



Business Growth Program Guidelines

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1. Background

Northern Grampians Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan, 2021-31 (the Strategy) is a ten-year plan to uplift the economic well-being and quality of life of the community. The Business Growth Program (the Program) is a tool used by council, to help delivery the Strategy. [Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan 2021-31 \(ngshire.vic.gov.au\)](https://www.ngshire.vic.gov.au)

The Strategy, and this program acknowledge the need to:

- centre economic development as a whole of community business
- make the most of Northern Grampians assets and competitive advantages in partnership with the community and other key stakeholders.

Northern Grampians Council Plan, 2021-25 draws on the Strategy, and says that council will develop and implement mechanisms to:

- support growth-focused entrepreneurs to embrace innovation, best practice, grow exports and jobs
- support businesses to be strong, innovative and sustainable

The Program has been developed to take action on the above Council Plan direction and gives priority to achieving the best outcomes for the community. This includes targeting key economic growth opportunities identified in the Strategy, based on evidence and community engagement.

"We have the potential to build on our strengths and be renowned for being proud, diverse and resilient - from our economy to our communities, heritage and landscapes. The strategy recognises that creativity and innovation will support a productive and sustainable future for Northern Grampians." Cr Tony Driscoll, Economic Development Strategy Committee Chair, 2021.



2. Aim and Objectives

Aim

The aim of the Program is to help businesses and entrepreneurs boost:

- Innovation
- Industry best practice
- Exports and jobs
- Economic and environmental sustainability.

Objectives

To leverage council resources to increase business and entrepreneurs':

- Access to funding (that aligns with the aim of the Program)
- Access to professional development
- Communication and networking with each other and council.

3. Key economic opportunities

Program services target (but not limited to) the following key economic growth opportunities:

Agriculture and Manufacturing

- Value-add to agriculture
- Rural and intensive agriculture industry
- Niche and artisanal producers - 'other agriculture'
- Native Bush Food Industry
- New and emerging industries
- Knowledge intensive professions.

Renewable energy

- Transition and growing use of renewable energy
- Energy security and affordability, mitigation, and adaptation to climate change through renewable energy.

Tourism and cultural and heritage:

- Growing the tourism offering required to grow visitor spend
- Growing the diverse, unique, high quality and enriching experiences that are dispersed across Northern Grampians
- Focusing on our standout strengths.



4. Services

The Program consists of the following services:

- 4.1 Funding Accelerator – supporting businesses to access funds.
- 4.2 Business Connections – enhancing communication and networking with each other and council.
- 4.3 Business Development – supporting business to access opportunities for growth.
- 4.4 Permit Concierge – helping business through permit and approval processes.
- 4.5 Regional collaboration – work with the community or across municipal borders on changing projects that unlock wider benefits.

1. Funding Accelerator Service – supporting businesses to access funds

a) Grant Funding Finding

Northern Grampians Funding Finder- A Grants Portal offering free access to more than \$2 billion worth of grant opportunities. The 'Grant Funding Finder' can be accessed by any business or business group, free of charge, at any time.

All grants have been filtered to the Northern Grampians Shire region and are not available to Metropolitan applicants. Registration online will send relevant grant opportunities to your email as they become available. No more searching online and missing out on valuable funding opportunities!

b) Grant Writing Service

We want to see you succeed in growing and developing your business. To support you winning those high value grants and accessing more funding, we have engaged multiple Professional Grant Writers who will support you in writing and submitting a high-quality grant application.

To be eligible for the grant writing service you must:

- be a business with a registered ABN and operate within, or plan to establish in the Northern Grampians Shire within the next 12 months
- be an incorporated not-for-profit business group or organisation located in and providing the support, service, or program within the Northern Grampians Shire
- lodge no more than two applications for the grant writing service per applicant per financial year
- have no outstanding debt or compliance issues with council
- complete an online application form.

Timing

The grant writing service will be open to applications all year round, until the budget is exhausted.



Assessment Criteria

Applications for the grant writing service will be assessed according to the following criteria:

- 1) Degree to which the proposal aligns with the:
 - aims of the Program
 - objectives of the Program
 - key economic opportunities identified in the Program.
- 2) Likelihood of the external funding application being successful (ie. The degree to which the proposal aligns with external funding program).
- 3) How specific and achievable project deliverables are.
- 4) Adequacy of the proposed project costing and schedule for delivery.

The level of funds awarded will be determined by the:

- Result of the application assessment.
- Total funding pool for the financial year.

