



Funding Policy

Gippsland Forest Dialogue



Engage • Explore • Change

www.gippslandforestdialogue.org.au
Facebook: GippslandForestDialogue

Foreword

The Gippsland Forest Dialogue is a locally based, not-for-profit incorporated association of community members who seek to facilitate informed conversations about Gippsland's forests during an era of rapid change. We have operated since 2022. The group uses an approach developed over 20 years by the international "Forest Dialogue" and Yale University to provide safe spaces for respectful dialogue on controversial and challenging topics in environmental conservation and management.

The forest dialogue approach allows diverse voices to come together to discuss, share information and perspectives, and consider solutions to complex problems in a way that is safe and constructive for all participants.

Our key outcome is to connect people and build trust and productive relationships amongst those who love our forests.

Chris McEvoy, President Dec 2025

Our aim: to secure funding to provide a three year planning platform

Our goal: a sustainable organisation meeting all legislative requirements and member expectations

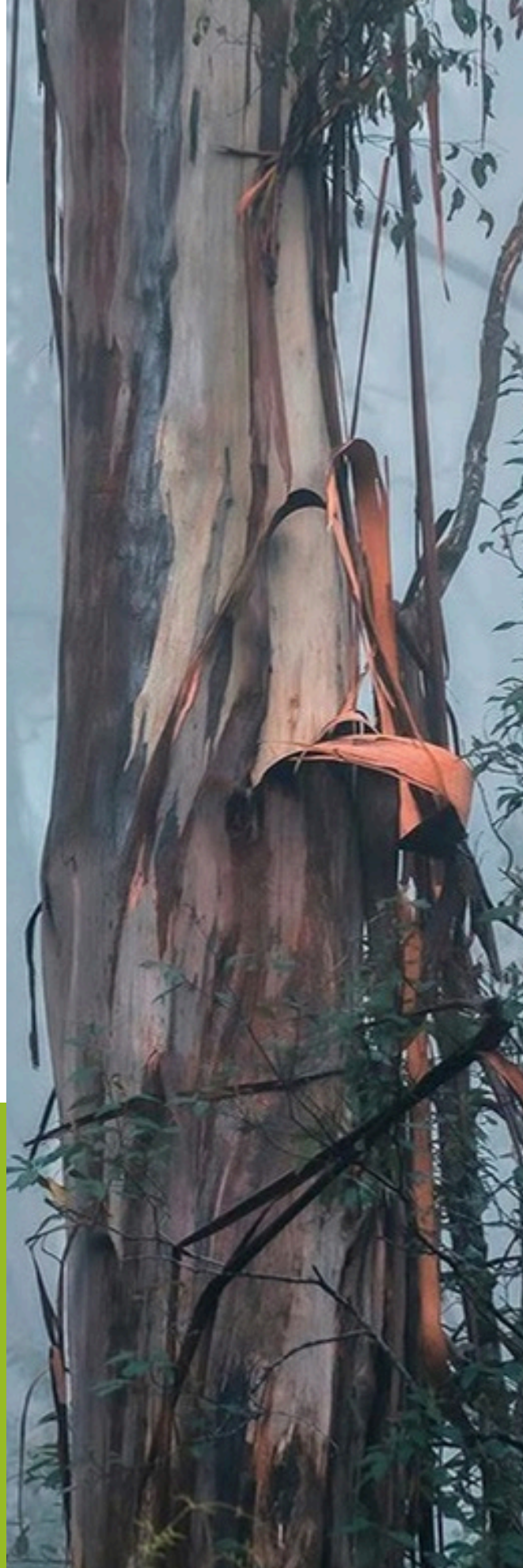




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Introduction



As GFD has maintained publicly: "We are independent and local. We have no government funding, no preconceived decisions or agendas and no collective association with peak bodies, interest groups, political parties or movements. We do not favour the interests of one group or sector and all options and opportunities are on the table."

GFD is committed to maintaining the integrity of its dialogue process, ensuring that no donor – whether government, industry, community, conservation, timber, recreation or tourism – dictates GFD's agenda, outcomes or recommendations.

