

Hepburn Shire Council

Sustainable Hepburn Grants Program Guidelines 2025



Introduction

Hepburn Shire Council recognises the interconnectedness of climate change, biodiversity, and waste management. We are dedicated to reducing our corporate greenhouse gas emissions, protecting and enhancing local biodiversity, transitioning to a low-waste Shire, and building resilience to the impacts of climate change.

We are proud to continue offering the Sustainable Grants Program to support our local communities. This program is a key component of our Sustainable Strategy 2022/2026, providing valuable opportunities to foster a more-circular economy, strengthen sustainable community infrastructure, and enhance local skills and knowledge for a prosperous future.

Our funding acknowledges the diverse organizations and community groups that form the backbone of our regional communities. Through the Sustainable Hepburn Grants Program, we aim to mitigate the future impacts of climate change by empowering individuals and groups to take action locally, advancing initiatives that improve the liveability of our communities and environments.

To achieve our vision of a healthy, supported, and empowered community, alongside a resilient, sustainable, and protected environment, the Sustainable Grants Program aligns with the priorities set out in the Council Plan, the Community Vision 2021-2025, the Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan, and the Grants Funding Policy 2024.

The Sustainable Hepburn Grants Program has been designed to deliver funding in an equitable, effective, and transparent manner, supporting community groups committed to making our Shire more vibrant, cohesive, inclusive, and sustainable. We encourage applications from groups across all regions and districts within the Shire and look forward to seeing innovative ideas come to life, driving sustainability-focused outcomes for all residents and communities.



A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Don Henderson".

Cr Don Henderson

Mayor

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 \$35,000 to support community driven sustainability initiatives in 2025. 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, carbon drawdown or increasing renewable energy in community facilities.

Projects may include:

- 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, 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 principles and objectives outlined in the [Council Plan and Vision 2022-25](#) and the Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan 2022-25. The Council plan focus area *A resilient, sustainable, and protected environment* directly aligns with the objectives of the Sustainable Hepburn Grant program and connects the program with Council's declaration of a Climate Emergency in 2019.

The program also connects with the strategic themes from the [Sustainable Hepburn Strategy 2022-26](#). 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 preferred. 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 Strengthening Officer or Sustainability Team to discuss your initial idea for your project, application requirements and the online application process.
2. Visit: www.hepburn.vic.gov.au/residents/support/grants for more information.
3. Go to the [Hepburn Shire Council Grants Portal](#) and submit your application online with Smartygrants.

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

Key Dates

Application Stage Opens	3 February 2025
Application Stage Closes	16 March, 2025
Assessment Panel Convenes	7 April, 2025
Assessment Outcomes Announced	11 April, 2025
All projects completed and acquitted	30 June, 2026

Eligible Projects for All Categories

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 2026, 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.¹
- Have all permits, permissions and approvals for the project.²
- 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-profit³ 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.

¹ 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.

² 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.

³ 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 for All Categories

- Individual applicants, profit-making organisations and political parties.
- An activity that is the funding responsibility of the state or federal government, or can be funded by fees, sponsorship or service agreements.
- An activity that 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.
- Applicants that have an outstanding Council grant acquittal or unpaid invoice from Council.
- Projects that have already commenced or have been completed.
- Applications made outside the Application Stage closing date.
- Organisations based outside the Shire unless the Project is of benefit to Hepburn Shire residents and the applicant partners with local organisations to deliver the project.
- Schools and health services. 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.

- Addresses an evidence-based community need or opportunity. (35%)
- Demonstrates alignment with the Hepburn Shire Council Plan and relevant strategy (Sustainable Hepburn Strategy 2022-2026.) (25%)
- Demonstrates a clear benefit to Hepburn Shire Council residents. (25%)
- Demonstrates a clear ability to carry out and undertake the project/activity/event through to completion. (10%)
- Provides supporting documentation including quotations. (5%)
- Demonstrates no ethical or other conflict of interest.

Funding

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

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. You are required to extend a written invitation, with a minimum of two weeks' notice, to the Mayor and Hepburn Shire CEO to attend openings and events when available.
- Councillors to be invited to attend openings and the event 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.

For applicants who are seeking funding from external grant sources, you 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 another source of funding; if the external funding source becomes unavailable, you will be required to submit an alternative proposal and budget within 30 days of the external funding decision date.

Applications are submitted online only. Council officers can assist with this process where required, e.g., if you have an impairment that prevents you using the online process.

How to Apply

Visit www.hepburn.vic.gov.au/grants to view the Biodiversity Grants page. All grant applications are made through the SmartyGrants portal – [Hepburn Shire Council Grants Portal](#).

Key Council Contacts

Sustainability Team

Email: sustainablehepburn@hepburn.vic.gov.au

Phone: (03) 5348 2306

Grants Specialist

Email: 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.