



Merri-bek
City Council

Community Grant Guidelines 2025-26

**Improving the quality of life for all
people in Merri-bek**

Sept 2025 – Revision 6



Table of Contents

What you need to know – Key dates.....	3
About our Community Grant Program	4
.....	5
Program Principles.....	6
Eligibility Criteria	6
What we won't fund.....	7
Which Grant should I apply for?.....	8
Support	9
Application Process	10
What happens after I submit an application.....	12
My application is successful	13
Promoting your project.....	13
Project changes or variations	13
Categories	15
Community Participation Grant.....	15
Membership Activity Grant.....	16
Community Strengthening Grant.....	17
Organisational Establishment Grant	18
Facility (Structural) Improvement Grant.....	19
Frequently Asked Questions	21

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Merri-bek City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people as the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waterways in the area now known as Merri-bek. We pay respect to their Elders past, present, and emerging, as well as to all First Nations communities who significantly contribute to the life of the area.

What you need to know – Key dates

All year-round grants	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Community Participation Grant (for groups and individuals) ➤ Membership Activity Grant 	
Applications open	Open all year (until funds are exhausted)
Applications submitted	At least 4 weeks prior to activity starting
Notification	2-4 weeks after application submitted

Annual Grants	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Community Strengthening Grant ➤ Facility Improvement Grant - Small Capital Projects ➤ Organisational Establishment Grant 	
Applications open 1 st January 2026	Applications close: 28 th February 2026
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start of the day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End of the day 11.59pm
Applications assessed	March – April 2026
Outcome Notification	May/June 2026

➤ Facility Improvement Grant - Large Capital Project

EOI open: 1 August	EOI submissions close 14 October 2025:
EOI Notification and Interviews conducted	October – November 2025
Eligible full applications due (Stage 2)	1 January – 28 February 2026
Stage 2 – Full Applications assessed	March – April 2026
Outcome Notification	May 2026

Community Information Sessions

All Dates and locations of sessions will be advertised on Council's website. Duration of session is approximately 1 hour.

<https://www.merri-bek.vic.gov.au/my-council/grants-and-awards/community-grants-program/current-community-grants/>

Enquiries please E-mail: communitygrants@merri-bek.vic.gov.au

About our Community Grant Program

Introduction

This Community Grants Program aims to work in partnership with community groups and individuals to create a sustainable, active, healthy, inclusive and empowered Merri-bek. The Program is based on Council's Community Grants Policy and provides support for new and innovative initiatives that respond to emerging community needs.

It is a competitive process and limited by the amount of funds available. Applicants are not guaranteed funding, nor the full amount requested. Projects funded previously cannot be guaranteed funding in future years. This needs to be considered when developing an application.

Community Grants Objectives

The objectives of this program are aligned with the themes in the Council Plan 2025-2029 – The **Council Plan outlines our commitment to creating a resilient, inclusive, and engaged community in Merri-bek.** that has been shaped by the voice of the community:

1. **Care for nature and climate resilience:** To create a flourishing and climate resilient Merri-bek by improving wildlife and nature connectivity, greening and cooling for healthier streets and public realm, and engaging the community in meaningful climate action.
2. **Healthy and inclusive communities:** To support accessible facilities, programs, services, housing that promote community wellbeing, and connection for all ages, abilities, genders, and cultures, fostering a safe, inclusive, and thriving Merri-bek community. Pg 25-28
3. **Beautiful and liveable city:** Create safe, accessible streets and public spaces that support vibrant communities, active travel, rest and relaxation, and community pride, while ensuring development and growth are well managed and local character is celebrated, ensuring Merri-bek is a welcoming, liveable, and connected place for all.
4. **Thriving economy and culture:** A lively and inclusive Merri-bek where the economy supports local business and industry growth, celebrates artistic and creative expression, and connects the community through vibrant cultural experiences.
5. **Encouraging and responsible Council:** A responsive and engaged Merri-bek that prioritises excellent service, embraces engaging communication methods, advocates community needs, and continues to uphold sustainable financial management and accountable governance that builds trust and collaboration with the community.

➤ Read the Council Plan 2025-2029 [here](#)

Funding Priorities*

Applications that meet one or more of the Funding Priorities, will score higher in the assessment process:

- Support Council's priority communities including:
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities,
 - People with disability,
 - LGBTIQ+ Communities,
 - Migrant and refugee communities,
 - Women, Girls and Gender Diverse Communities,
 - Children and young people,
 - Seniors,
- Planned and will be delivered by community groups and organisations that work together,
- Has clear benefits for people living in Merri-bek
- Considers its environmental impact and tries to minimise it where possible.

***Priority communities may change after Human Rights Policy is reviewed.**

Council Plan on a page

Care for nature and climate resilience

We want to protect our environment, make our streets cooler and greener, and involve our community in caring for the climate. We will achieve this by:

- Adding more trees and plants to make our streets and parks greener and cooler.
- Improving our natural spaces and waterways for people and wildlife to enjoy.
- Using eco-friendly ideas in building homes, roads, and public facilities around Merri-bek.
- Supporting and encouraging the local community efforts to fight climate change.

