

SIC: OUT OF TIME

PUBLIC INTEREST JOURNALISM – EMERGENCY RESILIENCE FUNDING

RECOMMENDATION

That the Staff Investment Committee **approves emergency resilience funding of up to:**

- \$12,324 to Gisborne Herald [REDACTED]
- \$21,429 to Hawkes Bay App [REDACTED]
- \$29,663 to Te Reo Irirangi o Ngāti Kahungunu / Radio Kahungunu
- \$30,000 to Te Reo Irirangi o Ngāti Porou /Radio Ngāti Porou [REDACTED]
- \$19,500 to BayBuzz

Five applications recommended for total funding of up to \$112,916

OVERVIEW

1. Cyclone Gabrielle hit New Zealand on 8 February 2023, bringing unprecedented and life-threatening flooding to the East Coast and damaging winds and rain in other parts of the country. 11 people died and communities across the East Coast were devastated and left without power, mobile communications, internet, or road access. The impacts are expected to take some years to recover from.
2. The Public Interest Journalism Fund (PIJF) had eight funding recipients impacted by Cyclone Gabrielle. All found they were prevented from delivering critical public interest journalism (PIJ) during and in the immediate wake of the disaster due to a lack of emergency infrastructure including power and communications. Some have also struggled with the increased demands for public information and accountability during the ongoing recovery phase.
3. The affected PIJF recipients were:
 - Gisborne Herald
 - BayBuzz
 - Hawkes Bay App
 - Napier Courier (NZME)
 - Hastings Leader (NZME)
 - Radio Ngāti Porou
 - Radio Kahungunu
 - Te Hiku Media
4. To ensure PIJF recipients can maintain delivery of PIJ as contracted, and as vitally needed by impacted regional audiences, the PIJF invited the affected media organisations to apply for an exceptional request for additional one-off funding to cover fixed costs including capital costs that support emergency resilience.

5. Capital expenditure has generally not been funded by the PIJF to ensure the funding was focused on its three pillars: roles, projects, and industry development. However, this type of funding was considered in the design of the PIJF, and the Cabinet paper does allow for the PIJF to provide 'necessary infrastructure support'.
6. While the Fund has closed its final general contestable round, a limited amount of funding has been returned from PIJF projects coming in under budget. Some of these funds will be re-directed to assist affected PIJF recipients for this one-off and exceptional funding.
7. On 14 March 2023, staff emailed all affected recipients and invited them to apply for one-off additional funding. They were asked to provide a detailed list of requirements, the costs of these requirements (including quotes) and an explanation as to how these items/services will ensure resilience in the ongoing reporting of the current disaster and in case of future civil defence events.
8. Applicants were required to provide their applications by no later than 5pm Friday 7 April 2023.
9. Five applications were received and were reviewed by staff on Thursday 13 April 2023. The majority applied for less than \$30,000 and staff determined this to be an equitable level to cap funding. This cap is in line with the emergency resilience funding in round Tahi being offered to Access Stations from the Capital Platforms fund.
10. This paper recommends funding of up to **\$112,916** be approved across five applicants.

GENERAL ASSESSMENT & STAFF OPINION

Synopsis

11. The following five applicants are seeking to improve their resilience and ability to provide critical public interest journalism both during and in the wake of a Civil Defence emergency.

Gisborne Herald

\$ [REDACTED] requested

Key personnel	Title/s	Relevant Past Work
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Current PIJF Funding	Kaupapa Māori Editor	Contract ends April 2025
Equipment requested	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Total		\$ [REDACTED]

General Assessment

12. The Gisborne Herald is an independent regional newspaper based in Gisborne and receives PIJF funding for one role, a Kaupapa Māori Editor.
13. [REDACTED] told staff that power and fibre outages meant the paper was unable to print for one day following the cyclone and then had to borrow equipment to get limited print capability. This was at a time when due to cell tower outages, delivery of printed papers was one of the few ways to reach communities with critical information such as the desperate need to conserve water supplies in Gisborne.

14. Jeremy says "The council also lent us a StarLink that afternoon which enabled us to build a network of computers and staff around the internet connection, so we could email stories, share images and piece together pages – and also restart some national and international news coverage. [REDACTED]

Staff Opinion

- 16. Staff accept the ability of the Gisborne Herald to provide critical public interest journalism and maintain its commitment to its PIJF funding during and in the wake of Cyclone Gabrielle was impacted by a lack of basic equipment.
- 17. Staff believes the requested equipment will ensure the paper can operate better under emergency situations in the future.
- 18. The type of equipment and costs requested are reasonable, however staff contacted the editor to discuss whether the Starlink package quoted at \$520 was available and would in fact be suitable. Staff suggested the \$4200 unit (as quoted by Noel Leeming) would be better as it is a high-performance unit for business purposes and designed to be more resilient to extreme environments. Jeremy asked to revise the request for the high-performance unit.

