



Ministry for the
Environment
Manatū Mō Te Taiao

Environment Centre Fund

Environment Centre Review Report

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Part One: Introduction

Background

- 1.1 The Ministry for the Environment ('the Ministry') first funded environment centres ('centres') in the 2000/01 financial year. The Environment Centre Fund began with the objective "to raise awareness of environmental issues and the actions that can be taken on those issues", and with the purpose of "having centres that are accessible to the general public, disseminate environmental information and educational services, and provide a focus and meeting place for community action on environmental issues".
- 1.2 The annual environment centre budget is \$300,000, with the exception of the 2002/03 financial year where an additional \$300,000 was made available by Cabinet. Overall \$1,800,000 has been allocated to centres over the past five years, with an average of 10 centres funded in any given year. The grant to centres is to assist with administration costs, including accommodation, purchase/hire of office equipment, salaries, and other administrative expenses.
- 1.3 There has been a shift in the strategic direction of the Ministry over the past two years. Correspondingly, the Ministry needs to ensure that the work of centres that receive Ministry funding reinforces this direction. A purpose of this review is to ensure alignment between the activities of centres and the Ministry's wider goals.
- 1.4 It has always been understood that centres would prioritise their activities around locally specific environmental needs, and hence that the priority and/or extent of activities would differ between centres. Nonetheless, the overarching vision for all centres was to act as catalysts for community environmental action and to forge partnerships within the community to achieve this. For that reason, the review has attempted to clarify the nature and range of the relationships the centres maintain and establish how these contribute to environmental action.
- 1.5 This review has allowed the Ministry to develop a clearer picture of current centre operations, and has provided information about the centres' capacity for future project-based work. The review will enable the Ministry to meet identified gaps and better support centres to align their efforts to meet Ministry objectives and the Crown's wider strategic goals for the environment.

Purpose of the Review

- 1.6 This review was commissioned by the Minister for the Environment, who agreed that a formal review was needed to assess the value for money derived from the Environment Centre Fund. The review process entailed assessing the environment centres' alignment with and capability to progress the Ministry's new strategic direction. This included:
 - a) communicating details of and expectations relating to the new strategic direction "to lead and facilitate the development of proactive partnerships of individuals and

groups who, in turn, are then motivated and empowered to take actions that materially improve environmental quality”

- b) identifying the current range of centres’ activities, range of services and performance, and identifying key issues helping or hindering their ability to deliver proactive partnership services
- c) identifying any changes/adjustments individual centres need to make to better deliver proactive partnership services.

Review Process

- 1.7 A questionnaire was distributed to all environment centres who had received funding from the Ministry in 2004 or in any previous financial year. Each centre was asked to complete an electronic or hard copy of the questionnaire and return it to the Ministry. The findings were then collated and analysed by the Ministry’s Funding Community Initiatives Team and are presented in this document.

Part Two: Findings

This section summarises key issues and points of note from the survey responses.

Value for Money

- 2.1 A central objective of this review was to assess centres in terms of the value for money they represent in acting as catalysts for environmental action. This proved a difficult assessment to make due to two key factors.
 - a) It has always been recognised that centres would prioritise their activities around meeting local environmental needs. Therefore, local differences in focus and emphasis make direct comparison between centres inappropriate and potentially misleading.
 - b) Changes in the Ministry's strategic direction have been made to reflect changes in environmental value. Few environmental issues are constant, and the Ministry is now articulating its renewed direction and priorities to centres.
- 2.2 There is sufficient evidence to show that the existing activities, although almost exclusively locally geared, are producing positive environmental results. Equally, our analysis suggests that in a majority of cases, centres' activities would gain additional value through a better understanding of the Ministry's strategic direction. This would enable centres to better align their efforts and reinforce the work of the Ministry.
- 2.3 The Ministry is addressing this through new funding application material that is structured to get centres to specify projects at a higher level of detail than in the past. New Deeds of Funding also reflect this and will allow for a clearer picture of centres' performance.

Funding Issues

- 2.4 Issues associated with financial support are of central concern to centres. The issues identified include:
 - a) centres would like the total funding pool of \$300,000 per annum to be increased
 - b) centres support the introduction of multi-year funding arrangements
 - c) a perception that the Ministry could better manage performance issues relating to centres.

Following is a discussion of each of these issues in more detail.

Environment centre funding pool

- 2.5 Aside from the 2002/03 financial year, in which the fund was effectively doubled, the total amount available has remained at around \$300,000 per year. At the time of the

fund's creation it was envisaged that funding would be available to six centres that would each receive \$50,000 per year. However, public enthusiasm for centres has seen an unexpectedly high level of interest, such that the fund is routinely oversubscribed to two to three times its value.

- 2.6 The Ministry recognises that there is significant financial pressure on centres and that fundraising is often a large component of the work of centre volunteers. However, we believe that the priority is to clarify the issue of centre alignment with the Ministry's goals. Seeking an increase in the level of the Environment Centre Fund would be premature at this stage.
- 2.7 In the meantime, centres are encouraged to seek project-specific funding. Those centres that organise a wide range of activities attract greater financial support, which results in a higher annual income. It is important that the proportion of the overhead costs needed to run a project is factored into any project-specific funding. Spreading running costs over a number of funders will lead to increased viability, and the impact of one funder withdrawing support will be less detrimental.
- 2.8 The Sustainable Management Fund has recently increased the emphasis on funding projects with a high degree of community environmental 'action-on-the-ground'. Accordingly, centres now have considerable potential to develop projects that meet the Sustainable Management Fund criteria. Environment centres are encouraged to apply to the fund because:
 - a) the Sustainable Management Fund has a better-established mechanism for ensuring that projects organised by centres will align with key Ministry priorities
 - b) it is a further source of funding that centres can access, thus encouraging them to become more project-focused with the potential to spread costs among a range of funders and increase their viability.

Multi-year funding

- 2.9 A related issue is the impact of a lack of funding certainty (highlighted in the Ministry's application material warning that future funding cannot be assured). This is seen to have implications for centres' planning and delivery. It is likely that this situation will not be satisfactorily resolved until the issue of the total amount of funding available is addressed, but the Ministry is willing to look at options for multi-year funding. Balance has to be achieved between the need for centres to have funding security, and the need for the Ministry to ensure quality and flexibility.

Managing performance

- 2.10 The perception that the Ministry has chosen to manage performance issues with specific centres through declining future funding, rather than by addressing the problem is of concern to both the centres and the Ministry. This perception may owe much to the fact that the time demands of Ministry staff have meant that there has been less direct contact than the Ministry and centres consider desirable. As a result an element of guidance mentoring and, where appropriate, correction has been lacking. The creation of a dedicated fund management team in April 2003 was expected to go some way towards addressing this, among other issues. The further development of reporting templates and

Deeds of Funding will increase the guidance levels. Also, each Deed of Funding now has the contact details of the contract adviser assigned to the centre, and centres are encouraged to contact their adviser with any questions.

Governance

- 2.11 The survey saw ample evidence to suggest that centres have appropriate and reliable governance structures in place.

Volunteers

- 2.12 The responses show that the ability of a centre to attract adequate volunteer support is critical to the centre's success. This is largely due to the central role volunteers play in contributing to practical environmental projects. This work is seen as highly influential in engaging further community support.

Relationships

- 2.13 The survey shows that centres are keenly aware of the importance of developing effective and productive relationships with a range of organisations, including local government and educational institutions. A higher number of relationships than expected have been established with businesses. Many centres are focusing on furthering their connections with universities, polytechnics and other educational facilities with an emphasis on participating in field research.

Issues Impacting on Service Delivery

- 2.14 A key factor, negatively impacting on service delivery, is the concern that centres may have to compromise their independent status to meet Ministry funding requirements. In common with many non-government organisations that receive Crown financial support, centres identify an inevitable tension between meeting the funders' requirements and their need for independent status, particularly where issues of the day are concerned. For its part, the Ministry is aware of its responsibilities as a steward of public funds, and it is equally aware that ministries have recently been censured for funding non-government organisations for whom lobbying was an express activity.
- 2.15 It is to be expected that on some issues centres may adopt a different position than that of the Ministry. The Ministry respects the independent nature of centres and does not seek to compromise this through the Deed of Funding. However, the Ministry must ensure the appropriateness, transparency and accountability of the expenditure of public funds. To prevent a lack of clarity around our expectations the Ministry will provide guidance to the centres on the appropriate range of activities that centres can undertake with Ministry support.

- 2.16 Negative stereotypes – “being labelled as greenies” – can also impact on local levels of support. On a positive note, centres cited their geographical location and the skill sets and experience of volunteers as key contributors to effectiveness.

Resource Management Act

- 2.17 Seventy-five percent of centres surveyed report that they handle enquiries specific to the Resource Management Act. However, only 40% of the same centres consider that they have sufficient capacity to manage these queries. Twenty percent of centres refer Resource Management Act enquiries to alternative sources of advice. It is important for centres without the in-house capacity to manage Resource Management Act enquiries to liaise with their local council and advice services such as Community Law Centres.

Part Three: Recommendations

The findings of the review have led to a number of key recommendations. These are presented below.

Value for Money

- 3.1 To increase the value for money provided by centres, it is recommended that the Ministry:
- a) continue to refine the application and assessment system to take account of the Ministry's findings of the Environment Centre Review, the Government's wider goals for the environment, and the Ministry's strategic position
 - b) communicate to centres the findings of the Environment Centre Review and, in an ongoing way, the Government's wider goals for the environment and the Ministry's strategic aim
 - c) continue to develop realistic measures of value for money that are fair in as much as they take into account non-government organisations' ability to deliver and account for regional differences.