Healthy and inclusive communities

We want to create a safe, fair, and welcoming place where everyone can access services, housing, and spaces to enjoy and connect. We will achieve this by:

- Providing accessible spaces, facilities, and programs that support community health and safety.
- Helping all people, especially those on low incomes, find good housing and support their wellbeing.
- Providing affordable activities and spaces for youth, seniors, and families to participate and feel independent.
- Supporting local food initiatives to increase access to healthy, affordable food.

Beautiful and liveable city

We want to make streets and public spaces safe, nice, and easy to use so everyone can enjoy and be proud of where they live. We will achieve this by:

- Keeping public places, spaces, and areas well-maintained, safe, and inviting for community use.
- Fixing and improving streets and footpaths to make them more friendly for walking and riding.
- Encouraging walking, riding bikes, and scooting, especially for getting to school.
- Making it easier and safer to use public transport to move around.

Thriving economy and culture

We want to create a vibrant community with thriving local businesses and a strong arts and culture scene that brings people together. We will achieve this by:

- Developing busy shopping and activity areas that are attractive, green and inviting.
- Attracting new businesses and encouraging investment to create more jobs in Merri-bek.
- Supporting local shops and traders making it easier for them to do business and succeed.
- Promoting and supporting local art, festivals, and events celebrating our community's diversity.

Engaging and responsible council

We are here to serve the community. We will achieve this by:

- Providing high-quality services and responding quickly to community needs.
- Communicating better using many different ways to include everyone's ideas and feedback.
- Working with other levels of government to advocate for community priorities.
- Being honest and transparent about how money is spent and how decisions are made.

Program Principles

Inclusion: Providing opportunities for individuals and groups to meaningfully take part in community life.

Equity: Consciously addressing the barriers faced by disadvantaged groups and individuals.

Impact: Taking a purposeful and strategic approach to funding projects that deliver meaningful social impact.

Capacity building: Supporting individuals and groups to develop practices, skills and resilience to shape their own futures.

Collaboration: Encouraging networks and partnerships to deliver exceptional strategic outcomes together.

Transparency: Delivering a funding program that is transparent and accountable in all processes and decisions.

Eligibility Criteria

Who Can Apply

Applicants must meet the following eligibility requirements. Ineligible applications will not be assessed.

Eligible Applicants:

Organisations, groups and clubs

- Be a Not-for-Profit community group, organisation or club,
- Be incorporated or [auspiced](#) by another incorporated organisation,
- Have adequate public liability insurance,
- Have acquitted previous Council grants and have no outstanding debts to Council,
- Be able to supply financial statements and requested supporting documentation,
- Ensure the proposed activity is consistent with Local, State and Federal laws.


Individuals

- Must be a resident of Merri-bek,
- Show that they have been invited to participate in an activity by an organisation or group,
- Show that there are financial barriers to participating in the activity,
- Individuals may only apply under the [Community Participation Grant \(for individuals\)](#) category.

How many grants can I apply for?

Organisations may receive funding for up to two grants per financial year. Where two applications are made, each grant must have different stakeholders in the community that benefit from the grant and different community outcomes.

*Individuals will only be funded for one grant per year.



Unincorporated not-for-profit community groups can have their applications auspiced by an eligible incorporated organisation or a Neighbourhood House.

See sections: 'What does it mean to be incorporated?' & 'What is auspicing?' read more pages 20-21

What we won't fund

To make sure Community Grant funding lines up with Council's values and vision, there are some things we don't fund. Please refer to the following list to ensure that your activities meet the criteria before you apply.

What's not funded	Explanation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Projects that do not align with the Community Grant Program Principles and Community Grants Objectives 	<p>The aims and priorities for our Community Grants are outlined in the sections: Please read this and consider whether or not your project meets these aims/priorities.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applications that don't meet the requirements of the grant category 	<p>Each grant has unique eligibility requirements. If you don't meet the eligibility requirements listed for the grant type you seek, you can't be considered.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legal fees or debts 	<p>Funding is focused toward community activities that benefit Merri-bek.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fundraising activities and projects that are for general fundraising and fundraising events, competitions, trophies, prizes or awards, gifts or honorariums, vouchers / gift cards or donations. 	<p>We are not saying that your group can't fundraise, have competitions or award prizes, but because we are granting public funds, we can't financially support fundraising activities.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Permanent public art installations. 	<p>Funding is focused on community building activities and projects, rather than any arts infrastructure. Contact: arts@merri-bek.vic.gov.au.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Projects / activities that have already started or have been completed or requests for retrospective funding. 	<p>If you've already completed or started a project or activities (beyond initial planning/ scoping), you won't be eligible for a Community Grant for that project/activity. Funding cannot reimburse costs paid before approval.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activities that are part of an organisation's regular program or that duplicate an existing program (except for applications to the Membership Activity Grant) Items that are part of an organisation's core business or normal operating expenses e.g. salaries, stipends, insurances, utilities, rental of business premises. (except for the Organisational Establishment Grant category) Activities and works that are considered as routine, cyclical maintenance, resurfacing or equipment replacement. 	<p>Our Community Grants are designed to support our community members. With limited pools of funds available, our grants are not available to fund and supplement existing employees and wages, operating costs and other core business program and expenses.</p> <p>e.g. general painting, replacement of end of life including minor equipment, fixtures, spouting, roofing, doors, flooring, playing surfaces etc.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Projects that are the funding responsibility of other levels of government State-wide activities that do not directly benefit the Merri-bek community 	<p>Funding is focused towards community-led local activities that benefit people in Merri-bek. We can't financially support these initiatives.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Privately-owned, for-profit businesses and entities 	<p>This funding program is focused towards not-for-profit community-led groups.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Canvassing or lobbying of councillors, employees of the Merri-bek City Council or assessment panel members in relation to any grant, subsidy and sponsorship applications is prohibited. 	

