

# **The Community Connections Care Group Programme Guidelines for Implementation**

## **1. Purpose of Care Groups**

The purpose of the care group programme is to promote the community's ability to look after and learn about the environment by assisting groups with projects and activities which benefit the environment.

- Care groups have both environmental and social purposes (as in the Environmental Education Strategy).
- Short term goals: improve or solve some environmental problems.
- Long term goals: behaviour change in relation to the environment; sustained improvements in environment over time; community cohesion.
- Care groups should raise the environment's profile amongst the public, increase community debate about environmental issues.
- Care groups should engage the wider community in environmental stewardship and promote the concept of care and environmental responsibility.
- The programme is also intended to raise the Council's profile in various communities.

## **2. Who may Apply?**

- Groups – because we are fostering community action and change.
- We would welcome applications from community groups, iwi, and environmental care groups.
- We will give advice to individuals who want to form a group on how to do so; what they would need to do to be eligible for our funding.
- Groups can be two people or more.

## **3. Will the Council Initiate Care Groups or Respond to Requests for Support?**

As indicated in *A Better Environment*, groups in the programme can be either initiated by the Council (to deal with a particular environmental problem which we have identified or which is on our land) or join the programme by applying to the Council for funding.

Funds for the latter groups will be made available through an open process where applications are called for and assessed against relevant criteria. In future years, this mixed system will continue so that we retain the flexibility to respond to new environmental issues as they arise.

## **4. What Types of Projects can be Funded?**

The fund will support projects or activities which contribute to the sustainable management or enhancement of the environment.

*A Better Environment* states that the programme should concentrate on water initially because this is an area of Council expertise. For the first three years the fund will support projects relating to freshwater and the coast (i.e. rivers and streams and their margins, wetlands, lakes, estuaries, dunes, and coastal water).

These ecosystems have been identified in our state of the environment report, *Measuring Up*, as priority ecosystems needing enhanced management.

Projects must relate to Council functions. We must be able to legally fund a project.

Projects which are predominantly pest control will not be funded but funds may be used for pest management as part of an environmental enhancement project (e.g., clearing weeds before replanting).

The use of other Council funds for pest management will be explored.

Predominantly beautification or amenity projects, i.e. projects which have no environmental basis, will not be eligible for funding (although it is recognised that most physical enhancements of habitats will also provide amenity benefits).

Amenity components of a proposed enhancement (e.g., picnic tables) can only be funded if they contribute to use and thus wider community awareness of environmental problems and their solutions, but they should not be the major focus of an application for funds.

Groups may be funded to carry out monitoring alone, or as part of community education or awareness raising but, in general, applications for funds for monitoring should be associated with other tangible outcomes.

As the Council is interested in achieving significant environmental improvements through this programme, preference will generally be given to projects of two years duration or more.

## 5. **Criteria for Assessing Applications**

Applications will be assessed against the following criteria. (The language of the following will be more simple in the application guideline information).

### *Criteria:*

- Consistency with the Council's statutory functions.
- The extent to which the project enhances or benefits rivers, streams, wetlands, riparian areas, lakes, estuaries, dunes, or marine ecosystems (and, after three years, indigenous terrestrial ecosystems and biodiversity, and soil health and stability).
- The extent to which the project contributes to the restoration or enhancement of our native plants, animals, and ecosystems, or to their mauri, or other special, or spiritual qualities.
- The extent to which the project will assist in raising community awareness of environmental issues within the local community.
- The level of support for the project in the local community and the nature of the community benefit from it.
- The cost effectiveness and practicality of implementation and maintenance.
- Whether the application has any adverse effects on natural ecosystems.

## 6. **Project Components for which Funding is Available**

Funding will be available for any aspect of a group's project but, in general, it is expected that it will fall into one or more of the following categories.

- Physical improvements/works (including revegetation or enhancement of habitats and ecosystems).
- Signage, advertising.
- Project plans, designs, drafting.
- Leaflets, and promotional activities
- Meeting venues
- Events, fairs, and other activities of an environmental education or promotional nature.

Land purchase by private individuals and groups will not be funded, except in exceptional circumstances.

WRC will assist with group set up and maintenance tasks such as photocopying, and administration, where necessary, but generally we will encourage groups to do this themselves.