Funding Issues

- 3.2 It is recommended that the Ministry:
- a) encourage environment centres to extend their range of activities, which will allow them to seek project-specific funding from a wide range of funders (as part of their project costs, centres should factor in a proportion of staff and running costs needed to run the project)
 - b) proactively advise the environment centres of the opportunities for project-specific support available through the Sustainable Management Fund, and how to apply for this
 - c) look at options for the multi-year funding of centres.

Governance

- 3.3 No recommendations have been made regarding environment centre governance.

Volunteers

3.4 It is recommended that the Ministry:

- a) fund staff, committee and volunteer development costs as part of their grant. These costs should centre on increasing project management, and financial and marketing skills.

Relationships

3.5 It is recommended that the Ministry:

- a) encourage environment centres to continue developing effective and productive relationships. These relationships should be centred on projects and services the centre can offer and organise in return for financial or in-kind support.

Issues Impacting on Service Delivery

3.6 It is recommended that the Ministry:

- a) provide guidance to centres on the appropriate range of activities to be conducted with Ministry support and further develop its application material and Deed of Funding to reflect this.

Resource Management Act

3.7 It is recommended that the Ministry:

- a) proactively advise environment centres of the opportunities for Resource Management Act project-specific support available through the Education and Advisory Services Fund, and how to apply to this.

Part Four: Summary of Responses

This section of the report summarises the responses received from the 23 centres that responded to the survey document. Each of the topical areas is addressed in the order in which it appeared in the survey. The data supporting the commentaries is presented in aggregate form in Appendix 1.

Governance

- 4.1 The survey demonstrated that the governance structures in environment centres are strong. Typically, they are controlled by regular monthly committee meetings attended by an average of five to nine committee members. More often than not, decision-making is by consensus.
- 4.2 Centres were asked to identify the separation between governance and management in conducting their activities. There was an almost equal split between centres in which the committees have a key role in deciding on policies/positions and only delegate day-to-day decision-making to their staff, and centres in which committees maintain a more distinct governance function and delegate a broader range of policy/ position decisions to staff. In a minority of cases, committees delegated to their staff the power to address all matters regarding the centres' activities.

Staff Members

- 4.3 This question sought to identify centres' staff levels, working hours and the qualifications and experience brought to bear in operating the centres. With the exception of two centres that do not employ staff, most have one or two paid employees; with a lesser number having three paid employees. The average time worked by each staff member is between 20 and 30 hours per week. Typically their core expertise lies in community work experience, working with non-government organisations and environmental and conservation disciplines; sometimes they are supported by degrees (in some cases PhDs). Examples of other central skills identified include training and delivering adult education, fundraising, event co-ordination, and library skills.

Volunteers

- 4.4 The Ministry recognises the crucial role of volunteers in the successful operation of environment centres. The data gathered indicates that over a quarter of centres surveyed engage the support of 20 or more volunteers, with around half of centres averaging between 5 and 14. A significant proportion of duties that volunteers carry out are in practical environmental work, followed equally by organising projects and working with committees. The survey also suggests that volunteers have limited participation in duties such as networking, customer service, administration, publicity and fundraising. Therefore the probable impact of any significant reduction in volunteer support would be to severely limit centres' capacity for practical environmental work, which is generally regarded as the most positive and visible way of engaging further community support.
- 4.5 It is also apparent that many centres have yet to take advantage of the potential to secure additional financial support for practical projects through application to the Sustainable Management Fund, administered by the Ministry for the Environment.

Funding Issues

- 4.6 Of the centres surveyed, the majority of funds were spent on staff costs such as salaries, administration, recruitment and travel; additional running costs included such items as rent, electricity and publicity materials. Less funds were spent on volunteer costs, project costs (eg, venue hire) and advertising, and other costs such as resources and bank fees. In deciding what percentage of funding would be used for each of the categories listed above, the majority of centres allocated funds by prioritising their needs, with staff being their top priority; others prioritised running and volunteer costs.
- 4.7 The three most common ranges of annual income were \$20,000 to \$29,000; \$40,000 to \$49,000; and \$75,000 to \$99,000, with a wide variation in annual income across centres. The trend was that the lower the annual income of a centre, the greater their dependency on the Ministry grant. Conversely, the higher the annual income, the greater the ability of that centre to obtain other sources of funding. In general, the centres with a higher total income tended to be well established and to drive activities that attract financial support from the likes of regional and local councils.
- 4.8 Looking at the other sources of funding centres secured in the last financial year, the survey reveals that central government organisations are a major source of additional funding. In particular, many centres have been awarded funding through the Community Education Grant, administered by the Department of Labour.
- 4.9 The data shows after central government sources, regional funding organisations (such as the Lotteries Commission - Regional Community Committees) are the next most common method of additional funding, followed by local and regional councils and centres' own fundraising efforts. The least favoured method of securing additional funding is through Community Trust Boards.
- 4.10 Of those centres not currently receiving an Environment Centre Fund grant, the data suggests that the majority are financially supported by sources such as councils. A small proportion of centres receive an income from the sale of goods, subletting part of their

premises to other organisations, or operating at the minimum level, carrying out only activities able to be supported by volunteer commitment.

Operation

- 4.11 This section enabled the Ministry to gain a greater awareness of the range of services that environment centres provide. The majority of centres have been open for more than five years. Half of the centres surveyed are open from Monday to Friday, with a third open during the weekend. A small proportion of environment centres operate for fewer than four days a week.
- 4.12 Of services provided at the centre, advice services, library services and assistance to other groups featured as the most popular. Meeting room hire, seminars, training courses and workshops, were also prevalent services.
- 4.13 The term 'library services' generally refers to the maintenance and availability of specialised publications dealing with resource management, environmental planning and case law on related matters. In some instances it also covers environmental and conservation practice and guidance.
- 4.14 Other examples of services include the Internet, advocacy, website forum and guided tours. All the environment centres identified community groups and community members as key users. Schools, universities and businesses were also listed by a number of centres.
- 4.15 Fewer than half the centres stated that they have other organisations providing a similar service within their geographical areas. A number of centres reiterated that aspects of their service were provided by other organisations, but that no one organisation delivered all the services offered by environment centres. Only three centres mentioned that another centre was operating in the same area; four said local and regional councils offered a similar service in part, and four identified localised environmental organisations offering broadly similar services.
- 4.16 Centres generally receive between 0 and 40 enquiries each week. The majority of these are received by email, and to a lesser extent by personal visits and phone calls.
- 4.17 Government department information is utilised by all of the centres surveyed. Information from regional and local councils, non-government organisations such as Forest and Bird and Greenpeace, and local environmental groups are also held by most centres. This information is disseminated and shared with interested parties, largely through libraries and schools.

Encouraging Community Action

- 4.18 The Government's vision is that centres act as catalysts for community environmental action, through facilitating or providing assistance to community environmental projects. The extensive list of projects received through this survey gives a good indication of how interactive centres are with the local community. This is detailed further in Appendix 2.

Relationships

- 4.19 As we have seen, to forge partnerships within the community, environment centres need to act as catalysts for community action. This section of the questionnaire outlined the types of organisations that centres have an active working relationship with. All but two centres have a relationship with the local community. This takes the form of providing facilities for community groups and individuals to use, and organising practical environmental projects such as restoration work, pest control and worm farming. Similarly, all but one centre have a relationship with their local council that focuses on practical conservation work (eg, pest control and riparian planting). A number of centres are involved in the delivery of the Sustainable Households Programme on behalf of the councils, working alongside local councils in promoting bike to work days, and in council consultations.
- 4.20 Seventy-five percent of centres surveyed said they have a relationship with central government agencies, based on disseminating or displaying the agencies' information. The Department of Conservation is the most prominent agency in this respect, and a number of the Centres were involved in promotional activities such as Conservation Week and Sea Week. Likewise, nearly 75% of centres surveyed have a working relationship with iwi groups, the core connection being through networking and involvement in consultations.
- 4.21 Of the centres surveyed, only a small proportion does not have a relationship with the local schools in their area. Four centres are involved with the Enviroschools Programme, while the remaining centres either deliver educational programmes to the schools, or the schools visit the centres to carry out practical environmental work.
- 4.22 Listed in the higher percentile of active working relationships are businesses. These involve relationships developed through, for example, receiving sponsorships, becoming involved in waste minimisation programmes, and the promotion of green products. Less than half of the centres surveyed cited working relationships with regional groups such as Landcare Trust, Genesis and Waicare. Where these relationships did occur they centred on information sharing.
- 4.23 In developing future partnerships, nearly half of the centres surveyed stated that they are keen to promote relationships with schools and (in particular) universities. This would focus on providing education programmes or becoming involved in practical research work. Thirty-three percent stated that they are keen to develop further relationships with councils and iwi, with a further 33% seeking to develop relationships with central government agencies to obtain funding and disseminate information on behalf of these organisations. The remainder of the centres will be developing partnerships with businesses to identify projects such as improving waste management and looking at alternative energy sources. None of the centres surveyed mentioned developing further relationships with regional environmental organisations.

Independent Feedback

- 4.24 The Ministry was interested to hear from other centre users to enhance our understanding of the environment centres' contribution. To facilitate this, we invited centres to provide contact details for two or three independent referees.

