



Fund Application Guide

Understanding the application process

Our Online **Application Form** is comprehensive; therefore it is essential you have all the information and documentation required to complete the application before you start. This will ensure we receive your application before the fund closes on 30 April 2026.

While you may be able to save your progress and return to the application later, we recommend completing it in one attempt to reduce the risk of losing any information.

All questions **should** be answered, even if non-applicable, as the **application form** may not be accepted if required information is not submitted.

Non-compulsory questions have a maximum word count and should be answered fully as the responses help determine how well the application meets the fund's criteria.

How to use this guide

Below are guidance notes for each section to help applicants understand why we ask for certain information, what to include, and how to complete the form correctly.

Use this guide together with the Ngā Whenua Rāhui Fund application form. Read through the guide thoroughly to identify what information and documentation is required to complete the application. Create a checklist of the information and documentation you need to gather.

The Process

1. As a contestable fund, the Ngā Whenua Rāhui Fund follows a staged assessment process. The first stage is confirming eligibility. The applying entity must:
 - have the legal authority to enter into an agreement to protect the land identified in your application; and
 - have trustees or directors who meet regularly and meet their governance responsibilities; and
 - ensure all trustees are available to sign an agreement if your application is successful.

Your application will not be accepted if your project does not meet all the eligibility criteria.

2. Being eligible is the first step. Your application will progress further if, in our assessment, your project clearly fits the Fund Criteria and aligns with the full assessment requirements.
3. Once eligibility is confirmed, applications are assessed against the fund's criteria, and additional criteria if required. The assessment panel reviews each application to determine how well the project meets those criteria.
4. Kaitakawaenga work with successful applicants to refine and develop the full proposal before a recommendation is put to the Ngā Whenua Rāhui Komiti.

Contact us

Email kaitakawaenga@doc.govt.nz if you have any questions about the fund or the application form.

Application Guide

starts here

Applicant Details

This section collects the basic information we need to communicate with you and confirm who has the authority to apply.

Name of Legal Entity or Landowner

Provide the full legal name of the entity or landowner applying to the fund.

Postal Address

In the case we need to send documents by post or courier, we require a postal address for the applying legal entity.

Physical Address

This is required if we need to courier important documents to the applying legal entity. The physical address might be the same or different from the postal address.

Applicant Name or Contact Person

Tell us who we should contact about this application. If the application is being made on behalf of an entity, you must have the prior approval of the legal entity that administers the whenua or be an individual owner of General land.

Role in Relation to the Whenua What is your role – are you the individual owner, a trustee, employee of the applying entity, lessee, or someone else? If none of the options in the dropdown list apply, state your role.

Your Contact Details

Include phone numbers and email for us to contact you. This helps us keep communication with you clear and timely.

Alternative Contact Details

Provide the contact details of someone we can contact if we are unable to reach you. This should be another person with approval to discuss the application with us.

Kawenata & why they matter

Kawenata are voluntary protection agreements between Māori landowners and the Minister of Conservation. They provide a legally recognised way to safeguard the natural and cultural values of whenua Māori while keeping ownership and control with the landowners.

They help protect indigenous biodiversity, uphold tikanga and mātauranga, and support the long-term care of taonga places through a 25-year reviewable agreement.



Legal Protection: Kawenata set clear boundaries around what can and can't happen on protected areas. This provides long term protection from activities or development that could damage indigenous biodiversity or harm cultural heritage.

Preserving Indigenous Biodiversity: Kawenata support Māori landowners to care for their whenua by protecting indigenous biodiversity, and the overall health of the taiao. By setting aside areas for protection, landowners help keep important habitats safe, prevent the decline of native species, and support strong, healthy ecosystems.

Cultural Resilience: Māori have a deep connection with the whenua, which shapes cultural identity. Kawenata help protect places and practices that are culturally important, ensuring traditional knowledge, history and tikanga can be passed on to future generations.

