Creative Development Grant

Guidelines

Program purpose

The Creative Development Grant supports Surf Coast Shire artists and creatives—individuals and groups—to explore new ideas, grow their practice, and contribute to a vibrant, inclusive arts and cultural landscape. The program provides funding to seed ideas, build skills and support career progression to strengthen the creative industries across the region to thrive.

This fund aligns with the Council Plan 2025-2029 (incorporating the Health and Wellbeing Plan) and the Surf Coast Shire Creative Places Strategy 2023–2031, recognising that creativity plays a vital role in community wellbeing, local identity and a thriving regional economy.

About the grant

The Creative Development Grant focuses on the development of creative ideas and practices, encouraging experimentation, exploration and skill development that can lead to future outcomes. While exhibitions, performances or public events may be part of a project, they are not essential to its completion.

Applicants are encouraged to meaningfully engage the community during the creative development process or through the outcome to demonstrate a broader impact across the Shire. Projects should demonstrate clear benefits aligned with the program's goals and demonstrate benefits consistent with Council's strategic direction, including:

- Supporting local creative industries to thrive by supporting the development of new skills of capability.
- Support community art and culture, including opportunities for cultural celebration and community events.
- Strengthening the local economy by supporting sustainable and diverse employment, promoting collaboration, and enhancing wellbeing through connection within the local arts and culture ecosystem.
- Creating opportunities and addressing barriers to support innovation, economic growth, and job creation, with attention to the distinct needs of coastal and hinterland communities.
- Improving mental health and social connection by fostering participation, building strong networks.

Objectives of the grant

To be successful, applicants must align their project with the Surf Coast Shire Council's vision and priorities, as outlined in the Council Plan and the Creative Places Strategy, thereby contributing to the Council's strategic goals and community wellbeing.

Therefore, applicants must address how their proposed project meets the following objectives:

- Supports their or their group's development of new ideas, enhances skills or facilitates the progression of their creative practice.
- Meaningfully involves the local community, audiences or collaborators throughout the development or presentation of their project.

In addition, they are required to address at least one of the following objectives:

- Contributes to the growth of a vibrant, inclusive, and resilient creative sector in the Surf Coast Shire, reflecting the values and reputation of the Shire.
- Showcases diverse cultural perspectives, voices or underrepresented groups within the Surf Coast Shire to a broad audience.
- Support the growth of the local creative sector, strengthen community wellbeing, and contribute to the economic vitality of the Surf Coast.
- Demonstrates consideration of sustainability in creative practice and project delivery, including environmental, social and/or economic sustainability.
- Builds or strengthens partnerships and collaborations within the creative community.

Funds available

Applications are accepted for requests between:

- $3000 for an individual.
- $5000 for a group/collective.

Applicants are not required to match the funding sought from Surf Coast Shire; however applications, that contribute funds (monetary or in-kind) will be viewed favorably

Key dates

Applicants will be accepted in February each year for an expected project delivery within the following 12 months, commencing on 1 May 2027.

Who can apply

- Individual professional creative practitioners (emerging or established) who are Surf Coast Shire residents and have an ABN or can appoint an Auspicing body to apply and take legal and financial responsibility for the grant.
- Professional creative collectives based in the Surf Coast Shire.
- Groups of individuals applying as a collective who are based in the Surf Coast Shire and who are either legally constituted, can nominate either an individual or can appoint an Auspicing body to use and take legal and financial responsibility for the grant.

Who cannot apply

- Creative practitioners or collectives based outside the Surf Coast Shire.
- Recipients of a Surf Coast Shire Artists and Creatives Grant funding within the last two years.
- Applicants who do not meet the eligibility criteria outlined in these guidelines.
- Applicants who have already received Council funding for the same project within the same financial year.
- Applicants with an overdue acquittal for any previous Council grant.
- Surf Coast Shire Council staff or elected members.

