
Opportunity Awaits

Small Business Grants Program
Guidelines
2025/26



Contents

Table of Contents

Contents	1
Program Overview	1
Program Objectives	1
Funding.....	2
What we will fund:.....	2
What we won't fund:	2
Key Dates	2
General Guidelines	3
Eligibility	3
Ineligibility	3
Mandatory documents.....	3
How to apply	4
Assessment Criteria	4
Application Process.....	5
Assessment Process.....	5
Lobbying	5
Outcome Notification	6
Payment and funding agreement.....	6
Acquittal	6
Reporting	6
Terms & conditions.....	7
Support for applicants	7

Program Overview

Latrobe City Council supports the establishment of new businesses and the expansion of existing businesses within Latrobe City targeting vacancy rates and creating employment.

The Latrobe City Opportunity Awaits Grants Program is designed to support the economic growth, and vibrancy of the Morwell and Moe Central Business Districts (CBD).

The Program aligns to the [Latrobe City Council Plan 2025-2029](#) supporting existing business, supporting the creation of new businesses, allowing innovation, and encouraging investment within our CBDs.

Program Objectives

The Latrobe City Opportunity Awaits Grants Program is designed to support Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs), Start-Ups, and Entrepreneurs, with a focus on diversifying the economies of the Morwell and Moe CBDs. It aims to address vacant commercial spaces and provide assistance to both existing and new businesses in the area.

The program seeks to:

- Support the establishment of new businesses or the expansion of existing businesses.
- Create employment opportunities within the Morwell and Moe CBDs.
- Increase the occupancy rate of vacant shopfronts in these areas.
- Stimulate economic activity and enhance the overall appeal of both CBDs.

For the purposes of this program, a Small Business is defined as an organisation with fewer than 20 full-time or equivalent employees.

Funding

The program will support applicants with new businesses to get established in the municipality or assist existing businesses looking to expand or relocate their current offer to within the Morwell or Moe CBD. Existing Business will be reviewed and be partially funded case by case due to being unable to meet all program objectives with the focus on employment creation for all projects.

For this grant round applicants choose ONE stream of funding, with up to \$15,000 (excl GST) per applicant.

Stream

For a Small Business to occupy a shopfront within an arcade, centre or street-facing commercial shopfront in the Morwell or Moe CBD that is vacant and meets all other eligibility criteria and program objectives.

What we will fund:

- Capital improvement costs associated with fit-out of the business premises including, but not limited to furniture, cabinetry, joinery, partitioning, flooring, shelving, and painting.
- Latrobe City Council fees and permits costs which would include planning, health, building and local laws.
- IT equipment cost including the purchasing of hardware (computers, laptops, printers and servers).
- Specialised equipment and software that is directly related to the operation of the new business or as part of the expansion.
- Other expenditure items not listed above where it can be clearly demonstrated there is a significant need for the set up or expansion of the Small Business.

What we won't fund:

- Operational expenses which are ongoing cost to run the business, such as rent, utilities, legal costs, marketing, subscription, wages and personal expenses.
- Expenditure items incurred prior to the date the business applied for the grant.
- Anything else outside of the agreed budget.
- Any activity that denigrates, excludes, or offends part of the community, is contrary to anti vilification laws, or freedom of speech, or not aligned with Council policies, priorities or values.
- Activity that pollutes air or water or destroys or wastes non-renewable resources.
- Applications that otherwise do not meet the eligibility or assessment criteria.

Applicants are expected to already have available the majority of the funding required to commence operation or complete their expansion or relocation, in addition to the funding sought through this program.

Key Dates

Round 2 opens on Monday 10 November 2025 and will close on Monday 8 December 2025.

