

INFORMATION FOR APPLICANTS

Ngā Whenua Rāhui Fund

This information will help determine whether the Ngā Whenua Rāhui Fund is suitable for your proposal and whether your organisation has the capacity to meet the obligations of the Fund. It will also assist you to complete the application form.

About the Fund

Established in 1991, the Ngā Whenua Rāhui Fund provides a formal mechanism to protect indigenous biodiversity on land owned by Māori, in a way that recognises the cultural, spiritual, historical and physical values Māori place on the land. One of the primary reasons the fund was established, was to counter the alienation pressures that Māori land was facing.

The Ngā Whenua Rāhui kaupapa is to protect remaining indigenous biodiversity on privately owned Māori land that represents the full range of indigenous biodiversity originally present in the landscape.

Through a 25-year reviewable agreement between the Minister of Conservation and the landowner, the fund enables and supports activities to protect indigenous biodiversity on Māori land, by:

- a. placing formal protection (kawenata agreement) over the whenua whilst allowing landowners to maintain their tikanga and tino rangatiratanga.
- b. developing and implementing a plan to address introduced pest plant and animal species.
- c. building landowner capability to manage activities on their land.
- d. developing partnerships with external agencies and working in collaboration to achieve outcomes for landowners.
- e. leaving the land in Māori ownership and control.

This applies to indigenous remnant forests, waterways and riparian margins, wetlands, tussock lands, coastal dunes and saltmarsh ecosystems on Māori freehold, customary land, Māori reservation or General land owned by Māori.

The Fund is administered by the Ngā Whenua Rāhui Komiti who provide independent advice and make recommendations to the Minister of Conservation on applications to the fund from Māori landowners to legally protect their land.

Assessing applications

When assessing applications, consideration is given to:

- the extent to which the project meets the Fund's criteria of spiritual and cultural importance, representativeness, practicality for sustainable management and landscape values.
- the merit of the proposal, particularly in its relationship to the Ngā Whenua Rāhui purpose, scope, objective and strategy.
- the contribution owners will commit to the project.

- the owner's capacity to satisfactorily complete the project (including long-term management) and to meet the terms and conditions of any grant.
- the extent to which the project is likely to enable effective ongoing actions to avoid future dependency on support from the Fund e.g. eco-tourism or other non-extractive activities such as honey production.
- projects funded for water and soil purposes by your Regional Council.

The Ngā Whenua Rāhui Komiti meets four times a year to consider applications that have progressed through the assessment stage.

Protection methods

Three agreement types are used to formalise arrangements between landowners and the Minister of Conservation. The type of agreement used depends on the management structure of the land that landowners are seeking to protect:

- Ngā Whenua Rāhui Kawenata (s77A Reserves Act 1977 or s27A Conservation Act 1987) – applies to Māori Freehold land
- Agreement for the Management of Land (s29 Conservation Act 1987) – applies to a Māori Reservation
- Deed to enter a Conservation Covenant (s77 Reserves Act 1977 or s27A Conservation Act 1987) – applies to General Land owned by Māori

Who can apply

Māori land authorities such as trusts and incorporations, organisations representative of whānau, hapū or iwi, and Māori owners of General land.

Applications must be made in the name of the organisation or individual who has legal status on the land block you are seeking protection over. For example, this could be an Ahu Whenua trust, Māori Reservation trust, charitable trust, incorporated society or individual Māori owner of General land.

When and how to apply

The fund opens on 1 March and closes 31 May of every year. Applications are made by accessing the online application form.

The process can take a few months following receipt of your application, therefore urgent requests for legal protection or funds cannot be considered.

Are you eligible

To be eligible to make an application, your entity or organisation must:

- have the legal right to enter into an agreement to protect the land identified in your application.
- have trustees or directors that meet regularly to fulfil their obligations under the rules of the organisation.
- ensure all trustees are available and accessible to sign an agreement if your application is successful.

NOTE: Eligibility does not necessarily guarantee a successful application. Your application may not be considered if in our opinion, your project does not fully meet the Fund's Criteria (see below).

Before you complete the application

Read through this Information Sheet to check that your purpose for applying is consistent with the kaupapa of the fund and that your project aligns with the criteria.

Before beginning your application, it is important to:

- a. understand the kaupapa of the fund
- b. ensure there is an active legal entity in place that administers the land you are seeking to protect, and that full agreement has been reached to make an application
- c. have your project's objectives and activities clearly defined
- d. ensure the legally entitled landowners have given approval to make the application.

