

Business Elevate Program Guidelines 2025/26

- Preferred Business Suppliers

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1.0 Introduction

Maribyrnong City Council supports our business community through the Business Improvement District (BID) grant program, which assists economic development and business viability across our City.

In the 2025/26 financial year, there will be two types of funding. The Trader Associations BID Grant Funding and the **Business Elevate Program Funding** (*which is the focus of these guidelines*).

1.1 Trader Associations BID Grant Funding

This financial year Maribyrnong City Council will be supporting ALL the registered trader associations with a distribution of grant funding, to support trader associations with the development and delivery of their marketing initiatives.

Grant funding will be distributed based on the size of the trader association and other defined criteria for assessment of the amount distributed. Up to \$100,000 will be distributed amongst the trader associations this financial year (see **Figure 1** on next page).

1.2 Business Elevate Program Funding

This financial year Maribyrnong City Council will be continuing the Business Elevate Program (that was introduced as a new concept in 2021/22). The premise of this program is to encourage business to business (B2B) interaction, transactions and support within Maribyrnong City.

A total pool of \$100,000 will be available for the Business Elevate Program which will provide for 50 x \$2000 vouchers.

The first step Council is undertaking, is to call for Expressions of Interest (EOI) from local businesses who are interested in becoming a part of the Business Elevate Program. Local businesses within thirteen defined categories will be asked to provide a description of the products/services which they are able to provide (valued at up to \$2,000*).

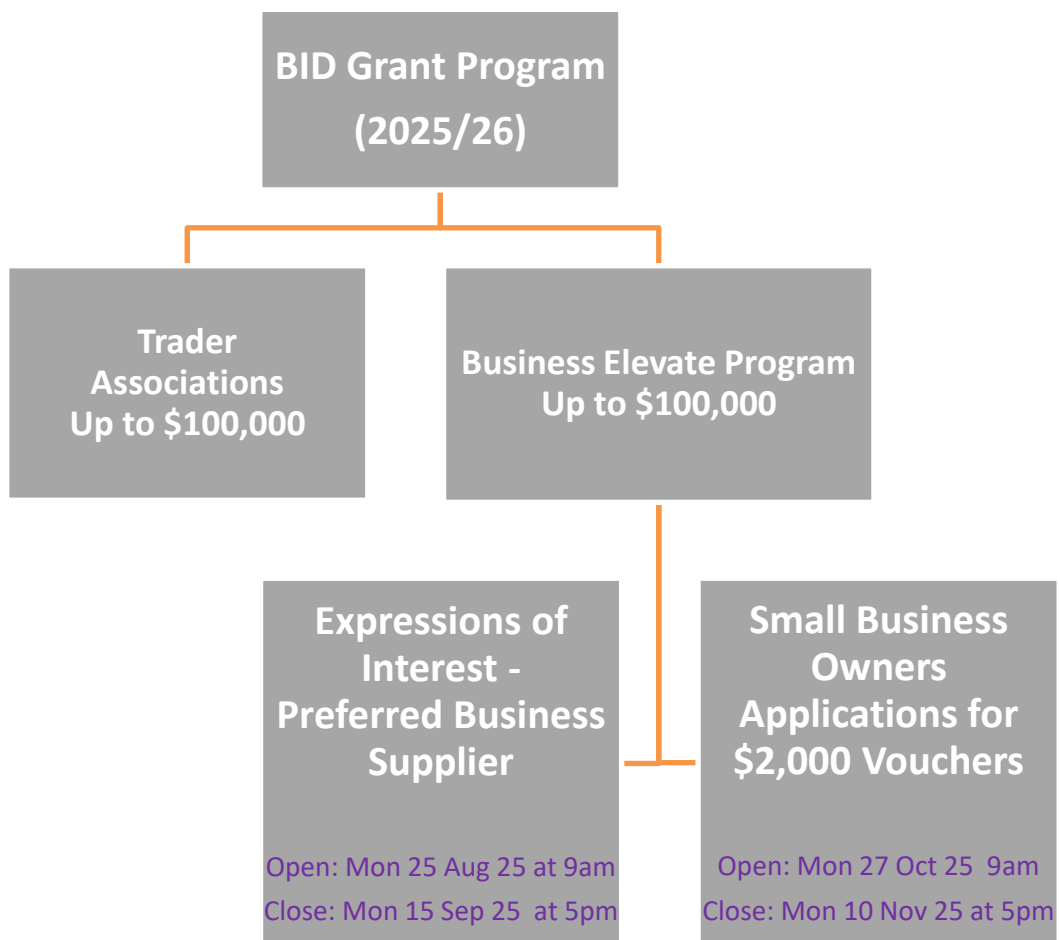
After undergoing a selection process, up to five businesses per category will be selected to participate as panel members in the Business Elevate Program (these will be listed on the Maribyrnong City Council Website >>>

