

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE GUIDELINE 2020-2024

GUIDELINE ADMINISTRATION

Dates	Guideline approved 15/12/2020 This guideline is effective upon its approval. Guideline is due for review (annually) February 2022.
Approved by	Executive on 15/12/2020
Exhibition Period	Consultation with the Independent Commission Against Corruption - September 2021
Policy Owner	Director Community and Culture Community and Culture Directorate
Related Documents	Georges River Council: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Grants, Donations and Sponsorship Policy 2. Community Lease Policy 3. Councillor Ward Discretionary Fund Policy 4. Grants Program Guidelines 5. Mayor and Councillors Expenses and Facilities Policy 6. Events Strategy 2018 - 2020 7. Interim Community Property Strategy 2020 - 2023 8. Code of Conduct 9. Payment Handling and Cash Collection Policy 10. Debt Management and Hardship Policy 11. Internal Audit Report – Section 356 Financial Assistance Final
References & Legislation	<i>Local Government Act 1993, s356 and s377</i>
Document Identifier	Doc #: D20/280916
Breaches of Policy	Breaches of any policy will be dealt with and responded to in accordance with adopted codes and/or relevant legislation.
Record Keeping	All documents and information obtained in relation to the implementation of this guideline will be kept in accordance with the <i>NSW State Records Act 1998</i> , Georges River Council's Corporate Records Policy and adopted internal procedures.

PURPOSE

The Georges River Council Financial Assistance Guideline (Guideline) provides a framework to guide the process, review and allocation of funds to community organisations.

The Guideline ensures consistency and compliance under sections 356 and 377 of the *Local Government Act 1993* for all financial assistance programs administered by Georges River Council, including the programs outlined in:

1. Georges River Council Grants, Donations and Sponsorship Policy
2. Georges River Council Community Lease Policy
3. Georges River Council Councillor Ward Discretionary Fund Policy

Therefore, this Guideline should be read in conjunction with the Policies listed above.

This Guideline was established following the Internal Audit Report (2020) – Section 356 Financial Assistance Final recommendation to develop an overarching framework on financial assistance to ensure consistency across financial assistance programs and reduce the risk of non-compliance with section 356 of the *Local Government Act 1993*.

This Guideline is reviewed annually to ensure the total allocated and approved budget is incorporated into the Guideline and published on Georges River Council's website.

SCOPE

The NSW Office of Local Government stipulates that this Guideline should include:

1. All forms of financial assistance provided by Council subject to section 356 and 377 of the *Local Government Act 1993*;
2. The public notice period for all financial assistance programs;
3. The manner in which public submissions for financial assistance are administered by Council;
4. Clear and transparent criteria for the assessment of the applications for financial assistance; and
5. Process in place to ensure the financial assistance is used by the recipient in the manner in which it was stipulated.

This Guideline outlines these stipulations and/or directs the reader to the appropriate and relevant Policy. In order to address the requirements of the NSW Office of Local Government, this Guideline includes five key sections:

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DEFINITION OF TERMS

Term	Meaning
Guideline	Georges River Council Financial Assistance Guideline

POLICY STATEMENT

Georges River Council provides financial assistance to community groups, organisations and events in a consistent, transparent and equitable fashion in accordance with sections 356 and 377 of the *Local Government Act 1993*.

1. Annual Budget & Programs

- 1.1. Georges River Council provides a range of financial assistance programs. These are outlined in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Financial Assistance Programs

