

MURRAY RIVER COUNCIL
COUNCIL POLICY

DRAFT
**COMMUNITY
FINANCIAL
ASSISTANCE
POLICY**

POL-601.V#4



murray river
council

1. INTRODUCTION

Murray River Council (Council) recognises the value and importance of the role that community groups and organisations play in building vibrant, inclusive and healthy communities.

Council further acknowledges that local organisations and groups may from time to time, in the absence of alternative funding sources, require financial assistance to help meet a demonstrated need within the community.

Council is accountable to the community for the management and disbursement of its funds that must be undertaken in a manner that maximises the benefits of the community and is seen to be fair and equitable. It also recognises that organisations and groups in receipt of Council funds have a responsibility to use those funds for the purposes for which they were given and that those purposes are of benefit to the community.

2. OBJECTIVE

This Community Financial Assistance Policy (Policy), together with Council's Community Financial Assistance Program Framework (Framework) sets out Council's framework for considering the provision of grant funding, donations, rates and charges to all of Murray River Council community.

Council commits to:

- ▶ Inform the community and Council's employees of its guiding principles and objectives of the administration of the Community Financial Assistance Program;
- ▶ Provide a fair, equitable, transparent and consistent method for providing financial assistance to community organisations and groups in accordance with the terms of Section 356 of the Local Government Act 1993 (the Act), ensuring agreed outcomes are delivered;
- ▶ Provide funds each year for the purpose of providing assistance to eligible community groups and organisations and groups in accordance with the terms of Section 356 of the Act ensuring agreed outcomes are delivered.
- ▶ Provide funds each year for the purpose of providing assistance to eligible community groups and organisations, bearing in mind that the Council is trustee and custodian of public assets and is bound by its charter to effectively account for and manage those assets;
- ▶ Funding applications are submitted and considered by Council, within the constraints of Council budgeted funds, adhere to Policy guidelines, build capacity and provide benefit to the community.
- ▶ Make decisions on the granting of assistance based upon need, value to the community and conformity with Council's Community Strategic Plan and annual operational plan.

3. SCOPE

This Policy applies to all forms of financial assistance (inclusive of donations, sponsorships, service fees and charges) provided to community groups and organisations by Council and for Council assets.

4. LEGISLATION

- ▶ Local Government Act 1993 (NSW) – specifically Section 356 and Section 377 1 (A) of the Act.

5. POLICY STATEMENT

This Policy addresses financial assistance provided by Murray River Council to “not for profit” community groups, organisations businesses and individuals providing services or programs to residents within the Murray River Local Government Area through a competitive grants process.

Council recognises and values the strengths of the Murray River community, including the strong sense of belonging, demonstrated through participation in a range of community and cultural activities. Council

aims to draw on these strengths and provide support to assist them to continue to grow. Council acknowledges the important role of community organisations in developing projects and coordinating and managing funded activities which help to further develop these strengths in the community.

The funding and support are also mechanisms for Council to further the aims identified in Council's strategic, social, cultural, economic and environmental plans and policies.

The values incorporated in the Community Financial Assistance Program are:

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| Measurable community outcomes | Grants must demonstrate that Murray River Council residents and community members directly benefit from the financial assistance awarded. |
| Bridging gaps in service delivery | Identified community needs are met by services, organisations and groups through funded projects, programs and events |
| Value for money | Council ensures that a broad range of programs, projects and events represent the best value for money for grant recipients across diverse groups and services. |
| Capacity building | Opportunities are provided to build skills, develop projects and services that will deliver strong outcomes for community benefit. |
| Transparency | Framework is transparent and equitable in line with Council's Code of Conduct. All decisions are published and feedback provided to applicants. |
| Equitability | Council provides equal opportunities for residents and groups to apply for all programs within grant guidelines |
| Merit based | Applications for financial assistance or sponsorship shall be considered on their merits, taking into account the policy, the circumstances of each case, the availability of funds in Council's budget and the relevant provisions of the <u>Local Government Act</u> as well as guidance from the <u>ICAC publication Sponsorship in the Public Sector 2006..</u> |

