

Emergency Relief Fund Guidelines 2026 - 2027



Image Credit: Outer East Foodshare

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1. Introduction

Knox City Council provides an annual budget to a range of grant programs designed to capture the priorities of the community and enable our community to thrive. They are underpinned by the following principles:

- Funded projects/activities will provide benefit to the Knox community and help meet Council's objectives;
- Co-operation and collaboration between groups is encouraged;
- Grants' processes will be consistent, equitable and transparent; and
- Grants' processes will support and strengthen community groups in developing local solutions to local needs.

These Guidelines outline the Emergency Relief Fund, which provides funding to respond to different community needs through an open grant application process.

Equity and Inclusion

Council is committed to equity and inclusion and welcomes applications from groups that may experience disadvantages or barriers to participation. This includes (but is not limited to) First Nations Peoples, LGBTIQ+ communities, over 55's, young people, culturally and linguistically diverse communities and people with disability. We also encourage partnership and collaboration between organisations.

2. Who can apply?

Organisations who meet the following criteria are eligible to apply for the Emergency Relief Fund.

Operational location

Applicants must be located within, or be delivering a project within, the City of Knox.

Australian Business Number

The organisation must have an Australian Business Number (ABN) or complete a Statement by Supplier form.

Governing Body

The organisation must have a Committee of Management or similar governing body that accepts responsibility for administering the grant.

Previous Grant Expenditure

The organisation must have provided evidence to Council's satisfaction regarding the expenditure of any previous grants received from Council.

No Outstanding Debts

The organisation must have no outstanding debts to Knox City Council.

Not-For-Profit Status

The organisation must be a not-for-profit legal entity that provides services, support, or activities to the Knox community. Grants will only be awarded to eligible organisations and not to individuals.

Public Liability Insurance

The organisation must hold adequate public liability insurance appropriate for the activity outlined in the application.

Required Permits and Plans

All required permits and approvals, including Council permits, must be obtained as part of the funding agreement.

3. General Grant Conditions and Compliance Requirements

The following conditions apply to the Emergency Relief Fund program:

Use of Grant Funds

Once a grant has been approved, grant funds must be used solely for the purpose approved in the grant application and Funding Agreement. Grant funds must not be gifted, transferred or passed on to another organisation, either in cash or through the purchase or transfer of equipment.

Any changes to the approved use of grant funds will only be considered in exceptional circumstances and require prior written approval from Council Officers within the Community Grants Team (delegated Officers) using approved forms.

Prohibited Expenditure and Funding Exclusions

Funding will not be provided for:

- Activities that have already commenced or expenses incurred prior to Council approval (retrospective funding).
- As a general principle, Council funding will not be used to replace services that are the core responsibility of the State or Federal Government.
- Projects, programs or activities delivered by political or religious organisations where the primary purpose is political advocacy, promotion of a political party, or the promotion of religious beliefs, doctrine or worship.
- Organisations or businesses that operate electronic gaming machines or other gambling activities strongly associated with gambling harm. Grant funding will also not support events, activities or programs delivered at venues where electronic gaming machines operate, in accordance with the Knox Gambling Harm Prevention Policy.
- The purchase of alcohol, or items that support the sale, storage or consumption of alcohol.
- Expenditure that contributes unnecessarily to environmental harm where more sustainable alternatives are reasonably available, including the purchase or use of single-use plastics.
- CCTV, surveillance systems, cameras, monitoring equipment, or associated installation and maintenance costs.

- Educational institution curriculum-based activities or projects that take place solely within, or exclusively benefit, a single school or kindergarten.
- Voucher support other than grocery vouchers. Grocery vouchers must be supermarket-specific (for example, Coles or Woolworths) and must restrict the purchase of alcohol and tobacco products.
- Capital works, building works, permanent infrastructure, or the purchase or installation of fixed assets. This includes any works or items that create, enhance or extend the life of a physical asset or infrastructure. Capital works generally refer to construction, structural improvements or permanent upgrades to land, buildings or facilities. Fixed assets are items of enduring value that are not easily moved and are intended for long-term use.
- Installation or replacement of fixed equipment (for example built-in seating or lighting infrastructure).
- Purchase of large or fixed equipment that becomes part of a facility (for example fixed shelving or commercial kitchen fit-outs).
- Portable equipment such as marquees, tables, chairs, fridges and ovens.

