

Event Partnership Program Guidelines 2027



CITY OF MELBOURNE

Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

The City of Melbourne respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land on which Event Partnership events take place, the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and Bunurong / Boon Wurrung peoples of the Kulin and pays respect to their Elders past and present.

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

We accept the invitation in the Uluru Statement from the Heart and are committed to walking together to build a better future.

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Cover Image: Midsumma Festival. Photo Credit: Craate Creative

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To find out how you can participate in the decision-making process for City of Melbourne's current and future initiatives, visit <https://participate.melbourne.vic.gov.au/>

Introduction

The Event Partnership Program is a sponsorship program designed to provide financial support to free and accessible events that are held within the City of Melbourne municipality.

The program aims to activate Melbourne and create memorable, engaging and innovative experiences for both locals and visitors.

Financial support should be used to present or enhance the free event programming and/or support a broader marketing or PR campaign that increases attendance and has a greater economic impact for the city.

Program objectives and priority considerations

There are several key Council objectives we aim to achieve through this program, which will form part of the assessment criteria. These include:

Vibrant and creative Melbourne

Events that support our vibrant city, maximise seasonal opportunities and contribute to Melbourne's creative identity through engaging programming and event delivery. Events that occur during the day, in winter or in spring are strongly encouraged.

Leveraging our economic strengths

Events that drive business engagement, visitation and spend, and strengthen Melbourne's economy by engaging and connecting with locals and visitors.

Building a city for people

Events that encourage and welcome people of all ages, identities and abilities through culturally aware and appropriate programming.

Healthy, safe, clean and connected communities

Events that celebrate inclusive and accessible opportunities and enable people from diverse cultural backgrounds to actively participate, connect and feel a strong sense of belonging in Melbourne.



Image: Vida Melbourne Latin Festival

Eligibility criteria

To be eligible for the Event Partnership Program, the event must:



1 Be free to attend or have significant free programming with a minimum attendance of 5,000 to the free programming.



2 Start between 1 January and 31 December 2027.



3 Demonstrate that a minimum of 30% of the event's costs will be self-funded or confirmed to come from other income streams.



4 Have a valid Certificate of Currency for public liability insurance of \$20 million.



5 Be presented by a legal entity with an ABN, that is not an individual or sole trader.



6 Occur within the **City of Melbourne municipality**.

Applications will be ineligible if any of the following apply:

- The event is an industry or business event, trade and consumer show, for example exhibitions, conferences, tradeshow, congresses, symposiums etc.
- The event is a PR opportunity, award ceremony, commercial theatre production or recurring market.
- The event is a teaching program, lecture or university open day.
- The event has an adverse effect on public health, safety, the environment or heritage.
- The event will not comply with anti-discrimination / anti-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).
- The event sells or promotes unethically sourced animal products, exploit or use animals in harmful ways, for example, through exhibition or use in performances.
- The event (including components thereof) receives funding from another City of Melbourne 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 or is in a legal conflict with City of Melbourne.

- The applicant undertakes 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.
- The applicant conducts or has conducted themselves in a way that is considered to be injurious or prejudicial to the character or interests of City of Melbourne.
- The applicant is requesting funds for debt reduction or operational deficits.
- The applicant is requesting sponsorship for reimbursement of funds already spent.
- The applicant is a Commonwealth or State Government Department, City of Melbourne employee or elected member of Council, or their immediate family. This does not include organisations they may be part of.
- The applicant is a political party or considers the primary purpose of the event to be political.

Ineligible applications will not advance to the assessment stage and applicants will be notified once final recommendations have been endorsed by Council.

Types of sponsorships

Applicants can request cash and / or in-kind sponsorship. The total value of the sponsorship is calculated by combining the value of both cash and in-kind support.



Cash sponsorship

Cash sponsorship up to \$150,000 excluding GST per year is available either for a one-year partnership or multi-year partnership (up to three years).

If applying for a multi-year partnership, the application must outline how this partnership will support the long-term goals of the event and achieve the program objectives.

The allocation of City of Melbourne cash sponsorship will be negotiated between both parties and specified in the sponsorship agreement. Cash sponsorship must be allocated towards the free programming of the event.



In-kind sponsorship

In-kind sponsorship relates to the partial or full waiver of event site hire fees for City of Melbourne's public outdoor spaces only.

