

# BUSINESS BOOST GRANTS PROGRAM Guidelines



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## 1 Purpose of the Program

The Business Boost Grants Program provides financial assistance to support local businesses to establish, grow and improve their contribution to Hindmarsh Shire's town centres and local economy.

The Program supports targeted investment that:

- strengthens the viability of local businesses
- improves the presentation and activation of retail and commercial areas
- encourages business growth, visitation and economic activity

These Guidelines are administered in accordance with Council's Grants Administration Policy (C032) and relevant governance and legislative requirements.

Council recognises that many valuable local businesses are not always visible from main streets or traditional commercial areas. The Start & Grow stream is designed to support a wide range of business types, including home-based businesses, agricultural and rural enterprises, and other non-retail or emerging sectors.

Businesses operating from:

- homes or sheds
- farms or agricultural properties
- workshops, studios or yards
- online or service-based models

are strongly encouraged to apply where funding would support establishment, growth or improved capability.

Council understands that growth opportunities for these businesses may look different to traditional shopfront businesses. Applications are assessed based on business need, readiness and outcomes, not visibility or scale.

The Focus on Façade stream provides funding to help businesses and landlords improve shopfronts and building façades, creating more attractive and welcoming town centres.

## 2 Program Overview

<b>Program name</b>	Business Boost Grants
<b>Funding type</b>	Grant
<b>Total funding available</b>	\$15,000
<b>Funding structure</b>	Two rounds (if not exhausted in one)
<b>Maximum funding per application</b>	Focus on Façade - \$3,000 Start and Grow - \$2,000
<b>Co-contribution requirements</b>	Required, 1:2
<b>Approval Authority</b>	Council
<b>Round 1 Application Period</b>	Q1-2
<b>Round 2 Application Period*</b>	Q3-4 *Subject to available funding.

### 3 Governance Framework

Council administers all grant and sponsorship programs in accordance with the Grants Administration Policy (C032), the *Local Government Act 2020*, Council’s Governance Rules and Codes of Conduct, and Council’s Fraud and Integrity framework.

Council is committed to ensuring that funding programs are administered consistently and fairly, assessed objectively against approved criteria, supported by clear documentation and records, and capable of independent and public scrutiny. Applicants must operate or intend to operate a business within Hindmarsh Shire (with a registered ABN) and be the business owner and/or property owner or have written owner consent.

### 4 Eligibility

Applicants must:

- operate or intend to operate a business within Hindmarsh Shire (have a registered ABN)
- be the business owner and/or property owner (or have written owner consent)
- demonstrate the capacity to deliver and acquit the project
- meet insurance and regulatory requirements
- only receive funding once per financial year

Both new and established businesses may apply, subject to stream requirements.

The following are not eligible:

- applications from businesses outside Hindmarsh Shire
- projects that have already commenced
- applications seeking full project funding (no co-contribution)
- activities inconsistent with planning, building or heritage requirements
- businesses who have successfully obtained funding in the current financial year
- government bodies (including schools and their Parents and Friends organisations)
- general business operating expenses including salaries, wages, overheads, material expenses, utility usage costs etc.
- Applications that have outstanding amounts owing to Council (rates, permit payments etc.)

### 5 Submission of Applications

Online applications are preferred and can be submitted via the online form. Alternatively, the application form can be downloaded and completed. Applications should be forwarded to the Economic Development and Tourism Team via any of the below methods:

<b>Online</b>	Visit our website, or use this link: <a href="https://www.hindmarsh.vic.gov.au/Community/Apply-for-Grants">https://www.hindmarsh.vic.gov.au/Community/Apply-for-Grants</a>
<b>Email</b>	Email your application, along with all required attachments to <a href="mailto:business@hindmarsh.vic.gov.au">business@hindmarsh.vic.gov.au</a>
<b>In Person</b>	Hand in your printed application and attachments to any of our Customer Service Centres in Dimboola, Jeparit, Nhill and Rainbow
<b>Mail</b>	Send your printed application and attachments to: Grants Team Hindmarsh Shire Council

## 6 Outcomes and Acquittals

Businesses will be informed of their grant application results through both a phone call and written confirmation after the relevant Council Meeting. Those awarded grants will receive 80% of the funding once they complete the grant acceptance form. The remaining 20% will be released upon submission of a completion report. All recipients must provide evidence to the Council showing that the funds were used as outlined in their application. A completion report template will be supplied before the final payment is made. Acquittals must be submitted by 30 June of the financial year in which funding was granted; unless negotiated with the program manager in exceptional circumstances, otherwise missing this deadline may affect eligibility for future funding opportunities.

## 7 Quick Response Applications

Quick Response applications provide an alternative pathway for community groups, event organisers and small businesses to access small-scale funding outside the standard grant rounds. This option is reserved for time-sensitive, unforeseen or emerging opportunities that cannot reasonably wait until the next scheduled round. All applications will be assessed against the same eligibility and assessment criteria as standard applications, in addition to a requirement to clearly demonstrate **exceptional** circumstances. Applicants must provide strong evidence explaining why they were unable to apply during the normal grant opening period, noting that the threshold for approval is intentionally high to maintain fairness and transparency. Acceptable circumstances may include unexpected project timing, urgent equipment replacement, late notification of external opportunities or situations genuinely outside the applicant's control.

## 8 Further Information

Further information can be provided by Council's Economic Development and Tourism team. They can be contacted by phone at (03) 5391 4444 or by email at [business@hindmarsh.vic.gov.au](mailto:business@hindmarsh.vic.gov.au).

