

Finance and Performance Committee

Meeting of 25 March 2026

Business Unit: Community
Date Created: 06 March 2026

Grant Funding Decisions - Contestable

Purpose Te Aronga o te Pūrongo

The purpose of this report is to provide the Finance and Performance Committee with an update on the performance of contestable funds administered under the current Community Development Policy for the period 1 July 2025 to 28 February 2026.

Recommendations Ngā Tūtohinga

That the Committee note the performance of funding administered under the Community Development Policy for the period 1 July 2025 to 28 February 2026.

Report prepared by:
Helen King
Grants Connector

Approved for submission by:
Lyn Daly
General Manager - Community

1 Background Ngā Kōrero o Muri

- 1.1 The Manawatū District Council adopted the Community Development Policy to provide a framework for allocating financial support to community organisations, events, and individuals that contribute to the wellbeing of the Manawatū District.
- 1.2 The policy supports the objectives of the Community Development Strategy, which aims to ensure the Manawatū District offers a high quality of life for residents through connected, inclusive and resilient communities.
- 1.3 Community development is recognised as a key component of Council's District Development activity and contributes to the social, cultural, economic and environmental wellbeing of the district.
- 1.4 The policy establishes a number of contestable funding streams designed to support grassroots initiatives, events and community participation. These include
 - Priority Services (3-year contracts)
 - Community Development Fund (one-off projects/initiatives)
 - Event Fund
 - Representative Fund
 - Private Cemetery / Urupā Fund
 - Community Committee Project Fund
 - Community Planning Implementation Fund
- 1.5 These funds enable Council to partner with community organisations and individuals to support activities that strengthen community connections, participation and local leadership.
- 1.6 Council is currently progressing work to transition to a new Grants Policy, which will modernise and streamline the way Council administers community funding.
- 1.7 As part of this work, it is proposed that the Community Committee Project Fund and Community Planning Implementation Fund be administered through the Community Committees Policy, as these funds relate directly to the role and activities of Community Committees and the delivery of projects aligned with Community Plans.
- 1.8 The Community Committees Policy establishes Community Committees as advisory bodies that act as a link between Council and their communities, supporting local participation, identifying community priorities and advocating for projects that contribute to social, environmental, cultural and economic wellbeing.
- 1.9 Under this policy, Community Committees receive annual funding to deliver small-scale local projects through the Community Committee Project Fund and can also access contestable funding to support projects identified within Community Plans through the Community Planning Implementation Fund.
- 1.10 As these funds are closely aligned with the governance and operation of Community Committees, they will be reported on separately. Accordingly, the funding streams covered in this report exclude the Community Committee Project Fund and the Community Planning Implementation Fund, which will be addressed through a separate report.

2 Strategic Fit Te Tautika ki te Rautaki

- 2.1 The contestable funds administered under the Community Development Policy support several of Council's Long-term Plan priorities by enabling community-led initiatives that contribute to the social, cultural and environmental wellbeing of the Manawatū District.
- 2.2 These funds contribute to the following strategic priorities outlined in the Long-term Plan:
- 2.3 **A place to belong and grow:** By supporting organisations, services and events that strengthen community connections and encourage participation in social, cultural and recreational activities, helping residents feel connected, safe and engaged in their communities.
- 2.4 **A future planned together:** Through funding programmes that enable community organisations and residents to contribute ideas, leadership and initiatives that strengthen their communities and support a positive future for the district.
- 2.5 **A prosperous, resilient economy:** By supporting events and initiatives that attract visitors to the district, encourage local spending and contribute to the vibrancy of towns and villages. These activities help strengthen the local economy and promote Manawatū as a great place to live, visit and do business.
- 2.6 **Value for money and excellence in local government;** By ensuring public funding is allocated to initiatives that deliver community benefit and improve quality of life for residents while maintaining transparent and accountable funding processes.
- 2.7 **An environment to be proud of:** By supporting organisations, events and initiatives that protect and enhance the Manawatū District's natural and physical environment.

3 Discussion and Options Considered Ngā Matapakinga me ngā Kōwhiringa i Wānangahia

- 3.1 This section provides an overview of the performance and impact of contestable funds administered under the Community Development Policy for the period 1 July 2025 to 28 February 2026.
- 3.2 Council's community funding programmes support initiatives that contribute to the wellbeing and resilience of the Manawatū District. Through several funding streams, Council invests in services, events and activities delivered by community organisations and volunteers.
- 3.3 During the reporting period, 86 applications were received across Council's community funding programmes, with 69 approved for support. These investments enable local organisations, volunteers, and community groups to deliver services and activities that directly benefit Manawatū residents.
- 3.4 In addition to the contestable funding rounds outlined in this report, Council also provides direct funding support for certain established events that deliver significant community benefit. For example, Council provides direct support for events associated with the New Zealand Rural Games, including the Kids 'n' Country event held in Feilding. These allocations sit outside the contestable funding process and are not included in the application numbers reported above.

