



WHITEHORSE
CITY COUNCIL

WHITEHORSE

Community Grants Guidelines

2026



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What is the Whitehorse Community Grants Program?

The Whitehorse Community Grants program provides funding to help support the needs of the local community. This funding can be used to run programs, provide services, or purchase equipment that promotes the health and wellbeing of the people in Whitehorse. Whitehorse City Council recognises that grant funding comes from the local community and is committed to using it in a way that is fair, responsible, and ethical.

What does the Community Grants Program aim to achieve?

The Community Grants Program supports projects and initiatives that demonstrate links to the [Whitehorse 2040 Community Vision](#), which includes the strategic objectives contained in the [Integrated Council Plan 2025-2029](#).

It exists to:

1. Support the community: Help a wide range of activities, services, and programs that meet the needs of everyone in Whitehorse fairly.
2. Build a strong and inclusive community: Encourage a community that values Whitehorse's history and diversity, and promotes learning, inclusion, and healthy living.
3. Help local organisations grow: Strengthen local groups and partnerships so they can work together, be innovative, and remain sustainable.
4. Be open and fair: Make sure the grants program is clear, well-managed, and that public money is used responsibly.

What does this document include?

The Whitehorse Community Grants Guidelines explain how to apply for an annual community grant, who can apply, how applications are assessed, key dates, and what to do after your project is finished. The guidelines are based on supporting the community, being responsible with funding, and following fair and good grant-giving practices.

All community grants, funds and discounts are outlined in the [Whitehorse Community Grants and Discounts Policy 2025-2029](#).

Discounts (such as Community Space Hire and Tip Vouchers) and other grant categories, including Neighbourhood and Community House Partnership Grants, have their own separate guidelines and processes. These guidelines are contained on the [Community Grants and Discounts](#) website.

What funding categories can I apply for?

There are three types of community funding available annually to apply for:

1. **Tiered grants**
2. **Micro funds**
3. **Partnership Grant - Social and Wellbeing**



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Tiered grants

These grants are offered on an annual basis and are tiered, which means there are different funding amounts you can apply for based on the type of project you are seeking funding for.

Tier	Grant	What it Supports	Funding
1	Connection Grant	Activities that build inclusion, participation and social connection in the local community.	Up to \$3,000
	Innovation Grant	New ideas, pilot programs or creative approaches that respond to emerging needs.	
2	Collaboration Grant	Partnerships between organisations to deliver shared initiatives with sustained community impact.	Up to \$7,000
3	Festivals Grant	Community festivals and events that bring people together at scale.	Up to \$10,000
	Sustained Impact Grant	Larger initiatives that deliver measurable, long-term health and wellbeing outcomes.	

A Fact Sheet is available for each grant tier. This contains detailed information about who is eligible to apply, what types of projects and initiatives you can apply for, and how the grant will be assessed. You will be required to read the Fact Sheet before you apply for a grant.

The key dates for the tiered grants are:

	Open	Close	Assessment Period	Outcome	Funding Received	Acquittal
Tiered Grants	10 March 2026	3 May 2026	May - June 2026	July 2026	September 2026	October 2027

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Micro funds

These funds support small community projects, activities, or equipment purchases up to \$1,000. They are available three times in the year and will be open until the funding for each round runs out per a first-in, first-served basis.

A Fact Sheet is available for Micro Funds. This contains detailed information about who is eligible to apply, what types of projects and activities you can apply for, and how the applications will be assessed. You will be required to read the Fact Sheet before you apply.

The key dates for the micro funds are:

Micro Funds	Open	Close	Funding Received (latest date)
Round 1	10 March 2026	3 May 2026	September 2026
Round 2	July	Early September	January 2027
Round 3	November	Early January 2027	May 2027

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Partnership Grant – Social and Wellbeing

This grant responds directly to the needs of the communities with a focus on the most vulnerable and socially disadvantaged population groups. It is designed to create a partnership with organisations that aim to deliver long-term benefits for the community, with funding up to \$40,000 each year for a maximum of 4 years available (i.e. \$160,000 maximum funding).