Child Safe Standards

Council is committed to creating a child safe and child friendly city. We have zero tolerance for child abuse and are committed to ensuring all children and young people are safe, valued and protected from harm. Child safety is embedded in the everyday work of Council staff, contractors and volunteers.

As a condition of receiving grant funding, organisations must comply with all relevant child safety legislation, including the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005, the Child Safe Standards and the Reportable Conduct Scheme. This includes:

- Reviewing the Worker Screening Act 2020 to understand any Working with Children Check (WWCC) requirements;
- Reviewing the Child Employment (Amendment) Act 2022 to determine whether a licence is required to employ children under 15;
- Implementing the Victorian Child Safe Standards, where applicable; and
- Understanding and complying with obligations under the Reportable Conduct Scheme.

Where an organisation has direct or indirect contact with children under 18 years of age, applications must include evidence of the organisation's commitment to child safety, including:

- Policies and procedures addressing the Child Safe Standards (where applicable); and
- Confirmation that relevant staff and volunteers hold a valid Working with Children Check, where required.

Plain language guides, fact sheets-language guides, fact sheets and other resources are available from the Social Services Regulator: [Child Safe Standards | vic.gov.au](https://www.vic.gov.au/child-safe-standards).

Equity, Inclusion and Respect

Grant recipients are required to demonstrate behaviour that promotes respect, integrity, inclusivity, accountability and responsibility throughout the delivery of the funded project or activity.

Activities should actively foster an inclusive environment for all community members, including culturally and linguistically diverse participants, people with disabilities, and other underrepresented groups.

Compliance with this requirement will be assessed as part of the grant acquittal process. 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.

Conflict of Interest - Community Group Members

Any individual or related business/organisation benefiting from grant funds must declare this conflict. If work or quotes are supplied by a connected party, it must be reported and supported by a second quote.

Funding Agreement

All successful applicants are required to enter into a funding agreement within two weeks of grant approval. Funding agreements detail the terms and conditions of the grant, accountability requirements for project delivery and financial reporting expectations.

Alignment with the Knox Council and Health & Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029

All funding applications must demonstrate how the proposed project will benefit the Knox community and align with the objectives and priorities of the Knox Council and Health & Wellbeing Plan 2025–2029.

Applicants must address this requirement through mandatory application questions. Demonstrated alignment will form part of the eligibility screening and assessment criteria. Applications that fail to demonstrate alignment will not be considered for funding.

Change of Circumstances

We understand from time to time, circumstances may change. Please contact the Community Grants Team on grants@knox.vic.gov.au or 03 9298 8000 to discuss your project or program and any foreseeable impacts to the delivery of your project.

Suspension or Withholding of Payments

Council may withhold or suspend funding where reporting is late, incomplete or unsatisfactory; where the Applicant has failed to remedy a breach; or where Council reasonably considers there to be a risk to health, safety, child safety or Council's reputation. Payments resume once issues are remedied.

The Role of an Auspice

An auspice arrangement is when a larger, eligible organisation supports a smaller unincorporated group to apply for and manage a grant. The larger organisation, known as the auspice, is responsible for managing the grant funds and providing public liability insurance for the activity or event. Both the auspice organisation and the group being auspiced must be community groups or organisations. Individuals cannot apply for funding under an auspice arrangement.

If you wish to use an auspice, you must provide evidence of their agreement, usually a letter which should be uploaded with your grant application in SmartyGrants. The auspice organisation must also meet the Eligibility Criteria outlined in the 'Who Can Apply' section of these Guidelines.

4. Emergency Relief Fund Specific Requirements

Purpose

The Emergency Relief Fund supports local service providers operating within Knox or delivering services to Knox residents to provide immediate and essential assistance to people experiencing hardship or crisis.

It is intended to be a responsive funding mechanism that enables organisations to meet urgent and immediate community need and replenish essential relief supplies.

The Fund is not intended to duplicate other Knox City Council grant programs and will generally support urgent or emerging needs that cannot reasonably wait for another funding round.

Examples of eligible support include:

- Food and groceries;
- Bedding and blankets;
- Clothing;
- Vouchers;
- Medicine and health-related essentials; and
- Other initiatives that address immediate community need.

