

Wyndham City Community Grants Policy 2026

Acknowledgment of Traditional Custodians

Wyndham City Council recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first Peoples of Australia. We acknowledge the Bunurong and Wadawurrung Peoples as Traditional Owners of the lands on which Wyndham City operates.

The Wadawurrung and Bunurong Peoples have and always will belong to the Werribee Yalook (river), creeks, stars, hills and red clay of this Country. We pay respect to their Ancestors and Elders who always have, and always will, care for Country and community today and for future generations.

Contents

1. Purpose	3
2. Scope	3
3. Policy Statement	3
4. Principles	4
5. Legislative and Governance Context	4
5.1 Alignment with Wyndham’s Community Vision	4
5.2 Alignment with the Local Government Act 2020	5
5.3 Alignment with Victorian Auditor-General’s Office (VAGO) Recommendations	6
5.4 Grant Governance and Risk Management	6
6. Definitions of Grants Offered by Council	7
6.1 Definition and Purpose of Grants	7
6.2 Grant Characteristics and Governance	7
7. Assessment and Decision-Making Process	8
8. Roles and Responsibilities	8
9. Expectations of Grant Recipients	9
10. Monitoring and Evaluation	9
11. Continuous Improvement	9

1. Purpose

The Wyndham City Community Grants Policy establishes a transparent, consistent, and equitable framework for managing and allocating grants provided by Wyndham City Council (Council). The purpose of this policy is to define the shared principles, roles, and governance requirements that guide how Council plans, delivers, and oversees grant funding, ensuring alignment with Council's strategic objectives, Community Vision, and legislative obligations.

This policy:

- supports strong decision-making, integrity, and public confidence in the allocation of public funds;
- reflects Council's commitment to advancing gender equality and social equity through the application of a Gender Impact Assessment (GIA);
- is supported by individual grant program guidelines which provide operational detail for each grants program delivered by Council, collectively forming Council's grants framework.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all grant programs administered by Council regardless of delivery model or responsible business area and applies across the full grants lifecycle.

The budget for grants programs will be determined by Council through the annual planning and budget process. Program specific budgets and frequency will be determined at an operational level and implemented under the individual guidelines for each program.

The following are excluded from the scope of this policy:

- Fee reductions or waivers
- Donations
- Sponsorships
- Council rebates

2.1 Who this Policy applies to

This policy applies to all individuals, community groups, not-for-profit organisations, and other eligible entities seeking grant funding from Wyndham City Council, including both incorporated associations and non-incorporated groups with appropriate auspice arrangements in place.

This policy also applies to Council officers involved in the planning, administration, assessment, approval, monitoring, and acquittal of grants.

Councillors play a governance role by endorsing policy directions and approving Council budgets. Councillors do not participate in the assessment or recommendation of individual grant applications.

3. Policy Statement

Council is committed to a fair, transparent, and strategic approach to grant funding that delivers meaningful benefits for the Wyndham community. This policy provides a whole-of-Council governance framework for grants administration, ensuring funding decisions are aligned with Council priorities and supported by strong governance and accountability.

Through this policy, Council commits to:

- Supporting initiatives that deliver measurable benefits to the Wyndham community.
- Ensuring an equitable and accessible grants process, with specific attention to reducing barriers for women, gender-diverse people, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, people with disability, First Nations communities, and other priority cohorts accessing the program.
- Maintaining accountability and transparency in decision-making and funding allocation.
- Strengthening governance, probity and compliance.
- Aligning with recognised best practice in public sector grants administration.

4. Principles

The Community Grants Policy is grounded in four core pillars: **Governance, Transparency, Equity, and Access.**

1. Governance

Strong oversight and clear accountability to ensure public funds are managed responsibly, in alignment with Council priorities, and deliver meaningful, long-term outcomes. Strong governance also means considering the environmental, social, and financial sustainability of funded initiatives.

2. Transparency

Clear, open and well documented processes that demonstrate how funding decisions are made, and how outcomes benefit the community.

3. Equity

Fair and inclusive access to grant opportunities, with consideration given to reducing systemic barriers and supporting participation across the community.

4. Access

Plain English, practical processes, and minimal red tape so the system is easy to navigate and trust.

Through these pillars, Council is committed to delivering grant programs that are equitable, transparent and responsive to the diverse needs of the community.

