



Yarra City Council
Grants Administration Guide

We acknowledge the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people as the Traditional Owners and true sovereigns of the land now known as Yarra. We acknowledge their creator spirit Bunjil, their ancestors and their Elders.

Cover image credit: The Bakehouse Art Project Reboot.

Artist: **Tai Snaith** – Goddess Atrium Room. Photographer **Virginia Cummins**.

2025 grant recipients

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About this guide

This Grants Administration Guide provides overview information on the management of the Yarra Community Grants program, including the application and assessment process.

Please read the current [Grant Guidelines](#) for specific information about how to apply for a grant.

Introduction

What is the purpose of these grants?

The Yarra Community Grants Program funds community-driven projects that improve access to, and the quality of, social, economic and cultural life across the neighbourhoods, shared spaces and communities of the City of Yarra.

Alignment with the Council Plan

Through the Yarra Community Grants program, Council supports the priorities set by the community through the Community Vision and [Council Plan](#).

Living in the city

- Strong and Vibrant Community
- Community Safety
- Social Equity
- Shared Spaces

Building the City

- Environmental Sustainability
- Growing Sustainability
- Shared Spaces
- Social Equity
- Community Safety

Working and Playing in the City

- Thriving Local Economy
- Strong and Vibrant Community
- Growing Sustainability
- Shared Spaces

Running the City

- Shared Governance
- Growing Sustainability
- Shared Spaces
- Social Equity
- Environmental Sustainability

Grant Principles

Projects funded through the program must align with the following three principles:

Promote Access and Equity — Actively remove barriers and promote fair access, ensuring that people from diverse backgrounds and with varying needs can participate and benefit.

Deliver Local Benefit — Provide clear and tangible benefits to the municipality— supporting its people, neighbourhoods and public spaces—while fostering local development, wellbeing and inclusion.

Enable Participation — Promote community engagement to foster wellbeing and social, cultural and economic participation while enabling connections between community members to strengthen social cohesion.

Grant Aims

The Yarra Community Grants Program supports community-led projects that strengthen social, cultural and economic life across Yarra's neighbourhoods, shared spaces, and communities.

The Council recognises grant-making as a vital tool for achieving broad community objectives. The Council commits to implementing open and competitive processes for all grant allocations, aligning with best practices to ensure fairness and transparency.

For community groups and other eligible entities, grants help turn ideas and enthusiasm into tangible projects.

For Council, the grants are a vital means to achieve the Community Vision and its strategic objectives, as stated through the [Council Plan](#).

Diversity is essential at every stage of the process, including at the application, assessment and evaluation stages. We encourage input from diverse groups within the City of Yarra, including First Peoples, those from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CaLD) communities, children and young people, and those experiencing disadvantage.

The Council does not offer closed, invitation-only grants, as this practice does not align with the principles of transparency and inclusivity.

Please note:

The Grants Administration Guide is to be read in conjunction with the Grants Guidelines updated each year.

Previous grant approval does not indicate likely success in future rounds.

The Community Grants Program is competitive, and funding decisions are made independently each round based on the application, current priorities, demand and available funding.

What size are the grants?

Small (up to \$4,000)

Small grants are suited to short-term, low-cost initiatives – typically volunteer-led and involving fewer than 50 participants – such as social events, recurring community gatherings, or pilot activities with minimal logistics and reporting requirements.

Medium (\$4,001–\$20,000)

Medium grants support multi-activity projects or short-term programs with moderate staffing, engagement, and evaluation needs.

Large (\$20,001–\$40,000)

Large grants fund more intensive, longer-term or partnership-driven initiatives that involve formal governance, significant coordination, and the potential for broad or sustained community impact.

Grant Streams

The grants program has seven funding streams:

- First Peoples Partnerships
- Healthy Communities
- Local Economy
- Creative City
- Environment, Conservation and Climate
- Safe Neighbourhoods
- Connecting Yarra

Each stream is described in more detail in the [Grant Guidelines](#), published annually.

Eligibility criteria

See the current [Grant Guidelines](#) for details on eligibility criteria, eligible projects, eligibility restrictions and information about ineligible projects.

Some of the streams have specific eligibility criteria which can be found in the [Grant Guidelines](#).

Assistance with grant applications

The Yarra Community Grants program is open to all Yarra community members (subject to [eligibility](#) – see [Grant Guidelines](#)) and the grants process is designed to be accessible and easy to navigate to enable broad participation.

Assistance is provided via the following methods:

- **Information sessions (in person):** The Grants team presents multiple in-person information sessions where they explain the grant round, application process and offer grant writing tips. Applicants have the opportunity to ask general questions in the group session or individual questions of Council officers.
- **Information sessions (online):** The Grants team presents an online webinar for applicants who cannot attend the in-person sessions. The online session is recorded and available on our website afterwards.
- **By telephone or email:** Applicants may call or email the Grants team for clarification on eligibility, help with their application or to talk through their project. The Grants team can direct applicants to Council officers who have specialised knowledge, such as Climate Action or Creative projects.
- **In-person:** Applicants may receive in-person assistance with their application (by appointment), with interpreter services if required.
- **Grant writing resources:** [Grant-writing resources are available year-round on the Resources page of the Yarra Community Grants webpage.](#)
- **Training opportunities:** [Yarra provides free training opportunities throughout the year, including project management, grant writing and acquittal writing.](#)

All of the above is advertised via the [Yarra Community Grants webpage](#), [E-newsletter](#) and Yarra social media.

