

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Manatū Aorere

# Manaaki

*“Uplifting mana, through listening, supporting and empowering”*

## Concept note assessment framework

MAY 2019



**NEW ZEALAND  
FOREIGN AFFAIRS & TRADE  
Aid Programme**



## Assessment of concept notes

Assessment of the concept notes will be based on the four assessment areas:

1. **The relevance and effectiveness of the strategic investment** – Applicant needs to demonstrate that the Concept is based on sound knowledge of the context and inclusive of approaches which will ensure inclusion of marginalised and vulnerable groups.
2. **The local investment** – Proposed activities must be based on genuine partnership with local CSO partners who can demonstrate connectedness and representativeness of community needs and voices.
3. **The management feasibility** – MFAT needs to be confident that the intended delivery of activities will be effectively project managed with clear roles and responsibility for respective parties based on demonstrated capability.
4. **The financial investment** – MFAT needs to be confident the financial investment will allow efficient delivery of all activities and offer value for money.

Applicants responses to assessment questions in each area will be assessed according to the framework provided below. Each of these four assessment areas has been weighted at 25%. The selection of successful concepts notes will be based on a two-stage process:

- **Review of individual concept notes (primary process):** Concept notes will be reviewed by an external assessor, the MFAT Partnerships Unit and MFAT posts, bilateral and thematic teams as appropriate. Individual assessment questions will be scored from 1-5 and scores will be averaged for each assessment area. Manaaki will prioritise the highest scoring concept notes in line with the Fund's objective to support strong projects to achieve impact.
- **Review of the portfolio (secondary process):** Once the highest scoring concept notes are identified, MFAT will review the portfolio to ensure that 60% of funding will be focused on the Pacific. If the highest scoring concept notes (those receiving scores of 4 and 5 in all assessment areas) represent more than NZD5m, then MFAT will consider the complementarity of concepts in the portfolio and the extent to which MFAT's geographic and sectoral priorities are represented. If the highest scoring concept notes represent less than NZD5m, then MFAT will consider concept notes which have scored 3 in any of the assessment areas. If the Concept Note is rated as 1 or 2 for any assessment question it cannot be funded by Manaaki.

As noted above, if an NZNGO's concept note is selected, then they will be required provide all mandatory documentation (and supplementary evidence as required) to demonstrate compliance with MFAT's due diligence standards. An independent provider will undertake the due diligence assessment of the NZNGO.

MFAT will provide feedback to successful and unsuccessful applicants through a phone call to discuss the assessment and written feedback on performance in each assessment area.

## Individual Concept Note Assessment Framework

### 1. Relevance & Effectiveness

*Strategic investment: long-term results and impact expected (weighting 25%)*

Concept Note Assessment Question	Concept Note Assessment guiding questions to make an informed and objective assessment. Compelling positive answers will increase the rating.	Assessment rating (select one)
1.1 Describe the current local context and the problem (issue / opportunity) this investment is addressing, the rationale for involvement and the processes through which this development problem, need or opportunity was identified?	<p>Is the problem clearly articulated and understandable?</p> <p>Is it clear how this problem was identified?</p> <p>Is there adequate evidence of contextual analysis?</p> <p>Evidence of gender analysis?</p> <p>Is the rationale for engagement adequately articulated?</p> <p>Is there evidence of consideration of other agents involved in the sector / their role?</p>	<p>1 = Does not meet requirements</p> <p>2 = Inadequate</p> <p>3 = Sufficient</p> <p>4 = Strong</p> <p>5 = Very strong</p>
1.2 Indicative strategies and approaches to address the issue identified at 1.1 – inclusive of a brief description of the partners' collective experience in this sectoral / technical area of development activity and considerations of any alternative approaches considered to date.	<p>Is the strategy and approach to address the problem clearly articulated and understandable?</p> <p>Does the intended approach appear appropriate and feasible based on knowledge of the context and the issue being addressed?</p> <p>Is the collective experience of the respective parties to undertake this activity adequately substantiated?</p> <p>Have any alternative approaches been presented, and if so, do they seem make the indicative strategy and approach presented more compelling?</p>	<p>1 = Does not meet requirements</p> <p>2 = Inadequate</p> <p>3 = Sufficient</p> <p>4 = Strong</p> <p>5 = Very strong</p>
1.3 Describe the likely end of activity outcomes expected providing a brief narrative on how strategies and approaches (anticipated activities) are expected to contribute to the achievement of outcomes (including any initial assumptions)	<p>Demonstrated capacity to distinguish between outputs and outcomes</p> <p>Are end of project outcomes clearly presented indicating the intended change?</p> <p>Does it seem probable that supported activities will convert to the outcomes i.e. the suggested program logic reasonable?</p> <p>Is the narrative clear and compelling?</p> <p>Have assumptions been clearly presented and are they logical and reasonable?</p>	<p>1 = Does not meet requirements</p> <p>2 = Inadequate</p> <p>3 = Sufficient</p> <p>4 = Strong</p> <p>5 = Very strong</p>
1.4 Elaborate on processes taken or to be undertaken to ensure inclusion of vulnerable and or marginalised groups (this would include but not be limited to a consideration of gender and disability inclusion).	<p>Is there evidence of an awareness of the need for gender or social risk analysis?</p> <p>Are marginalised or vulnerable people identified as beneficiaries?</p> <p>Is the involvement of disabled people and disadvantaged groups including women and girls considered and or planned processes to identify and or engage with them?</p>	<p>1 = Does not meet requirements</p> <p>2 = Inadequate</p> <p>3 = Sufficient</p> <p>4 = Strong</p>

