

Hepburn Shire Council

Environmental Group Grants Program
Guidelines 2025



Purpose

Hepburn Shire Council's Environment Groups Grant Program supports community groups that work to enhance and protect the environment of Hepburn Shire.

Council has committed \$15,000 to support local community environment groups in 2025. Potential applicants are identified by Council Officers and will be invited to apply by the Biodiversity Officer. Applicants will need to demonstrate that their group conducts on-ground environmental works or promotes/advocates for the protection and enhancement of ecological health within Hepburn Shire.

Program Principles

Three principles guide the Hepburn Shire Council's Grants Programs, including how Council Officers work with, support, and respect the community and administer the program.

1. Transparency

Transparency is defined as the lack of hidden agendas or conditions and the availability of all information needed in order to collaborate, cooperate and make decisions effectively.

2. Equity

Equitable grant making is being conscious of the barriers and disadvantage being faced by some groups or individuals because of the inequitable distribution of power and resources.

3. Efficiency and Effectiveness

Every grant dollar should produce the maximum benefit for Hepburn Shire communities. Every grant should be both efficient and effective throughout the whole lifecycle of the Community Grant process, from promotion to evaluation.

Program Objective

The Hepburn Shire Environment Groups Grants Program provides funding annually to community groups and organisations (\$15,000 in 2025).

Organisations can apply for funding to support their group's sustainability and effectiveness. Only groups which work to protect and enhance the environment through conducting on-ground environmental works or groups that promote increased awareness of environmental issues with Hepburn shire will be invited to apply.

Funding may be directed to activities that support the group's objectives such as:

- Publications, electronic media or administrative tasks related to environmental works and advocacy: e.g. copying, production of brochures, newsletters, mailing, website maintenance etc.
- Training of individuals and groups to carry out on-ground environmental works, e.g., first aid training, Agricultural Chemical Users Permit Course etc.
- On-ground works such as planting or 'assisted natural regeneration', weed control, pest control on public land or private land

Council will invite community groups to submit applications for their project. Submissions will be assessed for their suitability by a panel consisting of Council officers. Technical support will be provided to guide and refine the scope of potential projects, before and during the application stage. All applicants are advised to contact Council's Biodiversity Officer or Community Strengthening Officer to ensure that the project meets the funding aims.

Strategic Alignment

The Environment Groups Grants Program aligns with the principles and objectives outlined in the [Council Plan and Vision 2022](#) and is an action under the objective: 'to prioritise protection of existing biodiversity and habitat on both Council controlled and private land' in the [Sustainable Hepburn Strategy 2022-26](#).

Who Can Apply

A database of local not-for-profit community environmental groups in the Hepburn Shire is maintained by the Biodiversity Officer and groups may be asked to discuss their group's ongoing suitability. Eligible groups must be an incorporated body with an ABN, or have an auspicing agent. If you believe your group and project is eligible, contact Council's Biodiversity Officer or Community Strengthening Officer.

Application Process

1. It is strongly encouraged that all potential applicants contact Council's Community Strengthening Officer or Biodiversity Officer to discuss the suitability of proposed expenditure of this grant.
2. Applicants deemed eligible will be invited to apply by the Biodiversity Officer.
3. Visit: www.hepburn.vic.gov.au/residents/support/grants for more information.

Applications not meeting the eligibility guidelines will not be invited to apply.

Key Dates

Application Stage Opens	9am, 01 April, 2025
Application Stage Closes	5pm, 29 April, 2025
Assessment Panel Convenes	12 May, 2025
Applicants notified of Assessment Outcomes	15 May, 2025
All grants acquitted	June 30 2026

Eligible Projects for All Categories

To be eligible for assessment organisations must:

- Request funding to;
 - train individuals or groups conducting on-ground environmental works,
 - support on-ground environmental works such as planting or weeding or
 - support the administration of on-ground environmental works.
- Be strategically/ecologically sound and identify sustainable improvements (i.e. have an identified source of follow-up resources if required)
- Be a group that conducts activities within Hepburn Shire to the benefit of its residents.
- Be an organisation that is a legal entity with an Australian Business Number (ABN). For example; an incorporated body, co-op, trust, or, be auspiced by a suitable group.¹
- Have all permits, permissions and approvals for the project.²
- Be a not-for-profit³ or a community group.
- Be willing to participate in public relations for the project, including a potential media release and photo with members of the applicants' organisation and funding representatives.
- Involve community in its planning and implementation.

¹ An Auspicing Agent is another organisation that is a legal entity with an ABN. A letter signed by two committee members from the auspice agent confirming they will auspice the application must be provided when the grant application is submitted. Auspicing agents retaining a fee for this service will not be considered.

