



GREATER SHEPPARTON ECONOMIC RESPONSE TO COVID-19 PACKAGE

Visitor Economy COVID-19 Recovery and Activation Grant

Funding Guidelines

The Greater Shepparton City Council invites you to make an application for funding through the Visitor Economy COVID-19 Recovery and Activation Grants Program, as part of Greater Shepparton City Council's Economic Response to COVID-19 Package - Stage 2.

The Visitor Economy COVID-19 Recovery and Activation Grant has been established to assist businesses in Greater Shepparton's Visitor Economy industry to implement initiatives that help business sustainability and encourage enhanced visitor experiences and increased visitation during the COVID-19 pandemic recovery phase.

The total funding pool of \$125,000 (+GST) is available for individual projects up to a value of \$5,000 (+GST). Funding will only be provided where there is a direct link to a business that supports the local Visitor Economy and in accordance with grant guidelines.

The term 'visitor economy' refers to the production and delivery of goods and services for consumption by visitors/guests, which includes the industry sectors that directly serve visitors/guests, such as (but not limited to):

- Accommodation
- Passenger transport providers
- Event suppliers and contractors
- Tour companies
- Attractions
- Wellness tourism
- Farm gate experiences

The term will also refer to intermediaries and those involved indirectly, such as

- Retail who have a direct link to local produce
- Hospitality and boutique food production





The visitor economy recognises that visitor activity does not occur in isolation and contributes to investment and jobs across a range of industry sectors.

The Visitor Economy COVID-19 Recovery and Activation Grant is a once-off grant program to assist in the COVID-19 recovery process and is open until 5pm, Monday 10 August 2020. Applications received after this date will not qualify for funding. Any remaining funds not spent throughout this grant round will be redistributed into a further round of COVID-19 recovery funding.

How to Apply

It is a requirement that applicants apply with a formal grant application via Council's Smarty Grants portal at: https://greatershepparton.smartygrants.com.au/

Grant applications open Wednesday 1 July 2020

Applications close at 5pm Monday 10 August 2020

Please read the guidelines carefully to ensure you are eligible to apply and to assist you to complete all sections of the application process.

For any further questions about this grant, please contact Acting Team Leader Tourism and Major Events, Sharlene Putman on (**03**) **5832 9700** or **sharlene.putman@shepparton.vic.gov.au**





Background and Objectives

The Visitor Economy COVID-19 Recovery and Activation Grant has been established as a direct result of the COVID-19 Pandemic to provide financial assistance to eligible businesses. Due to the nature of restrictions with travel, essential services and social distancing, the grant is intended to provide support to visitor economy businesses to help through the recovery phase by activating initiatives that service the tourism and visitor industry within Greater Shepparton. The grant has the following objectives:

1. Visitor Economy Stimulation

To support visitor industry related businesses in Greater Shepparton increase visitation and economic stimulation for the region.

2. Tourism / Visitor Experience Product Development

To support innovative product development that enhances visitation opportunities, length of stay and visitor experience.

3. Private Sector Initiatives

To support private sector initiatives that complement and grow the region's tourism product.

4. Tourism Marketing and Promotion

To promote Greater Shepparton as an attractive place to visit and invest as travel restrictions are eased.





Eligibility

To be eligible for funding applicants must:

- Have a business that is located, registered and operates within the Greater Shepparton local government area.
- Have a valid Australian Business Number (ABN) that was registered prior to 16 March 2020 and be registered for GST.
- Have an annual payroll less than \$850,000.
- Business must demonstrate that they have been significantly impacted by COVID-19.
- Business must have all relevant State and Local Government permits, licences and approvals to operate as a business within the visitor economy including health, planning and building.
- Be open on Saturday and at least three other days of the week, school holidays (exemption will be given to Christmas Day, Anzac Day). Exemptions will also be given to Not for Profit entities such as historic museums and those businesses who operate on an "on demand" basis such as tour companies. Exemption may also be given to seasonal businesses (such as farm gate sales).
- Be open for a minimum of five hours per day on the days of operation (prior to COVID-19 restrictions).
 Consideration will be given to those businesses who do not have a shop front such as a tour company and are subject to demand.
- Be listed (if not, be willing to be) on the database of the Greater Shepparton Visitor Centre.
- Provide evidence of promotional literature/ brochures/ flyers / website / social media that promotes your business to the visitor market
- Have tourism as a core business activity and provide a substantive visitor experience (as per description below)

