

# Hepburn Shire Council

## Sustainable Hepburn Grants Program Guidelines 2025-2026



## Program Objectives

Hepburn Shire Council's Sustainable Hepburn Grant Program supports community-based projects and initiatives that aim to reduce future impacts of climate change.

Council has committed up to \$20,000 to support community driven sustainability initiatives in 2025-2026. Funding is available for projects that can demonstrate a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, through reduced energy consumption, reduced or avoided materials use, reduced or avoided waste to landfill, and carbon drawdown or increasing renewable energy in community facilities.

Projects may include the installation or implementation of:

- Renewable energy systems, such as solar photovoltaics
- Insulation and weather proofing
- Energy efficient heating/cooling systems
- Energy efficient lighting
- Energy efficient hot water, kitchen, or other fixed appliances
- Carbon drawdown programs
- Initiatives which support or encourage circular economy, low-carbon activities and education through reduced energy consumption, reduced or avoided materials use, reduced or avoided waste to landfill
- Initiatives which support or encourage sustainable practices and initiatives within the community.

We encourage programs that upgrade energy inefficient appliances or replace fossil fuel-based energy with renewable energy, as well as programs that shift the behaviour of Hepburn Shire residents to become more sustainable through education and awareness.

## Program Principles

Three principles guide Hepburn Shire Council's Grants Programs, including how Council Officers work with, support, and respect the community and administer the program.

### 1. Transparency

Transparency is defined as the lack of hidden agendas or conditions and the availability of all information needed in order to collaborate, cooperate and make decisions effectively.

### 2. Equity

Equitable grant making is being conscious of the barriers and disadvantage being faced by some groups or individuals because of the inequitable distribution of power and resources.

### **3. Efficiency and Effectiveness**

Every grant dollar should produce the maximum benefit for Hepburn Shire communities. Every grant should be both efficient and effective throughout the whole lifecycle of the Community Grant process, from promotion to evaluation.

### **Strategic Alignment**

The Sustainable Hepburn Grants Program aligns with the Domains and key focus areas detailed in the [Council Plan 2025-2029](#) and Council Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan.

Applicants will need to identify how their project aligns with one or more of these focus areas:

#### **Council Plan Domains:**

##### **Hepburn Life**

- Connected communities that are resilient and adaptable, able to respond, and supported to recover from climate-related impacts, emergencies and other community challenges.
- A healthy and inclusive community, where all people regardless of background or life stage have the opportunity to participate and thrive.
- An informed and engaged community.

##### **Future Hepburn**

- Preserve the unique character of our towns and communities, plan for future growth and protect our productive rural landscape.
- Responsible management of infrastructure and environment to support wellbeing now and for future generations.
- A dynamic, vibrant and resilient economic environment.

##### **Hepburn Working Together**

- Future-focused services that are easy to use and inclusive.
- Maintain corporate governance to enable good Council decision making and to ensure long-term financial viability.
- An engaged, safe and skillful workforce.

### **Municipal Public Health and wellbeing Plan focus areas:**

- Increased active living
- Increased mental wellbeing

### **Key priority groups:**

Projects should ideally target one or more of the key priority groups identified in the Council Plan 2025-2029:

- First Nations peoples
- Older people
- Children, youth and families
- Women
- People from low socio-economic backgrounds
- Culturally and linguistically diverse population
- People living with a disability
- LGBTIQ+ people

The program also connects with the strategic themes from the [Sustainable Hepburn Strategy 2022-2026](#). The following themes from the Strategy may be used for project alignment:

- Beyond Zero Emissions
- Low Waste
- Climate resilience
- Natural Environment and Biodiversity.

### **Who Can Apply**

Local not-for-profit and community groups in the Hepburn Shire, which are incorporated with an ABN, or have an auspicing agent, are encouraged to apply. Groups based outside of the Shire are encouraged to apply if they can partner with local organisations to deliver the project.

