

# LEAPS AND BOUNDS MUSIC FESTIVAL

Expressions of Interest (EOI)

2026



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## 1. About Leaps and Bounds Music Festival

Leaps and Bounds Music Festival began in 2013 as a City of Yarra initiative to support local live music venues and artists during the winter period. Now held annually, the festival has grown into a key cultural event in Yarra, presenting diverse, venue-based programming that champions local talent and strengthens the city's live music ecosystem.

In response to feedback from venues, Leaps and Bounds will be presented as a ten-day festival in 2026, providing greater flexibility to spread events across days and nights and enabling the inclusion of both funded programming and festival-affiliated events held during the festival period. While direct funding supports live music venues, we know there are many other music themed events that benefit from being part of Leaps and Bounds through a marketing only campaign, while also contributing to the overall energy of the festival. *Think Record fairs, launches and exhibitions.*

In 2026, the festival will bring together venues, artists, bookers and audiences across Yarra's live music precincts to collectively highlight the significance and vibrancy of the municipality's grassroots live music scene.

## 2. Festival dates

Thursday 16 July – Sunday 26 July, 2026

## 3. Participation options

### 3.1 Funded Leaps and Bounds events

Funding supports artist fees and/or production costs and is intended to encourage ambitious, inclusive or innovative programming created specifically for the festival.

Venues may submit **one funded application only**, in one of the following categories:

#### **Category 1 – up to \$3,000**

For smaller-scale or localised programming (e.g. single events or modest showcases).

At EOI stage, only an indicative cost summary is required.

#### **Category 2 – \$3,000 to \$5,000**

For larger or more ambitious programming (e.g. multi-night events or expanded line-ups).

At EOI stage, venues are asked to provide an indicative budget overview. Detailed budgets will be requested from successful applicants.

### 3.2 . Festival-affiliated (non-funded) events

Venues may also nominate events to be included in the Leaps and Bounds program without receiving cash support. These events contribute to the overall scale and diversity of the festival and will be promoted as part of the wider program.

Festival-affiliated events are subject to review for alignment with festival values, dates and programming guidelines.

## 4. Purpose of this EOI

Leaps and Bounds Festival invites Yarra's live music venues to propose new or expanded programming created specifically for the 2026 festival.

Council is seeking Expressions of Interest (EOI) from venues, bookers and producers to develop new and distinctive programming created specifically for Leaps and Bounds 2026. Successful proposals will be supported through festival funding and/or a coordinated marketing campaign that highlights Yarra's music precincts and attracts both new and returning audiences.

## 5. What's changed in 2026

To reduce the administrative burden on venues, in 2026 the EOI process will be in two stages. Stage One of the application is a short submission with a request to submit a high-level concept brief. Stage Two will be by invitation to successful application to submit a more detailed proposal. What this means for venues:

**Stage 1 is Expressions of Interest process:** Venues submit applications of creative concepts and programming intent, not fully locked in events.

**Stage 2 is Confirmation and delivery:** Successful applicants will be invited to Stage 2, which focuses on confirming delivery, not reassessing the concept.

## 6. Opportunities for venues

At a time when live music venues continue to navigate changing audience behaviours and economic pressures, Leaps and Bounds provides funded opportunities for venues to trial new approaches to live music programming and presentation that:

- Build new audiences.
- Re-engage lapsed or returning audiences.
- Offer established audiences something fresh or unexpected.
- Create more accessible and inclusive live music experiences.
- Support young and emerging musicians and audiences.
- Experiment with new genres, formats or collaborations.
- Broaden Yarra's offering of free and affordable live music.

## 7. Who can apply?

To be eligible, applicants must:

- Be a live music venue located within the City of Yarra.
- Have a demonstrated track record of hosting live music.
- Be accessible to a broad range of audiences.
- Demonstrate fair payment of artists in line with industry minimums.
- Have acquitted any previous City of Yarra funding (if applicable).
- Be a registered business or not-for-profit organisation.

Programming must include artists from **at least one** of the following priority groups:

- First Nations artists.
- Women and/or non-binary artists.
- People with disability.
- LGBTQIA+ artists.
- Young people.
- Seniors.

## 8. What we're looking for

Leaps and Bounds prioritises programming that:

- Feels distinctive and festival-specific
- Supports local artists and creative employment
- Creates inclusive and welcoming audience experiences
- Improves accessibility and reduces barriers to participation
- Builds new audiences or re-engages existing audiences
- Strengthens grassroots live music culture in Yarra

## 9. What support is provided

If your proposal is successful, Council support will include:

- Funding to present a Leaps and Bounds-specific event
- and/or inclusion in a festival-wide marketing and promotional campaign
- Profile as part of a collective, city-wide music festival

## 10. How applications are assessed

EOIs are assessed by an independent industry panel against the following criteria:

- a) Festival distinctiveness**  
How does the proposal differ from your regular programming and offer a special festival experience?
- b) Support for priority communities on stage**  
How does the event meaningfully showcase and support Yarra's priority communities as performers?
- c) Audience inclusion and engagement**  
How does the event create a welcoming and inclusive experience for diverse audiences?
- d) Accessibility**  
How does the event reduce barriers to participation and attendance?
- e) Audience development**  
How will the event attract new audiences and/or re-engage core audiences through considered outreach and programming?

f) **Values and culture**

How does the event foster safety, inclusivity and connection while supporting grassroots local music?

*In addition to the criteria above, the panel may also consider:*

- the mix and diversity of programming across the festival period
- geographic spread across Yarra's music precincts
- feasibility relative to the funding category requested

All decisions are final and based on the published criteria and available funding.

## 11. Expressions of interest

### 11.1 Stage 1 EOI – what to submit

At EOI stage, applicants are asked to provide:

- a short description of the proposed event concept
- indicative artists or programming approach (artists may be unconfirmed)
- how the proposal supports priority communities
- how audiences will be engaged and included
- the requested funding category
- indicative costs or budget overview (depending on category)

EOIs may be submitted in written, audio or video format via the online form.

### 11.2 Stage 2 – confirmation and delivery (successful applicants only)

Successful applicants will be invited to Stage 2, which focuses on confirming delivery, not reassessing the concept.

At Stage 2, venues will be required to submit:

- confirmed event title, dates and times
- confirmed artist line-ups
- final budgets (where applicable)
- marketing copy, images and accessibility information

Inclusion in the full festival launch is dependent on receiving complete and accurate information by the stated deadline.

## 12. Timeline – Leaps and Bounds Music Festival 2026

### STAGE 1

**EOIs open:** Tuesday 24 March 2026

**EOIs close:** Midnight Sunday 5 April 2026

**Assessment period:** 6 – 14 April 2026

**Notification of outcomes:** Wednesday 15 April 2026

## STAGE 2

**Final event details & marketing materials due** Wednesday 13 May 2026

**Festival program launch, on sale date and website launch:** Thursday 4 June 2026

### 13. How to Apply

EOIs may be submitted via the online application form, with the option to apply in written, audio or video format.

### 14. Enquiries

For further information and to discuss your proposal, please contact:

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