



# Proposed Community Grants Program

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The Community Grants Program Review assesses the effectiveness of the current Community Grants Program and makes recommendations for strengthening effectiveness of the program in future implementation.

MELTON CITY COUNCIL PROPOSED COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAM

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**MELTON CITY COUNCIL PROPOSED COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAM****1. Executive Summary**

The Proposed Community Grants Program presents an updated Community Grants Program from review of Melton City Council's current Community Funding Program. The review assessed the program in *"supporting, assisting and partnering with community groups in providing services which benefit the wider community, enhance community well-being and contribute to Council's strategic objectives."*

**Community Funding Program Policy**

The review takes as a starting point the current Community Funding Program Policy. The policy states that the program:

1. Recognises, encourages and values the contribution of local residents in enhancing local community wellbeing and social connectedness;
2. Builds resilient residents and communities through opportunities to increase civic participation and community activity;
3. Increase the capacity and learning of local groups and individuals in the establishment and development of self sustainable programs, projects and groups;
4. Strengthens relationships and create opportunities for collaboration between Council and our community; and
5. Supports new innovative and inclusive initiatives, activities and events, which promote the uniqueness, heritage and cultural diversity of our City.

**Current Community Funding Program**

Traditionally, local government has been seen as a primary source of funding support for the provision of local community services, programs and initiatives. Good practice determines that financial support should be responsive to an evidence base of community need, which enables the efficient use of resources, resulting in sustainable community outcomes.

The grants program is administered by the Community Funding Officer. In the three financial years from 2012-2015 an average of 132 grants (77 to groups and 55 individual) averaging \$350,000 has been awarded annually via six separate grant programs and streams.

The current grant program has supported achievement of much of the grant program policy goals. However, during review of grant processes, formal and ongoing consultations with over 30 internal and 40 external stakeholders, and ongoing engagement with community members during implementation of the program, a number of opportunities were identified to strengthen the program. These are summarised below as opportunities to:

1. improve predictability and consistency of grants program
2. increase capacity building outcomes
3. strengthen synergy across Council programs
4. standardise partnership models
5. improve marketing and promotion of grant program and grantee successes

**MELTON CITY COUNCIL PROPOSED COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAM**

**Recommendations**

The review process identified opportunities for improvements to the Community Funding Program. These will be achieved by implementing a number of changes to the structure and delivery of the grants program, summarised below:

1. Consistent schedule of Grant Rounds marketed on an annual basis
2. Standardised grant categories and guidelines across grant rounds
3. Stronger grants application eligibility
4. Strengthened and consistent grants assessment panels
5. Strengthened grants assessment criteria to increase strategic alignment with Council Plan
6. Increased capacity building and grantee feedback
7. Improved sharing of grantees project successes

**MELTON CITY COUNCIL PROPOSED COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAM****2. Introduction**

Melton City Council works with organisations, groups, businesses, individuals and other levels of government to plan for, develop and provide high quality and responsive services and programs to meet local needs.

In order to achieve this, Council can be asked to take on different responsibilities depending on experience, expertise, resources and roles. This includes:

- Advocating – raising issues and concerns on behalf of the Melton community independently and through peak bodies
- Planning – identifying need for services, including programs and the methodology to deliver outcomes
- Providing service – delivering direct services, including programs and activities, for the community
- Leading – coordinating and facilitating responses to community need
- Funding – providing financial and non-financial resource to external bodies.

In times of economic restraint and limited funding, Council is sought out more frequently to provide resources to support community organisations and groups to assist them to deliver much needed services or specific activities, events or programs. In order to provide support in a fair, transparent and equitable manner, a set of eligibility and assessment criteria has been developed to assist Council in making clear and consistent decisions about the allocation of resources.

**3. Gaming Venue Partnership Agreements**

The Community Funding Program currently incorporates external funding via agreements entered into by Council with Gaming Venues. The proposed program is structured to smoothly incorporate expiry of current agreements or inclusion of any new agreements that Council may choose to enter into in the future.

