



Grants and Sponsorships Policy

Responsible Officer	Adoption Date	November 2021
Manager Community and Recreation	Approved By	Council
Authorising Officer	Review Date	July 2024
Director Infrastructure Services	Policy Type	Corporate Policy

Statement and Purpose

This policy outlines the approach to Council's delivery of Grants and Sponsorship Programs ("Programs") to the community.

The policy reflects the commitments of Council made in the Council Plan 2021-2025 and Council Vision to improve and develop facilities, social connections, arts and culture, mental and physical health, environmental sustainability, heritage, public events and general liveability within the Rural City of Wangaratta. It also reflects Council's commitment to continuous improvement for its grant programs as noted in the Council Plan.

This policy will be supported by a set of procedures that will guide responsible officers in the coordination and administration of these programs.

Scope

Council provides funding opportunities for the community by way of one off grant programs and longer term sponsorship arrangements. This policy formalises the arrangements for both grants and community sponsorships, and applies to all Council staff, and agents of Council who are involved in the administration of Council sponsorships, grants and related funding.

Policy

COMMITMENT TO DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS

Council is committed to distributing financial assistance in the form of community sponsorships and grants in a transparent, cohesive, and fair manner. Council's objective is to ensure that there are clear guidelines around the financial assistance it provides to the community.

All such Programs delivered by Council will be guided by this policy and the corresponding documents including the procedure and guidelines for applicants.

Council recognises that the Programs are an important component of our continuing support for the community. The Programs empower local organisations and businesses to be drivers of projects, events or activities that are important to them and support Council's vision for a connected, accessible, healthy and vibrant community.

Council's financial assistance and sponsorship programs provide a way to support the community and to maximise their contributions to the wellbeing of the Rural City of Wangaratta.

FUNDING CATEGORIES

This policy will apply to the following programs:

- Community Grants
- Active Wangaratta Grants
- Individual Athlete Funding Program
- Tourism Events Grants
- Community Sponsorships
- Any other grant or funding programs organised by Council with the exception of Local Tourism Association and Business Investment support funding, and the Marquee Events and Events Attraction Fund which have their own guidelines and governance.

POLICY PRINCIPLES AND APPLICATION

Council will apply the following principles to all grant and sponsorship agreements. That the distribution of funds:

- promotes the strategic objectives and goals identified in the Council Plan, Vision, and other strategies;
- supports organisations that provide diverse and effective local services, facilities and activities;
- positively contributes to the way the community view Council and its services;
- is fair and free from bias, conflict of interest or any other form of influence, and
- is properly recorded and reported on.

Grants

A grant is a form of financial assistance that funds an individual or organisation to develop a specific project. These are one-off funding arrangements designed to assist with the delivery of projects and events for the benefit of the Rural City of Wangaratta.

Council seeks to maximise the return on investment by ensuring that the grant program is managed efficiently, and that resources and funds are distributed effectively to best meet the needs of the local community. This document contains guiding principles that the Grants process will be guided by. For more detail on implementation of these principles, refer to the Grants Distribution Procedure (Attachment A).

GRANTS APPLICATION PROCESS

The Grant Application Process will vary depending on the timeline and goals of the specific grant program. However, to ensure accessibility and fair access:

- Grant open and closing dates for each financial year will be published on Council webpages as soon as reasonably practicable,
- Grant applications will be made available online as well as through Council's Customer Service team wherever possible,
- Grant eligibility criteria including funding amounts and limitations to the program will be provided and published alongside the applications, and
- Council officers will make themselves available to discuss the criteria of each program as needed and advertise any formal sessions through Council webpages and other media.

All grant applications should include at minimum questions that align with the following:

- Does the proposed application support the strategic objectives and goals identified in the Council Plan, Vision, and other strategies. Does it positively contribute to the community?
- Is the proposed activity/application deliverable by the organisation?
- Is the scope of the project reasonable and achievable within the timeline for the grant program?
- Does the application include quotations and a project plan?
- Does the applicant seek to use local suppliers where possible (In line with the RCoW Procurement Policy)?
- Does the application align with Council's sustainability goals (In line with the RCoW Procurement Policy)?
- Has the organisation met their acquittal requirements for previous grants or funding received from Council?

