

# Council Grant Framework Policy

<b>Policy Number:</b>	2022/1	<b>Directorate:</b>	Connected Communities
<b>Approval by:</b>	Council	<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	Manager Community Strengthening
<b>Approval Date:</b>	May 2026	<b>Version Number:</b>	3
<b>Review Date:</b>	May 2028		

## 1. Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to provide a consistent guide for the allocation, management and review of all of Council's grant programs to the Knox community.

## 2. Context

Council provides an annual budget for a suite of grants which support and encourage community, business and individual activity and service delivery in Knox, for the benefit of the Knox community. Council will also, from time to time, allocate budget for special or specific purpose grants to respond to emerging community need.

All of Council's grant programs are underpinned by the following principles:

- Funded projects will provide benefit to the Knox community and help meet Council objectives;
- Responsiveness to current and changing needs;
- Encouragement of collaboration and partnerships;
- Consistency, equity and transparency; and
- Accountability for public funds.

Council is also committed to addressing the following:

### 2.1 Best-practice grant-making

Council is committed to best practices and continuous improvement in its grant programs. Council will monitor the grant-making environment, as well as respond to feedback about its grant making processes to improve programs and procedures on an ongoing basis.

### 2.2 Equity, Inclusion and Respect

Grant recipients are expected to demonstrate behaviour that promotes respect, integrity, inclusivity, accountability, and responsibility. Activities should actively foster an inclusive environment for all community members, including culturally and linguistically diverse participants, people with disabilities, and other underrepresented groups. Organisations that fail to uphold these standards may be required to

return grant funds to Council and may not be eligible for future grant funding.

### 2.3 Climate and Sustainability

Council is committed to tackling climate change and to support the community to adapt to climate change impacts. Council adopted the Climate Response Plan in 2021, which identifies actions to achieve zero greenhouse emissions for Council by 2030 and for the community by 2040. Council grants programs will provide opportunities to increase community impact and improve understanding of how climate change intersects with Council-funded programs and service outcomes.

### 2.4 Gambling Harm Prevention

Council recognises that gambling can cause significant health, social and economic harm to individuals, families and the wider community. In line with the 'Knox Gambling Harm Prevention Policy (2026/01)', Council applies a public health approach to preventing and minimising harm associated with gambling in the Knox community.

Consistent with this Policy, grant funding will not be provided to organisations or businesses that operate Electronic Gaming Machines (EGMs) or other forms of gambling that are strongly associated with gambling harm (including online gambling, sports betting, Keno, commercial bingo, casino games and race wagering). Council will also not fund events, programs or activities that are held at, dependent on, or promote venues where EGMs operate.

### 2.5 Visual Surveillance

Council recognises that visual surveillance can have privacy, ethical and community impacts; therefore, Council does not fund CCTV or visual surveillance systems.

### 2.6 Alcohol

Council recognises that alcohol misuse can result in harmful impacts to our local community and as such, Council grant funds cannot be used for the purchase of alcohol in any circumstances.

### 2.7 Child Safety

Under the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005, all organisations in Victoria providing services or facilities for children and young people under 18 years of age are required by law to comply with the Victorian Child Safe Standards.

Grant recipients of Knox City Council who provide services, programs or activities that include children and young people must be aware of their legislative obligations and may be required to demonstrate these to Council in the grant application and funding agreement stages. Council's child safety requirements cover the following:

1. Council requires grant recipients to ensure their compliance with all relevant child safety legislation, and with their responsibilities and requirements as a 'contractor' as outlined in Council's Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy (available at [Child Safe Policy | Knox](#)). If the Standards apply to community funded programs, activities or services, the Provider must:
  - a. Implement and comply with the Standards at all times; and
  - b. Supply Council with a copy of their child safety policy at any time upon reasonable request.

Information on the Child Safe Standards is from the Social Service Regulator: [Child Safe Standards | vic.gov.au](https://www.childsafestandards.vic.gov.au).

