



# **Evaluation of Community Organisation Grants Scheme (COGS)**

30 June 2010

**Final Report**  
**Report for the Department of Internal Affairs**

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## Preface

This report has been prepared for the Department of Internal Affairs by Donella Bellett and Marinka Teague and has been peer reviewed by Meenakshi Sankar, from MartinJenkins (Martin, Jenkins & Associates Limited).

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# Executive summary

## Introduction

- 1 The Local Government and Community Branch (LG&C) within the Department of Internal Affairs (the Department) has the overall responsibility for administering the Community Organisation Grants Scheme (COGS). COGS has been running for over 20 years and is one of a wide range of funding levers that the Department has to build strong, sustainable communities, hapū and iwi in New Zealand.
- 2 Over the 20 year history of COGS, the scheme has been reviewed a number of times, most recently in 2003. This review recommended a range of changes that were implemented between 2003 and 2005, with the intention of improving the operation of the scheme and renewing its focus on supporting community owned and driven services and projects.
- 3 Whilst government investment in COGS is significant at around \$14M annually, this represents only one source of funding and support for communities. The evaluation considers the outcomes and achievements of COGS within the broad funding context that community organisations operate in.

## Evaluation approach

- 4 The following evaluation data was collected/ activities undertaken:
  - document review and key informant interviews
  - case studies of seven Local Distribution Committees (LDCs)
  - online quantitative surveys of all current LDC members and all community organisations who received a COGS grant in 2009 (a high response rate was achieved with 60% of LDC members responding, and 67% of community organisations responding)
  - analysis of administrative data held by the Department on COGS applications
  - results were discussed with a Departmental Advisory Group at key stages throughout the evaluation and key evaluation decisions were informed by these discussions.
- 5 The evaluation primarily involved people with a direct link to COGS, as a result conclusions about wider community effects and higher level outcomes are drawn from these perspectives. In addition, those involved in the evaluation are key stakeholders of COGS and while they have the most detailed knowledge of the scheme, they also have a vested interest in the scheme and many have a strong belief in its benefits.

## Evaluation objectives

- 6 The objectives for the evaluation were identified by the Department. The main purpose of the evaluation was to assess the extent to which COGS is operating as effectively as possible and achieving results in and for the community. The objectives were to:
- determine the value of COGS for government and for the community (including the effectiveness of the funding model)
  - examine how COGS is operating in communities and how this impacts on the outcomes that are being achieved
  - understand the unique nature of the COGS funding model, and consider which aspects of the model should be retained, improved or might be expanded to other funding schemes
  - investigate the effects of the 2003/04 changes to COGS, and determine whether these changes have achieved their desired intent.<sup>1</sup>

## Outcomes framework

- 7 The evaluation is based on an outcomes framework which has been developed and refined throughout the evaluation. The outcomes framework builds on the Department's original Theory of Change and shows the expected immediate and intermediate impacts that are expected to ultimately contribute to the high level impacts identified by the Department.
- 8 The outcomes identified at each level of the framework are expected to **contribute** to the outcomes at the subsequent level. Because of the wide range of factors contributing to community outcomes, there is not a direct causal link between each level. The key levels of the outcomes framework are:
- enabling mechanisms (the COGS scheme itself): the structures and support provided by the Department; community engagement and participation
  - immediate impacts: COGS implemented in partnership between DIA and the community (includes how decisions are made, transparency of local decisions and extent to which the Department gains knowledge about the community); and community organisations receive funding (includes the diversity of these organisations and what they do with the funding)
  - intermediate impacts: strengthened community and community organisations (includes funding projects that make a positive difference, strengthened community capability and leadership, and creating opportunities for community networking)

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<sup>1</sup> The objectives are listed in order of importance. The evaluation placed the most emphasis on the objectives listed first, with a lesser emphasis on the final objective.

- higher level impacts: strong, sustainable, communities, hapū and iwi (includes social and economic equity for priority groups, increased community participation and momentum, and increased community and social capital).

## Outline of the COGS scheme

- 9 COGS is a community based grants scheme, providing grants to non-profit community owned and community driven organisations that provide social services and projects to people from one or more of the COGS priority sectors. COGS is designed to allow communities to drive the distribution of government funds, with the aim of helping communities, hapū and iwi become strong and sustainable.
- 10 The scheme involves a number of key players:
- the Department (responsible for supporting the scheme through nationally based staff and regional Advisors, and funding the scheme)
  - the NCC (an elected committee of volunteers drawn from the LDCs, filling a governance role and providing a link between the Department, the LDCs and the government)
  - LDCs (37 committees primarily responsible for assessing local applications and making decisions about the allocation of grants, made up of volunteers elected from the community)
  - Community organisations (recipients of COGS funding, they are also able to be involved in COGS through their participation in the LDC election process and the setting of local priorities).

## Key findings

- 11 The key findings of the evaluation are related to the levels contained in the outcomes framework.

## The enabling mechanisms of COGS

- 12 The evaluation found that the enabling mechanisms operate well enough for COGS to function; in particular, the structures and support provided by the Department are generally operating well. However, the other side of the mechanism, community engagement and participation, is not operating optimally. In particular, the evaluation showed that the wider community does not participate in the setting of local priorities, stand for election, serve on the community or vote in elections.
- 13 The implication of this is that LDCs are not necessarily driven by or aware of their community's *actual* needs and priorities. As a result, local needs may be understood and defined in a variety of ways, but are primarily dependent on each LDC's collective

knowledge and community contacts. The implications of this flow through to each level of the outcomes framework.

## Immediate impacts

- 14 Despite the identified weaknesses in the enabling mechanisms, immediate impacts were clearly evident. COGS grants are being distributed locally, to meet local needs, to a diverse range of organisations supporting the community – the majority of them volunteer based and with low incomes. COGS is clearly meeting its intended goals at this level.
- 15 While the evaluation found that decision making has been successfully devolved to the local level, the quality of the decision making is largely dependent on the contacts and knowledge of the LDC members (as outlined above). In addition to this, although there are a large number of inputs to their decision making, little evidence of strategic decision making was found. Rather, most LDC members aim to make ‘fair’ decisions and distribute funds as widely as possible.
- 16 Other immediate impacts confirmed by the evaluation included: community organisations perceive decision making to be transparent; and for the Department, good knowledge is gained about the community and strong links are formed.

## Intermediate impacts

- 17 The outcomes framework includes a number of impacts at the intermediate level, summarised as strengthened communities and community organisations.
- 18 The evaluation found that COGS is making a clear contribution to community capability, leadership and networking, primarily through the opportunities provided and skills gained through participation in the LDC.
- 19 However the key way that COGS strengthens communities is through funding projects that make a positive difference at the local level. The clearest impact of COGS is discernable at the individual organisation level and in particular on organisations that are small and vulnerable. Many of these organisations might not be able to continue without COGS funding. As COGS grants are rarely used in isolation, it is not possible to identify the definitive contribution of COGS to the success of individual projects. However there is clear evidence that COGS is highly valued for the way it interacts with other funding/support, being seen as the ‘glue’ that fills gaps and allows a project to succeed.

## Higher level impacts

### ***Social and economic equity for priority groups***

- 20 Analysis of who COGS grants are going to confirms that diverse community organisations are being supported through COGS. The evaluation found good evidence that these organisations are providing important services to priority groups and the wider community. The fact that their services are highly valued and are filling important niches in their communities was demonstrated by the high regard with which community members talked of services and the high degree of community support for and use of services. As a result, we conclude that COGS is making an important contribution to the social and economic equity of priority groups within individual communities.
- 21 COGS funding is just one contributor to the majority of community organisations however. The evaluation clearly demonstrated that most community organisations were dependent on a wide range of income and voluntary support and many also had other government contracts. However, a small number of COGS recipients (17%), reported a high degree of reliance on COGS funding – these organisations were mostly small and highly reliant on volunteer labour. The loss of COGS funding would have adverse consequences for these groups as there are few other sources of funding that specifically cover operational costs.

### ***Increased community participation and momentum***

- 22 COGS is not achieving widespread community participation in all aspects of its operation and momentum is lacking, however sufficient community participation has been achieved to allow the scheme to function.
- 23 Only limited sectors of the community take the opportunity to participate in the LDC, meaning that the functioning of COGS is overly dependent on a small pool of community members who engage in many such activities. Responsibility and engagement is not widespread throughout the community and this poses significant challenges to the Department's Advisors (who strive to identify new members for the LDC and to broaden the volunteer base). Ironically, while the wider community sees the grants as the most valuable aspect of COGS, the benefits of participating in the LDC and support for the LDC is not equally valued.
- 24 The lack of wider community engagement and participation in COGS through the LDC is of concern as it is one of the core principles of COGS. It also raises concerns about sustainability as the same pool of individuals and agencies are involved in repeated cycles. For COGS to be truly community driven and community owned it is critical to broaden it out and the Department needs to actively seek pathways through which these messages can be effectively delivered.

- 25 The fact that the split between government ownership and the community driven aspects is widely understood indicates a degree of community ownership. COGS is highly valued by communities and seen as an integral contributor to grass roots community initiatives.

***Increased community and social capital***

- 26 The evaluation found strong evidence of COGS contributing to increased community and social capital. Participation on the LDCs was seen as a way to learn valuable skills and to increase networks throughout the community, greatly extending individuals' existing networks and experiences. LDC members also believed that they take the skills they learn through COGS and transfer them to other areas of their lives. Through the LDC process, COGS is nurturing community leaders, providing them with new skills and networks and letting them know that they are valued.
- 27 The wider community are also experiencing increased networking opportunities through COGS. Community organisations that attend public meetings found them to be valuable networking opportunities. Clarification of the intent and value of public meetings would enable these social capital benefits to be increased, if attendance levels were raised.

**Conclusions**

- 28 Although the evaluation found that wider community engagement and participation is limited (particularly in the setting of local priorities and standing for and voting in the LDC elections), clear evidence of good immediate impacts was found. COGS grants are being distributed locally to a diverse range of organisations supporting the community.
- 29 COGS is also making a clear contribution to intermediate level impacts though improving community capability, leadership and networking, and funding projects that are making a positive difference within communities.
- 30 At the higher level impacts, it is not possible to isolate the extent of COGS' contribution to strong, sustainable communities, hapū and iwi. However, the weight of evidence shows that COGS' contribution is important. We are confident that COGS is acting in synergy with other funders, grants and volunteers to improve community outcomes. If COGS were no longer available to communities, we would expect to see a reduction in community capital and the diversity of community organisations (particularly small, volunteer led organisations) over time.
- 31 COGS funding fills an important gap – it is valued for its community driven nature, its 'clean-ness' and its flexibility. It is unique, and its achievements need to be

celebrated. We are confident that slight adjustments to the operation of the scheme would result in an even stronger contribution to strong, sustainable communities.

### Areas identified for improvement

- 32 The main purpose of the evaluation was to assess the extent to which COGS is operating as effectively as possible and achieving results in and for the community.
- 33 The evaluation identified a number of areas where COGS is not operating optimally. We recommend that the Department consider addressing the following:
- opportunities for the community to participate in the LDC need to be more widely promoted and the benefits more widely understood (nominations and election turn out both need to be increased)
  - the parameters of the Advisor role need to be tightened to prevent the possibility of undue or inappropriate influence over LDC composition and decision making (this is not currently happening, but there is the potential for it to)
  - the purpose of public meetings needs to be clarified and ways to increase community participation need to be identified
  - the use of local priorities and their relationship to national priorities needs to be clarified, a more robust process for the identification of local priorities needs to be developed
  - accountability requirements could be reviewed to reduce the burden for very small community organisations and/or those who receive very small grants.

# 1 Introduction

This section introduces the report by:

- Setting out the purpose and scope of the evaluation
- Summarising our approach
- Outlining the structure and content of this report.

## Purpose and scope

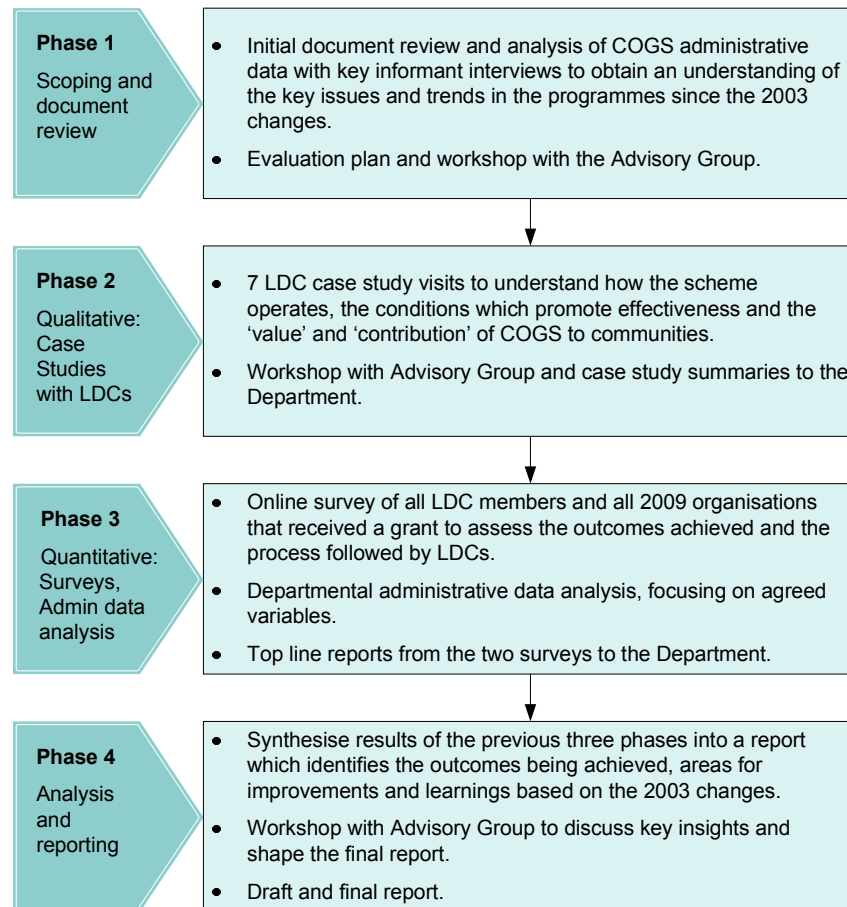
- 34 The Local Government and Community Branch (LG&C) within the Department of Internal Affairs (the Department) has the overall responsibility for administering the Community Organisation Grants Scheme (COGS) and other grants that develop community capacity to address local issues. COGS has been running for over 20 years and is one of a wide range of funding levers that the Department has to build strong, sustainable communities, hapū and iwi in New Zealand.
- 35 Over the 20 year history of COGS, the scheme has been reviewed a number of times, most recently in 2003. Sufficient time has elapsed since the most recent changes for the anticipated benefits to be evident and therefore it is timely to evaluate COGS to ensure it is achieving the outcomes anticipated in an efficient manner.
- 36 Whilst government investment in COGS is significant at around \$14M annually, this represents only one source of funding and support for communities. The evaluation considers the outcomes and achievements of COGS within the broad funding context that community organisations operate in, and looks to identify the unique contribution and structural aspects of COGS that create value for communities and community organisations.

## Limitations to the evaluation

- 37 The evaluation primarily involved people with a direct link to COGS, as a result conclusions about wider community effects and higher level outcomes are drawn from these perspectives. In addition, those involved in the evaluation are key stakeholders of COGS and while they have the most detailed knowledge of the scheme, they also have a vested interest in the scheme and many have a strong belief in its benefits.

## Our approach

- 38 The evaluation was conducted over four phases as depicted in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Evaluation approach, four phases**

39 Findings were presented to and discussed with a Departmental Advisory Group at key stages throughout the evaluation – prior to finalising the evaluation plan, at the conclusion of the qualitative phase and following the quantitative phase. The final workshop was used to explore conclusions and to confirm the direction of this final report.

## Structure and content of this report

- 40 The remainder of this report is set out as follows:
- Section 2 sets the context for the report, it includes: a brief outline of the COGS scheme; summarises the key changes implemented from 2003-05; presents the objectives for the evaluation and the outcomes framework to which the evaluation is anchored
  - Sections 3, 4 and 5 relate the main findings of the evaluation to the COGS outcomes framework. The sections cover:
    - Section 3 examines the key findings of most relevance to the **enabling mechanisms** outlined at the base of the outcomes framework
      - structures and support provided by the Department
      - community engagement and participation.
    - Section 4 examines the key findings of most relevance to the **immediate** impacts in the outcomes framework
      - how decisions are made
      - transparency of local decisions
      - the Department gaining knowledge about and links with, the community and its organisations
      - diversity of the community organisations who receive funding.
    - Section 5 examines the key findings of most relevance to the **intermediate** impacts in the outcomes framework
      - funding projects that make a difference
      - strengthened community capability and leadership
      - creating opportunities for networking between community groups.
  - Section 6 draws overall conclusions about the COGS' contributions to the **higher** level impacts identified on the outcomes framework.
- 41 Note that not all evaluation findings map neatly or sequentially onto the outcomes framework. Where this is the case, this is noted in the text or footnotes and additional findings of interest are contained in Appendix 3.

## 2 Setting the scene

This section provides relevant background and context including:

- Brief outline of the COGS scheme
- Outline of the 2003-05 changes
- Objectives for the COGS evaluation
- Outcomes framework for COGS
- Key challenges for the evaluation.

### Brief outline of the COGS scheme

42 The Community Organisation Grants Scheme (COGS) is a community-based grants scheme, providing grants to non-profit community owned and community driven organisations that provide social services and projects to people from one or more of the COGS priority sectors.<sup>2</sup>

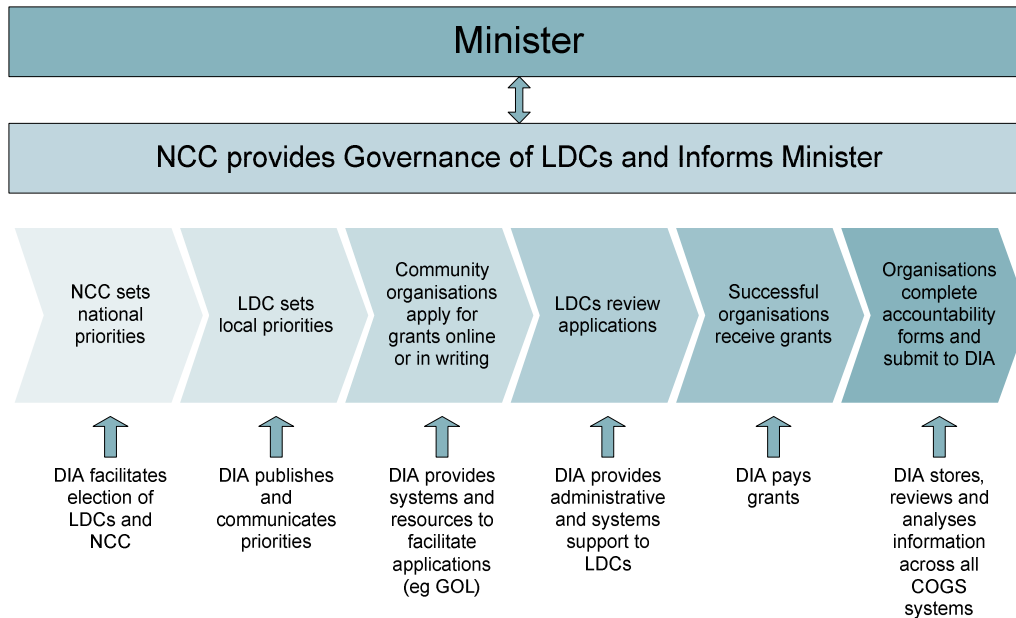
43 COGS is designed to allow communities to drive the distribution of government funds, with the aim of helping communities, hapū and iwi become strong and sustainable. Before this ultimate outcome, COGS is also expected to contribute to a range of immediate and intermediate level outcomes all of which are presented on the outcomes framework (presented at the end of this section).

