

Mount Alexander Shire Council

# Community Grants Program Guidelines - 2026 Round 1

Working together for a healthy, connected shire



# Our Community Grants Program

## Program Objective:

Mount Alexander Shire Council allocates funds each year to support new and innovative community projects that align with the pillars and strategic objectives in the [Council Plan 2025-2029](#).

Two funding rounds of \$50,000 are open each year (February and August).

All applications must be for projects that are:

- based in Mount Alexander Shire **and**
- benefit the Mount Alexander Shire community

Applicants are encouraged to read our [Council Plan 2025-2029](#) and other relevant [strategies and plans](#) available on our website prior to applying. These include but are not limited to Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan, Disability Inclusion Action Plan, Gender Equality Action Plan, Climate Change Strategy, Active Transport Strategy.

## Council's five focus areas:

Focus Area	Objectives
<b>1. Communities</b> Healthy, connected and inclusive communities	<b>1.1</b> A strong, connected network of community-led wellbeing initiatives. <b>1.2</b> Vibrant townships, reflecting local spirit and aspirations. <b>1.3</b> Services and initiatives are delivered equitably. <b>1.4</b> Council decisions, services, and planning are actively informed by the diverse voices of all people from across the Shire. <b>1.5</b> Strong relationships with Traditional Owners, First Nations groups and community members.
<b>2. Natural Environments</b> Enhanced and protected natural environments	<b>2.1</b> We are working to protect local biodiversity and ecosystems. <b>2.2</b> A shire that understands and cares for our environment. <b>2.3</b> A well-prepared, resilient shire with residents and communities equipped for extreme weather events and disasters. <b>2.4</b> First Nations knowledge and cultural values are embedded into environmental decision-making and organisational processes.
<b>3. Infrastructure</b> Appropriate, accessible and climate-resilient infrastructure	<b>3.1</b> Well-maintained, actively used infrastructure. <b>3.2</b> Increased access to housing, which is affordable, appropriate, accessible and considers environmentally sustainable design principles. <b>3.3</b> Accessible, safe, and inclusive infrastructure for all ages and backgrounds. <b>3.4</b> Infrastructure is designed to protect people, property, and the environment from natural disasters. <b>3.5</b> Built, cultural and natural heritage is safeguarded and celebrated.
<b>4. Wellbeing Economies</b> Thriving economies that serve the wellbeing of people, place and the environment	<b>4.1</b> Thriving local businesses, enterprises and organisations. <b>4.2</b> Increased access to meaningful local skills development, work and volunteering. <b>4.3</b> A resilient, diverse economy serving the wellbeing of people, place, and the environment.
<b>5. Organisation</b> A responsive, trusted and effective Council	<b>5.1</b> A responsive and transparent Council. <b>5.2</b> Organisational systems are optimised and support data-informed decision making, and a positive customer experience. <b>5.3</b> A capable, future ready, inclusive and culturally aligned workforce. <b>5.4</b> A workforce that enables strong partnerships with Traditional Owners and First Nations people.

## Key dates and timelines for 2026:

	Round 1	Round 2
Community Grants Program <b>OPENS</b>	2 February	3 August
Community Grants Program <b>CLOSES</b> . <i>Late or incomplete applications will not be considered.</i>	23 February (at <b>4:00pm</b> )	24 August (at <b>4:00pm</b> )
Applications assessed.	March	September
Applicants are notified of the outcome of their application.	March	September
Signed funding agreements & invoices due. Funding agreement will include an estimated project completion date – Ideally projects are completed within 12 months	April/May	October/November
Funds paid to successful applicants	April/May	October/November

## Our funding streams:

### Small Grants

- Up to \$3,000 available per application.
- Applicants must be either a;
  - Not-for-profit organisation
  - Incorporated association
  - Registered charity
  - Have an auspice. *Noting that an auspice must have an ABN.*
- Application process: Online application including budget.
- Reporting requirements at the completion of the grant:
  - Completion report with a summary of outcomes, including benefits and challenges of the project and photo evidence and/or media links that the project was completed as described in the initial application.
  - Public acknowledgement of Council/Community Grant support must also be included, including use of the Council logo on materials. Appropriate logos will be provided.

