Council Policy

Festival & Events Funding Policy

Policy owner	Arts, Advocacy and Economy and Social Strategy		
Adopted by	**Council**		
Adoption date	18/05/2026	Scheduled review date:	1/05/2030
Revision/version number	1		
Council Plan reference	1.1 Community culture and identity - We enrich local identity and foster opportunities for the community to make meaningful connections through creative arts, events and cultural expression.		

1 Purpose

Council is committed to supporting an inclusive festival and event program that activates the Shire's townships and public spaces, recognising the cultural, social, and economic value that events bring to the region.

This Policy establishes Cardinia Shire Council's principles and governance framework for funding community festivals and events. It ensures public funds are invested transparently, fairly and strategically to strengthen local identity, inclusion, and wellbeing; support volunteers and local creatives; activate townships across the Shire; and uphold integrity, safety and environmental responsibility.

Through strategic investment, Council promotes social inclusion, supports diverse community voices, and transforms public spaces into dynamic hubs of activity. This Policy ensures council funding supports safe, accessible, and community-focused, festivals and events, while upholding high standards of compliance and community benefit, making Cardinia a great place to live, work, and explore.

2 Scope

This Policy applies to all Council grants provided to external organisations or groups for festivals and events within Cardinia Shire. It covers design, assessment, decision-making, agreements, monitoring, reporting and evaluation, and funding distribution.

This Policy does not cover funding provided through other Council grant programs, procurement, sponsorships, donations, or any other support provided outside designated application periods.

3 Definitions

Term	Definition
Applicant	An individual, group, or organisation that submits an application for funding under this Program.
Acquittal	The process by which a grant recipient reports back to Council on how the funding was spent, usually including financial statements and evidence of outcomes.
Co-contribution/Co-funding	A financial or in-kind contribution made by the applicant toward the project, separate from the grant funding received.
Community Event	An event open to the public that provides social, cultural, economic, or recreational benefit to the local community.
Community	People with a connection to Cardinia Shire, including residents, workers, students, visitors, local groups, and those who share a sense of identity or common interest.
Council	The local government body administering the grants program.
Eligible Applicant	An individual or organisation that meets the criteria to apply for funding, such as being a not-for-profit, incorporated association, or local business.
Festival/Event	A planned public gathering offering cultural, social, artistic, recreational, or community focused activities to engage the community and activate public spaces.
Festival and Events Funding Program (the Program)	A structured grants or financial support program provided by Council to assist community groups, artists, businesses, or event organisers in planning, delivering, and delivering their festivals or events.
Funding Agreement	A formal document outlining the terms and conditions under which funding is provided, including obligations of the recipient.
Grant	Financial support provided by Council for eligible festivals and events.
Guidelines	The document setting out the rules, criteria, eligibility requirements, and processes for the funding program.
Independent Assessment Panel (IAP)	An Independent assessment panel (IAP), nominated by Council, is responsible for evaluating grant applications and making funding recommendations in accordance with the Guidelines.
In-kind Support	Non-monetary contributions such as volunteer labour, equipment, or services that contribute to the delivery of an event.
Streams	A category or pathway of funding within the overall program.

4 Policy principles

Support applications for accessible festivals and events that activate live music, youth and children's programming, and markets, while celebrating Cardinia's cultural diversity, local stories, and distinct township identities.

4.1 Inclusion, accessibility and cultural safety

- Festivals must be inclusive and welcoming of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, all genders, LGBTIQ+ communities, and people with disability.
- All funded festivals and events must be accessible and affordable, and welcoming for people of all ages and abilities.
- Gender equity and cultural safety must be embedded in all planning and delivery stages. This can be achieved by:
    - Creating welcoming and inclusive environments for all genders and cultures
    - Considering accessibility and safety for diverse community members
    - Including an Acknowledgement of Country or Welcome to Country in communications or at the commencement of a festival where appropriate.
- Applicants who cannot meet safety, disability access, or compliance standards are ineligible for funding.

4.2 Geographic equity

- Applications must show how the event will consider accessibility, inclusion, and community benefit for the local area.
- Funding will be allocated equitably across the region, with priority given to rural towns and communities with limited existing provision.

4.3 Grassroots and volunteers

- Prioritise community led and volunteer run initiatives, with proportionate requirements to reduce admin burden.
- Recognise in-kind contributions as valid contributions.
- Support pathways for festivals to grow over time through multi-year funding.
- Provide accessible guidance on event planning and compliance to ensure equitable participation and a sustainable, community driven calendar.

4.4 Environmental sustainability

- Applicants must demonstrate sustainable practices appropriate to their scale, by addressing waste minimisation, resource use, and sustainable procurement.

