



Community Grant Guidelines

January 2026

Northern Grampians Shire Council's Funding Program provides communities, businesses and local community groups with the opportunity to work collaboratively with the council to undertake projects that uplift our community's economic wellbeing and our residents' quality of life.

What is a Community Grant?

Council's Community Grants support projects that contribute towards outcomes that result in:

- Increased social connectedness for all Northern Grampians Shire residents.
- Creation of safe environments that are inclusive of the growing diversity across communities in the Northern Grampians Shire.
- Positive impacts to physical health, mental health, and wellbeing.
- Greater sustainability of community groups and assets.

Council is offering grants of up to \$5,000 to support projects that contribute towards outcomes that have a Participation, Inclusion and a Connection focus.

Grant priority areas for 2026?

Our grant priorities come straight from the heart of the community. They are shaped by:

- The ideas and feedback you shared during Council Plan engagement.
- The needs and experiences of local community groups.
- Current issues and opportunities that matter most to our region.

By listening to the community and working closely with local groups, we make sure our grants support projects that are meaningful, timely, and really make a difference where it counts.

1. Strengthen social connection and community belonging:

Supporting projects that bring people together, foster positive relationships, and help community members feel more connected and included.

In recent years, our communities have faced significant change and challenge. Emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic, ongoing pressures within farming communities, and rising mental health concerns across all age groups have highlighted just how important it is for people to feel connected, supported, and part of something bigger.

Strong communities are built when people have opportunities to come together to share experiences, build relationships, and connect with others who share similar interests or values. Creating these moments of connection can reduce isolation, improve wellbeing, and strengthen a sense of belonging.

At the same time, our communities are becoming more diverse. The growth of multicultural groups presents a wonderful opportunity to foster intercultural connections, build understanding, and celebrate the richness that diversity brings to our region.

Projects that bring people together, encourage participation, and create welcoming, inclusive spaces play a vital role in strengthening social connection and community belonging. We encourage grant applications that help create these opportunities and support people to feel connected to their community.

2. Encourage those who participate less to get involved in sport/recreational activity.

Supporting projects that create safe, inclusive and welcoming environments where people feel confident to participate in sport and recreation, particularly those who traditionally participate less.

Groups who may face barriers include:

- **Women and girls:** Women face a range of barriers to participating in sport and recreational activities, including concerns about safety and comfort in public or male-dominated environments, low confidence or self-consciousness, and limited beginner-friendly or non-competitive options. Caring responsibilities, cultural expectations, and a lack of culturally safe or women-only spaces can further limit participation. Additionally, facilities and programs are often not designed with women's specific needs in mind, including change rooms, privacy, equipment, and program structure. Providing safe, inclusive, and flexible programs, culturally appropriate and women-only spaces, beginner-friendly options, supportive facilities, and positive messaging can help overcome the barriers women face to participate in sport and recreation.
- **People with disability:** Physical and sensory barriers may make it difficult to access facilities, equipment, programs, or transport. Programs are often not adapted to different abilities, and lack of trained staff or inclusive coaching can make participation difficult. Providing accessible facilities, adaptive programs, inclusive coaching, and trained staff can help people with disability overcome physical, sensory, and participation barriers.
- **People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds:** Language barriers, differing cultural norms, and limited awareness of available activities can prevent participation. Lack of culturally safe environments or representation in programs may also reduce confidence or willingness to engage. Inclusive programs, interpreters, and culturally aware coaches can help overcome these barriers.
- **People experiencing financial disadvantage:** Costs associated with memberships, equipment, uniforms, transport, and program fees can be prohibitive. Low-income households may have fewer opportunities to participate consistently, affecting health and social inclusion. Subsidies, grants, or free community programs can make sports and recreation more accessible.
- **People living in rural or remote areas:** Limited local opportunities, long travel distances, and poor transport options can make regular participation challenging. Programs may be infrequent, and facilities may be shared or undersized. Outreach programs, mobile services, and support for local clubs can help bridge these gaps.