- 4.25 The majority nominated non-government organisations, followed by government departments, and educational and leisure facilities. A sample selection of independent referees was contacted. All the referees spoke positively about the centre operating in their area. The following is a sample of the answers given when referees were asked about the role the centre plays in the community.
- It is an important one-stop shop and clearing house.
 - The Centre is predominantly an educator on environmental issues.
 - They are a disseminator of information.
 - They are very much action-on-the-ground focused.
 - They encourage change in the community through workshops and providing information.
- 4.26 The referees also made a number of suggestions for improvement. These focused on centres improving their relationships, planning and ability to secure other sources of funding. The following is a sample of the comments made.
- Centres need mentoring to help them lift their game and become a more attractive funding venture.
 - More interaction with regional councils is required.
 - Better long term planning is needed as some projects can be rushed.
 - They are under-resourced, but they could be more proactive in obtaining funding for specific projects.

Issues Impacting on Service Delivery

- 4.27 The ability of centres to deliver services can be affected positively or negatively by a range of operational and strategic factors. We asked the centres to identify the positive and negative issues impacting on their ability to deliver services and worked out what percentage of centres identified these issues as a priority.
- 4.28 Half of those surveyed expressed positive views regarding their geographical location (such as space and well-situated CBD premises). Knowledge and skills among volunteers came second, followed equally by local and national recognition and community support.
- 4.29 In terms of negative issues, the majority of centres identified funding sustainability as the main reason their centre may not be able to deliver services as required. Lack of resources such as promotional/marketing material, lack of general awareness, lack of support from regional and local councils, and being labelled 'greenies' (suggesting they are not taken seriously or professionally) were issues also identified.
- 4.30 As well as describing these issues, we also welcomed suggestions for ways to address them. Some examples of suggestions include support from local and regional councils, ongoing educational programmes, regular meetings with Ministry representatives, and education about Maori cultural values.

Resource Management Act

- 4.31 Seventy-five percent of centres surveyed receive enquiries specifically related to the Resource Management Act. Around 40% have the capacity to deal with RMA enquiries, whereas 40% do not have such capacity. The remaining 20% can deal with enquiries by referring people to RMA guides and websites, but were unable to answer specific enquiries themselves. In this case they refer people on to other organisations such as community law centres, RMA management consultants and regional councils.
- 4.32 The survey also suggests a strong need to develop the capacity to deal with RMA enquiries in the future.

Appendix 1: Survey Results

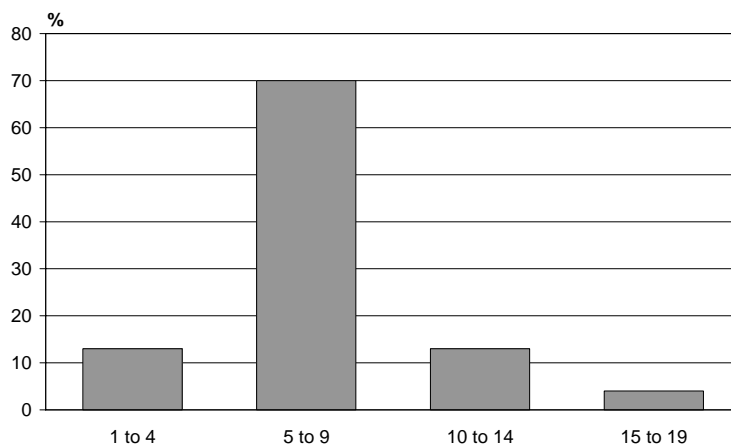
Governance

Through this section of the survey the Ministry gets a clear picture of the governance structures and decision-making processes that centres have in place.

Q1.1 Do you have a committee?

All environment centres surveyed stated that they have a committee.

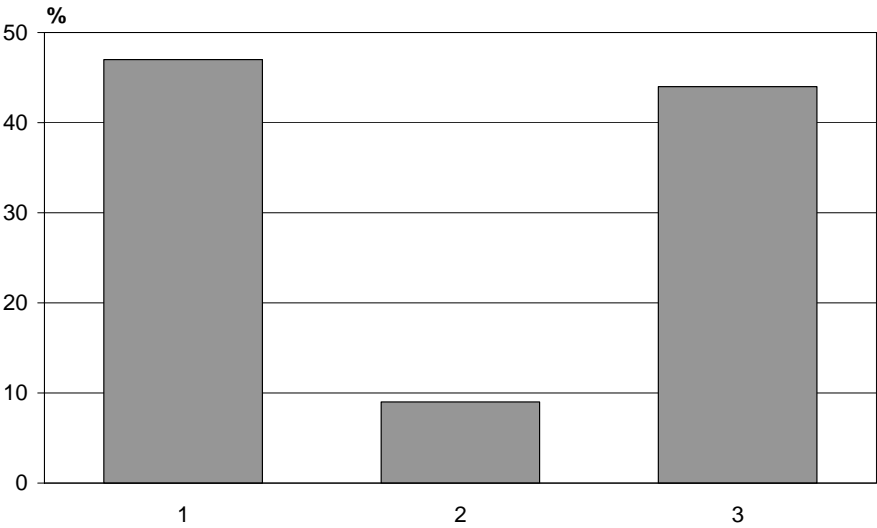
Q1.2 How many members are on your committee?



Q1.3 How often does the committee meet?

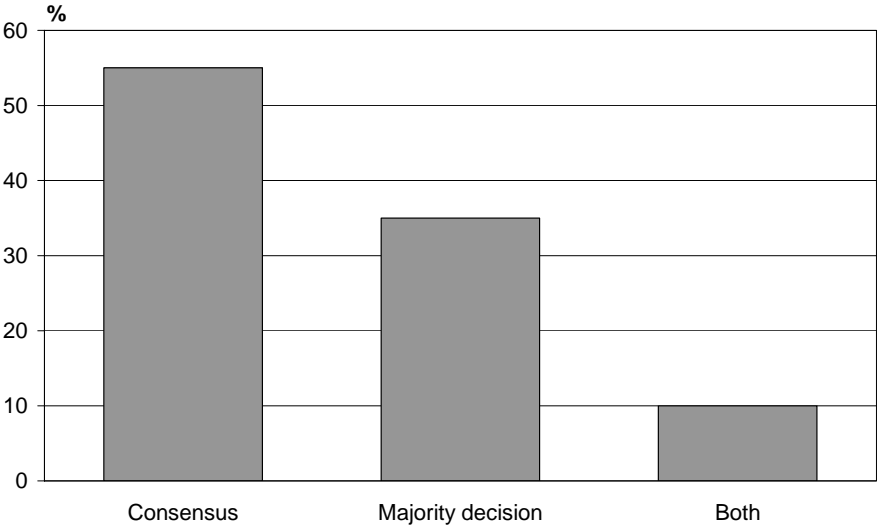


Q1.4 How are decisions made on the activities that the centre conducts?



1. Committee decides policy/position on a case-by-case basis and then delegates authority to staff members to make decisions within those policies.
2. Committee has delegated powers to staff members on all matters regarding the centre's activities.
3. Committee keeps an oversight, but delegates authority to staff members to make day-to-day decisions.

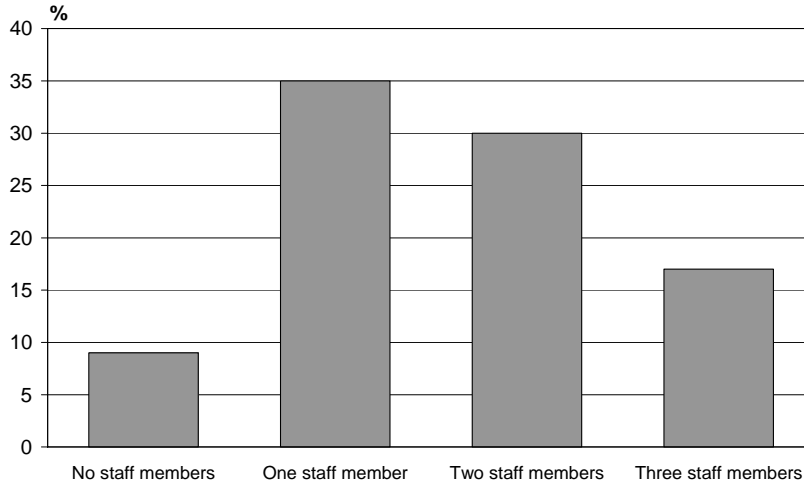
Q1.5 How are these committee decisions made?



Staff Members

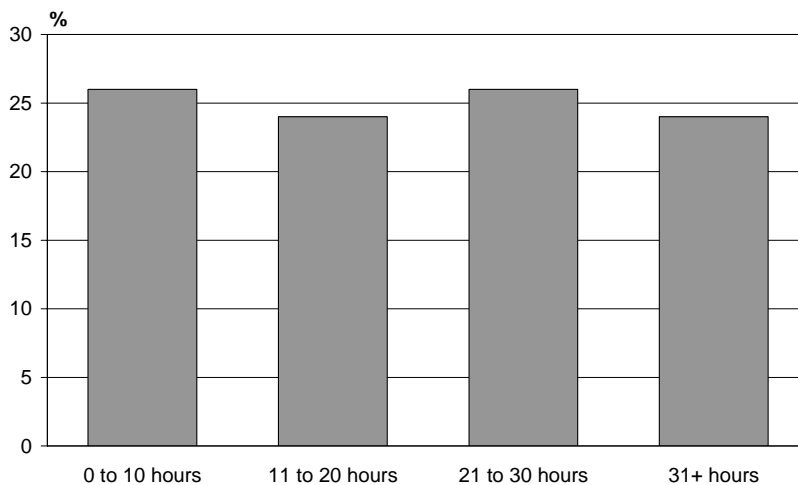
Through this section the Ministry gets a clear picture of the number of staff and their range of skills.

Q2.1 How many paid staff members are employed by the centre?

