

Best Practice Guide for Grants

► The Guide is intended to assist South Australian councils to build capacity and increase sustainability through integrating best practice in grants attraction and the grant making administration cycle.

**DEVELOPED BY
THE SA LOCAL
GOVERNMENT
GRANTS
NETWORK**



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ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Local government is both a funder and applicant for grant funding. Good grant attraction and grant making practices contribute in a meaningful way to the creation of fair, just, democratic and prosperous communities.

The SA Local Government Grants Network (the LG Grants Network), a community of practice supporting local government grant officers, commissioned this Best Practice Guide for Grants for Local Government in SA.

The Guide is intended to assist South Australian councils to build capacity and increase sustainability through integrating best practice in the grant making administration cycle. It is hoped the Guide will assist councils with performance assessment and continuous improvement. It is not mandatory policy but rather guidance to support best practice tailored to individual council's needs and resources. The Guide was informed by desktop research, the dedication of LG Grants Network members, a widely-distributed survey responded to by 80 local government officers in September 2021 and three online consultation sessions in October 2021.

Nothing in this Guide is legal advice. This Guide cannot be relied upon as legal advice.

This Guide is accompanied by two grant contract templates, Template 1: *Council Low Risk/Low Value Funding Agreement letter* and Template 2: *Council Grant Agreement*, which were drafted by a legal practitioner. Those two templates have been drafted as generic templates based on instructions received during the course of this project. Those templates contain a number of fields that must be completed by the relevant Council as well as a number of variables for different clauses which must be selected for the grant.

As such, while the templates are in our view legally appropriate for use, no legal representation is made that a particular grant agreement based on the templates is suitable for the purposes of protecting the legal position of the relevant council in that particular application. In cases where the council has any concerns about the legal risk of a particular grant, it should consider seeking specific legal advice on that grant.



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1. GRANT DISTRIBUTION

Local Government is an important source of grants for the South Australian community. Grant administrators and approvers oversee the allocation of public funds and therefore are publicly accountable to ensure that value for money is achieved through grants. This accountability is underpinned by legislation, including the:

- *Local Government Act 1999*
- *Public Finance and Audit Act 1987*
- *Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 2012.*

Appropriate consideration and planning of a grant scheme can support achievement of value for money and a council's desired outcomes. A well planned scheme also reduces preventable risks to councils while avoiding disproportionate red tape for applicants.

This section of the Guide is designed to support local government entities to design grant schemes and grant rounds. It also includes information about designing grant schemes and individual grant rounds for evaluation of their impact and value for money.

1.1. Policy and Governance

Before initiating a new grant scheme or implementing a new round of a scheme, consider if the appropriate policies are in place. Suggested policies and procedures to be in place include:

- Conflict of interest policy which takes into account the *Local Government Act 1999* and/or procedures
- Financial and contract delegations
- Privacy policy
- Dispute resolution procedures
- Complaints management policy or procedures.

Your organisation may wish to have a grants policy outlining the overarching objectives it seeks to achieve through grants and the principles it will implement to do so.

The term 'grant' can be used to mean a variety of funding arrangements. Consider whether your grants policy will cover:

- unsolicited requests, being requests for funding outside of a formal process
- discretionary grants, such as grants provided outside of a formal grant round at the discretion of a decision-maker
- donations, such as funding provided without a specific expectation of anything in return.

If a grants policy or other specific policy does not cover these issues, consider how processes for unsolicited requests, discretionary grants and donations will address risks to transparency and ensure they align to council's strategy.

Examples of other organisations' grants policies or principles can be found at:

- [City of Onkaparinga Grants Policy](#)
- [City of Playford Community Development Grants Policy](#)
- [Premier and Cabinet Circular 44: South Australian Funding Policy for the Not for Profit Sector \(covers grants and services\)](#)
- [Commonwealth Grant Rules and Guidelines](#)

1.2. Grant Scheme Planning

1.2.1. Record Keeping

Maintaining records about grant scheme planning processes and decision making will support transparency and accountability. Good record keeping can also reduce rework when planning future grant schemes and reduce risks with staff turnover. It will also support transparency to help meet audit requirements should an audit be conducted under the *Public Finance and Audit Act 1987*. When planning a grant scheme, the first step is to create a file to document the establishment of the scheme. The rest of section 1.2 provides useful indications of what should be included in the planning records.

1.2.2. Purpose of the Grant Scheme

Determine and document the purpose of the grant scheme. Questions to consider include:

- Why is this grant scheme needed by the community? What is the evidence for your conclusions? Is there competing evidence?
- What are the outcomes to be achieved by the grant scheme?
- What would success look like? How will success be measured?
- Are those outcomes and impacts appropriate for council intervention?
- Is a grant scheme the best way to seek those outcomes and impacts? Might another mechanism, such as funding specific services, be better suited?
- Are there any issues of inequity in the community or across regions that should be considered in the design of the scheme? If so, consider options to design the scheme to address any inequity. For example, would the scheme:
 - Set maximum amounts of funding that any one organisation can apply for during the life of the scheme
 - Set a limit on the number of applications that an organisation can make during the life of the scheme
 - Align eligibility criteria to organisations supporting specific demographics/ regions/target groups or give preference to such groups through assessment criteria?

