



MOUNT BARKER
DISTRICT COUNCIL

2024 - 2025

Community Funding Report



Acknowledgement of Country

Council acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the lands of the Mount Barker District. We respect the First Nations people and their spiritual relationship with their country and their cultural and heritage beliefs.



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Report Purpose

Report Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the outgoing funding Mount Barker District Council has distributed across its community funding programs:

- Community Grants
- Environmental Grants
- Event Support Program
- Heritage Incentive Scheme
- Ward Donations
- Discretionary Rate Rebates

This report is also intended to highlight the extent of support Council provides to community-led initiatives and the great outcomes grant recipients delivered during the 2024/2025 financial year.

It also outlines community funding program quality improvements Council has undertaken during this reporting period.



Photo Credit: Butler Creative

Ink Pot Arts Inc received a community grant in May 2025 to run their Bubble & Squeak creative program for pre-schoolers.

Overview of Community Funding

As at 30 June 2025, Council had awarded money through six grants programs, plus the Discretionary Rate Rebates Program which is a waiver, or subsidy, depending on the extent of the rebate applied.

In 2024/2025, \$263,832 of community funding was awarded across all programs.

PROGRAM	2024/2025 BUDGET	AWARDED
Community Grants	\$85,582	\$79,018
Environmental Grants	\$30,000	\$32,245
Event Support Program	\$105,000	\$108,309
Event Support Program for Civic Events (Australia Day, ANZAC Day, Remembrance Day)	\$12,000	\$13,309
Heritage Incentive Scheme	\$15,000	\$3,000
Discretionary Rate Rebates	N/A	\$9,903.57
Ward Donations	\$18,540.50	\$18,038.50
Total Awarded		\$263,832

Council's community funding programs are an important mechanism to achieve our goal to be the most liveable region in South Australia, and to support community leadership and innovation. Community leadership builds local economies, neighbourhood connection, a sense of belonging, community pride, cultural richness, heritage, resilience and wellbeing. Additionally, community leaders deliver outcomes for their community that otherwise may not happen. For these reasons, these community funding programs deliver a high economic and social return on investment for Council.

Community Grants

2024/2025

The Community Grants Program comprises two rounds, generally February and September each financial year. Grants are allocated to projects run by community not-for-profit groups which deliver local benefits and align with Council's Community Plan 2044. The average grant amount allocated is \$2,500 though lower or higher requests are considered.

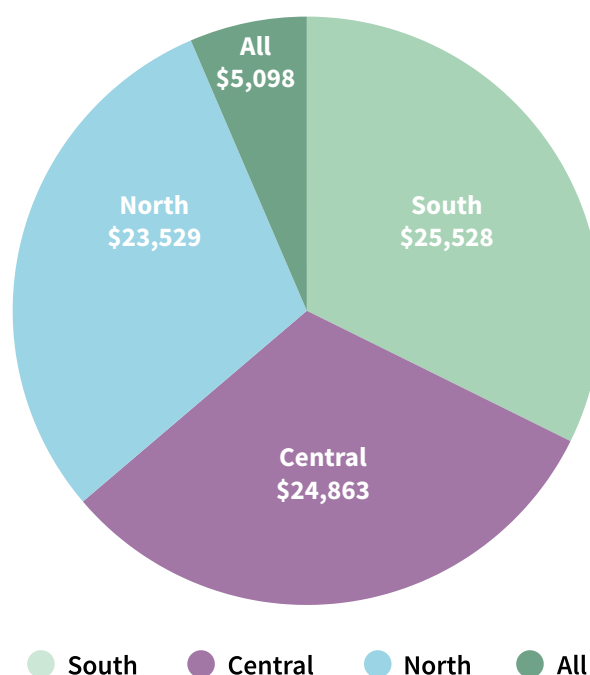
During 2024/2025, the Community Grants allocation was \$85,582 and \$79,018 was awarded.

Funding was provided to 36 applicants with an average grant amount of \$2,194. 72% of applicants received funding (noting some were partially funded).

