



Grants

Administration Guide

June 2023



Cover Image: Na Nguyen, a volunteer for Cultivating Communities in their community garden in Fitzroy. Photo: Matt Krumins 2021

Yarra City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people as the Traditional Owners and true sovereigns of the land now known as Yarra. We also acknowledge the significant contributions made by other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to life in Yarra. We pay our respects to Elders from all nations and to their Elders past, present and future.

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1. Introduction

The Community Grants Program provides an opportunity for Council and Community to work together on projects that build community connection, enhance arts and culture and promote sustainability.

For community groups and others eligible entities, the grants help realise their potential and turn ideas and enthusiasm into tangible projects. For Council, the grants are a vital means to achieve the Community Vision and its strategic objectives, as stated through the Council Plan. Specifically, the grants help to:

- Direct resources to the emerging and specific needs of disadvantaged groups,
- Develop a positive approach to the resolution of local social issues,
- Support local groups, activities, and community connectedness, and
- Support community organisations to develop skills and increase participation.

Community Grants provide funding towards small to medium-sized projects. A range of grant streams are available to support community, artistic, cultural and sustainability projects. A full list can be found at Appendix A: Grants Currently Available.

The Community Grants program is run in accordance with the principles of the City of Yarra Social Justice Charter. These are: Access, Equity, Rights, and Participation.

The diagram below outlines the key elements of the Community Grants Program.

1.1. Purpose

This Grants Administrative Guide provides guidance on the management of the grants program, including the application and assessment process. To understand the purpose of a particular grant stream and how specific applications are made and assessed, please read the relevant guidelines available at <https://www.yarracity.vic.gov.au/about-us/grants>.

To enable broad participation, the grants process is designed to be accessible and easy to navigate. It includes significant promotion and advertising of grants available and assistance in completing the grant application. This aims to increase the reach of the funding and ensure equity of access.

1.2. Scope

The Community Grants Program funds projects that are locally based, and that provide a program, service or activity that is of benefit to the Yarra community.

Community Grants will not fund:

- Projects considered to be the responsibility of the State or Federal Governments,
- Business grants and for profit organisations, or
- Neighbourhood Houses.

Additionally, to be eligible for funding, applicants must be a not-for-profit, incorporated community group **OR** meet one of the following specific exceptions.

The applicant must:

- be a registered charity, public benevolent institution or have deductible gift recipient (DGR) status,
- or be a state government entity seeking funding for activities beyond those considered the responsibility of State or Federal Government.

Or alternatively:

- Unincorporated not-for-profit community groups can have their applications auspiced by an eligible incorporated organisation or Neighbourhood House.
- Individual artists or arts-related businesses operating under an active sole-trader ABN can apply as individuals.

Each grants stream has specific eligibility criteria which can be found in the Grant Guidelines for the relevant grant stream as available at <https://www.yarracity.vic.gov.au/about-us/grants>.

1.3. Principles

The Community Grants Program is guided by the following principles:

- Local benefit – projects must provide a tangible benefit to the Yarra community.
- Access and equity – the program supports a range of community members to access grant funding.
- Partnership – the program promotes working together to increase the benefit of projects and organisations.
- Responsiveness – the program is flexible to develop solutions to emerging challenges and opportunities.
- Participation – the projects help build community engagement and citizenship.

1.4. Objectives

The objective of the Community Grants Program is to provide opportunities for Council and Community to work together on projects that:

- Direct resources to the emerging and specific needs of disadvantaged groups,
- Develop a positive approach to the resolution of local social issues,
- Support local groups, activities, and community connectedness, and
- Support community organisations to develop skills and increase participation.

1.5. Roles and responsibilities

Area of Council	Relevant grants	Role
Arts, Culture and Venues	Projects and initiatives that relate to festivals, exhibitions, public art initiatives, community arts and supporting creative spaces.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Advice to those developing applications.• Initial assessment of relevant applications.

