

Report to the Future Melbourne Committee

Agenda item 6.6

The New Business Concierge Service

20 April 2021

Presenter: Andrew Wear, Director Economic Development and International

Purpose and background

1. The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the Business Concierge Service (BCS) and seek endorsement of an enhanced operating model and future program of work.
2. On 17 March 2020, the Future Melbourne Committee resolved to implement a BCS to provide direct advice, support and process navigation to businesses impacted by COVID-19.
3. BCS created a direct link for businesses to connect with the City of Melbourne in relation to grants and business support programs, other support from the City of Melbourne, state and federal governments and other organisations, the extended outdoor dining program and new business start-up processes, along with an important 'care call' program to businesses across the municipality.
4. BCS has provided support to over 21,700 City of Melbourne businesses since its inception in March 2020. In a recent survey to assess the effectiveness of business support provided by City of Melbourne, 79 per cent of respondents indicated that BCS provided all the information the business required.
5. On 16 March 2021, the Future Melbourne Committee resolved that the City of Melbourne would deliver an enhanced BCS to support business growth and new business formation, with management to provide advice on a proposed operating model, which is the subject of this report.

Key issues

6. BCS has evolved as the City of Melbourne has responded to COVID-19. Initially, support was provided to businesses forced to close due to COVID restrictions. Increasing support was then provided to businesses who sought to transform their businesses to respond to the new context. This included the triaging of 1,037 applications for extended outdoor dining.
7. The next phase of the BCS will support Melbourne's growing economic recovery. Attachment 2 outlines the evolution of the BCS over the COVID-19 response, reactivation and recovery periods.
8. In addition to ongoing support for existing businesses, it is also important that support is provided to new and growing businesses, particularly as Melbourne's recovery gathers pace. These businesses will be the engines of Melbourne's recovery. The process of establishing or growing a business needs to be as seamless as possible and council processes need to support rapid decisions.
9. As the City of Melbourne has been the municipality most impacted by COVID-19, our objective is to ensure that during the recovery, the City of Melbourne is one of the easiest places which to start or grow a business.
10. The evolution of the BCS model will enable it to be the primary point of contact between existing and new businesses and the City of Melbourne. BCS staff will work to understand the needs of the business and the permits required. Whether planning, building, health or street trading, BCS will act as the central point of contact with business and will work across the organisation to ensure relevant issues are resolved. More information on the proposed approach is at Attachment 3.
11. While BCS interactions to date have principally been via telephone or email, future interactions with businesses will be increasingly in-person where this meets the needs of the business.
12. The proposed new operating model will also see BCS staff deepen their knowledge of particular precincts and sectors. By better understanding the context in which businesses operate, BCS will be in an even stronger position to add value.

13. BCS will continue to advise businesses on opportunities that are available to them from a range of sources, including the City of Melbourne, other levels of government, industry associations and precinct associations.
14. As an evolved BCS deepens its relationship with the City of Melbourne's businesses, feedback will be collated systematically. This input from businesses will be used to shape the evolution of the City of Melbourne's economic policy and programs.
15. The evolved BCS will:
 - 15.1. Manage the relationship with business by acting as a central point of contact at City of Melbourne;
 - 15.2. Continue to provide care and support for businesses during their time of need;
 - 15.3. Proactively support existing businesses to transform to new operating models;
 - 15.4. Provide assistance to new businesses in their planning and start-up phase;
 - 15.5. Operationalise recovery initiatives delivered through the Melbourne City Recovery Fund;
 - 15.6. Establish positive relationships with businesses by engaging face-to-face or over the phone;
 - 15.7. Gather evidence and insights from businesses that inform service improvement and policy development; and
 - 15.8. Work in partnership with businesses to understand and enhance the conditions that enable businesses to thrive.

Recommendations from management

16. That the Future Melbourne Committee:
 - 16.1. Notes the positive contribution of the Business Concierge Service team to date to support businesses impacted by COVID-19; and
 - 16.2. Agrees that the City of Melbourne deliver an enhanced Business Concierge Service program of work that supports business growth, provides a connection to council for businesses and supports new business formation in the municipality.

