

Policy – Council – Community Funding Program

Date amended:	October 2022
Date of next review:	September 2024
Adopted by:	Council
Date adopted:	18 October 2022
Responsible officer:	Community Wellbeing & Grants Coordinator

1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

To provide:

- A consistent and clear commitment in delivery of the Pyrenees Shire Council’s annual Community Funding Program, and
- An accountable and transparent administrative framework to ensure the fair and consistent distribution of public funds across the life cycle of the annual program.

This policy applies to:

- Community groups, organisations, and businesses that apply for Council funding support,
- Councillors and officers with the responsibility for approval of funding applications, and
- Officers with responsibilities for administration, promotion, assessment, and acquittal of the Community Funding Program and applications.

2 POLICY STATEMENT

Council recognises the valuable role that Community Funding plays in supporting and partnering with our community. The Community Funding Program aims to partner with our community to further enhance the Pyrenees Shire’s reputation as a desired place to live, work and visit.

The Program administers an annual financial allocation for community support via a range of one-off Project Grants, Sponsorships, Subsidies and Responsive Grants.

This policy does not apply to funding that is provided via other means, such as direct budget allocations to projects / groups or by other formal resolutions of Council.

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2.1 Policy objectives

This policy aims to:

- Provide a transparent approach and framework to support good governance in the appropriate distribution of public funds.
- Support the delivery of the Community Vision 2021-2031, the Council Plan 2021-2025 and objectives documented in other adopted Council corporate strategies.
- Ensure support is provided to deliver services and activities that are not funded as a responsibility of Commonwealth or State Government, or private resources.
- Support partnership development with community groups, organisations, and local business to deliver on identified local needs.

2.2 Policy principles

The following principles underpin the policy:

Responsiveness	Meeting the needs of community and Council by addressing identified community requirements through alignment of criteria to Council Plan objectives and prioritisation of need in application assessment.
Inclusiveness	Maintaining equitable access to all through program information, communication channels, officer supports, and associated guidelines and tools.
Fairness	Distribute and acquit funds in a transparent and equitable manner, including adherence to eligibility and assessment criteria and other procedure obligations (such as conflict of interest declarations) that remove unfair advantage.
Transparency	Decisions made in a consistent and clear manner, maintaining procedural integrity through public access to reporting of program assessments, decision-making outcomes, and other relevant information.
Consistency	Applying a single procedural framework that supports good governance through consistent administration and decision-making for grants, subsidies and sponsorships.
Efficiency	Applying continuous improvement approaches through program evaluations that are effective, solution driven, and customer focused to improve productivity and reduce inefficiencies.

3 DEFINITIONS

Acquittal	End of project reporting on how funding was used and spent.
Auspice	A means to provide support, sponsorship, or guidance.

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An auspicing organisation is one that allows an unincorporated organisation or individual to undertake an activity or project under their sponsorship.

This relationship is typically subject to an agreement that sets out the obligations of both the auspicator (sponsoring organisation) and auspicee (unincorporated organisation or individual undertaking the project).

Community Funding Program	The program that administers funds to support community led initiatives, which are consistent with Council’s strategic direction. Applications to the program are competitively assessed on merit and Council Plan alignment.
Community Fund Guidelines	Promotion and support document for community guidance that explains how to access funding.
Grant	A conditional sum of one-off funds provided to a recipient for an agreed purpose, under a formal agreement, with the understanding of specified outcomes that directly or indirectly benefits the community. General term that applies to all types of funding provided under the Community Funding Program.
Project	The individual events, projects, minor capital works, one-off or seed programs / activities that applicants request funding support.
Responsive Grants	Financial support for essential activities that require a quick response outside the scope of scheduled funding round opportunities.
Sponsorship	Sponsorship is the right to associate the sponsor’s name (Pyrenees Shire Council) in return for negotiated benefits such as promotional opportunities.
Subsidy	A form of financial assistance that is used to support and to encourage projects or activities that would otherwise not take place, particularly to support the commencement and establishment of initiatives in becoming self-sustaining.

4 POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

4.1 Community guidance

The Community Funding Program framework comprises of key operational phases detailed below and supported by guidelines contained within an online funding management system, which provides guidance and application tools to assist applicants.

Where applicants do not have access to digital resources, Council officers are available to support community members in making appropriate applications.

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The Program is also supported by a Community Funding Program Operational Procedure which guides officers in the program administration processes.

4.2 Program operational phases

4.2.1 Applications

- a. Applicants must complete and submit an appropriate application form relevant to an advertised category, including provision of all required supporting documentation.
- b. All applications are subject to the eligibility criteria as published in the Community Funding Guidelines.
- c. Applications should be lodged via Council's online grant management system. Applicants without access or ability to submit online, will be supported to lodge an application.
- d. All funding is exclusive of GST. If the applicant is registered for GST, this must be stated on the application form and the payment of the funding will have the GST component added to the approved funding amount.

