



Yarra Ranges Council Grants Policy 2020

We respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Owners, the Wurundjeri People, as the Custodians of this land. We also pay respect to all Aboriginal community Elders, past and present who have resided in the area and have been an integral part of the history of this region.

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Yarra Ranges Vision for the municipality

The following 2016 vision statement developed by Council is based on the ideas of more than 1,000 members of our community. It describes Council's aspirations for the future of the municipality - how we would like Yarra Ranges to be in 2036.

Whether you live here or visit, you will see how much we value our natural beauty, how connected our communities are, and how balanced growth makes this the best place in the world.

Our Strategic Objectives

Council has five strategic objectives to describe what we are working towards. These objectives and the activities have been developed in response to our community's priorities and the big issues facing Yarra Ranges. All activities completed by the organisation contribute to one or more of these objectives. The Grants Policy relates to the: Connected and Healthy Communities, Protected and Enhanced Natural Environment and Vibrant Economy, Agriculture and Tourism objectives.

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Introduction

“Good grant making contributes in meaningful ways to the creation of a fair, just, democratic and prosperous society. It does so by serving the public good, not private interests, and by employing practices that help organisations achieve their missions most effectively. At its best, grant making also strengthens democracy by responding to the needs of those with the least wealth, opportunity and power, while catalysing economic and social reforms.”
(Australian Institute of Grant Management (AIGM) Grant Making Manifesto, 2011)

Council is committed to partnering with the communities of Yarra Ranges through its grant programs to encourage, support and sustain diverse cultural, social & community initiatives. These strategic investments through grants then help to create a more connected and healthy community.

Designed to equip communities with the resources they need to thrive, Council’s grant programs also foster social inclusion, develop community capacity and support resilient, responsive communities.

Council offers these grant programs:

- Small Grants (Monthly)
- Grants for Community Program (Annual)
- Partnership Program (Multi Year)
- Capital Grants and ad hoc grants in response to community need such as those offered post bushfires.

This Policy supersedes the 2007 Grants Policy and is underpinned by principles of community development, good governance and best practice in grant making.

Scope of the Policy

The policy directs Council decisions on grants. Council Officers involved in the promotion, assessment and management of these programs will be directed by the policy. This Policy applies to:

- Small Grants
- Grants for Community
- Partnership Grants
- Other grant programs run through or by Council.

Out of Scope

Requests which fall outside the scope of this policy include: support for advocacy campaigns, major sponsorship and donations, requests to provide financial support to individuals.

Purpose

The Grants Policy provides a framework for responsive, equitable, transparent and sustainable grant making and guides Council's grant making decisions.

Council commits to providing grant programs which are inspired by Asset Based Community Development principles with a focus on discovering community assets, strengths and passions, nurturing positive community relationships and partnerships and mobilising community led initiatives.

Council Grants will:

- Support the delivery of the strategic objectives outlined in the Council Plan
- Align with the goals of Council's key strategies e.g. health and wellbeing, disability, environment, economic development, Reconciliation and creative communities
- Build partnerships between Council and communities
- Support the capacity of community organisations to deliver outcomes and services that benefit their community.
- Strengthen local economies through not for profit business grants.

Objectives

The objectives of Council grants are to:

- Inspire meaningful community participation which enhances quality of life, social connectedness and contributes to strong, vibrant communities
- Support capacity building to develop sustainable and resilient communities
- Provide resources to respond to current and emerging issues, informed by evidence¹ and community engagement
- Encourage effective partnerships between Council, community groups, not for profit business associations, and local agencies
- Help deliver Council's strategic objectives and optimise opportunities for:
 - Cultural expression, creative practice and celebration of our diverse communities and places
 - Strengthening communities and supporting volunteers
 - Increasing access to community services which are not Council's core business but which deliver vital community supports
 - Fostering social inclusion and connections to support ongoing resilience in community organisations
 - Vibrant economies, agriculture and tourism.

¹ Evidence is gathered from local data including on health and wellbeing and social research and local intelligence on community needs and priorities.

Principles

Grant making by Council has been guided over many years by inter-related principles:

- social inclusion, equity, diversity and capacity building.

“...when funders make diversity, equity, and inclusion central to their missions, philanthropy has greater impact. That’s because having varied perspectives helps generate better ideas to solve the complex problems of a changing and increasingly diverse world”.

(Fordfoundation)

This policy makes these principles explicit through the definitions below.

Definitions - grant making principles

- **Social Inclusion** “A socially inclusive society is defined as one where all people feel valued, their differences are respected, and their basic needs are met so they can live in dignity” (Cappo, 2002).
- **Equity** “Equity seeks to ensure fair treatment, equality of opportunity and fairness in access to information and resources for all” (Fordfoundation).