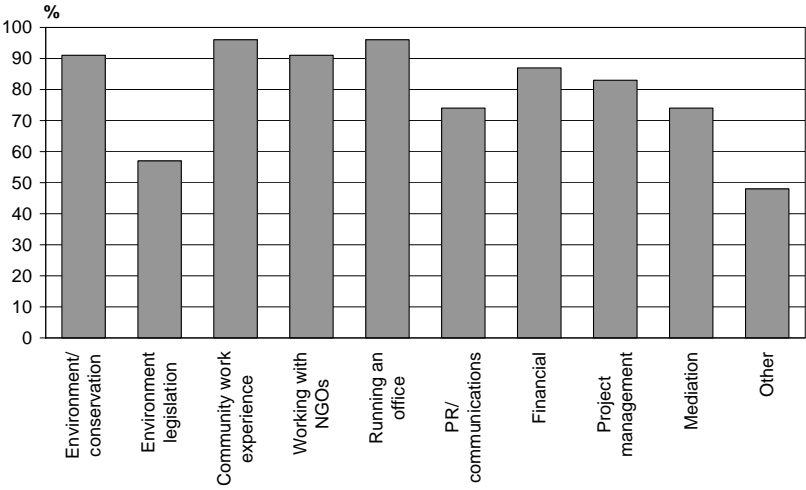


The number of staff members for one centre varied from zero to three during the year. Another centre has five staff members with working hours that range from one hour to 12 hours per week.

Q2.2 How many hours per week does each paid staff member work?



Q2.3 Please tick the skills/experience/knowledge which staff members possess and use to carry out their work.

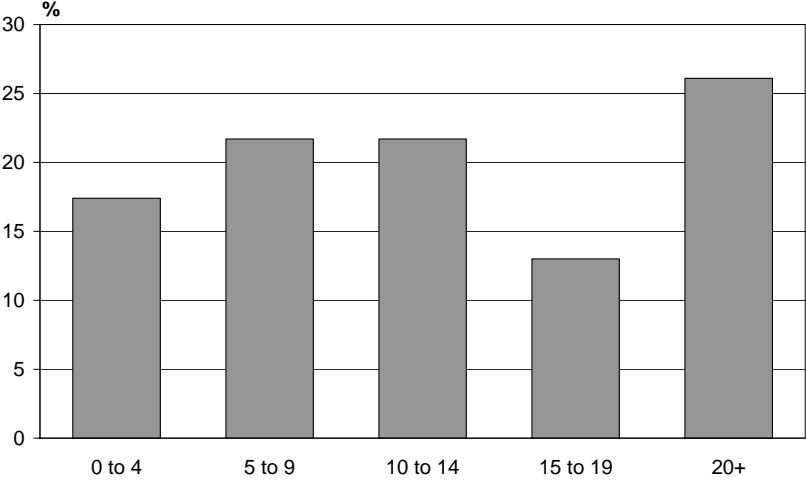


Examples of other skills listed include doctorates and degrees in environmental areas, training and delivering adult education, fundraising, event co-ordination and library skills.

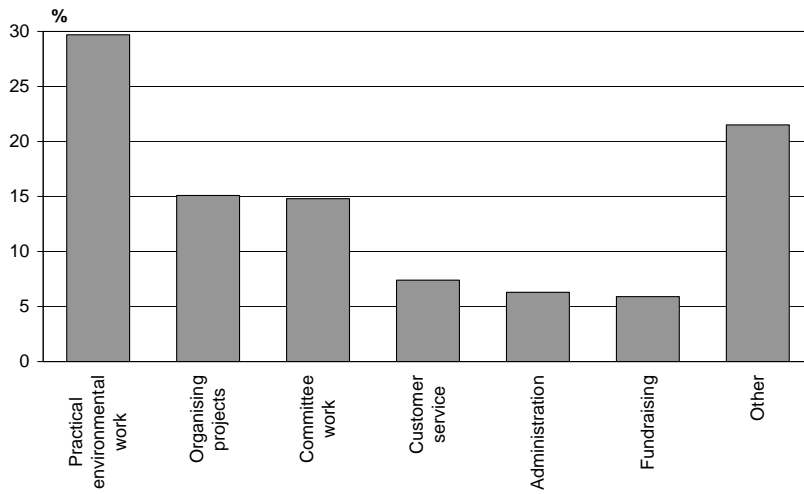
Volunteers

Without volunteers a large number of community organisations and non-government organisations would not be able to function. The Ministry was interested in assessing the role volunteers play in the centres’ ability to function.

Q3.1 How many volunteers/supporters does the centre have?



Q3.2 Please state the number of volunteers/supporters who carry out the following duties.

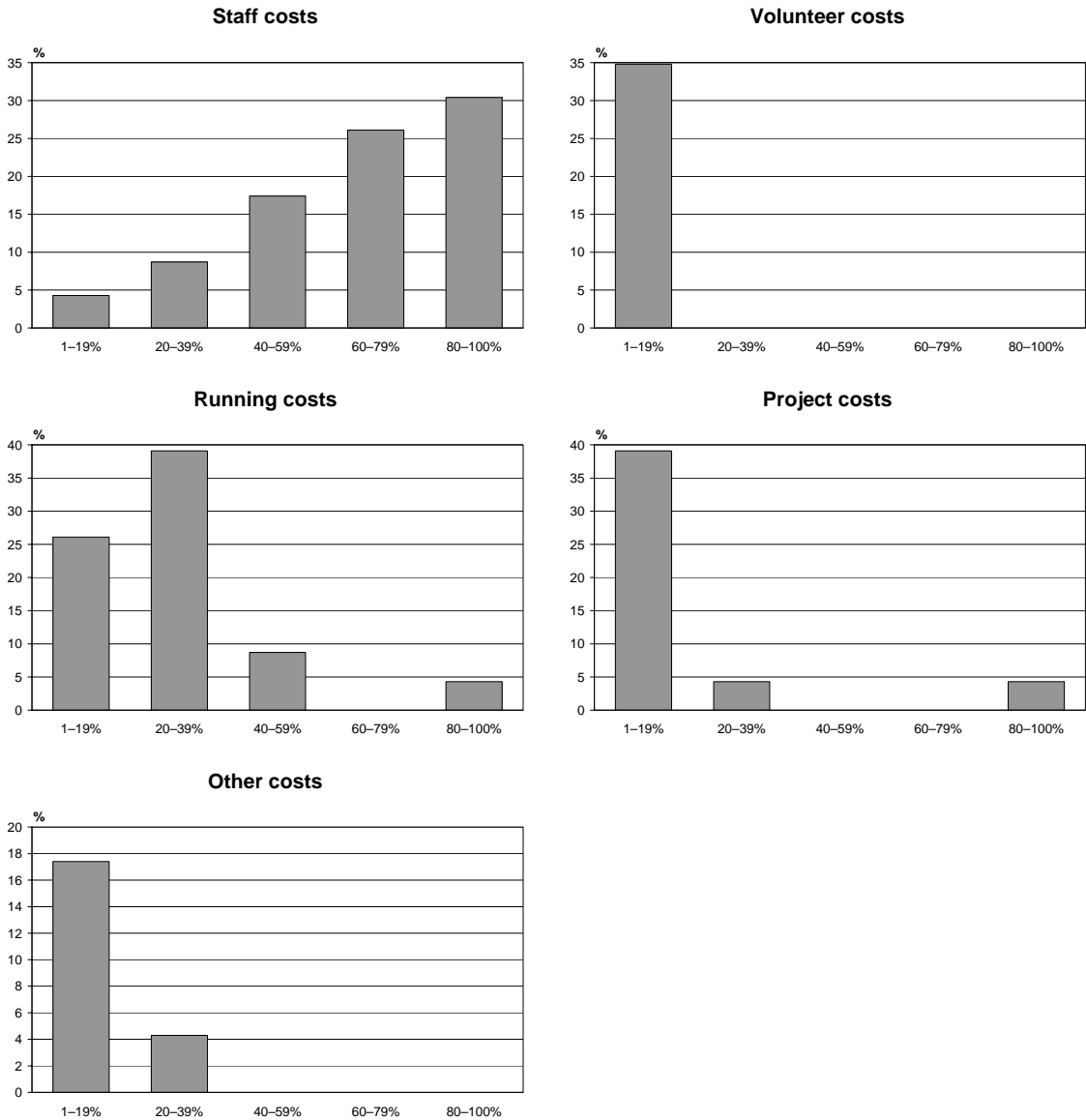


Examples of other duties that volunteers/supporters carry out include publicity, networking, displays and attending meetings.

Funding Issues

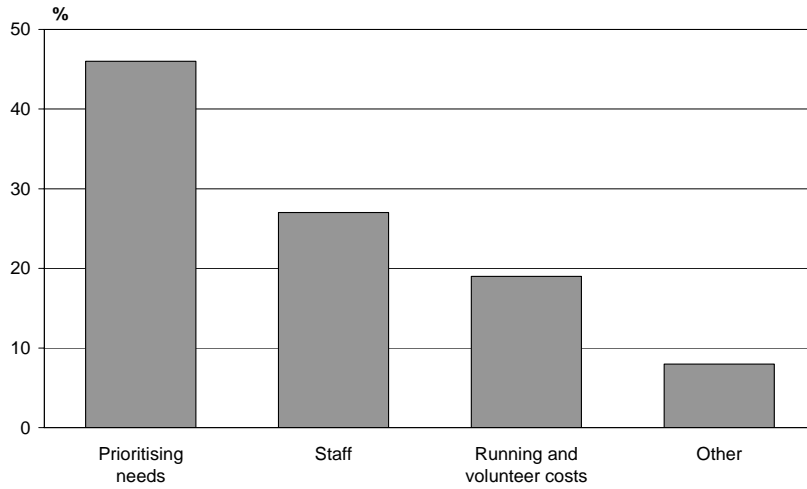
As a steward of public funds the Ministry needs to ensure that the spending of funding is consistent with the rules and regulations of the fund.