Attachment:

1. Supporting Attachment (Page 3 of 5)
2. Evolution of Business Concierge over the COVID-19 response, reactivation and recovery periods (Page 4 of 5)
3. An Evolved Business Concierge Service (Page 5 of 5)

Supporting Attachment

Legal

1. There are no legal implications.

Finance

2. Funding for an enhanced Business Concierge Program will be considered as part of the funding partnership with the Victorian State Government.

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

Health and Safety

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

Stakeholder consultation

5. Development of the new model has been informed by feedback from Business Concierge Service clients.
6. As the Business Concierge Service is part of the suite of initiatives included under the MCRF, this model has also been socialised with Victorian government representatives (Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions and Department of Premier and Cabinet).

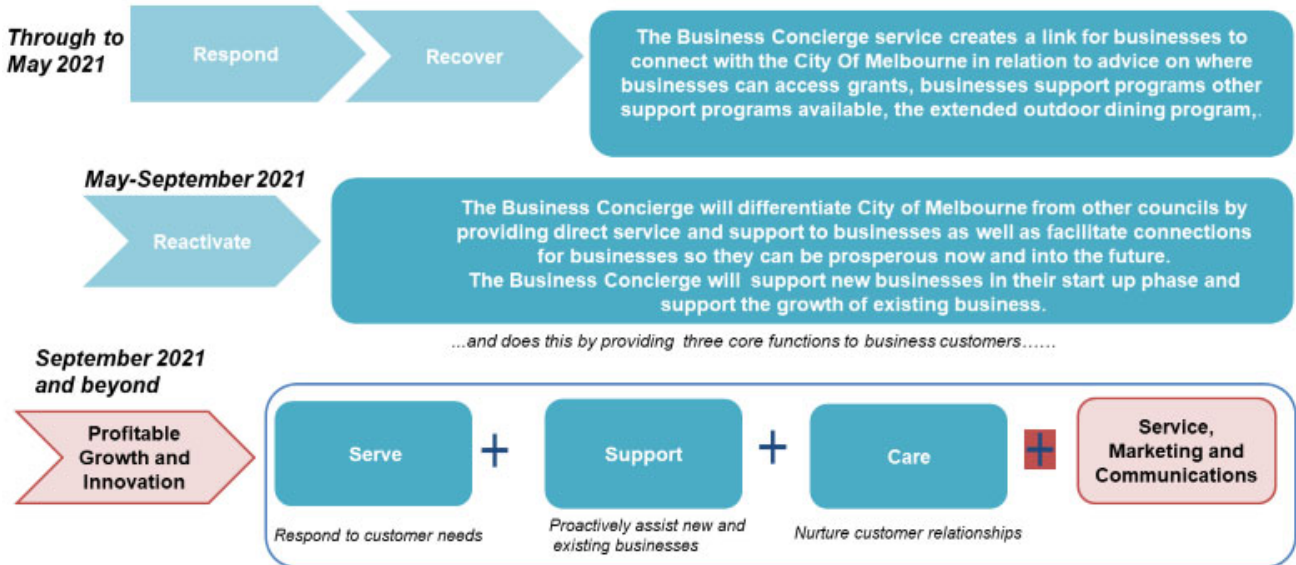
Environmental sustainability

7. In developing this paper, environmental sustainability issues have been considered and no direct issues were identified.

An Evolved Business Concierge

An Evolved Business Concierge

The Business Concierge plays a key role in assisting with the delivery of CoM's key goal of supporting existing and new businesses and has a unique opportunity to align the model with the economic recovery cycle.



An Evolved Business Concierge Service

New business start-up – future focus

- Business Concierge is the first port of call for business enquiries.
- Establishes positive relationships with businesses through face-to-face engagement or over the phone.
- Identifies the business's needs and the permits required to open their business e.g. planning, building, health, street trading.
- Identifies any opportunities that are available to them and their business e.g. communications and marketing through City of Melbourne, business support services, Business Vic, precinct associations, eco dev seminars/workshops.
- Brings all parties together to discuss the options and opportunities for the business.
- Manages the relationship with the business by acting as a central point of contact for the business rather than the business needing to engage with multiple City of Melbourne teams.
- Provides a central point of contact for City of Melbourne teams when assessing business permits.