Community Financial Requests Policy

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline the council's position in considering financial requests from community groups and organisations as part of the council's annual budget.

The council recognises its duty to the community in ensuring the responsible distribution of financial resources. This responsibility necessitates a fair, transparent, and equitable approach that optimises community benefit.

This policy aims to ensure consistency in decision-making processes related to financial request. Additionally, it specifies the obligations placed on funding recipients, ensuring that allocated funds are used for their intended purposes and that reporting requirements are fulfilled.

Scope

This policy does not pertain to feedback and suggestions offered by community members to inform the development of the council's annual budget. Instead, it is relevant to all direct financial requests made by community groups and organisations to Wodonga Council through the annual budget processes.

This policy does not cover:

- Sponsorships and donations.
- Sponsorship related to event attraction.
- The Young Achievers Scheme.
- Indirect support, such as the provision of buildings, facilities, land, or in-kind assistance from the council.
- Rate exception or rate reductions for charitable organisations.

Policy

Background

The council's budget is developed annually within an overarching planning framework. This framework guides the Council in addressing both short-term and long-term community needs and aspirations, as articulated in the Community Vision and Council Plan, respectively.

The Council frequently receives requests from the community seeking financial contribution for a variety of projects through the annual budget. Implementation of this policy will ensure that responses to financial requests in the annual budget are managed consistently with identified community needs and in line with the Council's strategic priorities, ultimately delivering benefits to the community.

Each year, the council will consider funding projects within the Community Financial Request program that:

- Align with the priorities and vision of our community as outlined in the Council Plan;
- Ensure community benefit beyond the group or organisation seeking funding;
- Encourage voluntary activity and civic participation; and,

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- Contribute to the social, cultural, environmental, and economic development of the Wodonga community.

Governance Principles

Governance principles have been formulated to secure the council's compliance with the statutory obligations specified in the Local Government Act 2020 and the Local Government (Governance and Integrity) Regulations 2020.

Accountability, Transparency, and Equity

The council commits to:

- Ensuring accessibility and timely, widespread promotion of opportunities for annual budget submissions;
- Fair and equitable budget allocation;
- Establishing transparent and efficient decision-making procedures to facilitate consistency in budget allocation for council members and employees when assessing, monitoring, and evaluating; and,
- Implementing processes that recognise diversity, promote transparency, accessibility, and inclusivity for the community.

Integrity and Fraud Prevention

The council commits to:

- Requiring that staff and councillors conduct themselves impartially and disclose any conflicts of interest;
- Clearly delineating the separate roles and responsibilities of staff, community members, and councillors in providing advice, support, assessing, and endorsing funding;
- Preserving the integrity and transparency of funding assessments and approvals through well-defined and documented eligibility and scoring criteria;
- Proposed projects are presented to the council for ultimate approval at a council meeting during annual budget deliberations
- Implementing a thorough and documented acquittal process for funded projects to ascertain community benefit and value for money; and,
- Ensuring that staff and councillors undergo training covering: a) The declaration and management of conflicts of interest; and b) Fraud prevention measures.

Funding Accountability

- Grants are directed towards approved purposes that align with the public interest;
- The anticipated outcomes of funded projects are clearly defined and subject to monitoring;
- Recognition of Council's financial support by all funding recipients is required in any promotion, media or advertising of the project being funded;
- Extensions are subject to negotiation and approval by the responsible manager;
- Unused funds must be remitted to the council within 30 days of project completion; and,
- Projects must be acquitted within 60 days of the designated project completion date.

Related policies

- Sponsorship and Donations Policy
- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy
- Fraud and Corruption Prevention and Management Policy
- Public Transparency Policy

Related legislation

- Victorian Local Government Act 2020 Part 2 Div 1 Section 8, 9, 10 & 11; Part 5 Div 1 Section 106(2); Part 6 Div 1, Section 123, Div 2, Section 127, 128, 129 & 130
- Victorian Local Government (Governance and Integrity) Regulations 2020

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 Funding Request Policy
Reference No:	
Business Unit:	
Category:	
Approved By:	
Next Review:	

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