SCS-056 Grants Program

TRIM Reference:	D24/4095	Due for Review:	March 2028
Responsible Officer:	Manager Community Support		

Purpose

This policy outlines Surf Coast Shire Council's (Council) commitment to supporting vibrant, resilient, and sustainable communities through the provision of grants.

The Policy:

1. Demonstrates Council's dedication to fostering community-led initiatives and events that align with strategic goals, including enhancing well-being, promoting environmental sustainability, supporting cultural and recreational activities, fostering economic growth, and ensuring inclusivity and accessibility.

2. Establishes a framework for equitable, transparent, and effective grant distribution, facilitating a collaborative approach to community development and capacity building to address the needs of the Surf Coast community.

Policy Principles

Surf Coast Shire Council's Grants Program Policy is founded on the principles of community development, good governance, and best practice in grant–making; ensuring a program that is transparent, equitable, and inclusive. These principles guide every phase of the grant process, from promotion and application to assessment, acquittal, and evaluation.

Community Development: Recognising community members as experts and harnessing those local strengths to addresses challenges and lead initiatives.

Equity and Inclusion: Celebrating diversity, challenging rigid stereotypes, and actively removing barriers so that everyone can participate fully in community life. Maintaining equitable, transparent, and fair grant management practices, Surf Coast Shire believes our diversity is what makes our community stronger.

Impact: Focusing on projects that deliver significant benefits across social, cultural, environmental, and economic dimensions.

Collaboration: Promoting strong, productive relationships and partnerships to achieve strategic outcomes.

Governance: Following transparent and consistent practices throughout all phases of the grant process, informed by continual evaluation to meet broad community needs.

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Scope

This policy applies to Council's grants programs and all activities related to the management of the program where funding is provided to an organisation, auspice organisation, business or individual. The policy does not apply to Council contributions to organisations through the budget process or Council's Sponsored Event program.

Policy

Council is committed to "helping our community and environment thrive" by providing grant funding to enable community groups, individuals, and businesses to enhance wellbeing, inclusion, and quality of life in the Surf Coast community.

Objectives:

Council's grants program is designed to deliver the following objectives:

- Strengthen the community through diverse activities, services, and programs that meet identified needs;
- Foster a thriving, safe, healthy, and inclusive community;
- Promote equality;
- Encourage collaboration and knowledge sharing;
- Enhance community capacity for economic, environmental, and social sustainability;
- Support events that foster economic growth in the region;
- Enhance the growth of the region's creative arts and culture sector.

Management and Administration of Grants Programs:

The grants program will be managed through a clear process, including:

Program Guidelines: Detailed criteria for eligibility, assessment, funding conditions, insurance and legislative requirements and timelines;

Strategy: Grant objectives, activity and measures of success to be embedded within existing Council strategic documents e.g. Community Development Action Plan;

Grant Promotion: Council will actively promote available grants via Council and Community networks, newspapers, and Council's website and social media;

Application Process: Emphasis on accessibility and support for applicants, utilising online platforms. Council officers available to assist by providing guidance in the application process;

Assessment Process: A transparent and formal evaluation by a panel, ensuring fairness and alignment with Council's strategic priorities. The relevant General Manager or the Chief Executive Officer gives final approval for grants;

Agreement Process: Clear agreements detailing funding conditions, acknowledgement requirements, and reporting obligations;

Accountability Requirements: Obligations for successful applicants to report on project outcomes and manage funds responsibly. Notify in writing changes to agreed project/funding terms.

Grievance Process: An open channel for applicants to discuss and contest the grant decision process;

Conflict of Interest: Strict adherence to ethical standards and legal requirements to prevent any conflict of interest. Council officers assessing grant applications must declare a conflict of interest in accordance with the Local Government Act 2020 (in particular sections 126-136);

Risk Management: Grant program aligns with Council's Risk Management Framework and Policy SCS-021 by creating transparency about how Council will manage risk in the grants process with a consistent approach in decision making;

Administration and Evaluation: Software is used to administer grant applications, assess, monitor, and evaluate each grant stream.

