

VENUE PLAQUE RECOGNITION SCHEME: OPTIONS MATRIX

Purpose: Compare four possible delivery models for a venue recognition scheme as part of the Live Music Circuit. The scheme should recognise places that have made a significant contribution to Adelaide’s live music culture, while avoiding duplication with existing heritage, industry and promotional programs.

Baseline requirement: Any model requires clear eligibility criteria, a transparent assessment process, property owner consent, content standards, maintenance responsibilities, and a process for managing contested or sensitive histories.

Validity and change over time: Recognition schemes can become outdated as venues close, relocate, change ownership, shift programming focus, or as audiences and cultural participation change. Any scheme should include review points, content refreshing processes, removal or retirement protocols, and clear language distinguishing historical recognition from current venue endorsement.

	Option 1 Council-led initiative	Option 2 Partnered program	Option 3 Invite / Peer recognition	Option 4 Open call with limited intake
Description	A City of Adelaide-led scheme designed, governed and delivered by Council as part of the Live Music Circuit.	A scheme delivered with an established or recognised partner, such as the UNESCO City of Music Office or another sector body, with Council providing oversight and support.	A curated scheme where a small number of venues are identified through invitation, expert advice or peer recognition rather than public application.	A public expression-of-interest or nomination process, with a capped intake and peer-reviewed assessment against published criteria.
Recognition focus	Council determines whether the focus is historic venues, current venues, former venues, cultural tourism, or a mix of these.	Focus is jointly shaped with the partner and can reflect sector knowledge, UNESCO City of Music positioning and broader cultural storytelling.	Focus is on venues with strong, demonstrable cultural significance and a high level of peer recognition.	Focus can be broad but must be tightly managed through eligibility criteria to avoid over-subscription and unrealistic expectations.
Eligibility / scale	City of Adelaide boundary; venue-based recognition only; property owner consent required; pilot of approximately 5-10 venues.	City of Adelaide boundary; criteria agreed with partner; limited pilot of approximately 5-10 venues or an annual intake of up to 5.	Small curated list of venues, likely 3-5 in the first round, selected for significance, influence, longevity or cultural contribution.	Limited annual or biennial intake, for example up to 5 venues per round, subject to budget and assessment capacity.
Strengths	Clear Council ownership, accountability and alignment with the Live Music Circuit, Cultural Policy and UNESCO City of Music objectives.	Adds credibility, sector expertise and shared ownership. Reduces the perception that Council is making cultural significant decisions alone.	Creates a high-prestige, tightly curated program. Peer input supports credibility and reduces administrative burden compared with open call.	Most transparent and participatory model. Gives venues, communities and sector stakeholders a clear pathway to nominate places.
Limitations / weaknesses	Highest direct responsibility for Council. May be seen as Council choosing winners unless criteria and rationale are clear.	Requires clear roles, approvals, branding, content ownership and dispute pathways between Council and the partner.	May be perceived as exclusive or less transparent if the selection rationale is not clearly documented and communicated.	Most administratively demanding. Can create high expectations and disappointment where many nominations are received but only a few are recognised.
Governance / assessment	Council-led working group with internal input from Creative City, Heritage, City Experience, Marketing, AEDA and asset teams, also carries higher reputational exposure if recognition is perceived as current endorsement rather than historical recognition.	Joint governance model with partner input, Council approvals and agreed decision-making authority. Requires agreement on responsibility for review, content accuracy and responding to venue changes.	Peer advisory group or expert panel recommends venues for Council or delegated approval. Requires careful framing so peer recognition remains valid over time and does not exclude less visible scenes or communities.	Published criteria, application materials, eligibility checks, peer assessment panel and final approval pathway required. Requires clear intake limits, review periods and dispute management where unsuccessful venues seek reconsideration.
Equity and representation	Council must actively consider under-recognised music histories, including First Nations, multicultural, LGBTQIA+, youth, all-ages, experimental and independent scenes.	Partner expertise can help broaden representation and identify histories beyond the most visible or commercially successful venues.	Strong peer process can surface respected but less publicly visible venues, but panel composition is critical.	Open calls may improve access but requires outreach to ensure under-represented venues and communities are aware and supported to apply.
Relationship with existing programs or initiatives	Must avoid duplication with Heritage Plaques, SA Music Hall of Fame, Discover Music Here decals, AEDA/Experience Adelaide and the Live Music Circuit guide.	Strongest opportunity to align with the UNESCO City of Music Office, SA Music Hall of Fame, MusicSA, ILVA, MDO and existing promotional platforms.	Can complement existing programs by recognising a limited number of places that have strong sector endorsement.	Needs careful positioning so it does not become a grants-style program or duplicate heritage and industry recognition schemes.
Timeframe for Delivery	12–18 months, subject to criteria, governance, permissions and future Council report.	9–15 months, subject to partner confirmation, detailed costing and future Council report	12 months after Council consideration, subject to peer validation, permissions and content development.	18+ months, subject to open call design, assessment process, permissions and future Council report.
Budget / implications	-Highest direct cost to Council. -Requires funding for design, research, writing, permissions, fabrication, installation, digital content, promotion and maintenance. -Bespoke wall-mounted plaques start from approximately \$1,000 each and footpath plaques / inlays from approximately \$1,300 each, excluding broader project costs.	-Moderate cost, with some responsibilities shared with an established partner -Council may fund design, production, installation, coordination and promotion, with partner support for nominations, validation and storytelling. -Additional budget would be required for expert advice, panel review fees, curatorial input and partner coordination. Annual or ongoing costs to be scoped in the next project stage.	-Lower intake controls costs but still requires budget for peer / expert panel coordination, research, permissions, fabrication, installation and communications. -Plaque costs would start from approximately \$1,000 each, or \$1,300 each for footpath treatments, excluding research, panel and content costs. -Ongoing costs depend on whether the model is one-off, annual or periodic.	-Requires recurring budget and staff time for each round, including promotion, administration, assessment, peer review, feedback, permissions and delivery. -Costs would include expert / panel fees, content development, fabrication, installation and communications. -Annual or ongoing costs to be determined in the next stage, with plaque costs starting from approximately \$1,000–\$1,300 each depending on treatment.
Risk implications	Risk sits with Council. Requires a clear process for contested histories, changes in ownership, venue closure, plaque removal and content updates.	Shared risk. Needs agreed escalation pathways, editorial standards and maintenance responsibilities.	Risk of perceived bias or insider recognition. Strong documentation and panel declarations are required.	Risk of over-demand, unsuccessful applicants, lobbying and contested outcomes. Strong criteria and communications are essential.
Validity / change over time	Council carries responsibility for keeping recognition accurate if venues close, relocate or change use. Requires a review cycle and clear removal or amendment process.	Shared governance can help manage changes in sector relevance, audience patterns and venue status, but roles for updates and de-listing must be agreed upfront.	Curated recognition may be more defensible, but can still become dated if peer views, cultural narratives or venue significance shift over time.	Open calls may generate higher expectations and disputes. Requires clear time-bound recognition, periodic review and transparent reasons for inclusion or non-inclusion.

Recommended pathway: A partnered delivery model is likely to be the most suitable pathway for further scoping, subject to Council consideration, detailed costing and confirmation of governance arrangements.

Implementation stages: 1) Council endorsement of a preferred delivery model; 2) confirm purpose, scope and criteria; 3) establish governance and partner roles; 4) update Council on costs, proposed pilot and implementation approach before any rollout; 5) identify pilot venues and secure permissions; 6) develop content, design and digital links; and 7) install and promote plaques or markers.