While no hard and fast rules will be set as to the proportion of any funding to be spent on the establishment and maintenance of a group, it is expected that the ratio of project costs (e.g., materials, promotion, advertising, education, design work) to group administrative costs should be no more than:

- Year 1: 70/30%
- Year 2: 80/20%
- Year 3: 80/20%
- Year 4: 80/20%

## 7. **Benefit**

Projects should be able to demonstrate that they will be of benefit to the community.

Projects solely benefiting an individual will not be eligible to receive funding.

Projects should not be designed for commercial or personal profit or to compensate individuals. If private individuals or organisations are going to benefit from a project, they should contribute to the project in proportion to the value of the benefit they expect to gain. This could be through a labour equivalent. The degree to which a landowner may give up productive use of the land needs to be considered.

The long term protection of publicly funded works on private land will be required. This will be investigated as part of other ecosystem and riparian projects currently being developed.

**8. Investment of Council Funds on Publicly Owned or Territorial Authority Land**

Many community restoration projects are carried out on land owned by or reserves vested in territorial authorities or crown entities. The Council will contribute to projects on such land but will require the groups concerned to seek assistance or contributions from the relevant agency.

**9. Who Determines which Groups are Funded?**

Staff under delegated authority, in accordance with the criteria set out under point 5 above and the general provisions of these guidelines.

**10. How Much Money is Available for Each Group?**

Applicants may apply for funding for up to a four year period (or less if a project does not require it). Annual maximum funds per group are: \$5,000 in year one, \$10,000 in year two, and \$2,000 in each of years three and four.

The Council will not necessarily fund projects, or parts of projects, at the level sought in an application, but may decide to provide a lesser, or greater, amount than the funds sought at its discretion.

In exceptional circumstances, the Council will consider funding above the annual maxima described above.

**11. How Many Groups May be Funded Each Year?**

Funding is available for 5 care groups in 2000-01 (plus three funded on the Council's initiative), and an additional 4 groups in each of years 2001-02, 2002-03, and 2003-04.

If, for any reason, these funds are not fully taken up (e.g., if the projects approved are of a small nature and do not require four year funding at the levels available), additional groups will be funded where possible. However, as the programme also provides for assistance for groups from Council staff, this will depend on the availability of staff resources.

**12. How will Successful Groups Access their Funds?**

Successful applicants for contestable funding, and groups which the Council chooses to assist, will be required to provide estimates of the costs involved in carrying out their projects.

The Council will retain control over expenditure and provide groups with relevant purchasing authorities when these are required.

### **13. Evaluation and Review**

Care groups will be required to evaluate their projects and report on their effectiveness in achieving what they set out to do. Staff assistance will be provided to assist with this process. Groups may also be asked to undertake some environmental monitoring as part of their projects to determine their effectiveness.

### **14. Removal of Support**

The Council may at any stage withdraw its support for a group if funds are not being used appropriately or for legitimate care group activities. The Council may also seek reimbursement for any funds, or for the cost of any materials, which are not used for legitimate care group purposes.

### **15. GST**

The Council will pay the GST on top of any expenditure of the funds available.

### **16. Council Services and Staff Assistance for Care Groups**

Staff are available to assist care groups with their activities. The amount and nature of assistance that will be provided will depend on the needs of the group and may include:

- Help with start-up of new groups;
- Conflict resolution and facilitation services;
- Specific expertise on ecological matters;
- Help with the organisation of planting days, etc;
- Assistance with applications by explaining the programme, how to apply etc;
- Administration for the group - only if the group cannot do it itself;
- Assistance with monitoring the environment and the effectiveness of group activities;
- Information on catchment characteristics from Council reports;
- Advice on where to obtain relevant plants and other materials; and
- Help with the environmental education aspects of care groups.

### **17. What is the Timetable for the Programme?**

The Council will call for applications for funding by mid February each year. Applications will close at the end April. This will enable a decision to be made by the end of May. We will advise applicants in June, with funding to be available from 1 July annually.

In the opening round (2000-01), applications will be called for in mid September. Applications will close in mid November. Successful applicants can expect to be advised by Christmas 2000, with funds available from January 2001.

**18. How will the Care Group Programme be Promoted?**

The availability of funds will be made known through *Elements* and the Public Notices columns of newspapers. We will produce a brochure outlining the care group scheme and how to apply.

Marketing and promotional aspects of the programme are still being developed.