



Small Business Development Grant Guidelines

Council Guidelines

Small Business Development Grant Guidelines

1. Program Overview

West Wimmera Shire Council provides the Small Business Development Grant to support new and existing businesses seeking to establish, expand or improve their operations within the shire. The program aims to strengthen local economic development by offering financial and in-kind support for eligible projects, including permits, equipment, facility improvements and professional business advisory services.

The Business Development Department seeks to:

- Encourage job creation, business growth and investment.
- Attract new businesses and capital to the region.
- Support local businesses that contribute to economic development.
- Facilitate investment in infrastructure that supports industry development.

2. Purpose, Funding and Co-contribution

The program establishes a framework for Council to offer targeted assistance to eligible businesses that can demonstrate clear and lasting benefits to the West Wimmera community.

2.1 Funding Available

- Up to \$10,000 per business may be available, subject to budget and assessment outcomes.
- Funding may support:
 - New business establishment within West Wimmera.
 - Expansion or improvement of an existing business (e.g. equipment upgrades, facility repairs, extensions).
 - Professional business advice, including marketing, business planning, and grant writing.

2.2 Co-contribution Requirement

- A minimum co-contribution of \$1 from the applicant for every \$2 from Council is mandatory (2:1 Council-to-applicant ratio).
- Council funds must not be used as a deposit or any component of a finance arrangement.

Council cannot guarantee that all eligible applications will be funded or funded at the amount requested.

3. Eligibility and Assessment

3.1 Eligibility Criteria

Applicants must:

- Hold a current and active Australian Business Number (ABN).
- Be located within West Wimmera Shire or be establishing a new business within the shire.
- Employ 20 or fewer full-time equivalent staff.
- Have acquitted any previous Council grants and hold no overdue debts with Council.
- Demonstrate a clear community benefit.
- Demonstrate the required minimum co-contribution.
- Own the business premises or hold a lease with at least 18 months remaining from application date.

Online businesses must also meet these additional requirements:

- Operate from a physical business premises (home-based or commercial) located within West Wimmera Shire.
- Demonstrate how the business creates local jobs, purchases from local suppliers, or contributes to the local economy beyond online sales.
- For e-commerce businesses without a physical storefront, provide evidence of local economic impact such as local warehousing, local employees, or local service contracts.

3.2 Assessment Considerations

Applications will be assessed on merit until the program budget is fully allocated.

Assessment may consider:

- Strength and viability of the business plan and supporting financial information.
- Anticipated impact on local employment and economic development.
- Benefit to the community.
- Project alignment with business start-up, growth or sustainability outcomes.
- Evidence of secured and realistic co-contribution.

4. Eligible and Ineligible Activities

4.1 Eligible Activities

<p>✓ Business start-up costs, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fit-out of new premises. • Initial equipment purchases. • Initial marketing and branding. • External or internal business signage related to launching the business.
<p>✓ Business growth or improvement activities, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refurbishment or equipment replacement. • Facility upgrades. • Building repairs. • Facility extensions. • Grant-writing support through approved providers. • Professional advisory services that directly support start-up or expansion (business planning, financial planning, marketing).
<p>✓ Online business-specific eligible activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website development and e-commerce platform setup (up to 30% of total grant funding). • Online marketing and digital advertising campaigns targeting West Wimmera customers. • Physical infrastructure supporting online operations (local warehousing, packaging stations, local delivery vehicles).
<p>✓ Other eligible activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refurbishing or replacing equipment. • Upgrading facilities. • Repairing buildings. • Extending current facilities. • Grant-writing support for external funding opportunities. • Professional advisory services such as business planning, financial planning or marketing advice.

4.2 Ineligible Activities

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works requiring permits that have not been obtained. • Works to buildings funded under this program within the past five years. • Retrospective activities or equipment purchased prior to Council approval. • Grant-writing services from non-approved providers. • Costs required for other grant applications (e.g. prerequisite surveys).

- Expenditure not clearly identifiable as part of the co-contribution or approved project.

✗ Ineligible for online businesses:

- Purely digital projects with no physical West Wimmera presence or local economic benefit.
- Software purchases or subscriptions without demonstrated connection to local operations.
- Online-only businesses operating entirely from outside West Wimmera Shire.

Council may request further information if necessary to finalise an assessment.

5. Application Process

Applications must be submitted online via SmartyGrants:

<https://westwimmera.smartygrants.com.au>

Applications must provide:

- Completed application form.
- Details of directors or business principals.
- Business plan with market analysis and financial forecasts (required for start-ups).
- SWOT analysis.
- Owner consent (if leasing premises).
- Description of proposed works or activities.
- Evidence of co-contribution (e.g. bank statements, quotes, finance approvals).
- Digital image(s) of the business area to be upgraded.

