

Community Grants and Discounts Policy 2025-2029

1. PURPOSE

The Whitehorse Community Grants and Discounts Policy provides a framework for the provision of the Whitehorse Community Grants and Discounts Program to the Whitehorse community, based on the principles of community development, good governance and best practice in grant making.

The Whitehorse Community Grants and Discounts Program provides support for the community to respond to community needs, to provide programs and services that make a positive contribution to the health and wellbeing of the Whitehorse community, and to deliver strategic outcomes for Council. Whitehorse City Council acknowledges funding for grants is sourced from the local community and is committed to providing this funding effectively, efficiently, equitably and ethically.

2. OBJECTIVES

The Whitehorse Community Grants and Discounts Program has four objectives:

- 2.1 Strengthen the Whitehorse community through supporting a diverse range of activities, services, and programs that are responsive to community needs in an equitable way.
- 2.2 Create a resilient community that embraces the history and diversity of Whitehorse and promotes learning, inclusivity and healthy living.
- 2.3 Build the capacity of local organisations and strengthen partnerships within the Whitehorse community to support innovation, collaboration and sustainability.
- 2.4 Provide a transparent and rigorous process to the Community Grants and Discounts Program, to support good governance and the appropriate distribution of public funds.

3. SCOPE

The Policy applies to Council-managed grants and discounts provided to the community through the Whitehorse Community Grants and Discounts Program. It applies to all Council Officers and Councillors involved in the promotion, assessment and management of the Community Grants and Discounts Program where Council is providing a funding contribution or benefit directly to a not-for-profit organisation or auspice organisation.

The Whitehorse Community Grants and Discounts Policy is supplemented with corresponding Guidelines, released annually in line with the opening of the grant and discount rounds. The Guidelines provide detailed information about the application process and provide more detailed information that is easy to follow.

4. STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

The Whitehorse Community Grants and Discounts Program directly aligns with the Integrated Council Plan 2025-2029 (including Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan), specifically with the following objectives:

Strategic Direction 1 – Community

Objective 1.1 – An involved and connected community

Objective 1.2 – A community that fosters social inclusion, cohesion and respect

Objective 1.3 – A healthy and active community

Objective 1.4 – A community where people feel safe

Strategic Direction 3 – Economy

Objective 3.1 – A thriving local economy

Objective 3.3 – Diverse education, employment and volunteering opportunities

Strategic Direction 4 – Natural

Objective 4.2 – An environmentally sustainable and climate resilient City

5. COMMITMENTS

- 5.1 Council will ensure that grant and discount processes are delivered in a fair and transparent manner.
- 5.2 Council will provide grants that have demonstrated links to the Whitehorse 2040 Community Vision, meet application eligibility criteria and assessment processes, and agree to funding conditions.
- 5.3 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.

6. POLICY

6.1 Grants Administration

- 6.1.1 Grant opportunities will be widely promoted across the municipality using a variety of promotional avenues to enable everyone who is eligible to apply for a grant with the same opportunity to do so.
- 6.1.2 The Whitehorse Community Grants Program will have a clear set of guidelines that outlines to the community the purpose, process and conditions of the grant program, such as:
 - Objectives of the program
 - Application process
 - Eligibility and assessment criteria
 - Acquittal/reporting
 - Timelines
 - Funding conditions
- 6.1.3 Council will administer the Whitehorse Community Grants and Discounts Program using an online grants administration system (currently SmartyGrants), to ensure a consistent, efficient and user-friendly customer experience. Support regarding use of this system will be provided at grant information sessions and upon request.
- 6.1.4 Applicants (both successful and unsuccessful) may be given the opportunity to opt-in to receiving information about other (non-Council) grant funding streams, where applicable.

6.2 Privacy

- 6.2.1 Personal information about individuals collected during the grant process will be treated in accordance with Council's Privacy Policy.

6.3 Eligibility

- 6.3.1 All grants offered through the Whitehorse Community Grants and Discounts Program are subject to the following mandatory criteria:
 - 6.3.1.1 Applicant must be a Not-for-Profit Organisation or Incorporated Association, as defined in this policy, or be auspiced by an appropriate organisation that meets these criteria.