- **Older adults:** Standard programs may not be suitable for older adults due to intensity, pace, or physical demand. Lack of low-impact, age-appropriate, or social-focused activities can reduce engagement. Offering modified programs, social groups, and health-focused initiatives encourages continued participation and wellbeing.
- **LGBTIQA+ community members:** Concerns about inclusion, safety, acceptance, and discrimination can prevent participation. Lack of awareness or inclusive policies in clubs and programs may make environments unwelcoming. Training, clear inclusion policies, and safe spaces are critical for fostering engagement.
- **People new to physical activity:** Beginners may lack confidence, skills, or knowledge about where to start or how to participate safely. Fear of embarrassment or injury, or not knowing the rules or equipment, can deter involvement. Beginner-friendly programs, coaching, and guidance can support confidence and sustained engagement.

Encouraging all people to participate in sport and recreational activities is important because it supports physical and mental health, wellbeing, and social connection, while also helping to create stronger, more inclusive communities.

3. Strengthen community group capacity.

Supporting activities that build the skills, capability, and long-term sustainability of community groups, including strategic planning, governance training, and leadership development.

Community groups are the heart of our towns and neighbourhoods, but we know that keeping them going has become increasingly challenging. Fewer volunteers, rising costs, and ongoing financial pressures are making it harder for groups to fundraise, plan ahead, and sustain their activities.

This priority recognises that now is the time for community groups to pause, reflect, and reset. It is about supporting groups to take a fresh look at how they operate, revisit their priorities, and build the skills, systems, and confidence needed to keep going and to thrive in changing and difficult circumstances.

Funding under this priority supports projects that help strengthen the foundations of community groups. This might include improving governance, planning, building volunteer capacity, developing new ways of working, or exploring more sustainable and resilient approaches.

If your group is looking to refocus, adapt, and build a stronger future, this priority is designed to support you.

What can the funding be used for?

If your initiative aligns with one of the funding priorities listed above, your community group or organisation can use the grants to fund:

- ✓ facilitators and speakers for training, sessions and workshops
- ✓ plays/shows
- ✓ materials and equipment
- ✓ purchasing programs
- ✓ program resources

- ✓ promotional material and activities
- ✓ transport
- ✓ catering (limited to 50% of the budget).

* *The items on this list are examples of what grants can be used for and are not exclusive.*

Council will not consider providing funding that contributes towards:

- The purchase of gift and prizes.
- Wages and operational costs.
- The reimbursement of council fees and charges.
- Unconditional gifts, donations, bequests, or endowments.
- Political sponsorships, donations, or merchandising.
- Events or programs that discriminate, denigrate, exclude, or offend minority groups.
- Environmental concerns.
- Have the potential to become a hazard to the community.

Are you eligible?

Your group or organisation can request a Community Grant if:

- You are a not-for-profit, incorporated body, or you have an ABN.
- You are based in Northern Grampians Shire or can effectively demonstrate your request has a direct benefit to the residents within it.

Your group or organisation will also need to:

- Align your request with the grant priorities.
- Be compliant with council's regulatory requirements if required.
- Provide evidence of Liability Insurance. Events, activities or construction that have a likelihood of causing damage or personal injury must have public liability insurance (of at least \$20 million). Other amounts will be considered where there is no likelihood of damage or injury.

Your group or organisation will not be eligible if:

- You have received considerable grant funding within the same financial year.
- Are an individual applying for funds.
- The project/activity you are seeking funding for has already commenced.
- The funds are to be used for wages, however professional services that support project capacity building (i.e. consultant fees, professional services, service, or product contractors that directly benefit the initiative) will be considered.
- Previous funding received from council has not been satisfactorily acquitted.
- There is outstanding debt with the council.
- The purchase or supply of alcohol, tobacco or other drugs.

How to apply

- Applicants must contact the Community Development team to discuss their request and application prior to applying.
- Community Grant applications are to be submitted online using the Smarty Grants platform.
- When you apply, you will receive a submission acknowledgement from Smarty Grants.

- Your submitted application can be accessed in your Smarty Grants account.

How your application is assessed

To ensure a fair and transparent process, all applications are assessed using the criteria outlined below. The assessment matrix shows what we look for in each area, the key considerations, and the weighting given.

The matrix is here to help you understand the information we need in your application. We encourage you to use it as a guide when preparing your submission, so you can clearly address each area.