- Prioritise festivals and events with environmental education or innovative sustainability initiatives.

4.5 Safety and compliance

- Festivals must meet Council safety and compliance requirements, including completing the Event Permit process and adhering to all legislative, regulatory, and risk management obligations.

- Festivals must hold $20 million public liability insurance, list Cardinia Shire Council as an interested party, and demonstrate capacity to meet all safety, risk, permit, and operational standards before funding is released.

- Applicants must enter a funding agreement and provide post event reporting and evidence of expenditure.

4.6 Local creatives and economy

- Prioritise applications that engage local artists, musicians, producers, suppliers, and businesses, strengthening the Shire's local economy through increased visitor activity.

4.7 Funding Program

- The Festival and Events Grants Program provides funding to support eligible community festivals and events. The program also offers multiyear funding per year for recognised civic and cultural days of celebration.

4.8 Eligibility and ineligibility

- Applicants must refer to the Program Guidelines to confirm eligibility and assessment criteria.

4.9 Assessment and decision making

- The Program will be administered transparently and accountably through centralised processes, standardised reporting, and ongoing monitoring to ensure proper use of public funds and compliance.

- The Program will be assessed by an IAP and Officers with members required to complete fraud, corruption, and conflict of interest training and declare conflicts for each application.

4.10 Integrity, probity and lobbying controls

- All assessments are conducted transparently and impartially in accordance with Council's Codes and Policies and the *Local Government Act 2020*.

- Applicants must direct all enquiries to Council officers. Lobbying of Councillors or staff, or offers of gifts, are strictly prohibited and may result in disqualification, withdrawal of funding, or formal referral.

- Applicants must engage respectfully with Council staff at all times. Alternative behaviour may result in disqualification or withdrawal from future funding.

4.11 Transparency and communication

- Council will administer the Program with openness, consistency, and accountability, and all funding decisions will follow the assessment criteria and policy priorities.

- Applicants will receive clear information about their application status and may request feedback if unsuccessful.

- All Program communications must go through designated Council officers to ensure consistency and integrity. Council may publicly report on funded event outcomes to meet accountability obligations.

4.12 Monitoring, evaluation and reporting

- All funding recipients must meet monitoring, evaluation, and reporting requirements as outlined in their funding agreement.

- A post event acquittal report is required, covering expenditure, attendance, and outcomes; failure to report may affect future eligibility.

- Council will periodically evaluate the Program to assess effectiveness, guide future priorities, and ensure alignment with community needs and strategic direction.

4.13 Ethical Standards

- Council will not provide support, including use of its facilities, funding, publicity or promotion for community groups, organisations, clubs or businesses that promote or advertise gambling, particularly EGMs, sports betting, and online gambling.

4.14 Risk management and fraud control

- The Program is administered in line with Council's Code of Conduct and governance frameworks, including fraud and corruption controls.
- Council reserves the right to disqualify any future applications where fraud is identified, and—in accordance with Section 4.12—may also refuse applications where required processes have not been followed.

4.15 Roles and Responsibilities

Council Officers

- Manages Program delivery, pre-eligibility assessments, agreements, appointing IAP members, overseeing the grants process, compliance, and risk assessment duties, with conflicts of interest managed under the Council Code of Conduct and the Local Government Act 2020.

Independent Assessment Panel (IAP)

- A panel of nominated Council officers evaluates applications and makes funding recommendations in line with the Guidelines. Panel members must declare any conflicts of interest before assessment.

Councillors

- Councillors endorse the Program policy and approve the annual budget but must not influence individual funding decisions or engage with applicants during assessment. Conflicts of interest must be declared and managed under the Council Code of Conduct. Councillors may attend funded events in an official capacity.

Applicants

- Applicants must submit accurate applications, attend required consultations, meet all eligibility, safety, compliance, reporting, acquittal, and sustainability requirements, deliver the festival as per the funding agreement.

5 Relevant documents

- Local Government Act 2020
- Code of Conduct
- Council Plan
- Arts and Creative Industries Strategy (Draft)
- Community Capital Works Grants Program
- Open Space Strategy
- Access and Inclusion Strategy
- Gambling Harm Prevention and Minimisation Policy
- Finance Procurement Policy

6 Review

Council will review this Policy every four years.

The next review of this policy is scheduled for completion by 1/05/2030.

It is recognised that, from time to time, circumstances may change leading to the need for minor administrative changes to this document. Where an update does not materially alter this document, such a change may be made administratively. Examples include a change to the name of a Council department, a change to the name of a Federal or State Government department, and a minor update to legislation which does not have a material impact. Administrative changes do not require Community Engagement.

7 Document history

Date approved	Change type	Version	Next review date
19/03/2026	Major Change	1.0	1/05/2030