



WARRNAMBOOL
CITY COUNCIL

Grants Policy

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Purpose

This policy provides a framework, guiding principles and outlines requirements of Council administered grant programs.

This policy is designed to support effective governance of Council grant program development and administration.

This policy will:

- Guide the effective administration and assessment of Council grant programs
- Provide acquittal processes to ensure Council grant money is being used in accordance with the policy and any relevant grants program guideline.
- Seek to deliver best practice principles and good governance to grants including accountability, transparency, inclusiveness, and equitability.

1.2. Scope

This policy applies to Council administered grants programs.

This policy applies to the role and responsibilities of Council Officers, Councillors and Contractors involved in grants, or grants processes administered by Council.

The policy applies to all funding requests made to Council by third parties that fall within the definition of 'grant' as detailed in section 1.3 of this policy.

This policy does not apply to items such as:

- Transactions where Council is making a payment for goods and/or services rendered.
- Reimbursements
- Financial assistance requests made to Council that are of an emergent or abnormal nature and that do not fall within any criteria set as part of any Council grant program.

1.3. Definitions

Term	Definition
Acquittal	Means information provided by a grant recipient that provides sufficient evidence that funds have been administered responsibly and in line with approved application and conditions of the grant program
Council	Means Warrnambool City Council
Grant	Means a sum of money given by Council to an organisation or individual with an expectation that the money will be used for an agreed and particular purpose

1.4. Related Documents

Local Government Act 2020

Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014

VAGO Report – Fraud Control over Local Government Grants – May 2022

Council Strategic Documents:

Council Plan
Health & Wellbeing Plan
Warrnambool 2040

Council Policies and Procedures:

Fraud Prevention and Control Policy
Fraud Prevention and Control Procedure
Privacy Policy
Governance Rules
Grants Procedure
Grants Program Guidelines Template
Staff Code of Conduct
Councillor Code of Conduct

2. POLICY

In seeking to achieve the objectives of the Council Plan and the responsibilities of Council in accordance with the Local Government Act 2020, Council will from time to time offer grant programs to inter alia:

- promote economic, social and environmental sustainability of the municipal district;
- deliver innovation and continuous improvement;
- achieve the best outcomes for the municipal community, including future generations; and
- ensure the ongoing financial viability of the Council.

Grants programs are to be approved by Council via a Council Resolution, and are to be reviewed at least every two years.

2.1. Policy Principles

The principles of this policy are:

- Enhance the community as well as contributing to the local economy
- Align with the Council's values, policies, plans and strategies
- Ensure the relationship established by virtue of the grant application will be transparent, produce outcomes of integrity and delivery tangible benefits to the community
- Minimise the risk of the approval of a grant entangling Council in controversial issues such as political or cultural sensitivities, or exposure to adverse criticism
- Encourage cooperation to ensure that all residents and organisations benefit from common resources
- Increase the range of, and access to, recreational, social, cultural and environmental activities, programs and services
- Support community development initiatives and socially responsible community activities
- Give particular consideration to those community groups that can give the greatest benefit back to the community
- Encourage and supports the principles of access and equity
- Ensure due diligence is applied to all grant applications seeking financial support

2.2. Development of Grants

Grants must take into account the principles and conditions set out in this policy.

A new grant program must have a guideline developed which is to include:

- Grant description/purpose
- Eligibility conditions
- Assessment criteria
- Funding conditions
- Officer(s) or service teams responsible for management and administering the grant
- Responsible officer(s) or panel/committee for assessment of applications
- Who is able to approve the award of the grant (grants up to and including \$5,000 can be approved by department manager)
- Rounds and assessment frequency

Once a grant program guideline has been developed it must then be submitted to EMT for assessment against this policy.

The final draft of the grants program guideline must be issued to Council for approval by Council Resolution.

All new grants must:

- align with existing Council plans and/or strategies
- not duplicate or conflict with an existing grant
- contain grant names that reflect the grant purpose
- be developed in consultation with key internal stakeholders and external stakeholders (when required)
- be endorsed by Council

2.3. Application Process

All applications must meet the grant's eligibility criteria as outlined on each grant's guidelines.

