

9.7 Policy Review - Community Grants Program

REPORT BY THE FINANCIAL PLANNING COORDINATOR
TO 14 DECEMBER 2022 ORDINARY MEETING
GOV400098, GRA600009

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. **receive the report by the Manager Financial Planning on the Policy Review - Community Grants Program;**
2. **place the revised Community Grants Program Policy on public exhibition for 28 days; and**
3. **adopt the revised Community Grants Program Policy if no submissions are received.**

Executive summary

A review of Council's Community Grants Program Policy has made a recommendation to include the category 'Sports Advisory Group'.

Disclosure of Interest

Nil

Detailed report

At the ordinary meeting of Council on 15 June 2022, a recommendation was made to update the Community Grants Policy to include financial assistance for Sporting Clubs and individuals, which was previously managed through each Sports Council.

The revised Policy now includes the category 'Sports Advisory Group'. To be eligible under this category, applicants must satisfy the following criteria:

- Be registered with a club, which is affiliated with a Mid-Western Sports Advisory Group and pays an annual membership fee for all members.
- Qualify as a NSW or Australian representative either as an individual or as part of a team.
- Have the application signed by a representative of the local sporting club or association.
- Must not have received funding under this program in the preceding 12 months for the sport that the application refers to.
- Under special circumstances, funding may be provided for circumstances not meeting the above criteria. Requests made under this special provision should be accompanied by detailed reasons.

Applicants are excluded from the requirements of the Community Grants Assessment Criteria and must complete a Sports Advisory Group Funding Application that will be assessed by a panel of at least two relevant staff members. The Cap for this category is \$500 per individual. The policy revision also:

- removes the Bushfire community resilience funding as this assessment is complete; and
- includes a new assessment criteria that will consider alignment with Council's Disability Inclusion Action Plan objectives. This was a recommended action within the plan endorsed on 21 September 2022.

Community Plan implications

Theme	Looking After Our Community
Goal	A safe and healthy community
Strategy	Support networks, program and facilities which promote health and wellbeing and encourage healthy lifestyles

Strategic implications

Council Strategies

Not Applicable

Council Policies

By adopting the recommendation, Council is endorsing the Community Grants Program Policy changes be placed on public exhibition for comment. Should any submissions be received, a further report will be presented back to Council for consideration. If no submissions are received at the end of the exhibition period, the revised policy will be adopted and apply from that date.

Legislation

Not Applicable

Financial implications

Not Applicable

Associated Risks

Not Applicable

AMANDA COVER
FINANCIAL PLANNING COORDINATOR

LEONIE JOHNSON
CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

24 October 2022

Attachments: 1. REVIEW - Community Grants Program Policy 2022.

APPROVED FOR SUBMISSION:

BRAD CAM
GENERAL MANAGER



POLICY COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAM

*A prosperous
and progressive
community.*

ADOPTED		REFERENCE	V4.3TBC
COUNCIL MEETING MIN NO	121/22TBC	REVIEW DATE	APRIL 2026TBC
DATE:	20-APRIL-2022TBC	FILE NUMBER	FIN300032

Objective

The objective of this policy is to:

- establish clear and transparent criteria by which financial assistance requests will be assessed and allocations determined;
- provide a process which allows Council to conduct a meaningful and equitable comparison of requests
- provide guidelines for the submission of applications and assessment process
- inform grantees of the requirements to acquit their funding

Scope

This policy applies to requests for financial assistance from not-for-profit community based organisations, groups and individuals that meet community needs and benefit residents in our community.

The purpose of the Community Grants Program is to enable Council to support local projects and activities put forward by those organisations that offer a significant contribution to community outcomes and goals as provided in the Towards 2030 Community Plan. In doing so, financial assistance is to be provided in a consistent, equitable and transparent manner.

Legislative requirements

The Community Grants Program is governed by the following legislative framework.

The Local Government Act 1993, Section 356, states:

- (1) A council may, in accordance with a resolution of the council, contribute money or otherwise grant financial assistance to persons for the purpose of exercising its functions.
- (2) A proposed recipient who acts for private gain is not ineligible to be granted financial assistance but must not receive any benefit under this section until at least 28 days' public notice of the council's proposal to pass the necessary resolution has been given.
- (3) However, public notice is not required if:
 - (a) the financial assistance is part of a specific program, and
 - (b) the program's details have been included in the council's draft operational plan for the year in which the financial assistance is proposed to be given, and
 - (c) the program's proposed budget for that year does not exceed 5 per cent of the council's proposed income from the ordinary rates levied for that year, and
 - (d) the program applies uniformly to all persons within the council's area or to a significant group of persons within the area.
- (4) Public notice is also not required if the financial assistance is part of a program of graffiti removal work.