Core Business Activity (Tourism)

Refers to a business operation where the principal motivation, or one of the major motivations is the provision of an experience and/or service to meet the needs of visitors (i.e. the business earns more than 50% of its annual revenue from visitor activities). A demonstrated commitment to high standards of customer service should be central to the business philosophy. Membership of / or active participation in marketing programs of local and / or regional tourism organisations may also be taken into consideration when assessing the 'core' business of a visitor experience operation in order to determine its eligibility.

Substantive Visitor Experience

In some cases it may be difficult to decide whether a particular establishment is primarily a visitor experience business or a retail outlet (e.g. craft workshop, fresh fruit outlet). Consideration is given to the following:

The experience must be for the purpose of promoting the business and Greater Shepparton region by education, demonstration or uniqueness.

The experience must be available on a regular basis so as to enable advertising of the experience (seasonal consideration will be given).

The experience must be available during school holidays, and on at least one weekend day (seasonal consideration will be given along with Not for Profit entities such as museums).





Other Desirable Eligibility Criteria

It is also desirable, but not essential, that the visitor economy business:

- Be a member of a recognised local, regional or peak sector tourism or business organisation (e.g. Tourism Greater Shepparton, Victorian Tourism Industry Council, Shepparton Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Committee for Greater Shepparton)
- Be open on public holidays
- Provide accessible parking and parking for larger vehicles.
- Be a current or past advertiser, in the Greater Shepparton Official Visitor Guide
- Be open both Saturday and Sunday (pre COVID-19)

Specific Criteria – for museums / historic locations:

To be eligible, museums must be open regularly, or open by appointment.

Seasonal attractions / Businesses:

Businesses that close for part of the year may be eligible if they meet the following conditions:

- Significant visitor experience to be provided to visitors, such as pick your own fruit, tours etc
- Must be open for a minimum of six months of the year
- Must have, and continue to communicate their opening hours to the Greater Shepparton Visitor Centre

Applicants must certify in writing that they meet the criteria in order to receive this grant. The Greater Shepparton City Council reserves the right to reject any application that is ineligible or does not meet the criteria.

To support their application, applicants must provide copies of the following as evidence they meet the mandatory requirements. Applications will not be assessed until all mandatory requirements are provided:

- 1. The most recent Business Activity Statement (BAS), (exemption can be given for museums /historic locations and new businesses)
- 2. Public Liability Insurance Certificate Applicants must provide a copy of their current Public Liability Insurance to the value of \$20 million (minimum).
- 3. Quotes quotes to be provided for all proposed works (email or screenshot including product and agreed cost from the service or equipment provider will suffice). For works up to \$5,000, one written quote is required. For works up to \$15,000, two quotes required, works above \$15,000 three quotes are required. Council will only accept quotes from businesses registered with a current ABN number.
- 4. Other supporting materials can also be provided (if it supports any of the above mentioned eligibility criteria).





What may be funded

Tourism product development, innovation and visitor experience enhancement:

- 1. Tourism and interpretive signage
- 2. Innovative tourism product development e.g. virtual reality
- 3. Diversification of current business / infrastructure improvements that add to the visitor experience (farm stay / inclusion of outdoor dining facility / adapting to COVID-19 restrictions).
- 4. Creative visitor experience enhancements e.g. Internet of Things (IoT), murals, storytelling, street art, creative art projects
- 5. Interpretive walks / trails infrastructure on property including signage, sculptures, bollards, resting facilities.
- 6. Accessibility upgrades e.g. toilets, ramps, car parking
- 7. Environmentally sustainable visitor infrastructure e.g. EV charging points