The Social and Wellbeing Partnership Grant has strict requirements and a more rigorous assessment process. Details are contained in the Social and Wellbeing Partnership Grant Fact Sheet.

The key dates for the Social and Wellbeing Partnership Grant are:

Partnership Grants	Open	Close	Assessment Period	Outcome
Social and Wellbeing Partnership Grant	10 March 2026	3 May 2026	May - June 2026	July 2026



What is not funded by the Community Grants Program?

The following applications or activities will not be funded through the Community Grants Program:

- 1. Organisations with outstanding grant reporting:** If your organisation has not completed the required reporting (acquittal) for a previous Council grant, you are not eligible to apply.
- 2. Organisations with unpaid debts to Council:** If your organisation has an outstanding debt to Council and is not actively repaying it, you are not eligible to apply. Grant funding cannot be used to repay debt to Council.
- 3. Personal expenses:** Grants cannot be used to reimburse personal expenses.
- 4. Political or religious activities:** Projects, programs or activities that are political, religious or spiritual in nature will not be funded.
- 5. Organisations linked to foreign governments:** Organisations that have ties to foreign governments are not eligible for funding.
- 6. Organisations that run their own grants program:** If your organisation already provides its own community grants program, you are not eligible to apply.
- 7. Services that are the responsibility of State or Federal Government:** Projects that are primarily the responsibility of State or Federal Government (for example, core school or hospital services) will not be funded.

What is the process to receive a grant?

The high-level steps of the Community Grants process is contained below. More information about eligibility, assessment criteria, timelines and funding conditions is outlined in this document, and detailed information is contained in the individual grant Fact Sheets. These documents are available on [Council's website](#) and you will be required to read them before applying for a grant.

1. **Check eligibility and read the guidelines:** Make sure your organisation and project meet the requirements.
2. **Prepare your application:** Develop your project idea and gather the required supporting documents.
3. **Submit your application via SmartyGrants:** Complete and submit your application online before the closing date.
4. **Council assessment:** Council officers undertakes a rigorous and transparent assessment process against the published criteria.
5. **Council decision:** Final recommendations are presented at a Council Meeting for adoption.
6. **Notification and funding:** All applicants are notified of outcomes whether successful or not via email. Successful applicants will be required to submit a Funding Agreement and a Vendor Details Form via SmartyGrants.
7. **Deliver the project:** Implement your project as outlined in your approved application.
8. **Project acquittal:** Submit a final report and financial acquittal to demonstrate how the funds were used and what outcomes were achieved.



What do I need to know before I start?

- The Community Grants Program is a competitive process, and it is not possible to fund all applications. The level of financial resourcing available is limited by Council's budget allocation and its priorities. No applicant can be guaranteed funding, nor can any applicant be guaranteed to receive the full requested amount.
- You can apply for multiple grant categories if you are eligible, but only once per category and for different programs, initiatives or purchases. If an applicant applies more than once in the same category, the application for the lesser amount will be assessed.
- All applications must be submitted online using the SmartyGrants program. Late applications will not be accepted under any circumstances.
- Before you receive any funding, you will be required to agree to specific conditions of funding, which may include compliance with Child Safety, Environmental Sustainability, Gender Equality and Human Rights Standards.

Am I eligible to apply?

To apply for a Community Grant, you must meet the following requirements:

1. **You must be a not-for-profit organisation:** Your organisation must be a registered not-for-profit or incorporated association. If your group is not incorporated, you can apply with the support of an eligible organisation that agrees to act as your auspice (they take legal and financial responsibility for the grant).
2. **Your project must benefit the Whitehorse community:** The activity, program or project you are applying for must clearly benefit people who live, work, study or participate in the City of Whitehorse.
3. **You must be active in the local community:** You need to show that your organisation is genuinely connected to and involved in the Whitehorse community.
4. **You must have public liability insurance:** You must hold appropriate public liability insurance for your project before funding is released. If you are auspiced, your auspice organisation must hold this insurance. Insurance must remain current for the entire duration of the funded project.