**4. Current Community Grants Program**

The community grants program is currently provided through six separate streams or programs (see table 1, page 7):

1. Community Grant Program; Annual Grants
2. Community Grant Program; Monthly Responsive Grants
3. Donation Fund; Community Contribution (suspended January 2016)
4. Donation Fund; Resident Achievement Donation (suspended January 2016)
5. EGM Community Benefit; The Club Caroline Springs Grants
6. EGM Community Benefit; HRV and Tabcorp Park Grants

Table 1: Grants currently provided under the Community Funding Program

Type/ Budget	2016/17 Funding Pool	Who	Grants Category	When
<b>Annual Grants</b> (up to \$10,000)	\$150,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Incorporated groups with low grants capacity</li> <li>NiPs and charities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Matching dollar-for-dollar threshold of \$4,000 (in-kind contribution accepted)</li> </ul>	February/March
<b>Monthly Responsive Grants</b> (up to \$2,500)	\$25,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New groups seeking funds for key establishment costs</li> <li>Projects that require responsive support</li> </ul>		Monthly
<b>The Club Caroline Springs</b> (up to \$10,000)	\$50,000* *Current agreement for \$50,000. Previously was \$93,000, however in 2015/16 a total of \$193,000 was available	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Incorporated groups with low grants capacity</li> <li>NiPs and charities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Two streams:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community Support (\$5,000)</li> <li>Capital/Infrastructure/Equipment (\$10,000)</li> </ul> </li> <li>Matching dollar-for-dollar threshold varies upon stream</li> <li>Due to large amount of unexpended funds in 2015/16 Council held a supplementary grant round of \$20,000-\$50,000</li> </ul>	Jun/July
<b>HRV and Tabcorp Park</b> (up to \$7,500)	\$50,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Incorporated groups with low grants capacity</li> <li>NiPs and charities</li> <li>Schools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Three streams:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community Support (\$4,000)</li> <li>Capital/Infrastructure/Equipment (\$7,500)</li> <li>School Welfare (\$5,000)</li> </ul> </li> <li>Matching dollar-for-dollar varies upon stream</li> </ul>	Sept/Oct
<b>Resident Achievement Donations</b> (up to \$750)	\$20,000* *this is a combined budget for both categories	Individuals in sports/community/arts participating at high level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reopened after being suspended following the Local Government Amendment (Improved Governance) Act 2015</li> </ul>	Monthly
<b>Community Contribution</b> (Donations) (up to \$2,000)		Community groups and other organisations requesting support of Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Remains suspended following the Local Government Amendment (Improved Governance) Act 2015</li> </ul>	Monthly

## 5. Strengthening the Community Funding Program

The engagement and consultation process captured a range of stakeholder feedback to inform design of a new and improved program. This feedback has helped identify the following principles to shape design of a strengthened Community Grants Program:

### Consistent schedule of Grant Rounds

Council Funded Grant program rounds will be scheduled on an semi-annual basis to provide timely and consistent opportunities for community to apply for funding support. The schedule will strengthen applicant's ability to accurately plan and prepare submissions to fit grant timelines. Further, a more even spread of funding throughout available rounds is projected to improve consistency of funding available to community as evidence indicates that large grant rounds (up to \$150,000) are regularly underspent, whilst 35% of eligible applications in small grant rounds (\$50,000) are unable to be funded due to insufficient available funds.

Grants requiring a faster response would be available on a bi-monthly basis to strengthen efficiency of administrative burden.

### Standardised grant categories and guidelines across grant rounds

A range of grants will be available for community to apply for in the relevant grant rounds. Grant categories will have standardised guidelines to improve consistency of application process experience for community groups through the grants program. An Entry-Level grant will be offered to facilitate access for applicants with low capacity to community grants, increasing opportunities for them to actively contribute to the community and build capacity to

Bi-monthly responsive grant rounds will offer opportunities for community to apply for establishment grant support, and for funding to meet responsive project needs.

See Table 2 page 9 for full grants schedule and categories.

### Stronger grants application eligibility

To strengthen the benefit the Community Grants Program provides to the wider City of Melton community the review has identified the following amendments to grant eligibility:

- Applicants for Community Project Grants and Entry-Level Grants must have at least 80% residents of the City of Melton as project participants/beneficiaries;
- Applicants for New Group Establishment Grants must have at least 80% of group participants as residents of the City of Melton;
- Applicants seeking funding for events over \$1,000 must include the broader community and not be exclusive to the membership of the applicant group.
- Individual Resident Achievement Grants are only available to residents of the City of Melton, with a limit of one grant per resident in a three year period.
- Schools are not eligible to directly apply to the Community Grants Program. However, schools may partner with Community Organisations making application to the Community Grants Program.
- Community projects may only receive funding from one Council funded grant round. Applicants may seek funding from multiple Gaming Venue Partner rounds.

