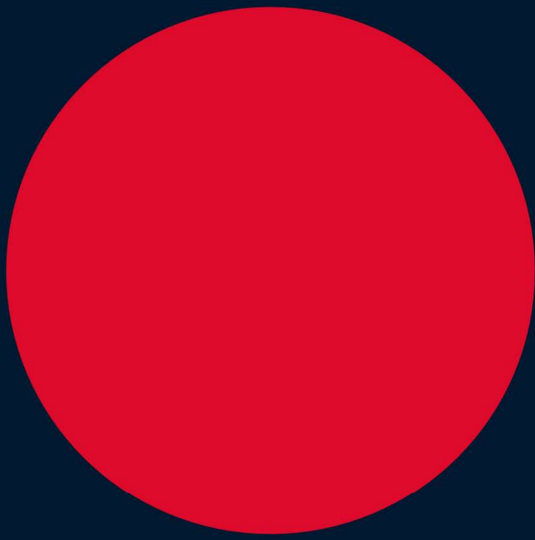




Ngā Tukunga pūtea ā-
takiwa mō te taiao me
ngā taonga tuku iho o te
ao tūturu

Guide for Applicants

Regional Environment & Natural
Heritage Grant 2025/2026



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Introduction

The **Regional Environment & Natural Heritage (RENH) Grant Programme** is a contestable fund supporting community-led conservation and environmental initiatives across Tāmaki Makaurau/Auckland. It provides funding for projects that protect native species, improve water quality, and support healthy ecosystems. In 2024, RENH combined with the Community Coordination and Facilitation (CCF) grant, so it now supports both hands-on conservation work and the coordination needed to make these projects successful.

The RENH grant operates under the Auckland Council [Community Grants Policy](#). Please read this policy carefully, especially Schedule Three, to make sure your application meets all requirements. The grant is very popular and often oversubscribed, so understanding what's required will give you the best chance of success.

The guidelines in this document will help you understand the grant priorities, who can apply, how to apply, and reporting requirements for the 2025/2026 RENH grant.

We strongly encourage you to talk to a council Conservation Advisor or Healthy Waters Advisor before you begin your application. They can help ensure your projects align with the grant's priorities. Even if you have received RENH funding before, we still strongly encourage you to have this conversation.

To get in touch with our advisors, please reach out to us at pestfree@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz.

Grant purpose and priorities

The RENH grant supports community-led conservation projects that protect and restore biodiversity and water quality across Tāmaki Makaurau/Auckland. It focuses on high-impact initiatives that operate at a landscape and catchment scale, align with regional conservation priorities and foster collaboration among mana whenua and local communities to care for their natural environment.

Projects should align with the following priorities:

1. **Conserve regionally significant ecosystems or species:** Protect, restore, or enhance important habitats, threatened species, and high-value ecosystems, across terrestrial, freshwater, and/or marine environments.
2. **Enhance community involvement:** Strengthen community participation in conservation by supporting volunteers, building the capacity of local groups, and fostering strategic partnerships.
3. **Enable meaningful Māori engagement and outcomes:** Create opportunities for mana whenua involvement, embed Te Ao Māori values and mātauranga in project design, and outline clear plans for collaboration or partnership with Māori communities.
4. **Deliver regional impact:** Contribute to regional conservation priorities, coordinate work at a landscape or catchment scale, and encourage broad participation or wide audiences.

For further guidance on regional conservation priorities and project planning, see Appendix 1. Helpful guides.

Applicant eligibility

Eligible applicants

You can apply for RENH funding if you are:

- A community organisation, iwi, hapū, marae, education institution, non-profit organisation or individual involved in regionally significant conservation work.
- A group or organisation contributing to Auckland's ecological health through community-led initiatives on private, Māori, or public land, provided you have the necessary permissions to carry out the work.

Ineligible applicants

RENH funding is not available to:

- Political parties, commercial entities or other local authorities, government agencies or public-sector entities.
- Auckland Council-controlled organisations, or programmes and facilities run by Auckland Council.
- Landowners or developers undertaking work required as a condition of a resource consent or environmental mitigation.

Returning applicants

Returning applicants who do not have existing multi-year RENH funding are eligible to apply.

However, to ensure equitable access to RENH funding for conservation groups across Auckland, **we won't be accepting new applications from groups already funded under a multi-year RENH agreement**—only in genuinely exceptional circumstances will this be considered.

Please contact a Conservation Advisor or Healthy Waters Advisor for more information.

Project eligibility

Eligible projects and expenses

Projects may be funded for one or more of the following activities or related expenses. If your project differs from these examples, please contact a Conservation or Healthy Waters Advisor to discuss.

