

Theme 1

Dynamic & Supported Business Community

Support and grow the business community to generate industry growth and successful economic outcomes

Overview

A core role for Council's economic development unit is to provide targeted business support to ensure the business base is able to strengthen and grow the local economy. Given the substantial impacts felt across the Banyule economy due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the provision of business support is particularly important over the short to medium term. Ensuring businesses have the tools to adapt, recover and grow in the long-term is critical to sustaining a prosperous business base.

As well, Banyule's business base is primarily (98%) non-employing or fewer than 20 employees (ie small-medium enterprises). Smaller businesses typically require additional support as they lack the resources to maximise growth opportunities or generate employment outcomes.

Strategic Directions

- 1.1: Promote business recovery and resilience**
- 1.2: Support business investment and attraction**
- 1.3: Improve business networking, engagement and collaboration**
- 1.4: Reduce legislative and regulatory burdens on business**

Indicators of Success

- Provide short and long term support to the business base through a variety of avenues
- Extend the business concierge program to continue providing planning permit support to small businesses
- Develop and maintain an up-to-date business database



Strategic Directions



1.1: Promote Business Recovery and Resilience

The Banyule economy is in a recovery phase as it emerges from the economic, social and health impacts associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. At the peak of the pandemic, Banyule lost more than 1,400 jobs and \$60 million in economic output as a result of government-imposed lockdowns placed on Melbourne.

Although the effects of the pandemic have been substantial for the local economy, this also presents a number of opportunities, particularly in relation to economic recovery. Recent Council efforts have been focused on business and economic recovery, in response to the COVID-19 restrictions that have impacted many businesses, particularly those industries (e.g. retail, personal services and hospitality) that are consumer facing and rely on population movements.

As the economy continues to transition out of the pandemic there should be a short-term focus on supporting the existing business base to grow the local economy. However, business support should not only focus on short-term recovery, but also ensure businesses have the capabilities to overcome future external shocks.

This should include the provision of business development assistance for activities such as:

- Marketing;
- Financial management;
- Business planning; and
- Accessing grants.



1.2: Support Business Investment and Attraction

Local Council's role in economic development includes the core activities to support existing industries and promote business growth and investment. These are typically facilitated through regular and meaningful engagement, with a view to helping businesses overcome specific challenges and providing a conducive environment to achieve positive business and employment outcomes.

Ensuring the existing (and future) business base has the tools to adapt, recover and grow in the long term is critical to fostering a thriving business community. Streamlining regulatory processes, ensuring appropriate commercial land and facilities and identifying business attraction activities targeting businesses that support Council's economic development agenda are important actions to ensure Council facilitates business investment and attraction within the municipality.

Providing a supportive environment for the small business community is a key priority for Council, given that the number of SMEs, which currently represent 98% of the business base, is expected to grow (particularly home-based businesses) in response to the rise in remote working and relocation of businesses from the CBD.

The provision of adequate employment land will also support future business investment and attraction. Council should consider undertaking a review of the municipality's employment land to identify opportunities to increase the supply of specialised employment land and encourage ongoing development of new office space.



1.3: Enhance Business Networking, Engagement and Collaboration

Building a connected and engaged business base helps facilitate industry collaboration, information sharing and creates B2B opportunities. This is vital to a thriving business community and ensures businesses have the skills and relevant support system to grow, particularly as most businesses are small and require additional resources to encourage growth.

Business networking offers a range of benefits for businesses including (but not limited to):

- Building relationships;
- Solutions to business problems;
- Business opportunities;
- Supply chain/customer opportunities;
- Improve social skills;
- Access new talent; and
- Benchmarking;

There is a potential for Council to facilitate and support additional networking and training opportunities for businesses, targeting those businesses who are seeking to upskill in certain areas of business management. This opportunity could be facilitated and administered through a dedicated CRM.



1.4: Reduce legislative and regulatory burdens on business

Ensuring the local business base is able to operate with freedom and flexibility will be critical to the municipality's future growth prospects. Council should identify opportunities to design and develop processes (e.g. Better Approvals for Business) to help businesses overcome regulatory barriers, improve the efficiency of planning permits and support investment.

Action Plan

The Action Plan provides a guide for the delivery of the projects and actions to achieve each theme's strategic directions and overall objective. The plan includes relevant actions, internal/supporting stakeholders, indicative costs and timeframes, categorised as follows:

- Short term (within 1 year);
- Medium term (1-3 years); and
- Long term (4 years +).

Note: Indicative costs are subject to confirmation and are assumed to be expenditure beyond the existing budget. In instances where projects are able to be delivered within existing resources, or where costs are unknown, these are listed as 'N/A'.

