

Outcomes of community engagement themed.

Theme 1: Partnership Grants add significant value to the community.

The current cost of living pressures on the community was consistently acknowledged across current grant recipients. Patterns of increasing community members seeking low cost, or no cost connection and activities were seen across all interviews.

Partnership Grants allow for many service providers to offer activities and programs at low or no cost and allows managers to implement flexible payment options at times when the community needs it.

Theme 2: Partnership grants need to address vulnerability within the community and be prioritised to respond to health and wellbeing being gaps of Council service provision.

Vulnerability is not static, and the partnership grants offer a unique opportunity to empower community organisations to respond to community need in a strategic and reactive way.

With rising cost of living and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic still being realised there is a high demand for support that is on the ground and responsive.

Theme 3: The partnership/collaboration between recipients and Council needs to be strengthened.

Grant recipients would like to see a stronger partnership between themselves and Council that transcends the exchange of funds for service. Groups have articulated their preference for one consistent responsible Officer that acts as a support and conduit for all things Council.

Theme 4: Partnership grants should align with the Council Plan, Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan and Whitehorse Community Vision.

Grant recipients want to better understand community need and work with Council to strive towards improving community outcomes. The Council Plan, Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan and the Whitehorse Community Vision were acknowledged as the best way to do this in partnership.

Theme 5: Greater equity amongst Neighbourhood House and Community Centre payments.

A number of Neighbourhood Houses and Community Centres raised the inequity of funding distribution being a concern without understanding of how this was determined and unclear avenues of applying for additional funding.

Theme 6: A framework for Neighbourhood Houses and Community Centres is needed and should be developed in partnership with houses. This framework should include a review of reporting requirements.

Neighbourhood Houses spoke of the desire to have a clear framework that outlines:

- Council expectations
- acknowledges the work that the Houses do on behalf of Council
- Outlines reporting and meeting obligations, and
- Sets a strategic purpose of the future of houses.

Theme 7: Funding security of 4 years is preferred but application and acquittal requirements need to allow for flexibility to accommodate reactive response to community needs at a local level.

Recipients advised what sets them apart from other service provision is their understanding of the communities in which they work on the ground. They interact every day and with the current flexibility of the funding hold the opportunity to quickly adapt and respond to urgent needs.

Whilst they would prefer the funding remain secured for a 4-year period, it consistently advised that funding needs to remain open for flexibility and not all locked down to the delivery of a set program. Houses acknowledge that clearer reporting requirements were also needed.