
Latrobe City Business Capability Grants Program 2025/26

Program Guidelines



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Program Overview

Latrobe City Council supports the establishment of new businesses and the expansion of existing businesses within Latrobe City.

The Latrobe City Business Capability Grants Program is designed to support the growth and resilience of eligible Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). This program provides funding to help businesses strengthen their operations, increase profitability, and create new employment opportunities. By investing in workforce capability, infrastructure, and essential equipment, the program aims to drive long-term economic development, support business expansion, and enhance the competitiveness of local enterprises.

There are two funding streams available:

1. Workforce Development and Training – Supporting training, skills development, and access to local professional services to enhance business and employee capability.
2. Business Expansion and Infrastructure – Providing funding for infrastructure upgrades or equipment purchases that enable business expansion, increase productivity, or improve service delivery.

This program provides SMEs with the resources to scale operations, diversify offerings, and strengthen the local economy, aligning with the [Latrobe City Council Plan 2021-25](#) to support the growth and prosperity of our existing business community.

Program Objectives

The Latrobe City Business Capability Grants Program aims to:

- Increase the capacity of Small and Medium Enterprises capacity for growth by enabling businesses to scale operations and diversify services.
- Create new employment opportunities through business expansion and the success of early-stage enterprises.
- Develop a highly skilled workforce by supporting targeted training and professional development initiatives.
- Strengthen economic resilience by fostering a more diverse local economy and supporting long-term Small and Medium Enterprise sustainability.
- Support the growth and stability of new and early-stage businesses by providing the resources to build a strong foundation for long-term viability.

Important things to know before you start

- Read the guidelines carefully. It is important to have a full understanding of the guidelines before you start completing the online application.
- All eligible applicants may only submit an application to one funding stream per round.
- Applicants may apply for the maximum available funding. however, partial funding may be awarded at the discretion of the assessment panel. Applicants should ensure their project remains viable if awarded a lower amount than requested.
- Grant funding must not be regarded as a recurrent commitment from Latrobe City Council. There is no guarantee a project will be funded in the future.
- Projects funded under this grant must be completed within 12 months from the date of funding approval. Applicants should ensure they have the capacity to deliver the project within this period before applying.
- Variations to projects and change of project dates must be sought in writing and permission received, prior to any changes commencing. This includes requests for extensions of time to acquit the project.

Grant Streams

Applicants may only submit an **application to one funding stream, per round**.

Workforce Development and Training	
Description	Funding support to enhance business and employee capability through training, skills development, and access to local professional services.
Examples of projects	Upskilling employees through accredited training, accessing local professional services like HR, marketing, or legal support, and improving business capability through financial management or digital transformation training.
Maximum grant amount	Up to \$4,000 (partial funding may be awarded)
Application dates	Round 1 – 2 June 2025 – 11 July 2025 Round 2* – 19 January 2026 – 27 February 2026 Round 3* – 01 June 2026 – 10 July 2026 *Future rounds are dependent on Government funding and are not guaranteed to proceed.
Application process	Online application via SmartyGrants. Applicants must address the eligibility, assessment criteria, answer all questions and submit all required documentation prior to program closing.
Reporting requirements	Signed acquittal including a summary of income and expenditure, copies of invoices and an economic impact statement.

Business Expansion and Infrastructure	
Description	Funding support to invest in infrastructure or to purchase equipment that enables business expansion, increases productivity, or enhances service delivery.
Examples of projects	Extending or repurposing existing buildings to accommodate more production space, upgrading facility to offer new or enhanced services, purchasing new machinery, technology adoption, etc.
Maximum grant amount	Up to \$8,000 (partial funding may be awarded)
Application dates	Round 1 – 2 June 2025 – 11 July 2025 Round 2* – 19 January 2026 – 27 February 2026 Round 3* – 01 June 2026 – 10 July 2026 *Future rounds are dependent on Government funding and are not guaranteed to proceed.
Application process	Online application via SmartyGrants Applicants must address the eligibility, assessment criteria, answer all questions and submit all required documentation prior to program closing.
Reporting requirements	Signed acquittal, including a summary of income and expenditure, copies of invoices, photos of completed project and an economic impact statement.