Not for profit / community organisations automatically have applicable site hire fees waived, regardless of the outcome of their application. Commercial events will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

In-kind sponsorship excludes any costs associated with other City of Melbourne permits such as planning or food and health permits.



Image: Melbourne Symphony Orchestra

Partnership tiers

All events are categorised into tiers to ensure the application, assessment and subsequent sponsorship agreement is equitable and reflective of the level of investment.

Tiers are categorised by the total investment value (cash and in-kind) per year and defined by the criteria below.

TIER 3 Total sponsorship request <i>Cash and in-kind</i> \$10,000 – \$50,000	TIER 2 Total sponsorship request <i>Cash and in-kind</i> \$50,001 – \$100,000	TIER 1 Total sponsorship request <i>Cash and in-kind</i> \$100,001+
Attendance	Attendance	Attendance
Minimum 5,000 to free programming of event.	- Minimum overall attendance of 50,000 - Significant free programming attracting a minimum of 25,000 attendees.	- Minimum overall attendance of 100,000 - Significant free programming attracting a minimum of 50,000 attendees.
Event profile	Event profile	Event profile
State and / or local exposure through marketing promotion.	National exposure in addition to notable local exposure through marketing promotion.	National and/or international exposure in addition to significant local exposure through extensive marketing promotion.
Sponsorship benefits	Sponsorship benefits	Sponsorship benefits
- Minimum \$2,500 in ticketing / corporate hospitality or equivalent (if applicable) - Basic digital and print advertising - Signage and branding opportunities - Speaking opportunities.	- Minimum \$5,000 in ticketing / corporate hospitality (if applicable) - Moderate digital and print advertising - Significant signage and branding opportunities - Significant speaking opportunities.	- Minimum \$10,000 in ticketing / corporate hospitality (if applicable) - Significant digital and print advertising - Significant signage and branding opportunities - Significant speaking opportunities.
Market research	Market research	Market research
Market research (externally or internally delivered) e.g. surveys.	Formal market research conducted by an external organisation, at least once during the term of the partnership.	Formal market research conducted by an external organisation, including at least one Economic Impact Report if a multi-year agreement.
Sustainability	Sustainability	Sustainability
Collaborate on initiatives to identify ways in which you will minimise the environmental impact of your event including: - Report on sustainability initiatives - Comply with the Single-Use Plastics Ban.	Collaborate on initiatives to identify ways in which you will minimise the environmental impact of your event including: - Report on sustainability initiatives - Conduct a waste audit of the event - Comply with the Single-Use Plastics Ban.	Collaborate on initiatives to identify ways in which you will minimise the environmental impact of your event including: - Report on sustainability initiatives - Report on initiatives undertaken to reduce their carbon footprint - Conduct a waste audit of the event - Comply with the Single-Use Plastics Ban.
Business engagement	Business engagement	Business engagement
Meaningful engagement with City of Melbourne based businesses and local precinct associations.	Meaningful engagement with City of Melbourne based businesses and local precinct associations.	Meaningful engagement with City of Melbourne based businesses and local precinct associations.
Acquittal	Acquittal	Acquittal
Within 4 weeks of the event concluding, the applicant must provide an acquittal report.	Within 4 weeks of the event concluding, the applicant must provide an acquittal report.	Within 8 weeks of the event concluding, the applicant must provide an acquittal report.

Assessment criteria weightings

Applications will be assessed by the Event Partnership Team using a set of weighted assessment criteria and then reviewed by a panel of assessors from various divisions within the City of Melbourne.

Criteria	Consideration	Weighting
 Economic impact and attendance	The degree to which the event increases visitation to the city, engages local businesses and provides a measurable economic benefit to the city.	18%
 Event programming	The range and quality of free, engaging programming that encourages active participation and aligns with the program's objectives and priority considerations.	17%
 Brand and marketing	The extent to which the event increases the profile of the city as a vibrant tourist destination and provides sponsorship benefits to council.	16%
 Community involvement	The degree to which the event actively and meaningfully engages with community groups and collaborates with Traditional Owners. Accessibility for all members of the community is also a key consideration.	15%
 Event calendar alignment	The degree to which the event fits within the city's year-round events calendar, including its uniqueness, date, time and location.	12%
 Capacity to deliver	The degree to which the event is financially viable and sustainable with or without City of Melbourne funding. The level of detail and completeness of the information provided, as well as the demonstrated capacity of the organisation to deliver the event.	12%
 Environmental sustainability	The degree to which the event employs environmentally sustainable practices and reduces their environmental impact.	10%
TOTAL		100%

Assessment criteria considerations

The application form will ask questions that pertain to the following considerations.