Funding available

- Total annual funding pool: \$150,000.
- Organisations may apply multiple times throughout the financial year. The total funding awarded to any one organisation cannot exceed \$10,000 per financial year.
- Funding requests can be made for any amount up to \$10,000.
- Applicants are encouraged to collaborate and partner where an identified need requires resources beyond the \$10,000 annual cap (for example, 3 different organisations may apply for a shared project up to \$30,000).
- Applicants are encouraged to request only the amount required to meet the identified need and are not expected to apply for the maximum amount.
- The organisation must be a member of the Knox Emergency Relief Network (KERN). Information on KERN is available on the Knox City Council website: [Knox Emergency Relief Network | Knox](#).

Assessment and Decision-Making

Applications are assessed and allocated monthly. The Emergency Relief Fund and any allocation and payment of Grants will be temporarily suspended prior to any Council election or by-election, in accordance with Council's Election Period Policy.

Application Amount	Assessment and Determination	Grant Accountability and Acquittal
\$1 to \$10,000	Assessed by the Director Connected Communities or Manager Community Strengthening. Determined by Council at the monthly Ordinary Meeting of Council.	Funding Agreement and Acquittal required that show proof of expenditure/purchase (i.e. receipt, paid invoice or bank statement) and benefit of grant.

Applications that may be supported

Projects that assist people in Knox experiencing an immediate crisis or unmet essential needs.

Eligible applications may include:

- The purchase and distribution of essential relief items to people experiencing hardship.
- One-off, short-term initiatives that respond to an identified and immediate community need.
- Projects that can be delivered and funds expended within five months of receiving funding, reflecting the responsive nature of the program.

To be eligible, applicants must:

- Have no overdue grant acquittals with Knox City Council.
- Have satisfactorily acquitted any previous Knox City Council grants.
- Have no outstanding debts to Knox City Council (to be verified as part of the assessment process).

Examples of eligible items and activities include:

- Food and groceries.
- Bedding and blankets.
- Clothing and personal care items.
- Vouchers for essential goods and services.
- Medicines and other health-related essentials.
- Other initiatives that directly address an immediate community need.

Applications and expenditure that won't be supported

In addition to the general exclusions outlined in Section 3, the Emergency Relief Fund will not support:

- Activities that take place in a private residence.
- Funding requests for individuals.
- Applications that are more appropriately funded under another Council grant program.

- Applications where the funding will be used to provide grants to a third party.
- Retrospective payments or expenses for activities or expenses undertaken before Council approval.
- Operating and core business expenses, including wages and salaries, rent, insurance, utilities, cleaning, general maintenance, subscriptions, annual software licences, website or social media maintenance fees, professional grant writer fees, and other ongoing organisational overheads.
- One-off hospitality, catering or meal events that do not provide an ongoing emergency relief outcome or demonstrate a sustained benefit to people experiencing hardship.
- Infrastructure projects or the purchase of fixed assets, including items such as commercial fridges, freezers, permanent storage infrastructure or facility upgrades.
- Projects must be accessible to, and provide a clear benefit for, Knox residents. Applications that are not open to the wider Knox community will only be considered where a significant community benefit can be clearly demonstrated.
- Projects that don't demonstrate community wellbeing or enhance access and inclusion.
- Projects from applicants whose primary mission does not align with the purpose of this Fund, which is enabling the delivery of immediate and essential relief and support to individuals in need in Knox.
- Fundraising activities.
- New vehicles, vehicle accessories, vehicle signage, or ongoing vehicle maintenance costs.
- Activities that primarily benefit people outside the Knox municipality.

Assessment Process and Criteria

All applications are to be submitted via the Knox City Council SmartyGrants Online Portal and must include:

- Your current Public Liability Insurance Certificate of Currency;
- Your most recent full year financials;
- Quotes to support the proposed expenses/budget;
- Evidence of your organisation's legal status; and
- Project Plan and Risk Assessment.

All Emergency Relief Fund Grant applications will be reviewed by Council Officers for eligibility in accordance with these Guidelines and the Community Grant Framework Policy.

Eligible applications are assessed monthly against the outlined criteria, with preference given to proposals that demonstrate longer-term benefit or ongoing support outcomes. For example, sustainable items or activities that continue to support people over time may be prioritised over one-off activities with limited community impact.

Recommendations are then provided to Council for determination at the next available Ordinary Council Meeting.