44 COGS operates on an annual funding cycle. Community organisations are invited to apply for funding annually by the last Friday in July. Figure 2 presents an overview of how COGS operates on a day-to-day basis.

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<sup>2</sup> [www.CDGO.govt.nz](http://www.CDGO.govt.nz)

**Figure 2: Operations of COGS**



45 Figure 2 identifies a number of key players in the operation of COGS: the Local Distribution Committees (LDCs), the National COGS Committee (NCC), the Department (including the national and regional offices) and the community organisations. Each of these contributes uniquely to the management and implementation of COGS.

46 The following paragraphs outline the way COGS is intended to operate – important variations in actual practice are discussed in the following sections.<sup>3</sup>

## The Department

47 The Department plays a role at both the local and national levels. At a national level the Department has in place a national co-ordinator and at a local level the Department has a number of COGS Advisors spread throughout the country each supporting three to five LDCs. The national co-ordinator works closely with the NCC and the Departments Advisors to ensure efficient and effective management of the scheme in accordance with the programme intent.

48 The Department provides the framework for the NCC, LDCs, and communities to focus their efforts. The Department is responsible for:

<sup>3</sup> The information for this section is derived from interviews with Departmental staff, LDC members and documentation provided by the Department on COGS practices including the Handbook for Local Distribution Committees.

- management and administration of the NCC and LDC elections
- management of, administration and advice to the NCC and LDC
- initial reviews of applications to ensure they are complete and eligible, following up as required
- providing skilled resources to ensure appropriate systems, policies, procedures and training are in place eg website, online application forms, training for the LDC and NCC members, financial tracking information and accounting services (to cover reimbursement of NCC and LDC members as required)
- ensuring appropriate government reporting requirements are met and that annual plans and reviews are published
- collecting and collating information from the accountability reports<sup>4</sup>
- monitoring and evaluation of COGS
- communication of the national and local priorities
- development and maintenance of the funding model.

## NCC

49 The NCC is an elected committee of volunteers drawn from the LDCs. The members are nominated and elected by the LDCs for a three-year period. The committee has five members, three from the North Island and two from the South Island and the next election is due to be held in 2012. The committee is able to co-opt up to two members as required (this has not occurred over the last few years).

50 The NCC meets quarterly and is responsible for:

- governance of the 37 LDCs
- communication with the LDCs via regular news letters
- advising the Minister about the operation of COGS. The NCC has in place a memorandum of understanding with the Minister for the Community and Volunteer Sector and is directly accountable to the Minister.
- providing the strategic direction for each year and a three year strategic plan
- resolving problems and undertaking evaluations as necessary
- setting the national priorities (although these have not changed in the recent past)
- allocation of a discretionary 10% of the total \$14M
- approving the funding allocation model (as outlined above).

<sup>4</sup> Forms completed by community organisations who received funding and detail how they spent their funding allocation.

- 51 The NCC is the legal link between the Department, the LDCs and the Government. The NCC, whilst independent of the Department, is strongly supported by the Department especially in terms of access to specialist skills and advice in areas such as policy, monitoring, evaluation, systems and procedures.

## LDCs

- 52 The 37 LDCs throughout New Zealand are aligned with the Territorial Local Authority boundaries. LDC members are volunteers who are nominated and elected by registered community organisations for a three-year period. Each LDC has 5 elected members from the local community and can co-opt up to two additional members depending on workload and other considerations (eg capability or skill gaps or to balance the composition of members). The LDC members are responsible for
- setting local priorities
  - assessing applications
  - making funding decisions for local applications.
- 53 The LDCs meet four times a year (or more if necessary):
- **To set priorities** – Each year the LDC arranges a public meeting in order to consult the community about local priorities for the coming year and to report on the last funding round. Local priorities are used in conjunction with the national priorities set by the Department. The public meeting is an opportunity for LDC members, the Department’s staff including Advisors, community organisations and the broader community to meet and identify priorities for the community. This meeting also presents an opportunity for organisations to network and gives ‘visibility’ to the process in the community.
  - **Pre-allocation meeting:** The committee meets to prepare for the assessment of applications. Each member of the committee is given a number of applications to review and make an assessment of whether they should be funded and for how much. The number of applications a committee member has to assess will vary significantly for each LDC - in some situations it may be around 15 while in others it can be upwards of 30. LDC members are expected to assess the merit of each application utilising an assessment tool which requires them to make contact with the organisation to clarify any queries relating to the application.
  - **Allocation meeting:** Most committees spend a full day making the final decisions on who to fund and how much to fund. Each member brings their allocated applications along with any information gathered during the assessment process and puts the case to the rest of the committee before a final decision is made.

- **Evaluation planning meeting:** Following the decision making process organisations are able to question the assessment of the applications. For any questions that arise, the committee discusses them and decides a course of action at this meeting. It is also a chance for the committee to review the year in general and begin planning for the following year.

- 54 A proportion of the annual COGS appropriation is allocated to each of the 37 LDC committees by the NCC. In the 2008/09 funding year the LDCs distributed \$14million (GST exclusive) to a total of 3,603 community organisations and the average size of grant was \$3,885<sup>5</sup>.
- 55 In 2009/10 the COGS appropriation was \$14million (GST exclusive)<sup>6</sup> this was allocated to the 37 LDCs in the following way:
- 80% was allocated according to the degree of deprivation within each community
  - 10% was allocated according to the degree of isolation within each community
  - the final 10% was discretionary funding and was primarily allocated by the NCC to LDCs that needed to address the needs of isolated communities<sup>7</sup>.
- 56 The set-up of LDCs is designed to provide the voice of the community within the infrastructure that supports COGS. The Department and the NCC provide guidelines to LDCs about their decision making role (eg outlining things that cannot be funded such as capital items like land or furniture) but at the same time LDCs have autonomy to determine how much funding they will give, and who they will give it to. Each LDC makes its decisions independently of others and may have in place their own unique approach to decision making. For example in 2008/09 the Rotorua LDC funded 63% of applicants compared to the Hutt Valley LDC who funded 93% of all applicants<sup>8</sup>.
- 57 The LDCs have access to a Department Advisor and the NCC should queries or problems arise. The Department Advisor provides secretariat support and advice to the LDC meetings and helps to ensure the LDC operates within the boundaries set by the NCC and the Department. The Advisor and NCC however do not make decisions for or on behalf of the LDC.

## Community organisations

- 58 Community organisations have a dual role - they are both recipients of COGS funds and contributors to the smooth functioning of COGS through their participation in the

<sup>5</sup> The total amount requested by applicants was \$41,231,873. COGS Profile 2008-09, produced by the Local Government and Community Branch of the Department of Internal Affairs, 2009.

<sup>6</sup> Less the cost of the evaluation.

<sup>7</sup> COGS Profile 2008-09, produced by the Local Government and Community Branch of the Department of Internal Affairs, 2009.

<sup>8</sup> COGS Profile 2008-09, produced by the Local Government and Community Branch of the Department of Internal Affairs, 2009.

election process and priority setting discussions. The expectation is that community participation in priority setting meetings and discussions will help shape the design and delivery of services that are locally relevant, and that will help to achieve strong, sustainable communities. Community Organisations participate in the following ways:

- applying for grants
- providing services the community needs
- participating in the setting of local priorities by attending public meetings (participants may be representing their community organisation and/or their own personal interests)
- nominating and voting for members of the LDC
- completing accountability reports and submitting them to the Department
- using grants as intended.

59 Participation in these activities is designed to support community organisations to deliver services that are critical to their community.

## Outline of the 2003-05 changes

60 COGS has evolved over the 20 years that it has been operating. The most recent changes were made following a review in 2003.<sup>9</sup> The review recommended a range of changes that were implemented between 2003 and 2005, with the intention of improving the operation of the scheme and renewing its focus on supporting community owned and driven services and projects. These changes shaped COGS quite significantly and included:

- a reduction in the size of the NCC from 12 to 5 members
- national coordination of elections for LDC members
- provision of training by the Department for LDC and NCC members
- a reduction in the number of LDCs from 41 to 37
- compulsory public accountability meetings changed to non-compulsory public meetings that set local priorities, combined with the introduction of an Accountability Report
- Regional funding allocations changed (funds are allocated to LDCs in the following way: 80% is allocated based on the area's deprivation index rating, 10% based on their isolation within the area and 10% at the NCC's discretion)
- Implementation of new guidelines and policies.

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<sup>9</sup> These changes are recorded in the Cabinet minute SDC Min (03) 10/6.

## Objectives for the COGS evaluation

- 61 The objectives for the evaluation were identified by the Department. The main purpose of the evaluation was to assess the extent to which COGS is operating as effectively as possible and achieving results in and for the community. The objectives were to:
- determine the value of COGS for government and for the community (including the effectiveness of the funding model)
  - examine how COGS is operating in communities and how this impacts on the outcomes that are being achieved
  - understand the unique nature of the COGS funding model, and consider which aspects of the model should be retained, improved or might be expanded to other funding schemes
  - investigate the effects of the 2003-04 changes to COGS, and determine whether these changes have achieved their desired intent.
- 62 The objectives are listed in order of importance. The evaluation placed the most emphasis on the objectives listed first, with a lesser emphasis on the final objective.

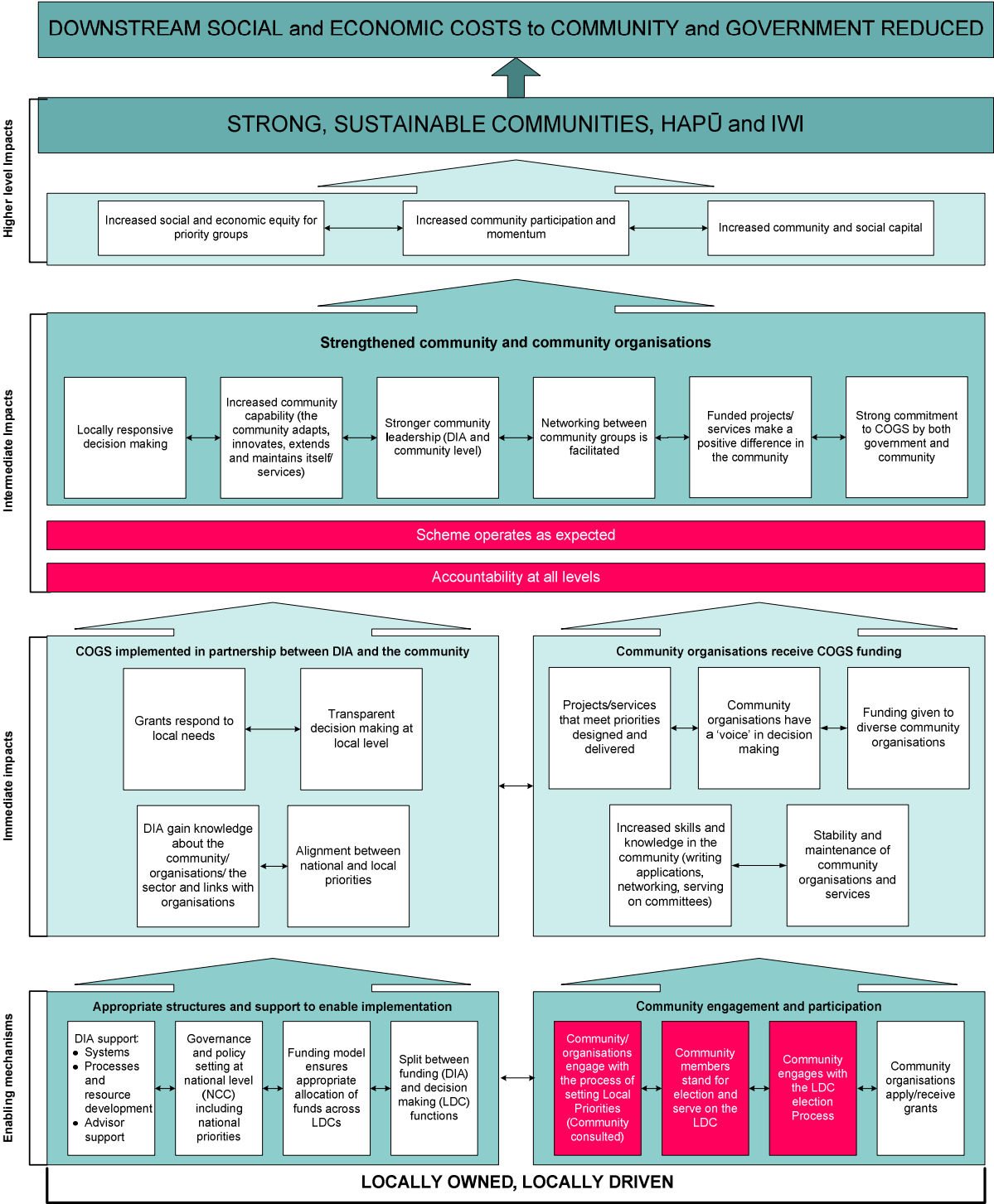
## Outcomes framework for COGS

- 63 The evaluation is based on an outcomes framework which has been developed and refined throughout the evaluation. The outcomes framework builds on the Department's original Theory of Change and shows the expected immediate and intermediate impacts that are expected to ultimately contribute to the high level impacts identified by the Department.<sup>10</sup>
- 64 The outcomes identified at each level of the framework are expected to **contribute** to the outcomes at the subsequent level. Because of the wide range of factors contributing to community outcomes, there is not a direct causal link between each level. Similarly, the levels do not equate to elapsed time; although COGS has been operating for longer than 20 years, this does not necessarily mean that the higher level impacts should be achieved. Rather, the framework should be interpreted in this way:
- immediate impacts: these are closest to the enabling mechanisms (the COGS scheme itself), therefore we would expect to see COGS making a strong contribution at this level, evident during every COGS funding round

<sup>10</sup> Note that the high level impacts are not necessarily well known by all of the COGS stakeholders, ie LDC members and community organisations.

- intermediate impacts: if the immediate impacts are achieved, we would expect to see good evidence of COGS having an impact at this level, over time we would expect impacts at this level to become more established and visible
- higher level impacts: these outline society wide ideals; if COGS is operating successfully, we would expect that COGS would be one of a large number of contributors to this level, the strength and visibility of COGS' contribution to this level is likely to fluctuate over time as different factors change (eg the state of the economy, employment levels, presence/absence of other funders).

Figure 3: COGS outcomes framework



## Key challenges for the evaluation

65 As outlined above, the main purpose of the evaluation is to ensure COGS is operating as effectively as possible and achieving results in and for the community. Understanding the location of COGS within the wider funding and community development picture identifies a number of challenges for achieving this. Key challenges for identifying outcomes for COGS include:

- **The diversity in the nature of initiatives/programmes funded by COGS.** Each of the initiatives/programmes funded contributes to desired outcomes in distinct ways. Funded organisations range from childcare, to support groups for the elderly, cultural organisations, budget Advisory services and youth groups; and each organisation has its own distinct objectives.
- **The relatively small scale of the impacts that many of the individual community organisations have on their wider community.** Given the size of the grants (the average grant in 2008 was \$3,885) it is not reasonable to expect to see evidence of impact in the wider community from every COGS grant.
- **The relative contribution of COGS in the broader context of community funding.** Whilst COGS represents a significant investment in communities, there are many local and central government agencies such as the Ministry of Social Development, Creative Communities New Zealand, other Department funding schemes, Sport and Recreation New Zealand (SPARC) and the non-Government Organisation (NGO) and philanthropic sectors that contribute to communities and share the longer term outcomes identified in the outcomes framework. Impact at a community level is likely to come as a result of the actions of many rather than any particular agency or funder.
- **The diversity of the organisations being invested in.** COGS invests in more than 3,600 different organisations a year and whilst they have a common community focus, the size of these organisations and their reliance on COGS funding varies significantly. For some organisations COGS funding is a significant source of funding, while for others it is much less important.

### 3 Key findings – the enabling mechanisms of COGS

This section presents findings relating to the bottom layer of the outcomes framework:

- Outline of the key components of the enabling mechanisms (the COGS process)
- Assessment of the enabling mechanisms, focusing on:
  - the Department's contribution (structures and support)
  - the community's contribution (engagement and participation)
- Summary: strength of the enabling mechanism of COGS.

#### Key components of the enabling mechanisms – the COGS process

- 66 The outcomes framework depicts the foundations of COGS as being made up of two sets of 'enabling mechanisms':
- structures and support provided by the Department including: support (systems, processes and resource development, training, and Departmental Advisors); governance and policy setting (including the national priorities); allocation of funds across the LDCs; and a split between the Department's role and that of the LDC
  - community engagement and participation (through the setting of local priorities, standing and voting in the LDC elections and applying for grants).
- 67 The programme is designed to have a clear split between what the Department provides (structures, funding and support) and the assessment and decision making function which lies with the community (through the LDC). The aim of this split is to devolve decision making **for** the community **to** the community, and the evaluation found that this split is widely understood by all parties. Almost all community organisations that received a grant knew that the funds were administered by the Department and that they were distributed by LDCs made up of local people.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Community Organisations questionnaire, q 9 (items 1 and 2), 97% and 96% agreement.

## The Department: structures and support to enable implementation

- 68 The Department plays a number of roles in the implementation and operation of COGS. This section focuses on the following:<sup>12</sup>
- support – including systems, processes and resource development, training for LDC members and the role of the Department’s Advisors
  - setting of national priorities.

### Support provided by the Department for COGS

#### Systems, processes and resource development

- 69 Since the 2003-05 changes, the support role for the Department has been strengthened with the implementation of new systems, processes, and operational policies. In doing this it was acknowledged that a balance needed to be struck between national prescription and local autonomy.<sup>13</sup> Overall, we found strong evidence that local autonomy co-exists alongside these new systems – the differing ways that LDCs make decisions within the overall system is discussed in Section 4.
- 70 The new systems and processes include guidelines, standards, operational policies and templates provided by the Department to LDC and as a result the COGS process is run consistently across the country. Feedback was generally positive about the clarity that resulted from comprehensive process manuals that outline each step for LDC members; the tool to guide the assessment of individual applications; and templates for meetings, accountability reports and newsletters to the community. Particularly for LDCs with predominantly new members, guidelines and support from Advisors and the Department is invaluable.

The support is incredible. From the day that I started it has been total support [from the Department] they have prepared everything well for us. That lightens the load. (LDC Chair)

<sup>12</sup> Aspects of the enabling mechanisms that have not been specifically evaluated include wider governance issues including the operation of the NCC and the way that the Department allocates funds to the LDCs. The Department has recently conducted its own evaluation of LDCs’ perceptions of the allocation of funds.

<sup>13</sup> Helping to make a real difference: A report on issues and options for the operation of the Community Organisations Grants Scheme (COGS), J R Consulting Group, November 2003.

- 71 A small amount of less positive feedback was received about the templates for meetings and newsletters. In these cases, it was felt that the system had become overly rigid and bureaucratic at the expense of allowing local ways of doing things.

I think they are good as a guide but they are very frustrating to use. There needs to be some local flexibility in there because you want to inject the local flavour and there is no local flavour. (Department Advisor)

- 72 The development of the current online application process (Grants Online, or GOL) was also seen as positive – community organisations find it easy to use, Advisors reported that it reduced their workload (through the reduction of data entry) and LDC members find having all information online speeds up the decision making process.

### Training for LDC members

- 73 Training is provided by the Department at the beginning of each LDC three-year cycle, following the election period and before the first LDC meeting. The training is regionally based and brings together LDC members from across a region. The size of the training sessions vary, with some including a number of regions and others just one.

- 74 The training is based on a series of modules covering COGS processes and issues that might arise and generally lasts for two days. The Advisors run the training using a training pack provided by the Department. Although each training session is based on the pack, the ways the Advisors run the sessions differ, some favour presentations, others discussions and some bring in guest speakers and use role plays.

- 75 LDC members who are not able to attend the training (including those who are co-opted on to a committee part-way through the term) are given the training pack to work through the modules on their own. The fact that face-to-face training is only held once per LDC term was mentioned by a small number as a negative aspect of the system. Some LDC members also expressed a need for a refresher course part-way through their term (ie once they have had a chance to put into practice what they were initially taught).