Conditions

If your business or group/organisation is successful in obtaining grant writing services, you will be required to enter into a written agreement with council, stating that your organisation will adhere to the following conditions:

- The grant writing service is used specifically for the project identified in the application and cannot be used for any other purpose without prior formal written agreement from council.
- If the grant is successful, the business is responsible for administering and acquitting the grant.
- Any change to the original submission must be approved by Northern Grampians Shire Council in writing.
- Applicants are required to partake in media and communications opportunities that promote the council's business grants program.
- Any successful external funding received because of the grant writing service must acknowledge the support of the Northern Grampians Shire Council
- Successful applicants will be provided with the Northern Grampians Shire Council corporate logo; use of the logo must be approved by the Northern Grampians Shire Council media and communications department.
- Applicants are required to meet relevant government legislation requirements (e.g., Occupational Health & Safety Issues, Risk Management Equal Opportunity, Workcover, Privacy).
- Applicants are required to ensure their personnel are adequately covered by insurance.
- A copy of the external grant acquittal must be provided to Northern Grampians Shire Council.
- Eligible applicants will be eligible for support to apply to services from only one service provider in a chosen discipline in accordance with their application.
- Eligible applicants agree to bear any additional costs over and above the support of those services.



Steps to accessing the Grant Writing Service

1. Explore

You will:

- a. Determine if you are eligible to access the grant writing service and if your proposal/project aligns with the aims and objectives of the program.
- b. Explore external funding opportunities to support your business via council's Grant Finder. [Northern Grampians Shire Grant Finder \(grantguru.com.au\)](http://grantguru.com.au)
- c. Make an appointment with the Economic Development Team to discuss your project and potential external funding sources and well as get general program advice by emailing the Economic Development Officer business@ngshire.vic.gov.au or calling 03 5358 8700.

2. Access

- a. Submit an expression of interest for the grant writing service through the SmartyGrants platform.
- b. Have your expression assessed by council against the Program eligibility and criteria.

3. Apply

- a. Council will notify unsuccessful applicants within two weeks of completing an expression of interest.
- b. Council will match successful applicants to a grant writer.
- c. Council will notify successful applicants and connect them with their grant writer.
- d. Work with your grant writer to access money to deliver your project.
- e. Fulfill the conditions of the grant writing service.

2. Business Connections – enhancing communication and networking with each other and council

The service is delivered through several channels, which currently include:

a) Business and Network Events

A calendar promoting a series of free or low-cost business networking and training events. Follow the [Training & Events calendar \(ngshire.vic.gov.au\)](http://ngshire.vic.gov.au) or subscribe to our E-News to keep up to date on these professional opportunities.

b) Business E-news

The fortnightly business E-news keeps our business community across the latest news and information from council's Economic Development Team. To subscribe [click here](#).

c) Business Directory

By signing up to the [Business Directory](#), your business will appear higher on the list of results returned by a website search. This creates the potential to increase the number of visitors to your website or other customer enquiry methods. Any business registered in Northern Grampians can sign up to the Business Directory.

d) Focus On Business

[Focus On Business](#) is delivered via council's website, Facebook page and other channels. It provides an opportunity to celebrate and promote local businesses that are achieving positive outcomes that are in line with the Program aim, objectives, or key economic opportunities.



e) **COVID-19 Business Concierge**

The program supports your business with implementing and understanding mandatory COVIDSafe requirements. The program aims to help businesses identify any areas of potential non-compliance in their COVIDSafe plan and provide assistance. For more information [click here](#).

3. **Business Development - supporting business to access opportunities for growth**

a) **Small Business Mentoring Service.** Council has partnered with the Small Business Mentoring Service (SBMS) to provide new and existing business owners with up to two free business mentoring sessions per financial year.

SBMS has a wide range of professional mentors who can:

- Help answer business questions
- Provide clarity around business goals
- Focus on marketing
- Business planning and finance management.

To learn more about the services a Small Business Mentor can offer, click here;
[Small Business Mentoring Service - SBMS](#)

b) **Business growth events and opportunities calendar.** Council supports businesses through promoting training and other business growth opportunities. We do this by sharing free and low-cost network, events and training opportunities.

4. **Permit Concierge – helping business through permit and approval processes**

One of the best ways council can support businesses is by guiding them through any permit and approval process, administered by council. In some instances, a new business or development triggers the need for a permit. Permits are sometimes required across several council departments, including Planning, Building and Environmental Health. Our Permit Concierge service is about helping your business identify if a permit is required and what they need to do to make an application.

New or existing business owners can complete a self-assessment online to determine if any permits are required or can contact the Permit Team on 03 5358 8700 or permitsupport@ngshire.vic.gov.au to discuss your project goals.



5. Regional collaboration – working with our community or across municipal borders on changing projects that unlock wider benefits

One of the most impactful things council can do to contribute towards business growth is to work on projects that unlock broad benefit. These are the projects that tackle issues or opportunities that are shared by a large number of people.

Live The Grampians Way

An online platform that is aimed at attracting new residents and skilled workers to the region. This campaign is actively marketing into the capital cities of Melbourne and Adelaide, as well as major population centres in other areas of Victoria. Respondents are being encouraged to register their skill or type of employment they are seeking, to encourage them to move to our beautiful region.

If you run a small business, organisation or company based in the Grampians Region and you require skilled workers, take a few moments to register by [clicking here](#).

