

# Hepburn Shire Council

Community Grants Program Guidelines  
2024/2025



## Introduction

Community-led initiatives not only build and strengthen connections between people and places in Hepburn Shire, but they are the lifeblood of an active, diverse, and healthy society. Hepburn Shire is at its best when people of all cultures, backgrounds, ages, genders, sexualities, and abilities are welcomed, celebrated, engaged, and protected. We are proud of the important contribution that our Community Grants Program makes to our communities, bringing a wide range of activities, events, and programs to fruition every year.

The funding we provide recognises that the fabric of regional communities consists of the diverse organisations and community groups that bring people together and support local engagement. Funding delivered through the Community Grants Programs aims to strengthen communities throughout the Shire by empowering individuals and communities to take local action and advance ideas that enhance the liveability of our communities and environments.

To achieve our vision for a healthy, supported, and empowered community and a resilient, sustainable and protected environment, Hepburn Shire's Community Grants Program is designed to support the priorities in the *Council Plan and Community Vision 2021-2025*, the *Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan* and to align with the objectives outlined in the Grants Funding Policy 2024.

The Community Grants Program has been developed to deliver funding equitably, effectively, and transparently to community groups that are working toward making Hepburn Shire a more vibrant, cohesive, inclusive, and sustainable place to live. We encourage applications from community groups operating in all regions and districts within our Shire and we look forward to seeing new ideas realised and better outcomes achieved for Hepburn Shire residents and communities.



A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Don Henderson".

Mayor, Councillor Don Henderson

## Program Objectives

Hepburn Shire Council's Community Grants Program supports community-based projects and initiatives that enhance the social, environmental, and economic life of Hepburn Shire. Community Grants can help community groups to implement projects that promote community wellbeing, increase social connection, and build capacity for leadership and independence. Funded programs can strengthen the community by creating opportunities for participation, celebration, development, inclusion, and sustainability.

The Community Grants Program will provide up to \$58,000 in 2024/2025 to fund proposals from the community for programs and activities that are conducted in Hepburn Shire to the benefit of its residents. The program will prioritise the establishment of new or one-off programs to enable the realisation of new initiatives within our communities.

Funding is available for projects that can demonstrate community benefits and align with one or more of the focus areas in the [Council Plan 2021-2025](#) and relevant Council Strategies.

## Program Principles

Three principles guide all of 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.

## Strategic Alignment

The Community Grants Program aligns with the principles and objectives outlined in the Council Plan and Vision 2022-25 and the Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan 2022-25.

The Community Grants Program also aligns with the following Key Strategic documents:

- Council Grants Funding Policy 2024
- Events Strategy 2020-2025
- Sustainable Hepburn Strategy 2022-2026
- Fair Access Policy 2024
- Reconciliation Action Plan 2018
- Gender Equality Action Plan 2021-2025
- Positive Ageing Strategy 2022-2030
- Youth Ace Strategy 2022-2030

The applicant will need to identify how their project aligns with the focus areas of the Council Plan and vision 2022-25. The following is a summary of the focus areas to be used for project alignment.

1. A Resilient, sustainable and protected environment
2. A healthy, supported and empowered community
3. Embracing the past and planning for the future
4. Diverse Economy and opportunities
5. A dynamic and responsive Council

### Who Can Apply?

- Local not-for-profits, sporting clubs and community groups in the Hepburn Shire, which are incorporated with an Australian Business Number (ABN).
- Local groups without an ABN may apply, only if they are auspiced by another organisation that is a legal entity with an ABN and meets the eligibility criteria.
- Only charities that are registered with ACNC (Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission) are eligible to apply for the Charitable Purposes stream.

### Who Can't Apply?

- Unincorporated groups, unregistered charities or a group without an auspice arrangement.
- Private organisations, profit-making entities or political parties.
- Applicants with an outstanding acquittal for a Hepburn Shire Council Grant.
- Applicants already receiving funding from Hepburn Shire Council for the same project.
- Applicants that have already commenced their project, or have completed the project and are requesting funds be applied retrospectively.

Applicants are only eligible to receive **ONE** grant, per funding stream, per 12 months. Applicants can apply for multiple streams of funding, however the same project cannot be funded more than once.