2. Under the Worker Screening Act 2020 (Vic), people engaging in child-related work must obtain a Working with Children (WWC) Check. Grant recipients must:
  - a. Ensure that all their relevant employees, contractors and volunteers who are providing the services or facilities in any Council-funded program hold a valid and current WWC Check (or for interstate visitors, an equivalent Check from their home State/Territory) as per the requirements outlined in Council's Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy;
  - b. Maintain an up-to-date register of WWC Checks;
  - c. Provide evidence of a valid and current WWC Check for each of their employees, contractors and volunteers providing the services or facilities to Council at any time upon reasonable request; and
  - d. Notify Council immediately if any of their employees, contractors or volunteers who are providing the services or facilities to Council have their WWC Check suspended or revoked, or are issued with a WWC Check Exclusion.

Information about the WWC Check is available at <https://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au/>.

### 3. Scope

This Policy applies to all grants allocated via the following ongoing Council grant programs including:

- Individual Excellence Grants;
- Biodiversity Buddies Grants;
- Minor Grants Program;
- Leisure Minor Capital Works Program;
- Community Development Fund Program; and
- Community Partnership Fund Program.

The Policy also applies to any one-off or ongoing grants that Council creates to respond to community need at the time.

This Policy will prevail over all other policies relevant to the above Council grant programs where inconsistencies are found.

### 4. Council Grant Framework Policy

#### 4.1 Guidelines

All Council grant programs will have accompanying guidelines that outline the eligibility and other specific information for each Council grant. Any amendments that materially change the intent of each

guideline must be considered and approved by the CEO.

#### 4.2 Promotion

All Council grant programs will be promoted widely within Knox to the targeted audience using the following approaches, where appropriate:

- Council's website and social media channels; and/or
- Media release; and/or
- Paid advertisement in community newspapers; and/or
- Opt-in email subscription lists via Smarty Grants; and/or
- Council newsletters and other Council publications; and/or
- Community information sessions; and/or
- Phone contact.

Additional assistance such as interpreters will be provided where required to ensure an equitable process for all applicants.

#### 4.3 Applications

4.3.1 Council grant guidelines will specify the application process.

4.3.2 All applicants must be able to demonstrate a positive benefit to the Knox community.

#### 4.4 Record keeping

All Council grant program records will be managed through Council's Smarty Grants online portal. This system aims to track interactions between Council and each unique grant applicant.

Applications and funding agreements will also be stored in Council's central record keeping system, Knox Explorer.

#### 4.5 Assessment Process

Assessment will be carried out in the following manner:

4.5.1 Applications will first be assessed for eligibility outlined in this Policy and the relevant grant guidelines.

4.5.2 Applications that are deemed ineligible at this first point will not be included in the following parts of the assessment process.

4.5.3 Grant guidelines will clearly specify the assessment criteria. These criteria will be made available to all applicants and assessors. Applications will be assessed against the program's criteria.

4.5.4 The Assessors will be given Assessor access to Smarty Grants (where applicable) to view the full application and supporting documents where possible.

4.5.5 Where applicable, an assessment report summarising all relevant assessor comments will be developed for presentation to the Assessment Panel as a tool to assist with assessment. Where

applicable, the assessment report will include details of the application

4.5.6 Where applicable, each Assessor will undertake an individual assessment of each application prior to the Assessment Panel process.

#### 4.6 Assessment Panels

4.6.1 Where practicable and subject to the individual grant program procedure, an Assessment Panel will be appointed and may comprise:

- A mix of community representatives and Council Officers; or
- Council Officers only; or
- Community representatives only.

4.6.2 Assessment Panels that comprise Council Officers only should include Officers who are subject matter experts as well as at least one Officer representative from an unrelated department.

4.6.3 Council Officers that assist applicants with information or support to complete their applications, or with the administration of a particular grant program, are not eligible to join the assessment panel as voting member however can still provide administrative support to the Panel.

4.6.4 Community representatives can only be appointed to one grant Assessment Panel at any time.

4.6.5 The Assessment Panel will be led by a Chair (a Council Officer) and the Chair will be supported by an Officer responsible for administrative oversight of the particular program. This Officer will provide the Chair with the following support:

- Confirmation that the grant application and evaluation process were completed in accordance with the Grant Framework Policy and individual grant guidance.
- Confirmation that all queries were resolved, to the extent possible, before initial assessments were made.
- Any conflicts of interest that were identified among assessment Panel Members or applicants were managed in accordance with Council's Governance rules.
- A Panel Assessment report that outlines all matters relevant to the application and the assessor's initial assessment.
- Any other issues of relevance to the individual grant.
- The Chair will then lead the Assessment Panel through a consensus decision making process.
- Where the collective Assessment Panel decision differs from any prior individual assessment, a collective agreement will be reached. These recommendations will be noted in the Minutes.
- Written assessment will be recorded for each application including the reason for approval or decline and where relevant, the reason why an application did not receive the full allocation.
- Panel Assessment meetings will be minuted and saved in Smarty Grants and Council's central record system, Knox Explorer.
- A report containing the Assessment Panel's recommendations will be prepared by the Council Officer responsible for administrative oversight of the particular grant program. All recommendations of Grant Assessment Panels will go to Council for approval, except those

made under delegation of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

#### 4.7 Decision-making

The final decision regarding successful applications will be made by Council or by CEO delegation. The decision will be recorded in Smarty Grants and reasons for the decision will be provided to applicants.

#### 4.8 Conflicts of Interest

4.8.1 All members of assessment panels and Council Officers must identify any conflicts of interest they may have in relation to grant programs they are involved in as assessors or administrators, declare all conflicts of interest and exclude themselves from any decision making processes in relation to a matter in which they have a conflict of interest; this includes any discussions that occur as a precursor to the decision being made.

4.8.2 Governance Rules (Chapter 5) apply to all conflict of interest procedures. A Conflict of Interest Declaration Form must be completed whenever a conflict is identified, including by:

- Assessment panel members (community, industry, business representatives);
- Council officers; and/or
- Council officers involved in administrating that specific grant program.

4.8.3 Council's Governance Rules (Chapter 5) will be followed in relation to conflict of interest procedures and a Conflict-of-Interest Declaration Form must be completed for members of grant Assessment Panels (including community / industry / business representatives; Council Officers; and by the Officers involved in grant administration of that particular program).

4.8.4 Grant applicants must disclose conflicts of interest at the time of application, particularly where they work or volunteer for Knox City Council. Disclosures will be managed in accordance with Council's Governance Rules (Chapter 5).

4.8.5 All members of grant Assessment Panels and Council Officers, including those involved in the administration of grants, must not make improper use of information acquired because of their position, or release information that they know of, or should reasonably know, is confidential information.

#### 4.9 Notification process

Notification of successful and unsuccessful applications will take place as soon as practicable after the decision is made.

Successful applicants will be informed by:

- Email; and
- An announcement on Council's website.

Unsuccessful applicants will be informed via email with an offer of feedback and contact details of the Officer to provide feedback. Council's decision in relation to funding applications is final.

#### 4.10 Funding Agreements

All successful grant recipients will be required to enter into a funding agreement with Council. The funding agreement will set out the terms of the grant based on the applicant's application. Council will use a standard funding agreement relevant to each grant program. Any contract negotiations, within the ambit of the approved grant, will be carried out between the relevant Council representative and the successful recipient's appointed representative.

The funding agreement must be signed and returned to Council with all funding conditions outlined in the funding agreement met before to the grant payment being released.

Funded organisations have three months from the date of the Council meeting to complete and return their signed funding agreement. Every effort will be made to secure a signed funding agreement before the money is returned to the grants pool.

#### 4.11 Payment arrangements

Payment will be made by Knox City Council to the nominated bank account by electronic funds transfer. The bank account must be in the name of the successful applicant entity or nominated auspice (except in the case of the Individual Excellence Grants). The individual grant guidelines will provide more information about grant payment arrangements.

#### 4.12 GST Treatment

- Where an applicant is registered for GST, GST will not be paid for any part of a grant for salary or project management costs.
- Where an applicant is registered for GST, GST will be paid for grants for equipment and other items that attract GST.
- GST will not be included as part of a grant to entities not registered for GST (though non-GST registered entities may still apply for Council grants depending on the individual grant guidelines).

#### 4.13 Reporting and Monitoring

The reporting arrangements for each individual grant program are specified in each individual grant guidelines and within the standard funding agreement. Any project specific items or conditions to be reported on will be identified in the contract.

All reporting is to be completed via Council's Smarty Grants online portal. Monitoring may be undertaken via telephone, meeting or network meeting.