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The Local Government Act 1993, Section 377, states:

(1) A council may, by resolution, delegate to the general manager or any other person or body (not including another employee of the council) any of the functions of the council, other than the following:

(q) a decision under section 356 to contribute money or otherwise grant financial assistance to persons,

Related policies and plans

- Code of Conduct
- Towards 2030 Community Plan
- Land Acquisition and Disposal Policy
- Disposal of Assets Policy

Policy

General Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible for assessment all applicants must:

- be an incorporated not-for-profit organisation or Individual. Unincorporated community groups are eligible to apply provided they are auspiced by an incorporated not-for-profit organisation;
- have met any previous Mid-Western Regional Council grant acquittal requirements;
- have no outstanding debts of any kind to Mid-Western Regional Council; and
- complete the online application form by the applicable cut-off time and date.

Mid-Western Regional Council does not provide grants under this policy for:

- events that are eligible to apply for the Events Assistance Program, excluding the Mudgee, Gulgong and Rylstone Shows'
- programs that typically fall under the responsibility of another level of government.

In-kind support for the waiver of rates, fees and charges is considered financial assistance within this policy and therefore eligible for applications. The waiver of a bond or security deposit is not considered financial assistance, however if any damage should arise as a result of the event, the applicant will be liable for the cost.

COMMUNITY GRANT CATEGORIES

Proposed projects must fall within one of the following categories (applicants cannot apply for funds in more than one category):

Youth Representative Grants Category

Youth representative grants are open to:

- persons that meet the eligibility criteria to represent on Youth Council; and

- are selected to represent Australia at any international competition or event, including but not limited to sporting, academic or the arts.

GRANT CAP: This grant is limited to \$1,000, and will be excluded from the requirements of the Community Grants Assessment Criteria.

Disability Representative Grants Category

Disability representative grants are open to:

- Persons that meet the definition of being disabled as per the Disability Discrimination Act 1992; and
- Are selected to represent at any state level or above, competition or event, including but not limited to sporting, academic or the arts.

GRANT CAP: This grant is limited to \$1,000, and will be excluded from the requirements of the Community Grants Assessment Criteria.

Business Associations Category

Business associations are organisations that represent the business community within the Mid-Western Regional Council area. To be eligible for funding the objectives of these organisations should align with strategies identified within Council's Community Plan theme 'Building a Strong Local Economy'.

For the purpose of this policy the business areas available for funding are:

- Gulgong
- Kandos/Rylstone
- Mudgee

Council may allocate an annual funding amount to a business association in each area. Council will prioritise claims based on need and program benefit, and will not cover the payment of wages for administration duties.

GRANT CAP: The annual amount for each business association per financial year shall not exceed \$10,000.

Community Groups Category

Community Groups are organisations that represent the community interests within the Mid-Western Regional Council area. To be eligible for funding the objectives of these organisations should align with strategies identified within Council's Community Plan themes 'Looking after our Community' or 'Protecting our Natural Environment'.

Council will prioritise claims based on need and program benefit, and will not cover the payment of wages for administration duties. Only one cap can be applied, per annum, for each program.

IN-KIND GRANT CAP: \$5,000

GRANTING OF COUNCIL ASSETS: See the Disposal of Assets Policy.

COMMUNITY EVENTS CAP: \$5,000

SPECIFIC PROGRAM/PROJECT CAP: \$10,000 (non-capital)

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Capital Grants Category

Capital Grants are grants provided to an organisation (that meets the general eligibility criteria) towards a major item of capital expenditure, such as the construction/upgrade of a building or facility. To be eligible for funding, capital projects should align with strategies identified within Council's Community Plan.

Council will prioritise claims based on need and program benefit.

LOANS: Council will not lend funds to organisations for capital expenditure.

COUNCIL LAND: Council will not gift land to organisations for capital infrastructure, however, Council may consider applying an approved grant amount as an in-kind payment, or partial payment, towards purchase of surplus Council land. All requirements of the Land Acquisition and Disposal Policy must be met.

CAPITAL PROJECT CAP: \$25,000 or 50% of the total project cost, whichever is the lower.

