

COMPREHENSIVE RESOURCE

# Grant Acquittal & Reporting Guide

Best Practices for NZ and Australian Not-for-Profit  
Organisations

Version 1.0

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| [AmplifyData.org.nz](https://AmplifyData.org.nz)

Financial Reporting

Outcome Measurement

Funder Compliance

Templates & Checklists

NZ & Australia

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A step-by-step guide from grant commencement to final acquittal submission

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# Introduction to Grant Acquittals

Understanding why acquittals matter and the cost of getting them wrong

## What is a Grant Acquittal?

A grant acquittal is the formal process of reporting back to a funder on how their grant funds were used. It demonstrates accountability by showing that:

- Funds were spent as agreed in the grant contract
- The project or programme achieved its stated outcomes
- Your organisation managed the grant responsibly and in compliance with conditions

## Why Acquittals Matter

### For Your Organisation

- Maintains positive relationships with funders
- Increases chances of future funding success
- Demonstrates organisational credibility and capability
- Provides valuable data for your own impact measurement

### For Funders

- Ensures accountability for funds distributed
- Informs future funding decisions
- Demonstrates impact to their own stakeholders
- Meets regulatory and governance requirements

## The Cost of Poor Acquittals

**40%**

REDUCTION IN REPEAT FUNDING

**2-3 mo**

AVERAGE DELAY IN FINAL PAYMENTS

**85%**

HIGHER REPEAT FUNDING WITH STRONG PRACTICES

**25%**

MORE TIME SPENT ON CORRECTIONS

# Understanding Funder Requirements

Different funders have varying requirements -- understanding these upfront prevents problems later

## Financial Reporting Requirements

REQUIREMENT	DESCRIPTION	COMMON IN
Expenditure summary	High-level breakdown of spending categories	All funders
Detailed transaction list	Line-by-line record of all grant expenditure	Government funders
Bank statements	Proof of transactions	Some government, large trusts
Receipts/invoices	Evidence of purchases	Government funders, large grants
Audited accounts	Independent verification	Grants over \$100,000 typically
Budget variance	Explanation of differences from original budget	Most funders

## Outcome Reporting Requirements

REQUIREMENT	DESCRIPTION	COMMON IN
Activity report	What activities were delivered	All funders
Output data	Quantitative measures (e.g., people served)	Most funders
Outcome data	Changes/impacts achieved	Sophisticated funders
Case studies	Qualitative stories of impact	Most funders welcome these
Participant feedback	Survey results, testimonials	Increasingly required
Photos/media	Visual evidence of activities	Most funders

## NZ and AU Regulatory Context

### **New Zealand**

- Charities Services requires annual reporting for registered charities
- Grant acquittals must align with your charitable purposes
- Specific requirements for government contracts (e.g., MSD, DIA)
- Incorporated Societies Act 2022 requires enhanced record-keeping

### **Australia**

- ACNC reporting requirements for registered charities
- State-specific requirements (e.g., ORIC for Indigenous organisations)
- Government grants often require GST invoices
- Enhanced due diligence for grants over \$500,000

# Step-by-Step Acquittal Process

Cases from grant commencement to post-submission

## Phase 1: Set Up for Success (At Grant Commencement)

### Week 1: Establish Systems

- Read the full grant agreement and identify all reporting requirements
- Note key dates: progress report due dates, final acquittal deadline
- Set up a dedicated cost centre or tracking code in your accounting system
- Create a project file (physical or digital) for storing evidence
- Brief relevant staff on grant conditions and their responsibilities
- Set calendar reminders for reporting milestones

#### Best Practice: Dedicated Cost Centre

Set up your chart of accounts with dedicated project-level tracking: Grant Income, Grant Expenditure (broken into Staff Costs, Programme Costs, Overheads, Capital Items), and Deferred Income for multi-year grants.

