

THE CITY OF
GREATER GEELONG

FIRST NATIONS GRANTS

2026-27 GUIDELINES

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We Acknowledge the Wadawurrung People as the Traditional Owners of the Land, Waterways and Skies. We pay our respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging. We Acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are part of our Greater Geelong community today.

About this grant

OBJECTIVES

The First Nations Grants support self-determined projects and initiatives aimed at increasing health and social equity for Wadawurrung Traditional Owners, First Nations People, organisations and groups living in Greater Geelong.

The grant supports applications that:

- deliver on the National Agreement on Closing the Gap socio-economic targets
- deliver on the five pillars of the City's Community Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-29
- increase understanding, respect and celebration of First Nations perspectives and culture
- increase knowledge and understanding of the impacts of colonisation on First Nations People and Traditional Owners through Truth Telling
- strengthen and enable First Nations decision making and increase opportunities for community participation and diverse engagement.

KEY DATES

Applications open:	27 June 2026
Applications close:	10 August 2026 by 5.00 pm (we do not accept late applications)
Notification to applicants:	9 December 2026
Project start date:	You cannot commence your project until after the notification date (above) and you have a signed funding agreement with us.
Project end date:	You must complete your activity within 12 months of the notification date.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO APPLY

Applicants must be based in the Greater Geelong municipality.

Wadawurrung Traditional Owners living outside Geelong are also eligible to apply when the project is delivered in Geelong. The City recognises Wadawurrung Country extends beyond Geelong's municipal boundaries.

YES ✓	NO ✗
✓ incorporated not-for-profit organisation	✗ unable to demonstrate 50% First Nations ownership or partnership.
✓ group with an auspice	✗ individual (without an ABN)
✓ registered charitable organisation	✗ school or learning institution (primary, secondary, tertiary).
✓ business	✗ previous applicant with an outstanding acquittal for grant funding from the City
✓ individual operating as sole traders (with an active ABN)	✗ applicant who has not complied with the terms of a previous funding agreement
✓ Early Years (playgroup, kindergarten, childcare centre).	✗ entity currently involved in legal proceedings with the City, bankruptcy or similar situations
	✗ entity with outstanding debt to the City.

HOW MUCH FUNDING CAN YOU APPLY FOR?

The total amount of funding available for First Nations Grants is \$100,000.

You may request up to \$25,000.

We understand that a First Nations individual, group or organisation may be involved in more than one application as a partner. This involvement will not make any of the applications ineligible.

HOW WE ALLOCATE FUNDING

Our grants are competitive, so even if you meet the criteria, you may not get funding.

You cannot rely on the City's Community Grants for ongoing funding.

In some cases, we may offer partial funding for a smaller or modified project.

We typically fund projects only once. However, we may consider funding a project again if there is a strong reason that aligns with the objectives of this grant.

You can apply to multiple City of Greater Geelong Community Grants programs, but each application must be for a different project, event, or activity.

What you can apply for

To help you work out whether your project is the sort of thing we are looking to fund, we have developed the following list of example projects and costs we might cover.

Yes - we will fund	No - we will not fund
<p>Types of projects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Projects within the City of Greater Geelong✓ Arts projects and activities with demonstrated Health and Wellbeing outcomes✓ Community development projects✓ Community engagement activities✓ Community events✓ Cultural awareness and capability building✓ Establish culturally safe spaces (e.g. signage, artwork acknowledgements, planting, enhancements or installations)✓ Health promotion activities✓ NAIDOC celebrations and events✓ Promoting Wadawurrung Culture (may require WTOAC approval)✓ Reconciliation events and activities✓ Training and development✓ Truth Telling events and activities <p>Expenses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Catering✓ Cultural consultations and services✓ Documentation e.g. photography, surveys, interviews vox pops✓ Equipment hire✓ Performers, artists, musicians and contractors✓ Promotion, printing and materials✓ Staff wages (where they relate to additional work required to deliver the project. Applicants must explain the role and why this work cannot be delivered within existing resources)✓ Stipends and honorariums for Elder knowledge and participation✓ Venue hire, (including City of Greater Geelong venues)	<p>Types of projects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✗ Projects outside Geelong✗ Black Cladded applications (cannot demonstrate transparent business practices or true Indigenous business ownership)✗ Capital Works (e.g. building property, structural improvements, alterations and extensions)✗ Core business✗ Cultural Heritage Management Plans✗ Fundraising events for charities or your own group✗ Permanent Public Art✗ Political or gambling activities✗ Projects started before funding is approved <p>Expenses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✗ Cash vouchers✗ Gift vouchers✗ General day-to-day operating costs of running your organisation or business (e.g. insurance, utilities, rent, administration)✗ Own venue hire✗ Prizes, gifts and awards (e.g. medals, money, trophies, vouchers)✗ Payments to volunteers✗ Taxes, levies, fines or penalties