- 3.5 Applications were assessed through the Council’s contestable funding process, with most funding rounds considered by an assessment committee comprising two Council officers and four elected members. The Private Cemetery/Urupā Fund was assessed by Te Kōtui Reo Taumata, which holds delegated authority to approve funding within the available budget.

Priority Services

- 3.6 Every three years Council invites applications for Priority Services funding to support organisations delivering ongoing community services that align with the Community Development Policy. Successful organisations enter into a three-year funding agreement and report to Council on agreed performance measures at six-monthly and annual intervals.
- 3.7 A total of 21 applications were received for this fund. Fourteen organisations were approved for three-year contracts (2025-2028), one organisation was approved for a one-year contract, four applications were declined and one application was withdrawn.
- 3.8 Priority Services funding supports a diverse range of organisations that collectively contribute to the wellbeing, safety, resilience, and social connection of communities across the Manawatū District. The funded services address a wide spectrum of community needs, including mental health and family wellbeing, youth development, community safety, support for older people, health access, and opportunities for community participation.
- 3.9 A significant portion of this funding supports organisations delivering essential social and wellbeing services. Programmes delivered by organisations such as Manchester House Social Services, Te Manawa Family Services, Youthline Central North Island, and Parentline provide counselling, parenting education, youth mentoring, and family support services. These programmes support families and young people facing challenges such as family violence, mental health pressures, parenting difficulties, and social isolation.
- 3.10 Council funding also supports initiatives that promote youth development and positive life pathways. Programmes such as those delivered by SnapBACK Gym and Plant to Plate Aotearoa provide young people with opportunities to build confidence, resilience, leadership skills, and practical life skills while encouraging positive engagement with their communities.
- 3.11 Investment in community safety and resilience is another key outcome of the programme. Organisations such as Neighbourhood Support Manawatū, community patrol groups, and Surf Life Saving services help create safer communities through neighbourhood support networks, community patrols, and beach lifeguarding services during peak summer periods.
- 3.12 Funding also supports healthy and connected ageing, with services delivered by organisations such as Age Concern and the St John Health Shuttle helping older residents remain active, independent, and socially connected through exercise programmes, companionship services, transport to medical appointments, and health education.
- 3.13 Council’s investment also strengthens community connection, participation, and cultural activity. Organisations such as the Feilding and District Art Society, Volunteer Central, and the Manawatū Historic Vehicle Collection Trust create opportunities for residents to engage in arts, heritage, volunteering, and community events, helping foster community pride and connection.
- 3.14 All Priority Services contracts are currently in the first year of their three-year funding term. Six-month accountability reports have recently been received from funded organisations as part of the agreed reporting framework. Early reporting indicates that services are being

delivered as planned and organisations are progressing towards their agreed annual performance measures. Council staff continue to work closely with contract holders to monitor delivery, support performance, and address any emerging issues early to ensure the services continue to meet community needs.

Community Development One-Offs

- 3.15 The Community Development Fund supports one-off initiatives or projects that align with Council's Community Development Policy and contribute to the wellbeing and development of communities across the district.
- 3.16 Nine applications were received for this funding stream, with three approved for funding.
- 3.17 Projects supported through this fund enable community organisations to deliver initiatives that would otherwise be difficult to achieve due to limited resources. These projects typically focus on strengthening community capability, supporting youth development, enabling cultural participation, or improving community wellbeing.
- 3.18 Successful projects this year included support for youth development activities through GirlGuiding New Zealand, enabling local GirlGuiding units in Feilding to provide outdoor leadership and adventure experiences for girls and young women. These activities promote confidence, independence, teamwork, and leadership skills while encouraging participation in community service and environmental stewardship.
- 3.19 Manawatū, Horowhenua and Tararua Diabetes Trust received funding for a '25 year POP-UP Expo' at the Eat Street Market. The Trust had a stall and provided the public with free access to registered nurses and dieticians and to answer any diabetes related questions. The trust spoke with people about various aspects of diabetes and felt this had had a positive impact on the community.
- 3.20 This fund experienced a relatively high decline rate, with six of the nine applications not approved. In many cases, while the projects aligned with community needs, applications related to ongoing operational costs rather than one-off initiatives and therefore did not meet the eligibility criteria for this funding stream. This reflects a wider trend across the community sector where organisations are increasingly seeking support for ongoing service delivery due to rising operational costs and growing demand for community services.