Financial assistance program	Maximum financial assistance available	Annual program	Total annual budget	Relevant Policy
Community Grants	\$25,000 – Major projects \$10,000 - Programming	Two rounds	\$400,000	Georges River Council Grants, Donations and Sponsorship Policy
Heritage Grants	Up to 50% of the cost of a project (up to a maximum value of \$10,000)	One round	\$50,000	Georges River Council Grants, Donations and Sponsorship Policy
Heritage Publications Grants	\$5,000	One round	\$5,000	Georges River Council Grants, Donations and Sponsorship Policy
Venue Hire Grants	\$30,000 \$1,000 for small targeted venue hire grants	One round or on application	\$300,000	Georges River Council Grants, Donations and Sponsorship Policy
Micro Grants	\$1,000	One round	(\$10,000 may be awarded from the Community Grants budget, unless funded by external sponsorship)	Georges River Council Grants, Donations and Sponsorship Policy
Event Sponsorship Quick Response	\$30,000 \$2,000	On application	\$107,000	Georges River Council Grants, Donations and Sponsorship Policy
Donations Quick Response Individuals Teams	\$30,000 \$2,000 \$200 \$1,000	On application	\$50,000	Georges River Council Grants, Donations and Sponsorship Policy
Councillor Ward Discretionary Fund	Community groups - \$1,500 Minor Capital Works - \$170,000 per ward	On application	\$1,000,000	Georges River Council Councillor Ward Discretionary Fund Policy
Community Leases	Subsidy based on market value	On application	\$1,125,000	Georges River Council Community Lease Policy
Total budget			\$3,037,000	

1.2. In accordance with section 356 of the *Local Government Act 1993*, the above programs are:

- Part of a specified financial assistance program;
- Specified in the current Georges River Council Delivery Program and Operational Plan (for example, item 6.1.3.c. in the Georges River Council Delivery Program 2018/19 – 2020/21 and Operational Plan 2020/21);
- Budgeted at less than 5% of the Council’s proposed income from the ordinary rates levied each year; and
- Applied uniformly to the Georges River community.

1.3. Council, under section 377 of the *Local Government Act 1993*, may delegate its functions to the General Manager relating to granting of financial assistance if compliance is reached under section 356 of the *Local Government Act 1993*, as outlined above. Consequently, Council has delegated decisions in relation to financial assistance programs to the General Manager or his/her delegates, as outlined in the approved relevant policies:

- a) Georges River Council Grants, Donations and Sponsorship Policy
- b) Georges River Council Community Lease Policy
- c) Georges River Council Councillor Ward Discretionary Fund Policy

2. Public Notice Period

2.1. As the financial assistance programs outlined above comply with section 356 of the *Local Government Act 1993*, a public notice period of at least 28 days is not required. However, financial assistance that falls outside the programs designated above would not be eligible until at least 28 days’ public notice of the council’s proposal to pass the necessary resolution has been given.

3. Administration of Submissions

3.1. Georges River Council administers financial assistance submissions in the following manner:

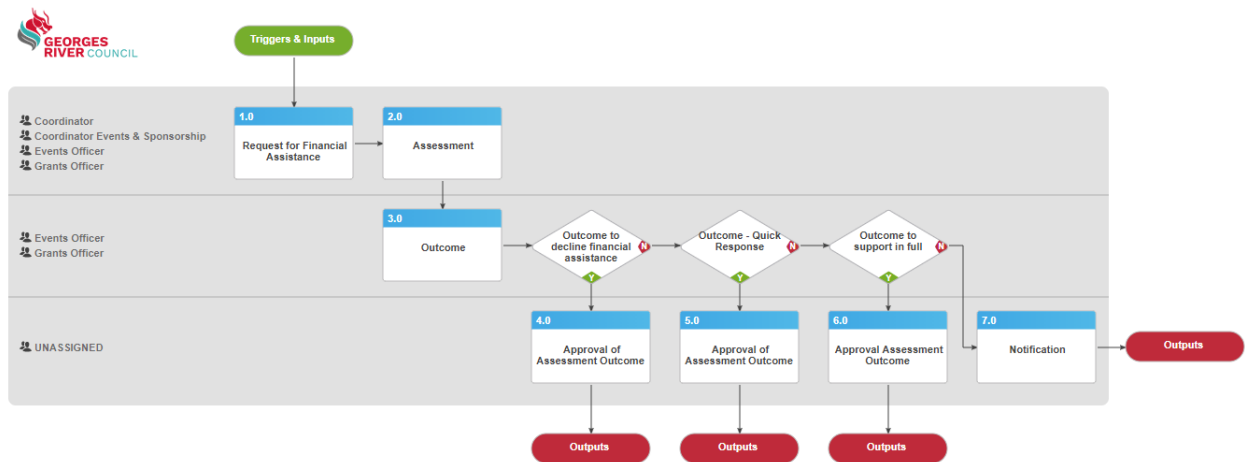
Financial assistance program	Administrative process	Directorate responsible for the administration of the program
Community Grants	SmartyGrants	Community and Culture
Heritage Grants	SmartyGrants	Environment and Planning
Heritage Publications Grants	SmartyGrants	Community and Culture
Venue Hire Grants	SmartyGrants	Community and Culture
Micro Grants	SmartyGrants	Community and Culture