Consider how the purpose would be achieved through the grant scheme. Document how the purpose would be monitored and reported on.

An example of a grant scheme's purpose articulated can be found at:

- [Local Government Research and Development Scheme Logic](#)

A further explanation of Program Logic can be found in:

- [This NSW Health YouTube clip.](#)

1.2.3. Internal and External Requirements

Consider the impact of any external requirements which must be met on the design of the scheme, such as:

- Requirements from external funders or partners, like the Local Government Association, the Government of South Australia or the Australian Government
- Any applicable legislation.

Design the scheme to meet any internal requirements, such as financial and contractual delegations, any applicable policies and existing approval processes.

1.2.4. Strategic Context

Consider and ensure alignment with existing commitments or strategic objectives, such as council commitments or strategic plans. Are there objectives in those commitments or plans that the grant scheme would contribute to? If so, how?

What other funding or resourcing opportunities meet the identified needs that the grant scheme would address? Document how the grant scheme would complement existing funding and resource supports, for example from:

- The Local Government Association
- Other councils if relevant
- Government of South Australia agencies, such as those listed on [GRANTassist](#)
- The Australian Government, as listed on the [Community Grants](#)
- Philanthropic organisations
- Available fee for service arrangements
- In-kind or volunteer support.

If the proposed grant scheme would partially duplicate an existing funding source, explain what the duplication is and why it is necessary.

1.2.5. Funding Context and Parameters

Consider the funding context of the scheme, including:

- What would be the council's funding source for the grant scheme?
- What is the term of that funding?
- How frequently would funding be available to council, for example annually or only once?
- How frequently would council make funding available for applicants?

- What is the transition plan out of grant scheme when the funding term ends? Would the outcomes sought be sustainable without ongoing council intervention?
- How much funding would be available in total for each grant round?
- What happens if a round's funding is not fully expended? Could a grant scheme go over budget? If so, what would happen?
- Should there be an upper and/or lower limit for individual applications across the life of the grant program?
- Would multi-year grant funding agreements be an option?
- Would there be a limit on applications or total funding available to an applicant, either within a grant round or over the life of the program? For example, might there be a compelling reason for an applicant to receive funding only once?
- Would applicants be expected to co-contribute to the funded activity, either financially or through in-kind activity?
- Is there a compelling reason for the scheme to consider geographic distribution of funding? If so, document those reasons and what actions would support meeting the desired geographic distribution, such as apportioning grants to particular regions.
- How would value be achieved with the public funds?

1.2.6. Engagement

Consider if engagement is necessary or appropriate. If so, consider who from council, for example an executive member, staff member or elected member, should lead that engagement.

Engagement is a broad term and should be designed to suit the specific situation. For example, you might propose consultation with leaders from community groups to better understand their current strengths and challenges to determine how to target future funding.

Consider probity principles before engagement. Particularly consider fairness and equity to potential respondents by documenting engagement and any information provided by council so it can be provided to potential grant respondents should a scheme be created. Ensure any approvals are in place before conducting engagement and ensure commitments are not made that cannot be met.

1.2.7. Governance

Consider appropriate governance and administration of the scheme based on existing policies and the scheme's strategic context. Consider:

- What positions would be most appropriate to evaluate applications?
- What position(s) would have authority to recommend applications?
- What position(s) would have delegation or other authority to approve applications as successful?
- What position(s) would have financial delegation to authorise grant giving? To enter into contracts with successful organisations?
- What position(s) would be responsible for overseeing that grants have been expended in line with any requirements?
- What would the complaint and appeal processes be?

Ensure there are no conflicts of interest created in the roles of the individuals responsible for governing and delivering the program--functions should be performed by different people to ensure appropriate segregation of duties. For example, one person should not both recommend and approve an application as successful. As another example, one person should not both manage a complaint and be involved in any appeal on how the complaint was managed.

1.2.8. Type of Grant

Depending on the purpose of the grant program, determine the category of grants to be made available. For example, is the purpose of the scheme best met by grants designed for:

- specific projects
- general operating expenditure
- building sector capacity
- capital works.

Determine the structure of the grants the program would distribute. Would the program be:

- Competitive, with applicants receiving funding based on their applications' relative merits?
- 'First come, first serve', with all eligible applications receiving requested funding until the funding has run out?
- Proportional (formula), with eligible applications receiving a portion of funding determined by their relative merit, the number of applications, or other factors?