Free programming

City of Melbourne supports high quality engaging experiences that encourage attendees to actively participate in the event – therefore a detailed description of the various free programming elements is required.



Aboriginal Melbourne

A **Welcome to Country or an Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners**, should be given at all events.

This recognises the continuing connection of Aboriginal Traditional Owners to Country.

View our **Aboriginal Melbourne** website for more information and to view City of Melbourne's **Reconciliation Action Plan**.



Community engagement

Events that City of Melbourne support must provide the opportunity for people to feel more connected and engaged with their community. A good application will outline:

- Any additional cultural programming that will engage with Aboriginal culture.
- How many different community groups have been engaged in the planning and delivery of the event, specifying which are located within City of Melbourne.
- How many different communities will attend the event.
- How attendees can meaningfully engage with the various communities as part of the event experience.

Examples include:

- Engaging local sporting clubs to promote at the event / mascots for photo opportunities.
- Engaging local multicultural communities for dance workshops, language classes, choir performances.
- Specific partnerships with key community groups, such as Aboriginal community, Childcare centres, LGBTIQ+ community, International residents, International students, Multicultural communities, Older Adults, People with disability, People facing social and economic barriers, People without housing, Precinct associations, Schools, Sport and recreation clubs.

There is no minimum number of local community groups your organisation should engage, however you will need to demonstrate meaningful community engagement as part of your event plan. Assessment will be based on the quality of your engagement, rather than the quantity of groups included. Groups should be actively involved in the event and free programming rather than just an invited to attend.

Some examples include volunteering opportunities, inviting multicultural, First Nations or local school groups to be involved in your event programming, and partnering with community groups.



Business engagement

City of Melbourne supports events that partner with local businesses and help showcase Melbourne's unique shopping and dining precincts. A good application will outline:

- How your event will meaningfully engage with local precinct associations, businesses and retailers as part of the event delivery.
- How your event will impact local businesses (i.e. road closures, pedestrian movement impacts, will the businesses see increased activity etc.).
- How your event will create direct economic impact for local businesses through incentive offers and / or marketing of local businesses as part of the event.



Sponsorship Benefits

The Event Partnership Program is a sponsorship program, therefore there is an expectation that the application outlines a summary of bespoke sponsorship benefits offered to City of Melbourne. These may include:

- special events and money can't buy experiences for Council supported community groups
- activation opportunities for Council branches
- Council message included on website and / or in event program
- Councillor speaking opportunities
- tickets / invitations for associated events
- digital and print advertising.



Event budget

All applications must include a balanced budget, where all costs are accurate and reasonable.

Income

Include all sources of income (confirmed and unconfirmed) required to fund the costs of the event such as:

- City of Melbourne sponsorship request
- other grants or sponsorship (government, philanthropic, private and corporate)
- earned income (e.g. ticket sales)
- in-kind support.

Expenditure

Include all expenses in the budget, highlighting where City of Melbourne sponsorship funds will be allocated.

Sponsorship funds should be allocated to supporting the objectives of the program by enhancing an existing event and driving an increase in attendance figures through the following initiatives:

- Contributing to a broader marketing or PR campaign that will increase reach and attract a larger audience.
- Presenting or enhancing the free event programming to engage and attract a larger audience.

City of Melbourne will not support events where monetary support is allocated to core operational costs including accommodation, wages / staffing costs, travel, security, prizes / prize money, food and beverage costs etc.

Events must not be fully reliant on funding from City of Melbourne and must be able to demonstrate that a minimum of 30% of the event's costs will be self-funded or confirmed to come from other income streams.



Accessibility and inclusion

Accessibility is an important consideration for any event City of Melbourne may partner with, as such event organisers must consider accessibility as part of their planning and put measures in place to ensure that the event site is accessible to everyone.

As part of Council's commitment to accessibility, a **self-assessment checklist** has been developed to help businesses and event organisers to ensure equal access for people of all ages and abilities. This checklist can also be used as a guide when planning improvements or when selecting sites for festivals or events.

