

## Community Grants Policy

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<b>Adoption Method</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Council	<input type="checkbox"/> CEO	<input type="checkbox"/> Other ( <i>please specify</i> )
<b>CEO Signature</b>			<b>Date</b> 8/5/24
<b>Responsible Officer and Unit</b>	Manager Community Strengthening Manager Economic Development and Visitor Economy		
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Macedon Ranges Shire Council acknowledges the Dja Dja Wurrung, Taungurung and Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Peoples as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of this land and waterways. Council recognises their living cultures and ongoing connection to Country and pays respect to their Elders past, present and emerging. Council also acknowledges local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander residents of Macedon Ranges for their ongoing contribution to the diverse culture of our community.

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# Community Grants Policy

## Policy statement

Council is committed to supporting the local community through grant programs that:

- connect communities by supporting access, inclusion, equity, fairness, engagement, and participation;
- promote healthy people and a healthy environment; and
- foster economic vitality (including tourism, agribusiness, and local employment options).

When granting public funds, Council will act with integrity, accountability, impartiality, transparency and in the public interest.

## Purpose

This Policy provides a framework for Council to grant public funds consistently and transparently through its externally facing grant programs.

## Scope

The distribution of funding through grants programs is in accordance with the *Local Government Act 2020*.

This policy applies to:

- The following external facing grant programs:
  - Community Funding Scheme (annual)
  - Events and Festivals Grant Program (annual)
  - Small Project Grants Program (monthly)
  - Australia Day Grants Program (annual)
  - Environment Support Group Grants (annual)
  - Neighbourhood House Funding Program (biennial)

- All Council departments involved in the promotion, assessment and management of grant programs where Council is providing a contribution directly to an organisation or an auspice.

As new external facing Council grant programs become available, they will be listed in this policy and be subject to the policy.

This policy does not apply to:

- funding received by Council from state or federal government agencies or non-government organisations, resulting from grant applications made by Council officers
- any sponsorship arrangements Council may enter with businesses.

## Objective

In accordance with the Council Plan 2021-2031, this policy supports Council in demonstrating the qualities of good governance, including a clear vision and culture, transparency, respect, consistency, accountability and responsiveness.

## Implementation

### Fraud and corruption controls

Council will facilitate transparency and accountability of grant programs while mitigating against fraudulent or corrupt use of funds.

All grant programs will be managed within Council's online administration system to ensure records are maintained and fully auditable.

To ensure a separation of decision making and allow an avenue for independent oversight, an individual or entity with the power to approve grants will not form part of an assessment panel (i.e. Councillors/Executive).

All members of assessment panels must:

- complete relevant fraud, corruption and conflict of interest training and a Grant Program Induction prior to participating in panels;
- complete a conflict of interest form for every application that they are assessing; and

adhere to Council's conflict of interest policies and requirements. Due to their role in approving grants, Councillors/Executive will not participate in any grant assessment panels.

### **Grant management and operations**

All grant programs must have guidelines (including an eligibility criteria), assessment criteria and terms of reference (including assessment panel composition). These must be approved by a resolution of Council.

All changes to grant guidelines, including recommendations to cease offering a grant program, must be approved by a resolution of Council.

Each grants program must utilise the assessment criteria documented in the respective grant guidelines when evaluating applications.

Grant programs will be widely promoted across the municipality using a variety of promotional avenues, to ensure everyone who is eligible to apply for a grant has an opportunity to do so.

Using a continuous improvement framework, all aspects of each grant program will be reviewed annually by the respective manager, taking into account feedback from Council, community and staff administering the grant program. Any recommended changes resulting from this process must be approved by a resolution of Council.

Grant applications must be submitted by the due date / time via Council's online grants administration system.

### **Eligibility**

Any grants provided to organisations and businesses must require

- Proof of incorporation;
- ABN/GST status; and
- Public liability insurance.

Applicants without a formal organisational structure (e.g. not incorporated) can apply under the auspice of an incorporated organisation

Grant applications will be automatically ineligible if they do not adhere to program guidelines or are not in alignment with Council policies and strategies, including, but not limited to:

Policy/strategic plans	Eligibility guidance
Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy	Projects/applicants that involve children but are unable to satisfactorily demonstrate their compliance with Child Safe legislation.
Financial policies (procurement, fraud control etc.)	Projects/applicants that do not meet documentation requirements, have a debt to Council or outstanding acquittal from previous grant funding.

Current officers or Councillors are ineligible to apply for any Council grant programs.

### Assessment process

Grant applications will be assessed and scored on their individual merit, in consideration of eligibility and according to the respective grant guidelines. Every grant category will have a detailed scoring matrix to inform the assessment panel and provide guidance for applicants.

During the assessment process, consideration will also be given to equity of distribution of Council funds.

All grant applications will be assessed by an assessment panel comprising Council officers from across the organisation.

After consideration of applications and grant program objectives, Council may propose an alternative form of assistance to meet the stated objectives of any application. This may include direct support to a project, activity or event, as recommended by the Director or Chief Executive Officer.

### Approval process

Unless otherwise approved by Council, the following process applies to grant programs with a funding cap of \$1,001 or more:

- Program established and endorsed by a resolution of Council annually.
- Applications assessed by nominated assessment panel.
- Recommendations endorsed by a resolution of Council.

Unless otherwise approved by Council, the following process applies to grant programs with a funding cap of \$1,000 or less:

- Program established and endorsed by a resolution of Council annually.
- Applications assessed by nominated assessment panel.
- Recommendations endorsed by Executive.
- Recommendations presented to Council for noting.

