

Draft Community Funding Request Policy and Guidelines

ENGAGEMENT SNAPSHOT

Draft Community Funding Request Policy and Guidelines

WHEN: Wednesday, October 18 to Tuesday, November 7, 2023.

ENGAGEMENT METHODS: To encourage residents to get involved, we promoted the opportunity for people to have their say through our communication channels, including public notices, emails, social media and a have your say page on makewodongayours.com.au.

RESPONSES

4 submissions through Make Wodonga Yours

0 relevant comments on social media

COMMUNICATIONS

3501 emails

51.93% average open rate

67 click-throughs

3 Facebook posts

980 reach

2 likes and reactions

3 Instagram posts

349 reach

4 likes and reactions

3 LinkedIn posts

1199 impressions

39 likes and reactions

117 website visits

74 unique pageviews

1 public notices

CITY OF WODONGA VIC



Draft Community Funding Request Policy and Guidelines

ENGAGEMENT SNAPSHOT

FEEDBACK SUMMARY

Key themes

- Concerns regarding the proposed disbursement of 50 per cent of funds upfront and the remaining 50 per cent upon project completion, as this may lead to financial strain and could potentially exclude some applicants.
- Requiring groups to submit project plans five months before potential inclusion in the draft, with the possibility of subsequent rejection, “undermines the confidence of applicants”.
- Extended timelines from project submission to funding decisions and the early need for cost estimates and quotes present significant challenges, given the fluctuating costs involved.
- A recommendation for the council to contemplate adopting a fixed budget allocation method.
- A perception of scepticism regarding the community’s capacity to execute projects as initially planned.
- The policy appearing to place more emphasis on highlighting what it will not support rather than explaining what it will support.
- Concerns raised about the adequacy of the small grant amount.
- Multi-year funding being an efficient way to achieve mutually agreed upon goals and reduce administrative load for applications and acquittals.
- Concerns about ineligibility to use the funds for operational costs, for example wages and salaries, utilities, rent and insurance.



Draft Community Funding Request Policy and Guidelines

ENGAGEMENT SNAPSHOT

FEEDBACK

Draft Community Funding Request Guidelines

- **Ian Thomas**
  The guidelines all made sense and seemed quite fair and reasonable. Seemed pretty straight forward to do a submission

- **Lauren Black**
  It is my understanding that the ongoing support Wodonga Council has provided to its Regional Arts Development Organisation Murray Arts, may potentially come under this revised policy and guidelines. Murray Arts supports the approach and general guidelines set out in these documents. We believe we clearly meet criteria for medium-scale community project and would be happy to apply through this process.

  However, as a service organisation, we would highlight two areas of feedback:

  1. Multi-year funding being an efficient way to allow our organisation to achieve mutually agreed upon goals and reduce administrative load for applications and acquittals.
  2. Ineligibility to use the funds for Operational costs, for example wages and salaries, utilities, rent and insurance. As our main function is to develop, support, educate, advocate, advise and promote individual creatives, arts, cultural and First Nations creative development in Wodonga and surrounds our funds go into the service costs centres as listed above.

  We believe Murray Arts has and does significantly contribute to the social, cultural, environmental, and economic development of the Wodonga community and will look forward to a continued relationship with Wodonga Council and its many arts and cultural organisations with ongoing conversations around mutually beneficial funding opportunities.

- **Lex Manning**
  Your guidelines show that no-one thought this through. eg Project to start in 12 weeks. Council will take 5 months to decide if they will give support. How is that going to work with a 2 month gap between start and knowing if you have funding. Any quote received that gives the amount to be outlaid would be way out of date given the earliest time to know how much money was available is a minimum of 5 months after the quote and a submission for Funding. NO business will stand by a quote over that length of time.

FEEDBACK

Draft Community Funding Request Policy

- **Ian Thomas**
  The document was very straight forward and easy to understand. The policy made sense and seemed to cover all bases.

- **Lauren Black**
  Murray Arts supports the development and improvement of the Draft Community Funding Request Policy but notes its focus on projects and does not include other community organisational models such as service organisations.

- **Lex Manning**
  Your draft policy outlines more of what projects you will not support than those that you will. Most groups look for help in more structural endeavours eg. buildings, structural maintenance for existing facilities, new machinery etc. This policy negates all this.

FEEDBACK

Draft Community Funding Request Policy and Guidelines

- **Tracey Farrant**
  I am writing in response to the recently circulated draft of the Community Grants Policy and Guidelines. While I appreciate the effort to encourage community engagement and development, I am very disheartened by several aspects of the policy that, in my view, fail to adequately consider the challenges faced by local community and volunteer groups. It seems evident that the current guidelines do not fully reflect the realities experienced by these groups.

  First and foremost, the timeline for project planning and budget approval outlined in the policy and guidelines is impractical and out of touch with the dynamic nature of community projects. Requiring community groups to develop project plans five months prior to potential draft budget inclusion, with the likelihood of subsequent denial by council members during the budget confirmation stage, undermines the confidence of applicants in the grant approval process.

  Additionally, the insistence on obtaining quotes and evidence of external funding so far in advance of the project commencement presents a significant hurdle. Given the fluctuating nature of costs and the reluctance of businesses to commit to long-term discounts, the stipulated timeline poses a risk of not being able to secure business support. Further, this approach is likely to result in budget overruns, making this a high risk for community groups to carry out their projects effectively.

  Moreover, the proposed disbursement mechanism, wherein only half of the grant is provided at the beginning and the remaining upon project completion, is impractical for most grassroots organisations. Such a structure places undue financial strain on these groups, counteracting the very purpose of seeking financial assistance in the first place.

  From a broader perspective, it would be beneficial for the Council to consider an approach that entails allocating a fixed budget annually for grant programs. This would ensure a more predictable and accessible funding process, resulting in community groups planning and executing meaningful projects that contribute to the overall betterment of the community.

  Furthermore, the current limit of $ 5,000 for the small grant program seems inadequate, particularly in the context of the prevailing economic climate. To enable more substantial and impactful initiatives that reflect the complex funding criteria, I recommend a revision of the upper limit to at least $10,000 for the small grant category.

  Considering the lengthy combined application and evaluation period of up to eight months, it is crucial to reassess the time frame for application processing, ensuring a more streamlined and efficient procedure that does not deter potential applicants from participating. This lengthy time period extends over the financial year period, which may lead to prospective auspice agencies hesitating to offer their services, further complicating applications for small groups.

  I urge the authority to reflect upon the fundamental principles of community engagement and trust, re-evaluating the guidelines to foster an environment that genuinely supports, strengthens, and sustains local community groups and organisations. A policy that solely serves the council's agenda, without genuine consideration for the needs and aspirations of the community, risks undermining the essence of communal spirit and vitality that defines our city. As it currently reads, the policy indicates a lack of trust in the community to deliver projects as planned, and I wonder where the evidence supports this lack of trust.

  Thank you for considering these concerns. I look forward to seeing positive revisions that will genuinely benefit our community and foster a more inclusive and participatory environment.