Event Sponsorship	SmartyGrants	Community and Culture
Event Sponsorship - Quick Response	SmartyGrants	Community and Culture
Donations - Quick Response	SmartyGrants	Community and Culture
Donations – Sporting, Academic or Cultural Event – Quick Response	SmartyGrants	Community and Culture
Councillor Ward Discretionary Fund	Councillor Portal	Office of the General Manager
Community Leases	SmartyGrants	Community and Culture

3.2. SmartyGrants administrative process

- 3.2.1. Applicable grants and funding programs are set up in the SmartyGrants system for each funding program, including application forms, assessment forms, acquittal forms and administrative forms. Application forms are then linked to Council’s website, and applicants are invited to apply through this online portal. Once applications have closed, a designated panel of staff assesses applications through SmartyGrants. A summary of all applications and assessment recommendations is saved in Council’s electronic document records management system (CM9). Following the prescribed funding approval process for each funding program, successful and unsuccessful applicants are notified of the outcome of their application. Project updates and funding acquittals are managed directly through SmartyGrants.
- 3.2.2. Each funding program is guided by the principles and eligibility criteria of its related Policy and the associated Guidelines for each funding program.
- 3.2.3. Financial Assistance through Community Leases may be determined directly by Council resolution, and as such a manual SmartyGrants form may be completed by staff.

PROMAPP



3.3. Councillor Portal administrative process

3.3.1. The Councillor Ward Discretionary Fund enables Councillors to provide financial support to individuals, community groups, or for the provision of minor capital works, subject to Council resolution. Funding allocations identified through the Fund must benefit residents of Georges River local government area (LGA).

3.3.2. Applications for funding through the Councillor Ward Discretionary Fund fall within two classifications:

- a) Applications put forward by an individual or community group; and
- b) Applications for minor capital works.

3.3.3. Councillors can apply for funding using the prescribed form which must be lodged with Council. The General Manager will then provide a report to the next ordinary Council Meeting outlining the details of any requests that have received support from Councillors seeking a resolution of Council to provide the financial assistance.

3.3.4. Requests from Councillors for funding of minor capital works will be forwarded for consideration to the relevant Director, who will be responsible for the submission of a report to Council which will take into account the benefits and lawfulness of the application.

3.3.5. To be eligible, community groups are required to have relevant and appropriate business/not-for-profit registration and have objectives and values (including those of any parent companies and subsidiaries) that are consistent with the objectives and values of Council.

- 3.3.6. Community groups will be required to include in their application demonstrated proof of their financial need, details of how the funds will be expended and the purpose for which the funds will be utilised.
- 3.3.7. To be eligible, individuals must be seeking funding to defray the costs of participation in an elite level sporting tournament, artistic or cultural event at a State, National or International level.
- 3.3.8. Details of all funds awarded through the Councillor Ward Discretionary Fund will be made available on Council's website, including the amount of funds provided and the purpose for which the funds are to be utilised and the outcome.

