



2026

Fund Application

Information Pack



Ngā Whenua Rāhui
our nature, our people, our future

Purpose of this document

What this document is for and how it helps you apply.

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

Kaupapa, why the fund exists, what it supports, and who administers it.

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, to:

- a. maintain tino rangatiratanga and tikanga;
- b. develop and implement a plan to manage introduced pest plants and animals;
- c. build landowner capability to manage activities on their whenua;
- d. develop partnerships with external agencies; and
- e. keep whenua in Māori ownership and control.

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.

On 12 April 2021, the Local Government (Rating of Whenua Māori) Amendment Act was passed. The Act made changes to the rating of whenua Māori 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. This does not apply to general land owned by Māori. To find out more, visit [Te Puni Kōkiri - Rating Whenua Māori 2021](#) or contact your local Council.

Who can apply

Eligible applicants and how applications must be made.

Whenua Māori authorities (such as trusts and incorporations), organisations representing whānau, hapū or iwi, and Māori owners of General land can apply.

Applications must be made by the organisation or person who legally administers the block you are seeking to protect. For example, trustees, Committee of Management, directors or an individual Māori owner of General land.

To be eligible, you must:

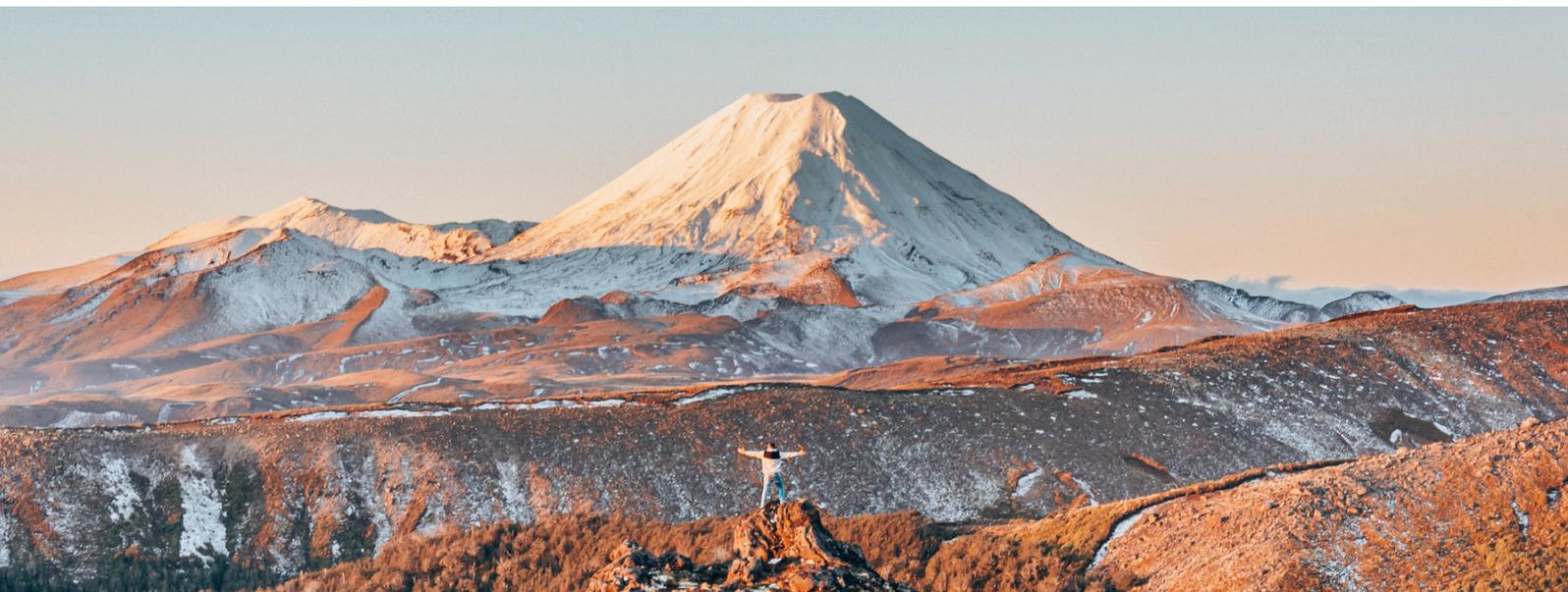
- a. have the legal authority to enter into an agreement to protect the land identified in your application;
- b. have trustees or directors who meet regularly and meet their governance responsibilities; and
- c. ensure all trustees are available to sign an agreement if your application is successful.

When and how to apply

Key dates, online process, and indicative timeframe.

The fund opens on **1 March** and closes **30 April 2026**. Applications are made by completing the **online application form**. The process can be lengthy, therefore urgent requests for legal protection or funds will not be considered.

To ensure your application is completed correctly, read through **this** Information Pack and the Fund Criteria before starting the application.



What you need for your application

Prepare these details and documents before you start the online form.