4.2.2 Application assessment and decision

- a. Applications will be assessed in accordance with the eligibility, funding, and pre-determined assessment criteria by an independent officer assessment panel.
- b. Applications that do not meet eligibility criteria will not be put forward for assessment.
- c. Members of the independent assessment panel will be governed by a Terms of Reference and required to disclose any conflicts of interest prior to being allowed to participate on the panel.
- d. Applications will be assessed in a competitive process, in accordance with published program categories, and will make funding recommendations to Council for final resolution.
- e. Applicants must not enter into discussion regarding applications undergoing assessment in the form of campaigning and/or soliciting approval support with Councillors or members of the independent assessment panel.
- f. Council and officers reserve the right to request further explanation on the detail provided in their application and / or any further information that is required to appropriately consider the application.
- g. Final funding allocation decisions will be at the discretion of Council through formal resolution, with the exception of Responsive Grants which may be approved through Council Financial Delegation processes, with monthly notification to Council.

4.2.3 Awarding of funding

- a. All Biannual Grant, Subsidy and Sponsorship category applications will be subject to assessment and final decision by the Council through formal resolution.

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- b. Responsive Grant applications will be subject to officer assessment with approval to distribute funds delegated to the Chief Executive Officer, to facilitate quick response and provision. Funding of projects through the Responsive Grants category will be presented to Council monthly for information.
- c. Successful applicants will be notified in writing of Council’s decision, including the funding amount and any conditions of the funding agreement (if applicable).
- d. Unsuccessful applications will be notified in writing, providing reasons for the decision and offered the opportunity to discuss the application process.
- e. Successful applicants will enter into a Funding Agreement and commit to adhering to its conditions for the duration of the Agreement.
- f. Where funds are contingent upon the receipt of other funding sources or specific conditions, proof of success must be provided before Council funds are released.

4.2.4 Objections or complaints

- a. Any objection to outcomes should be put in writing to Council, articulating justification and evidence for Council to re-assess the application and decision.
- b. Any disputes or complaints regarding the program or process will be managed in accordance with Council’s external complaints handling policy.

4.2.5 Project delivery

- a. Applicants must deliver their projects within prescribed timeframes and conditions as outlined in the Funding Agreement.
- b. Release of funding will not occur until Agreements have been signed and any pre-funding conditions met and approved.
- c. Any changes to the project Funding Agreement, including project dates, costs or location, must be disclosed to Council through a Community Funding Agreement Project Variation Form.

4.2.6 Funding acquittal

- a. Accountability of funding recipients requires a Funding Acquittal at the end of the project, including an evaluation of the project and financial acquittal, outlining use of the funds and achieved outcomes.
- b. Successful applicants are required to complete the project and funding acquittal within 12 months of receiving funding or 2 months of project completion (whichever is the sooner).
- c. Any unspent funds at the conclusion of the project must be returned to Council.
- d. Council may undertake a spot audit of a funded project. This will ensure successful recipients have used funding as intended and met funding agreement conditions.
- e. Specific evaluation requirements will be included within individual funding agreements and will depend on the nature of funding received.

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- f. Failure to acquit funded projects appropriately will result in ineligibility for future funding.

4.2.7 Program review

- a. Annually, officers will collect and evaluate information to ensure the Program is delivering community benefit.
- b. Outcomes of annual program reviews will be documented to support future budget planning, risk assessment and updates to this policy and associated guidelines, procedures or tools.

4.3 Program promotion, communication and timelines

- a. Program promotion, information and guidance will be maintained on the Community Funding Page of Council's website at www.pyrenees.vic.gov.au/funding.
- b. Funding availability, associated application opening and closing periods, and general announcements will be advertised via Council's website, social media channels, at Council's front counters in Beaufort and Avoca, and through available local media.
- c. Biannual Program Rounds will be open for a minimum advertised period of six (6) weeks.
- d. Funding program assessment outcomes will be reported publicly through Council's Ordinary Meeting Agenda provided on Council's website.

4.4 Program budget

- a. Council will allocate funds to the Community Funding Program as part of its annual budget preparation processes.
- b. From time-to-time Council may resolve to introduce new categories into the Community Funding Program to meet identified or emerging community needs.

5 REFERENCE & RELATED DOCUMENTS

In implementing this policy, reference is made to the following legislation and Council documents:

- Local Government Act
- Council Plan 2021-2025
- Council Strategic Plans including: Municipal Health & Wellbeing Plan, Assessment Management Plan, Recreation Strategy, Economic Development Strategy, Environmental Sustainability Strategy, Municipal Emergency Management Plan, Positive Ageing Strategy, Reconciliation Plan, and Tourism Strategy.
- Council Policy including: Privacy Policy, Fraud & Corruption Control Framework, and Public Transparency Policy.
- Community Funding Program Framework documents:
 - Community Funding Program Guidelines
 - Community Funding Program Operational Procedure

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- Community Funding Program Application Form
- Community Funding Agreement
- Community Funding Program Assessment Panel Terms of Reference
- Community Funding Acquittal Form
- Community Funding Agreement Project Variation Form
- Application Assessment Panel Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form

5.1 Consultation and impact

Pyrenees Shire Council is committed to consultation and cooperation between management and its employees. Development of this Policy was conducted in consultation with relevant officers prior to approval submission. It is considered that this Policy does not impact negatively on the rights identified in the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities and has been assessed under the Gender Equality Act 2020 obligations.

6 VERSION HISTORY

Version Number	Issue date	Description of change
1.0	October 2022	Initial release
2.0	October 2023	Annual Review

All Policies must be reviewed within 4 years. This Policy will be reviewed in a 1-year cycle.

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