### **Financial Co-contributions**

Council encourages financial co-contributions, particularly for projects requiring significant funding. To ensure funding can reach as many applicants as possible, for applications over \$10,000 a co-contribution will be required. Co-contributions can be obtained from partnering organisations, other grant programs, sponsorship, or philanthropic sources.

Applicants must provide evidence of financial co-contributions within the grant application. Financial co-contributing organisation may be contacted by Council as part of the eligibility and assessment stages.

### Application Process

1. It is strongly encouraged that all applicants contact Council’s Community Grants Officer or Sustainability team to discuss the idea for your project, the application requirements, and the online application process.
2. Visit: [www.hepburn.vic.gov.au/residents/support/grants](http://www.hepburn.vic.gov.au/residents/support/grants) for more information.
3. Go to the [Hepburn Shire Council Grants Portal on Smartygrants](#) to submit your application during the application period.

**Applications not meeting the eligibility guidelines will not be considered for assessment.**

### Key Dates

Due to Council's recent restructure, the program dates for Sustainable Hepburn Grants are still being finalised. Please check this page for updates. It is envisaged that one round of Sustainable Hepburn Grants will take place in the second half of the 2025/26 financial year for a total funding pool of \$20,000. The program will revert to two rounds in the 2026/27 financial year.

Application stage opens:	TBA
Application stage closes:	TBA
Assessment panel convenes:	TBA
Assessment outcomes announced:	TBA
All projects completed and acquitted:	30 June, 2027

### Eligible Projects

To be eligible for assessment, projects must:

- Have read and understood the Sustainable Hepburn Grant Program guidelines
- Demonstrate links to the strategic themes from [Sustainable Hepburn Strategy 2022-2026](#)
- Complete their activity or project before 30 June 2027, including acquittal
- Be conducted solely within Hepburn Shire to the benefit of its residents
- Have an organisation that is a legal entity with an Australian Business Number (ABN). For example; an incorporated body, co-op, trust, or, be auspiced by a suitable group<sup>1</sup>
- Have all permits, permissions and approvals for the project<sup>2</sup>

- Be an organisation that has valid public liability insurance or can demonstrate the ability to obtain such insurance before the project commences
- Be a not-for-profit<sup>3</sup> or a community group
- Be willing to participate in public relations for the project, including a potential media release and photo with members of the applicants' organisation and funding representatives
- Involve community in its planning and implementation.

<sup>1</sup> An Auspicing Agent is another organisation that is a legal entity with an ABN. A letter signed by two committee members from the auspice agent confirming they will auspice the application must be provided when the grant application is submitted. Auspicing agents retaining a fee for this service will not be considered.

<sup>2</sup> If the project is to undertake works on Council owned / managed land or property, Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action, or Parks Victoria land, you must provide written approval from the relevant land manager.

<sup>3</sup> Your organisation meets the requirements of being a not-for-profit by having specific statements in its governing rules; the not-for-profit and / or dissolution clause <https://www.ato.gov.au/non-profit/getting-started/is-your-organisation-not-for-profit/>

### Ineligible Projects

A project will be deemed ineligible for assessment if:

- The applicant is an individual, profit-making organisation, or political party
- The project is the funding responsibility of the state or federal government, or can be funded by fees, sponsorship or service agreements
- The project already receives or has received funding or in-kind-support for the project from other sources within Hepburn Shire Council, i.e., funding agreements or sponsorship arrangements
- The applicant has an outstanding Council grant acquittal or unpaid invoice from Council
- The project that has already commenced or has been completed
- The application is made outside the Application Stage closing date
- The applicant is based outside Hepburn Shire (unless the project is of benefit to Hepburn Shire residents and the applicant partners with local organisations to deliver the project)
- The applicant is a school or health service (we encourage these applicants to partner with other community organisations to deliver projects).