4. Assessment Criteria

- 4.1. The general principles for the financial assistance programs include:
 - Council will provide financial assistance only when the benefit to the community can be clearly defined.
 - Council will provide financial assistance to organisations whose values, identity and policies align with Council's strategic direction and image and comply with Council's policies and legislative requirements.
 - Council may seek independent advice in regards to any financial assistance arrangement to ensure the potential recipient's values, identity and policies support Council's strategic direction and image.
 - Council will not provide financial assistance to an organisation if the arrangement could compromise, or be seen to compromise, Council's ability to exercise its regulatory and planning functions.
 - A financial assistance agreement must not impose or imply conditions that could limit, or appear to limit, Council's ability to carry out its functions fully, impartially or ethically.
 - Council is not obliged to accept or provide financial assistance from/to any organisation.
 - Council reserves the right to decline a financial assistance agreement where the organisation, their activities or their proposals are in conflict with Council's core values or could have a negative impact on the community.
 - Financial assistance will not be sought from, accepted from or provided to political parties.
- 4.2. The specific assessment criteria for each financial assistance program is comprehensively detailed in the approved, relevant Council policy. The relevant policies are outlined in *Section 1: Annual Budget and Programs*.

5. Review & Compliance of Approved Submissions

- 4.3. All approved submissions for Financial Assistance are published on Council's website.
- 4.4. Any entity receiving Financial Assistance that totals more than \$15,000 per annum in any financial year must provide a set of Audited Financial Statements to Council.
- 4.5. At the end of each financial year, each of Council's Financial Assistance programs is reviewed by a panel of relevant Council officers that is consistent with the relevant funding Policy and Guidelines, and a report is published via Council's Annual Report. This review ensures all approved funds were expended in the manner in which they were intended.
- 4.6. Applicants who fail to suitably meet the agreed funding requirements of any funding program may be ineligible for future Financial Assistance from Council. Ineligibility will be reviewed on an annual basis.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Position	Responsibility
Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision making on the allocation of financial assistance in accordance with this Guideline and relevant associated policies and guidelines as outlined in this document.
General Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make recommendations to Council on the allocation of funds. Decision making on the allocation of specific financial assistance in accordance with this Guideline and relevant associated policies and guidelines as outlined in this document.
Councillors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation in the governance of funding programs through participation in Community and Culture Standing Committee and Council Meetings.
Director Community and Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make recommendations to the General Manager and Council on the allocation of funds. Decision making on the allocation of specific financial assistance in accordance with this Guideline and relevant associated policies and guidelines as outlined in this document. • Liaison with Committees and Community and Culture Standing Committee.
Manager Customer Experience and Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversee the implementation of Community Events and Sponsorship programs, investigate breaches and enforce compliance. • Update the Grants, Donations and Sponsorship Policy when

	<p>necessary.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oversee the implementation of Grants and Donations programs, investigate breaches and enforce compliance.
Manager Strategic Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oversee the implementation of Heritage Grants Program, investigate breaches and enforce compliance.
Coordinator Community Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update Grants Program Guidelines annually or as required with input from Community Strategic Planning objectives and in line with budget allocation.
Grants Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administer the Community Grants, Venue Hire Grants, Micro Grants, Heritage Publication Grants, and other grants programs as required.
Coordinator Events and Sponsorship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update Events Sponsorship Guidelines as required with input from Community Strategic Planning objectives and in line with budget allocation. Administer the Community Events and Sponsorship programs.
Manager Office of the General Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update the Councillor Discretionary Ward Fund Policy when necessary. Oversee the implementation of Councillor Discretionary Ward Fund, investigate breaches and enforce compliance.
Information Management Technology Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information management of program applications and record-keeping.

VERSION CONTROL AND CHANGE HISTORY

Version	Amendment Details	Policy Owner	Period Active
1.0	New Georges River Council Financial Assistance Guideline	Director Community and Culture	15 December 2020 - ongoing