

Community Grants Policy and Guidelines Engagement Summary



Between 16 October and 13 November 2025, Council sought community feedback on the draft Community Grants Policy and Guidelines.

The Community Grants Policy and associated Guidelines (Community Development Grant Guidelines, Community Events and Place Activation Guidelines and Community Support Grant Program Guidelines) were reviewed and updated with key changes such as the reallocation of a portion of the Community Grant Program budget to re-establish the Sponsorship Program, and updates to limits and eligibility criteria.

The community was invited to share their feedback by completing the online submission form via Your Voice Our Coast, writing to Council via email or post.

Key outcomes from the engagement include:

- **Overall support** for the draft Policy and Guidelines, with 81% of respondents supporting the Policy, and 65% supporting the Guidelines.
- **Reasons for support** included the re-introduction of the Sponsorship Program to provide **certainty** to groups with reoccurring events, **improved access** to funding and a **simplified application process**
- **Questions/concerns** relating to the changes included concern for **funding re-allocation impacts** and **general suggestions** around the grant application process and indexed funding



How you connected



A total of **21** online submissions and **1** written submission received



The Policy and Guidelines were downloaded **195** times



Your Voice Our Coast **631** views



Facebook – **3,357** people were reached, generating **14** interactions



Instagram – **967** people were reached, generating **18** reactions



Meta paid - Reach of **8,980** and **24,389** impressions



eNews story - Delivered to **20,472**

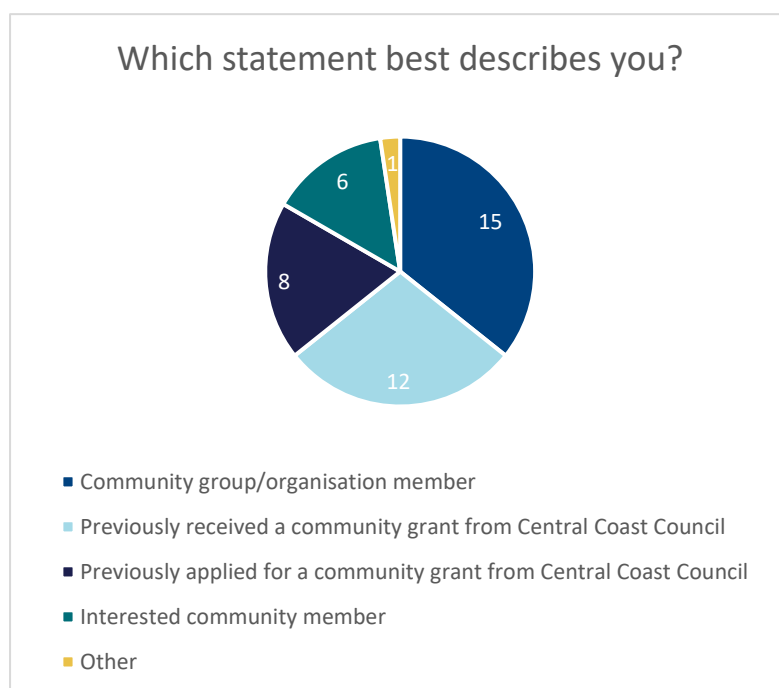


Email sent to **367** Your Voice Our Coast subscribers

Engagement Results

Online submissions

Council received a total of 21 online submissions. The feedback and insights from the online submissions are analysed below.



Of the 21 respondents, 15 were a community group/organisation member, 12 had previously received a grant from Council, 8 had previously applied for a grant from Council and 6 were interested community members (Figure 1).
*Note: As the selection of multiple options was allowed, totals exceed 21.

Figure 1: Type of respondent overview
Source: Survey on Your Voice Our Coast, 16 October to 13 November, 21 respondents

Most respondents (81%, n=17) support the proposed direction of the Policy, while 14% (n=3) were unsure and 5% (n=1) did not support (Figure 2).

Support for the Guidelines was lower but still positive, with 65% (n=13) in favour, 20% (n=4) unsure, and 15% (n=3) unsupportive (Figure 3).

Do you support the proposed direction of the Draft Community Grants Policy?

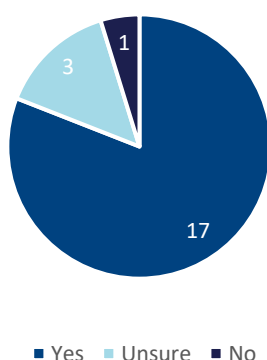


Figure 2: Support for Policy Source: Survey on Your Voice Our Coast, 16 October to 13 November, 21 respondents

Do you support the proposed direction of the Draft Community Grants Guidelines?