<https://www.maribyrnong.vic.gov.au/Elevate>

A maximum of up to 65 businesses will be selected (up to five per category)

*Note: Vouchers will be for \$2,000+GST where the recipient is registered for GST

Figure 1: Summary of key dates



Applications for Expressions of Interest to become a Business Elevate Program Preferred Business Supplier will be communicated via the Maribyrnong City Council Business Bulletin, website and social media, and will be processed via the Smarty Grants online applications platform.

The second step Council will then undertake, is to call for **Small Business Owners** located within Maribyrnong to apply for a voucher to receive services from the nominated Business Elevate Program - Preferred Business Suppliers. A total of 50 local businesses will be able to apply for a \$2,000 voucher and be matched with their Preferred Business Supplier, once they nominate which business from the Preferred Business Supplier list that they would like to work with.

NOTE: A 10% (i.e. \$200) **Activation fee** will be charged by the Preferred Business Supplier to the recipient/Small Business Owner at the commencement of any activity/work. This charge is in addition to the \$2000 voucher amount and is designed to ensure recipients are proactive in utilising their voucher. Failure to pay the Activation Fee could mean forfeiture of the voucher, which will be allocated to another business on the waiting list.

Small Business Owners will be awarded their vouchers on a first in best dressed basis, per supplier/per category. Therefore the speed of application will be very important. Also, as we are into the fourth year of the program, preference will be given to applicants who have never received a voucher in the past, and applications will be ranked accordingly.

The first 50 eligible businesses that meet all the relevant assessment and ranking criteria, will be considered as final and the application process will close. No further businesses will be considered, as the number of \$2,000 vouchers is capped at 50 business recipients. Businesses that miss out will be placed on a waiting list in the event that voucher recipients don't take up their opportunity.

It is advisable that business owners looking to apply for a voucher should carefully consider what their business needs are right now in order to grow or evolve, and select the Preferred Business Supplier they would like to work with accordingly.

Applications for Small Business Owners to receive a Business Elevate Program \$2,000 Voucher will be communicated via the Maribyrnong City Council Business Bulletin, website and social media, and will be processed via the Smarty Grants online applications platform.

All applicants are encouraged to read the guidelines and discuss any concerns with Council Officers before applying.

1.3 Contact details

Economic Development Unit – Council Offices (03) 9688 0200 or
Business.Elevate@maribyrnong.vic.gov.au

In person:

Civic Precinct and Community Hub, 61 Napier Street Footscray VIC 3012

In writing:

PO Box 58, West Footscray VIC 3012

1.4 More information

Information about the Business Elevate Program is available on Council's website at
<https://www.maribyrnong.vic.gov.au/Elevate>

1.5 Important dates

Business Elevate Program – Expressions of Interests for Preferred Business Supplier <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Opens for application – Monday 25 August 2025 at 9am• Closes for application – Monday 15 September 2025 at 5pm
Online Information Session – <ul style="list-style-type: none">• RSVP essential – Wednesday 27 August 2025 at 11am
Applications for \$2,000 Vouchers – Small Business Owners <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Opens for application – Monday 27 October 2025 at 9am• Closes for application – Monday 10 November 2025 at 5pm
Implementation Period: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Preferred Business Suppliers work with successful Small Business Owners to deliver their nominated projects/initiatives, monitoring milestones and project/initiative status – December 2025 to April 2026
Acquittals Reports: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Acquittals Reports Due – Monday 4 May 2026 at 5pm

