

Management report to Council

Agenda item 6.7

Council

Precinct Program Year 1 Funding Report

29 June 2021

Presenter: Andrew Wear, Director Economic Development and International

Purpose and background

1. The purpose of this report is to seek Council approval of funding recommendations for year one of the Business Precinct Program (BPP) 2021–25.
2. Melbourne's business precincts are an integral part of the city. Each retail, hospitality and leisure precinct is unique. They make Melbourne diverse, interesting and exciting.
3. Precinct trader associations play an important role bringing together stakeholders to share information, generate ideas and promote the precinct and its members. Since 1999, the City of Melbourne has provided annual financial support to eligible trader groups through the BPP.
4. The BPP guidelines (Attachment 2) were endorsed by Council on 30 March 2020. Funding allocated to each precinct reflects the size of the membership of each precinct association. The maximum annual funding in Year 1 of the program is \$90,000 per precinct.

Key issues

5. COVID-19 has severely impacted Melbourne's business precincts. In May 2021 (prior to the most recent lockdown period) 19 per cent of all shops across the City of Melbourne were either vacant or temporarily closed due to COVID-19. Pedestrian traffic has been down significantly. For example, last week, pedestrian traffic in Docklands was down 87 per cent compared to the benchmark period and in Chinatown, the number of pedestrians was down 73 per cent.
6. International evidence is clear; strong and vibrant shopping precincts are key to economic recovery following COVID-19. Strong precincts, with the active participation of businesses across all sectors, will be vital for the regeneration of the broader economy.
7. Since the BPP program opened, the City of Melbourne has received applications from ten precinct associations:
 - 7.1. City Precinct (small and independent business in the CBD)
 - 7.2. Collins Street Precinct Group
 - 7.3. Docklands Chamber of Commerce
 - 7.4. Greek Precinct Association (Lonsdale Street)
 - 7.5. North & West Melbourne Precinct Association
 - 7.6. Yarra River Business Association
 - 7.7. Carlton Inc.
 - 7.8. Kensington Business Association
 - 7.9. Chinatown Precinct Association
 - 7.10. Melbourne City North Business Association
8. These associations collectively represent nearly 1,300 Melbourne businesses.

9. Nine of the applications are from existing precinct associations that have previously received City of Melbourne funding.
10. The Melbourne City North Business Association is a newly-established trader group that will focus on the geographic area bounded by Little Lonsdale Street, La Trobe Street, Victoria Street and Peel Street to support local and Chinese-Asian businesses as members. This vibrant part of Melbourne is the epicentre of Melbourne's international student community and is an area that has not previously been represented by a trader association.

Recommendation from management

11. That Council:
 - 11.1. Approves \$830,400 overall funding for year one of the Business Precinct Program 2021–25.
 - 11.2. Notes that the funding will be distributed to each precinct in accordance with the Business Precinct Program 2021–25 Guidelines (Attachment 2), funding the following precincts: Carlton Inc., Chinatown Precinct Association, City Precinct, Collins Street Precinct Group, Docklands Chamber of Commerce, Greek Precinct Association, Kensington Business Association, Melbourne City North Association, North & West Melbourne Precinct Association and Yarra River Business Association.

Attachments:

1. Supporting Attachment (Page 3 of 11)
2. Business Precinct Program 2021-25 Guidelines (Page 5 of 11)

Supporting Attachment

Legal

1. Associations funded through the BPP will enter into an annual funding agreement with Council requiring an acquittal of the funds allocated against the marketing program nominated in the application.

Finance

2. A total funding allocation of \$830,400 is recommended for the Precincts as part of this report. The draft 2021-22 Council Budget includes funding of \$810,000 for the Precinct Program. The proposed additional spend of \$20,400 can be absorbed within the total Economic Development & International Branch Budget.

Conflict of interest

3. No member of Council staff, or other person engaged under a contract, involved in advising on or preparing this report has declared a material or general conflict of interest in relation to the matter of the report.

Occupational Health and Safety

4. In developing this proposal, no Occupational Health and Safety issues or opportunities have been identified.

Stakeholder consultation

5. Stakeholder consultation was undertaken with recognised precinct associations throughout March–April 2020. Associations were briefed with an overview of the program guidelines and application requirements. Further consultation and support was provided to address any queries relating to the program including quarterly meetings with precinct associations.
6. Information regarding the new precinct program was made available publicly on Council's website, Melbourne Magazine online article, Business in Melbourne newsletters and social media (Twitter and LinkedIn) from 1 April 2021.
7. When advising Council's approval, applicants will be informed of the assessment panel's recommendations that individual associations ensure that they list all precinct activities on CoM websites and endeavour to take advantage of City business initiatives, events and marketing campaigns.

