

Financial Assistance Policy

1. Purpose

AlburyCity regularly makes financial and in-kind contributions to groups, organisations and individuals. These financial contributions are an important part of Council's approach to meet the needs of the community identified in the Community Strategic Plan and other Council strategies and plans.

The purpose of the policy is to specify how Council allocates financial assistance and fulfils its legislative requirements under Sections 356 and 377 of the Local Government Act 1993.

Section 356, '*Can a council financially assist others?*', states that:

- 1) A council may, in accordance with a resolution of the council, contribute money or otherwise grant financial assistance to persons for the purpose of exercising its functions.
- 2) A proposed recipient who acts for private gain is not ineligible to be granted financial assistance but must not receive any benefit under this section until at least 28 days' public notice of the council's proposal to pass the necessary resolution has been given.
- 3) However, public notice is not required if—
 - (a) the financial assistance is part of a specific program, and
 - (b) the program's details have been included in the council's draft operational plan for the year in which the financial assistance is proposed to be given, and
 - (c) the program's proposed budget for that year does not exceed 5 per cent of the council's proposed income from the ordinary rates levied for that year, and
 - (d) the program applies uniformly to all persons within the council's area or to a significant group of persons within the area.
- 4) Public notice is also not required if the financial assistance is part of a program of graffiti removal work.

Section 377, '*General power of the council to delegate*', gives Council, among other things, the power to (By resolution) delegate to the general manager "a decision under section 356 to contribute money or otherwise grant financial assistance to persons."

This policy provides guidance to individuals and organisations when applying for cash, interest free loans and in-kind financial assistance. It also provides guidance to AlburyCity Councillors and employees when responding to and managing requests for financial assistance.

2. Policy Statement

AlburyCity's financial assistance Policy support initiatives and projects that strengthen the social, cultural, economic and environmental outcomes of the Albury Local Government Area (LGA). Through financial assistance, AlburyCity partners with the community and business to further the strategic directions of the Community Strategic Plan, Towards Albury 2050.

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AlburyCity recognises and respects the vital contribution of community and business in developing and delivering projects that contribute to a vibrant, inclusive, resilient, innovative and sustainable city. AlburyCity's financial assistance provides financial and in-kind support for a diverse range of projects.

This policy provides the framework for managing financial assistance applications. It sets the expected outcomes of AlburyCity's financial assistance and the principles that guide funding by AlburyCity.

The objectives of this Policy are to:

- 2.1 Provide a mechanism to partner with community to deliver on the Community Strategic Plan.
- 2.2 Ensure that financial assistance is allocated in accordance with Council's financial position and to ensure ongoing financial sustainability.
- 2.3 Ensure that financial assistance and in-kind support to community groups, organisations and individuals encourages social, cultural, and environmental sustainability, is fair and equitable, transparent, and undertaken within a system that fosters public confidence and reflects Council's role.
- 2.4 Ensure the recipients of the financial assistance or in-kind support understand their role and obligations.
- 2.5 Ensure Council fulfils its legislative requirements under Sections 356 and 377 of the *Local Government Act 1993*.
- 2.6 Provide support to community groups to maximise their opportunities in accessing financial assistance sources other than AlburyCity, including regularly promoting grant opportunities through community networks, assisting organisations prepare applications, conducting grant writing workshops, providing grant application resources on the AlburyCity website, and offering assistance where reasonable and practicable.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all outgoing grants, interest free loans, sponsorship, and in-kind provisions.

This policy applies to all not-for-profit organisations, for-profit organisations, sole traders, individuals, owners' corporations, unincorporated community groups and government agencies who apply for financial assistance from AlburyCity.

This policy applies to all financial assistance activity made available by AlburyCity as per Section 356 of the *Local Government Act 1993* and is independent of regular procurement of goods, works and services.

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4. Definitions

Acquittal a report that ensures that financial assistance recipients have administered funds responsibly and in line with the terms and conditions of the Funding Agreement. An acquittal report usually consists of a written report that summarises how the project fared against the initial objectives of the project. It also provides a financial statement detailing how the funds were spent.

Assessor is a person who evaluates a grant application. An assessor can be a Councillor, Council officer or a member from the community. All assessors will be required to make a conflict-of-interest declaration for the grant stream and or program they are assessing.

