



**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL  
DEVELOPMENT**

TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA

**Community Connectors  
Service Guidelines as at 1 October 2023  
(Version 2)**

# Contents

---

<b>Contents</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>1. About these Guidelines</b> .....	<b>3</b>
Introduction .....	3
Purpose .....	3
Using these Guidelines .....	3
Review of Guidelines .....	3
<b>2. Relationships</b> .....	<b>4</b>
Relationship principles .....	4
Cultural responsiveness .....	4
Good practice approach .....	4
<b>3. Community Connectors</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>4. Service Cohort</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>5. Provide short-term support to individuals, families and whānau, to prevent and minimise the impacts of hardship</b> .....	<b>6</b>
Supporting whānau and community .....	6
<b>6. Discretionary Funding</b> .....	<b>7</b>
Assessment Criteria: .....	7
<b>7. Administration Requirements</b> .....	<b>7</b>
Reporting measures .....	7
Provider reporting.....	8
Social Sector Accreditation.....	8
Family Services Directory .....	8

# 1. About these Guidelines

---

## Introduction

These Guidelines are for Community providers who hold a Ministry of Social Development (the Purchasing Agency) Outcome Agreement to host Community Connectors.

Outcome Agreements with community providers of this service require that they are delivered in accordance with these Guidelines.

## Purpose

These Guidelines have been developed to assist stakeholders by:

- a) providing information about the service in a more easy-to-read format to support the Outcome Agreement
- b) being a resource tool to help providers deliver services consistently and in line with the original intent
- c) being a way for the Purchasing Agency to improve its responsiveness to feedback regarding changes to the service delivery component of the Outcome Agreement.

## Using these Guidelines

These Guidelines should be seen as setting the minimum standard from which the provider can develop a service that reflects their organisation's philosophical base, incorporating local need and the culture within which the provider works.

The provider should use these Guidelines to assist them to competently deliver the service.

## Review of Guidelines

This is a living document. The Guidelines will be updated to ensure:

- a) they reflect the most current decisions of the Government that affect the service and the activities being funded
- b) reporting measures are up-to-date, relevant and collecting the most useful information on the service and its effectiveness.

## 2. Relationships

---

### Relationship principles

Both parties will collaborate to ensure the services are effective and accessible. In doing so they recognise that the service is a joint endeavour, in which both parties have a shared goal to achieve positive outcomes for their community.

The following principles guide all our dealings under the Outcome Agreement. Both parties agree to:

- a) act honestly and in good faith
- b) communicate openly and in a timely manner
- c) work in a collaborative and constructive manner
- d) recognise each other's responsibilities
- e) encourage quality and innovation to achieve positive outcomes.

Both parties will appoint contract managers who will be responsible for effectively managing the contractual relationship between us, by providing assistance and support as required. Details of the contract managers nominated by both parties are set out in the Outcome Agreement. Ministry of Social Development Regional Commissioners and social sector providers will continue to work together as partners to determine regional priorities with Community Connectors.

### Cultural responsiveness

Both parties recognise the needs of all people, including Māori, Pacific, ethnic and culturally and linguistically diverse communities and all other communities, to have services provided in a way that is consistent with their social, economic, political, cultural and spiritual values.

### Good practice approach

Both parties support the development of good practice in the delivery of this service. This includes:

- a) basing the service on current good practice approaches and considering community context and the knowledge and skills relevant to the purpose and focus of this service
- b) being people and whānau focused – including recognising the importance of cultural responsiveness in service delivery and designing services and physical facilities in a way that supports accessibility to services.
- c) using a collaborative approach across services and agencies where possible
- d) undertaking regular review, reflection and monitoring of the effectiveness of the service, including people and whānau, staff and external feedback, and changing and modifying practice in response
- e) ensuring that formal feedback processes are used for reporting purposes and that people and whānau participating in them are aware of how the information they provide will be used

- f) undertaking any relevant professional development and (where appropriate) supervision.

### 3. Community Connectors

---

Community Connectors were established in June 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and are a key part of the welfare component of the Care in the Community welfare response to COVID-19. Employed by non-government organisations, Community Connectors act as a trusted interface for individuals, families and whānau to access community and government supports and are well placed to respond to local need.

COVID-19 has put further stress on disadvantaged communities and without continued focus on improving people's access to community and government support, there is a risk that these impacts will be amplified, and the incidence of persistent disadvantage will increase. Research shows that some groups are more likely to miss out on the government support and services they need to thrive, due to social, cultural, and structural barriers. These barriers may include mistrust, lack of resources, language, and complexity of accessing services. Collaboration with community partners, including through the Connector role, is essential to break down barriers and support people to live a life they value.

