

March 2025

Business Façade Improvement Grants

Guidelines 2025-26
(Matched Grants up to
\$5000)

Table of contents

Introduction	3
Program objectives.....	3
Matched funding levels.....	4
Types of projects supported.....	4
Project examples.....	6
Funded projects	8
Projects not supported.....	9
Eligibility criteria.....	9
Applications from trusts	10
Who is not eligible to apply?	10
Assessment criteria	11
Assessment panel	11
Application process	12
How to apply	13
Key dates	14
Further information and support.....	14

Acknowledgment of Country

We acknowledge that Stonnington is on the Traditional Lands of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and Bunurong peoples of the East Kulin Nations and pay our respect to their Elders past and present.

We extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We acknowledge their living connection to Country, relationship with the land and all living things extending back tens of thousands of years.



Introduction

The City of Stonnington is committed to enabling a thriving local economy and creating more attractive and inviting commercial precincts, which supports our vision to achieve:

- a thriving and unique place
- an inclusive and healthy community
- a people-centred and future-ready city.

The Business Façade Improvement Grants program supports business and property owners to improve the visual appearance of business façades in the City of Stonnington’s commercial precincts.

Program objectives

The program aims to support façade improvement projects that help achieve outcomes aligned to the City of Stonnington’s Council Plan and Place-led Economic Development Strategy 2023-27:

<p>Identity and destination</p>	<p>Increase visitation Strengthen the City of Stonnington’s unique identity as a destination of choice, to continue to attract and create advocates of residents, businesses, and visitors.</p>
<p>Thriving and desirable businesses</p>	<p>Increase economic activity Attract industries, anchor tenants and a wide mix of businesses for our 20-minute neighbourhoods and align with precinct identities.</p>
<p>Pride of place and character</p>	<p>Improve place perceptions Provide safe, inviting, accessible and well-maintained streetscapes, neighbourhoods and public realm, as defined by our community, to promote pride of place and improved health and wellbeing outcomes.</p>

Matched funding levels

A total grant funding pool of \$75,000 is available¹.

City of Stonnington will provide matched funding (dollar for dollar) for up to 50 per cent of the total improvement costs, up to a maximum of \$5000 (excluding GST), with the remaining amount to be contributed by the applicant.

City of Stonnington contribution	Minimum matched funding required from applicant	Total minimum project cost (excluding GST)
\$2000	\$2000	\$4000
\$5000	\$5000	\$10,000

Types of projects supported

The following projects or initiatives will be eligible for a Business Façade Improvement Grant, subject to proposals being permissible*:

Building works:

- Ground floor and first floor façade and/or awning enhancements (shopfronts), upgrades and or repairs e.g. repainting of external shop frontages, or external treatments that improve the appearance of attractive or unique details such as texture, tiling or other materials
- Green walls, planter boxes or living greenery that can be seen from the footpath and are within the property boundaries or footpath trading areas
- New signage or improvements to signage as a part of a broader shopfront enhancement project
- Removal of privately owned visual clutter that detracts from the appearance and appeal of the shopfront e.g. signage and awnings that are in disrepair, or are not consistent with heritage aspects of the building
- Artistic lighting treatments on the facade that achieve improved aesthetic and amenity outcomes (excludes neon plug in signs e.g. 'open')
- Improvements to external lighting
- Repair, decorate and paint/apply a mural to existing shopfront roller door shutters
- Vacant property window decorative skins or artwork
- Other external façade improvements that reflect the intent of the grant

Footpath trading area enhancements:

- Installation of movable decorative/artistic cafe barriers, or other outdoor decorative features
- Living planter boxes (box and plant max 1.5m total height)
- Decorative pot plants (max 1.5m high)
- Murals on barriers

¹ Subject to FY25/26 budget approval by Council

Property walls (including laneways) enhancements:

- Laneway wall enhancements for corner properties, such as mural or lighting installations
- Mural installations on property walls that can be viewed from the main street:
 - evidence of laneway ownership, property ownership or right of use to be provided as part of the application. Written support must be secured from any other owner that has rights or access to the laneway.
 - Please note: mural installations are subject to the applicable approvals and permits being obtained from the City of Stonnington
- Lighting improvements in the laneway with appropriate permits and permissions
- Laneway mural collective - if multiple neighbouring or nearby properties wish to create an overall uplift, individual applications are encouraged. They should clearly note the nature/address of the related/nearby projects.

Any murals or artist installations must be in accordance with City of Stonnington's [Public Art Policy](#)

*Please note:

- Prior to any awarding of grants, it is a requirement that evidence of any necessary permits, approvals or insurances have been obtained or are in the process of being obtained.
- Prior to the commencement of any works, any [local laws](#), [footpath trading](#), [building](#) and/or [planning](#) permissions (including, if applicable, a heritage related planning permit) must be obtained by the applicant. Costs related to obtaining any of these permissions are not eligible for grant funding.

