

BRIEFING

Priority: High

Action sought by: Tuesday 19 May 2020

Date: 15 May 2020

To: Hon Julie Anne Genter, Minister for Women

From: Rebecca Barnes-Clarke, Director Policy

Subject: Implementation Plan for the COVID-19 Community Fund

Recommendations

The Ministry recommends that you:

1. **note** that the COVID-19 Community Fund of \$1,000,000 was approved in Budget 2020/21, with \$250,000 allocated to the 2019/20 Financial Year and the remaining \$750,000 allocated to the 2020/21 Financial Year.

Noted

2. **agree** to the following eligibility criteria for the COVID-19 Community Fund

Eligibility: funding will be available for community organisations that:

- are a New Zealand Registered Charity OR Incorporated Society OR a recognised subsidiary of one of those (such as local branches of a larger organisation. We would expect such bids to be collated and submitted by the umbrella organisation) OR community-based organisations that are not one of these kinds of entities where the case is compelling
- have not received, or have not been able to receive, other government funding for the same purpose
- will have to significantly reduce their support and/or services to women and girls due to additional costs or demands as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and/or are facing reduced revenue due to COVID-19
- contribute to the Ministry's and government's priorities for women and girls

Agree / ~~disagree~~

3. **agree** that a panel made up of government and two non-governmental organisation (NGO) representatives will make a final assessment on the merits of each application and will consider a wide range of factors such as:

Assessment:

- the impact funding will have to improve outcomes for women and/or girls
- the immediacy of the organisation's needs and the needs of the community it serves. Higher priority may be given to organisations that are able to meet immediate needs in a timely manner through the distribution of funds
- the extent to which funding requests will contribute to ensuring healthy and safe communities; reduce family and sexual violence; and/or improve child wellbeing
- the extent to which the funding will assist organisations to support women who face intersectional challenges such as women in Māori, Pacific, rural and migrant women
- the connection and influence the applicants have with the communities they serve, and the difference they will be able to make at a local level

Agree / ~~disagree~~

4. **agree** that the panel will have *at least* four members comprising:

- two NGO representatives; and
- two government department representatives, one of whom will be from the Ministry for Women

Agree / ~~disagree~~

5. **note** the proposed communications plan

Noted



Rebecca Barnes-Clarke
Director Policy



Hon Julie Anne Genter
Minister for Women

Date: *17 May 2020*

Purpose

1. This briefing provides you with a draft implementation plan for the COVID-19 Community Fund (the fund) and presents the eligibility criteria, assessment process, and communications plan for your approval.

Background

2. Women are disproportionately affected by disasters, and the COVID-19 pandemic is no exception. In order to alleviate some of the negative effects of the pandemic, Budget 2020 includes a new \$1,000,000.00 COVID-19 Community Fund to support New Zealand's most vulnerable women and girls through the NGO sector. The fund will support grassroots organisations to continue their work for women and girls where COVID-19 has compromised it; and address increased demands such organisations are facing because of the pandemic.
3. The funding is split over two years, with \$250,000 allocated to the 2019/20 Financial Year and the remaining \$750,000 allocated to the 2020/21 Financial Year.
4. The grants will be approved and paid on the basis of an assessment of the application against the noted criteria (see below).
5. We have modelled the fund process on the Suffrage 125 Community Fund. However, we have simplified the process by removing a number of criteria that were considered non-essential for the purposes of this fund, to take account of the urgency of the circumstances.

Implementation timetable

6. This implementation plan allows organisations sufficient time, at least two weeks, to consider the immediate needs of women and girls in their communities who are experiencing increased hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and to prepare their applications.
7. However, the timetable is very challenging, so we propose an application and assessment process that balances rigour with the need for timeliness. While applicants will be made aware of the assessment criteria, the application form itself will focus on eliciting the organisations' plans to use the funds to improve outcomes for women.
8. The first round of applications to the fund can be made from 1 June 2020, with a second round starting on July 6 2020. Although we expect the fund to be exhausted following the second application round, we propose that the assessment panel will consider applications every month until the fund is exhausted. We will schedule the first meeting of the Panel for mid-June. We will invite potential applicants to join a mailing list so they can stay informed of cut-off dates for each monthly assessment round. Information will also be disseminated through our website and social media.