General Guidelines

Eligibility

To be eligible for the Business Capability Grants programs funds, applicants must:

- Be a small to medium business that employs up to 99 full-time or equivalent (FTE) employees at the time of applying*.
- Have an aggregated turnover of \$10 million or less for small businesses, or up to \$100 million for medium businesses.
- Have a valid Australian Business Number (ABN).
- Be based in Latrobe City Council for the majority of, or all your business operations.
- Be an Australian registered business, sole trader, company, business cooperative or partnership & provide documented evidence of its legal structure.
- Be able to provide evidence of appropriate business insurance.
- Have no outstanding acquittals or debts to Latrobe City Council.
- Demonstrate financial viability as evidenced by relevant financial information.
- Complete the funded activity within 12 months of receiving funding approval. Failure to complete the project within the agreed period may result in the withdrawal of funding or a requirement to return funds already provided.

* FTE is calculated based on total hours worked, where 38 hours per week = 1.0 FTE. This includes sole traders and part-time operators.

If you answered no to any of the above criteria, you are ineligible to receive funding.

Ineligibility

Meeting any of the following criteria will render an applicant or application ineligible, meaning that it will not progress to assessment.

Ineligible applicants

- Applicants that have an overdue debt with Latrobe City Council or that have failed to comply with the terms and conditions of any previous Latrobe City funding agreement;
- Franchisees, subsidiaries of larger companies and unincorporated entities other than those stated in the Eligibility Checklist above;
- Government departments or agencies, foundations or organisations primarily funded through State or Federal Grant programs;
- Political organisations or organisations that have a political purpose;
- Current Latrobe City employees or their immediate families;
- Organisations eligible for the Latrobe City Community Grants Program;
- Entities that denigrate, exclude, or offend parts of the community.

Ineligible Expenditure

Ineligible expenditure items include:

- Requests for the purpose of raising funds for other groups or charities. Including fundraising projects with the primary purpose of fund raising for other organisations or individuals;
- Investments that deliver a religious or party political message where the purpose is to advance the organisation's religious beliefs or political message, irrespective of what those beliefs or positions might be;
- Retrospective costs. This includes reimbursement of costs already incurred and funding for projects which have already taken place or began prior to the application being submitted to Council;
- Payment of debts or loans;
- General operating expenses – funding will not cover expenses such as electricity, lease or rent payments, telephone, wages, salaries or project management costs that are ongoing organisational expenses. This includes wages for the business owner or staff completing the project;

- The purchase of land and non-commercial vehicles. Note that a commercial vehicle is a type of vehicle used for moving goods, freight or paying passengers. A bus, truck, tractor, or van are all types of commercial vehicles;
- The purchase of second hand items, unless clear evidence is provided including an image of the listed item with all specifications and email correspondence between the business and seller referencing the specific item, confirming the item is still available and an agreed sale price, pending the outcome of the grant;
- Repair of facilities damaged by vandalism, fire, or other natural disasters where the incident should reasonably be expected to be covered by insurance;
- Applications for projects that involve activities promoting discrimination, violence, or anti-social behaviour.

If Latrobe City Council is made aware of disputes or legal proceedings pertaining to the applicant which may negatively impact the delivery of the proposed project, or cause reputational risk or damage to Council, the application may be ruled ineligible with General Manager approval.

Mandatory documents

Applicants will be rendered ineligible if the following documents are not submitted by round closure date:

- Current certificate of business registration, incorporation, or equivalent documentation.
- Current certificates of currency for professional indemnity and public liability insurance.
- At least one written quote for projects up to \$5000 and at least two written quotes for projects over \$5000 from a registered business or tradesperson.
- Documentation to satisfy financial viability requirements (including profit and loss statements, cash flow, and balance sheets).
- Business plan.
- Workforce plan.

Applicants can also include the following documents as evidence:

- Letters of support from business partners and industry groups/associations.
- Marketing, public relations and promotion strategy including examples.

In selecting the optional material to attach, applicants are asked to limit the number and length of the attachments to relevant supporting evidence.

Successful applicants

Successful applicants will be required to:

- Enter into a funding agreement and adhere to the conditions of the agreement. Additional funding conditions may be applied to your project during assessment.
- Spend the grant money only as stated in the original application. Variations to projects and change of project dates must be sought in writing and permission received, prior to any changes commencing. This includes requests for extensions of time to acquit the project.
- Expend funds within 12 months of signing a Funding Agreement unless written approval has been given for an extension.
- Acquit funds within two months of identified project completion unless written approval has been given for an extension.
- Return any underspent and excess funding to Latrobe City Council when submitting the Acquittal form.
- Acknowledge Latrobe City Council's contribution to your project. This acknowledgement, depending on the amount of funding received, may include logo presence on supporting publications, displays or signage. You will be provided with copies of the Latrobe City Council, 'Supported by' logo and guidelines on its correct use when you receive your outcome notification.

