Whitsundays Chamber Community Fund

Grant Guidelines for Applicants
2026 Round 1

Everything you need to know before you apply — who can apply, what we fund, how applications are assessed, and what happens if you are successful.

About the Fund

The Whitsundays Chamber Community Fund distributes financial support to not-for-profit organisations, community groups and volunteer organisations operating in, or for the benefit of, the Whitsunday Local Government Area.

The Fund exists because a healthy local economy and a thriving community are not separate things. Money raised through the **Whitsundays Chamber of Commerce and Industry's** (WCCI) activities and donated by local businesses flows back out to the organisations that build connection and wellbeing across the region.

Where the money comes from: surplus funds from the Airlie Beach Cruise Ship Markets and Proserpine Community Markets, donations. and sponsorships from local businesses, and proceeds from Chamber fundraising events. Market surpluses are publicly disclosed at the end of each financial year in the audited financials.

> **Our mission**
>
> To strengthen the Whitsundays community by putting local money back into local causes — supporting the volunteers, organisations and community groups that create strong connections and wellbeing across our region.

What you can apply for

You may apply for one grant per round, and your organisation may hold only one active (unacquitted) grant at any time.

Grant type	Maximum	What it is for
Project Grant	Up to $5,000	A defined project with a clear start and end date, specific outcomes and a budget. The most common grant type.
Community Initiative Grant	Up to $3,000	A shorter initiative, event, program or ongoing work with clear community benefit.
Marketing Grant	$1,000 in-kind	Chamber marketing package to the value of $1,000 — two weeks advertising on the Airlie Hill billboard, one Mackay & Whitsunday Life feature, plus exposure through Chamber newsletters, website and social media, and two media releases. The package will be customised to suit your needs.

> **Partial funding**
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> The Chamber Board may approve funding for part of the amount you request. If that happens, we will contact you to confirm you can still deliver the project on the reduced amount before anything is approved.

Who can apply

To be eligible, your organisation must:

- Be a legally constituted entity — an incorporated association, registered charity or similar legal structure
- Operate in, or directly benefit residents of, the Whitsunday Local Government Area
- Have an active ABN
- Not be in financial administration, receivership or winding up proceedings
- Have appropriate governance in place — a committee or board, an annual general meeting process, compliant reporting and current licensing
- Be able to provide acquittal reporting on how the funds were used

Organisations based outside the Whitsunday LGA may still apply, but must demonstrate direct, specific benefit to Whitsunday residents. You do not need to be a Chamber member to apply.

We will not fund:

- For-profit businesses, commercial enterprises or sole traders
- Political parties, candidates or campaign activities
- Religious organisations, for activities that serve their membership rather than the broader community
- Government departments or agencies (statutory bodies considered case by case)
- Individuals applying in a personal capacity
- Projects that primarily benefit a private business or individual
- Activities that are unlawful, discriminatory or otherwise inconsistent with the purpose of the Community Fund
- Organisations that have not submitted an acquittal report for a previous Fund grant

Ineligible costs, regardless of the organisation:

- Retrospective expenses — costs incurred before the grant was approved
- Ongoing staff salaries or recurrent operating costs (project-specific costs may be considered)
- Interstate or overseas travel
- Fundraising activities for other organisations
- Gambling or gaming-related activities
- General administration or overheads that are not directly related to the funded project
- Alcohol purchases or licensed-bar costs
- Debt repayment, fines, penalties or interest
- Donations or grants to individuals
- Capital purchases or equipment not directly required for the approved project
- GST where the applicant is able to claim the GST as an input tax credit

The Chamber may also decline to fund costs or activities that it considers inconsistent with the objectives or intended community benefit of the Fund.

Key dates

Round	Applications open	Applications close	Outcomes notified
Round 1	Monday 14 September 2026	11:59pm Sunday 18 October 2026	By 30 November 2026

There is one funding round each year. Dates may be adjusted with a minimum of four weeks' notice, communicated through the Chamber website and social channels.

How to apply

1. **Check you are eligible against the criteria above.**
2. **Get your answers ready and documents together before you apply.** You will need:
   - Registered business name and ABN.
   - Description of the purpose of your business (max. 100 words)
   - Be clear on how much you are requesting and what for.
   - Start and finish dates for your project.
   - Specifics about your project (max. 200 words on what, when, where and who runs it)
   - Statement on the problem or gap your project address in the Whitsundays (max. 200 words).
   - Statement on the specific audience/who, and how many, will benefit from your project (max. 200 words).
   - Statement on what will be different as a result of your project (max. 200 words).
   - Description of measurable outcomes (max. 200 words).
   - If your project is an expansion of a current initiative, provide a statement on what has changed or evolved (max. 200 words).
   - Attachment: A project or initiative description (maximum two pages).
   - Attachment: A project budget showing income and expenditure
   - Attachment: Proof of incorporation — your Associations Incorporation certificate or ACNC registration
   - Attachment: Letters of Support, if you have them
3. **Complete the** online application form. Allow about 45 minutes. The form cannot be saved partway through, so have everything ready before you begin.
4. **Submit before the closing date.** Late or incomplete applications cannot be accepted.

Talk to us first

If you are unsure whether you are eligible, or which grant category fits your project, contact the Chamber before the deadline. We would much rather help you get it right than decline a good project on a technicality.

How applications are assessed

Every eligible application is scored independently by each assessor against four weighted criteria, then discussed as a group. Knowing the weightings should tell you where to concentrate your effort.