1.2.9. Risk Assessment

Consider the risks of establishing the grant scheme in line with any of your council's current policies or risk assessment tools. Some questions to consider include:

- Does your council have staff capacity and capability to manage the grant scheme from initiation to closure? In particular, will systems allow successful completion of a grant round from publication through to documenting acquittals if one or more key staff are not available?
- What additional resources could you access to support you, such as collaborating with other councils?
- What are the risks to council if successful applicants do not meet their obligations?
- Are there financial risks associated with the grant scheme, such as not receiving the funding required to facilitate grants?
- Are there sustainability issues associated with the scheme, for example from community expectations which may not be met?

Consider and document:

- the likelihood of the risks occurring
- the consequences should the risks occur
- any plans to treat (reduce the likelihood and impact) the risks.

Consider as well what may make the risks intolerable for council and therefore make the grant scheme unviable.

An example of a risk assessment process can be found in:

- [City of Marion's Risk Assessment for Events Held on Council Land](#), which includes a risk assessment matrix, hierarchy of risk control strategies and consequence criteria.

1.2.10. Approvals

Seek approvals for the grant scheme. Examples of approvals for establishing a new grant scheme that your council's policies or practices may require include:

- managerial or executive approval
- financial approvals
- approvals from elected members.

If approvals are provided, ensure they're documented and filed.

If any key approvals are not provided, the rationales for not proceeding should be documented to support continuous improvement.

1.2.11. Involvement of Elected Members

Consider any relevant delegations or policies regarding involvement of elected members. Document how elected members will be involved for the proposed grant scheme, for example, will they consider, note or approve:

- Establishing a new grant scheme
- Commencing a grant round from an existing scheme
- Providing offers of grants, either for all grant contracts or for grants exceeding defined financial or risk thresholds beyond which council involvement is appropriate
- Disbursing funds for grants, either for all grant funds or for grants exceeding defined financial or risk thresholds beyond which council involvement is appropriate
- Acquitted grants or grant reports.

Some councils also involve elected members in other ways. Some current practice includes:

- One or more elected members being involved in the grant round planning
- One or more elected members participating on the evaluation panel
- Grant officers offering briefings to elected members
- A committee of elected members supporting the development of grant processes.

1.3. Grant Round Planning

Once approvals are in place for establishing a grant program, planning for a specific grant round can occur. In your planning, consider any feedback from previous grant processes, including complaints and compliments. Are there actions that should be taken in this grant scheme to address that feedback?

1.3.1. Eligibility Criteria

Mandatory requirements or eligibility criteria may not be necessary. If there are mandatory requirements, it is recommended to keep them to a minimum.

Mandatory criteria might include:

- Any legislated or policy requirements
- Requirements for organisations, such as having a particular purpose or being incorporated
- Co-funding for the project from the applicant
- Having met previous acquittal or reporting requirements to council
- If appropriate for the type of grant, information about meeting any relevant COVID restrictions or obtaining any staff and volunteer clearances required by the relevant authority.

If eligibility for a grant scheme or a grant round will be limited or closed, document the reasons for doing so.

Once a round has been announced as having mandatory requirements, in fairness to applicants and potential applicants they should not be changed. Individual applications not meeting mandatory requirements should not be considered.

Consider whether the process may include the option for requesting additional information from applicants and when this would be appropriate. For example, will you seek information from applicants if it is missing from otherwise compliant applications?

An example of eligibility criteria can be found at:

- City of Pt Adelaide Enfield's [Community Grants](#).

1.3.2. Round-Specific Objectives

If a specific need has been identified and the grant program design and any higher-order legislation or policy requirements allow, determine any round-specific objectives. Consider if there are priorities targeted for this round, for example specific:

- types of projects
- types of organisations
- regions
- demographic groups.

Consider how applications which address the desired focus area will be treated. Will only applications meeting round-specific objectives be considered or will they be given preference, for example, through higher weighting in assessment criteria if an application meets the objectives?

1.3.3. Document Round Process

Design an assessment process which aligns to the type of grant to be distributed. Consider how items 1.2.7. Governance and 1.2.8. Type of Grant above will apply for this round.

Document the process to be undertaken before it commences. Consider timeframes for each of the steps and how requirements of applicants will be proportionate to the risk and value of the grant.

The process is likely to include the following steps:

- Grant round opens: Applications will be accepted from this date.
- Grant round closes: Applications will no longer be accepted after this date.
- Application screening: Council officers will check applications meet eligibility criteria.
- Application assessment: Assessment Panel will consider eligible applications.
- Applications recommended: Assessment Panel, with administrative support from council officers as appropriate, will provide recommendations to approving delegate or council
- Applications considered for approval: Delegate with authority for approval, such as council, the executive team or an executive, considers recommendations and approves or does not approve recommendations for successful applications.
- Applicants notified: Notify all applicants of the outcome of their applications.

