



Operational Support Grants Guidelines

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Purpose of Operational Support grants

The City of Melbourne is committed to creating healthy, connected and inclusive communities. We provide Operational Support grants for volunteer run community organisations to support health and wellbeing, social connection, access and participation for City of Melbourne residents.

Operational Support grants are provided for two years to support organisations to cover operational costs and costs of ongoing activities. This current round is for the two-year period 1 July 2026 to 30 June 2028.

Costs could include but are not limited to:

- insurance
- venue hire
- incorporation fees
- printing
- bus hire
- supplies for activities

Objectives/Outcomes of Operational Support grants

Operational Support Grants enable the City of Melbourne to strengthen social connection, improve health and wellbeing, build community cohesion, and support equitable access and participation across our neighbourhoods. They aim to:

- increase opportunities for people to connect, participate and feel included
- support communities to identify and respond to local needs and priorities

Eligibility criteria

To be eligible to apply for funding through Operational Support Grants, applications must meet the following criteria:

- Applicant organisations must be a not-for-profit constituted body. Auspiced applications are not permitted in this program.
- Applicants must be fully volunteer run and not employ staff or regular contractors (more than once per fortnight) to deliver services to members, for example facilitators or trainers.
- Applicants must create opportunities for community members to experience greater connection to their community through opportunities that improve access and participation.
- Applicants must be located within, or demonstrate clear evidence of operating within, the City of Melbourne municipality with benefits for local people.

Funding will not be considered for:

- organisations and activities with a religious focus. For example, organisations whose core activities are faith-based, such as religious service, preaching or proselytizing, or organisations that exclude community members of different faiths of joining.
- organisations whose activities includes political lobbying or advocacy

- organisations that City of Melbourne considers denigrate or exclude parts of the community or have an adverse effect on public health, safety, the environment or heritage
- organisations that conduct, or have conducted, themselves in a way that the City of Melbourne considers to be injurious or prejudicial to the character or interests of the City of Melbourne
- capital works
- commercial or for-profit activities and/or organisations
- fundraising activities, competitions, prizes or award events
- interstate and international travel costs including travel costs for facilitators/consultants
- activities that are being, or have already been, funded through other City of Melbourne grant or sponsorship programs
- an organisation that is in legal conflict with Council
- organisations with outstanding acquittals or debts owing to the City of Melbourne
- incomplete applications
- late submissions.

Funding level

Applications for Operational Support Grants funding can be made for any value up to \$2500.

Public Liability Group Purchase

Applicants can choose to opt in to the new Group General Public and Product Liability Insurance option. If you opt in and your application is approved, the City of Melbourne will purchase General Public and Product Liability Insurance on your behalf with a coverage limit of \$10 million.

The cost of this insurance will be taken out of your total grant amount, and you will receive the remaining balance. The current estimated cost is \$635, although this amount may increase at the time of purchase and in the second year of coverage.

Please note: this option only provides General Public and Products Liability Insurance. It does not include any other types of insurance.

Key dates

These grants are for the 2-year period 1 July 2026 to 30 June 2028.

- Applications open 9am on Wednesday 1 April 2026.
- Applications close 11.59pm on Thursday 30 April.
- Applicants will be advised of the outcome of their application in June.
- First instalment of grant payments will be paid in mid-July 2026.
- Activities must start after 1 July 2026.
- Activities must be completed by 30 June 2028.

Assessment process

After the application period has closed and we have received your application:

- You will receive an email confirming receipt of your application.
- Your application will be assessed against the eligibility and assessment criteria. Ineligible applicants will be notified that their application is ineligible.
- Funding recommendations will be advised to the General Manager City and Community Services who will make the final decision on the outcome of all eligible applications.
- All applicants will receive a notification via email with the result of their application by late June 2026.
- Information about grant decisions will not be given over the phone.
- The list of successful applicants will be published on the City of Melbourne's website approximately one week after all applicants have been notified of the outcome of their application.

Assessment criteria

Operational Support Grant applications are assessed against the assessment criteria below. Only applications that adequately respond to the assessment criteria will be considered.

1. Alignment to the purpose and objectives of Operational Support Grants

- Does the activity/organisation strengthen social connection, improve health and wellbeing, build community cohesion, and support equitable access and participation across our neighbourhoods for City of Melbourne residents?
- How many City of Melbourne residents are likely to participate and benefit?
- Does the activity/organisation target groups or individuals that face barriers to participation?

2. Community need

- Is there a clearly identified need for the services delivered by this organisation?

3. Budget

- Does the budget accurately reflect the scope and scale of the activity/organisation?
- Does the total revenue match the total expenses?
- Have quotes been provided to support capital purchases (if applicable)?

