

Grants - Economic Grants

File No: S117676

Summary

The City of Sydney's Grant programs support initiatives and projects that build the social, cultural, environmental and economic life of the city.

On 28 April 2026, Council resolved to adopt a revised Grants Policy and Grants Guidelines to take effect in financial 2026/27. Applications recommended in this report will be funded through the 2026/27 grants budget; however, the applicants applied and were assessed in accordance with the current Grants and Sponsorship Policy and Guidelines.

Under the current Policy and Guidelines, the annual grant programs have 2 main rounds: Summer and Winter, with a small number of other programs open for the entire year. The 2026/27 Summer round was open from 3 February 2026 to 3 March 2026. This report covers the following funding programs held during the Summer round:

- Business sector support grant program
- Haymarket activation grant program

In addition, the Major grants program, which is open all year, had 4 applicants eligible to apply under the economic pillar.

For the Business sector support grant program, 24 eligible applications were received. This report recommends a total of 10 grants for a total value of \$227,500 in cash for payment in the 2026/27 financial year.

For the Haymarket activation grant program, 4 eligible applications were received. This report recommends one grant for a total value of \$200,000 in cash for payment in the 2026/27 financial year.

For Major grants program, 4 eligible applications were received under the economic pillar. This report recommends 4 grants for a total value of \$200,000 in cash and \$90,507 in value-in-kind in the 2026/27 financial year.

All grant recipients will be required to sign a contract, meet specific performance outcomes and acquit their grant. All figures in this report exclude GST.

Recommendation

It is resolved that:

- (A) Council approve the cash recommendations for the Business Sector Support Grant Program as shown at Attachment A to the subject report;
- (B) Council note the applicants who were not recommended in obtaining a cash grant or value-in-kind for the Business Sector Support Grant Program as shown at Attachment B to the subject report;
- (C) Council approve the cash recommendations for the Haymarket Activation Grant Program as shown at Attachment C to the subject report;
- (D) Council note the applicants who were not recommended in obtaining a cash grant or value-in-kind for the Haymarket Activation Grant Program as shown at Attachment D to the subject report;
- (E) Council approve the cash and value-in-kind recommendation for the Major Grants Program as shown at Attachment E to the subject report;
- (F) Council note that all grant amounts are exclusive of GST;
- (G) authority be delegated to the Chief Executive Officer to negotiate, execute and administer agreements with any organisation approved for a grant or sponsorship under terms consistent with this resolution and the Grants and Sponsorship Policy; and
- (H) authority be delegated to the Chief Executive Officer to correct minor errors to the matters set out in this report, noting that the identity of the recipient will not change, and a CEO Update will be provided.

Attachments

- Attachment A.** Recommended for Funding - Business Sector Support Grant Program - Summer Round 2026/27
- Attachment B.** Not Recommended for Funding - Business Sector Support Grant Program - Summer Round 2026/27
- Attachment C.** Recommended for Funding - Haymarket Activation Grant Program - Summer Round 2026/27
- Attachment D.** Not Recommended for Funding - Haymarket Activation Grant Program - Summer Round 2026/27
- Attachment E.** Recommended for Funding - Major Grants - Economic - 2026/27
- Attachment F.** Data Report on Outcomes of Funding - Business Sector Support Grant Program - Summer Round 2026/27

Background

1. On 3 February 2026, the City announced the grants program as being open for applications, with a closing date of 3 March 2026. This was for a period of 4 weeks.
2. The funding programs with key outcomes for the economic pillar were:
 - (a) Business sector support grant program
 - (b) Haymarket activation grant program
3. In addition, 4 applications with outcomes for the economic pillar were received for the Major grants program.
4. The Business sector support grant program received 24 eligible applications and is open to eligible not-for-profit organisations, incorporated associations and business advocacy organisations.
5. The Haymarket activation grant program received 4 eligible applications and is open to eligible not-for-profit organisations, incorporated associations, corporations, co-operatives and trustees of a trust.
6. Out of a total of 4 eligible applications, 2 applications were received from for-profit organisations through the Haymarket activation grant program. Neither are recommended for funding.
7. The Major grants program is limited to applicants who have a significant and long-term outcomes for a strategic pillar. The program is open to eligible not-for-profit organisations, incorporated associations, corporations, co-operatives, partnerships, trustees of a trust, Government cultural institutions and Government entities.
8. Out of a total of 4 eligible applications, one application from a for-profit organisation was received under the economic pillar of the Major grants program and the following for-profit organisation is recommended in this report:
 - (i) USM EVENTS PTY LTD

