



City of Melbourne Precinct Program 2025-27 Guidelines

City of Melbourne Precinct Business Association Program 2025-27 Guidelines

Overview and objectives.

The Precinct Business Association Program (the Program) supports recognised and incorporated associations representing local traders in specific consumer relevant precincts across the City of Melbourne (CoM).

The goal is to help these areas thrive and contribute to Melbourne's economic prosperity by:

- Boosting economic activity and precinct vibrancy.
 - Precinct Business Associations promote local businesses and deliver activations. In doing so they attract foot traffic, which stimulates spending and generates revenue for the local economy.
- Improving local business competitiveness and resilience.
 - Precinct Business Associations provide resources, networking opportunities, and advocacy to help small businesses remain competitive.
- Enhancing the city's unique identity.
 - Unique local businesses contribute to Melbourne's character and appeal, making our neighbourhoods more attractive to visitors, investors, and residents.
- Encouraging collaboration and innovation.
 - Precinct Business Associations facilitate collaboration between businesses, driving innovation and the sharing of best practices to tackle shared challenges.
- Strengthening community connections.
 - Precinct Business Associations organise events, campaigns, and initiatives that encourage residents and visitors to support local enterprises, fostering community pride and connection.

1. Roles and responsibilities

Recognised Precinct Business Associations funded under this program are expected to undertake various activities to benefit the trader area on behalf of their members. These activities are designed to fulfill the objectives of the City of Melbourne Precinct Business Association Program 2025-27. The roles and responsibilities include:

- a. **Developing a Vision and Strategic Plan:** Each Precinct Business Association must create a vision and update their strategic plan annually to enhance trading in their precinct areas.
- b. **Business Development Initiatives:** Organising networking events and seminars to support business growth. Networking and business events must maintain a proof of focus, such as a business development theme, specific training presentation, or cater to a relevant precinct industry.
- c. **Marketing and Promotional Activities:** Conducting marketing campaigns and promotional activities to attract target market groups (residents, shoppers, workers, visitors) and convert them into customers for Precinct Business Association members.

- d. Localised Place Activation Initiatives: Implementing activities such as static installations, public events, and markets to increase visitation to the precinct areas.
 - e. Representing Members' Interests: Advocating for the interests and views of Precinct Business Association members.
 - f. Communicating with Constituency: Maintaining active communication with the precinct constituency.
 - g. Increasing Membership: Growing membership to ensure adequate representation of traders' views within the precinct.
 - h. Encouraging Participation in City Campaigns: Motivating members to actively participate in City of Melbourne marketing campaigns and promotions.
 - i. Adhering to Standards of Conduct: Following the Standards of Conduct outlined in the guidelines.
 - j. Seeking Collaboration Opportunities: Looking for opportunities to collaborate on marketing, events, and promotion initiatives with a focused business goal.
 - k. Attending Quarterly Meetings: Participating in quarterly City of Melbourne Precinct Business Association Program meetings.
 - l. Complying with Legal Requirements: Adhering to the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012, which is administered and overseen by Consumer Affairs Victoria.
- Completing an annual acquittal report: Outlining the business support initiatives, place activations and localised marketing activities undertaken during the funding period. The activities undertaken should be a direct response to those formerly described in the Precinct Business Association's application to benefit the association's approved area.
 - Submitting quarterly reporting: Summarising how Precinct Business Association Program funding has been spent or committed, including an update on the current number of Precinct Business Association members.

2. Precinct Business Association Eligibility

This section outlines the requirements for Precinct Business Associations applying for recognition within the Precinct Business Association Program 2025-27.

2.1 Eligibility

To be eligible, Precinct Business Associations must submit the following documents by the annual application for funding due date:

- Precinct Business Association Program 2025-27 Application for Recognition and Funding form: This is the official form that Precinct Business Associations need to fill out to apply for recognition and funding under the program. Key dates are available on www.melbourne.vic.gov.au from March - April annually.
- Management and Legal Structure Documentation: Copies of documents that demonstrate the management and legal structure of the applicant Precinct Business Association.
- Annual Financial Statements: Financial statements that comply with the requirements of the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012.
- Current Register of Members: A register showing a minimum of twenty-five individual members who have paid a membership fee of at least \$50 per annum.

- Membership Fee Structure and Development Plan: Details of the fee structure for members, a plan for developing membership, and verification documentation as outlined in section 4.

Successful applicants will be referred to as "Recognised Precinct Business Associations" and are required to acknowledge Council's support and participate in public promotions organised by the Council to promote the Precinct Business Association Program 2025-27.