What you need for your application

Before you start your application:

1. Read this checklist of what you may need.

- full and correct applicant name
- address and contact details of applicant
- name and contact details of the person authorised to apply for this grant
- certificate of incorporation
- auspice agreement letter (if your organisation is not incorporated)
- Australian Business Number (ABN) details registered to the grant applicant name
- a completed Statement by Supplier form (if you don't have an ABN)
- bank account details (account name, BSB and account number) which must match the applicant's name and ABN details
- redacted bank statement
- letters of support from project partners and/or stakeholders to evidence First Nations ownership or partnership in the project.
- copies of required permits or approvals
- evidence of venue availability
- evidence for expenses to be funded by the grant. Evidence we will accept includes:
 - supplier or contractor quotes with the supplier's business name, ABN/ACN and contact details,
 - screenshots from online stores with the item description, price and supplier's business name.

2. Contact the City

Contact the City's Community Grants Unit to discuss your eligibility, proposed activity and other grant matters.

E: communitygrants@geelongcity.vic.gov.au

P: 5272 5560

3. Ask for support

If you would like support to access our grants, the following is available

- A printed copy of the guidelines, or a large print version.
- Phone call to discuss the guidelines.
- Hearing or speech impaired - phone call through the National Relay Service on [133 677](tel:133677) (TTY), or [1300 555 727](tel:1300555727) on a regular phone and ask for 5272 5560.
- You need a language interpreter - contact TIS National on [131 450](tel:131450) and ask to be connected to us on 5272 5560.
- Option to provide a verbal presentation to the assessment panel (to support your written application).

How we assess applications

We carefully check all applications to make sure they meet the guideline rules and are a good use of the City's grant funding.

We will score your application based on the information you provide and how you answer the questions for each criteria.

FIRST NATIONS GRANTS ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Criteria 1: First Nations Outcomes 40%

- How will your project help improve outcomes linked to Closing the Gap and the City's Health and Wellbeing priorities for First Nations people?
- How will your project strengthen First Nations leadership, voice or self-determination? Explain how your project supports First Nations people to lead, guide decision-making, share cultural knowledge, or influence project outcomes.

Criteria 2: Community Engagement – 20%

- List all the people you'll work with, including First Nations community members, Elders, organisations, and other relevant partners.
- Explain how input or feedback from the First Nations community will influence decision-making and project outcomes.

Criteria 3: Well-planned Project – 40%

- What do you want to achieve, and how will you do it? Describe what your project includes and list the activities you will deliver.
- Upload letters of support from all project partners.
- Do you need any permits or approvals for your project? (e.g. event permit)
- Do you have a venue booking or evidence of venue availability?
- Describe any First Nations cultural protocols, permissions, or considerations you will follow.
- How much grant money do you need?
- What expenses will you pay for with the grant funds?
- Have you provided evidence for expenses to be funded by the grant? Evidence we will accept includes:
 - supplier or contractor quotes with the supplier's business name, ABN/ACN and contact details,
 - screenshots from online stores with the item description, price and supplier's business name.

If you do not provide this evidence, you may receive a lower score for this criteria, or the cost may be removed from the grant request.

FUNDING PRIORITIES

If the total funding requested by all applicants exceeds the available funding, we may prioritise:

- applications from First Nations owned or controlled organisations
- applications relating to items with immediate or urgent need as identified in the [socio-economic targets of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap](#)
- applications from organisations that do not receive money from electronic gaming machines or gambling.

Background

CONTEXT

This grant is informed by the City's Reconciliation Action Plan 2020-2021, Community Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025–2029, Council Plan 2025-2029 and Social Equity Framework 2022-2025.