Q4.1 In the last financial year that MfE awarded you funding, please indicate how much of your grant was spent on the following categories.¹

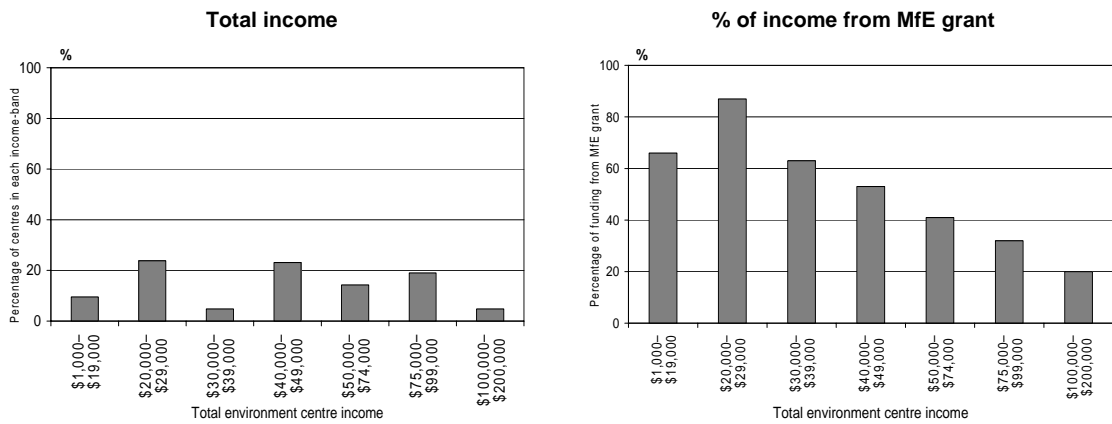


¹ Running costs include expenses such as rent, electricity and publicity materials. Project costs include venue hire, advertising, workshops, etc. Other costs were listed as resources, bank fees and contractors.

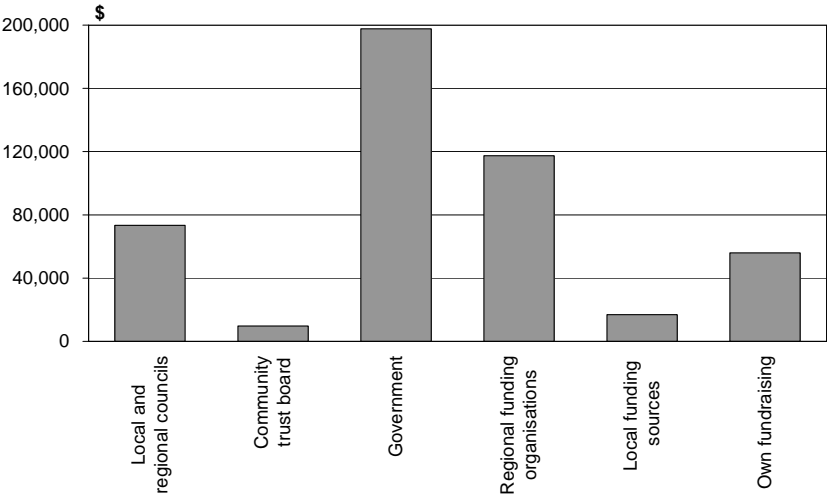
Q4.2 How did you decide what percentage of funding would be used for each category?



Q4.3 In the last financial year that MfE awarded you funding, what percentage of your total income for the centre was the MfE grant?

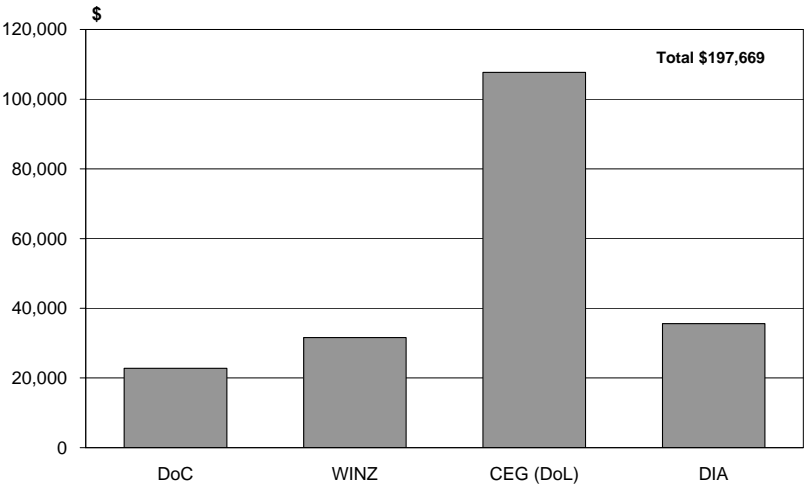


Q4.4 In the last financial year that MfE awarded you funding, what other sources of funding have you secured and the amount obtained?

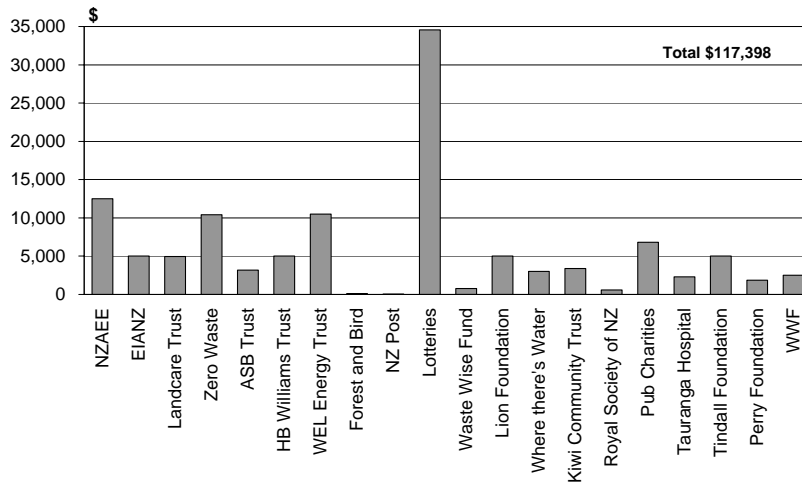


The following figures are a breakdown of the funders according to the categories listed above.

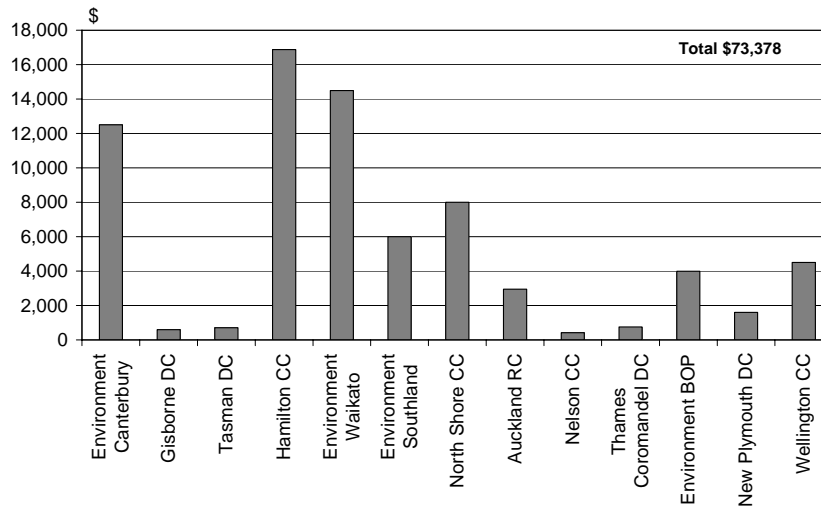
Government (other than MfE)



Regional funding organisations

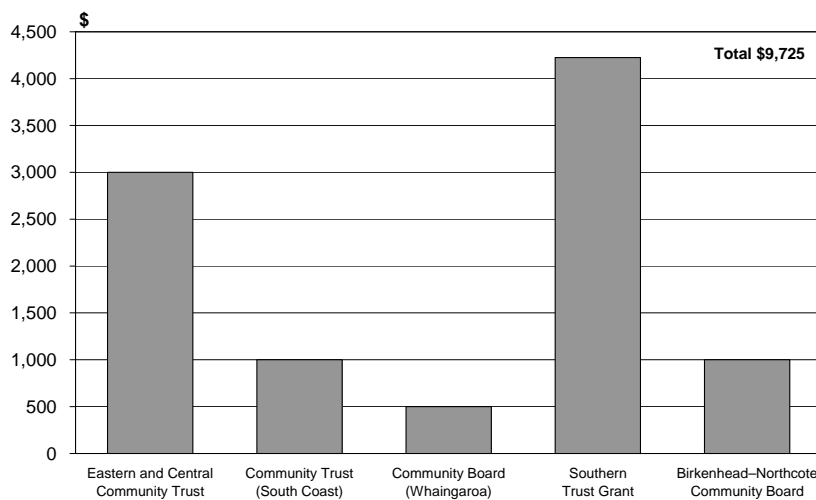


Local and regional councils

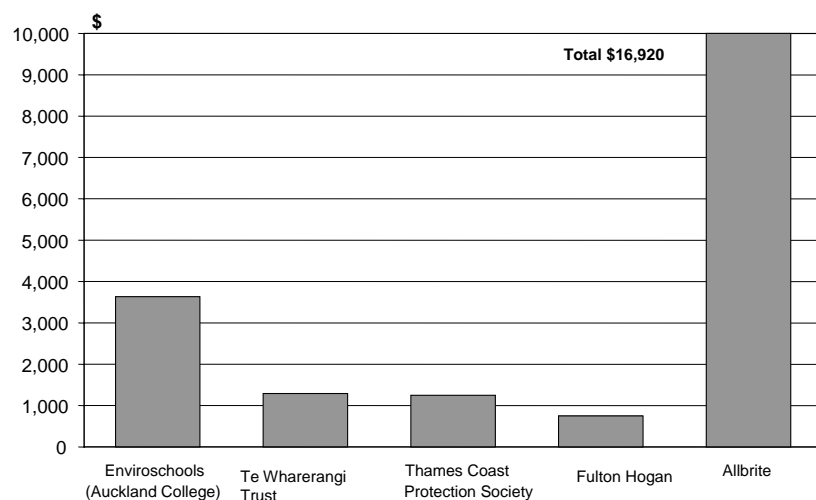


Waikato DC provided the local Environment Centre with a Task Force and the Hastings DC provided the local Environment Centre with free rental. These contributions are not represented on the graph.

