



Cardinia Shire Council

Festivals and Events Grant Program 2026-2027 Guidelines for Applicants

Cardinia Shire Council (Council) is committed to supporting a vibrant, inclusive, and growing calendar of festivals and events that celebrate local identity, reflect the Shire's cultural diversity, and activate communities across the region.

Through the Festival and Events Grants Program, Council invests in grassroots and community-led initiatives that deliver lasting cultural, social, and economic outcomes for residents and visitors alike.

The 2026–2027 Program supports events to be held between 1 July 2026 and 30 June 2027.

Program Objectives:

The Festival and Events Funding Program invests in community-led festivals and events that activate Cardinia Shire's townships, public spaces, and community precincts. The Program reflects Council's commitment to the cultural, social, and economic value of events, and responds directly to community feedback calling for grassroots-led experiences, greater geographic equity, and accessible, inclusive activation across the Shire.

The Program invests in initiatives that:

- Celebrate Cardinia's cultural diversity, local stories, and distinct township identities
- Support grassroots, volunteer-run festivals and local creatives, artists, musicians, and producers
- Deliver inclusive, family-friendly, and accessible experiences for all ages and backgrounds
- Activate parks, town centres, and community precincts, driving local visitation and economic activity
- Expand festival activity across rural, hills, and growth-area townships

This Program is delivered in accordance with the principles outlined in the Festival & Events Funding Policy.

Funding Streams

The Festival and Events Grants Program provides grants ranging from \$1,000 to \$30,000 to support community festivals and events. Eligible Civic Pride and Cultural Events may also access multi-year funding of up to \$5,000 per year for a maximum of three years.

The Program is built around the recognition that festivals and events across Cardinia Shire vary widely in scale, maturity, and capacity, from small, volunteer-led community celebrations to large, established annual events. Support is structured to reflect this diversity, helping to remove barriers to participation and support long-term sustainability.

All applications are assessed competitively, with larger event applications reviewed by an Independent Assessment Panel (IAP) following the close of each round.

Multi-Year Funding

Eligible Civic Pride and Cultural Events may apply for funding up to \$5000 per year for three consecutive years, subject to the following conditions:

- Satisfactory completion of acquittal and reporting requirements annually
- Continued eligibility and alignment with program objectives
- Annual budget availability

Funding Options – 2026–27 Round

Small Community Grant | \$1,000–\$5,000 Designed for recognised civic and cultural celebrations. Eligible applicants may access up to three years of support. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis until 30 June 2027, or until funds are fully committed.

Festivals and Events Grant | \$5,001–\$30,000 Open to once-off or recurring community festivals and events. Applications are accepted during an annual round and assessed by an Independent Assessment Panel.

Funding Schedule

Small Community Grants:

- 100% of the grant is paid upon signing of the funding agreement. For multi-year funding recipients, subsequent years are paid following satisfactory acquittal of the previous year.

Festivals and Events Grants:

- 70% paid upon signing of the funding agreement
- 30% paid upon completion of the event and all acquittal requirements

Council funding is intended to complement, not fully fund, an event. Applicants must demonstrate a co-contribution toward the event, separate from the requested grant – for grants under \$5,000, an in-kind contribution is sufficient; for grants of \$5,000 or more, both a financial and in-kind contribution is required. All applicants must show how their event will remain financially viable and sustainable.

Assessment Criteria

Applications will be assessed against the following criteria:

<p>Program objectives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants have demonstrated how their event contributes to a vibrant, inclusive, and growing calendar of festivals and events that celebrates local identity, reflects the Shire's cultural diversity, and activates communities across the region.
<p>Capacity and capability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants have demonstrated expertise and capacity to successfully plan, deliver, and promote the event within timeframes, and comply with all Council permits, legislative, and regulatory requirements. • Applicants have a positive track record delivering similar events, with clear measures of success outlined in the application. • A post-event acquittal report covering expenditure, attendance, and outcomes is required; failure to report may affect future eligibility.
<p>Inclusion, accessibility and cultural safety</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants have demonstrated how the event will be inclusive, accessible, and affordable for people of all ages, abilities, backgrounds, genders and identities, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, CALD communities, LGBTIQ+ communities, and people with disability. • Gender equity and cultural safety are embedded in planning and delivery, including an Acknowledgement or Welcome to Country where appropriate. • Applicants unable to meet safety, disability access, or compliance standards are ineligible.
<p>Economic impact and community connections</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants have demonstrated engagement with local businesses, organisations, artists, musicians, producers, and suppliers, and how the event will strengthen the local economy and attract visitation. • Applicants have demonstrated how the event celebrates local stories, distinct township identities, and builds ongoing community partnerships.
<p>Funding requirements and budget</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants have provided a realistic, itemised budget reflective of the event's scope and scale, with sufficient revenue streams to ensure the event is not solely dependent on Council funding. • Funding will be allocated equitably across the region, with priority given to rural towns and communities with limited existing provision.

