



GREATER SHEPPARTON CITY COUNCIL

SMALL TOWN FESTIVE DECORATION GRANTS PROGRAM

2025/26 GUIDELINES

CM REF: M23/131115

About this grant program

Greater Shepparton City Council is pleased to offer the Small Town Festive Decoration Grant program for small towns and localities. This grant enables local community organisations to purchase and install festive decorations.

The funding is available to a population centre in Greater Shepparton with less than 10,000 people. This includes the following small towns; **however other localities may also apply.**

- Congupna
- Katandra West
- Toolamba
- Tallygaroopna
- Bunbartha
- Dookie
- Merrigum
- Undera
- Kialla West
- Arcadia
- Mooroopna
- Murchison
- Tatura
- Kialla Central

Program Objectives

This grant program aims to empower small towns and localities (generally population centres under 10,000) within the Greater Shepparton municipality to:

1. **Enhance Community Spirit:** Create a festive, welcoming, and celebratory atmosphere in main streets and public spaces during the festive season.
2. **Increase Activation:** Encourage visitation and community gathering in high-visibility public areas.
3. **Promote Sustainability:** Prioritise the purchase of decorations that are reusable, durable, and have minimal environmental impact (e.g., solar-powered lights).
4. **Demonstrate Inclusivity:** Ensure decorations are accessible and welcoming to all members of the community.

The objective of the Small Town Festive Decoration funding program is to provide small towns and localities the opportunity to decorate their main street and/or public space to celebrate the festive season.

What can be funded?

This section could be simplified to include (feel free to include the examples listed below in a table format)

Funding is available for the purchase, installation, and decommissioning of physical festive decorations to be placed in outdoor, public spaces.

Eligible Items

Examples

Physical Decorations

Lighting, reusable banners, feature sculptures, decorations for street poles and public trees, community-made displays.

Festive Assets	Purchase of a community Christmas tree (or equivalent festive centerpiece).
Operational Costs	Hire of contractors, machinery, and equipment necessary for the safe installation and removal of decorations.
Eco-Friendly Initiatives	Solar-powered lights or durable, sustainable materials.

Linkages to the Council Plan 2025–2029

This grant program supports priorities in the Council Plan 2025–2029, focusing on:

Economy: Events and cultural initiatives that boost community vibrancy and economic growth.

Liveability: Strengthening community leadership and volunteering. Promoting health, wellbeing, social connection, diversity, respect, and inclusion.

Applicants are encouraged to consider these priorities, but explicit alignment is not required. Project alignment will be considered during assessment.

Funded projects must be able to demonstrate community support, have a clear scope on what will be delivered and address safety and risk issues in the installation of decorations.

For the 2025/2026 Financial Year there is a total funding pool of \$15,000 available. Individual grants of **up to \$3,000** are available for successful applicants to conduct activities during the timeframes below.

Council strongly advises you to contact the Community Wellbeing Department prior to making an application to discuss your proposed activity and eligibility. You can contact Council's Project Officer via telephone on (03) 5832 9472 or via email communityadmin@shepparton.vic.gov.au

Expected timing for this grant program

Applications will be accepted until 5:00pm on the closing date.

Applications open:	Friday 9 January 2026 at 9:00am
Applications close:	Monday 2 March 2026 at 5:00pm
Notification of outcome:	March/April 2026
Activity timeframes:	1 April 2026 to 30 December 2026

How to Apply

Applications for this grant program must be submitted via Greater Shepparton City Council's SmartyGrants online portal. You can access this portal via the following link:

<https://greater-shepparton.smartygrants.com.au/>

Who can and can't apply?

All applicants activities must be primarily based in Greater Shepparton.

APPLICANT TYPE	YES	NO
Not-for-profits, incorporated bodies, co-operatives or associations	X	
Registered charitable organisations (refer to the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission)	X	
Unincorporated bodies with an auspice	X	
Schools and learning institutions – only for activities that are not curriculum based and the primary benefit is for the wider community	X	
Individual / Sole Traders		X
For profits, commercial entities, registered businesses		X
Applicants with outstanding acquittals for grant funding from Greater Shepparton City Council (including auspices)		X
Applicants with outstanding debts or arrears to Greater Shepparton City Council or in legal proceedings with Council		X
An organisation involved in legal proceedings relating to winding up its operations, or experiencing insolvency or bankruptcy (this includes any legal bankruptcy – related actions against the organisations directors or officers).		X

What if you are NOT incorporated?

If you are not an incorporated body, you can still make an application by using an auspice. An auspice is an organisation that meets our eligibility criteria and agrees to support your application.

If you're successful, the auspice receives the grant money on your behalf so you can undertake the project work.

If you are intending to make an application using an auspice you must obtain written approval from your proposed auspice before you submit your application, and attach this to your application form.

