

Study Melbourne Inclusion Program

2026 Funding Application Guidelines

STUDY MELBOURNE



Accessibility

If you would like to receive this publication in an alternative format, email: smip@studymelbourne.vic.gov.au. This document is also available in Word accessible format on the internet at business.vic.gov.au

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1. Supporting international students

Purpose of this document

This document sets down the guidelines for applying for funding under the Victorian Government's **Study Melbourne Inclusion Program (SMIP)**.

Funding under the program is available to organisations working in partnership and provides funding of up to \$30,000.

The SMIP is a Study Melbourne initiative, which supports international students studying at Victorian based higher education providers.

A thriving international education sector

Victoria is a leading destination for international students and has one of the most diverse student populations in the world.

In 2024, Victoria attracted around 330,000 enrolments from over 175 countries. This reflects the outstanding quality of the educational and broader experiences Victoria has to offer.

Victoria is committed to ensuring all students enjoy studying and living in Victoria, feel well supported and have a strong sense of belonging and connectedness to the local community.

Most students are under the age of 25 and many have never travelled outside their home countries until they come here. For many, this is their first experience of living away from their family home.

Promoting the wellbeing of every student

Study Melbourne wants every student who comes here from overseas to have the best possible experience. They become our ambassadors to the world. Every positive story enhances Victoria's reputation as a great place to live, learn, work and do business.

Study Melbourne aims to empower students to have a positive experience in Victoria through inclusive, culturally appropriate and responsive student wellbeing support, engagement programs and sector capacity building.

Study Melbourne works directly with international students, other parts of government, education providers, the business sector and the community to support international students and address issues that affect their wellbeing. We are committed to listening to students' views and responding to their needs. We aim to support greater engagement with students studying with regional providers, with equal access to wellbeing services and empowerment programs.

The Study Melbourne Hub, at 17 Hardware Lane, Melbourne, is our central dedicated space for connecting with and helping students. The Hub provides free information and confidential support to individual students. An emergency support line is available on 1800 056 449.

More information about Study Melbourne can be found on [our website](#).

What contributes to student wellbeing?

The priorities for supporting the wellbeing of international students vary across the student population and can change from year to year. The quality of each student's experience depends on many factors, including:

- overcoming loneliness and social isolation
- strong connection with other students and the local community
- being mentally and physically healthy
- knowing where to go for help and support
- learning basic living skills, such as how to shop and cook for themselves or managing their personal finances
- Securing meaningful part-time work or volunteering opportunities
- being able to learn and practise English
- finding a comfortable and affordable place to live
- not being taken advantage of, for example, in the workplace or when paying for goods or services
- feeling safe
- understanding Australia's multicultural way of life.

Most of all, students tell us that they want to establish friendships and feel like they belong in our community.

2. About the program

What is the Study Melbourne Inclusion Program (SMIP)?

The program provides funding for activities that support and promote the wellbeing of international students and enhance their experience of living in this state.

The SMIP supports post-secondary international students studying at Victorian based universities, TAFEs, private higher education and vocational colleges, English language colleges and other registered training organisations. It does not fund activities that target students studying at higher learning institutions outside of Victoria.

Activities that may be considered for funding can focus on a range of topics, including (but not limited to): mental and physical health; volunteering and leadership; community engagement; arts and culture; health and safety.

Activities which support greater inclusion of women, LGBTIQA+ communities, people of colour and all faiths, people with disability and those from a broad spectrum of socio-economic backgrounds are also encouraged.

What is the program aiming to achieve?

SMIP's goal is for international students to have positive, rewarding and enriching experiences during their time in Victoria.

The program aims to:

- ensure all international students enjoy studying and living in Victoria and feel a strong sense of belonging and connectedness to the local community
- enable capable organisations to deliver high quality activities that improve the wellbeing of post-secondary international students living in Victoria
- fund activities that respond to emerging needs of international student cohorts
- encourage activities that place international students at the centre; genuinely involving them in the design, delivery and review of projects
- build the capacity and capability of Victoria's education ecosystem to offer inclusive and

culturally appropriate services

- increase international students' access to mental and physical support and information services
- increase international students' social connections and create positive opportunities for them to get involved in the local community
- support greater engagement with students studying with regional providers and remotely, with equal access to wellbeing services and empowerment programs.

