



Mildura Rural City Council

Grants Policy

Policy – CP021

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Grants Governance Group	Executive Leadership Team	Council	June 2018	2013/244
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1. The purpose of this policy is

To provide a policy governing all of Council's outgoing grants programs.

2. Policy Statement

This policy provides an overarching framework for the various grants programs administered by Council to ensure that they are accessible, appropriate, fair and equitable across all groups in the municipality.

As part of meeting its overall corporate objectives outlined in the Community and Council Plan, Council is aware of the importance local government plays in the provision of additional funding to support community programs, services and events across the municipality.

Each year, Council operates a number of grants programs which provide an opportunity for organisations and community groups to apply for assistance, through supporting, or partnering projects and initiatives which address community needs. These include: community projects, events, arts projects, sport and recreation projects environmental initiatives, community development initiatives and other partnerships.

This policy provides a common standard of grants administration. Each specific grants program has its own criteria depending on the specific purpose of the grants program.

3. Principles

In accordance with the Community and Council Plan, Council assists eligible organisations and groups with grants funding support to enhance and improve the quality of life of residents, by meeting identified community needs throughout the municipality.

Council recognises that community groups, organisations and/or volunteer groups are best suited to do this and structures its grants programs to facilitate this process.

In addition to Council's Grants programs, support may be in the form of financial, in-kind or other discretionary assistance, however these must be clearly highlighted in any grant application being submitted.

Council may also support initiatives and applications made by groups to State, Federal and philanthropic organisations for assistance.

The following principles articulate the basis for a strong funding and working relationship between Council and organisations receiving grant funding assistance within the municipality.

Value for money: Obtains the best mix of services to meet community needs (within available funding) and selects a mix of resources, delivering the best possible outcomes to people throughout the municipality.

Fairness, Integrity and Transparency: Ensures that Council's Grants Policy is, and is seen to be; accessible, appropriate and fair.

Cooperation: Council, community groups and other funding organisations work together to promote a funding relationship based on mutual assistance.

Diversity: Embodies the recognition of diversity in the community through effective grants administration practice.

Consistency: Grants administration procedures are consistently applied across Council, funding agencies and community groups.

Coordination: Outcomes for people and communities are improved through better alignment of strategic planning, program design and service delivery, throughout the municipality.

Probity: Grants administration is conducted in an environment of integrity, honesty and scrutiny.

Objectives of the Policy

The objective of Council's Grants Policy is to:

- Encourage the development of services, facilities and events, which help achieve the objectives of the Community and Council Plan;
- Promote the active participation of local residents in community initiatives and the development of their skills, knowledge and opportunities;
- Provide equality of access to services, taking into account the need to target particular groups that may be under-served;
- Provide assistance to the community to develop initiatives and services, consistent with Council objectives and programs, but not directly operated by Council;
- Ensure the focus of services brings people into a network of supportive relationships;
- Ensure there are fair, transparent and accountable processes for the distribution of the Council funded grants program; and
- Outline principles that will apply in the eligibility, advertising, application, assessment and accountability phases, for grants funding.

Eligibility

Council will consider grant applications from registered businesses, incorporated community groups and eligible service organisations. This may include, but is not limited to, Incorporated Associations, commercial business entities and schools. Specific eligibility criteria and other conditions are outlined in the respective grants program guidelines available at www.mildura.vic.gov.au/grants.

If an applicant is not an eligible organisation as defined above, they may be auspiced by an eligible organisation to apply on their behalf. For example if a small voluntary committee is auspiced by a larger parent organisation, the parent organisation may be able to apply for funding on behalf of the committee.

Applicants are required to be either based within the municipality or provide services, projects, events or programs within the boundaries of our Local Government Area. New groups, proposing to establish themselves within the boundaries of the municipality, are also eligible to apply.

Projects proposing to install or upgrade assets or infrastructure which is located on property owned privately or by a public company will not be eligible.

All applications for funding must align with the objectives outlined in the appropriate key result area of the Community and Council Plan. Council reserves the right to redirect an applicant to a different Council Grants Program which better aligns with the objectives of the applicant's project or event. The Community and Council Plan will be used as a point of reference to best determine the Grants program suitable for an applicant if the initial program selected is not suitable.