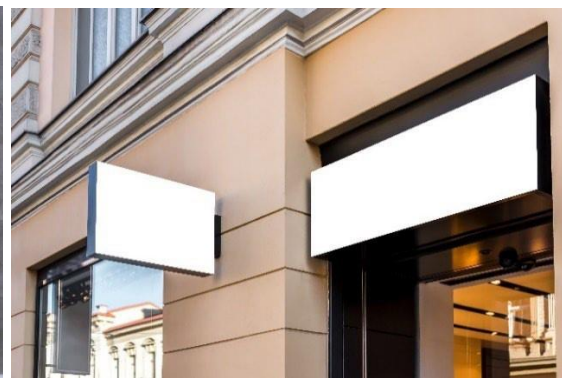
Project examples



Painting and façade upgrade/refresh



Updated store signage



Updated and decorative/mural roller shutters





Vacant shop window artwork/skins



Green walls and murals



Decorative planter boxes in approved footpath trading areas

Funded projects

The following projects are some of the outcomes from the inaugural Business Façade Improvement Grant recipients from last year.

- Façade updates with new signage and paintwork – [watch transformation video](#)



- New corner signage for locale visibility – [watch transformation video](#)



- Façade updates with new signage and paintwork



Projects not supported

The following projects or initiatives are ineligible for a Business Façade Improvement Grant:

- Internal fit-out works
- Advertising and/or marketing campaigns
- Structural works for a building that doesn't align to the objectives of the grant funding
- One-off events, temporary or short-term projects
- Ongoing operating or general maintenance costs such as staff wages, salaries and remuneration, rent, utilities bills, administration overheads, stock, and personal expenditure
- Expenditure incurred prior to the project commencement
- General business operating costs – rent, employee costs, stock, commission etc.,
- Projects that have detrimental environmental impact or produce large quantities of waste
- Projects where the primary purpose could be considered political
- An application for multi-staged projects where the City of Stonnington has supported a previous stage through City of Stonnington sponsorship and grant funding
- Changes to the public realm or public-owned assets
- Projects that denigrate or exclude parts of the community or have adverse effects on public health, safety, or any other reason Council deems applicable.
- Projects that have potential to not be completed prior to end of April 2026

Eligibility criteria

The City of Stonnington's Business Façade Improvement Grants are designed to assist small to medium sized businesses.

To be eligible for a Business Façade Improvement Grant of up to \$5000 (ex GST), applicants must:

- be a legally constituted entity or a registered business and have an active Australian Business Number (ABN)
- have a demonstrated investment in the city including:
 - a signed commercial property lease arrangement within the City of Stonnington extending beyond 30 June 2026, and/or
 - ownership of a commercial property (tenanted or vacant) located in the City of Stonnington
- have written permission from all affected property owners to undertake these works (if project impacts yours and/or adjacent properties)
- have a total business turnover of less than \$2 million in the previous financial year for the commercial business located within Stonnington
- Provide verified financial evidence that the applicant has sufficient funds available to finance the complete project without the support of the City of Stonnington's grant
- be delivering a project that improves a business façade on the ground floor and/or first floor of a commercial property within a commercial precinct in the City of Stonnington
- submit a comprehensive project plan that aligns with the aims of the grant
- have a project that will be completed between 15 September 2025 – 30 April 2026 after a successful funding agreement is executed
- Have all appropriate insurances, permits and licences for the proposed project or can demonstrate that the projects have been discussed with the relevant authorities including but not limited to the City of Stonnington's Planning, Building, Local Laws and

- Health departments, and relevant paperwork for these processes have been lodged
- Provide proof that the applicant holds a current Public Liability Insurance of no less than \$20 million
 - Have no pending acquittals or debts to the City of Stonnington or have failed to comply with the terms and conditions of any previous funding agreement with the City of Stonnington
 - only submit one grant application per property
 - advised all affected stakeholders of the works to be completed

Applications from trusts

Applications from trustees acting on behalf of trusts must provide a copy of the Trust Deed to the City of Stonnington as part of the application process.

Who is not eligible to apply?