Table 2: Proposed Grants Schedule and Categories

Type/ Budget	Funding Pool	Who	Grants Categories	Rounds Open
<b>Semi-Annual Grants</b>	2 rounds of \$75,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community clubs and organisations</li> <li>Not-for-Profits and Charities</li> <li>Groups with low capacity may apply to Entry-Level Grants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community Project Grants for up to \$10,000 (matching dollar-for-dollar threshold of \$5,000)</li> <li>Entry-Level Grants may apply for up to \$2,000</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>February</li> <li>June</li> </ul>
<b>The Club Caroline Springs Grants Program</b>	\$50,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community clubs and organisations</li> <li>Not-for-Profits and Charities</li> <li>Groups with low capacity may apply to Entry-Level Grants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community Project Grants may apply for up to \$10,000 (matching dollar-for-dollar threshold of \$5,000)</li> <li>Entry-Level Grants may apply for up to \$2,000</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>October (Partner agreement programs administered concurrently)</li> </ul>
<b>HRV /Tabcorp Park Grants Program</b>	\$50,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community clubs and organisations</li> <li>Not-for-Profits and Charities</li> <li>Groups with low capacity may apply to Entry-Level Grants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community Project Grants may apply for up to \$10,000 (matching dollar-for-dollar threshold of \$5,000)</li> <li>Entry-Level Grants may apply for up to \$2,000</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>October (Partner agreement programs administered concurrently)</li> </ul>
<b>Bi-Monthly Responsive Grants (up to \$2,500)</b>	\$25,000	Community clubs and organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New groups seeking funds for key establishment costs may apply for up to \$2,500</li> <li>Projects that demonstrate requirement for responsive support may apply for up to \$2,500</li> </ul>	Bi-Monthly
<b>Individual Resident Achievement Donations (up to \$750)</b>	\$20,000	Individuals participating in academic/arts/ community/sports events at high level	Reopened after being suspended following the Local Government Amendment (Improved Governance) Act 2015	Bi-Monthly



### Strengthened and consistent grants assessment panels

Three grant assessment panels will be appointed for each calendar year:

1. Semi-Annual Grants Assessment Panel
2. Gaming Venue Partnership Agreement Grants Assessment Panel
3. Bi-Monthly Grants Assessment Panel

Panels will be appointed at the end of each calendar year for the following year. Councillors will be appointed at the annual review of Councillor representation on Council Committees. Community Representatives will be selected through an open application process with appointments to last for two years. Council Officers will be appointed for a period of two years.

#### Semi-Annual Grants Assessment Panel

The panel will assess applications made to the Semi-Annual Grants Program and include a combination of Councillors, community representatives and council officers.

#### Councillors

It is proposed that each ward is represented on the assessment panels to ensure broad representation of elected officials across the municipality.

#### Community representatives

It is proposed that a community representative is sought from each ward. Council will seek nomination and endorsement of three community representatives to participate throughout the year.

#### Council officers

Council officers will be appointed with approval of the General Manager Community Services based on positional links with the community for a two year period.

Who	Number/round	Term
<b>3 Councillors</b>	3 Councillors (1 per ward)	1 year term limit
<b>3 community representatives</b>	3 per round (1 per ward)	2 year term limit
<b>2 Council officers</b>	Appointed due to positions links to community	2 year term limit
<b>Council Manager (Chair)</b>	Non voting	Every round
<b>Community Funding Officer</b>	Non voting	Every round

#### Quorum

Quorum will be reached when at least five voting members (including at least two Councillors) are present. Meetings are required to be advertised at least four weeks in advance to panel members at a time that it could reasonably be expected for all members to attend.

#### Rights of assessment panel

Assessment panels will score applications and allocate funding as per current practice. However, they will not be empowered to increase funding allocation beyond what applicants have applied for. If an applicant is assessed as not having requested sufficient funds to achieve project then the assessment panel will be encouraged to decline the application and provide relevant feedback so the application can be amended for subsequent round.