5. You must demonstrate financial viability: You must provide recent financial records to show your organisation is financially responsible and able to manage the grant funding. If you are auspiced, your auspice organisation must provide this information.

Please note that eligibility for a Micro Fund is different to the eligibility requirements listed above. This includes a demonstration of financial need for funding. Refer to the Micro Fund Fact Sheet for more information.

How do I apply?

Applicants for Community Grants are required to register in SmartyGrants with an email address and password. The link is available on [Council's website](#) by clicking the "Apply for Grants" button.

A general organisation email and password is recommended to enable more than one person in the organisation to access applications and outcomes. All notification emails and updates regarding the application will be sent to the email address provided in the application.

All applicants must provide the following information when applying for a Community Grant:

- Proof of current incorporation
- ABN number (if applicable) and not-for-profit status.
- Certificate of Currency for Public Liability Insurance
- Financial records as outlined by the requirements of the grant category. This will likely be your most recent Financial Statements (e.g. your Profit and Loss Statement and Balance Sheet).

These documents can be uploaded onto the SmartyGrants Program. SmartyGrants will send confirmation of receipt of submitted applications to the email address provided in the application.

Support is available for applicants who are not familiar with using the SmartyGrants platform as outlined in this document.

To ensure a fair and transparent process, applications submitted after the due date and time in SmartyGrants will not be accepted.



How is my application assessed?

All grant applications are assessed through a rigorous, staged process to ensure fairness, transparency and good governance.

Each application is assessed by a minimum of two Council Officers. Officers involved in the process must declare any conflicts of interest and cannot assess the same application at more than one stage of the process. This ensures independent review and objective decision-making.

The assessment process includes the following stages:

Stage 1: Eligibility Review: Council Officers review all applications to confirm they meet the mandatory eligibility requirements, such as not-for-profit status, insurance and financial documentation. Applications that do not meet the essential criteria will not progress to the next stage.

Stage 2: Detailed Assessment: Eligible applications are assessed by a Council Officer with relevant subject matter expertise. Applications are scored against the published assessment criteria, including community need, strategic alignment, sustainability and capacity to deliver.

Stage 3: Peer Review: Officers collectively review individual assessments and scoring to ensure consistency, fairness and accuracy.

Stage 4: Review Panel: An Officer panel meets to discuss applications, moderate scores where required, and develop final funding recommendations. This stage ensures balanced consideration across all applications and grant categories.

Stage 5: Council Adoption: Final recommendations are presented to a formal Council Meeting for endorsement. Funding is only confirmed once Council has formally adopted the recommendations.

Assessment Criteria

To ensure transparent decision-making, applications for the annual community grants will be assessed and scored based on the criteria below.

Criteria A: Demonstration of community need or emerging priorities	Criteria B: Achievement of strategic outcomes	Criteria C: Project sustainability	Criteria D: Experience and capacity to deliver
Shows how well your project responds to a real or growing need in the community, and why it's important right now.	Explains the change your project will create, shows how it aligns with Council's priorities.	Looks at whether your project will continue or have lasting benefits after grant funding ends.	Considers whether your group, organisation has the skills, experience and resources to deliver the project successfully.

The assessment criteria above is applied differently for each tiered grant. Details of how a grant will be assessed is contained in the related Fact Sheet.

How funding is decided?

The final score of the application determines how much funding may be offered, subject to available funds:

- **More than 85% — 100% of the requested funding**
- **Over 75% to 85% — 85% of the requested funding**
- **Over 65% to 75% — 75% of the requested funding**
- **Less than 65% — funding may be considered subject to available funds**

Meeting the assessment criteria does not guarantee funding. Final funding decisions are subject to Council approval and available budget.