### **Funding Streams**

#### **Community Strengthening Grants.**

Community Strengthening Grants are provided to fund new projects/activities or to support substantial improvements to existing programs/activities. Community groups may apply for funding of up to \$5,000 to fund community led projects and activities that align with the priorities and focus areas of Hepburn Shire Council Plan 2021-2025. Projects that increase inclusion and diversity and provide greater access for under-represented groups to sporting and community clubs are strongly encouraged as are projects aimed at addressing issues facing Indigenous Australians and the LGBTQ+ community.

Projects may include:

- New projects or activities that benefit Hepburn communities.
- Projects that support the focus areas of the [Council Plan 2021-2025](#).
- Projects that promote culturally or artistically vibrant communities
- Projects aimed at connecting communities, or growing skills or capacity.
- Projects that focus on minor/small-scale community infrastructure or equipment.
- Activities such as training and networking activities that increase capacity and sustainability of volunteer groups.
- Projects that focus on sustainability and taking action to reduce environmental impacts and contribute to becoming a more sustainable community.
- Activities that seek to restore, promote, or investigate the heritage and history of the region.
- Activities that seek to support and increase the health and wellbeing of communities.

#### **Children's Programs.**

The Children's Programs Stream will fund programs or activities that primarily benefit or support children aged 8-12 years. Community groups may apply for funding of up to \$5,000 to fund Programs that provide opportunities for children to engage in activities they normally would not have access to. Programs must be FREE to attend, and accessible to children of all abilities.

The Principles stated in Council's [ACE Youth Strategy 2022-2030](#) for 12-25 year olds are also relevant to our priorities for the 8-12 years age group.

Projects may include:

- Programs that encourage opportunities for learning and participation.

- Projects that address issues of child safety.
- Programs that provide access to technology and information

### **Charitable Purposes**

The Charitable Purposes stream provides funding for organisations that perform charitable activities within the Shire. Projects in this stream can be ongoing projects or previously run initiatives. Applicants may apply for funding of up to \$2,000 to fund projects, programs, activities for vulnerable or disadvantaged community members. There is one grant available per township district. Applicants must be a registered charity organisation to apply for this stream.

Projects may include:

- Food drives to support the homeless and/or disadvantaged peoples.
- Projects to provide relief and support to those negatively impacted by storms, bushfires or other weather events.
- Infrastructure or equipment to support activities that benefit disadvantaged or vulnerable communities.

### **New Residents Welcome Sessions**

The New Residents Welcome Sessions stream provides funding to community groups that are providing sessions or activities that welcome new residents to the district. There is one grant available per township region. Applicants can apply for a maximum amount of \$1500 however, funding will be allocated proportionally based on the number of applicants. Existing and/or on-going programs are eligible for funding through this stream.

Projects may include:

- Programs with the primary purpose of connecting new residents of the region with local community organisations.

### **Application Process**

1. It is strongly encouraged that all applicants contact Council's Grants Specialist to discuss your initial idea for your project, application requirements and the online application process.
2. Visit: [www.hepburn.vic.gov.au/residents/support/grants](http://www.hepburn.vic.gov.au/residents/support/grants) for more information.
3. Go to the [Hepburn Shire Council Grants Portal](#) and submit your application online with Smartygrants.

**Applications not meeting the eligibility guidelines will not be considered for assessment.**

### Before you apply.

Council encourages community groups interested in submitting applications for their project to discuss their project with a Council Officer. 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 Grant Specialist at [grants@hepburn.vic.gov.au](mailto:grants@hepburn.vic.gov.au) or (03) 5348 2306 to ensure that the project meets the funding aims.

Council will hold information sessions for applicants seeking further information on this grant program and how to apply. Each session will include time for one-on-one discussions about your project. Please let Council know if you require an interpreter or other assistance for these sessions. For further details please visit [www.hepburn.vic.gov.au/residents/support/grants](http://www.hepburn.vic.gov.au/residents/support/grants) for more information.

### Ready to Apply?

All grant applications are made through the – [Hepburn Shire Council Grants Portal](#). Click the link to begin your application during the application period.