Which Grant should I apply for?

Categories and key dates

Category	Maximum Amount	Open Dates	Who Should apply?	Read more:
Community Participation Grant	\$750	Open all year	For individuals: Supports individuals selected to attend development opportunities.	14
	\$3,000	Open all year	For community groups: Community groups and organisations needing support with funding for programs and activities designed to build participation in the community includes projects that fall outside of the annual grant timeframes.	14
Membership Activity Grant	\$3,000 per annum	Open all year	To assist with ongoing costs for member activities of community groups that meet regularly to support health and wellbeing of its members.	15
Community Strengthening Grant	\$7,000	1 January – 28 February	To support community groups to deliver projects that enhance the Merri-bek Community and aim to address areas such as social inclusion and community participation, environmental sustainability, healthy and active living and creating vibrant spaces.	16
Organisational Establishment Grant	\$10,000 per annum	1 January – 28 February	To support newly established community organisations or groups to develop over three years to grow and become independent.	17
Facility Improvement Grant	\$10,000	1 January – 28 February 2026	To support community groups to deliver smaller improvements to facilities that will help local people participate more in community life.	18
	\$40,000	EOI's open August - October	To support community groups to deliver larger improvements to facilities that will help local people participate more in community life.	19



Need to speak to a Council Officer about your grant?

Call us on 9240 1111 or e-mail communitygrants@merri-bek.vic.gov.au.

Please ensure you allow ample time to prepare and submit your application.

Support

Talk with a Council Officer

Test your idea: Speak to one of our staff about your application. They can help to develop your ideas and provide guidance on Council's priorities.

Language Link: is a telephone service that provides recorded information in common community.

It also provides trained interpreters to help residents and staff talk to each other in any language.

Speak with us in your language

Per maggiori informazioni nella tua lingua, chiama il numero **9280 1911**

Για να μάθετε περισσότερα στη γλώσσα σας, καλέστε το **9280 1912**

لمعرفة المزيد بلغتك، اتصل بالرقم **9280 1913**

اپنی زبان میں مزید جاننے کے لیے پر کال کریں۔ **9280 1917**

तपाईंको भाषामा थप जान्नुको लागि, **9280 1910** मा कल गर्नुहोस्

Kendi dilinizde daha fazla bilgi edinmek için **9280 1914**'ü arayın.

如需了解更多您语言版本 的信息, 请致电 **9280 0750**

Para saber más en tu idioma llama al **9280 1916**

Để tìm hiểu thêm bằng ngôn ngữ của bạn, hãy gọi **9280 1915**

अपनी भाषा में अधिक जानने के लिए, **9280 1918** पर कॉल करें

To speak with us in a language not listed here, please call **9280 1919**

For more information visit merri-bek.vic.gov.au/your-language

National Relay Service - If you are deaf or have difficulty with hearing or speech, you can use the National Relay Service to contact Council. National Relay Service 1300 555 727. Ask for 9240 1111. Read more on their website [here](#).

Guidelines and forms in other formats

- Other languages: We can offer the application form and guidelines in other languages, as well as translation services. Contact us to receive an application form in another language.
- Other formats: We offer printed paper-based applications for those that need them.
 - Technical difficulties? If you have any technical challenges with your online application, contact us for assistance.

Other people that can help with support

- ✓ Council suggests speaking with your closest Neighbourhood House that can provide additional support to groups that work with migrant and refugee groups. View more information [here](#).
- ✓ Information sessions and workshops: We offer information sessions and workshops. [Click here for session dates and bookings](#).
- ✓ Auspice organisations: can provide support and help to unincorporated organisations applying to this program. Click [here](#) to read more about auspicing for your group.
- ✓ FAQs: Click [here](#) for more information and frequently asked questions.

Free online training

We have three courses available that will help you in your volunteer role. We offer free training to volunteer-led Merri-bek community groups. The aim of the training is to educate and support groups to become sustainable.

- ✓ **Win More Grants** – How to find and apply for grants
- ✓ **WTF - Where's the Funding?** – How to put more sustainable fundraising strategies in place
- ✓ **Step In, Step Up:** Everything a New Community Board Member Needs to Know – How to make the best contribution you can to your community board and committee

Visit [the Our Community - Merri-bek page](#) to register and get started with these free Compact Courses. Read more [here](#).

Application Process

How Do I apply

What I need to do:

1. Read these Community Grants Guidelines.
2. Check eligibility against the Eligibility Criteria.
3. Discuss your application with Council Staff, if relevant.
4. Identify all costings needed for your proposal. See help Sheet - budgeting
5. Link with other groups and provide letters of support
6. View the application form online at <https://merri-bek.smartygrants.com.au/>
7. Fill out the application form with all information requested
8. Provide all supporting documentation to attach electronically to your submission, including photographs, quotes, financial statements and insurance
9. Submit your application online by the closing date. - You will receive an email instantly confirming the application has been submitted

What documentation do I need?