“Equity refers to the impact of philanthropic investment and action wherein outcomes are not correlated with race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, or ability.” (Grantmakers for Effective Organizations, January 27, 2017)

- **Diversity** Council expresses its commitment to diversity in many ways. The grant programs actively recognise and include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, LGBTIQ community members, people living with disability, people from all socio-economic backgrounds and those from cultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds as important stakeholders who bring perspectives and experiences that are inherently valued, celebrated and respected.
- **Capacity building** Council grants aim to facilitate capacity building in communities as an activity that yields benefits to individuals, communities and local organisations. The following definitions of capacity building describe this principle as it applies to Council’s grant making:

“The process of developing and strengthening the skills, instincts, abilities, processes and resources that organisations and communities need to survive, adapt, and thrive in the fast-changing world.” (Wikipedia)

“Community capacity building is about promoting the 'capacity' of local communities to develop, implement and sustain their own solutions to problems in a way that helps them shape and exercise control over their physical, social, economic and cultural environments”. (Western Australian Department for Community Development 2006)

Supporting Local Businesses and Industries

In addition to the principles of social inclusion, equity, diversity and capacity building, Council expresses its commitment to fostering local businesses and industries.

Grant seekers are encouraged to “Try Local First” when procuring services and goods.

Council will also support capacity building through a skill building program and leadership development opportunities that run alongside the grant programs and is open to the whole community.

Process

All Council grant programs will have efficient and transparent processes to deliver:

- Accessibility and openness:
 - Information about the grant programs and how decisions are made is available and accessible to all
- Clear program structure, eligibility criteria and objectives; expressed in Plain English
- Clear and robust governance
- Transparent and criteria-based decision-making
- Risk identification and effective risk management
- Monitoring and reporting of financial and grant performance
- Outcomes of the grant programs can be clearly identified by applicants

For each of the major grant programs governance and reporting processes apply to ensure checks and balances are in place to deliver community benefit and adhere to the principles of the grants policy. Council uses the SmartyGrants platform to administer and manage its grant programs. Support is provided to community applicants and recipients by Council Officers to help achieve these outcomes.

Good Governance

Good Governance refers to procedures, processes, templates and governance structures that are fair and transparent and ensure accountability measures are in place.

Council’s grant programs will also be guided by:

- Good governance in grantmaking and evidenced in the Program Guidelines and Selection Criteria
- Best practice in grant making processes identified by the AIGM (refer Appendix A)

Decision making and governance processes for Council grant programs are outlined below:

Partnership Program

- Guidelines & Selection Criteria reviewed prior to round opening and endorsed by Council
- Applications assessed by an independent assessment panel comprising of community members and Council Officers with subject matter expertise
- Recommendations of the assessment panels endorsed at a Council meeting
- Program reported to Council at round initiation and funding recommendation stage

Grants for Community Program

- Guidelines & Selection Criteria reviewed annually and endorsed by Council
- Applications assessed by an independent assessment panel comprising community members and Council Officers with subject matter expertise
- Recommendations of the assessment panels endorsed at a Council meeting
- Reporting to Council to initiate the round and endorse funding recommendations

Small Grants Program

Guidelines & Selection Criteria reviewed annually and endorsed by Council

- Applications assessed by two Council Officers with Manager level approval
- Funding recommendations circulated to Councillors monthly

Other Grant Programs

- Other grant programs run by Council should meet the same governance standards

Measures of success

- The Small Grants Program, annual Grants for Community Program and multi-year Partnership Grant Program are delivered in a timely manner
- Community participation is demonstrated by the number of applications, the range of locations and project types and the spread of projects across grant criteria
- Shared learnings are captured through feedback from grant recipients, applicants & other stakeholders
- Feedback is incorporated and changes made where appropriate
- Grant programs apply continuous improvement processes

Monitoring and evaluation process

Council staff support grant recipients to track milestones, provide reports that share the outcomes of Council funding. This also informs planning for future grants, promotes learning and ensure Council understands stakeholder perspectives. Key community networks inform and support the grants processes including the Township Network which represents townships across the municipality.

A robust acquittal process is managed through the SmartyGrants platform. The process is designed to:

- Report on outcomes of funding, monitor the effectiveness of funded programs and enable Council to fulfil accountability for its grants distributed.

In addition, capacity building interest and needs identified through monitoring and feedback help inform community training opportunities, delivered through the complementary Skill Building program.

