

## Council

Meeting of 17 June 2026

Business Unit: Community  
Date Created: 18 May 2026

## Development of Grants Policy

### Purpose Te Aronga o te Pūrongo

The purpose of this report is to seek Council's adoption of the new Grants Policy and revoke the existing Community Development Policy. The report also introduces the accompanying Community Grants Guidelines, which will provide operational detail and criteria for Council-administered funding programmes.

### Recommendations Ngā Tūtohinga

That the Council:

1. Adopts the Grants Policy.
2. Revokes the Community Development Policy.
3. Notes that the operational detail, eligibility criteria, assessment processes, and funding priorities for Council-administered funding programmes will be contained within the Community Grants Guidelines.
4. Notes the following proposed funding approach changes for the 2026/27 funding year that will be outlined in the Community Grants Guidelines:
  - a. The Representative Fund will be focused on applicants aged 19 years and under, with tiered funding available for regional, national, and international representation.
  - b. The Community Development One-Off Fund criteria will be clarified to reflect that the "one-off" nature of the fund relates to the funding allocation itself rather than limiting support to one-off initiatives or projects, allowing greater flexibility to support initiatives and services that demonstrate clear community benefit.
  - c. The Events Fund will move to a fully contestable approach, with no specific funding allocations reserved for individual events or organisations.
  - d. The Council-funded traffic management support will continue for Anzac Day commemorations, Rural Day, and the Feilding Christmas Parade for the 2026/27 funding year, with all other event-related traffic management requests to be considered through the Events Fund application process.
  - e. The future structure and administration of the Traffic Management Fund may be reviewed through future Long Term Plan discussions.

- f. The consequential amendments will be made to the Community Committee Policy and Marae and Hapū Development Policy to incorporate relevant funding administration and accountability provisions previously contained within the Community Development Policy.

Report prepared by:  
Adie Johansen  
Community Services Manager

Approved for submission by:  
Lyn Daly  
General Manager - Community

---

## 1 Background Ngā Kōrero o Muri

- 1.1 Council administers a range of community funding programmes intended to support community wellbeing, participation, resilience, local initiatives, and events across the Manawatū District. These funding programmes contribute to Council's broader strategic priorities and community wellbeing outcomes identified through the Long-term Plan and Community Development Strategy.
- 1.2 The current Community Development Policy includes both governance direction and detailed operational information relating to individual funding programmes, including eligibility criteria, assessment processes, funding administration, and other procedural requirements.
- 1.3 Over time, this has resulted in the policy becoming increasingly operational in nature and less flexible to update as community priorities and funding approaches evolve.
- 1.4 The current structure of the policy has been reviewed and a revised approach developed that separates the strategic policy framework from the operational administration of funding programmes.
- 1.5 The proposed Grants Policy focuses on Council's purpose, principles, and overall approach to community funding. Detailed operational information for individual funding programmes will instead sit within a separate Community Grants Guidelines document.
- 1.6 This approach is intended to:
- provide a clearer distinction between governance and operational matters,
  - improve accessibility and consistency for applicants,
  - allow funding criteria and priorities to remain responsive to changing community needs and opportunities, and
  - reduce the need for formal policy amendments for minor operational changes.
- 1.7 As part of this review, information relating to Community Committee and Marae and Hapū funding administration previously contained within the Community Development Policy will

instead be incorporated into the relevant Community Committee Policy and Marae and Hapū Development Policy.

- 1.8 The proposed changes retain Council’s overall commitment to supporting strong, connected, and resilient communities, while introducing several refinements to improve clarity, transparency, equity, and accessibility across the funding framework for the 2026/27 funding year.

## 2 Strategic Fit Te Tautika ki te Rautaki

- 2.1 The proposed Grants Policy supports Council’s strategic direction of enabling strong, connected, and resilient communities through transparent and responsive funding programmes.

- 2.2 The policy aligns with the Long-term Plan community outcomes of:

- “A place to belong and grow”, through supporting community participation, connection, and wellbeing, and
- “A future planned together”, through enabling community-led initiatives and partnerships across the district.

- 2.3 The proposal also aligns with the Community Development Strategy vision that the Manawatū District offers “a high quality of life for all residents” and supports Council’s role in encouraging active participation, strengthening communities, and supporting locally led initiatives.