An example of requirements tiered to be proportionate by grant value can be found in:

- The [City of Adelaide Community Impact Grants](#), which have four levels of complexity in eligibility, application requirements and reporting depending on the type and value of the grant.

1.3.4. Assessment Criteria

If the grant round is competitive, determine what criteria will be used to determine the relative merit between applications. The qualitative criteria should align to the desired purpose and outcomes of the grant scheme. If some areas are more important than others, use weighting so scoring emphasises those areas' importance through a proportionally larger available score.

If a grant scheme or round is *not* competitive (see section 1.2.8. Type of Grant above for examples of other options), ensure there is clarity on how funds will be distributed.

1.3.5. Approvals

Seek approvals for proceeding with the grant round in line with the design of the grant scheme, for example from an executive or elected members. Should approvals not be given, the rationale for not proceeding should be documented to support continuous improvement.

1.4. Promotion

1.4.1. Applicant Support

Consider if your council has the resources to offer support to potential applicants, like promoting that potential applicants can ring council or having a dedicated grants email address. You may also wish to publish answers to any Frequently Asked Questions from previous grants and any arriving as the current grant round is promoted. For significant grant programs, you may consider providing community information sessions or grant writing workshops.

Some grant writing supports for community members include:

- The City of Playford's [Grant Writing Workshop](#)
- The Victorian Government's [grant writing guide](#)
- The [Multicultural Communities Council of SA](#) often hosts grant writing workshops

In fairness to potential applicants, be clear what sort of support your council is able to provide. Supports could include explaining the grant process, directing potential applicants to publicly available information about grants or grant writing, answering specific questions from potential applicants or accepting applications in alternative formats (for example hardcopy instead of a completed online form).

1.4.2. Design the Grant Application Form

Consider what information you will require of applicants. Be clear in the application form which requested information forms mandatory criteria and which elements will be assessed by the Assessment Panel.

As much as possible, the grant application form should align with the criteria to be assessed. If the grant scheme is competitive and weightings will be used in the assessment, consider including the weightings on the application. You may wish to specifically request applicants design measures of their projects' impact or project milestones which align with the purpose of the grant scheme.

Information not relevant to the mandatory criteria, assessment criteria or general administration of the process should generally not be requested. Requests for surplus information adds additional effort by applicants and may confuse the assessment process.

You may also wish to be clear which sorts of information are not required through the grant application process and, if provided, would not form part of assessment, for example letters of support.

1.4.3. Develop Grant Round Promotion Materials

To support transparency, it is recommended that at a minimum the grant round be made public, for example on a webpage or through accessible grant guidelines. Ensure public information aligns with decisions made to date, including the information requested on the grant application form.

Use plain English to describe the grant. Be transparent about what will happen through the grant process, what you expect from applicants and what will be expected from successful recipients.

Guidance on using plain English can be found in:

- The Centre for Inclusive Design [Easy English versus Plain English Guide](#)
- The Australian Government [Style Manual](#)
- Government of South Australia [Plain Language guidance](#)

For publication materials, consider including:

- The grant scheme name
- The purpose of the grant scheme and any specific objectives of this grant round
- Open and closing dates of the grant round
- Applicant eligibility criteria from item 1.3.1. Eligibility Criteria above. If eligibility for a grant scheme or a grant round is limited or closed, explain why
- How much funding is available this round and any upper and/or lower limit for individual applications
- What funding can be used for and what it cannot be used for
- Any limitations on how many times an applicant can apply (across a scheme or within a round)
- How applications can be submitted
- What documentation will be required in the application
- The application and assessment process
- Governance of the grant program, including who will make recommendations about applications and who will approve them
- Assessment criteria and any weightings
- Any contact officer or applicant support options
- Any appeals or complaints process
- Potential reporting and/or acquittal processes.

1.4.4. Communicate and Promote

Develop a communications plan for the grant round. Consider how to reach your target audiences and what actions will be taken by whom to promote the grant round. Ensure all communications have a clear call for action and direct interested parties to the collated information you prepared in section 1.4.3. Develop Grant Round Promotion Materials.

Once approvals for the grant round have been received, the round can be promoted to its target audiences. Promote the grant round, for example through council newsletters, email lists, social media, your council's website and at council events.

If promoting the grant round on your council's website, you may also wish to provide links to other potential funding options, for example any relevant to your target audience that you identified during the grant scheme planning phase, general Government of South Australia grants at [GRANTassist](#), or Commonwealth grants listed on the [Community Grants portal](#).