Donation is any financial assistance or in-kind support that is provided by AlburyCity to any individual, group or organisation to support a service, program or initiative that is likely to benefit the community.

Financial assistance includes direct financial and in-kind contributions provided by Council to a group, organisation or individual through programs approved by Council.

Funding Stream is the overarching level that encompasses a group of grants, programs or projects and has a capped amount allocated.

Grant is a mechanism by which Council provides financial assistance. It can be cash or in-kind support provided to recipients who meet a specific program or fund criteria to deliver an agreed outcome. The evaluation process is usually competitive.

In-kind Support includes donations involving the use of Council personnel, equipment or facilities. This form of support may still lead to Council incurring direct costs such as wages and plant hire. It also includes the subsidisation, reduction of fees normally charged by Council to use a facility or access a service as this is income forgone by Council.

Interest Free Loan is a mechanism by which Council can provide financial assistance for Community Infrastructure Fund requests. It is sum of money provided to organisations or individuals where they pay zero interest back to AlburyCity. Interest free loans will be required to fit within the funding limit for the Community Infrastructure Fund and will be subject to a separate loan agreement.

Program Guidelines provide specific details for each of AlburyCity's financial assistance programs including funding priorities, key dates, funding available, eligibility criteria, application processes, guidance for unspent funds and assessment criteria.

Scholarship is a sum of money paid to an individual to assist in funding their education and/or extra-curricular activities.

5. References

- The *Local Government Act 1993*, specifically Section 356, *Can a Council financially assist others?* and Section 377, *General power of the Council to delegate*
- Program guidelines for each specific financial assistance program
- AlburyCity Scholarships Program
- AlburyCity Delegations of Authority Register
- Albury Entertainment Centre – Subsidised Use Policy DOC11/44667
- Annual Financial Assistance Schedule (adopted by Council as part of the annual Operational Plan)
- Annual Events Assistance budget (adopted by Council as part of the annual Operational Plan)
- Annual Fees and Charges Schedule (adopted by Council as part of the annual Operational Plan)
- Smarty Grants Online Application System
- Events Sponsorship Procedure (DOC10/32514[v2])
- Waiving of Fees for Development Applications/Construction Certificates Policy (DOC11/27888)
- Accounting for Council's Financial Assistance Procedure DOC13/36784
- Asset Disposal Policy (DOC13/47094).
- Draft AlburyCity Asset Management Strategy 2023- 2027 (DOC23/101510)

6. Content

6.1 Funding Streams

Funding streams have been created to capture the types of financial assistance that AlburyCity provides to the community.

The funding streams have been aligned to the four themes that are identified within the Community Strategic Plan – Towards Albury 2050:

- A Growing Sustainable Economy
- An Enhanced Natural Environment
- A Caring Community
- A Leading Community

Each of these streams will have a set funding limit applied and will be underpinned by individual programs that have their own guidelines.

Financial assistance is allocated through Council's budget process, and any assistance allocated to the community throughout the year is reported in Council's annual report. Note that Council may adjust the annual budget, the capped funding stream limit and or the name and purpose of each program, as community needs change, at which time program details will be updated on Council's website.

At the time of the development of this policy the following funding streams and programs are in place to provide financial assistance:

Funding Stream	Towards Albury 2050 Alignment
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Community Infrastructure Fund (previous Community Fund)	*	^	#	
<p>For significant community capital assets or improvements, this fund encourages financial contribution from applicants and includes the provision of up to ten-year interest free loans.</p> <p>Programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Infrastructure Fund - New Requests • Approved Infrastructure Projects 				
Community Organisation Support (previous Financial Assistance)		^	#	
<p>Provided to any community organisation to support a service, program or initiative that is likely to benefit the community.</p> <p>Programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-Year Approved Funding • Community Centre Operational Support • Community Organisation Support – New Requests 				
Sport and Recreation			#	
<p>Upgrading sporting and recreational equipment or related infrastructure, business plans, forward planning documents or feasibility studies related to the development of their sport within AlburyCity and supporting individual athletes to compete at State or National level.</p> <p>Programs including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sports Grants • Fee Reduction 				
Environment		^		
<p>Supporting an environmentally sustainable community including sustainability rebates and land management incentives.</p> <p>Programs including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Sustainability Rebate Program • Land Management Incentive Program 				
Community and Place		^	#	@
<p>Provides funding to develop and present new and innovative community and cultural development projects, programs, and activities; and support to individuals to assist in funding their education and/or extra-curricular activities.</p> <p>Programs including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General In-Kind Support • Community and Cultural Grants • Tertiary Students Scholarships 				
Economic Development	*			
<p>To attract, expand and support business activities that will deliver significant benefits to the Albury LGA.</p>				