General Guidelines

Eligibility

The applicant must:

- Be a small business that will be established in, relocated to or expanded in the Morwell or Moe CBD. See appendix 1 and 2 below.
- Have a valid Australian Business Number (ABN) and be able to provide documentation confirming legal structure as a sole trader, company, co-operative or partnership.
- Have less than 20 full-time or equivalent employees at the time of applying.
- Hold any registration or licence necessary to carry on the relevant type of business.
- Be able to provide evidence of appropriate business insurances.
- Have no outstanding acquittals or debts to Latrobe City Council.
- Demonstrate financial viability as evidenced by relevant financial information (see Assessment Criteria for appropriate documentation).
- Provide evidence of a minimum 12-month commercial lease agreement within the Morwell or Moe CBD (agreement preferably to be provided from real estate agent). Can be subject to grant approval.
- Have not received funding from Round 1 Opportunity Awaits 2025 Small Business Grant.

Ineligibility

The Program will not support:

- Applicants that have an outstanding 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 bodies other than those stated in the Eligibility Checklist above.
- Government departments or agencies, foundations or grant making bodies.
- Political organisations or organisations that have a political purpose.
- Current Latrobe City Council employees or their, immediate families, and contractors to Latrobe City Council.
- Entities that denigrate, exclude, or offend parts of the community.

Mandatory documents

Applicants will be rendered ineligible if the following documents are not submitted by round 2 closure date:

- Proof of the business being placed in the Morwell or Moe CBD.
- Certificates of currency for insurance policies.
- Proof of incorporation or registration of business name.
- Financial documentation (including profit and loss statements, cash flow and balance sheets).
- Skills and qualifications of key personnel.
- Proof of expansion plans for an existing Latrobe City business (including increased floor space, new activity, additional staffing).
- Commercial lease agreement organised with partnering real estate agency.

Applicants can also include the following documents as evidence:

- Letters of support from business partners and industry groups/associations.
- Marketing, public relations and promotion strategies including examples.
- Map showing locations of activities or material flows.
- Organisational chart.

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

How to apply

Applications for grants are completed online using SmartyGrants. Applicants must address the eligibility, assessment criteria, answer all questions and submit all required documentation prior to the program closing.

Assessment Criteria

Applicants will individually be assessed against the following criteria.

Criteria	Description	Weighting
Business Plan, Workforce & Experience	- Clearly demonstrate that the purpose, vision and business model of the small business is well researched, planned and validated. - Establish the small business's unique point of difference. - Outline the workforce of the small business, the relevant experience of the core team members and their ability to deliver on the purpose and vision. - Provide an outline of the business's marketing plans including promotional activities, product/service positioning and identified target market/customers. *Existing small businesses must demonstrate their expansion or growth plans, for example additional staffing, increased floor space, new activity, products, or services.	50%
Financial Viability	- Detailed documentation that outlines the long-term viability of the small business such as financial statements, forecasts and projections, cash flows, annual turnover and total investment into establishment or expansion of the enterprise. - Clearly describe the activities that this grant will support.	25%
Benefits and impact to Morwell & Moe CBD	- Outline how the small business will establish or locate itself in Morwell or Moe CBD and how the funding will provide benefit to the community. - Demonstrate the impact of your small business – in terms of economic and social benefits to the Morwell or Moe CBD	25%

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 Opportunity Awaits Round 2 grant stream
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 of Monday 8 December 2025 at 11:59PM. 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 and receive funding to one round per funding stream.
- 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.
- Manage any Conflicts of Interest between the assessors and the application/applicants.
- Panel's funding recommendations to be submitted to the Councillors 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.

Outcome Notification

- All applicants will be notified of their application outcome through SmartyGrants.
- Applicants will not be reimbursed for the time spent on the application process.

Payment and funding agreement

Successful applicants must provide details of their nominated bank account for Latrobe City Council to provide funding. Successful applicants are also required to submit an invoice to Latrobe City Council for the approved funding amount plus GST.

Payment terms are 30 days from the date of invoice, subject to the receipt of a signed funding agreement, tax invoice and other requested information.

Successful applicants will also be required to enter into a funding agreement. The funding agreement outlines the application outcome, the items to be funded and any conditions associated with the use of funds. Payments are not processed before the timeframes stipulated in the funding agreement. Any changes to the approved funding agreement will need to receive approval from Latrobe City Council. Changes are not guaranteed to be accepted for funding.