View our **Accessing Melbourne** website to view our interactive access map and for further information on accessibility in the city.

City of Melbourne **Inclusive Melbourne Action plan 2024-26** commits to ensuring that everyone in the Melbourne municipality, regardless of their gender identity, have access to equal power, resources and opportunities, and are treated with dignity, respect and fairness.

This **Gender equality statement of commitment** establishes the expectation that gender equality is considered and prioritised in all current and future Council planning, policy, service delivery and practice.



Sustainability and Waste

All events must commit to reducing their environmental impact and improving waste management. In your application, please provide details of the event's sustainable commitments as part of the event delivery, including:

- encouraging the use of public transport to and from the event
- providing recycling facilities
- no use of **banned single-use plastics**
- reducing printed collateral
- conducting a waste audit report
- establishing improvement targets.

Please find more information through the **Sustainable Event Guide**.

Supporting application documentation

All application forms must include the following.



Event marketing and communications plan

Event marketing is how you plan to promote and advertise your event to a wider audience to drive event attendance. Your application must include a copy of your event marketing and communications plan detailing:

- Specific plans for your free programming components
- How your event will hero Melbourne as a destination of choice
- How your event will create international, national, state or local exposure.



Attendance

It is an expectation that all events sponsored through the program commit to driving visitation to City of Melbourne. As part of the application for funding, you will be required to provide historical data on the event attendance.



Economic Impact Report (Tier 1)

City of Melbourne values events that contribute significant economic impact to the municipality of Melbourne by attracting audiences that contribute to the local economy into the city. If your organisation does not have a recent Economic Impact Report, you will need to outline how this will be reported.



Market research

Market research is the gathering of information and data from event attendees. It can provide statistical support to validate your planned target audience(s), target areas of improvement and can also be valuable for sponsors. Details on how past market research has been utilised for these purposes, and information about how the event will conduct market research in future events will be highly regarded.



Image credit: Melbourne Food and Wine Festival
Photo Credit: Nguyen Dang

Permits



Event permit and site hire fees

If you intend on using outdoor public open space managed by City of Melbourne, you will require an event permit. Event permits ensure public safety and amenity in public spaces and assist in the sustainable management for our parks and gardens. For further information, visit the [event permits page](#) on the City of Melbourne website.

To view public open spaces available for events, refer to the City of Melbourne's [interactive map](#) or contact the Event Operations Team directly on (03) 9658 9658, or via email at events@melbourne.vic.gov.au.

An estimate of site hire fees is required to be uploaded as part of your EPP application. Please note, an estimate does not constitute approval. You must continue to work with the Event Operations Team to meet the requirements for use of public open space.

If seeking use of public space managed by City of Melbourne for your event:

- Submit an [online event permit application](#) and indicate that you are applying to the Event Partnership Program.
- Wait to receive an estimate for site hire fees for inclusion in your EPP application. If you do not receive an estimate within 10 business days - email events@melbourne.vic.gov.au or call (03) 9658 9658 to speak with a member of the Event Operations Team.

Depending on the outcome of your EPP application, event permit fees may still apply.

- Not-for-profit or community organisations may be entitled to a full waiver of event permit fees.
- Commercial entities are required to pay full event permit fees. If your EPP application is successful, these fees may be waived as in-kind sponsorship if included in your application request.

Place of Public Entertainment (POPE) Permit

We also recommend contacting the Building Control POPE team to ascertain if your event may require a [Place of Public Entertainment Permit \(POPE\)](#) at building@melbourne.vic.gov.au. Regardless of your entity type, all events are expected to pay for the POPE, and they are unable to be waived as part of EPP sponsorship.

Food Safety Permit

Events that have food and / or beverage vendors at their events are subject to comply with the *Food Act 1984*. All vendors must be registered with the City of Melbourne or another council within the state of Victoria.

Events that have personal care and body art vendors at their events are subject to comply with the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* and associated Regulations and must register with the City of Melbourne for event-specific registration.

Event Organisers must contact the Community Wellbeing Health team on (03) 9658 9658, or via email at hsevents@melbourne.vic.gov.au to ensure all relevant vendors are registered and meet all requirements of the applicable legislation.

Additional information can be found in the [Event Planning Guide](#).