Indicative implementation timetable	
Friday 15 May 2020 – Monday 18 May 2020	You announce the fund. The Ministry emails networks and NGOs, stakeholders and influencers, and promotes the media release through its channels.
Friday 29 May 2020	The Ministry will host a webinar for interested stakeholders to discuss the fund, the application process and expectations.
Monday 1 June 2020	First round of applications opens for two weeks. This is for the initial funding pool of \$250,000 in grants.
Monday 22 June 2020	The Panel meets to consider applications, on advice from the Ministry for Women.
Thursday 25 June 2020	The Ministry provides you with a list of successful applicants for your information for the initial \$250,000 funding pool for the 2019/20 Financial Year.
Friday 26 June 2020	The Ministry notifies all applicants of the outcome of their application, and drafts a media release for you. The funding will be allocated accordingly.
Monday 6 July 2020	Second round of applications opens for the second grant funding pool of \$750,000 for the 2020/21 Financial Year. The Ministry emails networks and NGOs, stakeholders and influencers, and promotes the media release through its channels.
Monday 20 July 2020	The second round of applications closes. The above timeline for round one is followed for round two, and until the fund has been exhausted. The Ministry provides you with a list of successful applicants for your information for the \$750,000 funding pool for the 2020/21 Financial Year.
January 2021	The Ministry provides an interim report on funding allocated and outcomes achieved.
June 2021	The Ministry completes a full report on the allocation of the funding and impact at a local level, for coverage in its Annual Report.

Overview of the criteria

9. We propose the following eligibility and assessment criteria, which will be made available on our website:

Eligibility funding will be available for community organisations that:

- are a NZ Registered Charity or Incorporated Society OR a recognised subsidiary of one of those (such as a local branch of a larger organisation, we would expect such bids to be collated and submitted by the umbrella organisation) OR community-based organisations that are not one of these kinds of entities where the case is compelling;
- attest that they have not received, or were not able to receive, other government funding for the same purpose;
- attest that they will have to significantly reduce their support and or services to women and girls due to additional costs or demands as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and/or are facing reduced revenue due to COVID-19; and
- contribute to the Ministry's and government's priorities for women and girls: ensuring healthy and safe communities; reducing family and sexual violence; and/or improving child wellbeing.

Assessment: each application will be assessed on its merits and the criteria below will be taken into account by the panel, and be communicated to applicants as a guide. For example, some applications likely to have an immediate impact might be prioritised. The assessment considerations below are a guide for the panel, rather than aspects that must all be 'ticked off' for funding. In assessing applications, the panel will take into consideration a wide range of factors such as:

- evidence of the impact funding will have to improve outcomes for women and/or girls
 - the immediacy of the organisation's needs and the needs of the community it serves. Higher priority may be given to organisations that are able to meet immediate needs in a timely manner through the distribution of funds
 - the extent to which the organisation and its proposed activities ensure healthy and safe communities; reduce family and sexual violence; and/or improve child wellbeing
 - the extent to which the funding will assist organisations to support women who face intersectional challenges such as women in Māori, Pacific, rural and migrant communities
 - the connection and influence the applicants have with the communities they serve, and the difference they will be able to make at a local level
10. The Ministry is aiming for round one applicants to receive the funds in the 2019/20 Financial Year.
11. Over the next two weeks, we will design an application process which will be accessible and easy to navigate, while at the same time ensuring we have the information we need to assess applications.

Funding details

12. We propose that applications must be for grants of \$5,000-\$50,000 for each funding round. This will ensure a significant number of NGOs are able to receive funding, rather than a select few. There may, of course, be pressure on the funds available and the assessment panel may not be able to provide the full amount requested.
13. The fund is likely to be open for the first round of applications on Monday 1 June 2020, and will open for a second round on Monday 6 July. We expect the fund to be exhausted following these application rounds. In the event it is not exhausted after two rounds, it will remain open for monthly application rounds until all funds have been distributed. Organisations will be able to apply to the fund more than once, however priority will be given to those organisations that have not previously applied. Panel members will meet for the first two rounds, then on a monthly basis to consider applications, and will keep applicants informed of cut-off times for each round by way of a mailing list and through our website.
14. Funding that can be applied for, will cover requests that will improve outcomes for women and girls which have not yet been covered by other government funds. This may include initiatives such as opening a community centre for an additional day in order to provide extra services, funding to pay for extra doctor and or nurses visits to remote communities as well as a number of other initiatives which are likely to be identified over the coming months.

Proposed administration process

15. The Ministry will administer the fund, and will employ an administrator for the fund from early June. We estimate the costs of managing the fund will be \$20,000-\$50,000. This will be funded from baseline funding. We will fund the NGO panel participants according to the Crown fees guidelines, and envisage that this will comprise one day for scrutiny of applications, and one day for panel meetings. An application of the Government Fees Framework and the nature of this work, provides for a rate of \$190 - \$270 per day.