Bushfire Community Recovery and Resilience Fund Grants Category

~~The Bushfire Community Recovery and Resilience Fund (BCRRF) grants are provided to not-for-profit organisations or individual applicants to support sustained economic recovery and community resilience following the 2019-2020 bushfire season. The BCRRF Phase Two is designed to support community recovery by funding projects and initiatives that will promote community well-being, social and broader recovery and future disaster resilience following the bushfires.~~

~~Community projects need to meet one or more of the following objectives:~~

- ~~▪ Improve community capacity, capability and resilience~~
- ~~▪ Improve community connectedness, identity of place and cultural heritage~~
- ~~▪ Improve and build regional and community knowledge~~
- ~~▪ Assist in local preparedness to future disasters and hazards~~
- ~~▪ Promote future disaster resilience following the bushfires~~
- ~~▪ Promote community well-being~~
- ~~▪ Support social and broader community recovery~~
- ~~▪ Support commemoration~~

~~Council will prioritise claims based on need and program benefit.~~

~~**PROJECT CAP:** Total funding is capped at \$62,500. This funding has been provided through the joint Commonwealth-State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangement under the Bushfire Community Resilience and Recovery Fund.~~

Sports Advisory Group Category

This Program provides funding to individuals from affiliated Sports Advisory Group members who satisfy the below criteria. Applications for funding from sporting teams will be considered under the special assistance clause.-

To be eligible for funding, applicants must satisfy the following criteria:

- Be registered with a club that is affiliated with a Mid-Western Sports Advisory Group and pays an annual membership fee for all members.
- Qualify as a NSW or Australian representative either as an individual or as part of a team.

- Have the application signed by a representative of the local sporting club or association.
- Must not have received funding under this program in the preceding 12 months for the sport that the application refers to
- Under special circumstances funding may be provided for circumstances not meeting the above criteria. Requests made under this special provision should be accompanied by detailed reasons

The Sports Advisory Group Funding Applications received are assessed by a panel of at least 2 relevant staff members.

GRANT CAP: This grant is limited to \$500 per individual, and will be excluded from the requirements of the Community Grants Assessment Criteria.

Other Grants Category

Other grants include all not-for-profit or individual applications that do not meet one of the above categories, but still meet the General Eligibility Criteria. To be eligible for funding, these requests should align with strategies identified within Council's Community Plan.

GRANT CAP: \$2,000

Grants Management Process

APPLICATIONS

All grant applications are to be completed online, accessed from the Mid-Western Regional Council website. If you are unable to access the internet, facilities are available for lodgement at Council's Customer Service locations.

ASSESSMENT

All applications (except Youth Representative Grants, Disability Representative Grants and Sports Advisory Group Grants) received are assessed by a panel of at least three relevant staff members. If required, some applications may be assessed by external parties who have skills and professional expertise that benefit the assessment process.

The application will be assessed against the following criteria relative to the amount of funding requested:

- Degree of benefit to the community aligned with the community plan
- Amount of resident participation
- Level of consultation and collaboration with other not-for-profit local groups in the planning and delivery of the project
- Organisational capacity to deliver the program or project
- Highlighted alignment with objectives in Council's disability inclusion action plan

Unsuccessful applicants are encouraged to seek feedback from staff on their application. Even though an application may meet the criteria it may not be competitive against other applications.

APPROVAL

Only Council has authority to approve grants for financial assistance. Council will be provided with a report on a quarterly basis to consider the assessment panel's recommendations for which applications will be funded and to what amount.

ACQUITTAL REQUIREMENTS

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To ensure financial assistance is used by the recipient for the specified purpose all grantees must submit reports back to Council in accordance with the below requirements depending on the type of activity.

Grant Amount	Project	All other activities
<\$2,000	Brief report on the outcomes achieved at the end of the project	Brief report on the outcomes achieved at the end of the financial year
>\$2,000	In addition to the above a financial report with copies of invoices attached where relevant	In addition to the above annual financial statements with copies of invoices attached where relevant

UNSPENT GRANTS

Where unspent grants are reported in the acquittal this may jeopardise future applications for funding.

TIMETABLE

	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4
Applications open online via MWRC website	1 st May	1 st July	1 st October	1 st January
Applications close	6 weeks after opening	6 weeks after opening	6 weeks after opening	6 weeks after opening
Report to Council meeting (month)	July	October	February	May

**These dates are based on anticipated Council meeting dates, if a Council meeting is moved or cancelled - applications will be submitted at the next available meeting date.