Relation to Council policy

8. The draft Council Plan 2021-25 has a strategic objective of Economy of the Future with the following priorities relevant to this report;
 - The city economy is stronger, resilient and fully recovered from the impacts of COVID-19,
 - Existing businesses are supported, new businesses, talent and investment are attracted to the city and our growing residential community.
9. The draft Economic Development Strategy 2031 has the Key Priority; A business-friendly city by ensuring that the City of Melbourne is one of the easiest places to start and grow a business, aiming to build our education and skills supply for the future, and encourage collaboration, networking, entrepreneurship, innovation and startup creation.

Environmental sustainability

10. Whilst there is no significant impact on environmental sustainability, precincts are encouraged to undertake maintain a low impact on environmental sustainability when undertaking activities such as events and other initiatives

Overview

The Business Precinct Program 2021-25 provides annual financial support to recognised and incorporated precinct associations (Recognised Associations) representing individual traders in nominated consumer-relevant areas of the public domain (Precincts) within the municipality to contribute to the City of Melbourne's goal of economic prosperity.

1. Objectives

The Recognised Associations funded under this program will undertake activities to benefit the trader area on behalf of their members and are expected to undertake the following roles relevant to their respective precinct in order to fulfil the objectives of the City of Melbourne's Business Precinct Program 2021-25:

- a. Development of a vision and an annually updated 5 year strategic plan for the enhancement of trading in the precinct areas.
- b. Business development initiatives, such as networking functions and business events and seminars.
- c. Marketing and promotional activities for the benefit of the broader precinct geographic area to convert target market groups (i.e. residents, shoppers, workers, visitors) into customers.
- d. Localised activation initiatives, such as public events and markets, to drive visitation to precinct areas.
- e. Represent the interests and views of precinct members.
- f. Communicate with the precinct constituency.
- g. Increase membership to ensure adequate representation of the views of traders within the defined precinct.
- h. Encourage members to actively participate in City of Melbourne marketing campaigns and promotions.
- i. Adhere to the Standards of Conduct as contained within these guidelines.
- j. Attend quarterly City of Melbourne precinct program meetings. Recognised Associations must also comply with the *Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012* under which they are registered as a legal entity. Consumer Affairs Victoria administers and oversees these registration requirements.

2. Precinct Association Eligibility

Associations applying for recognition within the Business Precinct Program 2021-25 will be required to present the following documents by the **annual application for funding due date**.

- a. Business Precinct Program 2021-25 Application for Recognition and Funding form.
- b. Copies of documentation demonstrating the management and legal structure of the applicant association.
- c. Annual financial statements in accordance with the requirements of the *Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012*.
- d. The association's current register of members demonstrating a minimum of twenty-five individual members who have paid a membership in full at a minimum of \$50 per annum.

- e. The fee structure for members, membership development plan and membership verification documentation (as outlined in section 4).

Successful applicants are referred to in this document as “Recognised Associations”. As part of recognition, Recognised Associations are required to acknowledge Council’s support and to participate in any public promotions organised by Council to promote the Business Precinct Program 2021-25.

In the case that an application is received from two or more associations whose membership covers adjacent or overlapping geographic areas, the City of Melbourne will only recognise one precinct trader association per consumer relevant precinct strip or geographic area as determined by City of Melbourne. The City of Melbourne reserves the right to determine the most suitable representative association which will be based on application documentation submitted including the association’s member representation, precinct geographic area and history of the association in representing members.

2.1 Ineligibility

The City of Melbourne will deem a precinct association ineligible to apply for recognition if any of the following conditions exist:

- a. The precinct association and/or area is not located within the City of Melbourne municipality and not classified as an area of commercial or retail significance.
- b. The applicant association has not acquitted previous City of Melbourne grants or has outstanding debts to the City of Melbourne.
- c. Existing members of the precinct association contravene to the Standards of Conduct as contained within these Guidelines.
- d. The precinct association does not fulfil the objectives and deliverables for which funding was provided under the Business Precinct Program 2021-25 within a financial year to Council’s satisfaction.

If determined that any of the above exists, the City of Melbourne will deem the precinct ineligible to apply for future funding.