**MELTON CITY COUNCIL PROPOSED COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAM****Gaming Venue Partnership Agreement Grants Assessment Panel**

The panel will assess applications made to the Gaming Venue Partnership Agreement Grants Program and include the Semi-Annual Grants Assessment Panel and a representative from each Gaming Venue that Council has entered into a partnership agreement with.

**Gaming Venue Partner**

It is proposed that each partner is represented on relevant assessment panel for applications made to rounds funded under the specific partnership agreement.

**Community representatives**

It is proposed that a community representative is sought from each ward. Council will seek nomination and endorsement of three community representatives to participate throughout the year.

**Council officers**

Council officers will be appointed with approval of the General Manager Community Services based on positional links with the community for a one year period.

Who	Number/round	Term
<b>3 Councillors</b>	3 Councillors (1 per ward)	1 year term limit
<b>3 community representatives</b>	3 per round (1 per ward)	2 year term limit
<b>2 Council officers</b>	Appointed due to positions links to community	1 year term limit
<b>Representative from Gaming Venue Partner</b>	1 per Gaming Venue that Council has partnership agreement with	Appointed
<b>Council Manager (Chair)</b>	Non voting	Every round
<b>Community Funding Officer</b>	Non voting	Every round

**Quorum**

Quorum will be reached when at least three (3) voting members, including at least one (1) Councillor are present. Meetings are required to be advertised at least one week in advance to panel members at a time that it could reasonably be expected for all members to attend.

**Rights of assessment panel**

Assessment panels will score applications and allocate funding as per current practice. However, they will not be empowered to increase funding allocation beyond what applicants have applied for. If an applicant is assessed as not having requested sufficient funds to achieve project then the assessment panel will be encouraged to decline the application and provide relevant feedback so the application can be amended for subsequent round.

**Bi-Monthly Grants Assessment Panel**

The panel will assess applications made to the Bi-Monthly Grants Rounds. The grant categories assessed include:

- Bi-Monthly Responsive and New Group Establishment Grants
- Individual Resident Achievement Grants

**Councillors**

It is proposed that each ward is represented on the assessment panels to ensure broad representation of elected officials across the municipality.

**Council officers**

**MELTON CITY COUNCIL PROPOSED COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAM**

Council officers will be appointed with approval of the General Manager Community Services based on positional links with the community for a two year period.

Who	Number/round	Term
<b>3 Councillors</b>	3 Councillors (1 per ward)	1 year term limit
<b>3 Council officers</b>	Appointed due to positions links to community	1 year term limit
<b>Coordinator Community Capacity (Chair)</b>		Every round
<b>Community Funding Officer</b>	Non voting	Every round

**Quorum**

Quorum will be reached when at least five voting members (including at least two Councillors and representatives of Gaming Venues) are present. Meetings are required to be advertised at least four weeks in advance to panel members at a time that it could reasonably be expected for all members to attend.

**Rights of assessment panel**

Assessment panels will score applications and allocate funding as per current practice. However, they will not be empowered to increase funding allocation beyond what applicants have applied for. If an applicant is assessed as not having requested sufficient funds to achieve project then the assessment panel will be encouraged to decline the application and provide relevant feedback so the application can be amended for subsequent round.

## MELTON CITY COUNCIL PROPOSED COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAM

**Strengthened grants assessment criteria**

The review identified opportunities to strengthen assessment criteria of grant applications to strengthen ability of assessment panels to accurately assess applications and increase alignment with Council's strategic objectives.

**Community Project Grants**

Priority Area	Assessment Criteria	Weighting
1. Community Need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project responds to an existing or emerging community need</li> <li>Evidence has been provided to support the identified need</li> <li><b>The identified need is a priority issue for Melton City Council to address</b></li> </ul>	40%
2. Community Benefit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Who is involved in the project planning and delivery, will new community partnerships and connections be developed</li> <li>Clear identification of the individuals, groups or broader local population that will benefit from the project</li> <li>Clear demonstrated outcomes of the project <b>beyond the applicant to reflect benefit to the broader community</b></li> </ul>	20%
3. Ability to Deliver Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project plan in place demonstrating the steps to be taken to deliver the project</li> <li>A complete, realistic and achievable budget provided</li> <li><b>Project includes other sources of funding</b></li> <li>Evidence is provided demonstrating how the project will continue into the future <b>if it is an ongoing event or activity</b></li> </ul>	20%
4. Commitment to Supporting the values of the City of Melton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Applicants demonstrated participation and engagement in other community events and activities</b></li> <li><b>Applicants demonstrated support for the values of Melton City Council</b></li> <li><b>Applicants demonstrated support to address or promote health &amp; wellbeing outcomes for the community</b></li> </ul>	20%