Criterion	Weight	What assessors look for
Community benefit	30%	Is the impact clear and meaningful? How many people benefit, and how directly? Is the benefit specific to the Whitsundays?
Financial need and value for money	25%	Is the funding genuinely needed? Does the budget demonstrate the money will be used well? Is co-funding or in-kind support evident?
Alignment with Fund objectives	25%	Does the project fit the purpose of the Fund? Does it address a real gap in services or opportunity?
Organisational capacity to deliver	20%	Does the organisation have the track record, people and infrastructure to deliver what is proposed?

Each criterion is scored from 1 to 5 and multiplied by its weighting, producing a total out of 100. Applications scoring below 50 are not recommended for funding regardless of the available budget.

A note on writing a strong application

The applications that score well are specific and measurable. "We will run eight sessions for around 40 young people between March and June, and we will know it is working if attendance stays above 30 per session and participants report feeling more connected" tells assessors far more than "improving youth wellbeing".

What happens after you apply

Applications are reviewed for completeness, then assessed and scored within four weeks of the round closing. The WCCI Board reviews and approves all eligible applications, and its decisions are final.

All applicants — successful and unsuccessful — are notified in writing within 14 days of the Board's decision. Successful applicants receive a Grant Offer Letter setting out the amount, conditions and reporting requirements.

Unsuccessful applicants receive a brief explanation. You may request general feedback within 30 days of notification. Individual scores are not released.

If something goes wrong with the process

There is no formal right of appeal against a funding decision. If you believe a procedural error occurred, you may submit a written complaint to the WCCI Board within 30 days of notification. The Board will acknowledge your complaint and advise you of the outcome.

If you are successful

The Grant Offer Letter is a binding agreement between WCCI and your organisation. Funds are not released until it is countersigned and returned.

Payment

- Grants up to $2,000 — paid in full on return of the countersigned Offer Letter
- Grants above $2,000 — 50% on return of the countersigned Offer Letter, and 50% on receipt of a satisfactory progress report or at the six-month mark of the project, whichever is earlier

Payments are made by direct bank transfer to the recipient organisation's account.

Conditions of the grant

- Funds must be used solely for the purpose described in the approved application
- Any significant change to project scope, timeline or budget must be approved in writing before the change is made
- Support from the Fund must be acknowledged in public materials relating to the project, including your website, social media, media releases and signage, using the approved Chamber Community Fund logo where appropriate, and the wording "Supported by the Whitsundays Chamber Community Fund"

- The Chamber may request a site visit or progress update at any time during the grant period
- Unspent funds must be returned within 30 days of project completion, unless a different arrangement has been approved in writing
- Expenditure records relating to the grant must be kept for a minimum of five years

Acquitting your grant

Acquittal is how the Fund demonstrates to stallholders, donors and members that their money achieved something. Requirements scale with the size of the grant.

Grant amount	What is required	Due
Up to $1,500	**Short impact report:** a one-page narrative outlining what was delivered, who participated or benefited, key outcomes and what the funding enabled. Include basic engagement data such as attendance or participation numbers, plus a summary of how the grant was spent.	Within 60 days of project completion
$1,501 – $3,000	**Impact and engagement report:** a two-page summary covering what was delivered, who participated or benefited, key outcomes and lessons learned. Include relevant engagement data, participant numbers or other measures of reach and impact, plus itemised expenditure and receipts.	Within 60 days of project completion
$3,001 – $5,000	**Detailed impact and engagement report**: a narrative summary of the project, including activities delivered, participation and reach, outcomes achieved, what changed as a result of the project and any lessons learned. Include relevant data demonstrating engagement and impact, itemised expenditure with receipts, and at least two photos showing the project in action.	Within 90 days of project completion

Do not overthink the reporting. We are interested in the story behind the numbers as well as the numbers themselves — who you reached, what you delivered, what changed and what the funding made possible. Not every project will have the same measures of success, so tell us what makes sense for your project.

Organisations that miss the due date receive a written reminder and a further 30 days grace. Organisations that fail to acquit after the grace period are ineligible to apply in future rounds and may be required to return the grant. Non-acquittal is reported to the WCCI Board.

> **If the paperwork is the problem, tell us.**
>
> Acquittal trips up plenty of volunteer committees. Contact the Chamber before the due date and we will help you work through it — that is a far better outcome for everyone than a non-compliance notice.

Applying again

- Previous recipients may reapply, provided all prior acquittal obligations have been met and the subject matter is not a straight repeat
- An organisation may receive funding only once during a financial year
- No organisation may receive funding in two consecutive rounds
- Ongoing programs must demonstrate evolution or expanded reach

Fairness and conflicts of interest

The WCCI Board reviews and approves all eligible applications. Board members serve voluntarily.

Every Board member signs a conflicts of interest declaration at the start of each round. A member who sits on the board or committee of an applicant organisation withdraws entirely from the discussion and scoring of that application. All disclosures are recorded in the minutes.

No donor to the Fund receives preferential influence over grant decisions, as a condition of their donation or otherwise. Fund monies are held in a dedicated account, separate from the Chamber's general operating accounts, and reported in the Chamber's annual audit.

Each year the Chamber publishes an Annual Impact Report summarising all grants made, outcomes reported and fund performance. It is made available to members and the public.

Questions

We are happy to talk through an idea before you write a word of your application.

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Whitsundays Chamber of Commerce and Industry