- 6.3.1.2 The funded project, service, program, initiative or activity must provide benefit to the City of Whitehorse community.
- 6.3.1.3 Applicant must demonstrate they are actively engaged in the local community.
- 6.3.1.4 Applicants must provide evidence of current public liability insurance coverage suitable for the project/ initiative or proof of the same coverage by an auspice organisation prior to funding being awarded. Grant approval is contingent upon applicants obtaining the required insurance if it is not already held at the time of application, and it must be in place before funds are released by Council. Public Liability Insurance must be maintained for the duration of the funding or project period. More information about the level of insurance coverage needed and how this can be obtained will be outlined in the Guidelines available when the grants and discount rounds open.
- 6.3.1.5 Applicants must provide financial records to show financial viability. If being auspiced, the auspicing organisation is to provide their financial records.

6.4 Grant Categories

- 6.4.1 Council reserves the right to amend the grant title, funding amounts and purpose of the grants to reflect Council priorities and available funds.

Category	Availability	Description	Funding Level
Micro funds	Multiple times per year	These grants provide support for small projects/ initiatives or equipment purchases. Available until the budget allocation is exhausted.	Up to \$1,000
Tier 1	Annual	<p>These grants focus on fostering participation and local inclusion or provide initial support to activate new ideas with promising outcomes.</p> <p>This grant can be applied to a range of projects and initiatives, including but not limited to those that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Focus on improving the overall health and wellbeing of the community, such as those that support healthy eating, increasing physical activity, or supporting healthy minds. – Support positive ageing in the community, such as those that tackle ageism, social inclusion and digital participation. – Enhance creativity in the local community. – Foster inclusion and civic participation to build deeper social connections across different cultures, genders and age groups within the local community. <p>This tier includes the following grant categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connection Grant: This grant provides funding to foster participation and local inclusion. • Innovation Grant: This grant provides initial support for organisations to test new initiatives, programs or services in the local community. 	Up to \$3,000

Category	Availability	Description	Funding Level
Tier 2 – Collaboration Grant	Annual	<p>This grant supports partnerships and scaling to achieve positive outcomes in the local community through collaboration with one or more organisations.</p> <p>It provides an opportunity for organisations to respond to emerging community needs/ trends in a collaborative way and or to trial new ideas that provide sustained impact.</p>	\$3,001 - \$7,000
Tier 3	Annual	<p>These grants support larger scale programs, services, projects, initiatives or activities that will significantly benefit the Whitehorse community and deliver positive health and wellbeing outcomes for Whitehorse.</p> <p>This tier includes the following grant categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Festivals Grant: This grant provides support for local community events that deliver positive outcomes at a large scale. • Sustained Impact Grant: This grant provides support for projects/ initiatives that demonstrate long-term benefits for the local community. 	Up to \$10,000

Category	Grant Availability	Description	Funding Level
Partnership Grants	4-yearly	<p>These grants are designed to foster a collaborative relationship with Council to deliver on the achievement of long-term positive outcomes for the local community.</p> <p>This category includes the following grant categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Neighbourhood and Community House (NCH) Partnership Grants <p>These grants incorporate Council's financial support NCHs and promote the achievement of aligned strategic goals.</p> Social and Wellbeing Partnership Grants <p>These grants respond directly to the needs of the communities with a focus on the most vulnerable and socially disadvantaged population groups.</p> 	<p>Up to \$45,000 with rate cap annual indexation</p> <p>Up to \$40,000 each year for a maximum 4-year period (\$160,000 maximum funding over 4 years)</p>

Category	Availability	Description	Discount Level
Discounts	Per Guidelines	<p>These discounts are designed to provide additional, non-financial support for the community through a reduction in the cost of Council's services.</p> <p>This category includes the following discount supports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Space Hire A proportional discount in relation to selected Council owned and operated venues. Determined within the available budget allocation. Tip Vouchers Tipping passes to dispose of waste through Council's Recycling and Waste Centre. Determined through demonstrated need and in line with existing recycling and waste management practices. 	<p>Proportional discount on venue hire cost</p> <p>Subject to a limited number of vouchers each year</p>

6.5 Assessment Process – Tiered Grants

- 6.5.1 All individuals involved with any stage of the assessment process must adhere to conflict-of-interest requirements.
- 6.5.2 The assessment process for the annual community grants is as follows:
- Council Officers will review all applications to determine their eligibility.
 - Applications that meet all essential criteria will be referred to a Council Officer with relevant subject matter expertise for assessment against the corresponding grant criteria.
- 6.5.3 An Officer panel is established to discuss all applications and provide a final recommendation against each application.
- 6.5.4 To ensure transparent decision-making, applications for the annual community grants will be assessed, and scored, based on the relevant weighted criteria associated with the grant category:

	Tier 1: Up to \$3,000	Tier 2: \$3,001 to \$7,000	Tier 3: Up to \$10,000
Criteria	Weighting		
Demonstration of achievement of strategic outcomes aligned to either the Whitehorse Community Vision 2040 or the Integrated Council Plan 2025-2029 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Application clearly articulates how their proposed project or initiative will achieve strategic community outcomes and how this will be measured. 	35%	35%	35%
Evidence of community need or emerging priority <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Application is supported by provision of data, case studies and/or, local knowledge etc., which demonstrates the community need for the proposed project/ initiative. 	20%	20%	25%
Project is sustainable into the future <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Application demonstrates that the success of the project/ initiative will not rely on ongoing funding from Council. 	30%	25%	15%
Capacity to deliver <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Application demonstrates that the organisation has genuine capacity to deliver the project/ initiative. Application must be accompanied with a clear project plan and timeline. 	15%	20%	25%

	Tier 1: Up to \$3,000	Tier 2: \$3,001 to \$7,000	Tier 3: Up to \$10,000
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Application clearly demonstrates how the requested funding from Council will be allocated. - Application demonstrates in-kind and financial support from other sources. 			

- 6.5.5 In addition to the relevant weighted criteria associated with the grant category, in instances of equal assessments, priority will be given to:
- New applicants or applicants that have not previously received funding
 - Applicants that do not have access to other grants outside of the Whitehorse Community Grants and Discounts Program
 - Projects/ initiatives that support gaps in Council's current service provision
 - Projects/ initiatives that provide benefits to a wider reach of people in the local community
 - Applicants that do not have other in-kind and/or financial support from Council
 - Applicants with fewer successful grant submissions across different Whitehorse Community Grant categories.
- 6.5.6 Outcomes from the assessment process will be outlined in a Recommendations Report presented at the July Ordinary Council Meeting for adoption. This will include the final assessment rationale for successful grant applicants. Councillors have the ability to determine no grants are awarded as a whole during this meeting.
- 6.5.7 Council will promote successful grant applicants on Council's corporate website, including a description of the initiative.
- 6.5.8 All applicants will be informed of the outcome of their application in writing and will have the opportunity to discuss the outcome or seek feedback on their application with Council officers if required. All outcomes are documented in SmartyGrants.

6.5.9 The application and assessment process for Micro Funds and Discounts will be outlined in the related annual Whitehorse Community Grants and Discounts Program Guidelines. Process requirements will be proportional to the size of the grant or discount to make it easier for applicants of smaller grants and discounts.

6.6 Late Applications

6.6.1 Applications must be submitted by the due date and time that is outlined in the related Whitehorse Community Grants and Discounts Program Guidelines. Late applications will not be accepted.

6.7 Conflict of Interest

6.7.1 Council Officers involved with the Community Grants assessment process, including assessing and recommending grant applications, are required to declare any conflict of interest, in line with Council's Conflict of Interest Policy. Councillors must also declare any conflict of interest and be excused from any decision-making process.

6.7.2 Anyone that declares a conflict of interest will be exempt from discussing the application and will not be able to influence or decide on any matter relating to the specific applicant.

6.8 Conditions of Funding

6.8.1 The following standard conditions apply to all funding categories within the Whitehorse Community Grants and Discounts Program:

- Council's financial contribution is limited to the funding amount awarded in the written offer, with all other costs associated with the application being the responsibility of the grant recipient.
- Funding must only be used for the purposes outlined by Council in the written offer and funding agreement.
- Changes to the funding scope can only be made if requested in writing and approved by Council before implementation.
- When an organisation accepts a grant and/or signs a funding agreement it means they accept the conditions within this policy and the guidelines relevant to the specific grant category.
- The organisation receiving a grant agrees to complete the acquittal form by the date specified in the annual guidelines for the relevant funding period.

- Unexpended funds must be returned to Council, unless a written approval for variation to agreed funding is obtained prior to the acquittal due date.
- All organisations receiving community grant funding must recognise Council in their promotional material for the services, programs or initiatives being delivered.

6.8.2 Any other funding conditions will be outlined in the annual Whitehorse Community Grants and Discounts Program Guidelines, letters of offer and funding agreements.