Priority Considerations

- The event is inclusive, accessible, and affordable for all people, reflecting Cardinia's diverse community.
- Community led and volunteer run initiatives.
- Events with environmental education or innovative sustainability initiatives.
- Engaging local artists, producers, suppliers, and businesses, strengthening the Shire's local economy through increased visitor activity.
- Located in rural towns or communities with limited existing events provision.

Eligibility Criteria

Eligible Applicants and Events

To be eligible for funding under the Festival and Events Grants Program, applicants must meet the following criteria:

Event location and public access

- The event must take place within the Cardinia Shire Council Local Government Area.
- The event must be open to the general community, and provide demonstrable social, cultural, economic, or community benefit.
- Events must be inclusive, affordable, and accessible, and not discriminate on the basis of age, gender, ability, cultural background, sexual orientation, or socio-economic status.

Applicant eligibility

Applicants must be one of the following:

- An incorporated not-for-profit organisation
- A community group or community asset committee
- A local business, sole trader, or event organiser with a valid Australian Business Number (ABN)

Applicants must demonstrate appropriate experience, governance, or partnerships to successfully deliver the proposed event.

Environmental sustainability

- Applicants must demonstrate sustainable practices appropriate to their scale, by addressing waste minimisation, resource use, and sustainable procurement.

Financial contribution and viability

- Applicants must demonstrate a co-contribution toward the event, separate from the requested grant. For grants under \$5,000, an in-kind contribution is

sufficient; for grants of \$5,001 or more, both a financial and in-kind contribution is required.

- Council funding is not intended to fully fund an event; applicants must show how their event will remain financially viable and sustainable.
- Grant funding must be used to enhance the quality, reach, accessibility, or impact of the event, rather than to cover standard business operations.

Safety, compliance and risk management

- Applicants must demonstrate the ability to meet all **Council safety, compliance, and legislative requirements**, including:
 - Completing the Event Permit process (where required)
 - Meeting risk management and operational standards
- Applicants must hold, or be willing to obtain prior to the execution of the first payment:
 - **\$20 million public liability insurance**
 - Insurance listing **Cardinia Shire Council as an interested party**
- Applicants unable to meet safety, disability access, or compliance standards are not eligible for funding.

Application Requirements

Applications must:

- Be submitted within the advertised funding period
- Be complete and include all required supporting documentation
- Agree to enter into a funding agreement if successful

Successful applicants must complete a post-event acquittal, including financial reporting and evidence of outcomes, in order to remain eligible for future funding.

Ineligible applicants and events

An application will be deemed ineligible if any of the following apply:

- The event is private, invitation-only, or restricted to members of a business, club, or organisation.
- The event is primarily a school fete, school event, or educational activity.
- The funding request is for:
 - Ongoing business or operational costs, including staff salaries, administration, insurance or project management
 - Capital works, facility maintenance, or permanent infrastructure purchases
 - Fundraising activities, catering, prize money, or competitions
 - Retrospective funding for events that have already occurred, or events scheduled outside the approved funding period

- The applicant:
 - Is currently in financial debt with Council
 - Has failed to comply with previous Council grant conditions or acquittal requirements
 - Is already receiving Council funding for the same event or component in the same financial year
 - Is unable to meet required safety, insurance, compliance, or reporting obligations
 - The applicant is a Council staff member, Councilor, or contractor, or has attempted to improperly influence the assessment process.