- 76 Despite the variation in the way the training is provided, the online survey showed that it is valued by the majority of LDC members.

- 87% of members said they attended training, of these 96% found it useful or very useful.

It is really exciting because you get to suddenly meet a whole bunch of people from all these different regions in Auckland who are involved in all these different groups ... you get lots of ethnicities... it is just awesome. It is a real eye opener ... The training itself is about a lot of Self Awareness and

dealing with people of all cultures. Developing confidence, thinking on the spot and it is a lot of really good personal training in a sense. (LDC member)

- 77 Feedback on the value of the training was more mixed from the case studies – a minority of Advisors and LDC members reported that they didn't think the training was a very good use of their time. Positive outcomes identified from the training included:
- the chance to meet and get to know the members of your committee and other committees
  - learning from the experiences of members with previous experience
  - developing new skills
  - building confidence and expectations about the role
  - electing a chair for each committee
  - a feeling of being rewarded or receiving a perk (training often involves staying at a hotel and meals are provided).

### Role of the Department's Advisors

- 78 The Advisor's main role is to support the LDCs to distribute funds to communities.<sup>14</sup> However the role of an Advisor also includes a range of tasks additional to this support role, including :
- assisting with the election process at a local level
  - providing information and assistance on COGS processes (including the application process, Grants Online) and the use of national priorities
  - supporting LDC meetings and members and compiling newsletters
  - ensuring accountability reports are returned and compliance checked
  - scheduling and organising the public meetings.

She has a full in-depth understanding of applicants, organisations, their financials, is able to give them advice on matters relating to voluntary organisations and funding applications in general. Rather than just straight advice on COGS. She covers a wider view, she is very good at that. Almost without exception people will go and visit her and say "she has a great head". (LDC member)

- 79 The profile of Advisors varied greatly, a minority of Advisors only work on COGS while others have a range of other duties most usually including Lottery grants or Community Development. Advisors bring a range of experience levels to the role, a

<sup>14</sup> This support includes a range of things as shown on figure 18 in Appendix 3. Support commonly includes checking the details of applications, identifying whether an organisation is new, if there are concerns about an organisation and whether or not direct contact is advised.

small number have been COGS Advisors since the beginning of the scheme while most have come from other jobs both inside and outside of the Department. Advisors who have strong community networks actively used and continued to develop their networks through their COGS role. Their networks are a key part of finding community people to stand for the LDC (this is discussed below – under community participation).

- 80 The scheme is designed to have a clear demarcation between the Advisors' support and the decision making by the LDCs. The interaction between the two is further discussed in the following section, but it should be noted here that almost half of the LDC members said that advice/input from the Advisor strongly or very strongly influenced the way their committee made decisions.

## Setting of national priorities

- 81 The COGS national priorities are set by the Department and are designed to ensure that funding is distributed to community organisations that support and/or serve the needs of a wide cross section of the community. The national priority groups are: Māori, women, Pacific communities, other ethnic communities, older people, the rurally isolated, people with disabilities, families, youth and children, the unemployed.
- 82 Consistent feedback was received that while the national priorities cover the necessary groups, they are too broad to be usefully applied. While this means that every group can potentially meet the priorities, this does not assist LDCs in their decision making. The breadth of the national priorities also means that community organisations are not encouraged or motivated to shape their services or activities in any particular direction, and simply continue to offer the same services.
- 83 Many LDC members reported being unsure about how the national priorities relate to local priorities, particularly in cases where the local priorities are different to the national ones. This is further discussed in Section 4.

There are national priorities set down by the Government. Following the national priorities, in the communities, we ask the communities at the public meetings, what local priorities have you got concerns about and we've developed a whole range of local priorities and they are the ones that we go by, not the national ones. No, national priorities are not a constraint, they're broad enough. (LDC Chair)

I think [national priorities] are a good guideline, but they are quite 'broad', they pretty much cover everyone. It means that no-one is excluded ... so the local priorities become more important. (Department Advisor)

## The community: engagement and participation in the COGS process

- 84 The outcomes framework identifies the key ways that the community is expected to support and contribute to the operation of COGS. These are through the setting of local priorities, standing and voting in the LDC elections and applying for grants.

### Setting of local priorities

- 85 The local priority setting process is visible to community organisations and valued by them. High numbers of community organisations reported that they are aware of local priorities being set annually (78%) and that they feel it is important to participate in the process (80%). However this strength of feeling is not matched by the level of **actual** community organisation participation:

- only 51% of organisations agreed that they actively participate in the COGS local priority setting process (with 11% disagreeing)
- only 44% of organisations said they actually attended the last public meeting.

- 86 In areas where the priority setting process is not well known, the process tends to involve the reading out of existing local (or national) priorities at the annual public meeting and an opportunity for community organisations to give feedback if they wish. In most areas however, the community organisations will be asked to identify areas of need or priority and/or to discuss areas that have previously been identified. In areas where the process is most elaborate, community organisations may be split into groups and/or given the opportunity to vote and prioritise options.

They will ask “what area would you like to see the money going towards this year?” Because I am from the Toy Library I will say “children”, if children are not mentioned then we are not going to be on that top level for getting the funding. You want to make sure that it gets put forward. (Community organisation)

[The process is] not too explicit. It is put to the meeting and it is discussed, people have a chance for input and generally speaking there are no arguments. It is all commonsense really. (LDC member)

- 87 Despite the variations in process, and relatively low levels of attendance, LDC members believed that the local priorities that are being identified are a good reflection of the needs of the community (82% of LDC members agreed or strongly agreed). However the case studies found little evidence of local priorities changing or developing over time, isolated examples included adding travel or youth to a list or a reordering of existing broad priorities.
- 88 This indicates that neither the community nor the LDC members are reflecting on their community’s changing, social, economic and demographic circumstances. This points

to the need for LDC members to be provided with additional training about local priorities, including how they should be identified and used, and the potential for local priorities to shape the provision of local services.

To tell you the truth I think that setting our priorities is a bit of a [joke]. Because they are pretty well always the same aren't they? (LDC member)

- 89 The variations in priority setting processes appear to suit the needs of the different areas, with strong agreement that the local processes to identify priorities are effective:
- 85% of LDC members and 88% of community organisations felt that the process is effective at identifying appropriate local priorities and the communities' needs.
    - A difference in opinion was evident in one area, 18% of community organisations from the Wellington LDC felt that the process was not very effective<sup>15</sup>
  - 90% of LDC members felt that the community organisations that attended meetings participated fully in the setting of local priorities.
- 90 The case study feedback indicated that for many organisations and LDCs, the value of the priority setting process is not in the provision of guidance for allocation, but rather the process is a useful focus for the public meetings – bringing people together and providing a constructive and interesting avenue for discussion.

### ***Setting of local priorities – other methods***

- 91 When asked whether local priorities were set in any other way, 30% of LDC members said they were. The main method identified was that they were set by the LDC (usually at the beginning of their allocation meeting) utilising their local knowledge, questionnaires that were sent out, and/or information from other (eg local government) sources.

## **Community participation in the LDC**

- 92 Community participation in the LDC is a key component in achieving devolution of decision making to the community. The community can either nominate and vote for LDC members, or serve on the committee themselves. As outlined above, LDC members are responsible for a number of crucial COGS processes including the setting of local priorities, assessing applications and making funding decisions for their local community.

<sup>15</sup> 51 responses were received from the Wellington region. The average number of responses from community organisations over all of the LDCs was 49.

## Standing for election to the LDC

- 93 The scheme has been designed to get as broad a base of community involvement as possible. Any community organisation can nominate an individual to stand for election with the intention that elected members reflect the community's composition. In reality, only a sub-set of the community participates in the process and the community as a whole has only limited knowledge of who is on the committee.
- 94 Visibility of COGS committee members is relatively high amongst the community organisations that receive grants. Two thirds knew at least one of the COGS LDC members. The nature of the assessment process, elections, local priority setting and connection of LDC members to their communities helps maintain the profile of LDC members in the community.
- 11% of community organisations knew most/all of their committee members
  - 55% knew a few or one of their committee members
  - 28% didn't know any of their committee members.<sup>16</sup>

## Nominations

- 95 The nomination and election of LDC members is nationally coordinated (prior to the 2003-05 changes this was done regionally as vacancies arose). Each committee is made up of between five and seven members that may serve up to two consecutive terms. Prior to 2003 LDC committees were as large as 12 members, elections were held on a rolling basis and members were required to stand down after a period of one term.
- 96 Community organisations are invited to nominate members to serve on the committee, and this is a key way that the scheme aims to achieve broad community involvement. In actual fact however, wider community involvement in the nomination process is limited with nominations not being easily generated and the community (and LDC members themselves) not necessarily being aware of the nomination and election process.
- 97 Advisors report that they work extremely hard to find community members to stand on the committee – because they find this so difficult, efforts usually stop once the minimum number has been found, meaning that elections are not required. Finding community members to stand is a balancing act between finding the 'best' possible nominees and finding community members who are willing. Advisors told us that their community networks are crucial for finding nominees. Some LDC members also

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<sup>16</sup> The likely reasons for this include: these organisations not being personally visited by an LDC member (ie either no contact was made or it was via phone call) and/or the person who filled out the survey not being involved in the assessment process (ie someone else in the organisation dealt with an LDC member).

reported that they felt a degree of obligation and pressure to stand (to either help out the Advisor or to fill a vacuum in the community).

Sometimes you wait for the nominations to come in because you are told by the Department that they will advertise etc, but you don't get the nominations.  
(Department Advisor)

- 98 When asked how they were nominated 52% of LDC members said that their own community organisation had nominated them. The case study feedback would indicate that in many instances, this is likely to have been at the prompting of the Advisor. Other ways that LDC members were nominated included being approached by:
- an existing/old committee member (20%)
  - a community organisation (not their own) (14%)
  - someone from DIA (11%).
- 99 When asked about nominations for the LDC, community organisations revealed a rather ambivalent attitude:
- 85% said they had not nominated anyone for the last election
  - 32% said they would consider nominating someone from their organisation, with a further 42% saying they would 'maybe' consider nominating someone.
- 100 There was general agreement that the difficulties in getting nominees reflected both general apathy in the community, and a degree of volunteer fatigue with the same minority filling a variety of voluntary roles in communities.

### Participating/voting in the LDC elections

- 101 As outlined above, nationally coordinated elections have only been in place since the 2003-05 changes. The Department has undertaken to ensure that there is a balance of gender, ethnicity, age, geographical representation and skills on each LDC by reserving the option to co-opt up to two additional members for an LDC if an imbalance needs to be rectified.
- 102 Advisors work extremely hard to ensure there is balanced representation and many noted it was particularly difficult to ensure appropriate Māori representation: 53 LDC members identified as Māori in the online survey, spread across 27 of the 37 LDCs. The survey of LDC members shows that the members who are currently serving on the committees are predominantly older people, female and of NZ European ethnicity
- 103 With the limited number of nominations that are received, elections are often not required – 58% of LDC members said that they were not actually elected for this

reason (either the exact numbers or less were nominated or the nominees decided amongst themselves). Only 32% of LDC members said that they were elected.

I had to fill out the application form, there were only just enough nominations so it didn't have to go to vote. There was no voting. (LDC member)

- 104 The small number of LDC members that were elected is reflected in the number of community organisations who said they voted in the last election – 16% said they voted, and a further 20% couldn't remember whether they did or not. The impetus/knowledge to vote is not necessarily there either – only 18% of community organisations said that they'd ever had anybody on the committee.
- 105 The rolling election process that occurred prior to the changes ensured that committees would always contain a mix of experienced and inexperienced members. Whilst the new system does not guarantee this happens there is evidence to suggest that the new system continues to result in a committee with mixed experience. Only 14 LDC members that responded to the survey said their committee was mainly new members and 8 of these came from three committees. Committee members noted they discussed the issue of continuity amongst themselves when an election was approaching and in some instances would reach agreement about who should stand again.

## Applying for COGS grants

- 106 COGS applications are accepted annually. Applications can be submitted online using Grants Online (GOL) or via hard copy. The GOL system was introduced in 2005 following the changes to COGS and stores organisations' details with the application and makes the relevant details available for the accountability reports and future applications, reducing the need for details to be re-entered. The GOL system is also used by DIA Advisors to enter in hard copy applications. A verification process is in place in order to track who enters the application, ie the Advisor or the organisation. Advisors play an important role in supporting organisations to make applications, making themselves available to assist with the completion of applications. In one area the Advisor made DIA computers available so applicants could complete the forms online at the local office and seek help as they did so.

## Ease of applying

- 107 83% of organisations surveyed reported completing their application online, this is inline with the DIA figures for online applications. Two thirds of organisations believed the application process was very easy or easy, with only 7% of organisations believing the process was difficult or very difficult (this was similar regardless of whether the application was completed online or by paper).

- 108 Only 28% of those surveyed sought help when completing their application. The majority of those that did seek help received assistance from DIA (64%), or within their organisations (31%). Other sources of help when applying included other organisations that had applied and LDC members.
- 109 Organisations spoken to as part of the case studies found the ease of the application process similar to other grants such as Lottery and felt the information being asked for was appropriate. What differentiated the COGS process from other application processes was the ability to speak face to face with an LDC member as part of the assessment process, along with the support that could be accessed through DIA. As a result many applicants said they felt completing the COGS applications helped them build confidence and improve their ability to complete application forms.
- 110 The annual cycle of the application process suits some organisations well, coinciding with their budgeting, financial year and planning cycles. Others noted it was difficult when alignment didn't occur and when all funders were 'out of sync' it can be hard to predict what will be needed. All acknowledge that moving to a multi-round or continual cycle had both pro's and con's. LDC members were generally happier with a single funding round from a workflow management and assessment perspective.

### Accountability requirements

- 111 Successful applications must complete an accountability report that details the spending of the grant in accordance with the spending applied for. Subsequent grants are withheld until the accountability requirements have been fulfilled; as a result of this some organisations must complete an interim accountability report, if the spending of their COGS grant falls after the July application cut off time. This can generate significant work for both the Advisor and the organisation.
- 112 Previously the accountability process also required applicants to attend the public meeting (as mentioned above). There are mixed views about this change and its impact on attendance and participation at the public meeting. The removal of accountability from the public meetings has also limited the feedback loop to LDC members. Previously at the public meetings the LDC members could see the results of decisions and could also be held accountable by the community for their decisions.
- 113 Overall, the current accountability process was seen as appropriate and similar to that of other grants. While only 27% of community organisations had completed their accountability report at the time of the survey<sup>17</sup>, 71% of these organisations believe the process was easy or very easy (a further 22% believed it was neither easy nor difficult).

<sup>17</sup> Grant recipients are required to return an Accountability Report when the grant has been fully spent, or 12 months after the grant has been approved, or within ten working days of applying for another COGS grant – whichever is soonest.

- 114 Advisors had more mixed views about the accountability process given the workload generated for the Advisors in reviewing, checking, and following up on accountability reports. There was a sense that the process could be streamlined, eg by requiring different levels of accountability and checking for different sized grants or by limiting the information required whilst still retaining an appropriate level of rigor. A small number of organisations spoken to noted that requirements in regards to accounts were onerous for very small organisations and/or organisations that were not required to have their accounts audited.

## Summary – the enabling mechanisms of COGS

- 115 As outlined at the beginning of this section, the outcomes framework splits the enabling mechanisms into two complementary sides:
- mechanisms that are the responsibility of the Department: appropriate structures and support to enable implementation
  - mechanisms that require community engagement and participation: setting of local priorities, standing and voting in the LDC elections and applying for grants.

## The Department – structures and support

- 116 The structures and support are being implemented as intended, and overall, they are relevant to COGS and provide value.
- 117 The support functions that are provided by the Department were found to be operating well, indicating that an appropriate balance is currently being struck between the need for national guidelines/consistency and local autonomy. However it should be noted that there will always be the potential for tension to arise in situations where local autonomy is possible, but that the Department has chosen to go with what could be described as a 'high trust' model.
- 118 The most visible component of the Department's support is the role of the regionally based Advisor. The Advisors play an integral role in supporting the LDCs, acting as a much needed link through the provision of information, guidance and support. The evaluation found that the Advisors are highly valued by the LDCs.
- 119 There was evidence that Advisors do have some indirect influence over mechanisms that should be wholly in control of the community side of the process. Although they are careful not to actively influence decisions, their advice and input is seen as a key input by many of the LDC members - almost half of the members said that advice/input from the Advisor strongly or very strongly influenced the way their committee made decisions. Advisors also play a pivotal role in determining the

composition of LDCs, primarily through identifying appropriate people to stand for the committees.

- 120 These blurred boundaries tend to be the result of Advisors utilising strong community networks and extensive knowledge of the COGS process to support LDCs to operate well, and should not necessarily be viewed as a negative outcome. However, improved clarity around the Advisor role is needed to ensure the integrity of the role is maintained.

## The community – engagement and participation

- 121 The evaluation found areas for concern around the level of community wide engagement and participation.
- 122 While the intention of allowing local communities to set their own priorities is sound, there is room for improvement. There are low levels of actual community engagement in the process, there is no consistency or reliability in the way the priorities are set and there is confusion about how the priorities are supposed to be used (particularly regarding their relationship to the national priorities). Despite this, communities and LDCs seem relatively happy with the priorities that do get set – this is likely to be related to the fact that their actual use is unclear and the national priorities are sufficiently broad enough to capture everyone.
- 123 Community engagement in the election process, particularly voting, was too low to be judged a success. Adequate levels of community participation in the LDCs is an integral aspect of devolving decision making to the community. The pool of community organisations prepared to stand for election is small – only one third of organisations who receive funding were prepared to consider nominating someone. An even smaller number of community organisations had actually voted in the last election (16%) and knowledge of who is on LDCs was very limited among organisations who receive grants.

## Conclusion

- 124 The enabling mechanisms operate well enough for COGS to function, in particular, the structures and support provided by the Department. However, the other side of the mechanism, community engagement and participation, is not operating optimally.
- 125 The main way that the wider community currently participates in COGS is through applying for grants, where the incentive to participate is most obvious (ie the chance to secure funding). The fact that there is not widespread community engagement and participation in other crucial community mechanisms represents missed opportunities for the community and undermines the very essence of COGS.

- 126 The reasons the wider community is not highly engaged in COGS are likely to include lack of community capital, general apathy and/or volunteer fatigue. To overcome this, the Department should commit to giving the scheme a higher profile at local level – not just the availability of grants, but also the engagement and participation opportunities that COGS provides, and to ensure that the incentives are high enough to motivate and encourage the community.

## 4 Key findings – the immediate impacts of COGS

This section presents findings relating to the immediate impacts of COGS as identified in the outcomes framework, focusing on:

- how decisions are made
- the transparency of local decisions
- the extent to which the Department gains knowledge about the community
- the diversity of community organisations who receive funding, and what they do with it
- Summary: assessment of the immediate impacts of COGS.

127 The outcomes framework identifies a range of immediate impacts under two headings:

- COGS is implemented in partnership between DIA and the community
- community organisations receive COGS funding.

128 This section looks at immediate outcomes in the 'partnership between DIA and the community' box by examining:<sup>18</sup>

- how decisions are made (to assess whether grants respond to local needs)
- the transparency of local decisions
- the extent to which the Department gains knowledge about the community.

129 Community organisations that receive funding are examined by looking at:<sup>19</sup>

- the diversity of community organisations who receive funding
- what community organisations do with their funding (to assess whether projects that meet priorities are designed and delivered, and whether the stability and maintenance of community organisations is achieved).

