

 Central Highlands Regional Council	CENTRAL HIGHLANDS REGIONAL COUNCIL POLICY	
	Economic Stimulus Policy	POLICY REF NO <i>CHRCP: 0013</i>

1.0 Policy Purpose

- 1.1 This policy provides the framework for an incentive program where council may provide financial assistance to support the revitalisation of urban areas and attract and retain business investment in the region.

2.0 Policy Statement

- 2.1 The purpose of this policy is to establish a consistent, equitable and transparent process to assess incentive applications made for façade improvements, built heritage places, placemaking and reductions in fees and charges associated with development.
- 2.2 It supports the intent of the Central Highlands Regional Council Corporate Plan 2022-2027 to support regional industry development via advocacy, planning and incentives and protect and promote the heritage of our region.

3.0 Incentive Program

- 3.1 Council has established the Economic Stimulus Policy (the program) to provide the community, building owners and developers with the opportunity to apply for financial assistance. Applications are assessed on merit, considering the eligibility criteria and available funds. Nothing in the policy shall imply or suggest that the council is under any obligation to provide any incentive to any applicant.
- 3.2 The program will be administered and reported by Communities Department to an annually agreed budget. The policy will provide incentives under the following streams:
 - Stream 1 - Façade Improvement
 - Stream 2 - Built Heritage Improvement
 - Stream 3 - Placemaking
 - Stream 4 - Development Application Fees and Infrastructure Charges
- 3.3 Applicants may apply for and receive financial assistance under multiple streams of the program concurrently.
- 3.4 For Streams 1 to 3, applications in which a number of adjoining businesses collaborate on a larger joint proposal to achieve a more significant enhancement of the street appeal are encouraged.

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4.0 Conditions of Funding

4.1 Applicants must agree to and meet the following general conditions before an application will be accepted and assessed for funding allocation:

- Applicants must be the property owner or have proof of the property owner's consent to make the application
- An application will not be accepted if the property holds an outstanding debt to council. Council may, at its discretion, accept applications under Stream 4 where the property has outstanding infrastructure charges if they have only recently come due.
- Council may seek further information or clarification of a proposal to facilitate the assessment. Additionally, council may refuse to accept an application that does not contain sufficient information to progress the evaluation.
- Funds are awarded based on merit. Not all applications may be funded. Applications may not receive the full amount of funding requested.
- Applications will be assessed against the Assessment Criteria relevant to the stream.
- For Streams 1 to 3, an application must be made before any works commence on site. Some Stream 4: Fees and Charges applications may be accepted after works have begun.
- For Streams 1 to 4, the applicant must obtain all necessary planning and building approvals before any approvals can be given or works can commence. Applications for a Pre-approval Notice under Stream 4 are the only exception to this rule.
- Successful Stream 1 to 3 applicants will be required to enter into a Funding Agreement with council. Successful Stream 4 applicants will receive a letter of offer that outlines conditions relating to the funding and the payment process.
- Council may, at its discretion, refuse to accept Stream 4: Fees and Charges applications in which the applicant has acquired an established business on a "walk in, walk out" basis or has purchased the underlying ownership interests and will retain existing staff levels. Under these types of circumstances, an application may only be supported if they can demonstrate that it will generate genuinely "new" and additional community benefits and investment above and beyond the existing business via new jobs and/or capital investment via construction.
- Applicants agree to allow council to use any non-commercial information to promote the program.

5.0 Incentive Streams

5.1 Stream 1: Façade Improvement Grant (Maximum Contribution \$2,000 for physical works and \$500 for landscaping)

5.1.1 Intent: To provide financial support to commercial property owners to undertake high-quality façade improvements to enhance the visual appearance and function of their building. This will increase street appeal and patronage, stimulate the economy, and improve uptake of commercial tenancies within urban areas.

5.1.2 This stream requires an application that addresses the following assessment criteria:

1. The application must demonstrate how the project will benefit the building's presentation and streetscape
2. The applicant must provide a minimum of one quote for the proposed works and provide the business address of the contractor. Council encourages applications where local and/or indigenous-owned businesses are utilised (if available in the region).
3. Applicants must submit a plan detailing the proposed improvements together with all necessary approvals and permits

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4. Applicants must submit “before photos” of the proposed building with the application.

