



## Community Grants Policy

Department/Unit	Community and Economic Development	First Implemented	New Policy	Review Date	November 2027
Origin	Coordinator Community Development	Reviewed	October 2023	Version	1
Authorising Officer	Endorsement by Council	Effective From	28 November 2023	TRIM Reference	E513/3

### Purpose/Objective

To provide a framework for Council to grant public funds consistently and transparently through its externally facing grant programs.

### Policy Statement

When granting funds Council will act with integrity, accountability, impartiality, transparency and in the interests of the community.

All of Council's grants programs are underpinned by the following principles:

- ▶ funding will provide benefit to the Mansfield community to help meet Council objectives,
- ▶ responsiveness to current and changing needs,
- ▶ encouragement of collaboration and partnerships,
- ▶ consistency, equity and transparency,
- ▶ social and gender equality, and
- ▶ accountability for public funds.

### Definitions

Term	Definition
Mansfield Shire Council	Refers to the local government body responsible for governing the Mansfield Shire and administering the grant distribution process as outlined in this policy.

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Term	Definition
Grant	Means a sum of money given to organisations or individuals with an expectation that the money will be used for an agreed and specified purpose.
Community Grants	Refers to the grant category focused on supporting projects that enhance community, social inclusion, connection within the Mansfield Shire.
Eligible Applicants	Individuals, organisations, or community groups based within the Mansfield Shire who meet the specified criteria and are eligible to apply for grants according to this policy.
Non-Material Changes	Minor modifications to grant programs/projects that do not impact the approved project outcome
Grant Assessment Process	The series of steps and procedures outlined in this policy that govern the assessment, selection, and distribution of grants by the Mansfield Shire Council.
Conflict of Interest	A situation in which an individual's personal or financial interests, relationships, or affiliations may influence or appear to influence their ability to act impartially and in the best interest of the Mansfield Shire Council and the community.
Assessment Panel	A group of individuals appointed by the Mansfield Shire Council to assess and evaluate grant applications and provide recommendations for grant allocation.
CEO	Refers to the Chief Executive Officer of the Mansfield Shire Council or any other designated officer responsible for grant administration as specified in this policy.

## Scope

The distribution of funding through grants programs is in accordance with the Local Government Act 2020.

This Policy applies to:

- ▶ the granting of funds via competitive, merit-based program(s), from Council to the Mansfield community - grant recipients may include residents, community groups (incl. Sporting / environment, arts groups etc), organisations or businesses
- ▶ all Council Departments involved in the promotion, assessment, and management of grant programs where Council is providing a contribution directly to an organisation, auspice or

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individual

- ▶ granting programs distributed by Council for community events.

This Policy does not apply to:

- ▶ funding received by Council from state or federal government agencies or non- government organisations resulting from grant applications made by Council officers
- ▶ scholarships, other funded contributions (i.e., Service/Delivery Agreements, partnership agreements, partnerships with a Memorandum of Understanding etc) or general purchasing undertaken by Council
- ▶ any sponsorship arrangements Council may enter with businesses.

## Responsibilities

Overall responsibility for the application of this Policy is held by the Chief Executive Officer.

Managers are responsible for ensuring their staff comply with the principles, practices and any associated procedures of this policy. Management, employees, contractors and volunteers are to be familiar with, and competent in, the application of this policy, and are accountable for the delivery of this policy within their areas of responsibility.

Adherence to this policy will be overseen by the General Manager Business and Economic Development, with any associated procedures implemented by the Governance and Risk Manager and the responsible officer.

Management and employees are to be familiar with, and competent in, the application of this policy, and are accountable for the delivery of that policy within their areas of responsibility.

The Business and Economic Development Department is the owner of this policy. Any reviews of this policy must be made in consultation with the General Manager Business and Economic Development.

## Objectives

In accordance with the Council Plan 2021-2025, this Policy:

- ▶ supports Council in providing responsible and transparent governance, to ensure that grants provided to the Mansfield community meet the highest standards of probity and transparency
- ▶ ensures that Council acts in the public interest and delivers grants in a manner that is accountable, impartial, inclusive, and having considered gender and social impacts
- ▶ provides a consistent guide for the allocation, management and review of all of Council's grant programs to the Mansfield Shire community
- ▶ supports initiatives that contribute to the social connection, cultural, economic, and environmental development of the Mansfield Shire
- ▶ encourages innovative projects, programs, and events that enrich the community and contribute to its vitality

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- ▶ allocates grants to address identified community needs and priorities as identified by the Council
- ▶ promotes partnerships and collaborations among community organisations to maximise the impact and outcomes of funded projects
- ▶ allocates Community Grants funding as provided for within the annual budget - Council may also, from time to time, allocate budget for special or specific purpose grants to respond to emerging community need.

## Policy Implementation

### Fraud and Corruption Controls

- ▶ Council will facilitate transparency and accountability of grant programs whilst mitigating against fraudulent or corrupt use of funds.
- ▶ All grant-giving programs will be managed within Council's online administration system to ensure records are maintained and fully auditable.
- ▶ To ensure a separation of decision making and allow an avenue for independent oversight, an individual or entity with the power to approve grants will not form part of an Assessment Panel (i.e., Councillors / Financial Delegate).
- ▶ All members of Assessment and Review Panels (including external panel members, where relevant) must:
  - Complete relevant Fraud, Corruption and Conflict of Interest training and a grant program induction prior to participating on an Evaluation Panel
  - Adhere to Council's conflict of interest policies and requirements.

