

2025-2028

Strategic Plan

BE.BENDIGO

Reflecting on our *past* to move forward into the *future*

Be.Bendigo has remained a present force in the local business community. Our business model has been tested on its sustainability over the last decade, and more specifically the last three years by uncertain and changing economic conditions.

Despite these challenges, we've continued to lead in key areas, including the Bendigo Business Excellence Awards, leadership programs, and direct engagement events that deliver real value to our members and partners.

A standout success has been our membership growth. Over the past three years member and partner numbers have grown by 52%. This upward trend reflects the need for local businesses to engage, their desire for support, and their commitment to the Bendigo business community.

To support this growth we've shifted key roles and focus across the business but despite strong engagement on the ground, we've faced significant funding reductions. The withdrawal of government and industry funding has created an unstable financial position. At its peak external funding made up 40% of our revenue.

We acknowledge that this funding has helped us gain traction on programs and advocacy projects, but its unpredictability highlights a core issue: our current model is not financially sustainable. One of the key priorities of the 2025–2028 strategy is to address this.

Our advocacy efforts, once a key strength, have also taken a back seat as we focus on membership growth and cost reduction. Be.Bendigo was previously at the forefront of addressing local business challenges which built strong brand awareness and allowed us to reinvest in our members and partners. It's time to bring advocacy back into focus.



Measuring our Success

| FY | FY23 | FY24 | FY25 |
|--|-------------|-----------|-----------|
| Membership No. | 255 | 320 | 388 |
| Partners No. | 53 | 50 | 58 |
| Member Revenue | \$55,000 | \$71,000 | \$82,000 |
| Partner Revenue | \$164,000 | \$188,000 | \$234,000 |
| Programs & Events, Revenue | \$294,000 | \$304,000 | \$322,000 |
| Cost base | \$1,067,000 | \$917,000 | \$788,000 |
| Govt./Industry Funding (ex. City) | \$350,000 | \$54,000 | \$6,000 |
| % of cost base | 32.80% | 5.90% | 0.80% |

BE.BENDIGO

The voice of our members and partners

We regularly gather feedback from our members and partners through various mediums. It is our responsibility to represent the voice of our business community.



What value Be.Bendigo provides

ONE CENTRAL PLACE:

Be.Bendigo is seen as a central business group and will maintain its role as a professional connection hub.

NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES:

Events that facilitate peer-to-peer connections are highly valued. Continuing to focus on creating spaces for businesses to connect and build relationships is crucial.

SHARING STORIES:

Members appreciate the emphasis on showcasing local business achievements. Sharing stories and challenges helps inspire and engage the community.

BRAND AWARENESS:

The Be.Bendigo brand has improved recognition and attractiveness within the business community. Continuing this trend will further enhance its value.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING:

Providing learning and leadership opportunities is valued by members and will continue as it fills a critical need.

What Be.Bendigo will strive towards

STRATEGIC CLARITY:

There is a need for a clearer strategic direction and purpose with a long term vision for the impact of the business.

ADVOCACY AND INDEPENDENT VOICE:

Increase visible advocacy efforts and ensure an independent voice for business interests, reducing COGB influence for effective advocacy.

EVENT DIVERSITY:

Explore intimate settings and structured formats beyond traditional networking events. This includes diversifying engagement methods to reach non-event-driven businesses.

VARIED SERVICE OFFERINGS:

Offer more tailored services to different business industries to enhance member value, as well as financial sustainability.

BROADEN ENGAGEMENT BEYOND NETWORKING:

Develop a more solutions-focused approach, helping members with local challenges and offering practical business support.

CONSIDER BRAND:

Address perceptions that the name lacks clarity and consider rebranding for clearer positioning as a Chamber of Commerce.

LEADERSHIP ROLE:

Strengthen leadership in driving economic agendas and influencing local policies, with a clear vision for Bendigo's economic future

BROAD BUSINESS SUPPORT HUB:

The evolution towards being more than just a Chamber of Commerce, positioning as a comprehensive business support hub, is seen positively.



Our reach across the Bendigo business community

Be.Bendigo has seen significant growth across various channels.



Growing community

Membership increase of over 50% since 2023



10,000+ followers

Across six social media accounts



Email marketing

Weekly newsletters to a highly engaged audience of over 5,000 contacts



Podcast

Three seasons of Bendigo Business Stories



Media partnerships

Strong relationships with local media including TV, radio & newspaper

BE.BENDIGO

Advocacy in our business community

Be.Bendigo is recognised as a voice for local business in Central Victoria. Advocacy is part of what we do, but right now it is mostly informal and reactive, relying on stakeholder engagement and media activity rather than a clear strategy.

