

Council Policy



Policy Title:	Community Financial Assistance Program
Policy Number:	1.02
Focus Area:	Creating Great Places to Live
Responsibility:	Community Programs and Grants
Meeting Adopted:	18 February 2025 [Resolution 180225/10]

OBJECTIVE

1. To allocate financial assistance funds to community groups in an equitable and appropriate manner and to assist Council in exercising its functions.
2. To acknowledge and support community groups within the Richmond Valley Local Government Area (LGA).
3. To consult with the community on a regular basis to determine the growing and changing needs of the community.
4. To comply with Section 356 of the *Local Government Act 1993* in maintaining a consistent, open and equitable approach to the provision of financial assistance by Council to applicants in the Richmond Valley community.
5. To link financial assistance to Council's Community Strategic Plan through its Delivery Program and Operational Plans.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all applicants seeking Community Financial Assistance Program funding from Council, as well as to all Council departments involved in the decision-making, administrative and acquittal process related to these applications.

POLICY

Introduction

During the annual budget review each year Council allocates funds for Community Financial Assistance to support local community organisations and groups that provide services, programs or activities in the Richmond Valley. The funding is managed in accordance with the financial assistance provisions of Section 356 of the *Local Government Act 1993*. To optimise the benefit of these funds in the community, funds are allocated in accordance with the process, eligibility and selection criteria outlined in this Policy.

Funding Process

Each year Council will allocate an amount in its annual budget for Community Financial Assistance. Council will advertise and call for applications from community groups for financial assistance from \$100 up to \$5000 on a bi-annual basis.

Ordinarily, applications will be advertised twice yearly, calling for applications to be submitted in March and September, with those applications then decided by Council in May and November. Each round of applications will be open for a minimum of 28 days.

All applicants will be made aware that there are limited funds available as determined in Council's budget.

All applicants will be required to complete an application in the approved form. This will include a brief description of the organisation, the organisation's viability, the purpose of the funding request, the expected beneficiaries of the funding request and the need to be accountable for any funds provided.

Applications will be assessed based on each applicant's eligibility, including how well they have addressed the selection criteria, the application's overall merit and the amount of financial assistance requested. An assessment panel composed at the General Manager's discretion will review applications and make recommendations for partial funding, full funding or no funding.

A summary of applications along with funding recommendations will be presented to Councillors at a workshop and Councillors' comments and recommendations noted.

Following consultation with Council, the General Manager will use his delegated authority to approve the successful applicants. An Information Report will be prepared for Council, advising the outcome of the funding round.

Funds will be made available to groups as soon as practicable after a decision has been made.

Eligibility

Financial Assistance is available to incorporated or sponsored not-for-profit community organisations or groups which provide a community service or the like within the Richmond Valley LGA; that service should assist Council in exercising its functions.

Unincorporated not-for-profit community organisations can apply for assistance through eligible incorporated sponsor organisations. Sponsor organisations must provide a signed letter agreeing to take responsibility for the application, receipt and acquittal of the financial assistance provided.

Applicants (or sponsor organisations) must provide evidence that they hold the appropriate public liability insurance.

Only one application per organisation per round of funding will be considered.

Applicants with outstanding/unacquitted funds from previous Community Financial Assistance Program rounds, or with a history of not complying with Community Financial Assistance Program funding requirements, are not eligible to apply. Preference will be given to programs and activities with a direct social or community benefit. Equipment and infrastructure may be funded if the request is considered of sufficient benefit to the community.

Financial assistance will only be provided to applicants who act for private gain in exceptional circumstances, and then only strictly in accordance with the requirements of the Act, including 28 days' public notice.