In cases where multiple Precinct Business Associations from similar precincts or geographic locations submit applications for funding under the program, the City of Melbourne will only recognise one precinct business association per relevant precinct strip or geographic area. This means that if there are overlapping applications, the City of Melbourne will evaluate the submissions and select the most suitable representative Precinct Business Association.

The decision on which association to recognise will be based on several factors, including:

- The documentation submitted with the application.
- The representation of members within the association.
- The geographic area of the precinct.
- The history of the association in representing its members.

The City of Melbourne reserves the right to determine the most appropriate Precinct Business Association to represent the precinct based on these criteria.

2.2 Ineligibility

The City of Melbourne will deem a Precinct Business Association ineligible to apply for recognition if any of the following conditions exist:

- The Precinct Business Association or area is either not located within the City of Melbourne municipality or is not classified as a consumer relevant area of commercial or retail significance.
- The applicant Precinct Business Association has not acquitted previous City of Melbourne grants or has outstanding debts to the City of Melbourne.
- Existing members of the Precinct Business Association do not adhere to the Standards of Conduct outlined in these Guidelines.
- The Precinct Business Association does not fulfill the objectives and deliverables for which funding was provided under the Precinct Business Association Program 2025-27 (*or previous iterations of the program*) within a financial year to the Council's satisfaction.
- The Precinct Business Association has not notified the Program Manager within 28 days of rejecting a membership application from a City of Melbourne-based business entity, including the rationale for the rejection.
- The Precinct Business Association has been found to have breached the Consumer Affairs Victoria's (CAV) Model Rules for an incorporated association or other regulatory acts and governance standards. This includes instances where a Precinct Business Association does not maintain an up-to-date Conflicts of Interest register.

If any of these conditions are breached, the Council will deem the Precinct Business Association ineligible to apply for future funding. Any unacquitted or unused program funding must be reimbursed at the direction of Council.

3. Recognition of Precinct Business Associations' Members for Funding Purposes Under This Program

This section outlines the criteria for recognised Precinct Business Associations to qualify for funding under the Precinct Business Association Program 2025-27.

To be eligible for funding, Precinct Business Associations must provide evidence of having at least 25 individual members who have paid a membership fee of at least \$50 per year. These members must have a physical business location within the area represented by the Recognised Precinct Business Association. Only one membership per business entity is allowed.

3.1 Criteria for Recognition of Commercial Members

The following types of businesses and entities are eligible for recognition as commercial members:

- a. **Retailers, Hospitality Businesses, and Traders:** These are businesses engaged in the sale of goods to consumers and have a physical business location within the district area administered by the Recognised Precinct Business Association.
- b. **Service Providers:** These include businesses providing professional services such as financial, medical, and trades services, and consultants with a business office located in the district area administered by the Recognised Precinct Business Association.
- c. **Commercial Operators:** These are goods suppliers directly related to the precinct geographic area, such as food/small goods or product suppliers. These commercial operators/suppliers are only eligible to be ordinary members (i.e., they cannot hold a position on the precinct business association executive) and should only represent up to ten percent of the overall Precinct Business Association membership.
- d. **Landlords:** Non-owner occupiers of shops, offices, and other trading premises in the precinct, provided they are not eligible for appointment or election to the Precinct Business Association executive.
- e. **Institutions:** Universities, hospitals, schools, and similar bodies with a legitimate interest in the prosperity of the precinct, provided they are not eligible for appointment or election to the Precinct Business Association executive.
- f. **Other:** Not-for-profit organisations or businesses with a legitimate interest and demonstrated ongoing support for the promotion and development of the precinct and its members.
- g. Only one membership per business entity can be purchased.

3.2 Categories and Members Not Recognised for Funding Purposes

The City of Melbourne will not recognise the following categories and members for funding purposes:

- a. **Non-Paying Members:** This includes honorary members and members who do not pay membership fees, such as life members.
- b. **Memberships Paid by Organisations Run by the City of Melbourne.**

4. Membership Register and Verification

This section outlines the requirements for maintaining and verifying the membership register for Recognised Precinct Business Associations under the Precinct Business Association Program 2025-27. The purpose of the register is to ensure that Precinct Business Associations have an accurate and up-to-date record of their members, a requirement for funding eligibility.

4.1 Membership Register

Recognised Precinct Business Associations are required to maintain an up-to-date membership register as per the requirements of the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012. This register must include the following information for each member:

- a. The contact person for the member business.
- b. The business name and address.
- c. The telephone number.
- d. Evidence of the membership fee paid and the date it was paid.

