Partnership Policy

Mandate

Council has an obligation to establish its own mandate for the promotion and effective management of partnerships in Bass Coast Shire.

Council will create an appropriate authorising environment through approval and adoption of local policy and procedures.

Scope

Councillors, Council officers and others employed as representatives of Council have accountability for enacting this policy and framework through understanding, application, and compliance.

The framework will govern:

- 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

Policy Statement

Bass Coast Shire Council is home to many local, state, and national non-government, and community-based organisations. This policy promotes the value of working with these entities for the positive benefit of our community.

Bass Coast Shire Council (the Council) cannot achieve its objectives alone and therefore recognises and respects the additional public value created through the various forms of partnership with community.

Council commits to:

- Respect and transparency in partnerships
- Encouraging collaboration, innovation, and creativity
- Building on strengths and evidence
- Access and equity to support a diverse community

Council has a primary obligation to ensure responsibility and accountability in the active management of community resources and funding.

Supporting Principles

Accountability

- Council has accountability to the community for good governance and ensuring appropriate management of public resources
- Strategic alignment with Council and community priorities is a priority success factor

Transparency and equity

- Partnership assessment processes will improve transparency and support equity of access
- All partnership arrangements will have mandatory review cycles to ensure evaluation of outcomes and opportunity for review
- Review cycles will consider whether a public exposure and testing process should be applied, few exceptions to this requirement are anticipated
- Application processes and partnership review cycles will be transparent and advertised publicly
- The value and outcomes derived from partnerships will be reported to Council on a regular basis

Proportionality

- Documentation requirements and mitigation controls will be commensurate to the level of risk

Risk management

- Real, perceived, and potential risks will be managed transparently and efficiently by Council

Conflicts of interest

- All partnership agreements will outline how conflicts of interest (whether actual or perceived) are to be managed

Public value

Public value assessment:

- Partnerships deliver different public value outcomes based on the social, economic, environmental, and cultural features of a proposal
- Council will assess the net-community-benefit of partnerships in its assessment and decision processes

Legitimacy and support (for Council) relies upon:

- Mindful exercise of authority
- Consistent application of policy and procedures
- Clear lines of accountability and decision-making

Operational capacity (the Administration)

The administration will ensure assessment of:

- Operational and financial implications
- Social, economic, environmental, and cultural benefits
- Benefits and risks associated with a partnership proposal
- Feasibility and practicability of a proposal
- Required documentation and evaluation

Evaluation criteria

Bass Coast Shire Council will apply the following evaluation criteria to assessment of partnerships:

Benefit to community

- Proposals must outline the net-benefit to Council and community
- Social, economic, environmental, cultural, and other benefits will be assessed

Alignment with Council objectives

- Proposals must align with stated priorities and aims of Council

Appropriate contribution by parties

- The contribution of all parties needs to be assessed and understood to assess feasibility of the initiative or concept

Local and community impact

- Initiatives must have local community impact and preference will be given to locally based entities

Public perception

- Council must consider the likely community response and public perception of the activity

Relevant matters before Council

- To avoid conflict of interest Council will consider if there are relevant matters before Council concerning the entity

Effective risk management

- Potential risks will be identified, evaluated, and mitigation strategies identified

Probity checks

- Reasonable probity checks will be conducted, and entities may be required to sign a disclosure form
- Policies that support access, inclusion and diversity will be highly regarded
- Working with Children Checks and Police checks may be mandatory

Impact on existing arrangements

- In determining if an arrangement proceeds Council will consider overall impact on Council including workload, resources, and other priorities

Scale and authority

Minor – partnerships with an annual value below $10,000

Medium – partnerships with an annual value between $10,000 and $49,999

Large – partnerships with an annual value between $50,000 and $99,999

Major – partnerships with an annual value of more than $100,000 per annum

All proposals will be assessed by Council administration according to policy, expenditure, and risk levels. Large and major partnerships will be subject to a comprehensive officer assessment.

Recommendation will be made from officers to the relevant approval authority.

Approval authority:

- Minor – CEO or delegate at second level (if consistent with policy)
- Medium – CEO or Council depending on level of risk and public impact
- Large and Major – full assessment and Council determination

Documentation

Minor – simple agreement and evaluation framework – low doc approach

Medium – simple agreement with higher requirement for evaluation

Large – comprehensive agreement and limited evaluation

Major – comprehensive agreement and detailed evaluation

Review cycles

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

Related activities

Sponsorships

- An agreement in which an external entity either provides or receives cash or in-kind support for an event or project for a specified time, in return for negotiated rights and benefits
- Offer of sponsorship – Council will determine if it is appropriate or necessary to invite other potential sponsors to make an application for an initiative
- Request for sponsorship – Council will ensure appropriate assessment of net-community-benefit and associated risks. All sponsorship arrangements will have an appropriate evaluation framework and documentation commensurate with level of investment

Community grants

- Community grants are managed under separate policy which is consistent with the broader partnerships policy and framework

Tenancy agreements

- Groups or organisations that occupy Council facilities on discounted value (i.e., peppercorn rental, subsidised rental) licences or leases will be required to enter into a partnership agreement that sets out social, community, or other objectives of the relationship
- The partnership agreement will be appended to the lease/licence agreement

Procurement

- Groups or organisations will ensure that there are clear internal processes to avoid the perception or reality of conflict of interest with procurement or purchasing processes

Exclusions

Bass Coast Shire Council is committed to enhancing the health and wellbeing of the community. Council will therefore not enter partnerships with external parties who might have a perceived or real conflict with Council's responsibilities to the community. This includes but is not limited to entities which:

- Operate in the tobacco, gambling, or sex industries
- Produce or sell alcohol as core business
- Produce or sell products that portray negative images or descriptions related to race, gender, sexual preference, religious belief, marital status, or disability
- Are publicly known to have significant past partnerships with the types or organisations and circumstances listed above

Council will also not enter into cash partnership agreements:

- With individuals
- Where the agreement might limit or restrict Council's rights to access other opportunities
- With registered political parties, or with organisations which has an owner/s or director/s running for political office, at any level of government
- Religious groups seeking to promote their spiritual beliefs
- Advocacy groups seeking to promote or lobby regarding laws, policies and practices or decisions of government which are not aligned with Council's objectives, strategies, policies, and practices
- For a period longer than four years. After four years the opportunity will be reopened for submissions, allowing other organisations (where applicable) to apply in addition to the current organisation
- With organisations that are not aligned with Council's Community Vision, Council Plan, values, policies, strategies, and other guiding documents
- Where there is any current planning, regulatory, or legal matter involving Council, or if it is reasonably known that such matters are likely to arise
- Council will only enter partnerships if the organisation has an appropriate legal structure, relevant liability insurance (where applicable), and an Australian Business Number (if required)

Revision History

Date	Version	Revision Description	Administered
18 October 2023	1		Adopted by Council
2 November 2023	1.1	Administrative update transferring document to Policy template	Council Officers

Approval

Adopted by Council at its meeting held on Date: 18 October 2023



Signed by the Mayor Cr Michael Whelan