Area of Council	Relevant grants	Role
	The subsidised use of Council-owned halls and meeting rooms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment and administration of assessment panels for relevant grants and streams. • Oversight of funded projects and initiatives, including liaison with funded parties as and when required. • Processing applications for the subsidised use of Council-owned halls and meeting rooms.
Sustainability	Projects and initiatives that relate to efforts to mobilise community on climate action, carbon emissions, waste reduction, conscientious consumption, sustainable transport, local natural environments, local food systems and supporting vulnerable community members with climate impacts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advice to those developing applications. • Initial assessment of relevant applications. • Establishment and administration of assessment panels for relevant grants and streams. • Oversight of funded projects and initiatives, including liaison with funded parties as and when required.
Family, Youth and Children's Services	Projects and initiatives that relate to support for families, children and young people from all backgrounds, with a particular focus on families, children and young people who are vulnerable, socioeconomically diverse, culturally and linguistically diverse, gender diverse, and/or who are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advice to those developing applications. • Initial assessment of relevant applications. • Establishment and administration of assessment panels for relevant grants and streams. • Oversight of funded projects and initiatives, including liaison with funded parties as and when required.
Sports and Recreation	Projects and initiatives that seek to increase inclusion, diversity and access to opportunities that increase physical activity levels and facilitate the sustainability of local clubs and community organisations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advice to those developing applications. • Initial assessment of relevant applications. • Establishment and administration of assessment panels for relevant grants and streams.

Area of Council	Relevant grants	Role
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversight of funded projects and initiatives, including liaison with funded parties as and when required.
Equity and Community Development	Projects and initiatives that engage communities in collaborative efforts to promote community health, safety and wellbeing, build confidence, capacity and resilience for diverse communities, and support under-resourced communities and other groups disadvantaged by systemic barriers and social injustice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advice to those developing applications. • Initial assessment of relevant applications. • Establishment and administration of assessors for relevant grants and streams. • Oversight of funded projects and initiatives, including liaison with funded parties as and when required.
Community Grants Team (within Equity and Community Development)	The overall management and administration of the Community Grants Program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Functions and tasks include: information provision, promoting and receiving requests for proposals, confirming eligibility, reviewing applications, coordinating internal referrals, managing assessment panels, reporting to Council, processing grants and their acquittal.

2. Promotion and assistance with applications

2.1. Promotion of grants

The promotion of available grants helps to broaden the reach of the program and encourages new applicants. This helps individuals and organisations to learn about the program and apply for grant funding. The Community Grants Program and individual grant streams are widely promoted through a range of mediums:

- Council website and social media
- Yarra News
- e-newsletters
- information sessions
- local and ethnic radio
- visits to relevant organisations and groups
- posters and flyers (in English and a range of languages)

- other methods relevant to the individual grant stream

Promotion and advertising occurs before the opening of each grant round to allow applicants the opportunity to develop their projects and maximise the reach of grant funding. All grant rounds must be open for a minimum of six weeks.

2.2. Assistance with grant applications

Community grants are open to all community members (subject to [eligibility](#)). Assistance in developing a project or navigating the application process can be provided by the Community Grants Team. This assistance ensures that the grants are accessible to a wide range of community groups and improves community skills in applying for funding.

2.2.1. Project development

Groups are encouraged to talk their project idea through with Council officers prior to submitting a grant application. Council officers can advise on project design, budgeting and project management. Groups can attend an information session or book a one-on-one appointment.

2.2.2. Application process

Assistance in completing the Smarty Grants™ application form can be provided if required.

2.2.3. Interpreters

Interpreters can be provided for information sessions and one-on-one discussions.

2.2.4. Aboriginal consultation

For grants that relate to or involve working with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community, consultation should occur before applying for grant funding.

Council recognises the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung as the Traditional Owners of the land on which the City of Yarra now stands. Consultation and cultural requests such as cultural awareness training, Welcome to Country ceremonies or smoking ceremonies must be directed to the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation. If a project relates to specific issues it may be necessary to consult with other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations such as the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service or the Melbourne Aboriginal Youth Sport and Recreation Co-operative (MAYSAR) and Council's Aboriginal Partnership Officers.

2.2.5. Accessibility

All applicants are encouraged to consider how their organisation and project will be accessible and inclusive of people with a disability.