Event Fund

- 3.21 The Event Fund supports events and festivals that primarily benefit Manawatū District residents and align with the Community Development Strategy's vision that the district offers a high quality of life for all residents.
- 3.22 Eighteen applications were received for the Event Fund, with sixteen approved for funding.
- 3.23 Funded events this year included a wide range of activities that contribute to the social, cultural, and recreational life of the district. Several events celebrate the district's strong rural identity and agricultural heritage. Events such as Rural Day and agricultural competitions provide opportunities for families and young people to engage with rural traditions while strengthening community pride in the district's agricultural roots.
- 3.24 Council funding also supported sporting competitions and tournaments that attract participants and visitors from across the country. These included national cycling

championships, athletics road relays, swimming carnivals, and equestrian competitions. Such events help showcase the district's facilities, attract visitors to the region, and support local businesses while providing opportunities for local athletes to participate and compete.

- 3.25 A number of funded events focused on arts, culture, and community celebration, including concerts, performing arts events, community Christmas celebrations, and cultural festivals such as Pasifika Fusion. These events create opportunities for residents to come together, celebrate cultural identity, and enjoy shared experiences that strengthen community connection.
- 3.26 Many of the events supported through the Event Fund are delivered by volunteer-led organisations and rely heavily on community participation. Council's support helps these groups deliver accessible, family-friendly events that encourage residents to connect with one another and contribute to a vibrant community life across the district.
- 3.27 In addition to the contestable Event Fund, Council has provided direct support for the New Zealand Rural Games and associated Kids 'n' Country activities held in Feilding. These events celebrate rural sports and traditions while providing free, family-friendly activities that attract visitors and create opportunities for residents to engage with rural culture and community life. While this support is funded from the same overall events allocation, it is provided as a direct grant rather than through the contestable Event Fund process and is therefore not included in the application numbers reported above.

Representative Fund

- 3.28 The Representative Fund supports individuals and teams who have been selected to represent the Manawatū District or New Zealand at regional, national, and international events.
- 3.29 Thirty-four applications were received for this fund, with thirty-one approved for support.
- 3.30 The majority of applications supported young athletes representing the district at sporting events, including basketball, hockey, canoe polo, triathlon, taekwon-do, netball, bowls, swimming and rugby league tournaments. Many competitors were selected to compete at national and international levels, including world championships, Asia-Pacific competitions, and international tours. These opportunities allow local athletes to test their skills against high-level competition while proudly representing the Manawatū District.
- 3.31 In addition to sporting representation, funding also supported cultural and academic opportunities, including participation in performing arts competitions such as the National Shakespeare Schools Production and national youth performance awards, as well as school-based competitions such as the AgriKids national competition.
- 3.32 The number of applications reflects the high level of participation and achievement among Manawatū residents, particularly young people, across sport, arts, and academic activities. Council's support helps reduce the financial barriers associated with travel, accommodation, and competition costs, enabling talented individuals and teams to take part in opportunities that may otherwise be out of reach.
- 3.33 As part of the programme's accountability and celebration of local success, many recipients have returned to present to Council following their events, sharing their experiences and achievements representing the Manawatū District. These presentations provide an opportunity for Council to recognise the accomplishments of local residents and highlight the positive outcomes supported through the Representative Fund.

Private Cemetery / Urupā Fund

- 3.34 The Private Cemetery / Urupā Fund assists with the costs associated with the upkeep of private cemeteries and urupā located within the Manawatū District. Only existing urupā or private cemeteries within Manawatū District Council boundaries are eligible for funding assistance.
- 3.35 Four applications were received for this fund and all were approved.
- 3.36 Funding supported the ongoing upkeep and maintenance of private cemetery and urupā sites, including the purchase of small capital items and materials required to assist with maintenance activities. This funding helps ensure these important community and cultural sites are maintained respectfully and remain accessible for whānau and communities.

Overall

- 3.37 Overall, the contestable funding programmes continue to perform well and remain an important mechanism for supporting community-led initiatives across the district. Through these funds, Council supports essential social services, community events, youth participation, cultural activities, and the maintenance of important community spaces. Together, these investments contribute to stronger community connections, increased participation in community life, and improved wellbeing for residents across the Manawatū District.

4 Risk Assessment Te Arotake Tūraru

- 4.1 The Community Development Policy provides a framework for allocating public funds to community organisations, individuals and events that contribute to the wellbeing of the Manawatū District. While the risks associated with these grants are generally low to moderate, there are several risks to Council that are managed through the policy's processes and oversight.

Financial risk

- 4.2 There is a risk that funding recipients may not deliver the services or outcomes outlined in their application or contract, or that funds may not be used for the intended purpose.
- 4.3 This risk is mitigated through established assessment processes, clear funding criteria, funding agreements and accountability reporting requirements. Recipients of priority services funding are required to report on performance during the contract term, while recipients of all one-off funding are required to submit accountability reports on completion of funded activities.

