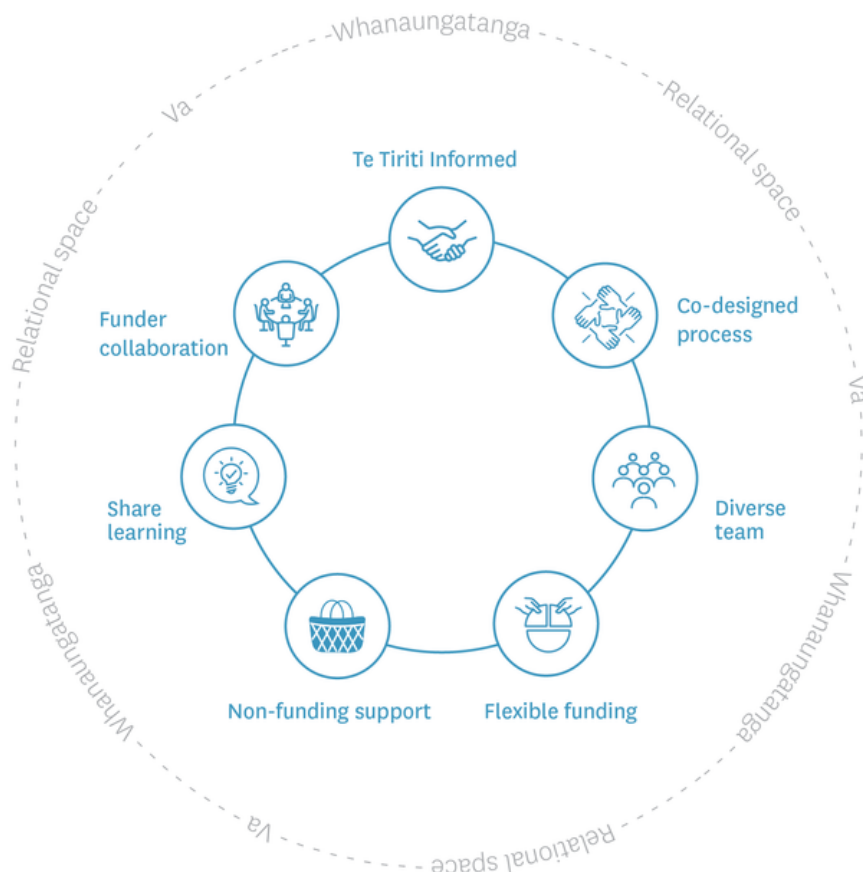


Better funding

Seven ways funders can make life better for community partners

People across the spectrum of our community sector in Aotearoa are doing amazing work, often in challenging contexts. Funders can make this work easier or harder through their own processes. Through years of supporting diverse community kaupapa, we see clear themes as to how funders can make life better for applicants. These go beyond basic good practice such as being clear what you will and won't fund, being accessible, clear consistent points of contact and relationship holders, being responsive and fast decision making.

Consider how you might become a better funder through the means below. All of these occur through nurturing healthy relationships. Try out the one-page self-assessment tool at the bottom with your staff, board and community partners to see where you are sitting now and what your priorities for strengthening are. This is a great way to begin conversations and hear different perspectives on what you are doing well and how you might improve.





1. Be Te Tiriti o Waitangi centred/informed and engage well with tangata whenua

As a philanthropic funder in Aotearoa, a strong understanding of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and good practice when engaging with tangata whenua is essential. Ensure appropriate Te Tiriti training¹ for everyone in your organisation, have strong Māori representation at governance and staff levels, develop and implement a Te Tiriti commitment statement², and be guided by your mana whenua (local iwi and hapū) as to their aspirations and how you might support those. See [here](#) for a Te Tiriti o Waitangi resource for funders looking to honour Te Tiriti, which is based on the experience and insights of funders in Aotearoa. It includes four short videos with different funders on their approach.