Important Notes

- Applications involving First Nations content submitted by non–First Nations applicants must demonstrate appropriate cultural process.
- All applicants are encouraged to include access costs in their budgets (e.g. Auslan interpreters, captioning, audio description, or materials in accessible formats) to ensure projects are inclusive and accessible to all audiences.
- All applicants will ensure that the activity complies with all the relevant acts, codes, standards and applicable legislation, including, but not limited to, Victoria's Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005, Disability Discrimination Act 1992 and Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004.

What will be funded

The Creatives Development Grant supports a wide range of creative projects and activities, including but not limited to:

- Development of new work, creative experimentation or concept development (including for future public art or performances).
- Projects that align with the purpose and objectives of the Creative Development Grant.
- Activities that support gender equality, intersectionality, promote diversity and inclusion.
- Projects that contribute to First Nations self-determination, reconciliation and allyship.
- Activities that demonstrate positive outcomes for environment, sustainability and climate action.
- Purchase of tools, equipment or resources that directly support creative development.
- Activities that contribute to the creative growth and career progression of individuals or groups.
- Auspicing fee costs if the applicant is being Auspiced.

Adopted November 2025
Updated November 2026
D26/243157

What Will Not Be Funded

The Creatives Development Grant will not support:

- Projects that do not align with the Grant's purpose or objectives, or Surf Coast Shire plans, for example Creative Place Strategy 2023-2031 or the Surf Coast Shire Council Plan
- Retrospective funding, including reimbursement for expenses already incurred.
- Repeat applications in consecutive years for the same project, activity or equipment.
- Projects that can be funded through the Surf Coast Shire Community Initiative Grant program.
- Activities that reinforce gender stereotypes or do not promote gender equality.
- Activities related to First Nations peoples that do not demonstrate that they value and strengthen relationships with First Nations communities.
- Activities that do not provide appropriate approvals or evidence of landowner permission, particularly for activities taking place on public land, including public art installations.
- Projects led by faith-based organisations are eligible; however, we do not fund activities that are primarily religious in nature or that seek to promote specific spiritual beliefs to others.
- Political or lobbying activities.
- Private tuition, training or coursework undertaken for academic assessment.
- Business start-up costs or operational expenses not directly related to the creative project (e.g. insurance (including Public Liability and Volunteer insurance, rent subsidies).
- Capital works, renovations or structural upgrades.
- Interstate or overseas travel.
- Activities that do not pay artists or creative practitioners at appropriate industry-standard rates.
- Conferences, business meetings or expenses not directly tied to creative delivery.
- Prizes, competitions, awards, fundraising activities, eisteddfods or trophies.

Assessment criteria

All applications will be assessed by a panel of three based on the merit, impact, and viability of the proposed project. Each assessment area will be weighted equally.

1. Merit: Quality and creativity of the project

- The project demonstrates originality, creativity and artistic quality.
- It supports the applicant's creative growth or career development.
- The application clearly explains how the project meets the grant objectives and outlines how these will be achieved.

2. Impact: Community engagement and benefits

- The project meaningfully engages community members, audiences or collaborators.
- Address the Grant Objectives to ensure it aligns with Surf Coast Shire Council's vision and strategic priorities (including the Council Plan and Creative Places Strategy).
- It demonstrates positive cultural and social outcomes, contributing to cultural diversity, community wellbeing, economic benefit and/or local identity.
- Demonstrate how the project will build skills or capacity for the applicant and potential participants, with benefits that continue beyond the life of the project.

3. Viability: Planning and feasibility

- The timeline and project milestones are realistic and clearly defined.
- The applicant and any collaborators have the skills, experience, and capacity to deliver the project successfully.
- The budget is clear, realistic, and appropriate for the scale and scope of the project.
- The applicant outlines appropriate evaluation methods to report on the outcomes and impact of the project.

Additional consideration:
Where proposals involve working with diverse or underrepresented communities, the panel will consider whether the applicant demonstrates best practice and appropriate cultural competencies to deliver the project respectfully and effectively. See 'Application Support Materials and Documents' below for further recommendations.

Addressing the Assessment Criteria

Applicants will complete an application form via the **SmartyGrants** portal. The form includes questions designed to help applicants clearly explain how their project meets the three **assessment criteria:** Merit, Impact and Viability.

