

CITY OF MELBOURNE BUSINESS EVENT SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

BUSINESS EVENT SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM GUIDELINES

Acknowledgement

The City of Melbourne respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land, the Wurundjeri Woiwurrung and Bunurong Boon Wurrung peoples of the Eastern Kulin and pays respect to their Elders past, present and emerging.

We acknowledge and honour the unbroken spiritual, cultural and political connection the Wurundjeri, Bunurong, Dja Dja Wurrung, Taungurung and Wadawurrung peoples of the Eastern Kulin 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 Business Event Sponsorship Program (the Program) supports business events such as conferences, showcases, workshops, seminars, conferences, and networking functions.

Funding is open to organisations and individuals planning to hold business events within the City of Melbourne municipality.

The program aligns to [The Melbourne Advantage - Economic Development Strategy 2030](#) bold ambition to make the city the Asia-Pacific's city of choice for innovation, talent and liveability.

This program is seeking to catalyze a vibrant calendar of events that energize Melbourne year-round, unlocking new opportunities for collaboration across people, industries and knowledge. By championing the innovation economy, it will elevate Melbourne's global standing as a dynamic hub for investment, talent and transformative ideas.

Program Objectives

The program objectives for this round are to support and promote quality business events that:

- **Activate Melbourne's innovation ecosystem** through events that engage knowledge workers, entrepreneurs and researchers strengthening the city's reputation as a global leader in innovation.
- **Facilitate cross-sector collaboration and industry engagement** through events that accelerate business development, attract investment and drive economic growth across Melbourne's priority innovation sectors.
- **Deliver events that enhance Melbourne's vibrancy and liveability** by generating broad economic, social, and environmental benefits while fostering inclusive participation.

Event Delivery

Only in-person events taking place from February 2026 to December 2026 are eligible for funding. An in-person event is defined as a live gathering held at a physical venue with a valid street address, where attendees and delegates are present on-site. The in-person component must include a live audience that meets the minimum attendance requirements outlined in the funding table below (Fig. 1). This audience may include speakers, featured talent, and essential production or logistics personnel required to deliver the event.

Funded events need to have the following information provided to City of Melbourne prior to end of financial year for payment (30 June 2026):

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- Signed Funding Agreement
- Completed Event Fact Sheet
- Certificate of Currency
- Evidence of venue hire (tax invoice, email outlining confirmation of event hire)

If you are organising a public or a private event in any of the City of Melbourne's public spaces, you may require an event permit. Permits ensure public safety and amenity in public spaces and assist in the sustainable management of our parks and gardens. Please contact the Event Operations team on 03 9658 9658, or via email at events@melbourne.vic.gov.au.

Note – successful sponsorship allocations do not guarantee relevant permit approvals will be received. Holding relevant permits at the time of application will not have any bearing on the outcome of sponsorship applications.

Funding levels

Sponsorship of up to \$10,000 is available per application. Please see the funding breakdown available for events attracting a certain number of attendees. Fig.1:

Level	Funding available	Expected attendance
1	Up to \$5,000	Minimum attendance of 100 people and up to 250
2	Up to \$7,250	Minimum attendance of 250 and up to 500
3	Up to \$10,000	Attendance above 500 people

What we will fund:

Requested funding must be directly related to the set-up and delivery costs of the proposal.

Only expenditure items that have been incurred after your application has been approved.

Business event sponsorship must contribute directly to one or more of the following:

- set-up costs
- logistics
- venue hire
- catering
- presenters / speakers
- production / audio-visual costs
- marketing
- any other event enhancing expenditure that is additional to the core program must be agreed in writing with City of Melbourne.

What we won't fund:

Operational expenses such as:

- Office rental payments
- Utilities
- Expenses related to any hybrid component of the event program.
- Wages and expenses not directly related to the delivery of the event.
- Applications that do not meet the eligibility or assessment criteria.
- Expenditure items incurred prior to approval of application funding.

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Additional support and opportunities available

The City of Melbourne owns a variety of [venues](#) that may be of interest for your business event. Please be aware catering packages may apply for these venues.

Subject to agreement and availability, successful applicants may use the following services from the City of Melbourne at their event:

- Lord Mayor or Councillor speech
- City of Melbourne staff involvement as keynote speaker, participation in workshops or panels
- Promotion through City of Melbourne marketing channels.

Environmental Sustainability

Applicants are encouraged to use resources wisely in the creation and delivery of their event. Applicants will need to describe their environmental sustainability practices in their application. Please find more information through the [Sustainable Event Guide](#).

Key Dates

- Applications open on Tuesday 9 September 2025 at 9am AEST
- Applications close Tuesday 30 September 2025 at 4pm AEST
- Assessment and approval will be in October and November 2025
- Application outcome early 2026
- Successful applicants will be publicly announced in early 2026 after letters of agreement are in place.

Assessment Criteria

Applicants will be assessed against the following criteria.

1. Purpose and expected impact of the event (45 per cent)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explain the purpose for the event.• Outline how your event aligns with each of the Program objectives as mentioned above.• Describe your target audience including cross-sector audience.• Describe what are the expected economic, social and/or environmental impacts or benefits for the City of Melbourne and the industry sector. <p><i>Further information on how City of Melbourne aligns to your projects impacts and benefits can be sourced from Melbourne 2050 Vision and Council Plan 2025-29, The Melbourne Advantage - Economic Development Strategy 2030, and United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.</i></p>
2. Quality and viability of the event (25 per cent)

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- Demonstrate that your event is thoroughly researched and strategically planned.
- Briefly outline your experience in delivering similar events, highlighting key achievements and providing evidence of successful outcomes.
- Attach a detailed event budget, clearly outlining all income sources such as ticket sales, sponsorship agreements and in-kind contributions.
- Describe your strategy for attracting your target audience, outlining channels, messaging, and engagement tactics you will use.
- Provide a marketing plan explaining how the requested funding will be used to effectively reach and engage your target audience.