### Key Dates

#### Community Grants 2024/2025 - All Streams

ROUND 1	KEY DATES
Application Period Opens:	9 December 2024 – 9:00am
Application Period Closes:	31 January 2025 – 11:59pm
Outcomes announced:	24 February 2025

ROUND 2	KEY DATES
Application Period Opens:	10 March 2025 – 9:00am
Application Period Closes:	30 April 2025 – 11:59pm
Outcomes announced:	26 May 2025

**Acquittal and Evaluation Form:** Due 12 months after funds are granted.

## Assessment Process

- 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, with funding allocated to the highest scoring 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. (35%)
- Demonstrates alignment with the Hepburn Shire Council Plan and relevant strategies (Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan or Events Strategy) (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.

## Funding

Applicants will be notified of the assessment panel outcomes by Council Officers. Once notified, successful applicants are required to sign a funding agreement and submit a tax invoice to Council using the Smartygrants platform.

## 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 our grant's portal as part of the acquittal process.

## Eligible Projects for All Categories

To be eligible for assessment, projects must:



- Be a new or one-off activity or program, or, a new initiative for an existing project or program. Exceptions apply to the **Charitable Purposes** and **New Residents Welcome Sessions** streams, which can be a repeat of previous programs.
- Be completed within twelve months of signing the agreement and release of funds.
- Be held within the Hepburn Shire to the benefit of its residents.
- Be an organisation that is a legal entity with an ABN (e.g., an incorporated association), or be auspiced by a suitable group.<sup>1</sup>
- Have all permits, permissions, and approvals for the project.<sup>2</sup>
- Be a not-for-profit group (NFP).<sup>3</sup> NFPs that employ paid staff, such as Coaches, Players, Administrators or Chairpersons, must clearly show a strong financial need for funding and explain the potential growth of their organisation due to the project.
- Demonstrate community involvement in its planning and proposed implementation.
- 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
- Be an organisation that has valid public liability insurance or can demonstrate the ability to obtain such insurance before the project commences.

If the project is expected to generate a minor financial gain, the applicant must clearly highlight how the profits will contribute to the group's sustainability or community benefit.

<sup>1</sup> An Auspicing Agent is another organisation that is a legal entity with an ABN. A letter signed by two committee members from the auspicing agent must be submitted with the grant application, confirming they will auspice the application and that they will not charge a fee for this service.

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

<sup>3</sup> Your organisation may meet the requirements of being a not-for-profit by having specific dissolution clauses in its governing rules. Category C Children's Programs will consider applications from organisations such as schools.

### **Ineligible Projects for All Categories**

- Individual applicants, profit-making organisations and political parties
- 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 already received a successful Community Grant from the same funding stream within previous twelve months (judged from the date the funding agreement was signed until the date the application period closes.)
- Applicants that have an outstanding Council grant acquittal or unpaid invoice from Council.
- Recurrent or ongoing projects can only apply if they demonstrate the introduction of a significant new initiative. Exceptions apply to the Charitable Purposes and Welcome to New Resident Sessions streams, which can accept applications for recurrent events.
- An activity that meets the definition of an 'Event' as defined in the Hepburn Shire Council Events Strategy 2020-2025. (Projects meeting this definition should contact the Events Officer to discuss the project and apply through the Events grants programs).
- An activity that already receives or has received funding or in-kind-support from other sources within Hepburn Shire Council, i.e., funding agreements or sponsorship arrangements.
- Projects that have already commenced or have been completed.
- Applications submitted outside the Application Stage closing date.
- Organisations based outside the Shire, unless the project is of benefit to Hepburn Shire residents.
- Applications completed by a third party on behalf of an applicant will not be considered.

### 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 program launch activities when available.

- Successful applicants, or their Auspicing Agent, are required to enter into a formal funding agreement with Council. If the Project 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.
- In the event of a Project/Event only being part-funded, Council will provide an explanation for this decision. Applicants have the right to accept partial funding or withdraw their application.

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 using the Smartygrants portal. Council officers can assist with this process where required, e.g., if you have an impairment that prevents you using the online process.

### Funding Alternatives

The Hepburn Grants Finder provides local community groups with a comprehensive and up-to-date list of grant and funding opportunities available from a range of funding providers including State and Federal government and philanthropic organisations. The Hepburn Grant Finder also includes an alert service meaning you will never miss a grant opportunity again.

Access the [Hepburn Grant Finder](#) on our grants website to explore what other funding opportunities may be available to support the implementation of your project.

### Council Contact

Grants Specialist

Email: [grants@hepburn.vic.gov.au](mailto:grants@hepburn.vic.gov.au)

Phone: (03) 5348 2306

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