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Programs including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Albury Business Connect Sponsorship Albury Business Connect – CBD Promotional Rate Economic Development Incentive Program 				
Events	*		#	
Financial or in-kind support for events is assessed on a range of criteria including community and economic benefit. Programs including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> General In-Kind Support Event Sponsorship 				
Mayoral Donations			#	
Requests for one-off financial donations at the discretion of the Mayor. Programs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mayoral Discretionary Fund 				
General Support			#	
Provision of financial and in-kind support under delegation to the Chief Executive Officer to community, volunteer, not-for-profit and charity organisations. Programs including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> General In-Kind Support Fee Reduction Council Building - Peppercorn Rental Albury Waste Management Centre Gate Fees Albury Entertainment Centre (AEC) Subsidised Use 				

Key:

Towards Albury 2050 Themes	
A Growing Sustainable	*
An Enhanced Natural	^
A Caring Community	#
A Leading Community	@

6.2 Funding Limits

Setting and committing to clear funding limits each year demonstrates that Council acts responsibly and with a fiscally sustainable intent. It provides transparency to Community and a greater understanding for applicants of the funds that are available.

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The financial assistance budget set for the 2023/24 financial year serves as a baseline for setting limits within each funding stream moving forward. Additionally, the rate peg may be applied each year to the Community Organisation Support funding stream. This will assist community organisations to respond to economic pressures.

The remaining funding streams of Community Infrastructure Fund, Sport and Recreation, Environment, Community and Place, Economic Development, Events, Mayoral Donations and General Support, will not have the rate peg applied to them.

Funding limits are set as part of the annual budget process. This provides Council with the flexibility to review and adjust the funding limits each year to reflect current community needs. If additional funding is approved during this process this will be facilitated through a quarterly Budget review.

6.3 Applications

Financial Assistance information for the community will be available on the AlburyCity website. AlburyCity use grant administration software to manage financial assistance requests. Applicants will be required to submit their grant application via the grant administration software link provided on the AlburyCity website.

Community groups are encouraged to contact Council officers to discuss their project / initiative prior to submitting their application. Contact details will be made available on the AlburyCity website.

AlburyCity's financial assistance is grouped into funding streams. Funding streams have open and close dates for when the community can apply for funding, with dates available on the AlburyCity website.

Council has the flexibility of endorsing projects presented outside of the regular approval process by exception for consideration at a Council Meeting.

6.4 General Criteria

The general criteria for evaluating requests for financial or in-kind assistance includes the following items:

- 6.4.1 How the initiative links to the four strategic themes identified AlburyCity's Community Strategic Plan, Toward Albury 2050:
 - A Growing Sustainable Economy
 - An Enhanced Natural Environment
 - A Caring Community
 - A Leading Community
- 6.4.2 How the initiative supports the delivery of Council's adopted strategies and plans.
- 6.4.3 The program is not typically or potentially able to be funded through other sources e.g., other levels of government, philanthropic entities.

- 6.4.4 How the initiative supports equity, diversity and inclusion in our community.
- 6.4.5 How the initiative supports social, cultural and environmental sustainability.
- 6.4.6 How the initiative provides community benefit beyond a specific interest group.
- 6.4.7 Whether the applicant has met their obligations if they have previously received financial assistance from AlburyCity.
- 6.4.8 Whether the applicant will be contributing to the initiative and the quantum of this contribution (financial and in-kind).
- 6.4.9 Whether the timing of the initiative integrates well with other initiatives.
- 6.4.10 Whether the applicant or the occupier of a facility that has applied for assistance is in arrears with their financial obligations to AlburyCity.
- 6.4.11 Whether the application fits within Council's budget allocation.

Criteria, specific to each program are detailed in the Program Guidelines applicable to that program.