Insurance

Applicants must have Public Liability Insurance with a minimum amount of \$20 million. The Certificate of Currency for this insurance, will be required as part of the application process.

Applicants using an auspice would include a certificate from the auspice organisation. A policy statement or receipt of payment is not an acceptable substitute for the certificate of currency.

Permits and Approvals

Activities may require permits and approvals.

Any festive season decorations in townships and public places will need to be assessed and may require a local law permit from Greater Shepparton City Council. Depending on the location of the decorations in relation to VicRoads roads and road reserves, an approval may also be needed from VicRoads or Regional Roads Victoria.

These processes are separate to the grant application process and require additional time and budget in the project plan. You do not need to secure permits or approvals before applying for the grant, however obtaining these approvals will be a condition of the funding.

You must also be able to demonstrate that you are aware of the necessary permits and approvals in your application.

What if my activity does not proceed?

If you are successful in obtaining a grant and your activity does not proceed, you must contact the Community Wellbeing department in a timely manner to discuss the circumstances of the activity not proceeding and organise returning the grant funds provided.

Failure to notify Greater Shepparton City Council of your activity not proceeding will deem future applications for all grants available ineligible.

Funded activities will:

- occur in Greater Shepparton between the timeframes stated above
- provide an inclusive, safe and accessible outcome for the community of Greater Shepparton
- demonstrate effective partnerships i.e. with other groups and/or across interest groups
- deliver value for money and show sustainability beyond Council's funding
- be well developed and have reasonable indicators of success for the outcomes expected
- be able to be utilised over multiple years and not have a detrimental impact to the environment
- acknowledge Greater Shepparton City Council as sponsors of the project receiving funding
- invite relevant Council Officers and/or Councillors to any event, launch, or celebration of the funded project.

The following activities will NOT be funded:

- events and activities not held within the activity timeframes
- Projects that do not occur in a public place for the broader community to benefit from
- events and activities held outside the Greater Shepparton municipality
- applications received after the closing date
- applicants who have previously been funded by Council and have failed to comply with the financial, project monitoring and/or reporting requirements
- projects that are clearly a duplication of an existing service
- fundraising activities
- ongoing expenses and projects which have already commenced or have been completed
- projects and activities that are discriminatory in any way, or contravene any legislation.

Matched Funding

Council aims to work in partnership with groups to support their project.

Applicants are encouraged (not mandated) to provide a contribution towards their project. This contribution can either be financial, or "in-kind" or a combination of both. An in-kind contribution is part of the project that would normally be paid for but is given to the project at no cost.

The ability to provide financial and in-kind support to a project by the applicant will be taken into account during the review process.

Budget

The budget must include details on all income (all sources of funding which will be used to deliver the project, including the requested amount from this grant) and all expenditure (costs involved in the project). Income and expenditure must be equal. Below is an example of the budget table within the application form.

Please provide a copy of quotes with your application for expenses exceeding \$1,000.

Income	\$	Expenditure	\$
Council Event Grant	\$2,000.00	Face Painting	\$80.00
Market Stall	\$600.00	Community group payments	\$500.00
Cars and Public Entry	\$1,000.00	Bar	\$560.00
Bar	\$800.00	Canteen and BBQ	\$1,750.00
Canteen and BBQ	\$2,000.00	Jumping Castle	\$250.00
	\$	Musicians	\$500.00
	\$	Music equipment hire	\$250.00
	\$	Prizes for Colouring Competition	\$60.00
	\$	Prizes for Car Competition	\$550.00
	\$	Marque Hire	\$300.00
	\$	Craft Table	\$100.00
	\$	Flyers Printing	\$700.00
	\$	Folding of Flyers and distribution	\$100.00
	\$	Advertisement	\$700.00
	\$6,400.00		\$6,400.00

It is also necessary to detail the in-kind contributions, if any, that will be made to the activity in the in-kind section of the application form. Below is an example of this table within the application form.

If you have volunteers working on the project, include their contribution at the following values:

- \$25 per hour for unskilled labour
- \$40 per hour for qualified trades person
- \$65 per hour for machinery hire, including driver

In-Kind

Please include details of any contributions to the project that you would normally pay for, but are being received at no cost to the project.

If you have volunteers working on the project, include their contribution valued at:

- \$25 per hour for unskilled labour
- \$40 per hour qualified trades person
- \$65 per hour machinery hire including driver

Person or organisation*	Task	Hours/Rate	Amount In-Kind*
Committee	Labour set up and remove display	10 hrs/\$25	\$250
Recreation Reserve	Loan of tables and chairs		\$100
Joe Blough	Sound equipment and tech support	4 hrs/\$40	\$160
Mary's Newsagents	Photo copy flyers		\$100
			Total* \$610

Add Row

If your organisation is registered for GST the budget should be filled in **GST exclusive**. If your organisation is not registered for GST you should fill in the budget **GST inclusive**. Please refer to the www.ato.gov.au website for further details.