2.0 Business Improvement District (BID) Grant Program – Business Elevate Program

Overview

Businesses within the City of Maribyrnong are encouraged to participate in the Business Elevate Program. The idea is for local businesses to help 50 other local businesses to thrive, by sharing the skills and talents that already exist within the Maribyrnong business community. This not only promotes business awareness, it also helps foster networking and business development, and possible future collaborations. Instead of just being a standard grants program, the Business Elevate Program is really designed to support multiple small businesses and create a ripple effect of personal, professional and economic benefits for all involved.

2.1 Online information session

Join us for a Zoom discussion about how the Business Elevate Program will work, and how applications are submitted via the Smarty Grants Platform. This will take place on **Wednesday 27th August 2025 at 11am**. Note RSVP is essential, via email to business.elevate@maribyrnong.vic.gov.au

2.2 Business Elevate Program objectives

The objectives of the Business Elevate Program are:

- To increase opportunities for small businesses within Maribyrnong through a voucher based, business-to-business (B2B) grants program
- To showcase the business talent in our community that are experienced and well equipped to help and support other local businesses with their services
- To strengthen connections, future networking and collaborative opportunities for small business owners
- To create a positive ripple effect by adding to the collective economic benefits for small businesses in Maribyrnong

2.3 Case study

Website Wizard is a business based in the City of Maribyrnong, and has a passion for helping small businesses with their website needs. The owner, William, received an email promoting the Business Elevate Program, through the Business Bulletin newsletter, and was excited to see that they could help other local businesses through the program.

Website Wizard met all the necessary eligibility criteria and applied to be a Preferred Business Supplier as part of the Business Elevate program. They had a special offer “My First Website” valued at \$2,000 which they proposed as part of their application. Fortunately they were selected as a Preferred Business Supplier.

Their offer was advertised on the Maribyrnong City Council website for Small Business Owners in Maribyrnong who were interested in applying for a \$2,000 voucher to consider and review their “My First Website” offer.

In February 2022 a local entrepreneur Sandra started a home based business located in City of Maribyrnong called She Makes Cakes. Her business has grown quickly and organically. Most of her marketing has predominately been based on Instagram advertising – using posts, stories and reels to promote her baking talents. She has a strong desire to grow her business, and ultimately move into a commercial kitchen, but she really needs a professional website.

Sandra applies for the Business Elevate Program to be matched with a website designer. She had five web companies (preferred business suppliers) to choose from (they were listed on the Maribyrnong City Council website), and she did her research and liked what Website Wizard had to offer for \$2,000. She met all the relevant selection criteria, and promptly filled in the application form online. Sandra was successful in receiving her \$2,000 voucher to use with Website Wizard.

When Sandra’s application for a voucher was approved by Council and successfully matched with Website Wizard, both organisations were notified. After the initial discussions took place, Website Wizard directly invoiced a Sandra a \$200 (+GST) Activation Fee, in order for the work to get started.

Then Website Wizard received the first \$1,000 instalment payment and got started immediately on the new website scope and development process for ‘She Makes Cakes’ website. Sandra had five months to work with the web designer, to design and develop a basic website for her brand and she was thrilled with the experience and outcome.

After five months the website was finished and Website Wizard provided an acquittals report to Council to prove the successful completion and delivery of services provided to Sandra. William then received the final \$1,000 payment. Two happy businesses in Maribyrnong.

NOTE: This is just a fictitious example to demonstrate how the process will work, and how two businesses can benefit from being involved in the Business Elevate Program.

