SCS-056 Grants Program

TRIM Reference:	D21/7838	Due for Review:	March 2024
Responsible Officer:	Manager Community Support		

Purpose

This policy outlines Surf Coast Shire Council's (Council) commitment to provide our community with funding through the provision of grants. It provides guidance for the consistent management of grant programs across Council.

Policy Principles

This policy provides a framework for the provision of grants from Surf Coast Shire Council to community applicants which is transparent, equitable, and inclusive. It applies across all phases of the grant process, including promotion, application, assessment, acquittal and evaluation. The policy establishes clear expectations for both Council and community and is informed by the principles of community development, good governance and best practice in grant making.

The following principles will be reflected in grants practices:

Community Development:
- Community members are experts in their lives and communities, and consequently Council values their knowledge and wisdom
- Each community member has the knowledge, skills, care and connections to create positive change
- Community members are empowered to take the lead, deciding on issues which affect them and identifying and building on the assets which already exist in their communities.
- Strong productive relationships and a shared way of working are central to achieving lasting change
- Council considers the unique and interacting elements of nature, culture, lifestyle, industries and history of our towns and villages.

Governance
- The grants program operates under the adopted grants policy.
- Grants management practices are consistent and understood by Council officers and community.
- Suitably skilled officers provide centralised oversight of the program.
- Council's grant programs are equitable, transparent and fair.
- Accurate records are kept for the application, assessment, acquittal and evaluation processes.

Grants best practice
- Grants arise from community need.
- Grants are properly resourced.
- Grant opportunities are widely promoted within our community.
- Provision of grant funding is fair and free from bias.
- Grants programs generate knowledge which is utilised to inform future planning and implementation.
- Grants programs are continually evaluated to ensure outcomes create opportunities and meet the needs of a broad range of community members and interests.

We exist to help our community and environment to thrive

Scope

This policy applies to competitive applications for funding which is provided by Council to community stakeholders for a specific, agreed purpose.

This policy applies to all Council activities involved in the promotion, assessment and management of grants programs where funding is provided to an organisation, auspice organisation, business or individual.

The policy does not apply to direct Council contributions to organisations through the budget process.

Policy

Council's purpose is to "help our community and environment thrive". By providing grant funding, Council enables community groups, individuals and businesses to enhance wellbeing, inclusion and quality of life in the Surf Coast community.

Objectives:

In providing grant funding to the community, Council aims to support the following key objectives:

- Strengthen the Surf Coast Shire community through the support of a diverse range of activities, services and programs that are responsive to identified community needs.
- Create a thriving and active community that is safe, healthy and inclusive.
- Encourage and enable groups or individuals across the Shire to collaborate and share knowledge, skills and resources.
- Build the capacity and capability of communities to become economically, environmentally and socially more sustainable.
- Support community and major events.

Management and administration of grants programs:

Each grant program will adhere to the following processes:

1. <u>Program guidelines</u> with clearly defined criteria which include:
- Eligibility – including details of any exclusions.
- Assessment criteria – clearly defined and weighted.
- Conditions of funding.
- Insurance and legislative requirements.
- Timelines.
- Step by step guide to the application process.

2. <u>Application process:</u>
- Council will only consider grant applications from eligible organisations.
- Applications must be submitted on the appropriate form made available on Council's website (or hardcopy on request).
- The majority of Council's grant programs will be processed using online grant management software system e.g. SmartyGrants.
- Council will actively promote grants available via Council and community networks, newspapers, Council website and social media.
- Council will assist community members to develop quality applications to grants programs through information sessions, access to guidelines on council's website and access to advice from Council Officers.
- The application process will include: Applicant details, assessment criteria, budget breakdown and electronic verification.
- Evaluation and feedback opportunities within the application process.

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3. Assessment process:
- A formal and clearly documented assessment process will be applied to each grant program to maintain community confidence and transparency.
- All projects will be assessed by a panel of subject matter experts relevant to the grant program/stream, whereby Council Officers make an initial assessment against a set of pre-determined, weighted criteria. Final endorsement for all grants is given by the relevant General Manager or CEO.
- All applicants will be informed of the outcome of their application in writing, with feedback including alternative funding options given to unsuccessful applicants.

4. Agreement process: The agreement between Council and the successful applicant will include:
- Details of the applicant organisation.
- Amount funded.
- Funding period, conditions of the grant.
- Acknowledgement of Council requirements e.g. Use of Shire Logo.
- Reporting requirements.
- Agreements must be electronically verified (signed) by Council officers and the successful applicant.