How will applications be assessed?

All applications received will go through the following assessment process:

- Eligibility checks against criteria for the funding of this program
- Panel Assessment with broad representation from Council Departments
- Final review and approval under delegation of the Department Director

The Assessment Panel will consider the following:

- Does the activity meet the objectives and activities of the program
- Does the activity have a broad community benefit
- Is the activity well planned and feasible within the timeframes provided
- Evidence that the activity will be well supported by the community
- Evidence that the activity will be inclusive and accessible for the whole community
- If there is a matching component
- Does the intended activity align with the following strategic documents:
 - Greater Shepparton City Councils Plan 2025 - 2029
 - Other Master Plan or other Council Strategy.

The Council Plan and other Strategies can be accessed at www.greatershepparton.com.au

Eligibility Assessment Stage

This stage involves checking the submitted application against all mandatory assessment criteria as outlined in the relevant categories and includes the following:

- The applicant is an eligible organisation or entity and/or has secured an auspice arrangement.
- A current Certificate of Currency for \$20M public liability insurance is attached to the application.
- Quotations for all eligible expenditure items valued at \$1,000 or above have been provided.
- The proposed activity will take place within the Greater Shepparton municipality and within the specified timeframes.
- The budget table has been completed, with income and expenditure balanced.
- The applicant has no outstanding acquittals at the time of submission.
- The applicant meets the minimum objectives of the Community Matching Grant and has appropriately matched their requested funding amount.
- Relevant approval has been received by Council department or request made through contact officer for installation on Council land.

Applications that do not meet all mandatory requirements outlined above will not progress to the next stage of the assessment process.

Panel Assessment Stage

At this stage, applications are reviewed by an assessment panel comprising representatives from relevant Council departments.

In addition to the assessment criteria outlined below, the panel will consider the following:

- Whether the activity aligns with the objectives of the program stream.
- The extent to which the activity demonstrates broad community support and delivers community benefit.
- Whether the activity is well-planned and feasible within the specified timeframes.
- Evidence that the activity will be inclusive and accessible to the whole community.
- If the matched requirement has been appropriately fulfilled.
- Alignment of the proposed activity with strategic documents such as the Council Plan, master plans, or other Council strategies. These documents can be accessed at www.greatershepparton.com.au.

Assessment Criteria

Applications will be assessed on a weighted average scoring system, as shown below:

Weighting	Criteria	Measure/ Key Considerations
20%	<p>The extent to which the application/project has outlined a proposal for purchase/installation of festive decorations.</p> <p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Applicant has clearly identified the need for the project and what it will achieve• Evidence of how it will benefit the local community/town• Application is clearly defined• Applications link to the Council Plan 2025-2029	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clear problem/need statement and outcomes (community benefit, activation, vibrancy)• Scope and description of decorations and installations (what, where, how)• Alignment with local community identity and inclusion (e.g., cultural sensitivity, accessibility)• Feasibility of delivery within timeframe (workflow, suppliers, installation sequence)• Risk and compliance awareness (public safety, weather, vandalism, electrical where relevant)• Linkage to the relevant Council Plan strategic objectives
20%	<p>The extent the application demonstrates the use of an appropriate location.</p> <p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Applicant has clearly identified an appropriate location for decoration/installation.• Discussion was held to state approval has been granted for use of location from landowner or how approval will be granted.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Location suitability (visibility, foot traffic, accessibility, safety)• Fit-for-purpose (structural suitability for installation; power needs)• Approval pathway (Council/site owner consent, timelines, contact)• Cultural and environmental considerations (First Nations acknowledgements where relevant, heritage, trees/greenspaces)• Operational logistics (bump-in/out, storage access, traffic management if needed)

20%	<p>The extent to which the applicant has contributed in-kind support to deliver the project and has partnerships.</p> <p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicant has identified In Kind Support and partnerships to be involved to ensure successful delivery of the project. • Key groups were consulted and there is a demonstrated need for this project. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identified partners (community groups, businesses, schools, volunteers) • Defined roles and commitments (letters/emails of support, MOUs) • In-kind contributions quantified (materials, labour, venue, logistics) • Community consultation (key groups engaged; feedback informs design) • Equity and inclusion (First Nations, CALD, disability/community voices represented)
20%	<p>The extent to which the application demonstrates a clearly defined budget that includes associated costs.</p> <p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Application showcases a comprehensive breakdown of expenses, outlining specific costs and has a quote. • Items/installations clearly identified for purchase in application. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive itemised budget (purchase, installation, labour, storage, transport, contingency) • Quotes/evidence for key items • Value for money (cost-benefit rationale; reuse potential; maintenance costs)
20%	<p>Applicant demonstrates an appropriate plan for storage and future use of the festive decorations.</p> <p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicant has outlined a clear approach for the storage and future utilisation of festive decorations, ensuring they are securely stored and readily available for use in subsequent years. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defined storage location (secure, dry, accessible) • Handling and maintenance plan (cleaning, repair, condition checks) • Inventory management (tagging, asset register, photos) • Reuse schedule and process (who's responsible, booking/request system) • Longevity and sustainability (materials durability, reuse cycles, cost-efficiency)

Notification of outcome

All applicants will be notified as to the outcome of their application via the email address provided in the application. Please refer to the timetable on page 2 to confirm the date we aim to notify you of the outcome of your application. Multiple applications from one organisation will not be funded under this program.