Please note: Grants officers are unable to provide advice outside the grant guidelines and cannot provide letters of support.

Grant assessment

To support a fair, transparent and consistent process, eligible applications are assessed against published assessment criteria. The criteria vary depending on the grant size, reflecting the different scale, complexity and risk of Small, Medium and Large Grants.

Each application is assessed on its own merits. Previous grant approval does not indicate likely success in a future round. Assessors are not asked to rely on an applicant's previous funding history and will assess the information provided in the current application.

In simple terms, assessors consider how well the application responds to each assessment question. They give each answer a score from 0 to 4. Those scores are then weighted and converted into a score out of 100. For Medium and Large Grants, panel members' scores are averaged and then discussed by the panel before recommendations are made to Council.

Assessment scale

Assessors score each relevant criterion using the following scale:

Score	Meaning
0	Does not address the criterion
1	Poorly addresses the criterion
2	Partially addresses the criterion
3	Meets the criterion
4	Strongly addresses the criterion

Small, Medium and Large Grant assessment

The number of assessment criteria depends on the size of the grant.

Small Grants are assessed against four criteria because they are lower-value grants and should be simpler for applicants to apply for. These criteria focus on the Grant Principles, stream objectives, community need and budget.

Medium Grants are assessed against six criteria. In addition to the Small Grant criteria, applicants must demonstrate their capacity to complete the project and the community benefit the project will deliver.

Large Grants are assessed against eight criteria because they involve higher funding amounts, greater project complexity and stronger expectations for planning, delivery and reporting. Large Grant applicants must also provide clear, specific and realistic intended outcomes, along with appropriate measures of success or evaluation methods.

Assessment criteria and weighting

Applications are converted to a score out of 100 using the weighted criteria below. “Weighting” means how much each criterion contributes to the final score.

Criterion	Assessment question	Small Grants	Medium Grants	Large Grants
Grant principles	How well does the project address the Grant Principles?	25%	17%	12.5%
Stream objectives	How well does the project address the objectives of the relevant grant stream?	25%	17%	12.5%
Community need	How well does the project meet a clear community need?	25%	17%	12.5%
Budget	How well does the budget accurately reflect the scope and scale of the project?	25%	17%	12.5%
Capacity to complete the project	How well does the applicant demonstrate the capacity to complete the project?	Not assessed	16%	12.5%
Community benefit	How well does the project demonstrate community benefit?	Not assessed	16%	12.5%
Clearly defined outcomes	How clear, specific and realistic are the project’s intended outcomes?	Not assessed	Not assessed	12.5%
Measures of success	How clearly defined and appropriate are the project’s measures of success or evaluation methods?	Not assessed	Not assessed	12.5%
Total		100%	100%	100%

Grant principles

All applications are assessed against the Grant Principles. These are the three principles of the Community Grants Program:

- **Promote Access and Equity** — Actively remove barriers and promote fair access, ensuring that people from diverse backgrounds and with varying needs can participate and benefit.
- **Deliver Local Benefit** — Provide clear and tangible benefits to the municipality— supporting its people, neighbourhoods and public spaces—while fostering local development, wellbeing and inclusion.
- **Enable Participation** — Promote community engagement to foster wellbeing and social, cultural and economic participation while enabling connections between community members to strengthen social cohesion.

Stream objectives

Each application is also assessed against the objectives of the grant stream selected by the applicant. Stream objectives are listed in the [Grant Guidelines](#) under each grant stream and are updated each year.

Applicants should clearly explain how their project aligns with the objectives of the stream they are applying to. Applications that do not clearly align with the relevant stream objectives may receive a lower score, even if the project has general community value.

For example, the Healthy Communities, Creative City and Local Economy streams have objectives such as supporting projects that improve food security and local food systems, creating or presenting new artistic work, and activating retail precincts to strengthen the local economy.

A sample of stream objectives from 2027 is provided in Appendix D: Sample of stream objectives from 2027.

Assessment process

Council officers assess Small Grants against the relevant assessment criteria.

Medium and Large Grant applications are assessed by independent panel members (see [External Assessment Panel](#)). Panel members are asked to disclose conflicts of interest (COI) or perceived bias at multiple stages of assessment (see [Conflict of Interest](#)). The Grants team manages a detailed conflict of interest register. If an assessor has a declared conflict of interest, they do not assess or have access to any application associated with the conflict of interest.

Each eligible Medium and Large Grant application is scored independently by panel members before the panel meeting. These scores are then averaged to produce an initial assessment score for each application.

Panel deliberation and recommendations

The averaged scores are used to rank applications within each stream and grant size category. They support panel discussions and help identify the relative strength of applications. They are not used to make automatic funding decisions.

At the panel meeting, panel members review the ranked list of applications, consider the available budget for each stream and grant size category, and discuss relevant issues arising from the applications. This may include alignment with stream objectives, evidence of need, budget reasonableness, project readiness, duplication, risk, value for money, and whether the application clearly explains the proposed project and its community benefits.

Following deliberation, the panel makes a recommendation on whether to fund, partially fund, or not fund each application. Where partial funding is recommended, this may be subject to the applicant confirming a revised project scope.