What happens if I am successful?

Council requires an Acquittal Report to be submitted by the successful recipients to demonstrate that they have met their obligations as required by the Funding Agreement.

This Acquittal Report must include the use of funds (including receipts where relevant), the activities/programs undertaken and the impact on the participants and community.

Grant extensions will only be approved in exceptional cases by Council and will be recorded in SmartyGrants. If an acquittal is incomplete or not submitted, the organisation may not be eligible for future grants.

Council can ask for repayment of grant money if the evaluation or acquittal isn't provided on time or if funds weren't used as intended. Council may also carry out random checks to make sure funds are used correctly.

Conditions of funding

- Council will only provide the amount stated in the grant offer. Any other costs are the responsibility of the organisation receiving the grant.
- Grant money must be used only for what Council approved in the offer and Funding Agreement. Any changes to how the grant is used must be requested in writing and approved by Council before making the changes.
- By accepting a grant or signing a Funding Agreement, the organisation agrees to follow the grant's rules and guidelines.
- The organisation must complete and submit the Acquittal Report by the date specified in the Funding Agreement form.
- Any unused grant money must be returned to Council, unless Council gives written approval to use it differently before the acquittal is due.
- Organisations receiving a grant must acknowledge Council in any promotion of the programs, services, or activities funded.

What support is available for me?

There are several ways Council will support you through the application process. This includes:

- **Information sessions:** These sessions provide an overview of the grant categories, eligibility requirements, assessment criteria and key dates. These sessions help you understand what Council is looking for and give you the opportunity to ask questions.
- **Grant writing workshops:** These workshops provide practical guidance on how to prepare a strong application. These sessions may include tips on responding to the assessment criteria, demonstrating community need and clearly outlining outcomes.
- **Individual support:** Applicants can contact Council for one-on-one support. This may include clarifying eligibility requirements, discussing your project idea, or navigating the SmartyGrants system.
- **Online resources:** A range of materials that are available on Council's website to assist you with your application, including the Fact Sheets for each grant category.

Information Sessions & Grant writing workshops

Information sessions

We will be delivering 4 free information sessions to provide an overview of the grants program, eligibility requirements and assessment criteria.

The sessions include:

- **In-person session** – Open to all applicants who would like to attend face-to-face.
- **Online session** – Delivered via video conference for those who prefer to attend remotely.
- **Mandarin in-language session** – Delivered with a Mandarin interpreter present and tailored to support members of the Chinese community.
- **Seniors in-person session** – Designed to support older community members, with additional time for questions and guidance.



Date	Time	Venue	Format
10 March 2026	6pm - 7.30pm	Box Hill Community Arts Centre - General	In-person
11 March 2026	6pm - 7.30pm	Microsoft Teams - General	Online
12 March 2026	6pm - 7.30pm	Willis Room - Mandarin-language	In-person
17 March 2026	9.30am - 12.30pm	Vermont South Club – Seniors Forum	In-person

Grant writing workshops

We will be offering two free grant writing workshops focused on helping you prepare a strong and competitive application. These workshops provide practical tips on responding to the assessment criteria and clearly articulating your project outcomes.

Date	Time	Venue	Format
19 March 2026	6pm - 8pm	Willis Room, Civic Centre	In person
25 March 2026	6pm - 8pm	Microsoft Teams	Online

You must register your attendance for an Information session or a Grant writing workshop via the following link:

[Click here](#)  or Scan QR code:



Individual support

Applicants can contact Council for one-on-one support. This may include clarifying eligibility requirements, discussing your project idea, or navigating the SmartyGrants system.

You will be directed to the website to explore our online resources as a first step, or you can request a hardcopy of the documents you require by emailing grants@whitehorse.vic.gov.au.

Online resources

A range of materials have been developed to assist you with the application process. These are available on [Council's website](#).



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Whitehorse City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Owners of the land. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

CONTACTING COUNCIL

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Social Media: Connect with Whitehorse City Council



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