## 1. Relevance & Effectiveness

### *Strategic investment: long-term results and impact expected (weighting 25%)*

	Were marginalised or vulnerable people involved in the development of the Concept Paper or is it clearly presented how they will be consulted in the design phase and involved in implementation/monitoring and evaluation?	5 = <i>Very strong</i>
1.5 Indicate key strategies for sustainability	Is it clear how any activities and outcomes will be maintained beyond the project? Do you think it likely that any activities and outcomes will be maintained beyond the project support? How viable / capable is the local CSO and / or are specific strategies for institutional strengthening or local capability enhancement explicit in the concept note?	1 = <i>Does not meet requirements</i> 2 = <i>Inadequate</i> 3 = <i>Sufficient</i> 4 = <i>Strong</i> 5 = <i>Very strong</i>
1.6 Alignment: Provide a brief narrative highlighting alignment (and or complementarity) of the proposed activity and its broader relevance in reference to New Zealand aid programme and national development priorities and the achievement of the SDGs at a country level (and or other relevant sectoral /technical policy and guidelines).	Are New Zealand Aid programme and national development priorities presented? Is it clear how this activity aligns with (or is complementary to) New Zealand aid programme and national development priorities? Is it clear and believable how project outcomes will contribute to the presented New Zealand development priorities? Is there an awareness of the country level SDGs and how this activity might contribute to their achievement? Does the Concept Note reference or align with other regional/ sectoral or other policy / guideline or otherwise?	1 = <i>Does not meet requirements</i> 2 = <i>Inadequate</i> 3 = <i>Sufficient</i> 4 = <i>Strong</i> 5 = <i>Very strong</i>
	<b>Overall Rating</b>	1 = <i>Does not meet requirements</i> 2 = <i>Inadequate</i> 3 = <i>Sufficient</i> 4 = <i>Strong</i> 5 = <i>Very strong</i>

**2. Local investment:**  
*Benefits planned with the local community (weighting 25%)*

Concept Note Assessment Question	Assessment guiding questions to make an informed and objective assessment. Compelling positive answers will increase the rating.	Assessment rating select one)
2.1 Describe the nature and length of relationship between the local CSO and the NZNGO and confirm how (and or from whom) the idea for this activity was initiated (provide detail on previous activity collaboration / successful outcomes).	<p>Is it clearly presented how long the NZNGO has been in a relationship with the local CSO – and what the nature / evolution of that relationship has been?</p> <p>Is there evidence of responding to local voice in the initiation of this concept?</p> <p>To what extent is there evidence of a demonstrated and effective working relationship between the NZNGO and local CSO?</p>	<p>1 = Does not meet requirements</p> <p>2 = Inadequate</p> <p>3 = Sufficient</p> <p>4 = Strong</p> <p>5 = Very strong</p>
2.2 Elaborate on local partner priorities and capabilities – describing the process used for assessment and previous investment in capacity strengthening (e.g. mutual capability mapping and/or strengthening)	<p>Is there evidence of articulation of local CSO priorities?</p> <p>Is there evidence of capacity assessment / capability mapping by either the local CSO (self-assessment) and or the NZNGO having undertaken capacity assessment of CSO partner (s) to identify strengths and weaknesses in the partnership?</p> <p>Is there evidence of investment in local capacity / capability building and or organisational strengthening?</p>	<p>1 = Does not meet requirements</p> <p>2 = Inadequate</p> <p>3 = Sufficient</p> <p>4 = Strong</p> <p>5 = Very strong</p>
2.3 Provide a description of other relevant stakeholders – network / community links in the proposed location with some indication of how these groups / individuals might engage with the project (and or be enablers/ barriers to implementation / achievement of outcomes)	<p>Is a clear and informed understanding of the local community and its structures demonstrated</p> <p>Have local stakeholder networks been identified/analysis undertaken – or indicated as necessary in the next stage?</p> <p>Has it been presented how stakeholder/ networks might support /enable and or present obstacles to the implementation of the project/achievement of outcomes?</p>	<p>1 = Does not meet requirements</p> <p>2 = Inadequate</p> <p>3 = Sufficient</p> <p>4 = Strong</p> <p>5 = Very strong</p>
2.4 Confirm the name, location and likely number of the local impacted community (the direct beneficiaries): (indicating what is the unit – communities / individual women or men .... Etc.) – who will be targeted (primary) and or secondary beneficiaries.	<p>Is the location / population targeted in a remote and or difficult to reach location?</p> <p>Have the people, groups and/or communities (units) who will benefit from this project been clearly presented?</p> <p>Have the people, groups and/or communities been identified as direct (primary) beneficiaries or indirect (secondary) beneficiaries?</p>	<p>1 = Does not meet requirements</p> <p>2 = Inadequate</p> <p>3 = Sufficient</p> <p>4 = Strong</p> <p>5 = Very strong</p>