3. Recognition of Associations’ members for funding purposes under this program

Recognised Associations applying for funding under the program are required to provide evidence at the time of application of a minimum of 25 individual members who have paid a membership in full at a minimum of \$50 per annum. These members must be physically located (via a retail, trades or professional services shop/business) within the area represented by the recognised precinct association. A maximum of 1 membership per business entity can be purchased.

3.1 The criteria for recognition of commercial members:

- a. **Retailers, hospitality businesses and traders:** engaged in the sale of goods to consumers with a physical business location within the district area administered by the Recognised Association.
- b. **Service providers:** provision of professional services such as financial, medical and trades services with a business located in the district area administered by the Recognised Association.
- c. **Commercial operators:** goods suppliers directly related to the precinct geographic area. These commercial suppliers are defined as food/small goods or product suppliers directly related to the precinct area. Commercial operators/suppliers and those servicing the precinct are only eligible to be ordinary members (i.e. not holding a position on the precinct association executive) and should only represent up to ten per cent of the overall Recognised Association membership.

- d. **Landlords:** Non owner occupier holders of shops, offices and other trading premises in the precinct provided such members are not eligible for appointment or election to the Recognised Association executive.
- e. **Institutions:** Universities, hospitals, schools and similar bodies with a legitimate interest in the prosperity of the precinct, provided such members are not eligible for appointment or election to the Recognised 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. A maximum of 1 membership per business entity can be purchased.

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

- a. Non-paying-members (such as honorary members and members who do not pay membership fees, e.g. life members).
- b. Memberships paid by organisations run by the City of Melbourne.

4. Membership Register and Verification

Precinct Associations are required to present all of the following forms of evidence as part of the yearly membership audit by the **annual application for funding due date**.

4.1 Membership Register

Recognised Associations are required to maintain up to date membership register as per the requirements of the *Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012*.

This register must include:

- a. member business contact person
- b. business name and address
- c. telephone number
- d. evidence of member's fee and date paid

Bulk membership listings (such as retail centre memberships) must detail individual trader details (member's name, business name and address, telephone, fee paid and date).

4.2 Membership Verification

To allow the verification of association memberships, the following documentation must be provided by the annual application for funding due date:

- a. Membership Register as per the requirement above.
- b. Completed and signed membership form for each member that clearly shows
 - i. Member business' contact person
 - ii. business name
 - iii. contact details
 - iv. amount and date in which membership was paid
- c. Payment of membership verification, either
 - i. tax invoices (receipts) for **all current members**; or
 - ii. membership register that includes a column noting membership renewal payment date, signature from the member **and** a copy of the payment receipt clearly identifying the member; or

- iii. Copy of bank statement entry clearly identifying payment of member dues (such as member's business name entered on bank statement)

For bulk memberships (i.e. 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 payment receipt (tax invoice or bank statement entry) should be provided that clearly show payment of dues by the centre.

Membership will only be recognised for businesses that have paid membership dues within the annual application for funding financial year.

Note: Full evidence must be presented to the Council officer in a timely manner before funding can be released.

5 Application process

Precinct associations wishing to apply for annual precinct program funding will be required to submit documentation via the Smarty Grants online system.

In the case of more than one submission from associations in similar precincts or geographic locations applying for funding under the program, the City of Melbourne will only recognise one precinct trader association per consumer relevant precinct strip or geographic area. The City of Melbourne reserves the right to determine the most suitable representative association which will be based on application documentation submitted including the association's member representation, precinct geographic area and history of the association in representing members.

6. Funding, requirements and ongoing eligibility

Recognised Associations under this program are eligible to apply for funding annually in two categories:

6.1 Administrative Funding

The administrative funding is available on a financial year basis to assist Recognised Associations with administration costs and the employment of an Executive Officer or Coordinator to deliver services to members such as membership development in the trader area and active communication with all members.

The City of Melbourne can assist associations with drawing up an Association Executive Officer / Coordinator Job Description template.

The City of Melbourne will provide a \$30,000 annual contribution to the cost of this resource.

With the support of the Executive Officer / Co-ordinator the Recognised Association must develop, for approval by council officers, a vision and 5 year strategic plan for the precinct which will form the basis for an annual business/activity plan.

6.2 Business Development and Marketing Funding

Funding is available on a financial year basis to assist Recognised Associations delivering their annual business plan. Without limiting the scope of these plans, funded activities could include:

- a. Business development initiatives such as networking functions and business events and seminars.
- b. Consumer advertising of the trader area.
- c. Marketing and promotion campaigns to benefit their members.
- d. Localised events that promote the trader area to visitors and consumers.