For examples of councils supporting the community by collating other relevant funding sources, see:

- Alexandrina Council's [Alternative Funding Opportunities](#)
- The [Onkaparinga Funding Finder](#)

1.5. Assessment and Disbursement

1.5.1. Conflicts of Interest and Confidentiality

Ensure there is a clear process for decision-makers, including the Assessment Panel and advisors providing advice or recommendations on applications, to declare any associations with grant applicants or conflicts of interest. As outlined in section 1.2.7 Governance above, also ensure there are no conflicts of interest created by the roles assigned in the grant scheme's governance structures.

Any staff, elected members or others (such as subject matter experts providing advice) who have access to confidential information should be made aware of their obligations to maintain confidentiality. Confidential information includes information about the grants which is not publicly available (or not yet publicly available) or grant applications themselves.

Some current practice to remind those involved in a process to declare associations and conflicts and maintain confidentiality include:

- Requiring written declarations of associations or interests before providing access to confidential information. Note it is good practice that declarations be updated if needed throughout the process when additional information is available, for example when applicants are known.
- Including a declaration of no association or conflict at the top of each assessment form.
- Providing briefings to those involved in the process of confidentiality and conflict of interest requirements.
- An annual reminder to staff and elected members about declaring associations and maintaining confidentiality.

The [Local Government Act 1999](#) includes key obligations:

- Chapter 5, Part 4--Conduct and Disclosure of Interests includes elected members' obligations to act honestly, with reasonable care and with diligence in performing official duties. It includes requirements for confidentiality, declaring interests on council's Register of Interests, and declaring and dealing with material, actual and perceived conflicts of interest.
- Chapter 7, Part 4--Conduct of Employees includes employees' and former employees' obligations to maintain confidentiality. It contains requirements for chief executive officers and prescribed officers to declare interests on a Register of Interests. It also includes employees' obligations to disclose and manage their interests and those of people closely associated with them.

1.5.2. Establish Assessment Panel and Process

In line with the record keeping protocols established during Grant Scheme Planning, ensure records are maintained of the assessment process, particularly decisions and rationales for decisions.

For competitive grants, consider what sorts of perspectives are needed for the grant process and who could provide them in line with previous decisions. Establish an Assessment Panel. The use of assessment evaluation sheets which outline criteria to be assessed and provide qualitative options (numbers) for assessing each criteria may support record keeping.

Grant management software (see Grant Management Tools below for some examples) may provide templates for collecting assessment information from the Assessment Panel. If you use cloud-based grant management software, consider if it meets your record keeping requirements. For example, consider if your council will be able to access information in the system if key staff leave or council cancels the software subscription. If the software does not meet your record keeping requirements, consider if you may need to store assessment information locally, such as by downloading any input information about the grant round.

1.5.3. Screen Applications

If there are mandatory criteria for the grant round, have a process to screen applications to ensure mandatory criteria are met before progressing applications. You may consider whether it is appropriate to seek additional information from applicants to assess whether eligibility requirements are met. Non-compliant applications should not progress to evaluation.

1.5.4. Evaluate Applications

For competitive grants, provide applications to the Assessment Panel (if applicable). If a decision was made to use standard assessment sheets, provide those sheets; if an online tool is being used, provide access to the tool. A good process for assessing competitive rounds is individual scoring of applications then group discussion of individual's rationales for those scores to seek a consensus score and make decisions. Another option is to average the scores of all assessors prior to discussion and seek to discuss if there are outlying scores for some criteria.

Ensure new criteria are not introduced during evaluation. Records of decisions, such as minutes, should be taken and assessors should sign off that those minutes are accurate of decisions and rationales of the decision-maker or Assessment Panel.

1.5.5. Document Recommendations

Document the Assessment Panel or assessment officer's recommendations on applications through existing internal processes, such as written briefings to the approving delegate.

1.5.6. Approvals

Seek approvals of recommendations from the people or groups, such as elected members, with delegations to:

- approve successful applications
- enter into contracts, and
- incur expenses.

Document all approvals.

1.5.7. Inform Applicants and Provide Contracts

After receiving approvals of successful grants, inform all grant recipients in writing of the outcome of their applications. Seek to provide notifications to all applicants on the same day. For unsuccessful applicants, inform them in writing via email or letter. Consider providing an opportunity for feedback.

For successful applicants, provide the offer of funding via email or letter with a draft contract. Your council may call the draft contract 'conditions of funding', 'funding agreements', 'grant contracts' or

another term. Templates have been created to supplement this Guide if your council does not already have grant contract templates or would like to consider updating its templates.

Consider the value and risk of the grant based on your council's context. See section 1.2.9. Risk Assessment above for some considerations for risk. The Government of South Australia typically considers grant contracts low value if valued at \$10,000 or less. During consultation for the creation of this Guide, council officers suggested low-value grants to be valued at between \$2,500 and \$15,000.

