



Community Governance

Supporting community governance in Aotearoa

Hon Louise Upston
Minister for the Community and Voluntary Sector
Parliament Buildings
Wellington 6160

29 September 2026

Tēnā koe Minister Upston

Re: 2026 Community Governance Aotearoa Sector & Insights Survey

Thank you for your work as Minister for the Community and Voluntary Sector, and for your commitment to the organisations and people who contribute so much to the wellbeing of communities across Aotearoa. I also appreciated the opportunity to meet with you early in your tenure as Minister.

I am writing on behalf of Community Governance Aotearoa to share the findings of our 2026 Sector & Insights Survey, completed by 201 community and not-for-profit organisations across Aotearoa. A survey overview is attached for your consideration.

The survey raises an important question: *are current funding and policy settings providing the certainty community organisations need to continue delivering essential services and outcomes for their communities?*

The results suggest many organisations continue to face significant uncertainty. Almost 68% expect their financial position to stay the same or worsen, while only 24% expect improvement. At the same time, 81% identified multi-year funding as a priority, yet 64% reported seeing no increase in multi-year funding opportunities.

Government funding decisions are having a direct and significant impact on community organisations. **A combined 62% of respondents reported reduced contracts, contracts being cut entirely, or ongoing uncertainty while awaiting decisions.** While we recognise the increasing use of amalgamated delivery models, where several entities are funded to lead or coordinate work, the benefits do not always flow through clearly or consistently to the community organisations delivering services on the ground. Many of these organisations remain reliant on contracts of 12 months or less. This short-term funding undermines their ability to plan, retain skilled staff, sustain services and provide the strong community leadership that government and communities rely on.

The survey also highlights growing governance pressures. Boards reported an average performance rating of 5.8 out of 10, while 58% of organisations have no dedicated governance training budget. At the same time, boards are increasingly expected to make decisions about data, privacy and artificial intelligence. Only 8% reported high confidence in making these decisions, while 55% expressed concern about the responsible use of AI.

These findings suggest four areas that would make a meaningful difference to the sector:

- Greater use of multi-year funding models.
- Reduced uncertainty caused by delayed funding decisions.
- Increased investment in governance capability.



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- Support for organisations navigating data and AI governance.

Community organisations play a vital role in strengthening the wellbeing of communities across Aotearoa, our audience is now over 6,000, we are diverse and represent the community. We hope there will be further opportunities to engage with you, the Social Investment Agency and the Department of Internal Affairs. We value the opportunity to contribute the sector's experience and evidence to policy development, and to help shape policy and funding settings that reflect the realities of our sector, rather than seeing this lead by government agencies alone.

We would welcome a meeting, in due course, to discuss the findings and explore practical changes that encourage greater capability and investment in the community and voluntary sector, particularly at a time when this support is not keeping pace with the pressures organisations are facing.

Ngā mihi nui

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'RH' with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Rose Hiha-Agnew
Chief Executive
Community Governance Aotearoa
www.communitygovernance.org.nz