5. Accountability requirements: Successful applicants will be required to:
- Notify in writing changes to agreed project/funding terms.
- Provide an evaluation report on the outcomes of the project, including a financial summary within the funding period specified in the funding agreement.
- Return unspent funds to Council or obtain written approval for a variation to the agreement.
- Provide an invoice for appropriate funded amount

6. Grievance process: All applicants whether successful or not have the opportunity to discuss the application process. Applicants have the opportunity to write to the CEO if they are not satisfied with the grant process. The applicant will be notified of the outcome in writing.

7. Conflict of Interest: Councillors and Council Officers assessing grant applications must declare any conflict of interest in accordance with the Local Government Act 2020 in particular sections 126-136. The process for declaring a conflict of interests is set out in Council's Governance Rules.

Standard conditions:

Specific grant priorities will be detailed in the grant guidelines for each program.

The following conditions apply to all Council's grants and funding programs.

1. Council is responsible for setting the total annual budget allocation for grants.
2. Grants will be assessed to a maximum of $10,000.
3. Council reserves the right to consider allocating more than $10,000 in funding to any given project where significant benefit to the community is identified.
4. Council's contribution is limited to the amount granted with all other costs associated with the project being borne by the grant recipient.
5. Funding must only be used for the purposes outlined by Council in the letter of offer or funding agreement. Changes can only be made if requested in writing and approved by Council prior to the change being enacted.
6. Unspent funds must be returned to Council unless otherwise agreed to in writing.
7. Council reserves the right to withdraw funding and/or cease partnership with the grant recipient if the project is not progressing satisfactorily, the organisation ceases to be eligible, the organisation breaches funding conditions, or the project poses a safety or reputational risk to either the community or Council. If this occurs, the organisation is fully liable for costs, and grant funds must be returned to Council.

Local Government Act 2020 Principles

Principles	Applicable to policy	If yes, provide details
Governance Principles (Consideration of the Governance Principles under s.9 of LGA 2020)	**Yes**/No	*Priority has been given to achieving best outcomes for the municipal community by providing the community with funding opportunities through the provision of grants.*
Community Engagement (Consideration of Community Engagement Principles under s.56 LGA 2020)	**Yes**/No	*Community Engagement undertaken to inform the development of this policy was guided by the community engagement principles under s.56 LGA 2020.*
Public Transparency (Consideration of Public Transparency Principles under s.58 of LGA 2020)	**Yes**/No	*The purpose of this policy is to achieve public transparency and it describes the way this will be achieved through clear, transparent and well understood grants processes.*
Strategies and Plans (Consideration of Strategic Planning Principles under s.89 of LGA 2020)	**Yes**/No	*Consideration has been given in the development of this policy to describe and integrated approach across Council for the delivery of grants programs.*
Financial Management (Consideration of Financial Management Principles under s.101 of LGA 2020)	**Yes**/No	*This policy seeks to ensure accounts and records of grants are accurately kept and supports Council in achieving financial management principles.*
Service Performance (Consideration of Service Performance Principles under s.106 of LGA 2020)	**Yes**/No	*This policy seeks to ensure grants are provided in an equitable manner and are responsive to the needs of the municipal community.*

Definitions

Council: the Surf Coast Shire Council

Councillors: Individuals holding the office of a member of Surf Coast Shire Council

Council Officer: The Chief Executive Officer and staff of Council appointed by the Chief Executive Officer

Community: Towns, places, or shared interest groups located within the Surf Coast Shire

Capacity building: The development of long-term skills which help assist a person or group become self-sufficient.

Community Development: A process where community members are supported to identify and take collective action on issues that are important to them.

Funding agreement: A legal document that outlines the terms, conditions and obligations of funding, project delivery, and accountability for both Council and the funded organisation.

Funding stream: Funding streams indicate the various funding amounts available for a grant program. Each funding stream may have different eligibility, application and project requirements.

Program guidelines: Program guidelines provide details about:

- The grant program
- The types of projects
- Events of activities the program is looking to fund
- How to apply for the grant
- Eligibility
- Application assessment criteria

Funding rounds: Some grants program will have a series of open and closing dates throughout the year when applications can be submitted. Each one of these is called a funding round.

Assessment criteria: Is the key points that grant applications will be considered against. A grant application must meet all assessment criteria to be successful.

Related Procedure

Grants management procedures

Grant guidelines and objectives

References

This policy is underpinned by the following Surf Coast Shire Council policy documents and external documents:
- Surf Coast Shire Council plan (2021-2025).
- Surf Coast Shire Council Community Development Policy (SCS Policy – 049).
- Australian Institute of Grants (AIGM) Code of Practice for Grantmaking Agencies
- Local Government Act (2020)
- The Victorian Local Government Association 'Best Practice in Local Government Community Grants Programs' (2002)
- Victorian Auditor General's Office (VAGO) 2017 Local Government Audits

Document History

Version	Document History	Approved by – Date
1	*Amended*	*Council Resolution – 23 July 2019*
2	*Amended*	*Council Resolution – 22 March 2022*