### Partnership Grants

- Up to \$10,000 available per application.
- Funding for projects of up to three years in length involving a minimum of three active partners.
  - An active partnership includes equal roles, responsibilities and contributions by all partners.
- Applicants and all partners must be a not-for-profit, incorporated association or a registered charity. Auspice arrangements are not applicable.
- Application process: Online application including an itemised budget, project plan and evidence of partnership.
- Reporting requirements at the completion of the grant:

- Completion report with a summary of outcomes, including benefits and challenges of the project and photo evidence and/or media links that the project was completed as described in the initial application.
- Public acknowledgement of Council/Community Grant support must also be included, including use of the Council logo on materials. Appropriate logos will be provided.

## How to apply:

- You are required to verbally discuss your project idea with a member of the Community Grants Team within the Community Partnerships team, to ensure that your project adheres to the guidelines. Please phone 5471 1700, or email [grants@mountalexander.vic.gov.au](mailto:grants@mountalexander.vic.gov.au), to arrange a time to discuss.

*Note – this conversation must happen within the two months prior to the grant application being submitted.*

- We use an online platform called SmartyGrants where you can complete and submit your application. If this is the first time you have used SmartyGrants you will be prompted to register before beginning your application.
- Once your application is complete, you will receive an automated email acknowledging successful submission. Please check the round closing date so you don't miss the deadline to submit.
- **Apply online** via <https://mountalexander.smartygrants.com.au/>

## Applications will not be considered if:

- They are late or incomplete.
- The project or activity has not been discussed with a member of the Community Grants team within Community Partnerships directly.
- The applicant has an outstanding grant acquittal or debt to Council.
- The applicant already receives funding from Council for the activity.
- The project has already commenced or has been completed, and the funds are to be applied retrospectively.

## Who can apply?

To be eligible to apply for a community grant the applicant must:

- Be listed as an incorporated association ([see Consumer Affairs Victoria](#)), a registered not-for-profit ([ACNC Charity Register](#)), a registered foundation or have an auspice arrangement.
- Have an ABN or provide a Statement by a Supplier form from the Australian Taxation Office. The statement can be found via the ATO <https://www.ato.gov.au/forms/statement-by-a-supplier-not-quoting-an-abn/>, or have an auspice arrangement.
- May receive only one grant per funding stream within a 12-month period. For example: If you were successful in receiving a Small Grant in 2025 Round 1 and have acquitted that grant, you may next apply for a Small Grant in 2026 Round 1.



## Who can't apply?

- An unincorporated association, unregistered charity or an individual/group without an auspice.
- Private, profit-making individuals, organisations or businesses.
- Applicants with an outstanding acquittal for a Mount Alexander Shire Council Community Grant.
- Applicants who are already receiving funding from Mount Alexander Shire Council for the same project, or where an existing agreement prevents additional Council funding.
- Community Asset Committees (previously Section 86 committees).
- Applicants who have already received a grant from the same funding stream within the past 12 months.  
For example: If you were successful in receiving a Small Grant in 2025 Round 1, you cannot apply for another Small Grant until 2026 Round 1.

## What will not be funded?

- Applications seeking funding to cover recurring projects or activities.
- Ongoing and/or operational costs (e.g. insurance, utilities, rent, salaries, administration, acquitting your grant).
- Applicants seeking to make a profit that would mostly benefit an individual.
- The costs associated with establishing and running events held in Mount Alexander Shire. These may be applied for via Events Grants.
- Groups, projects or activities that are:
  - religious or political in nature or support a religious or political cause.
  - of a discriminatory nature in terms of race, disability, age, sex, gender or sexuality.
  - requesting donations or fundraising on behalf of a third party.
  - already commenced, recurrent or have been completed.
  - the responsibility of the State or Federal Government, exemptions will be considered for projects that fall outside of core business funded activities that provide benefit to the local community. This include local CFA and SES branches, Dhelkaya Health Community Health (CHIRP), local state schools.
- Maintenance or capital works to buildings, with the exception of environmental sustainability initiatives and accessibility improvements.
  - Capital works is defined as 'building and engineering works that create an asset as well as constructing or installing facilities & fixtures associated with and forming an integral part'.
- Projects that have the purpose of improving Council owned land or buildings.
- Activities or works on land which is managed by State or Federal Government.
- On the ground environmental works on Council land or private land.
- Partnership grant applications for equipment only.

