



Merri-bek  
City Council

# Flourish Arts Grants 2026



Image credit: Brunswick Music Festival 2025. Miss Samoa Victoria. Image by Simon Fazio.

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## Purpose

Merri-bek City Council is committed to strengthening and investing in the creative community of Merri-bek and recognises the importance of continual support for the sector.

## Objectives

- To support local artists and arts organisations to flourish and be sustainable.
- To strengthen the capacity of local artists and arts organisations.
- To support local artists and arts organisations to explore new ways of engaging audiences. To build connection and engagement through community led arts and cultural activities.
- To support and encourage more people to be involved with arts and culture in Merri-bek.

## Grant Categories

- Individual Artists (up to \$5,000)
- Arts Organisations (up to \$10,000)

## Funding Preferences

We will give preference to applications which:

- Showcase Merri-bek as a vibrant arts location.
- Encourage and champion diversity and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture.
- Show respectful partnerships with other artists, community groups and/or organisations.
- Clearly show how the initiative will impact and/or grow Merri-bek's arts sector.
- Encourage environmental sustainability in line with Council's [Zero-Carbon 2040 Framework](#)
- Align with identified priority groups from the Merri-bek [Human Rights Policy 2016 – 2026](#).

## Merri-Bek Human Rights Policy Priority groups

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities
- People with Disability
- LGBTIQ+ Communities
- Migrant and Refugee Communities
- Women

## Eligibility Requirements

This program is only open to Merri-bek based artists and arts organisations whose primary business is in the arts sector. This includes literature, music, theatre, musical theatre, opera, dance, circus, comedy, puppetry, arts festivals, visual arts and crafts, community arts and experimental arts. Applicants can apply for one grant in either of the following categories.

### Individual Artists (up to \$5,000)

All applications must meet the following criteria:

- Be Merri-bek residents.
- Have appropriate Public Liability Insurance or guarantee that it will be obtained upon notification of successful funding. See information about Public Liability Insurance below.

- Have no outstanding grant acquittals or outstanding debts owing to Council.
- Must address one or more of the objectives of the Flourish Arts Grants program.
- Ensure the proposed activity is consistent with all Local, State and Federal laws.
- For projects that involve children ensure this complies with Victorian Child Safe Standards.
- Have other sources of income to support the project (this can include in-kind support, i.e. volunteers, free or reduced rate venue, catering etc)
- Note, auspicing is no longer required for individual artist grants.

## Arts Organisations (up to \$10,000)

All applications must meet the following criteria:

- Be Merri-bek based.
- Be a Not-for-Profit arts collective or organisation; or be a First Peoples business and/or arts organisation. A First Peoples business is one that is at least 51% owned and operated by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Be incorporated or auspiced by another incorporated organisation. See more information about auspicing below.
- Incorporated groups or organisations possess the legal framework to show they operate as such.
- Have appropriate Public Liability Insurance or guarantee that it will be obtained upon notification of successful funding. See information about Public Liability Insurance below
- Have no outstanding grant acquittals or outstanding debts owing to Council.
- Must address one or more of the objectives of the Flourish Arts Grants program.
- Ensure the proposed activity is consistent with all Local, State and Federal laws.
- For projects that involve children ensure this complies with Victorian Child Safe Standards.
- Have other sources of income to support the project (this can include in-kind support, i.e. volunteers, free or reduced rate venue, catering etc).

## What we will fund

- Events, activities, and projects that:
  - provide an opportunity for community connection.
  - support the generation of new or existing income streams.
  - explore new ways of engaging audiences.
  - take place between January 2026 and December 2026.
- Organisational costs including rent, utilities, wages etc. that will support the organisation's sustainability.

## What we will not fund

- Events, activities, and projects held outside of Merri-bek.
- The entire cost of an initiative/project/program. You must have other sources of income to support your project; this can include in-kind support.
- For profit businesses (with the exception of First Peoples businesses outlined above)
- Competitions, awards, fundraising activities, fetes, reunions, amateur or hobby pursuits.
- Tertiary education qualifications, including projects or work that will be used for the purposes of academic assessment.
- Reimbursement for events, activities and projects that have already occurred, or will be complete before the funding period. No retrospective funding.