Documentation needed:

Collaborations and partnerships

- ✓ Collect written support from other community organisations clearly indicating their contribution and how they will support the project

Costing and budget

- ✓ Quotes or pricing for ALL budget items - see the Costs and Budget Fact Sheet
- ✓ Other supporting documentation you wish to include
- ✓ Strategic or marketing plan (if requested)

Financial and Legal Requirements

- ✓ Collect your organisations ABN and tax status
- ✓ Certificate of Incorporation (not-for-profit incorporated groups)
www.consumer.vic.gov.au
- ✓ Certificate of Public Liability Insurances Certificate
- ✓ Letter confirming Auspice (if not incorporated) - see the [Auspice Fact Sheet](#)
- ✓ Collect latest endorsed Financial Statements of organisation, as presented at most recent AGM.

To find out more:



You **must** speak with a Council Officer prior to submitting your application to assist with developing your idea and guidance on Council's priorities.

- More Help Sheets available at [Councils website](#).



Visit our website:

www.merri-bek.vic.gov.au



General Grants Enquiries

communitygrants@merri-bek.vic.gov.au



Call us

9240 1111

Completing your online application

When you are ready to submit your grant application, you'll use an online program called SmartyGrants. SmartyGrants lets you complete sections of your application in stages, save your progress and return to it later (you don't need to do it all at once). Your application will be stored online, so there's no need to save it to your computer.

Important notes on using the SmartyGrants online form:

SmartyGrants is user friendly, but please keep the following in mind.

- It's helpful to read the [SmartyGrants Help Guide for Applicants](#) before you start the application form,
- Allow plenty of time to complete your online application, so that if you run into difficulties, you can seek help,
- Fields marked with an asterisk must be completed.
- As part of completing the form, you need to upload supporting documents. Files must be no greater than 25mb but are best kept under 5mb each,
- If you aren't familiar with uploading files, please see if someone in your group knows how,
- Please ensure the supporting documents you upload are the appropriate documents required for your application,
- See [What documentation do I need](#) for information on the documents you need to supply
- To avoid losing your work, remember to regularly save your progress in SmartyGrants every 10-15 minutes, as the form logs you out after 30 minutes of inactivity. you can receive support from a Community Grants team member (9240 1111 or e-mail communitygrants@merri-bek.vic.gov.au) before the closing date.
- Review your responses, and then submit your application.
- You will receive an email instantly confirming the application has been submitted
- The link to submit an application is: <https://merri-bek.smartygrants.com.au/>



Speak with us if you need to submit your application in another format.

Example: hand written form or in another language.

Speak with the Community Grants Team on 9240 1111 or email communitygrants@merri-bek.vic.gov.au.

Check our website www.merri-bek.vic.gov.au and view our Help Sheets

What happens after I submit an application

How we assess grants

We assess eligible applications using the criteria listed below and funding is awarded based on merit and information submitted in the application.

% of Score	Criteria	How we assess applications
40%	Supports Community Grants Objectives and Funding Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How does the application meet one or more of the Community Grants Objectives? ▪ To what extent does the project address the Funding Priorities?
35%	Demonstrates community need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Why is the project needed? ▪ How many local people will benefit from the project? ▪ What benefits will the project have for the community? ▪ Has the applicant asked local people or groups if this project is needed? ▪ Is there anything else like this project in Merri-bek?
25%	Has capacity to implement the project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Is the project well planned and achievable within the timeframes? ▪ Does the organisation have the resources and experience to manage the program? ▪ Does the budget reflect value for money? ▪ Is there evidence of in-kind contribution?

Assessment Process

The Assessment Process involves several stages, which is why it takes a little time before you find out the outcome of your application.

- The Community Grants team conducts eligibility checks based on the Community Grants Policy and Guidelines. Applications that meet the eligibility criteria continue to the next assessment stage. (Eligibility checks relate to the information in the Who can apply and What we won't fund sections.)
- Eligible applications are then assessed by an Assessment Panel, who will come up with a list of applications recommended for funding.
- Applications requiring an EOI for a Structural Improvement Grant will undergo a preliminary assessment process, including an interview and site visit where necessary, and be short-listed. Shortlisted applicants will then be asked to submit Part 2 of the application form, along with any additional supporting information, which will be further assessed by the Assessment Panel.

Approval of Applications

- Annual Grants: Recommendations made by the Assessment Panel are presented to Council for approval at a Council Meeting.
- All-year-round applications will be assessed by the Assessment Panel and approved by Council staff, in line with the level of authority as outlined in the Merri-bek Procurement Policy.
- All applicants will be informed of the outcome of their application in writing and offered the opportunity to discuss the application process. Unsuccessful applicants can seek feedback from Council in relation to funding outcomes and assessment panel decisions.

My application is successful

If you are successful, a funding agreement outlining the conditions of your grant will be sent to you (or your auspice organisation). You will be required to sign and return a copy of the funding agreement and provide a copy of your organisation's bank statement showing the account number, BSB number and name that matches the applicant or auspice ABN details. All payments will be made by electronic transfer.


Facility Improvement Grants (capital improvement) are paid by instalment.