Variation to a project

Variation requests for projects and change of project dates must be sought in writing and permission received, prior to any changes commencing. This includes requests for extensions of time to acquit the project.

All variation requests must be sent in writing to Latrobe City Council's Business Development Team at Busdev@latrobe.vic.gov.au.

You will be notified in writing of the outcome of your variation request. You must not proceed with any variations to your project or event until you have received your outcome notification email.

Applicants who fail to comply with the process mentioned above will be required to return the funding to Latrobe City Council.

Assessment Criteria

Workforce Development and Training

Applications will be assessed by Council Officers against the following criteria:

Criteria	Description	Weighting
Business Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Business plan* that outlines the vision, growth strategies, target market, and workforce needs. The plan should highlight the experience of key personnel and demonstrate the business's ability to manage and scale operations, with a focus on building local skills and capabilities.	40%
Financial Viability of your business	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Detailed documentation that demonstrates the long-term financial viability of the business, including financial statements, forecasts, and projections, cash flows, and annual turnover. Highlight how the investment supports the business's capacity to grow and sustain its workforce.	40%
Demonstrated potential for job creation and economic impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Submit a workforce plan** that outlines the current employee base, roles, and projections. This plan should include the number and types of jobs (full-time, part-time, or contract) expected to be created, along with any plans for employee training, upskilling, or development. Additionally describe how the project will contribute to enhancing local skills and capabilities within the work force.	20%

*Support and guide for writing a Business plan is available from Business Victoria: [Business Plan | Business Victoria](#)

** Support and templates for Workforce planning are available from Business Victoria: [Workforce planning | Business Victoria](#)

Business Expansion and Infrastructure

Applications will be assessed by Council Officers against the following criteria:

Criteria	Description	Weighting
Business Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Business plan* that outlines the vision, growth strategies, target market, and infrastructure or equipment needs. The plan should demonstrate the business's ability to manage and scale operations, with a focus on the role of infrastructure or equipment in supporting long-term growth and economic impact.	40%
Financial Viability of your business	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Detailed documentation that demonstrates the long-term financial viability of the business, including financial statements, forecasts, projections, cash flows, and annual turnover. The submission should also include a breakdown of total investment into infrastructure or equipment acquisition, installation, and maintenance, detailing how these investments will enhance operational efficiency, business growth, and job creation.	40%
Demonstrated potential for job creation and economic impact to Latrobe City	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Submit a workforce plan** outlining how the investment in infrastructure or equipment (e.g. new machinery or technology) will impact the workforce. This includes the creation of new positions, expansion of existing roles, any training required for staff to operate the new equipment, and how this investment will lead to increased operational efficiency. Additionally, describe the expected economic impact, including potential growth in sales, customer satisfaction, local supply chain engagement or broader regional economic activity.	20%

*Support and guide for writing a Business plan is available from Business Victoria: [Business Plan | Business Victoria](#)

** Support and templates for Workforce planning are available from Business Victoria: [Workforce planning | Business Victoria](#)

Application Process

1. Ensure you have carefully read the guidelines and meet the eligibility criteria.
2. Register online at SmartyGrants and preview a copy of the application.
3. Select the correct grant stream that you would like to apply for.
4. Plan, research, and gather information required for your application.
5. Complete your application:
 - a. Answer all questions.
 - b. Upload all supporting documents.
6. Submit your application before the closing date and time. On submission, you will receive an electronic reply acknowledging your receipt from SmartyGrants.
7. All applicants will be notified of their application outcome through SmartyGrants.

Important Notes:

- Applicants may only submit an application to one funding stream per round.
- Applicants may apply for the maximum available funding. however, partial funding may be awarded at the discretion of the assessment panel. Applicants should ensure their project remains viable if awarded a lower amount than requested.
- Once submitted, no further editing or supporting materials will be accepted.
- Late applications will not be accepted.
- Applications sent by email or via post will not be accepted.
- Applicants will not be reimbursed for the time spent on the application process, whether or not they are successful.

Assessment Process

Once an application is received, Council Officers will:

- Complete an eligibility check against the Program guidelines.
- Determine assessors, who will be Council Officers who possess the necessary level of expertise and subject matter knowledge to provide recommendations.
- Provide relevant assessment training to the assessor.
- Provide assessment guidelines for each grant stream which aid the assessors in their determination.
- Manage any Conflicts of Interest between the assessors and the application/applicants.
- Submit the panel's funding recommendations to the General Manager for review and decision.