Timelines, project plans, marketing strategies and/or promotional plans will provide strength to this response as attachments.

3. Sponsorship benefits to the City of Melbourne (25 percent)

Outline the sponsorship benefits your event will offer to the City of Melbourne, including opportunities to promote Council through speaking engagements, logo placement, signage, and other forms of public recognition.

4. Key innovation sectors (5 per cent)

Demonstrate how your event aligns with the five priority innovation sectors that support the continued growth of Melbourne's innovation economy:

- *Health technology*
- *Education technology*
- *Sports technology*
- *Digital gaming*
- *Climate technology*

Eligibility checklist

The application must:

- Propose to deliver a business event including a multi-day program, conference, exhibition, pitch competition, showcase, demo day, product demonstration, networking, or meeting with a minimum attendance of 100 people.
- Deliver the business event in a venue located within the [City of Melbourne municipality](#).
- The proposed event must take place between February and December 2026
- Have a valid Australian Business Number (ABN).
- Must be an Australian registered business, sole trader, company, business cooperative or partnership and provide documented evidence of its legal structure.
- Demonstrate financial viability as evidenced by a basic business plan, budget and projected financial statements.
- Provide evidence of current public liability and professional indemnity insurance policies when requested and maintain these insurances when delivering the event.
- Have no outstanding acquittals or debts to the City of Melbourne.

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- Have not failed to comply with the terms and conditions of any previous funding agreement or sponsorship from City of Melbourne.

Who is not eligible to apply?

The program will not support applications from:

- Events or festivals (including components thereof) that receive funding from another City of Melbourne funding program.
- Political or religious organisations that have a political purpose or seek to promote political or religious ideologies.
- Government departments, agencies of government departments, foundations or grant making bodies.
- Fundraising events or events that are solely marketing their own business.
- Events that are already receiving financial support from [Melbourne Convention Bureau](#).
- Cultural, music or sports festivals and events, community workshops, recurring markets, teaching programs, lectures or universities open day.
- Online events without an in-person program.
- Organisations 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.
- Events that have an adverse effect on public health, safety, the environment or heritage.
- Events that will not comply with anti-discrimination / ant-vilification legislation and / or are incompatible with Council's policies, priorities or values. Council's priorities include those set out in the [Inclusive Melbourne Action Plan 2024-26](#) (IMAP).
- Events that sell or promote unethically sourced animal products.
- Events that exploit or use animals in harmful ways, for example, through exhibition or use in performances.
- Applicants undertaking canvassing or lobbying of Elected Members and / or employees of City of Melbourne in relation to the sponsorship request during the application and assessment period.
- Current City of Melbourne employees, immediate families and contractors.

How to Apply

Applications must be completed online using [SmartyGrants](#). Applications must address the eligibility, assessment criteria, answer all questions and be submitted prior to the program closing date.

Application Process

1. Read the guidelines.
2. Apply through [SmartyGrants](#) during the application period (9 to 30 Sep 2026).
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)
 - Complete all questions.
 - Allow ample time to upload supporting documents.
 - Submit only one application per event.
 - Once you have submitted, no further editing or supporting materials will be accepted.
5. On submission, you will receive an electronic reply acknowledging receipt from [SmartyGrants](#).

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Support Material

Support material is an important part of your application and reviewed as part of the assessment, and may include:

- proof of the event being located in City of Melbourne municipality
- certificate of currency
- certificate of incorporation or registration of business name
- marketing strategy
- event budget including evidence of other confirmed sponsors and committed funds for the event
- examples of marketing, PR or other evidence to support your application.

Assessment Process Overview

Applications will be assessed competitively during October–November 2025 by a panel of assessors. The program receives more applications than it can support, so outcomes are determined on the following basis:

- How well the application meets and demonstrates the assessment criteria
- The strength of the event concept and its alignment with program objectives, the Council Plan, The Melbourne Advantage, and other key City of Melbourne strategies
- The event's economic, social, and environmental benefits to the city and its residents

Other 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 sponsorship 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 program guidelines.
- The applicant names, 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](#).

Council Decision

The assessment panel and City of Melbourne senior management will consider the diversity of applications as a set and will put forward recommendations at Council meeting for consideration and approval.

Lobbying

Canvassing or lobbying of Councillors, City of Melbourne employees or assessment panel members in relation to any funding 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.

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Successful applicants are prohibited to lobby Councillors, City of Melbourne staff when seeking additional benefits in the sponsorship agreement.

Outcome notification

All applicants will be notified of their application outcome after Council approval through SmartyGrants. Unsuccessful applicants will not be reimbursed for the time spent on the application process.

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 the 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 funding conditions are met.

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 sponsorship recipient is unable to meet project costs.

Any changes to approved events will need to receive approval from the City of Melbourne, including but not limited to date, programming and / or duration. Changes are not guaranteed to be accepted for funding.

Reporting and Acquittal

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

Acquittal reports are confidential, but applicants are advised that a short summary of the report will be shared in reports to Council and de-identified information could be used to evaluate the program. Final reports must be submitted no later than four weeks after the agreed completion date as stated in the funding agreement.

Terms and conditions

Applicants must comply with the following terms and conditions:

- 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, venue confirmation and auspice details where relevant.

Support for applicants

If you would like more information about the program please contact the business funding team through businessfunding@melbourne.vic.gov.au or call 03 9658 9658.

Technical assistance

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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.

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