- **Pest animal and pest plant management:** Control or monitoring of invasive species to protect priority habitats, threatened species, or high value ecosystems, waterways and marine

environments. Eligible costs include pest control, monitoring activities, and fencing (including stock or deer exclusion).

- **Protecting kauri and myrtle species:** Raise awareness, promote behaviour change around Kauri Dieback Disease and Myrtle Rust. This includes education for industry, landowners, schools, and community groups.
- **Restoration planting:** Enhance biodiversity through [eco-sourced](#) planting in high-value ecological areas. Preference is given where plants are sourced from nurseries accredited with or working towards the [Plant Pass](#) nursery biosecurity scheme.
- **Water quality improvement:** Projects that protect or restore water quality at the catchment scale, such as fencing, riparian planting, sediment or contaminant control, or community education.
- **Protecting outstanding natural features:** Safeguard scheduled outstanding natural features and landscapes identified in the Auckland Unitary Plan.
- **Community coordination and engagement:** Support for community-based facilitators or coordinators who strengthen collaboration, grow volunteer networks, and support on-the-ground conservation activity.
- **Operational costs:** Reasonable day-to-day expenses for running a community conservation group such as administration, travel within the Auckland region, and communications.
- **Strategic, operational or restoration planning:** Development (or review) of plans guide biodiversity outcomes, improve waterway health, or build capacity for long-term sustainability of conservation groups.

Note: Specialist contractor services (e.g. fencing, planting, or pest control in challenging terrain) are eligible project expenses.

Land tenure

Projects must have **written permission from the land manager**, regardless of whether activities occur on private or public land.

For projects on Auckland Council land:

- A letter of support is required from the local board via your Community Park Ranger or Senior Regional Parks Ranger.
- For local parks and reserves, email mylocalpark@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz
- For work on regional parks, email pestfree@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz

For projects on Department of Conservation (DOC) land:

- Contact a council Conservation Advisor or Healthy Waters Advisor before applying.
- Projects must meet all RENH priorities and be either mana whenua-led or co-funded by DOC (or have equivalent in-kind support).
- DOC is generally expected to provide a funding or resource contribution for projects on DOC land.

Ineligible projects and expenses

RENH funding will **not** support:

- Projects that do not contribute towards regional biodiversity or water-quality priorities.
- Projects focussed solely on beautification or small-scale local issues without regional impact.
- Projects already receiving significant non-contestable funding support from Auckland Council.
- Activities required by, or connected to, a current or future resource consent, or works needing permits that have not yet been obtained.
- Activities unrelated to on-the-ground conservation, such as legal, medical, religious, or political work.
- Capital assets (other than fencing), including structures like viewing platforms, gazebos, or similar facilities.
- For a full list of exclusions, please see the [Community Grants Policy](#)

Application notes

RENH is a contestable grant with designated application periods (see Timeline section below). Application dates are publicly advertised, and all applications are assessed through a standardised process.

Before you apply:

- Talk to a Conservation Advisor or Healthy Waters Advisor about what you want to apply for.

Application requirements:

- Clearly describe how your project aligns with RENH priorities, including goals, expected outcomes, and budget breakdown.
- Include all relevant supporting documents such as quotes, project plans, detailed site maps.
- For community coordination or facilitation roles, describe how these roles support conservation outcomes (see Appendix 2 for suggested rates).
- For specialist contractor roles, outline their responsibilities and contribution to conservation goals. (See Appendix 2 for suggested rates).
- Provide evidence of landowner permission for your project area. Even long-standing projects should ensure permissions are up to date.

Multiple applications:

- Each organisation or individual can submit only one application that includes all their proposed projects or activities.

- Umbrella organisations (those applying on behalf of several separate community groups) may submit more than one application, provided each application represents a different affiliated group.

Multi-year applications:

- We will consider multi-year applications for up to three years, with clear justification of need.
- Continued funding for subsequent years will be dependent on the successful achievement of project goals, accountability reporting and availability of funds in future years.

Financial information:

- **Applicants can apply for a minimum of \$5,000 and a maximum of \$90,000 per year;** subject to funding availability. However, because RENH is highly competitive, full funding is not guaranteed.
- Co-funding is encouraged, with a general expectation of at least 50% applicant contribution. Volunteer hours can be counted at the Living Wage rate (\$28.95/hour).
- For grants over \$1,000, individuals and unincorporated groups must either nominate an umbrella organisation or receive grant payments as reimbursements.

Health and safety compliance:

- All applicants must have appropriate Health and Safety measures in place, including a risk assessment for project sites.

Archaeological assessments:

- Projects involving ground disturbance (e.g. fencing, planting, manual removal of large invasive plants) will be reviewed by our Archaeology team to assess potential impact on cultural heritage sites. If issues are identified, we will contact you to work through a solution.