Choose the appropriate documentation based on your assessment of value and risk:

- For low value/low risk grants, use your council's existing contract template or complete Template 1: *Council Low Risk/Low Value Funding Agreement letter*. Provide recipients the opportunity to clarify terms so recipients understand what they will be required to do.
- For higher value grants or those with grant-specific special conditions:
 - a cover letter may be appropriate along with your council's existing contract template, or
 - a completed Template 2: *Council Grant Agreement*. Include reporting and acquittal requirements proportionate to the level of risk and value of the grant.Provide recipients the opportunity to clarify terms so recipients understand what they will be required to do.
- For high risk, complex or atypical grants, or where the Council is otherwise unsure, seek legal advice on the appropriateness of the template proposed to be used.

Once contracts are signed by both the recipient and the council delegate, ensure the signed, final versions are filed in a central place with appropriate security. This will support audit requirements, including should an audit be conducted under the *Public Finance and Audit Act 1987*, reduce rework and support continuity should there be staff changes.

1.5.8. Transparency

Consider how your council will be transparent about the grant round's results, for example publishing the names and projects of grant winners on a website.

1.5.9. Reporting and Acquittal

Design internal systems to support receipt of reporting from grant recipients. Consider if recipients will receive reminders to complete their acquittal or reporting, for example through an online grant system or a reminder email.

Review reporting and ensure acquittals are complete and align with what was expected. Where there may be discrepancies, seek additional information from recipients. Consider recourse where appropriate in line with the signed grant contract, such as requiring unspent funds to be returned.

1.6. Evaluation

1.6.1. Continuous Improvement Systems

To support improvements in customer experience and internal systems, consider seeking feedback from grant applicants and those involved in the grant process. Options for seeking feedback include:

- surveys sent to applicants
- requesting feedback from applicants as part of the acquittal process
- formal and informal complaints and feedback
- requesting feedback from grant Assessment Panels and staff involved in the process.

Any learnings should be recorded to support continuous improvement.

Consider keeping a database of any non-compliance from applicants, such as whether they did not complete the project as expected or did not acquit or report on expenditure. Your database might include an assessment of whether the non-compliance is major and should impact an organisation's eligibility to apply for future grants.

1.6.2. Monitor Impact and Assess Performance

Consider the measures of impact developed in the Grant Scheme Planning phase (section 1.2 above). Has the grant round achieved its desired outcomes? How do you know?

What evidence is there that there has been an impact in the community? Can it be quantified?

What has not been achieved during the grant round? What could be improved upon for next time? Document learnings for future rounds.

2. GRANT ATTRACTION

Grants can be an important source of funding for local government much-needed projects. Well-designed grant attraction programs and good project management methodologies will support successful delivery of projects. Conversely, delivering on obligations associated with grant funding can be burdensome if the project to be delivered is not well planned, particularly if the full requirements of its delivery were not fully identified or its delivery is under-resourced.

2.1. Policy and Governance

Before designing a grant attraction strategy or applying for grants, ensure governance of grant delivery is clear, particularly who would be responsible for what elements of grant attraction and delivery.

Consider having in place policies and procedures to allow delivery of a grant-funded project, such as delegations or procedures for:

- approving the development of grant applications. This will help avoid wasting effort on grant applications which may not align with council's strategy
- approving grant applications to ensure quality and accountability
- entering into contracts
- monitoring project delivery
- escalating any issues, such as risks to project delivery or funder relationships
- approving projects as complete
- developing grant reports and acquittals
- approving grant reports and acquittals
- ensuring allocated funding can be traced to delivery of a project, particularly for any staffing costs.

2.2. Attraction Planning

2.2.1. Funding Landscape

Be aware of the funding landscape relevant to your council and your community. Consider subscribing to funders' newsletters and using grant search databases, such as those listed in Grant Attraction Tools below, to map out opportunities that may be relevant to your community.

Consider joining professional networks, like those in Networks below, to share information with colleagues working in similar areas. These relationships may also support your council to build collaborative relationships to deliver on future projects in partnership with other organisations.

2.2.2. Grant Attraction Program or Funding Strategy

Consider designing a program of the types of projects required by your community which would be well-suited for grant funding.

Consider your council's strategic plan and existing projects. What are your council's goals and where is additional funding most needed to achieve them? How will grant attraction fit within the existing context of the programs your council provides? How would any proposed projects fit within the

existing context of those provided by state and Commonwealth government as well as not-for-profit organisations?

Part of any grant attraction program will include developing ways to describe your council, its vision and strategy, your community and your council's track record delivering on projects with positive impact. For projects that are determined to fit within your grant attraction program, consider drafting project plans for how they would be delivered. Pre-preparing statements with frequently used information and project plan drafts early, before grant rounds open, will expedite application preparation as you can tailor the pre-prepared information as well as develop consistent messaging with funders.

If there have been previous challenges with delivering on projects or on grant obligations, consider if and how those challenges will be avoided or addressed in the future, for example by re-building relationships with funders. Document those actions and how they will be applied in your grant attraction program.

