

DATE ADOPTED: 28 MAY 2024

VERSION: 8

POLICY STATEMENT

The Maitland City Council Community Grants Program is designed to assist community projects in the Maitland Local Government Area (LGA) that foster community partnerships, meet community needs and are deemed to benefit the community.

The purpose of this policy is to enable Council to support local projects put forward by community organisations/ groups and individuals. In doing so, the policy aims to:

- i. provide an accessible and equitable application and assessment process for community organisations and individuals seeking grant funding from Council
- ii. secure an open and transparent decision making process for requests for grant funding including discretionary funding from Council, and
- iii. ensure the Community Grants Policy and Guidelines are developed in alignment with Sections 356 and 377 of the *Local Government Act 1993*.

1. POLICY SCOPE

This policy applies to the administration, management and delivery of Maitland City Council's Community Grants Program which offers access to financial support for local community organisations, groups and individuals to assist with projects that meet community needs and benefit residents in the Maitland LGA.

2. POLICY OBJECTIVES

The objective of this policy is to:

- provide clear guidelines on the criteria by which Community Grant applications will be assessed and funding allocations determined
- provide a clear process which allows Council to conduct a meaningful comparison of requests for grant funding and discretionary funds, and
- provide community groups and individuals with financial support to meet identified community needs.

3. PRINCIPLES

The following principles provide a foundation that will guide all practices associated with the assessment, allocation, management and administration of grants under the Community Grants Policy.

- Access and equity: Promotes social inclusion, embrace diversity and establish environments that are supportive of all people regardless of age, ability, culture or identity.
- Fairness and impartiality: Ethical behaviour will guide all dealings with applications received for funding.
- Management of conflicts of interest: Identify potential conflicts of interest in accordance with Council's Code of Conduct Policy and the Department of Local Government's Pecuniary Interest guidelines.

- Responsive and community focused: Prioritise the allocation of funds that acknowledge and respond to the needs and aspirations of the residents that live within the Maitland LGA in line with the assessment criteria.
- Security and confidentiality: Standards of integrity and professional conduct govern the management of information obtained through the application lodgement and assessment process.
- Sustained benefit: Decision making is undertaken in the public interest, processes are effective and efficient and provide long term benefits to the community and best possible outcomes for resource expenditure.
- Transparency of process: Processes and procedures for the management and administration of Community Grants are created and implemented in a transparent and open manner.

4. COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAM

This policy supports financial assistance to three grant programs under the banner of the Maitland City Council Community Grants Program, namely the Community Projects Grants Program, Community Celebrations Grants Program and the Individual Development Grants Program.

These programs have a number of rounds during each financial year;

COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAMS		
PROGRAMS		NO. OF ROUNDS PER FINANCIAL YEAR
Biannual Grants Programs	Community Projects Grants Program: A program dedicated to supporting community organisations to implement specific projects, services and/or activities that provide community outcomes, respond to the needs of the community and enhance the quality of life of residents of living in the Maitland LGA.	Two
	Community Celebrations Grants Program: Support groups and community organisations to run programs and activities that encourage community participation and involvement, promote leadership and develop a strong sense of belonging in line with the eligibility criteria outlined in the guidelines e.g. ANZAC day, NAIDOC week.	Two
Year Round Grants Programs	Individual Development Grants Program: Supports individuals or teams representing the Maitland LGA in sporting endeavours at national or international levels and supports professional development opportunities for artists or small project opportunities.	Five

Council's Community Grant Program budget will be distributed to the following funding programs:

- 72% Biannual Community Projects Grant Program (60%) and Community Celebrations Grant Program (12%)
- 25% Year round Individual Development Grants
- 3% Discretionary*

*Discretionary funding is allocated as a supplementary funding source to support eligible applicants in instances where the initial funding allocation has been exhausted.



4.1 COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAM – GUIDANCE DOCUMENTS

The delivery of the Community Grants Program is guided by a suite of documents (detailed in the table below) to ensure the information provided by applicants supports a transparent and rigorous process to the assessment, allocation and distribution of public funds. The Community Grants guidelines and application forms can be found on Council's website maitland.nsw.gov.au/services/community-services/grants-and-funding

DOCUMENT NAME	DOCUMENT PURPOSE	REVIEW DATE
Community Grants Applications Guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Guide applicants to apply for the most relevant category.• Ensures the information that will be required is clearly outlined for applicants.• Inform of eligibility and number of grants individuals, groups or community organisations can apply for.	Annually
Assessment Panel Terms of Reference (TOR)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Define the purpose and structures of the grant program and details the level of authority in decision making for assessment committee and Councillors.	Annually
Application and Assessment Forms	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Applicants are assessed based on the information provided in the application form and the weighting allocated to each question.	Annually

4.2 APPLICATION PROCESS

Individuals, community groups or community organisations must complete and submit, within the relevant category, an application via Council's grant management system.

5. ELIGIBILITY AND ASSESSMENT

5.1 ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Eligibility of certain entities may differ across Community Grant Program categories. Applicants will not be guaranteed funding support, nor can any application be funded to the full amount requested if that amount exceeds the grant limit. Council reserves the right to vary grant funding allocated during the approval process.

5.1.1 Applicants seeking Community Grant Program funding must comply with the following essential eligibility criteria, in addition to any category specific criteria as detailed in the Guidelines:

- applicants must be based within the Maitland LGA and/or be able to demonstrate that the activity will directly benefit residents of the Maitland LGA
- applications must be received on or before the advertised closing date and completed with the required level of detail and supporting documentation as specified in the Guidelines
- applicants must have the appropriate level of insurance for the activities that are the subject of the funding application (not applicable to the individual grants program)
- applicants must be capable of obtaining all regulatory approvals for the activity
- applicants must not have any outstanding debts with Maitland City Council, and
- applicants must have satisfactorily acquitted any previous projects funded under the Maitland City Council Community Grants Program.

