

Supporting non-profit, community and voluntary organisations in Aotearoa New Zealand.

For more than two decades the Community Organisation Grants Scheme (COGS) has invested in social service groups working towards strong, sustainable communities.

Administered by the Local Government and Community Branch of The Department of Internal Affairs, COGS has distributed \$225 million – some 50,000 grants – since 1986.

It's a community-driven, government-funded scheme – an example of the community and voluntary sector and government working together to provide strong social services.

In 2008 / 09, \$14 million of COGS funding will be distributed to more than 3000 community organisations.

Most grants are for \$3000 or less, and contribute to ongoing running costs (such as rent, travel, volunteer and administration expenses), to hosting hui, fono or community workshops, or toward project development costs.

COGS also encourages communities to set their own funding priorities through 37 Local Distribution Committees.

Committees are made up of volunteers nominated and elected by registered community organisations and serve for a term of three years.

They consider and make decisions on grant applications from groups within their area according to local priorities.

In 2007, COGS committees considered almost 4000 applications. Of those organisations considered, 91% received a grant.

Priority for the allocation of COGS funding goes to

- Projects responding to a locally identified community need
- Community groups and organisations with limited access to other government funding
- Projects and services initiated by local community groups
- Projects and organisations working with one or more COGS priority sector.

Applications open on 1 June and close on the last Friday of July each year. Online applications are available through www.cdgo.govt.nz.

More information on COGS is available at www.dia.govt.nz or by freephone 0800 824 824.

Kaitaia Riding for the Disabled
Riding for life

It's the small steps that count to the riders, coaches and volunteers of the Kaitaia group of Riding for the Disabled Association (RDA).

For one child, that first small step wasn't climbing up onto a horse – it was getting into the car to go to RDA. Principal of local Papatūria School, Stephen Hovell, said there's been a transformation since one of his students began her therapeutic riding programme.

"This young girl really enjoys RDA and will often come back, bubbling over with the joy of going on a horse. With virtually no oral language, she conveys her joy with singing and other non-verbal communication."

"Children with special needs have been part of the school community for 15 years. While some of the disabilities are readily identifiable, others are more difficult to define, including significant motor difficulties. We've been grateful for the opportunity afforded by RDA. It helps to build up confidence in the children in an area that few – if any – have experienced before."

Some of the benefits to the children are improved balance, co-ordination and self-discipline. "It offers an opportunity for developing communication and social skills between the student and the volunteers working with them. Our children love RDA," he said.

Kaitaia RDA has received an average of \$4000 a year from the Community Organisation Grants Scheme (COGS). Volunteer treasurer and fundraising co-ordinator Eleanor Keyte-Bailey said the grant goes towards travel costs. "Most of our volunteers are travelling long distances to work with the children at each session and they can't really afford it. COGS enables us to provide them with petrol vouchers."

Riding therapy is far from just a pony ride," she said, "An individual plan is developed for each rider in response to their particular disability or disabilities. Most riders initially need two or three trained volunteers leading the horse and walking alongside them."

"Disabilities that can respond well to riding therapy cover the spectrum – many physical, intellectual, behavioural and learning difficulties can be improved on horseback," she said.

Dianne Byers has volunteered with Kaitaia RDA for 8 years, and loves seeing the positive influence riding and interaction with the horses has on children. "I think a lot of the volunteers get great personal satisfaction out of it. You get close to the children, as it's a small community."

She said children respond well to riding therapy, "They feel special because they're there riding with other children with similar needs and they don't feel like the odd one out."

Dianne travels 32km – the majority of which is on a gravel road – to volunteer, and said she's really grateful for the help with transport costs.



Kaitaia RDA volunteer Dianne Byers helps Brayden Hughes (8) ride Dooley