Grants - Economic Grants

File No: S117676

Summary

The Economic grants program supports projects that help create vibrant local economies that are inclusive, sustainable and innovative. It encourages proposals that bring economic benefits such as improving local areas, supporting important skills development and creating partnerships to attract long-term local investment.

It consists of 2 categories:

Precinct and place activation

This category supports projects that will activate places and precincts with economic benefits, such as workshops, pop-ups, street performances, installations, live music and local festivals.

Innovation and business capacity building

This category supports projects that grow the skills, capability and capacity of local businesses, promote sector-wide innovation and connect businesses to networking opportunities. For example, upskilling programs, pilot projects, proposals that test new approaches, advocacy and research.

This report recommends a total of 13 grants across these 2 funding categories for a total multi-year value of $252,945 in cash and $75,476 value-in-kind. These grants will be paid over a period of 3 years. Further information on these recommendations is detailed within this report and its attachments.

If all recommendations are approved, the 2026/27 budgets for the Economic grants program will be exhausted.

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 and value-in-kind recommendations for the Economic grants program as shown at Attachments A (Precinct and place activation) and C (Innovation and business capacity building) to the subject report

(B) Council note the applicants not recommended for funding as shown at Attachments B (Precinct and place activation) and D (Innovation and business capacity building) to the subject report

(C) Council note that all grant amounts are exclusive of GST

(D) authority be delegated to the Chief Executive Officer to negotiate, execute and administer agreements with any organisation approved for a grant under terms consistent with this resolution and the Grants Policy

(E) 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 - Precinct and place activation

Attachment B. Not recommended for funding - Precinct and place activation

Attachment C. Recommended for funding - Innovation and business capacity building

Attachment D. Not recommended for funding - Innovation and business capacity building

Attachment E. Grant program budget allocation - Economic grants

Attachment F. Data report on outcomes of funding - Economic grants

Background

1. On 28 April 2026, Council adopted the Grants Policy and Grants Guidelines under which this grant program has been delivered.

2. The City's grants program provides the City with a platform to support cultural, economic, environmental and social initiatives from the communities and business, within the local area.

3. The grant programs consist of Economic, Environmental, Creative and Social and Community grants. This report covers the recommendations for the Economic grants program which includes the Precinct and place activation and Innovation and business capacity building categories.

Grant program opened	21 July 2026	
Grant program closed	1 September 2026	
Eligible applicant types	As per Grant Guidelines	
Eligible applications received and cash amount requested in 2026/27		
Precinct and place activation	38	$1,373,950
Innovation and business capacity building	66	$2,272,137
Total	**104**	**$3,646,087**
Number of applications from for-profit organisations and/or sole traders	63	
Applications recommended and cash amounts recommended for 2026/27		
Precinct and place activation	5	$107,945
Innovation and business capacity building	8	$145,000
Total	**13**	**$252,945**
If recommendations are approved, the 2026/27 budget for the Economic grants program will be fully expended.		
For-profit organisations and/or sole traders recommended	2 applications: • Precinct and place activation: Trading Blak Pty Ltd • Innovation and business capacity building: Tech Week Pty Ltd	

4. Each funding round the City receives over 100% more applications than it can fund within its allocated funding budget. Not all quality applications can be funded therefore the City applies a rigorous assessment process to ensure that recommended projects align with the City's strategies and priorities.

5. In assessing the applications, the assessment panel may recommend an amount less than what the applicant has requested. The main reasons why the panel may do this are:

   (a) the applicant has not made a case for full funding

   (b) the applicant has requested funding for items that the City does not support

   (c) the panel wishes to support the project but does not have sufficient budget to provide the full request and therefore recommends a lower amount.

6. If an applicant does not receive the full amount requested they will have the opportunity to vary their project accordingly. If the panel has concerns about the applicant's capacity to achieve the objectives of their project, the panel may request a revised budget prior to contracting.

7. This program is assessed under the grants assessment process and against the criteria as detailed in the approved Grants Policy and Grants Guidelines.

8. Attached to this report at Attachment F are high level summaries on the anticipated outputs and outcomes of the funding if the recommendations are approved for this program. This provides insight into what the applicants have identified they hope to achieve if they receive the City's funding.

Key implications

Strategic alignment - Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision

9. 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 program 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.

10. The directions above are those that relate most closely to this grant program, however the City acknowledges that many of the grants recommended under this report will support projects with outcomes and impacts that reach beyond these directions.

Organisational impact

11. All grants are recommended on the condition that any required approvals, permits and development consents are obtained by the applicant.

12. All grant recipients will be required to sign a contract, meet specific performance outcomes and acquit their grant. The management of grant 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

13. 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.

Financial implications

14. A financial summary of the recommendations for this program is at Attachment E. This details the proposed cash and value-in-kind allocations for the current financial year and any future financial years (where relevant). If the recommendations are approved there will be no further budget available for this program in the current financial year.

15. There are sufficient funds allocated in this financial year's operational budget to support the recommended grants. The forward multi-year proposed recommendations are included in the long-term financial plan.

16. Value-in-kind support has been recommended for selected applicants as detailed in the Attachments. The value-in-kind budget is approved each year as part of the grants budget and there is sufficient budget to support these recommendations.

Relevant legislation

17. 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.

18. 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 the delegation of the granting of financial assistance, are satisfied because:

    (a) the funding is a part of the Economic grants program

    (b) the details of the program were included in the Council's adopted operational plan for this financial year

    (c) each programs' proposed budget does not exceed 5% of Council's proposed income from ordinary rates for this financial year

    (d) these programs apply to a significant group of persons within the local government area.

Critical dates / Time frames

19. The funding period for this grant program is for activities taking place 12 months from each 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 engagement

20. At the opening of the annual grant program, the City of Sydney delivers a number of community focused online, telephone and in-person information sessions designed to share more details of the opportunities and support prospective applicants. Details of the type and number of sessions and attendees, are included in the table below:

Type of information session	Number of sessions	Number of attendees
Economic program webinar	1 (22 July 2026)	64
All other program webinars	3 (various dates)	324
Telephone bookings (15-minute sessions)	416 (all programs)	416 (all programs)
In-person meetings (20-minute sessions)	61 (all programs)	61 (all programs)

21. As per the Grants Guidelines, all applicants - whether successful or unsuccessful - have the opportunity to contact the City of Sydney's Grants team directly to arrange an appointment for feedback on their application. This feedback, delivered orally, provides applicants with a greater understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of their submission that were identified by the assessment panel.

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