Additional notes about the assessment process

- Applications are confidential. The contents will not be disclosed to any person outside the application and assessment process. A summary of the project concept will be used in reports to Council.
- Latrobe City Council will not correct errors in applications or supporting material. Applications are assessed as they have been submitted.
- Latrobe City Council reserves the right to request further information in considering any application, as well as the right to reject any application that is ineligible or does not meet the grant criteria.
- Assessment panels may recommend part funding.
- All funding decisions of Council are final. Unsuccessful applicants can re-apply in future funding rounds in accordance with grant guidelines.
- Names and brief project descriptions of successful applicants will be made publicly available, including publication on the Latrobe City Council website and in media releases.

Lobbying

Canvassing or lobbying of Councillors, employees of Latrobe City Council or the assessment panel members in relation to the grant's application is prohibited.

No further consideration will be given to an application submitted by an applicant who has canvassed or lobbied Latrobe City Council Staff, Councillors, or assessors in relation to their application.

Application funding

Applicants will be advised of their assessment outcome in writing through Smartygrants.

Funding Agreement & Conditions

Successful applicants will receive the funding agreement outlining:

- The application outcome.
- The items to be funded.
- The funding conditions.

Applicants will need to agree to the funding conditions and provide any requested documents to Latrobe City Council Officer or assessment panel.

All funding agreements will include an offer expiration date after which Latrobe City Council may refuse to grant funds.

Payment Process

Payment will be processed upon receipt of:

- A signed funding agreement.
- An invoice to Latrobe City Council for the approved funding amount plus GST.
- Details of the nominated bank account for Latrobe City Council to provide funding.

All payments are made electronically, direct to the applicant's bank account in line with Council's Procurement Policy.

Project Delivery and Reporting

Once the funding agreement has been executed the applicant will be required to actively manage and deliver the project.

Progress reports must be submitted as required, and Latrobe City Council staff may request updates during the project.

Please note:

The outcome notification email does not mean that your funds have been paid. Payment of the funds will be processed following receipt of:

- Signed funding agreement.
- Invoice to Latrobe City Council for the approved funding amount plus GST.
- Details of the nominated bank account for Latrobe City Council to provide funding.

No grant funds should be spent until you have completed all relevant documentation, and you have received your funding.

Applicants who fail to comply with the terms and conditions listed in the funding guidelines and supplementary agreements will be required to return the funding to Latrobe City Council.

Acquittal

The Acquittal report will be a reconciled statement of expenditure and income associated with the grant and will ask the applicant to provide detail on the outcomes of the project that were achieved because of the funding.

Applicants will also be required to attach:

- Evidence of how Council's support for the project was recognised.
- An actual income and expenditure budget for the project.
- Photo evidence that demonstrates the completed project.
- Statement on how the project has impacted their business.

An applicant must acquit their project within two months of the identified project completion date, unless otherwise agreed.

Acquittals will be considered as overdue if they are not completed within these two months of the specified project completion date.

By submitting the acquittal, the applicant provides permission to Latrobe City Council for the use and publication of the information provided.

Further Information

Applicants are strongly encouraged to initiate contact with the Latrobe City Council Business Concierge prior to applying, to discuss the grant opportunity via email Busdev@latrobe.vic.gov.au or call 1300 367 700.

Successful applications will be registered with the Business Concierge for further support during their funded period. Support may include navigating council permit approval processes and linking to other opportunities like networking events, workshops, and training.

Support and guidance provided by our Business Concierge does not guarantee relevant permit approvals will be received and holding relevant permits at the time of application will not have any bearing on the outcomes of grant applications.

Grant Portal Technical Assistance

Refer to the [SmartyGrants help guide](#) for technical assistance related to submitting your application. The SmartyGrants support desk is open 9am – 5pm Monday to Friday on 03 9320 6888 or by email service@smartygrants.com.au.

Interpreter & Translation services

To contact us in your own language through the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) phone 13 14 50 and ask them to contact the Latrobe City Council on **1300 367 700**

If you are deaf, or have a hearing impairment or speech impairment:

- Contact us through the [National Relay Service](#).
- TTY users phone 133 677 then ask for 1300 367 700.
- Speak and Listen users phone 1300 555 727 then ask for 1300 367 700.
- Internet relay users connect to the NRS then ask for 1300 367 700.