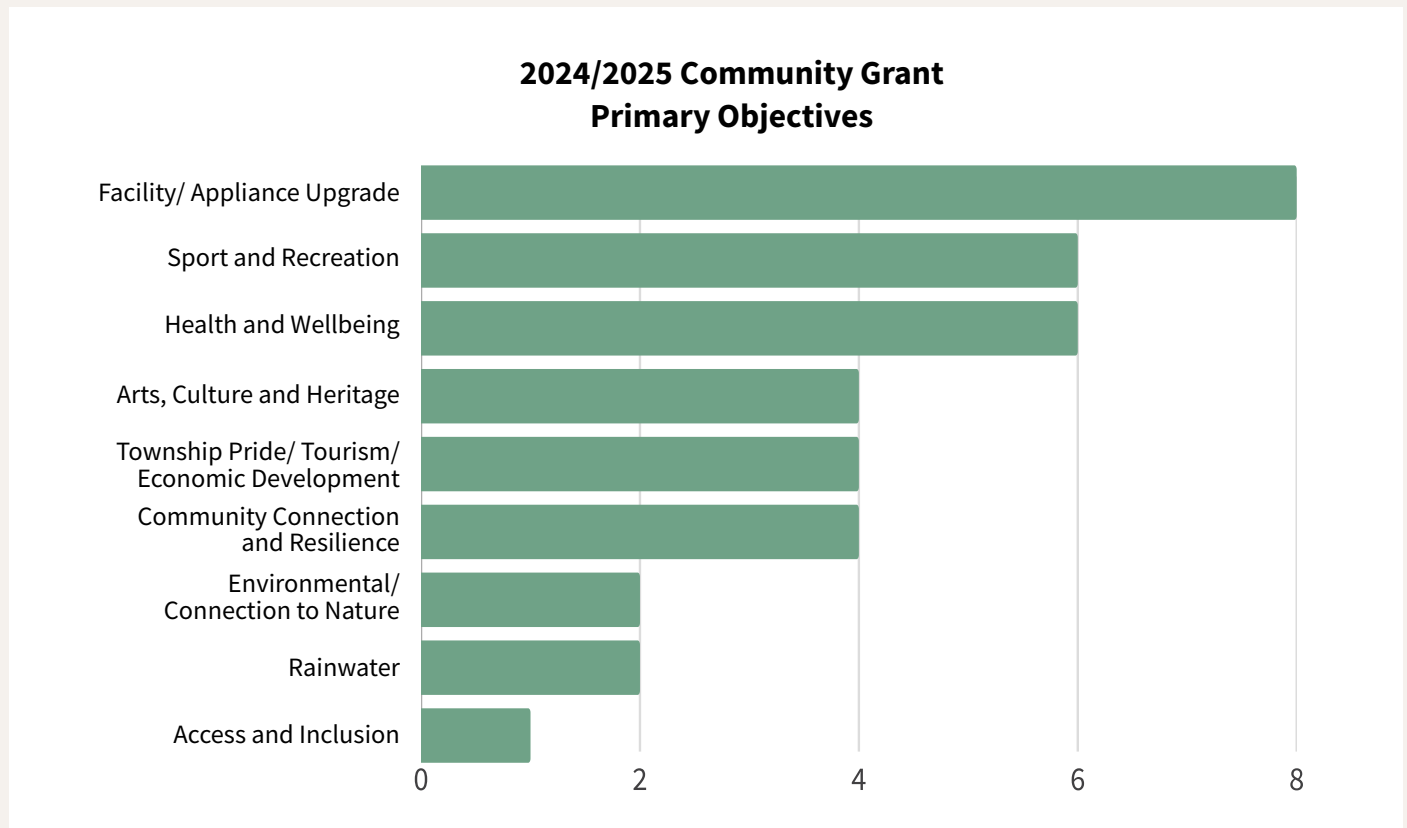
29 grants were provided to community groups, five to not-for-profit organisations and two to emergency services organisations.

The distribution of Community Grants was relatively even across district wards.

2024/2025 Community Grant Funding Allocations - By Ward



When analysing the primary objective of each awarded grant, noting some had several aims, eight grants were given for facility and appliance upgrades and six to health and wellbeing, and sport and recreation projects respectively.



Grant Completions 2023/2024

Round	Number of Grants	Acquitted	Extended	Overdue
1	17	17	nil	Nil
2	15	12	1	2



The three case studies of acquitted grants provided below show the broad range of projects funded by the Community Grants program.