Funding recommendations and Council decision-making

Funding is generally recommended for the strongest eligible applications until the available funding for that stream and grant size category is exhausted. Budget allocations may differ between streams and grant sizes.

Panel recommendations are included in an officer report to a Council meeting. Council considers the recommended allocations through the formal Council meeting process and makes the final decision on annual grant funding allocations.

A high score does not guarantee funding. The Community Grants Program is competitive, and funding outcomes depend on the quality of applications, stream priorities, demand, available funding and Council's final decision.

If an application does not clearly explain the project, who will benefit, why the project is needed, how the budget has been developed or how the applicant will deliver the project, this may result in a lower score or a recommendation not to fund.

Outcomes

To support alignment with [Yarra's Community Vision](#) and the Community Grants Program Aims, Council has developed an Outcomes Framework.

As part of the application process, grant applicants must select outcomes and indicators from the Council-developed framework that best match their project goals. These will be used to measure success and must be reported on at the acquittal stage.

[See our Outcomes Framework.](#)

Processing applications

All Council grant program records will be managed through Council's SmartyGrants™ portal. This system will be used to track interactions between Council and each grant applicant.

Medium and Large Grant applications are assessed on the information provided in the application using the following process.

1. Eligibility: Council officers examine submitted applications to confirm that the applicant and project are eligible for funding. An Eligibility form is completed within SmartyGrants™. Ineligible applications do not progress.
2. Review: Council officers assign applications to the External Assessment panel members.
3. Assessment:

- I. Applications are scored against the criteria for the relevant grant stream (see [Grant assessment criteria](#), above).
 - II. Applications are assessed by at least two external assessors, often by three.
 - III. The scores from the Assessment panel are collated and averaged for each application.
 - IV. Council Officers prepare a report with the scoring and anonymised comments for presentation at the Assessment Panel meeting. Applications in each stream and grant size (medium and large) are listed in order of score, from highest to lowest.
 - V. The Assessment Panel confirms at panel meetings whether the grants listed by score, from highest to lowest, will be recommended for approval.
 - VI. The Assessment Panel may deliberate the scores and may choose to alter their score/s. If this is the case, the rationale is recorded.
 - VII. Once the Panel agrees, funding is recommended for the highest-scoring grants in each stream and size category until funding is exhausted.
4. Decision-making: Council officers record panel recommendations within SmartyGrants™ and prepare a report listing recommended applications for Council's consideration.
 5. Council Approval: Following the Council meeting, the successful and unsuccessful applicants are notified as soon as is practicable. Feedback on applications is provided on request.
 6. Payment of approved grants: Grant funds are paid once the Grant Funding Agreement has been completed and submitted by successful applicants.

Promotion of grants program

The promotion of available grants helps to broaden the reach of the program and encourages new applicants. This helps individuals and organisations to learn about the program and apply for grant funding. The Yarra Community Grants Program and individual grant streams are widely promoted through a range of channels:

- Council website and social media
- Yarra News
- Yarra e-newsletters
- Information sessions
- Other methods relevant to the individual grant stream

Promotion and advertising occur before the opening of each grant round to allow applicants the opportunity to develop their projects and maximise the reach of grant funding. All grant rounds must be open for a minimum of five weeks.

Yarra community grants assessment panel

Through an expression of interest process or direct invitation where necessary, Council officers identify suitable community members to become external assessors for medium and large-sized grants. Small grants are assessed internally.

Council aims to ensure a balance between benefiting from experienced panel members and avoiding panel stagnation. To foster diversity, inclusivity, and fresh perspectives within the grant assessment process, the tenure and appointment of community panel members will adhere to the following principles:

- **Term Length:** The tenure of community panel members will be formally set at four years, with panel members refreshed via an expression of interest process on a four-year rotating basis.
- **Reappointment Restrictions:** Upon the conclusion of their four-year term, panel members will not automatically continue in their roles. Any member wishing to serve a second term must undergo a formal reappointment process.
- **Preference for New Members:** In the spirit of continuous renewal and community engagement, the Council will prioritise the appointment of new panel members over the reappointment of incumbents, wherever possible.
- **Community Engagement:** Council commits to using a range of community engagement strategies to encourage participation of a diverse pool of candidates. In the event of difficulty in identifying willing and qualified community members, the Council will work with community organisations and groups to assist in the identification of appropriate panel members.

With these measures, Council aims to enhance the integrity, effectiveness, and community representation of its grant assessment panels. See [Terms of Reference for Community Grants Assessment Panel](#).

Panel members are anonymous to the public.

External assessors are trained in scoring applications, conflict of interest, privacy, confidentiality and standards of conduct. They receive a copy of the current Guidelines and this Grants Administration Guide.

Please note: Council officers process Small grants and subsidised venue hire ([Town Hall Subsidy Grants](#)).

Terms of Reference

[All Community Assessment panels have a Terms of Reference](#). The Terms of Reference will outline the purpose of the panel, how the assessments will be conducted, the responsibilities of panel members and how conflicts of interest will be managed.