Projects catering for a demonstrated community need (i.e. identified in the Community and Council Plan, Community Plan, Master Plan or other strategic document) will be given first preference.

Council reserves the right to determine an application ineligible if any organisation or project is found to be non compliant with a previous grant, has an outstanding debt, lease payment or agreement, or is the subject of any legal action, dispute or otherwise, which may damage Council's reputation.

Applicants may be required to include quotations as part of the application process. Details of these requirements are outlined in the respective policy for each funding program.

Advertisement of Grants

Council advertises grants at defined intervals throughout the year, usually in February and August. Council may use all media (including radio, television, print and internet) and its service networks to advertise grant funding opportunities, including important closing dates for applications.

In addition, Council will conduct a number of community information sessions across the municipality to highlight grant availability. Staff will also be made available to assist with application enquiries.

Applications

Applicants are strongly encouraged to read and follow the grant guidelines and address all relevant criteria outlined in the grant application. It is highly recommended, and in some cases mandatory, that applicants discuss their projects with relevant Council staff prior to submitting a grant application.

Applications must be submitted online, using Council's online grants management system found at www.mildura.vic.gov.au/grants. Hardcopy applications can be submitted in exceptional circumstances and subject to approval by the relevant Coordinator.

All applications received will be formally acknowledged..

Assessment Criteria

In addition to the criteria outlined in the respective grant application, Council may also consider the following assessment criteria and factors, in determining whether to support grant applications.

- Number of grant applications received and funds sought;
- Amount of grant funding available within the Council Grants Program budget;
- Degree of alignment of the project with the Community and Council Plan, Community Plan, Master Plan, or other strategic document;
- Degree of involvement of other stakeholders;
- Potential to develop, maintain, or increase project initiatives and sustainability in the community, following Council support; and
- Evidence of adherence to social justice and inclusion principles.

Applications which do not score a minimum 50% of the total available score in the assessment phase will not be eligible for funding.

Assessment Process

For each of its grants programs, Council establishes appropriate Grants Assessment Teams, who individually score applications received, based on meeting the agreed selection criteria.

To ensure probity and fairness, each member will complete a Disclosure of Conflict of Interest Declaration prior to the grants assessment process.

Where relevant/appropriate, advice or information given to one applicant will be made available to all other applicants. To ensure impartiality, Council officers who have assisted with an application, will not be part of the Grants Assessment Team.

Applications will then be ranked accordingly, based on defined scoring protocols, before a report is forwarded to Council regarding the recommended distribution of grants funding.

After consideration of applications and current program objectives, Council may propose an alternative form of assistance to meet the stated objectives of the application. This may include supporting a new initiative, project or other event, as recommended by the Chief Executive Officer for discretionary assistance.

Auspecting Administration Fee

An auspecting organisation may apply an administrative fee to contribute to the cost of administering the Funding Agreement and Invoicing process on behalf of the recipient organisation. This fee will be allowed under the following conditions:

1. The auspecting agency must be a not for profit organisation.
2. The administration fee must not exceed 10% of the Council endorsed grant funding amount.

Insurance

Public Liability Insurance is an eligible requirement of all grants programs and applicants must demonstrate insurance that is both appropriate to the activity or event proposed to be undertaken and to the minimum value of \$10 million as part of the application process. This insurance must be in the name of the applicant group.

Where a grant applicant group is being covered by an auspicing agency's public liability insurance cover, this will be reviewed on a case-by-case scenario against certain criteria to ensure the cover is sufficient.

Grants Notification

Following confirmation of the Council decision, all organisations will be notified of the outcome of their application.

Councillors and Council staff should note that, as public officials, they are subject to the ten Information Privacy Principles (IPPs) contained within the Information Privacy Act 2000, until a meeting of Council has approved successful grant applications.

Accountability

Successful applicants will be contacted in writing and a Grant Funding Agreement will be prepared by Council to outline the responsibilities, obligations and identified outcomes assigned to the grant funding.

For Council grants of \$10,000 (GST inclusive) or more, an audited financial statement specific to the funded activity will be required as part of the acquittal process.

Acquittal

Upon project or event completion, recipients must complete and submit an acquittal to Council in accordance with the conditions outlined in the associated signed Funding Agreement to demonstrate that grant funds were expended for the approved purpose. Where indicated in the Funding Agreement, an evaluation or completion report may also be required by Council. In these instances, a percentage of final payments may be withheld, pending this being submitted.