Community trust boards



Local funding sources



Q4.5 If your centre is not currently funded by MfE, please explain how you are financially supported.

Eighty-eight percent of the centres not being funded stated that they survive by receiving funding from sources such as local councils. Two centres mentioned that they receive an income from the sale of goods, and one said they receive income by subletting part of their premises to other organisations. One centre stated that they operate at the minimum level; although unstated, this suggests only doing activities able to be supported by volunteer commitment.

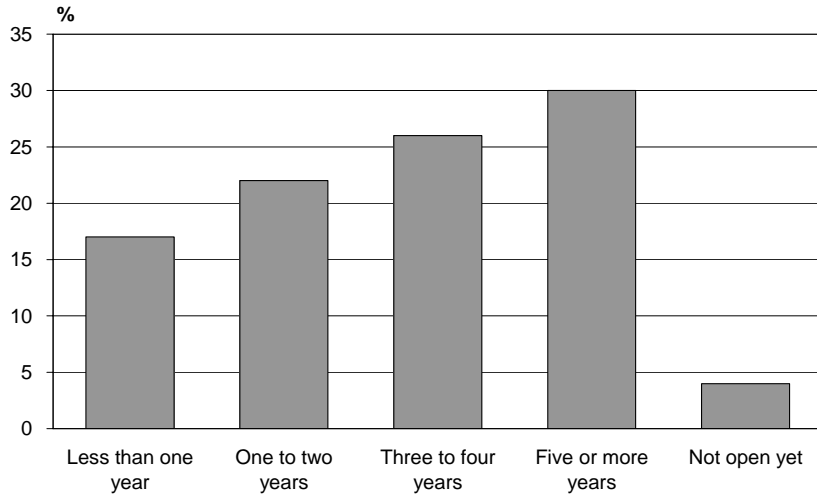
Operation

This section gives the Ministry a greater awareness of the range of services provided by environment centres.

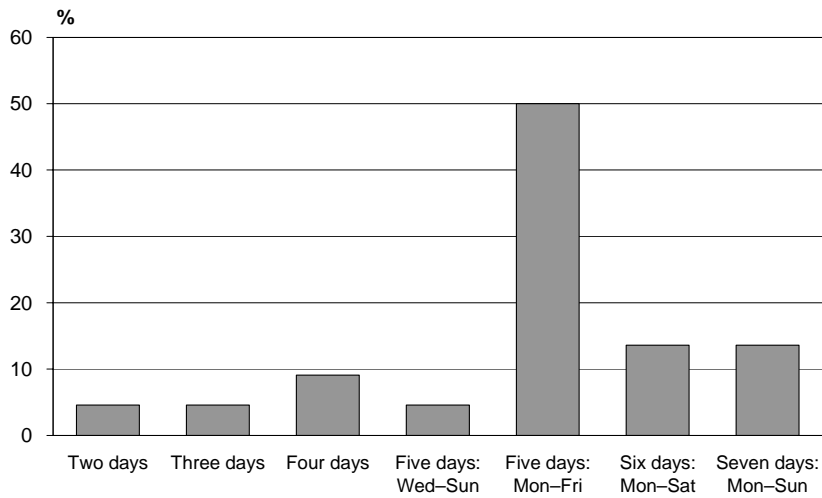
Q5.1 Describe what you consider to be the geographical boundaries of your service.

Due to the locally specific nature of the areas, the data gathered in response to this question has not been included. This information is principally of interest to the Ministry for the Environment.

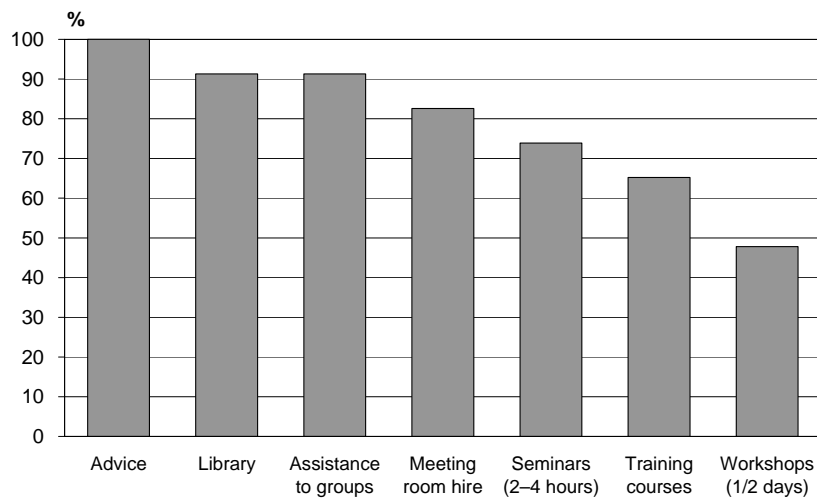
Q5.2 How long has the centre been operating?



Q5.3 Please show what days, how many hours per day and your opening times for the centre.



Q5.4 What services are provided at the centre and who are the key users?



Some examples of other services listed by centres are:

- internet service
- co-ordinating community environmental programme
- holiday programmes and school visits
- guided ecological tours
- newsletter
- outreach (eg, festivals)
- polytechnic students able to volunteer
- advocacy
- provide space for self-funded food co-op
- display of sustainable products and services
- website forum
- events calendar
- display space
- equipment use (eg, photocopier)
- coast to kauri walk.

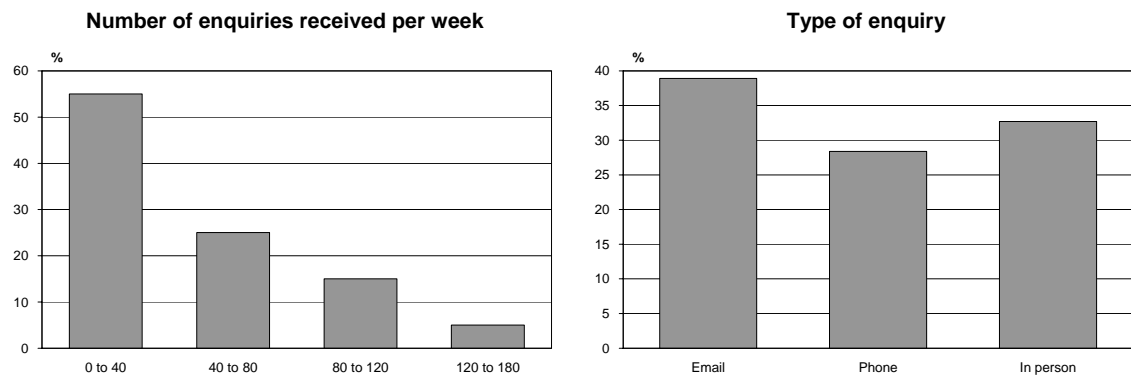
All the environment centres listed community groups and community members as key users. Schools, universities and businesses were also listed by a number of centres.

Q5.5 Are there any other organisations providing similar services within your geographical area described in Question 5.2?

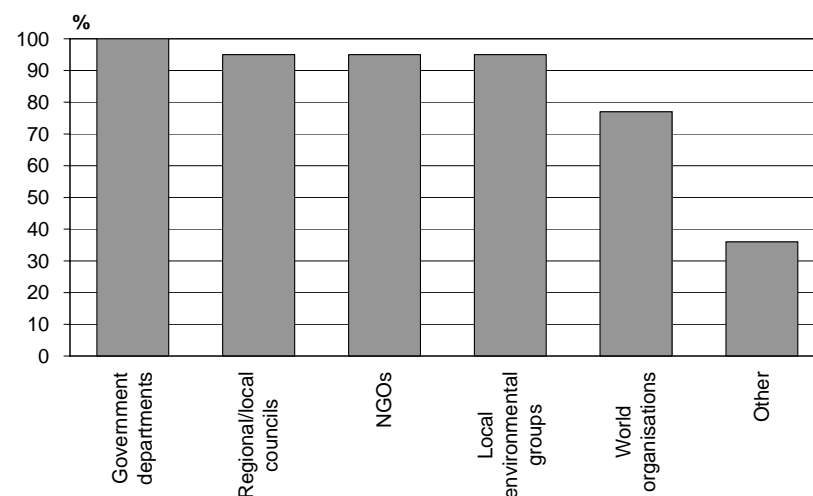
Forty percent of centres have organisations providing a similar service within their area. A number of centres reiterated the point that aspects of their service are provided by other organisations, but no one organisation delivers all the services offered by centres. Organisations providing similar services are as follows:

- another environment centre operating in the same area (mentioned by three centres)
- local and regional councils offering a similar service in part (four centres)
- localised environmental organisations offering broadly similar services (four centres).