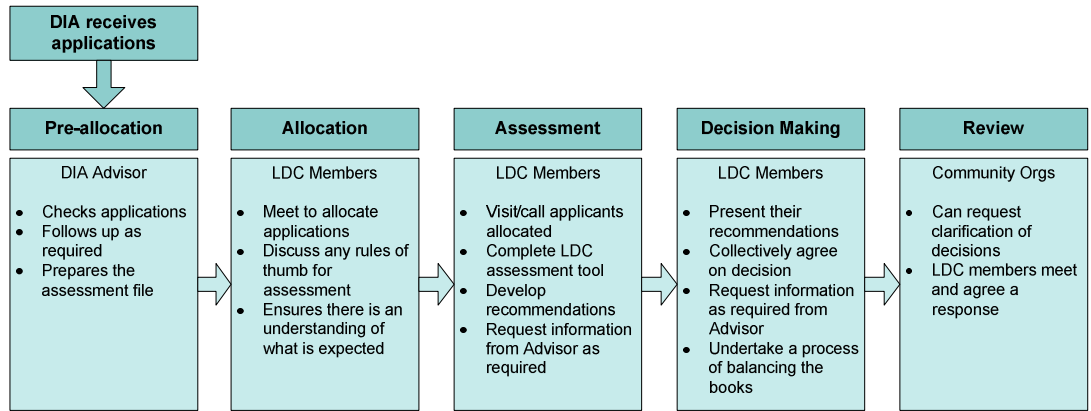
### How decisions are made

130 The decision making process is sequential and contains a number of steps that involve LDC members, DIA Advisors and community organisations. Figure 4 outlines the key steps in the process. Full details on the way the process actually operates are contained in Appendix 3.

<sup>18</sup> The alignment between national and local priorities is discussed briefly in the previous section and again in this one.

<sup>19</sup> Immediate impacts identified in the outcomes framework (and not discussed under this heading) include the community voice in decision making (discussed under how decisions are made, above), and increased skills and knowledge in the community (this will be discussed in the following section – intermediate impacts).

**Figure 4: The decision making process**



131 The decision making process has been designed to:

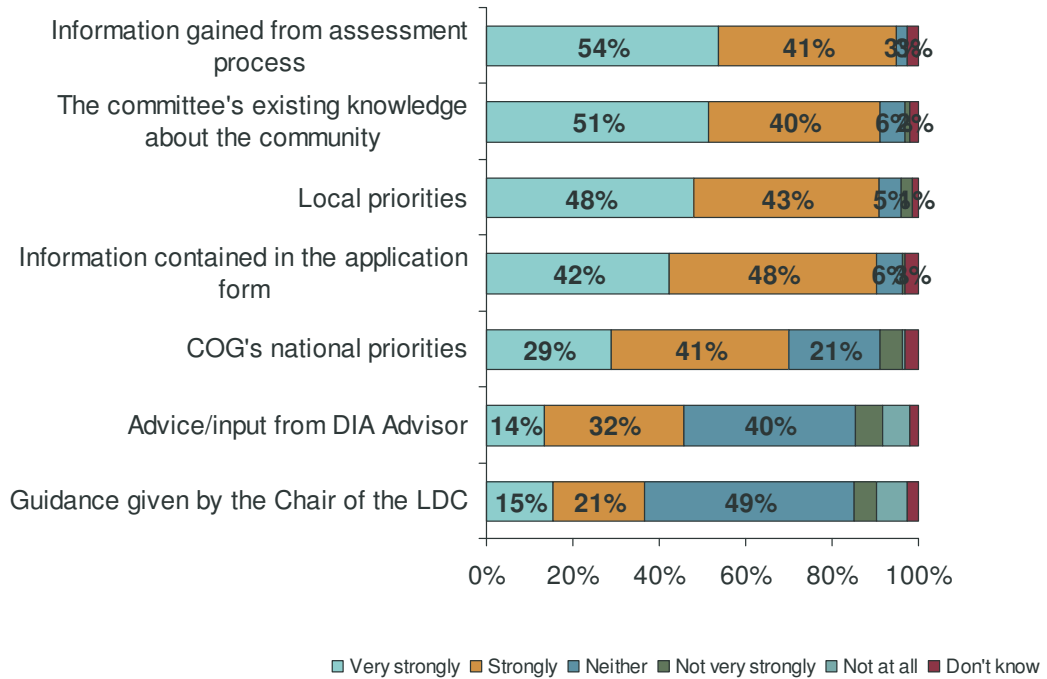
- ensure decision making responsibilities are totally devolved to the community
- recognise that the LDC members are volunteers; DIA needs to support the process to maximise efficiency and provide impartial information to assist assessment and decision making
- maximise the opportunity for LDC members to learn, through interviewing skills, community knowledge, sharing of ideas, meeting management and dealing with governance issues
- allow community organisations the opportunity to actively participate in the process.

132 The process assumes LDC members have the skills and knowledge to make good decisions for their community (developed through the training and/or part of their existing skill set).

### Factors influencing LDCs decisions

133 A wide range of factors influence how LDCs make decisions. In the online survey LDC members were asked how strongly a range of factors (identified in the case studies) influenced the decision making process. Figure 5 highlights the importance of the assessment process, along with the LDC's own knowledge and the local priorities in the decision making process.

**Figure 5: Factors that influence LDC decision making process**



Q22: How strongly do the following things influence the way your committee makes decisions?  
 Base: All LDC responses n=156

**Information from the assessment process is key**

134 The assessment process involves LDC members reviewing the applications they have been allocated and if deemed necessary, visiting and/or calling the organisation to discuss their application.

- 95% of LDC members said this locally collected information strongly or very strongly influenced their decision making.

135 Following the 2003-05 changes, the Department developed an LDC assessment tool to be used by the LDC members to record information collected during the assessment. The tool forms part of the quality assurance procedures and was designed to guide new LDC members as well as promote consistency in the process.

[the assessment tool] is a very useful guide and I think it is very good to go in with it and say "this is the formal part of the discussion we are going to have and I am sure you will understand there is a need to tick these boxes". They appreciate that after all they are looking for the money. (LDC member)

- 136 Information gained at the assessment process is a critical beginning point for decision making. The assessment process equips LDC members to present what they believe is the most appropriate and compelling case for each organisation. LDC members described their role at the decision making process as championing the organisations they assessed but acknowledged pragmatism was required as they weren't there to represent the organisation but rather, to present information about the organisation in light of what they know about the community's needs as a whole.
- 137 This pragmatism was reflected in the survey where over 90% of LDC members agreed that when conflicts arose about who to fund, the LDC was able to easily resolve the conflict.

We have our own 'bent' on what we are particularly supportive of. We bring that and in some ways that is what we are pushing for. But you have the checks and balances of other committee members saying "hey hang on a minute prove your case that you want to allocate this much". (LDC member)

### The LDC's existing knowledge about the community

- 138 LDC members generally believe their committees have appropriate skills and knowledge to make the right decisions for their communities. Over 90% of LDC members strongly agreed or agreed with the following statements about their committee:
- the members of our committee have enough community knowledge to make fair decisions
  - the members of our committee have the right skills to do a good job
  - I believe our committee generally makes good/appropriate decisions
  - there is a high degree of transparency in the way the committee makes decisions.

The LDC members are really well 'connected' and they understand all the other types of funding available too. (Department Advisor)

- 139 In addition to this, 99% of those surveyed were active members of a community organisation and over 90% (strongly agreed, or agreed) they personally had:
- strong community networks
  - a good understanding of key social issues facing their community
  - a good understanding of organisations in their community and what they were doing.

## Local priorities v national priorities

- 140 Although questions were raised over the robustness of the local priority setting process in the previous section, they were rated as more influential in decision making than national priorities (91% of LDC members said local priorities strongly or very strongly influenced their decisions, compared to 70% for the national priorities). This indicates that LDC members believe that local needs should be driving their decision making.
- 141 The way that local priorities are intended to be used however, was not clear to many LDC members (only 66% agreed/strongly agreed that they have a good understanding of how the COGS local priorities are used, and a further 10% disagreed). In particular, the way that the local priorities relate to the national priorities (most LDC members and community organisations saw the national priorities as being so broad that all community organisations should be included). When there were differences between the two priorities (eg if women were not identified as a local priority, while they are on the list of national priorities), different committees behaved in different ways:
- some would give precedence to the local priority (ie not fund an application if it didn't meet a local priority)
  - some felt unable to prioritise at all and treated all eligible applications equally
  - some would give funding to something that wasn't a local priority (because it was on the national list) but give the application less money than an application that explicitly meet a local priority.

## Advice/input from the Department Advisor

- 142 Figure 5 shows that 46% of LDC members said that advice/input from the Advisor strongly or very strongly influenced the way their committee made decisions<sup>20</sup>. The Department is clear that the main role of the Advisor is to support the LDCs to make their decisions, not to influence the decisions that are made. In actual practice, the Advisors do have a degree of influence on the way LDCs operated and ultimately made their decisions.

I think that the 'filtering' that is done through the office here is excellent. We have one or two committee members wanting to see the full set of financials for the organisations, but it is not necessary if it has gone through this office. (LDC member)

I felt that the new Chairperson wasn't always the 'leader' of the meeting and I wondered if that came down to the fact that it was a whole new committee... [they] didn't feel 'empowered' in the process ... and when there were 'gaps' ... there was too great an opportunity for [the Advisor's] input. (LDC member)

<sup>20</sup> LDC q 22 item 4.

- 143 The case studies showed that the nature of the influence was most likely to be the provision of relevant advice and/or information about particular organisations (eg their financial position). In some cases Advisors also provided direction on the types of decisions or parameters set or used by previous committees. The committee also uses the Advisor to provide guidance when knowledge gaps arise in regards to a particular sector or applicant (eg one LDC received an influx in applications from ECE [Early Childhood Education] centres, the Advisor investigated why and recommended that the LDC provide funding to ECE centres for things that fall outside of the current government funding contracts).
- 144 In all such cases the Advisors were careful to offer this as an input to the decision making process – never actually taking part in how individual decisions were made and ensuring that the ownership of the decision remained with the LDC.
- 145 The case studies indicate that Advisors’ advice is most likely to be an important influence for the following ‘types’ of LDCs:
- those that lacked COGS experience (ie were largely made up of members serving their first term) and who were therefore receptive to guidance
  - those that had an experienced Advisor, particularly those with extensive community networks and knowledge of individual organisations and/or those who had been with COGS over a long time period (five years or more).

### Guidance given by the Chair of the LDC

- 146 There are situations where a very strong individual, particularly if they are the chair of the LDC, will influence the decision making process quite significantly (as seen above 36% of LDC members agreed or strongly agreed the chair was influential in decision making). This could include a range of things such as offering interpretation of COGS guidelines and the setting of ground rules.

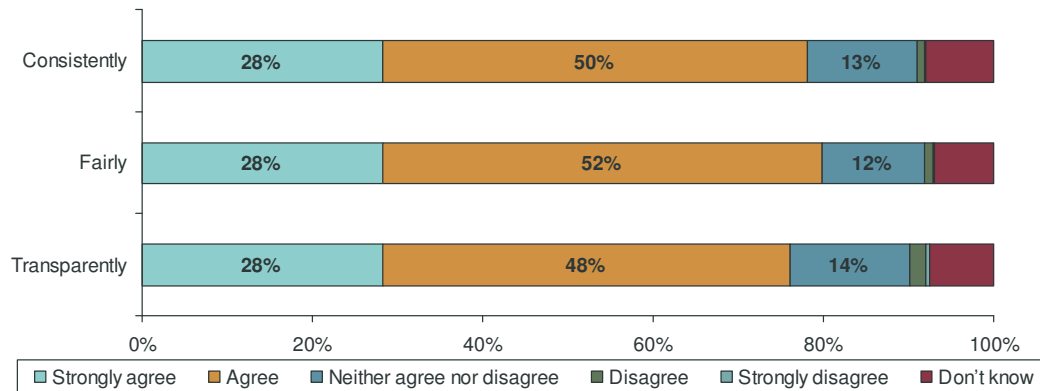
I prefer to give more money to fewer people, than dilute it to less money to a whole lot more people because I think the leverage is less ... I do it covertly. I haven't said to anybody that this should be one of our policies, I never have had to, and we debate each case on its merit. (LDC Chair)

There is a danger that [the process] allows for perhaps one or two people to dominate. Again a good Chairperson can handle that and [ours] does a pretty good job most of the time. (LDC member)

## Transparency of local decisions

147 Community organisations believe the COGS decision making process is consistent (78%), fair (80%) and transparent (76%). This is most likely to be a result of the trust built up during the visits and phone calls being made during the assessment process.

**Figure 6: Community Organisations’ perceptions of the LDC allocation process**



Q41: How strongly does your organisation agree or disagree with the following statements: Our COGS local distribution committee (LDC) allocates grants:  
 Base: All respondents (n=1800)

148 Given the low levels of wider community participation in the setting of local priorities and participating and voting for LDC elections, this indicates a high degree of faith in the LDCs by the community.

149 Community organisations showed sufficient understanding of the wider COGS process, giving further credibility to this result:

- community organisations were aware that the source of funding was DIA (97%) but that the funds were distributed locally (96%)
- community organisations were aware that local priorities were set annually in consultation with the community (78%), however interviews with organisations indicated that the depth of understanding around the process was quite variable.

## The Department gains knowledge about, and links with the community and its organisations

- 150 Analysis of the case study interviews revealed a number of benefits for the Department arising from COGS. These benefits can be summarised as:
- the accumulation of knowledge about communities at the Advisor level, this knowledge (of the types of organisations that are valued and used by the community, the presence and absence of particular services) could be a valuable input into ongoing community development efforts by the Department
  - direct linkages and relationships to individual community organisations through LDC members; arising from the provision of training and support provided for LDC members by the Department's Advisors
  - the goodwill generated by administering and funding a scheme that is community driven
  - enhanced profile and knowledge of the Department by a wider range of community members and organisations.

## Diversity of the community organisations who receive funding

- 151 COGS grants are used for a wide range of activities and services. In 2009 grants were given to a huge diversity of projects, services and activities for and involving all of the COGS priority groups. Examples include support and recreation for people with health and disability issues, activities for youth and elderly, respite services for carers, educational activities including early childhood and language instruction (English for speakers of other languages as well minority languages), ethnically based (including Māori and Pacific) cultural and social groups, support groups for other minority groups, transport and meal services.
- 152 Full details of the community organisations who received a grant in 2009 are contained in Appendix 2. The following tables present some of their key characteristics and show the wide diversity of organisations that were funded.

**Table 1: Key characteristics of community organisations who received a COGS grant in 2009**

Characteristic	Sample Profile
Type of organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Majority (94%) are local organisations</li> <li>remainder are head or regional offices</li> </ul>
Mix of staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>55% mainly volunteers</li> <li>27% even mix of paid and volunteers</li> <li>18% mainly paid staff</li> </ul>
Income total	
0-\$20,000	28%
\$20,001-\$100,000	37%
\$100,001-\$1,000,000	31%
\$1,000,000 +	4%
Funding sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Almost all organisations receive money from multiple sources</li> <li>40% receive funding from government agencies and this on average accounts for 51% of the total income</li> <li>82% received other grants</li> </ul>

153 Only 16 organisations of the total 1800 that responded listed COGS as their only funding source<sup>21</sup>, demonstrating that COGS works in combination with other funding sources. The table below shows the other funding sources that COGS organisations access and also the proportion of their income that source accounts for.

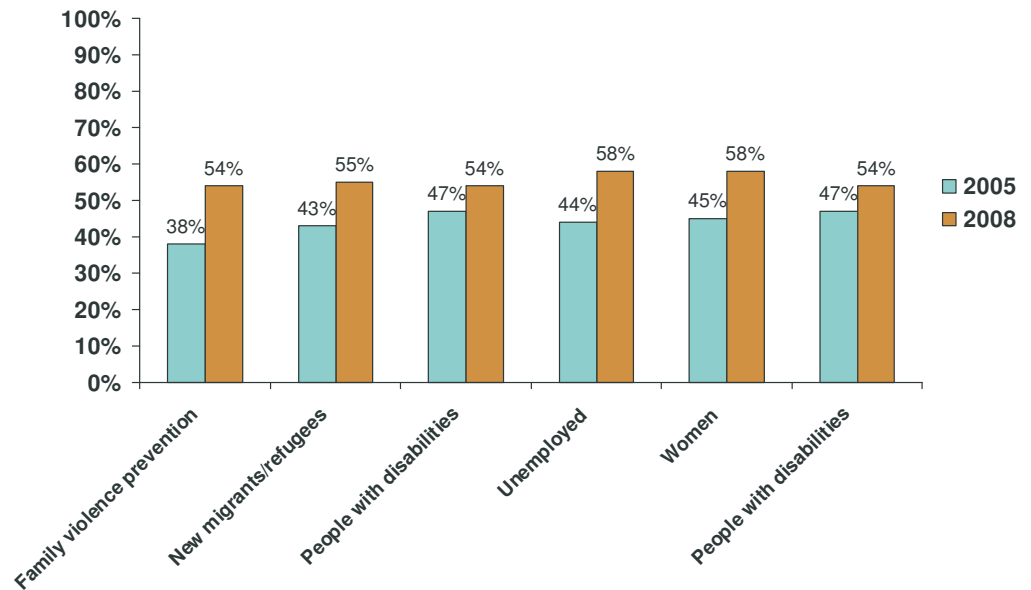
<sup>21</sup> Not only did they not receive other grants, these 16 organisations said that they did not receive funding from any other source (including fundraising etc).

**Table 2: Other sources of income received by community organisations who received a COGS grant in 2009**

Source	Frequency	Average proportion of Income
Membership fees	40.7%	15%
Interest on investments/investments	40.2%	4%
Cash donations e.g. bequeaths, street appeals	52.4%	12%
Fundraising activities e.g. sausage sizzles, raffles, gala days, concerts	54.2%	13%
Contracts with government agencies e.g. MSD, CYFS, MOH or the regional DHB	40.0%	51%
COGS grants	99.6%	14%
Other grants e.g. Lottery, Pub Charities, Tindall Foundation	82.1%	36%
Sponsorship	14.7%	9%
Other (please specify)	35.8%	35%

- 154 Identifying the sector that the organisation benefits is difficult as the majority of respondents indicated they worked across a very wide range of groups. As such there is little ability to differentiate if any key sectors are benefiting more or less from COGS grants. In the administrative data 61% said they worked across all ethnic groups, 13% said their main ethnic target group were Māori and 20% said New Zealand European. A further 3% identified Pacific peoples.
- 155 The figures below show the sectors that were identified on organisations' COGS applications as benefiting from the organisations' service(s). There has been an increase across all sectors, possibly suggesting organisations are now more universal in their targeting than in 2005 of organisations. The case studies found that community organisations believed that the more groups they could tick, the more likely they were to receive a grant.

**Figure 7: Groups in the community that access services provided by COGS recipients (as identified by community organisations on their COGS applications)**



Source: administrative data analysis

## Summary – the immediate impacts of COGS

- 156 The immediate impacts of COGS were discussed relating to four main areas:
- how decisions are made
  - transparency of local decisions
  - the Department gaining knowledge about and links with, the community and its organisations
  - diversity of the community organisations who receive funding.

157 Assessment of how decisions are made found clear evidence that the process is driven by local factors and influences. The process is dependent on local players and information gathered and assessed through methods that closely engage the community (eg phone calls and visits). The local flavour of the decisions is dependent on:

- the skill and community knowledge of the LDC members almost all of whom are active members in the community
- the fact that decisions are made by local people and local organisations have an opportunity to present their case to the decision makers

- decisions are made by a collective of people, ie by consensus, with no not just one person moderating the process.
- 158 All of these factors result in the decisions that are being made being perceived as transparent. Community organisations know who make decisions, they have an adequate understanding of why, and they are aware of other organisations who receive funding.
- 159 The evaluation also found evidence that the Department gains good knowledge of and links with the community. At present these linkages appear to be largely untapped and represent a potentially vast community development resource.
- 160 The evaluation also confirmed that COGS funding is going to a wide range of organisations – the majority of them volunteer based and with low incomes.