All applications must be completed in full on closure of applications. Where not completed by the closure date, the application must be deemed non-compliant and will not be considered as part of the assessment process.

Council may request additional information from applicants when required. All supporting documentation requested must be provided to Council Officers within the specified timeframe. Applicants that do not provide all the additionally requested information will be deemed non-compliant and will not be accepted.

All eligible applications will be checked for eligibility by the Grants Officer or nominated Council officer.

Applicants should note that receipt of previous grants in any one year does not guarantee funding in future years.

2.4. Funding Pool

The funding pool for distribution across the nominated grant categories will be determined as part of the annual Council budget.

Recommended funding pool will be provided in a report at a Council Meeting where not set as part of the budget adoption or the overall approval by Council for the grant at its inception.

From time to time, when a specific community need arises, Council may provide additional funding for nominated grant categories.

A review of any Grants Program and allocated budgets to determine appropriate funding levels will be conducted as required.

2.5. Assessment and Approval Process

Grant applications will be assessed in accordance with the criteria and weighting as outlined in each Council grant's application guidelines by the nominated person(s)/Panel.

Eligible applicants with the strongest alignment with the grant criteria will be awarded the grant up to the limit where the fund allocation is expended, or as otherwise detailed in the specific grant guidelines.

Persons involved in the assessment or approval of applications must complete a probity form prior to completing any assessments, and adhere to Council's Conflict of Interest requirements set out in the Governance Rules and in this policy, and complete any available fraud training related to grants.

Assessment of grant applications must include the following conditions:

- Persons involved in assessment must not be the same as persons approving the grant application.
- Councillors are to be excluded in assessing and making grant recommendations.
- The Panels assessing grants will be determined and governed by the relevant Terms of Reference.
- Specific grant amount allocations will be approved in accordance with the grant guidelines and criteria.

2.6. Grant Payments and Conditions

Recipients of grants programs will:

- Provide Council with an invoice for the awarded amount (plus GST if applicable).
- Spend funds for the agreed purpose and report on the spending of funding received within 12 months after funding was received, or as required by the grants guidelines (see section 2.7).
- Council may accept extension for the above requirement on a case by case basis. Request for extension must be sent in writing to the applicable Council officer, outlining the reason for the extension and any substantial changes to their funding activity.
- Notify Council of any substantial changes to their funding activity throughout the funding period. Any significant variation of funding spend must be approved in writing by the Council.
- Return to Council any unspent or contractually uncommitted funds by the completion of the financial year (of grant round period in accordance with the grants program guidelines) for which the grant was given or any funds identified that were not utilised for the approved purpose.

2.7. Verification and Acquittal

All grant recipients must verify that grants funds were used for their intended and approved purposes.

Grants verification processes are to be outlined in the grants program guidelines for each grants program and are to be managed by the Grants Officer, or nominated council officer

Where a grant provided to an applicant is in excess of \$20,000, an acquittal process must be undertaken. The acquittal process is to be outlined in the grants program guidelines for that grant. Acquittal reports must provide information that the grant was expended in line with the requested expenditure.

2.8. Grant Program Evaluation

At least every 2 years, each grants program guidelines needs to be reviewed in line with this policy and the Council Plan and any other related Council strategies, plans and policies.

The Grants Officer, or nominated Council Officer responsible for the grants program is responsible for ensuring reviews are undertaken.

The Executive Management Team (EMT) are responsible for notifying the Grants Officer, or nominated Council officers responsible for grants about any change to the organisation, budget, Council Plan or other strategic document that may impact on any Council administrated grants as soon as is reasonably practicable.

EMT should, as part of the budget development process each year, consider the ongoing value of any grants program and its alignment to Council objectives that are currently under operation by Council.

2.9. Grants Promotion

All public grants will be promoted on the Council website including key dates, application link and relevant information about the grant such as eligibility criteria.

Grant recipients must seek and gain approval for the use of Council logos on any promotional material.

Grant recipients for all grant categories will be approved by Council and this process will abide by the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014.