### **Contracting and payments**

All payments will be managed in accordance with Council's standard timelines, practices, and policies.

Following grant approval, recipients must be offered a funding agreement endorsed by the relevant manager within 14 days from the date recommendations were approved by Council.

Grant payment cannot be made until a signed funding agreement is received from the recipient, and all funding conditions have been met.

### **Project reporting and acquittals**

All grant funded programs must submit a financial and programmatic acquittal within eight weeks of completing the project or the designated due date of the funding agreement, to ensure monies are spent in accordance with the signed funding agreement.

Council reserves the right to recover funding or to take other appropriate action, in the event of non-compliance with the funding agreement.

Failure to comply with grant requirements, may include failure to:

- meet the terms of the funding agreement;
- seek a variation prior to making any fundamental changes to an approved project;
- acquit outstanding grants; and/or
- return unspent funds;

Failure to comply as noted above, may render organisations ineligible for any further funding through Council programs until these matters are resolved.

Council reserves the right to undertake a spot financial and programmatic audit of a funded project.

### **Variations and extensions**

Any variations to the project, as articulated in the funding agreement (with reference to the amount of funding), can only be made with written authorisation from the relevant officer with the delegated authority, as per Council's Delegation Framework, Policy and Procedures. All variations must be recorded in Council's online grants administration system.

Variations to the project will only be approved if the requested variation is consistent with the objectives in the original funded project.

Extensions to a funding agreement (with reference to the amount of funding) of up to 12 months may only be made with written authorisation from the relevant officer with the delegated authority as per Council's Delegation Framework, Policy and Procedures. All extensions must be recorded in Council's online grants administration system.

Extensions to a funding agreement will only be approved if the grant recipient experienced unforeseen circumstances that fundamentally delayed the project.

### **Appeals**

Decisions regarding successful / unsuccessful grants are final and an appeal will not be considered.

Any disputes or complaints regarding grants programs or processes will be responded to in accordance with Council's Complaints Policy.

### **Recordkeeping**

All application outcomes will be recorded in Council's online grants administration system.

Following confirmation of the formal decision, all organisations will be notified in writing of the outcome of their application within 14 days.

Within 30 days of a formal decision, an announcement of successful grant recipients will be published on Council's website.



Personal information about individuals collected during the grant process will be treated in accordance with Council's Privacy Policy.

## **Gender impact assessment**

In accordance with the *Gender Equality Act 2020*, a gender impact assessment has been conducted in relation to the subject matter of this policy.

In the interest of delivering more inclusive and accessible funded community projects for the Macedon Ranges, the following measures will be required under Council's grants programs:

- All funding applications covered by this policy will request information about which diverse groups in the community would benefit from the project, how these groups would be supported to participate in funded programs, and the estimated reach across men, women and gender diverse groups.
- Addressing gender equity and inclusion will strengthen an application and will be reflected in the scoring matrix.
- The composition of all assessment panels will include mixed gender representation.
- Information sessions promoting all grants programs will be held at different times of the day so as not to disadvantage those with caring responsibilities and/or work commitments.

## Definitions

Term	Definition
Audit	An official examination and confirmation of accounts and records. Council can be audited and Council can also audit grant recipients. For Council's audit of grant recipients, the recipient organisation will be required to readily make available all income/expenditure records, correspondence, meeting notes, promotional material, and any other document relating to the funded program/activity.
Auspice	An agreement where one organisation (the 'principal organisation') agrees to apply for funding on behalf of a second organisation that is not incorporated (the 'auspiced organisation'). If the funding application is successful, the principal organisation then receives, holds and administers the funding to the auspiced organisation, so that the auspiced organisation can complete the funded project or activities.
Acquittal	An acquittal report ensures that grant recipients have administered grant funds responsibly and in line with the terms and conditions of the funding agreement. An acquittal report usually consists of a written report that summarises how the project fared against the initial objectives of the grants. It also provides a financial statement detailing how the funds were spent.
Funding agreement	A written agreement between Council and the grant recipient clearly articulating the purpose of the funding, the dollar amount and the grant conditions. It also defines the rights and responsibilities of the agreement. Once signed, organisations are under a legal obligation to comply with the stated terms and conditions.
Grant	A sum of money (cash or in-kind) given to organisations or individuals for a specified purpose directed at achieving goals and objectives consistent with specific policy.

Incorporation	Being incorporated means that the group has a legal identity of its own, separate and distinct from the individuals who formed or make up the group.
Public liability insurance	Public liability insurance will protect a community organisation against its legal liability to pay: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● compensation to third parties (for example, members of the public) for bodily injury;</li> <li>● property damage that may occur as a result of the community organisation's activities;</li> <li>● the legal costs that a community organisation may have if it needs to defend bodily injury and property damage claims made against it.</li> </ul>

## References

- > [Community Funding Scheme Guidelines](#)
- > [Small Project Grant Guidelines](#)
- > [Events and Festivals Guidelines](#)
- > [Australia Day Grant Guidelines](#)
- > [Environment Support Group Grant Guidelines](#)
- > [Neighbourhood House Funding Program Guidelines](#)

## Related policies

- > [Council Plan 2021-2031](#)
- > [Health and Wellbeing Plan](#)

- > [Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy](#)
- > [Fraud and Corruption Control Policy](#)
- > [Privacy Policy](#)
- > [Delegation Framework, Policy and Procedures](#)
- > [Complaints Policy](#)
- > [Neighbourhood House Policy](#)

## **Related legislation**

- > *Local Government Act 2020*
- > *Gender Equity Act 2020*