5. Legislative and Governance Context

5.1 Alignment with Wyndham's Community Vision

This policy supports the delivery of the Wyndham 2050 Community Vision, which aspires to a vibrant, inclusive and connected city that celebrates culture, champions wellbeing, and nurtures the environment for future generations. The policy provides a consistent framework for Council's investment in community outcomes.

This policy also aligns with the *Wyndham City Council Plan 2025-2029 (incorporating the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan)* - a strategic roadmap that outlines Council's vision for a thriving, connected, and sustainable community.

In alignment with the 2050 Community Vision and Council Plan this policy prioritises initiatives that:

- Promote health, wellbeing and social connection- particularly for women, gender-diverse people, people with disability, First Nations people, and culturally and linguistically diverse communities.
- Celebrate diversity, arts, heritage and culture, including the leadership and contributions of First Nations people and multicultural communities.
- Strengthen community safety and social cohesion, through programs that reduce harm, engage young people, and build belonging.
- Advance environmental sustainability, including projects that support climate action, waste reduction, and access to green and shared spaces.
- Enhance civic pride and local identity, ensuring all community members see themselves reflected and welcomed in Wyndham's public life.
- Demonstrate evidence of procuring goods and services from local businesses, social enterprises and/or First Nations businesses.

Through targeted support and equitable access, Council Community Grants Programs help address systemic barriers to participation.

Individual grant programs will further articulate their specific objectives, priorities, and desired outcomes within individual grant program guidelines.

5.2 Alignment with the Local Government Act 2020

This policy is informed by the Local Government Act 2020 and reflects the principles of equity, transparency, accountability, and community benefit that are required to underpin Council decision-making.

5.2.1. Community Benefit and Inclusive Engagement

Grants provided by Council are intended to support projects that enhance community wellbeing and participation. Program-specific priorities and eligibility requirements are defined in program guidelines.

This policy is informed by a Gender Impact Assessment and supports inclusive practice across the grants lifecycle.

5.2.2. Conflict of Interest

Wyndham City Council is committed to ensuring fairness and impartiality in its grant decision-making process. All grant processes must comply with Council's Conflict of Interest policies and procedures.

Council Officers and any panel members involved in grants administration must declare and manage actual, perceived, or potential conflicts of interest in accordance with legislative and organisational requirements.

Councillors will remain independent from the grant assessment and recommendation process, upholding fairness and public confidence.

5.2.3 Grants and Procurement Policy Exemption

In accordance with Section 108 of the *Local Government Act 2020*, Local Councils are required to adopt and comply with a Procurement Policy for purchasing goods, services, or works.

Funding provided under grant programs administered by Council may be exempt from procurement requirements where the funding meets the definition of a grant under this policy and does not constitute a procurement activity.

For the purposes of this policy, grants are characterised by the following:

- Council does not acquire or gain ownership of goods, services, or works.
- Funding supports community-led initiatives rather than the delivery of services that Council is legislatively or operationally responsible for.

Where funding meets these criteria, it is not considered a procurement activity and is therefore not subject to Wyndham City's Procurement Policy or the requirements of Section 108 of the *Local Government Act 2020*.

Where funding arrangements do not meet the definition of a grant, or involves the purchase of goods, services, or works for Council purposes, the relevant procurement and contracting policies and procedures will apply.

5.3 Alignment with Victorian Auditor-General's Office (VAGO) Recommendations

This policy incorporates key recommendations from the Victorian Auditor-General's Office (VAGO) Report: Fraud Control Over Local Government Grants (May 2022). These recommendations strengthen governance, fraud prevention, and risk management in grant administration, ensuring a fair, transparent, and accountable funding process.

5.4 Grant Governance and Risk Management

5.4.1. Strengthening Eligibility and Assessment Processes

Council ensures fair and consistent grant assessments by:

- Establishing clear eligibility and assessment criteria for each grant program.
- Documenting application assessments to maintain transparency.
- Providing applicants with feedback, including reasons for unsuccessful applications.
- Regularly reviewing grant programs to ensure they align with community needs and strategic priorities.

Eligibility, assessment, and decision-making requirements are defined in individual grant program guidelines.

5.4.2. Ensuring Proper Use of Grant Funds

To verify that grant funding is used appropriately and delivers intended benefits, Council has implemented monitoring and reporting requirements to ensure recipients comply with funding agreements, which includes an assessment of final report and financial acquittal.

Specific monitoring and reporting, requirements are set out in program guidelines and funding agreements.