3. GRANT PROGRAM CONDITIONS

3.1. General Ineligibility

Council will not enter into grants with parties who:

- Involve activities or programs that are the responsibility of another level of government (such as education, health); or are the responsibility of a group under their incorporation or lease/license agreement (including recurrent expenses and capital works);
- Are requesting funding that would otherwise be covered by insurance;
- Are unable to provide required documents as per the application guidelines.
- Do not support diversity, tolerance and inclusivity within the community;
- Support programs that create or may present hazards to the community;

- Contravene State and Commonwealth legislation, Local Laws or the Planning Scheme;
- Are seeking retrospective funding activities, programs and projects that have already started or have been completed;
- Submit applications not made through the official Council application process;
- Have outstanding grant acquittals;
- Are commercial and/or profit making organisations, political party or hosting a political event;
- Are currently involved in a tendering or procurement process with the Council;
- Are submitting an application for something that is an obligation under a lease agreement between Council and the organisation
- Do not have approval from the property owner (where not Council) included as part of their application.

3.2. Conflicts of interest

A conflict of interest occurs where there is a conflict between a person's private interests and their obligations as an officer, volunteer, contractor or Councillor.

All Councillors, officers and community members involved in funding assessment and approval processes are required to declare their interests prior to assessing and/or approving any applications or reviewing project evaluations and reports. This process ensures that any potential, actual or perceived conflict of interest is promptly identified and managed appropriately.

In the event of a conflict of interest, the relevant person must decline to participate in any discussion or decision about the application or report and have this declaration noted as per of the grants assessment process and in accordance with Council's conflict of interest processes as detailed in the Governance Rules.

3.3. Policy non-compliance

Failure to comply with this Policy could result in legislative non-compliance, adverse impacts on the reputation of Council, and poorer outcomes for the community.

Council reserves the right to withdraw grant funding with the External Party when they are considered to have not complied with the spirit of the policy and any written agreement entered into as a grant arrangements

3.4. Administrative Updates

It is recognised that, from time to time, circumstances may change leading to the need for minor administrative changes to this document. Where an update does not materially alter this document, such a change may be made administratively. Examples include a change to the name of a Council department and a minor update to legislation which does not have a material impact. However, any change or update which materially alters this document must be by resolution of Council.

3.5. Risk Management

Council have established fraud controls and anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism financial protocols which will extend to any payment made as part of a grants program.

Screening of applications is to take place by the Grants Officer and the nominated officer on receipt of all applications to ensure their validity and accuracy of the information provided in the applications. A documented screening process is to be undertaken where applications exceed \$50,000.00.

4. GOVERNANCE

4.1. Owner

Manager Governance, Property, Projects and Legal

4.2. Review

The Manager Governance, will review the policy for any necessary amendments no later than 4 years after its formulation or after the last review.

4.3. Audit

Individual grant programs should be reviewed annually at the end of each grant round to ensure best practice and continuous improvement.

Community grants may be subjected to an independent review by Council's internal audit committee or external auditors. Any changes to community grants arising from the auditor's recommendations are to be reflected in subsequent funding rounds.

4.4. Compliance Responsibility

4.4.1. *Management Executive Group (Chief Executive and Directors)*

4.4.2. *Managers and Supervisors*

4.4.3. *All Employees*

4.5. Charter of Human Rights Compliance

It is considered that this policy does not impact negatively on any rights identified in the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act (2006).

Warrnambool City Council is committed to consultation and cooperation between management and employees. The Council will formally involve elected employee health and safety representatives in any workplace change that may affect the health and safety of any of its employees.

4.6. Gender Equity

In accordance with the Gender Equality Act 2020 the following will be undertaken in accordance with the legislation where possible:

- Any new grants program will undergo a Gender Impact Assessment during the development phase prior to being put to Council for adoption.
- Grants programs will undergo regular reviews against relevant equity and equality measures and available assessment tools. This can coincide with the full program review requirements which are to be undertaken at least every two years.
- Where possible, individual grant applications should be reviewed in consideration of intersectionality.

5. APPENDICES

Nil.