GRANTS ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

All applications received by the advertised closing date will be assessed against the advertised eligibility criteria prior to being considered. Applications received after the closing date will not be accepted.

An evaluation panel will then consider all eligible applications against a set of criteria specific to that grant program prior to making a set of recommendations for funding.

Each evaluation panel will consist of no fewer than three Council Officers, and all members will need to ensure they have no material conflicts of interest with the grant applicants. Conflicts of interest must be managed according to advice from Governance and aligned with any Conflict of Interest Policy adopted by Council.

Consideration should be made to the gender equity of the panel where possible.

Councillors shall not be included as a part of grant or sponsorship assessment panels as they are the final approvers of all grants awarded by Council. To be involved in the assessment panel would be a conflict of interest.

The recommendations will be presented to Council or to an appropriately delegated Council officer to make a final decision.

No grant funds will be distributed until the grant recipient has completed a funding agreement form including the terms and conditions of the grant. (Attachment B)

GRANTS IMPLEMENTATION AND ACQUITTAL

Council want to see successful outcomes through the grants program. The Funding Program Administrator will request periodic status updates from recipients, no less than once per funding period. Additional support such as training for recipients may be developed based on community needs and trends.

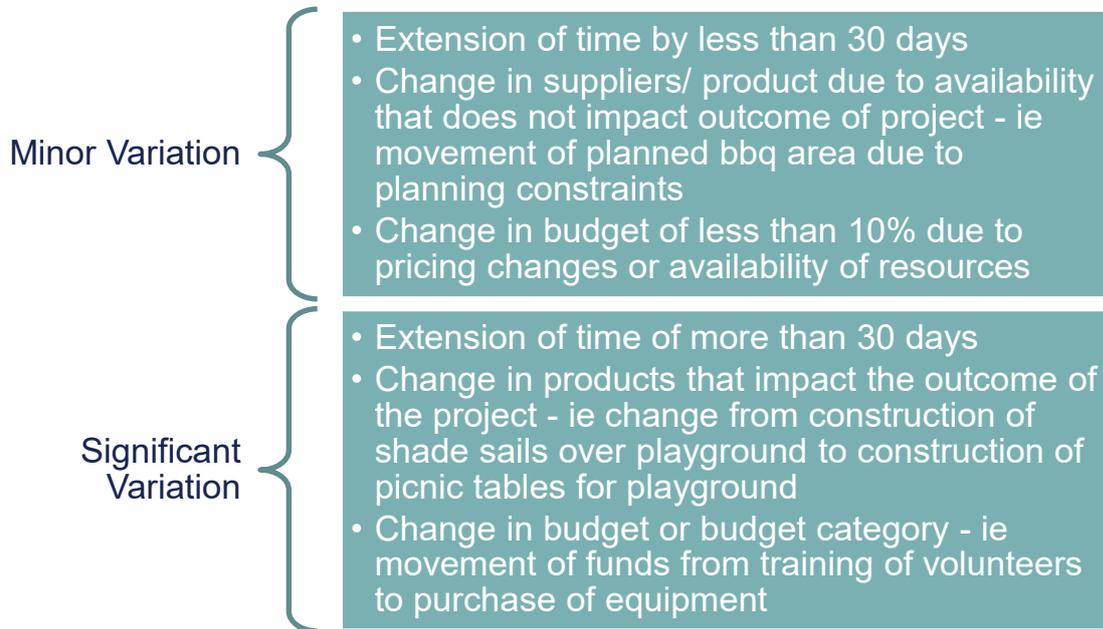
This also includes the proper acquittal of grants to ensure that funds are used for their intended purpose. The acquittal process and expectations will be outlined to grant recipients before funds are awarded. Acquittal information will be reviewed, approved and recorded by Council staff..(Attachment C)

Council understands that sometimes situations will arise where funds cannot be spent in the manner outlined in the application. Grant recipients will need to complete a variation form to be submitted to Council for approval and will be advised to not proceed with works until the variation is reviewed and approved. (Attachment D)

A variation form will at minimum include an outline of the change, a description of how the change will impact the project, and a description as to how the changes are being managed.