Your responsibilities

If you receive a grant from Council, you'll be expected to:

- ✓ Spend the money for the purpose outlined in your application and Funding Agreement.
- ✓ If your plans change (timing / budget / project), you need to submit a variation request to Council, and have it approved, before you make any changes to your project.
- ✓ If you spend the grant differently than your application / Funding Agreement without approval, Council will ask for all grant monies to be returned.
- ✓ Submit an Acquittal/Accountability Report that shows how the grant money was used, as set out in the Funding Agreement.
- ✓ Return any unspent funds to Council.
- ✓ Acknowledge Council's support in any advertisements, flyers or other activities used to promote the project.
- ✓ Tell people about the funded activity or project. Please note, evidence of promotion will be required in your acquittal.
- ✓ Support Council's campaign to encourage the community to support local businesses by buying local goods and services.

As part of the Community Grant accountability process, we reserve the right to audit any and all Community Grant recipients for compliance with the grant conditions and expenditure of grant monies received.



Talk to us if you encounter issues or problems with delivery of your project.

Promoting your project

Please ensure you acknowledge the Community Grant funding contribution on all publications and advertising for your funded activity.

Please use the grants logo to acknowledge support, the grants team can provide support and approval for your advertising and promotions of the funded activity.

Don't forget to provide opportunity for a Council representative to speak and attend the launch or opening of the project.

Example of logo is below: [E-mail](#) us for more logos and help with promotion.



Project changes or variations

Any change to the project will require a formal variation request. This request is assessed and approval by the assessment panel. Written approval can only be issued by Councils Grants Team. Do not make changes to your project without receiving approval. You will be notified of the outcome

A variation to a project may change how, when or the expenditure of a component of a funded project, while maintaining the outcomes of the project. Changes to the funded activity must be submitted via a Funding Variation Request form on SmartyGrants. Please request a variation form to be added to your submission. Discuss any proposed changes with the Grants Officer via [e-mail](#) or phone.

Significant variation proposals that change the scope and impacts the outcomes approved by Council, may be viewed as a new project and a variation may not be supported.

Problems with your project

Talk to us in the grants team if you encounter issues or problems with delivery of your project.

The earlier a problem is identified the easier it can be dealt with so any impacts on the project are minimised.

If you encounter a really significant issue, you will need to speak with us as we will assess the problem and arrange relevant discussions or meetings with relevant Council officers and the grants team, especially if it will affect your organisation's ability to meet deadlines or complete the project.

Council officers will respond positively to honest, and timely contact with organisations should major problems be encountered.

E-mail: communitygrants@merri-bek.vic.gov.au



Acquittal Evaluation

Each grant recipient is required to submit an Acquittal Form within one month of completion of the project. The acquittal includes questions about how many people participated in the event/program, what adjustments were made to the project as it unfolded, and whether the aims and objectives outlined in the application were met. The acquittal also includes a financial report, which shows how the funding was spent. You are required to keep accurate and up-to-date records including itemised receipts issued when funding is spent.

The required acquittal form is attached to each successful application. Links to the acquittal forms are listed under each application in the “My submissions” area of SmartyGrants. To access an acquittal form, please log onto <https://merri-bek.smartygrants.com.au/>, click on the “My Submissions” tab and scroll down to the specific grant. You can then complete and submit the acquittal.

- ✓ Please keep receipts for all expenditure items to upload into your online acquittal.

Facility Improvement Grants are required to submit completions certificates and evidence of occupancy when the project is complete to receive the final payment of funding.

Do you have a question we haven't covered? Check our website www.merri-bek.vic.gov.au

Help sheets or contact the Community Grants Officer on 9240 1111 or e-mail communitygrants@merri-bek.vic.gov.au

Categories

Community Participation Grant

This funding aims to support initiatives that help residents participate in community life and improve personal outcomes. Two types of grants are available under this category.

Open for applications all year. Applications must be submitted at least 4 weeks prior to the activity or event. Please note: We aim to process these as quick as possible, however times may vary.

Funding for community groups

Amount:

Up to \$3,000

Timing:

Applications are accepted throughout the year until funds are exhausted.

Requirements:

reference will be given to projects that:

- Address [Community Grants Objectives](#) and [Funding Priorities](#)
- Meet the needs of the community
- Preference will be given to projects that meet the [Funding Priorities](#) outlined on page 4.
- Applicants must be representing a not-for-profit community group and will also score higher against the [assessment criteria](#) where the project is planned and delivered by

community groups and organisations that work together.

- Evaluation and Acquittal report due: within 1 month of funded project end

What funding can cover

Activities or projects that support communities listed above to be healthier and participate in community life, including:

- Community events
- Leadership and development activities
- Sports programs
- Community projects
- Relevant equipment that has long term relevance to the organisation/community.

Refer to page 16 for more on what can be funded.

Funding for individuals

Amount:

Up to \$750

Timing:

Applications are accepted throughout the year until funds are exhausted, Evaluation and Acquittal report due: within 1 month of funded project end

Requirements:

Funding is provided to individuals who are residents of Merri-bek that have been selected to pursue an achievement and / or development activity in their chosen area of expertise.

