Economic Diversification Fund 2025-2026

ECONOMIC FUTURES | QUEENSTOWN LAKES DISTRICT COUNCIL

Applicant guidelines and eligibility criteria

The Economic Diversification fund aims to support collaborative projects that help deliver the districts Economic Diversification Plan: *New pathways to a thriving future*, and contribute towards the [Queenstown Lakes Wellbeing Framework](). The Economic Diversification Plan is summarised below, or you can find the full plan [on the Council website.]()

NEW PATHWAYS TO A THRIVING FUTURE

Goal	**A resilient and sustainable economy offering a diverse range of career and income opportunities by 2040**		
Strategic pillars	**PILLAR 1:** Best-fit businesses have the infrastructure they need	**PILLAR 2:** Our hosting expertise supports diversification	**PILLAR 3:** Grow niche export industries
Objectives	› The housing and infrastructure needs of best-fit businesses are met › A strong pool of skilled staff is available › Businesses have the capability and resources to launch, innovate and grow	› Exportable tourism and hospitality products and services grow › The value of creative industries rises › Training and education options increase	› The potential for niche opportunities is understood › Businesses within the niche grow › New businesses are attracted because of the strength of the niche
Projects	**1.1:** Future-Focussed Infrastructure **1.2:** Build Diverse Skills **1.3:** Innovate and Grow	**2.1:** Lifetime Value of the Visitor **2.2:** Exportable Tourism **2.3:** Film and Creative Industries **2.4:** Learn Queenstown Lakes	**3.1:** Technology **3.2:** Outdoor Products **3.3:** Environmental Enterprise **3.4:** Food and Beverage
Key enabler	**World of Connections – globally connected, locally collaborative**		
Foundations for success	**Set the systems in place to realise the vision**		
	Objectives › Establish prioritisation, reporting, and accountability › Work alongside Māori to support diversification › Align brand and marketing activities with diversification and regenerative tourism goals › Secure resources and build capacity to enable plan delivery	**Projects** **F.1:** Collaboration and Oversight **F.2:** Support Māori Economic Diversification **F.3:** Update Queenstown Lakes Brand and Marketing Strategies **F.4:** Resources and Capacity	

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Objectives of the fund

A total of $100,000 is available for 2025-2026. Successful applicants will build on the work already being done by a variety of organisations, spark new initiatives by working together, and improve how we can capture the impact of projects. Anticipated grant amounts range from $3,000 to $25,000 (+GST). The fund aims to:

- **Promote innovation**: Support projects that introduce new and innovative business models.
- **Encourage focus industries**: Foster niche industries and sectors that expand career and business opportunities
- **Enhance economic resilience**: Reduce reliance on traditional economic sectors by diversifying the economic base.

Eligibility criteria

To qualify for the Economic Diversification Fund, your project must meet the following requirements:

1. A collaboration between two or more organisations that includes at least one partner based in the district.
2. All partners must be contributing resources to the project – this can include volunteer hours, donated materials or services, and/or financial support.
3. Projects should be scheduled to be completed before 31 December 2026.
4. A Queenstown Lakes based legal entity (such as a company, trust, or incorporated society) must accept funding on behalf of the group and take responsibility for reporting outcomes.
5. Applicants must have no outstanding debts or unresolved reporting obligations from previous QLDC funding.
6. You must comply with all relevant QLDC regulatory and statutory requirements, including obtaining any necessary permits or consents for your service or project.

Assessment criteria

The following criteria will be considered when the panel reviews applications:

1. **Alignment with the Economic Diversification Plan**: Demonstrates clear measurable connection to specific outcomes and projects.
2. **Target audience and need identified**: Identify the intended beneficiaries and the needs or gaps being addressed.
3. **Value beyond Business-As-Usual**: Initiatives may expand upon existing efforts but must introduce new value. The benefits must extend beyond participating organisations to impact the local economy or community.
4. **Collaboration quality**: Provides detail on what each partnering organisation will contribute and how they will collaborate (e.g. roles, decision-making processes, and approaches to data or intellectual property management).
5. **Project viability**: Assesses the strength and experience of the project team, along with a realistic implementation plan, budget, objectives, and timeline.
6. **Measurable outcomes**: Clearly specifies the project benefits and how these will be measured. Any training or upskilling projects should focus on actions that will result from such initiatives.
7. **Sustainability**: Evaluates how the collaborative partnerships and project benefits will be maintained after the funding period concludes.

Application and funding process

17 November 2025 – Fund opens for Expressions of Interest (EOI) and Applications

19 Dec 2025 - Expression of interest deadline *(optional*): We encourage you to complete a simple EOI online before applying. This will enable the Economic Futures team to identify and share any potential synergies or contacts that could strengthen your application (you can apply without submitting an EOI).

16 Jan 2026 - **Feedback on EOI submissions** shared by Economic Futures team on or before this date.

2 Feb 2026 – Application deadline: Submissions must be made online via SmartyGrants portal. You must attach a project budget with your application. There will be instructions within the form showing you how to attach these documents to the application. Please label all documents clearly with the name of your project. You may like to attach supporting documents (e.g. letters of support, evidence of previous project or organisation successes).

3-26 Feb 2026 – Review and funding decisions: An independent review panel will review applications, along with assessments offered by the Economic Futures team. The review panel may request additional information from applicants before making final funding decisions.

Mar 6, 2026 – Applicants notified of funding decisions: The Economic Futures team will then work with successful applicants to complete funding agreements which will detail funding granted, conditions and reporting expectations.

Questions?

Contact Economic Futures team on **economicfutures@qldc.govt.nz** or Peter Harris on 027 230 9971

Terms and conditions of funding

Applicants must:

- Disclose all other funding, grants, and sponsorships (confirmed or pending).
- Avoid any attempt to improperly influence QLDC's funding decisions.
- Not seek non-public QLDC information to gain an unfair advantage.
- Agree to QLDC's due diligence on the organisation and involved personnel.
- Allow QLDC to contact third parties and provide referees as requested.
- Agree to acknowledge Economic Futures/QLDC support in promotional materials and share project updates.

QLDC has the right to share application details with all departments of Council and to consult with them on any application.

Reporting Requirements

- All recipients of Economic Diversification Fund grants are expected to provide regular written updates on project progress, including how funds have been used and what has been achieved or learned.
- Recipients are required to keep accurate records and may be asked to provide supporting documentation, such as receipts, budgets, and evidence of project activities or achievements.
- Grant recipients must submit a final report at the conclusion of the funding period. This report should outline key outcomes, lessons learned, and any challenges encountered, as well as financial accountability for the expenditure of grant funds.

What we don't fund

Grant funding cannot be spent on:

- Costs incurred before a funding agreement has been signed by all parties
- Debt repayment

- Legal fees
- Religious or political activities
- Construction, capital purchases or rental costs
- Alcohol purchases

Conflicts of interest

Organisations affiliated in some way to elected members or employees of QLDC can still be considered for grant funding. However, organisations in this category should disclose any possible conflict of interest (or perception of a conflict of interest) in their application to ensure any necessary steps can be taken to mitigate this. There will be a field on the application form providing an opportunity to declare any conflicts of interest.