For bulk membership listings, such as those from retail centres, the register must detail individual trader information, including the member's name, business name and address, telephone number, fee paid, and date.

Funded Precinct Business Association are required to provide a listing of members on the Precinct Business Association's website.

4.2 Membership Verification

To verify Precinct Business Association memberships, the following documentation must be provided by the annual application for funding due date:

- a. The Precinct Business Association's membership register as described above.
- b. A completed and signed membership form for each new member that clearly shows the member business's contact person, business name, contact details, and the amount and date the membership fee was paid.
- c. Payment verification for membership dues, which can be provided in **one** of the following ways:
 - i. Tax invoices (paid receipts) for all current members.
 - ii. A membership register for the new funding year that includes a column noting the membership renewal payment date, the member's signature, and a copy of the payment receipt clearly identifying the member.
 - iii. A copy of the bank statement entry clearly identifying the payment of member dues, such as the member's business name entered on the bank statement.

For bulk memberships (e.g., shopping centres), a letter from the centre manager detailing the list of tenancies (including individual trader details such as member and business names, address, telephone number, fee paid, and date) and a payment receipt (tax invoice or bank statement entry) should be provided that clearly shows the payment of dues by the centre.

Only members who have paid their membership dues within the application for funding financial year will be recognised for Precinct Business Association membership.

Note: Full evidence must be presented to the Council officer in a timely manner before funding can be released. Upon request, Associations may need to provide externally verified or audited financial statements. This may include evidence of membership applications received and payment via electronic payment only, such as credit card, bank transfer or invoice, rather than cash. Each membership payment received must be linked to an individual. The purchase of multiple memberships by one person or entity is prohibited.

5. Application Process

Precinct Business Association interested in applying for annual Precinct Business Association Program funding need to submit their documentation through the Smarty Grants online system.

6. Funding requirements and ongoing eligibility

Recognised Precinct Business Associations under this program apply for funding annually, in two categories:

6.1 Administrative Funding

This section explains the financial support available to Recognised Precinct Business Associations for administrative purposes. Administrative funding is provided on a yearly basis to help cover administration costs, including association office expenses, software licence fees, affiliation memberships as well as the salary of up to one staff member responsible for delivering relevant services to members, such as developing membership in the trader area and maintaining active communication with all members.

The Council offers a fixed annual contribution based on the number of financial members in the association with each member paying at least \$50 per year:

- a. \$30,000 flat rate for associations with 25 to 100 members.
- b. Flat rate of \$30,000 + an extra \$100 per member over 100 members to a maximum of 200 members.
- c. \$40,000 flat rate for associations with 200 or more members.

The Executive Officer or Coordinator must work with the Precinct Business Association to create a vision and strategic plan for the precinct and serve as the foundation for an annual business or activity plan.

6.2 Business Development, Place Activation and Marketing Funding

This section outlines the funding available to Recognised Business Associations for business development, place activation, and marketing activities. Applications for this funding should include activities that leverage City of Melbourne business activities, marketing campaigns, and consumer events like Moomba and Christmas Festival.

The funding is provided on a yearly basis to support the implementation of the Precinct Business Association's annual business plan. Funding must only be used for relevant activities listed below.

Recognised Precinct Business Associations applying for funding, must submit an annual draft plan of intended activities utilising program funding. The draft plan must detail running costs, including any hospitality expenses for all planned initiatives at the time of applying. All hospitality expenses must be approved by the Program Manager, at the Program Manager's discretion.

Activities that can be funded:

- a. Business development initiatives restricted to the following:
 - o seminars and capability building business training events such as governance, legal, marketing, strategic planning and financial management that demonstrate a benefit to a broad group of members.
- b. Place activation initiatives such as:
 - o pop-up events,

- markets,
- static installations in public areas, and
- interactive or augmented reality experiences.

These activities must aim to build a place brand and promote the trader area to visitors by creating engaging and immersive experiences.

c. Marketing of the precinct area benefiting the Precinct Business Association's members, including:

- advertising,
- websites,
- B2B and B2C newsletters,
- brochures,
- social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, Facebook; and
- gift card programs and giveaways where the broader association membership is included and benefits through rotating business participation and methods (such raffles, social media contests, event participation). Each giveaway should be based on a broader marketing and outreach strategy with a focused goal (e.g. increase foot traffic, promote a new business).