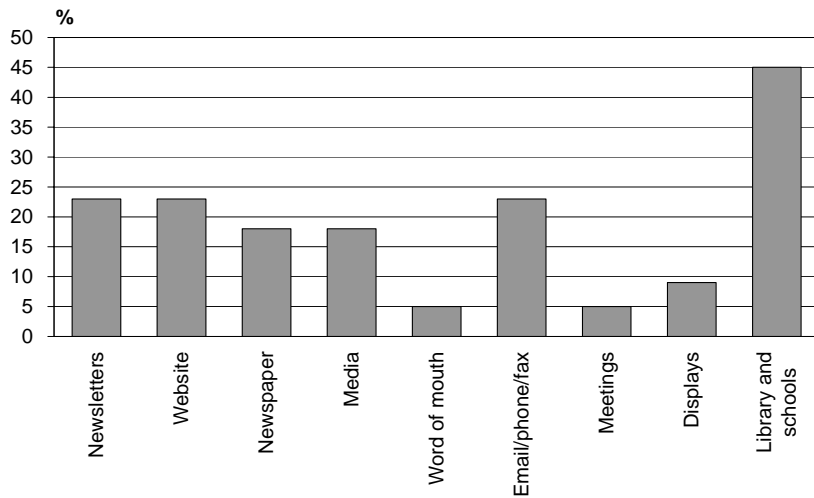
Q5.6 Please indicate how many and the types of enquiries you receive.



Q5.7 If you have a library, please tick whose information you hold.



Q5.8 Please describe how you disseminate/share this information with interested parties.



Encouraging Community Action

All centres were envisaged as acting as catalysts for community environmental action. The list of projects is a good indication of how interactive centres are with the local community.

Q6.1 What community environmental projects has the centre facilitated or provided assistance to during the 2003/04 financial year or the last year that the centre received funding from the Ministry?

Refer to Appendix 2 of this report.

Relationships

To act as catalysts for community action, environment centres need to forge partnerships within their local community.

Q7.1 Please indicate who you have an active relationship with and give examples of work undertaken with these organisations.

Local community

All centres except two stated that they have an active relationship with the local community. These relationships centred on two main areas:

- a) providing facilities for community groups and individuals to use
- b) organising practical environmental projects such as restoration work, pest control and worm farming.

Councils

All centres except one stated that they have a relationship with their local council. This relationship focused on practical conservation work (eg, pest control and riparian planting). Four centres are involved in the delivery of the Sustainable Households Programme on behalf of the councils, two centres work alongside their local councils in promoting bike to work days, and three centres are involved in council consultations.

Central government

Seventy-four percent of centres listed central government agencies they have a working relationship with, based on disseminating or displaying the agencies' information. The Department of Conservation was the most prominent agency, with a number of the centres involved in promotion weeks such as Conservation Week and Sea Week.

Iwi

Seventy percent of centres stated that they have a relationship with iwi. The core relationship was identified as networking and becoming involved in consultations.

Schools

Only three centres stated that they do not have a relationship with the local schools in their area. Four centres are involved with Enviroschools, and the remaining centres either deliver educational programmes to the schools, or the schools come to the centres to carry out practical environmental work.

Businesses

Seventy percent of centres stated that they have an active relationship with local businesses. These ranged from receiving sponsorship and becoming involved in waste minimisation programmes, to promoting green products.

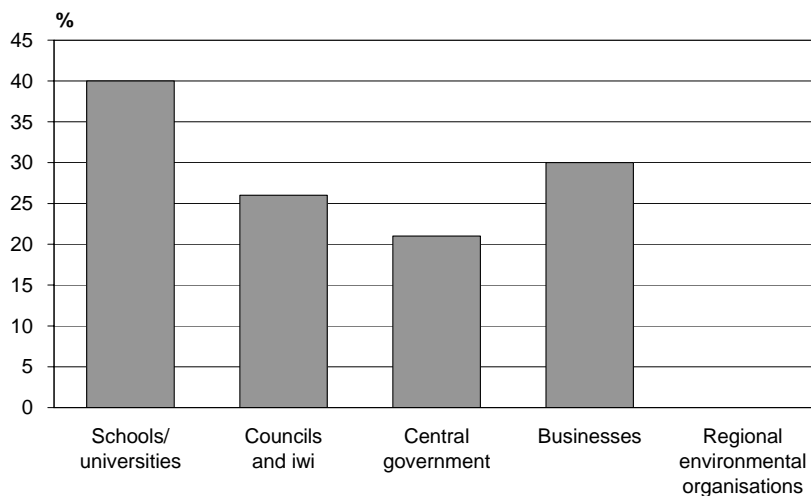
Regional organisations

Thirty-five percent of centres mentioned that they have relationships with regional organisations. Examples of organisations mentioned were Landcare Trust, Genesis and Waicare. The relationships centred on information sharing and being part of the committee.

Other

Twenty-six percent of centres listed other organisations, such as working with farmers, the Museum of Arts and Culture, Zero Waste, Scouts and Girl Guides.

Q7.2 Are there any partnerships which the centre would like to develop in the future and, if so, for what purpose?



Forty percent of centres stated that they would like to further relationships with schools and, in particular, universities. This would be centred on the provision of educational programmes or becoming involved in practical research work.

Twenty-six percent of centres would like to further develop relationships with councils and iwi.

Twenty-one percent of centres would like to further develop links with central government agencies to obtain funding and disseminate information on behalf of the organisations.

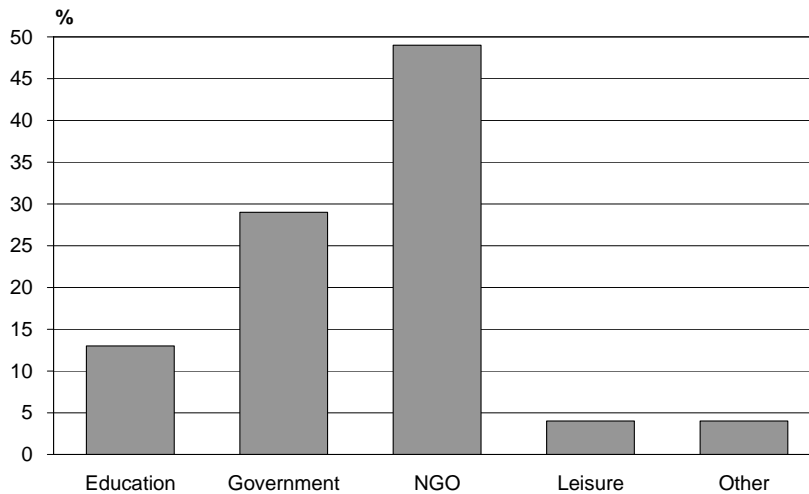
Thirty percent of centres are keen to develop relationships with businesses, mentioning projects such as working with businesses to improve waste management, looking at alternative energy sources, and getting financial support.

No centres mentioned that they would like to develop relationships with regional environmental organisations.

Independent Feedback

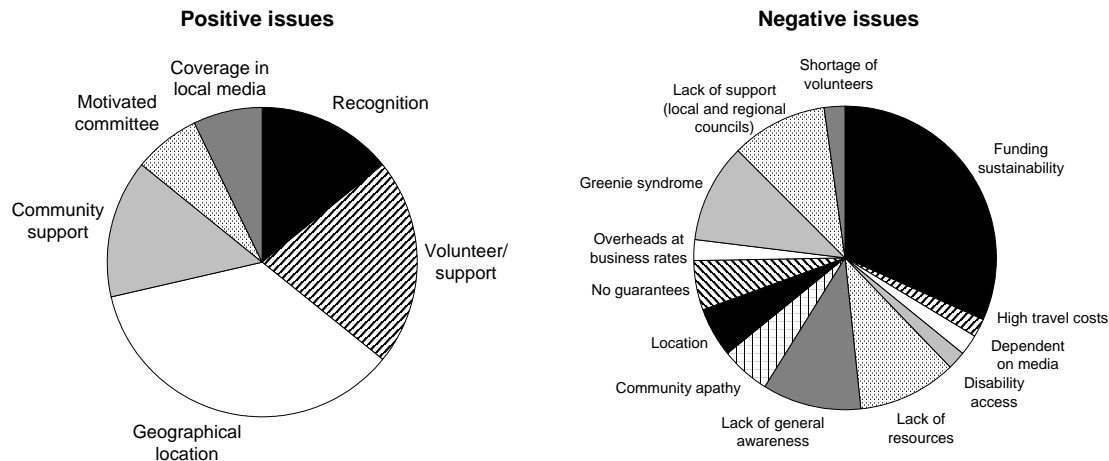
Q8.1 MfE is interested in hearing from users of the centre. If you feel this is useful please nominate 2–3 users who would help inform our understanding of the environment centre’s contribution.

Of the 23 environment centres surveyed, 17 offered 45 independent referees. The following chart shows a breakdown of the percentage of referees provided per group.



Issues Impacting on Service Delivery

Q9.1 Centres' abilities to deliver services can be affected positively or negatively by local factors. If this is the case please take the opportunity to describe these.