Battunga Country Tourism was awarded \$1,680 for its Battunga Country Towns Unique Promotion. Grant funds were used for graphic design and printing of twelve eye-catching signs promoting the towns of Meadows, Macclesfield, Echunga, Prospect Hill and Flaxley.

The signs have been on display across the district on a rotating basis and are receiving many positive comments.



Mount Barker Community Centre was awarded \$2,500 to pilot a Walking Netball Program in partnership with Adelaide Hills Recreation Centre. Weekly evening sessions were run by Netball SA for ten weeks, which then continued on a weekly basis with volunteers running the activities. The program was then handed over to Adelaide Hills Recreation Centre to continue.

Mount Barker Cricket Club received \$1,500 to run a female Come and Try Day and to purchase equipment for their first ever female cricket team. The under 14 female team played across two terms and was extremely competitive.



Environmental Grants

2024/2025

Environmental Grants are administered in one round and open in February each financial year. Grants are provided to projects run by community not-for-profit groups which provide local environmental benefits and align with Council's Community Plan 2044. In 2024/2025, the Environmental Grants Program had an allocation of \$30,000; a \$20,000 increase from previous years. This rise was funded through an increased Community Funding budget allocation as a result of the 2023 Community Funding Review.

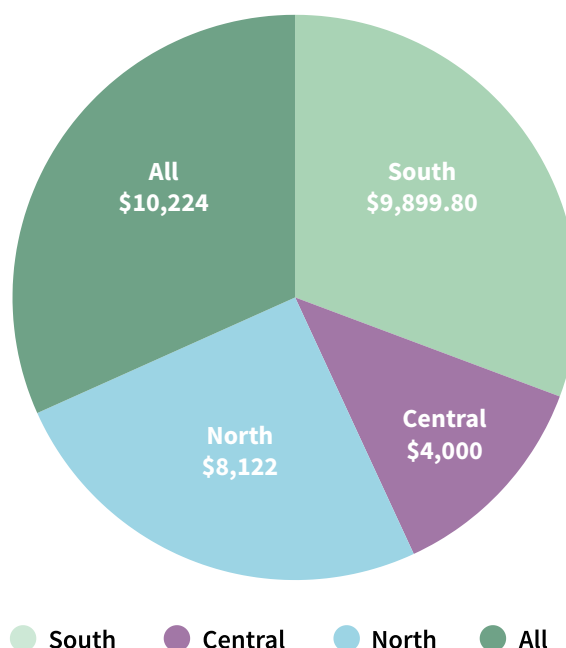
Funding was provided to 11 recipients which included 10 community groups and one not-for-profit organisation. The average grant amount allocated was \$2,931. All applicants received funding noting some were partially funded.

\$32,245.80 of grant funding was awarded under this program; the overspend was balanced by underspends in the Community Grants program.

Six grants funded equipment/ materials, four funded contractors, and one funded the purchase of plants and supplies.

The Central Ward received less grant funding proportionately than other wards; most likely because there are less environmental and/or bushcare groups active in the area compared with other wards.

2024/2025 Environmental Grant Funding Allocations - By Ward



Grant Completions 2023/2024

Number of Grants	Acquitted	Extended	Overdue
7	5	1	1

The three case studies of acquitted grants provided below show the broad range of projects funded by the Environmental Grants Program.



Hills Wildlife Guardians received \$2,979 to purchase two hospital box incubators for rehabilitating raptors, birds, reptiles, bats, possums and kangaroo joeys. More than 50 animals had been rehabilitated with a 95% successful release rate at the time of grant acquittal which was one year after the grant funding was received.

Echunga Golf Club Inc. received \$4,000 for its project to conserve a high quality patch of native vegetation on Echunga Golf Course. Grant funding was used to pay for five professional bushcare contractors to dig weedy bulbs, cut and swab weedy grass species, spot spray and remove weed debris offsite. This project was supplemented with volunteer labour. A photo monitoring point was also set up.



Littlehampton Primary School received \$3,908 to create signage and habitat boxes for Coppins Bush Trail. This project included engaging local mural artist Taylr Jay to incorporate the students' ideas and involve them in the development of designs. Funding also enabled the creation of QR codes to provide an interesting and interactive learning experience for visitors to Coppins Bush Reserve.



