

Merri-bek Democracy Lab – Seeds of Change Program

What is Seeds of change? What are we trying to achieve?

The program supports community-led approaches to meeting needs and finding inclusive solutions to Merri-bek's most pressing issues and aspirations.

The objectives of the Seeds of Change program are to:

- build capacity for civic participation and support priority groups to develop community-led approaches that address local needs and ambitions.
- catalyse community-led action which informs longer term policy change and builds social capital.
- support civic and political participation by increasing opportunities for priority groups to participate in local decision-making and leadership opportunities.
- support the development of programs and services that are more inclusive and accessible, that support human rights and fight against discrimination and racism in all its forms.
- provide skill development opportunities for economic and civic participation, particularly for priority groups.

The following are some examples of potential outcomes from Seeds of Change support:

- Develop up a Project Plan for a community-led activity which looks at potential partners and engages with community members ready for the next stage and funding applications.
- Develop a report on a community issue or opportunity with research and recommendations that you can present to Council for consideration.
- Conduct a community-led consultation on a key policy issue in consultation with relevant Council staff to explore new community-led approaches.
- Develop a Business Plan for a new incorporated association based in Merri-bek.
- Participate in a professional development activity and present learnings which can inform a Council policy or program to relevant Council staff.

Ideas other than these are welcome! Ideas that increase community participation, encourage volunteering, provide leadership opportunities and increase learning and skill development are encouraged.

What are we providing?

- Up to \$1000 to assist with costs associated with the proposal.
- Mentoring support.

Costs associated with the proposal can include (but are not limited to):

- Childcare, travel or other expenses to support participation in relevant meetings, workshops, events etc.
- Registration or membership fees to participate in relevant professional development or activities that are directly related to the proposal outcomes.
- Project Management fees.

What can be supported?

All Seeds of Change supported activities must meet the objectives of the program and directly benefit the Merri-bek community.

The funding can be used to cover costs associated with the activities if original receipts can be provided.

If part of the support is used for project management costs, applicants will need to invoice The Public Value Studio. Although preferable, applicants do not need to have an ABN, however they will need to submit a Statement by Supplier.

What can't be supported through this program?

Projects or activities that have already received funding from Merri-bek City Council either through its grants program or any other program.

Projects or activities that implement an existing Merri-bek City Council program or policy in its current form.

The support cannot be used to deliver community events. However, ideas can involve participating in community events: e.g. hosting a stall or registration fees.

Who can apply?

The Seeds of Change Program is only open to people who have participated in the Merri-bek Democracy Lab.

Applicants do not have to live in Merri-bek; however, their proposal must engage with local community members and directly benefit the Merri-bek community.

Past participants can apply as individuals or groups. Where applicants are as a group, the project must be led by the Merri-bek Democracy Lab participant.

Applicants must have no outstanding grant acquittals or debts owing to Merri-bek City Council.

Applicants do not need to be incorporated or auspiced to apply.

What is expected of successful applicants?

Successful applicants will need to:

- Deliver activity as outlined in their application by no later than August 2024.
- Maintain regular contact with assigned mentor/s.
- Participate in three Community of Practice meetings to share knowledge and learnings (one on 30 January 2024 where Seeds of Change recipients will meet their mentors and each other, a mid-program session in May 2024 and a final debrief/celebration event in September 2024).
- Provide original receipts for any expenditure they are using funding for.
- Fill in an acquittal form by 12 August 2024 – the acquittal is mostly to evaluate the outcomes of the program and get a sense of what we can do to improve it going forward.

Application Process:

Applications are due **13 November 2023**.

Applicants will be asked to answer the following questions:

1. What is your idea?
2. How does it connect with the objectives of the Seeds of Change program?
3. Who will be involved in your activity and how will they be involved?
4. How will you use the funding?
5. What type of support would you like from a mentor? E.g. what types of knowledge or skills would be useful to you?

Assessment Criteria and Process

Applications will be assessed based on the following criteria:

How will this idea increase civic participation in Merri-bek? Will it improve the capacity for communities to participate in local decision-making, or to develop community-led activities or approaches that address local needs and ambitions in a new and inclusive way?	40%
How does this idea develop opportunities, knowledge and skills for more inclusive and accessible services and programs? In particular, for Merri-bek's priority groups (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Migrant and Refugee, People with disability, LGBTIQ+ and Women).	30%
Are the right supports and circumstances in place for this idea to succeed? E.g. do we have mentors that can support this idea? Is the timing right? Are there barriers to this idea being implemented which we need to consider?*	30%
Total	100%

*Part of the assessment is based on whether we can provide the right support for the idea and there are circumstances that will enable it. We have added this because we know that sometimes great ideas can be difficult to implement because the circumstances aren't there to support them. We strongly encourage all applicants to speak with us before you put in an application so we can discuss this criterion.

To assess applications, an Assessment Panel will include:

- At least one member of the Merri-bek Democracy Lab Community Reference Group
- One Council staff member
- A representative of The Public Value Studio.

The Panel will assess the applications based on the Assessment Criteria outlined above and decide who is successful. Once decided, a mentor/or mentors will be assigned to the group.

