

Your High Street Grant Program

Commonly Asked Questions – Updated April 2021



GENERAL

Who can apply?

NSW Councils.

Individuals, chambers of commerce, community groups are encouraged to work with their local Councils if they would like to suggest projects.

When do applications close?

Applications close at 5pm on 29 January 2021.

How many applications can Council submit?

Councils are invited to submit one application for up to \$1 million to deliver a project for a single high street in their local government area to be delivered within a year of funding approval.

What is the maximum amount Council may apply for?

The Department of Planning, Industry and Environment is inviting local Councils to apply for up to \$1 million to make permanent changes that improve the amenity and functionality of a high street in their area.

Why is DPIE championing streets and delivering a grant program for improving high streets?

Quality public space is essential for quality of life and to support economic, environmental, social and cultural benefits. Streets are important public spaces for our community, and also economic drivers for our local business.

The NSW Government wants to increase the amount of quality public space through projects that can allow pedestrians to maintain physical distancing safely and support jobs and boost business confidence.

One-off grant funding through the Your High Street grant program will support local Councils to fund permanent changes that boost the local economy.

This program will support the Premier's Priority of increasing the proportion of homes in urban areas across NSW within 10 minutes' walk of quality green, open and public space by 10 per cent by 2023.

Why does the program use the term "High Street" and not "Main Street" or "Shopping Precinct"?

We wanted to make sure Councils everywhere in NSW had the best chance of applying for grants without being limited by definitions. In smaller country towns main street is more common,

Your High Street Grant Program

Commonly Asked Questions – Updated April 2021



but elsewhere a main street is more of a traffic thoroughfare for a suburb, and not necessarily the retail/business centre. We've given more flexibility to Councils and made it clear in the guidelines that high streets may also be referred to as main streets.

What if there are no council meetings between now and closing date, and I need a council resolution?

To enable councils to lodge within the timeframe, if needed, the letter of support from your General Manager can endorse the project pending Council resolution. If successful, a satisfactory Council resolution would become a condition of the grant, alongside other approvals.

FUNDING FOR THE PROGRAM

How much funding is available for this program?

The total funding available for this program is \$15 million.

What types of projects can be funded under this program?

This program provides councils funding for projects including (but not limited to) space for dining outdoors, wider footpaths, tree planting, traffic calming, lighting, public art or anything else that might invigorate high streets and boost local economies.

Are Councils required to provide contributing funds for their project?

No, but seeking other sources of funding is encouraged. When making a submission Council will need to decide whether they add existing Council budgets to these projects such as from infrastructure contributions plans that identify projects suitable for this grant program, where the plan allows for apportionment of funds.

Why is government now investing in projects that are permanent changes to public space?

The Your High Street Program builds on the success of the Streets as Shared Spaces grant program by recognising the demand for more permanent works, and on trends emerging through COVID-19 to support local business recovery through improved local high streets.

When will councils receive payments?

Payments will be made at milestones, with timing and phasing of payments to be confirmed in funding agreements.

PROCESS FOR DECIDING SUCCESSFUL PROJECTS

How and who is going to make the decision about which projects will be funded?

Projects will be evaluated against the assessment criteria set out in the Your High Street grant guidelines (<https://www.dpie.nsw.gov.au/premiers-priorities/great-public-spaces/streets/grants-for-councils>). Criteria includes strategic alignment to both NSW Government and local Council priorities specifically to boosting the local economy, as well as practical requirements such as project deliverability, value for money, and improving the amenity and functionality of a high street.

An assessment panel of advisors from across Government including Transport for NSW will assess all eligible applications.

When will successful projects be announced?

Successful projects will be announced in April 2021.

Does a strategic centre need to be designated as a strategic centre in a District or Regional Plan?

No. The project location must be in a strategic neighbourhood centre, as defined in the program Glossary of Terms:

Strategic centre also known as a strategic neighbourhood centre, means an area of important economic activity and employment for an LGA that supports a combination and agglomeration of local businesses that meet community and local business needs. They must be identified in council's strategic plans that could include strategic centres identified in District Plans and Regional Plans. It can also be any other important economic activity and employment centre that is identified in Council plans including economic development plans, community plans etc

Note: the underlined words were included in an updated version of the Guidelines.

All submissions must demonstrate current community and stakeholder consultation in support of the nominated Your High Street project. This can be previous engagement undertaken as part of the development of Councils plans as long as it is specific enough to the nominated high street and proposed interventions.

Are projects ineligible if they are already identified in councils' future asset and maintenance plans?

The intent behind the ineligibility criteria is to discourage projects that could be classified as routine maintenance as we are looking for innovative approaches to enhancing high streets. Therefore, projects identified within council programs may still be eligible for the grant funding, however an application relating to routine maintenance is less likely to score well.

Your High Street Grant Program

Commonly Asked Questions – Updated April 2021



We encourage projects that meet our criteria and objectives which have been identified as a priority by council and have the support of the community and local businesses.

If council is in the planning stages of an existing project, is this considered 'underway' and therefore ineligible?

