

AEDA CITY SME GROWTH PROGRAM

Request for Proposal (RFP)

Project Brief

1. Introduction

The Adelaide Economic Development Agency (AEDA) invites suitably qualified organisations to submit a proposal to design and deliver the **City SME Growth Program**.

Contributing to the long-term economic growth of the City of Adelaide, the program seeks to strengthen business capability, improve profitability and increase employment among a cohort of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) operating within the City of Adelaide and North Adelaide.

AEDA is seeking a provider(s) with demonstrated expertise in business growth and SME capability building to design a high-impact program that delivers measurable economic outcomes.

Subject to the applications received, AEDA may appoint multiple providers. Applicants should nominate a realistic SME participant target that reflects the scale of their proposed program, delivery capacity and recruitment approach, and reflect this in their proposed budget.

2. Background

Small and medium enterprises are fundamental to Adelaide's economy, contributing significantly to employment, innovation, investment and city vibrancy.

While many businesses demonstrate strong potential for growth, they often encounter barriers including limited strategic capability, access to expertise, investment readiness and growth planning.

The City SME Growth Program has been established to address these challenges through targeted capability development, expert mentoring and practical business support designed to enable participating businesses to scale.

For the purposes of this program, eligible SMEs are those:

- With >1-50 employees
- Have been operating more than 2 years
- Are looking to grow their business revenue and workforce
- Operating within the City of Adelaide/North Adelaide (5000/5006)

Sole traders and micro-businesses employing no staff are not eligible.

3. Program Objectives

The successful provider(s) will design and deliver a contemporary business growth program that:

- builds the capability of city SMEs to grow sustainably
- assists participating businesses to increase revenue, productivity and employment
- strengthens leadership, strategic planning and commercial capability
- supports businesses to identify and pursue growth opportunities

Collectively the program(s) will support approximately **30 eligible SMEs**.

4. Target Segments

Proposals are sought for one or both of the following business segments:

Segment One

City-based SMEs operating within the:

- Retail;
- Hospitality; and/or
- Night-time economy sectors.

Segment Two

City-based SMEs operating across all other sectors.

Respondents should clearly identify which segment(s) they are proposing to support.

5. Strategic Context

The City SME Growth Program directly supports the [City of Adelaide Economic Development Strategy 2024–2028](#), particularly: Enable SME growth to increase the city's contribution to Gross State Product; and Support small and medium enterprises to scale and grow.

The program forms part of AEDA's broader commitment to building a resilient, innovative and globally competitive city economy.

Respondents should demonstrate an understanding of:

- current opportunities and challenges facing Adelaide SMEs
- barriers to scaling businesses
- existing business support programs
- opportunities to complement, rather than duplicate, current services.

. Where an existing program or services can be tailored or enhanced for city SMEs or expanded to include a higher volume of city SMEs (above normal CBD participation levels) this will be considered.

6. Scope of Services

The successful provider(s) will be responsible for the end-to-end design, delivery and evaluation of the program.

This includes, but is not limited to:

Program Design

The provider(s) will develop a contemporary SME Growth Program informed by current best practice, market needs and evidence-based approaches to business growth.

The proposed SME Growth Program may include:

- workshops
- mentoring
- coaching
- peer learning
- advisory services
- expert masterclasses
- other innovative delivery models.

Both individual and group-based delivery models will be considered.

Participant Recruitment

The provider(s) will develop and implement a recruitment and engagement strategy to attract suitable City SMEs.

AEDA will support recruitment through its communications and marketing channels.

For proposals seeking part funding must support at minimum of 10 businesses.

Eligibility and Selection

The provider(s) will develop participant eligibility criteria and an assessment methodology for approval by AEDA.

The provider(s) will assess applications and recommend successful participants for final approval by AEDA.

Program Delivery

The provider(s) will deliver the agreed program to participating businesses over the project period.

The provider(s) should demonstrate flexibility to tailor support to participant needs while maintaining consistent program quality.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The provider(s) will develop a comprehensive evaluation framework that measures:

- participant engagement
- business capability development
- participant satisfaction
- business performance outcomes
- longer-term economic impact.

The provider(s) will collect and report agreed KPIs at:

- program completion
- six months
- twelve months
- eighteen months after completion.

7. Performance Measures

Respondents should propose measurable KPIs aligned to program objectives.

These should include:

- participant revenue growth
- participant employment growth
- participant completion rates
- participant satisfaction

These may include:

- business confidence
- capability uplift
- strategic planning maturity
- investment secured
- productivity improvements
- business expansion outcomes
- collaboration and partnership outcomes.

8. Roles and Responsibilities

Provider Responsibilities

The successful provider(s) will:

- design and deliver the program, including an evaluation framework and reporting methodology
- recruit and assess participants
- manage all program delivery activities including participant resources and supporting materials
- monitor participant progress
- collect performance data
- report agreed outcomes (through the program and at program completion), plus
- post-program outcome reporting at six, twelve and eighteen months
- participate in project management meetings.
- Provide recommendations for future program improvements.

AEDA Responsibilities

AEDA will:

- provide project oversight and governance in line with AEDA's Charter and the broader policy and legislative requirements of the Corporation of the City of Adelaide
- approve SME participant eligibility criteria, assessment methodology and SME participant selection
- support marketing and communications
- facilitate project meetings
- provide strategic advice where required.

9. Budget

AEDA has allocated a total budget of **\$307,000 (GST exclusive as applicable)** for delivery of this initiative.

Respondents should provide:

- a detailed pricing schedule
- proposed cost per participant
- any participant contribution (this would be highly regarded to ensure participants are fully committed)
- value-for-money justification (what services will participants receive and does it align with market value)
- any optional enhancements.

10. Project Timeline

Milestone	Timing
RFP released	Friday 14 August 2026
Questions close	To be advised
Proposal submissions close	5pm Sunday 6 September 2026
Evaluation completed	Mid-September 2026
Contract(s) awarded	End-September 2026
Participant recruitment	October 2026 (TBC)
Program delivery	Commencing November 2026 (TBC)
Outcome reporting	At Program completion, plus 6, 12 and 18 months post completion

11. Proposal Requirements

Respondents should include:

Organisational Capability

- relevant organisational experience
- demonstrated experience delivering SME growth programs
- key personnel and backgrounds
- relevant case studies.

Methodology

A detailed methodology describing:

- program design (whether new or existing)
- delivery approach
- participant recruitment
- participant assessment
- mentoring/coaching model (as relevant)
- evaluation methodology
- reporting framework.

Innovation

How the proposed program:

- reflects current best practice
- addresses market gaps
- creates measurable impact
- leverages partnerships (as relevant)
- delivers value for money.

Risk Management

Identification of project risks together with mitigation strategies.

Pricing

A detailed budget including all assumptions.

12. Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated using the following weighted criteria.

Criteria	Weighting
1. Demonstrated experience delivering SME growth and capability programs	25%
2. Understanding of City SME growth challenges and opportunities	15%
3. Quality and innovation of the proposed methodology (including participant recruitment)	30%
4. Monitoring, evaluation and reporting framework	15%
5. Value for money	15%

AEDA reserves the right to seek clarification, negotiate aspects of proposals, appoint one or multiple providers, or not proceed with the procurement.

13. Enquiries

For further information regarding this Request for Proposal, please contact:

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