Future Generations: Kawenata reflect a commitment to caring for the whenua in a way that supports those who come after us. By protecting key conservation values through a legal agreement, Māori landowners can help ensure their whenua continues to be a source of identity, wellbeing, and connection for future generations.

Collaboration / Kaitiaki: Kawenata can help bring together landowners, government agencies, conservation groups, and local communities. This kind of collaboration encourages shared care for the taiao and helps build the relationships needed for good conservation outcomes.

Climate Change: As climate change brings bigger impacts, areas protected by Kawenata can become an important refuge for native species whose habitats are changing or disappearing. Keeping ecosystems healthy and diverse also helps with the effects of climate change.

Kaitiaki: Kawenata help Māori landowners fulfil their role as kaitiaki. They blend mātauranga Māori with modern conservation methods, making space for Māori to care for their whenua in a way that honours cultural values while meeting what the whenua needs. Through these agreements, Māori can continue to protect their heritage and contribute to wider conservation efforts.

Rates Rebate: Whenua Māori protected by a Ngā Whenua Rāhui Kawenata becomes non-rateable. This amendment in the Local Government Amendment Act, reduced the barriers for effective partnership between local government and Māori to support the development of whenua Māori.

Economic and Ecotourism Opportunities: Protecting natural and cultural heritage can also open up economic opportunities. Areas under kawenata may attract ecotourism and support local, sustainable development.

Land information

This section helps us understand exactly where the proposed protected area is and how the land is currently managed.

Whenua Location	Use the map navigation tool to find and select the correct land block(s). This ensures we are assessing the right parcel of land.
Legal Description	Also known as the record of title. You can find this information at: • District Council rates • Land Information NZ • Pātaka Whenua (Māori Land Online – if whenua Māori) • Tupu.nz
Land Status	Select whether the whenua is Māori freehold, Customary, General land owned by Māori, or SILNA. This ensures eligibility and determines the correct protection mechanism.

Entity type & governance

This section helps to confirm legal authority and restrictions that may affect a Kawenata.

Administrator Type	Typically refers to organisations authorised to manage whenua that is held in trust, or individuals who own the whenua outright. Administrators relevant to the NWR Fund include – Ahu Whenua Trust, Charitable Trust, Common Trust, Company, Iwi Authority, Māori Reservation Trust, Whānau Trust, Incorporation and Individual. Māori Freehold land or General land owned by Māori is sometimes owned by an individual; enter the name of the owner(s). If the whenua is multiply-owned under a trust or incorporation, enter that entity's name.
Entity Rules	There are different rules for each type of entity. For instance, an Ahu Whenua Trust is governed by a Trust Order. Select the applicable rules from the dropdown list. You must upload a copy of the entity's rules. Select 'Not Applicable' if the whenua is owned by an individual.
Entity Administrator Type	The different types of land administrator will depend on the entity type. Select the role of the person(s) responsible for managing the entity (e.g. Responsible Trustee, Committee of Management, Individual). Select from the drop-down list.

Proposed Protection Area	Understanding the size of the area proposed for protection affects how we assess the area and the scale of work required. If you have not yet decided the extent of the area you want to protect, select the 'whole block'.
Current Land Use?	Describe what the land is currently being used for (e.g. forest regeneration, farming, agriculture, wāhi tapu). Be as specific as possible within the maximum word count.
Legal Interests	Certain interests (e.g. mortgages, leases, caveats, access rights) may give another party legal rights over the whenua. If those rights overlap with the area you want to protect, consent from that party may be required, or the interested party may prevent a Kawenata being placed on the whenua. Documentation relating to all legal interests you identify in your application, must be provided if eligibility is confirmed.
Restrictions Over Proposed Protected Area	If legal interests exist over the whenua (identified in the previous question), do any of these exist over the specific area you propose to protect? If yes, specify what the restriction is, and how.
Occupiers and Access	Someone living on or using the whenua (such as a lessee, farm manager or an occupier with an occupation order) may hold legal rights that overlap with the proposed protected area. These rights must be understood because they can affect whether a Kawenata: • can be placed on the whenua; or • requires their consent; or • needs conditions to avoid conflicting with an occupier's activities.
Access Issues	Is the whenua accessible? For example, is access to the whenua blocked because it is surrounded by land owned by others; is it a working farm under lease? Please provide details.
Current Activities	Are there current or planned activities on the proposed protected area or the remainder of the whenua? (e.g. commercial development, customary use, occupation order, conservation or other activity). Please provide details.