Grants assessment process

9. The City's Grant programs are highly competitive. Applications that are not recommended have either not scored as highly against the assessment criteria as the recommended applications or have incomplete or insufficient information. The City's Grants team provides feedback to unsuccessful applicants.
10. The assessment process includes advice and recommendations from a suitably qualified assessment panel. The applications are scored against defined assessment criteria for each grant program as well as the integrity of the proposed budget, project plan, partnerships, contributions and connection to the local community and industry sectors.

11. For the Business sector support and Haymarket activation grant programs, the published assessment criteria was:
 - evidence of the need for the project
 - demonstrated connection, benefit to, and engagement with, the local diverse community in the planning and delivery of the project
 - your capacity and experience to deliver the project
 - how the project delivers against the funding priorities.
12. Applications submitted to the Major grants program are assessed on their own merit against the published criteria. They are assessed against all criteria listed above in addition to:
 - evidence of the need for the project
 - demonstrated connection, benefit to, and engagement with, the local diverse community in the planning and delivery of the project
 - demonstration of sustainable practices and minimising environmental impact and implementation of resource recovery approaches
 - capacity and experience of the applicant to deliver quality projects of this size, impact and reach
 - how the project delivers against the funding priorities
 - demonstration of value for money, financial capacity and ongoing viability of the project
 - evidence of partnerships with local community organisations and networks
 - for event-based projects: evidence of track record, organisational viability and market demand to support future events, large scale audience or market reach and national or international brand awareness.
13. The assessment meeting for the Business sector support grant program was held on 21 April 2026. All applications were assessed against the published assessment criteria. The assessment panel consisted of City staff from City Life and across the organisation with input from the First Nations Leadership team.
14. The assessment meeting for the Haymarket activation grant program was held on 22 April 2026. All applications were assessed against the published assessment criteria. The assessment panel consisted of City staff from City Life and across the organisation.
15. The assessment meeting for the economic pillar of the Major grants program was held on 6 May 2026. The application was assessed against the published assessment criteria. The assessment panel consisted of City staff from City Life and across the organisation.

16. It is expected that all successful applicants will work cooperatively with relevant City staff throughout the project for which they have received funding.
17. All grants are recommended on the condition that any required approvals, permits and development consents are obtained by the applicant.
18. Attached to this report are high level summaries on the outcomes of the funding if the recommendations are approved for the Business sector support program. This provides insight into what the applicants have identified they hope to achieve if they receive the City's funding.

Program budgets

19. The 2026/27 grants budget is due to be formally adopted by Council on 29 June 2026, this meeting cycle. The budget detailed within this report reflects the City of Sydney's long term financial plan as previously endorsed by Council.

Business sector support

20. The applications recommended for the Business sector support grant program are outlined in Attachment A to this report.
21. The Business sector support grant program budget is set out below:

Total budget for 2026/27	\$850,000
Less: Total cash committed to previously approved applications	\$389,555
Total remaining cash available 2026/27	\$460,445
Number of eligible applications received in Summer Round 2026/27	24
Number of grants recommended in Summer Round 2026/27	10
Cash recommended in Summer 2026/27	\$227,500
Cash remaining in 2026/27	\$232,945

2026/27	Cash	VIK
Total requested	\$940,517	\$22,999
Total recommended	\$227,500	\$0
2027/28	Cash	VIK
Total requested	\$298,699	\$18,054
Total recommended	\$52,500	\$0
2028/29	Cash	VIK
Total requested	\$250,725	\$18,054
Total recommended	\$30,000	\$0

Haymarket activation

22. 2026/27 represents the final year of available funding under the Haymarket activation grant program.
23. The application recommended for the Haymarket activation grant program is outlined in Attachment C to this report.
24. The Haymarket activation grant program budget is set out below:

Total budget for 2026/27	\$200,000
Less: Total cash committed to previously approved applications	\$0
Total remaining cash available 2026/27	\$200,000
Number of eligible applications received in Summer Round 2026/27	4

Number of grants recommended in Summer Round 2026/27		1
Cash recommended in Summer 2026/27		\$200,000
Cash remaining in 2026/27		\$0
2026/27	Cash	VIK
Total requested	\$800,000	\$19,695
Total recommended	\$200,000	\$0

Key Implications

Strategic Alignment - Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision

25. Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision renews the communities' vision for the sustainable development of the city to 2050. It includes 10 strategic directions to guide the future of the city, as well as 10 targets against which to measure progress. This grant is aligned with the following strategic directions and objectives:
- (a) Direction 6 - An equitable and inclusive city - the recommended grant projects in this report contribute to community development and support active participation in civic life. They empower the community to address issues that matter to them and drive projects to create a more inclusive and resilient city.
 - (b) Direction 8 - A thriving cultural life - the recommended grant projects in this report contribute to supporting artistic and creative endeavours in our city, helping foster initiative, experimentation and enterprise by creative workers and providing new opportunities for audiences to engage in the city's cultural life.
 - (c) Direction 9 - A transformed and innovative economy - the recommended grant projects in this report contribute to helping stimulate business and promote economic activity. They encourage partnerships with other organisations on business development and assist groups of businesses to work together for the collective benefit.

Organisational Impact

26. The management of grants contracts will involve key staff across the City of Sydney. Identified staff set contract conditions and performance measures for each approved project, and review project acquittals, which include both narrative and financial reports.

Risks

27. This recommendation is within the City's risk appetite, which states:
- (a) We make decisions that align with our corporate objectives, policies and strategies and are committed to conducting our activities in full compliance with applicable laws, regulations and relevant industry standards.
 - (b) We foster a culture of ethics, integrity and responsible behaviour across our organisation. By creating a strong ethical foundation, we aim to minimise the likelihood of reputation-damaging incidents and enhance our ability to respond effectively when challenges arise.
 - (c) The City has a responsibility to ensure that it has sufficient resources in the short, medium and long term to provide the levels of service that are both affordable and considered appropriate by the community.

Social / Cultural / Community / Economic / Environmental

28. The City's Grants and Sponsorship Program provides the City with a platform to support cultural, economic, environmental and social initiatives from the communities and business, within the local area.

Financial Implications

29. There are sufficient funds allocated in the 2026/27 grants budget, included in the City's draft operating budget for 2026/27 (recommended for adoption in this meeting cycle) to support the recommended grants.

Relevant Legislation

30. Section 356 of the Local Government Act 1993 provides that a council may, in accordance with a resolution of the council, contribute money or otherwise grant financial assistance to persons for the purpose of exercising its functions and section 377(1A) permits the delegation of the granting of financial assistance in certain circumstances.
31. Sections 356(3)(a) to (d) with respect to providing grant funding to for profit organisations, and sections 377(1A)(a) to (d) with respect to delegating the granting of financial assistance, are satisfied because:
- (a) The funding is part of the following programs:
 - (i) Business sector support grant program
 - (ii) Haymarket activation grant program
 - (iii) Major grants program.
 - (b) The details of the program were included in the Council's adopted operational plan for financial year 2026/27.

- (c) Each program's proposed budget does not exceed 5% of Council's proposed income from ordinary rates for financial year 2026/27.
- (d) These programs apply to a significant group of persons within the local government area.

Critical Dates / Time Frames

- 32. The 2026/27 funding period for the funding programs is for activities taking place 12 months from the project start date. In this report there are also recommendations of funding for future financial years to support activities for multi-year projects. Contracts will be developed for all successful applications after Council approval to ensure their funding is released in time for projects starting.

Public Consultation

- 33. On 5 February 2026, the City's grants team delivered a free online information session which attracted 99 attendees and where potential applicants were notified about the grants available in the 2026/27 Summer Round and how to apply. In addition an in-person session for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community was held in Redfern on 6 February 2026, at which a total of 10 individuals attended.

EMMA RIGNEY

Executive Director City Life

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