Recipients who have an outstanding funding acquittal for a grant, and who do not have an approved variation in place, may be ineligible for funding in future grant rounds until the outstanding acquittal is completed.

Where applicable, grant payments may also be attached to specific milestones, or achievement of stated objectives, throughout the period of the agreement.

Variations

Variations or extensions to legally binding agreements with Council shall only be requested in writing. Variations will be considered by the relevant General Manager and any agreed variation must be signed off by both parties.

Council reserves the right to recover or write-off grant funding, or to take other appropriate actions, in the event of non-compliance with the terms and conditions of the Funding Agreement. Failure to comply with grant requirements may render organisations ineligible for further funding for any of Council's grants programs.

Variation appeal process

The General Manager's decision regarding a variation is final and will not be considered in appeal unless new evidence is forthcoming and good cause can be demonstrated as to why this information was not forthcoming in the initial request for variation.

Appeals must be made in writing addressed to Council's Chief Executive Officer.

Recording

Project details, acquittals, evaluations and outcomes will be appropriately recorded by Council for future reference. A list of successful grants recipients approved by Council during each financial year, may be published in the subsequent Annual Report to the community.

4. Definitions

The following definitions serve to clarify current grant terminologies, grant programs and categories which may be available to community groups.

Grant	The Auditor General's definition of a grant is "payments to organisations such as community groups, which are directed at achieving goals and objectives consistent with government policy. The payments are conditional upon recipients using the funds for specific purposes set out in the terms and conditions of the grant agreement."
Subsidy/Benefit	A non-repayable allocation of money, to assist approved applicants and projects. Subsidies, usually provided by government in the form of a cash payment, or tax reduction) to groups, employers, or individuals. Subsidies are usually given to remove some type of burden or create incentive, deemed to be in the public interest.
Auspicing	Auspicing means that an organisation with a legal not-for-profit status takes responsibility for ensuring grant funds are used as specified in the grant allocation. Auspicing is commonly undertaken for community organisations or groups that are not yet legally constituted as a not-for-profit entity (Incorporated Association, a Public Company Limited by Guarantee, a Co-operative Society or a Trust).
Sponsorship	Sponsorship involves a commercial arrangement in which a sponsor provides a contribution in money or 'in kind' support for an activity, usually in return for a certain specified benefit. Rights or benefits often include naming rights to help align the sponsor with products, services or activities and may typically relate to the sponsor's reputation, management or communication objectives.
Financial Assistance or "in kind" donation	Financial assistance, or 'in kind' donation may involve an allocation (or donation) of funds, facilities, personnel or services to councils, individuals, community groups or non-profit organisations, for the purpose of establishing or enhancing community services, facilities or events. 'In kind' contributions must be detailed in the grant application
Funding Agreement	A signed approval or agreement, usually in writing by a duly Authorised person, within a community organisation, local, State, or Federal Government level, following an initial offer of funding support to the applicant.
Discretionary payment	A payment whose amount is not fixed in advance by law or regulation. Government and their duly authorised representatives may provide discretionary assistance in some cases, through 'act of grace' payments, or by waiving debts owed. Assistance may also be granted where it is considered that an organisation has a moral, rather than a legal responsibility, to provide such assistance.
Council Grants Program	This is a program maintained by Council and may change from time to time depending on Council's budget allocation.

5. Who is responsible for implementing this policy?

Relevant Branch Managers.

6. Legislation and other references

6.1 Legislation

Disclosure of Interest Section 79 – Local Government Act.

6.2 Documents

This Policy is implemented in conjunction with individual grant policies, guidelines and operational procedures applicable to each Council Branch.

6.3 Risk Assessment Reference

Risk Category	✓	Risk Category	✓
Asset Management		Financial Sustainability	✓
Committees		Human Resource Management	
Compliance – Legal & Regulatory	✓	Leadership & Organisational Culture	✓
Contract Management	✓	Occupational Health & Safety	
Contract Tendering & Procurement		Organisational Risk Management	✓
Corporate Governance		Project Management	✓
Environmental Sustainability		Public Image and Reputation	✓