

## GREATER SHEPPARTON

# Visitor Experience Innovation Grant (Major and Minor)

## Funding Guidelines

Greater Shepparton City Council is offering funding through the Visitor Experience Innovation Grant, which 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.

Council invites you to speak to the mentor for Visitor Experience Innovation Grants to discuss your project and make an application for funding through the Visitor Experience Innovation Grants Program.

Minor Visitor Experience Innovation stream	up to \$5,000	1:1*
Major Visitor Experience Innovation stream	up to \$10,000	2:1**

\* For every \$1 provided through the grant the business provides a matching component of \$1

\*\* For the Major grant stream, for every \$1 provided through the grant the business provides a matching component of \$2

The total funding pool of \$35,000 is available. 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 Experience Innovation Grant is a funding program to assist businesses to increase available visitor experience product and visitation whilst increasing diversity and sustainability. Applications received after the closing date will not qualify for funding.

Any remaining funds not spent throughout this grant round will be redistributed.

# Background and Objectives

The Visitor Experience Innovation Grant was initially established in 2020 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.

The grant is intended to provide support to visitor economy businesses to increase their available visitor product, increasing the capacity for the region to attract visitation 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 including accessibility.

## 4. Tourism Marketing and Promotion

To promote Greater Shepparton as an attractive place to visit and invest.

## 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 **Monday 6 February 2023**

Applications close **Monday 10 April 2023 at 5pm**

It is also a requirement that each application must be discussed with Council's mentor for Visitor Experience Innovation Grants, Jessica Watt on 03 5832 9874 prior to submission.

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 Visitor Economy Development and Digital Officer, Jessica Watt on (03) 5832 9874 or [jessica.watt@shepparton.vic.gov.au](mailto:jessica.watt@shepparton.vic.gov.au)

## Eligibility

To be eligible for funding applicants must satisfy the following:

- Have a business that is located, registered and operates within the Greater Shepparton local government area.
- Have a valid Australian Business Number (ABN).
- Business must have all relevant State and Local Government permits, licenses and approvals to operate as a business within the visitor economy including health, planning and building.
- Must have public liability insurance to the value of \$20 million.
- (Minor Grant) - Be open a minimum of one weekend day (Saturday or Sunday) 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).
- (Major Grant) - Be open Saturday AND Sunday, and at least three other days of the week, school holidays (exemption will be given to Christmas Day, Anzac Day). Exemptions may 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. 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).
- Have not previously received funding from the Greater Shepparton City Council towards the proposed project.
- Discuss the project with Councils mentor for Visitor Experience Innovation Grants prior to submitting their application.

### 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 (what can the visitor experience and feel from your business).

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).

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. Destination Goulburn Valley, 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.

### 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 between \$1,000 and \$10,000, one written quote is required. For works between \$10,000 and \$50,000, two quotes required. For works above \$50,000 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. Innovative tourism product development e.g. virtual reality, or mobile visitor experiences.
2. Diversification of current business / infrastructure improvements that add to the visitor experience (farm stay / inclusion of outdoor dining facility / glamping). Note to be eligible for outdoor dining facility funding project must be permanent in nature.
3. Creative visitor experience enhancements e.g. Internet of Things (IoT), murals, storytelling, street art, creative art projects.
4. Interpretive walks / trails infrastructure on property including signage, sculptures, bollards, resting facilities.
5. Accessibility upgrades e.g. toilets, ramps, car parking.
6. Environmentally sustainable visitor infrastructure e.g. EV charging points.
7. Tourism and interpretive signage.

