



## **Waikato Regional Council Community Transport Grant Fund Policy**

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## **Policy Statement**

1. The Waikato Regional Council (WRC) established a contestable fund through the 2022/23 Annual Plan to better support community transport providers.
2. The purpose of this policy is to outline the framework for Community Transport Grant (CT Grant) applications, general conditions, the prioritisation criteria to target application selections, and the payment and contractual arrangements.

## **General Principles of Public Transport Services**

3. Public transport services support equitable access to places, facilities, services, and social and economic opportunities. This is achieved by ensuring that the transport services are co-ordinated, integrated, reliable, frequent, accessible, affordable, and safe.
4. The Waikato Regional Council and public transport operators will work together to co-ordinate public transport services and the provision of infrastructure as necessary to meet passenger needs and encourage greater uptake of services.
5. The Waikato Regional Council wishes to encourage and support work done by community transport providers within the Waikato region by providing a grant toward operations. With this funding Waikato Regional Council aims to support the ongoing value added to communities through community transport providers.

## **Background**

6. Community transport supports our communities by providing flexible and accessible community-led solutions in response to unmet local transport needs. It is often the only means of transport for many vulnerable and isolated people, including older people, or people with disabilities.
7. Community transport typically:
  - 7.1. relies on volunteers and fundraising;
  - 7.2. operates at low cost and draws heavily on community goodwill to deliver higher value services than to a public transport equivalent;
  - 7.3. can generate significant benefits for communities by reducing isolation and enabling access to healthcare, education, and social opportunities;
  - 7.4. is an effective transport solution in smaller towns and rural areas, and complements council's public transport network.

## **Fund Budget**

8. The Community Transport Grant fund budget available per annum is \$500,000. A maximum grant of \$20,000 is available per application. Applicants are encouraged to detail their true operational need so this can be fully considered.
9. Notwithstanding paragraph 8, where the full budget is not claimed by the initial financial year's applications, council assessors may distribute, at their total discretion, the remainder of funding to existing applicants as appropriate.

## **Annual CT Grant Fund Application Evaluations**

10. CT Grant Fund applications will be assessed and awarded through a contestable evaluation process annually.
11. Applicants will complete an online application through an online portal such as SmartyGrants.
12. Applications will be assessed by Council representatives, and a determination will be made if there are any relevant grant conditions.
13. Where applications exceed the annual grants budget, applications will be prioritised and/or grants reduced.

## **Application Criteria**

14. In reviewing grant applications, council assessors will evaluate whether the proposed funding is necessary to best meet unmet transport needs.
15. Applications will be prioritised using by considering the following criteria:
  - 15.1. The applicant has not received a CT Grant Fund allocation in the current financial year;
  - 15.2. The applicant will be primarily serving an area where there is not currently public transport adequate to meeting people's needs for participation;
  - 15.3. The applicant demonstrates responsiveness to community need;
  - 15.4. The applicant intends to provide transport that best suits their community's needs;
  - 15.5. The applicant intends to provide transport that supports people to remain in their chosen community;

- 15.6. If the applicant has received previous funding from WRC, they have met all terms of the funding agreement;
- 15.7. Preference will be given to organisations whose primary activity is community transport;
- 15.8. Preference will be given to an applicant who requires funding to sustain running costs (e.g., vehicle repairs, fuel costs, staff training, insurances, booking and accounting software, etc.) over purely innovative pursuits.

16. The funding is available to community transport providers who can demonstrate that they
  - 16.1. are delivering transport services that meet the needs of people in the Waikato region;
  - 16.2. serve an area where public transport does not currently meet people's needs for participation;
  - 16.3. operate through a recognised legal entity, such as:
    - 16.3.1. an incorporated society
    - 16.3.2. a registered charitable trust
    - 16.3.3. a Māori trust board or a marae-based organisation operating through an incorporated entity
    - 16.3.4. a limited liability company that is either registered as a charity or fully owned by one of the above; and
    - 16.3.5. are a not-for-profit, non-government, or non-commercial organisation;
  - 16.4. operate safely and ensure that the service and its drivers meet the applicable legal, licensing, and insurance requirements for their operations; and
  - 16.5. are able to manage financial accounts and meet reporting requirements.

## **Support for Applicants**

17. WRC staff are available to help Applicants understand the fund and answer questions about eligibility or criteria.

## **CT Grant Obligations and Payment**

18. Successful Applicants will be required to:

- 18.1. Sign a WRC funding agreement (Doc# 25622881) which will identify the approved grant value, conditions, and the length of service obligation.
- 18.2. Operate within the terms imposed by the funding agreement.
- 18.3. Complete an annual accountability report (via the online portal) at 12 months, sharing data such as passenger numbers, types and numbers of trips, volunteer hours, and related activities. This helps Council understand the value of the service and support ongoing improvements.

19. Transport providers may have different legal or regulatory obligations depending on their activities and structure. Council does not regulate passenger service licensing and cannot determine which licences or endorsements may apply, but may take known non-compliance into account when assessing risk or setting conditions.
20. Any information from Council about legal or operational requirements is general guidance only. Applicants are responsible for confirming and meeting their own transport, safety, licensing, and insurance obligations.
21. This policy does not change or interpret statutory requirements.

## **Community Transport Fund Recipient Expectations**

22. The Recipients are expected to:
  - 22.1. Interact with the Waikato Regional Council in an open and transparent manner;
  - 22.2. Interact with members of the public in a friendly and supportive manner;
  - 22.3. Ensure that they comply with all relevant legal obligations;
  - 22.4. Ensure that their relevant vehicles are maintained in a safe and comfortable state of repair.