

COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAM POLICY



Community Grants Program Policy

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1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose this policy is to:
- 1.1.1 Outline Council's commitment to providing the community with funding.
 - 1.1.2 Provide an overarching framework for Council's Community Grants Programs to ensure they are transparent, consistent, equitable, inclusive and understood by the community.
 - 1.1.3 Identify acquittal and evaluation requirements to ensure Council and funding recipients remain accountable through the processes.
- 1.2 This policy aligns community grants with Council's strategic objectives (as outlined in the Council Plan) and establishes clear expectations for both Council and the community.

2. SCOPE

- 2.1 This policy applies to all Council's Community Grants Programs (both competitive and non-competitive grant programs) which includes:
- 2.1.1 Competitive Grant Programs
 - Community Strengthening Grants
 - Berrybank Wind Farm Community Grants
 - 2.1.2 Non-Competitive Grant Programs
 - Community Planning Program Seed Funding
 - Berrybank Wind Farm Senior Citizens Grants
 - 2.1.3 Any new / impromptu Council grants programs that become available to respond to emerging community priorities.
- 2.2 The policy applies to:
- 2.2.1 Council staff involved in the development, administration, assessment and evaluation of the community grants programs.
 - 2.2.2 External and community assessors who review and assess community grant applications as part of the Community Grants Program assessment panel.
 - 2.2.3 Community groups and business groups who apply for funding and receive funding under Council's Community Grants Programs.

3. POLICY STATEMENT

- 3.1 Council allocates an annual budget for a suite of grants available to community and business groups. The Community Grants Programs enable the delivery of initiatives

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and activities consistent with Council's strategic objectives that further enhance the wellbeing and quality of life of the wider community.

- 3.2 Council will provide a consistent and transparent approach to the Community Grants Program process across its life cycle (application, assessment, decision-making and acquittal approval processes).

4. POLICY FRAMEWORK

- 4.1 The framework for the Community Grants Program is informed by the Golden Plains Shire vision and the community development principles of community strengthening and building.
- 4.2 The objectives and priorities of funding for the community grants program are a reflection of the objectives and priorities of the Council Plan. Council's Community Grants Programs support the following key objectives:
- Assist common interest groups to take an active involvement in the life of their community for the overall benefit of that community.
 - Increase the capability of communities to become stronger, and more resilient and sustainable economically, environmentally and socially.
 - Empower communities to address local needs and challenges.
 - Develop a sense of community spirit, pride, ownership, and identity.
 - Recognise and respond to emerging themes, issues and trends. Council will support projects that reflect demonstrated community need, address priority themes of the Council Plan and/or fulfill identified service gaps.
- 4.3 Specific grant objectives and priorities will be communicated through funding streams relating to specific eligibility requirements outlined in a set of Guidelines for each program.

5. PROCEDURES

Administration of Community Grants Program

- 5.1 Guidelines
- 5.1.1 Documented guidelines are prepared for each Community Grants Program with clearly defined criteria. This will include:
- Eligibility criteria – detailing any exclusions
 - Assessment criteria – clearly defined and weighted
 - Conditions of funding
 - Insurance and legislative requirements
 - Timeline
 - Step by step guide to the application process
 - Evaluation and feedback opportunities within the application process

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- Acquittal process and requirements
- Available funding (i.e. annual budget allocation) for each grant program each financial year in line with budget processes.

5.1.2 Guidelines are reviewed annually as part of the Community Grants Program evaluation process to ensure best practice in grant management and continual improvement.

5.2 Grant Management System

5.2.1 Council administers / processes all Community Grants Programs through the online grant management system, SmartyGrants.

5.2.2 All forms including applications, assessment, final recommendations, variation requests and acquittal including tax invoices and receipts are submitted to and stored in SmartyGrants.

5.2.3 Other key documentation (e.g. outcome letters, funding agreements) are kept in Council's record management system, SharePoint.

Management of Life Cycle of Community Grants Program

5.3 Advertisement

5.3.1 All Council's competitive grant programs will be promoted widely within the municipality using the following approaches, where appropriate:

- Council's website
- Media release
- Social media
- Community newsletters
- Golden Plains eGazette
- Web banner
- Information sessions
- Community engagement opportunities

5.3.2 Council will take an active role in the promotion of grants available and the facilitation of quality applications through information sessions, access to relevant and detailed guidelines on Council's website and access to Council officer's advice.

