Grant Writing Frequently Asked Questions

We get asked a lot of questions by grant seekers from our Community. We have listed some of the most FAQs we get asked. You may find the answer to question here.

Application Questions

Where can I find information about Council's grant programs

Hepburn Shire Council offers a variety of grant programs, each with its own goals and objectives. Visit the Grants Page on the Hepburn Shire Council website to explore detailed information about our grant programs. The program guidelines will provide details on objectives, eligible project types, and the criteria for eligibility.

What grant Programs are currently open?

Hepburn Shire Council has a number of grants that open at different times of the year. As most of our grants are recurrent, they are generally provided during the same periods each year. Head to the Grants Page on the Hepburn Shire Council Website to view current and upcoming grant programs.

Is my group or project eligible?

Read the guidelines and eligibility criteria of the grant program you are interested in to ensure that your organisation is eligible to apply, and that your funding request aligns with the program's purpose.

Unique program guidelines and application forms are provided for each grant program and can be found on the relevant program page on our website. If you have any questions about eligibility, you should contact our grants team on grants@hepburn.vic.gov.au or (03) 5348 2306.

How do I apply for a grant?

Start by reviewing the guidelines and eligibility criteria for the grant program you're interested in to ensure your organization qualifies and your project aligns with the program's objectives. You may also want to discuss your project with the Grants team before beginning the application process.

Program guidelines and application forms for each grant program are available on the relevant program page of our website. Simply click on the accordion tab for the grant program you're interested in to access more details and a link to the Grants Portal.

All applications must be submitted through the online Grants Portal. Applicants will need to create an account to begin the application process. Once registered, you can access and complete the application form.

What can be funded?

Hepburn Shire Council provides funding for projects that benefit the community and are led by not-for-profit groups. Projects must offer a broader community benefit and align with the values and objectives of the Council Plan and Community Vision.

Each grant program has specific criteria, so be sure to read the funding guidelines thoroughly before applying to ensure your project meets the requirements. If you're unsure, feel free to contact the relevant Program Manager or the Grants team for clarification.

How much do you fund?

The amount of funding available varies depending on the specific grant program. Each program has its own funding limits, objectives, and criteria. To find out how much funding you can apply for, be sure to review the guidelines for the specific grant program you're interested in. These guidelines will provide details on the funding range, eligibility, and any requirements for financial contribution or matching funds.

If you're unsure about the funding amount or have specific questions, feel free to contact the Grants team for further clarification.

Do I need a financial co-contribution ?

Whether or not you need a financial co-contribution depends on the specific grant program you're applying for. Some programs may require a co-contribution from your organisation or other partners, while others may fully fund your project. Most Hepburn Shire Council Grant Programs do not require a financial co-contribution with the exception certain projects that apply for the Sustainable Hepburn Grants Program.

Be sure to check the guidelines for the particular grant program to understand the requirements. If a co-contribution is needed, it will typically be outlined in the funding criteria. If you're unsure, you can contact the Grants team for clarification.

What makes a good application

A good application is clear, concise, and includes all the necessary information. Make sure to answer every question and attach the required supporting documents. Carefully read the guidelines and eligibility criteria to ensure you understand the expectations. When writing your application, also consider Hepburn Shire Council's strategic objectives and focus areas outlined in the Council Plan.

A strong application will directly address the questions, use evidence and data to back up claims, particularly regarding community need and project benefits and succinctly describe the project and its outcomes. Council will assess the risk and budget, so it's important to ensure your project is low risk and financially viable.

Do I need letters of support?

Letters of support are not mandatory for a grant application, but they can strengthen your submission by adding credibility. These letters show endorsement for your project throughout the local community and demonstrate community consultation and need. The more community groups involved in the planning and design, the broader the potential benefit to the community.

Where else can I apply for funding?

In addition to Hepburn Shire Council's grant programs, there are various other funding opportunities available from other sources. These may include:

1. **State Government Grants** – Many state government departments offer grants for community projects, arts, heritage, environment, and more. Check your state's official website for details.

2. **Federal Government Grants** – The Australian Government provides numerous funding programs for community, environmental, and economic development initiatives. Visit the Australian Government's grant portal for more information.

3. **Philanthropic Foundations** – Many private foundations and charitable organisations offer grants to support community-driven projects. Look for local or national foundations that align with your project's goals.