#### 4.14 Performance

Whilst every effort is made to ensure that projects go smoothly, grant recipients may fail to deliver on aspects of their contract for a range of reasons. For applicants with the following:

- 4.14.1 Variation requests – All requests for variations to the approved project must be submitted electronically, and Council will provide an electronic response. Variations must still deliver outcomes similar to those originally approved by Council. If an applicant is unable to submit electronically due to accessibility or technical limitations, Council may accept a hard-copy submission by special arrangement.

4.14.2 Extension requests - Requests for an extension of a funding agreement must be submitted electronically through the SmartyGrants Extension Request Form. Council will provide an electronic response to extension requests, and this will be done through SmartyGrants. Extensions will not be approved beyond twelve months from the original acquittal date in the Funding Agreement, unless extenuating circumstances can be demonstrated.

4.14.3 Unspent Grant Funds - In the event that an applicant can no longer complete any, or all, of the approved project, unspent grant funds will be returned to Council and any partial expenditure must be acquitted on the relevant forms.

#### 4.15 Financial acquittal

Financial acquittal is required for all Council grants. A financial acquittal report must be submitted:

- Via Council's Smarty Grants online portal on the form provided by Council;
- By the date agreed in the funding agreement;
- With supporting documents including receipts or other supporting documentation that shows expenditure of Council grant funds. Further information about the types of supporting documentation will be outlined in the individual grant procedures.

Failure to meet the above criteria may result in an applicant being:

- Required to return allocated funding to Council; and/or
- Becoming ineligible for future Council grants.

Applicants who have not provided adequate grant acquittal documentation within two years of the original grant approval date will be referred to Council's Finance Department for debt retrieval and may not be eligible for future Knox grant funding.

#### 4.16 Project Outcomes

The success of the funded activity will be assessed through a final report via Council's Smarty Grants online portal (along with the financial acquittal). The specific grant guidelines and/or funding agreement will outline Council's expectations around outcome reporting.

As with the financial acquittal, failure to report on project outcomes may result in the applicant being ineligible for future funding. Any unreported or unspent funds must be returned to Council.

#### 4.17 Complaints and dispute resolution

Council is committed to sound decision-making processes to ensure fair and reasonable outcomes for the Knox community. Council values complaints and encourages people to contact us when they have a problem with our services, actions, decisions, and policies. If a complaint or dispute arises through Council's grant making processes, Council's Complaint Policy will be followed.

Where there is a complaint or dispute between Assessment Panel members, the Terms of Reference for that Panel will provide guidance.

#### 4.18 Fraud and corruption control

Council recognises that there are specific fraud and corruption risks related to the administration of public funds through grant making. Council maintains a Fraud and Corruption Control Framework and Risk Register which provides guidance to all parties around fraud or corruption risk in the grant making process.

#### 4.19 Grant recipients

Grant recipients are expected to demonstrate behaviour that promotes respect, integrity, inclusivity, accountability, and responsibility. Activities should actively foster an inclusive environment for all community members, including culturally and linguistically diverse participants, people with disabilities, and other underrepresented groups. Organisations that fail to uphold these standards may be required to return grant funds to Council and may not be eligible for future grant funding.

## 5. References

### 5.1 Knox Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029

- **Theme 1: Enhancing community connection to vital services and resources** - Our Knox community will feel better supported and more informed. They will be able to access the jobs, services, and the nutrition they need to sustain a healthy, and satisfying lifestyle
  - Strategy 1.2 – Access to diverse training and lifelong learning
  - Strategy 1.4 – Access to affordable and nutritious food
  - Strategy 1.5 – Access to health and wellbeing services, education and programs
- **Theme 2: Embracing connection, inclusion and diversity** - Our diverse and connected community is strengthened by creating opportunities to actively participate, connect and learn.
  - Strategy 2.1 – Equity and inclusion in decision-making
  - Strategy 2.2 – Celebrating cultural diversity
  - Strategy 2.4 – Opportunities for social connection and active living
- **Theme 3: Caring for and enhancing our environment** - Our environment is greener, healthier and sustainable through Council's environmental protection and enhancement, working in collaboration with our community.
  - Strategy 3.1 – Environmental considerations in planning and decision-making
  - Strategy 3.3 – Minimising waste to landfill
  - Strategy 3.4 – Reduced energy consumption and increased renewable energy use
- **Theme 4: Leading, listening and governing** -Our community feels empowered, heard, and has trust in Council through responsible governance, proactive communication and engagement, and transparent decision making.
  - Strategy 4.1 – Transparent and responsible decision-making
  - Strategy 4.2 – Community engagement and meaningful communication
  - Strategy 4.3 – Efficient, innovative and capability-focused service delivery
  - Strategy 4.4 – Informed policy and strategy aligned to community needs

- **Theme 5: Being a strong voice for safety** - Our community feels safe, respected and supported in public spaces and at home through Council’s delivery, advocacy and partnerships.