Event Support Program

The Event Support Program is administered in one round and opens in April each financial year for events occurring the following financial year. The purpose of the Event Support Program is to provide funding and assistance to community groups and event management/tourism organisations to deliver regional and community events within Mount Barker district. The program comprises two tiers:

- Community Event – an event of local significance with grants up to \$4,000 available.
- Regional Event – an event which attracts visitors from outer regions and media interest with grants up to \$5,000 available.

The Event Support Program had an allocation of \$95,000 in 2024/2025 which was fully allocated.

45 applications received funding with the average grant amount being \$2,198. All applicants received funding noting some were partially funded.

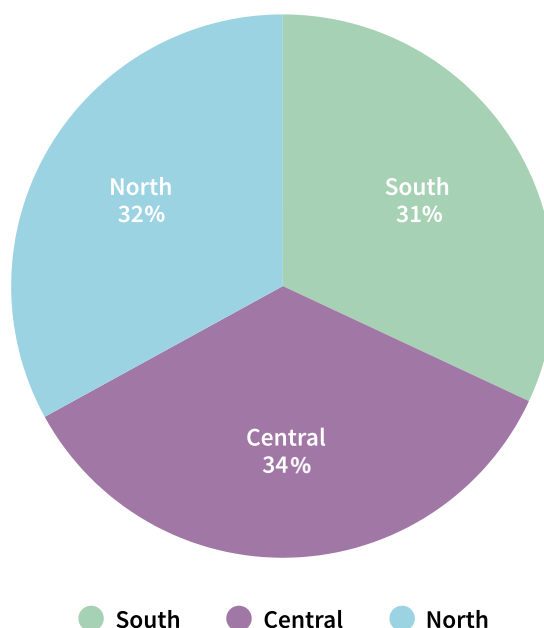
Additionally, 11 civic events received funding of \$13,309 which included events such as Remembrance Day, Australia Day and ANZAC Day.

A \$10,000 contingency for the Event Support Program is retained each year to assist applicants with unforeseen costs, such as revised quotes for traffic management.

Event Support Program funding was evenly split across Council wards.

Based on the acquittals received, volunteers donated 45,404 hours to organise and deliver these events; a contribution with an estimated value of more than \$2 million.

**2024/2025 Event Support Program
Funding Allocations - By Ward**



The Event Support Program includes a significant in-kind component provided by Council's Event Coordinator/s and Maintenance and Operations staff. This support is provided to many events which do not receive event funding through the program. This in-kind component also includes marketing support provided by Council's

Communications and Engagement team who assist with pre- and post-event promotion using Council's social media platforms, and publishing event information on Council's What's On events calendar. The loan of event infrastructure and practical support by staff is estimated to have saved event organisers more than \$100,000.

Grant Completions 2023/2024

	Number of Grants	Acquitted	Overdue
Event Support Program	41	38	3 - cancelled due to weather
Civic Events	11	11	-

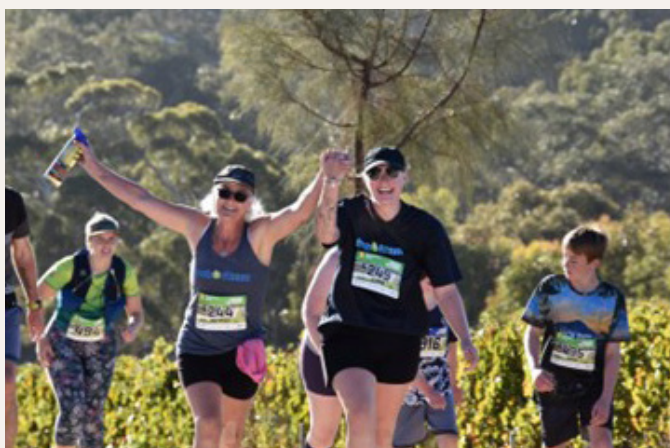
The three case studies of acquitted grants provided below show the broad range of events funded by the Event Support Program.