5.1 GENERAL CONDITIONS

The following conditions apply to all applications for financial assistance from Council:

1. Council will only enter into a grant agreement with an organisation/group whose reputation and image is consistent with the values, objectives and policies of the Council. Applications will not be accepted from political parties or groups.
2. Financial assistance will only be granted by Council in accordance with Section 356 of the Local Government Act 1993 for the purpose of exercising Council's functions.
3. Grant applications will be accepted only during the advertised application period for the relevant grant category or stream.
4. If applications for other financial assistance for matters of merit arise outside a specific grant program category or application window, Council may resolve to fund the application through the Quick Response Grants.
5. Grant approval will be limited to the defined funding period. Approved applications will not automatically apply to subsequent years.
6. Applications in competitive categories will be assessed on merit using the assessment matrix.
7. Council may assess and approve applications based on the total financial assistance funding the applicant has been granted, across all program categories.
8. All grantees are required to publicly recognise Council's contribution.

5.2 CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

- ▶ No Councillor or employee of Council may seek to receive a personal benefit or be perceived to receive any personal benefit, as a result of sponsorship allocation from Council.
- ▶ Applicants must identify and declare any actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest (if applicable) in accordance with Council's Code of Conduct Policy available on Council's website.

5.3 LOBBYING

- ▶ Applicant with a submission for funding under consideration may not lobby Council employees or Councillors to provide funding for their submission either verbally or in writing. Any applicant who does so will have their submission withdrawn from consideration for that round of funding with immediate effect.

5.4 AQUITTALS

- ▶ Recipients shall supply Council, if requested, with an audited balance sheet indicating gross receipts and disbursements. Proof of purchase in the form of receipts must also be provided.
- ▶ All recipients of financial assistance from Council must submit an end of project report (acquittal) via Council's Smartygrants system, within six weeks of the project's completion.
- ▶ Failure to provide satisfactory acquittal evidence or complete the acquittal on time, may disqualify the group or organisation from future allocation of funds and result in Council issuing an invoice for repayment.
- ▶ Any unspent funds or funds used outside of the approved application must be returned to Council who will issue an invoice for repayment.
- ▶ All recipients must successfully acquit any prior grants before applying for any further grants and have no outstanding debts to Council. ~~Failure to provide satisfactory acquittal evidence will disqualify the organisation for future allocations of funds.~~
- ▶ ~~Applicants must have no outstanding debts to Council.~~

6. EVALUATION AND REVIEW

It is the responsibility of the Manager Economic Development & Tourism and the **Local Heritage Fund Grants**

Provide funding for conservation projects (e.g. repair of original features and painting in period colours) for heritage items and items of heritage significance within Murray River Council. Grants Officer to monitor the adequacy of this Policy and recommend appropriate changes.

This Policy will be formally reviewed within four (4) years of adoption or as needed, whichever comes first.

7. ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS, DEFINITIONS AND ACRONYMS

External:

- ▶ ICAC publication Sponsorship in the Public Sector 2006.

Internal:

- ▶ MRC Framework - Community Financial Assistance Program Framework (for current financial year)
- ▶ MRC Plan - Community Strategic Plan
- ▶ MRC Plan - Annual Operational Plan
- ▶ MRC Plan – Delivery Plan

- ▶ Annual Allocation Application Form – (Smartygrants) and Guidelines
- ▶ Community Grants Program Application Form (Smartygrants) and Guidelines
- ▶ Quick Response Application Form (Smartygrants) and Guidelines
- ▶ **Disability, Access and Participation Application Form (Smartygrants) and Guidelines**
- ▶ Services and Charges Assistance **Application** Form (Smartygrants)
- ▶ Local Heritage Fund Application Form and Guidelines

