

1. Policy Statement

Council has a clear vision in making the Hinchinbrook Shire one of the most business friendly Shires in North Queensland. To achieve this, Council encourages the establishment of new and innovative businesses that are sustainable financially and environmentally and provide a long term benefit to the Hinchinbrook Shire community.

Council is committed to securing the attraction of new industry and innovative business to compliment and/or add value to or significantly expand upon the already existing businesses and assist economic and employment growth. Council is willing to provide incentives and other assistance in accordance with this Policy to support that commitment.

GOALS

Council recognises that the creation of employment for the Shire is one of the most critical challenges that it faces. One of Council's key goals is to achieve a sustainable and growing economy through:

- Competitiveness and employment opportunities, and
- The attraction of new and innovative businesses to the Shire.

2. Scope

This policy is to provide support for new innovative business start ups in the Hinchinbrook Shire.

Applicants must be establishing a business within the Shire's boundary that directly benefits the Shire by way of service provision and job creation. The applicant must be able to provide a business plan, business proposal, evidence of a fully developed business idea or other, complete an application form and have acquitted all previous grants and have no outstanding debts to Hinchinbrook Shire.

3. Responsibility

All requests for support are to be lodged with Council by way of an application process. The assessment panel will review the application and make a recommendation to Council for consideration. The funding for the assistance is subject to availability of budget as determined by Council annually.

4. Definitions

Assessment Panel will be a committee consisting of two (2) Councillors and two (2) Council Officers.

Eligible applicants are those that:

- are developing proposed business within the Hinchinbrook Shire boundary
- have a registered Australian Business Number (ABN)
- are establishing a business that directly benefits the Shire
- provides a product or service not already provided for or which adds value to or significantly expands upon product or services in the Shire
- does not owe monies to Council ie that have acquitted all other Council grants and have no outstanding debts with Hinchinbrook Shire.

Electronic version current. Uncontrolled Copy current only at time of printing

Policy Number: 01

Authorised By: EMDPES

Document Maintained By: Development, Planning and Environmental Services

Version No: [2]

Initial Date of Adoption: [28 March 2017]

Current Version Adopted: [31 October 2017]

Next Review Date: [October 2019]

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The economic benefit to the Shire will be assessed against the following business opportunities:

- provide employment opportunities
- be sustainable
- generate economic activity
- be innovative and entrepreneurial
- improve the viability and vitality of our shire
- provide a service or product not already available locally.

In regards to cash assistance, the applicant is eligible to use these funds on the following activities:

- Engagement of short term (up to 6 months) specialised personnel
- Purchase of promotional material specific for the business (ie business card, website, signage)
- Purchase of equipment, fixtures and fittings
- Any upskilling training for staff (new or existing staff) or business owners

Funds cannot be used for:

- Permanent salaries and wages
- Telephone and utilities costs
- Maintenance of business site
- Insurance
- Licensing, registration and legal obligations

5. Policy

Hinchinbrook Shire Council has developed this policy to support new businesses in the Shire. The scheme aims to provide targeted assistance that will result in employment and investment opportunities. The scheme incorporates the offsetting of some costs associated with establishing a new business which may include, but is not limited to, rates, permits, rent and fee concessions. The scheme is aimed at creating healthy, sustainable, strong and growing businesses in the Shire.

Prior to applying for assistance, the applicant must have initial conversations with respective officers within the Development, Planning and Environmental Services Department to discuss the process of the assistance. A business plan, proposal, evidence of a fully developed idea or other must be submitted along with an application form for all requests for assistance under this scheme. The application form can be downloaded from the Council website (www.hinchinbrook.qld.gov.au).

The Business Plan should include such details as; company principals, nature of the business, SWOT analysis and financial analysis. A template of a business plan can be found at: www.business.qld.gov.au/starting-business/planning/turn-into-business/business-plan

The panel will carry out an assessment of the application based on the set criteria and a written recommendation will be forwarded to the Council for consideration.

6. Guiding Principles

- All applications will be considered on merit and must pass the economic benefit test as described in this policy;
- The scheme does not provide retrospective funding;
- Assistance under the scheme is not 'as of right' assistance;
- This assistance scheme is a once off form of assistance and limited to one

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application per business for the life of that business.

- Funding may be subject to the applicant repaying any cash grant within a period of six (6) months or such further time as Council may agree to under the circumstances, from the date of completion.; and
- Funding is subject to the attainment of Council and other regulatory approvals.

7. Assessment Criteria

The assessment panel will assess applications for assistance under this scheme and shall consider any application on a case by case basis and interpret the policy accordingly.

The assessment will be based on an economic benefit test which includes:

- The number of jobs that the business will create at specific timelines (initial business development, 6 months and 12 months)
- The proposed business is not to the detriment of existing businesses in the Shire
- The business is innovative and utilises new ideas
- The requested support provides value for money to the community
- The proposal will provide economic benefits for the Shire
- The business will reduce the level of expenditure outside of the Shire by local residents.
- The business will increase the expenditure in the Shire from those living outside the Shire.

8. Financial Assistance Available

The grant amount is dependent on each individual situation and is to be determined by Council.

Minimum Level of Assistance - Council has agreed that all eligible business will, in addition to other incentives as may be agreed to as undermentioned, be entitled to a base level of assistance in the form of \$500 (ex GST) comprising of either cash and/or in-kind assistance with Council licenses and/or fees.

Rate Concessions - will be considered to new businesses on an individual project basis and will be based on employment outcomes. Concessions will be considered for a maximum of 50% of rates and for a maximum of 3 years.

Rate concessions will only be considered for commercial and industrial rated properties.

Permits and Fees: Council may consider reimbursing permit costs for eligible businesses.

Rural Community Incentives - In recognition of the special needs of outlying communities (outside of Ingham), Council may provide assistance to support businesses located in those communities where the venture will generate increased economic benefit. These will be considered on a case by case basis, in consultation with the relevant portfolio Councillors.

Rent Subsidy - this form of assistance (**for a maximum of 6 months**) is to support eligible new businesses, where the provision of the subsidy removes a particular constraint to the development of the business. Businesses that wish to expand into or utilise unused Council property will also be considered on a case by case basis.

Other financial incentives - depending on the economic benefit provided by the development, Council may determine that other support is appropriate, this may include in-kind works or support to provide infrastructure, waiver of planning infrastructure charges or similar benefit at Council's discretion. Eligibility to receive this type of assistance is to be determined on a case by case basis.

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9. Other

By accepting the assistance from Council the recipient agrees to submit a report to Council such as a progress report or acquittal within 12 months. The 12 month reporting will include a statement of expenditure with copies of invoices and supporting documentation of the expenditure provided. A penalty for not providing a progress report or acquittal at 12 months would result in an automatic requirement to refund any monies, or assistance provided by Council. A repayment agreement can be entered into to facilitate the payback schedule.

Payment can only take place when a tax invoice has been submitted.

Should the business proposal as outlined in the application be deferred or withdrawn all assistance provided by Council must be reimbursed in full within 12 months from the date of application.

The applicant may be required to pay back the funding over a six (6) month period or a further period as decided by Council from time to time after the date of completion of the assistance period. A repayment agreement will be entered into to facilitate the payback schedule.

10. Legal Parameters

Local Government Act 2009

11. Associated Documents

Business Assistance Scheme Application Form
Business Assistance Scheme Acquittal Form