Assessment area	What the key considerations will be when assessing your application.	Percentage of total score
<p>How your project is linked to the grant priorities.</p> <p>The level that your project demonstrates alignment with the Community Grant priorities.</p>	<p>The application demonstrates:</p> <p>How well the project aligns with the Community Grant priorities:</p> <p>1. Strengthen Social Connection and Community Belonging.</p> <p>Supporting projects that bring people together, foster positive relationships, and help community members feel more connected and included.</p> <p>2. Encourage those who participate less to get involved in sport / recreational activity.</p> <p>Supporting projects that create safe, inclusive and welcoming environments where people feel confident to participate in sport and recreation, particularly those who traditionally participate less.</p> <p>3. Strengthen Community Group Capacity.</p> <p>Supporting activities that build the skills, capability, and long-term sustainability of community groups, including strategic planning, governance training and leadership development.</p>	30%
<p>Demand and need for the project</p> <p>The local opportunity, need or challenge the project is looking to address.</p>	<p>Assessment will consider the extent to which the application demonstrates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A clearly identified local opportunity, need or challenge relevant to the broader community or a specific community group. Evidence that the need has been informed by appropriate sources (e.g. community consultation, feedback, data, lived experience or identified service gaps). 	20%

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A strong and logical link between the identified need and the proposed project activities. • That the project meaningfully responds to the identified issue and is likely to provide a relevant and timely benefit to the community. 	
Project readiness	<p>Assessment will consider the extent to which application demonstrates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That your project is ready to go, with clear outcomes, a realistic timeline, and a well-planned budget. • That any required permits or approvals are already in place, or that you have a clear plan for how and when they will be obtained (if needed). 	30%
Capability of the applicant	<p>Consideration will be given to the level your group or organisation has shown that you have the skills and experience to successfully deliver this project. This is demonstrated through the clear way you have explained your project idea, identified realistic and achievable outcomes, shown strong community engagement and collaboration, and provided thoughtful planning around what is needed to implement the project effectively.</p>	10%
Value for money	<p>Assessment will consider the extent to which the application can demonstrate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That your project budget is realistic and based on accurate cost estimates, such as written quotes or confirmed pricing. • That you are unable to fully fund the project through other income sources or grant programs, and that this funding is genuinely needed to make the project happen. 	10%

The assessment process involves:

- The applications being reviewed and assessed by the Economic and Community Development teams, who provide recommendations to the Coordinator of Community Development for final approval.
- Consideration being made of the total funding pool for the financial year.
- Applications usually being assessed within two weeks of the application being submitted.
- Applicants usually being notified of the assessment outcome via email within four weeks of the application being submitted.

Timeline and grant journey

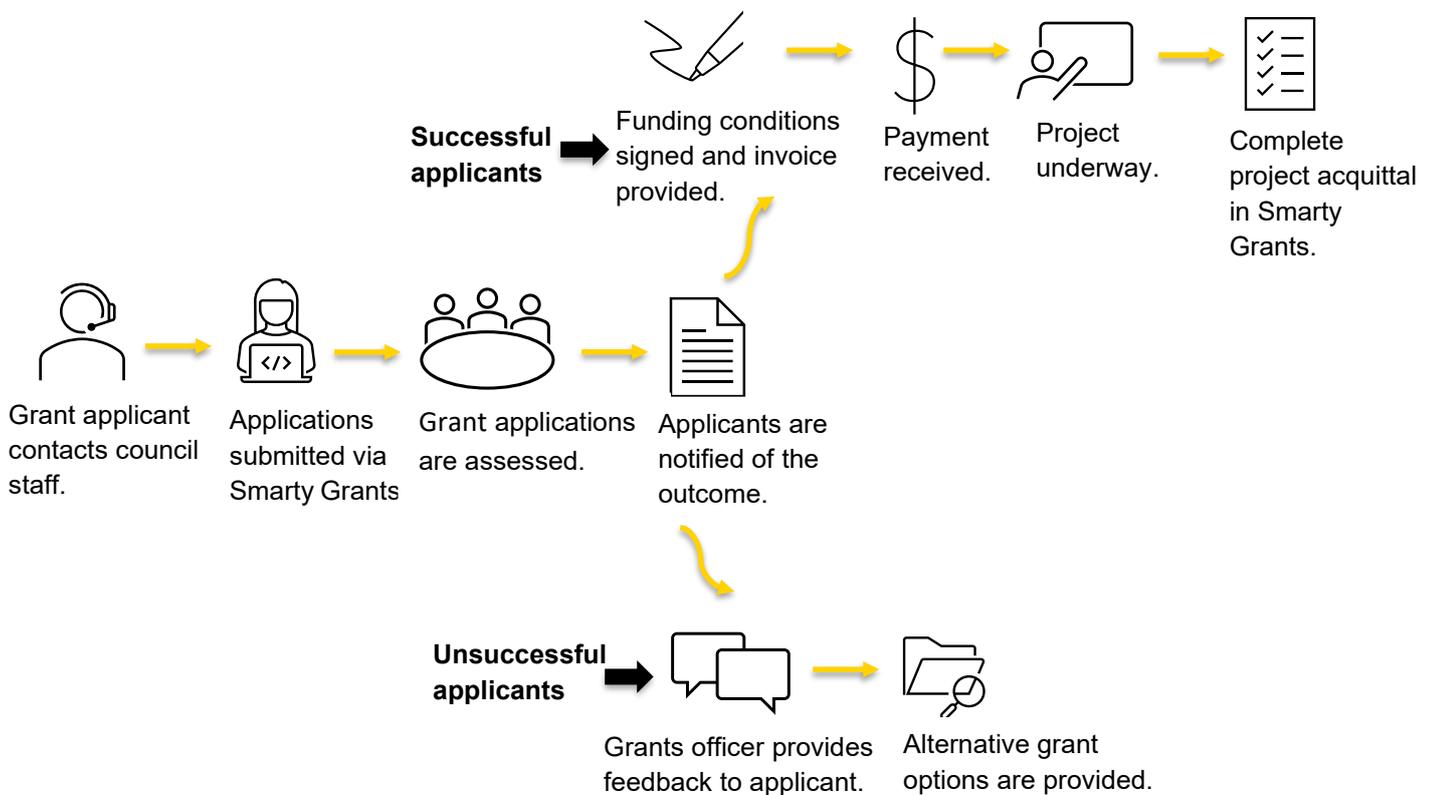
The Community Grants program will follow the timeline outlined below:

- **16 February 2026 (8am)** – Community Grants open.

- **31 March 2026 (5pm)** – Community Grants close.
- **Week of 27 April 2026** – Grant applicants notified of assessment outcomes.
- **By 30 May 2026** – Grant funding provided once a grant invoice has been received and the terms and conditions have been signed.
- **By 30 May 2027** – Projects are complete and the grant acquittal is complete.

Knowing how the grants process works can make applying much easier. From your first chat with the Grants Officer through to submitting a short feedback form and budget acquittal, we are here to support you every step of the way. The diagram below shows the steps involved from start to finish.

Grant journey – start to finish



Conditions of funding if your application is successful

If the group or organisation is successful in obtaining sponsorship, it will be required to enter into a written agreement with council stating that the group or organisation will adhere to the following conditions:

- Project-specific conditions may be identified during the assessment and notification process. These must all be adhered to and addressed as part of the acquittal.
- Grants are allocated specifically for the purpose of the application and cannot be used for any other purpose without a formal written agreement from council.
- Funds allocated to the group or organisation include GST if the group is not eligible for GST. If the group is eligible for GST, GST is not included.

- Any change to the original submission must be approved by Northern Grampians Shire Council in writing.
- Funds are required to be expended within 12 months of the letter of offer. Funds not expended by this date are to be returned to Northern Grampians Shire Council unless a written extension is obtained from council.
- Groups or organisations are required to participate in media and communications opportunities that promote the council's Community Grants Program, as requested.
- Successful applicants will be provided with the Northern Grampians Shire Council corporate logo to utilise on all promotional and media activities.
- Groups/organisations are required to meet relevant government legislation requirements (e.g. Occupational Health and Safety Issues, Risk Management, Equal Opportunity, Workcover, Privacy).
- Groups or organisations are required to ensure volunteers are registered with the group or organisation and are adequately covered by insurance.
- A grant acquittal must be submitted to council one month after completion of the project via the Smarty Grants platform. The acquittal is to include what took place, impacts, photos and evidence of the project implementation and evidence of expenditure.

References to relevant council plans and strategies

Grants Funding Policy 2024

Northern Grampians Events Strategy 2023-33

Council Plan and Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025 -29

Economic Development Strategy 2021-31

Applicable legislations and standards

Gender Equality Act 2020

Child Safety Act 2015

Equal Opportunity Act 2010

Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006

Age Discrimination Act 2004

Fair Access Policy 2024

Sex Discrimination Act 1994

Disability Discrimination Act 1975