**Applications completed by a third party on behalf of an applicant will not be considered.**

### Assessment

- Technical and grant writing support will be made available to applicants before and during the application stage.
- At the conclusion of the Application stage, applications are reviewed to ensure they meet the eligibility criteria. Those not meeting the criteria will be notified and will not progress to assessment.
- Eligible applications will be assessed by a panel consisting of Council Officers against the Assessment criteria.
- Applications are ranked by overall average score, with funding allocated to the highest scoring applications until the funding pool or pool of suitable applicants is exhausted.

### Assessment Criteria

All Council Grant Programs are assessed against the following Assessment Criteria:

- Criterion 1: Evidence of a community need or opportunity, and evidence of support from the community (25%)
- Criterion 2: Alignment with the Council Plan 2025-2029 (25%)
- Criterion 3: Benefit to Hepburn Shire residents (20%)
- Criterion 4: Ability to deliver the project effectively and within budget (15%)
- Criterion 5: Managing risk (15%)

### Funding

Successful applicants will be notified of the assessment panel outcomes at the conclusion of the assessment period. Once notified, successful applicants will be required to sign a funding agreement and submit a tax invoice to Council.

### Acquittal Process

An online acquittal must be completed through the SmartyGrants portal at the conclusion of the funded project/activity/event. Successful applicants are required to keep records of all items used and purchased in facilitating the grant project/activity/event and upload these records to the Smartygrants portal as part of the acquittal process.

### Funding Conditions and Requirements

- All planning and building permits and other applicable authorisations remain the responsibility of the applicant. Evidence of permits / permissions must be provided where relevant.
- Public Liability Insurance is the responsibility of the applicant and must be obtained prior to commencing any works that has been funded.
- An offer of a grant does not mean an ongoing funding commitment or obligation by Council.
- Hepburn Shire must be acknowledged on any promotional material related to the Project / Event. This must be approved by Council's Communications Officer prior to distribution.
- Successful applicants will be required to extend a written invitation, with a minimum of two weeks' notice, to the Hepburn Shire Mayor, Councillors, and CEO to attend openings and events when available.
- Successful applicants, or their Auspicing Agent, are required to enter into a formal funding agreement with Council. If the Project / Event does not adhere to the conditions of the agreement, Council may require grant funds to be returned.
- All funded Projects must complete an Evaluation and Acquittal including evidence of expenditure, e.g., receipts.
- Ongoing maintenance and repair costs for equipment purchased with grant funds are the responsibility of the applicant.
- In the event of a Project only being partly funded, Council will provide an explanation on request.

Applicants who are seeking funding from external grant sources are required to advise Council as soon as possible on the status of this external grant funding.

If your application includes grants funds from Council and an external source of funding, and the external funding becomes unavailable, you must submit an alternative proposal and budget within 30 days of receiving the external funding decision.

### Ready to Apply?

All grant applications must be lodged through the [Hepburn Shire Council Grants Portal by Smartygrants](#). Click the link to begin your application during the application period.

Applications can only be submitted online only using the Smartygrants portal. Council officers can assist with this process where required, e.g., if you have an impairment that prevents you from lodging your application online.

### Funding Alternatives

The Hepburn Grants Finder provides local community groups with a comprehensive and up-to-date list of grant and funding opportunities available from a range of funding providers including State and Federal government and philanthropic organisations. The Hepburn Grant Finder also includes an alert service meaning you will never miss a grant opportunity again.

Access the [Hepburn Grant Finder](#) on our grants website to explore what other funding opportunities may be available to support the implementation of your project.

### **Key Council Contacts**

#### **Sustainability Team**

Email: [sustainablehepburn@hepburn.vic.gov.au](mailto:sustainablehepburn@hepburn.vic.gov.au)

Phone: (03) 5348 2306

#### **Community Grants Officer**

Email: [grants@hepburn.vic.gov.au](mailto:grants@hepburn.vic.gov.au)

Phone: (03) 5348 2306

Please get in touch if you would like additional information, or if you require assistance to complete your application.