

Business to Business (B2B) Grant Program

Frequently asked questions (FAQ)

What is the purpose of the B2B Grant Program?

The B2B Grant Program supports small businesses in the City of Whittlesea to grow by encouraging local procurement and strengthening local supply chains. It aims to foster innovation, business growth, and economic sustainability through business-to-business (B2B) transactions.

How much funding is available per application?

Each business can apply for up to \$10,000, which must be matched dollar-for-dollar by the applicant. Funds are reimbursed after project completion and proof of matched expenditure.

What does 'matched dollar-for-dollar funding' mean?

It means the business must contribute an equal amount to the grant funding. For example, if applying for \$5,000 the business must ALSO contribute a minimum of \$5,000.

What are the two funding streams and how do they differ?

Stream 1 - Business Improvement and Innovation

The Business Improvement and Innovation stream provides the opportunity for businesses to improve their business acumen and operation and supporting improvements that deliver efficiencies and/or innovations.

What can be funded

- Web design and development and E-commerce platforms
- Business coaching and consulting
- Financial planning
- Marketing activities
- Cyber security or AI education
- Leadership training identified by the business owner or management team
- Sustainable opportunities such as:
 - Energy efficiencies,
 - Waste audit and action plan,
 - Recycling waste initiatives such as diversion of food waste and zero waste packaging.

Stream 2 - Elevating Your Business

The Elevating Your Business stream provides the opportunity to assist businesses to elevate from a micro or small business model to activate a commercial or activity centre premises. This stream also provides the opportunity to improve the physical appearance or accessibility of their current commercial premises.

This stream is offered to businesses with a maximum of 5 FTE (Full Time Equivalent) employees.

What can be funded

- Façade improvements including painting, murals, signage, awnings and lighting
- Outdoor furniture or improvements that activate the shop front.
- Indoor furniture and equipment to activate the operation of the business premises
- Accessibility upgrades including ramps, handrails, automatic or easy-to-open entrance doors and upgrade to accessible restrooms for customers.

Is “What can be funded” under either stream an exhaustive list or will other options be considered?

Currently, yes what is shown is the complete list of what will be considered.

Is the grant competitive or guaranteed if eligibility is met?

The grant is competitive. Meeting the eligibility and assessment criteria does not guarantee funding. Final decisions are made by the Council's Grant Steering Committee.

Do I need to be a member of the City Whittlesea Business Network (WBN) to apply?

Yes, membership in the WBN is a requirement for eligibility. Membership is free and can be completed online. Once membership is approved, the business is eligible to apply for a grant.

Can a business submit more than one application?

A business can only submit one application per round. If they choose to submit a second application in a future round, it must not duplicate the previous one.

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Are sole traders or home-based businesses eligible?

Yes, sole traders and home-based businesses can apply for Stream 1, providing they meet the eligibility criteria including WBN membership. Home-based businesses can only apply for Stream 2 if they are intending to move to a commercial premises and be named on a pending commercial lease agreement.

What disqualifies a business from applying?

Businesses with electronic gaming licenses, political affiliations, discriminatory practices, or outstanding debts or acquittals with the Council are ineligible.

What are examples of ineligible expenses?

Ineligible expenses include permanent security fixtures, gambling or alcohol-related activities, political activities, and costs associated with Council permit applications.

Can I use the grant to cover costs already incurred?

No, the grant only covers future expenses. Funding is provided after project completion and proof of expenditure.

Can I use the grant to pay for services from non-local suppliers?

Preference is given to local suppliers, especially WBN members. Non-local suppliers must be justified in the application.

Is the grant funding provided upfront or reimbursed after project completion?

Funding is reimbursed after the project is completed and the business demonstrates matched expenditure.

What financial documents or evidence do I need to provide?

Applicants must provide insurance certificates, quotes for services, and evidence of financial viability.

Are quotes required for all expenses? How many quotes are needed?

Yes. One quote is required for expenses over \$500 ex GST, and three quotes are required for expenses over \$2,000 ex GST

When do applications open and close?

Round 1: 1 October – 31 December 2025

Round 2: 1 January – 30 April 2026 or until funds are expended.

How long does it take to find out if my application is successful?

Applicants will be informed of the outcome within six weeks of the round closing

What is the project delivery timeframe?

Projects must be completed within 12 months of grant approval.

When is the acquittal due?

Acquittals must be submitted within three months of project completion.

What happens if I don't complete the project within the 12-month timeframe?

You may be required to request an extension with a valid justification.

How do I apply for the grant?

Applications must be submitted online via SmartyGrants. An email address is required for registration and communication.