Grant amounts offered to successful applicants are based on outcomes determined during the assessment process and are in line with the program budget. Applicants may be offered partial funding to run a reduced or modified project.

If your application is successful

Successful applicants will be required to:

- Enter into a funding agreement and adhere to the conditions of the agreement.
- Spend the grant money in accordance with the conditions stated in the funding agreement and provided for in the application.
- Return any unspent funds at the completion of the activity, or at the end of the agreement unless prior written approval has been obtained to expend the funds in another way.
- Complete in full detail an acquittal form to the satisfaction of Council.

If your application is NOT successful

If your application is not successful you will be notified in writing and provided with an opportunity to discuss the outcome with the Program Coordinator and Grants Coordinator.

In some cases, the assessment panel may consider your application more suited to one of Council's other grant programs. If your application is more aligned with another funding program, Council will contact you and let you know.

If an application is made to an alternative funding stream within Council, only one funding application may be considered per financial year for the same activity.

If there are funds remaining in the grant pool, Council may choose to offer a second round of funding. Whilst unsuccessful applicants are eligible to reapply, we would recommend revising the application prior to ensure it fits the objectives of the program and assessment criteria before doing so.

Diversity and Inclusion

Council values and celebrates the diversity of the Greater Shepparton community. While this grant focuses on purchasing decorations, applicants are encouraged to consider inclusive practices where possible. Examples include:

- Using decorations that reflect cultural diversity and respect for all community groups.
- Considering accessibility (e.g., placement for visibility, ease of access).
- Avoiding language or imagery that excludes or stereotypes.

Council Officers are available to assist with advice on incorporating diversity and inclusion into your application.

Please contact Customer Service on (03) 5832 9700 and ask to speak to a member of the Community Wellbeing department. Alternatively, you can make contact via council@shepparton.vic.gov.au.

Gender Equality

Council is committed to promoting gender equality under the Gender Equality Act 2020. While this grant is for purchasing decorations, applicants are encouraged to consider inclusive choices that reflect and respect all genders. Examples include:

- Selecting decorations that avoid gender stereotypes (e.g., not overly associating certain colors or themes with one gender).

- Incorporating designs or messages that celebrate diversity and equality.
- Ensuring decorations are welcoming and inclusive for everyone in the community.

Council Officers can provide advice on how to integrate gender equality principles into your application.

Sustainability and Environment

Applicants of Council's grant programs are encouraged to consider sustainability outcomes and the impact of their project on carbon emissions and minimise carbon emissions i.e. by using recycled products, reducing or eliminating waste, using local products or using renewable energy.

Applications that support communities to thrive under a changing climate will be highly regarded.

You are encouraged to visit the Greater Shepparton City Council website for more information on Council's commitment to the environment:

<https://greater-shepparton.com.au/animals-environment-and-waste/environment>

Advertising and Promotion

All media, promotional and social media assets will require approval from Council's Communications and Engagement department prior to distribution. Ensure all promotional materials are submitted for approval at least three weeks prior to the event.

This will include providing logo recognition of Greater Shepparton City Council on all your promotional material relating to the event including, but not limited to posters, apparel, event programs and any other reasonably requested intellectual property.

To access the current branding guidelines, please contact the Community Development Officer on (03) 5832 9472.

Final Acquittal

You will be required to report back to Council when your project is completed. The Acquittal process is important because it enables Council to continuously evaluate the success of the program.

You must report back to Council within the timeframe provided in your funding agreement. The financial acquittal is an income and expenditure statement for the grant confirming that funding has been spent on the activity in accordance with the funding agreement.

Council officers may request meetings with you to check the progress or undertake an independent audit of the records of the applicant as they relate directly to the grant.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to maintain accurate financial records for the grant and make them available in the event of an audit by the Council into the use of the grant.

An organisation which fails to submit their acquittal documents is deemed ineligible to apply for any future funding from Council, until their acquittal is completed and approved by Council.

Contact Details

Greater Shepparton City Council

Community Wellbeing Department

Phone: (03) 5832 9472

Email: communityadmin@shepparton.vic.gov.au

Website: greater-shepparton.com.au



CONTACT US

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