This grant is also informed by the [National Agreement on Closing the Gap](#) which tracks progress against 19 national socio-economic targets across areas like life expectancy, health, education, and housing, and is used to assess progress and inform reporting on the agreement's implementation.

The objective of the National Agreement is to overcome the entrenched inequality faced by too many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, so that their life outcomes are equal to all Australians.

FIRST NATIONS COMMUNITIES IN GEELONG

The City is committed to supporting partnerships and collaborations with First Nations Communities across Geelong and recognises the rich diversity of these communities.

The City of Greater Geelong has the largest population of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in any local government area in Victoria, with an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population of 1% (ABS 2016). This is larger than Greater Melbourne with 0.5% or Victoria with 0.8% of the population. Across Australia Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples make up 2.8% of the total population¹.

There are two primary organisations who provide First Nations programs and services in Geelong.

The [Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation \(WTOAC\)](#) is the representative body for the Wadawurrung people, legally recognized under the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 as the Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) for Wadawurrung Country. Its primary role is to manage, protect, and preserve Wadawurrung cultural heritage, including artifacts, sites, stories, and land.

[Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative](#) provides culturally appropriate programs, support and services for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living on Wathaurong, Gulidjan and Gadubanud country, within the wider Geelong, Bellarine and Colac regions.

¹ 2021 Greater Geelong, Census Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people QuickStats | Australian Bureau of Statistics

How to apply

CONTACT THE GRANTS UNIT

Please contact the City's Grants Unit before applying to discuss your eligibility, proposed activity and other grant matters.

E: communitygrants@geelongcity.vic.gov.au

P: 5272 5560

APPLY ONLINE

All applications must be submitted online via SmartyGrants. You must log in or create an account before you begin. You can access the application form in two ways:

Visit the [Community Grants](#) section of the City's website and navigate to the specific grant page. Click the **Apply Now** button and log in or create an account to access the form.

Visit [SmartyGrants](#) directly, log in or create an account, and select the grant you wish to apply for.

Paper or email applications will not be accepted.

MAKE A PRESENTATION

In addition to the online application, you may request the opportunity to present to the assessment panel. This is optional, not a requirement of the application process. Applicants that do not make a presentation will not be disadvantaged.

WITHDRAWING OR CHANGING YOUR APPLICATION

If you have not yet submitted your application, you can log in to SmartyGrants at any time to make edits.

If you have already submitted your application and need to make changes, contact us before the closing date. We can reopen your application to allow edits.

Changes cannot be made after the closing date.

If you need to withdraw your application after submission, please notify the Community Grants Unit in writing.

ABOUT APPLICANT TYPES

To determine eligibility for a grant, please read all applicant types carefully. If you are unsure what sort of applicant you are, please check your details online.

- incorporated associations – go to www.consumer.vic.gov.au
- companies – go to <https://connectonline.asic.gov.au>
- individuals or sole traders with an ABN – go to <https://abr.business.gov.au>
- charities – go to www.acnc.gov.au/charity/charities

IF YOUR GROUP IS NOT INCORPORATED

If your organisation or group is not incorporated, you can still apply for a grant by working with an auspice organisation.

An auspice is an organisation that meets our eligibility criteria and agrees to support and manage your grant. They take legal and financial responsibility for the funding.

If your application is successful, your auspice organisation will:

- sign the grant funding agreement
- receive the grant money and pass it on to you

- make sure all grant activities are completed
- submit the final evaluation and financial report on your behalf.

How to apply with an Auspice

If you want to apply with an auspice organisation, you must:

- get their approval before you submit your application
- upload a signed letter confirming your auspice arrangement.

What happens next

Once we have decided who is going to receive a grant, we will let you know of the outcome of your application, even if it was unsuccessful.

NOTIFICATION OF OUTCOME

The City of Greater Geelong will notify all applicants of their outcome by email by the date listed on page 3 of this booklet.

Successful Applications

If your application is successful, this does not guarantee funding. You must complete additional steps before receiving a grant payment.

You will receive an email with a link to a funding agreement outlining the terms and conditions of the grant (see **Funding Agreements** section below).

You must sign and return the agreement, upload a tax invoice and your public liability insurance certificate of currency before any payment is made.

You cannot commence your project until after the notification date and you have a signed funding agreement with us.

Unsuccessful Applications

If your application is unsuccessful, we will notify you by email.