2.4 13 Key Categories of Preferred Business Suppliers

The following categories will be the primary focus areas to source Preferred Business Suppliers for local businesses to be a part of the Business Elevate Program for 2025/26:

1. Accounting/Bookkeeping
2. Business Coaching/Business Consulting
3. Business Sustainability
4. Copywriting/Public Relations
5. Digital Marketing/SEO
6. Graphic Design/Visual Merchandising
7. Legal/Intellectual Property
8. Marketing Consulting/Advertising
9. Photography
10. Printing/Signage
11. Videography
12. Web Design/Mobile App Development
13. Other Business Services

- Only up to five suppliers will be selected per category for the first round of the Business Elevate Program.
- Being selected and listed as a Preferred Business Supplier in the Business Elevate Program does not guarantee that you will be selected by a Small Business Owner to redeem their \$2,000 voucher to engage your business for the services/offer.
- A Preferred Business Supplier can only select one category in which to represent their business offer.
- A Small Business Owner can only apply for one \$2,000 voucher to use to be matched with one Preferred Business Supplier.
- There is a cap of a maximum of five businesses that a Preferred Business Supplier can agree to work with as part of the Business Elevate Program – to

ensure fairness and distribution of work across a variety of suppliers.

- A Preferred Business Supplier has the right to reject an application to work with/be matched with a Small Business Owner.
- In the event that a Preferred Business Supplier receives at least one match, they **will be ineligible to also apply to receive a \$2,000 voucher** for their business (in order to be fair to all businesses participating in the program).
- The purpose of the program is to offer the program to a wide group of local businesses. Where there is an oversupply of Preferred Business Suppliers in the same category, preference will be given to suppliers who have never participated in the program.
- Where a potential supplier is already engaged by Maribyrnong City Council to provide other work/supply services to the business community, Maribyrnong City Council reserves the right to give preference to suppliers in the same category who have never participated in the program.
- Maribyrnong City Council reserves the right to add external suppliers (from outside the municipality) in the event that there are not enough local suppliers for a particular category.

2.5 Timeline

Date	Details
25 August 2025	Applications for expressions of interest for Preferred Business Supplier open
27 August 2025	Online information session
15 September 2025	Applications for expressions of interest for Preferred Business Supplier close
29 September 2025	Announce list of successful Preferred Business Suppliers
27 October 2025	Applications for Small Business Owners to apply for \$2,000 Vouchers open
10 November 2025	Applications for Small Business Owners to apply for \$2,000 Vouchers close
2 December 2024	Announce successful Small Business Owners/Preferred Business Suppliers matched for \$2,000 services
24 November 2025	50% Payment of \$1,000 made to all recipients (<i>paid to Preferred Business Supplier</i>) – <i>upon confirmation that the Activation Payment of \$200+gst has been paid by the voucher recipient to the Preferred Business Supplier</i>
Dec 2025 – Apr 2026	Preferred Business Suppliers work with successful Small Business Owners to deliver their nominated projects/initiatives, monitoring milestones and project/initiative status
4 May 2026	Preferred Business Suppliers - Acquittals reports due
18 May 2026	50% Final Payment of \$1,000 made to all recipients (<i>paid to Preferred Business Supplier</i>)

3.0 Business Elevate Program – Preferred Business Suppliers

3.1 Eligibility

Who is eligible?

- Applications will be accepted from businesses within the business district boundaries of the City of Maribyrnong (see **Figure 2** at the end of this document)
- Projects/initiatives must be delivered and support businesses within the boundaries of the City of Maribyrnong
- Businesses who can supply products/services/initiatives in one of the 13 Key Categories shown in **Section 2.4** above.

Who is not eligible to apply?

Applications will not be accepted from:

- Businesses not located in the City of Maribyrnong
- Businesses not legally registered
- Businesses that are not financially stable
- Businesses who owe reports or money to Maribyrnong City Council
- Businesses who have outstanding compliance issues with Maribyrnong City Council.
- Businesses who do not have the relevant level of business insurance required

General Exclusions

- Preferred Business Suppliers cannot have an existing business relationship/contract/agreement with a Small Business Owner recipient of a voucher, as the program is designed to encourage new business connections/transactions.