- Initiatives that will need ongoing funding from Council to be sustained.
- Applicants seeking funding to cover outstanding loans or debts.
- Events, activities, and projects already partially or wholly funded or supported by Council via other streams for the same activity in the same financial year (includes Merri-bek Festivals funding/programming and Counihan Gallery funding/programming).
- Applicants who have lobbied or canvassed Councillors or Council Officers.
- Applicants that have an outstanding Merri-bek City Council acquittal.
- Applications where the recipient organisation/s promote and/or benefit directly from electronic gaming machines or from any form of gambling including sports betting and lotteries.

## Timeline

Grant Category	Grants Advertised	Applications Due	Expected Notification
Individual Artists <\$5,000	21 July	25 August, 11.59pm	November for projects undertaken between January 2026 and December 2026
Arts Organisations <\$10,000	21 July	25 August, 11.59pm	November for projects undertaken between January 2026 and December 2026

## Applications

### Advice and support

The Arts Development Officer is available to assist you with questions relating to your grant application and can offer detailed advice. They are not part of the grant assessment panel. For quick questions, you can email the Arts Development Officer at [artsgrants@merri-bek.vic.gov.au](mailto:artsgrants@merri-bek.vic.gov.au).

Alternatively, you can book a time to meet with the Arts Development Officer to discuss your grant application in detail. These sessions are 30-minute online meetings conducted via Microsoft Teams. Please book via the link below to schedule a 30-minute online meeting:

<https://calendly.com/jibacache-merri-bek/30min>

### Access and Alternative Submission Formats

If you require any access assistance with this document, or with the application process, please contact the Arts Development Officer on [artsgrants@merri-bek.vic.gov.au](mailto:artsgrants@merri-bek.vic.gov.au).

We accept written and video grant submissions through SmartyGrants. Please check with the Arts Development Officer for details on how to submit your video application.

Additionally, we offer translation services if you would prefer to submit an application in your native language.

### General Information

Please submit applications online via Merri-bek City Council's [SmartyGrants](#) program.

The online application form will include the questions outlined below:

- Artist / Organisation name and address / Website
- Title of Event / Activity / Project.
- Date(s) and location of Event / Activity / Project.

## Your Proposal

- Provide a brief description of the event/activity/project including:
  - the purpose
  - outcome
  - medium
  - when/where it will take place
- Describe how it will promote/benefit your creative practice/arts career.
- Describe how it aligns with one or more of the grant objectives.
- Describe who it will engage and benefit:
  - Explain how you will engage members of Merri-bek Human Rights priority groups.
  - Explain if and how you will provide access and access information to participants.
  - Identify any Merri-bek venues, creatives or businesses that may benefit.
- Outline who is in your project team and their roles:
  - List any artists you are hoping to work with or have confirmed.
  - Outline any collaborations or partnerships with other groups or organisations.
  - Identify any members of Merri-bek human rights priority groups in your project team.

## Budget

Please submit a full project budget using the SmartyGrants template provided.

For your budget to be accepted as part of your application it must:

- be realistic and balanced (income and expenditure totals must equal the same amount.)
- show other income sources (including in-kind support)
- prove why you need the grant.

If you wish to include a more detailed budget, please submit it as an attachment under Additional Support Material.

## Support Documents

Please submit the following support documents as attachments to your SmartyGrants application:

- A maximum of three (3) letters of support from partner organisations, community groups, artists or anyone else who supports your proposal.
- Current Public Liability Certificate (or a quote for a new policy). See information about insurance below.
- A relevant URL / website.
- A copy of you or your organisation's Child Safe Policy or Statement of Commitment to Child Safety if your project includes people under the age of 18, then.
- Additional Support Material as required, i.e. detailed budget.

## Assessment Process

Council is committed to ensuring that the assessment of all grant applications is coordinated in a fair and transparent manner. The assessment process will be as follows.

1. An Officer from the Arts and Culture Unit will assess each application to confirm its eligibility. This Officer will be the main contact for questions and assistance while applications are open. Eligible applications will be submitted to a decision-making panel. This Officer will not be on the decision-making panel.
2. A panel of at least two (2) Officers from across Council and two (2) external representatives will assess the eligible applications against the assessment criteria outlined below. The panel will be chaired by the Unit Manager Arts and Culture.
3. A report from the panel with recommendations for funding will be made to the Director Community for endorsement.