2.2.6. Environmental Impact

All applicants are encouraged to incorporate activities that will improve the sustainability of outcomes of their projects.

3. Processing applications

Grant applications are assessed on the information provided in the application using the following process.

1. **Eligibility:** Council officers examine applications to confirm that the applicant and project are eligible for funding. Ineligible applications do not progress.
2. **Review:** Council officers review applications against the advertised criteria and this commentary is collated and provided to assessors, along with the original applications.
3. **Assessment:** Through an expression of interest process or direct invitation where necessary, Council officers identify suitable members of the community to become an external assessor. External assessors review all applications, convene and determine which applications will be recommended for funding. Applications are assessed by at least two external assessors or through an external assessment panel comprising of at least three assessors, known as a Community Panel. These deliberations are documented, including the names of any panel members and relevant experience.
4. **Decision-making:** Council officers record the outcomes of panel assessments within the grants administration system (currently Smarty Grants™) and prepare a report listing the recommended applications which is presented to Council for consideration. Following the Council meeting, the successful and unsuccessful applicants are notified in writing as soon as is practicable. Letters to successful applicants will include the assessment comments. Unsuccessful applicants are provided with the contact details of an officer who can provide verbal feedback.

External assessors must:

- Be of good character, with a record of being ethical in the community.
- Be available to attend meetings.
- Understand and comply with conflict of interest and confidentiality requirements.
- Have a strong understanding of the grants program and the role of grants for non-profits and other community organisations. (Yarra's grants are part of a complex array of funding arrangements and opportunities).
- Bring experience and knowledge of the municipality and local communities in the relevant stream.
- Have the capacity to assess the proposals against stream criteria including assessment of the financial aspects of the proposals.
- Have no contact with applicants during the assessment process.
- Make decisions based on the information provided in the application.

Please note: Council officers process small project grants, Room to Create Grants and subsidised venue hire.

3.1. Assessment criteria

All applications are assessed against the following criteria:

- the capacity of the applicant to deliver on project outcomes,
- clearly defined project aims,

- clearly identified target group,
- alignment with stream funding priorities,
- evidence of community need,
- well-defined intended outcomes,
- clear evaluation methods,
- community participation and consultation where appropriate, and
- a complete, balanced, and realistic budget.

Additional criteria may apply for certain grant streams. These will be outlined in the individual grant stream guidelines as available at <https://www.yarracity.vic.gov.au/about-us/grants>.

3.2. Terms of Reference

All Community Assessment panels will have Terms of Reference. The Terms of Reference will outline the purpose of the panel, how the assessments will be conducted, the responsibilities of panel members and how conflicts of interest will be managed. At a minimum, the Terms of Reference will record:

- Purpose,
- Objectives,
- Membership,
- Chair,
- Selection Criteria,
- Meeting arrangements,
- Assessment, and
- Conflicts of interest.

There may be variations or additions for certain grant streams and these will be outlined in the individual grant stream guidelines. Please refer to Appendix C: Sample Community Assessment Panel Terms of Reference.

3.3. Conflict of interest

A conflict of interest is defined as a conflict between a person's private interests and their public obligations. All assessors of Yarra City Council grants must declare if they have, or could be perceived to have, a conflict of interest. This process ensures that any potential, actual or perceived conflict of interest is promptly identified and addressed.

All assessors must declare if they have any relationship with an applicant or private interest in the application before any grant applications are assessed. Assessors are also deemed to have a potential conflict of interest if they provided intensive assistance with a particular application. If a member of the public would have reasonable grounds to believe that this relationship or private interest might influence their decision then the assessor should not proceed with the assessment.

In a panel setting, assessors with a conflict of interest must absent themselves from all discussions of the particular application and must not provide *any* additional information/background/context etc., letting the application speak for itself. If it is known that a Community Panellist or officer will have multiple conflicts of interest they should not participate in the assessment at all. Conflict of Interest forms are obtained from all assessors via Smarty Grants™ .

All assessors are also required to declare that they will treat information they have access to through the assessment process confidentially.