Note: Refer to Façade Improvement Program Fact Sheet for assistance in lodging an application

5.2 Stream 2: Built Heritage Grant – (Maximum contribution \$10,000)

- 5.2.1 **Intent:** To provide a financial incentive to assist building owners in conserving, restoring and protecting buildings or structures included on the Local Heritage List or otherwise identified on the Heritage Overlay in the Central Highlands Regional Council Planning Scheme.
- 5.2.2 To be eligible to apply for funding under this stream, the applicant must meet the following assessment criteria:
 1. The property must be included on the Local Heritage List or identified on the Heritage Overlay in the Central Highlands Regional Planning Scheme.
 2. The proposed works will enhance, repair and/or are considered critical to the rehabilitation of the structure or key architectural features of the building which have historical significance.
 3. The applicant must provide a minimum of one quote for the proposed works and provide the business address of the contractor. Council encourages applications where local and/or indigenous-owned businesses are utilised (if available in the region).
- 5.2.3 The application may also include the engagement of a heritage consultant or conservation specialist to develop a conservation and management approach based on the specific heritage values of the site.

Note: Refer to Built Heritage Improvement Fact Sheet for assistance in lodging an application

5.3 Stream 3 – Placemaking (Maximum contribution of \$1,000 per project)

- 5.3.1 **Intent:** To provide funding to support entrepreneurs and established businesses to create and deliver inclusive and vibrant projects in public spaces or areas that are public facing. The aim is to activate pockets of the region for the benefit and attraction of residents and visitors.
- 5.3.2 This stream requires an application that addresses the following assessment criteria:
 1. The application must demonstrate how the project will satisfy one or more of the following:
 - a. Activate a public space by encouraging people to visit, invest and spend time in the place
 - b. Enhance streetscapes and/or improve walkability
 - c. Encourage/increase participation in community life and social inclusion
 - d. Celebrate and connect the space to the unique history of the community
 2. Artwork, if any, must not contain material that discriminates against or vilifies any person or group or is offensive or sexually explicit. Artwork must not violate intellectual property rights.
 3. If engaging a contractor, the applicant must provide a minimum of one quote for the proposed works and provide the business address of the contractor. Council encourages applications where local and/or indigenous-owned businesses are utilised (if available in the region).

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Note: Refer to Placemaking Program Fact Sheet for assistance in lodging an application

5.4 Stream 4 – Development Application Fees and Infrastructure Charges

5.4.1 **Intent:** To encourage development that is significant to the community to occur within a shortened timeframe, assist new businesses to establish by reducing the up-front costs and provide some certainty to those proposing to invest in the region.

5.4.2 **Eligibility:** To be eligible to apply for funding under this stream, the application must:

- be a new or expanding business in the region
- demonstrate compliance with the planning scheme
- demonstrate compliance with the relevant part(s) of Table 1
- not be for a non-resident workers accommodation and/or rural subdivision
- not be for or associated with a development that has been operating unlawfully.

Note: Council may, at its discretion, accept applications where the “unlawful operation” relates to:

- (a) *unpaid infrastructure charges if they have only commenced operation of the development or the relevant stage of the development in the last six months; or*
 (b) *a minor compliance matter provided that it is rectified prior to the application being submitted.*

5.4.3 **Incentives available for consideration:**

1. Reduction or elimination of development application fees and infrastructure charges
2. Alternate schedule for payment of infrastructure charges
3. Pre-approval Notice

5.4.4 **Rebates available**

Applications will be assessed against the eligibility criteria, and the funding will be awarded in accordance with Table 1

Table 1: Assessment Criteria and Funding Distribution – Fees and Charges

Part 1	PRIMARY REQUIREMENTS		REBATE APPLICABLE	
	Eligibility Criteria	Detail (Must demonstrate compliance with Operational Lead Time <i>and</i> either Economic Investment or Employment Generation)	Assessment Fees	Infrastructure Charges
	Economic Investment; and/or	Demonstrate that the minimum capital investment in the development is equal to or greater than \$250,000.	100%	50%
	Employment Generation	Result in an expansion of genuine “new” Full-Time Equivalent jobs in the Central Highlands region (i.e. not jobs that have been relocated within the region between premises) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the interest of a “start-up”, a minimum of three (3) Full Time Equivalent jobs; or • For existing businesses, a significant expansion of Full-Time Equivalent jobs <p><i>Note: The application must include information describing the number of new construction and ongoing jobs (existing and created).</i></p> <p><i>Note: The jobs must be genuine ‘new’ jobs rather than a transported or relocated workforce</i></p>		

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	Operational lead time	The business activity can commence operation within two years of receipt of all required planning and development approvals.		
Part 2	SECONDARY REQUIREMENTS (must also comply with Part 1)		REBATE APPLICABLE	
	Eligibility Criteria	Detail	Assessment Fees	Infrastructure Charges
	Environmental	Provide detail that the design of the development has considered greenhouse gas emissions, climate sensitive design and/or incorporated low emissions technology	100% (when also compliant with Part 1)	70% (when also compliant with Part 1)
	Financial	Demonstrate the financial viability of the project in the absence of any financial assistance through a fully costed business project plan		
Part 3	SPECIFIC DEVELOPMENT (must also comply with Parts 1 and 2)		REBATE APPLICABLE	
	Eligibility Criteria	Detail	Assessment Fees	Infrastructure Charges
	Land use	Development defined as the following land uses: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Child care centre• Residential care facility• Retirement facility• Community care centre• Tourist park and Nature-based tourism	100% (when also compliant with Parts 1 and 2)	100% (when also compliant with Parts 1 and 2)

5.4.5 Alternate schedule for payment of infrastructure charges

Applicants may request alternate arrangements for the payment (i.e. through a payment plan) of their infrastructure charges. This can include the “gap” amount outstanding after funding from Table 1 has been applied. Delayed or scheduled payment instalments will be determined in accordance with Table 2.