Additional assessment notes

City of Melbourne reserves the right to:

- not consider applications that do not meet the eligibility or assessment criteria
- not consider applications that do not align with Council's strategic priorities
- request further information to inform our assessment

- require normal permits for all projects. If relevant, these should be outlined in the application (refer to the [City of Melbourne website](#)¹ for permits required within the City of Melbourne)
- request a declaration in the application if quotes and/or other proposed services are provided by family, friends or committee members.

Essential attachments for all applications

Applicants must provide a certificate of currency for public liability or other relevant insurance, unless they are applying for the Public Liability Group purchase option.

Lobbying

Canvassing or lobbying in relation to an application is strictly prohibited during the application process.

No further consideration will be given to an application submitted by an applicant that canvasses or lobbies the Lord Mayor, City of Melbourne councillors or employees of the City of Melbourne.

Grant terms and conditions

If your application is successful, you will be required to:

- sign a funding agreement with the City of Melbourne that provides details about the terms and conditions of funding. The funding agreement will outline reporting and acquittal requirements specific to your application
- supply all requested information prior to any funding being released
- submit paperwork within the allocated timeframes. Funding is allocated from specific financial year budgets and if paperwork is not submitted within the allocated timeframe, then funding is forfeited by the funded organisation
- use the funding allocated for the purposes specified in the application. Grants may not be used for any purpose other than for which it is granted, without the written permission of the City of Melbourne. Unspent funds must be returned to City of Melbourne
- deliver the activity within the allocated budget. City of Melbourne will not be responsible for shortfalls in budgets if the applicant is unable to meet costs
- if the funded project includes contact with children aged 0-18, ensure that all relevant staff, contractors, volunteers and committee members hold a valid Working with Children Check and provide copies of these if requested by Council
- acknowledge the City of Melbourne in all promotional materials relating to the successful application, including use of the logo
- provide a tax invoice and complete an acquittal of funds expended so far by 31 July 2027 in order to receive the second year of funding
- complete the activity by 30 June 2028. No extensions will be provided
- complete a final acquittal report by 31 July 2028.
- invite the Lord Mayor and Councillors to attend any significant launches or events associated with the activity

¹ <https://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/pay-report-request>

- acquit the grant and provide receipts for any purchases over \$200.

Completing your application

Applications will be submitted and managed online via SmartyGrants. Application forms can be accessed from the City of Melbourne website.

Applications will automatically be closed by the SmartyGrants system at 11.59pm on Thursday 30 April.

Please avoid submitting your application at the last minute. If there is heavy use of the system with others submitting last-minute applications, there may be delays which will affect your ability to lodge your application before the deadline and it will be deemed ineligible.

When your application is fully submitted you will receive an automated email containing a PDF copy of your application and confirmation that it has been received.

If you experience technical issues with the SmartyGrants system, please contact SmartyGrants directly (contact information below).

Contacts

General enquiries

Please contact the City of Melbourne Community Grants Officer via email commstrength@melbourne.vic.gov.au or phone 9658 9901

SmartyGrants technical assistance

If you experience technical issues with the SmartyGrants system please contact them directly on email: service@smartygrants.com.au or by phone: 03 9320 6888.

Application assistance

If you are unable to complete the application form online due to access issues or you difficulty using technology please contact us at commstrength@melbourne.vic.gov.au or phone 9658 9901 and we will discuss how we can assist you to complete the forms.

Frequently asked questions

Q: Can my organisation submit more than one application?

A: No, we will only accept one application per organisation for Operational Support grants. If you apply for operational funding in the Operational Support grants program, you can still apply for a project in the Community Inclusion Grants program.

Q: My organisation is located outside the City of Melbourne, can I apply?

A: No, to be eligible organisations must be located within the City of Melbourne municipality. In addition, the program has a focus on local and / or vulnerable communities. City of Melbourne suburbs include: Carlton, Central Business District (Melbourne), Docklands, East Melbourne, Fisherman's Bend, Kensington, North Melbourne, Parkville, part of Port Melbourne, Southbank, parts of South Yarra and West Melbourne. You can view a map of the boundaries at the [City of Melbourne website](https://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/city-maps)².

Q: My group is not incorporated, can I apply?

A: No, to be eligible applications must come from a not-for-profit community organisation that is a registered legal entity

Q: How long can the project be funded for?

A: There is no maximum number of years that an organisation can receive Operational Support grants. The grant is for a two-year period and when this is completed you can then apply again for another two years funding.

Q: Can I ask for funding for operational costs?

A: Yes, the Operational Support grants program is open to applications for operational costs.

² <https://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/city-maps>