Importantly, these costs do not refer to specific internal staffing requirements for Council.

Project	Action	Stakeholder/s		Priority	Time frame	Indicative Cost
		Internal	Partner			
Business Support & Assistance*	Provide assistance, including promoting access to grants and financial/business planning. This should also include targeted assistance to help businesses alter operations in the wake of COVID-19, including supporting online presence/e-commerce opportunities, providing outdoor dining permits, etc.	Economic Development		High	Short	N/A
Business Support*	Identify opportunities to design and develop processes (e.g. Better Approvals for Business) to help businesses overcome regulatory barriers, improve the efficiency of planning permits and support investment.	Planning, Building & Local Laws, Economic Development, Environment & Transport		Medium	Short & Ongoing	N/A
Business Mentoring & Training*	Provide ongoing workshops, mentoring and training opportunities to improve industry capability and support business growth. This should focus on areas that businesses wish to upskill in (e.g. marketing, financial management, business planning etc.). This should include targeting relevant businesses through updating or enhancing Council's CRM database.	Economic Development		Medium	Ongoing	\$8,200/year
State Government Advocacy	Advocate to State Government to understand mechanisms to better support businesses in the future. This will allow Council to be at the forefront of emerging industry challenges and opportunities.	Economic Development, Corporate Governance & Communications		Medium	Ongoing	N/A

Project	Action	Stakeholder/s		Priority	Time frame	Indicative Cost
		Internal	Partner			
Business Attraction	<p>Identify diverse and innovative business attraction activities that targets businesses that support Council's economic development objectives, including the ability to generate economic growth and alignment with environmental sustainability. These activities should focus on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting Banyule's advantages to industry (via marketing channels); • Establishing a program that targets innovative small businesses and start-ups; • Engaging with prospective investors; and • Measures/incentives to encourage business investment and relocation to Banyule (e.g. assistance with planning permits, access to parking, high-speed internet, etc.) <p>These activities should be linked to the business concierge service provided by Council.</p>	Economic Development		High	Medium	\$30k /year
Employment Land Assessment	<p>Identify opportunities to increase supply of specialised employment land and encourage ongoing development of new office space, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing current planning controls and the extent to which they encourage and facilitate employment floorspace delivery; • If necessary, updating local planning policy to ensure employment floorspace is prioritised and encouraged in strategic locations (e.g. along commercial corridors, public transport networks and commercially desirable locations); and • Ensuring that strategic planning process (such as preparation of structure plans) align with policies to facilitate investment in employment land and office development. 	Planning, Building & Laws, Strategic Planning & Urban Design		Medium	Medium	N/A
Business Engagement Project*	<p>Develop an engagement plan that guides Council's interactions and partnerships with Government and industry, focusing on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information sharing and collaboration. • Identify shared priorities across industry for advocacy purposes. • Increase opportunities for funding to deliver priority projects/infrastructure. <p>This could be supported through the development of an up-to-date Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software that allows ongoing communication with local businesses.</p>	Economic Development		Medium	Short & Ongoing	N/A

Project	Action	Stakeholder/s		Priority	Time frame	Indicative Cost
		Internal	Partner			
Business Networking*	Promote business to business activity and connections through business networking, which can be facilitated by Council in collaboration with other industry bodies (e.g. NORTH Link, Traders' Associations).	Economic Development		High	Ongoing	N/A
Business Communication*	Regular communication and promotion of external private and public support programs and resources available to businesses, including through traditional communication channels, such as newsletters and contemporary communication channels, such as social media.	Economic Development		High	Ongoing	N/A
Business Awards*	Present business awards to top performing businesses in the municipality on a two-yearly basis and facilitate the ongoing delivery of the Northern Business Achievement Awards.	Economic Development		Medium	Ongoing	\$40K (every two years)
Business Grants*	Provide business grants to suitable businesses within the municipality to support growth of the local business base. This is expected to benefit 10-15 recipients every two years.	Economic Development		Medium	Ongoing	\$40k (every two years)

*Note these actions/programs are already delivered by Council in some capacity.

Implementation of the Strategy should be monitored on an ongoing basis using the indicators of success and monitoring tools outlined below.

Indicators of Success & Monitoring Tools

Indicator	Monitoring
<i>Provide short and long term support to the business base through a variety of avenues</i>	Annually, via Council records
<i>Extend the business concierge program to continue providing planning permit support to small businesses</i>	Ongoing, via Council records
<i>Develop and maintain an up-to-date business database</i>	Review and update annually, using the Australian Business Register (ABR) or Council-operated CRM