

Proposed amendments to Community Grants Guidelines Engagement Summary

June 2024

Introduction

Introduced in August 2023, the City of Whittlesea Community Grants Program offer grants to individuals, groups and businesses and supports our community to deliver programs, activities, and events. The *Community Grants Guidelines* provide the framework for the grants program, outlining the criteria and eligibility requirement for applicants.

Some minor administrative amendments to the Community Grant Guidelines were proposed and we sought community feedback before the revised document is presented to Council for endorsement in July.

How we engaged you

The Community Grants guidelines consultation was open for community comment from 12 to 25 June 2024. Community feedback was sought online through Council's Engage Whittlesea platform which utilises an accessibility add-on ensuring that it is as accessible as possible for all users. The platform also has an in-built translation tool to mitigate any language barriers to participation, allowing the page to be translated into the top ten languages spoken within the municipality.

The project Engage page highlighted the key amendments being proposed, linked to the updated draft Community Grant Guidelines, and provided opportunity for visitors to submit feedback.

The opportunity to participate in the community engagement was promoted through The Engage Whittlesea platform and via a targeted email to community groups currently accessing the Whittlesea Community Grants program.

Participation

A total of three community members participated in the consultation and their feedback will help Council confirm updated Community Grants guidelines are meeting user group priorities and make any adjustments to the guidelines if required.

Community participation



The Engage campaign received 239 direct views from our community.



The direct email was sent to 673 community groups who currently access the community grants program or use community facilities within the municipality.



There were three contributions made to the digital consultation.

What we heard

We asked community to share their feedback regarding the proposed updates to the *Community Grants guidelines* through a feedback tool on the Engage Whittlesea platform.

Participant feedback captured through the consultation has been themed below:



Funding Concerns

- Insufficient Grant Amounts: participants expressed concerns about the insufficient individual grant amounts, noting that the amount provided is not enough.
"\$1000 is not enough for a proper course, which typically costs \$1800-3500 including travel and meal expenses".

Technical response:

Reviewed by considering individual grants offered by other Councils to ensure evidenced based best practice. We found that City of Whittlesea is offering more than other Councils for Individual Grants. We will review again at the 1-year review period.



Guidelines and Examples

- Clarification Needed: need for clearer guidelines on what constitutes a new project or event.
*"The example in '2. Regular activities' is unclear regarding what constitutes a new project or event (for example, *if an individual applies to support a morning tea for their existing group who meet would also meet for morning tea, this is not a new project or event*)".*

Technical response:

A new project or event would be something not currently being delivered or planned by the group. The example provided identifies this as a regular activity.



Eligibility and Fairness

- Discounted Venue Hire Policy: allowing groups with discounted venue hire to also include these costs in their grant applications.
"Groups and organizations receiving a discounted venue hire should be eligible to apply for venue hire at their discounted rate. They should be able to include this discounted rate as a cost in their grant application. If they had discounted rate of \$8/hour for a Council facility, they should be able to include this as a cost in their grant application (i.e., 3 hours = \$24 for venue hire), just the same as if they were paying the full rate".

Technical response:

This was reviewed with clarification sought from internal finance team due to financial auditing requirements. The advice was that organisations and groups already receiving a discount cannot receive grant funding for discounted venue hire. The resolution was, that the applicant would need to choose either the discounted rate or apply for a grant to contribute to full price of venue hire. Further, groups can note their current contribution of discounted venue hire in the 'in-kind section' of the application form.

**Accessibility and Support**

- Translation and Bilingual Assistance: translation services or bilingual staff could be made available to assist cultural community groups in understanding the grant process and supporting Q&A sessions.

“Is it possible to have translational services or bilingual CoW staff to assist with cultural community group info sessions to better understand process & support Q&A”.

Technical response:

The Grants team are collaborating with City of Whittlesea staff in direct contact with the community to deliver information sessions in language where identified. For example, a session has been delivered to our Hindi speaking community, with a staff member translating the information.

Next steps

The feedback captured supports the proposed changes and suggests areas for further development and consideration. The feedback captured will also be considered in the development of other key plans and strategies Council are working on to make Whittlesea *A Place for All*.

Thank you again to everyone who participated in the community engagement by sharing comments and feedback.