6.5 Assessment

Decisions regarding the allocation of financial assistance will be made through one of the following:

- 6.5.1 Council endorsement - Grant programs are reported to Council for final approval before the grants are released. Council can also endorse projects outside of the regular approval process by exception.
- 6.5.2 Budget process - All other financial assistance applications will be considered as part of the Council budget process and will be reviewed by Council Officers, for eligibility and quality of application against the general policy criteria and specific criteria for the particular program. Council Officers compile applications into a report to Council, setting out the details of organisations that have been recommended to receive financial assistance, the amount, brief description of the program, service or activity to be funded and other relevant information.
- 6.5.3 Delegated authority – Council may delegate decisions to allocate financial assistance under individual programs to either the Mayor or Chief Executive Officer (CEO). Delegated authority may be allocated up to a specified amount and in accordance with adopted program guidelines.

Where relevant, the decision to fund an application is informed by findings from independent assessment panels and Advisory Committees. This is a mechanism by which a group of community members, industry-specific individuals and Councillor representatives meet to provide a rigorous assessment of funding requests received under an identified program. The findings of their assessment are reported to Executive for endorsement under delegated authority.

AlburyCity's financial assistance programs are highly competitive. Even though an application may meet the criteria it may not be competitive against other applications. If an application is unsuccessful, the applicant can request feedback from Council Officers.

All assessors are required to make a conflict-of-interest declaration on each application as part of the assessment process, and in accordance with Council's Code of Conduct.

6.6 Approval

For funding streams that require a Council resolution or approval under delegated authority of the CEO to provide financial assistance to organisations, formal advice will be provided to all applicants (both successful and unsuccessful). Organisations who have successfully obtained financial assistance will be provided with a letter/agreement setting out any conditions specific to the financial assistance.

Many projects including festivals and events require approvals and consents from AlburyCity (such as development applications), insurers, NSW Police and other state government agencies. If the necessary approvals cannot be obtained, the financial assistance may be revoked. Approval of financial assistance does not imply that the AlburyCity has given any other required consent, authorisation or approval.

Approval of in-kind support for a booking is not a guarantee of a booking. All bookings are subject to availability and must be made through the usual booking process for the facility, space or location requested.

Council may approve funding outside of funding programs developed in accordance with this Policy. In these instances, a report detailing the proposed financial assistance will be presented to Council, and, if endorsed, will be placed on Public Exhibition for no less than 28 days.

6.7 Acquittal

A formal acquittal is required at the end of each project. The recipient organisation is required to:

6.7.1 Complete an acquittal form provided by Council within 60 days after the funds have been expended, with details of how the funds were spent

6.7.2 Include receipts for any equipment purchased where funds are approved for the purchase of equipment; the equipment is to be identified as an asset for the organisation

6.7.3 Supply copies of promotional materials and acknowledgement of Council's support.

AlburyCity maintain the right to audit, or have an agent, accountant, or other representative, audit such books, records and supporting data relating to the financial assistance upon thirty (30) days' notice.

Program Guidelines will provide specific guidance to recipients of financial assistance on how funding will be treated that is not expended in the financial year in which it was allocated.

6.8 Responsibilities

Councillors will approve AlburyCity's Financial Assistance Policy and all associated funding guidelines that enable provision of financial assistance, as and when they are due for review or amended.

Strategy & Performance Service Leader will provide a financial system that is able to record all relevant financial transactions to enable regular reconciliation and reporting of the financial assistance.

Council Officers responsible for administering the funding will:

- 6.8.1 Make decisions in accordance with this policy and specific program guidelines.
- 6.8.2 Work within their approved delegation.
- 6.8.3 Record all correspondence and other relevant material in AlburyCity's electronic document management system.
- 6.8.4 Record all transactions in accordance with the Financial Assistance Record Keeping Procedure. These transactions ensure all parties are aware of the monetary value of the assistance.

Corporate Performance Team will ensure AlburyCity's Annual Report documents all financial assistance activity for the year.

Detailed responsibilities for each program are outlined in the guidelines for each specific financial assistance program.

7. Authorisation

Owner	Directorate	Business Growth and Community – Community and Place – Communities
	Responsible Officer	Community Development Partner
Authorisation	Insert 'Approved Executive' or 'Adopted Council' Include date approved/adopted	
Review Date	July 2027	
Register	This policy is included in the Public Policy and Procedure Register.	
Record of Amendments	Insert date	Provide brief description of the change.
	Insert date	Provide brief description of the change.

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