Community Grants Program Policy

2022-2023

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Introduction

The City of Stonnington is an inclusive City that enhances the health and wellbeing of all residents, where people feel safe, socially connected and engaged. Council is committed to supporting local community organisations with equitable access to facilities, support and resources.

Program objectives

Council provides the Community Grant Program to eligible community organisations delivering Stonnington-based programs that respond to community needs and align with the priorities of the Council Plan and key Council strategies.

The objectives of the Community Grants program are to:

- foster community participation, build social connections and reduce isolation

- respond to local issues and priority areas of need within the community

- provide accessible and inclusive opportunities for communities who are considered vulnerable or under-represented

- build the capacity of local groups and organisations to develop, implement and sustain positive impact in their community

- encourage sustainability and strong governance in the delivery of services and programs.

This policy outlines the guiding principles and management of the community grant funding lifecycle in line with best practice and good governance to maximise benefits to the community.

Scope

This policy applies to the City of Stonnington Community Grants Program, including its funding categories:

- Community Capacity Building

- Partnership

- Quick Response

- In-kind (venue or bus hire)

This policy does not apply to other grant programs offered by Council.

Definitions

Assessment	The steps that are followed to judge the merit of an application. These will normally include eligibility, evaluation against criteria and ranking applications for merit. Applicants need to address the assessment criteria as part of their application for a grant.
Auspice	An agreement where an incorporated organisation agrees to apply for and manages a grant on behalf of another organisation that is not incorporated. The auspice is responsible for the financial management and acquittal requirements on behalf of the unincorporated organisation.

Acquittal	Final reporting requirements for a funded project that demonstrate how the funds have been used in accordance with the funding agreement. These requirements can include financial reports and non-financial items, such as detailing project outcomes and participation and photographs.
Community organisation	Not-for-profit organisations and community-based groups that offer a wide range of activities, programs and services. The community sector consists of organisations that vary significantly in size and can range from small volunteer-run and locally based groups to larger organisations.
Conflict of interest	A conflict that arises where a person makes a decision or exercises power in a way that may be perceived to be influenced by either material to personal interests (finance or non-financial) or material personal associations.
Equity	Fair treatment, access opportunity, and advancement for all people, while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups.
Funding agreement	A legally-binding contract established with a funding recipient, which is used as the primary legal instrument to monitor the implementation of the funded activity through to its completion.
	The funding agreement states the purpose of the funding, the financial amount, and the conditions of the grant, including key deliverables. It also defines the rights and responsibilities of the parties. Once signed, parties are under a legal obligation to comply with the stated terms and conditions.
Grant	A single instance of funding given to an organisation for a specified purpose, directed at achieving goals and objectives consistent with organisational policy, where the recipient is selected on merit against a set of criteria.
Grant program	Pool of grant funding designated to organisations on a merit basis to achieve stated objectives through a grant application process.
Grant administration	The end-to-end grant management process that comprises planning and design, assessment and decision-making, grant establishment, including the funding agreement and relationship management, monitoring, acquittal and review, and evaluation.
Inclusive community	Where all people feel valued, their differences are respected, and their basic needs are met so they can live in dignity (Cappo 2002).
In-kind	Contribution of a good or a service other than money. Council offers in-kind grants for the use of Council venues and/or community buses.
Not-for-profit organisation	Not-for-profit organisations are organisations that provide services or undertake activities for the benefits of the community and do not operate to make a profit for its members or personal gain.

Policy statement

- The City of Stonnington is committed to funding community services and activities that support community outcomes aligned with its vision of supporting an inclusive, healthy, creative, sustainable and smart community.

- Council will ensure that grant processes reflect its strategic priorities and are delivered in a fair and transparent manner within the City of Stonnington community. Strategic priorities will be reviewed annually in line with the strategic planning process, and the relevant assessment criteria will be adjusted to maximise those strategic outcomes.

- Council will provide grants that have demonstrated links to the Council Plan 2021-2025 and strategic objectives, met application eligibility criteria and assessment processes and agreed to its funding conditions. Except for taxation eligibility, Council retains discretion to waive or amend assessment and / or eligibility criteria.

- Grants programs will be managed consistently in line with the grants management lifecycle.

- The level of assistance available is limited by Council's budget allocation and its priorities. No applicant can be guaranteed funding, nor can any applicant be guaranteed to receive the full requested amount.

- Information on community grants program will be shared broadly through Council officers and networks to encourage broad participation and uptake. This is not to be considered a direct approach and all applicants will be treated on the merit of their application.

Community development principles

Principles for the Community Grants program have been developed from best practice experience and underpin funding approaches and priorities.

- **Access and equity** – We will support programs and organisations which address social inequity, promote social inclusion, embrace diversity, and establish environments that are supportive of all people regardless of age, ability, culture or identity.

- **Social and economic participation** – We will support programs and organisations which support the local community and economy, encourage community involvement, facilitate volunteerism, and empower the community.

- **Positive working relationships** – We will support programs and organisations which operate with transparency, link with Council priorities, and maintain relationships based on mutual trust and respect.

- **Flexibility and responsiveness** – We will support programs which recognise and can adapt to changing needs and circumstance.

- **Sustained benefit** – We will support programs with approaches that can remain financially viable and achieve sustained participation and positive impact into the future.

- **Environmental sustainability** – We will support activities that have low to zero environmental impacts and promote environmentally sustainable practices.

Administrative principles

Principles for the administration of the Community Grants program have been developed from best practice experience and underpin program delivery.

Maximise outcomes from investment

- **Value for money** – obtaining the best mix of services to meet the community's needs within available funding and selecting the mix of resources that delivers the best possible outcomes to clients.

Sound administration

- **Robust planning and design** – efficient, effective, and ethical funding administration, including the establishment of effective risk management processes.

- **Proportionality** – program design and administrative processes are commensurate to the scale, complexity and risks associated with the funding.

- **Governance and accountability** – establishment of a robust governance framework that:
  - defines roles and responsibilities
  - establishes the policies, procedures and guidelines necessary for defensible grant recipient selection
  - supports public accountability for decision making, grant administration and performance monitoring.

- **Probity and transparency** – program administration reflects public sector values, grant decisions are impartial, well documented and publicly defensible and appropriate reporting and fraud control measures are in place.

Conflict of interest

All Council officers involved in the grant assessment process are required to declare their interests prior to assessing any grant applications or reviewing project evaluations and reports. Councillors involved in the review of recommendations are also required to disclose their interests prior to their involvement in the grants allocation process. Applicants, as part of the online application process, are required to complete a conflict of interest declaration. These processes ensure that any potential, actual or perceived conflict of interest is promptly identified and managed appropriately. In the event of a conflict of interest, the declaration will be noted in relevant reports to Council and managed according to Council policy.

Grievance procedure

All funding decisions are made by the Council and are final. There is no review or appeal process.

Program review

Grant funding priorities will be reviewed in accordance with the Council Plan, other key Council strategies and issues of concern to the community identified throughout the year.

The results of the review will be used by Council to inform and updates to, and improve implementation of, the Community Grants Policy.

Appendix: Grant Management Life Cycle

Plan	Design	Deliver	Improve
Policy Alignment	Detailed program design	Planning delivery	Review Framework
Purpose & Outcomes	Outcome indicators	Application	Data requirements
Business Case	Community engagement strategy	Assessment	
Funding matrix	Governance & Formal Approval	Formal Decision	
		Funding Agreement	
		Monitor	
		Report & Acquit	