20. Funding is recommended up to \$12,324 [REDACTED]

Hawkes Bay App

Engage Video

\$ [REDACTED] requested

Key personnel	Title/s	Relevant Past Work
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Current PIJF Funded roles	Contributing Editor Video Journalist	Contract ends 1 February 2025
Equipment requested	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

Total		

General Assessment

21. The Hawkes Bay App, operated by Engage Video, is based in Napier and has two PIJF funded roles.
22. During Cyclone Gabrielle its team was dispersed between Hastings and Napier and unable to get to equipment due to bridge washouts. It says getting raw or edited footage onto the platform was a big hurdle.
23. [REDACTED] has requested a range of equipment. A Starlink and generators will give the App the ability to operate under emergency conditions. The LiveU unit is used to enable live broadcast /streaming of video from any location. The request list also includes audio equipment and a smartphone gimbal.

Staff Opinion

24. The Hawkes Bay App has developed a strong public interest journalism offering since the funded roles were provided just before the Cyclone hit.
25. While the rationale for the Starlink request was clear, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
26. The request for an emergency generator likewise seemed reasonable [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]. Staff contacted the applicant for further information and were told that a major impact of the cyclone was that staff members were isolated without the ability to communicate. *"We would require the gear to ensure that if the team members are separated again in an emergency, we would have the gear accessible to be able to continue producing content remotely, contact the team and keep all the regular content creation processes flowing, or creating alternative processes."*
27. Staff accepts ensuring staff can operate remotely for such a small operation as The Hawkes Bay App is important to its resilience and given the generator costs are within the overall cap, believe the rationale for two based with staff and one based in the office is reasonable.
28. While not required to keep The Hawkes Bay App operational, the LiveU equipment will enable The Hawkes Bay App to provide live video giving their viewers the most up to date information and visuals of any unfolding situation. Staff felt this capacity would be invaluable in an emergency.
29. The Hawkes Bay App says, due to staff being cut off and isolated during the cyclone, they were unable to access equipment and relied on their smartphones. Staff accepts that while smartphones provide excellent video and wild sound, they require external microphones to be used for interview situations. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] A range of microphones for Smartphones are available for under \$100 and staff would suggest they could be employed.

30. [REDACTED]

31. If the following items are not funded, the budget would be reduced by \$7,335.

[REDACTED]

32. Staff believes The Hawkes Bay App has demonstrated it can provide strong public interest journalism and ensuring resilience for the remainder of its PIJF contracts will support the Hawkes Bay Community. **Funding is recommended up to \$21,429** [REDACTED]

Te Reo Irirangi o Ngāti Kahungunu

\$29,663

Key personnel	Title/s	Relevant Past Work
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Current PIJF Funded roles	Digital Content Creator / Producer	Contracts end September 2024
Equipment requested	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
	Starlink [REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Total		\$29,663

General Assessment

- 33. Te Reo Irirangi o Ngāti Kahungunu / Radio Kahungunu is an established iwi radio station based in Hastings and receives PIJF funding for two roles, - a Digital Content Creator and Producer.
- 34. The station was severely affected by the Cyclone and told staff “We were able to remain on air for nearly eight hours after we had lost power (limited to our studio only), however we spent a much longer period without power and were therefore unable to continue to broadcast for another two days.” This means at the time the station’s Māori audience needed them most, Te Reo Irirangi o Ngāti Kahungunu / Radio Kahungunu was not able to provide critical public interest journalism.
- 35. Te Reo Irirangi o Ngāti Kahungunu / Radio Kahungunu has applied for a large generator capable of powering the entire station for three days. They have also applied for one Starlink

Staff Opinion

- 36. Te Reo Irirangi o Ngāti Kahungunu / Radio Kahungunu is a key part of Ngāti Kahungunu and provides strong engagement for local Māori communities.
- 37. While the costs and size of the generator are larger than other applicants, Staff accepts the rationale that a power system that can provide three days of resilience enabling the station to remain on air is reasonable. The station is paying the installation costs estimated at \$5000.00 and the total costs remain within the established cap.