### Documentation Checklist

- Signed grant agreement
- Original application/proposal
- Approved budget
- Funder correspondence
- Contact details for funder relationship manager
- Any variations or amendments approved

## Phase 2: Ongoing Tracking (During Grant Period)

### Monthly Financial Tracking

- Code all grant-related invoices correctly
- Keep copies of all receipts and invoices
- Update budget tracker with actual expenditure
- Note any significant variances
- Reconcile grant expenditure monthly

### Monthly Outcome Tracking

- Record participant data as activities occur
- Collect feedback forms/surveys
- Take photos at events (with consent)
- Document case studies as they emerge
- Track progress against outcome indicators

## Budget Tracking Template

BUDGET CATEGORY	APPROVED BUDGET	YTD ACTUAL	VARIANCE	% SPENT
Staff Costs	\$50,000	\$12,600	-\$37,400	25%
Programme Costs	\$20,000	\$7,400	-\$12,600	37%
Venue Hire	\$5,000	\$1,500	-\$3,500	30%
Materials	\$3,000	\$1,400	-\$1,600	47%
Admin/Overhead	\$2,000	\$498	-\$1,502	25%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$80,000</b>	<b>\$23,398</b>	<b>-\$56,602</b>	<b>29%</b>

## Phase 3: Progress Reporting

### Progress reports are opportunities to:

- Demonstrate progress and build funder confidence
- Flag any issues early (budget changes, timeline delays)
- Request variations if needed
- Strengthen the relationship with your funder

### 1 Executive Summary

Key achievements, significant challenges or changes, overall progress rating

### 2 Activity Update

Activities completed vs planned, participant numbers/reach, key milestones

### 3 Financial Update

Expenditure to date vs budget, cash flow status, any requested variations

### 4 Outcomes Progress

Early indicators of impact, participant feedback highlights, case study

Upcoming activities, anticipated challenges, support needed from funder

## Phase 4: Final Acquittal Preparation

### 4-6 Weeks Before Deadline

- Review all grant conditions and reporting requirements
- Download/obtain funder's acquittal form
- Compile final financial data
- Gather all evidence and supporting documents
- Draft narrative sections
- Calculate final outcome data

### 1 Week Before Deadline

- Final review by CEO or delegated authority
- Obtain required signatures
- Check all attachments are complete
- Submit to funder (allow buffer for queries)
- File copy of submitted acquittal
- Note any learnings for future grants

## Phase 5: Post-Submission

- Confirm receipt with funder
- Respond promptly to any queries
- Track final payment (if applicable)
- Document learnings for organisational knowledge
- Update funding pipeline tracker
- Send thank you note to funder relationship manager
- Consider future funding opportunities with this funder

# Financial Reporting Templates

to-use templates for income statements, budget variance, and asset registers

## Template 1: Income and Expenditure Statement

LINE ITEM	BUDGET (\$)	ACTUAL (\$)	VARIANCE (\$)
<b>INCOME</b>			
Grant from Funder	80,000	80,000	0
Co-funding	10,000	12,000	2,000
In-kind contributions	5,000	4,500	(500)
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>95,000</b>	<b>96,500</b>	<b>1,500</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>			
Subtotal Personnel	55,000	54,600	(400)
Subtotal Programme	25,000	25,700	700
Subtotal Overheads	5,000	5,150	150
Subtotal Capital	5,000	4,800	(200)
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>90,000</b>	<b>90,250</b>	<b>250</b>
<b>SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)</b>	<b>5,000</b>	<b>6,250</b>	<b>1,250</b>

## Template 2: Budget Variance Explanation

### When to Explain Variances

Provide a written explanation for each significant variance -- typically more than 10% of a line item or more than \$1,000 in absolute terms. Include the reason for the variance and its impact on the project.