You are strongly encouraged to contact us for feedback which may help if you plan to apply again in future rounds.

PAYMENTS

If your application is successful, the City will transfer the approved funding amount to your nominated bank account after the funding agreement is signed.

We will only pay grant money to the applicant (or auspice).

A tax invoice is required before we pay any grant funds. Our team will contact successful grant applicants to arrange this.

If you do not provide either an ABN or a 'Statement by a Supplier' form, we may have to withhold tax from the grant payment at the top marginal rate of 45%.

FUNDING AGREEMENTS

Successful grant applicants will be required to enter into a funding agreement. The agreement will include:

- the terms and conditions of funding
- the details of the activity
- what you are expected to deliver
- your reporting requirements

General information

The following information applies to all City of Greater Geelong grants.

PERMITS AND APPROVALS

Some projects or events may need a permit or approval. These processes are separate to the grant application process and require additional time and budget in your project plan.

While you do not need to secure permits or approvals before applying, securing them will be a condition of the grant if your application is successful. As such, we may choose not to pay you any money until the relevant permits and approvals are secured.

You must demonstrate that you are aware of the necessary permits and approvals in your application. We will consider this information when assessing your application under the 'well-planned' criteria on page 7.

INSURANCE

You must arrange public liability insurance (PLI) to cover the activity detailed in your application and provide the PLI certificate of currency if your application is successful.

Applicants using an auspice would include a PLI certificate from the auspice organisation.

A policy statement or receipt of payment is not an acceptable substitute for the certificate of currency.

REPORTING

If you receive a grant, you must submit an evaluation of your activity and a financial report within one month of your project finishing.

The evaluation report tells us about your project and the financial report includes all income and expenses for the grant. It demonstrates you have spent the money how you said you would.

We may request meetings with you to check your progress or ask for an audit of your financial records to prove you have spent the grant as you said you would. As such, you must keep accurate financial records and make them available to us if requested.

GRANT VARIATIONS - MAKING CHANGES TO YOUR FUNDED ACTIVITY

Projects are funded for delivery as described in your funding agreement.

If you need to change something about your grant, you must seek our approval in writing. This includes:

- changes to your proposed completion date
- changes to the nature of your activity
- changes to how you want to spend the money.

We reserve the right to withdraw funding if:

- we do not support your request for changes
- your request is not made within a reasonable time
- you make changes without our knowledge.

If a project stops or the grant funds are no longer required, you must repay the funding to the City of Greater Geelong.

WITHDRAWING FUNDING

We reserve the right to withdraw funding if we do not receive a tax invoice within the financial year in which the grant was awarded, or by the due date/s included in the agreement.

We can also withdraw funding if you are in breach of your funding agreement.

ACKNOWLEDGING OUR SUPPORT AND MEDIA

You must acknowledge the City of Greater Geelong on your promotional materials if you receive a grant. We will provide a guide with detailed instructions on how to do this.

When you sign your funding agreement, you can choose to share a short statement about what receiving this grant means to you and how your project will benefit the community.

We may use your statement for promotion on social media or in other media outlets.

Definitions

Following are definitions of some of the words we use in this document. If you find other words that you are not familiar with, please contact us for help.