What level of funding is available?

The SMIP provides funding of up to \$30,000 for organisations working in partnership to deliver activities that support and promote the wellbeing of international students.

When can you apply?

There will be one round of funding per calendar year for the SMIP.

Up-to-date information about funding rounds, including opening and closing dates and information webinars, will be promoted ahead of each funding round and listed on the [Study Melbourne webpage](#).

Please note: late applications will not be accepted.

3. Program eligibility and requirements

An activity must be undertaken by two or more organisations. Each application must be submitted by one lead applicant. This is usually the organisation with the main coordinating role in the partnership.

Funded organisations must comply with all applicable laws and Departmental policies, including health directives.

All applications must demonstrate how international students will be involved in the design, delivery and/or review of the activity. This could be achieved in a number of ways, for example by engaging with international students or student groups to obtain their views, by involving them in the oversight of the activity, or by establishing a partnership with student organisations or associations.

Who can apply?

To be eligible to apply for funding under the SMIP, the lead applicant **must** satisfy these three requirements:

- Be a legal entity and operate in Victoria
- Have an Australian Business Number (ABN) operating as a legal entity for at least three years.
- Have appropriate insurance cover arranged for the activity being proposed.

Organisations that can apply include:

- Student organisations and associations
- Education providers
- Not-for-profit organisations
- Industry associations
- Local government organisations
- Businesses.

Who cannot apply?

- Individuals
- Sole traders
- An organisation involved in legal proceedings relating to winding up its operations in insolvency (this includes any legal bankruptcy-related actions against the organisation's directors or officers).

Partnership considerations

- An activity must be undertaken by two or more organisations. Applicants and their partner/s must be entirely separate entities. They must not be owned by the same parent company, share governance, or have common directors.
- All applications must provide evidence of the partnership arrangement between the organisations (which may be in the form of a partnership agreement and a letter of support), and include information about the roles and responsibilities of each of the organisations involved in the activity and any contribution for the activity.
- Project partnerships that include at least one education provider and/or student group or association will be highly regarded.

What are we looking for?

To be eligible for funding, your proposed activity **must** satisfy these six requirements:

- Promote and support the wellbeing of international students by addressing some or all of the aims of the SMIP
- Support post-secondary international students studying at Victorian based higher education institutions
- Involve collaboration or engagement with international students living in Victoria
- Offer genuine opportunities for international students to contribute to the design, delivery and review of funded activities
- Increase awareness in the community and among support services about the needs of international students
- Strengthen the capacity of services and education providers to respond to the needs of international students.

We also **encourage** applications for activities that:

- will reach a large number of students and be delivered across more than one education provider (for example, more than one university, college or registered training provider, or a combination of these providers)
- are innovative in their approach and/or extend the level of support available to international students
- are designed to reach students from a number of different cultural backgrounds
- respond to the language, cultural and geographic needs of international students (for example, by addressing specific issues for students living in regional Victoria)
- support greater inclusion of women, LGBTIQ+ communities, people of colour and all faiths, people with a disability, and those from a broad spectrum of socio-economic backgrounds
- increase participation by international students in programs that improve their leadership capability and address priority issues affecting the wellbeing of international students, such as mental and sexual health, safety, employment and accommodation
- include funding contributions from non-government sources.

What will NOT be funded by the SMIP?

This program will not fund:

- pre-existing staff and salaries
- activities designed to offset the costs of existing operations, to meet regulatory requirements, or that duplicate existing services that would best be funded by other government programs
- recurrent operating costs
- budget deficits
- capital expenditure
- competitions, commercial or fundraising activities
- expenses of overseas visitors
- alcohol purchased for functions or events
- religious or political activities
- research and applied research activities
- activities that already have been completed or are underway before the start of a funding agreement, other than in exceptional circumstances and with prior written approval from Study Melbourne.

Co-contribution requirements

All applications for SMIP funding must provide a minimum co-contribution of at least half of the value of the requested funding (e.g. applications for a \$20,000 grant must include a co-contribution of at least \$10,000). This can be made up of cash and/ or in-kind contributions from the applicant or the lead applicant and activity partner organisations.