Conservation details

This section helps us understand the ecological values of the whenua.

Land Cover	What is the main land cover in the proposed protected area? Select all boxes that apply (mature native forest, wetland, regenerating native forest, scrub etc).
<u>Current</u> Indigenous Species	Provide details of any indigenous animal (including fish) or plant species <u>currently</u> present within the proposed protected area and the surrounding area?
<u>Past</u> Indigenous Species	If known, list any indigenous animal (including fish) or plant species that were previously present on the whenua, but are no longer found there. This question speaks directly to the fund's kaupapa to protect and restore indigenous biodiversity across the whenua.
Threats to Biodiversity	Describe any threats such as erosion, flooding, stock damage, pest plants and animals (name them).
Introduced Animals and Plants	Tick which introduced animals are present and list any introduced plant species.
Pest Control Operations	Let us know if any pest control is happening in or near the area. This helps us understand what is happening across the wider landscape.
Waterways	Let us know if waterways are used for drinking water, for example to supply whānau homes, marae, or something else.

Objectives

This section explains what you want to achieve through legal protection and/or funding.

Protection Only or Protection and Funding	Are you applying for legal protection only or legal protection and funding towards works on the proposed protected area.
Project Brief	This information is essential to help us understand your main goals for the whenua, and what you hope to accomplish. This helps us understand the vision driving the application.
Required Works	Outline the actions or works needed to protect the area. Think about the condition of the whenua and what it needs. What issues or threats exist and what do you think needs to happen to protect it. Why is it important?

Collaborators	Tell us if others (e.g. regional council, QEII, hapū, Dept of Conservation, community conservation group) are working with you, or willing to work with you, if the whenua has a Kawenata.
Role of Collaborators	If there are others working with you, provide details about what each of them are doing. If working with the Regional Council, is an agreement already in place, what are the activities in the plan?
Management Plan	If you have a management or project plan already in place, upload a copy with your application. This helps us to further understand your goals and aspirations for the whenua.
Landowner Contribution	The NWR Fund is contestable and has limited funds available. Applicant contributions, financial or non-financial, help lower overall project costs allowing the fund to support more work and protect more whenua. Contributing to costs also shows your commitment to the protection and restoration of indigenous biodiversity and your whenua.

Cultural & Natural Heritage

This section recognises the cultural and historical values of the whenua and acknowledges the whakapapa relationship between the people and the whenua.

Pepeha	Provide details of the pepeha associated with the whenua and where it is located in relation the Maunga, Awa and Rohe.
Iwi and Hapū	Tell us the iwi and hapū connected to the whenua.
Connection to the Whenua	How and why is this whenua important to you, your whānau, hapū or iwi? You may wish to include whakapapa links, significant places, historical, spiritual or ongoing cultural connections, or your role as kaitiaki.
People Living on or Near the Block	Do any landowners or whānau live on or next to the whenua? Do they have a role in the administration of the whenua? If so, what is their role?
Cultural Values Supporting Environmental Outcomes	Please provide details of any cultural factors significant to achieve your environmental outcomes for the proposed protected area (e.g.: Mātauranga Māori, Kaitiakitanga, Rangatiratanga, Traditional practices, harvesting, whakapapa).
Cultural Values	For example, think about: • special places such as wāhi tapu, old pā sites, urupā, pou whenua, ancient gardens, or other important physical features. • stories, whakapapa connections, historic events, mātauranga, or spiritual beliefs linked to the land. • cultural practices or traditions connected with the proposed area.
Sacred or Significant Sites	Are there any sacred or significant sites within the proposed protected area? While we do not need to know where these are for the application, if your application progresses to the field assessment stage, NWR kaimahi will need to know areas to be aware of so appropriate measures can be taken to ensure their wellbeing.
Threats to Cultural Heritage	Describe any risks to cultural values (e.g. erosion of a wāhi tapu site, access threats, land development pressure). Identify anything that could harm, damage, diminish or put at risk the cultural values, sites, practices or history connected to the whenua. Please explain how or why these things are a threat.