At a minimum, the Terms of Reference will record:

- Purpose
- Duration
- Membership criteria
- Meeting procedures
- Governance Obligations
 - Conflicts of Interest
 - Confidentiality
 - Privacy
 - Standards of conduct
- Remuneration information

Conflict of Interest and Perceived bias

All assessors of Yarra City Council Grants must declare if they have, or could be perceived to have, a conflict of interest (COI) or bias (positive or negative).

A conflict of interest is defined as a conflict between a person's private interests and their public obligations. All assessors of Yarra City Council Grants must declare if they have, or could be perceived to have, a conflict of interest or bias. This process ensures that any potential, actual or perceived conflict of interest or bias is promptly identified and addressed.

All assessors must declare if they have any relationship with an applicant or private interest in the application before any grant applications are assessed. Assessors are also deemed to have a potential conflict of interest if they provided intensive assistance with a particular application. If a member of the public would have reasonable grounds to believe that this relationship or private interest might influence their decision, then the assessor should not proceed with the assessment.

Upon application to become an Assessor, potential applicants are asked to list all possible conflicts of interest and biases.

Before each grant round, all assessors are contacted by email to confirm whether they wish to participate and to declare any conflicts of interest.

In their role as an assessor, if they have something to personally gain from an application being assessed (as either successful or unsuccessful), or if members of the public could have grounds to

believe that they could personally gain from a decision, or hold a bias about an application, assessors are advised not to proceed with the assessment. They declare this on the first page of the Assessment form in SmartyGrants™. They are also asked to contact the Grants team.

Unexpected COIs may arise. Assessors are advised to let the grants team know as soon as they realise any COI or potential bias.

Applications where an Assessor declares an unexpected COI or bias will be assigned to a different Assessor.

Council Officers actively manage potential conflict of interest in a detailed Conflict of Interest and Bias Register. They ensure applications are not assigned to Assessors with documented conflict of interest.

In a panel setting, assessors with a conflict of interest must absent themselves from all discussions of the particular application and must not provide *any* additional information/background/context etc., letting the application speak for itself. If it is known that a Community Panellist or officer will have multiple conflicts of interest they should not participate in the assessment at all. Conflict of Interest declarations are obtained from all assessors via Smarty Grants™.

Council officers are present in Panel discussion meetings and ensure that any Assessment Panel member with a listed conflict of interest leaves the room and is not part of any discussion of the application.

All assessors are also required to declare that they will treat information they have access to through the assessment process confidentially.

Questions or concerns relating to conflict of interest that cannot be resolved using the conflict-of-interest process are to be referred to the Manager Ageing, Equity and Community Development.

To uphold the integrity and transparency of the decision-making process, particularly in the administration of grants, the Council adopts the following measures regarding conflicts of interest and perceived biases:

- **Induction Pack:** Every panel member and assessor will receive an induction pack. This pack will contain detailed examples and definitions of conflicts of interest and bias, alongside the Council's policies governing such conflicts. This is to ensure that all involved parties have a clear understanding of what constitutes a conflict of interest and the importance of managing it appropriately.
- **Formal Induction and Training:** The Council commits to providing formal induction sessions and comprehensive training for all panel members. These sessions will cover the ethical guidelines, legal obligations, and best practices in identifying and managing conflicts of interest and perceived bias.

- **Mandatory Declarations:** At every meeting related to grant discussions, a standing item will be the declaration of any potential conflicts of interest or perceived bias. Panel members will be required to fill out and submit declaration forms, ensuring transparency and accountability in all proceedings. All COIs and biases are documented in the Conflict of Interest and Bias Register.

By implementing these measures, the Council aims to foster a culture of integrity and transparency, ensuring that all decisions related to grant administration are made in the best interest of the community and free from any undue influence or bias.

All parties will encounter conflict of interest and perceived bias, and Council acknowledges that conflicts will not always be able to be avoided. They must, however, be identified and appropriately managed to ensure Council maintains the highest levels of integrity and public trust in the Yarra Community Grants Program.

Definitions

Conflict of interest

A conflict of interest is where an employee or panel assessor has private interests that could improperly influence, or be seen to influence, their decisions or actions in the performance of their public duties.

Conflicts may be actual, potential or perceived:

- **Actual** conflict of interest: there is a *real conflict* between a Councillor, Council Officer or panel member's public duties and private interests.
- **Potential** conflict of interest: a Councillor, Council Officer or panel member has private interests that *could conflict* with their public duties. This refers to circumstances where it is foreseeable that a conflict may arise in future and steps should be taken now to mitigate that future risk.
- **Perceived** conflict of interest: the public or a third party could *form the view* that a Councillor, Council Officer or panel member's private interests could improperly influence their decisions or actions, now or in the future.

Private interest

A private interest means anything that can influence an employee. Private interests include **direct** interests, such as an employee's own personal, family, professional or business interests. They also include **indirect interests**, such as the personal, family, professional or business interests of individuals or groups with whom the employee is, or was recently, closely associated.

Private interests may be **pecuniary** (i.e. financial), which includes any actual, potential or perceived financial gain or loss. They may also be **non-pecuniary**, which includes any tendency

toward favour or prejudice resulting from personal or family relationships, such as friendships, enemies or sporting, cultural or social activities.

Any person involved in the grant-making process must avoid wherever possible or identify, declare and manage conflict of interest in accordance with this policy, as outlined with the guidance above.

Specific processes have been established to manage consensual personal relationships as a specific category of interest.