- 2.4 The revised policy structure further supports Council’s objective of delivering services that are accessible, adaptable, efficient, and responsive to changing community needs over time.

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

- 3.1 As part of the review of Council’s community funding framework, an initial review and proposed changes to the framework were presented to Council during workshop discussions in 2025.

- 3.2 During these discussions, it became apparent that the current Community Development Policy had become difficult to navigate, with governance direction, operational processes, eligibility criteria, funding administration, and detailed fund information all contained within a single document. This created confusion around the purpose of the policy itself and made it difficult to clearly distinguish between Council’s governance role and the operational administration of funding programmes.

- 3.3 Workshop discussions also highlighted the need for a framework that could more easily adapt to changing community priorities and emerging needs without requiring frequent formal policy amendments.

- 3.4 Following this feedback, the proposed structure was reconsidered and a refined the approach presented through this report.

- 3.5 The resulting proposal separates the framework into:

- a high-level Grants Policy, and
- a separate Community Grants Guidelines document.

3.6 Under this approach, the policy provides the overarching governance framework, purpose, principles, and responsibilities relating to community funding, while the guidelines contain the operational detail for individual funding programmes, including:

- eligibility criteria,
- application requirements,
- assessment considerations,
- accountability expectations,
- funding limits, and
- administrative processes.

3.7 This revised structure aims to provide a clearer distinction between governance and operational matters, improves accessibility and consistency for applicants, and allows Council greater flexibility to respond to changing community needs over time.

3.8 As part of this review, information relating to Community Committee and Marae and Hapū funding administration previously contained within the Community Development Policy will instead be incorporated into the relevant Community Committee Policy and Marae and Hapū Development Policy.

3.9 It is recommended, that the overall funding framework remain largely unchanged for the 2026/27 funding year, and that refinements are made through the accompanying Community Grants Guidelines.

#### **Representative Fund**

3.10 It is recommended that the Representative Fund be refocused toward applicants aged 19 years and under. Funding would be available through tiered support levels for regional, national, and international representation opportunities.

#### **Community Development One-Off Fund**

3.11 It is recommended that the Community Development Fund remain in place, with clarification provided through the accompanying guidelines that the “one-off” nature of the fund relates to the funding allocation itself rather than limiting support to one-off initiatives or projects.

3.12 This change is proposed in response to challenges experienced during the current funding year, where a number of applications demonstrated clear community benefit but were unable to be supported as they did not align with the narrow interpretation of “one-off” initiatives under the existing criteria.

3.13 The revised approach would allow the fund to support a broader range of locally led initiatives that strengthen community wellbeing, participation, resilience, identity, and connection, including ongoing community services where there is demonstrated community benefit.

- 3.14 This approach provides greater flexibility to respond to identified community need while maintaining the intent of providing limited-term funding support rather than creating ongoing funding commitments.

#### **Events Fund**

- 3.15 It is recommended that the Events Fund move to a fully contestable funding model.
- 3.16 Under the current approach, specific funding allocations are associated with certain events or organisations. The proposed approach removes reserved allocations and requires all events to apply through the same contestable process and assessment framework.

#### **Traffic Management Support**

- 3.17 Council currently provides traffic management support for a limited number of significant district events, specifically Anzac Day commemorations, Rural Day, and the Feilding Christmas Parade.
- 3.18 It is recommended that Council-funded traffic management support continue for these specified events for the 2026/27 funding year. All other event-related traffic management requests would instead be considered through the Events Fund application process.
- 3.19 The proposed approach provides greater clarity, consistency, transparency, and flexibility across the community funding framework while retaining Council's overall commitment to supporting strong, connected, and resilient communities.

