Consultation FAQ

Bass Coast Shire – Partnership Policy and Framework

June 2023

Where can I find a copy of the Draft Partnerships Policy & Framework?

The Draft Partnership Policy and Framework is available as a PDF download in the Document Library on the Engage Bass Coast Partnerships page. Visit engage.basscoast.vic.gov.au/partnerships or scan the QR code below.

When are the Information Sessions?

Council currently has two information sessions scheduled (one online and on in-person) to assist in understanding the Policy & Framework and how it will be progressively implemented over coming years. Further information sessions may be added, please follow the Engage Bass Coast Partnerships page for future updates.

In Person Session:
Tuesday 20th June
Bass Coast Shire Council, Wonthaggi, 2 – 4 pm

Online Session:
Thursday 22nd June 2023
Online via registration link, 7pm onwards

Register for sessions via Engage Bass Coast by scanning the QR code or visiting:
engage.basscoast.vic.gov.au/partnerships

What is a partnership?

Partnerships are an important way Council to pursue the delivery of policy outcomes and strategic objectives and ensure Bass Coast is a resilient, sustainable, and inclusive municipality.

A wide definition is applied; partnerships can include:

- Grants and other resources provided to external parties – this will include community grants and financial resources
- Sponsorships or contributions given to external parties to support events, initiatives, and projects
- In-kind support – Council lending its name or provision of services in lieu of funding
- Rights and entitlements to use or access Council or community facilities and assets

Partnerships support the achievement of council policy objectives, build, and strengthen community capacity, and deliver a high level of 'public value' from the investment.

This additional 'public value' is generated through co-contributions by organisations, the work of volunteers, efficient use of facilities, improved connections and cohesion in the community, and celebration of place.

What is included under partnerships?

Partnerships include the many arrangements that Council enters into with the community to pursue the achievement of shared objectives, this includes:

- Sponsorship arrangements
- Community-led investment proposals
- Community grants and contributions
- Requests for in-kind support
- Rights and entitlements to use or access Council facilities and assets on a discounted basis
- Regional network arrangements that Council participates in or supports

The framework may not apply to:

- Projects and activities that are subject to external government grants
- Supplier arrangements where Council purchases agreed services from others

Partnerships can sometimes sit alongside other agreements and forms of relationships, these include:

- Leases and licences – these are legal arrangements governing the use and occupation of facilities and assets, a partnership agreement might be referenced to explain the social or community benefit of the arrangement, but it will not override or supersede the agreement.
- Procurement or contracts – Council has legislated obligations in relation to procurement processes and contracts, partnership arrangements might be referenced in these but once again will not over-ride of supersede Council obligations.
- Community grants – community grants might be an important element of some partnership arrangements, but not all grants will end up with a partnership agreement. Community grants has a separate application and assessment process.

What is the purpose of the proposed policy & framework?

Council is trying to establish a fair process to clarify:

- Why Council enters partnerships – strategic alignment with Council objectives
- What Council is seeking to achieve – increased public value from investment
- How Council will document and manage partnerships – transparency and consistency
- When partnerships will be reviewed and evaluated – adaptation to changing needs in the community

Council has a responsibility to ensure that partnerships are established and reviewed in a transparent and consistent manner.

Approximately $2.5 million of value is distributed through partnership arrangements each year and Council has a responsibility to ensure that appropriate processes are in place to ensure transparency and accountability.

Why did Council start the process?

The drivers for establishing the partnership framework include:

- A desire for a consistent policy to guide and support both community applications and officer assessment of proposals
- Ensuring governance and documentation requirements match the value of the partnership, it should not place an unreasonable burden on community
- Demand for resources outstrips supply so there is a need for transparent prioritisation
- The true value of partnerships is not well understood
- Lack of clear documentation has made it difficult to evaluate success

Council is wanting to clarify the intent and purpose of partnerships, ensure there is an opportunity for review, and ultimately ease the burden on community at a time when there is a decline in volunteering and participation.

What is happening now?

Council has adopted a draft policy and framework on an in-principle basis and is now seeking community feedback into the process.

Council will consider feedback received and will amend and adopt a final policy by September, 2023.

Will this impact our partnership with Council?

There is no immediate impact on partnerships with Council.

In the short term, Council is working to improve its internal processes and systems.

Once the policy is adopted Council will set criteria and establish a review cycle for all partnership agreements. The review of all partnerships will likely take several years to complete.

If your organisation has an ongoing partnership with Council, you can expect:

- Reasonable advance notice of any future review of the arrangement
- Notice of the way in which the review will be conducted
- An understanding of the objectives of the review, this will likely include clarifying the community benefit of the arrangement and any issues from your organisation's perspective

What will Council consider when setting a review cycle?

Council understands the need for and importance of certainty and predictability for community partners.

This imperative needs to be balanced with the need for appropriate cycles of review that enable the value of partnerships to be assessed and requirement for transparency, equity of access to public resourcing, and adaptation to changing and emerging needs.

Council will consider the following factors in categorisation of partnership arrangements and establishing review cycles:

- Level of trust in the relationship – this is often built up over time and reflects strength in partnership
- Vulnerability of target group – if a program is directed to meeting the needs of a vulnerable group, Council will consider the potential impact of disruption to the partnership arrangement
- Maturity of proposal – initiatives that are in early stage of development or exploration may have shorter review cycles to evaluate and track performance
- Commercial factors – some partnerships require certainty to fulfil commercial requirements, these will be considered in the assessment process

How can I have my say?

Council will receive a further report to adopt a final version of the Partnership Policy & Framework by September, 2023.

You can make a submission into the final decision process in the following ways.

- Visit the Engage Bass Coast Partnerships page (https://engage.basscoast.vic.gov.au/partnerships) and provide a response in the feedback form provided.
- Follow the Engage Bass Coast Partnerships page for updates about key dates for submissions and Council Meeting dates regarding this topic.
- Attend an information session and complete the feedback form.
- Make a written and / or submission to the Council in the decision process.
- Attend the Council Meeting and hear Council's final decision.

If you have any questions or want to learn more about the Partnership Policy and Framework, please contact Johanna Radford, Coordinator Partnerships and Engagement via the details below:

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