Definitions, land types & values

Land Types

Māori Freehold Land	Land that has the status of Māori freehold land determined by the Māori Land Court through a Status Order.
General Land Owned by Māori	Land that is held in fee simple (General land) but is owned by a Māori or a group of persons where the majority are Māori.
Māori Customary Land	Land held by Māori in accordance with tikanga Māori and that has not been converted to freehold title through the Māori Land Courts.

Values

Cultural Heritage	Includes the physical places and objects connected to hapū and iwi, and the non-physical knowledge and traditions passed down through the generations, associated with the whenua. For example: • Physical (tangible properties) such as waahi tapu, pou whenua, ancient maara kai or pā sites, urupā, and artifacts. • Non-physical (intangible properties) such as spiritual beliefs, traditional knowledge, history and stories linked to the land.
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Natural Heritage	Refers to the natural environment and its important features. It includes: • natural geological features with cultural attributes e.g. caves, mountains, rivers, wetlands, dunes, estuaries, and native forests. • native species and the places in which they live • culturally significant landscapes.
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Indigenous Biodiversity	Indigenous biodiversity is about connections – and sustainability depends on keeping those connections healthy. Ngā Whenua Rāhui describes indigenous biodiversity as the relationships between all living things in a place, understood through a cultural lens. It includes: • how plants, animals, and other living species interact and depend on each other across different habitats and ecosystems • the idea that people share whakapapa with the natural world and are part of the web of life – all life forms are intrinsically connected.
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Because humans share whakapapa with the natural world, we are part of indigenous biodiversity, not separate from it. Our responsibility to care for the environment is expressed through kaitiakitanga which expresses the responsibility we have to sustain the environment.

Many customary values and practices come from this close relationship between people, the whenua, the environment and natural resources. This connection helps anchor tangata whenua to their specific place and identity.

Natural Character

Includes natural processes, natural elements and natural patterns:

- 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

Kaipupuri Whenua

Māori landowners or landholders who hold legal interests, shares, or titles in whenua Māori. They are individuals or collectives (such as whānau or trusts) who own, manage, or have rights in whenua, often becoming a beneficiary or shareholder through succession, gifting, or shares in a Māori incorporation.



Other Agreements

Is there a current agreement with Ngā Whenua Rāhui protecting some of the whenua? If so, what is the NWR agreement reference(s) or name(s)?

Applications to Other Agency

Please provide details of any other applications made to other agencies or organisations in relation to the proposed protected area and/or whenua.

Final Requirements

Working through the application process is extensive and time consuming. As this is a contestable fund, we are unable to work on applications where the applying entity is not actively engaged in the process. If the process is held up or stagnates due to the applicant not engaging, your application will be cancelled.

You must confirm if:

- The Administrators of your legal entity or Individual owners have agreed to make this application to the Ngā Whenua Rāhui Fund.
- The Administrators or Individual owners are available to sign an agreement if your application is successful.

A copy of the meeting minutes, or a written letter signed by all trustees is required to be attached to the application form.

DECLARATION

By submitting your application, you confirm that:

- All information provided is true, correct and complete to the best of my knowledge.
- I have the authority to make and submit this application on behalf of the legal entity or owners of the whenua.
- The legal entity or owners are aware of, and have agreed to, this application being submitted.
- All authorised persons (e.g. trustees or individual owners) are available to sign a Ngā Whenua Rāhui agreement if this application is successful through to signing with the Minister of Conservation.

You acknowledge that the Ngā Whenua Rāhui Fund may decline applications submitted without the knowledge or permission of the legal entity or owner that administers the whenua you are seeking to protect.