The Battunga Weekend was a festival run over Mother's Day weekend in May 2025 by Battunga Country Tourism. Featuring 30 events across five towns, the festival is estimated to have attracted 3,000 visitors with an economic return of \$60,000 and more than 300 volunteer hours donated. The event received local newspaper coverage which resulted in a rise in artist sales, events being booked out and increased attendance to the Meadows Market. Council granted Battunga Country Tourism \$2,500 for this event.



Nairne Districts Residents Association received \$2,000 from Council's Event Support Program for the Nairne Christmas Twilight Markets. 2,000 people were estimated to have attended with 45 stallholders involved. Due to the level of community interest in the event, the applicant applied for a road closure permit for their 2025 event to ensure the safety of the thousands who attend and to further activate the main street.



Conquer the Summit is a community fun run held in March each year. The 2024/2025 event was based at the Summit Sport and Recreation Park (SSRP) for the first time. Run by the Lions Club of Mount Barker, it is a significant fundraiser for Operation Flinders. The Lions Club received \$1,000 in Event Support Program funding toward the event. Runners and walkers started their race at the SSRP and the course took in parts, or all, of an ascent to the top of Womma Mukarta/ Mount Barker Summit. 750 participants took part in this growing event which highlights the natural beauty of the Mount Barker region and event organisers are aiming for 1,000 people in 2026.

Heritage Incentive Scheme

The Heritage Incentive Scheme is designed to assist residents conserve their heritage listed properties. The scheme offers;

- the waiving of development application fees for conservation works.
- free professional heritage advice from Council's Heritage Adviser*;
- a grants scheme involving a subsidy of up to 50% (up to a maximum of \$3,000) of the total cost of conservation works to assist owners in conserving heritage listed properties.

*Advice is available for a range of projects such as restoration of stonework, verandas, roofs and fencing, general information on suitable materials, colours and construction techniques.

In the 2024/2025 financial year, the Heritage Incentive Scheme received two applications. One application of \$3,000 was approved to restore the original stone walls of a local heritage listed property.

Discretionary Rate Rebates

Council may grant a discretionary rebate of rates upon application in the prescribed form. Rebates are able to be applied in accordance with the Rate Rebate Policy, in the following circumstances:

To preserve buildings or places of historic significance where the land is being used for:

- educational purposes except where a mandatory exemption applies;
- agricultural, horticultural or floricultural exhibitions;
- a hospital or health centre;
- facilities or services for children or young people;
- accommodation for the aged or disabled;
- residential aged care or day therapy centre; and
- providing a benefit to the community.

In 2024/2025, Council provided discretionary rates rebates to 37 community groups. Discretionary rate rebates are reviewed every three years on a rolling basis. The following rebates were reviewed and reapproved during 2024/2025:

APPLICANT	AMOUNT OF REBATE (\$)	%
Littlehampton Peace Memorial Hall Inc.	\$3,548.15	100
Nairne Institute Committee Inc.	\$1,287.24	100
Nairne Soldiers Memorial Hall Inc.	\$1,782.33	100
Macclesfield Community Assoc.	\$1,270.73	100
Adelaide Hills Motor Restorers	\$967.37	100
Mount Barker Family House Inc (Laratinga Community Shed)	\$1,047.75	100
TOTAL	\$9,903.57	

Ward Donations

At each monthly meeting, Council Members may nominate individuals or groups for a donation from their annual ward donation allowance. Decisions to award donations are a Council decision.

The Ward Donation budget for 2024/2025 was \$18,540.50. The total amount expended was \$18,038.50, resulting in \$502 being unallocated.

2024/2025 Ward Donations comprised:

RECIPIENT TYPE	NUMBER OF DONATIONS	TOTAL MONETARY VALUE
Individuals	4	\$600
Community groups	35	\$13,778
Not-for-profits	4	\$1,385
Churches	1	\$500
Businesses	1	\$215

Note: a detailed list of Ward Donations gifted each year is provided as a Council report each August and can be viewed in the August Council agenda.

Continuous Improvements

Council undertook a Community Funding Review in 2023, and the final report and action plan was endorsed by Council in February 2024. In September 2024, following budget adoption, Council created the role of Community Grants Officer and appointed Alyssa Hill to the position. The Community Grants Officer's role is to:

- drive quality improvements to Council's community funding programs;
- implement the recommendations from the Community Funding Review;
- provide one point of contact for Council's grants programs; and
- support community groups across the district to secure funding beyond Council's grant programs.

