

This page covers the key questions to ask, what documents are needed and where to next for people considering setting up charities and community groups.

Do I need to start a new group?

An organisation takes time, money and resources. Before you decide to start a new group, ask yourself:

- ▶ Are there existing charities I could work with? [Search the Charities Register](#) to find charities doing similar work to avoid duplication.
- ▶ Are there other ways to carry out my purpose? Learn more about [donor advised funds and working with a fundholder to do good work in the community](#).
- ▶ Do I have the right people involved? You will need a diverse group of people who understand: how to run an group, the [reporting requirements](#) and the [obligations of being a registered charity](#).

Legal structure

If you decide to start a group, you need to decide on what kind of legal structure you will form. We created a [webinar on the different structures](#) available to help you think through your options. The [Community Resource Kit](#) and [Community Law Manual](#) are also good resources to help you decide. Te Puni Kokiri provides information on [structures for Māori organisations](#).

Rules

Next, you need to write a rules document – also known as a constitution or a trust deed. Your [rules document](#) needs to meet some [requirements to be considered charitable](#).

Useful information:

- ▶ Charitable Trusts can use the [Sample Charitable Trust Deed and Guide to its Clauses](#). This is a template you can download and edit.
- ▶ Incorporated Societies can use the [Constitution Builder - a 'do-it-yourself' online tool](#) for writing or revising your society's rules.
- ▶ If you want donee status with Inland Revenue, your organisation's rules must ensure that its funds are applied [wholly or mainly](#) to charitable purposes in New Zealand. Find out more on [Inland Revenue website](#).

Incorporation

If you decide to incorporate your group (as an incorporated society, trust or company), you need to apply to the [Companies Office](#) before you apply to register as a charity. Read our blog to find out more about incorporation.

- ▶ [Charitable Trust Register](#)
- ▶ [Incorporated Societies Register](#)
- ▶ [Companies Register](#)

Incorporated organisations are automatically assigned a New Zealand Business Number (NZBN) following registration with the Companies Office. If you are not incorporated, it's easy to apply for an NZBN for your organisation free-of-charge through the [NZBN website](#). Read our [blog on what charities need to know about the NZBN](#).

You will also need an Inland Revenue number. You can [find out more about the process on their website](#). This information is for people who want to set up a simple community group. If you have significant resources, and intend to own land or employ people, we recommend talking to a lawyer.

Once you have a rules document and decided on incorporation, you can then decide if you want to apply for registration as a charity by looking at the [benefits and obligations of being registered](#) and [preparing to register pages](#).

Useful resources

▶ Community Resource Kit

The [Community Resource Kit](#) is an in-depth resource from [CommunityNet Aotearoa](#). It is a guide to setting up and running community groups in Aotearoa New Zealand. It is designed for community, voluntary and iwi/Māori groups and is useful for your governance group, staff and volunteers. It covers: Getting Started, Planning, Organisational Structures, Governance, Policies, Meetings, Financial Management, Record Keeping, Raising Funds, Employment and Communications.

▶ NZ Navigator

[NZ Navigator](#) is a free online self-assessment tool developed for community groups. You can use it to assess your group's strengths and weaknesses across nine different areas - direction, governance, leadership, people, administration, finances, communication, evaluation, and relationships. Once you complete an assessment, an in-depth report is emailed to you with feedback and resources (including an action plan) to help you to develop your group.

Other handy resources

- ▶ [CommunityNet Aotearoa](#) is the largest online hub in Aotearoa New Zealand and provides a huge range of practical resources designed to strengthen groups and communities.
- ▶ [Community Law New Zealand](#) produces [The Community Toolkit](#) - a practical legal resource. It's aimed at those who are planning to set up a new group (or are looking at restructuring) and provides information about legal powers and obligations.
- ▶ [Sport New Zealand Ihi Aotearoa](#) offers excellent governance resources to help you run your group. They offer a [free online governance course](#) to further your governance knowledge. If you want something shorter, check out the [Governance Lite information](#).
- ▶ [Socialink](#) has many excellent resources that are available to download. They cover topics such as [strategic planning](#), [financial management](#), [governance](#) and [health and safety](#).
- ▶ [The Wheelhouse](#) provides information, support, advice and training to enable groups to succeed.
- ▶ [Creative New Zealand](#) provides toolkits, workshops, webinars and training which are useful for all groups but have a focus on the arts.
- ▶ [Institute of Directors Not-for-Profit Hub](#) offers a collection of resources, articles and guides for not-for-profit groups.



Still need help?

[Book a one-on-one clinic](#) and you can talk to us by phone or video chat (Zoom).



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