If the variation is minor change in timeline or scope and does not alter the intended outcome of the Grant, it can be reviewed by the Funding Program Administrator before a recommendation being made to the Funding Program Manager. If the variation is a substantial change, the variation form will be submitted to no less than two members of the original grant assessment committee for review and approval along with a recommendation from the Funding Program Administrator. If the original committee members are not available, their respective Manager or Director may be nominated to complete the review.

Examples of minor and significant variations:



If the variation is approved the recipient will be notified in the change to their funding terms and conditions. If the variation is not approved, and the recipient is unable to complete works according to the scope of the original application then the granted funds will need to be returned to Council within a specified financial period.

GRANT AUSPICING

Community organisations without their own incorporation often approach the Rural City of Wangaratta to auspice their grant application for an external grant program. There is a risk to Council in auspicing grants, as Council is ultimately responsible for the delivery and acquittal of the awarded grant.

Based on this, auspice requests should be considered against the following:

- Does the proposed application support the strategic objectives and goals identified in the Council Plan, Vision, and other strategies. Does it positively contribute to the community?
- Is the proposed activity/application sustainable or deliverable by the auspice organisation?
- Is the scope of the project reasonable and achievable within the timeline for the grant program?
- Does the application include quotations and a project plan?
- Does the organisation need assistance with delivery of the project, and does Council have the capacity to provide that support?
- Has the organisation met their acquittal requirements for previous grants or funding received from Council?

If these considerations are met satisfactorily, then the recommendation will be presented to a Director or CMT for approval. Financial delegation for approvals shall align with the Rural City of Wangaratta current Grant application approvals.

The organisation will be provided with an auspice agreement to sign (Attachment E) The agreement will outline that the auspice organisation is responsible for all reporting, funds, and overspends on the project. It will also outline any agreed project management or other contribution from Council as agreed. The Auspice agreement must be returned before the grant application is submitted. Failure to follow this process may negatively impact future grant applications and/or auspice requests.

Sponsorships

COMMUNITY SPONSORSHIP DISTRIBUTION

The Rural City of Wangaratta is committed to working in partnership with community stakeholders to nurture and develop the vitality of communities through support for programs and projects with community outcomes which align to its Council Plan. Longer term partnerships with the community are a part of delivering strategic outcomes for Wangaratta.

In support of the above, Council commits to supporting on-going financial assistance across the term of the Council Plan in the form of Community Sponsorships to Community Organisations to deliver specified programs and events that deliver on priorities identified in the Council Plan.

COMMUNITY SPONSORSHIP IMPLEMENTATION AND ACQUITTAL

Current Sponsorships

Each year a report on existing sponsorships will be presented to Council for approval. Council approved sponsorship recipients will be asked to complete a funding agreement, which will include annual financial acquittal for each organisation and scheduled disbursements. (Attachment F)

New Sponsorships

In order to maximise community partnerships and delivery of the Council Plan, beginning in 2022 and after the completion of each new Council Plan, Council will conclude their current sponsorship agreements and open the sponsorship program up for application.

This application and evaluation process will run in line with the Grants Application and Approval process.

This will include releasing information on the amounts and terms of funding available, the criteria sponsorship applications will be considered against, alignment with the Council Plan and any other specific requirements as decided upon and published.

The program should remain open for no less than one month and should run alongside the Community Grants Program.

Applications will be considered against the following at minimum:

- How the proposed funding aligns to the Council Plan
- Is the proposed activity/application sustainable or deliverable by the organisation?
- Does the application include a budget and a project plan?
- Has the organisation met their acquittal requirements for previous grants or funding received from Council?