3.2 Application Checklist

Before starting an application we suggest business owners gather the following information to make the application process a smooth and easy experience:

- The business ABN
- Insurance Certificate of Currency - showing minimum \$20M Public Liability Insurance
- Website/Social media links
- A clear idea of what services/offers the business can offer up to \$2,000 (+GST)
- Evidence of the business having any community involvement (*for example - involvement in business/trader groups/association, sponsoring of clubs, volunteering*)
- Up to three testimonials from customers/clients
- Reading these guidelines in full before applying

TIP: Businesses should consider reading through the questions early in the application period and allow some extra time for gathering any extra information that may be needed to complete the application.

3.3 Key Application Components

Consider your application process as being a “pitch” to Maribyrnong City Council.

- Why should Council choose your business as a Preferred Business Supplier?
- What makes your business unique?
- What makes your business stand out, relative to other suppliers in the area?
- What can you offer small businesses to help them grow and elevate to the next level?

Applications must consider formulating answers to address the following:

- What is your primary service offering?
- Provide a short summary of your services?
- How your services will help assist the growth of small business in Maribyrnong?
- How your business has been involved/engaged in the local community?
- Your capacity to provide services during December 2025 – April 2026?
- Provide up to three testimonials from your past customers/clients?

3.4 Application

All applications are subject to review against the eligibility and assessment criteria. Applicants are encouraged to carefully consider their capacity to meet program requirements and the assessment criteria before committing resources to developing an application.

Applications must include:

- A completed **Expression of Interest application form** via Smarty Grants online platform, that is well thought through and well-developed, addressing all criteria and questions to be considered as a Preferred Business Supplier.

3.5 Assessment Criteria

Applications will be assessed against the following criteria:

Strength of Offer/Package	50%
Strength of Brand/Business Reputation	20%
Strength of Past Client Interactions	20%
Demonstrated Community Involvement	10%

3.6 Activation Fee

The Preferred Business Supplier will charge the recipient/Small Business Owner an Activation Fee – as follows:

1. The activation fee to be invoiced is 10% of the voucher value – ie \$200 (+GST *where appropriate if the business is registered for GST*). This is over and above the \$2,000 +GST voucher that will be paid by Council to the Preferred Business Supplier through this program.
2. The activation fee should be paid before any work commences.
3. The activation fee is non-refundable unless for unforeseen reasons the Preferred Business Supplier is unable to fulfil the commitment.
4. If the activation fee is not paid, the Preferred Business Supplier reserves the right to stop working with the Small Business Owner as part of the Business Elevate Program, and may seek to be matched with an alternative Small Business Owner from the waiting list if viable.

NOTE: The activation fee is a small financial contribution from the recipient, designed to encourage participants to engage in commencing the work in a timely manner to complete all the initiatives/programs within the designated five month timeframe.

3.7 Payment

The payment schedule will be as follows:

1. Council will release funding in two instalments.
2. The first instalment will be 50% (i.e. \$1,000 +GST) when the Preferred Business Supplier is successfully matched with a Small Business Owner and the Activation Fee has been paid.
3. The final instalment of 50% (i.e. \$1,000 +GST) is withheld until Council has received the project/initiative acquittal report, and is satisfied with the execution of activities.

3.8 Reporting

The following reports are required:

- Acquittals report due at the end of the project/initiative to be submitted to Council demonstrating the successful implementation/execution of the program.
- If the Preferred Business Supplier is experiencing any difficulty meeting their obligations, they should contact the Economic Development Unit for advice.

3.9 Notification Process

- Applicants for Preferred Business Suppliers will be formally advised of the outcome of their application via email.
- Once the successful matching of Small Business Owners and their Preferred Business Supplier is made, both parties will be contacted via email and advised the next steps.

Figure 2: Activity Centres in City of Maribyrnong