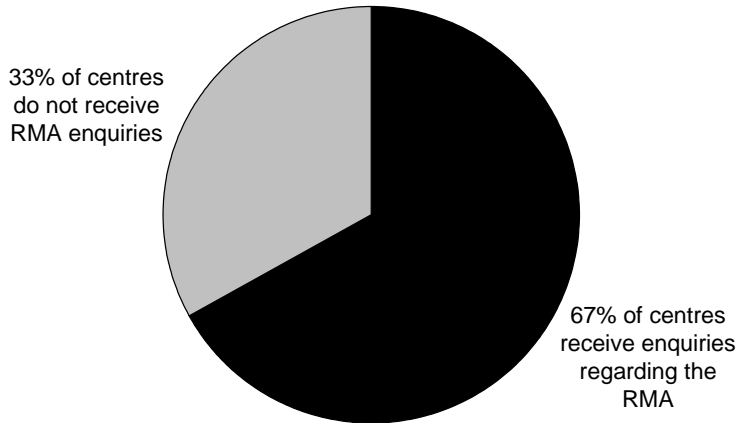
Q9.2 Ways to address issues

Some suggestions we received to address these issues were:

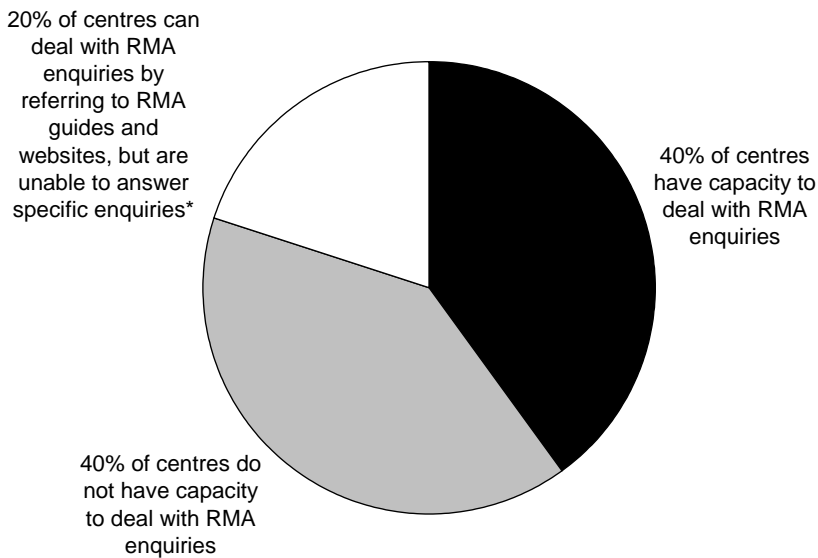
- recognition by the Ministry for the Environment
- acknowledgement through media/advertising
- local and regional council support
- increased funding support
- gain reputation through consistent funding
- increase partnerships/contracts
- develop/implement marketing plans
- ongoing education programmes
- increased signage
- funding should reflect the cost of rentals
- regular meetings with Ministry for the Environment representatives
- environment taken as seriously as human health status
- education about Maori cultural values
- funding for advertising
- national hui for environment centres.

Resource Management Act

Q10.1 Does the centre receive enquiries regarding the Resource Management Act?



Q10.2 If yes, does the centre have the capacity to deal with these enquiries.

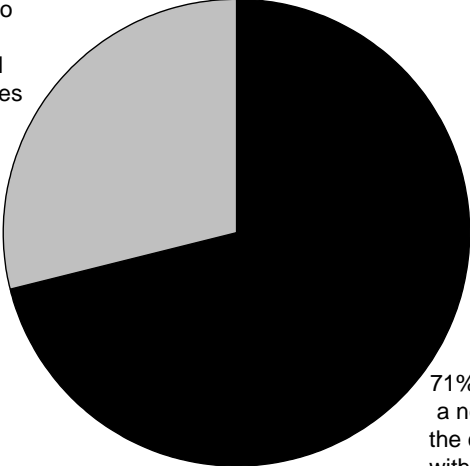


* Environment centres that are not able to deal with RMA enquiries refer people to:

- community law centres
- Ministry for the Environment CD Rom
- other environment centres
- website, videos, booklets and Department of Conservation
- RMA management consultants and lawyers
- regional councils and NGOs.

Q10.3 Does the centre see such a need to develop the capacity to deal with Resource Management Act enquiries in the future?

29% of centres do not see a need to develop the capacity to deal with RMA enquiries in the future



71% of centres see a need to develop the capacity to deal with RMA enquiries in the future

Appendix 2: Projects Facilitated in the 2003/04 Financial Year

Centre	Projects Facilitated in 2003/04 Financial Year
Christchurch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Zealand Association for Environmental Education Conference, January 2004 • Commuter Challenge • Conservation Day • Say No to Plastic Bags campaign
Hawke's Bay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worm farm display • Worm farm presentation • Organic gardening
Far North	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A&P shows • Hui in conjunction with ECO Wellington • Don Staniford visit/seminar
Gisborne	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wastewater systems hui • Integrated catchment plan and management energy seminar • Allbrites recycling • Stormwater research project • Bioethics and GE hui
Golden Bay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening day for the Centre included a series of five speeches on environmental themes and activities from Fulton Hogan, Fonterra, NIWA, TDC and local MP Damien O'Connor • Sustainable Households course – pilot testing a course being developed with assistance from the council • Running a second-hand shop; in future may expand to retail outlet for eco-products • Alternative energy workshop • Public consultation on biking and walking transport strategy • March: Sea Week • Arranging a public lecture and discussion forum on the health and future on the Golden Bay marine ecosystem • Arranging opening day of the sewerage plant, and joining with Kiwi Conservation Club for open day of the sewerage scheme with the council • Promoting EnviroSchools
Hamilton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life with Waste workshop • Open talk by Lex Chalmers from Waikato University on the place of GIS in environmental reporting • Holiday skink/gecko display • Bike to Work Day breakfast • Display with Biodiversity Forum at Expo • Involvement in establishment of Sustainability Forum
Invercargill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forest Festival • Lifestyle Options Day • Assist church group • Training programme at permaculture garden • Forest & Bird working bees • Clean Up NZ • Kerbside recycling • Field days

Centre	Projects Facilitated in 2003/04 Financial Year
Kaipatiki	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practical two-hour waste minimisation training seminars run in partnership with local council • Kereru Awhina Conservation project • Enviroschools
Nelson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable Households programme • National waterways project • Worms in schools project • Info and resource centre • Ecoweb calendar of environmental events, website • Radio show • Regional environmental education group • Environmental education events and theme days (eg, Sea Week, Eco Fest, Earth Day, Biodiversity – Our Place) • Resource management workshops • Secondary tertiary RMA education programme
Northland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centre organised and facilitated an eco-court display area at the annual Home Show Expo in August/September 2003 • Department of Conservation and Landcare open days in November 2003 and February 2004 – centre assisted with publicity of the open days • Scrap to Sculpture event
Papatuanuku	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing nature corridors within a forest • Pros and cons for the proposed sawmill in the local forest
Peel Forest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planting and regeneration programmes
Pirirakau	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restoration of an estuary • Development of an environmental monitoring plan based on Maori cultural practices and traditions
South Coast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nursery enterprise – project growing native trees (4000 trees) • Establishment of local market day providing outlet for local organic growers etc, now self-sustaining • Building of a 'seed ball' machine, brought to New Zealand – a new successful and innovative revegetation method • Recycling bins for tourists/travellers/picnickers
Taranaki	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eco Show – promoting environment centres, permaculture, biodegradable packaging • Permaculture design course – host and facilitate • Enviroschools – assist facilitators to attend training days, project support

Centre	Projects Facilitated in 2003/04 Financial Year
Tauranga	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservation Week August 2003 – Our Places Our Stories mini exhibition in Tauranga City Library window • Wall mural – community painting activity for Conservation Week • TECNET fortnightly email newsletter • ‘Lifting the Spirit’ supporting community environment groups with resources, equipment meeting space and quarterly forums • Enviro Library – a specialised up-to-date library housed at the centre for community use • Attendance at community meetings – four to six each month • Eco-Challenge – an evening of team activities and quiz rounds, a fund and profile raiser for the Centre • Eco Fest Day, 6 March – involved with organising the event • Manaakitia te Taniko o Tauranga Moana, 15/16 May, Caring for the Fringes of Tauranga Moana – organised with University of Waikato • World Environment Day / Arbor Day, June 2004 – fortnightly display • Participation in Landcare Trust field day, 20 March – joint promotion with RMA service • Eco Fest Day, 6 March – RMA • RMA clinics • Pamphlet for target users of RMA • TECNET – fortnightly email newsletter with the Centre • Business card display • School/tertiary education – provision of classes on RMA • Community GP education – RMA • Participation in Landcare Trust Field Day – RMA
Te Ao Turoa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rangitaane o Manawatu (ROM) resource management and environmental assistance • Environment hour/radio • Community environmental forum
Thames Coast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community consultation on the aims of the Centre • Brochure preparation for coast to kauri walk • Open evening for Coro Pohutukawa Festival • Establish a permanent location on Wanomu Domain • Sustainable district planning workshop • Environment Day with local schools – Te Puru, Tapu, Manaia
The Green Beehive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with Nature revegetation of four sites along stream • Wai Care – looking out for and after our catchment by testing and monitoring the stream and taking action • Management of Parrot’s Feather in pond as comparison with chemical/biological control • Worms/composting sessions • Working with Nature course
Whaingaroa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maui Dolphin Day, 13 March – launch of a community-based strategy to halt the decline of Maui • Wild Life Corridor Workshop – November 2003 calendar project