Local Government Act 2020 Principles

Principles	Applicable to policy	If yes, provide details
Governance Principles (Consideration of the Governance Principles under s.9 of LGA 2020)	**Yes**	*Priority has been given to achieving best outcomes for the municipal community by providing the community with funding opportunities through the provision of grants.*
Community Engagement (Consideration of Community Engagement Principles under s.56 LGA 2020)	**Yes**	*Community Engagement undertaken to inform the development of this policy was guided by the community engagement principles under s.56 LGA 2020.*
Public Transparency (Consideration of Public Transparency Principles under s.58 of LGA 2020)	**Yes**	*The purpose of this policy is to achieve public transparency and it describes the way this will be achieved through clear, transparent and well understood grants processes.*
Strategies and Plans (Consideration of Strategic Planning Principles under s.89 of LGA 2020)	**Yes**	*Consideration has been given in the development of this policy to describe and integrated approach across Council for the delivery of grants programs.*
Financial Management (Consideration of Financial Management Principles under s.101 of LGA 2020)	**Yes**	*This policy seeks to ensure accounts and records of grants are accurately kept and supports Council in achieving financial management principles.*
Service Performance (Consideration of Service Performance Principles under s.106 of LGA 2020)	**Yes**	*This policy seeks to ensure grants are provided in an equitable manner and are responsive to the needs of the municipal community.*

Definitions

Council: the Surf Coast Shire Council

Councillors: Individuals holding the office of a member of Surf Coast Shire Council

Council Officer: The Chief Executive Officer and staff of Council appointed by the Chief Executive Officer

Community: Towns, places, or shared interest groups located within the Surf Coast Shire

Capacity building: The development of long-term skills which help assist a person or group become self- sufficient.

Community Development: A process where community members are supported to identify and take collective action on issues that are important to them.

Funding agreement: A legal document that outlines the terms, conditions and obligations of funding, project delivery, and accountability for both Council and the funded organisation.

Funding stream: Funding streams indicate the various funding amounts available for a grant program. Each funding stream may have different eligibility, application and project requirements.

Program guidelines: Program guidelines provide details about:

- The grant program

- The types of projects that will and will not be funded

- How to apply for the grant

- Eligibility

- Assessment criteria

Funding rounds: Some grants program will have a series of open and closing dates throughout the year when applications can be submitted. Each one of these is called a funding round.

Assessment criteria: Is the key points that grant applications will be considered against. A grant application must meet all assessment criteria to be successful.

Strategic priorities: The key objectives set by Surf Coast Shire Council.

Related Procedure

- Grants management procedures Grant guidelines and objectives
- Event Grants Policy

References

This policy is underpinned by the following Surf Coast Shire Council policy documents and external documents:

- Surf Coast Shire Council Plan (2021-2025)
- Surf Coast Shire Council Community Development Policy (SCS Policy – 049)
- Surf Coast Shire Access and Inclusion Strategic Plan 2014-2024
- Surf Coast Shire Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan Dec 23-24
- Surf Coast Shire Youth Strategy 2022-2025
- Surf Coast Shire Gender Equality and Diversity Action Plan 2021-2025
- Creative Places Strategy 2023-2031
- Surf Coast Shire Council Climate Emergency Response Plan 2021-2031
- Australian Institute of Grants (AIGM) Code of Practice for Grantmaking Agencies
- Local Government Act (2020)
- Gender Equality Act (2020)
- The Victorian Local Government Association 'Best Practice in Local Government Community Grants Programs' (2002)
- Victorian Auditor General's Office (VAGO) 2017 Local Government Audits

Document History

Version	Document History	Approved by – Date
1	Amended	Council Resolution – 23 July 2019
2	Amended	Council Resolution – 22 March 2022
3	Amended	Council Resolution – 28 May 2024