Strategy 5.1 – Safety in public spaces and facilities

Strategy 5.3 – Supporting vulnerable and isolated community members

Strategy 5.4 – Programs and services that enhance safety at home and in the community

#### 5.2 Relevant Legislation

- Local Government Act 2020
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2025

#### 5.3 Charter of Human Rights

- This Policy has been assessed against and complies with the charter of Human Rights.

#### 5.4 Related Council Policies and Procedures

- Election Period Policy.
- Knox Gambling Harm Prevention Policy
- Statement of Commitment for Reducing Alcohol Harm
- Complaint Policy.
- Knox City Council Governance Rules (Chapter 5 – Disclosure of Conflicts of Interest).
- Fraud and Corruption Control Framework.

#### 5.5 Related Council Documents

- Excellence Grants for Individuals Guidelines.
- Biodiversity Buddies Grants Guidelines.
- KCC Community Grants Guidelines.
- Community Development Fund Assessment Panel Terms of Reference.
- Leisure Minor Capital Works Grant Scheme Guidelines.
- Leisure Minor Capital Works Grant Scheme Assessment Panel Terms of Reference.
- Knox Council Integrated Risk Management Process.
- Knox City Council Fraud & Corruption Control Procedure.

## 6. Definitions

Acquittal	Means the information provided by the grant recipient that proves funds have been spent responsibly and in line with the guidelines of each grant program.
Auspice	An established not-for-profit legal entity that agrees to take responsibility for the grant obligations of an unincorporated or informal or newly established group with no legal status.
Assessment Panel	An Assessment Panel formed specifically to provide recommendations to

	Council regarding grant allocations.
Capital Works	Refers to projects that involve building, installing, upgrading or significantly improving fixed assets or infrastructure. These works usually create a long-term asset or increase the value, capacity or lifespan of an existing one.
CEO	Means the Chief Executive Officer of Knox City Council.
Community Group(s) / Organisation	A legal entity who provide services, support or activities to the Knox community.
Community Representative	A member of the community appointed by Council to participate in the Panel Assessments.
Council	Knox City Council, whether constituted before or after the commencement of this Policy.
Delegate	Means a Council officer(s) selected by the CEO to administer a grant process.
Event	Means an event, celebration, conference, performance or exhibition open to the community and held within the boundaries of Knox City.
Fixed Asset	A fixed asset refers to a tangible item purchased for long-term use that supports the ongoing delivery of a community organisation's programs, services or operations. Fixed assets are durable items that are not intended for resale and remain available for ongoing community benefit beyond a single activity or event.
Funding agreement	An agreement between the grant recipient and Council that documents the agreed objectives of the funded project/activity and the reporting and accountability requirements of the grant.
Grant	Means a sum of money given to an individual or organisation with the expectation that the money will be used for an agreed and specific purpose.
GST	Goods and Services Tax.
Individual(s)	Means a resident(s) of the Knox Municipality.
Legal Entity	An incorporated association, a co-operative, a company limited by guarantee, share or a trust or other organisation established under an Act passed by the State or Commonwealth.
Not-for-profit	Means a group or organisation that is not operating for the profit or gain of its individual members; and any profit or surplus is directed back into the operation of the organisation to carry out its purpose.

## **7. Administrative Updates**

From time to time, circumstances may change leading to the need for minor administrative changes to this Policy. Where an update does not materially alter this Policy, such a change may be made administratively on approval of the Chief Executive Officer. Examples of minor administrative changes include change to names of Council departments or positions, change to names of Federal or State Government departments or a minor amendment to legislation that does not have material impact. Where any change or update may materially change the intent of this Policy, it must be considered by Council.