Community Grants Policy

Purpose

In providing funding through its community grants program, the council aims to provide opportunities to empower organisations and groups to drive social, environmental, cultural, and economic outcomes in the Wodonga municipality. The community grants program is strategically aligned to the Council Plan and the integrated Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan.

The purpose of this policy is to outline the council's position in considering requests for financial assistance from community groups and organisations, through the community grants program.

The council acknowledges that it is accountable to the community for the responsible and prudent management and disbursement of its funds and that this must be undertaken in a fair, transparent and equitable manner that maximises community benefit.

The policy assists the council to achieve consistency of council processes and procedures when assessing, monitoring, evaluating and acquitting grants. Additionally, the recipients of council grants have a responsibility to expend those funds for the purposes for which they were given to meet all legal and reporting obligations.

Scope

This applies to all requests from community groups, organisations and individuals that apply for and receive financial assistance from Wodonga Council through the community grants program.

Definitions

The policy provides direction for three specific streams of community grants/assistance:

Community Impact Grant is a funding program, awarded twice a year, which provides direct financial contributions provided by the council to a group or organisation towards programs, services or initiatives that will benefit the community. This grant is competitive. Cross-border collaborative projects will also be considered.

Community Infrastructure and Equipment Grant is a funding program, awarded twice a year, which provides direct financial contribution provided by the council to a group or organisation towards small infrastructure projects and equipment that will benefit the community. This grant is competitive.

Community Grants Policy

Community Partnership Grant is a funding program that provides direct financial contributions provided by the council to a group or organisation towards programs or services through Memorandums of Understanding (MOU's) or contractual agreements between the council and the funded organisation that will benefit the community. These agreements are over one, two or three years.

Policy Statement

The council commits to the following policy principles:

Accountability, transparency and equity

The policy supports a framework that:

- Ensures that financial assistance and in-kind support to community groups/organisations is fair and equitable and undertaken within a system of accountability for the recipient that fosters public confidence and meet transparency requirements;
- Provides an approved transparent and effective decision-making process for groups and organisations when applying to the council for financial assistance, through a council resolution;
- Ensures applicants understand the information they will be required to provide under the different financial assistance programs;
- Ensures a program that recognises diversity and is open, accessible, inclusive to all community members; and,
- Ensures that the council fulfils its legislative requirements under the *Local Government Act 2020* and the *Local Government (Governance and Integrity) Regulations 2020*.

Integrity and fraud control

The policy supports a framework that:

- Requires staff and councillors to act with impartiality and declare conflicts of interest;
- Clearly outlines the distinct segregation of roles and responsibilities of staff, community and councillors in the advice, support, assessment and endorsement of grants;
- Maintains the integrity and transparency of the assessment and approvals of grants, supported by clearly defined and documented eligibility and scoring criteria;
- Ensures a rigorous and documented evaluation of funded projects to ensure community benefit and value for money; and,
- Ensures staff and councillors receive training that covers:
    a) Declaring and managing conflicts of interest; and,
    b) Fraud control.

Alignment with the council plan and adopted strategies

The policy supports a framework that:

- Ensures that the initiative links to outcomes listed in the Council Plan, and the council's adopted strategic plans, including the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan;

- Ensures the initiative provides community benefit beyond a specific interest group; and,
- Ensures that the purpose of the grants is consistent with community values as defined in the council plan.

Value for money

The policy supports a framework where:

- The grant provided will be used for a purpose that is approved and in the public interest;
- The desired outcome of the program/activity or event/initiative to be funded are clear, monitored and evaluated;
- Recommended projects for the three grant programs are reported to the council for final endorsement at a meeting of council before the grants are released; and,
- All unspent funds must be returned to the council.

Attachments

Nil.

Related policies

- Human Rights Policy
- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy
- Councillor Code of Conduct
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Fraud and Corruption Prevention and Management Policy

Related legislation

- *Local Government Act 2020* (Vic)
- *Local Government (Governance and Integrity) Regulations 2020* (Vic)
- *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* (Vic)
- *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* (Vic)
- *Gender Equality Act 2020* (Vic)
- *Disability Act 2006* (Vic)
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth)
- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (Vic)
- *Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001* (Vic)
- *Family Violence Prevention Act 2008* (Vic)

References

- *Local Government Act 2020*
- Council's *conflict of interest guide for councillors, committees and staff*

Community Grants Policy

Review

Council may review this policy at any time but unless otherwise requested at least every four years from date of adoption. Minor amendments to the policy may be authorised by the CEO at any time where such changes do not alter the substance of the policy e.g.: typographical errors, a change to the name of a related policy, or a change to the name of legislation.

Title:	Community Grants Policy
Reference No:	D18.55376[v3]
Business Unit:	Community Development
Category:	Quality Manager - Strategic and Governance Policy
Approved By:	Council at its meeting of July 18, 2022
Next Review:	18 July 2026