2. Co-design your application process end to end with your priority communities

Are you reaching the communities you want through your current funding process? Do you know how your communities perceive your processes? Are they working well for them? A fail-safe way to make sure your processes work for your target communities is to co-design your processes with them, taking into account diverse cultures, abilities and multiple formats (written, audio, video). Resource people for their time and expertise and make sure they are happy with the results before you complete the process.



3. Diversify your team to reflect your communities

It's human nature for people to feel more comfortable approaching people they can identify with – those who look like them or who otherwise feel familiar and relatable. Consider how your board and staff can best reflect and relate to the people you are there to serve and act accordingly. Consider co-opting advisors if gaps persist and make extra efforts to seek diverse applicants when hiring staff. Further options include partnering with representative groups and setting up paid advisory bodies.

¹See for example [Treaty Training](#), [Groundwork NZ](#), [Treaty People](#) and [Inclusive Aotearoa](#).

²Click [here](#) for Foundation North's statement.



4. Provide a suite of flexible funding options, including multi-year and untagged funding

Rigid criteria and exclusions constrain community innovation and responses. It is helpful for funders to reflect the diverse funding needs of their communities by providing easy access to smaller funding amounts through low bar application processes, to higher engagement processes for more complex, higher level and multi-year funding.

Community organisations continually call for the provision of multi-year and untagged funding, to reduce the administrative load of constantly applying for funding and to support planning and organisational viability. If you have key community partners you want to fund ongoing make it multi-year funding (3-5 year+). Some funders such as Foundation North are moving to much longer-term funding in high priority spaces, for 20 years+. Supporting upstream or transformational change requires long-term, committed support.



5. Be clear on the non-funding support you can offer

Be transparent about the non-funding support you can provide, for example:

- Your networks, influence and connections (to other funders, capability support, decision makers, staff expertise, others working in similar spaces)
- Capability and capacity support (such as support with governance, evaluation, advocacy, communications, social enterprise, leadership development, impact investment)
- Convening conversations and ako/learning spaces
- Venues for wānanga, training, organising

You may have specific expertise in your organisation that you can offer to your communities, or you could partner with other funders and providers to offer that support. Examples include back-office support, financial/accountancy support, or social media and communications support.



6. Grow your funding pool and funding access through funder collaboration and partnership

Increased funder partnership and collaboration was seen as a significant opportunity in a 2023 [Philanthropy New Zealand survey of funders](#). This can include partnering with the private sector. Funder-led mechanisms for collaboration are increasing as their potential for impact are being better understood. Examples include Te Kāhui Pūmanwa (Māori Funders Network³), the [Pasifika Funders Network](#), [Rainbow Rōpū](#), [Climate Action Funders Network](#), the [Climate Action Funders Commitment](#) and the [Kaupapa of National Significance Fund](#) established by Community Trusts in 2023, which is currently focusing on climate action. Funders are identifying potential collaborators built around shared interests.

Funders can tackle this through a place-based approach, for example talking with other funders in their rohe or region, or putting out calls for interest through Philanthropy New Zealand or their own networks, around particular kaupapa.



7. Share collective learning and stories of impact and change

Funders hold unique positions in their communities – they operate and learn across many spaces, groups and issues. Some funders gather insights⁴ along the way and share them with their communities, to grow collective learning about what supports impact.

Another key role for funders is to profile amazing mahi in their communities through funding impact stories and supporting communities to share their stories⁵ and insights about what makes a difference. In this way we all learn from each other and spread ideas worth sharing.

³ Website in development.