Ineligible uses of funding include:

- fees not directly related to the delivery of funded activities,
- activities that promote a single or small group of businesses exclusively during the funding period,
- private functions or entertainment with no clear link to the needs of the broader membership base,
- third-party events not aligned to the organisation's business plan.

Funding Formula: business development, place activation and marketing

The Council-approved funding formula for business development, place activation and marketing is as follows:

Base funding for 25-100 members, each paying at least \$50 per year:

- a. \$600 per eligible member (minimum 25 members) and up to \$60,000 for associations with 100 members.

Bonus funding for larger associations with 101 or more members, each paying at least \$50 per year:

- a. 101-200 members: an extra \$300 per member.
- b. 200+ members: \$30,000 flat rate.

6.3 Funding Documentation and Performance Reporting

This section outlines the documentation and performance reporting requirements for Recognised Precinct Business Associations that receive funding under the Precinct Business Association Program 2025-27. To ensure transparency and accountability, associations recommended for funding must submit the following:

- a. **Signed Guidelines and Commitment to Standards of Conduct:** The association's president and one committee member must sign the Precinct Business Association Program 2025-27 Guidelines and a Commitment to Standards of Conduct 1.
- b. **Signed Funding Agreement:** The Precinct Business Association's president must sign the funding agreement.
- c. **Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):** Precinct Business Associations must report on specific KPIs outlined in their annual funding agreements. These KPIs include:
 - i. Developing a membership plan to increase paid memberships.
 - ii. Assessing member satisfaction and the satisfaction of all businesses in the precinct.
 - iii. Delivering place activities that showcase local businesses and increase visitation.
 - iv. Providing member support initiatives such as business themed or focused networking and information seminars.
 - v. Implementing localised marketing initiatives to enhance the precinct's vibrancy.
 - vi. Evidence of communications with members on a minimum, quarterly basis via newsletter or email.
- d. **Quarterly Reports:** For ongoing compliance, Precinct Business Associations are required to report on any spent or committed program funding, as well as provide an update on the current number of Precinct Business Association members to date.
- e. **Annual Report:** As a condition of funding, Precinct Business Associations must publish an annual report, available to the public via the association's website at the completion of the funded financial year. The report will describe the completed activities aligned to the Precinct Business Association's strategic plan and outline the activities and related costs undertaken utilising funding from the Precinct Business Association Program.

6.4 Governance Training

Precinct Business Association committee members and executive officers are required to attend Governance training relating to the requirements of the *Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012 as directed by the City of Melbourne*.

6.5 Conflict of Interest Register

To ensure correct governance procedures, a Conflict of Interest (COI) register must be in place for funded Precinct Business Associations. The register manages potential conflicts of interest among board members, staff, and volunteers. The register maintains transparency, accountability, and ethical decision-making within the organisation. The register should document any actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest, ensuring proper management and mitigation strategies are in place. The Conflict-of-Interest Register should include:

- the Responsible Person's name.

- the date of their appointment.
- record of interests, such as:
- relationship of interests (if any) to the Precinct Business Association's activities or proposed activities.
- date of disclosure.
- steps taken to prevent or manage the conflict, if any.
 - a. Once a conflict has been disclosed at the earliest possible opportunity, the next step is to manage the conflict by not participating in the decision-making about that issue.
 - b. City of Melbourne reserves the right to request this at any time. If it is found that the funded Precinct Business Association has failed to disclose a related conflict of interest, this may be viewed as a breach of the funding agreement.

6.6 Meetings

All Precinct Business Associations are required to attend formal Precinct Business Association Program meetings held by the City of Melbourne at the Melbourne Town Hall. Additionally, they must participate in any ad hoc or periodic working group meetings as requested by the Precinct Business Association Program Manager. Failure to attend these meetings may affect the Precinct Business Associations eligibility for continued funding.

6.7 Summary: Funding requirements of Recognised Precinct Business Associations: Reporting and ongoing eligibility requirements

Precinct Business Associations are required to submit documents to the City of Melbourne that are listed within the Eligibility section (Section 2 above) and in addition to the following:

- a. Formal register of the Precinct Business Association's financial membership and membership development plan.
 - b. The Precinct Business Association's vision, strategic plan and annual business/activity plan for the precinct.
- The Precinct Business Association's published annual report available to the public via the association's website at the completion of the funded financial year, describing the completed activities aligned to the Precinct Business Association's strategic plan and outlining the costs undertaken through Precinct Business Association Program.
 - c. Annual financial statements in accordance with the requirements of the *Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012*.
 - d. Schedule of communications with constituents and provision of evidence of communication undertaken with association members (for example, email, newsletters, brochures etc.). This includes issuing a quarterly newsletter to association members detailing precinct updates, opportunities, City of Melbourne information and other noteworthy business information during the funding period.
 - e. Minutes of the Precinct Business Association's Annual General Meeting.
 - f. Minutes of the Precinct Business Association's most recent general meeting.