Applicant must:

- be a resident of Merri-bek
- show that they have been selected to participate in an activity by an organisation or group, by providing information about the selection process and any advertisements
- show that there are financial barriers to participating in the activity

- Demonstrate a strong commitment to their area of endeavour
- Show the benefit of your activity to the Merri-bek community

What funding can cover

Access to programs and activities such as:

- Helping an individual to participate in an event or activity such as, artist/cultural events, sporting competitions
- Opportunities to participate in State, National and international forums that will bring new skills and knowledge to the Merri-bek community
- Leadership and professional development opportunities that will help build leadership capacity of the Merri-bek community

Note: Support is provided for non-ongoing activities (school, tertiary and TAFE studies are excluded). Coaches and support staff are not considered to be participants.

Membership Activity Grant

About

This funding aims to help with ongoing costs for community groups that meet regularly to support the health and wellbeing of its members.

Funding Amount:

Up to \$3,000 each year for 3 years (max. \$9,000)
Amounts groups can receive:

- \$2,000 for groups with up to 20 members (\$1,500 if receiving other Council support)
- \$2,500 for groups with 21 to 60 members (\$2,000 if receiving other Council support)
- \$3,000 for groups with over 60 members (\$2,500 if receiving other Council support).

Application Timing

- Open for applications all year round.
- Applicants will be notified of outcome in 4-6 weeks after application is submitted.

Requirements:

Community groups must:

- Meet regularly in Merri-bek
- Address [Community Grants Objectives](#) and [Funding Priorities](#)
- Provide activities to members that support health and wellbeing, such as social or active programs
- Provide evidence of membership and that it meets in the Merri-bek Municipality.
- Must complete an acquittal every year to show how the organisation is operating.
- Funding must be spread evenly across the costs listed in "What funding can cover". Costs must support the delivery of activities for the members when they meet.

Funded Period:

3 years

Evaluation and Acquittal reporting

Within 1 month from approved date each year of funding.

Please note - Annual approved amount is not reviewed each year of agreement.

Funds Payment

Payment is annually - up to \$3,000 is paid each financial year, a total of \$9,000 over 3 years.

*Payments for year 2 and 3 is paid after an annual acquittal and evaluation is submitted in accordance with the funding agreement.


What can funding cover

Member activities, such as:

- Guest speakers, classes, workshops
- Social outings (e.g. bus hire)
- Consumables and supplies (e.g. tea & coffee, food, equipment)
- Special events (e.g., social lunches, end of year celebrations)
- administration
- group activity insurance
- advertising
- Volunteer expenses
- Small equipment that is useful long term to the group
- Communications, media, advertising and marketing.

Funding may not be used for:

- The hire of Council venues.
- Restaurant bills
- Purchasing alcohol
- Outings to gambling venues
- Personal expenses (i.e. petrol, utility bills, phone bills that aren't in the group's name)



Examples of eligible groups:
community garden, seniors' group, playgroup, youth group, etc.

Community Strengthening Grant

This funding supports community projects that benefit and enhance Merri-bek Community and aim to address areas such as:

- ✓ social inclusion and community participation
- ✓ environmental sustainability
- ✓ healthy and active living
- ✓ creating vibrant spaces.

Amount:

Up to \$7,000

Timing:

Open for applications: 1 January - 28 February 2025.

Notification:

Applicants will be notified of outcomes in May 2025.

Funded Period:

- 12 months
- Project to occur: 1 July 2025 - 30 June 2026

Evaluation and Acquittal reporting

Within 1 month of funded project end

Requirements:

Preference will be given to projects that:

- Address [Community Grants Objectives](#) and [Funding Priorities](#)
- Meet the needs of the community
- Preference will be given to projects that meet the [Funding Priorities](#) outlined on page 4.
- Applicants must be representing a not-for-profit community group and will also score higher against the [assessment criteria](#) where the project is planned and delivered by community groups and organisations that work together.

Examples of eligible groups:

community garden, seniors, playgroup, youth, support, 'friends' of, recreational, active etc.

What funding can cover

- Temporary staff costs to implement the project (e.g. project worker, instructor etc.)
- Printing, advertising, translation, promotional activities
- Equipment or community venue/meeting room hire (up to \$500)
- Costs to encourage participation (e.g. Transport, disability support, interpreters)
- Catering and refreshments (up to \$300)
- Volunteer expenses
- Small equipment that is useful long term to the community and is needed for the project and aligns with the Community Grants Objectives (Up to \$500)
- Communications, media, advertising and marketing.

Community events/festivals, projects (e.g. sustainability, social inclusion, health promotion, participation etc) Training and capacity building.

Organisational Establishment Grant

About

This funding aims to support newly established organisations or groups over three years to grow and become independent.

Funding Amount:

Up to \$10,000 each year for 3 years
(total \$30,000 over 3 years)

Application Timing

- Open for applications 1 January – 28 February 2025.
- Applicants will be notified of outcome in May 2025.

Requirements:

Community groups must:

- Be based in Merri-bek municipality,
- Address [Community Grants Objectives](#) and [Funding Priorities](#).
- Groups must have been established less than three years before applying for a grant
- Must complete an acquittal every year to show how the organisation is operating.

Funding Timeline:

Funding: 1 July 2025 - 30 June 2028.