6. Definitions of Grants Offered by Council

6.1 Definition and Purpose of Grants

For the purpose of this policy, a grant is a financial contribution provided by Council to eligible individuals, groups, or organisations to support initiatives that deliver benefits to the Wyndham community. Grants are allocated through a transparent, submission-based process and must align with Council's strategic objectives and priorities.

A grant:

- Is an allocation of funds that supports projects and programs that contribute to defined community outcomes.
- Is provided subject to specific eligibility criteria, assessment processes, and funding agreements.
- Requires recipients to use the funds as outlined in their approved application and to comply with all reporting and accountability requirements.
- Is expected to contribute to broader community and social benefit.

Council grants are intended to support initiatives that are within the role and responsibility of local government. Grants will not be awarded to fund activities or services that are the sole responsibility of State or Commonwealth Governments, ongoing operating expenses, or recurrent staffing costs.

Grants do not include Sponsorships, Donations, Fee Waivers, or Capital funding for Council-owned assets.

6.2 Grant Characteristics and Governance

Grants provided by Council must:

- Support recipients in achieving their goals while contributing to Council's strategic objectives and community outcomes.
- Align with Council priorities, including those outlined in Wyndham's strategic plans and frameworks.
- Be used in accordance with specified terms and conditions, ensuring funds are spent appropriately and reported on as required.
- Enable individuals, groups, or organisations to undertake initiatives that strengthen the Wyndham community.
- Follow a transparent, submission-based process with clear eligibility criteria, defined budgets, structured application and assessment procedures, and alignment with Council's strategic objectives.
- Provide community benefit rather than direct financial or economic return to Council, though Council may gain reputational benefits through its support of community-led initiatives.
- Be administered in accordance with this policy and relevant program guidelines.

7. Assessment and Decision-Making Process

Assessment and decision-making processes are defined at a high level in this policy and detailed in individual grant program guidelines.

1. **Application Submission:** Applicants must submit their proposals through Council's designated grants process by the advertised deadline.
2. **Eligibility Screening:** Applications are reviewed for compliance with eligibility criteria.
3. **Equity Consideration:** Each application will be reviewed with regard to equity considerations and alignment with inclusive practice, in line with Council's equity priorities.
4. **Assessment:** Eligible applications will be independently evaluated by a minimum of one Council Officer. Subject Matter Experts may be consulted where required to inform the assessment process.
5. **Assessment Panel:** Panels may be convened to review applications and make funding recommendations. Panel members will assess each application against published criteria. The panel will operate under an approved Terms of Reference for that program and in accordance with Council's Code of Conduct and Conflict of Interest Policy.
6. **Conflict of Interest Management:** All Council Officers and panel members involved in the assessment process must declare any actual, perceived, or potential conflicts of interest prior to participating in the assessment, in line with Council's Conflict of Interest Policy.
7. **Scoring and Recommendation:** Applications will be scored against the published assessment criteria. Recommendations for funding will be documented and submitted for review by the relevant delegated authority.
8. **Approval:** Final approval of recommended applications will be made by the appropriate delegate in accordance with Council's financial delegations and governance procedures.
9. **Notification and Feedback:** Applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application. Feedback will be offered to unsuccessful applicants to support learning and strengthen future submissions.
10. **Transparency and Accountability:** Council may publish summary information about approved grants, including recipient names, funding amounts, and project descriptions, to promote transparency and public confidence in a grants program

8. Roles and Responsibilities

- **Grant Applicants:** Ensure applications are complete, accurate, and comply with grant eligibility and submission requirements.
- **Council Grants Staff:** Administer the grants process, provide guidance and support to applicants, and ensure grant programs are delivered in line with policy requirements - including communication, translated materials, and culturally responsive assistance to support underrepresented applicants where required.
- **Assessment Officers:** Evaluate applications impartially and in compliance with grant guidelines.
- **Grant Recipient:** Deliver funded initiatives in accordance with the approved application and funding agreement. Recipients are responsible for the appropriate use of funds, meeting reporting and acquittal requirements, and ensuring that projects are delivered ethically, lawfully, and in a manner that reflects positively on Council and the Wyndham community.