Required information for your application

Some essential information is required to complete your application. Having information on hand prior to starting your application helps to complete the application quickly:

- name of the legal entity that administers the block
- legal entity type e.g. Ahu whenua rust, Whānau trust, Māori incorporation etc
- physical address of the land block/s you are seeking to protect
- legal description or LINZ reference of the property and/or the Māori Land Online block name
- land status (see definitions below)
- clearly defined values, objectives and activities you require
- reference number and name of an existing Ngā Whenua Rāhui kawenata if you already have one in place
- preferred name for your project – this will be used to identify your project when a reference number is assigned by us

Applications are made online: [How to apply to the Ngā Whenua Rāhui Fund](#)

Legal description

The block name and legal description of the land you are proposing to protect is necessary to ensure we access the correct legal information about the land block when doing our background checks. Without this information, we are unable to confidently identify your legal capacity to enter into a formal agreement.

If you don't have this information on hand, there are a couple of ways to find it:

- Search [Māori Land Online](#)
- [Ngā Whenua Rāhui online mapping tool](#)
- [District Council – ring your local council](#) or check your rates notice (if applicable)
- [LINZ Property Titles and Plans](#)

Legal entity status

A legal entity is an organisation that has its own legal identity, separate from its members or shareholders. Most Māori land has multiple owners. A number of specific forms of management are provided under Te Ture Whenua Māori Act, including Māori land trusts, Māori incorporations, and Māori reservations.

If you are unsure of your legal status, check on Māori Land Online or the Ngā Whenua Rāhui mapping app.

What happens next

1. Once we receive your application, information and documentation is collated to determine your legal capacity to enter into a formal arrangement. This task is done by a legal team and may take some time. If we are unable to find relevant documents, you may be asked to provide these, such as a copy of your Trust order or copies of encumbrances registered on the land title.
2. There are a number of variables that determine how long this process will take. It may take longer if insufficient or incorrect information is provided in your application.
3. First contact will occur shortly after we receive your application. The Kaitakawaenga in your rohe will make contact to introduce themselves and give you a bit more information about the steps in the process.
4. Once legal capacity to enter into an agreement is confirmed, you will receive an information pack with legal and other information relevant to your application. The information pack will contain a form called *Supporting Information*. You may fill out this form prior to the first Kaitakawaenga visit with you or wait to go through it with them. You should take care in the preparation and presentation of the supporting information as this provides important information when considering your application.
5. The Kaitakawaenga will meet with you and visit the land block. Depending on the reason for your application, an indigenous biodiversity or cultural assessment may be carried out – at no cost to you.

You will be advised if we find you do not have the legal capacity to enter into an agreement and the reason why. Your application will stop at this point. If relevant, the Kaitakawaenga will provide other available options to fulfil your project objectives.

6. Once all information is collected, applications that satisfy the criteria are presented to the Ngā Whenua Rāhui Komiti for their consideration. An application that is supported by the Komiti is recommended to the Minister of Conservation for approval. The Minister of Conservation has the final decision as to whether or not to enter into an agreement with your organisation.
7. The Kaitakawaenga will contact you to advise the final outcome, and the next steps.

Making your application

It is advisable that you read through this Information Sheet and the Fund Criteria before completing your application, which you can do via the [online application form](#) on the Ngā Whenua Rāhui website.

Rating of Māori land

On 12 April 2021, the Local Government (Rating of Whenua Māori) Amendment Act was passed. The Act made changes to the rating of Māori land to reduce the barriers for effective partnership between local government and Māori to support the development of whenua Māori, and modernise the rating legislation that applies to whenua Māori.

One part of the new Act made land subject to Ngā Whenua Rāhui kawenata non-rateable from July 2021. To find out more, visit [Te Puni Kōkiri - Rating Māori Land 2021](#) or contact your local Council.