Emergency Relief Fund applications are assessed on the following weighted criteria:

- **Community Need and Demand (40%):** Demonstrates a clear current community need, including

service demand, waitlists, service pressures, and any recent increases in demand and contributing factors.

- **Urgency and Responsiveness (30%):** Demonstrates why the support is needed now, the consequences if funding is not provided, and how the request responds to an unmet or emerging community need.
- **Community Benefit (15%):** Demonstrates the direct benefit to Knox residents, including who will benefit and how the funding will assist people experiencing hardship or disadvantage.
- **Organisational Capacity and Budget (15%):** Demonstrates the organisation has the capacity to deliver the proposed activity and that the budget is reasonable, well-structured, and represents value for money.

Application submission deadlines

Grant submission deadline	Council meeting date
23 November 2026	14 December 2026
18 January 2027	8 February 2027
16 February 2027	9 March 2027 (Tues)
22 March 2027	12 April 2027
19 April 2027	10 May 2027

Use Council's link below to access the **Emergency Relief Fund** webpage and submit your application through the SmartyGrants Online Portal, found on this webpage [Emergency Relief Fund](#). All applications must be completed through the SmartyGrants Online Portal.

Please note: The SmartyGrants program will not receive applications beyond the specified closing date and time. Please ensure that you allow adequate time in submitting online to anticipate the possibility of last-minute technical challenges.

Your project/activity start date must be after the Council meeting date where your application is being presented for approval.

Projects/activities that are due to begin before the Council meeting date will not be considered.

We may request extra information about your application so please allow enough time before the monthly deadline. Otherwise, we may defer your application to next month's Council meeting.

The administration and management of the grants program is guided by the Community Grants Framework Policy which can be accessed via Council's website - [Community grants framework policy](#).

Applications must be submitted at least **15 working days** before the Council meeting to allow time for assessment.

Emergency Relief Fund grants will not be awarded during June due to end of financial year processes, or in January, as Council meetings are not held during this period. Applicants will be advised if their application is delayed and assessed as part of the new financial year processes.

Crisis Response Provision

In the event of a declared emergency or exceptional circumstance, such as a natural disaster or pandemic impacting the municipality, Council or its delegate may waive specific clauses in this document to enable appropriate support to community organisations.

Budget Allocation

If the Emergency Relief Fund budget allocation is exhausted before May 2027, the Program will be suspended immediately, and new applications will not be accepted.

5. Application Process

When will I know the outcome of my application?

All applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application by email following consideration and approval by Council. Applicants will be advised of the outcome in the days following the relevant Council meeting.

What happens if my application is successful?

Successful applicants will be required to sign a formal funding agreement outlining the details of the grant. This Agreement will clearly define the approved purpose of the funding and set out the terms and conditions to support effective project delivery and ensure public funds are used appropriately.

What happens if my application is unsuccessful?

If you are not successful, we encourage you to talk to the Community Grants Team to seek feedback on your application and make further applications in the future.

Privacy and Data Protection Act

As part of the Information Privacy Act Statement of Consent, Council collects information from grant applicants to register and manage grant applications for the relevant funding period. The information may also be used to provide related updates and to assess satisfaction with Council services. Your information will not be shared except as required by law and will not be disclosed for marketing purposes.

Administrative Updates

From time to time, minor administrative updates may be required to this document. Changes that do not significantly affect the Guidelines can be made administratively and approved by the CEO. Examples include updates to Department or position names, Government Department titles, meeting dates or minor legislative amendments with no substantial impact. Any changes that could materially affect the intent of the Guidelines must be submitted to Council for consideration.

I Need Help

If you are having difficulty applying online, we are here to help. Contact the Community Grants Team on 03 9298 8000 or email: grants@knox.vic.gov.au.

6. Acquittals

What is an acquittal?

An acquittal is a report that the successful grant applicant submits, showing how the grant was spent and the outcomes of the funded activity. This report confirms that the funding was used as intended.

The submission of a satisfactory acquittal within the agreed timeframe is mandatory. If the acquittal report is incomplete, missing, or does not include the required documentation, it may affect your organisation's eligibility to apply for future Knox City Council grants.

Why is an acquittal important?

An acquittal is an important part of the grants process, as it ensures public funds are used responsibly and in line with the Funding Agreement and Grant Program Guidelines.

