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| Guideline title: | Individuals or Families in Financial Hardship - Contingency Grant Guideline |
| Guideline ref no: | DOC/20/66735 |
| Governing policy (ref no): | DOC/20/135907 |
| Guideline owner: | Manager Open Space, Recreation and Wellbeing |
| Approved by: | Director Environment, Recreation and Infrastructure |
| Date approved: | May 2020 |
| Scheduled review: | December 2021 |

1. Guideline intent

The Individuals or Families in Financial Hardship Contingency Grant Program (Hardship Grants) provides discretionary funds for Council to assist individuals or families experiencing financial hardship.

1. Scope

The guidelines apply to the application, evaluation, payment and reporting requirements for applications made under Part C of the Council Grants Policy (2020). These guidelines do not apply to other funding streams (Part A and Part B) of the Council Grants Policy (2020).

1. Guideline statement
	1. Purpose of the Hardship Grants Program

Hardship Grants support individuals experiencing financial hardship to participate in community life and improve their personal outcomes through sustainable change. People who are considered to be experiencing hardship are those who are struggling financially to manage the cost of a reasonable standard of living.

Financial hardships arise in an array of circumstances and may include, but are not limited to:

* Unemployment;
* Sickness or injury (including acute and chronic mental health issues);
* Family dissolution; and
* Low income.
	1. Eligibility

A community service agency is eligible to apply for a Hardship Grant on behalf of individuals experiencing financial hardship within the City of Bayside. All applications will be assessed on an individual basis and will be determined in accordance with the assessment criteria. A limit of one grant per individual to a maximum of $500 will be funded per financial year.

Individuals or families experiencing financial hardship may receive assistance for purposes not covered by other state or federal government grants, subsidy programs or local crisis relief programs.

Where appropriate, more than one applicant may be considered per application when referred by a community service agency to alleviate the administrative burden and to maximise the utilisation of funding support available.

* 1. Applications

Applications for a Hardship Grant must be made through Council’s online grant management platform Smartygrants which can be accessed through Council’s webpage: [www.bayside.vic.gov.au/grants](http://www.bayside.vic.gov.au/grants)

Applications will be assessed in accordance with the Council Grants Policy 2020 and Hardship Grant Guidelines.

Applications should be received as early as possible, ideally at least four weeks prior to the date of any payment deadline (e.g. term fees). Funding will not be approved retrospectively. Due to the urgent nature of some applications, Council will endeavour to advise applicants of the funding decision within 5 working days of Council receiving a correctly completed and submitted application.

The community service agency will apply on behalf of the individual and will:

* Identify the need of the applicant for financial assistance;
* Provide evidence of financial hardship through a copy of a Centrelink issued Health Care Card or Pensioner Card;
* Provide evidence of Bayside residence through a copy of a Centrelink issued Health Care Card or Pensioner Card or other approved identification;
* Provide a letter of support from a community or health service representative known to the recipient to support evidence of financial hardship;
* Provide details of the nature and costs to be incurred and the level and nature of other sources of assistance;
* Provide evidence of selection/representation to participate in the nominated event (if applicable);
* Provide a tax invoice for the services applied for; and
* Provide an Australian Business Number of the community service agency for payment to be made.

Applications may receive funding for:

* Social support: providing support for an individual to remain socially connected through membership to social activities such as sporting clubs, social groups and programs.
* Pursuing educational opportunities that would assist an individual to gain employment or improve life skills (not including educational fees).
* Other needs not covered in this guideline will be assessed on an individual basis.

Requests for items that are covered by other state or federal government grants, subsidy programs or local crisis relief programs will not be considered.

Hardship Grants will be paid directly to the community service agency or other approved organisation. Funding will not be paid directly to the individual.

* 1. Acquittals

Successful applicants must complete and submit to Council, an online acquittal form, within the current financial year. Applicants that do not submit an acquittal form may not be eligible for future Council grants.

* 1. Assessment

All applications received are assessed by the Community Development Officer and referred to the Manager Open Space, Recreation & Wellbeing for the final determination in line with financial delegation.

*Community Development Officer*

* Coordinates the administration of applications for Hardship Grants;
* Undertakes an initial eligibility assessment;
* Reviews and assesses eligible applications for assessment and provides recommendations to be reviewed by the Manager Open Space, Recreation & Wellbeing;
* Relays further feedback between the Manager and applicant, as necessary; and
* Provides verbal or written feedback to applicants, including rationale for decision, where appropriate.

*Community Wellbeing Coordinator*

* Provides guidance and support to the Community Development Officer in determining appropriateness of applications; and
* Assesses applications in the absence of the Community Development Officer.

*Manager Open Space, Recreation & Wellbeing*

* Reviews the referred application and recommendation;
* Requests further information through the Community Development Officer; and
* Provides the final decision to approve or decline grants.
	1. Funding criteria

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|  **Funding request** | **Maximum grant****amount** |  **Assessment criteria** |
| Individuals or families experiencing financial hardship which limits their ability to participate in community life. | Up to $500 per individual per financial year. | Determined on a case by case basis. Must be accompanied by a letter of support from a community service agency and evidence of financial hardship. Payment will be made directly to the community service agency. |
| For attendance at sport, recreation, arts, culture, civic and youth leadership events |  | In addition to the above, sporting attendance and athlete selection must be supported by documentation from a sports’ peak governing body or affiliated organisation that is recognised by the Australian Sports Commission. |
| * National Attendance- VIC/ NSW/ SA/ TAS/ ACT
 | Up to $200 |
| * National Attendance- WA/ QLD/ NT
 | Up to $300 |
| * International Attendance
 | Up to $500 |

1. Related documents

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| Policies | Council Grants Policy 2020 |
| Strategies | Wellbeing for All Ages and Abilities Strategy 2017-2021 |
| Guidelines | Contingency Grants Guidelines 2020 |

**Please note:** This guideline is current as at the date of approval. Refer to Council’s website ([www.bayside.vic.gov.au](http://www.bayside.vic.gov.au)) or staff intranet to ensure this is the latest version.