Event site bookings for major events

If you are presenting a major event and wish to book outdoor public space managed by the City of Melbourne across multiple years, you will need to submit a separate application for the Major Events Expression of Interest (EOI). For further information, key dates, and to apply, we recommend referring to the [Major Events EOI](#) page on the City of Melbourne website.

Partnership process

Apply	- Preview the Event Partnership Program application form through SmartyGrants from 1 April 2026. - We recommend that new applicants contact the Event Partnerships Team at eventsponsorship@melbourne.vic.gov.au to discuss the application form and application process. - Apply for an Event Permit from April 2026. - Apply for Event Partnership Program sponsorship through SmartyGrants from 1 April to 15 May 2026. <i>For further information on key dates refer to the Event Partnership Program page on the City of Melbourne website.</i>
Assessment	- May to July 2026 - Applications will be assessed by a panel of assessors in a competitive round, against all other applicants. - The program consistently receives more applications than it can support, so outcomes are determined on the following basis: - The application's ability to meet the assessment criteria. - The ability to demonstrate adherence to the criteria and partnership benefits as per the relevant Partnership Tier. - The merit of the event concept and whether it adds value to the annual calendar of events based on uniqueness, timing, location and audience. - For returning events, the level of new free programming and / or increased benefits to community sectors. - The amount of sponsorship requested, and the total request for sponsorship by all events within the application round.
Council decision	August 2026 – Recommendations are put forward at a formal Council meeting for consideration and approval.
Outcome	September 2026 – Applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application.
Agreement	- Successful applicants will be required to enter into a written sponsorship agreement with City of Melbourne which includes terms and conditions, benefits and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). - The maximum term of each agreement is three years. If applying for a multi-year partnership, the application should present a compelling rationale as to how this will support the event's strategic direction and reciprocated outcomes. - The funding decision made by Council is final and is contingent upon the delivery of the event programming outlined within the application submitted. In the event there are significant changes to the event scope and programming, the funding amount may be reviewed. - You will be allocated a partnership account manager who will begin discussions with you a minimum of 3 months prior to the event.
Payment	- Successful applicants will also be required to accept City of Melbourne's standard payment schedule, which is 50% of any cash sponsorship paid prior to the delivery of the event, with the balance payable on submission of a satisfactory post-event report. - At the discretion of City of Melbourne, additional conditions may be placed on your sponsorship with accompanying adjustments to the standard payment schedule.
Benefits	Sponsorship benefits to be delivered as per the agreement.
Post-event reporting	- All sponsored events are required to submit a post-event report which includes financial statements and / or invoices at the conclusion of the event. - If a sponsored event fails to submit an adequate post-event report to the satisfaction of City of Melbourne or fails to deliver each of the KPIs outlined within the sponsorship agreement, then it is at the discretion of the City of Melbourne as to whether the full sponsorship amount will be paid.

Application assistance



Technical assistance

Refer to the [SmartyGrants help guide](#) for technical assistance related to submitting your application. The **SmartyGrants support desk** is open during business hours on 03 9320 6888 or by email service@smartygrants.com.au.



Event planning guide

City of Melbourne has produced an interactive [Melbourne Event Planning Guide](#). The guide provides an accessible and comprehensive overview of event permitting processes and planning requirements when organising an event within the city's public spaces.



Interpreter and translation Services

If you need an interpreter when calling the City of Melbourne, please call the following relevant 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 and Listen users phone 1300 555 727 then ask for 03 9658 9658
- Our multilingual information telephone service offers assistance to people from a non-English speaking background. Visit [Interpreter services](#).

Should you require additional assistance please contact the Event Partnerships Team, to discuss your specific needs.

Other grants and sponsorships



Alternative funding programs

Events that are not eligible for support via the Event Partnership Program may wish to review City of Melbourne's alternative programs of support.

More information can be found on our [grants and sponsorship page](#).

Please note this program does not fund events or festivals (including components thereof) that are already receiving support from other City of Melbourne programs.

Child Safe Standards

Council is committed to being a child safe organisation and has zero tolerance for child abuse. All children and young people are valued members of our community and have the right to be and feel safe. We are committed to embedding child safety into the everyday thinking and practice of all employees, volunteers and contractors.

We require contractors / funded organisations to understand and act to prevent, detect, respond and report any suspicion of child abuse and maintain a culture of child safety. A child or young person is under 18 years.

More information can be found on our [keeping children and young people safe](#) page.