### **4 Risk Assessment Te Arotake Tūraru**

- 4.1 The proposed Grants Policy introduces a clearer and more transparent framework for the administration of Council grant funding. Separating governance policy from operational guidelines reduces the risk of inconsistent decision-making and improves Council's ability to respond to changing community needs over time.
- 4.2 A key risk identified through the review process is the potential for grant requests to continue being directed informally to staff or elected members outside of the approved grants process.
- 4.3 Council's policy is for all grant funding support requests to be assessed through the formal grants framework and applicable application process. Requests considered outside of the adopted process create a risk of:
- inconsistent decision-making,
  - perceived inequity between applicants,
  - reduced transparency and accountability,
  - reputational risk to Council, and
  - undermining the integrity and intent of the Grants Policy and associated guidelines.
- 4.4 There is also a risk that retaining highly detailed operational information within the policy itself would continue to create confusion between governance and administrative matters, limiting

Council's ability to adapt funding criteria and priorities in response to emerging community need.

4.5 Separating operational detail into the Community Grants Guidelines helps reduce this risk by allowing funding programmes and criteria to be reviewed and refined more efficiently while remaining aligned with the adopted principles and purpose of the Grants Policy.

4.6 The proposed framework is intended to support a fair, equitable, transparent, and consistent process for all applicants while maintaining public confidence in Council's grant funding decisions.

## 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 There are no known cultural considerations associated with the matters addressed in this report. No specific engagement with Māori or other ethnicity groups is necessary.

### Community Engagement

5.3 No formal community engagement has been undertaken as part of this review.

5.4 The proposed changes primarily relate to the structure, administration, and governance framework of Council's grants system rather than introducing significant changes to overall funding availability or levels of service.

5.5 However, analysis and observations from the administration of the 2025/26 grant funding rounds have been used to inform the proposed approach and recommendations. This included identifying recurring issues relating to funding criteria interpretation, applicant eligibility, administrative complexity, and limitations within the current policy structure.

5.6 This operational experience has helped inform the proposed refinements to improve clarity, consistency, accessibility, and flexibility across Council's grant funding framework.

## 6 Operational Implications Ngā Pānga Whakahaere

6.1 The proposed Grants Policy is not expected to create operational impacts for Council.

6.2 Council already administers and processes community grant funding programmes as part of normal business activity. The proposed changes largely formalise and clarify existing administrative practices through a clearer separation between governance policy and operational guidelines.

6.3 The revised structure aims to improve operational efficiency by:

- improving clarity and consistency for applicants,

- supporting more streamlined grant administration processes, and
- providing clearer guidance for staff and elected members regarding grant assessment and decision-making processes.

6.4 Overall, the proposed approach is expected to create a more practical, adaptable, and user-friendly grants framework for both applicants and Council administration.

## 7 Financial Implications Ngā Pānga Ahumoni

7.1 The proposed Grants Policy does not create any additional financial implications or changes to the overall grant funding budgets planned through the 2026/27 Annual Plan process.

7.2 The proposed changes primarily relate to the structure, administration, and transparency of Council's grants framework rather than altering funding levels.

7.3 Should Council wish to review overall grant funding allocations or funding levels in future years, these discussions would be considered through future Long-term Plan or Annual Plan processes.

7.4 The proposed approach is expected to improve transparency and equity across the grants framework, particularly through the removal of pre-allocated or earmarked event funding and the transition toward a more contestable funding process.

7.5 The clarification of the Community Development Fund criteria is also expected to improve Council's ability to allocate available funding to initiatives that provide clear community benefit. During the 2025/26 funding year, staff identified situations where applications aligned with identified community need but were unable to be supported due to the narrow interpretation of "one-off" initiatives under the existing criteria. The revised approach is intended to provide greater flexibility while still maintaining appropriate accountability around one-off funding allocations.

## 8 Statutory Requirements Ngā Here ā-Ture

8.1 There are no statutory requirements for this report.

## 9 Next Steps Te Kokenga

9.1 Subject to Council adoption of the Grants Policy, staff will:

a) Finalise and publish the accompanying Community Grants Guidelines for the 2026/27 funding year,

b) Update relevant operational processes, application forms, and public information to align with the revised framework,

c) Update the Community Committees Policy and Marae and Hapu Committees Policy.

c) Implement the revised funding approach for the 2026/27 grant funding rounds.

9.2 The effectiveness of the revised framework will be monitored to identify any future potential improvements through the ongoing administration of Council grant funding programmes.

## 10 Attachments Ngā Āpitihanga

- DRAFT P336 Grants Policy
- DRAFT P336 Community Grants Guidelines
- Community Development Strategy
- Community Development Policy