5.1.2 If an assessment panel member, Maitland City Council employee or Councillor is a party to an application submission, this must be declared, and the assessment panel member, Council employee or Councillor is unable to take part in the assessment of the application.



5.2 ASSESSMENT OF GRANT APPLICATIONS

- 5.2.1 Activities that satisfy the eligibility criteria set out in Section 5.1 and the associated Community Grant Program Guidelines will be evaluated against assessment criteria published by Maitland City Council in the Guidelines.
- 5.2.2 Assessment criteria will include consideration of (but is not limited to):
- alignment of the proposed activity to the Community Strategic Plan Maitland +10
 - capacity and experience of the applicant to demonstrate their ability to successfully complete the activity, and
 - extent to which the budget is comprehensive, realistic and provides value for money.
- 5.2.3 Maitland City Council employees and members of the assessment panel involved in the assessment and approval of applications under this section, must comply with Maitland City Council Code of Conduct, Community Grants Program Assessment Panel Terms of Reference, and declare any potential pecuniary or non-pecuniary conflicts of interest.

5.3 ASSESSMENT PANEL

- 5.3.1 The assessment panel for Biannual Community Grants will include:
- a) Two Councillor delegates and a mayoral representative
 - b) A non voting Council officer
 - c) Two independent community service sector representatives.
- 5.3.2 Additional Council employees may be requested to assist the panel by providing advice or guidance on applications.
- 5.3.3 The assessment panel will assess Biannual Community Grant Program applications and the value of funding requested.
- 5.3.4 The assessment of applications for the Community Grants Program Year Round categories will be conducted by a Council officer, with a final review of applications completed by the assessment panel.

5.4 GOVERNANCE

- 5.4.1 Applications are assessed in accordance with, and subject to, the established criteria of the Community Grants Program categories as detailed in the Community Grants Application Guidelines.
- 5.4.2 The process and framework of the Community Grants Program, along with the process and framework for the distribution of program funds to successful applicants, is endorsed by Councillors, based on advice and recommendations from Council officers and the assessment panel.
- 5.4.3 Through a Council resolution, Councillors may resolve to introduce new grant programs into the overarching Community Grants program to meet identified community needs.
- 5.4.4 Successful applicants enter into a funding agreement and commit to adhering to the conditions of the written document/s for the duration of the agreement.

5.5 AUTHORITY TO DISTRIBUTE FUNDS

- 5.5.1 Council, consistent with its budget deliberations for the forthcoming financial year, allocates funds for the overall Community Grants Program. This does not preclude Council adding additional programs, or additional monies at any time to meet an identified community need, via a Council resolution. Any unspent funds at the end of the financial year will be rolled over into the next financial year.
- 5.5.2 Where applicants have been approved and fail to meet the outcomes outlined in their funding agreements and project plan, the Director of City Services may refuse funding for future grant applications and request the return of any unspent funds.



5.5.3 As part of the accountability process, Council reserves the right to audit any and all community grant recipients to confirm compliance with the grant conditions and expenditure of grant monies received.

5.6 FUNDING AGREEMENT

All successful applicants will be required to enter into a funding agreement before funds are released and the activity commences. The funding agreement will include:

- all terms related to the funding agreement and the provision of the grant
- all terms related to the payment schedule, and
- all terms related to the activity and financial acquittal.

5.7 APPEAL PROCESS

Any appeal in relation to the outcome of Council's Community Grants Program should be made within 30 days of notification of an unsuccessful outcome. The appeal should be addressed to the Director of City Services in writing and must clearly identify grounds for a review of Council's decision that relate to either the assessment process or application of the selection criteria.

6. DEFINITIONS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Acquittal is a report submitted as per a funding agreement at the conclusion of a project detailing how the recipient administered the grant funds and met the activity outcomes in the funding agreement.

Biannual grant program are programs that can only be applied for twice a year, during a designated application period. Applications outside the designated period will not be accepted.

Community organisation are any organisation engaged in charitable or other community-based activity operating under Australian law and not established for the purpose of making a profit.

Community service sector representative are individuals with knowledge and expertise in community development, lived experience, and/or local community groups and services.

Funding agreement is a formal, legally binding contract established with a funding recipient, which is then used as the primary legal instrument to monitor implementation of the funded activity through to its completion.

Grant is the monies provided to successful applicants for a particular purpose, such as an activity or project.

Guidelines means the specific conditions and criteria for each grant category under the Community Grant Program to be read in conjunction with this policy.

Year round program are programs that can be applied for at any time during the year, until funds are exhausted.



7. POLICY ADMINISTRATION

ADMINISTRATION	RESPONSIBILITY
Business group:	City Services
Responsible officer:	Director of City Services
Council reference:	Council Meeting 28 May 2024
Policy review date:	Three (3) years from date of adoption
File number:	10/5/18
Relevant legislation	Local Government Act 1993 (NSW) Section 356 and 377 Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 (NSW)
Related policies / procedures / protocols	Maitland City Council Code of Conduct

8. POLICY HISTORY

VERSION	DATE APPROVED	DESCRIPTION OF CHANGES
1	April 2000	New policy adopted.
2	26/02/2002	Policy review.
3	28/06/2005	Policy review and name change.
4	12/09/2006	Amendments due to DLG Circular.
5	05/05/2012	Review and change to name to include Sport & Arts High Achievers Grant.
6	23/06/2015	Policy review and name change.
7	25/6/2019	Policy review and category changes.
8	28/05/2024	Policy review, name change and category changes.