Community organisations will be able to apply for a maximum of \$10,000 funding a year for up to four years to fund their community programs or regular community events.

The Assessment should give consideration to a variety of funding options for the programs including:

- Awarding a decreasing tranche of funding over the term of the MOU
- Limiting the terms where appropriate to a shorter period – ie where the activity is to deliver a two year program, to award the funding for those two years only.

Approved organisations will be asked to complete a Memorandum of Understanding with Council, agreeing to reporting requirements, and the proposed funding term.

Acquittal and Disbursements

Organisations will need to report annually by 15 July acquitting the use of their funds for the previous financial year, and acquittals will be approved and recorded by Council officers.

A yearly report on sponsorships will be provided at the August ordinary Council meeting each year for approval. Disbursement of the next round of funds will occur in September of each year following those these approvals.

Annual Budget Submissions

The Community Sponsorship process would not preclude organisations from making an annual budget or project submission. However, such submissions should be considered against the same criteria as the Community Sponsorships. Once reviewed in this manner a recommendation to fund or not fund can be made to Council based on the outcome of the review. Approved organisations would need to enter into a MOU for the term of their funding, and acquit and report in line with Community Sponsorships requirements.



Roles and responsibilities

Funding Program Manager

A delegated Council Officer who will be responsible for yearly review of the funding program, timeline, and communications plans. Will also be responsible for reporting to Council and CMT on trends, outcomes, and issues.

Funding Program Administrator

A delegated Council Officer who will be responsible for the implantation of the funding program activities, including implementation of communications plan, tracking applicants, reporting, coordinating assessment panels, and reviewing documents including applications and acquittals.

Assessment Panel Members

Panel members will be delegated Council Officers without a material conflict of interest in the program currently being assessed. Panel members will review applications against set criteria, and may be called upon to discuss or review their decisions with the rest of the panel, CMT, or to Council. All information the Assessment Panel is privy to is subject to confidentiality.

Workplace behaviours

The Rural City of Wangaratta is responsible for ensuring that appropriate behaviour is clearly defined and expectations are accessible and understood by all staff, contractors and volunteers.

Employee conflicts of interest

The Rural City of Wangaratta will ensure all employees involved with the grant process declare any conflicts of interest. Material conflicts may preclude involvement in the program by Council officers.

Privacy

Council is committed to protecting an individual's right to privacy. In accordance with Council's Information Privacy Policy, personal information considered or recorded during the process of a report or investigation will respect the privacy of all individuals involved.

Breaches

Breaches of this policy may lead to disciplinary action in accordance with Councils Enterprise Agreement.

Monitoring and evaluation

All Programs will be evaluated in an ongoing manner, with an annual report presented to the Corporate Management Team summarising the program and lessons learned. Any change or update which materially impacts or alters this policy must be approved by Council following a review by the Corporate Management Team.

Definitions

Council officers	Council staff working full or part time, including temporary employees, contractors and consultants while engaged by Council
Community Organisation	A "not-for-profit" organisation or organisation with an open membership to residents of Rural City of Wangaratta.
Local Community	All residents within Rural City of Wangaratta.
Grant	A grant is a form of financial assistance that funds an individual or organisation to develop a specific project.

Community Sponsorship	A sponsorship is agreed funding arrangement that funds an organisation to support their works that align with and enable the delivery of the Rural City of Wangaratta Council Plan.
Business	A for-profit organisation within the Rural City of Wangaratta.

References

Legislation

Local Government Act 2020 (VIC)

Council

Council Plan 2021 – 2025

Review

Any change or update which materially impacts and/or alters this policy must be approved by the Coordinated Management Team (CMT). Otherwise the policy will be reviewed by the Manager, Community and Recreation every three years.

Attachments:

Attachment A – Grant Distribution Procedure

Attachment B – Funding Agreement Form (example)

Attachment C - Funding Acquittal Form (example)

Attachment D - Grant Request for Variation – Scope/Timing (example)

Attachment E – Grant Auspice Form (example)

Attachment F – Community Sponsorship Distribution Procedure