

## SMALL BUSINESS PROGRAM GUIDELINES

### Acknowledgement

The City of Melbourne respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land we govern, the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and Bunurong Boon Wurrung peoples of the Kulin and pays respect to their Elders past, present and emerging.

We acknowledge and honour the unbroken spiritual, cultural and political connection they have to this unique place for more than 2000 generations.

We are committed to our reconciliation journey, because at its heart, reconciliation is about strengthening relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples, for the benefit of all Victorians.

### Overview

The Small Business Grants Program supports the establishment of new businesses and expansion of existing businesses within the City of Melbourne. Small businesses funded through this program will fuel growth through job creation and bring new solutions and ways of doing business into the city.

The program aligns to our [Economic Development Strategy 2031](#) ensuring Melbourne is one of the easiest places to start and grow a business and encourage innovation and start-up creation.

For the purpose of this program, a 'small business' is defined as an organisation which employs less than 20 full-time or equivalent employees.

### Program objectives

The program objectives for this round are to:

- encourage the establishment and growth of small businesses that:
  - enhance the City of Melbourne's reputation for business innovation, creativity, diversity, inclusiveness and environmental sustainability
  - strengthen and diversify the local economy's resilience by demonstrating a unique point-of-difference, sound business model and long-term financial viability
  - generate employment and investment opportunities
- enhance the city's vitality by increasing the occupancy rate of shopfronts\*\* across the municipality.

\*\* For the purposes of this grant program, shopfronts are defined as a street-facing, ground level commercial properties.

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## Funding

The program will support applicants with new businesses to the municipality or existing businesses looking to expand or relocate their current offer within the municipality.

There will be two streams available – an Open stream available to any small business operating within the municipality and another specifically for applicants who occupy a vacant ground floor, street-facing commercial shopfront within the municipality.

- **Open stream** - up to \$20,000 per applicant is available to any business that meets the eligibility criteria and program objectives
- **Shopfront Occupancy stream** – has two options available to businesses that meet the eligibility criteria and program objectives:
  - Up to \$20,000 per applicant available to occupy a property vacant for two to six months
  - Up to \$30,000 per applicant available to occupy a property vacant for more than six months

What we will fund:

- Capital improvement costs associated with fit-out of business premises including, but not limited to furniture, cabinetry, joinery, partitioning, flooring, shelving, and painting.
- Website costs including development or enhancements.
- IT equipment costs including the purchasing of hardware (computers, laptops, printers, servers).
- Specialised equipment and software that is directly related to the operation of the new business or as part of the business expansion activity.
- Other expenditure items not listed above where it can be clearly demonstrated there is a significant need for the set up or expansion of the small business.

What we won't fund:

- Operational expenses which are ongoing costs to run the business, such as rent, utilities, legal costs, marketing, wages and personal expenses.
- Applications that do not meet the eligibility or assessment criteria.
- Expenditure items incurred prior to the date the business submitted an application.

Applicants are expected to have the majority of their small business's funding from other sources, in addition to the funding sought through this program.

## Additional support and opportunities available

Applicants are strongly encouraged to initiate contact with the City of Melbourne's Business Concierge to discuss the grant opportunity, potential locations and to get important advice on starting and growing a business in Melbourne.

To request an appointment please fill out the [online form](#) and Business Concierge will be in contact to discuss prior to applying.

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Successful applications will be registered with Business Concierge for further support during their funded period. Support may include navigating council permit approval processes and linking to other opportunities like networking events, workshops and training.

Support and guidance provided by our Business Concierge does not guarantee relevant permit approvals will be received and holding relevant permits at the time of application will not have any bearing on the outcomes of grant applications.

## Key dates

- Applications open Tuesday 22 August 2023 at 9am AEDT
- Applications close Monday 25 September 2023 at 12pm AEDT
- Assessment and approval October and November 2023
- Successful applicants will be publicly announced after letters of agreement are in place

## Assessment criteria

Applicants will individually be assessed against the following criteria.

### 1. Business plan, workforce and experience (40 per cent)

- Clearly demonstrate the purpose, vision and business model of the small business is well researched, planned and validated.
- Establish the small business's unique point of difference.
- Outline the workforce of the small business, the relevant experience of the core team members and their ability to deliver on the purpose and vision.
- Provide a marketing strategy with promotional plans, product/service positioning and identified target market/customers.