A report on submitted applications will be presented to Councillors for determination.

6. Claiming Grant Funds

6.1 Project Works

- An initial tax invoice (including ABN) for 80% of the approved grant is required.
- Upon project completion, the applicant must submit a full acquittal.
- A final tax invoice for the remaining 20% is then required.
- Council will inspect works and release funds only when works are satisfactorily completed.

6.2 Professional Services (e.g. Grant Writing)

- Applicant must provide Council with a tax invoice from the service provider (including ABN).

- A grant acquittal is required once the service provider has been engaged and the external grant application lodged.
- Any additional service provider fees remain the applicant's responsibility.

7. Terms and Conditions

Applicants must:

- Submit a complete application with all required documents.
- Obtain necessary planning or building permits prior to receiving funds.
- Use grant funding solely for the approved project.
- Enter into a written agreement with Council before commencing works.
- Complete works within 12 months of signing the agreement.
- Ensure grant funds are not used as a deposit or part of a finance arrangement.
- Cover any project overruns without additional Council support.
- Participate in reasonable promotional and media activities.
- Actively participate in grant-writing processes when support is provided.

For online businesses, applications must include:

- Physical business address within West Wimmera Shire (no PO Boxes).
- Evidence of local economic contribution (employment contracts, supplier invoices, lease agreements).
- Website/business plan clearly showing how online operations support the local West Wimmera economy.

8. Occupational Health and Safety

All works must comply with relevant legislation, including:

- Victorian OHS Act 2004
- OHS Regulations 2017
- Electricity Safety Act 1998
- Electricity Safety (Installations) Regulations 2009
- Applicable Australian Standards and Codes of Practice

Applicants, building owners and licensed contractors must:

- Comply with all OHS regulations and standards.
- Ensure works do not obstruct or endanger public areas; comply with traffic management requirements under the Road Management Act 2004.
- Obtain Council approval for temporary road/footpath closures at least 10 days prior to works.
- Minimise trip hazards during works.
- Comply with electrical safety requirements and the *Blue Book 2012*.
- Assess structural integrity of awnings, roofs or decorative features before working.

- Properly manage asbestos in accordance with WorkSafe Victoria guidance.
- Provide safe access and egress to elevated work areas.
- Avoid working within 2 metres of an unprotected edge without appropriate safety systems.
- Maintain Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) for chemical use.

9. Disclaimer

- Council is not responsible for cost underestimations.
- Funding is not guaranteed, nor is the full amount requested.
- Meeting eligibility criteria does not guarantee funding.

10. Program Review

The program is reviewed annually as part of Council's budget process. Reviews consider:

- Effectiveness in achieving program objectives.
- Uptake and utilisation rates.
- Post-grant evaluation feedback.
- Any required updates to information, processes or funding limits.

11. Assessment Process

Applications will be assessed by a panel consisting of:

- A member of the Community Development team
- A member of the Planning team
- A member of the Engineering team
- A member of the Projects and Innovation team

Projects may not receive the full amount requested. Final approval will be endorsed by Council at its next available meeting.

12. Acquittal

At the conclusion of all works and within 12 months of the receipt of the grant the successful applicant must complete the Smarty Grant online acquittal form. The grant recipient will be required to demonstrate the following:

- All funds provided under the Shopfront Improvement Grant Program were used exclusively for eligible project costs as defined in the program guidelines.
- Expenditure included approved items such as accessibility upgrades, repainting, window refurbishments, or other permitted façade improvements.
- The grant recipient has submitted all required documentation including:
 - Photographs of completed works
 - Copies of invoices and receipts
 - Contractor quotes, where applicable
 - Confirmation that all permits and regulatory obligations were met

- All works were carried out in compliance with Victorian legislation, relevant safety requirements, and any applicable planning or building permit conditions.
- The project did not obstruct public access or compromise safety during construction.

13. Further Information

To apply: <https://westwimmera.smartygrants.com.au>

For further information, contact the Community Development team:

Phone: 13 99 72

Email: council@westwimmera.vic.gov.au

Next review Date: May 2027

Executive Director: Director Corporate and Community Services

Responsible Officer: Manager Community Development

Functional Area: Corporate and Community Services

Guideline Adopted:	Council Meeting 19 April 2023	Business Assistance Grant
Guideline Reviewed:	Council Meeting 20 May 2026	Name change to Small Business Development Grant

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