In February 2025, Council launched a new Community Leads newsletter, which is aimed at the district's community groups and not-for-profit organisations. The newsletter contains grants information as well as networking and training opportunities. In May 2025, Council coordinated a community group forum which was promoted through the newsletter and Council's social media platforms. 35 volunteers from a diverse range of organisations attended this casual networking and information sharing event at Hahndorf Bowling Club. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive and these forums will become a permanent fixture on Council's calendar.

In the past financial year, Council undertook community engagement on a new Community Funding and In-Kind Support Policy to guide how community funding programs will be administered. Council has also adopted guidelines for a new Community Infrastructure Grant Program which will fund upgrades and improvements to community and recreational facilities across the district.

Of the 34 recommendations in the Community Funding Review:

- Five are complete
- 13 are underway
- Three have commenced and are now ongoing
- Four have stalled
- Nine have not commenced

Refer Appendix 1 for more detail.

Appendix

Progress implementing the Community Funding Review 2023 recommendations as at 30 June 2025.

RECOMMENDATION	STATUS	NOTES
1. Develop a community funding communications strategy that concentrates on engaging community groups that are harder to reach or have not recently applied for community funding.	Complete	Community Leads newsletter launched with 800+ subscribers. Promotion of funding opportunities on social media and through Council's monthly community newsletter District Matters. 'Equity' included as a principle in the draft Community Funding and In-Kind Support Policy. Website communicates that Community Grants Officer is available to assist with all grants queries. One-on-one mentoring sessions have been held with groups. Webpage upgrades have improved navigation between different grants programs and increased visibility of Ward Donations program.
2. Produce a digital community funding booklet that summarises all avenues for community groups seeking financial and in-kind support, how to access it and provide at least one case study example for each community funding stream to showcase how a community group has benefited.	Underway	
3. Provide briefing sessions to all staff with a community facing role to ensure they are aware of and can promote community funding opportunities to the groups they interact with.	Ongoing	
4. Include a summary of community funding program outcomes in the MBDC Annual Report.	Ongoing	Completed for 2024/2025.
5. Establish an internal community funding dashboard to consistently record, track and monitor where grants and other forms of community funding are being distributed. Monitor the data for trends that show particular groups or locations may be missing out or receiving a disproportionate share, and report this information periodically to Council.	Underway	

RECOMMENDATION	STATUS	NOTES
6. Repurpose 'Ward Donations' as 'Quick Wins' Community Grants to assist with better promotion of this funding to the community to meet the demand for small quick response grants. 20. Repurpose 'Ward Donations' as a quick response 'Quick Wins' community grant program for initiatives and activities that demonstrate immediate need and do not fit within other established grant programs. This repurposed funding would, subject to meeting clear eligibility criteria, provide small grants of \$50 - \$500 for: • Participation by local youth in formally recognised state, national or international sporting, arts or cultural events or programs. • Delivering 'quick wins' to the community for worthy programs, projects or events that are time sensitive. • Purchase of small equipment to support community groups to achieve their core purpose. • Training and development programs for local volunteers to build the capacity of the community groups they are associated with. 21. 'Quick Win' Community Grants should be open all year round, or until all funds have been exhausted, and be approved by Council staff under delegation where proposals meet the criteria established by Council Members. 22. Develop a simple assessment form and acquittal process to ensure that there is a record of 'Quick Win' funding requests and how grants have been used by recipients.	Stalled	Workshop with Council Members held 11 June 2024 demonstrated support for Ward Donations to continue with refinements to process.
7. Expand the briefings and training provided to grant applicants / recipients to include grant recipients on project management skills and reporting and acquittal processes to reduce the risk of funds being used inappropriately.	Ongoing	Grants information sessions held regularly. Community Groups Forum held with guest speakers. Community Grants Officer available to provide one on one assistance.
8. Monitor community queries or common errors being made in application or acquittal processes and publish a series of fact sheets or FAQs to build community capacity to participate in community funding programs.	Underway	