**2. Local investment:**  
*Benefits planned with the local community (weighting 25%)*

2.5 Confirm the local CSOs relationship with the direct beneficiaries:	<p>Has the nature and length of the relationship between the local CSO and the beneficiaries been clearly presented?</p> <p>Based on what is presented, do you think it reasonable to assume the that the local CSO is able to be a legitimate representative of the local community – this will be tested further at the proposal development stage?</p>	<p><i>1 = Does not meet requirements</i></p> <p><i>2 = Inadequate</i></p> <p><i>3 = Sufficient</i></p> <p><i>4 = Strong</i></p> <p><i>5 = Very strong</i></p>
2.6 Confirm the involvement of local communities and/or their representatives in developing this concept	<p>To what extent were local people, groups and/or communities (units) were involved in/consulted regarding the development of this Concept Note/potential activity?</p> <p>To what extent does the proposed concept reflect local priorities, needs and capacities?</p> <p>Based on what is presented, do you think it reasonable to assume the that the local stakeholders would understand what the Concept Note is requesting on their behalf?</p>	<p><i>1 = Does not meet requirements</i></p> <p><i>2 = Inadequate</i></p> <p><i>3 = Sufficient</i></p> <p><i>4 = Strong</i></p> <p><i>5 = Very strong</i></p>
2.7 Describe how this initiative will contribute to an increased voice / better responsiveness to local needs and demand in the longer term	<p>Is it described how the NZNGO will support the local CSO to have an increased voice and better represent local needs in the longer term?</p> <p>Is it presented how the local people, groups and/or communities presented will be able to strengthen their advocacy and demands or improve local conditions or services in the longer term?</p>	<p><i>1 = Does not meet requirements</i></p> <p><i>2 = Inadequate</i></p> <p><i>3 = Sufficient</i></p> <p><i>4 = Strong</i></p> <p><i>5 = Very strong</i></p>
<b>Overall Rating</b>		<p><i>1 = Does not meet requirements</i></p> <p><i>2 = Inadequate</i></p> <p><i>3 = Sufficient</i></p> <p><i>4 = Strong</i></p> <p><i>5 = Very strong</i></p>

**3. Management feasibility:**  
*Delivery of activities and outputs (weighting 25%)*

Concept Note Assessment Question	Assessment guiding questions to make an informed and objective assessment. Compelling positive answers will increase the rating.	Assessment rating (select one)
3.1 Present the expected roles and responsibilities of the direct beneficiaries, the local CSO and the NZNGO and how these have been decided and will be managed (elaborate further where this activity involves more than one collaborating NZNGO or CSO).	<p>Are the roles and responsibilities of the direct beneficiaries, the local CSO and the NZNGO clearly presented?</p> <p>Is it clear how these role and responsibilities were discussed and confirmed?</p>	<p>1 = Does not meet requirements</p> <p>2 = Inadequate</p> <p>3 = Sufficient</p> <p>4 = Strong</p> <p>5 = Very strong</p>
3.2 Confirm who will be responsible for financial management and reporting – including evidence of capability and track record where relevant	<p>Is the anticipated flow of funds clearly described?</p> <p>Where partners are in receipt of funds, is there track record of managing and acquitting funds to a similar amount proposed in this concept?</p>	<p>1 = Does not meet requirements</p> <p>2 = Inadequate</p> <p>3 = Sufficient</p> <p>4 = Strong</p> <p>5 = Very strong</p>
3.3 Confirm who will be responsible for implementing and monitoring the progress and quality of key activities and outputs:	<p>Is it clear which entity will be responsible for activity implementation and monitoring the progress and quality of delivery?</p> <p>Based on what is presented, do you think it reasonable to assume that this entity can perform the implementation and monitoring tasks required?</p>	<p>1 = Does not meet requirements</p> <p>2 = Inadequate</p> <p>3 = Sufficient</p> <p>4 = Strong</p> <p>5 = Very strong</p>
3.4 Confirm who will be responsible for assessing, evaluating and reporting progress towards and or achievement of outcomes	<p>Is it clear which entity will be responsible for evaluating and reporting against the delivery of outcomes?</p> <p>Based on what is presented, do you think it reasonable to assume that this entity can perform evaluation and reporting tasks required?</p>	<p>1 = Does not meet requirements</p> <p>2 = Inadequate</p> <p>3 = Sufficient</p> <p>4 = Strong</p> <p>5 = Very strong</p>