**Entry-Level Grants**

Priority Area	Assessment Criteria	Weighting
1. Community Need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project responds to an existing or emerging community need</li> </ul>	40%
2. Community Benefit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project is likely to build applicants project and grant management capacity</li> </ul>	20%
3. Ability to Deliver Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Key project activities are defined</li> <li>A realistic and achievable budget provided</li> </ul>	20%
4. Commitment to Supporting the values of the City of Melton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Applicants demonstrated participation and engagement in other community events and activities</b></li> <li><b>Applicants demonstrated support for the values of Melton City Council</b></li> </ul>	20%

## MELTON CITY COUNCIL PROPOSED COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAM

**New Group Establishment Grants**

Priority Area	Assessment Criteria	Weighting
1. Community Need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establishment of the group responds to an existing or emerging community need</li> </ul>	60%
2. Ability to Deliver Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A realistic and achievable budget and quotes are provided</li> </ul>	20%
3. Commitment to Supporting the values of the City of Melton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Applicants has demonstrated support for the values of Melton City Council</li> </ul>	20%

**Individual Resident Achievement Grants**

Priority Area	Assessment Criteria	Weighting
4. Community Need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establishment of the group responds to an existing or emerging community need</li> </ul>	60%
5. Ability to Deliver Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A realistic and achievable budget and quotes are provided</li> </ul>	20%
6. Commitment to Supporting the values of the City of Melton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Applicants has demonstrated support for the values of Melton City Council</li> </ul>	20%

**Increased capacity building and grantee feedback**

The review identified opportunities to strengthen capacity building and grantee feedback in the Grants Program. These opportunities will encourage continuous improvement of grantees and grants applicants:

- **Entry-Level Grants** provide an opportunity for groups with identified low capacity in grants and project management to gain experience developing and implementing small projects via an accessible application process.
- **Grant writing workshops** will continue to be offered on a regular basis.
- **Grant applicants will be connected to relevant Council Officers** for technical support as they develop projects.
- **Unsuccessful applicants will be provided with specific feedback** from grants assessment panels, assisting them to develop future projects/applications to Council's Community Grants Program.
- **Grants acquittal process will include a face-to-face close-out meeting** between relevant council officers and grantees to debrief grant experience, assist identify lessons-learned and capture grant results for promotion.

## MELTON CITY COUNCIL PROPOSED COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAM

**Improved promotion of grants and sharing of grantees project successes**

A key opportunity identified by the review was to improve promotion of the grants awarded under the program and of the outcomes of grantee projects. This improved promotion of the grants is expected to build capacity of community to identify and develop future programs, and increases awareness of the grants in the wider community, leading to increased applications from community. Under the proposed program the grants will be promoted in the following manner:

- **Development of grant highlight video** to capture and share results of selected grants funded under Council grant rounds. The video will be shared on Council's website, on social media, and will be used to promote future grant opportunities.
- **Spotlight On**, a Council social media strategy (based on the successful Humans of New York format). Council will promote grantee success and learning in a short interview with grants beneficiaries during grant close-out meetings, capturing in their own words the benefits for the community created by the project. The Spotlight On entries will be collated at the end of each financial year into a grants 'yearbook' to be shared online.
- **SHARE Event** – Council funded Semi-Annual Grant Rounds will include a high profile event to present cheques to successful applicants rounds (one held in Melton Township and one in the Eastern Corridor). Events will include guest speakers and will be professionally photographed to capture the shared interaction of grant recipients. The gallery will be shared on Council's Facebook page with a link to Council grants information.
- **Promotion on website** – successful grantees will be announced on the website after each round. Entries will include brief description of the organisation and project.
- **Community Newsletter** – Council will create a monthly newsletter that informs community on grants and training availability, as well as other relevant information. The email is created using an online email service to improve user interface.