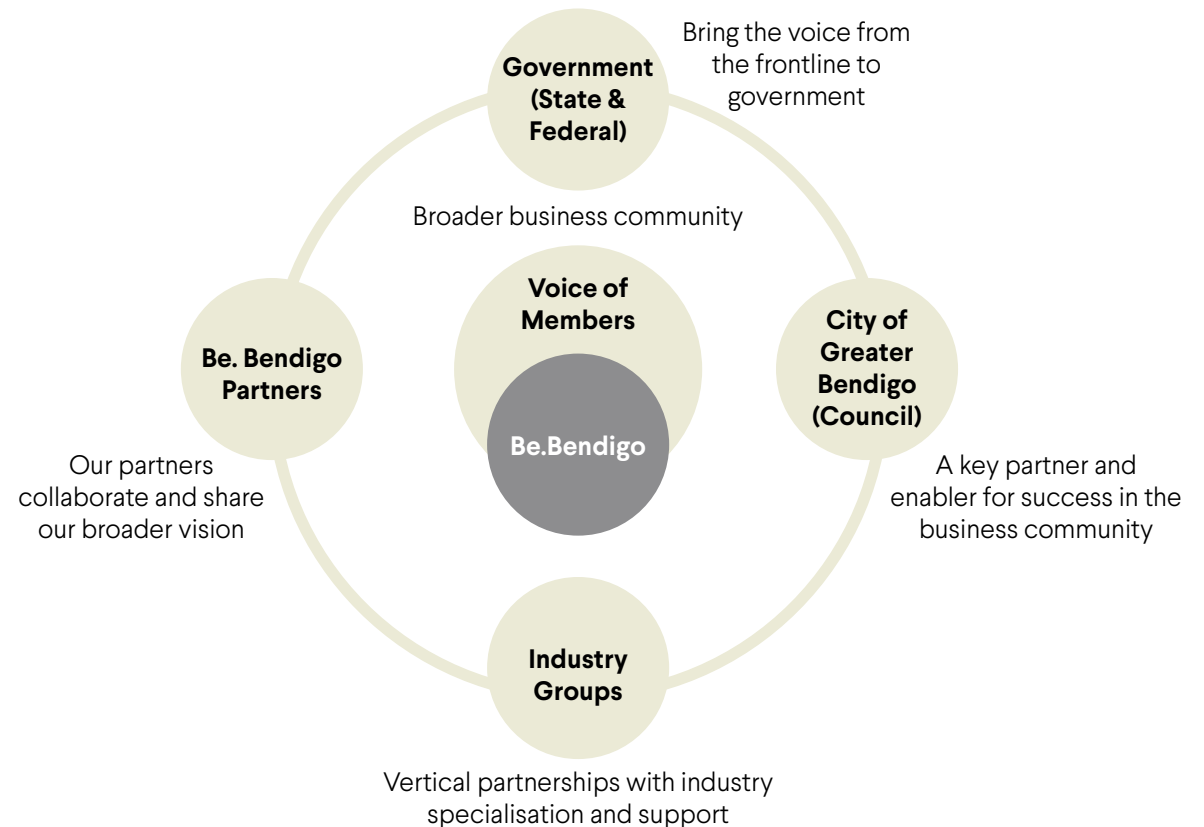
Be.Bendigo operates with a small team and a volunteer board. Our CEO acting as the unofficial spokesperson. Without a dedicated advocacy plan or resources, efforts are ad hoc, responding to issues as they arise. Activities such as meetings with stakeholders, politicians and media are valuable, but they lack the depth of research, policy development and coordinated campaigns.

This approach means we respond well to immediate issues, but we have limited influence on longer-term business policy. Financial pressures have also shifted our focus to revenue and cost reduction, raising concerns that advocacy is being sidelined despite it being a key part of what members value about Be.Bendigo.

Looking ahead we plan to adopt a clear advocacy strategy. This will focus on priority issues, blend proactive and reactive efforts, and align with Be.Bendigo's broader goals - ensuring our advocacy has lasting impact.

www.bebendigo.com.au

Be.Bendigo Advocacy Model



Looking ahead to opportunities

BE.BENDIGO

Values

Unite

We facilitate business connections

Support

We help business

Service

We're here to service
the community

Authenticity

Genuine commitment to
business success

Success Measures

- Member & Partner Growth** > 10% increase year on year
- Member Satisfaction** > Net Promoter Score of 9
- Sustained Profitability** > 5% profit growth



www.bebendigo.com.au

Vision

We aim to elevate and help shape our business community in the Bendigo region.

Purpose

To strengthen the business community by helping to build capability and supporting connection.

Strategic Pillars

- Advocate
- Member and Partner Engagement
- Support Business



Strategic Pillars

ADVOCATE

Be the voice for the business. We champion the needs of local business while recognising some industries may need louder advocacy at times when challenges emerge or opportunities arise.

MEMBER & PARTNER ENGAGEMENT

Create valuable member and partner experiences and products. Our focus is on building lasting relationships with members and partners by creating products and experiences that matter. While we serve the broader business community, we prioritise those with the greatest need.

SUPPORT BUSINESS

Become the 'place to go' for business in our community. If we can't help directly we'll connect business with someone who can. Through our network and services, we offer practical help, education, and opportunities to collaborate and grow.

What will help us build success

DIGITAL, BUT HUMAN

Modernise our approach to managing and engaging our member and partner base. We'll improve member experience with smarter digital tools and streamlined processes. This will lead to better business efficiency to free up time to focus on relationships and engagement.

DATA & INSIGHTS

It is critical we listen to our business community. By capturing data, insights, and feedback we can take informed action. We'll create consistent ways to listen and use tools that make it easy for members and partners to share their voice.

SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS MODEL

Create a business model that can balance economic cycles. We'll strengthen our core revenue streams to provide stability during change. By partnering where it makes sense and managing costs carefully, we can reduce risk and reinvest in initiatives that support our business community.

BE.BENDIGO



From Hayley Tibbett, CEO, Be.Bendigo

The next three years mark a defining period for Be.Bendigo as we strengthen our role as the unifying voice for Bendigo's business community.

Our renewed strategy is grounded in collaboration and shared purpose to bring business, government and community together to deliver meaningful outcomes for our region.

Bendigo's strength lies in its people. By supporting local leaders, championing emerging talent, and creating opportunities for genuine connection, we will continue to build a resilient and united business community. I am excited for the initiatives we have planned to support these goals.

Through our renewed focus on advocacy, Be.Bendigo will ensure the voice of business is

heard in the conversations that shape our future. Through collaboration, we will deliver programs and partnerships that empower, celebrate and sustain our regional city.

The duration of this strategic plan will see us continue to build a Bendigo where business thrives, leadership grows, and community prospers together.