FIRST NATIONS GRANTS

Word	Explanation
Black Cladding	<u>Supply Nation</u> (Australia's leading database of verified Indigenous businesses) considers 'black cladding' as the practice of a non-First Nations business entity or individual taking unfair advantage of a First Nations business entity or individual for the purpose of gaining access to otherwise inaccessible First Nations procurement policies or contracts. Supply Nation's definition of a First Nations business is at least 50% owned by an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islands person(s).
Cultural Awareness	Cultural awareness means being aware of, and developing sensitivity to, cultural difference and cultural diversity. It involves knowledge, attitudes and values that demonstrate an openness and respect for other people and other cultures, languages, religions, dress and communication styles.
Cultural Capability	First Nations cultural capability is the ongoing, lifelong development of the skills, knowledge, behaviours, attitudes, and systems needed to respectfully and appropriately engage with, plan, support, improve, and deliver services that reflect the unique cultures, histories, and perspectives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
Cultural Safety	First Nations cultural safety is the creation of environments where the identity, culture, and experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are respected and upheld, ensuring they are not challenged, assaulted, or denied.
Elder	An Aboriginal Elder is a respected community leader who is a recognised custodian of Indigenous knowledge and law. They are trusted guides who provide wisdom, advice, and support, passing down culture, traditions, and history to younger generations.
First Nations	First Nations recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the sovereign people of this land. It goes further than First Australians as it recognises various language groups as separate and unique sovereign nations.
First Nations Communities	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
First Nations Cultural Heritage	First Nations Cultural Heritage encompasses the living knowledge, spiritual beliefs, cultural practices, and physical elements that are significant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
First Nations Cultural Intellectual Property	Cultural and Intellectual Property (CIP) refers to First Nations peoples' rights to their cultural heritage, which includes traditional knowledge, cultural expressions, sacred sites, and traditional medicines, as defined by customary laws rather than Western legal systems.
First Nations protocols	First Nations protocols are established customs, ethical principles, and ways of behaving developed by First Nations communities to guide interactions with their cultures, knowledge, and lands, encompassing everything from respectful communication and the protection of <u>cultural and intellectual property</u> .
National Agreement for Closing the Gap	The National Agreement on Closing the Gap is a partnership between Australian governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak organisations to improve life outcomes for First Nations People, shifting from a top-down approach to shared decision-making and accountability. The Australian Local Government Association is a partner to the Agreement.
Reconciliation	Reconciliation is a process aimed at strengthening relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-First Nations peoples, for the benefit of all Australians. Reconciliation is an ongoing journey.
Registered Aboriginal Party	A Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) in Victoria is a legally recognised Aboriginal corporation representing the Traditional Owners of a specific area of Country, responsible for protecting and managing Aboriginal Cultural Heritage under the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006. Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation are the Registered Aboriginal Party in Geelong.

Word	Explanation
Traditional Owners	In Victoria, <i>Traditional Owners</i> are Aboriginal people with deep cultural and spiritual ties to a specific area of land and water (Country). Wadawurrung are the Traditional Owners of the lands on which the City of Greater Geelong operates.
Truth Telling	In Victoria, <i>truth-telling</i> is a process of openly sharing historical truths about colonisation, its ongoing impacts, and the injustices suffered by First Nations peoples, as well as acknowledging their strength and contributions.

COMMUNITY GRANTS

Word	Explanation
ABN	Australian Business Number is a unique number that identifies a business in Australia.
Application	A form you fill out to ask for grant money.
Assess	How we review and consider your application.
Auspice	An organisation that applies for a grant on your behalf if your group is not legally registered.
Budget	A plan that shows how much money you have and how you will spend it.
Categories	Different types of funding available within one grant.
Community panel	A group of community members who review applications and recommend which projects should get funding.
Eligibility	The rules that decide if you or your project can receive grant funding.
Evaluation and financial report	A report you must complete after your project ends, explaining what you did and how you spent the grant money.
Expenditure	The things you spend money on for your project.
Funding agreement	A document that explains why we are giving you the grant money and the rules you must follow when using it.
Grant	Money given to a person or organisation for a specific purpose.
Group	Two or more people who meet regularly and run projects or activities that other people participate in (e.g., youth group, seniors group, cultural group)
GST	Goods and Services Tax. This is tax that applies to goods and services in Australia.
Income	Money that you have or expect to receive for your project. This can include grant money from the City, fundraising, sponsorship, ticket sales or other grant funding.
Incorporated	A group or organisation that has legally registered to become a formal entity.
Insurance	A contract you have with an insurance company that helps protect from financial loss if something goes wrong.
Log in	Your email and password used to access SmartyGrants.
Not-for-profit	An organisation that does not does not distribute profits to owners or shareholders.
Officer panel	A group of City officers who review applications and recommend which projects should get funding.
Online	Available on the internet.
Organisation	A legally constituted organisation that is registered or created by law. For example, incorporated associations, companies limited by guarantee or registered charities are all defined as organisations.
Quote	A written estimate of how much something will cost.
SmartyGrants	An online system we use to manage grant applications.
Submitted	When you finish your application in SmartyGrants and press the submit button.
The City	The City of Greater Geelong.
Unincorporated Group	A group that is not legally registered as an organisation.
Weighted average scoring	A method of scoring applications where some parts of the decision are more important than others.