

Application checklist and helpful tips

Updated July 2012

Here are some helpful tips on how to make sure your application is processed as quickly as possible.

On this page:

Is it best to apply online or on paper?

We encourage you to apply online. You are likely to find it quicker and simpler, and your online application goes into our queue as soon as you click the “submit” button.

Your paper application goes into our queue as soon as we have checked that you have sent us correctly signed copies of the application and Officer Certification forms and a complete (signed) copy of your rules.

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How long does it take to process an application?

If you have given us all the necessary information, our registration analysts will take about eight working days to process your application.

From time to time, delays may occur. This happens when we receive a large number of applications at once, or a large number that have incorrect, incomplete or unclear information.

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Can your application be “fast-tracked”?

No. We process applications in the order in which we receive them. One application cannot be fast-tracked ahead of others, as this would be unfair to other applicants.

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To apply to register an individual organisation you will need:

- an application form – completed online or on paper
- to certify each of your officers – online or on paper
- a signed copy of your rules, including all amendments

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Information needed to complete your application includes:

Name and address

- Your organisation’s legal or most formal name
- Other names (if any) that it is known by
- Postal and street address details

Identification numbers (if they apply to you)

- Companies Office registration number. This only applies if your organisation is an incorporated society, registered charitable trust or company. Visit www.companies.govt.nz to find your number
- Inland Revenue (IRD) number, if you have one

Financial information

- End of financial year/balance date, if you have one
- Sources of your organisation’s funds. Choose from the list on the form. If you tick that your organisation receives “donations/koha”, Inland Revenue will see this as your application for donee status
- A reasonable estimate of the percentage of funds sourced in New Zealand but spent overseas in your last financial year, if applicable

IMPORTANT: *If you have previously been registered, but were deregistered for failing to file your Annual Return, you must supply us with copies of any missing financial statements, for each of the financial years since you were last registered.*

Send the financial statements with your application.

If we re-register you, we will display the financial statements on the Charities Register. You don't need to complete an Annual Return form for each missing financial year, just provide the financial statements.

Your rules

- A good quality signed copy of your rules, trust deed or other governing document and all amendments. Don't send the original, and do make sure that all pages are numbered and included in the copy you send us.
- If your organisation is a Māori Trust Board, please indicate whether the Commissioner of Inland Revenue has approved your trust deed for charitable purposes.
- If your organisation is a marae on a Māori reservation, is the land set apart under section 338 of Te Ture Whenua Māori Act 1993? Are the funds used for purposes other than:
 - administration and maintenance of the marae?
 - a charitable purpose of the marae?

Note: *Some rules that previously were accepted for registration may no longer meet the requirements of the law.*

If we are not able to register you again because of this, we will contact you and explain the reasons.

IMPORTANT: *We can't register any organisation if there is a possibility that it could be used to create or maintain a private financial profit for anyone. All the money and benefits flowing from a charity must be directed at achieving its charitable purposes.*

We will check your rules for clauses that ensure that the payment of money, advantage, or benefit is only directed at achieving your charitable purposes. This includes the payment of salary or wages.

If you are a trust wishing to make a payment to a trustee, your trust deed must clearly allow this payment.

If your organisation is not a trust - for example, if it is a company, incorporated society, or is unincorporated - you must include a winding-up clause in your rules. It must clearly specify that any remaining assets, after you've settled any debts and liabilities, must be used for a charitable purpose (or given to another organisation with charitable purposes). It's not enough for your rules to simply say that the assets will be given to a "similar" purpose. For more details, see — [Charity Rules](#).

Charitable purpose

You will need to specify, by choosing from the lists on the form:

- The sectors your organisation operates in – for example, “health”
- Your activities – for example, “provides grants”
- Who benefits from your organisation?
- The geographical area your organisation operates in.

IMPORTANT: *Are the charitable purposes set out in your rules clearly explained?*

Vaguely-worded charitable purposes, or purposes that are too broad will mean we need to ask you for more specific information.

Rules that are too vague are likely to lead to the application being declined.

For help with wording, see our information sheets on [Rules and the Charities Act](#) and [Charitable purpose](#).

For examples of acceptable wording, see these information sheets:

- [Advancement of religion: Examples of wording for purpose clauses](#)
- [Advancement of education: Examples of wording for purpose clauses](#)
- [Purposes beneficial to the community: Examples of wording for purpose clauses](#)
- [Relief of poverty: Examples of wording for purpose clauses](#)

Officer details

- Certify the correct number of officers. We check to make sure that you have certified *all* your officers – but if we find some are missing, we need to hold up your application while we ask you for the missing information.
- If your rules say that you have - for example - *five* officers, you must certify five officers. If you're not sure who to certify as an officer, see our information sheet, [Officer Certification](#).

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Information that you should include, so we can process your application efficiently:

- The name and contact details of someone we can contact if we have any questions about your organisation
- The email address to which you would like us to send correspondence – for example, your online account password. These details will not be published on the Charities Register and will not be available to the public.
- If a marae on a Māori reservation, it will help us if you supply a copy of the *Gazette* notice relating to the reservation of the land, the legal description of the land and your formal marae name.

IMPORTANT: Have you given us a description of your charity's activities?

We are likely to be able to process your application more quickly if you attach a covering letter to it, or a copy of a brochure you give to the public, or a link to your website, giving us information about your organisation's activities.

We need to be sure that all your activities are aimed at achieving your charitable purposes.

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What can you do if you have already applied, then realise you have given us incomplete, incorrect or unclear information?

If you have applied for registration, and then amended your rules, or need to certify additional officers, or want to provide updated information about your activities - please send an email to info@charities.govt.nz with the additional information.

Remember to include your charity reference number (sent to you when we acknowledged receipt of your application) in the subject heading of your email, so we can match up the new information with your application.

If you amend your rules, and you are registered with the Companies Office, you will need to advise them of the change before you send a copy of the amendment to us. You don't need to send us a whole new set of rules.

For more information about the Charities Register or registration under the Charities Act, please call our free information line – 0508 242 748.