## Preparing your application:

- This is a competitive program, and no application is guaranteed funding. Please consider your responses carefully, and if needed seek advice from a Community Grants team member when discussing your project.
- Before starting your application, you are required to discuss your project idea with a member of the Community Grants Team, to ensure that your project adheres to the guidelines. Please phone 5471 1700, or email [grants@mountalexander.vic.gov.au](mailto:grants@mountalexander.vic.gov.au), to arrange a time to discuss.
- Please ensure your project or initiative can be linked back to the objectives of council.
- Give clear explanations of the need and benefit to the community. Be as specific as possible and include relevant examples.
- All successful applications will be required to acknowledge council support as part of the funding agreement, consider how you will achieve this in your project planning.

Applicants are encouraged to read our [Council Plan 2025-2029](#) and other relevant [strategies and plans](#) available on our website prior to applying. These include but are not limited to Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan, Disability Inclusion Action Plan, Gender Equality Action Plan, Climate Change Strategy, Active Transport Strategy.

- Auspiced applications must have a signed auspice agreement. An auspice agreement template is available on Council's website (for Small Grants only).

### *Inclusion of quotes*

Quotes are not required; however, they are encouraged. Project costs and budgeted items are reviewed as part of the assessment. Please provide as much specific detail as possible.

## How will my application be assessed?

Eligible applications are assessed by a cross-organisational panel against the following weighting and criteria listed below.

Applications will be ranked from highest to lowest score and those with the highest scores will be awarded funds until the total pool is exhausted.

- |     |   |
|-----|---|
| 25% | how well the project aligns with the objectives of the Council Plan                 |
| 50% | how the project benefits and/or meets a need in the Mount Alexander Shire community |
| 25% | demonstrated ability to plan and deliver the project                                |

## How will I know the outcome of my application?

Successful applicants will be notified by email and sent a funding agreement outlining the terms and conditions of the funding being provided by Council.

Unsuccessful applicants will be notified by email and provided with feedback. Applicants may also request to speak with a Council officer about their unsuccessful application for further feedback.

## Next steps for successful applicants:

Each successful applicant is required to submit a signed funding agreement and tax invoice to indicate their acceptance of the funding and Council's terms.

### *Funding agreements*

Applicants (and where relevant, their auspice and all partners in a Partnership Grant) are required to sign the funding agreement. The funding agreement document will be provided to grant recipients by Council. Funds will not be released until this document is signed by all parties.

### *Tax invoices*

You will be requested to also invoice Council with the following details:

- Funding amount, plus GST if the organisation is registered for GST
- Bank account details BSB and Account number
- Your SmartyGrants application number as a reference, for e.g. CG2026/1/01
- Organisations name, address, email & phone number
- ABN
- Invoices to be made out to Mount Alexander Shire Council
- For those applicants with an auspice, the auspice organisation will need to issue the invoice, and funds can only be paid to the auspice organisation.

If a group or auspice is registered for GST, GST should be paid in addition to the grant amount (E.g. for a grant of \$2,500 awarded to a group registered for GST, the total payment amount would be \$2,750.) The Australian Business Register indicates if a group is registered for GST. If the group is not registered for GST, then the invoice must contain the words "<Org/Individual> is not registered for GST".

### *Eftsure*

To receive your funding, Council requires all applicants to be registered with a third-party entity called Eftsure. This system has been introduced to tighten security and eliminate the risk of fraudulent behaviour.

You will be contacted via both email and phone by Eftsure and asked to verify your details.

For quick payment please verify at your earliest convenience once you received the email. You will only need to do this once, unless your details change. Please check your junk inbox if you do not receive an email.

## Do you require assistance?

We are happy to discuss any requirements that would be of assistance in completing an application for the Community Grants Program.

Please contact the Community Grants team within Community Partnerships at **grants@mountalexander.vic.gov.au** or phone **03 5471 1700** to request a call back.