## Conclusion

- 161 Despite some identified weaknesses in the enabling mechanisms, immediate impacts are strong and clear. COGS grants are being distributed locally, to meet local needs, to a diverse range of organisations supporting the community. COGS is clearly meeting its intended goals at this level.

## 5 Intermediate impacts of COGS

This section discusses the intermediate level outcomes achieved by COGS, focusing on:

- funding projects that make a positive difference to the community
- strengthened community capability and leadership
- creating opportunities for networking between groups
- Summary: achievement of intermediate outcomes by COGS.

162 As outlined earlier in this report, COGS is designed to allow communities to drive the distribution of government funds, with the aim of helping communities, hapū and iwi become stronger and more sustainable. Before this ultimate outcome, COGS is also expected to contribute to a range of immediate and intermediate level outcomes all of which are presented on the outcomes framework (Figure 3).

163 The outcomes framework outlines the range of intermediate level outcomes that can be expected to be achieved if the immediate impacts were evident. The findings from the evaluation shows that sufficient components of the enabling mechanisms are working and that strong immediate impacts are being achieved.

164 The overarching intermediate impact as outlined in the outcomes framework is strengthening the community and community organisations, this is expected to be achieved through:<sup>22</sup>

- funding of projects that make a positive difference in the community.
- strengthened community capability and leadership
- creating opportunities for networking between community groups.

165 This section discusses the achievements of COGS in relation to the intermediate outcomes identified in the framework. Progress towards higher level impacts and outcomes are discussed and assessed in the following section on conclusions.

### Funding projects that make a positive difference to the community

166 As outlined in the previous section, a wide range of community organisations receive COGS grants for a diverse range of projects. Over half of all community organisations who receive a grant are mainly dependent on volunteers and most have relatively small incomes.

<sup>22</sup> Locally responsive decision making is discussed in the previous section.

## What COGS grants are used for

167 Community organisations frequently referred to COGS as the 'glue' that keeps them going. While the amount of a grant may not be large, the grants often fill important gaps that other funders won't pay for – eg photocopying, administrative costs and rent. Other funders are perceived as being more likely to pay for specific projects, while COGS was often described as filling in gaps to enable existing projects to be well supported and to operate well. This was often the case for organisations that receive funding from contracts with government departments.

A lot of groups say [COGS] is like the 'glue' that holds us together, and the COGS money can contribute to the rent, to the phone, petrol costs and that sort of thing. To them that is really important, whether it be \$2K or \$10K it is still an important part of their budget to help them operate. (Department Advisor)

Funding for overheads, admin, salaries is hard to find. There are a lot of things out there that you can apply for specific projects but they don't cover salaries. (Community organisation)

168 However COGS grants are also given for initiatives that other funders don't pay for, presumably this includes projects as well as meeting administrative and operational costs.

- 68% of community organisations said that COGS supports initiatives that other funding agencies won't (with a further 20% of organisations neither agreeing nor disagreeing or not knowing).

169 LDCs have the ability to give a Global contribution to an organisation.<sup>23</sup> This flexibility was seen as another unique characteristic of COGS, giving community organisations the ability to put their COGS grant to the best possible use once the results of all of their funding applications is known. Global contributions are then used to fill funding gaps wherever it would be most useful.

Now with global contributions they [organisations] can put it towards which part of their work hasn't got enough money from Lottery, Council or whatever. (Departmental Advisor)

But they will say "here is a [global] contribution to recognise what you need funding for and you can portion it as you need it". [Is that a good thing?] Yeah it is, for them to have the discretion to have 'no strings money' is superb. (Community organisation)

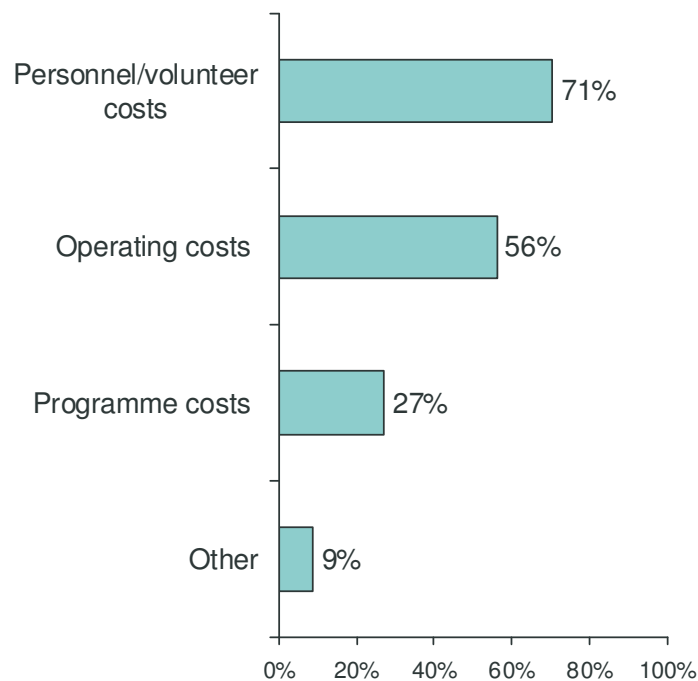
<sup>23</sup> A Global contribution can be used flexibly by an organisation and is not tied to a specific expenditure (though there are specified parameters about how it can be used). This is commonly used in situations where an organisation received two grants for (eg) photocopying. If the COGS grant was a global contribution, the organisation can then use the funds to cover another administrative cost.

## Types of costs COGS grants are used to fund

170 The online survey quantified the types of expenses that grants were actually used for. The most common expense was personnel/volunteer costs (eg wages, training, travel, volunteer reimbursements), followed by operating costs (eg rent, stationery, administration, advertising) and programme costs (eg venue hire, equipment hire, conferences, book, craft supplies).<sup>24</sup>

The main thing it does is that it makes the volunteers realise that they are appreciated. Because they are getting help with their costs and without that help it's extremely difficult for them. (LDC chair)

**Figure 8: What COGS grants fund**



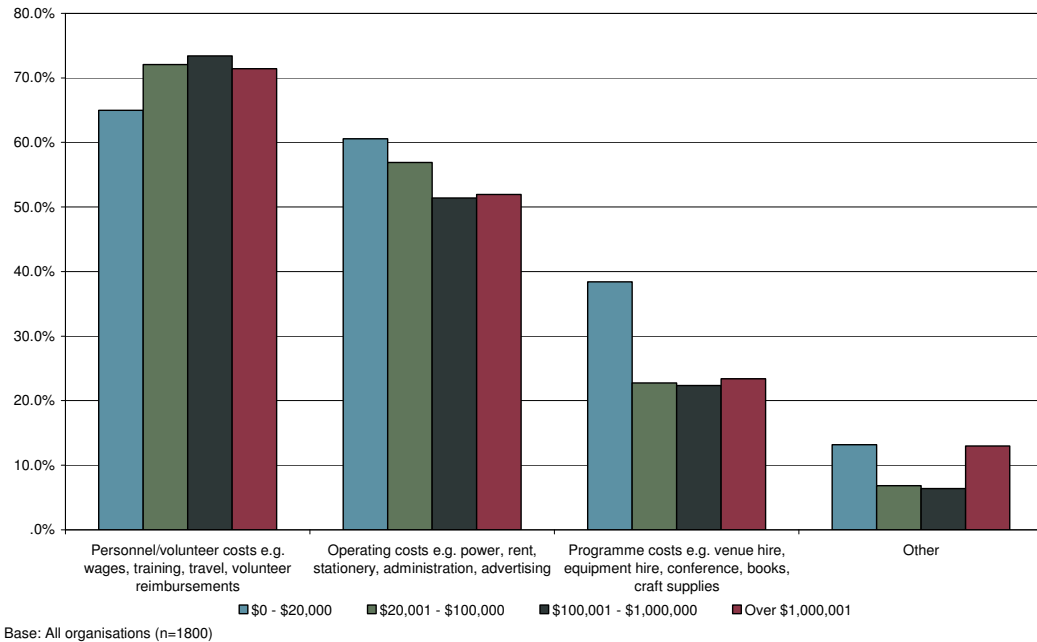
171 Figure 8 shows what COGS grants are used to fund, by community organisations with different income levels. The graph shows that community organisations with the lowest incomes are more likely to use their grant for programme costs than larger organisations. This is likely to be a reflection of their level of existing resources –

<sup>24</sup> The Department's administrative data records what purposes the grants were requested for, but not what they were actually used for, and so cannot be used here.

being small organisations they may not have their own venues or equipment and therefore need to use grants to pay for them.

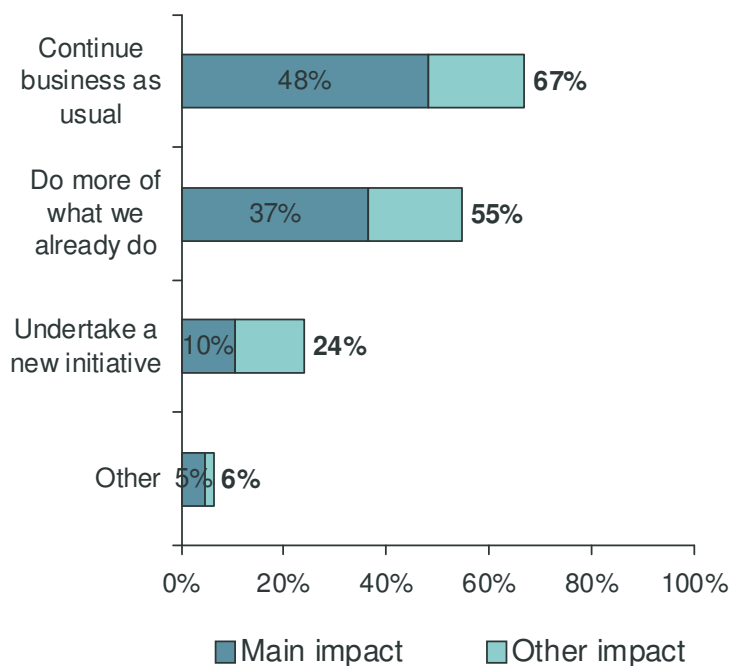
172 Figure 9 also shows that small organisations are slightly more likely to use their grants for operating costs than larger organisations, and slightly less likely to use grants for personnel/volunteer costs.

**Figure 9: What COGS grants fund - by organisations' income level**



173 Community organisations were also asked the effect their COGS grant had had on their 'business' or services. The most common responses indicate that COGS grants aren't often used for new initiatives, but rather to continue or extend what an organisation is already doing. This finding is consistent with the intention of the 2003/05 changes, with the refinements designed to support both new and established initiatives.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Cabinet minute SDC Min (03) 10/6

**Figure 10: What COGS grants allowed organisations to do**

174 Examination of those who said that undertaking a new initiative was the main impact of their COGS grant showed the following:<sup>26</sup>

- where a grant was used for a new initiative it was most likely to be used for programme costs (43% compared to 27% of all community organisations)
- very large community organisations were the most likely to undertake a new initiative (17% compared to 10% of all community organisations).

### Interaction between COGS grants and other forms of income

175 Analysis of community organisations' incomes confirmed that income from COGS is just a small part of organisations' total incomes.

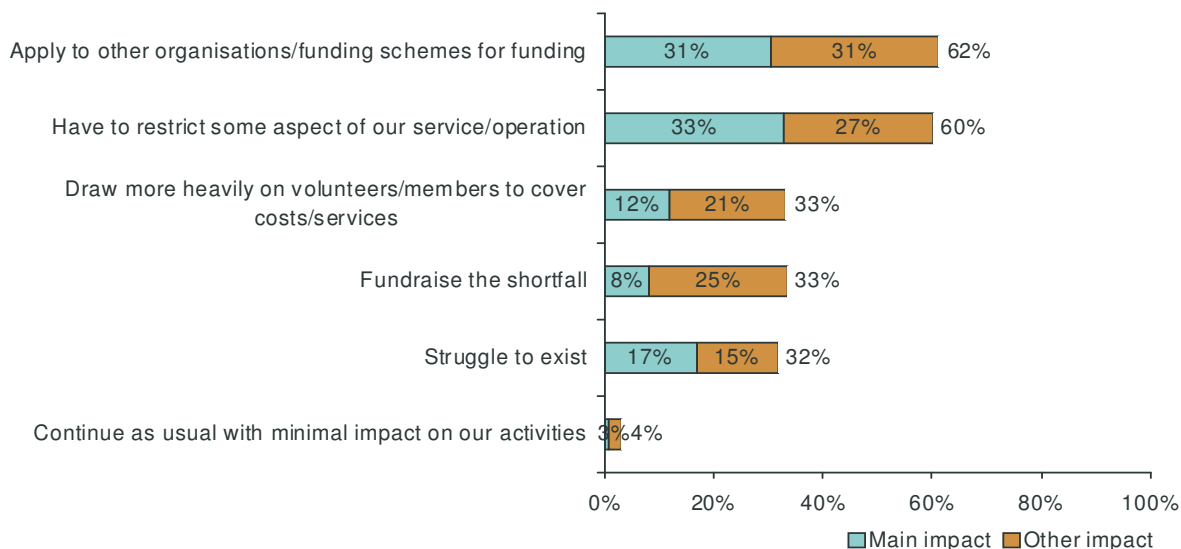
- 40% of organisations also had contracts with a government agency
- 82% of organisations receive other grants (eg Lottery, Pub Charities, Tindall Foundation)
- money was also commonly received from the community (fundraising 54%, donations 52% and membership fees 41%).

<sup>26</sup> No other significant results were found.

- 176 On average, the income received from COGS accounted for 14% of a community organisation's income. The fact that COGS grants (on average) constitute such a small part of an organisation's income may help to explain why so few grants are described as being used to undertake a new initiative. Even in cases where a grant may actually be used to support a new initiative, if the bulk of the funding for the project came from another source, the community organisation might not perceive the COGS grant as contributing to something new.
- 177 In addition to this, most COGS organisations are dependent on volunteers (55%). Organisations that have paid staff also commonly talked of working significant numbers of unpaid hours. Volunteer efforts can also be seen as a significant input into the running of a community organisation, reducing the amount of additional funding they need to secure.

### What would happen if COGS grants weren't available?

- 178 While virtually all community organisations said that COGS funding was very important to them (99%), most believed they would continue to exist and operate if they didn't receive a COGS grant:
- To be honest it is actually only \$2K, it is a drop in the ocean, it is no great impact this year. We would just carry on, it wouldn't make any difference  
(Community organisation)
- 179 'Struggle to exist' was chosen by a total of 32% of community organisations, but only 17% of community organisations chose it as the main impact.

**Figure 11: what would happen if your organisation did not receive COGS funding?**

180 However Figure 11 also shows that the loss of COGS funding is likely to have a significant effect on the services that organisations would be able to provide. The main impacts that community organisations anticipated from the loss of COGS funding were:

- one-third thought that the main impact would be a restriction of their services
  - I think it would be a huge loss. We would not be running – full-stop! – the workshops that are really, really needed in the community. (Community organisation, case study visit)
- almost three-quarters thought they would have to put more resources into fundraising or covering costs themselves (through volunteers or members); this would then be likely to affect resources that were available to actually provide services.
  - If the money stopped it would leave a big hole. Our resources would all have to go into fundraising. (Community organisation, case study visit)
  - I would have to try and get it from elsewhere like everybody else. Rather than meaning a shrinking of our services I would probably say [it would be] more of a lack of growth. (Community organisation, case study visit)

181 When discussing the impact that the loss of COGS would have, community organisations commonly talked about the complex range of funding sources they have (see Appendix 2). For many organisations, their funding mix changes from year to

year. Losing any one source of funding may not have a huge impact, but if another source of funding were lost at the same time then the result could be much more significant. The responses in Figure 11 therefore need to be looked at in this context – the actual effects of not securing COGS funding would be compounded by the other funding sources the organisation did or did not get at the same time.

When you look at [the effect of losing] 1K out of probably 200K, it is probably minimal. But all those 1K's add up. So that is where the crunch is. (Community organisation, case study visit)

### Characteristics of community organisations who believe they would struggle to exist without COGS

182 Table 3 shows the characteristics of the organisations who said the main impact of the loss of COGS would be that their organisation would struggle to exist. The table shows that the loss of COGS funding would be more likely to affect small, voluntary based organisations.

**Table 3: Characteristics of community organisations who would struggle to exist<sup>27</sup>**

Characteristic	% of all community organisations
More likely to have a low income, <b>44%</b> had an income of \$20,000 or less	28%
Less likely to have strong/and or diverse incomes	
only <b>27%</b> earn interest on investments	40%
only <b>27%</b> have a contract with a government agency	40%
• of those who have a government contract, this accounts for (on average) <b>44%</b> of their income	51%
More dependent on COGS funding	
COGS accounts for (on average) <b>24%</b> of their income	14%
More likely to use COGS funding for day-to-day operational costs	
<b>65%</b> use COGS mainly for operating costs	56%
<b>59%</b> use COGS to continue business as usual	49%
More likely to rely on volunteers, <b>63%</b> said they rely mainly/only on volunteers	55%

<sup>27</sup> The organisations who said that they'd struggle to exist were not geographically clustered in any particular locations.

## COGS funds are highly valued

183 The evaluation found strong evidence that COGS is highly valued by community organisations – virtually all community organisations and LDC members said that COGS was important to individual organisations.<sup>28</sup> The reasons that community organisations believe COGS is important included:

- the funds that are received support their project or service
- a sense of confidence and belief in their abilities to secure funding
- a feeling that they are an important party of the community and that they had been 'endorsed' and are therefore valued by the community.

184 There is also good evidence that COGS is valued because it is seen as different and distinct from other funders. The key perceived difference between COGS and other funders was the fact that it is driven by the community.

COGS is all about the grass roots. It is for community focus. I think it is the only community funding that has ever been given for what you could do across the board, whether it is big or small. (LDC member)

What drew me to COGS is the process and how the community people are involved and that they are also elected by the community. (Department Advisor)

The 'people' that are doing the hard yards are the committee members, and they are part of the community. (Department Advisor)

I think [LDC members] being unpaid means that they can't be directed... COGS still has its policies, but it is very much about what the community 'sees' as the need. For something to last all these years it really is to me quite radical in a lot of ways. (Department Advisor)

They [the LDC members] are all people from here and they know what it is like to operate in a Not for Profit organisation. They are local and have those networks which are also important. (Community organisation)

185 A number of community organisations also valued the fact that COGS funds are seen as 'clean', ie they do not come from activities that can have a detrimental effect on communities (eg gambling or alcohol consumption).

I have never gone to the Pub Charities, I have never touched them. [Why?] I don't know it is probably a bit about me, about how I see beer and things... (Community organisation)

The reason why I am hesitant about apply to Lottery is because it is money that has been gambled and we are doing the opposite. Instead of encouraging

<sup>28</sup> 99% of community organisations and 98% of LDC members thought COGS was important or very important. (Community orgs q18, LDC q25).

families to gamble we are trying to help families work to a budget and be wise with how they spend their money. So it just seemed to be undermining what we were trying to do. (Community organisation)

## Strengthened community capability and leadership

186 The findings from the surveys of community organisations and LDC members demonstrate that they believe COGS is strengthening community capability and leadership, this in turn offers benefits for the wider community. Note that the evaluation did not engage with the wider community in any direct way, and that the comments and observations made in this section are drawn from the case study visits and the two online surveys where we gathered participants' perceptions of COGS and its perceived contribution to the wider community.

187 Consistent feedback was received about the positive benefits of COGS and its importance to the wider community. Both LDC members and community organisations saw COGS as contributing to community capability and being very important to the community as a whole.<sup>29</sup>

COGS 'enriches' the community, there is a sense of belonging and the wellbeing of the fabric of the community is healthier. (Community organisation)

I think throughout the years COGS has been a 'life line' money-wise for a lot of the groups here especially with Pacific groups and Maori groups. Back in the day there was very little avenue for funding for the kind of stuff that they do... (Department Advisor)

[COGS has] a big effect, you just see smiles and it is just delightful... it helps everything [therefore it indirectly] helps the health system... some places that can't fundraise, they haven't got the opportunities to because there is nothing there, they are quite poor and struggling as it is. They haven't even got a grocery shop. (Community organisation)

It has enabled the community organisations to grow and be recognised by the rest of the community, because they've also been able to publicise the fact that they are there and so it's done that. What's the third one? Must be a third one. I think the third one is that what it's done is to put the community in front of the Government. (LDC member)

188 Both community organisations and LDC members agreed that:

- COGS funding is used for the benefit of the community:
  - 97% agreed that COGS funds projects that make a difference to the wellbeing of the community

<sup>29</sup> 98% of community organisations thought it was important or very important to the wider community, as did 99% of LDC members.