*\*Existing small businesses must demonstrate their expansion or growth plans, for example additional staffing, increased floor space, new activity, products or services.*

*\*\*For the Shopfront Occupancy stream small businesses must demonstrate they add value to Melbourne's unique street level offerings.*

### 2. Benefits and impact to the City of Melbourne (20 per cent)

- Outline how the small business will establish or locate itself in City of Melbourne and how the funding provided will benefit the municipality's community including residents, students, visitors and/or businesses.
- Demonstrate the impact of your small business – in terms of economic, social and/or environmental benefits to City of Melbourne places and people, including its ethical and sustainable business practices.

*\*To assist with determining how your business impacts and benefits align with the City of Melbourne refer to our [Council Plan 2021-25](#), [Economic Development Strategy 2031](#) and [commitment to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#).*

## 3. Financial viability (40 per cent)

- Clearly describe the long-term financial viability of the small business, including information such as projected financial statements, cash flows, annual turnover and total investment into establishment or expansion of the enterprise.
- Detailed outline of the activities this application to the grant round is for, including financial contributions to those activities from the small business.

*\*Applicants must demonstrate the business has capacity to proceed without grant funding.*

*\*It has been shown from previous grant rounds that those applications providing more financial information have a greater chance of success.*

## Eligibility checklist

The applicant must:

- be located within or committed to relocate promptly (within three months of receiving a grant) to the [City of Melbourne municipality](#).
- have a valid Australian Business Number (ABN)
- have less than 20 full-time or equivalent employees at the time of applying
- be an Australian registered business, sole trader, company, business cooperative or partnership and provide documented evidence of its legal structure
- be able to provide evidence of appropriate business insurances
- have no outstanding acquittals or debts to the City of Melbourne
- demonstrate financial viability as evidenced by relevant financial information
- **\*\*Shopfront occupancy stream ONLY:** provide evidence of a commercial lease (for a minimum length of 12 months) if relocating to City of Melbourne or moving to a larger premises within City of Melbourne.

## Ineligibility

The program will not support:

- applicants that have an outstanding debt to City of Melbourne or that have failed to comply with the terms and conditions of any previous funding agreement with City of Melbourne
- franchisees, subsidiaries of larger companies, unincorporated associations
- government departments or agencies, foundations or grant making bodies
- political organisations or organisations that have a political purpose
- current City of Melbourne employees, immediate families and contractors
- entities that denigrate, exclude or offend parts of the community
- applicants who have already received funding from City of Melbourne for the same activity being requested in this program

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## How to apply

Applications for grants are completed online using [SmartyGrants](#). Applications must address the eligibility, assessment criteria, answer all questions and submit all required documentation prior to the program closing date.

## Application process

1. Read the guidelines
2. Register online at [SmartyGrants](#) and preview a copy of the application
3. Plan, research and gather information required for your application
4. Complete and submit your application before the closing date and time  
(Note: Late applications will not be accepted)
  - a. Complete all questions
  - b. Allow ample time to upload supporting documents
  - c. Submit only one application for this funding round
  - d. Once submitted, no further editing or supporting materials will be accepted
5. On submission, you will receive an electronic reply acknowledging receipt from [SmartyGrants](#).

## Support material

Applicants will be asked to provide evidence as part of their application. This will be reviewed as part of the assessment and may include:

- proof of the business being located in [City of Melbourne municipality](#).
- certificates of currency
- certificate of incorporation or registration of business name
- skills and qualifications of key business personnel
- financial statement (including profit and loss statements, cash flow and balance sheets)
- proof of expansion plans for existing City of Melbourne businesses (including increased floor space, new activity, additional staffing)
- Commercial lease for a minimum length of 12 months (*Please note for the Shopfront Occupancy Stream priority will be given to leases signed after 1 July 2023*)
- **\*\*Shopfront Occupancy Stream ONLY** - letter from landlord or property manager confirming period of time commercial shopfront space was vacant prior to lease

Applicants **can** also include the following documents as evidence:

- letters of support from business partners and industry groups/associations
- marketing, public relations and promotional strategy including examples
- map showing the location(s) of activities or material flows
- organisational chart

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In selecting the optional material to attach, applicants are asked to limit the number and length of the attachments to relevant supporting evidence.