2.2.3. Evidence Gathering

Consider what evidence will be compelling to potential funders in regards to your community's needs and your council's ability to deliver on them. Gathering and maintaining evidence of why additional funding is required will be critical to being able to develop grant applications within grant rounds' opening periods.

Consider how you know there is a community need. Do you have data you can reference either from council or others, examples of success from other councils or jurisdictions, or ways to reflect stakeholder feedback? See 3.1.3 Evidence Gathering Tools below for some sources with data available by council area.

Guidance on quantifying community impact can be found in:

- The SA Community Managers' Network [Valuing Social Outcomes Tool](#), which was designed to support councils in measuring the social value of community development and community services programs they deliver in their communities.

2.3. Preparing an Application

2.3.1. Record Keeping

Maintaining records about your grant application planning and decision making will reduce rework in the future and reduce risks should there be staff turnover. It will also support transparency to help meet audit requirements, should an audit be conducted under the *Public Finance and Audit Act 1987*. When planning to prepare a grant application, the first step is to create a file to document work on the application as it progresses, any communication with the funder and decision-making.

Consider maintaining a record of the time associated in preparing the application to support decision-making about whether to apply for future grants.

2.3.2. Assessing Grant Opportunities

Read carefully any information you can find about the grant, particularly eligibility criteria, the purpose or objective of the grant, and any guidelines. If the funder provides a list of previous recipients or

projects, consider if your organisation and project appear similar to previous successful recipients. Seek to understand the funder, its purpose and its high-level strategy. Particularly note any areas of alignment with your council's strategy.

Consider what the grant provides for and what it excludes. For example, if the grant could not be applied for internal staffing for a project that will require council employees to manage it, would internal resources be available to manage the project?

If your council requires an approvals process for applying for grants, ensure approvals are in place before developing the application.

2.3.3. Project Planning

Develop a plan for the project in line with your council's project management procedures. At a minimum, define and document the:

- goals of your project
- schedule for your project, including any external or immovable deadlines
- costs and other resources required for the project
- project milestones and key approval points
- the council's ability to deliver the project as described
- the closing point of the project and project evaluation.

When considering costs and resourcing, ensure all resourcing to deliver the project is documented, including:

- Expenditure associated with the project, including potential price rises between the application development and project delivery
- Non-direct or delayed costs, such as the Construction Industry Training Board levy or any increases to insurance premiums due to the project
- Internal resources required to administer the grant, including its reporting and acquittal
- Internal resources required to deliver the project
- Any external resources required to deliver on the project, such as contractors.

A quick guide to project management and links to resources can be found in:

- The Australian Public Service Commission's [effective project management resources](#).

2.3.4. Grant Writing and Submission

Good grant writing is important to ensure the effort associated with grant applications is not wasted. If your area does not have a lot of experience with successful grant writing, consider consulting with other areas of council, such as grant management or marketing staff, for support. You may also choose to tap into existing networks, including those listed in section 3 below, for tips and additional information.

Supports for grant writing include:

- The Network of Alcohol and Other Drug Agencies commissioned the [FundAssist Toolkit](#). Although designed for alcohol and other drug organisations, it has comprehensive information relevant to many grant applications
- The Victorian Government's [grant writing guide](#)
- Pro Bono Australia's [Top 10 Tips for Grant Writing](#)
- The Funding Centre's [guidance on writing a grant application](#)
- LG Professionals [Grant Writing Courses](#) (paid)
- Our Community's [Grant Writing Seminar](#) (paid)

For significant grants, you may wish to engage a professional grant writer. Consider the need for the potential grant funding, how well the project meets the grant criteria and the availability of both budget and staff resources to support a grant writer.

Ensure any appropriate approvals are sought with enough time to submit the application before its due date. Keep a copy in council records of the final submission and any acknowledgement from the funder confirming receipt of the submission.

2.4. Successful Applications

If you are notified a grant application has been successful, ensure someone familiar with the proposed project carefully reviews the grant terms and conditions. If the full amount of requested funding has not been offered or there have been changes to council's staffing or capacity since the application, consider if the project can be delivered. If there are terms and conditions you or your team do not understand, seek internal advice, then seek clarification from the funder. Seek legal advice if necessary to ensure the obligations are fully understood before the grant is accepted. If there are terms that would be unacceptable or create an undue burden on your council, discuss with the funder if they may be negotiated.

Ensure the grant contract (which may be referred to by other terms, such as 'grant conditions' or a 'grant agreement') is endorsed according to your council's delegations and policies then returned to the funder before commencing the project.

2.5. Project Delivery

2.5.1. Project Delivery and Monitoring

Review the project planning documentation, considering if any changes are required in line with the grant contract or changes since the project plan was created. Now that funding is secured, consider if the project plan requires additional detail to successfully deliver the project. Particularly note any reporting or approval points.