- 96% agreed that COGS supports communities to work together.
- COGS funding increases the diversity of organisations serving the community:
  - COGS supports initiatives which other funding agencies would not – 67% of community organisations agreed and 87% of LDC members agreed
  - COGS supports innovative activities in the community – 76% of community organisations and 87% of LDCs members agreed.

[You see community organisations at the public meeting], and you go “wow, who are they?” all these organisations that are just going about their business and doing wonderful things... The range of community groups is amazing, some are small and some are large and some are just pottering along. (Community organisation CS1)

189 As outlined in the above paragraph, LDC members had a higher level of agreement on questions of diversity and innovation. This is likely to be a reflection of the fact that LDC members have a broader perspective on the types of organisations that receive funding and what the grants are used for, than individual community organisations would.

190 The case studies identified a range of specific benefits arising from COGS funding that can be summarised as:

- increased vibrancy in communities through a greater range of services and choices
- a sense of community empowerment, enthusiasm and momentum
- a feeling that the community and voluntary sector are being actively supported and strengthened.

191 Specific examples of communities benefiting from COGS were given by many case study participants – ranging from research projects, to educational initiatives and the filling of services gaps. Particularly successful examples showed the ability to leverage other funds (all were co-funded), deliver to specific community needs and develop and grow over time.

What I love is seeing community groups changing over the years. When I first started [some] were support groups but over the years ... they have ended up employing staff... You are talking about [community organisations supporting those with] epilepsy, arthritis, heart, the whole lot. I think that [the ongoing funding] has given them the confidence to look ahead and help them form relationships, put in place a proper constitution, get themselves legally set up, have a governance group, have a management board. (Department Advisor)

COGS money has helped them to achieve what their goals are and what they want to do and I see a lot of the groups that have been here for a long time and

they have developed. A lot of people have been helped and they have been moved on, I think that without that money they wouldn't have been able to do that. (Department Advisor)

Only once that I know of have we ever had a group come to us and ask for a pocket of funding for the next three years to make themselves more self-sufficient and that was exciting because we knew that for the next three years we were going to give them 'x' dollars but at the end it was going to stop and it did stop... For me that is really good because that is what we should be about, helping these groups to get themselves established. (LDC member)

You go [to the funded organisation] and you see a group that works with mental health people. But you see that it is so much more, they are actually retraining them and counselling them and as a result they are confident enough to be able to find work, get a certificate from a course... knowing about this kind of 'success' empowers the organisation and the [LDC] committee. (Department Advisor)

192 However many other case study participants were not able to point to specific examples, rather they referred to a general sense of the community being enhanced and strengthened over time.

193 As LDC members are drawn from the communities that the LDCs serve, the benefits identified for LDC members also flow back to the community as a whole. LDC members believe that they gained the following benefits from serving on the committee:

- development/improvement of community networks (91% agreed or strongly agreed)
- development of new skills which they have applied to other parts of their lives (75% agreed or strongly agreed)
- development/ mprovement of leadership skills (71% agreed or strongly agreed).

I have learnt a lot generally about COGS and the community... I have a better understanding of the needy and what is needed... I have met some good people on the committee and on a personal note I have got some satisfaction in doing this. (LDC Chair)

You gain a lot of knowledge about what different groups do that you have never heard of before, all those kinds of things. You'd never know about these groups until you read their applications. (LDC member)

It is empowering [for LDC members] to come in here, learn a lot more about not just COGS but DIA and LDC and the process. They feel empowered that they were able to do a good job in allocating the money and they can see the groups that are working really well out there in the community. (Departmental Advisor)

I have seen a lot of [LDC members] become 'leaders' within their group... like [ ] now she is the 'lead person' in the Marae with fundraising and with knowing where to go. She now goes and participates in other meetings/conferences, so she is really confident in that way and her way of thinking has widened. (Departmental Advisor)

Because you get to 'see' what else is out there, you are working with other people that 'feel exactly' the same as you do, you feel like you are helping more groups than just the one group that you are [directly] involved in... and there are places I have never been to, like I have never had to experience what people have gone through with Hospices for example... it was amazing being in that type of place and I came back thinking "wow". (LDC member)

- 194 The community organisations also gave strong feedback that they thought LDC members gained valuable skills:
- 82% of community organisations agreed or strongly agreed that being on the LDC develops and enhances skills that are useful to the community and personally
  - 77% of community organisations agreed or strongly agreed that being on the LDC is a respected role in the community.

## Creating opportunities for networking between community groups

- 195 A key component of the COGS scheme designed to involve communities are the public meetings.<sup>30</sup> Attendance at these meeting is very low (only 44% of all community organisations who received a grant said they attended), however, those who do attend find the public meetings useful for networking:
- 82% agreed that the public meetings provided a good opportunity to network with other community organisations
  - 70% agreed that the public meetings promoted co-ordination and networking between community organisations.

Losing COGS would be a big loss, not only for money but also for the community and the community groups. It would be a loss because it is a way of trying to get them to work together and 'knitting' them together... they probably wouldn't come together and work together if it wasn't for COGS. (Department Advisor)

- 196 In addition to the networking occurring at public meetings, the LDC members' interactions with community groups through the assessment of applications results in a significant amount of information and knowledge sharing between community groups and individual LDC members who have a range of existing networks. This was

<sup>30</sup> Full details of the public meetings are contained in Appendix 3.

also believed to result in greater community cohesion and was seen as a positive way to share knowledge.

## Summary – the intermediate impacts of COGS

### Increased community capability, leadership and networking

- 197 COGS is making an obvious contribution to all of these outcomes, but in an appropriately limited and focused manner, ie to those directly involved in the scheme. The primary mechanism for achieving this is through the LDCs. By locating the decision making function for COGS within each local community, the Department is sending a strong message to communities – that it trusts and supports communities to make their own decisions about what they need and value. Communities have responded to this by actively participating in the process, however as discussed in Section 3, the extent of active community involvement is limited to a minority of committed volunteers.
- 198 Community leadership and networking is being actively developed and supported by COGS. The opportunities presented to LDC members through the training and carrying out of their duties are valued and there is strong evidence that new skills and networks are transferred and utilised widely through the LDC members' networks. As the LDC members have a wide range of existing community networks and are motivated to benefit their community, the LDCs are a very effective mechanism for the Department to indirectly support the growth of community capability.
- 199 The networking opportunities for the wider community are not being as effectively utilised. With public meetings no longer being compulsory, the wider community has reduced its commitment and interaction with the COGS process. However those that do attend the public meetings obviously do so for good reason – they report strong networking and knowledge gain benefits.

### Funded projects making a positive difference in the community

- 200 The evaluation has found good evidence that individual projects and community organisations believe they are benefiting from COGS. The primary benefit is through the provision of funding to allow a wide range of services to be provided or supported.
- 201 There was good evidence that funds are most commonly used to extend or continue existing services with only a small number of grants (10%) primarily being utilised for new initiatives. Other information gained in the evaluation however, indicates that the services that are being continued and extended are successfully filling important roles and niches in individual communities.

- 202 COGS appears to act in synergy with other sources of funding and strong commitment from the community, most often through voluntary effort. It is neither possible nor appropriate to seek to isolate the effects of COGS from the other funds and support that co-exist with COGS.
- 203 Despite this, the evaluation identified a subset of organisations who have a high degree of dependence on COGS (ie those who would be most likely to struggle to exist without COGS). These organisations tended to be small, with limited funding options and largely dependent on voluntary efforts. Through the provision of support to these groups, COGS is making a real difference by ensuring marginal services are able to be maintained.
- 204 The evaluation also found that COGS is positively perceived as contributing to positive outcomes for the wider community. COGS was most commonly seen as making a positive difference to the community through supporting diverse and innovate projects that meet particular community needs.
- 205 Only those with a broad perspective on the community and COGS' input over time (ie Department Advisors) were able to talk of specific community changes and benefits that they felt were directly attributable to COGS. Given the broad number of factors influencing a community's capability and strength, this is to be expected.

### Strong commitment to COGS by both the government and the community

- 206 The evaluation did not involve government officials or departments to ascertain the degree of commitment to COGS, however communities feel that the Department is showing strong support for the process through the Department's regionally based Advisors. The Advisors provide the LDCs with strong support and are valued for this by the communities.
- 207 The community believes it benefits from COGS grants, but the extent to which the wider community shows commitment by participating in the process is limited (particularly the public meeting process and LDC elections). However COGS is heavily dependent on community members serving on the LDC, and this process generally functions well. Given competing demands on community members' time, it is to be expected that only the necessary number of community members become engaged in the process. We therefore conclude that while the wider community is not necessarily committed to COGS (or even aware of COGS) the level of commitment among parts of the community is sufficient to allow the scheme to operate well.

## Conclusion

- 208 COGS is making a contribution to strengthening communities through strengthening individual organisations within communities. The clearest impact is discernable at the individual organisation level, and in particular on organisations that are small and vulnerable. Many of these organisations might not be able to continue without COGS funding.
- 209 COGS grants are rarely used in isolation and it is difficult to identify the definitive contribution of COGS to the success of a project where other funds and/or volunteer effort is also used. However there is clear evidence that this is one of the areas that COGS is most valued – for the support ('glue') that it provides to fill gaps and allow a project to succeed.
- 210 Benefits are also apparent throughout the wider community, primarily through the networking and leadership skills gained through participation in the LDC.

## 6 Conclusions

This section summarises the impacts of COGS already identified in the report and assesses their contribution to the overall, higher level impacts achieved by COGS:

- Outline of the expected higher level impacts of COGS
  - social and economic equity for priority groups
  - increased community participation and momentum
  - increased community and social capital
- Conclusions
  - areas identified for improvement.

### Summary of conclusions – enabling mechanisms, immediate and intermediate impacts

#### *Enabling mechanisms*

- 211 The evaluation found that the enabling mechanisms operate well enough for COGS to function; in particular, the structures and support provided by the Department are generally operating well. However, the other side of the mechanism, community engagement and participation, is not operating optimally. In particular, the evaluation showed that the wider community does not participate in the setting of local priorities, stand for election, serve on the LDC or vote in elections.
- 212 The implication of this is that LDCs are not necessarily driven by or aware of their community's *actual* needs and priorities. As a result, local needs may be understood and defined in a variety of ways, but are primarily dependent on each LDC's collective knowledge and community contacts. The implications of this flow through to each level of the outcomes framework.

#### *Immediate impacts*

- 213 Despite the identified weaknesses in the enabling mechanisms, immediate impacts were clearly evident. COGS grants are being distributed locally, to meet local needs, to a diverse range of organisations supporting the community – the majority of them volunteer based and with low incomes. COGS is clearly meeting its intended goals at this level.
- 214 While the evaluation found that decision making has been successfully devolved to the local level, the quality of the decision making is largely dependent on the contacts and knowledge of the LDC members(as outlined above). In addition to this, although

there are a large number of inputs to their decision making, little evidence of strategic decision making was found. Rather, most LDC members aim to make 'fair' decisions and distribute funds as widely as possible.

- 215 Other immediate impacts confirmed by the evaluation included: community organisations perceive decision making to be transparent; and for the Department, good knowledge is gained about the community and strong links are formed.

### ***Intermediate impacts***

- 216 The outcomes framework includes a number of impacts at the intermediate level, summarised as strengthened communities and community organisations.
- 217 The evaluation found that COGS is making a clear contribution to community capability, leadership and networking, primarily through the opportunities provided and skills gained through participation in the LDC.
- 218 However the key way that COGS strengthens communities is through funding projects that make a positive difference at the local level. The clearest impact of COGS is discernable at the individual organisation level and in particular on organisations that are small and vulnerable. Many of these organisations might not be able to continue without COGS funding. As COGS grants are rarely used in isolation, it is not possible to identify the definitive contribution of COGS to the success of individual projects. However there is clear evidence that COGS is highly valued for the way it interacts with other funding/support, being seen as the 'glue' that fills gaps and allows a project to succeed.

## **Outline of the expected higher level impacts of COGS**

- 219 The Department's Statement of Intent states that one of the key outcomes they are attempting to achieve is strong, sustainable communities, hapū and iwi. The COGS scheme is one of a number of activities the Department undertakes to contribute to this outcome. Other activities (undertaken by the Local Government and Community Branch) include Community Advisory services, support for other grant funding bodies and policy advice.
- 220 As outlined at the beginning of this report, this evaluation is anchored in an outcomes framework (developed using principles from a Theory of Change approach) which illustrates the ways that COGS is expected to contribute to the Department's high level goal of strong, sustainable communities, hapū and iwi. Beneath this high level impact the framework outlines the expected intermediate impacts, immediate impacts and (at the bottom) the enabling mechanisms.

- 221 Specific high level impacts identified in the outcomes framework (and by both internal and external stakeholders) are:
- increased social and economic equity for priority groups
  - increased community participation and momentum
  - increased community and social capital.
- 222 This section discusses the contribution that COGS is making to these impacts. All of these impacts relate to community development – strong, sustainable communities, hapū and iwi require individuals and communities to work together to enact change for enhanced wellbeing.<sup>31</sup>

### Social and economic equity for priority groups

- 223 Community development is driven by issues of fairness and equity<sup>32</sup>, and one of COGS' characterising features is the distribution of funds to groups identified as having higher needs within individual communities. Through the utilisation of the LDCs as the distribution mechanism, COGS gives local communities the ability to address the areas of inequity that they themselves see as most important.
- 224 Equity can be understood in two ways. Equity of access involves everyone having equal access to government funding. Whereas the strategic use of funding to provide priority groups with the opportunity to improve their outcomes and the setting of national priorities represents a more focused approach to equity.
- 225 Examination of the LDC decision making process revealed that committees use an equity of access approach to the task, by attempting to share COGS grants as widely as possible throughout a community. There was little evidence of LDCs taking a truly strategic approach to addressing inequity in their communities, however, the setting of sensible ground rules and guidelines (utilising local priorities and knowledge) allowed them to approach this task in a way that was widely perceived to be fair and consistent.
- 226 Analysis of who the grants are going to confirms that despite this approach, diverse community organisations are being supported through COGS. The evaluation found good evidence that these organisations are providing important services to priority groups and the wider community. The fact that their services are highly valued and are filling important niches in their communities was demonstrated by the high regard with which community members talked of services and the high degree of community support for and use of services. **As a result, we conclude that COGS is making an**

<sup>31</sup> Department of Internal Affairs "What is Community Development?" draft paper, 2010.

<sup>32</sup> Department of Internal Affairs "What is Community Development?" draft paper, 2010.

**important contribution to the social and economic equity of priority groups within individual communities.**

227 COGS funding is just one contributor to the majority of community organisations however. The evaluation clearly demonstrated that most community organisations were dependent on a wide range of income and voluntary support and many also had other government contracts. However, a small number of COGS recipients (17%), reported a high degree of reliance on COGS funding – these organisations were mostly small and highly reliant on volunteer labour. The loss of COGS funding would have adverse consequences for these groups as there are few other sources of funding that specifically cover operational costs.

### Increased community participation and momentum

228 Active citizen engagement is an important tenet of community development and a participative democracy. Effective community development cannot be done from the top down, but needs to involve the community actively engaging and participating in issues and structures that influence their day to day life. This is also critical for maintaining and generating community vibrancy and wellbeing.

229 The design of COGS is dependent on the community actively engaging in the process. Decision making is truly in the hands of the community, through the LDCs distribution of grants. However as the findings show, only limited sectors of the community take the opportunity to participate in the LDC, meaning that the functioning of COGS is overly dependent on a small pool of community members who engage in many such activities. Responsibility and engagement is not widespread throughout the community and this poses significant challenges to the Department's Advisors (who strive to identify new members for the LDC and to broaden the volunteer base). Ironically, while the wider community sees the grants as the most valuable aspect of COGS, the benefits of participating in the LDC and support for the LDC is not equally valued.

230 The lack of wider community engagement and participation in COGS through the LDC is of concern as it is one of the core principles of COGS. It also raises concerns about sustainability as the same pool of individuals and agencies are involved in repeated cycles. For COGS to be truly community driven and community owned it is critical to broaden it out and the Department needs to actively seek pathways through which these messages can be effectively delivered.

231 The fact that the split between government ownership and the community driven aspects is widely understood indicates a degree of community ownership. COGS is highly valued by communities and seen as an integral contributor to grass roots community initiatives.

- 232 **COGS is not achieving widespread community participation in all aspects of its operation and momentum is lacking, however sufficient community participation has been achieved to allow the scheme to function.**

### Increased community and social capital

- 233 High levels of community and social capital are linked to enhanced outcomes in a range of areas, including welfare, health and social outcomes.<sup>33</sup> Communities with social capital are more likely to be able to address their own needs and priorities.<sup>34</sup>
- 234 **The evaluation found strong evidence of COGS contributing to increased community and social capital.** Participation on the LDCs was seen as a way to learn valuable skills and to increase networks throughout the community, greatly extending individuals' existing networks and experiences. LDC members also believed that they take the skills they learn through COGS and transfer them to other areas of their lives. Through the LDC process, COGS is nurturing community leaders, providing them with new skills and networks and letting them know that they are valued.
- 235 The wider community are also experiencing increased networking opportunities through COGS. Community organisations that attend public meetings found them to be valuable networking opportunities. Clarification of the intent and value of public meetings would enable these social capital benefits to be increased, if attendance levels were raised.

### Conclusions

- 236 Although the evaluation found that wider community engagement and participation is limited (particularly in the setting of local priorities and standing for and voting in the LDC elections), clear evidence of good immediate impacts was found. COGS grants are being distributed locally to a diverse range of organisations supporting the community.
- 237 COGS is also making a clear contribution to intermediate level impacts though improving community capability, leadership and networking, and funding projects that are making a positive difference within communities.
- 238 At the higher level impacts, it is not possible to isolate the extent of COGS' contribution to strong, sustainable communities, hapū and iwi. However, the weight of evidence shows that COGS' contribution is important. We are confident that COGS is

<sup>33</sup> The Department of Internal Affairs "Building strong, sustainable, communities, hapu and iwi Maori", draft paper, 2010.

<sup>34</sup> Department of Internal Affairs "What is Community Development?" draft paper, 2010.

acting in synergy with other funders, grants and volunteers to improve community outcomes. If COGS were no longer available to communities, we would expect to see a reduction in community capital and the diversity of community organisations (particularly small, volunteer led organisations) over time.

- 239 COGS funding fills an important gap – it is valued for its community driven nature, its 'cleanness' and its flexibility. It is unique, and its achievements need to be celebrated. We are confident that slight adjustments to the operation of the scheme would result in an even stronger contribution to strong, sustainable communities.

### Areas identified for improvement

- 240 The main purpose of the evaluation was to assess the extent to which COGS is operating as effectively as possible and achieving results in and for the community.
- 241 The evaluation identified a number of areas where COGS is not operating optimally. We recommend that the Department consider addressing the following:
- opportunities for the community to participate in the LDC need to be more widely promoted and the benefits more widely understood (nominations and election turn out both need to be increased)
  - the parameters of the Advisor role need to be tightened to prevent the possibility of undue or inappropriate influence over LDC composition and decision making (this is not currently happening, but there is the potential for it to)
  - the purpose of public meetings need to be clarified and ways to increase community participation need to be identified
  - the use of local priorities and their relationship to national priorities needs to be clarified, a more robust process for the identification of local priorities needs to be developed
  - accountability requirements could be reviewed to reduce the burden for very small community organisations and/or those who receive very small grants.