PRIVACY

Applicants should be aware that copies of applications for financial assistance may be included in a report to Council which will be published in the Council Business Paper and will be publicly available as well as being published on Council's website.

Variations to Policy

Council may vary the amount and timing of Community Grants outside the Policy restrictions when a project or program is deemed to meet additional/high demand community needs or provide very high economic benefit to the region. Varied grants must be awarded through a Council Resolution and will meet all requirements of the Local Government Act at the time of providing the grant. Additional justification or evidence may be required from the applicant, and this is at Councils discretion.

Definitions

Term	Meaning
Grant Caps	<p>A grant cap provides the maximum amount of claim for each grant category. There are many beneficial programs, groups and projects that are carried out within the Mid-Western Regional Council community, and caps are designed to ensure that grant funding is available for many, not just some.</p> <p>Grants should be applied for based on need. Caps are not allocations, they are maximums, and a lesser amount may be granted dependant on how the application meets the assessment criteria. Caps are also designed to give guidance to applicants around expectation of Council support.</p> <p>Applicants may only apply for a grant in ONE category, per project. Some caps apply as an annual maximum, where this is the case, it is specified in the category definitions. Applicants should advise which cap they are applying under; however, Council reserves the right to apply the most appropriate cap to the grant application.</p>
Acquittal	<p>An acquittal is a written report submitted after the funded project is complete or at end of financial year. It details how the grantee administered the grant funds and met the outcomes in the funding application.</p>
Auspice	<p>An auspice is an incorporated not-for profit organisation who receives, administers and acquits the funding on behalf of an unincorporated grant applicant. Unincorporated groups seeking funding must apply for funding under an auspice.</p>
Financial Assistance	<p>Payments given to individuals or organisations which are not commensurate with a reciprocal benefit received by Council.</p> <p>It should be noted the following examples are not considered financial assistance and are therefore outside this policy:</p> <p>Payments made in exchange for the provision of a service which Council may otherwise provide itself.</p> <p>Statutory contributions such as SES, Rural Fire Service and NSW Fire Brigades.</p> <p>Waiver of a bond or security deposit.</p>
Grant	<p>Cash provided to applicants for the specified purpose as outlined in the application. A grant is given with conditions that is must be administered for that purpose identified with requirement for acquittal.</p>

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In-kind	Refers to an arrangement whereby Council foregoes revenue on things for which they would normally charge a fee.
Not-for-profit organisation	A not-for-profit organisation is an organisation that does not directly operate for the profit or gain of its owners, members or shareholders, either directly or indirectly. Any profit must be used to implement the organisation’s purpose and must not be distributed to members, owners or shareholders either while the organisation is operating or when it winds up.
Project/Program	A Project is a temporary organisation that is created for the purpose of delivering one or more business products according to an agreed Business Case
Business Association Group	Business associations are organisations that represent the business community within the Mid-Western Regional Council area. Examples include Chambers of Commerce.
Community Groups	Community Groups are organisations that represent the community interests within the Mid-Western Regional Council area. Examples include (but are not limited to) Fundraising Institutes, Hobby/Social Groups, Sports/Arts/Environmental/Health Groups, Associations etc

ONLINE APPLICATION

The online application form requires the below information.

APPLICATION FORM – COMMUNITY GRANTS

Applicants Details

- Name of organisation
- Contact person
- Address
- Phone
- Email
- ABN
- Bank Account

Project/Activity Details

- Name of project/activity
- Amount of funding requested
- Start and finish date
- Briefly describe project/activity

Address Criteria

- Degree of benefit to the community aligned with the community plan
- Amount of resident participation
- Level of consultation and collaboration with other local groups

- Organisational capacity to deliver the project/activity
- [Highlighted alignment with objectives in Council's disability inclusion action plan](#)

Financial Information

- Income
- Expenditure
- Net budget. If the application shows a budget surplus there must be an explanation provided to justify why surplus funds are required and how they are to be used. For example a charitable donation or organisation fund raising towards a major purchase
- Most recent bank account balance, from either bank statement or treasurers report

Attachments

- Certificate of incorporation or letter from auspicng body

APPLICATION FORM – YOUTH REPRESENTATIVE GRANTS/ DISABILITY REPRESENTATIVE GRANTS

Applicants Details

- Name
- Date of Birth
- Address
- Phone
- Email
- ABN
- Bank Account

Project/Activity Details

- Name of project/activity
- Amount of funding requested
- Start and finish date
- Briefly describe project/activity