Latrobe City Council will not be responsible for a shortfall in a project budget if a grant recipient is unable to meet project costs.

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.

The 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.

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.

Terms & conditions

Applicants must comply with the following:

- Payment and funding agreement (see above).
- Reporting and acquittal (see above).
- Sign an agreement detailing the terms and conditions of the funding.
- Payments terms are 30 days from the date of invoice, subject to the receipt of a signed funding agreement, tax invoice and other requested information.
- Complete the funded activity within 12 months (no later than two weeks after the agreed completion date of the proposal as stated in the funding agreement).

Support for applicants

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

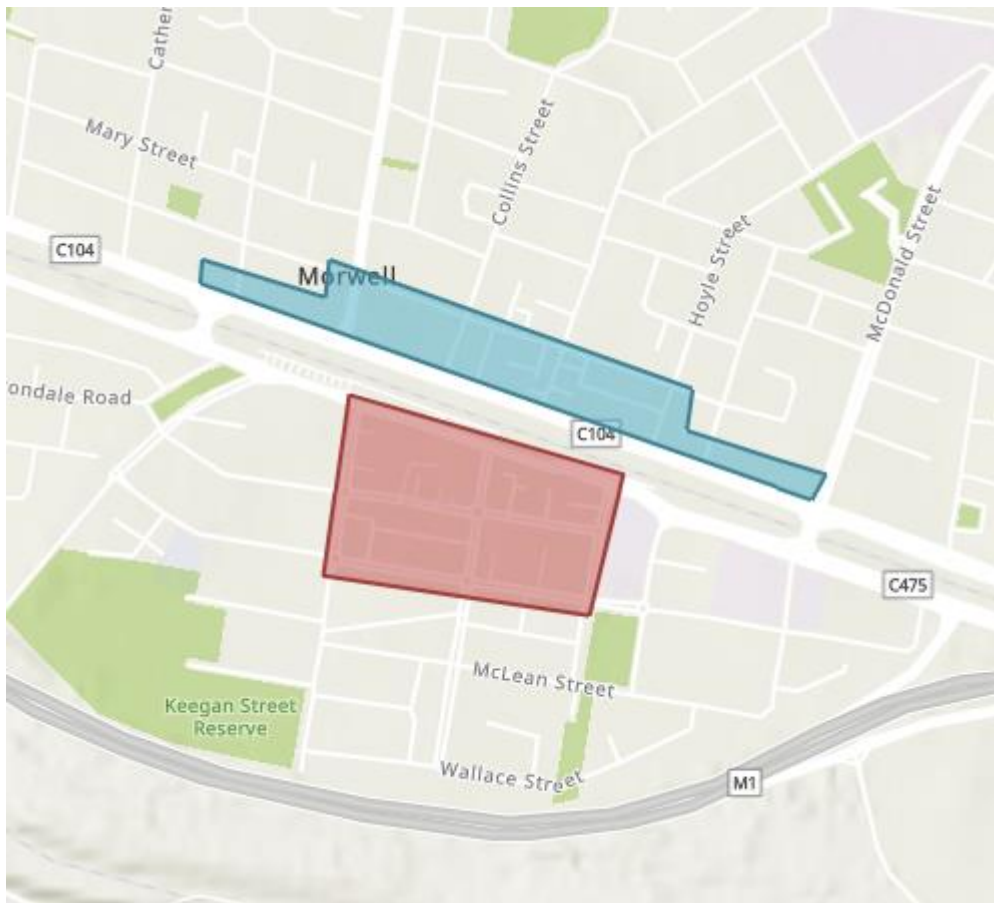
Interpreter & Translation services

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.

Appendix 1. Key Focus Areas Morwell CBD



* Relevant sites must be a commercial property within the Northern or Southern side of the CBD. Please contact the business concierge around the property to ensure it will work for your business proposal

Appendix 2. Key Focus Areas Moe CBD



* Relevant sites must be a commercial property within the Northern or Southern side of the CBD. Please contact the business concierge around the property to ensure it will work for your business proposal