4. **Corporate Sponsorships and Partnerships** – Some businesses provide funding, sponsorships, or in-kind support for projects that align with their values or corporate social responsibility initiatives.

5. **Community and Industry Associations** – Some industry-specific organisations or local community groups offer funding or grants to support projects in certain sectors, such as the arts, education, or social services.

Always research eligibility criteria, deadlines, and application processes before applying to ensure your project is a good fit.

The Foundation for Regional and Rural Renewal (FRRR) website has some terrific resources for grant seekers – we encourage you to check out their website for further information and assistance.

How do I demonstrate community need?
A letter of support is an effective way to show community consultation and the need for your project. The more groups involved in planning and designing your project, the greater the potential benefit to the community. Please note that while Council can provide land-owner consent for projects on Council-managed land, it cannot offer letters of support for applications to its own grant programs.

Community need can also be demonstrated through other methods, such as surveys, social media, online forms, resident feedback, or emails. You may also reference studies or media highlighting the community's needs. Ultimately, it is up to the applicant to decide how to demonstrate the need, but all claims should be backed by evidence.

How do I demonstrate alignment with Council Plan and Community Vision?
Applicants must demonstrate how their project aligns with the Council Plan and Community Vision. The Council Plan outlines the Shire's vision and key focus areas for the upcoming term. Your project should connect with at least one of these focus areas. It may also align with priority areas from the

Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan or other Council strategies. While a detailed description is not necessary, the link between your project and the Council Plan should be clear.

How do I demonstrate community benefit?

To demonstrate community benefit, you need to clearly show how your project will positively impact the community. This can be done by highlighting the specific needs your project addresses, the number of people it will benefit, and how it aligns with the community's values and priorities.

Provide evidence, such as feedback from community members or local organisations, to support your claims. You can also include data or examples of similar successful projects. Additionally, consider how your project will create lasting change, improve well-being, or contribute to the social, cultural, or economic development of the community. The more clearly you can outline the tangible benefits, the stronger your application will be.

What information should I put in the budget

When preparing your budget for a grant application, it's important to provide clear and detailed information to demonstrate how the grant funds will be used. Your budget should include:

Project Costs – List all anticipated expenses related to the project. This can include:

Materials and supplies

Equipment

Personnel or contractor fees (if applicable)

Venue rental (if applicable)

Marketing or promotional costs

Travel or accommodation costs (if applicable)

Any other project-specific expenses

Income or Co-Contribution – If applicable, indicate any other funding sources, including co-contributions from your organisation or other partners, as well as any in-kind support.

Total Project Budget – Provide a total for the overall cost of the project and indicate how much you are requesting from the grant program.

Breakdown of Costs – Offer a detailed breakdown for each category to show how the funds will be allocated. This helps to demonstrate responsible and transparent financial planning.

Justification of Costs – Briefly explain or justify the key costs, especially those that may seem unusual or high. This shows the funder that you've carefully considered your budget.

Make sure your budget is realistic, aligns with the project scope, and demonstrates that your project is financially viable.

What does in-kind mean and how do I show it?

In-kind is generally classed as a contribution made to a project that has a dollar value, but has been provided as goods or services instead of cash.

In-kind may consist of volunteer hours, equipment or services or it may also include discounts given to your organisation – as listed in quotes.

Don't underestimate the amount of money your community is contributing to the project. Without it, the project would be unlikely to succeed, and it is a clear demonstration to grant-makers that the project has community support.

How to Show In-Kind Contributions:

1. **Estimate the Value** – Assign a dollar value to the in-kind contributions. For example, if volunteers are providing time, calculate the value of their hours based on a standard hourly rate for similar work.

2. **Provide Documentation** – Include a summary of in-kind contributions in your budget, detailing what is being provided, the estimated value, and who is providing it. You may also need to include letters or documentation from those offering in-kind support.

3. **Demonstrate the Impact** – Show how in-kind contributions will help reduce costs or enhance the effectiveness of the project. This helps strengthen your application by showing the breadth of support for your project.

Including in-kind contributions in your budget can strengthen your application by demonstrating additional resources and community support.

Assessment Questions

What does assessment involve?

All Hepburn Shire Council Grant Programs are assessed against the following criteria.

