Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillor Martin - QoN - AEDA 2025/26 Strategic Partnerships Program

Tuesday, 23 September 2025
Council

Council Member
Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillor Phillip Martin

Public

Contact Officer:
Anthony Spartalis, Chief Operating Officer

QUESTION ON NOTICE

Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillor Phillip Martin will ask the following Question on Notice:

'Noting AEDA's website states the Agency " …has awarded six city organisations a share of $3.6 million over three years through its Strategic Partnerships Program to drive growth, foster innovation, and strengthen the city's business landscape …", could the Administration advise;

1. What, if any, arrangements are in place to ensure funds allocated to one of the six, MTP Connect, whose head office is in Brighton in Victoria, will be expended in the City of Adelaide for the benefit of ratepayers
2. What, if any, arrangements are in place to ensure funds allocated to another of the six, University of Adelaide/ThincLab, will be expended on entities and/or initiatives based in the City of Adelaide for the benefit of ratepayers, and
3. If AEDA is likely to adopt criteria in the coming year to ensure recipients of grants under the program should be located on rateable land in the City of Adelaide and propose to spend grant funds in the City of Adelaide to benefit ratepayers?'

REPLY

Background

1. Through its Strategic Partnerships Program, AEDA funds organisations that have the skills and experience to drive economic activity, create jobs, and grow businesses in the city. The six organisations funded by AEDA operate out of premises within the Adelaide CBD.
2. Funding criteria in the operating guidelines reflect AEDA's obligations in its Charter and Council's Economic Development Strategy. The program funds proposals that benefit Adelaide businesses and ratepayers by addressing one or more of the following objectives:
   - 2.1 Increasing the number of people working and living in the city including students.
   - 2.2 Attracting new businesses to the city.
   - 2.3 Leveraging investment in the city's innovation assets and entities (for example Lot Fourteen and BioMed City) to drive greater economic benefit for the CBD.
   - 2.4 Positioning Adelaide as a world class events city by ensuring that events not only attract attendees but also encourage longer stays and repeat visits.
   - 2.5 Driving tourism initiatives that attract regional, national and international visitors.
   - 2.6 Enhancing the value proposition of Adelaide as a destination to work, invest, live, study and visit.

2.7 Decreasing shopfront vacancies in the city

3. The City of Adelaide Economic Development Strategy states "We will partner with organisations and businesses such as MTPConnect, Renew Adelaide, SouthStart and the University of Adelaide's ThinkLab, to support start-up businesses throughout the start-up business lifecycle."

4. All Strategic Partners are required to report bi-annually on key measures and achievements (including businesses involved in their programs), work collaboratively with AEDA throughout the agreement, and provide a detailed acquittal report at the end of the program.

Question 1

5. MTPConnect is a national, independent, not-for-profit organisation established in 2015 to accelerate growth, innovation and commercialisation in Australia's medical technologies, biotechnology and pharmaceutical (MTP) sectors.

6. MTPConnect has offices around Australia with its Adelaide office based in the Adelaide CBD.

7. Health, education, and medical technologies are priority sectors for AEDA, and aligns with Council's Economic Development Strategy *"Priority: Promote Adelaide's reputation as a centre for health and education"*. MTPConnect has made a strong contribution to Adelaide's ecosystem, including through a 2024 program delivery.

8. Over the life of the present Strategic Partnerships agreement, its focus will be:

   8.1 attracting inbound delegations to showcase Adelaide companies and university research in collaboration with local innovation precincts

   8.2 educating investors about sector opportunities to grow investment, companies and jobs.

9. Program objectives under the present program are to:

   9.1 host at least three inbound and three outbound delegations, targeting five new partnerships between international and local organisations

   9.2 Deliver an Investor Education Program for 50 investors over four years, with a goal of facilitating at least $5m in new investment

   9.3 Launch two initiatives to strengthen clinical trial infrastructure, aiming for a 10% increase in trials in Adelaide within three years

   9.4 Demonstrate ROI through increased economic activity in the city (revenue, secured funding, investment, jobs, accommodation and visitor spend).

Question 2

10. The ThincSeed program delivered by ThincLab has two tiers - a Pre-Accelerator for 70 participants, from which high-potential city businesses are selected for tailored Accelerator support, with top participants eligible for the ThincSeed Investment Fund. The model aims to strengthen Adelaide's start-up ecosystem, improve seed investment deal flow, and increase angel investor engagement.

11. Over the life of the present agreement, the program's focus will be on:

   11.1 delivering a Pre-Accelerator program for 70 emerging companies/entrepreneurs

   11.2 delivering an Accelerator program for high potential emerging companies/entrepreneurs.

12. The program will deliver benefits by:

   12.1 helping participants accelerate research commercialisation

   12.2 providing Adelaide emerging companies and entrepreneurs with more sophisticated and effective start-up support services

   12.3 supporting growth in start-ups establishing in Adelaide's CBD

   12.4 increasing venture funding volume and value, targeting $500,000–$1,000,000 in equity/debt funding across participants.

Question 3

13. Earlier this year the AEDA Board allocated funds from the Strategic Partnerships Program (with funding subject to the City of Adelaide's annual budget process) for the next three financial years.

14. Program guidelines will be revised and considered by the AEDA Board prior to the next funding round being opened (likely to occur in late 2027). Without discussion by the Board at that time, administration cannot

provide a view on whether or not the Board would adopt criteria to ensure recipients of grants under the program should be located on rateable land in the City of Adelaide. The current program already ensures funded proposals benefit city ratepayers as the assessment criteria assesses alignment with Council priorities for the City, encourages innovation in approaches to accelerate economic activity in the city and ensures it provides value for money through both the competitive process but also the applicant organisation's capability and track record.

Staff time in receiving and preparing this reply	To prepare this reply in response to the question on notice took approximately 5.5 hours.

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