Application for business development and marketing activity funding must include:

- a. Activities that leverage City of Melbourne business activities, marketing campaigns and consumer events.
- b. Events including business to business, stand-alone events for the public or part of a broader event (e.g. Moomba, Chinese New Year, and Christmas etc.), as well as activities such as advertising, website, newsletters, brochures, social media i.e. Instagram, Facebook, Twitter.

The Council-approved formula for funding for Recognised Associations is based on \$600 per eligible member for a minimum of 25 members, up to a maximum of \$60,000.

In addition, in Years 3-4 of the program the following bonuses are available for Recognised Associations that achieve membership levels;

- 150+ members - \$10,000 bonus
- 200+ members - \$20,000 bonus
- 300+ members - \$30,000 bonus

6.3 Funding documentation and performance reporting

Recognised associations recommended for funding under the Business Precinct Program 2021-25 are required to submit the following documentation:

- a. A signed Business Precinct Program 2021-25 Guidelines and Commitment to Standards of Conduct by the Recognised Association's president and one member of the committee.
- b. A signed funding agreement by the Recognised Association's president.
- c. An annual and half-year acquittal report demonstrating the undertaking of localised business support initiatives and localised marketing activities as outlined in the association's application to the Business Precinct Program 2021-25 for the benefit to the associations described precinct- wide area as approved.

As a further condition of funding made available under the Business Precinct Program 2021-25, recognised associations must make available to the general public an annual report which

- d. Discloses the performance of the Precinct against the indicators set out in the 5 year strategic plan and annual business/activity plan
- e. Discloses all financial transactions undertaken in delivering on these key performance indicators

6.4 Governance Training

Recognised Associations are required to attend Governance training relating to the requirements of the *Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012*. This training is to be undertaken by precinct association committee members and executive officer within the first 12 months of the program. Governance training will be organised by the City of Melbourne.

6.5 Meetings

All Recognised Associations are expected to be represented at formal Business Precinct Program 2021-25 meetings conducted by the City of Melbourne as well as ad hoc or periodical working group meetings as required by the Precinct Program Manager. Failure to do so could impact on continued eligibility for receipt of funding.

6.6 Summary: Funding requirements of Recognised Associations: Reporting and Ongoing Eligibility Requirements

To ensure continued eligibility for receipt of funding, precinct associations will be required to submit documents annually listed within the Eligibility section (Section 2) above and the following required documentation to City of Melbourne:

- a. Formal register of the Recognised Association's financial membership and membership development plan.
- b. The Recognised Association's vision, 5 year strategic plan an annual business/activity plan for the precinct
- c. The Recognised Association's published annual report (as per section 6.3)
- d. Annual financial statements in accordance with the requirements of the *Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012*.
- e. Schedule of communications with constituents and provision of evidence of communication undertaken with Recognised Association members (for example, email, newsletters, brochures etc.).
- f. Minutes of Recognised Association's Annual General Meeting.
- g. Minutes of the Recognised Association's most recent general meeting.
- h. The appointment of an independent coordinator engaged throughout the year to undertake Recognised Association administration, promotional and membership development opportunities (as per section 6.1).
- i. Submission of half year report and a finance report. This report should include demonstration (via copies of correspondence) that Recognised Associations have distributed information regarding City of Melbourne business, marketing and events opportunities to the membership base. A template will be provided to Recognised Associations for this purpose.
- j. Undertaking Governance training relating to the requirements of the *Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012*.
- k. The Recognised Association will ensure that the Council's funding of the Program is appropriately acknowledged in all media and promotional material and that approval is sought from the Precinct Program Manager prior to release of such material. This includes use of the City of Melbourne logo.
- l. Where appropriate, leverage City of Melbourne led business activities, marketing campaigns and events.
- m. In the case of more than one submission from associations in similar precincts or geographic locations applying for funding under the program, the City of Melbourne will only recognise one precinct trader association per consumer relevant precinct strip or geographic area.

7. Key program dates

Recognised 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 Program Manager is a requisite to obtain funding under the program. Key dates are available on www.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 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 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 associations recommended for funding under the Business Precinct Program 2021-25 are required to submit a signed Business Precinct Program 2021-25 Guidelines which includes a commitment to Standards of Conduct by the association's president and one member of the committee.

<https://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/about-council/governance-transparency/policies-protocols/pages/code-of-conduct-and-protocol.aspx>

Commitment to Standards of Conduct

Name of Precinct Association: -----

• **Name of President:** -----

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

• **Name of Committee Member:** -----

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