## What will NOT be funded

1. Applications received after the close off.
2. Those businesses that have received funding from Greater Shepparton City Council previously and have not provided a completed acquittal are ineligible to apply.
3. Businesses that have previously failed to complete projects funded by Greater Shepparton City Council.
4. Retrospective funding where projects have commenced or are completed prior to funding approval.
5. Payment of general business expenses such as: business rates, rental costs, insurance policies, business start-up costs, purchase of land, payment of bonds, operational costs - staffing, outgoings etc.
6. Routine maintenance considered to be for the general upkeep / renewal of the business infrastructure (such as fridges, televisions, carpet, ovens, cabinetry etc).
7. Repair of facilities damaged by vandalism, fire or other natural disasters where the damage should be covered by insurance.
8. Events - refer to Major and Minor Events grant program for potential funding streams.
9. Advertising, Marketing and Promotion implementation. Photography or videography (exemptions may be given if the photography or videography forms a part of the product development).
10. Building of website and / or upgrades or improvements.
11. 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.
12. Applications from Corporations however this does not exclude Franchisees (or the equivalent) from making application.
13. 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 (any funds committed from the applicant or other sources which may be used to fund the project) and expenditure (all costs involved in the project). **The income and expenditure must be equal.**

## Matched Funding

Through the Visitor Experience Innovation Grant Program, Council aims to work in partnership with industry to support their project. Applicants are required to match the grant amount requested by providing a contribution. This contribution can either be financial, or “in-kind” or a combination of both. An in-kind contribution is part of the project that would normally be paid for but is given to the project at no cost.

The ability to provide financial and in-kind support to a project by the applicant will be taken into account during the review process. Ideally, a 1:1 for Minor Grants and 2:1 for Major Grants match is preferred but factors including the value of the project to the visitor economy, the capacity of the business to deliver, together with the sustainability of the project is taken into consideration in the decision making process

## 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.

## Compliance

In some cases, approvals/permits may be required to carry out the proposed project. Applicants should discuss their project with the responsible body eg. Council or a Victorian Government Department, prior to submitting their application. Your offer of funding will be made conditional to you obtaining regulatory approvals. The approval/permit must be obtained within 6 weeks of your offer of funding or an extension negotiated and approved. Council Officers can assist applicants with the process of gaining approvals. Funds will only be released if the relevant approvals and permits are provided. Funds from grants cannot be used to cover costs incurred from obtaining relevant approvals.

## Timelines

It is expected that the proposed activity will be completed within 9 months of funding approval (if successful).

Grant funding will be made available by EFT once all works have been completed, inspected and photographed by Council. Council reserves the right to use photographs for promotional purposes.

## 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 is contributing to the local visitor economy.
2. 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 Shepparton and Goulburn Valley region.
3. The degree that the business has been negatively impacted by the 2022 floods.
4. The use of local suppliers (where possible).
5. Project feasibility.
6. Matching component.
7. Demonstrate a level of innovation that will lead to business improvement (to deliver better visitor products or services).
8. How well the proposal aligns with current visitor experience and tourism product in the Shepparton and Goulburn Valley.
9. How well the proposal aligns with core brand pillars for Shepparton and Goulburn Valley and / or product gaps.
10. How the business plans to market themselves and Shepparton and Goulburn Valley as an attractive place to visit, live and invest as travel restrictions change.
11. Evidence that grant funding will be used to support the sustainability of the business.
12. Businesses' accessibility and that of the proposal for regular visitation.
13. 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](http://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.

## Acquittal

You will be required to report back to Council when your project is completed. Your acquittal must include: A summary of the project including your feedback on the things that went well and also things that you have learnt from the project.

A Financial Statement must be completed together with receipts attached.

Copies of promotional materials, photographs or video for the purpose of promoting the Visitor Experience Innovation Grants program through Council publications and website.

The Acquittal process is important because it enables Council to continuously evaluate the success of the Grants program.

All projects will be required to be completed within nine months of grant funds being approved. All projects must complete an acquittal within three months of project completion. A business which fails to submit their acquittal documents is ineligible to apply for funding under any future rounds of Council Grant programs until their acquittal is completed and reviewed by Council.

## 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.
- 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 nine months of grant funds being approved. All projects must complete an acquittal within three months of 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.