Principles

The Council is committed to and will uphold the following principles in applying this policy:

- **Public interest:** all Councillors, Council Officers and assessment panel members have a duty to place the public interest above their private interests when carrying out their official functions.
- **Accountability:** all Councillors, Council Officers and assessment panel members are accountable for avoiding wherever possible or identifying, declaring and managing any actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest or bias that applies to them. Employees with direct reports are accountable for overseeing management of their direct reports' conflict of interest, modelling good practice and promoting awareness of conflict of interest policies and processes.
- **Risk-based approach:** the Council will take a proactive approach to assessing and managing conflict of interest risks. Employees with direct reports will ensure they are aware of the conflicts inherent in their team's work and functions and monitor the risks to which their direct reports are exposed.

Process

Identify conflict of interest

Councillors, Council Officers and assessment panel members should regularly consider the relationship between their private interests and public duties in order to identify any conflict of interest (for example, in recruitment, before major projects, tender decisions, legal proceedings or policy development).

Private relationships, including family relationships, business relationships and consensual personal relationships carry a high risk of conflict with public duties.

Declare conflict of interest

A conflict of interest **must be declared**.

Examples of conflict

To be clear, if a person involved in the grant-making process answers yes to any of the following questions in relation to their duties, there is an actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest:

- Do you, your spouse or intimate partner, or a close family member of you (e.g. parent, child, sibling, step-parent, step-child, step-sibling) have an interest in the outcome of the grant's assessment by way of being an applicant?
- Is an entity that you are employed by or for which you or a family member sits on the governing body of, an applicant for a grant?

If any of those circumstances apply, you will need to declare the conflict of interest and complete a declaration form and remove yourself from the assessment of the relevant application/applications. Conflict of interest forms are available at the end of this Guide in the appendices and will be made available at all panel meetings or other events related to the grantmaking process.

Anyone involved in the grantmaking process should discuss any conflict of interest with:

- their manager; or
- a designated disclosure officer (e.g. Governance Officer); or
- a designated management representative.

Anyone with a conflict of interest must complete and submit a *Conflict of Interest Declaration and Management* form. The declaration form sets out specific instructions for completing and submitting the form and details a conflict of interest management plan.

Anyone on a selection or procurement panel should also complete the declaration form in the following circumstances, regardless of whether a conflict of interest is identified:

- Their manager, an authorised disclosure officer, or the Grants Administration team has assessed them as warranting declaration on the basis of potential, perceived or actual conflict of interest risk.

Manage conflict of interest

Conflict of interest management plans will ensure conflicts are managed and resolved in favour of the public interest rather than that of the Councillor, Council Officer or assessment panel member, and will be based on the following mitigation strategies:

- **Restrict:** restrictions are placed on the person's involvement in the matter.
- **Remove:** the person removes themselves, or is removed, from the matter.
- **Relinquish or Resign:** the person relinquishes the private interest that is creating the conflict. Where relinquishing the interest is not possible (e.g. relationship with family) and the conflict cannot be managed in the public interest using one of the other options above,

the employee may consider removing themselves completely from involvement with the Community Grant Program.

Declaration and management of private interests

All assessment panel members and Council officers involved in grant assessment must complete a Conflict of Interest Declaration upon appointment, annually thereafter, and within five working days of any change in circumstances (i.e. their circumstances as they relate to the topics covered in the declaration form):

The declaration form sets out specific instructions for the assessment panel member and/or Council Officer for completing and submitting the form. It also provides instructions and guidance to the Grants Administration team, including that an assessment panel member is only required to record family interests that are known to them *and* that may reasonably raise an expectation of a conflict of interest. Where family members are in a direct hierarchical relationship, this relationship must be disclosed.

Breaches

A failure to avoid wherever possible or identify, declare and manage a conflict of interest in accordance with this policy could lead to disciplinary action including dismissal from participation in the grants program and/or employment at Council (consistent with the relevant industrial instrument and legislation).

Additionally, actions inconsistent with this policy may constitute misconduct under the *Public Administration Act 2004*, which includes:

- breaches of the binding Code, such as sections covering conflict of interest (section 3.7), public trust (section 3.9), gifts and benefits (section 4.2), and use of official information (section 3.4); and
- employees making improper use of their position.

For further information on managing breaches of this policy, please contact the Manager Ageing, Equity and Community Development.

Speak up

Employees who consider that a conflict of interest within the Community Grants Program may not have been declared or is not being appropriately managed should speak up and notify the Manager Ageing, Equity and Community Development, or a Council Governance Officer.

A conflict of interest is not always clear to those who have them. Any person involved with the grants program who is unsure about a possible conflict of interest, or the application of this policy, should ask the Manager Ageing, Equity and Community Development for advice.

Related policy, legislation and other documents

- Public Administration Act 2004
- Code of Conduct for Directors of Victorian Public Entities 2016
- Victorian Public Sector Commission Managing Conflicts of Interest: a Guide to Policy Development and Implementation
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010
- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006
- Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014
- Fair Work Act 2009 (CT)
- Declaration and Management of Private Interests Form
- Declaration and Management of Conflict of Interest Form
- A Guide to Applying the COI Policy Principles.