DEFINITIONS

Land Types	
Māori Customary Land	Land held by Māori in accordance with tikanga Māori and that was never converted to Māori freehold land by the Land Courts, so that Māori have the same title to it as they had in 1840.
Māori Freehold Land	This is land: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - held by individuals who have shares together as tenants in common - that has been investigated by the Māori Land Court and a freehold order has been issued, or - set aside by the Crown as Māori freehold land and awarded by Crown Grants to specific individuals, or - that has had the status determined as Māori Freehold Land by order of the Māori Land Court.
Māori Owned General Land	General land refers to ordinary privately owned freehold land that is beneficially owned either by one Māori person or by a group of people of whom a majority are Māori. Some general land owned by Māori are also subject to some of the provisions of Te Ture Whenua Māori Act.
Values	
Cultural Heritage	Includes tangible and intangible assets passed down through the hapū and iwi associated with the land. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tangible (physical properties) such as waahi tapu, pou whenua, ancient maara kai or pā sites, artifacts. - Intangible (non-physical properties) such as spiritual beliefs, mātauranga Māori, history and stories associated with the land.
Natural Heritage	Encompasses the natural environment and includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - natural geological features with cultural attributes e.g. caves, mountains, rivers, wetlands, dunes, estuaries, native forest - native species and the places in which they live - culturally significant landscapes.
Indigenous Biodiversity	Ngā Whenua Rāhui defines indigenous biodiversity as “ the variety of connections of all living species in a specific geographic area understood within a cultural context ”. Indigenous biodiversity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - relates and interconnects all diverse life forms and species within various ecosystems and habitats - describes the relationship between all natural living species within the specific area in which they live and demonstrates a fundamental principle whereby human activity is one of many strands of the web of life where all life forms are intrinsically connected. <p>Humans share a common whakapapa with animals and plants and are therefore part of nature and indigenous biodiversity. Our responsibility to other living things is expressed in the concept of kaitiaki.</p> <p>Customary values and practices originate from this relationship between ourselves, our landscape, our environment and our natural resources. That relationship reinforces tangata whenua to a specific geographic area.</p>
Natural Character	Includes natural processes, natural elements and natural patterns: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - natural action of rivers, tides, wind and rain, movement of animals and natural succession of plants - water, landforms and vegetation cover - distribution of natural elements over an area forms natural patterns

Contact us

If you have any questions about the Fund or require assistance with completing your application form, contact your regional Kaitakawaenga. Hover over the area on the [Ngā Whenua Rāhui regions map](#) where your whenua is located, the name and contact details of the relevant Kaitakawaenga will pop up.

FUND CRITERIA

The following sets out currently applied criteria designed to help you when considering your application. Full consideration of these will ensure you have sufficient information available for the first Kaitakawaenga visit.

Note: Criteria used for evaluating applications have evolved over time and will continue to evolve as new knowledge emerges.

Representativeness

This is the extent to which the area proposed for protection is representative of the full range of indigenous biodiversity that was originally present in the natural landscape, including:

- commonplace, rare and threatened indigenous species, habitats, and communities
- the ecological processes that link them
- the extent to which indigenous biodiversity is already protected in the proportion that they were originally present.

Sustainability

The extent to which the area proposed for protection is likely to continue to be viable and evolve in a natural way in the long term. This includes the extent to which the area is:

- protected by its size and shape
- buffered from the effects of adjoining land uses or activities
- linked to or dependent on other protected areas (either physically or by ecological processes) for its continued viability
- expected to maintain its ecological integrity through major natural disturbance events
- vulnerable to the depredations of introduced species
- able to be managed to protect its indigenous biodiversity values
- expected to contribute to sustaining existing protected areas, through additional scale, buffering, linkages or restoration.

Cultural and Natural Heritage

The extent to which the area proposed for protection represents the cultural and natural heritage that resident whānau, hapū and iwi have associated with the land, including the extent of:

- native plant and animal species originally present on the land
- places of cultural, historical and spiritual significance
- traditional harvesting practices and areas, and plants for food, rongoā, resource materials
- natural geological features with cultural attributes e.g. caves, mountains, rivers, wetlands, dunes, estuaries, native forests

Landscape Integrity

The extent to which the area proposed for protection contributes to and maintains the original integrity of the landscape, including the extent to which it:

- protects the natural character of the land
- protects the range of processes that link ecosystems present
- maintains the natural landscape values

What cannot be funded?

The fund does not provide for:

- administrative overheads or equipment to be purchased for unspecified projects
- commercially oriented projects or those involving the immediate or future production of indigenous timber
- retrospective costs.

Feasibility and funding criteria

Additional criteria which might be applied once other criteria have been assessed, include:

- connectedness to other work and other protected areas
- urgency of threats to the area that protection could alleviate
- the opportunity for protection may not arise again
- the cost of protection versus the value of protection
- opportunity costs of not being able to protect other areas.

Use of criteria

These criteria will ensure a comprehensive evaluation of your application. The feasibility and funding criteria (see above) will be used once representativeness, sustainability, cultural and natural heritage, and landscape integrity have been assessed.