A Business Façade Improvement Grant will not be awarded to:

- an applicant who does not meet all the eligibility or assessment criteria listed above
- political organisations or businesses that have a political purpose
- Government departments or agencies, foundations or grant making bodies
- an employee or Councillor of the City of Stonnington or their immediate family. This also includes any organisation that an employee, Councillor, or their immediate family member may be part of
- an applicant that the City of Stonnington considers to support, promote or facilitate violence, intolerance, or discrimination
- an applicant who has outstanding debts to the City of Stonnington
- an applicant who is in legal conflict with the City of Stonnington
- an applicant who has failed to provide satisfactory acquittal reporting for any previous City of Stonnington funding
- an applicant who has already received City of Stonnington funding (including in-kind) for the same project within the same financial year
- an applicant who has already applied for City of Stonnington funding (including in-kind) for the same project within the same financial year, and been refused
- an applicant who conducts themselves in a way that the City of Stonnington considers to be injurious or prejudicial to the character or interests of the municipality
- an applicant with or who has had a major/critical non-compliance order
- unincorporated associations, branches, large and/or established franchisees or subsidiaries of larger companies.

Assessment criteria

Applications will be assessed against the degree to which they meet the following criteria:

	Key criteria	Weighting
1.	Demonstration of business financial viability.	20%
2.	Façade improvements that will positively contribute to the attractiveness and appeal of the commercial precinct.	40%
3.	Project management, experience and capability.	30%
4.	Use of City of Stonnington-based suppliers/ tradespeople to deliver proposed works.	10%

Assessment panel

The assessment panel will comprise four City of Stonnington Officers who will represent some of the following departments:

- Economic and Place Development
- Finance
- Planning
- Building
- Local Laws
- Other relevant Council departments

Applications will be assessed on their eligibility and ability to deliver on the program objectives. Eligible applicants are not guaranteed funding, only the strongest applications will receive funding through a competitive assessment process. Ineligible applications will be excluded from the assessment process. All funding decisions are final. All applicants will be notified of the result of their application.

Applications will be kept confidential and will not be disclosed to any person outside the application and assessment process.

Applications that have been selected by the panel will be recommended to Council via a Council report. Councillors will make the final decision on the successful applicants via formal resolution at a Council meeting.

Application process

Applicants must provide the following as part of the application process:

Business information

- Name, address, and contact details
- Business activity
- Australian Business Number (ABN)
- Evidence of property ownership or commercial tenancy agreement within the City of Stonnington.
- Evidence to confirm that the business income is below \$2 million per annum (income statement)
- Evidence of business financial viability to fund the project, including:
 - Profit and Loss Statement, cash flow and balance sheet audited or certified by an accountant for FY23/24
 - Most recent business bank account statement from the previous three months showing closing balance (redaction of private information permitted)

Project details

- Project name
- Project brief
 - What – overview of the proposed works, including sketches, designs and/or site plans (including before and after photos or sketches)
 - Why – explanation of what the project will achieve (the improvements it will make)
 - Where – location of the project including site plans and photos
 - When – timeline for the project
 - Who – outline the team that will manage and undertake the project, including project supervisors and contractors/installers, including a summary of their skills and experience
 - How – detailed project delivery plan (steps of key activities from start to finish)
 - How much – detailed realistic budget for proposed works and appropriate cash flow available to complete the project.

Project outcomes

- Identity and Destination
 - Describe how this project will improve customer's experience of the precinct.
- Thriving and Desirable Businesses
 - Describe how the project or initiative will contribute to the success and economic growth of your business and the wider precinct.
- Pride of Place and Character
 - Describe how the project will assist in establishing a safer, more inviting, accessible and well-maintained precinct.

Supporting documentation

- Evidence of business ownership
- Evidence of current public liability insurance
- Evidence to confirm the business income is below \$2 million per annum (income statement)
- Minimum of 2 high resolution 'before' photos
- Evidence of permits, approvals and licenses that have been attained or are in the process of being acquired
- Evidence of relevant business insurances
- Evidence of written consent from the property owner for the project work (if activity affects the property)
- Evidence of how the project will be funded (only applications providing sufficient financial documentation will be assessed)
- Evidence of a signed commercial property lease arrangement within the City of Stonnington extending beyond 30 June 2026, and/or
- Evidence of ownership of a commercial property located in the City of Stonnington
- Comprehensive project budget
- Minimum of 2 verified written quotes for each component of the project to demonstrate that the project budget is realistic
- Comprehensive project plan, drawings and timeline

Business site visit

A business site visit may be undertaken by City of Stonnington Officers at any time or Officers may contact the applicant to verify the current façade or to verify any documentation that has been submitted.

Grant acquittals

On completion of the project, successful applicants will be required to submit an Acquittal Report through Council's [SmartyGrants](#) online platform by no later than 25 May 2026.