Managing awarded grants

Grant Funding Agreement

Council officers continue to engage with recipients after grants have been awarded, providing support and oversight for funded projects and navigating any required changes. The main tool for managing the grants is the grant funding agreement which provides detail on what is expected from Council and the grant recipient. The grants are a partnership between Council and the community.

Successful applicants receive a Grant Funding Agreement soon after notification of grant approval. This agreement must be signed by both parties. The grant funding agreement protects the interests of Council and the grant recipient and enables the conditions of the grant to be enforced.

Project Variations

All requests for variation to the approved project must be made in writing to the Grants team. The Grants team prepare a Project Variation Form that can be added to a SmartyGrants application.

This includes but is not limited to:

- Changes to the timing of the project
- Changes to the venue/area
- Changes to the budget
- Changes to the aims/outcomes

Variations to project details are expected to deliver similar outcomes as initially approved by Council.

Extensions will not be accepted beyond a twelve-month period from the original acquittal date in the Funding Agreement, unless extenuating circumstances can be demonstrated.

If an applicant can no longer complete any or all of the approved project, unspent grant funds must be returned to Council, and any partial expenditure must be acquitted on the relevant forms.

If grant funding agreements are not submitted by the due date, the grant will be forfeited.

Acquittal

Each grant recipient is required to submit an Acquittal Form within two months of completion of the project. The acquittal will ask for information such as:

- how many people and Yarra residents participated in the event/program
- what (if any) adjustments were made to the project
- whether the aims and objectives outlined in the application were met
- Outcome/s selected in the application will need to be reported on

The acquittal must include a financial report (budget) that outlines how funds were spent. The acquittal will be submitted via Council's Smarty Grants™ portal on the form provided by Council. It should contain supporting documents including receipts or other supporting documentation that shows expenditure of the funds granted by Council. Council also asks applicants to include photographs or videos in the acquittal where available.

Any unspent Council grant money must be returned to Council.

Applicants who do not submit an acquittal will not be eligible for future grants.

Record keeping

Any other information or correspondence to/from the application is added to the application through Council's Smarty Grants™ portal.

Dispute process

Council is committed to sound decision-making processes to ensure fair and reasonable outcomes for the Yarra community. If a complaint or dispute arises through Council's grant-making processes, Council's Customer Complaints Policy will be followed. The policy and related information can be found at <https://www.yarracity.vic.gov.au/contact-us/customer-feedback-and-complaints>

Where there is a complaint or dispute between assessment panel members, the Terms of Reference for that Panel will provide guidance.

Monitoring and evaluation

The Community Grant program provides significant funding to a wide range of community groups and is responsible for delivering key strategic outcomes for Council and community. Monitoring and evaluation ensures that the individual grant recipients and the broader program are meeting these strategic outcomes.

Individual grants will be monitored through the Smarty Grants™ acquittal system.

Yarra Community grants programs will be evaluated periodically to understand whether they are meeting required outcomes.

At the end of every application form, is an optional survey that applicants can choose to complete. It asks applicants a few questions about the application process and for suggestions how to improve the Yarra Community grants program. These answers are taken seriously; we wish to continuously improve our grants program.

Evaluations may consider who is receiving funding, which projects are being funded, the number of new recipients receiving funding, how the projects respond to the current Community Vision, Council Plan and other Council matters.

Policy Statement on Grant Allocation and Procurement Practices

The Council acknowledges that grant-making is an appropriate mechanism for achieving broad community objectives where there is no clear specification of outputs.

Recognising that closed grant rounds contradict best-practice principles in grant-making, the Council has ceased the practice of offering invitation-only grants.

The Council commits to adopting open and competitive processes for grant allocations. This ensures that grant-making aligns with principles of transparency, fairness, and accessibility, thereby fostering a diverse and vibrant community sector.

When the Council seeks to procure specific services or goods, it will rely on its established procurement policies and business systems. This includes invitations to quote, advertised tenders, contracts, or formal service agreements, ensuring that the selection of community service providers is conducted through an open and transparent process.

Vilification and funding denial or withdrawal

At Yarra, we are committed to fostering a safe, inclusive, and respectful environment for all individuals and communities. Our grants program is designed to support projects, programs, and initiatives that align with our core values of diversity, equity, and inclusion. For more information refer to [Appendix D](#).

We will deny or withdraw funding to projects, programs, or initiatives that are found to cause harm, discrimination, or marginalisation to any diverse communities. These communities may include, but are not limited to, individuals and groups based on their race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, disability, age, or any other protected characteristic.

Funding denial or withdrawal principles

By implementing this funding denial or withdrawal policy, Yarra reaffirms its commitment to promoting a society where all diverse communities are respected, protected, and empowered. We believe that by upholding these principles and having the ability to deny or withdraw funding when necessary, we can contribute to a more equitable and inclusive world.

- **Promotion of Inclusion:** We are dedicated to promoting an inclusive society where all individuals can thrive, and we do not support initiatives that contradict this principle.
- **Respect for Diversity:** We value diversity and recognise the importance of cultural, linguistic, and religious differences. We will not fund initiatives that promote discrimination or harm based on these differences.
- **Protection Against Harm:** Our commitment to not fund projects that cause harm extends to any form of harm, including, but not limited to, physical, emotional, and psychological harm.
- **Alignment with Our Values:** All projects seeking funding from Yarra must align with our mission, values, and commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Any project that conflicts with these principles will not be considered for funding.
- **Process for Assessment and Withdrawal of Funding:** When reviewing grant applications, our organisation will assess projects, programs, and initiatives for their potential impact on diverse communities. If a project is found to cause harm or promote discrimination, it will not be considered for funding. Additionally, if an already funded project is determined to cause harm or discrimination after the grant has been awarded, we reserve the right to withdraw funding from that project.
 - The decision to withdraw funding, ask for funding to be returned and/or halt the project will be based on an objective evaluation of the project's goals, methods, and potential consequences.