Project objectives and measures:

- Including clear, specific, and measurable objectives really strengthens a RENH grant application. See Appendix 3 for some advice and several examples tailored to typical conservation projects.

Mapping requirements

- Most applications will need one or more maps to clearly show the project area and where specific activities will take place. See Appendix 4 for further guidance and links to mapping tutorials.

Assessment criteria

Applications will be assessed against the following key criteria. Strong applications will clearly demonstrate alignment with RENH priorities, readiness for delivery, and long-term regional benefit.

1. Regional significance and impact

Projects must make a meaningful contribution to regional conservation priorities and outcomes.

Assessors will consider:

- The extent to which the project protects or enhances priority habitats, threatened species, high-value ecosystems, waterways, or marine environments.
- How well the project aligns with regional biodiversity and water quality priorities (see Appendix 1).
- The project's geographic scale (e.g. landscape or catchment level) and potential to connect with other conservation initiatives.
- Use of best-practice methods in project design, implementation, and monitoring.
- The magnitude and durability of the expected environmental outcomes.

2. Track record, capacity, and readiness

Applicants must show they have the capability and systems to deliver the proposed work effectively.

Assessors will consider:

- The applicant's experience, qualifications, and previous performance in delivering similar projects.
- Strength of financial management and reporting systems.
- The availability of resources, staff, volunteers, and technical expertise to deliver the project on time and within budget.
- Evidence of project planning, including realistic milestones, achievable timelines, and contingency planning.

3. Feasibility and on-the-ground action

Projects should be practical, achievable, and deliver measurable conservation outcomes. Assessors will look for:

- A clear statement of need and demonstration that the project addresses an identified conservation issue.
- Defined and achievable goals, outcomes, and success indicators.

- A realistic and transparent budget, showing good value for money and proportional use of funding for on-the-ground delivery.
- Evidence that the project will enable action, such as direct habitat improvement, pest control, planting, or water-quality work.

4. Māori engagement and outcomes

RENH places strong emphasis on meaningful partnerships with Māori and the integration of Te Ao Māori values. Assessors will consider:

- Evidence of early and ongoing engagement with mana whenua and/or mataawaka.
- How the project integrates Te Ao Māori principles, values, and mātauranga into its design and delivery.
- Opportunities for co-design, collaboration, or shared decision-making with Māori partners.
- The potential for the project to build relationships, capability, or benefits for Māori communities.

5. Collaboration and partnerships

Collaborative approaches strengthen conservation outcomes and ensure lasting impact. Assessors will consider:

- Evidence of partnerships or shared delivery with other organisations, iwi/hapū, schools, landowners, or businesses.
- How the project connects with or complements other regional initiatives or networks.
- The extent to which the project builds community involvement, expands volunteer networks, or enhances collective capacity.

Accountability and reporting

Successful applicants must report on project progress and outcomes to demonstrate conservation impact and responsible use of funds.

Reporting requirements:

- **Progress reports:** Regular communication with your local Conservation Advisor or Healthy Waters Advisor on project milestones and community engagement.
- **Final report:** Summary of project outcomes and grant expenditure. The report should include, but is not limited to:
 - Measurable conservation and community engagement achievements (e.g. number and species of native plants planted, maps of specific project activities, numbers of volunteers and volunteer hours etc.)

- Sharing of project data with Auckland Council (e.g. trap locations/results, bird monitoring, survey findings etc.)

If your application is successful, you will be provided with the relevant reporting templates.

Timeline

Application period opens

Friday 14 November 2025

Applicant workshops

Two different types of online workshop will be available to assist you with your application: a general workshop aimed at first-time applicants, and a more advanced drop-in session addressing FAQs and some applicant-specific queries. Workshops will be held on:

- **Thursday, 4 December 2025: 1pm-3pm (general)**
- **Wednesday, 15 December 2025: 4.30pm-6.30pm (advanced)**
- **Wednesday, 14 January 2026: 1pm-3pm (general)**
- **Thursday, 15 January 2026: 4.30pm-6.30pm (advanced)**

Times and dates are subject to change.

Registration links to attend these sessions can be found on the [RENH web page](#)

Application deadline

Sunday 25 January 2026 - Final date to submit the application.

Notification of decisions

May 2026 - Applicants are notified of the outcome.

Funding agreement issued

June 2026 - Successful applicants receive a funding agreement that must be signed to access funds.

Project commencement

July 2026 - Projects can start once funding agreements are finalised.

Progress reporting

Ongoing - Regular updates are required during the project. The schedule will be outlined in your funding agreement.

Final reporting

Within 1 month of project completion - A final report summarising outcomes and achievements is required.