Evaluation and Acquittal reporting

Within 1 month from 30 June of each funded year

Funds Payment

Payment annually - up to \$10,000 is paid each financial year, a total of \$30,000 over 3 years.

* Payments for year 2 and 3 is paid after an annual acquittal and evaluation is submitted in accordance with the funding agreement.

What can funding cover

- Administration and running costs
- Small equipment that is of significant need to the organisation and supports the Community Grants Objectives
- Incorporation fees
- Insurance
- Governance training
- Volunteer training and capacity building
- Strategy development
- Rent.

Funding may not be used for:

- The hire of Council venues.
- Purchasing alcohol
- Outings to gambling venues
- Personal expenses (i.e. petrol, utility bills, phone bills that aren't in the group's name or aren't incurred by the group)



To support newly established community organisations to grow and become independent.

Facility (Structural) Improvement Grant

This funding supports fixed/permanent changes to community facilities or assets that will help community members participate more in community life. Priority is to support community-led projects that increase community access and participation, demonstrate collaboration between groups and result in greater use of facilities.

Two types of grants are available under this category.

Funding for smaller capital projects

Amount:

Up to \$10,000

Timing:

Annual round 2026/27 - Open for applications: 1 January – 28 February 2026.

Notification:

Annual round 2026/27 - Applicants will be notified of outcomes in May or June 2026.

Funded Period:

- 12 months or as per below
- Annual round 2026/27 - Project to occur 1 July 2026 - 30 June 2027.

Evaluation and Acquittal reporting

Within 1 month of funded project end.

Requirements:

Preference will be given to projects that:

- Encourage greater participation in community life
- Address Community Grants Objectives and Funding Priorities
- Meet the needs of the community
- Show how organisations partner together
- Plan for long term sustainability.
- Plans, permits or site audits may be required, depending on the project.
- Read the [Facility Improvement Grant – Information Manual](#) for more guidance on this category.

What funding can cover

General facility improvements that encourage greater community access, equity and participation.

- Multipurpose community facilities
- Facility improvements to support people with disability accessing the venue.
- Energy efficiency upgrades - improves a buildings' environmental performance. i.e. conversion of items to renewable energy and/or water and energy efficiency.

Funding may not be used for:

Read what we won't fund page 6 and next page what can and won't be funded under both Facility Improvement categories.

Minor upgrade works examples:

- Community gardens
- Unisex accessible change facilities
- Outdoor shading
- Multi-use meeting and training spaces
- Environmental upgrades, such as LED lighting, conversion to renewable energy or water tanks.
- Kitchen upgrades

Funding for larger capital projects

Amount:

Up to \$40,000

Timing:

Expression of interest (EOI):

- Are open August to mid-October each year for the next funding round
- An interview will be required for all EOI applications and are conducted within the EOI period.

A full application will need include all information including quotes, plans, permits, approvals and site audits.

- Full application due: 1 January – 28 February 2025
- Notification of Outcome: May 2025
- Project Delivery: 1st July 2025 – June 2026

Requirements:

Applicant must contribute 25% of project value. In addition to requirements set out in smaller capital projects:

Applicants are required to:

- show how community groups collaborate to encourage greater use of the facilities by a range of community members
- contribute at least 25% to the cost of the project
- complete a two-part application process:

1. Submit an EOI
2. Applications that require an EOI will undergo a preliminary assessment process, including an interview and site visit where necessary, the EOI process will determine if the applicant is eligible and ready to submit a full application form in the next funding round, including plans, permits and site audits, depending on the project.

Preference will be given to projects that:

- Address Community Grants Objectives and Funding Priorities
- Meet the needs of the community
- Plan for long term sustainability.

What funding can cover

General facility improvements that encourage greater community access, equity and participation

- Environmental initiatives - Energy efficiency upgrades that improves a buildings' environmental performance.
- Multipurpose community facilities
- Facility improvements to support people with disability accessing the venue

Funding may not be used for:

- Facilities where there is little or no public access,
- Purchase of land,
- Regular maintenance work (e.g. general painting, replacement of fixtures and /or equipment, drainage, roofing),
- Purchase of minor equipment not part of wider facility upgrade,
- Wages or salaries for project management unless an external person is appointed to manage the project.
- Upgrades to privately owned facilities.

Read the [Facility Improvement Grant – Information Manual](#) for more guidance on this category.

- 
- Community gardens
 - Upgrade to sports surfaces
 - Unisex accessible change facilities
 - Outdoor shading
 - Multi-use meeting and training spaces
 - Environmental upgrades, such as LED lighting or water tanks.
 - Kitchen upgrades to meet food safety standards.

Frequently Asked Questions

What does mean to be incorporated

Incorporation gives your group its own legal identity (the group becomes a 'separate legal entity' separate from its members). The incorporated group can enter into contracts, sign a lease, employ people, and sue and be sued.

Activities occur in the group's name, rather than in the names of individual members. Incorporated groups follow a particular structure, with group rules (or constitution), members, and a governing body (often called a board or committee).

Many grants are unavailable to unincorporated groups, and this is why auspicing is suggested in these situations.