### Grant Management and Operations

- ▶ All grant-giving programs must have guidelines (including eligibility criteria), assessment criteria and terms of reference (including assessment panel composition) that are approved by a resolution of Council.
- ▶ All material changes, including recommendations to cease offering a grant giving program must be approved by a resolution of Council.
- ▶ Non-material changes to grants programs can be made by program managers.
- ▶ Each Grants Program must utilise an evaluation schedule developed in accordance with Council's evaluation processes.
- ▶ The amount of detail required from the applicant will be proportional to the grant amount.
- ▶ Grant programs will be widely promoted across the municipality using a variety of promotional avenues to enable everyone who is eligible to apply for a grant has an opportunity to do so.
- ▶ Applicants must submit a completed grant application form, including all necessary supporting documentation, by the specified deadline.
- ▶ Late applications will only be accepted under exceptional circumstances and at the discretion

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of Council. Approval for late applications must be pre-approved by the relevant Department Manager with the rationale documented in Council's online grants administration system.

- ▶ Personal information about individuals collected during the grant process will be treated in accordance with Council's Privacy and Data Protection Policy.
- ▶ Unsolicited requests for funds will be directed to an appropriate grant program and must meet requirements as detailed in the relevant guidelines to be considered for grant funding.

### Eligibility

- ▶ Any grants provided to individuals must require proof of identity, address, and bank details.
- ▶ Any grants provided to organisations and businesses must require proof of organisational structure, ABN/GST status, relevant insurances; and bank statements.
- ▶ Applicants must declare any relationship(s) with Council staff / Councillors to inform conflict of interest processes.
- ▶ Current officers or Councillors are ineligible to apply for any grant-giving programs.
- ▶ Canvassing of Councillors and officers, or any attempts to influence the outcome of the grant application / process, is prohibited and will render an application ineligible.
- ▶ Grant applications will be automatically ineligible if they do not adhere to program guidelines or are not in alignment with Council policies and strategies, including, but not limited to:
  - Council Plan 2021-2025
  - Child Safe Policy
  - Governance Rules as per section 9 of the Local Government Act 2020.

### Assessment Processes

- ▶ Eligible applications will be assessed against assessment criteria by a Council officer or panel of Council officers as stipulated within each grant guideline and must include a representation from the department who will be handling maintenance.
- ▶ To ensure transparent decision-making, applications will be assessed based on criteria provided in the program guidelines.
- ▶ Any Conflicts of Interest will be managed according to the Local Government Act 2020 and Council's conflict of interest procedures.
- ▶ Requests from applicants to make variations or changes to funded projects or project expenditure items will be assessed and approved by Council officers.
- ▶ All applicants will be informed of the outcome of their application in writing and offered the opportunity to discuss the application process.

### Grant Award & Agreement Management

- ▶ Successful applicants will enter into a grant agreement with the Mansfield Shire Council, outlining the terms and conditions of the funding.
- ▶ Recipients may be required to provide progress reports and financial statements to ensure

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accountability.

- ▶ Unsuccessful applicants can seek feedback from officers in relation to funding outcomes and assessment panel decisions.
- ▶ Any further concerns and complaints will be managed according to Council's Complaint Handling procedure which can be found on the Mansfield Shire Website.

### **Grant Management and Accountability**

Council is committed to ensuring effective grant management and accountability. The following measures are in place:

- ▶ Regular monitoring and evaluation of funded projects will be conducted to assess their progress, impact, and compliance with grant requirements
- ▶ Grant recipients must submit progress reports and financial statements as specified in the grant agreement
- ▶ In exceptional circumstances, grant recipients may request variations to the approved project plan - any such requests will be assessed on a case-by-case basis by the Mansfield Shire Council
- ▶ Grant recipients must provide a final acquittal report summarising the outcomes and benefits of the funded project upon its completion.

### **References / Related Policies**

Grant applications must be in alignment with Council policies and strategies, including, but not limited to:

- ▶ Council Plan 2021-2025
- ▶ Council's Privacy and Data Protection Policy
- ▶ Governance Rules as per section 9 of the Local Government Act 2020
- ▶ Council's updated Administration of Grants Policy.
- ▶ VAGO Report – Fraud Control over Local Government Grants – May 2022

### **Gender Impact Assessment**

The Community Grants Policy has had a Gender Impact Assessment (GIA) completed and is compliant with the obligations and objectives of the Victorian Gender Equality Act 2020.

The policy provides a framework for Council to grant public funds consistently and transparently through its externally facing grant programs. The framework incorporates the requirements for assessments of grant applications to consider gender and social impacts associated with the use of the funds.

## Implementation

This Policy is effective from 28 November 2023.

## Review Date

This Policy is to be reviewed by November 2027.

## Authorisation to Implement Policy

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Councillor

Witnessed: \_\_\_\_\_

Chief Executive Officer

Approval dated: 28 November 2023

**Mansfield Shire Council reserves the right to review, vary or revoke this Policy at any time.**