

31 July 2015



InternetNZ
Community Grant Funding
PO Box 11881
Manners Street
Wellington 6142

Blind Citizens NZ

Dear Maria

re Mid-Year Report / Reference CP20143

Blind Citizens NZ was successful in receiving a grant of \$15,000 plus GST from InternetNZ, to introduce guidelines and raise awareness of the accessibility of websites, to an audience of retailers and businesses in conjunction with our Main Street Project. Funding from the Ministry of Social Development's Social Change "Making a Difference" fund has been obtained for the Main Street Project. The latter project raises awareness of a range of situations such as but not limited to pedestrian challenges when tables and chairs, sandwich boards and other obstacles are randomly scatter on pavements and around shop-front entrances, and knowing what information is available thus we are also evaluating entry into shops, and the ease at which a blind or vision impaired customer can locate counters and/or products, etc.

Funding from InternetNZ, as set out in the application, will give attention to ease of access for blind and vision impaired customers to navigate sites, because blind people need to be able to have the same access to what is available in their local community as anyone else. Evaluating websites of businesses in conjunction with the Main Street Project will raise awareness of the needs of the blind community, and guidelines will assist retailers who often do not think about such things, because they are guided by web-site designers.

As set out in the following, there have been delays implementing the Main Street Project which has implications for Blind Citizens NZ implementing activities funded by InternetNZ.

Implications to meet the required timeline began when Blind Citizens NZ down-sized our premises to reduce financial outgoings. This involved a temporary relocation of our national office from our existing premise for seven months (20 June 2014 to 20 January 2015). Also, during this period of time but more specifically from October 2014 through to December 2014 inclusive, restructuring of one of only two full time positions took place. This led to the disestablishment of my Executive Assistant position. The Board favoured this approach, supporting also, on the same budget, the creation of three smaller, part-time "task" focussed roles that better serve the organisation. Recruitment for the three positions commenced in June 2015.



Appointments were subsequently made for the positions of Administrative Support (12 hours per week), and Personal Assistant (60 hours per month). Each commenced earlier this month.

For the six month period since December 2014, including relocating our national office back to our premises mid-January 2015 (with the assistance of movers), I have been the organisation's sole employee. While able to utilise assistance on a temporary basis, this has been minimal. Thus, these two events (relocation and restructuring) have impacted on my available time i.e. to set up our new national office premise, to run the organisation, bed down the new staffing structure, and to implement the project for which we have received approval of \$15,000 from Internet NZ.

Noting our intention for funding from InternetNZ to be utilised for activities carried out in conjunction with our Main Street Programme, I can advise that the Ministry of Social Development are well-informed of the constraints we have faced. The Ministry is most supportive of our approach i.e. to carry out the project well and thus has extended the timeline. The extension for our Main Street Project recognises the disruption we have faced organisationally with our relocations, restructuring, and implementing as of early this month, a new structure that should be respond to the organisational requirements of Blind Citizens NZ. Our revised timeline for the Main Street Project is that we will be concluded by 30 June 2016. The support of InternetNZ by also extending the completion timeline of our project would be very much appreciated for it complements all that we are doing to raise awareness of access to information for blind and vision impaired people. And there is approximately 168,000 people living in New Zealand who are blind, vision impaired or have self-identified as having a vision impairment, all of whom may potentially benefit from our work...

Thank you once again for your support of the work we do. It is greatly appreciated, and as evidenced in the smaller project funded by InternetNZ in 2013, and our "brief", which is attached for reference, the tool has been well-utilised across government, and businesses.

Yours sincerely

Rose Wilkinson
Executive Officer