Definitions:

| Term | Definition |
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| <p>Fee waiver</p> <p>Note: In accordance with the NSW Local Government Act 1993, annual rates cannot be reduced or waived.</p> | <p>Where an individual or group requests that a fee or charge (as outlined in the Council's <u>Community Strategic Plan</u>) is reduced or waived.</p> <p>Examples of what will be considered by Council as a request to waive fees are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ a reduction in fee for water usage ▶ a reduction in the cost to hire a hall or reserve ▶ a reduction in the cost to hire Council plant or equipment |
| Grants | <p>Contributions provided to various community-related activities by Council and can include cash, in-kind and fee waiver.</p> <p>Examples of grants, as Assistance provided through Council's <u>Community Financial Assistance Program</u>, include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ <u>Annual Allocations</u> which are allocated to recurring projects that Council generally contributes to on an annual or multi-year basis. ▶ <u>Community Grants</u> which are allocated to one-off projects. These grants are open to community groups and organisations who can make application in accordance with the policy guidelines. Applications must be received during the stipulated annual application period. ▶ <u>Quick Response Grants</u> which are administered by the Mayor and CEO and may be allocated to worthy projects or opportunities that occur outside of the application window for Council's <u>Community Grants</u> (refer above). Council will allocate funds to the <u>Quick Response Grants</u> each year, during budget deliberations, and may, from time to time, set a maximum grant amount. ▶ <u>Disability, Access and Participation Grants</u> which are allocated to support individuals with disabilities in accessing sport, arts, and cultural activities within the Murray River Council area. Applications must be received during the stipulated annual application period and be submitted in accordance with the policy guidelines. <p><u>Local Heritage Fund Grants</u></p> <p>Provide funding for conservation projects (e.g. repair of original features and painting in period colours) for heritage items and items of heritage significance within Murray River Council.</p> |

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| In-kind support | <p>A contribution of Council's staff time, equipment or other services. In-kind support incurs a cost to Council and has a financial value to a group or organisation that must be calculated.</p> <p>Examples of in-kind support are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ utilisation of Council staff or services ▶ temporary loan of light depot equipment – sandbags, bollards, witches hats, signage, bunting and safety tape ▶ temporary loan of special events equipment ▶ preparation of Council reserves for use for special events ▶ event promotion through Council publications ▶ auspice of grant funding by Council ▶ provision of bins and waste removal |
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5. DOCUMENT CONTROL

| Version No. | Details | Dates | CM9 Reference | Resolution No. |
|-------------|--|----------------------------|---------------|----------------|
| 1 | Initial Issue | 21 Aug 2018 to 22 Oct 2019 | VF/19/62 | 160818 |
| 2 | Reviewed as per schedule | 22 Oct 2019 to 27 Aug 2024 | VF/19/62 | 191019 |
| 3 | Reviewed to reflect changes in legislation, current practise and position titles. Reformatted into the adopted MRC Policy template | 27 Aug 2024 to DRAFT | VF/19/62 | 070824 |
| 4 | Update the Acquittal process to reflect current practise and include DAP & Local Heritage Grants | DRAFT | VF/19/62 | |

Council reserves the right to review, vary or revoke this policy at any time
This Policy is scheduled for review prior to 2029

NOTE:

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DISCLAIMER:

This document was formulated to be consistent with Murray River Council's legislative obligations and with the scope of Council's powers. This document should be read in conjunction with relevant legislation, guidelines and codes of practice. In the case of any discrepancies, the most recent legislation should prevail. This document does not constitute legal advice. Legal advice should be sought in relation to particular circumstances and liability will not be accepted for losses incurred as a result of reliance on this document.

It is recognised that, from time to time, circumstances may change leading to the need for minor administrative changes to this document. Where an update does not materially alter this, such a change may be made administratively. Examples include a change to the name of a Business Unit, position title or a change to the name of a Federal or State Government department, and a minor update to legislation which does not have a material impact. When such changes are made the version number will be amended and an extension added (eg V#1.1)