

Draft Community Grants Guidelines Engagement Summary June 2023

Introduction

Following a review of Council's Community Grant program, Council are proposing new Community Grant Guidelines to make it easier for Council to partner with and support local communities to deliver important programs and events.

The new guidelines will ensure grants are distributed in an equitable way across the community and are easier for groups and individuals to access. The proposed guidelines will open funding opportunities to a wider range of community groups and localities with funding to be available all year round rather than via programs with specific dates for applications.

Key recommendations of the new program include:

- the introduction of all year-round grants with approval rounds being conducted on a monthly or quarterly basis
- the introduction of grant categories that will open funding opportunities to individuals and unincorporated groups
- the introduction of emergency grants to support community organisations and businesses requiring immediate assistance
- a centralised and holistic process for receiving and assessing community grant applications which will ensure we can collect data and can develop outreach/awareness programs where necessary to ensure funding is shared among a wider range of groups and individuals in the City of Whittlesea
- honouring and continuing existing agreements and partnerships with groups who are delivering community services. The new guidelines have been informed by feedback we have received in recent years and through examination of best practice across the local government sector and beyond.

How we engaged you

Phase 1: Analysis and review of previous community feedback to develop the draft Community Grants Guidelines. (COMPLETED August 2022 – May 2023)

Between August 2022 and May 2023 Council undertook an in-depth analysis of its Community Grants program reviewing feedback received from the community over the proceeding few years. Council also undertook an examination of other Community Grants programs to determine best practise across the local government sector. This information was used to shape the new draft Community Grants Guideline, which was presented to council for further feedback prior to being presented to the community for feedback.


Phase 2: Draft Community Grants Guidelines presented to community for feedback (19 May - 13 June 2023)

The draft Community Grants Guidelines were presented to the community for feedback between 19 May and 13 June 2023. Community feedback was sought online through Council's Engage Whittlesea platform and through direct conversation and activities at community-based pop-ups.

Council shared the key recommendations of the guidelines and asked the community whether they supported the guidelines through a quick poll on the project Engage page that enabled participants to indicate their support of the draft guidelines using a rating scale from 'I like it a lot' to 'I don't like it at all' with five possible options. They were also asked if they had ever applied for a grant through Council and if they felt these proposed guidelines would make future grant applications fair and equitable. There was also the ability for participants to identify any missed opportunities that could be added to the guidelines.

The Engage Whittlesea platform utilises an in-built translation tool to ensure that the information provided can be translated into the audience's preferred language to ensure it is understood. The Draft Guidelines and a detailed FAQ section was also included on the project Engage page to provide the community with all relevant project background.

Participants at community-based pop-ups were presented with the same key recommendation and offered the opportunity to undertake the same activity on large activity boards. These boards that posed the same question and possible responses as well as space to share any missed opportunities.






Let's talk 

Draft Community Grant Guidelines

- Following a review of Council's Community Grant program, we are proposing new Community Grant Guidelines to make it easier for Council to partner with and support local communities to deliver important programs and events.
- The new guidelines will ensure grants are distributed in an equitable way across the community and are easier for groups and individuals to access. The proposed guidelines will open funding opportunities to a wider range of community groups and localities with funding to be available all year round rather than via programs with specific dates for applications.
- The new guidelines have been informed by feedback we have received in recent years and through examination of best practice across the local government sector and beyond.

Key highlights of the new guidelines include:

 All year-round grants The introduction of all year-round grants with approval rounds being conducted on a monthly or quarterly basis	 Grant Categories The introduction of grant categories that will open up funding opportunities to individuals and unincorporated groups	 Centralised and holistic process Ensures when receiving and assessing community grant applications data is collected and awareness programs developed where necessary
 Emergency Grants The introduction of emergency grants to support community organisations and businesses requiring immediate assistance	 Honour existing agreements Honouring and continuing existing agreements and partnerships with groups who are delivering community services	 Eligibility To ensure funding is fair and equitable, all applicants will need to meet an eligibility criteria.

1. WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE DRAFT COMMUNITY GRANT GUIDELINES?

I LIKE IT A LOT	I LIKE IT	I CAN LIVE WITH IT
I DON'T LIKE IT	I DON'T LIKE IT AT ALL	

2. DO YOU HAVE ANY OTHER COMMENTS?

Above: information board and dot board activity used at the community-based pop-ups.