² If the project is to undertake works on Council owned / managed land or property, Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action, or Parks Victoria land, you must provide written approval from the relevant land manager.

³ Your organisation meets the requirements of being a not-for-profit by having specific statements in its governing rules; the not-for-profit and / or dissolution clause <https://www.ato.gov.au/non-profit/getting-started/is-your-organisation-not-for-profit/>

Ineligible Projects for All Categories

- Individual applicants, profit-making organisations and political parties
- Any group whose primary purpose is not focused on environment and ecological health.
- An activity that is the funding responsibility of the state or federal government, or can be funded by fees, sponsorship or service agreements.
- Applicants that have an outstanding Council grant acquittal or unpaid invoice from Council.
- Applications made outside the Application Stage closing date.
- Organisations based outside the Shire, unless the group conducts activities that directly benefit to Hepburn Shire residents and its environment.
- Applications completed by a third party on behalf of an applicant will not be considered.

Assessment

- Technical and grant writing support will be made available to applicants before and during the application stage.
- At the conclusion of the Application stage, applications are reviewed to ensure they meet the eligibility criteria. Those not meeting the criteria will be notified and will not progress to assessment.
- Eligible applications will be assessed by a panel consisting of Council Officers against the Assessment criteria.
- Applications are ranked by overall average score and suitability, with funding allocated equitably to all suitable applications until the funding pool or pool of suitable applicants is exhausted.

Assessment Criteria

All Council Grant Programs are assessed against the following Assessment Criteria.

- Addresses an evidence-based community need or opportunity.
- Demonstrates alignment with the Hepburn Shire Council Plan and relevant Strategy (Sustainable Hepburn Strategy 2022-2026.)
- Demonstrates a clear benefit to Hepburn Shire Council residents.

- Demonstrates a clear ability to carry out and undertake the project/activity/event through to completion.
- Provides supporting documentation including quotations.
- Demonstrates no ethical or other conflict of interest.

Funding

Applicants will be notified of the assessment panel outcomes once councillors have been informed of the results. Once notified, successful applicants are required to sign a funding agreement and submit a tax invoice for the funding amount offered (for groups registered for GST, the invoice will also include the addition of GST) to Council using the Smartygrants platform. To provide access to funding to as many groups as possible, the total amount provided by Council may vary from what was requested by the applicant. Applicants will be given the opportunity to proceed with the funding amount or withdraw from the program. Funding will allocated equitably to all successful applicants.

Acquittal Process

An online acquittal must be completed through the SmartyGrants portal at the conclusion of the funded project/activity/event. Successful applicants are required to keep records of all items used and purchased in facilitating the grant project/activity/event and upload these records to the Smartygrants portal as part of the acquittal process.

Funding Conditions and Requirements

- All planning and building permits and other applicable authorisations remain the responsibility of the applicant. Evidence of permits / permissions must be provided where relevant
- Public Liability Insurance is the responsibility of the applicant and must be obtained prior to commencing any works that has been funded.
- An offer of a grant does not mean an ongoing funding commitment or obligation by Council.
- Hepburn Shire must be acknowledged on any promotional material related to the Project / Event. This must be approved by Council's Communications Officer prior to distribution. You are required to extend a written invitation, with a minimum of two weeks' notice, to the Mayor and Hepburn Shire CEO to attend openings and events when available.
- Councillors to be invited to attend openings and the event when available.

- Successful applicants, or their Auspicing Agent, are required to enter into a formal funding agreement with Council. If the Project / Event does not adhere to the conditions of the agreement, Council may require grant funds to be returned.
- All funded Projects must complete an Evaluation and Acquittal including evidence of expenditure, e.g., receipts.
- Ongoing maintenance and repair costs for equipment purchased with grant funds are the responsibility of the applicant.

For applicants who are seeking funding from external grant sources, you are required to advise Council as soon as possible on the status of this external grant funding.

If your application includes grants funds from Council and another source of funding; if the external funding source becomes unavailable, you will be required to submit an alternative proposal and budget within 30 days of the external funding decision date.

Applications are submitted online only. Council officers can assist with this process where required, e.g., if you have an impairment that prevents you using the online process.

How to Apply

Visit www.hepburn.vic.gov.au/grants to view the Environment Groups Grants page. All grant applications are made through the SmartyGrants portal – [Hepburn Shire Council Grants Portal](#) on an invite only basis. To discuss your project's suitability please contact the Officers below.

Key Council Contacts

Biodiversity Officer

Email: bbainbridge@hepburn.vic.gov.au

Phone: 0437 048 648

Grants Specialist

Email: grants@hepburn.vic.gov.au

Phone: (03) 5348 2306

Please get in touch if you would like additional information, or if you to discuss your application.