Procedural guidelines

The Festivals and Events Grants Program is administered transparently and accountably through centralised processes, standardised assessment, and ongoing monitoring to ensure appropriate use of public funds and compliance with Council policies. Following the close of applications, Council Officers review submissions for eligibility before eligible applications are assessed competitively against published criteria by internal Officers or an Independent Assessment Panel (IAP). All assessors must declare conflicts of interest and comply with Council's Codes of Conduct and the *Local Government Act 2020*. Funding decisions are made in accordance with the Guidelines and Council policy priorities and are final, with unsuccessful applicants able to request feedback. Applicants may submit feedback or complaints regarding the process in line with Council's Complaints Policy

All enquiries must be directed to designated Council Officers. Lobbying of Councillors or staff, or offers of gifts, is strictly prohibited and may result in disqualification, withdrawal of funding, or formal referral. Applicants must engage respectfully with Council staff at all times; failure to do so may result in disqualification or exclusion from future funding rounds. Successful applicants must enter into a funding agreement and meet all requirements, including event approvals, insurance, compliance, and post-event reporting and acquittal. Council may publicly report on funded events and outcomes to meet its transparency and accountability obligations.

Proposed Key Dates - Small Community Grants

Assessed monthly until 30th June 2027 or until funds are expended

Applications Opens	20 th May 2026
Assessment Period	3 rd week of the month
Applicants notified of outcome	21 st July 2026, then 2 nd week of the following month

Proposed Key Dates - Festival & Events Grants

Applications open	20 May 2026
Applications close	24 June 2026
Applicants notified of outcome	21 July 2026

How to apply

Applications can be made via the SmartyGrants Portal. Please ensure you attach all requested supporting documentation for your application. Applications without all required supporting documentation will be deemed ineligible.

Please Note: Once submitted, applications cannot be reopened. Check your application carefully and use the check list to ensure your application is complete and eligible prior to submitting.

Festivals and Events Grant Program Checklist

1. Read through the objectives and priorities of the grant program and check your group/organisation is eligible for funding and that your proposed activity meets the criteria.
2. Attend or watch the grant information session(s). Recordings available on the website.
3. Speak to an officer regarding your application prior to submitting.
4. Read through all of the resources and support documents carefully.
5. Assemble your support material and budget.
6. Draft your application by downloading a copy from SmartyGrants.
7. Submit your completed application via the SmartyGrants portal.

Terms and Conditions

- Applications must be received before the closing period. Applications received after this date will not be eligible for consideration as there is a no appeals process for late applications.
- Successful applicants will need to enter into a formal funding agreement with Council and will be expected to spend and acquit their funding by the agreed date in their funding agreement.
- If an event is postponed, cancelled or significantly altered, Council must be notified immediately and may adjust funding arrangements accordingly.
- Successful applicants will be required to provide a post-event report detailing key performance indicators specific to their event, in addition to providing evidence of

expenditure as detailed in the funding agreement. This includes evidence of promotional materials mentioning Council support and logos,

- Unsuccessful applicants may request feedback from Council Officers regarding why their application was not successful and how they can improve any future applications.
- The number of applications supported and the level of funding provided will be at Council's discretion and will reflect the available budget, the quality of applications, the outcomes achievable and the needs of the community.
- Allocation of funds to an applicant for any purpose in any year must not be taken as a commitment by Council for funding in any subsequent years.
- Council will not be responsible for any under-estimated costs and Council's only contribution will be that outlined in the funding agreement. All other costs will be the responsibility of the applicant.
- Council may make funding conditional on particular elements, as outlined in an offer to the applicant.
- If the applicant has not spent all of the funding, all remaining funds must be returned to Council.
- Council's decision is final and will not be reviewed. No further correspondence will be entered into.
- Council reserves the right to extend the application period or open subsequent rounds of funding if no suitable submissions are received and/or the funding pool is not fully exhausted.
- Please ensure your application is eligible and correct. Once submitted **there will be no recourse to reopen your application** and make changes. If in doubt, please contact the Grants Officer prior to submitting.

Important contacts

Smarty Grants technical assistance

If you experience technical issues with the SmartyGrants system, please contact Smarty Grants directly via email service@smartygrants.com.au or by calling 03 9320 6888 (Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm).

General enquiries

If you have any questions in relation to the grant program please contact the Cultural Development and Grants Officer on 1300 887 624 or email arts@cardinia.vic.gov.au.

If you are unable to complete the application form online due to access issues or you have difficulty using technology, please contact us via email, arts@cardinia.vic.gov.au or by calling 1300 787 624 and we will discuss how we can assist you to complete the forms.