- **Before beginning your application, it is important to:**
 - a. understand the kaupapa of the fund to ensure your project fits the kaupapa of the fund, and that your project aligns with the criteria;
 - b. ensure there is an active legal entity in place that administers the land you are seeking to protect;
 - c. have your objectives and project brief clearly defined; and
 - d. have documented approval from the legally entitled persons to make the application.

Important information

Required information for your application

Having essential information on hand will ensure you complete all requirements of the application:

- Name of the legal entity that administers the block
- Legal entity type e.g. Ahu whenua trust, 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 Pātaka Whenua Online block name
- Land status - Māori freehold, customary, general land owned by Māori or SILNA
- Clearly defined values and objectives
- Project brief – a clear summary of what the whenua requires, why those needs are important, and how your proposed objectives respond to those needs.
- Reference number and name of an existing Ngā Whenua Rāhui kawenata if you already have one in place
- Preferred project name – a unique name used to identify your application which we link to the reference number we assign
- Digital copy of your organisation's rules (trust deed, constitution, charter etc)
- Copy of meeting minutes or a letter signed by authorised persons confirming that the organisation has agreed to make the application
- Confirm all authorised persons (e.g. trustees) are available to sign an agreement if your application is successful



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 online mapping app](#).

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](#) (Pātaka Whenua Online)
- [Ngā Whenua Rāhui Online Mapping tool](#)
- District Council – call your local council or check your rates notice (if applicable)
- [LINZ Property Titles and Plans](#)

Eligibility checklist

The baseline requirements you must meet to be eligible.

Are you eligible?

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

1. Have the legal right to enter into an agreement to protect the land identified in your application.
2. Have trustees or directors that meet regularly to fulfil their obligations under the rules of the organisation.
3. 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).

Assessment – how applications are considered

Assessing applications

- Assessing applications takes time and happens in several stages. First, we look at how well your project aligns with the Fund Criteria. This helps to understand whether your application is a good fit before it moves to the next stage. Consideration against the criteria includes (but is not limited to) –
- How well your project aligns with the fund’s criteria.
- The merit of the proposal in relationship to the kaupapa, scope, objectives and strategy of Ngā Whenua Rāhui.
- The financial and non-financial contribution owners can commit to the project.
- The owner’s ability to complete the project, meet agreement conditions and keep the whenua well-managed over the long term.
- The likelihood that your project can help create long-term, self-sustaining activities on the whenua e.g. eco-tourism or non-extractive activities such as honey production.
- Any support your Regional Council may provide or already be providing for water or soil projects.



Fund Criteria

Because the fund is contestable, each application goes through a detailed assessment process. Firstly, applications are evaluated on how well it aligns with the Ngā Whenua Rāhui kaupapa and the fund's criteria –

Representativeness

the extent to which the area you want to protect shows the variety of indigenous biodiversity that once existed in the landscape –

- common place, 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 it was 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 –

- the area is naturally protected because of its size and shape
- it is shielded 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
- it is able to maintain its ecological integrity through major natural disturbance events
- vulnerability to harm caused by introduced species
- able to be managed in a way that supports and protects its indigenous biodiversity values
- support the sustainability of neighbouring protected areas by contributing additional scale, buffering, ecological linkages or opportunities for 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 whenua –

- 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 –

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

Feasibility and Funding Criteria

If required, additional criteria may be applied to the assessment process –

- connectedness to other work and neighbouring protected areas
- the level to which imminent threats could be reduced or removed through protection
- the opportunity for protection may not arise again
- the cost of protection versus the value of protection
- the degree to which protecting this whenua may limit the ability to protect other areas.



The things that cannot be funded

- 01 Admin costs:** Preparing or submitting your application.
- 02 General equipment:** Buying gear without a confirmed project.
- 03 Commercial use:** Activities mainly focused on profit or timber harvesting.
- 04 Retrospective costs:** Anything paid for before you apply.

What happens after you apply

Sequence from submission through to decision and agreement.

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.

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.

If legal capacity to enter into an agreement is confirmed, you will receive a written acknowledgement and other information relevant to your application. If you are not eligible, you will be advised in writing. If relevant, the Kaitakawaenga may provide other options to fulfil your project objectives. Your application will stop at this point.

Eligible applicants are then assessed against the fund's criteria and additional criteria if required.

The Kaitakawaenga in your rohe will make contact to introduce themselves and arrange a visit. Members of the Tuora Mahi (operations) team may also be present to discuss their role.

Depending on the reason for your application, an indigenous biodiversity or cultural assessment may be carried out – at no cost to you.

Once all information is collected, applications that satisfy the criteria are presented to the Ngā Whenua Rāhui Komiti, who meet four times a year, for consideration. An application that is supported by the Komiti is recommended to the Minister of Conservation for approval.

You will receive the agreement for signing. The Minister of Conservation has the final decision as to whether or not to enter into an agreement with your organisation.

The Kaitakawaenga will contact you to advise the 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](#)** at **www.ngawhenuarahui.org.nz**