Key stakeholders and the wider community were informed of the project through a range of channels including direct mail, digital engagement, and community pop-ups. Subscribers to the Smarty Grants application, registered groups with council and high priority groups were all included in the electronic direct mail that included a link to the project Engage page where the draft guidelines could be accessed.



Above: Project team engaging at the Shared Cup Café in Donnybrook and at Galada Community Centre in Epping with the Punjabi Men's Group.

The seven community-based pop-ups were held in high foot traffic locations. These were:

- Thomastown Library
- Whittlesea Library
- Lalor Library
- Olivine at Donnybrook
- Refugee week event at Plenty Ranges Arts and Convention Centre
- Mernda Junction Shopping Centre
- Galada Community Activity Centre and Epping North shopping precinct
- Westfield Plenty Valley.

Participation

A total of 234 contributions were made online or in-person throughout the community engagement period.

A snapshot of consultation activities and community participation is below:



7 community-based
pop-ups



446 visitors to the
project Engage
page



177 in-person
contributions



57 digital
contributions



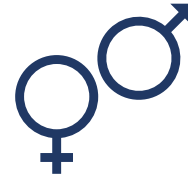
3 First Nations people



32 CALD community
members



27% aged 46-55
21% aged over 66
years



61% Female, 36 %
Male, 3% Prefer not
to say



10% carers of a
person with a
disability



33% unpaid
volunteers



27% from Epping



Draft Community
Grant Guidelines
downloaded 128
times

What we heard

Community feedback on the draft Community Grants Guidelines was very positive, with 89 percent of those that provided feedback indicating that they liked it or liked it a lot. Appendix A provides a breakdown of the feedback captured at each community-based pop-up.

Of the 35 people that provided feedback online, 19 indicated that they had previously applied for a Community Grant through Council, 15 of these applications had been successful.

When asked if the draft guidelines will make future grant applications fair and equitable, 59 percent believed they would, 32 percent weren't sure and only nine percent believed they wouldn't.

A total of 48 additional comments were contributed by participants at the community-based pop-ups (22 comments) and online through the project Engage page (26 comments).

Most of the comments received were in support of:

- the individual and unincorporated categories
- the timings of the grants being monthly and quarterly
- how the focus is on targeted outcomes
- the promotion of the grants program
- using the Smarty Grants program.

Participants also identified opportunities that could be considered, including:

- increasing the amount of the grants as they have not gone up in value
- include people who do not reside within the City of Whittlesea but will host an event/program within the municipality
- include information of what the grants can be used for earlier in the guidelines.

Other comments focused on specific situations and how the guidelines may impact on individual scenarios which do not necessarily influence how the draft guidelines may be finalised. These comments have been noted by the project team to assist at any 'how to apply' workshops to assist community with specific individual needs.

How your feedback has shaped the draft Community Grants Guidelines

Following community consultation, the team have made 27 edits to the draft Community Grants Guidelines that will be presented to Council for endorsement. Some of the changes include:

- extending eligibility to people outside of the municipality that will deliver a project or event within the City of Whittlesea
- adding school, TAFE and Uni fees and venue hire fees for meetings/programs that are delivered in a place where alcohol or gambling is served to the not funded list
- a series of formatting and edits to improve the flow and reduce repetition of information as well as adding a definition of what a 'significant benefit to the community' is.

Next steps

The draft Community Grants Guidelines were presented to Council for endorsement on 27 June 2023. Once endorsed the new guidelines will be shared with the community, providing any rationale for refinements made following community consultation. This will be shared through digital communications, direct contact with stakeholders, and updates on the project Engage page.

Appendix 1

Below is the breakdown of the feedback captured at each community-based pop-up and through the project Engage page.

Location	I like it a lot	I like it	I can live with it	I don't like it	I don't like it at all	Total
Online	9	14	8	4	0	35
Donnybrook	8	6	0	0	0	14
Mernda Junction	4	4	4	0	0	12
Thomastown Library	12	4	2	0	0	18
Galada CC	29	4	2	0	0	35
Whittlesea Library	10	13	0	0	0	23
Lalor Library	4	14	1	0	0	19
Westfield Plenty Valley	6	4	0	0	0	10
Refugee Week @PRACC	6	13	1	0	0	20
Total	88 (48%)	76 (41%)	18 (10%)	4(1%)	0	186