Within the form, applicants will also be asked to provide:

- A short professional CV or summary of their creative practice and ethos, to offer context around their experience and approach.
- A clear and realistic budget, including quotes for eligible items and a breakdown of how Surf Coast Shire funds will be used in line with grant eligibility.
- Details of any other confirmed or anticipated income sources, as well as any additional project costs not covered by the Shire, to demonstrate the overall financial viability of the project.
- If working with First Nations communities, provide evidence of sound engagement in line with Creative Australia's Protocols for Using Cultural Heritage and Intellectual Property in the Arts.

Application Support Materials and Documents

Applicants are required to upload supporting documents to verify eligibility, including:

- Evidence of residency in Surf Coast Shire (e.g. driver's license, rates notice, utility bill).
- Quotes for items or services (excl. GST).

If applicable to the application, applicants will be required to provide:

- Evidence of consultation and permission if work is to be conducted on private or Council land.
- Evidence of consultation and permission, demonstrating sound engagement in line with Creative Australia's 'Protocols for Using First Nations Cultural and Intellectual Property in the Arts' if working with First Nations community.

Applicants are encouraged to upload relevant support materials that help demonstrate how their project meets the assessment criteria. These may include:

- Letters of support from collaborators, community partners or venues.
- Evidence of partnerships or confirmed participants.
- Examples of past work (their own or similar projects by others) to illustrate capability or inspiration.
- Documentation showing need or demand for the proposed project (e.g. community feedback, expressions of interest, statistics).

When submitting additional support materials, please ensure:

- A maximum of 10 documents can be uploaded (excludes Quotes to support the applicant's budget)
- Each file must be no larger than 5 MB.
- Web links must be publicly available (e.g. YouTube, Vimeo, personal websites). The panel will not be able to access membership-only or password-protected content.
- Do not submit materials via file-sharing platforms such as Dropbox, Google Drive, or similar services. These will not be reviewed.

Funding Conditions

In accepting the Surf Coast Creatives Development Fund, applicants will commit to:

- Projects must commence on or after 1 May 2027 and be completed within 12 months of the start date.
- Grant funds will only be transferred once Council has received:
    - A signed Funding Agreement
    - An invoice
    - Statement by Supplier (if no ABN)
    - Evidence of Public Liability Insurance
    - Auspicing organisation details and invoice, if applicable.
- Funds must only be used for approved items as outlined in the original application. Any changes must be requested in writing and approved by Council in advance. Changes must align with the original intent of the project.
- Council will not be responsible for any project costs that exceed the amount awarded.

- Applicants are responsible for meeting any Australian Taxation Office (ATO) obligations. For advice regarding GST or ABN registration, contact the ATO on 13 28 66 or visit ato.gov.au.

At completion of the project, applicants must submit a grant acquittal report via the SmartyGrants portal outlining how the project was delivered, along with receipts to verify all expenditure in line with their original application.

All successful applicants (or their Auspicing organisations) will be required to enter into a Funding Agreement with Surf Coast Shire Council. This agreement outlines the grant conditions, reporting obligations, and agreed outcomes. Funding will not be released until this agreement is fully executed and signed.

Acknowledgement Requirements

Recipients must acknowledge Surf Coast Shire Council's support in all promotional material, announcements, and public communications relating to the funded activity. Council's logo must be displayed on relevant project materials, and all acknowledgements must be made following Council's brand guidelines (provided upon funding approval).

Acquittal and Reporting

At the conclusion of the project, recipients must:

- Submit a written project evaluation through the SmartyGrants portal
- Provide a detailed expenditure report or audited financial statement, including receipts for all grant-funded expenses
- Return any unspent funds to Surf Coast Shire.

Grievance Process

All applicants, whether successful or unsuccessful, are welcome to seek feedback and discuss the application process with Council. If an applicant is not satisfied with the process or outcome, they may submit a written grievance addressed to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Surf Coast Shire Council. All grievances will be reviewed in accordance with Council's complaints management procedures. Applicants will be notified of the outcome of their grievance in writing.