In-kind (non-cash) services, equipment and facilities can form part of the total co-contribution the partners provide to the activity. These may include: salaried time, staff members, administration/ office costs, materials and promotional support. More information about what we accept as in-kind contributions and how to give them a dollar value is provided in the Activity Budget Forecast template that needs to be completed as part of the application process.

Applications that include co-contributions from other state or federal government funding programs will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Other funding considerations

- Incomplete applications will not be accepted. Please ensure that you upload all the required documents and your application addresses the program eligibility requirements.
- Submitting an application does not guarantee your activity will be funded. This is a competitive application process and there is likely to be strong demand for funding. Study Melbourne will consider each application on its individual merits and also compare it with activities proposed by other applicants.
- No application for funding will be approved and no activity can be undertaken unless two or more organisations have agreed to deliver the activity.
- A funded activity must be completed within 12 months, with project reporting to be submitted to Study Melbourne at its completion.
- Other than in exceptional circumstances, activities will take place in Victoria.
- From time to time, Study Melbourne may fund activities outside of funding rounds to address urgent priority issues affecting student wellbeing.
- Study Melbourne reserves the right to seek proposals from organisations that have not applied during formal funding rounds.
- The decisions Study Melbourne makes will depend on available funding.
- Study Melbourne reserves the right not to proceed with funding at any stage in the process.

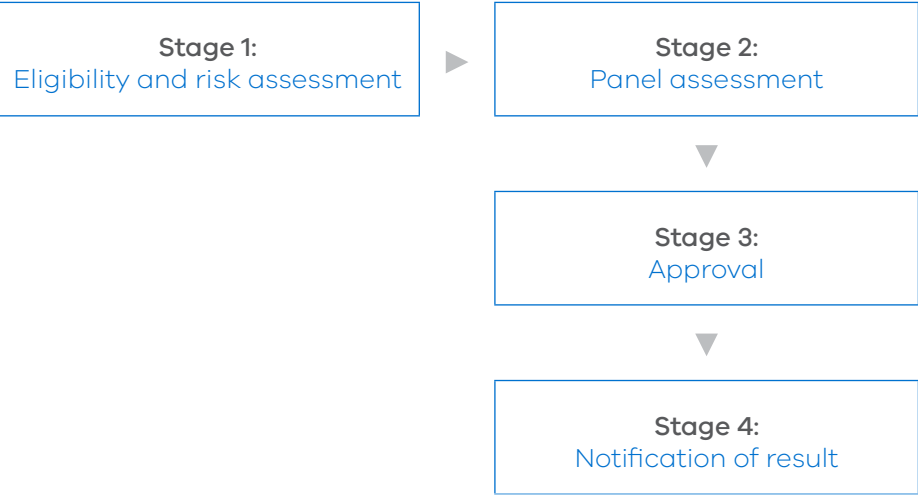
4. How to apply

Follow the five steps below to complete and submit an online application for the Study Melbourne Inclusion Program (SMIP) via <https://business.vic.gov.au>.

STEP 1	PLAN: Check the opening and closing dates for the next funding round. Plan ahead so you don't miss the deadline.
STEP 2	REGISTER: Set up an online account with Business Victoria to access the SMIP's online application form and submission portal. An account is easy to set up. Visit www.businessvic.secure.force.com/GrantsPortalLogin and follow the prompts to 'Create an Account'.
STEP 3	WRITE: Complete the online application form for the Study Melbourne Inclusion Program at https://business.vic.gov.au/grants-and-programs/study-melbourne-inclusion-program . Helpful tips: As part of your application you will be required to complete an Action Plan template, to map out the details of your activity, including how it will be delivered and reviewed. The application must be submitted in the name of the organisation with the main coordinating role in the partnership. You only need to provide contact details for the lead applicant. Draft your responses to the questions in a separate document, then cut and paste your prepared answers into the fields in the online template. This reduces the risk of losing information in the online template. If a question does not apply to your activity or situation, clearly explain that in your response. Check your draft application against the Top 10 Tips For A Successful SMIP Application .
STEP 4	PROVIDE EVIDENCE: Prepare and upload the necessary supporting documents at the end of the completed online application form. SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION: Need to be clearly labelled and cross-referenced with your application form. They include: • Partnership documents – a letter of support from each of your partners, and/or copies of written partnership agreements. • An activity budget forecast – this must identify all costs and how they will be covered, including cash and in-kind contributions from your organisation and any partners. • An activity plan template – please map out the details of your activity, including how it will be delivered and reviewed. • Insurance – show your organisation has the necessary insurance cover to undertake the activity. • Financial records – if applying for more than \$50,000 in funding, you must include copies of your organisation's financial reports for the last three financial years. Partner organisations making significant cash or in-kind contributions may also be asked to provide their financial reports for the last three financial years.
STEP 5	SUBMIT: Submit the application online on or before 11:59pm on the closing date . Late submissions to formal funding rounds will not be accepted. Applications submitted outside of the https://business.vic.gov.au website will not be considered. If you are having trouble setting up a Business Victoria account or submitting your application, please contact Business Victoria staff for assistance. Include email/phone.