- Yarra will communicate this decision with the project's stakeholders and work with them to ensure that any harm is mitigated or rectified.
- **Reporting and Accountability:** We encourage individuals or organisations to report concerns related to our funding decisions, ensuring transparency and accountability in our non-funding policy. Yarra is committed to continually reviewing and improving this policy in alignment with evolving diversity and inclusion standards.

Appendices

Appendix A: Definitions

Acquittal: An acquittal report details how grant recipients have successfully completed their project and administered their grant funds responsibly and in line with the terms and conditions of the grant funding agreement. An acquittal report usually consists of a written report that summarises how the project fared against the initial objectives of the grants, along with a financial statement detailing how the funds were spent.

Auspice: An agreement where one organisation (the 'principal organisation') agrees to apply for funding on behalf of a second organisation that is not incorporated (the 'auspiced organisation'). If the funding application is successful, the principal organisation then receives, holds and distributes the funding to the auspiced organisation, so that the auspiced organisation can complete the funded project or activities.

Eligibility criteria: A set of predefined factors used to assess the eligibility of a grant application.

Funding agreement: A written agreement between Council and the grant recipient clearly articulating the purpose of the funding, the dollar amount and the grant conditions. It also defines the rights and responsibilities of each party. Once signed, organisations are under a legal obligation to comply with the stated terms and conditions.

Grant: A grant is a sum of money given to organisations or individuals for a specified purpose directed at achieving goals and objectives consistent with specific policy.

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

Guidelines: A document outlining the reason for the grant funding, eligibility criteria and how to apply for the grant.

Appendix B: Conflict of Interest

All assessors of Yarra City Council Grants must declare if they have, or could be perceived to have, a conflict of interest or bias (positive or negative).

If an Assessor has something to personally gain from an application being assessed (as either successful or unsuccessful), or if members of the public could have grounds to believe that they could personally gain from a decision, or hold a bias about an application, Assessors are advised not to proceed with their assessment.

A conflict of interest **must be declared**.

If a person involved in the grant-making process answers yes to any of the following questions in relation to their duties, there is an actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest:

- Do you, your spouse or intimate partner, or a close family member of you (e.g. parent, child, sibling, step-parent, step-child, step-sibling) have an interest in the outcome of the grant's assessment by way of being an applicant?
- Is an entity that you are employed by or for which you or a family member sits on the governing body of, an applicant for a grant?

If any of those circumstances apply, you will need to declare the conflict of interest and complete a declaration form and remove yourself from the assessment of the relevant application/applications. Potential Conflict of Interest from Panel Assessment members are actively managed by Council Officers.

Management of conflict of interest

Conflict of interest management plans will ensure conflicts are managed and resolved in favour of the public interest rather than that of the Councillor, Council Officer or assessment panel member, and will be based on the following mitigation strategies:

- **Restrict:** restrictions are placed on the person's involvement in the matter.
- **Remove:** the person removes themselves, or is removed, from the matter.
- **Relinquish or Resign:** the person relinquishes the private interest that is creating the conflict. Where relinquishing the interest is not possible (e.g. relationship with family) and the conflict cannot be managed in the public interest using one of the other options above, the employee may consider removing themselves completely from involvement with the Community Grant Program.

Panel Assessment members sign a COI declaration on each application they assess.

Appendix C: Funding denial or withdrawal principles

By implementing this funding denial or withdrawal policy, Yarra reaffirms its commitment to promoting a society where all diverse communities are respected, protected, and empowered. We believe that by upholding these principles and having the ability to deny or withdraw funding, when necessary, we can contribute to a more equitable and inclusive world.

- **Promotion of Inclusion:** We are dedicated to promoting an inclusive society where all individuals can thrive, and we do not support initiatives that contradict this principle.
- **Respect for Diversity:** We value diversity and recognise the importance of cultural, linguistic, and religious differences. We will not fund initiatives that promote discrimination or harm based on these differences.
- **Protection Against Harm:** Our commitment to not fund projects that cause harm extends to any form of harm, including, but not limited to, physical, emotional, and psychological harm.
- **Alignment with Our Values:** All projects seeking funding from Yarra must align with our mission, values, and commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Any project that conflicts with these principles will not be considered for funding.
- **Process for Assessment and Withdrawal of Funding:** When reviewing grant applications, our organisation will assess projects, programs, and initiatives for their potential impact on diverse communities. If a project is found to cause harm or promote discrimination, it will not be considered for funding. Additionally, if an already funded project is determined to cause harm or discrimination after the grant has been awarded, we reserve the right to withdraw funding from that project.
 - The decision to withdraw funding, ask for funding to be returned and/or halt the project will be based on an objective evaluation of the project's goals, methods, and potential consequences. Yarra will communicate this decision with the project's stakeholders and work with them to ensure that any harm is mitigated or rectified.
- **Reporting and Accountability:** We encourage individuals or organisations to report concerns related to our funding decisions, ensuring transparency and accountability in our non-funding policy. Yarra is committed to continually reviewing and improving this policy in alignment with evolving diversity and inclusion standards.