5.4 Application Process

5.4.1 Applicants must read program guidelines provided on Council's website to ensure meet eligibility requirements set out in each program guidelines.

5.4.2 Applicants are strongly encouraged to discuss their project / application with relevant Council officers prior to developing their applications.

5.4.3 Council will only consider complete grant applications from eligible

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organisations / applicants. Applications must be submitted using the SmartyGrants by the due date / time.

5.5 Assessment Process

- 5.5.1 The assessment process and weighted criteria will be clearly outlined in each program's set of guidelines to maintain community confidence and ensure transparency.
- 5.5.2 Council officer will conduct an eligibility check against eligibility criteria set out in each program guidelines prior to application assessment.
- 5.5.3 If applications are ineligible, the applicant will be informed verbally then in writing of the reason for ineligibility. Applications that are deemed ineligible at this stage will not be included in the assessment process.
- 5.5.4 Eligible projects will be assessed by a panel of minimum three people:
- Council officers whose roles and/or expertise where possible are directly related to each of the specific grant streams; and/or
 - External assessors including community members and funding body representatives).
- Each program guideline provides who will be assessing applications.
- 5.5.5 The panel members independently make an initial assessment against a set of pre-determined, weighted criteria outlined in program guidelines.
- 5.5.6 All members of assessment panels must declare any conflict of interest in accordance with the Local Government Act 1989 in particular sections 76AA to 81. Completed forms are kept in SmartyGrants.
- 5.5.7 For competitive grant programs, once the individual assessments are completed against weighted criteria, assessments are collated into a matrix and ranked accordingly. funding recommendations are then submitted to the CEO for approval.
- 5.5.8 Final endorsement will be given by the CEO. Councillors will be notified of the outcome via a Councillor Briefing Report.
- 5.5.9 Both successful and unsuccessful applicants from the assessment process will be notified of the outcome of their application in writing. Successful applicants, projects and funding awarded will be announced via a media release and displayed on Council's website for community transparency.
- 5.5.10 All applicants have the opportunity to discuss the application process. Applicants have the opportunity to write to Council if they are not satisfied with the grant process / outcome in accordance with section 6.1 of Council's Complaints Handling Policy.
- 5.5.11 Meeting all the eligibility criteria does not guarantee that an application will be successful. Availability of funding under the approved budget annually, number of eligible applications and funding requested each round ultimately limit the amount of funding allocated through community grants each year.

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5.6 Agreement Process

- 5.6.1 Successful applicants must enter into a funding agreement with Council and commit to adhering to the conditions set out in the funding agreement.
- 5.6.2 Funding agreement will include all details of the applicant organisation, amount funded, funding period, conditions of the grant, acknowledgement of Council and reporting requirements and must be verified (signed) by a Director of Council and an executive officer from successful applicant organisation.
- 5.6.3 Successful applicants must return the signed funding agreements to Council within six weeks from the date of successful notification letter or the funding may be withdrawn. For competitive grant programs, the funding will be reallocated as per the recommendations from the ranking matrix, then approved by the CEO.

5.7 Project Delivery / Acquittal Process

- 5.7.1 Successful applicants will be required to:
- Request any variations to agreed project / funding terms in writing for Council's approval. If required, a variation form must be submitted via SmartyGrants.
 - Acknowledge Council (and/or third-party funding body) as a funding source on all marketing and publicity material.
 - Submit an acquittal report on the outcomes of the project, including a financial summary with tax invoices, receipts within the funding period specified in the agreement.
- 5.7.2 Council Officers will review acquittal reports within six weeks from submission and confirm acceptance in writing.
- 5.7.3 Any grant recipients that fail to complete the grant acquittal processes (incomplete or overdue) and have received two reminder letters from Council with no response, will not be deemed eligible to apply for any grant programs administered by Council for up to two years and/or action may be taken to recover grant funding as outlined in Council's grant funding agreements.