The scope of Community Connectors from 1 October 2023 is ***to provide short-term support to individuals, families and whānau, to prevent and minimise the impacts of hardship.***

This may comprise of:

- Supporting individuals, families and whānau who have been impacted by the January floods, Cyclone Gabrielle, or COVID-19.
- Walking alongside individuals, families and whānau, advocating for them until they are connected with supports and services that work for them.
- Providing a broad range of supports to individuals, families and whānau in hardship including ensuring people can access physical and mental health services, supporting direct provision of food, assisting access to culturally appropriate services such as kaupapa Māori supports, and helping people to access employment

Under this scope, individuals, families and whānau who have been impacted by the January floods, Cyclone Gabrielle, or COVID-19 can continue to be supported by Community Connectors. These cohorts have been offered holistic support by Community Connectors, and this support can continue in the future scope.

## 4. Service Cohort

---

The Provider will provide the Services primarily for:

- individuals, families and whānau who may not want to or be able to access traditional or government support.
- People and whānau who have been affected by the January/February floods and Cyclone Gabrielle and/or COVID-19.
- Priority cohort groups including but not limited to Māori, Pacific, ethnic and migrant communities, disabled people and older people

## 5. Provide short-term support to individuals, families and whānau, to prevent and minimise the impacts of hardship

---

### Supporting whānau and community

Community Connectors work alongside other roles and organisations in the social sector, using a team approach to provide the best support to their communities. They have multiple unique features which distinguish them from others:

- **Flexibility:** Connectors are a flexible workforce, shifting to local and regional priorities as they emerge. For example, alongside their mandate to assist people impacted by COVID-19, they have also supported households affected by recent adverse weather events in the North Island. This includes Connectors helping people to access employment services, education, training, and income supports, for example where unemployment is a concern in the region due to the adverse weather.
- **Duration and type of support:** Connectors focus on providing short-term 'sort and support' assistance.
- **Scope and reach:** Community Connectors support all peoples, and because of their focus on short-term support, Connectors can provide support to a large number of individuals, families, and whānau.

Community Connectors focus on:

- Assisting families, through advocacy and information to access longer-term income entitlements and a wide range of services and resources that support wellbeing (i.e. housing, education and employment)
- Addressing immediate hardship, especially where someone may not be entitled to receive Work and Income assistance and support them to access wider services and resources that support their wellbeing.

## 6. Discretionary Funding

---

Discretionary Funding is administered by Community Connectors and can be accessed when all other options of financial support have been exhausted. These may include:

- Work and Income services and products
- Other initiatives or local services such as Community Food banks

This funding is to address immediate hardship and can be accessed where it is reasonably evident that the person or whānau has inadequate income to meet essential needs. The amount per household has reduced from previous average's, given the purpose will no longer be centred on responding to COVID-19. As a guideline, we recommend up to \$300 per whānau or person.

### Assessment Criteria:

- The person or whānau does not qualify for assistance from Work and Income based on an assessment using the [Check what you might get \(msd.govt.nz\)](https://www.msd.govt.nz) tool or/and a discussion with Work and Income.

***Community Connectors are not required to apply the assessment criteria above if there is a time critical imperative that means other options cannot be fully considered and explored to provide immediate support.***

Discretionary funding can be used for essential and immediate welfare needs that include but are not limited to:

- Food and Personal hygiene needs
- Immediate housing costs such as rent arrears and board payments
- Medical needs i.e., doctors' bills and prescriptions
- Utilities i.e., phone bill, internet or phone data and power
- General household items i.e., clothing, blankets, and bedding
- Transportation costs i.e., medical appointments and arranging delivery or collection of items
- Education needs i.e., uniform, stationary, activity packs

Discretionary funding cannot be used for:

- Purchasing a vehicle
- Cigarettes (includes e-cigarettes)
- Alcohol.

## 7. Administration Requirements

---

### Reporting measures

An online tool (SORT) has been developed to provide a streamlined and effective approach for providers to submit information for this service. Access to the tool including login and user guide information is provided as a part of contract engagements. We are making

updates to the tool to reflect the new scope and will be in touch to advise when this is done.

It is important that reporting for the previous weeks activities is completed no later than Monday, because MSD reports on the previous week's activities using the information that has been reported as 5pm Monday.

### **Provider reporting**

Reporting is necessary to ensure accountability to Government for the funding provided in terms of outcomes. The Ministry has agreed on the quantity and nature of the services that government funding supports, and we are required to report to Government that this has been achieved.

During the term of the Outcomes Agreement, providers are required to provide responses to the above Reporting Measures. From time-to-time requests for additional information to support these Reporting Measures may be made.

Annual audited financial reports may also be requested.

### **Social Sector Accreditation**

Providers are required to maintain their accreditation level according to MSD relevant Social Sector Accreditation Standards.

Providers delivering Community Connectors are required to meet Level 3, Ministry of Social Development specific accreditation standards. You can find details about these accreditation standards here Accreditation Standards - Ministry of Social Development (<https://www.msd.govt.nz/>)

### **Family Services Directory**

Through the term of the Outcome Agreement with MSD, providers must ensure that their organisation is listed on the MSD's Family Services Directory ([www.familyservices.govt.nz/directory/](http://www.familyservices.govt.nz/directory/)), and that information is updated when required.