9. Expectations of Grant Recipients

Grant recipients are expected to:

- Use grant funds solely for the purpose outlined in the approved application, in line with the agreed budget and project scope.
- Comply with the terms and conditions of the funding agreement, including timelines, acknowledgement requirements, and reporting obligations.
- Maintain high standards of governance, financial accountability, and conduct throughout the grant period.
- Notify Council in writing of any proposed changes to the project or organisation that may affect delivery, eligibility, or compliance with the funding agreement.
- Accept that Council reserves the right to vary, withhold, or withdraw funding where significant risks are identified, where conditions are breached, or where the project no longer aligns with Council's strategic direction or values.
- Return unspent funds or funds used inappropriately if required under the terms of the agreement.

Grant recipient obligations are further governed through funding agreements and program guidelines.

10. Monitoring and Evaluation

Grant recipients must:

- Submit progress reports and a final acquittal report as required.
- Provide evidence of outcomes achieved and expenditure of funds as required.
- When funding is intended to support specific community groups, include evaluation measures that check whether the funding reached those groups and achieved the intended outcomes.
- Comply with all policy, guidelines, and funding terms. Failure to do so may impact eligibility for future funding. In cases of non-compliance or misuse of grant funds, Council may take appropriate action, including requiring the return of funds and restricting future eligibility.

Monitoring, reporting, and compliance requirements are detailed in individual grant program guidelines and funding agreements.

11. Continuous Improvement

Wyndham City Council is committed to the ongoing improvement of its grant programs through:

- Regular feedback mechanisms, which may include surveys of applicants and funding recipients.
- Periodic reviews of eligibility settings, assessment and decision-making processes, and risk management approaches across Council-funded grant programs.
- Alignment with legislative and strategic changes.

A comprehensive review of this policy and Council funded grant programs will be undertaken at least every four years to ensure responsiveness to community needs and strategic priorities.

References

External Reference material:

- Local Government Act 2020
- Victorian Auditor-General's Office (VAGO) Report: Fraud Control Over Local Government Grants (May 2022)

Wyndham City Council reference material:

- [Wyndham City Conflict of Interest – Compliance, Process and Guidance Policy 2024](#)
- Wyndham City Community Vision 2050
- Wyndham City Council Plan 2025 - 2029

Term	Definition
Acquittal	The process of reporting back to Council to confirm how grant funds were used and what was achieved. This includes providing evidence of expenditure and outlining the project outcomes.
Assessment Officer	A Council Officer who reviews and scores applications against the assessment criteria. Assessment Officers must apply a fair and impartial process and comply with conflict-of-interest requirements.
Auspice	An incorporated organisation that applies for and manages a grant on behalf of an unincorporated group or individual. The auspice is accountable for receiving the funds, managing the budget, and fulfilling all grant obligations, including acquittal.
Community Group	A volunteer-led or member-based group that operates on a not-for-profit basis to deliver local activities or services. Community groups may be formal or informal and include sporting clubs, cultural associations, and support groups.
Conflict of Interest	A situation where personal, professional, or financial interests could improperly influence a person's role in the grant process. All conflicts must be declared and managed under Council's Conflict of Interest – Compliance, Process and Guidance Policy.
Council Officer	A staff member employed by Wyndham City Council. Officers are responsible for administering the grants program, supporting applicants, and ensuring compliance.
Councillor	An elected member of Wyndham City Council who participates in Council decision-making, including endorsing policy directions and approving Council annual budgets.
Funding Agreement	A formal document outlining the terms and conditions of a grant, including how funds must be used, reporting obligations, and timelines. This agreement must be signed before funding is released.
Incorporated Organisation	A legally registered entity under legislation such as the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012. Incorporated organisations can apply for grants and enter into legal agreements.
Individual	A person applying for a grant in their personal capacity. Individual applicants must reside in Wyndham and meet specific eligibility criteria. Some streams may require an auspice arrangement.

Term	Definition
Non-incorporated Group	A group of people working together to benefit the community but without formal legal status. These groups must work with an auspice to access Council grants.
Not-for-Profit	An organisation that does not operate to make a profit for individuals. All income or surplus is reinvested into the organisation's purpose or community services.
Operating Expenses	Day-to-day expenses associated with running an organisation, such as rent, insurance, salaries, and utilities.
Project	A specific activity, program, event, or initiative for which a grant is requested. Projects must have clear goals, timelines, and deliver measurable community benefit.
Subject Matter Expert	A Council Officer or external advisor with specialised knowledge who may be consulted to provide input during the assessment process.

Version History				
Version	Date	Person Responsible	Revision/Reason/Key Changes	Review Dates
V.1	24.03.2026	Manager – Community Strengthening & Inclusion Department	New Policy adopted by Council.	To be reviewed at least every 4 years.