## Template 3: Asset Register

ASSET	DATE PURCHASED	INVOICE NO.	COST (\$)	LOCATION	CONDITION
Laptop - HP EliteBook	15/03/2024	INV-2341	1,800	Main office	Excellent
Projector - Epson	20/03/2024	INV-2356	1,200	Training room	Excellent
Printer - Canon	22/03/2024	INV-2361	800	Admin area	Excellent
Furniture - Tables (5)	01/04/2024	INV-2412	1,000	Training room	Excellent
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>\$4,800</b>		

# Outcome Reporting Frameworks

Understanding outcomes vs outputs and measuring real impact

## Outputs vs Outcomes

### OUTPUTS = What You Did

- 12 workshops delivered
- 85 participants attended
- 200 hours of support provided
- 500 resources distributed

### OUTCOMES = What Changed

- 78% of participants reported increased confidence
- 45 participants gained employment within 6 months
- Participant wellbeing scores improved by 23%
- 12 families moved into stable housing

## Outcome Measurement Methods

METHOD	BEST FOR	EFFORT LEVEL
Pre/post surveys	Knowledge, attitudes, skills	Medium
Follow-up surveys	Behaviour change, sustained outcomes	Medium
Interviews	Understanding how/why change occurred	High
Focus groups	Community programmes, shared experiences	Medium
Case studies	Demonstrating depth of impact	Medium
Administrative data	Hard outcomes (employment, housing)	Low

## Logic Model Overview



# Evidence Collection Guide

evidence to collect, how to organise it, and privacy considerations

## Financial Evidence Requirements

### Essential (keep for all grants)

- All invoices and receipts for grant expenditure
- Bank statements showing payments
- Payroll records for funded staff
- Signed contracts with suppliers/contractors

## Programme Evidence Requirements

### Essential (keep for all grants)

- Attendance records/sign-in sheets
- Participant registration forms
- Evaluation/feedback forms
- Photos of activities (with consent)

## Photo Evidence Best Practices

### 1 Obtain Written Consent

Use consent form with clear options. Note if consent is for internal use only or public sharing.

### 2 Label Photos Clearly

Date, event/activity, location. List people for your records.

### 3 Select Appropriate Photos

Show activities, include diverse participants, demonstrate programme quality.

**4****Resolution and Format**

Medium resolution (300 DPI for print), JPG format, typically 5-10 photos sufficient.

**Privacy and Data Protection****New Zealand (Privacy Act 2020)**

- Collect only information you need
- Explain how information will be used
- Store securely and limit access
- Keep only as long as needed

**Maori Data Sovereignty**

- Consider Maori rights and interests in data
- Ensure appropriate governance of Maori data
- Enable Maori participation in data decisions
- Apply tikanga Maori principles

# Common Pitfalls and Solutions

common mistakes in grant acquittals and how to prevent or recover from them

## Pitfall 1: Poor Financial Tracking

### Warning Signs

- Staff don't know which grant to code expenses to
- No dedicated cost centre or project code
- Scrambling to reconstruct spending at acquittal time

### Prevention

- Set up dedicated cost centre at grant commencement
- Brief all staff who incur expenses
- Create clear coding guidelines
- Regular (monthly) reconciliation

## Pitfall 2: Missing Evidence

### Warning Signs

- Documents filed inconsistently or physical documents only
- No backup of digital files

### Prevention

- Single, consistent filing system
- Scan and store digital copies immediately
- Backup digital files to cloud storage

## Pitfall 3: Underspending

### **Solutions**

- Monitor budget monthly and escalate concerns early
- Contact funder to discuss options; request extension if activities delayed
- At acquittal: explain reasons clearly, return unspent funds as required

## **Pitfall 4: Overspending**

### **Solutions**

- Build contingency into budget (if allowed) and monitor closely
- Seek variation approval BEFORE overspending
- Identify offsetting underspends if budget is flexible

## **Pitfall 5: Poor Outcome Data**

### **Prevention**

- Design evaluation at project start and collect baseline before programme begins
- Build data collection into programme delivery
- Make evaluation part of participant experience

## **Pitfall 6: Missing Deadline**

### **Consequences**

- Final payment withheld and future applications rejected
- Reputational damage; legal action in extreme cases