Selecting the Panel

16. We propose that Ministry for Women officials conduct an initial assessment of applications, and provide an initial triage of initiatives to the Panel for final consideration and approval. The Panel will be presented with the applications to scrutinise, and discuss at the Panel decision making meetings.
17. The Panel to decide on the successful applications will comprise:
- one official from the Ministry for Women (who was not involved in the initial assessment round mentioned above);
 - one official from another government agency;
 - two NGO representatives who reflect the diversity of women in New Zealand, with a strong preference for at least one NGO representative who is a wāhine Māori to ensure a Te Ao Māori perspective.
18. This group will be chaired by the Ministry official. Following the Panel's meeting, we will provide you with the final list of approved applications for your information.
19. Due to the relatively small size of the sector that is being targeted by the fund, and as per standard governance processes, panel members will be required to sign a 'conflict of interest' waiver and refrain from assessing any applications where conflicts are significant and cannot be managed.

Communications plan

20. We have attached a communications plan (Appendix One) for your information.
21. As part of this plan we will be actively targeting community organisations through social media and other channels.

Next steps

22. Following your approval we will:

- invite people from relevant ministries and NGOs to join the Panel;
- organise a webinar with key stakeholders to discuss the fund;
- draft the application form;
- set up the Ministry's website so that organisations can begin applying for grants from 1 June 2020;
- provide you with a memo containing the application form (including the link), the confirmed Panel, and other relevant information by 29 May 2020.

Proactive release

23. Within three months of the date of this briefing, it will be considered for release under the Ministry's proactive release of documents policy.

Appendix One: Communications Plan

Key messages

- The Government has announced new funding of \$1,000,000 for community organisations that support women and girls, and who have been adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- the COVID-19 Community Fund of \$1,000,000 was approved in Budget 2020/21, with \$250,000 allocated to the 2019/20 Financial Year and the remaining \$750,000 allocated to the 2020/21 Financial Year.
- During emergencies and crises, issues related to gender equality often take a backseat, resulting in worse outcomes for women and girls. This includes greater loss of income, increased instances of domestic violence, and increased caring responsibilities.
- Many NGOs that support women are facing two major barriers. They have reduced income and volunteer numbers due the impacts of COVID-19, and at the same time, they have many more people needing their support and or services.
- Funding that can be applied for will cover requests for funding that will improve outcomes for women and girls which have not yet been covered by other government funds. This may include initiatives such as opening a community centre for an additional day in order to provide extra services, funding to pay for extra doctor and or nurses visits to remote communities as well as a number of other initiatives which are likely to be identified over the coming months.
- It will also support organisations to be sustainable and make the difference we need in communities to empower women and girls in Aotearoa New Zealand
- Community groups will be able to apply for this funding through the Ministry for Women's website.
- The funding is to support those organisations who work to improve outcomes for women and girls. The objectives of the fund are to:
 - prioritise grass-roots investments - making sure funds are spent to improve outcomes for women, and where they are needed most
 - support diversity - assisting organisations that support women within their communities who face intersectional challenges such women in Māori, Pacific, rural and migrant communities
 - support the Ministry's and government's priorities for women and girls - ensuring healthy and safe communities; reducing family and sexual violence, and improving child wellbeing.
- The fund is likely to be open for the first round of applications on Monday 1 June 2020, and will open for a second round on Monday 6 July 2020. We expect the fund to be exhausted following these application rounds, however, the fund will remain open for monthly application rounds until it has been exhausted.
- Organisations will be able to apply to the fund more than once, however, all else being equal, priority will be given to those organisations that have not previously applied. Panel members will meet on a monthly basis to consider applications, and will keep applicants informed of cut-off times for each round by way of a mailing list and through our website.
- The amount of funding that can be applied for by each organisation will be between \$5,000 and \$50,000. Organisations will be able to apply for more than one funding round.
- The funding will be allocated in July and August 2020 or until the fund has been exhausted.

Target groups

The target groups for this fund is grass-roots community groups across New Zealand, although larger NGOs can also apply.

We will work closely with the members of our International Women's Caucus and encourage them to share the information across their networks.

We will also work closely with Government agencies that already allocate funding and have good networks into the community, for example, Te Puni Kōkiri, the Ministry for Pacific Peoples, the Department of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, and the Ministry of Social Development. We will use their networks to spread the message and encourage applications.

We will make the application process simple and easy

We will keep track of all organisations that show interest and, where needed, will assist them with the application process. We will ensure that our communication and process is as simple as possible.