## Assessment Criteria

Criteria	Score	%
<u>Impact</u> The application demonstrates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• significant benefit to the applicant's own professional creative practice.</li> <li>• potential to support the quality and strength of the arts sector in Merri-bek.</li> </ul>	Score out of 10	Equal
<u>Alignment</u> The application aligns with one or more Flourish Arts Grant objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To support local artists and arts organisations to flourish and be sustainable.</li> <li>• To strengthen the capacity of local artists and arts organisations.</li> <li>• To support local artists and arts organisations to engage new audiences.</li> <li>• To build connection and engagement through community led arts and cultural activities.</li> <li>• To support and encourage more people to be involved with arts and culture in Merri-Bek.</li> </ul>	Score out of 10	Equal
<u>Capacity</u> The application: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• outlines roles and responsibilities of a project team that is suitable and capable to manage and deliver the project.</li> <li>• demonstrates a collaborative approach with a range of partners.</li> </ul>	Score out of 10	Equal
<u>Need</u>	Score out of 10	Equal

The application: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>demonstrates community support (e.g. support letters)</li> </ul> The budget: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>demonstrates the need for funding support</li> <li>is balanced, realistic, shows other income sources, including in-kind support</li> </ul>		
Total	Score out of 40	100%

## Conflict of Interest

All those involved in the assessment of applications must declare any conflict of interest that exists, including but not limited to, personal or business connections with any applicant. The assessment panel member is required to step down from participating in any vote or decision-making process undertaken regarding the specific applicant.

## Terms and Conditions

Successful applicants are required to:

- Enter into a funding agreement with Council which sets out the conditions and reporting requirements.
- Use the grant funding for the project outlined in the application only and in line with the budget submitted in the application.
- Be covered by an appropriate Public Liability Insurance policy.
- Acknowledge Arts Merri-bek and Merri-bek City Council by using logos on all promotional material relating to the activity with the accompanying text: 'This event has been proudly supported by Merri-bek City Council through the Flourish Arts Grant program'.
- Obtain any relevant legal permissions with regards to copyright and intellectual property rights.
- Submit an Acquittal Report including a financial report (a true statement of actual income and expenditure after the activity is completed, including receipts upon request); and a brief written report via SmartyGrants.
- Networking and professional development opportunities with other artists and arts organisations will be programmed during 2026. Your details will be used to invite you to these events.
- Obtain an event permit for events held on Council owned open space. The event permit cost is waived for successful grant applications however each event permit also requires a bond which cannot be waived.

## Copyright and Intellectual Property

Where an activity will use copyright material, or another entity's intellectual property, it is the applicant's responsibility to seek and obtain all the necessary permissions. All intellectual property rights within the application and delivery of the event / activity / project will be held exclusively by the applicant(s).

## Lobbying

Lobbying or canvassing Councillors or Council Officers in relation to any grant application is prohibited. This includes asking Councillors or Council Officers to recommend your project to assessment panel members or to discuss the application with assessment panel members on your behalf. Any application submitted where the applicant, or applicant's representative, has canvassed or lobbied a Councillor or Council Officer will be deemed ineligible.

## Feedback

**Please Note:** Due to the large volume of applications we expect to receive, feedback may not be provided for this program unless requested.

## Privacy and Information Statement

Merri-bek City Council is committed to protecting your privacy in accordance with the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic) and the Health Records Act 2001 (Vic).

The personal information requested on this form is being collected by Merri-bek City Council for Flourish Arts Grants applications and may also be used to update your personal information otherwise held by Council (for example, contact details including email address, phone number). The personal information will be disclosed to any auspicing body or project funders and may also be used by Council for related purposes (e.g. to contact you about the grant or use of your images).

It will not be disclosed to any other external party without your consent, unless required or authorised by law. If the personal information is not provided, then your grant application will be deemed ineligible.

You can gain access to the personal information you have provided to Merri-bek City Council, and/or alter it, by contacting Council's Privacy Officer via telephone on 9240 1111 or e-mail at [Privacyofficer@merri-bek.vic.gov.au](mailto:Privacyofficer@merri-bek.vic.gov.au).