Table 2: Alternate Payment of Infrastructure Charges

Development Type	Current Payment Timing	Delayed Timing
Material change of use	Prior to the commencement of use	Under a payment plan with a maximum repayment term of three years
Reconfiguring a lot	Prior to the endorsement of a survey plan	Three years after endorsement or upon settlement of sale of any additional lots, whichever occurs first

5.4.6 Pre-approval Notice

Applicants may request an eligibility assessment of their proposal. This application process is separate from any development application and can be lodged at any time. A project’s eligibility will be assessed based on the information provided by the applicant. The applicant must address the criteria in Table 1, including the following:

- general information about the proposed development, including location and land use
- estimate of the capital investment and construction costs

- c. estimate of the number of temporary (construction) and permanent jobs (Full Time Equivalents)
- d. identification of the anticipated economic benefits of the project
- e. estimated timeframe for commencement of use.

Following the assessment, a written notice will be issued to the applicant advising that:

1. The proposed development qualifies for incentive funding under the policy, including the specific incentives that will be offered and any other conditions; or
2. The development does not qualify and the reasons for this assessment.

Note: Should the proposed development have changed since the preliminary assessment or not comply with any condition of either the Pre-Approval Notice or the subsequent development approval, the funding offer will be voided. However, the applicant may re-apply for an incentive with a revised application based on the changed circumstances.

6.0 Assessment and Approval of Applications

- 6.1 Applications are to be made through SmartyGrants using the approved form with all mandatory parts completed and supporting documentation attached.
- 6.2 For Streams 1 to 3, applications will only be accepted during the “open” period of each funding round. For Stream 4, applications may be accepted at any time provided that funding is available.
- 6.3 Council officers are authorised to determine the administrative process and assess all applications for incentive funding.
- 6.4 The CEO or delegated officer (General Manager Communities) can approve or not approve an application under \$10,000 which is in accordance with the prescribed stream and assessment criteria.
- 6.5 Council, at its discretion, may present applications that do not meet the assessment criteria for consideration at a General Council Meeting.

7.0 Conditions of Approval

Streams 1, 2 and 3: Once approved, applicants will be required to enter into a funding agreement with council. Conditions will include a nominated currency period to complete the works and fulfil the requirements relating to necessary insurances, permits and licences required prior to the works occurring.

If works are not undertaken in accordance with the timeframes and conditions outlined in the funding agreement, council has no obligation to release the funds.

Funding will be released after the Acquittal Form is submitted and accepted by council.

Stream 4: A letter of offer detailing the conditions of approval and payment process will be issued. The reimbursement of assessment fees and/or infrastructure charges rebate will be made to the applicant’s nominated bank account upon issue of a Development Compliance Certificate when all conditions of approval have been fulfilled. The cost of the Development Compliance Certificate will be incurred by council.

Applicants requesting to pay any outstanding infrastructure charges in instalments will be required to enter into a payment plan with council.

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8.0 Conflicts of Interest

- 8.1 To ensure an accountable and transparent assessment process is maintained, council officers assessing incentive requests must declare any perceived or potential conflict of interest before the assessment process commences. This may include personal connections with any applicant or personal involvement with any organisation. Anyone having a conflict of interest should not debate, be involved in any discussions, or vote on any matter relating to the specific application.

9.0 Reporting

- 9.1 A quarterly report detailing the disbursement of funding across all incentives will be provided to councillors through the operational plan reporting process.

Strategic Link	Local Government Act 2009 Local Government Regulations 2012 Charges Resolution (No 14) (2022) Central Highlands Regional Council Planning Scheme 2016 Central Highlands Regional Council Corporate Plan 2022-2027 Operational Plan 2022-2023
Category	Planning and Development Business and Economy
Lead Business Unit	Planning and Development
Public Consultation	No
Adoption Date	To be advised
New Review Date	14 December 2023
Document Number	Insert ECM Doc Set ID number
Record Keeping	Council Website, the Vine, ECM
Related Documents	Specific Fact Sheets for each stream Application Form Funding Agreement Acquittal Form

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