6.9 Acquittals

6.9.1 Grant extensions will only be approved under exceptional circumstances by the Manager Communities, Engagement and Integrated Planning and will be documented in SmartyGrants.

6.9.2 Successful applicants must provide a financial acquittal of funds, including receipts relating to the grant, and complete a brief evaluation by the date specified in the annual guidelines for the relevant funding period.

6.9.3 Incomplete or non-existent acquittals will result in an organisation being ineligible for future funding rounds.

6.9.4 Council reserves the right to seek reimbursement of grant funding from a funded organisation if the required evaluation or acquittal is not provided in a timely manner, or if Council is not satisfied that funds were used for the intended purpose as outlined in the original application. Council may conduct random audits of grant applications to ensure funds are being used in accordance with the grant application.

6.10 Applying for Multiple Grants

6.10.1 Council will only accept one application per organisation in each grant category per year.

6.10.2 Where an applicant submits more than one grant application, each application must meet the specified eligibility criteria and clearly identify a different program, service, project, activity or purchase. Applications that are deemed to be effectively the same, will only be considered in relation to the lesser grant.

7. TERMS AND CONDITIONS

- 7.1 Application must be submitted by the closing date and time specified for the specific grant round and submitted via SmartyGrants.
- 7.2 Applicants must submit all supporting material when applying. Given the competitive nature of grants, no late submission of supporting documents can be accepted unless requested by Council.
- 7.3 Applicants must have successfully completed all reporting requirements for grants received in the previous funding period and have no outstanding debts with Council.
- 7.4 Applications for Tier 1 – 3 grants must demonstrate that the funding will be expended by 30 June the following year.
- 7.5 Not funded by the Community Grants Program:
 - 7.5.1 Applications from an organisation that has not satisfactorily acquitted previous grants.
 - 7.5.2 Applications from an organisation that has an outstanding debt to Council and is not maintaining regular repayments. Funding from the Community Grants and Discounts Program cannot be used to repay debt to Council.
 - 7.5.3 Reimbursement of personal expenses.
 - 7.5.4 Projects, services, programs, initiatives or activities that are political, religious or spiritual in nature.
 - 7.5.5 Organisations that have ties to foreign governments.
 - 7.5.6 Applications from an organisation that provides their own community grants program.
 - 7.5.7 A program, service or activity that is primarily considered the responsibility of State or Federal Government for example, schools and hospitals.

8. DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of Whitehorse Community Grants and Discounts Program, the following definitions apply:

- Acquittal: Information provided by a grant recipient that ensures funds have been administered responsibly and in line with conditions of the grant program.

- Auspice: An auspice is an established not-for-profit legal entity that agrees to take responsibility for the grant obligations of an unincorporated or informal or newly established group with no legal status.
- Discount: A deduction from the usual cost of something provided to organisations or community groups based on a set of criteria to determine the level of cost reduction to apply.
- Grant: A sum of money given to organisations or community groups with an expectation that the money will be used for an agreed and specified purpose.
- Incorporated Association: Incorporated associations are typically clubs or community groups, operating as not-for-profit, whose members have made the decision to give their organisation a formal legal structure. Incorporated associations are registered under the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012.
- Not-for-Profit Organisation: The Australian Charities and Not-for-Profit Commission defines 'not-for-profits' as organisations that do not operate for the profit, personal gain or other benefit of particular people.
- Rate Cap: A Victorian Government regulation that limits the maximum average increase in council's total revenue from general rates and municipal charges each year.

9. RESPONSIBILITIES

The Communities, Engagement and Integrated Planning Department is responsible for the Community Grants and Discounts Program and the eligibility checks and assessment of relevant applications, however, other departments across Council are involved in the assessment of relevant community grant applications.

10. RELATED POLICIES & LEGISLATION

- Whitehorse 2040 Community Vision
- Integrated Council Plan 2025-2029 (including Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan)
- Victorian Local Government Act 2020
- Victorian Auditor General's Office - Fraud Control over Local Government Grants 2022
- Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012

- Australian Institute of Grants Management (AIGM)

Internal Use Only

11. REVIEW

Responsible Manager: Manager Communities, Engagement & Integrated Planning

Date Adopted: November 2025 (scheduled)

Date of Next Review: November 2029

This policy has been reviewed for Human Rights Charter compliance.