How to apply

1. Register online at [SmartyGrants](#) and preview a copy of the application form and requirements once applications open 19 May 2025.
2. Attend an information session to gain additional information and insights into lodging an application. Please go to the [Business Façade Improvement Grants webpage](#) to see session times and to book your preferred session. This is not mandatory, but it is recommended.
3. Plan, research and gather information required for the application.
4. Complete and submit the application online via [SmartyGrants](#) *within the required timeframe*
5. Complete all questions and upload supporting documents by 30 June 2025.
6. Submit one application per property only.
7. On submission, you will receive an electronic reply acknowledging receipt from SmartyGrants. No further editing or supporting materials will be accepted once the application has been submitted, so allow ample time and crosscheck.

Key dates

Applications open	19 May 2025
Applications close	30 June 2025
Assessment period	July 2025
City of Stonnington endorsement	August 2025
Applicants notified and agreements finalised	August – September 2025
Projects commence	15 September 2025
Project completion	By 30 April 2026
Acquittal reports due	By 25 May 2026

Information sessions

Online	Thursday 8 May 6:00pm – 7:00pm
In person	Wednesday 28 May 6:00pm – 7:00pm
Online	Thursday 29 May 6:00pm – 7:00pm

Grant writing resources:

[Business grant writing webinar](#) (online) Tuesday 27 May 12:30pm – 1:30pm

(See Council's Business events [webpage](#) for more details).

Further information and support

Program questions

Applicants are encouraged to contact Council's Business Concierge to discuss any proposed ideas, specific needs, to check if any permits may be required or seek additional support that may be required to complete and submit an application. Contact businessconciierge@stonnington.vic.gov.au

Refusal

The City of Stonnington may refuse any applicant who fails to comply with the outlined conditions, including as a consequence of the following:

- submitting after the closing time
- not addressing or aligning to the grant guidelines
- not submitting the required documentation
- submitting fraudulent or misleading information in the application

- submission is deemed likely to cause offence to the community
- applicant does not submit materials that are consistent with deliverables.
- bringing Council into disrepute with public comments regarding the grant or services

The City of Stonnington reserves the right, at its absolute discretion, to not enter into a contract with any applicant, to not proceed with review of any submission and to not proceed to fund any project in relation to a Business Façade Improvement Grant for any reason.

Application Terms and conditions

Applicants are required to comply with the following terms and conditions.

The City of Stonnington has the right to exclude an application if these terms and conditions are not adhered to.

- All applications must be submitted via the SmartyGrants portal by 30 June 2025.
- During the application process, canvassing or lobbying of Councillors, employees of the City of Stonnington or assessment panel members in relation to any funding application is prohibited. No further consideration will be given to an application submitted by an applicant who canvasses or lobbies a Councillor, City of Stonnington employee or assessment panel member in relation to their application.
- All information must be true and correct at the time of submission – any information found to be fraudulent or misleading will result in immediate disqualification of the application.
- The City of Stonnington has the right to request clarification or further information relating to the project delivery at any time during the assessment process. This information must be provided within 3 business days.
- No late or incomplete applications will be accepted.
- The applicant must not bring Council or the grant into disrepute during the application process. Any concerns about the grant or the application process must be addressed with Council directly in writing to Council's Business Concierge
- Council's decision is final and no further correspondence will be entered into after the final decision has been made.
- Property owners who own multiple properties within Stonnington will only receive a maximum of \$5000 across all successful applications submitted.

Grant Terms and Conditions

Applicants are required to comply with the following terms and conditions if successful.

The City of Stonnington has the right to exclude an application if these terms and conditions are not adhered to:

- No additional City of Stonnington grants can be applied for or used in conjunction with the Business Façade Improvement Grant funding for the same project.
- Grants will be dispersed in two installments 80% on execution of the contract and 20% upon receipt of the acquittal report. Failure to submit the required acquittal report to Council in the required timeframe will result in Council withholding the final 20% payment.

- Upon successful application, applicants must sign an agreement that details all funding obligations within 30 days of receiving the agreement. Applicants must complete and submit all required documentation as a condition of funding. Failure to execute the agreement in the required time could result in the funding offer being withdrawn
- Projects must be delivered between 15 September 2025 and 30 April 2026 – failure to deliver the project will require a return of the full funding amount awarded by Council to the applicant.
- Council will view, photograph and promote the projects that have received grant funding before, during and once completed. Applicants will be required to provide access to Council officers to the project as required.
- Council will require regular updates on the projects pre and during completion – this may include updated timelines, project plans and costings. Applicants are required to provide this documentation on request. The City of Stonnington will not be responsible for shortfalls in project budgets if the funded recipient is unable to meet project costs.
- The City of Stonnington will not be responsible for paying of any contractors, agents or employees during the execution of the project – the agreement and funding is for the applicant only and not between Council and any third parties.
- The City of Stonnington retains the right to request the repayment of any unspent grant funds.