What will **NOT** be funded

- 1. Payment of business rates
- 2. Reductions in rental costs, insurance policies
- 3. Routine maintenance considered to be for the general upkeep of the business
- 4. Purchase of land
- 5. Payment of bonds
- 6. Repair of facilities damaged by vandalism, fire or other natural disasters where the damage should be covered by insurance
- 7. Operational costs staffing, outgoings etc
- 8. Events refer to Major and Minor Events grant program for potential funding streams
- 9. Advertising, Marketing and Promotion implementation. Photography or videography
- 10. Building of website and / or upgrades or improvements
- 11. Retrospective funding where projects have commenced or are completed
- 12. Statutory fees and other statutory charges collected on behalf of state government or other authorities including development applications, health inspection fees, health approvals, street closures and other approvals
- 13. Applications from Corporations however this does not exclude Franchisees (or the equivalent) from making application
- 14. Those businesses that have received funding from Greater Shepparton City Council previously and have not provided a completed acquittal are ineligible to apply.

It is imperative to note that related party transactions between businesses applying for the grant and the supplier will not be funded either.



Budget

A full budget for the proposed activity must be provided as part of the application. This budget must be backed up by quotes from suppliers. The budget should include details on all income sources, i.e. any funds committed from the applicant or other sources which may be used to fund the project.

Local Suppliers

Applicants should consider giving priority to local suppliers for delivery of their project. Applications that include the use of local suppliers will be given a higher priority for selection.

Timelines

It is expected that the proposed activity will be completed within ten months after funding approval (if successful).

Assessment

Assessment – applications will be assessed after the closing date and applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application as soon as practicable.

Applications will be assessed on the following criteria:

- 1. The degree that the business has been negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic (eg. Loss of 30% or more of income, closed doors due to restrictions)
- 2. The degree that the business is contributing to the local visitor economy
- 3. The degree that the grant will contribute to the future capacity to attract visitation and revisitation / extension of stay to the individual business and the Greater Shepparton region.
- 4. The ability to retain operations and existing staff as a result of the project
- 5. The use of local suppliers (where possible)
- 6. Demonstrate a level of innovation that will lead to business improvement (to deliver better visitor products or services).
- 7. How well the proposal aligns with current visitor experience and tourism product in the Greater Shepparton region.
- 8. How the business plans to market themselves and Greater Shepparton as an attractive place to visit, live and invest as travel restrictions change.
- 9. Evidence that grant funding will be used to support the sustainability and recovery of the business.
- 10. Businesses' accessibility and that of the proposal for regular visitation
- 11. How well the project aligns with product gaps and visitation opportunities identified in the region's strategic plans i.e. Economic Development, Tourism and Major Events Strategy. Strategy can be found at www. greatershepparton.com.au/business/business-publications





Applications are assessed by Greater Shepparton City Council staff and peer reviewed. The Greater Shepparton City Council reserves the right to request further information in considering any application.

Any personal details will not be disclosed to any person outside the assessment process, however a short summary of the application activity will be utilised in briefings to Council and the list of successful applicants (business name) will be published on the Greater Shepparton City Council's website, social media and communicated to local media.

All funding decisions are final.

Applications must provide evidence that their grant will be used to support the sustainability and recovery of the business.

Terms and Conditions for successful applicants

Successful applicants are required to comply with the following terms and conditions:

- Signing a letter of agreement detailing the grant obligations
- Submission of an acquittal report evidencing the invoices and receipts for the funding approved and demonstrate how the grant helped support the business in response to the impact and recovery of COVID-19.
- Provide copies of promotional materials, photographs or videos for the purpose of promoting the grants scheme through Council publications and website.

All projects must be completed within ten months of receiving the grant funds.

All projects must complete an acquittal three months after project completion.

An entity which fails to complete their project and acquittal report is ineligible to apply for funding under any future Greater Shepparton City Council Grant rounds.