## Assessment process

- City of Melbourne check applications to establish that all eligibility criteria are met. This is referred to as due diligence.
- Applications are individually assessed in relation to the criteria through a competitive process. This is undertaken with an assessment panel including internal staff from City of Melbourne.
- The panel and City of Melbourne senior management consider the diversity of applications as a set.
- Recommended applications are provided to Council for their decision.

Additional notes about the assessment process:

- Applications are confidential. The contents will not be disclosed to any person outside the application and assessment process. A short summary of the project concept will be used in reports to Council.
- The City of Melbourne does not seek to correct errors in applications or supporting material. Applications are assessed as they have been submitted.
- The City of Melbourne reserves the right to request further information in considering any application, as well as the right to reject any application that is ineligible or does not meet the grant category criteria.
- Assessment panels may recommend part funding.
- All funding decisions of Council are final. Unsuccessful applicants are eligible to re-apply in future funding rounds in accordance with the grant guidelines.
- Support and guidance provided by the City of Melbourne's Business Concierge does not guarantee relevant permit approvals will be received and holding relevant permits at the time of application will not have any bearing on the outcomes of grant applications.
- The applicant names and brief project description of successful applicants will be made publicly available, including publication on the City of Melbourne [website](#) and in media releases. For further details City of Melbourne Privacy Statement can be found [here](#).

## Lobbying

Canvassing or lobbying of Councillors, employees of the City of Melbourne or assessment panel members in relation to any grant application is prohibited.

No further consideration will be given to an application submitted by an applicant who has canvassed or lobbied City of Melbourne staff, Councillors or assessors in relation to their application.

## Outcome notification

All applicants will be notified of their application outcome through SmartyGrants.

Unsuccessful applicants will not be reimbursed for the time spent on the application process.

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## Payment and funding agreement

Successful applicants must provide details of their nominated bank account in order for City of Melbourne to provide funding. Successful applicants are also required to submit an invoice to Melbourne City Council for the approved funding amount plus GST.

Payment terms are 30 days from the date of invoice, subject to the receipt of a signed funding agreement, tax invoice and other requested information.

The funding agreement outlines the application outcome, the items to be funded and any conditions associated with the use of the funds. Payments are not processed before the timeframes stipulated in the funding agreement. The City of Melbourne will not be responsible for shortfalls in project budgets if the grant recipient is unable to meet project costs.

Any changes to the approved funding agreement will need to receive approval from the City of Melbourne. Changes are not guaranteed to be accepted for funding.

## Reporting and acquittal

Recipients must report on the outcome of their proposal through an online acquittal through SmartyGrants. Reports provide valuable feedback to the City of Melbourne on the success of the proposal, in relation to the agreed outcomes, performance measures and any lessons learnt.

Applicants should be aware that as part of the acquittal the City of Melbourne will request information about investments outside of the grant amount.

Reports are confidential, however applicants are advised a short summary of the report will be shared in reports to Council. Final reports must be submitted no later than four weeks after the agreed completion date of the proposal as stated in the funding agreement unless otherwise agreed.

## Terms and conditions

Applicants must comply with the following:

- payment and funding agreement (see above)
- reporting and acquittal (see above)
- sign an agreement detailing the funding obligations
- payment terms are 30 days from the date of invoice, subject to the receipt of a signed funding agreement, tax invoice and other requested information. This may include revised budgets, project details and auspice details where relevant.
- complete the funded activity within 12 months (no later than two weeks after the agreed completion date of the proposal as stated in the funding agreement).

## Support for applicants

### General enquiries

For more information about the grant program please contact [businessfunding@melbourne.vic.gov.au](mailto:businessfunding@melbourne.vic.gov.au) or call 03 9658 9658.

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## Technical assistance

Refer to the [SmartyGrants help guide](#) for technical assistance related to submitting your application. The [SmartyGrants](#) support desk is open 9am – 5pm Monday to Friday on 03 9320 6888 or by email [service@smartygrants.com.au](mailto:service@smartygrants.com.au).

## Interpreter and translation services

If you need an interpreter when calling the City of Melbourne, please call the following relevant translation services:

Our multilingual information telephone service offers assistance to people from a non-English speaking background. Visit [Translation services](#).

If you are deaf, hearing-impaired, or speech-impaired, please call us via the [National Relay Service](#):

- Teletypewriter (TTY) users phone 133 677 then ask for 03 9658 9658
- Speak & Listen users phone 1300 555 727 then ask for 03 9658 9658