38. **Funding is recommended up to \$29,663**

Radio Ngāti Porou

\$ [REDACTED]

Key personnel	Title/s	Relevant Past Work
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Current PIJF Funded roles	Ngā Kopara Project staff X2 / Journalist	Contracts end September 2024
Equipment requested	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Total		[REDACTED]

General Assessment

39. Radio Ngāti Porou is an established iwi radio station of 17 years based in Ruatoria. It has three funded PIJF roles; two providing content to The Ngā Kopara Project which aims to maximise the social media reach of the station building on its radio base and one recently employed Te Rito graduate journalist.
40. Radio Ngāti Porou is the only radio broadcaster north of Gisborne in Te Tairāwhiti, an area that faced some of the worst destruction and continues to face ongoing disruption from the Cyclone. The area has faced six major storms since 2017.
41. In the wake of Cyclone Gabrielle, the station had five staff including the three PIJF employees unable to get to work due to road closures. The fragility of the roading network will remain for some time and staff ability to work remotely is compromised.
42. Ngāti Porou is requesting three generators, three Starlinks and two remote broadcasting kits along with Starlink subscriptions.

Staff Opinion

43. Staff recognises Radio Ngāti Porou is delivering crucial public interest journalism not only to its local community but to the more than 90% of Ngāti Porou who live away from Te Tairāwhiti.
44. It's also noted that Radio Ngāti Porou is the most isolated of the five applicants and staff understands at the height of the disaster they were off air due to power outages and unable to provide critical civil defence information.
45. While staff accepts that ensuring staff across the isolated Te Tairāwhiti motu can operate remotely given the ongoing roading issues and continuing effects of flooding, this application is the most expensive of all five applications [REDACTED]
46. [REDACTED] staff are comfortable that the equipment requested is in line with emergency resilience, but the quantity cannot be approved within the constraints of this fund.
47. Staff believe Ngāti Porou are best placed to decide which equipment will best serve its needs within the funding cap. **Funding is recommended up to \$30,000 subject to a revised application and budget.**

BayBuzz

\$ [REDACTED]

Key personnel	Title/s	Relevant Past Work
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Current PIJF Funded roles	Local accountability reporter (2 part time roles)	Contract end August 2024

Request		3 months	6 months
	██████████	██████	██████
	██████████	██████	██████
	██████████	██████	██████
	██████████	██████	██████
	██████████	██████	██████
	██████████	██████	██████
Totals		██████	██████

General Assessment

- 48. BayBuzz, based in Havelock North, is a bi-monthly quality magazine providing longform current affairs journalism along with web content, two weekly newsletters, a newsbrief and a fortnightly radio programme. It has two part-time PIJF funded journalists to provide local accountability reporting that focuses on local government and regional issues.
- 49. With a current affairs focus, ██████████ says BayBuzz is looking to ensure the recovery effort is *'matched in scope by the 're-think' that will need to occur around 'lessons learnt' and hard decisions required to properly prepare for a future that's more resilient to severe weather events, climate change and other potential natural disasters.'*
- 50. While the publication says its already delving into these issues in its print and online platforms, its greatest need in the wake of the Cyclone is dealing with the huge amount of public information being generated around the recovery, providing this greater volume of content online and meeting the needs of the community to get the latest information quickly.
- 51. BayBuzz currently employs a part-time online manager but is requesting funding for up to six months to make the role full time to cope with the increased online demands.
- 52. The application also includes a range of additional costs that would support the role and increased dissemination of content online including an App, Facebook boosting and Mailchimp delivery.

Staff Opinion

- 53. BayBuzz is the only applicant to request role funding rather than capital expenditure, however staff accepts the nature of its longform journalism has been impacted by the post recovery needs of the community for greater and more immediate online content.
- 54. While this application doesn't seek to deal with the immediate effects of a disaster to power supplies or communications etc, staff believes there is a valid argument that in-depth coverage of issues in a post recovery phase will be critical to Hawkes Bay Communities.
- 55. Three months on from the Cyclone, the issues facing the Hawkes Bay community remain fraught and distressing and staff believe strong public interest journalism will be supported by ensuring BayBuzz can increase its online output while allowing the current PIJF roles to delve deeper in their longform stories.
- 56. It could also be argued that this role could set up systems that ensure BayBuzz is better positioned to provide critical information to its community in future civil defence emergencies.

57. The applicant gave two options to consider - 3 month or 6 month funding. As the 6 month option goes beyond the \$30,000 cap, staff recommend the 3 month option being funded.
58. Staff believe the current need for information is still high and increasing the online manager's role for three months would assist meeting this need. For this reason, **funding is recommended up to \$19,500**

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