For more information on incorporation, refer to the following helpful guides:

- Justice Connect's Not-for-profit-Law website: [Starting a not-for-profit organisation](#)
- Consumer Affairs Victoria's guide for clubs and community groups: [Should your club incorporate?](#)

Volunteer expenses

Volunteering - the definition of volunteering is that there is no financial payment; in other words, volunteering is an unpaid activity. Expenses to support volunteering may include: travel, special clothing or PPE equipment and meals.

Does my group need an ABN

Your group may need to supply an ABN as part of your application. An ABN refers to an Australian Business Number issued by the Australian Taxation Office (ATO). If your organisation has an ABN, it must be included in your application.

Payment of GST may only apply to Facility Improvement Grants if the applicant is registered for GST. All other categories do not have GST implications.

What is Auspicing?

The 'auspice organisation' takes responsibility (legal and financial) of the grant on your group's behalf. They will sign your grant agreement, receive and distribute grant funds under the grant agreement, ensure activities or events are completed, and submit accountability and evaluation reports with you and on your behalf.

Your group/organisation will still be known as the 'grant recipient'.

Important information on auspice organisations:

- The auspice organisation you choose must be incorporated and have an ABN.
- The auspice organisation accepts legal and financial responsibility for the grant and will need to meet all eligibility criteria and provide public liability insurance coverage for the project(s).
- Grant money will be paid to the auspice organisation, not the applicant.

Auspiced applicants will need to provide the auspice organisation's contact details, ABN, their most recent financial report, and evidence outlining your agreement with them.

Eligibility and auspicing: categories that are targeted for groups; this grant program cannot fund auspiced ineligible entities or individuals for projects to get around the eligibility criteria. Examples of entities that are ineligible, Australian Public Company, Limited by Shares, sole trader, trust, Public Company Pty Ltd, Partnership or other for profit structures for projects.

Who could auspice me?

You can approach a larger organisation to partner with your community group/organisation to fund a grant.

- Local neighbourhood house
- A community organisation you have worked or partnered with
- Peak body or governing association of your field
- Organisations with a similar mission and purpose

You may apply through an auspice organisation if your group does not wish to purchase insurance.

Or you may be covered under Liability insurance of the venue you are holding your project if your activity is entirely held at that venue.

What is "In Kind"?

In Kind means any contribution you (or others) make for free, that you would otherwise have to pay for. e.g. volunteer hours, free venues, free advertising etc. Including your In Kind amount in your budget shows us the full scale of your activity, and how much you're contributing.

Why do you need public liability insurance coverage

Understandably Public Liability Insurance (PLI) may cost a significant amount to a group, however the risks of not having PLI could cost a group much more.

Community groups/organisations will most likely interact with the public as part of running its activities or projects. PLI protects an group/organisation against the liability to pay damages for a bodily injury, death, or for property damage that may occur as a result of an activity by the organisation. Because of the enormous potential costs your group could face if something went wrong and you didn't have PLI, we only fund groups who manage the risk by having PLI.

Important note on Public Liability Insurance:
PLI doesn't cover everything you may expect it to. You may need separate insurance when required, such as volunteers insurance to cover volunteers in the event of an injury claim, or building and contents insurance, to cover damage to a property in your organisation's control (if you're renting a space).

A group may be auspiced for insurance coverage. Provide a letter and evidence of coverage from the auspicing organisation that confirms coverage.

Child Safe Standards

Victorian organisations that provide services or facilities for children (anyone under 18 years old) are required by law to implement Child Safe Standards to protect children from harm. Therefore, if you project/program will engage children as either participants or audience members you will be required to demonstrate that you are complying with the Child Safe Standards by uploading a copy of your organisation's Child Safe Policy or Statement of Commitment to Child Safety. For further information on the Child Safe Standards see: <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/child-safety/resources/>

What is an annual financial statement?

All those applying as an organisation must upload a copy of the organisation's (or auspicing organisation's) most recent annual financial

statement to their grant application. For most applicants, this will be the previous year's Financial Statements. The financial statements of an incorporated association must give a true and fair view of its financial performance and position during and at the end of the year.

Requirements of Financial Statements is set out by Consumer Affairs and outlined below:

Financial statements must contain

- Income and expenditure (Income Statement)
- Assets and liabilities (Balance Sheet)
- Notes to the accounts, that includes:
 - information required by the accounting standards
 - information necessary to give a true and fair view
 - information required by the provisions of the Act and its regulations.

More information is available at:

<https://www.consumer.vic.gov.au/clubs-and-fundraising/incorporated-associations/running-an-incorporated-association/annual-statement/financial-statements-and-auditing>

You can see an example as part of a Board's financial report here www.ourcommunity.com.au

If your organisation is a registered Not-For-Profit with ACNC, you are required to submit your Annual Statement. <https://www.acnc.gov.au/for-charities>.

Temporary staff or contractor costs

Generally, community grants funding intended for projects should not be used to directly engage and pay directors, members and volunteers as temporary contractors or staff. The engagement of temporary staff and professional services should be an external organisation and / or contractor.

Using community grant funds to pay directors and / or members as temporary staff or contractors could create a conflict of interest, as it could be perceived to benefit individuals from an organisation who are involved in a project's delivery and management.

Do you have a question we haven't covered? Check our website www.merri-bek.vic.gov.au

Community Grants Officer on 9240 1111 or e-mail communitygrants@merri-bek.vic.gov.au.

This page is left intentionally blank