Need assistance?

For any questions or application guidance, please contact the team at pestfree@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz

Appendix 1. Helpful guides

[Te Haumanu Taiao – Restoring the Natural Environment guide](#): For information on ecosystem types, preparing a restoration plan, pest plant and pest animal control, restoration planting guides, and restoration near cultural heritage sites.

[Pest animal control guidelines for the Auckland region](#): For guidance on best practice management of pest animals, including planning considerations, control methodologies, and monitoring.

[He puka tohutohu mō te patu otaota orotā / Guide to controlling pest plants](#): For pest plant identification, species information and control methodologies.

[Indigenous terrestrial and wetland ecosystems of Auckland guide](#): For information on ecosystem types, conservation status and mapping.

[Tiaki Tāmaki Makaurau Conservation Map](#): For geospatial information on ‘Current Ecosystem Extent’ (ecosystem type), Biodiversity Focus Areas and Significant Ecological Areas (priority sites for conservation), and waterways, as well as land tenure and other conservation geospatial layers.

Conservation status reports for [birds](#), [bats](#), [reptiles](#), [amphibians](#), [freshwater fishes](#) and [vascular plants](#) in Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland.

Outstanding Natural Features Overlay Schedule and Outstanding Natural Landscapes Overlay Schedule (Schedule 6 and 7 of the [Auckland Unitary Plan](#)): For information on the locations and types of outstanding natural features and landscapes in Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland.

Appendix 2. Suggested rates

Role	Suggested hourly rate	Notes
Project delivery or field staff roles	The Living Wage (\$28.95/hr, as of September 2025) or above	RENH will not fund any roles below the Living Wage hourly rate.
Volunteer roles (when counted as part of your overall project contribution)	\$28.95/hr for general volunteers Market rate for specialised volunteers	General volunteer time can be calculated using the living wage. Specialised volunteer rates can be calculated according to comparable market rates.
Coordinator / facilitator roles	Typically, between \$35 - \$50/hr	Depends on the complexity of the role and the project area. The maximum RENH will fund is \$50/hr.
Manager roles	Typically, between \$50 - \$55/hr	Depends on the complexity of the role and the project area. The maximum RENH will fund is \$55/hr.
Specialised contractor roles	Market rate for specialised contractors	Contracted for a fixed period, to support specific specialised tasks (e.g. writing strategic plans, pest control in challenging terrain).

Appendix 3. Objectives & measures

- Objectives should be *SMART*: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound.
- Measures should clearly show *how success will be demonstrated*.
- Avoid vague terms like “raise awareness” or “improve biodiversity” without a measurable indicator.
- Link each measure directly to an activity in your RENH application.

Examples:

Project aspect	Objective	Measures
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Habitat restoration	Restore native vegetation within the project area to improve biodiversity outcomes.	• Number of native plants planted (e.g. 5,000) • Percentage of plant survival after 12 months (e.g. $\geq 80\%$) • Reduction in invasive weed cover (e.g. from 70% to $<20\%$)
Pest control	Increase the population and breeding success of native species within the project area.	• Annual bird count data showing trends in key species • Predator control coverage maintained across XX hectares at XX density
Species protection / monitoring	Reduce possum / rat / mustelid densities to protect native flora and fauna.	• Trap or bait-station network established at across XX hectares at XX density • Tracking tunnel results showing XX% rodent tracking rate, pre and post control period • Chew card index showing XX% possum interaction rate, pre and post control period
Waterway restoration	Improve water quality and riparian habitat along 2 km of stream.	• Length of stream fenced and planted • Number of riparian species established (and survival rate)
Conservation coordination / capacity building	Build community capacity and participation in local conservation.	• Hire XX coordinators / facilitators • Number of community planting days or workshops held • Participant feedback indicating increased knowledge or confidence • Ongoing volunteer coordination plan established

Appendix 4. Mapping requirements

- **For site-based projects** (e.g. restoration or pest management):
 - Provide clear and detailed site map(s) showing where project activities will occur this year.
 - Use a scale that allows recognition of key features such as street names, landmarks, and significant visual features.

- Include drawn spatial features (lines or polygons) that identify specific activity areas — for example:
 - Fencing locations
 - Planting sites
 - Pest animal control area boundaries
- **For projects not tied to a specific site** (e.g. coordinator or facilitator roles), please provide a landscape-scale map showing your priority areas of work for the role.
- **For projects without a spatial component** (e.g. operational costs, strategic planning), maps are not required.

For specific guidance on how to use different tools to create detailed site maps from your project, please refer to the following links:

- [Guidance on making maps for Google Earth](#)
- [Guidance on making maps for Auckland Council GeoMaps](#)