Questions or concerns relating to conflict of interest that cannot be resolved using the conflict of interest process are to be referred to the Manager Equity and Community Development.

4. Managing awarded grants

Council officers continue to engage with recipients after grants have been awarded, providing support and oversight for funded projects and navigating any required changes. The main tool for managing the grants is the funding agreement which provides detail on what is expected from Council and the grant recipient. The grants are a partnership between Council and the community. The management process helps foster and build this partnership.

4.1. Funding agreements

Successful applicants receive a Funding Agreement. This agreement must be signed by both parties. The funding agreement protects the interests of Council and the grant recipient and enables the conditions of the grant to be enforced. The agreement outlines:

- the purpose of the funding,
- the dollar amount of funding,
- a clear and precise statement of the required outcomes of the grant,
- the rights and responsibilities of all parties to the agreement, including reporting and evaluation requirements, and
- the terms and conditions of the grant, including the circumstances in which Council can reclaim the grant, consequences for breaches of grant conditions and a procedure for the return of unexpended funds.

4.2. Performance

While every effort is made to ensure that projects go smoothly, grant recipients may fail to deliver on aspects of their contract for a range of reasons. Applications for changes to the terms of the funding agreement can be made by contacting the grants team.

Requests for variation to the approved project must be made in writing. A written response is then provided by Council. Variations to project details are expected to deliver similar outcomes as initially approved by Council.

Requests for an extension of a funding agreement must be made in writing. A written response to such requests will be provided by Council. Extensions will not be accepted beyond a twelve-month period from the original acquittal date in the Funding Agreement, unless extenuating circumstances can be demonstrated.

In the event that an applicant can no longer complete any or all of the approved project, unspent grant funds must be returned to Council and any partial expenditure must be acquitted on the relevant forms.

4.3. Acquittal

Each grant recipient is required to submit an Acquittal Form within two months of completion of the project. The acquittal includes:

- how many people and Yarra residents participated in the event/program,
- what (if any) adjustments were made to the project, and
- whether the aims and objectives outlined in the application were met.

The acquittal also includes a financial report that outlines how funds were spent. The financial report must be submitted via Council's Smarty Grants™ portal on the form provided by Council by the date agreed in the funding agreement. It should contain supporting documents including receipts or other supporting documentation that shows expenditure of the funds granted by Council.

Any unspent Council grant money must be returned to Council.

4.4. Record keeping

All Council grant program records will be managed through Council's Smarty Grants™ portal. This system will be used to track interactions between Council and each grant applicant.

Applications and funding agreements will also be stored in Council's central record keeping system.

4.5. Dispute process

Council is committed to sound decision-making processes to ensure fair and reasonable outcomes for the Yarra community. If a complaint or dispute arises through Council's grant making processes, Council's Customer Complaints Policy be followed. The policy and related information can be found at <https://www.yarracity.vic.gov.au/contact-us/customer-feedback-and-complaints>

Where there is a complaint or dispute between assessment panel members, the Terms of Reference for that Panel will provide guidance.

4.6. Role of grants in emergencies

Grants can play an important role in response and recovery from emergencies such floods or pandemics. In circumstances where projects are adversely impacted Council will:

- Encourage delivery of projects, including re-imagined or revised versions, at an appropriate time, post-emergency.

- Exercise due consideration in determining whether funds expended in good faith on a grant project should be re-couped.
- Ensure acquittal of public funding.

This acknowledges the significant financial and wellbeing impacts emergencies can have on communities, and Council's focus on supporting communities to recover.

5. Monitoring and evaluation

The community grant program provides significant funding to a wide range of community groups and is responsible for delivering key strategic outcomes for Council and community. Monitoring and evaluation ensures that the individual grant recipients and the broader program are meeting these strategic outcomes.

5.1. Monitoring individual grants

Individual grants will be monitored through the Smarty Grants™ acquittal system. Specifically grant recipients will provide the following information:

- Funds used (or unused),
- Number of participants, and
- How the project met stated goals of the project.

5.2. Evaluating grants programs

Various community grants programs will be evaluated periodically to understand whether they are meeting required outcomes. Evaluations may consider who is receiving funding, which projects are being funded, the number of new recipients receiving funding, how the projects respond to the current Council Plan and Community Vision, and other matters.