Appendix D: Sample of stream objectives from 2027

First Peoples Partnerships

- Support First Peoples-led ideas. Applicant organisations must be First Peoples-led, meaning organisations that are driven and managed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- Invest in First Peoples-led projects that advance self-determination through wellbeing and economic prosperity.
- Enable initiatives that celebrate and strengthen First Peoples' cultural expression, ceremony and living heritage.
- Resource First Peoples-led truth-telling projects that deepen awareness of history, culture and ongoing connection to Country.

Healthy Communities

- Support community health initiatives that promote physical activity, nutrition, mental wellbeing and healthy lifestyles.
- Strengthen community-led projects that improve food security, local food systems and access to affordable, nutritious food.
- Enable inclusive sport, recreation and physical activity programs that encourage active living across all age groups.
- Support early years programs, family wellbeing initiatives, ageing well activities and lifelong learning opportunities.
- Empower under-represented groups to participate in and shape community life, fostering greater equity and inclusion.
- Build the capacity of organisations that assist people experiencing disadvantage, isolation or barriers to participation.
- Foster neighbourhood-scale leadership and engagement initiatives that strengthen community resilience and connection.

Local Economy

- Support initiatives led by small to medium enterprises that activate retail precincts and strengthen local economies.
- Strengthen destination marketing initiatives that increase visitation, raise the profile of activity centres and attract investment.
- Support projects that build business capability, foster innovation and encourage entrepreneurship.
- Advance economic resilience by supporting partnerships that diversify and grow local enterprise opportunities.
- Encourage projects that create local jobs and training opportunities, peer-to-peer learning and networking support, particularly for young people, migrants and disadvantaged groups.
- Encourage collaboration between businesses, community groups and other local stakeholders to deliver tangible, on-the-ground improvements in defined precincts or activity centres.

Creative City

- Support the creation, development, exhibition and performance of new artistic works by artists, arts organisations or creative enterprises across all career stages and art forms.
- Strengthen cultural festivals and events that celebrate Yarra's diversity and foster community leadership and participation, encouraging new and innovative models in event delivery.
- Activate public spaces through accessible, inclusive and innovative arts and events programming.
- Support new creative partnerships that enable connections within the community and across a range of sectors.
- Encourage creative projects that are artist-led and community collaborations that strengthen cultural participation, drive cultural enrichment and deliver experiences that promote social connection.

Environment, Conservation and Climate

- Support community-led projects that expand urban greening and cooling through tree planting, community gardens and green infrastructure initiatives.
- Strengthen the restoration and protection of remnant vegetation and the enhancement of urban biodiversity corridors.
- Support community-led projects that protect and care for urban wildlife.
- Advance projects that improve the quality, accessibility and amenity of parks, waterways and natural green spaces.
- Increase community resilience and climate adaptation, including by strengthening social connections that help people withstand future climate-related shocks and stresses.
- Engage and mobilise our community to take climate action by growing a network of people who are actively involved and advocating for stronger climate policies and meaningful change.
- Engage and enable our community to make lifestyle changes to cut household carbon emissions, including supporting local food systems, encouraging a circular economy and generating less waste.

Safe Neighbourhoods

- Encourage local activations and physical improvements, such as small-scale events, installations or upgrades, that improve the look, feel and use of public spaces, strengthen neighbourhood identity and help people feel more comfortable spending time there.
- Support initiatives that improve the presentation, care and usability of public spaces, including practical responses to common issues such as litter, waste management, graffiti and general cleanliness.
- Promote projects that enhance accessibility, wayfinding and inclusive design, meaning spaces that are easier to navigate and use for people of all ages and abilities.
- Improve perceptions of safety, recognising that people are more likely to use public spaces when they feel safe. Projects should be informed by Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design, an approach that uses design – such as better lighting, clear sightlines and active frontages – to reduce opportunities for unsafe behaviour.

- Facilitate small-scale, place-based safety interventions led by local stakeholders, including environmental design measures such as improved lighting or CCTV, where these measures contribute directly to safety in shared public spaces.
- Encourage collaboration between businesses, community groups and other local stakeholders to deliver tangible, on-the-ground improvements in clearly defined public or community-accessible locations.

Connecting Yarra

- Support small, community-led groups to meet regularly for ongoing group activities such as shared meals, music, games, information sessions, gentle exercise programs or outings.
- Provide simple, low-barrier ways for people to come together, build relationships and reduce loneliness, particularly for people who may experience social isolation or barriers to participation.
- Support regular and ongoing activities that provide consistent opportunities for people to connect in a welcoming and inclusive environment.
- Support informal recreational activities, such as social sport or games, where the primary purpose is participation and social connection rather than structured training, competition or skill development.
- Support informal, community-based activities rather than structured programs, formal services or one-off events.
- Prioritise groups supporting communities that may experience barriers to participation, including First Peoples communities, multicultural and multi-faith communities, women, older people, LGBTIQ+ communities, people with disability, young people and people experiencing social or economic disadvantage.