If internal or external stakeholders will be involved in the project, inform them of the grant's success. Commence delivering the project in line with your project plan and grant conditions.

Ensure the project is monitored, particularly in line with any risk management plan.

2.5.2. Managing At-Risk Projects

If a grant-funded project is at risk of not being delivered to requirements, consider if actions could achieve those requirements. For example, consider if additional funding or resourcing, such as council revenue or partnering with another organisation, could support delivery of the project in line with obligations.

If changes may be required at any stage to approved plans, it is good practice to flag these possibilities as early as possible, first internally and then with the funder.

If a project may be at risk, consider any relevant agreement or contractual obligations with the funder. There may be scope to negotiate modifications to the obligations, for example by extending deadlines, particularly if there are strong reasons why the original obligations have not been met. Seek legal advice if needed.

2.6. Continuous Improvement

2.6.1. Accepted Grants

For successful grants that are accepted by council, consider and document what made the grant application successful. Even though the application was successful, you may wish to seek feedback from the funder to understand why your application was successful. Consider and document the positives of the process, as well as if there may be options for continuous improvement to internal processes.

Ensure records are kept of any feedback. Review your grant attraction program or strategy and revise if needed.

Ensure you evaluate the grant process and project execution and document any learnings to refer to when considering grant opportunities in the future.

2.6.2. Unsuccessful Applications

For unsuccessful applications, ask the funder for feedback on why the application was not successful. Seek to understand if there are potential learnings, for example, did the funder have concerns about:

- the grant writing or application
- the project budget
- the project's alignment with their objectives
- your council's track record or ability to deliver the project.

Ask the funder if they may consider the project or a similar project in the future.

Ensure records are kept of the feedback. Review your grant attraction program or strategy and revise if needed.

2.6.3. Unaccepted Grants

If council makes a decision to not accept a grant, document why. Evaluate the grant preparation and negotiation process to document any learnings to refer to when considering grant opportunities in the future.

3. OTHER RESOURCES

Free and paid tools and resources exist across Australia to support your council with grant distribution and attraction.

3.1. Grant Attraction Tools

3.1.1 Government Databases

- [GrantConnect](#): The free centralised publication of forecast and current Australian Government grant opportunities and grants awarded.
- [Grants & Programs Finder](#): A free Australian Government grant and funding search to support businesses.
- [GRANTassist](#): Free information on Government of South Australia grants and assistance for business and industry and for communities, clubs and individuals.

3.1.2 Subscription-based grant search databases

- [Funding Centre](#): Focus on not-for-profits.
- [Grant Guru](#): One limited no-cost option; registration required.
- [The Grants Hub](#): For local government, not-for-profit and business; free 14 day trial.

3.1.3 Evidence Gathering Tools

- [.id \(Informed Decisions\)](#): Demographic information tools, population forecasting, locational analysis. Registration required
- [REMPPLAN](#): Economic and demographic data, some available without a subscription or registration.
- [Community Wellbeing Indicators](#): A tool for small to medium sized and regional council to monitor community wellbeing.

3.2. Grant Management Tools

There are a number of subscription-based grant management tools, including:

- [Good Grants](#)
- [Grant Toolbox](#)
- [OmniStar](#)
- [SmartyGrants](#)
- [Tactiv](#)

3.3. Other Organisations' Grant Rules and Policies

- [Commonwealth Grant Rules and Guidelines](#): The Australian Government grants policy framework. The Commonwealth Grant Rules and Guidelines contain the key legislative and

policy requirements, and explain the Commonwealth's better practice principles of grants administration.

- [Premier and Cabinet Circulars](#): Government of South Australia requirements for Best Practice Community and Stakeholder Engagement (Circular 36), Unsolicited Proposals (Circular 38), Complaint Management in the SA Public Sector (39), SA Funding Policy for the Not for Profit Sector (includes grants--Circular 44)
- [Treasurer's Instruction on Grant Funding](#): Requirements for Government of South Australia administrative units issued by the Treasurer of South Australia to establish accountability for grant recipients.
- [City of Onkaparinga](#) Grants Policy, Auspice Form and Auspice Declaration. City of Onkaparinga also has an interactive tool, [Grant Selector](#), an example of how to support community to find grants.

3.4. Networks

- [SA Local Government Grants Network](#)
- LG Professionals Australia SA [Community Managers Network](#)
- LG Professionals Australia SA [Business Performance and Improvement Network](#)
- For regional councils, connecting with colleagues in your region through the relevant [Regional LGA](#), [Regional Development Australia](#) or [Landscape Board](#).

3.5. Government Contacts

- [SA Councils list and map](#)
- [Australian Government departments and agencies](#)
- [Government of South Australia departments and agencies](#)



Local Government Association
of South Australia

For further information please email:
lgrds@lga.sa.gov.au