# Focus on Façade



## 9 Stream 1: Focus on Façade

This stream provides funding to help businesses improve shopfronts and building façades, creating more attractive and welcoming town centres. Examples of projects include:

- Shopfront refurbishment, including repainting, cladding or façade repairs
- Replacement or enhancement of business signage, including illuminated or heritage-appropriate signage
- Improvements to entryways, such as doors, glazing or accessibility enhancements
- Removal of unsightly fixtures and reinstatement of heritage or original building features
- External lighting to improve safety, visibility and streetscape appeal
- Minor façade works that improve consistency with town centre character
- Installation of murals, vinyl wraps or creative artwork on vacant shopfront windows or façades that visually activate vacant premises and improve main-street presentation. This may include non-operating businesses and absentee/vacant landlords as approved by Council. \*

\*Absentee/vacant landlords must demonstrate the project is for aesthetic reasons and provide clear proofs/designs of works to be undertaken if not utilised Council-approved decals. This grant funding must not be utilised for structural works on non-operating commercial businesses or commercially zoned vacant property.

### 9.1 Funding available and Co-contribution

Up to \$3,000 is available per application. Businesses must match \$1: \$2 to grant.

### 9.2 Assessment Criteria – Focus on Façade

Applications will be assessed in two stages. First, applications must meet the pass/fail eligibility requirements (including location, applicant authority/owner consent, project visibility from the public realm, project not commenced, planning/heritage compliance pathway, and demonstrated co-contribution). Only eligible applications proceed to the scored assessment.

Requirement	Pass / Fail
Project is located in Hindmarsh Shire	Pass / Fail
Applicant is business owner or has written owner consent	Pass / Fail
Works relate to external façade or shopfront visible from the street	Pass / Fail
Project has not commenced	Pass / Fail
Proposal complies with planning / heritage controls (or can reasonably do so)	Pass / Fail
Co-contribution demonstrated	Pass / Fail
Applicant has not received a business grant this financial year	Pass / Fail

Eligible applications are then assessed on merit against the criteria below.

Applicants do **not** need to address each heading separately in their application, but responses should clearly cover these points.

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Value</b>	<b>Assessment Considerations</b>
<b>Streetscape and visual impact</b>	<b>25 points</b>	Make a clear, visible improvement to the outside of the building or shopfront Improve how the building looks from the street Reduce visual clutter, ageing or vacancy impacts
<b>Alignment with town character and place</b>	<b>15 points</b>	Suit the character and style of the town Respect heritage features where relevant Use colours, materials or designs that fit the surrounding area
<b>Economic benefit</b>	<b>20 points</b>	Make the business or building more visible Help attract customers or visitors Improve activity along the street
<b>Project readiness and deliverability</b>	<b>15 points</b>	A clear description of what will be done Realistic costs with quotes where possible A simple and achievable timeline An understanding of any permits or approvals needed
<b>Value for money and co-contribution</b>	<b>15 points</b>	Show that Council funding will help achieve a bigger or better outcome Deliver improvements that will last and be seen by the public
<b>Amenity</b>	<b>10 points</b>	Creates a more welcoming and safe public space

# Start and Grow



## 10 Stream 2: Start and Grow

This stream provides a practical leg-up for new and growing local businesses to get established or take the next step. Examples of projects include:

- Purchase of essential equipment or tools required to commence or expand a business
- Development or upgrade of a website, e-commerce platform or online booking system
- Marketing and branding costs, including signage, professional photography or promotional material
- Professional services to support growth, such as business planning, financial advice or digital capability
- Purchase of technology or software that improves efficiency, compliance or service delivery
- Establishment costs for new businesses moving into vacant premises within town centres

### 10.1 Funding available and Co-contribution

Up to \$2,000 is available per application. Businesses must match \$1: \$2 to grant.

### 10.2 Assessment Criteria

Applications will be assessed in two stages. First, applications must meet the pass/fail eligibility requirements. Only eligible applications proceed to the scored assessment.

Requirement	Pass / Fail
Business is located in, or will operate within, Hindmarsh Shire (ABN provided)	Pass / Fail
Applicant is business owner or has written owner consent	Pass / Fail
Project aligns with eligible Start and Grow activities	Pass / Fail
Project has not commenced	Pass / Fail
Proposal complies with relevant regulatory requirements (or can reasonably do so)	Pass / Fail
Co-contribution demonstrated	Pass / Fail
Applicant has not received a business grant this financial year	Pass / Fail

Eligible applications are then assessed on merit against the criteria below.

Applicants do **not** need to address each heading separately in their application, but responses should clearly cover these points.

Criteria	Value	Assessment Considerations
<b>Business Growth and Impact</b>	<b>25 points</b>	How strongly the project will help the business start, expand, or increase its capacity. Evidence that the project will improve operations, productivity, customer reach, or service delivery.

		Clear link between the funded activity and measurable business outcomes.
<b>Economic and Local Benefit</b>	<b>20 points</b>	Contribution to local economic activity, job creation, activation of vacant premises, or increased visitation. Benefits to the broader community or town centre.
<b>Digital Capability and Innovation</b>	<b>15 points</b>	Extent to which the project improves digital presence, online sales, efficiency, compliance, or modernisation. Adoption of new technology, systems, or tools that enhance competitiveness.
<b>Project Readiness and Deliverability</b>	<b>15 points</b>	Clear description of the project, realistic costings and quotes, achievable timelines, and understanding of required permits or approvals. Evidence the applicant can deliver and acquit the project successfully.
<b>Value for Money and Co-Contribution</b>	<b>15 points</b>	Demonstrated co-investment that increases project impact. Reasonableness of costs relative to outcomes. Long-term benefit and sustainability of the improvements.
<b>Activation of Vacant Premises / New Business Establishment</b>	<b>10 points</b>	For new businesses: strength of the proposal to activate a vacant shopfront or premises in a town centre. Likelihood of the business becoming viable and contributing to local activity.

## 11 Document Control

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