## Appendix 1: Methodology

The evaluation was conducted over four phases:

### Phase 1 – Inception and evaluation planning phase

There were three parts to the inception and planning phase:

- Document review - review relevant documents to build an in-depth understanding of COGS, its operational context, and the outputs and outcomes COGS was expected to deliver upon following the 2003 review.
- Analysis of administrative data - to understand the profile of organisations applying for grants and the profile of target populations.
- Key informant interviews - build a picture of the current landscape, to test the evaluation framework and begin the development of the Merit criteria determination.

### Phase 2: Case study research

- Case study selection - 7 LDCs were selected to cover a range of variables in consultation with the Department. Each site was visited for two days and approximately 8-11 interviews were conducted at each site. Interviewees included:
  - members of the LDC
  - regional DIA staff
  - organisations that receive funding (both large sums and small sums)
  - community groups that contribute to the priority setting process
  - local government/community organisation stakeholders.

### Phase 3: Quantitative survey (community organisations and LDC members)

Two online surveys were conducted:

- all 2009 COGS grants recipients
- all LDC members.

Analysis of Departmental administrative data on COGS grants recipients (from 2005 to 2008) was also conducted.

## Phase 4: Analysis and reporting

This phase involved bringing together the insights generated from the above phases allowing the evaluation team to triangulate findings in order to test their validity and robustness. The phase began with a final workshop to test findings with the Department's Advisory Group.

## Case studies

LDCs were selected as the 'case' because they play a key part in the COGS process:

- the outcomes achieved by COGS are highly influenced and shaped by how the LDC operates
- they are the mechanism through which DIA's goals and outcomes are achieved
- the insights generated would help identify areas for improvement

Seven LDCs were selected as case studies on the basis of two main criteria:

- how the LDC operates ie small grants to many, large grants to few
- level of isolation.

However, a number of other factors were also considered when selecting the case study LDCs:

- volume of funds distributed
- deprivation
- ethnic mix of the population
- perceived quality of the LDC
- North Island vs South Island coverage
- number of applications received
- involvement of a range of different DIA advisors.

## Methodology

In total seven LDCs were selected:

- Hutt Valley
- Coastal Otago
- Kaitaia
- Rotorua
- West Coast
- Southland
- Great Barrier.

Each LDC was visited for two days, observing their operation and speaking face-to-face with:

- 2-3 LDC members
- COGS Advisor
- 3-4 Community groups/members/leaders

Interviews lasted 45mins to 1.5 hours.

### Online survey – LDC members

The LDC Member survey was launched on 9 April, 2010, three days before the Community Organisations survey was launched. Reminders were sent at the same time as those sent to the community organisations. The survey ran for approximately 4 weeks until Monday 10 May, 2010, during which time two email reminders were sent out.

Just over 170 LDC members responded to the survey, 156 (60%) completing it. This includes 14 hard copy surveys returned. The maximum margin of error for this survey is  $\pm 5.08\%$ <sup>35</sup>

**Table 4: Response rates**

	LDC Members
Invited	261
Bounce backs*	3
Invited less bounce backs	258
Responded	172
Incomplete	16
<b>Completes</b>	<b>156</b>
<b>Completes response rate</b>	<b>60%</b>

<sup>35</sup> Given the LDC population is known and small the following calculation was used to establish the maximum margin of error. Margin of error =  $\sqrt{[(N-n)/Nn]}$ . Where N refers to the total number of LDC members in 2009 =261, and n refers to the number that responded to the survey = 156

## Online survey – Community organisations

### Preparing the sample

Before the survey was launched the database containing the sample required “cleaning”. This is to look for anyone who shouldn’t be sent the survey and any errors that will prevent people from getting the survey.

The database started with a total of 5,031 applications for a range of community organisations, submitted between 2 June 2009 and 26 August 2009. A number of organisations were removed from the sample for various reasons, leaving us with a functioning sample of 2,917. The table below specifies reasons for removal and number of community organisations removed at each step.

**Table 5: Database cleaning**

	Community organisations
Number of applications	5,031
Less: - Not 'Approved'	888
- Duplicates	950
- 'NULL' email address	191
- Missing or incorrect email address	85
<b>Total valid email addresses</b>	<b>2,917</b>

### Survey launch and response rate

After the sample had been “cleaned” and uploaded into Vovici the survey was launched on 12 April, 2010. The survey ran for approximately 4 weeks until Monday 10 May, 2010, during which time two email reminders were sent out.

The overall response rate came to 1,800 community organisation, or 67%. The response rate also includes approximately 15 surveys that were filled out on hard copy and mailed back in.

**Table 6: Response rates**

	<b>Community organisations</b>
Invited	2,917
Bounce backs	230
Invited less bounce backs	2,687
Responded	2,094
Incomplete	294
Awareness of receiving COGS funding = No	5
<b>Completes</b>	<b>1,800</b>
<b>Completes response rate</b>	<b>67%</b>

## Administration Data

The Administration Data (data held by the Department and collected from the Grant Application form, the Application Checklist, the Accountability report and the Applicant Declaration) initially required a considerable amount of work to manipulate the data so that it was in a workable format. Some changes that needed to be made included:

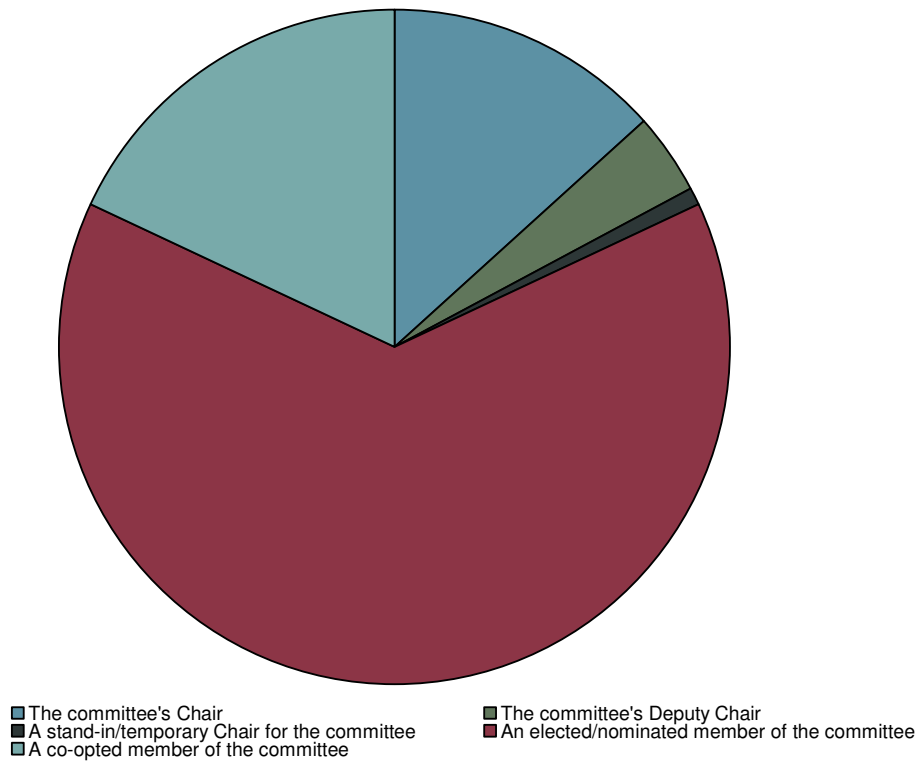
- change the date format – although the accuracy of having the exact date and time can be useful in some situations, the date format needed to be changed to just display only the year so data could be analysed on a year by year basis.
- column showing 'Benefitting Sector' displayed all benefitting sectors separated by a coma, this needed to be split out so all the benefitting sectors were in individual columns so the data could be run against each sector separately.
- 'Items' were also all listed in one column and separated by a column. These also needed to be split out in order to be used for any analysis. Dollar amounts needed to be split out from each item in order to calculate various means. Some items were also listed with subtle variations which needed to be adjusted in order to group the data properly.
- some applications listed their 'Primary' and 'Secondary' ethnicity the same, which had to be removed in order to analyse the data and avoid duplicating response rates.

## Appendix 2: Online survey respondents' details

The information contained in this section has been sourced from the LDC survey results, the community organisation survey results and the administrative data.

### LDC members' characteristics

Figure 12: LDC member role on the committee



Base: All LDC members (n=156)

- A majority (64%) of LDC members are elected or nominated members of the committee.

**Table 7: Benefitting groups**

Characteristic	% of community organisations
All ages	84.6%
Youth	7.1%
Elderly	7.1%
Other	3.9%
Both Genders	96.1%
Male only	-
Female only	3.9%
All ethnicities	70.8%
NZ European	14.9%
Māori	22.1%
Samoan	5.2%
Cook Islands Māori	5.8%
Tongan	4.5%
Niuean	3.2%
Chinese	1.3%
Indian	0.6%
Other	5.8%
Disabled	54.5%

- Most (84.6%) organisations cater for all ages groups and the others mostly target either youth or elderly.
- Seven in ten organisations are available to all ethnicities, the remaining organisations catering for a single ethnicity or a combination of a couple of ethnicities.
- Just over half (54.5%) of the community organisations provide support to people with varying disabilities.

**Table 8: LDC member characteristics vs. national statistics**

	LDC Members (n=156)	National Statistics (2006 census) based on population 20 years and over
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
New Zealand European	68%	71%
Māori	34%	11%
Samoan	2%	2%
Cook Islands Māori	3%	1%
Tongan	1%	0.8%
Niuean	0.6%	0.4%
Chinese	1%	4%
Indian	2%	2%
Other	11%	11%
<b>Age</b>		
Under 20 Years	0%	4%
20-29 Years	0.6%	17%
30-39 Years	7%	19%
40-49 Years	19%	20%
50-59 Years	36%	16%
60-64 Years	11%	6%
65 Years and Over	26%	17%
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	32%	49%
Female	68%	51%

- Māori are well represented among LDC members, 34.0% of LDC members of Māori ethnicity compared to 10.7% of the New Zealand population over 20 years of age.
- 20-29 year olds have the smallest representation (0.6%) while those aged 50 years or older make up 72.4% of LDC members.

**Table 9: LDC member employment status**

I am in full time paid employment	44.9%
I am in part time paid employment	26.3%
I am seeking paid work	0.6%
I am not in paid employment and I am not seeking paid work	6.4%
I am not in paid employment: I am a full time volunteer	8.3%
I am not in paid employment: I am a part time volunteer	11.5%

- Seven in ten (71.2%) of LDC members are either in full time or part time employment.
- One in five (19.8%) LDC members are either a full time or part time volunteer.

## Community organisations' characteristics

**Table 10: Community organisation LDC area**

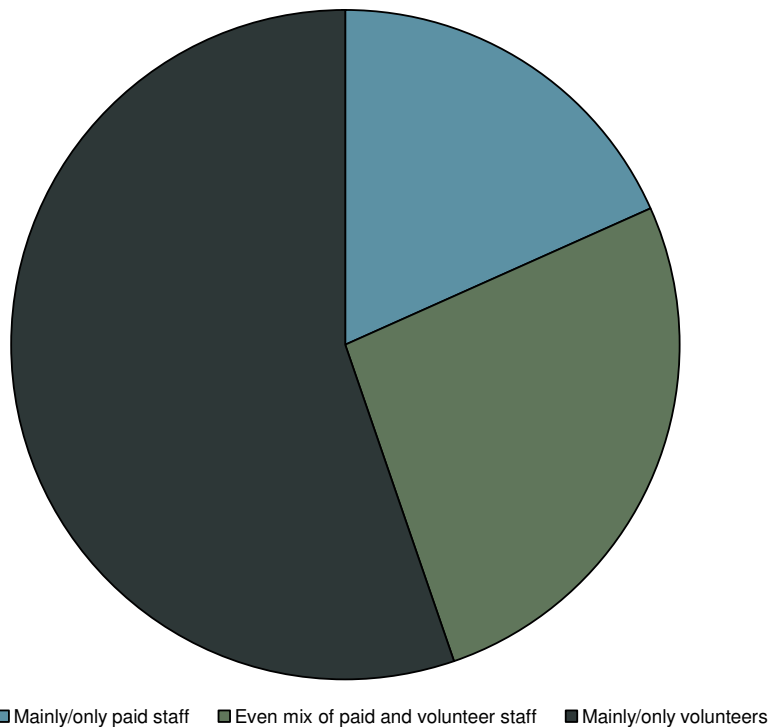
Aoraki	3.1%
Auckland City	5.4%
Canterbury Rural	1.9%
Central Otago	1.6%
Chatham Islands	0.2%
Christchurch City / Banks Peninsula	9.3%
Coastal Otago / Waitaki	5.1%
Far North	3.6%
Great Barrier	0.3%
Hauraki	1.8%
Hutt Valley	2.7%
Kahungunu Ki Heretaunga	2.6%

Kirikiriroa / Hamilton City	3.2%
Manawatu / Horowhenua	3.9%
Manukau	4.8%
Marlborough	1.7%
Mataatua	1.9%
Nelson / Bays	3.3%
North Taranaki	2.4%
Papakura / Franklin	1.6%
Rodney / North Shore	3.6%
Rotorua	1.3%
South Taranaki	1.6%
South Waikato	2.4%
Southland	3.3%
Tairāwhiti	3.4%
Tamatea / Tamaki - Nui-A-Rua	1.6%
Tauranga / Moana	2.5%
Tongariro	1.2%
Waikato West	2.2%
Wairarapa	1.4%
Waitakere City	3.2%
Wellington	2.8%
West Coast	1.4%
Whanganui / Waimarino / Rangitikei	2.1%
Whangarei / Kaipara	3.9%
Whitireia	1.6%

**Table 11: Level at which COGS grant was received**

Your local community organisation	94.1%
The regional office of your national organisation	3.7%
The head office of your national organisation	2.2%

- Most of the COGS grants received were for an item or activity managed at a local community organisation level (94.1%). Only 2.2% were managed at a national head office level.



Base: All organisations (n=1800)

**Figure 13: Staff and volunteer make-up of community organisation**

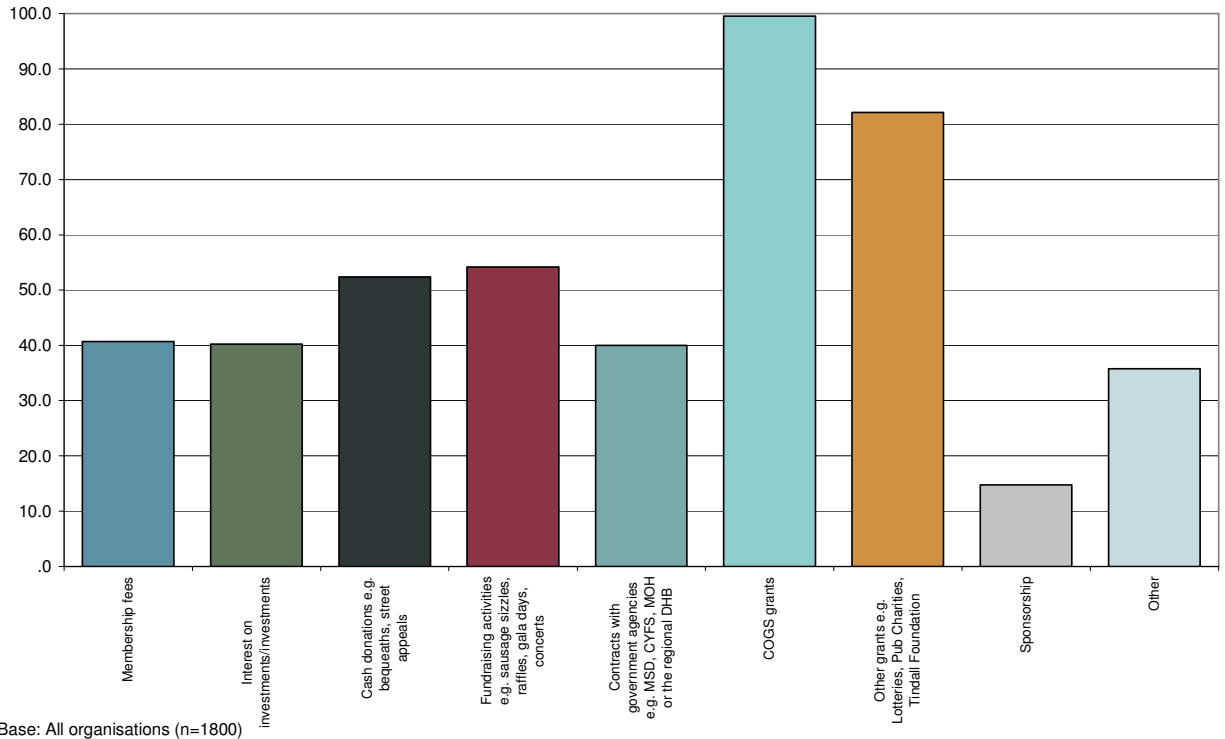
- One in five organisations (18.2%) are made up of mainly or only paid staff, the remaining 81.8% of organisations either have an even mix of paid and volunteer staff or mainly or entirely volunteer staff.

**Table 12: Community organisation's total annual income**

Total annual income	
\$0 - \$10,000	17.1%
\$10,001 - \$20,000	10.7%
\$20,001 - \$50,000	18.5%
\$50,001 - \$100,000	18.1%
\$100,001 - \$200,000	14.4%
\$200,001 - \$1,000,000	16.9%
Over \$1,000,001	4.3%
Mean	\$385,212
Median	\$60,000
Sum	\$693,382,235

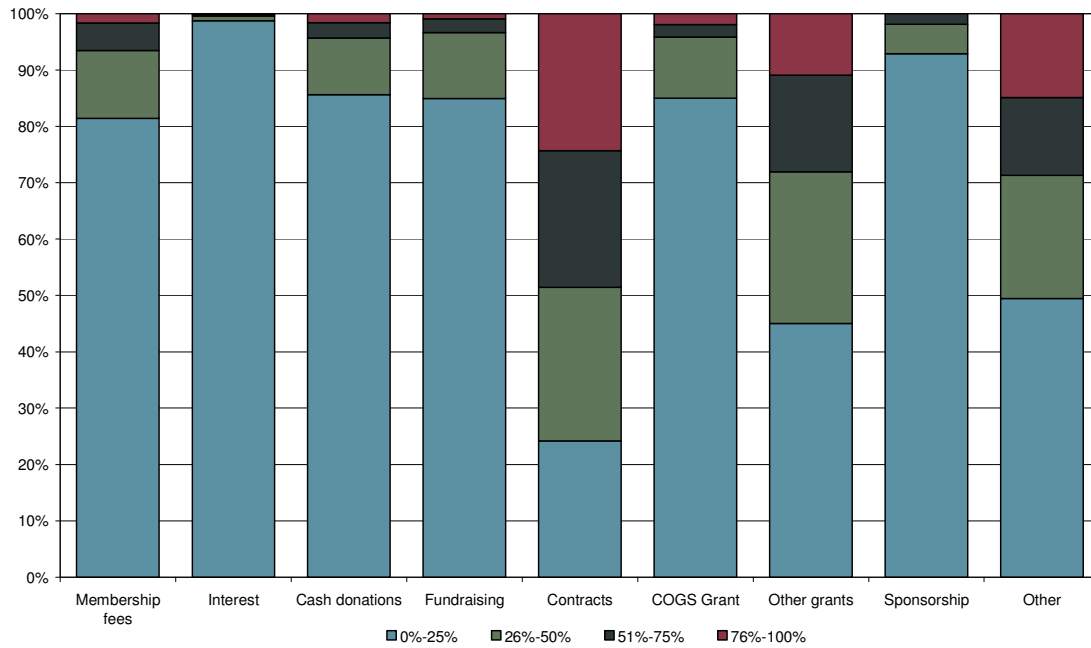
- Community organisations have a mean annual income from all sources of \$385,212 and a median annual income of \$60,000. The disparity between these two averages is most likely because a handful of organisations with large annual incomes are driving up the size of the mean.