Support materials

Supporting materials, referred to in this policy include:

- Yarra Ranges Council Grants Policy (2007)
- Yarra Ranges Grant Programs' Guidelines & Selection Criteria
- Local Government Act 2019

Data sources

This policy was designed using information derived from the following data sources:

- AIGM Grant Makers Toolkit, 2011, www.ourcommunity.com.au
- AIGM Grantmaking Manifesto, www.ourcommunity.com.au
- Benchmarking - multiple Council policies on grants from across Australia were reviewed
- Council Plan
- Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2017-2021
- Creative Communities Strategy (2019)
- Reconciliation Framework for Action 2013 – 2023
- Environment Strategy 2015 – 2025
- Child and Youth Strategic Action Plan
- Equity Access and Inclusion Strategy (disability focused strategy)
- Fordfoundation, 2020, <https://www.fordfoundation.org>
- Grantmakers for Effective Organisations, 2020, www.geofunders.org

Application of this policy

Grants for Community Program

Delivery of annual program which supports community-based projects that builds the social and cultural life of the region. The program is a platform for groups and individuals to lead projects that address community concerns and aspirations.

The program includes three funding streams:

- **Arts and Heritage:** Provides opportunities for the community to express, tell stories, connect with one another and contribute to a sense of creativity, identity and wellbeing.
- **Festival and Events:** Supports community groups to deliver activities that enhance local culture, celebrate community spirit and contribute to the liveability of Yarra Ranges.
- **Community Development:** Focuses on people and building communities around the principles of respect, equality and locally led community responses to needs and opportunities.

Partnership Program

Delivery of a multi-year program (4 years) which provides key service providers, community and cultural groups with stable funding for ongoing and sustainable programs that support the Yarra Ranges community. The program enables Council to collaborate with services and agencies where community delivery is deemed most appropriated.

The program includes two funding streams:

- **Connected & Healthy Communities:** Supports the delivery of programs and services that align with Council's Health and Wellbeing Strategy with the aim of a connected and healthy community.
- **Creative Communities:** Delivery of programs and events, aimed to enhance local culture, celebration creativity and contribute to the liveability of Yarra Ranges.

Small Grants Program

Delivery of a monthly program that supports community groups responding to opportunities and challenges in their communities. The program provides quick response funding and in-kind support for activities that promote greater social inclusion, wellbeing, community participation and economic development

Other Grant Programs facilitated by Yarra Ranges Council

Council may use grants to support community outcomes in other contexts for example, in partnership with the State Government after an emergency. Teams within Council may also allocate funding to lead specific outcomes such as for families and children. The capital grants program to support sports clubs and recreation activities in the municipality should also align with principles of good grant making outlined in the Policy.

Role of Grants in Emergencies

Grants can play an important role in response and recovery from emergencies such as bushfires, flood events and pandemics. In circumstances where projects are adversely impacted Council will:

- Encourage delivery of projects, including re-imagined or revised versions, at an appropriate time, post-emergency.
- Not seek to re-coup funds expended in good faith on a grant project
- Ensure acquittal of public funding

This acknowledges the significant financial and wellbeing impacts emergencies can have on communities, and Council’s focus on supporting communities to recover.

Definitions

- **Best Practice:** A method or technique that has been generally accepted as superior to any alternatives because it produces results that are superior to those achieved by other means or because it has become a standard way of doing things, e.g., a standard way of complying with legal or ethical requirements.
- **Community Development:** A process where community members are supported by Council to identify and take collective action on issues which are important to them. Community development empowers residents to create stronger and more connected communities.
- **Grant:** A sum of money paid by Council to an eligible recipient with an expectation that funds will be used for an agreed and specified purpose.
- **Good Governance:** Procedures, processes, templates and governance structures that are fair and transparent and ensure accountability measures are in place.
- **Program Guidelines:** Articulation of the implementation process, eligibility, objectives, selection criteria, and selection process.
- **Selection Criteria:** A set of criteria against which applications are assessed such as community benefit, partnership and collaboration, organisational capacity, budget and inclusion.

Endorsement

Stakeholders <i>e.g. ELT, Councillors, external agencies</i>	Version of the policy endorsed	Date endorsed	Signature (if required)
ELT			
Forum			
Focus Group			

Wider community

Review cycle

This policy will be reviewed every 5 years.

Should any major changes occur to Council's grant funded programs prior to the next review date, this policy may be reviewed earlier than scheduled.

Revision history

Version	Date	Summary of revisions
2020	March 2020	Changes to reflect the good governance, purpose and scope of the grants programs since the last version in 2007.
2025		Review and refresh as appropriate.

Appendix A

Best Practice Grants Program (AIGM Toolmakers Kit)