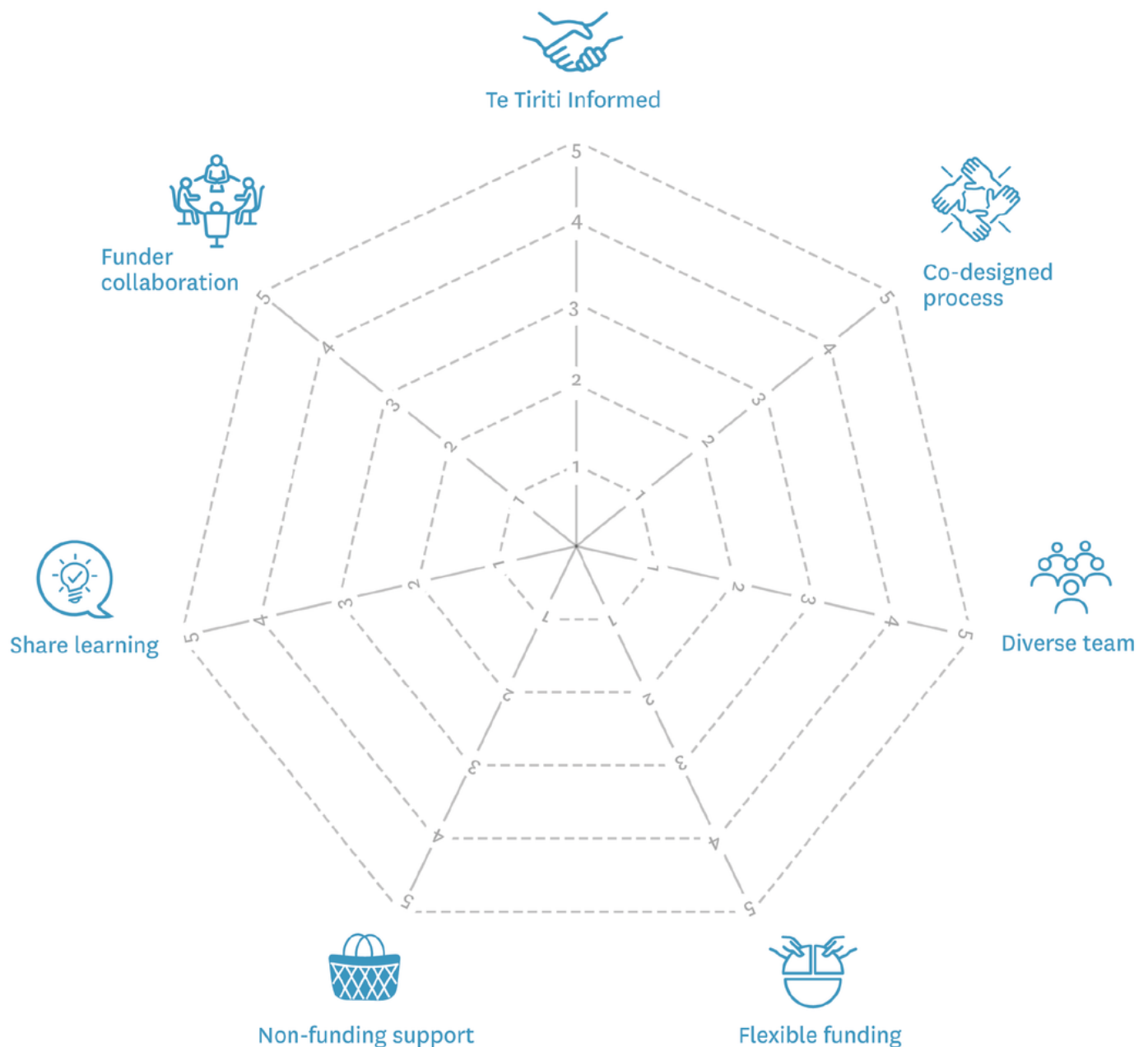
⁴ See for example [Centre for Social Impact Knowledge Base](#).

⁵ See for example [Foundation North](#), [JR McKenzie](#), [Toi Foundation](#), [Rata Foundation](#), [Next Foundation](#).

Self-assessment tool - how are we doing on better funding practices?

With staff and/or your board, rate how you feel your organisation is doing on these seven ways to better funding practice, using the key below.

Do the rating collectively and use varied ratings as the vehicle for discussion on how you might improve. Identify next steps on agreed priority areas for improvement.



Key: 1-very poor, 2-poor, 3- good/ok, 4-very good, 5-excellent