Applicants must provide evidence of purchases and confirm that all funds were spent on approved items.

If funds are not used in accordance with the agreement with Knox Council, applicants will be required to return the funds. Funds will also be required to be returned if the spending is found to be retrospective.

Timeline for Grant Acquittals

Acquittals will be due two weeks after the end date of the project/activity.

Recognition of Council Funding

Recipients of funding from this Program are expected to acknowledge Council's contribution and support through one or more of the following means:

- Use of the Council logo on relevant promotional material;
- Recognition in annual reports and at relevant events, launches and other public activities; and
- Invitation of the Mayor and Councillors to attend relevant events, activities and/or project milestones.

Specific instructions regarding the use of Council's logo will be included in the Funding Agreement. Recipients will be required to provide evidence of this acknowledgement as part of their grant acquittal.

Tips for a successful acquittal

- Complete and submit the acquittal online using the SmartyGrants Online Portal.
- Submit the acquittal within two weeks of completing your project or activity.
- Upload evidence of acknowledgement of Council funding.
- Include receipts or other proof of payment equal to the value of the grant. Documents must

clearly show that the amounts have been paid in full, for example marked as “paid” or showing a zero balance (quotes or unpaid invoices are not sufficient).

- Attach photos or videos of your project/event.
- Provide a summary outlining the benefits and outcomes of the project for the community.
- If required return any unspent grant funds to Council.

7. Definitions

Acquittal	Means the information provided by the grant recipient that proves that funds have been spent responsibly and in line with the guidelines of each grant program.
Assessment Panel	A specific purpose committee to provide recommendations to Council on the Emergency Relief Fund program grant allocations.
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.
Chief Executive Officer	Means the Chief Executive Officer of Knox City Council.
Community Group/Organisation	Means a legal entity which provides 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	Means Knox City Council, whether constituted before or after the commencement of these Guidelines.
Delegate(s)	Means a Council Officer selected by the Chief Executive Officer to administer the Grant Program.
Event	Means an event, celebration, conference, performance or exhibition open to the community and held within the boundaries of the Knox municipality.
Funding Agreement	Means an agreement between the grant recipient and Council that documents the agreed objectives of the grant and the accountability requirements of the grant.
Grant	Means a sum of money given to an organisation with the expectation that the money will be used for an agreed and specific purpose.

GST	Goods and Services Tax.
Individual	Means a person who lives, works, studies, or has a demonstrated connection to the Knox municipality.
Legal Entity	An incorporated association, a co-operative, a company limited by guarantee or a trust or other organisation established under an Act passed by the State or Commonwealth.
Not-for-Profit Group	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.
Capital Works & Fixed Asset	<p>Capital works and the purchase or installation of fixed assets are not eligible for funding under this grant program. This includes any works or items that create, enhance, or extend the life of a physical asset or infrastructure.</p> <p>Capital works generally refer to construction, structural improvements, or permanent upgrades to land, buildings, or facilities. Fixed assets are items of enduring value that are not easily moved and are intended for long-term use.</p> <p>Examples of ineligible capital works and fixed assets include (but are not limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction of new buildings, extensions, or permanent structures; • Renovations, refurbishments, or upgrades to existing facilities (e.g. kitchens, bathrooms, clubrooms); • Installation or replacement of fixed equipment (e.g. built-in seating, lighting infrastructure); and <p>Purchase of large or fixed equipment that becomes part of a facility (e.g. scoreboards, fixed shelving, commercial kitchen fit-outs).</p>

8. References

Knox City Council Plans

Knox Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029

Relevant Legislation

- Local Government Act 2020
- Child Wellbeing and Safety (Child Safe Standards Compliance and Enforcement) Amendment Bill 2021

Charter of Human Rights

These Guidelines have been assessed against and complies with the Charter of Human Rights.

Related Council Policy

- Council Grant Framework Policy (April 2025)
- Election Period Policy
- Electronic Gaming Machine Policy
- Complaint Policy
- Knox City Council Governance Rule (Chapter 5 Conflicts of Interest)
- Fraud and Corruption Control Framework
- Child Safe Policy

Related Council Documents

- Knox City Council Fraud and Corruption Control Procedure
- Community Grant Assessment Panel Terms of Reference
- Community Events in Knox – Information Pack