6. RESPONSIBILITIES

Compliance, monitoring and review

- 6.1 The policy owner is responsible for ensuring the policy:
- aligns with relevant legislation, government policy and Council's requirements / strategies / values;
 - is implemented and monitored (i.e. the policy is followed, reflects the changing policy environment, and emerging issues are identified); and
 - is reviewed every 3 years in accordance with Council's planning processes to evaluate its continuing effectiveness (e.g. achieving its purpose, remains

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relevant/current).

Reporting

- 6.2 No additional reporting is required.

Records Management

- 6.3 Council must maintain all records relevant to administering this policy in accordance with the Public Records Act 1973.
- 6.4 Council must maintain all records relevant to administering this policy in accordance with Council's Privacy Collection Notice.

7. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS OR ABBREVIATIONS USED

Term	Definition
<i>Acquittal</i>	<i>Information/evidence provided by a grant recipient that ensures that funds have been administered responsibly and in line with the terms and conditions set out in the funding agreement.</i>
<i>Applicant</i>	<i>A not-for-profit group/organisation (and/or a business organisation for Berrybank Wind Farm Community Grants) applying for a grant.</i>
<i>Assessment</i>	<i>The steps taken to review the merit of an application.</i>
<i>CEO</i>	<i>Chief Executive Officer</i>
<i>Competitive Grant</i>	<i>A type of grant funding that is awarded through a competitive application process. A selection process for a grant round where applications close on a specified date and applicants are assessed against selection criteria and ranked in order of merit.</i>
<i>Council</i>	<i>Golden Plains Shire Council</i>
<i>Council Plan</i>	<i>A medium-term planning document, incorporating the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan, details the priority initiatives and actions for Council services, infrastructure and advocacy to be provided to the Golden Plains Shire community over a four-year period.</i>
<i>Eligibility</i>	<i>The mandatory principles or standards that must be met for an application for funding to be considered.</i>
<i>Funding Agreement</i>	<i>A legal document that outlines the terms, conditions and obligations of funding.</i>
<i>Grant</i>	<i>Sum of money given to a recipient with an expectation that the money will be used for an agreed and specified purpose.</i>
<i>Guidelines</i>	<i>A document that provides the applicant a guide on eligibility of the specific grant.</i>
<i>Non-Competitive Grant</i>	<i>A restricted non-competitive selection process where applicants are invited by the entity to submit applications for a particular grant and the</i>

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	<i>applications or proposals are not assessed against other applicants' submissions but assessed individually against other criteria. Typically, all eligible applications are funded.</i>
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8. RELATED LEGISLATION AND DOCUMENTS

Strategic Documents, Policies or Procedures

Asset Management Policy

Code of Conduct

Community Vision 2040

Council Plan (including Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Action Plan 2021-2025)

Fraud & Corruption Control Policy

Information Privacy Policy

Public Transparency Policy

Legislation

Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)

Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Vic)

Local Government Act 2020

Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic)

Public Records Act 1973 (Vic)

Working with Children Act 2005 (Vic)

9. HUMAN RIGHTS STATEMENT OF COMPATABILITY

- 9.1 As a public authority, Council has a duty to act compatibly with human rights and to give human rights proper consideration in decision making.
- 9.2 It is considered that this policy does not impact negatively on any rights identified in the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic).

10. POLICY OWNER

- 10.1 The policy owner is the Director of Community, Planning & Growth.
- 10.2 The policy owner is the individual who is given the responsibility to review, edit and maintain this policy and associated procedure. The policy owner is also the point of contact for any questions regarding this policy.

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11. FEEDBACK

- 11.1 You may provide feedback about this document by emailing enquiries@gplains.vic.gov.au

12. DOCUMENT INFORMATION

DOCUMENT TYPE:	Council Policy document
DOCUMENT STATUS:	Approved
DOCUMENT OWNER POSITION:	Director Community, Planning & Growth
APPROVED BY:	Council
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EVIDENCE OF APPROVAL:	<p style="text-align: right;">_____ Signed by Chief Executive Officer</p>
FILE LOCATION:	NA
NOTES:	<p>Policy documents are amended from time to time, therefore you should not rely on a printed copy being the current version. Please consult Council's Policy page on the Golden Plains Shire Council website to ensure that the version you are using is up to date. Available at:</p> <p>https://www.goldenplains.vic.gov.au/residents/my-council/about-council/council-policies</p>