Ineligible Projects

The following activities and projects are not eligible for funding:

- Ongoing operating expenses, such as insurance, rent and utility bills.
- Staff/volunteer costs including salaries and professional development.
- Items/equipment/activities primarily for use by one individual or a closed group of individuals only; equipment must have a broad benefit.
- Fundraising, donation or scholarship-based initiatives.
- Promotional items or uniforms.
- Projects already receiving financial assistance from another source of Council funding are not eligible for assistance under this process.
- Contingency or administrative costs.
- Planning costs e.g. master plans, DA fees, business plans etc.
- Retrospective funding for activities which have already occurred, or items already purchased.
- Events funding or support for events should be applied for through Council's Event Funding Scheme or event sponsorship program. Equipment to support community events may be considered under this funding if a strong community benefit can be demonstrated.

Groups are encouraged to contact Council to discuss their application if they are unsure of the eligibility of their project.

Selection Criteria

In ranking applications and determining the amount of financial assistance to allocate, Council should consider the following:

Impact on the Community and Disadvantaged Groups:

- Will the project have a positive impact on disadvantaged groups (e.g. low income, youth, Aboriginality, rural or social isolation, disability)?
- Does the project provide a direct benefit to the broader Richmond Valley community?
- Does the project address an unmet community need?
- Will the resources or project be available to general community?
- Is support delivered equitably across different areas of the LGA?

Capacity to Deliver the Project:

- Is the project well thought out and planned?
- Does the project scope provide sufficient detail?
- Does the applicant have the capacity and resources to successfully deliver the project within the specified timeframe?
- Does the applicant have the necessary insurance?
- Does the applicant have a proven track record in delivering similar projects?

Financial Viability:

- Is the budget detailed, realistic and balanced?
- Have quotes been provided for the proposed expenditure?
- Has the applicant provided the organisation's financials?
- If only partial funding is being allocated, has the applicant provided details of how the rest of the required funds will be provided?
- Are all activities and items eligible for funding?
- Does the project offer value for money?
- Are there alternative funding sources available for the project?

Overall Merit:

- How would you rate the overall quality of this project and its potential benefits to the Richmond Valley community?
- How well does the project align with our Community Strategic Plan?
- How will the project assist Council in exercising its functions?

Conditions of Funding

Funding is allocated to groups on the understanding that successful applicants will adhere to the following conditions:

- **Use of Funds:** Funding must be used for the sole purpose for which it is granted i.e. for activities and items included in the original grant application.
- **Project Changes:** If the original project cannot proceed or will only be partially completed—whether due to newly available funding or other circumstances—the applicant must notify Council in writing as soon as possible and seek written approval from Council's General Manager to amend the project's purpose.
- **Unspent Funds:** If the allocated funding is not fully spent on the original project, any unexpended funds must be returned to Council. However, applicants may submit a written request to repurpose the remaining unspent funds for a related project, subject to approval by Council's General Manager. If the unspent amount is less than \$100 or 10% of the total grant (whichever is smaller), the group may retain the remaining funds.
- **Acknowledgment of Council Support:** Projects must acknowledge Richmond Valley Council as the funding body. Council's approved logo must be used in all promotional materials or signage related to the funded project, with the following acknowledgement included on media releases, invitations, posters, signs, websites, and other communications:
"This project is supported by the Richmond Valley Council Community Financial Assistance Program."

- Grant Acquittal: Groups that receive funding are required to submit an acquittal report within 12 months, providing proof of expenditure and completing the "Acquittal for Community Financial Assistance Program - Evaluation of Grant and Financial Report" form.
- Future Funding Eligibility: Groups that fail to comply with these conditions will not be eligible for future funding.

Procedures

The General Manager will ensure that staff develop, maintain and comply with procedures supporting the implementation of this Policy.

REFERENCES

Local Government Act 1993

REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed by Council at the time of any relevant legislative changes, compliance requirements or at least every four years.

Version	Date	Comments
1	17 July 2018	New policy – adopted resolution 170718/6
2	18 February 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and general amendments to wording and structure • Update of funding processes • Additional information with respect to unspent funds • Amendments to eligibility requirements • Inclusion of standalone ineligible projects section and amendments to ineligible events.