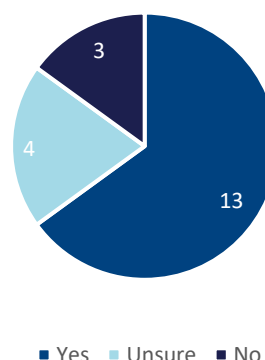


Figure 3: Support for Guidelines Source: Survey on Your Voice Our Coast, 16 October to 13 November, 21 respondents

Key themes

Support for Policy and Guidelines

Of the respondents who expressed support for the Policy and Guidelines, feedback included:

- **Support for the re-introduction of the Sponsorship Program to provide certainty to groups with reoccurring events (n=5)**

"I think the re-introduction of the sponsorship program is a good decision. It will provide some certainty for those organisations which are involved in regular events across the CC."

"I agree with funding reoccurring events. Living year to year without surety of funding I imagine stifles creativity and vision in the long term."

- **Support for improved access to funding (n=5)**

"Great to have more diversity in the grants program. It is often difficult when looking for funding, for your project to meet the criteria."

"As a grant recipient and community member, I can see that Central Coast Council is laying the foundations for a vibrant community culture here on the Coast. This is done by continuing to develop guidelines so as to provide better access to community groups which in turn showcases the unique identity of the contemporary Central Coast."

- **Support for a simplified application process (n=4)**

"The guidelines support community events that run annually. If this simplifies the application process then it is a positive change."

"I agree with funding reoccurring events. Living year to year without surety of funding I imagine stifles creativity and vision in the long term. Grant writing takes time and networking, easing that work load would again free up time."



Comments and questions for Policy and Guidelines

Of those who were unsure or unsupportive of the Policy and Guidelines, feedback included:

- **Concern for funding re-allocation impacts (n=4)**

"I am concerned that the funding available for the sponsorship is coming from within the Community Grants funding, as this will impact on the other funding opportunities."

"I support the changes, in principle, if they result in a fairer access to support. However, if limiting the number of times organisations can seek support in one year means that they can't access enough funding to operate, then it could be problematic for some smaller orgs who rely on rent subsidies etc."

- **General suggestions around the grant application process (n=5) and indexed funding (n=2)**

"I understand the reasons for the changes and have no objections as they seem well-intended. However, I would like to see changes include a commitment that the overall grant budget be increased each year in line with inflation, the RPI, or some similar economic marker, to prevent the value of the grants being reduced in value over time."

"We've found that the current acquittal and application processes are disproportionately time and resource intensive relative to the funding amount available. For small community organisations like ours, the administrative burden can outweigh the benefit, limiting our capacity to focus on service delivery and community impact."

Summary of findings

Most respondents expressed support for the proposed Policy and Guidelines, highlighting the value of reintroducing the Sponsorship Program to provide certainty for recurring events. Feedback highlighted the importance of improved access to funding and simplifying application processes to better support community groups and organisations. Concerns centred on potential impacts of funding reallocation and the need for indexed grant funding. Suggestions also included simplifying grant application processes to reduce administrative burden. Council's response to common suggestions and comments can be found below.

Council's response

Theme	Council's response
Suggestions to simplify application process (n=5)	Council recognises the importance of supporting applicants to navigate the grant application process and is committed to making it as accessible and straightforward as possible. Annual reviews are conducted on the application and acquittal process including: • online forms • mandatory documentation • simplification of processes where possible This is based on feedback from applicants, knowledge gained from our Grants Officers and overarching organisation requirements. Each year, the Grants team delivers a series of grant writing workshops, information sessions and Q&A sessions for community organisations and individuals interested in applying for funding. This education series aims to build applicants' skills and confidence, covering topics such as project planning, aligning proposals with funder guidelines, and understanding eligibility criteria. Additionally, these sessions provide an opportunity for applicants to access practical guidance on the application process, which can include assistance on how to use the SmartyGrants platform.
Concern for funding re-allocation impacts (n=4)	Council is proposing to establish a Sponsorship Program by reallocating approximately 15% of the existing Community Grants Program budget. While the Sponsorship Program has not yet been developed, its intended purpose is to offer a dedicated funding stream for organisations that deliver significant, recurring events on the Central Coast. By introducing a Sponsorship Program, the Community Grants Program will be able to offer more opportunities for a wider range of community groups and new initiatives. This ensures that funding is distributed more equitably and supports the sustainability and innovation of community-based organisations across the Central Coast.
Suggestions to index grant funding (n=2)	Council acknowledges the suggestion to index grant funding to inflation or similar economic markers. While the current changes focus on program structure and eligibility, Council will consider this feedback as part of ongoing policy review.

What's next?

Council is currently reviewing all feedback received during the public exhibition and will amend the Community Grants Policy and Guidelines where appropriate. The final Community Grants Policy and Guidelines and results of the exhibition will then be presented to Council for formal adoption.

Once Council has adopted the proposed changes, the Sponsorship Policy and associated Guidelines will be developed and presented to the Community and Culture Committee for endorsement prior to public exhibition.

Find out more and stay up to date at
Your Voice Our Coast