Timeline and communications activities

Indicative timeline of application rounds and communication activities		
Timing	Activity	Communications activities
Thursday 14 May 2020 – Friday 22 May 2020	You issue a media release.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Media release Email to Government agencies asking them to promote the fund externally Email to stakeholders and members of the International Women's Caucus
Friday 15 May 2020	The Ministry will host a webinar for interested stakeholders to discuss the fund and the application process and expectations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotion on social media (throughout the last week of May)
Monday 8 June 2020	Reminders about the fund.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reminders on social media and emails to organisations Acknowledgement to applicants as they are processed
Monday 15 June 2020	First round of applications closes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website information updated
Monday 22 June 2020	Following assessment of the applications the panel meets to discuss and confirm successful applications.	
Thursday 25 June 2020 and Friday 26 June 2020	The Ministry notifies all applicants on the outcome of their application. The funding can be allocated accordingly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> List for successful applications sent to your office. Applicants notified and given information about next steps. Media release
Monday 6 July 2020	Second round of applications opens.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotion through social media

Indicative timeline of application rounds and communication activities		
Timing	Activity	Communications activities
Monday 13 July 2020	Reminders about fund.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reminders on social media and emails to organisations • Acknowledgement to applicants as they are processed
Monday 20 July 2020	Second round of applications closes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website updated
Monday 27 July 2020	Following assessment of the applications the panel meets to discuss and confirm successful applications.	
Thursday 30 July 2020 and Friday 31 July 2020	The Ministry notifies all applicants on the outcome of their application. The funding can be allocated accordingly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List for successful applications sent to your office. • Applicants notified and given information about next steps. • Media release
Monday 3 August 2020	Third round of applications opens and the above timelines for round one and two are followed until the fund has been exhausted.	
Thursday 31 January 2021	The Ministry provides an interim report on funding allocated and state of projects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication to applicants reminding them of reporting requirements
Friday 25 June 2021	The Ministry completes a full report on the allocation of the funding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List is published in the Annual Report

Draft Media release

New fund for women's organisations to assist COVID-19 response

Date: to be confirmed

A new fund of \$1,000,000 has been announced today to support women's organisations in Aotearoa New Zealand's as part of the Government's COVID-19 response.

Minister for Women Julie Anne Genter said organisations will soon be able to apply for funding to support the government priorities of healthy and safe communities, reducing family and sexual violence, and improving child wellbeing.

"During emergencies and crises, issues related to gender equality often take a backseat, resulting in worse outcomes for women and girls. This includes greater loss of income, increased instances of domestic violence, and increased caring responsibilities."

"Many NGOs that support women are facing two major barriers. They have reduced income and volunteer numbers due the impacts of COVID-19, and at the same time, they have many more people needing their support and or services," Ms Genter said.

"Funding that can be applied for will cover requests for funding that will improve outcomes for women and girls which has not yet been covered by other government funds. This may include initiatives such as opening a community centre for an additional day in order to provide extra services, funding to pay for extra doctor and or nurses visits to remote communities as well as a number of other initiatives which are likely to be identified over the coming months".

"It will also support them to be sustainable and make the difference we need in communities to empower women and girls in Aotearoa New Zealand", she said.

Applications will be available for the fund from the Ministry for Women later this month. The funding is for \$250,000 in the 2019/20 year and \$750,000 in the 2020/21 year.

More information on the fund can be found at www.women.govt.nz

ENDS

Questions and Answers

Why is this fund available now?

The COVID-19 Community Fund of \$1,000,000 was approved in Budget 2020/21, with \$250,000 allocated to the 2019/20 Financial Year and the remaining \$750,000 allocated to the 2020/21 Financial Year.

This funding has been allocated as part of the government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. During emergencies and crises, issues related to gender equality often take a backseat, resulting in worse outcomes for women and girls. This includes greater loss of income, increased instances of domestic violence, and increased caring responsibilities.

Many NGOs that support women are facing two major barriers. They have reduced income and volunteer numbers due to the impacts of COVID-19, and at the same time, they have many more people needing their support and services. This fund will support those organisations who are experiencing increased demand due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

What is it for?

Funding that can be applied for will cover requests for funding that will improve outcomes for women and girls which has not yet been covered by other government funds. This may include opening a community centre for an additional day in order to provide extra services, funding to pay for extra doctor and or nurses visits to remote communities as well as a number of other initiatives which are likely to be identified over the coming months.

Why is the funding not more?

The Government has allocated this fund specifically for grass-roots community organisations. There are also a number of other ways that community organisations can obtain funding. For example, the Ministry of Social Development manages a number of funds organisations can apply to.

How will you measure impact?

The Ministry will measure the outcomes through the number of applications, reported outcomes and by obtaining stakeholder feedback.

Who will make the decisions on funding?

The Ministry will convene a group of representatives of women's organisations and government agencies to consider the applications.

Can organisations apply whose focus is wider than just women?

We welcome applications from all groups with projects that meet the criteria. There are many organisations in New Zealand which champion women's rights and which meet the needs of women and girls.