Reputational and governance risk

- 4.4 Council funding decisions may attract public scrutiny if allocations are perceived as inconsistent, inequitable or not aligned with Council policies and priorities.
- 4.5 There is also a risk to the integrity of Council's funding framework if funding is approved outside of established contestable funding processes. Direct funding decisions that sit outside the approved policy framework may create perceptions of inconsistency or undermine the transparency and fairness of Council's grant allocation processes.
- 4.6 This risk is mitigated through maintaining clear funding policies, applying consistent decision-making processes and ensuring funding allocations are reported transparently.

Governance and capability risk

- 4.7 Some community organisations receiving funding may have limited governance or financial management capability, which can affect their ability to deliver projects or services.
- 4.8 Council mitigates this risk through application assessment processes, officer oversight of funding allocations and accountability reporting requirements.

Strategic alignment risk

- 4.9 There is a risk that existing funding programmes may become less aligned with Council's strategic priorities over time if they are not regularly reviewed.
- 4.10 The transition to the new Grants Policy will help mitigate this risk by updating the funding framework and ensuring future funding allocations remain aligned with Council's strategic priorities and community outcomes.
- 4.11 Overall, the risks associated with administering contestable community funding are considered manageable and are mitigated through the policy framework, delegated decision-making and monitoring of funded initiatives.

5 Engagement Te Whakapānga

Significance of Decision

- 5.1 The Council's Significance and Engagement Policy is not triggered by matters discussed in this report. No stakeholder engagement is required.

Māori and Cultural Engagement

- 5.2 The Community Development Policy includes a Private Cemetery / Urupā Fund, which supports the maintenance of urupā and private cemeteries within the Manawatū District.
- 5.3 Applications relating to urupā are considered annually by Te Kōtui Reo Taumata, which has delegated authority to approve funding within the available budget. This process ensures that decisions relating to urupā are informed by appropriate cultural oversight and reflect the significance of these sites to Māori communities.

Community Engagement

- 5.4 Community engagement is not required for this report.

6 Operational Implications Ngā Pānga Whakahaere

- 6.1 There are no operational implications associated with this report. The report provides a performance update on the administration of contestable funds under the existing Community Development Policy.

7 Financial Implications Ngā Pānga Ahumoni

- 7.1 The total budget allocated to the Community Development contestable funds for the 2025/26 financial year, including carry forwards, is **\$472,425**. As at 28 February 2026. Most funds have been allocated or committed through approved grants.

Priority Services

- 7.2 The Priority Services budget for 2025/26 is **\$260,000**, of which **\$250,000** has been allocated through multi-year service agreements. The remaining **\$10,000** is being transferred to the Community Development one-off fund to support the current open funding round.

Community Development Fund (One-off projects)

- 7.3 The Community Development Fund has a total budget of **\$48,491**, with **\$7,387** allocated to date. This leaves **\$41,104** available for the current funding round. Applications for this fund remain open until 30 March 2026.

Event Fund

- 7.4 The Event Fund has a total budget of **\$126,697**, with **\$94,173** allocated to approved events to date. A balance of **\$32,524** remains available for the current funding round, with applications open until 30 March 2026.

Representative Fund

- 7.5 The Representative Fund budget for the year is **\$20,992**, with **\$20,795** allocated through approved applications. A remaining balance of **\$197** remains unallocated. The fund is now closed for the year.

Private Cemetery / Urupā Fund

- 7.6 The Private Cemetery / Urupā Fund has a total budget of **\$16,245**. Of this, **\$6,254** has been paid out and **\$9,861** has been approved but not yet uplifted by applicants. A remaining balance of **\$130** remains unallocated. This fund is now closed for the year.

8 Statutory Requirements Ngā Here ā-Ture

- 8.1 There are no specific statutory requirements associated with this report. The administration of contestable funds is undertaken in accordance with the current Manawatū District Council Community Development Policy and the delegations approved by Council.
- 8.2 Organisations that receive funding are required to meet the accountability requirements set out in the policy and relevant funding agreements, including:
- 8.3 Organisations that have entered into a Priority Services contract with Council are required to provide six-monthly and annual performance reports for the duration of the contract term, which expires on 30 June 2028.
- 8.4 Organisations receiving funding through other contestable funds are required to submit an accountability report within two months of project completion.

8.5 Successful Representative Fund recipients are required to present a summary of their experience representing the Manawatū District at a Council meeting.

9 Next Steps Te Kokenga

9.1 Council officers will continue to administer the remaining open funding rounds and monitor the delivery of funded initiatives in accordance with the Community Development Policy.

9.2 There are no funding applications for the Committee to consider as part of this report. However, current funding rounds remain open, and any resulting applications will be brought forward for consideration in accordance with Council's funding delegations.