The intent of the ineligibility criteria is to exclude offsetting costs of project components that are already funded and underway. While existing projects are not excluded in the guidelines, we are looking for innovative approaches to enhancing high streets. To score well, this may require council to consider expanding the scope of an existing project.

HOW DOES THIS RESPOND TO COVID-19 RECOVERY

Council submissions must demonstrate how the project elements boost the local economy and stimulate employment. The grant program encourages projects that improve the amenity and functionality of a high street.

Adapting streets as safe, shared public spaces will support healthier, safe and resilient communities. Providing quality access to community centres within a high street location will encourage more pedestrian traffic to support existing businesses and help retain and create jobs including through the design, delivery and construction of projects.

Additional space provided by 'Your High Street' projects will also support safe social distancing as people return to their workplaces.

ALIGNMENT WITH TRANSPORT FOR NSW ACTIVITIES

DPIE is working closely with Transport for NSW, NSW Treasury and other government agencies to deliver the Your High Street grant program and will ensure it aligns with projects such as the Walking and Cycling Grant Program, the Transport 2056 strategy, the NSW Road Safety Plan 2021 and the Outdoor Dining Strategy, among other initiatives.

DEVELOPING THE PROJECTS

Who in Council should be developing these project ideas?

Where possible, Councils are encouraged to pull together multidisciplinary teams to develop a project. Where the application form indicates it, project pathway approvals must be analysed and mapped with internal and external stakeholders.

Councils are required to demonstrate community consultation in their local government area has been undertaken during COVID-19 to inform their application.

What resources are available for Councils to develop schemes?

On the [DPIE website](#) we have the following additional resources:

Your High Street Grant Program

Commonly Asked Questions – Updated April 2021



- Streets as Shared Spaces – Ideas and Opportunities
- Temporary street interventions case
- Government Architect NSW - Better Streets
- NSW Temporary Streets (TFNSW)
- Streets for Pandemic Response and Recovery (NACTO)
- Your High Street – Transforming your High Street case studies

We have developed:

1. A [three-part webinar series](#). Commencing Monday 16 November, the Your High Street webinar series will showcase speakers from government and industry to support Councils to develop a robust grant submission.
2. A community consultation survey template that Council can use to engage businesses, residents and visitors during COVID-19. Use of the template demonstrates compliance with a compulsory 'community engagement' section of the grant application. Contact DPIE for a copy at publicspace@planning.nsw.gov.au
3. An [Evaluation Tool for Public Space and Public Life](#) to build an evidence base and measure change is required to be used in the project evaluation.

Can Councils submit applications on land owned by others?

Councils may apply for funding for projects occurring on council owned or managed land, or on a state road. The project location must accord with the high street specific parameters, as defined in the program Glossary of Terms:

High street specific parameters means anything that supports people's safety and comfort that is council owned or managed, or on a state road, within the high street in a main street and directly adjacent that is aligned with boosting the local business economy, excluding road surface improvements unless specifically addressing new or improved bicycle lane. NB. If Your High Street location includes Transport for NSW (TfNSW) land, then TfNSW approval in principle must be included in your application, with formal landowner's consent provided prior to funding release.

Note: the underlined words were amended in an updated version of the Guidelines.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF SUCCESSFUL PROJECTS

The program was announced with a \$15 million budget. Why is the total funding now \$15.1 million and where did the additional \$100,000 come from?

The Your High Street program is part of the Department's Planning Reform program. Given the strong field of applications, the Department identified an additional amount of under \$100,000 available in the Planning Reform budget to fund 19 projects in total.

Your High Street Grant Program

Commonly Asked Questions – Updated April 2021



Your High Street is part of the Planning Reform program which targets economic stimulus. Why is so much of the funding going to regional councils?

The funding will support revitalisation in strategic centres within local government areas, benefitting local economies across the State. Our existing funding programs, such as the Summer Fund, have shown that placemaking in regional areas can have a significant effect on boosting local economies.

The successful councils were able to show how their projects supported economic activity and employment in their strategic centres. Successful councils will be required to report against core indicators including employment opportunities and retail turnover.

Why wasn't my council's application successful?

The program was significantly over-subscribed and received a high volume of high-quality applications.

Projects were evaluated against the assessment criteria set out in the [Your High Street Grant Guidelines](#). Key comments from the panel about applications were that:

- stronger applications used innovative approaches to enhance or create quality public spaces, providing opportunities for social interaction and economic activity;
- the highest scoring projects clearly articulated a problem statement and outlined a vision to address the problem;
- stronger applications clearly considered delivery and approvals, and outlined existing and planned consultation; and
- projects focused on maintenance and repairs tended not to score as highly.

What is required of successful councils?

Councils are responsible for delivering the projects, including obtaining all necessary approvals and consulting the community and stakeholders such as local businesses. Councils will be required to report at milestones and evaluate their project against core indicators and using the Department's [Evaluation Tool for Public Space and Public Life](#).

Who do we contact if we have questions?

Contact the public space team via email: publicspace@planning.nsw.gov.au

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