## **Pitfall 7: Scope Creep Without Approval**

### **Prevention**

- Understand funder's variation policy
- Seek approval for significant changes and document why changes were needed
- At acquittal: be transparent and demonstrate outcomes still aligned with purpose

# nder-Specific Requirements

ting requirements for NZ and Australian government and community funders

## New Zealand Government Funders

### DIA Lottery Grants

- Online acquittal via DIA grants portal
- Final report within 3 months of completion
- Photo evidence (3-5 photos minimum)
- Financial summary (simplified format)

### MSD Community Capability

- Quarterly progress reports during programme
- Detailed financial acquittal
- Outcome data aligned to their framework
- Often require contracted providers to use their templates

## NZ Community Trusts (COGS, Rata Foundation, etc.)

### Typical Requirements

- Accountability report form (varies by trust)
- Financial summary plus photos and stories of impact
- Declaration signed by authorised person
- Usually simpler than government requirements -- personal relationships matter

## Australian Government Funders

### Federal Grants

- AusTender and GrantConnect portals
- Detailed financial acquittal
- Understand PGPA Act requirements
- Maintain records for 7 years post-grant

### Philanthropic Trusts

- Foundation-specific report templates
- Narrative on achievements plus financial summary
- Build personal relationships
- Quality over quantity in reporting

# Templates and Checklists

to-use master checklist, case study template, and evaluation survey

## Master Acquittal Checklist

### Financial Documentation

- Completed financial statement
- Budget variance explanations
- Invoices and receipts (organised and labelled)
- Bank statements for grant period
- Payroll records for funded staff
- Asset register (if applicable)

### Programme Documentation

- Activity summary/work plan progress
- Attendance records/participant lists
- Participant demographic data
- Output data table
- Outcome data and evidence
- Case study/stories (1-2 minimum)
- Photos (with consents)

### Compliance Documentation

- Declaration/certification signed
- Insurance certificates (if required)
- Acknowledgement evidence (funder logo use, etc.)
- Report reviewed by finance and programme teams
- Signed by authorised signatory
- Copy filed for records and submitted before deadline

## Case Study Template

### Structure for Impact Stories

**Background:** 2-3 sentences about the person's situation before the programme, their challenges, and why they engaged.

**Engagement:** 2-3 sentences about their participation and the support they received.

**Outcomes:** 3-4 sentences about specific changes they experienced and quantifiable improvements.

**In Their Words:** A direct quote from the participant about their experience.

**Impact:** 1-2 sentences on broader significance and connection to programme goals.

*Note: Obtain written consent before sharing. Offer participants the chance to review the final version.*

# Appendix: Sample Reports

the executive summary and outcome data presentation

## Sample Executive Summary

### Key Achievements

- Delivered 12 workshops (120% of target)
- Engaged 85 participants (142% of target)
- 78% of participants reported increased confidence
- 72% implementing learned strategies at 3-month follow-up

## Sample Outcome Data at a Glance

85

PARTICIPANTS (TARGET: 60)

12

WORKSHOPS (TARGET: 10)

+73%

KNOWLEDGE INCREASE

+86%

CONFIDENCE INCREASE

### Participant Satisfaction: 4.6 / 5.0

*"This programme changed my life. I now have the skills and confidence to pursue my goals." -- Programme graduate*

## Resources and Further Reading

### New Zealand

- Charities Services: [www.charities.govt.nz](http://www.charities.govt.nz)
- Community Matters: [www.communitymatters.govt.nz](http://www.communitymatters.govt.nz)
- Funding Information Service: [www.fis.org.nz](http://www.fis.org.nz)
- Hui E! Community Aotearoa: [www.huie.org.nz](http://www.huie.org.nz)

### Australia

- ACNC: [www.acnc.gov.au](http://www.acnc.gov.au)
- Our Community: [www.ourcommunity.com.au](http://www.ourcommunity.com.au)
- Philanthropy Australia: [www.philanthropy.org.au](http://www.philanthropy.org.au)
- Funding Centre: [www.fundingcentre.com.au](http://www.fundingcentre.com.au)

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