**3. Management feasibility:**  
*Delivery of activities and outputs (weighting 25%)*

<p>3.5 Confirm key risks you have identified for this proposed activity (include any treatments or mitigation strategies envisaged to manage these risks) – where relevant include specific social impact and or environmental risks</p>	<p>Presents and understanding of risk identification/analysis/mitigation</p> <p>Have key risks been presented and prioritised (e.g. rated for seriousness/impact)?</p> <p>Are these risks reasonable and relevant to the proposed activity and context?</p> <p>Have sensible strategies to manage risks been presented?</p> <p>Are there any significant risks that you can identify that have not been identified by the applicant? Are there any significant risks that you can identify that have not been identified by the applicant – if there are this will reduce the rating below OK and should be discussed with the applicant?</p>	<p><i>1 = Does not meet requirements</i></p> <p><i>2 = Inadequate</i></p> <p><i>3 = Sufficient</i></p> <p><i>4 = Strong</i></p> <p><i>5 = Very strong</i></p>
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<p>3.6 Describe the process for completing a full proposal, workplan and budget including timeframe</p>	<p>Has it been clearly presented how the full proposal will be developed?</p> <p>Is the process /timeframe described feasible and reasonable to develop a design?</p> <p>Has it been confirmed that the proposal will be developed within the proposed Stage 3 timeframe?</p>	<p><i>1 = Does not meet requirements</i></p> <p><i>2 = Inadequate</i></p> <p><i>3 = Sufficient</i></p> <p><i>4 = Strong</i></p> <p><i>5 = Very strong</i></p>
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<p>3.7 Confirm any support required from MFAT or other parties in the implementation of the activities, for example local government:</p>	<p>Has any additional support other than submitting partners been identified or requested?</p>	<p><i>1 = Does not meet requirements</i></p> <p><i>2 = Inadequate</i></p> <p><i>3 = Sufficient</i></p> <p><i>4 = Strong</i></p> <p><i>5 = Very strong</i></p>
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**Overall Rating**

*1 = Does not meet requirements*

*2 = Inadequate*

*3 = Sufficient*

*4 = Strong*

*5 = Very strong*



**4. Financial Investment:**  
*Efficiency (weighting 25%)*

Concept Note Assessment Question	Assessment guiding questions to make an informed and objective assessment. Compelling positive answers will increase the rating.	Assessment rating (select one)
4.1 Confirm how requested funds and implementation costs were calculated.	Has a complete budget amount been presented? Has a comprehensive costing process been presented? Are there any concerns or apparent gaps in the costing?	1 = Does not meet requirements 2 = Inadequate 3 = Sufficient 4 = Strong 5 = Very strong
4.2 Confirm how any NGO funding contributions (including in-kind) will be sourced by the NZNGO (and local CSO where relevant), and the amounts – include timeframes where indicated.	Have all co-funding contributions from the NZNGO and local CSO been presented? Has the NZNGO confirmed how and when the co-funding will be provided? Has any contribution in kind component been presented?	1 = Does not meet requirements 2 = Inadequate 3 = Sufficient 4 = Strong 5 = Very strong
4.3 Describe the nature and scope of relationship between the NZNGO and the NZ public, confirming how the NZNGO will engage with any New Zealand constituency during the activity, for example to create awareness and promote this activity and New Zealand support	Does the NZNGO have a clearly identified NZ constituency? Has the NZNGO clearly described its relationship and contact with the New Zealand public? Has the NZNGO clearly described how it will engage with the New Zealand public during implementation?	1 = Does not meet requirements 2 = Inadequate 3 = Sufficient 4 = Strong 5 = Very strong
4.4 Confirm additionality and briefly describe how this activity is in addition to existing initiatives and work programmes (i.e. is not business as usual) for the NZNGO and local CSO	Has the NZNGO confirmed that this activity would not be able to happen without MFAT support? Based on what is presented, do you think it reasonable to assume that this activity would not be able to happen without MFAT support?	1 = Does not meet requirements 2 = Inadequate 3 = Sufficient 4 = Strong 5 = Very strong
<b>Overall Rating</b>		1 = Does not meet requirements 2 = Inadequate 3 = Sufficient 4 = Strong 5 = Very strong