Funding however is critical to maintaining an organisation and arranging quality dialogue events

This policy applies to all gifts, grants, sponsorships, donations, in-kind contributions, partnerships or other resources received by GFD, or committed to GFD, from any individual, organisation, government agency or other entity. It covers funds intended for general operations, project-specific funding, event support, staff roles, member support, organisational core costs or any other resource.

Gippsland Forest Dialogue:
Funding policy

Purpose and scope



Purpose

This policy sets out the principles, procedures and governance arrangements for all fundraising, sponsorship and philanthropic income (monetary or in-kind) received by the Gippsland Forest Dialogue (GFD). The objective is to ensure that GFD remains independent, transparent, accountable, and free from undue influence by any particular stakeholder, sector or interest group.

GFD is committed to maintaining the integrity of its dialogue process, ensuring that no donor – whether government, industry, community, conservation, timber, recreation or tourism – dictates GFD's agenda, outcomes or recommendations.

Scope

This policy applies to all gifts, grants, sponsorships, donations, in-kind contributions, partnerships or other resources received by GFD, or committed to GFD, from any individual, organisation, government agency or other entity. It covers funds intended for general operations, project-specific funding, event support, staff roles, member support, organisational core costs or any other resource.

Guiding principles



Independence of process and agenda

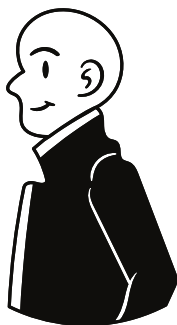
All fundraising must preserve GFD's ability to convene all stakeholders without bias, and must not create real or perceived obligations or expectations that GFD will favour the donor's interests over the broader stakeholder community.

Donors must not have the right to direct, influence, veto or control GFD's agenda, hosting of dialogues, membership or outcomes.



Transparency and accountability

GFD will publicly disclose its funding sources, amounts, and any conditions attached to funding (see section 6).



Diverse funding base

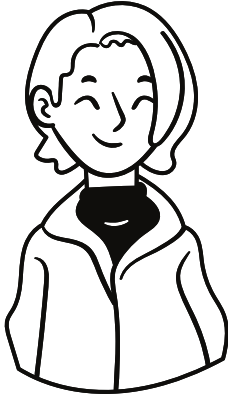
To reduce the risk that any single donor exerts undue influence, GFD shall endeavour to maintain a broad funding base, drawing on multiple sources (philanthropy, government grants, private sector, membership/subscriptions, events) and avoid heavy reliance on any one large donor.



Ethical considerations

GFD will not accept funds from donors whose activities or reputation clearly conflict with GFD's values of inclusivity, ecological sustainability, fairness to Traditional Owners, or that would create a perception of bias.

Guiding principles



Non conditional tied funding that compromises independence

1. GFD shall not accept donations with conditions that require GFD to act in the interest of a donor, make statements supporting a donor's cause, or restrict GFD's ability to convene parties on all sides of an issue.

- As stated on the website: "We further state that any allocation of funds or property to other persons or organisations will be made in accordance with the established purposes of the organisation and not be influenced by the preference of the donor. The organisation will not pass a donation ... as a condition of a donation."



Alignment with mission, values and stakeholder trust

All fundraising must align with GFD's mission: to bring forest stakeholders together in a safe, impartial environment and explore how best to care for Gippsland's forests.



Clarity of roles

Funders are not to serve as representatives of stakeholder groups in dialogues unless they join as individual participants under GFD's standard membership/participation protocols (i.e., they do not join as "sponsors" and thereby gain privileged access or influence).



Types of funding or contributions

- Unrestricted philanthropic gifts (general operations)
- Project-specific grants or sponsorships (e.g., for a specific Dialogue event)
- Government grants (state, federal)
- Corporate sponsorship or partnership (private sector timber, tourism, recreation, etc)
- Membership fees or subscriptions
- In-kind contributions (venue, catering, transport, equipment)
- Earned revenue (ticketing, events, training)



Acceptance criteria and due diligence

All proposed funding must be reviewed against the following acceptance criteria before acceptance:

- Purpose of funds – The proposed use must align with GFD's objectives and priorities.
- Donor profile – The donor's activities, values and reputation will be reviewed. Any potential conflict of interest must be declared and managed in a transparent manner.
- Conditions attached to funding – A full review of the donor's terms is required to ensure no provision compromises GFD's independence (e.g., requiring endorsement of the donor's interests, restricting GFD from engaging with certain stakeholders).
- Proportionality – If a single donor offers a very large amount relative to other funding sources, the relationship must be carefully managed to avoid dependency or undue influence.
- Disclosure obligations – The donor must permit public disclosure of the fact of the donation, the amount (or at least band/category), and any material terms.
- Exit provisions – Terms should allow GFD to terminate or return funding if circumstances compromise GFD's independence or reputation.
- Record-keeping – A written agreement must document the donor, amount, purpose, any conditions and reporting obligations.



Reporting, governance and use of funds

Reporting and transparency

- GFD will publish annually (and where material, publicly update during the year) a Funding Statement listing: major donors (donations exceeding \$1000), categories of income, in-kind contributions and any sponsored activities, and any conditions attached.
- Donors will be acknowledged (unless anonymity is requested) in a way that does not imply endorsement of GFD or control of content.
- GFD will maintain internal records of all funding agreements, reporting and compliance.
- GFD will report to donors on the use of funds, outcomes achieved, any unspent funds, and will highlight how the funds supported the independent dialogue process.

Governance

- The GFD Steering committee is responsible for oversight of the Fundraising Policy and for approving any major funding agreements (e.g., above a material threshold of \$1000).
- The executive staff, in consultation with the Treasurer, will manage day-to-day fundraising, ensure compliance with this policy and prepare the annual Funding Statement.
- A Conflict of Interest register shall be maintained: any Board or staff member with links to a potential donor or stakeholder must declare those links and recuse from relevant decisions if required.

Use of funds

- All funds must be used consistent with GFD's objectives: to convene forest stakeholders in Gippsland, facilitate multi-stakeholder dialogue, build trust, explore sustainable forest futures and support collaborative actions.
- Funds may be used for: dialogue event costs (venue, travel, facilitator), research/scoping papers, communications/engagement, staff or contractor costs for organising dialogues, travel for participants (with clear equity criteria), materials, audits and governance costs.
- GFD will ensure overhead/corporate costs are allocated transparently and not hidden or subsidised unfairly by single donors in a way that compromises independence.
- Funds will not be used for lobbying or advocacy that advances a donor's commercial or political agenda. GFD's role is to facilitate dialogue—not to serve as an agent of donor-advocacy.



Recognition, Conflict of interest Review of policy

Recognition and naming rights

- Donors may be recognised (e.g., on website, annual report) but no naming rights or branding shall be granted that imply the donor controls or influences GFD's agenda or outcomes.
- Sponsorship of individual Dialogue events is permitted, but the sponsor must not influence participant selection, agenda, facilitation or outputs.
- Any co-branding must clearly state that GFD retains full independence of process.

Conflict of interest

- GFD will monitor for and guard against real or perceived donor influence over agenda-setting, participant selection, workshop design or reporting.
- If a donor is also a participant stakeholder in a dialogue (e.g., forestry company, timber trade association), this must be declared and managed under GFD's standard conflict-of-interest procedure (e.g., disclosure at meeting, facilitation ensuring balanced voice).
- GFD will avoid dependence on a single donor representing one sector (e.g., one major timber industry funder) that may skew perceptions of neutrality.

Review and amendment

- This Fundraising Policy will be reviewed every two years by the GFD Steering Committee.
- Any amendments will be publicly published.
- The Steering Committee will monitor key indicators of independence (such as share of total funding from a single source, donor mix, incidents of donor attempting influence) and report on them.



Context Implementation Exceptions

Alignment with international practice

GFD draws on the approach of The Forests Dialogue (TFD) which emphasises multi-stakeholder dialogue, independence of process and diverse stakeholder representation. GFD commits to uphold those same principles in its fundraising activities.

