

Shopfront Improvement Program FAQ

Am I eligible to apply?

To be eligible to apply for the Shopfront Improvements Program, applicants must meet the following criteria:

- Must currently operate a commercial business located within designated precincts of Reservoir Village, Broadway and Preston Central;
- Must have an active ABN (Australian Business Number) as of 1 July 2026;
- Meets all requirements of the Fair Work Act 2009;
- Does not own or operate Electronic Gaming Machines (EGMs), or receive funding or in-kind support from EGM venues;
- Operates in accordance with any applicable code of conduct and ethical standards; and hold all appropriate permits and licenses;
- Are not a political organisation or that has a political purpose, government departments, agencies, foundations or grant making bodies, or those that have a primary focus on fundraising;
- Is not a big box retailer or national chains (e.g. supermarket chains, fast food chains, liquor stores, service stations, etc);
- Is not a business operating online only with no shop fronts in the activity centre;
- Is not a tobacco shop.

What supporting documents are required?

The following supporting documentation is required:

- A copy of your Darebin Council property rates notice indicating operating premise (for verification purposes only)
- If you rent, a copy of the business lease agreement or another business document that proves business operating premise i.e. electricity or phone bill or a copy of your licence
- Certificate of Public Liability or professional indemnity insurance or relevant business insurance (or included in the project budget)
- Provide the front page of a recent bank statement (for verification purposes of your bank details only – no need to show balances)
- Quotes or costings for items or services you intend to use
- Budget plan

What might be funded?

Approved façade improvements may include the following:

- Improvements to shop signage or new signage
- External shopfront lighting
- Digital display boards

- Repainting of external shop frontage, including creative artwork
- Repairs to external shop frontage e.g. tiling or concrete rendering
- External treatments to the facade that provide attractive or unique detail, such as texture, tiling or innovative materials
- Pigeon mitigation installations such as nets or spikes
- Other external façade work that reflects the intent of the program

What won't be funded?

- Routine maintenance (defined as simple general upkeep of a building)
- The program is not intended for do-it-yourself (DIY) renovations
- Internal shop fittings
- Activities which have already commenced, or have already been completed, or are scheduled to occur prior to the funding period
- The purchase of equipment
- Projects that require building or planning permits, engineering reports, infrastructure such as plumbing and irrigation, ongoing maintenance costs

When do applications open?

Applications open at 9 am on Monday 31 August 2026.

When do applications close?

Applications close 11.59 pm on Monday 5 October 2026.

Where can I apply?

Online applications can be completed online, via Smarty Grants here:

[Shop Improvement Program 2026 - City of Darebin](#)

I am in the Eligible Area on the map but on the second floor, am I eligible?

Yes. You are eligible if your project is related to improve the external treatment of the shopfront and improve the frontages that interact with the street.

I have applied for a grant from State and/or Federal Business support program. Can I also apply for this program?

Yes, if you currently own a commercial premises or operate a commercial business with a shopfront in the eligible area.

I have a business in Darebin, am I eligible?

To be eligible for this program, your business must operate from a physical shopfront located within one of the designated precincts: **Reservoir Village, Broadway, or Preston Central**. Businesses that are **home-based, online-only**, or do not have a shopfront within these precincts are **not eligible** to apply.

Refer precinct maps below.

When will I find out the outcome?

Applications will be assessed, and applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application within three weeks of the application lodgement.

What is the funds amount that the council will pay?

All eligible applicants may receive up to \$5,000 (ex. GST)

When will I receive the funds?

Funding will be paid in two instalments: 50% within two weeks of application approval, and the remaining 50% upon completion of the project/activity.

How long will I have to use the funds?

Once the funds have been transferred to the business, it is expected the proposed activity will be completed within two months or by 28 February 2027 latest.

Who can I contact regarding my application?

If you have any questions, you can:

- Send an email to businesss@darebin.vic.gov.au
- contact the Economic Development Unit on 8470 8888 (9am-5pm, Mon to Fri)
- If enquiring after you have lodged your application, please quote your submission number

How is my application assessed?

Your application will be assessed against the criteria below;

Criteria	Description	Weighting
Need	Provide photo evidence of the improvement area. Priority will be given to shopfronts in disrepair or in poor to moderate condition.	30%
Budget & Documentation	Provide a complete budget with quotes. Good supporting evidence such as quotes for items or services you intend to use. Official quotes are preferred but screen shots of items will be accepted. Provided all the documents required	50%
Darebin focused	Engagement of local businesses, suppliers, fabricators, painters or artists within City of Darebin	20%

Can I submit more than one application?

No -only one application can be submitted per address. If you have multiple businesses, please submit a separate application for each address.

What are the terms and conditions for successful applicants?

A maximum of one application will be considered per business however more than one project can be included within that application.

- Quotes or invoices should be provided where relevant in the application.
- You may be provided funding less than the amount requested by an applicant and special conditions be applied for the funding to be provided.
- Projects must be completed within 2 months of receiving the funds or by 28 February 2027 latest.
- Projects will not be funded retrospectively.
- Successful applicants must sign/complete a funding agreement before payment is processed.
- At the conclusion of their shop improvements, successful applicants must provide a brief report (refer The Acquittal section below) to Council on the project

demonstrating its completion, impact and use of funds. Failure to do so satisfactorily, may lead to the business needing to reimburse.

- Recipients agree that they will participate in marketing and promotional activities of this Program. This may include but is not limited to displaying Council's decal in the shopfront, case studies including photos, feedback, surveys and providing information about the benefits of participating following conclusion of the program.

I recently improved the shopfront, if I provide the invoice, would it be possible for the council to refund through this program?

The improvements made prior to the commencement of this program will not be funded.

Can I use The Shopfront Improvement Program for improving the inside of my shop?

The program is to be used to improve the visual appeal of the shopfronts but if there is an inside improvement related to the shopfront and can be visible from outside it may be acceptable, subject to review and approval by the assessment panel.

What reporting and acquittal information will I need to provide?

You will be required to submit an acquittal report via Smarty Grants evidencing:

- The invoices and receipts for the expenses
- Alternatively, bank statement showing direct cash input to the project
- Digital pictures of prior to and after the completion of the project

Reservoir Village and Broadway



Preston Central