**Figure 14: Community organisation funding sources**



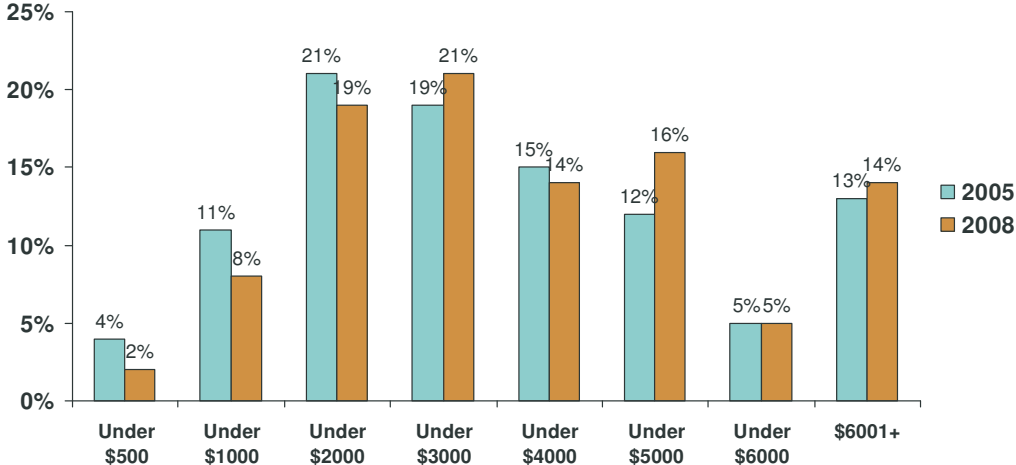
- Other grants is the second most popular source of funding (behind COGS grants), more than eight in ten organisations receiving some funding from these organisations.
- All other funding sources are utilised by at least 40% of community organisations with the exception of sponsorship (and 'other').

**Figure 15: Proportion of income made up from other funding sources**



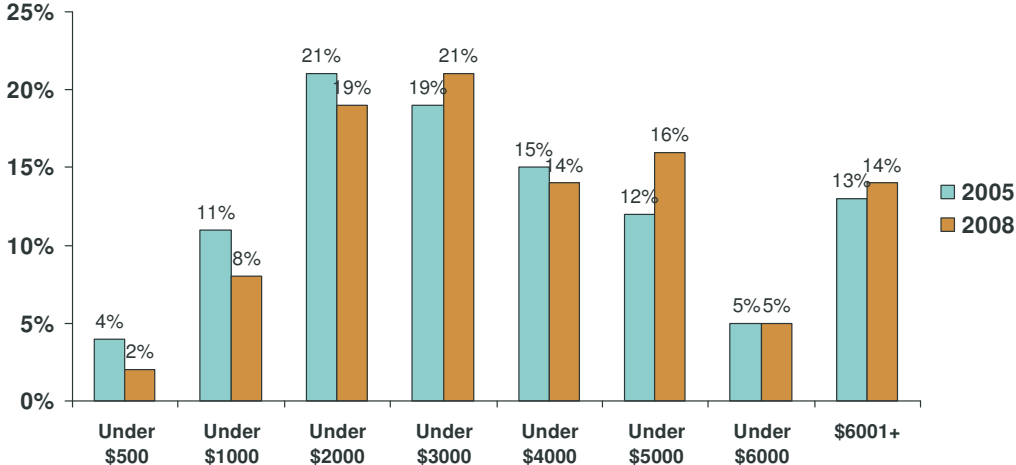
- Figure 6 indicates a lot of organisations get their annual funding from a number of different sources – six of the nine funding sources only make up 0-25% of total annual funding for at least 80% of community organisations.
- Contracts (with government agencies) attributes a lot of funding to a number of organisations, nearly half (48%) of organisations collecting at least half of their annual income from these contracts.

Figure 16: Value of COGS grants 2005 and 2008



Source: administrative data analysis

Figure 17: Value of COGS grants 2005 and 2008



Source: administrative data analysis

## Appendix 3: Additional aspects of the COGS process not covered in the main body of the report

### 1. Public meetings

The local priorities are usually set at the annual public meeting. Prior to the 2003-05 changes, the annual public meetings were compulsory for all community organisations that had received a COGS grant and they were used primarily for accountability purposes (all community organisations had to present a report on how they had used their grant).

Since the 2003-05 changes, there appears to be no common understanding of the purpose of the public meetings, and they actually serve a range of different needs in different regions.

#### Purpose of the public meetings

From the Department's perspective, the key activity that is supposed to be achieved at the public meeting is the setting of local priorities. When asked what they thought the **main** purpose of the public meeting was, just over one-third (36%) of LDC members chose the setting of local priorities. Other purposes identified were:

- giving information about how to apply for COGS (and/or other) funding (chosen as the main purpose by 17% of LDC members)
- networking between community organisations (main purpose: 17%)
- giving community organisations a chance to meet the members of the committee (main purpose: 16%)
- giving the community organisations a chance to find out about DIA/talk to the DIA Advisor (main purpose: 13%).

Community organisations also reported that the meetings were valuable to them for a range of reasons including: an opportunity to meet the LDC members (91%); getting information about applying for COGS (89%); getting information about other funds (60%); and networking (89%). Overall, 92% of community organisations who attended the public meetings thought they were useful for their organisation.

#### Attendance at the public meetings

With meetings no longer being compulsory, attendance has dropped markedly. The lack of clarity around the meetings purpose may also be contributing to the falling attendance rates:

- less than half of the community organisations (44%) said that they (or another member of their organisation) had attended the most recent public meeting
- actual levels of attendance varied widely from a high of 84% of community organisations attending in Tauranga/Moana to a low of 22% in Canterbury Rural and Wellington.<sup>36</sup>

Reasons for low attendance varied, but were most commonly reported in the case studies as being one or a combination of the following:

- general community apathy
- travelling distance required to attend (for LDCs which cover a large geographic region, a number of small regionally based meetings had previously been held but with falling attendance – from none to as low as two or three community members– these meetings are increasingly being cancelled)
- community organisations not having enough time or resources to attend meetings
- community organisations not seeing any particular benefit from attending and/or not understanding the purpose.

Although actual numbers of people attending the meetings was felt to be low, the types of people who attended and the groups and networks they represented were perceived positively. When asked whether the last public meeting was well attended by a wide range of community organisations:

- 65% of LDC members agreed (and 22% disagreed)
- 71% of community organisations agreed (and 11% disagreed).

Despite this, widespread concern was expressed in the case studies at the low levels of public attendance, with the following consequences identified:

- loss of public accountability – community organisations no longer have to tell other organisations what they do with their grant; not everyone knows who gets a grant
- community organisations not using the opportunity to participate in the setting of local priorities and therefore influence the types of organisations who should receive funding.

We are 'disempowering' those community groups because they don't know that if they don't attend they don't get their 'voice' in for the next year's priority list. (LDC member)

Nostalgia was repeatedly expressed for 'the good old days' with many LDC members, Advisors and community groups feeling that making the meetings non-compulsory had resulted in the loss of a valuable community event.

<sup>36</sup> A total of 45 (Tauranga/Moana), 35 (Canterbury Rural) and 51 (Wellington) responses were received from community organisations in each of these areas. The average number of responses from community organisations over all of the LDCs was 49.

Accountability meeting was previously a warm fuzzy meeting. This is what hooked me [into COGS]. I was blown away by what people were doing. (LDC member)

In the past system we had accountability meetings and they were wonderful days out. All the groups would 'strut' along with their accountability reports, a picture board or their new brochures. They would all sit around, the committee members would be in attendance and we would get to chat to every group that turned up... We would have a finger lunch and drink. There was a lot of chatter and a lot of information shared. (LDC member)

Advisors talked of creative ways of trying to get community organisations to attend by coming up with a 'hook', eg having a guest speaker, sharing the meeting with other funders, and providing the opportunity for networking and information exchanges between community organisations. While some Advisors had managed to achieve good attendance rates, Advisors who had tried a range of methods without success reported feeling demoralised by the experience.

## 2. Distributing COGS grants – details of the process

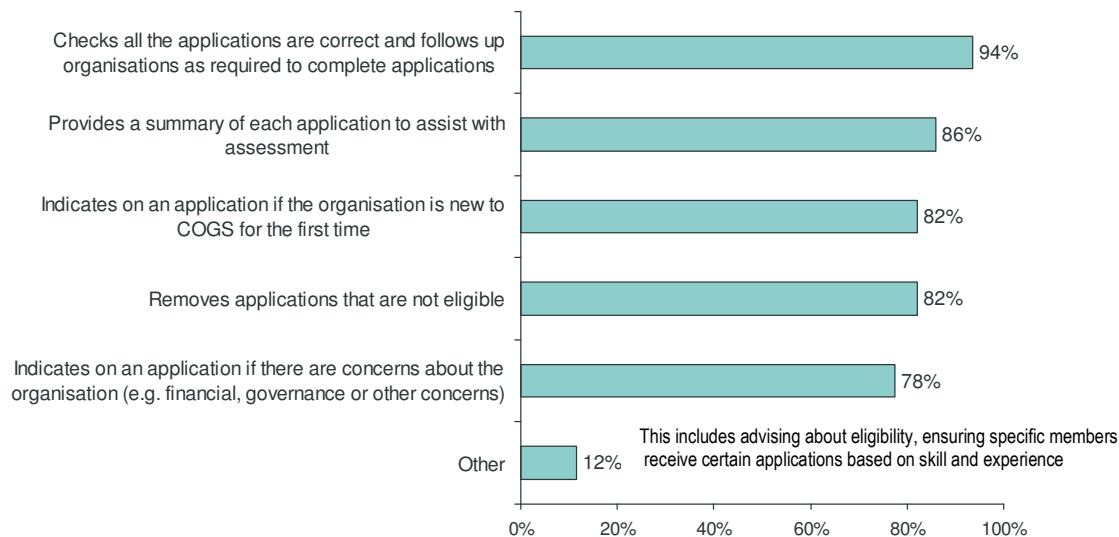
### Pre-allocation

The DIA Advisor manages the receipt of applications, checking each application to ensure it has been completed in accordance with the Department's requirements. Where applications have not been completed appropriately or have submitted requests for ineligible items<sup>37</sup> the Advisor follows up with the organisation to secure additional information and/ or resolve the eligibility issues. If they are not resolved the application is passed to the LDC and it is declined.

Once applications are confirmed as being complete and eligible the Advisor prints the application form and appends a copy of the LDC assessment tool and any other relevant information. The practice of Advisors varies in relation to the relevant information that may be appended. For example some Advisors have been asked by the LDC committees to provide a financial summary on top of each application. Others categorise applications into 'low' and 'high risk' which determines the type of contact that the LDC committee member should make with the organisation. The Advisor may also append historic information for example previous grants given. The figure below shows the type of activities LDC Advisors are undertaking prior to the allocation process.

<sup>37</sup> Items such as buildings and capital are not eligible for COGS funding. The Advisor only assesses eligibility against the specified DIA criteria, not criteria that the LDC may subsequently set.

**Figure 18: Actions LDC members have identified that Advisors undertake prior to distributing applications**



Q15: Prior to distributing the applications at the allocation meeting, which of the following activities, if any, does the DIA Advisors undertake?

(Respondents were allowed to choose multiple responses)

Base: All respondents (n=156)

I think one of the things that our committee members have come up with is having a summary of financial facts with each application so that we can go over it and look at their financial situation without having to fumble through the pages. Because when you are doing a presentation you can't remember it all. Someone might ask "hey how much money have they got? Are they covered for the next six months? How much is it?" (LDC member)

LDC members are trusting of this process and although they can review applications that are considered ineligible or incomplete by the Advisor, none of the LDC members spoken to as part of the case studies did this.

Pre-allocation involves a very high workload for Advisors and although they urge community organisations to complete applications as early as possible, the vast majority are received in the last few days leading up to the closing date for applications. As a result Advisors work extremely hard to ensure applications are in order in preparation for the allocation meeting.

## Allocation

A special pre-allocation meeting is usually held to assign the applications to the LDC members. Each LDC we spoke to approached this in a slightly different way. The declaration of conflicts of interests always begins the process – members are not allocated the applications for any

organisations for which they may have a conflict of interest. Following this applications are allocated according to a wide range of factors which include:

- geographical proximity of LDC member to the applicant
- LDC member's interest in the applicant organisations
- who the previous assessment was made by (some like to see the same organisations, others like to see new organisations)
- skills and knowledge of the applicants or the sector
- who the Advisor believes has the skills to assess the application
- workload of individual LDC members is balanced against a sharing of applications.

I wanted to make sure that I get a good range of organisations [to visit] kids, old people, mental health or different ethnic groups because that is a great way to 'educate' yourself. (LDC member)

## Assessment

The assessment process involves LDC members reviewing the applications they have been allocated and if deemed necessary, visiting and/or calling the organisation to discuss their application. Following the 2003-05 changes, the Department developed an LDC assessment tool to be used by the LDC members to record information collected during the assessment. The tool forms part of the quality assurance procedures and was designed to guide new LDC members as well as promote consistency in the process.

On average LDC members have 20 applications to assess. This number varies significantly by LDC, from as few as two in a location like the Chatham Islands to as many as 40 in a location such as Auckland or Christchurch. Just over half of applications are usually phoned and 37% are visited. A small number of community organisations are not contacted at all (according to LDC members, 3% of applications are not contacted; however 10% of community organisations said they were not contacted).

Contact is generally made by only one LDC member, however if there are any concerns, queries or the member is unsure of anything more than one LDC member may make contact with an organisation. In areas where fewer applications are received, some LDCs have an 'interviewing' day where as a group they interview each applicant.

## Contact (by telephone or visiting) is valued

Regardless of the type of contact (ie a phone call or a visit), 95% of LDC members said they found the contact very useful or useful when it came to assessment. From the case studies LDC members used this part of the process to really understand what organisations were doing and the value the organisation provided for those who accessed their services. It is a key

aspect of the process for LDC members, who enjoy it and believe that it makes the role both rewarding and interesting. It was also seen as an opportunity for LDC members to build on their existing community knowledge and share their learnings with organisations.

I love getting out and visiting the groups, I love being able to go out and visit the playcentres, senior citizens, voluntary agencies and any of the groups that apply for funding. You find out first hand what is 'happening'. (LDC member)

I usually open my interviews with just a general discussion I never go straight into ticking the boxes. I get to know them a little bit. In the main all of them are very nice people and they are interesting. So we tick the boxes. Then I go through some aspects of the activity that they are involved in. Try and find some highlights, what their priorities are and so on and just note it down.

Organisations echoed this sentiment with 87% finding the contact with an LDC member very useful or useful. Organisations felt this gave them a good opportunity to express themselves and present their 'case' for funding in a much more compelling manner than they could on paper. This aspect also helped organisations gain a better understanding of the application process and build confidence for future applications.

### Use of the LDC assessment tool

94% of LDC members surveyed said they used the LDC assessment tool.<sup>38</sup> Of those who used the tool 85% reported that they found it very useful or useful. LDC members spoken to noted that the tool acted as a good reminder/guide for new members and as a checklist for more experienced members. However the case studies showed that the tool was not seen as the focus of the contact with greater value being placed on the general information and discussion held.

This committee has always said "right this is what I have got to ask you for - the tick box, and then when we get over that, I am going to ask you the real questions" and they do that with everybody. Even the younger ones that come in they do that too. (Department Advisor)

Following contact with the applicant organisation the LDC member forms a recommendation for funding. A large range of factors influence how an individual member forms this recommendation, including their:

- personal knowledge of the community and community needs
- knowledge of the organisation and the information on the application form
- own personal skills and values – some are very analytical others are more intuitive.

<sup>38</sup> Note that reporting the use of the tool does not necessarily mean that a copy of the form was filled out and attached to every application. LDC members in the case study talked of using the tool as a prompt – some would then fill it out and others would not. It also might have been commonly used by LDC members but not necessarily for every application that they assessed.

## Decision making

The committee meets 6-8 weeks after the pre-allocation meeting, to allow enough time for LDC members to assess the grants they have been assigned. It is at this meeting that the final funding decisions are made.

### Guidelines and rules for making decisions

The case studies found a number of examples of LDCs setting guidelines or rules to help guide their decision making.

For those LDCs that set rules, the rules help to streamline the decision making process and increases the consistency of decision making within an allocation period. Whether or not rules are developed was strongly influenced by three key factors:

- current trends in applications
- historic rules are used to guide the setting of new rules each year
- the values and beliefs of the current committee (this is especially true if the chair of the committee has strong views in a particular area).

### *Treating types of organisations in particular ways*

Only one third of LDC members (36%) said that their committee had discussed and decided to 'Treat particular types of organisations in the same way (eg give them all the same amount/not fund any of them)'.<sup>39</sup> The case studies found a number of examples including:

- giving all national organisations a set amount
- giving all Early Childhood Education centres a set amount
- not funding food for food banks
- not providing any funds for conferences
- not funding refugee groups.

### *Deciding how much money to allocate*

Some LDCs also set rules around the maximum amount that can be allocated to a particular organisation. For example, one committee calculated a maximum allowable grant by dividing the total number of applications by the total amount they had to allocate. Others made 'rules of thumb' about how much to allocate to ensure each LDC member came to the assessment table with fair and consistent recommendations.

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<sup>39</sup> The LDC members who gave this response were spread across 29 different LDCs.

Less than a third of LDCs said they made a decision on the overall approach to the size of grants:

- 30% of LDC members said their committee decided to ‘give small grants to as many organisations as possible’
- 27% of LDC members said their committee decided to ‘give some larger grants to particular organisations for significant projects’.

Giving ‘small grants to as many as possible’ was commonly talked about as being the most fair approach. As funds are limited, distributing them as widely as possible by giving everyone a little bit, results in accountability (money is spread throughout the community), and vibrancy (by keeping lots of organisations ticking over and doing things in the community). LDCs members commonly reported that they did not feel comfortable assessing the merit of one organisation against that of another and that they would rather give everyone a contribution.

### **Aligning available funds to the received applications**

More often than not, once all of the applications have been discussed, the LDC will have exceeded its available funds. When this occurs a ‘trim back’ process is entered into. Each LDC does this differently, eg some take a percentage off every application, others remove money from a selected group, others go through all the applications again to clarify decisions. On rare occasions an LDC under allocates in which case a similar process is entered into but with the opposite result.

Sometimes we might do what we call the ‘marmite approach’ so that you go across and you just spread the cut. So you say “we will take 500 off everyone” and then go back and have a look. (LDC member)

It is debated, it is either accepted – gold starred or black holed. Then we go back and compare the black holed ones if we need to make cuts, the gold starred ones don’t get touched. (LDC member)

## **Review**

Once the decisions have been made, money has been allocated and the list of recipients has been made publicly available, organisations can write in seeking clarification about the status of their grant.

Very few complaints are received, many LDCs receive no complaints at all. This is a testament to the process but may also reflect the reluctance of an organisation to ‘rock the boat’ in case it may affect future grants.

The LDC will respond in writing but may also choose to contact the organisation and speak with them directly. This decision generally depends on the relationship the organisation has with the committee.

## Community organisations' awareness of COGS grants

Community organisations were asked how they heard about COGS, given the length of time COGS has been established it is not surprising that four out of ten noted their organisation had been applying so long they couldn't recall where they heard about COGS, a further 17% heard about COGS from another community organisation, DIA was the next most common place to hear about COGS (12%), a range of other places such as the local council, funding websites and from LDC members were also identified as places where community organisations heard about COGS.

There was a general sense within the case studies that COGS was well known amongst community organisations but not necessarily the broader community. Organisations, to varying degrees, promote to their members/ those who access their services that COGS provides them funding. This was echoed in the survey of grant recipient organisations where 99% strongly agreed that those who run the organisation know that they receive COGS funding, however only 66% strongly agreed their members/those who access their services would be aware they received COGS funding.