Can multiple people work on the same application?

Yes, multiple users can work on the same application using shared login credentials, but only one person should edit at a time.

What documents do I need to attach to my application?

Required documents include quotes, insurance certificates, and any supporting materials relevant to the project.

What happens after I submit my application?

You will receive a confirmation email. The application will be reviewed and assessed based on the selection criteria.

How do I know if my application was successfully submitted?

You will receive a confirmation email from SmartyGrants. If not, check your spam folder or log in to verify submission status.

How do I view the Whittlesea Business Network Online Business Directory?

Visit  whittlesea.vic.gov.au/Business/Business-directory

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Examples:

- A food business – wants to invest in a new piece of machinery to improve their productivity. Would this be suitable for Stream 1?
No, this is not available through Stream 1.
- A Thomastown company is moving to Epping – would like to invest in warehouse racking to make their storage space more efficient rather than just having pallets or boxes on the ground. Would this be suitable for Stream 1?
No, this is not available through Stream 1.
- A Lalor retail shop wants to install festoon lighting around their façade, so it is more visible to passing trade. Would this be suitable for Stream 2?
Yes, providing the business has a maximum of five FTE and any permits required.
- A Thomastown retail shop gets graffiti regularly on its premises, so it wants to install sensor lighting that comes on at night. Would this be suitable for Stream 2?
Yes, providing the business has a maximum of five FTE.
- A large manufacturer has identified they have a significant amount of timber waste from crates, pallets etc, however, to date they have not found a cost-effective solution to remove this waste. They want to employ a Uni student to identify alternative pathways for removing or recycling this wood waste. Would the labour cost attached to this exercise be suitable for stream 1?
No, labour costs are not included, however there may be the potential for a consultant to be funded through Stream 1.
- A Mill Park café wants to upgrade its stools in the window seat area. Would this be suitable for Stream 2?
Yes, providing the business has a maximum of five FTE.
- A not-for-profit organisation (situated in a commercial premises) wants to apply for a grant towards marketing. Would this be suitable under Stream 1?
Yes, providing the organisation meets the eligibility criteria on page 5 of the Grant Program guide.
- A small plumbing company (3 FTE) wants to take on a small warehouse. Can they apply for Stream 2 for some building signage and office fit out (desk, chair, photocopier, filing cabinet, coffee machine etc).
Yes, however signage may trigger a planning permit so it will be up to the applicant to check this.
- A steel fabricating firm wants to train up their warehouse storeman to do welding so their job can be more diverse. Would this be covered under Stream 1?
No, this is not included.
- A local tourism business wants to get sign writing for their bus. Is this covered by either Stream 1 or Stream 2 or neither?
Neither Stream 1 or Stream 2 covers this.
- A local tourism business wants to buy a bike trailer to expand their business into bike riding. Is this covered by either Stream 1 or Stream 2 or neither?
Neither Stream 1 or Stream 2 covers this.
- A Heidelberg-based business signs a lease for premises in Thomastown and wishes to join the Whittlesea Business Network to apply for a grant. Can the business apply for the grant based on the signed lease for the Thomastown property, or must they wait until they have physically relocated to the City of Whittlesea?
Any grant application can only be lodged when the business is registered and operating in the City of Whittlesea.
- Can an Owner's Corporation apply for a grant to paint the outside of the building or enhance the appearance of the centre?
Yes, providing the Owner's Corporation is a registered business win the City of Whittlesea and meets the other eligibility criteria.
- Is a tenant eligible to apply for a grant to repaint the shop interior and flooring to enhance the business's appearance?
Providing the business have a maximum of five FTE, have written permission from the landlord and meet the eligibility criteria.
- Can a business apply for new sustainable fridges etc power saving equipment?
Yes
- Could stream 2 funding be used to prepare and deliver a tourism event?
No, Stream 1 and Stream 2 do not include funding for events. Council offers businesses the opportunity to apply for funding for events through the Community Grant program, Visit [whittlesea.vic.gov.au/Services/Support-for-people/Community-grants](https://www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/Services/Support-for-people/Community-grants)
- Are businesses that have previously received funding from any City of Whittlesea grants program able to apply for this program?
Yes, providing the business meets the eligibility criteria and have no outstanding acquittals with City of Whittlesea.

Who can I contact if I have questions about the grant or my application?

Contact Michael Schiller,
Senior Investment Attraction Officer
business@whittlesea.vic.gov.au or call 9217 2170.

Alternatively, email
community.grants@whittlesea.vic.gov.au
or call 9217 2170.