Implementation

- GFD's executive will develop a fundraising plan aligned with this policy, identifying potential donor sources, diversification strategy, target amounts, risk assessment of donor influence.
 - The executive will prepare standard donor agreements/templates that incorporate the acceptance criteria set out in Section 5.
 - A simple tracking system will monitor donor amounts, conditions, use of funds, reporting obligations and outcomes.
 - The annual Funding Statement will be prepared and published on the GFD website and shared with stakeholders.
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Exceptions and special cases

- In exceptional cases where funds are offered with unusual conditions, the Steering Committee must approve acceptance and may require external advice (e.g., legal or conflict-of-interest).
- If a donor requests anonymity, GFD may accept but must still record internally the donor's identity, conditions and report publicly the fact of an anonymous donor (above threshold) without naming.
- If funds are proposed from a donor that raises significant reputational risk (e.g., a company under major environmental complaint), the Steering committee will conduct due diligence including reputational, social licence and conflict impact. The Steering Committee retains right to refuse such funding.
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Appendices

A: Definitions

B: Donor risk assessment matrix

C: Template Donor Agreement (sample)

A: Definitions

You/Donor:

Any individual, organization, business, philanthropic entity, or government body providing financial or in-kind support to the Gippsland Forest Dialogue (GFD).

Sponsorship:

A financial or in-kind contribution made to support a specific event, activity, or element of GFD's work, without granting influence over GFD's agenda, decisions, or outputs.

In-kind Contribution:

Non-monetary support such as venue hire, catering, transport, equipment, professional services, or volunteer labor.

Unrestricted Funding:

Funding provided for general use across GFD operations with no conditions attached.

Restricted Funding:

Funding designated for a specific project, event, or purpose as agreed in writing with the donor, provided such restrictions do not compromise GFD's independence.

Core Funding:

Funding used to support organisational operations such as staffing, administration, governance and communication.

Conflict of Interest:

A situation in which personal, financial, or stakeholder affiliations could improperly influence, or be perceived to influence, decisions made by GFD representatives.

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Appendices

- A: Definitions
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B: Donor risk assessment matrix

The matrix below guides GFD's assessment of potential donor risk, ensuring alignment with independence, transparency and stakeholder trust

Risk level	Example
Low risk	• small philanthropic donations (<2,000) • Community organisation without direct forest sector interests • Anonymous donors (with internal disclosure)
Medium risk	• Government grants supporting regional development, environment or community programs • Philanthropic foundations with environmental or social portfolios • Businesses with indirect interest in forest landscapes (e.g. tourism operators)
Higher risk	• Large donations (>20% of annual revenue) from any single donor • Entities directly involved in contentious forest activities (e.g. native timber harvesting, mining) where perception of influence may arise • Donors with active political advocacy campaigns related to forest outcomes

Mitigation dependant on circum stance but approavd by the steering committee

Likely mitigations as per Conflict section include

Low risk - document and report

Medium ; cmmplete a donor agreement

Higher risk - donor agreement and SC approval and overall portfolio mix



Appendices

A: Definitions

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C: Template Donor Agreement (sample)

C: Template Donor Agreement

Purpose:

This agreement outlines the terms under which the Donor provides financial or in-kind support to GFD.

Independence Clause:

The Donor acknowledges that GFD maintains full independence over its agenda, processes, facilitation, participant selection, and outputs.

Use of Funds:

Funds will be used solely for the purposes agreed and may not be redirected by donor preference.

Reporting:

GFD will provide reporting proportional to the size of the contribution, ensuring transparency without administrative burden.

Disclosure:

GFD will publicly disclose the donor's name, contribution category, and any material conditions unless anonymity is requested.

No Influence:

The Donor will not seek to influence GFD's decisions, policies or dialogue outcomes.

Termination:

GFD reserves the right to return or decline funds if the relationship threatens its independence or reputation.

Duration:

This agreement remains in effect for the duration of the funded activity or as otherwise stated.



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D: Annual Funding Statement Template

The Annual Funding Statement will include the following information:

- Donor name (or anonymous identifier).
- Contribution category (financial / in-kind).
- Amount or value (or band/category if anonymity requested).
- Purpose of funds (general / project-specific).
- Any conditions or reporting requirements.
- Confirmation that no donor influenced GFD's agenda or outputs.
- Summary of how funds were used in alignment with GFD's mission.



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