Appendices

Appendix A: Grants Currently Available

Grant Program	Streams	Type	Delivery timeframe
Town Hall Subsidy for community events	N/A	Open	As required
Small Project Grants	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Community Projects 2. Arts and Culture 3. Climate action 	Open (until funds are exhausted)	Annual
Room to Create Responsive Grants	N/A	Open (until funds are exhausted)	Annual
Annual Grants	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Community Development 2. Climate Action 3. Family, Youth and Children 4. Sports and Recreation 5. Arts and Culture 6. Community Housing 	Competitive	One Year
Creative and Engage Yarra	N/A	Competitive	Two Years
Investing in Community Grants	N/A	Competitive	Three Years
Richmond and Collingwood Youth Grants	N/A	Competitive	Three Years
Fitzroy Adventure Playground Program Grant	N/A	Competitive	Three Years
Celebrate Yarra	N/A	Direct Invitation	Three Years
Community Partnership Grants	N/A	Direct Invitation	Four Years

Appendix B: Definitions

Acquittal:	An acquittal report details how grant recipients have successfully completed their project and administered their grant funds responsibly and in line with the terms and conditions of the funding agreement. An acquittal report usually consists of a written report that summarises how the project fared against the initial objectives of the grants, along with a financial statement detailing how the funds were spent.
Auspice:	An agreement where one organisation (the 'principal organisation') agrees to apply for funding on behalf of a second organisation that is not incorporated (the 'auspiced organisation'). If the funding application is successful, the principal organisation then receives, holds and distributes the funding to the auspiced organisation, so that the auspiced organisation can complete the funded project or activities.
Eligibility criteria:	A set of predefined factors used to assess the eligibility of a grant application.
Funding agreement:	A written agreement between Council and the grant recipient clearly articulating the purpose of the funding, the dollar amount and the grant conditions. It also defines the rights and responsibilities of each party. Once signed, organisations are under a legal obligation to comply with the stated terms and conditions.
Grant:	A grant is a sum of money given to organisations or individuals for a specified purpose directed at achieving goals and objectives consistent with specific policy.
Grant stream:	Grant streams indicate the various funding amounts available for a grant program. Each stream may have different eligibility, application and project requirements.
Guidelines:	A document outlining the reason for the grant funding, eligibility criteria and how to apply for the grant.

Appendix C: Sample Community Assessment Panel Terms of Reference

Introduction

Community Assessment Panels can be used to assess grant applications. The panels are made up of community members who have expertise of the relevant grant stream. The panels review grant applications against agreed criteria and make recommendations on which applications will be funded.

Panel membership

Community panels will:

- Be of good character, with a record of being ethical in the community.
- Be available to attend the panel meeting.
- Have local knowledge.
- Understand and comply with conflict of interest and confidentiality requirements.
- Have a strong understanding of the grants program and the role of grants in the service and community sector. (Yarra's grants are part of a complex array of funding arrangements and opportunities).
- Bring experience and knowledge of the Yarra community in the relevant stream.
- Have capacity to assess the proposals against stream criteria including assessment of the financial aspects of the proposals.

Assessment Criteria

All applications are assessed against the following criteria:

- capacity of the applicant to deliver on project outcomes
- clearly defined project aims
- clearly identified target group
- alignment with stream funding priorities
- evidence of community need
- well defined intended outcomes
- clear evaluation methods
- community participation and consultation where appropriate
- a complete, balanced, and realistic budget
- individual grant stream published criteria.

Conflict of interest

All assessors must declare if they have, or could be perceived to have, a conflict of interest.

All assessors must declare their relationship with an applicant before their grant is assessed. If a member of the public would have reasonable grounds to believe that this relationship might influence their decision then the assessor should not proceed with the assessment.

Assessors with a conflict of interest should absent themselves from all discussion of the application relating to that conflict of interest. They should not provide *any* additional information/background/context etc. and let the application speak for itself.

All assessors must declare that they will treat information they have access to through the assessment process confidentially.