- Addresses an evidence-based community need or opportunity. (35%)
- Demonstrates alignment with the Hepburn Shire Council Plan and relevant strategies (25%)
- Demonstrates a clear benefit to Hepburn Shire Council residents. (25%)
- Demonstrates a clear ability to carry out and undertake the project/activity/event through to completion. (10%)
- Provides supporting documentation including quotations and a comprehensive budget. (5%)
- Demonstrates no ethical or other conflict of interest

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, with funding allocated to the highest scoring applications until the funding pool or pool of suitable applicants is exhausted.

When will I find out if I am successful?

Each grant program has its own opening, closing and outcome announcement dates as described on the Grants webpage.

Can I be offered partial funding?

In certain circumstances, the assessment panel may decide to partially fund projects. This could be for any number of reasons including:

- To ensure an equal distribution of funding to all successful groups
- To allow all groups approved for funding to receive funding, when the funding requested from approved applications exceeds the grant funding available.
- Because the project was endorsed by the panel, but an aspect of the project or budget was not supported by the pane for funding.
- The quotes and budgets were inconsistent or incomplete or seemed extraordinarily high compared to similar items costed by other groups.
- Some items suggested for funding are not critical to the project's success and the project would most likely go ahead and have a positive impact even when receiving lesser funds than requested
- It was felt the group has the ability to raise additional funds needed or had not listed any fundraising of their own to support this project.

Applicants offered part-funding are not required to accept this, they may instead opt to address the issue and reply in a future round. The panel may also require some evidence that they project can proceed with only part funding.

Why didn't my project receive funding?

Your project may not have received funding for a variety of reasons. Assessing applications can be a tough process and we take into consideration many factors. The Grants team will contact all unsuccessful applicants to provide advice on the specific reasons the grant was not successful.

These are some of the more common reasons for an application not getting approval:

- The project is ineligible under the granting guidelines, e.g. the application budget requested money for items listed in the guidelines as things that can't be funded, required documentation was not provided, or the organisation has on overdue final report with FRRR

- During assessment, the project scored lower, when compared with other applications. For example, the application has not demonstrated the level of community need or impact.

- Council received applications requesting more funds than were available in the round.

- The application has not provided evidence of community and/or stakeholder support for the project.

- The grant is not critical to the success of the project (the project would most likely go ahead regardless).

- The project is underdeveloped and needs further consideration of the grant seeker to reapply.

- The project is outside the scope of the Program Guidelines.

- Multiple applications are received from one organisation in a single program round. Only one application per round per organisation is accepted, any further applications will be deemed ineligible.

- The project did not look realistic / achievable, or its impact appeared to be unlikely.

- The applicant had a strong financial situation and / or ability to fund the project by other means.

Can I reapply in an upcoming round?

Yes, if your project was not funded then you can reapply in an upcoming round of the same grant program. However, applicants cannot receive multiple Council grants for the same project so successful grant projects cannot re apply for further funding.

Reporting and Project Progress

What do I need to document?

Remember to document your project, keep your finances up to date and take photos along the way. Keeping an ongoing record will make reporting on your project far easier. You may wish to look ahead to the report so you know what is expected. Please check your grant agreement or other documentation from Council's Grants Portal to understand your obligations.

Why do I need to report and monitor my project

Reporting and monitoring your project is essential to ensure that the goals and outcomes of the grant are being met. It helps us track the progress of your project, ensures the funds are being used appropriately, and allows us to provide support if any challenges arise.

Regular reporting also allows us to evaluate the effectiveness of the grants program and learn from your experience, which can improve future funding opportunities. Additionally, monitoring helps maintain transparency and accountability for both you and the council, ensuring the continued success of your project and its alignment with the intended objectives.

Please note: *Organisations that have not submitted a financial acquittal of previously funded projects are considered eligible for funding from Hepburn Shire Council in the future.*

How do I complete the project acquittal?

To complete the project acquittal, all reports must be submitted through the online Grants Portal. If Within the portal, you can use the Financial Acquittal form and upload receipts, photos and other information about your project.

Please ensure that someone with delegated financial authority in your organization signs the form.

Further Assistance

Where can I find help for using the Grants Portal?

Assistance can be provided to all applicants via the grants team. Contact grants@hepburn.vic.gov.au or (03) 5348 2306 to request assistance.

All Neighbourhood Houses throughout the Shire (Creswick, Clunes, Daylesford and Trentham) can also provide in person assistance for using the Grants Portal and assistance developing applications.

The Foundation for Regional and Rural Renewal (FRRR) website has some terrific resources for grant seekers – we encourage you to check out their website for further information and assistance.