- Submission of an annual acquittal and finance report. This report should demonstrate the Precinct Business Association's localised business support initiatives and marketing activities utilising program funding (as per section 6.1).
 - g. Ensure that Governance training relating to the requirements of the *Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012* is undertaken by Precinct Business Association committee members and the executive officer.
 - h. The Precinct Business Association must have a Conflict of Interest (COI) register.
 - i. Funded Precinct Business Associations are expected to fulfil Consumer Affairs Victoria reporting requirements. City of Melbourne will undertake a review of Precinct Business Association applicants as part of the verification phase to ensure compliance with annual reporting requirements for Consumer Affairs Victoria incorporated associations.
 - j. The Precinct Business Association will ensure that the Council's funding of the Program is appropriately acknowledged in all media and promotional material and ensure that approval is sought from the Precinct Business Association Program Manager prior to release of such material.
 - k. The Precinct Business Association will ensure that approval for use of the City of Melbourne logo is sought via logos@melbopurne.vic.gov.au prior to public promotion.
 - l. Where appropriate, the Precinct Business Association will leverage City of Melbourne led business activities, marketing campaigns and events and provide evidence of same.
 - m. Funded Precinct Business Associations are required to provide a current listing of members on the Precinct Business Association website, which is to be reviewed and updated, at least, quarterly.
 - n. Precinct Business Associations must issue notification to the Precinct Business Association Program Manager of instances where an application for membership by a City of Melbourne based business entity has been rejected by the Precinct Business Association and the grounds for it within 28 days of the Precinct Business Association's rejection of membership. If the reason for rejection does not align with the program objectives, the Precinct Business Association will be required to accept the application for membership to remain eligible to apply for program recognition and funding.
 - o. Funded Precinct Business Associations are required to send a notice of its AGM to all current members and the precinct program manager, at least two weeks ahead of the meeting. A copy of the AGM Invitation sent to members that show the email addresses of all current members must be uploaded to the annual acquittal report.
 - p. Funded Precinct Business Associations are required to have a current strategic plan submitted via the annual application for program funding.
 - q. Upon request, Associations may need to provide externally verified or audited financial statements. This may include evidence of membership applications received and payment via credit card, bank transfer or invoice rather than cash. Each membership payment received must be linked to an individual. The purchase of multiple memberships by one person or entity is prohibited.
- Funded Precinct Business Associations are required to submit an up-to-date quarterly funding acquittal, accurately detailing the precinct program funding spent or committed to date and providing an update on the number of current Precinct Business Association members at the time of reporting.

7. Key program dates

Recognised Precinct Business Associations are required to apply for funding on a financial year basis and submit documentation to Council, including acquittal reports. Timely submission of all documents to the

Precinct Business Association Program Manager is a requisite to obtain funding under the program. Key dates are available on melbourne.vic.gov.au¹ from March - April annually.

8. Standards of Conduct

The City of Melbourne requires its contractors and business parties associated with it to fully comply with all relevant legal obligations, including acting against inappropriate conduct such as discrimination, harassment and/or bullying. A condition of funding will be that all Precinct Business Associations acknowledge and commit to relevant City of Melbourne behavioural and conduct standards such as its [Code of Conduct](#)², its Anti-discrimination and Harassment Procedure and its Workplace Bullying Policy.

In addition, the Council's values should be modelled at all meetings and informal gatherings, and Precinct Business Association attendees should, in particular, respect and tolerate the views of others on these occasions. Failure to respect others and their points of view during meetings and informal gatherings will impact on future funding.

Recognised Precinct Business Associations recommended for funding under the Precinct Business Association Program 2025-27 are required to submit a signed Precinct Business Association Program 2025-27 Guidelines which includes a commitment to [Standards of Conduct](#)³ by the association's president and one member of the committee.

Commitment to Standards of Conduct

Name of Precinct Business Association: _____

- **Name of President:** _____

- **Signature of President and date:** _____

- **Name of Committee Member:** _____

- **Signature of Committee Member and date:** _____

¹ <http://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/>

² <https://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/code-conduct-and-protocol>

³ <https://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/code-conduct-and-protocol>