Key insights for Funding Relationships

A resource generated from the collective kōrero during the Community Building Block session on Funding Relationships with Leonie Matoe (Rātā Foundation) and Anna Parker (Inspiring Communities) on November 10, 2026.

What makes strong funding relationships

- **Early connections and open kōrero**
  - Reaching out to funders early to check fit before spending hours on applications.
  - Getting to know funding advisors by sharing stories and keeping lines of communication open.
  - Sharing opportunities across community groups and building real partnerships together
  - Fostering peer networks to enable community knowledge sharing and "paying it forward" across groups, sustaining collective momentum and mutual support.
- **"Cups of tea" kaupapa and meeting people where they are**
  - Funders visiting groups in their own spaces, rather than expecting grassroots teams to travel or disrupt their daily mahi.
  - Recognising that taking time to build trust is just as important as writing grants.
  - Working with funding advisors who have real community experience and truly understand local needs.
  - Authentic and humble grassroots whakawhanaungatanga that builds genuine trust and mutual understanding on the ground.
- **Simple, welcoming processes**
  - Keeping forms clear and simple so they match how community groups actually plan and budget.
  - Providing hands-on support for applicants, especially first-time or ethnic community groups.

What good relationships can change

- **Focusing on real community impact**
  - Moving beyond tick-box numbers to capture true, meaningful difference in people's lives.
  - Celebrating stories, photos, and community voices alongside reporting data.

- **Flexibility and core support**
  - Adapting funding systems to fit community realities, rather than forcing groups to fit rigid boxes.
  - Funding people and core operations to support long-term stability and wellbeing.
  - Offering multi-year funding agreements so community groups can plan long-term and focus on deep, strategic community benefit rather than constant short-term grant scrambling.
- **More time for mahi, less admin**
  - Easing administrative loads so community teams can spend more energy doing their core work.
  - Walking alongside groups as true partners by offering shared spaces, learning, and networks beyond just grants.

Practical steps forward

- **Slowing down to build connections**
  - Making intentional space for genuine connection, conversation, and mutual learning.
- **Making forms work for people**
  - Continually updating application and reporting processes so they feel supportive and empowering.
- **Growing internal capability**
  - Supporting funding teams and assessors to practise warm, kaupapa-based ("cups of tea") approaches.
- **Brave conversations and shared growth**
  - Having honest kōrero across sectors to address systemic tensions between transactional and transformational funding, using collective voice to help shift funder mindsets across the motu.
- **Constructive feedback and growth**
  - Funders offering constructive guidance and feedback on declined or partially funded applications rather than just citing a lack of pūtea, helping groups learn and improve for next time.

The heart of it

Great funding relationships grow from trust, flexibility, and shared kaupapa. When funding shifts from transactions to true partnerships, community groups get the stability they need to make a lasting difference.