RECOMMENDATION	STATUS	NOTES
9. Adopt a Community Funding Policy to guide the way MBDC provides funding to the community. 14. Undertake community engagement on a draft Community Funding Policy to seek feedback from the community before implementing significant structural changes to the community funding program. 24. Include a clause in the recommended Community Funding Policy that it will seek to partner with the community to deliver programs and projects on behalf of council where there is an economic and strategic benefit to doing so.	Underway	Community engagement on the draft policy closed June 2025.
10. Introduce weighted criteria in all grant guidelines to establish a transparent ranking system for assessment processes.	Underway	Weighted criteria are in place for Community Infrastructure Grants and included in the published grant guidelines.
11. Develop an assessment template with a scoring system and commentary fields to ensure that there is a clear record of assessments that can be used to communicate feedback to applicants.	Complete	This is in place for all community funding programs.
12. Review the templates for all funding agreements (or other instruments relating to community funding) to ensure they are clear in terms of roles and responsibilities, the quantum of funding to be provided, acquittal and reporting requirements and access to information. 13. Nominate one point of contact for all types of funding agreements and implement workflow procedures to ensure all requests and correspondence relating to that agreement are referred to the nominated contact for the relevant type of agreement. 30. Establish a new agreement where the previous agreement has expired but funding continues to be provided. If there are complex matters to be resolved before a long-term agreement, prepare an interim agreement. 31. Work with funding partners to develop agreed performance targets or key performance indicators to be specified in the agreement (or associated policy document) and reported on an annual basis.	Underway	Review of funding agreement with Mount Barker Community Centre is underway.

RECOMMENDATION	STATUS	NOTES
15. As a community engagement approach only, undertake a general Expression of Interest (EOI) process to identify community groups that would like to partner with Council on larger township projects that exceed the current levels of grant funding available. 16. Through the EOI, ask community groups to identify the categories of township projects they are interested in delivering and what type of assistance they would require from Council - both funding and in-kind. 17. Use the outcomes of the EOI process to establish the parameters for future project funding partnerships and 'pre-qualify' community groups that have the skills and capacity to plan, manage and deliver larger projects. 26. In each Annual Business Plan and Budget process, clearly define specific priorities and objectives aligned to its strategic plans that it is seeking Council partners to deliver on its behalf in the following financial year. 27. Invite pre-qualified community groups (see recommendation 15) to nominate projects that achieve the defined objectives and consider those submissions as part of the budget setting process. 28. Implement a Townships Plans Partnership Agreement, based on the Community Development Partnership Programs approach, for selected projects. 29. Establish a small, short-term, working group comprising the Community Development, Maintenance and Operations, Communications and Engagement and Finance teams to develop a solution that allows the in-kind services provided by Council staff to be accounted for in the most practical way.	Has not commenced	Township plans are being incorporated into district - wide strategies as they are developed. A process for considering and approving requests for in-kind assistance to community-initiated projects has been included in the draft Community Funding and In-Kind Support Policy.
18. Review the membership of the Community Grants Assessment Committee to include members of the community. This will also assist with the assessment of funding applications where specialist knowledge of a field would be advantageous, such as arts and culture. 19. In the longer term, investigate the potential advantages and disadvantages of appointing specialist 'Grant Assessment Panels' for each community funding stream to increase the role of independent community members in assessment processes.	Complete	The committee's Terms of Reference was updated June 2025 which provided for the appointment of a proxy member and independent members in line with grant guidelines.

RECOMMENDATION	STATUS	NOTES
23. Establish guidelines, criteria, application, assessment and evaluation processes for a Community Arts Grant Program to provide funding assistance to community groups and local artists for creative projects that progress the themes and goals of MBDC's Arts Plan.	Underway	
24. Engage with the Mount Barker district business community to determine demand for funding support linked to the objectives of the MBDC Economic Development Strategy 2022 – 2027.	Has not commenced	
32. Undertake a review of community funding program budget allocations and the maximum grant in each funding stream, having regard to: a. MBDC's strategic objectives b. Community needs - recent trends in grant applications where larger amounts have been sought c. Similar grants offered by other councils d. Budget impacts	Underway	
33. Appoint a Community Grants Officer to oversee a centralised community funding administration process.	Complete	Community Grants Officer commenced September 2024.
34. Amend delegations to enable Administration to assess and determine applications for discretionary rate rebates based on the clear policy and criteria adopted by Council.	Has not commenced	Not a current priority.



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