5. How applications will be assessed

Applications will be assessed using the four-stage process below. It may take 8 to 12 weeks from the closing date until a formal funding agreement is signed.



Stage 1: Study Melbourne program staff will review applications to ensure the organisation and the proposed activity are eligible for funding under the SMIP.

Stage 2: A panel will then consider all eligible applications. Study Melbourne may invite individuals with subject matter expertise, who come from other organisations and government agencies, to provide advice if required.

The panel will:

- review applications individually and score them according to the assessment criteria
- compare them with the value and benefits offered by other applications
- develop a list of applications they recommend be approved, subject to funding being available.

Stage 3: Recommended applications will be considered for funding approval.

Stage 4: Each applicant will be notified of the outcome of their application, and successful applicants will receive a Letter of Offer.

Due Diligence Assessments

Applicants are subject to a risk assessment which verifies business details provided with the Australian Business Register, Australian Securities and Investment Commission, Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commissioner, Consumer Affairs Victoria and/or other applicable regulator.

Any of the following circumstances may be taken into consideration in any decision whether to award a grant:

- Financial standing of the applicant
- Previous performance of State government grants
- Any adverse findings by a regulator regarding an applicant;
- An applicant is placed under external administration;
- There is a petition to wind up or deregister the applicant;
- The applicant is or becomes deregistered or unregistered (including cancellation or lapse in registration); and

- Whether the applicant has failed to meet key contractual obligations for previous grant agreements with the State. Note: as appropriate, delays due to COVID-19 restrictions and responses will be taken into consideration at the Department’s discretion.

The Department may at any time, remove an applicant from the application and assessment process, if in the Department’s opinion, association with the applicant may bring the Department, a Minister or the State of Victoria into disrepute.

Assessment criteria

Panel Members will be guided by the questions provided below when assessing Study Melbourne Inclusion Program (SMIP) applications. Each application will be given a point score against the seven main questions and weighted accordingly.

1. Event/Activity Description (20% Weighting)	The panel may consider: • whether the proposal is cost effective and represents value for money; • whether the proposed activity is new and innovative. Does it build on or extend existing approaches OR does it duplicate existing services or activities; and • whether the application’s activity and budget plans are thorough, logical and realistic.
2. Student issues to be addressed through the project (15% Weighting)	The panel may consider: • whether the applicant has properly articulated the wellbeing issue/s being addressed; • if the applicant has described how or why their project will address those issues; • whether there are any gaps in logic or issues with how the activity addresses student needs; and • what the likely immediate and long-term benefits would be for international students in Victoria.
3. Describe who the project is aiming to attract as participants (15% Weighting)	The panel may consider: • the number of students that will be supported; • whether international students will be genuinely involved in the design, delivery and evaluation of the activity; • whether the proposed activity has considered the cultural and language needs of students; and • whether the project will be open to all international students to participate, or target students from particular education providers or cultural groups.
4. Outline any ways the activity will support the wider international educational community in Victoria (15% Weighting)	The panel may consider: • the likely response the proposed activity would receive from the international education sector and students; • whether the activity will improve the leadership capability of international students; • the potential for building the capacity of international student groups and organisations; and • if feasible, whether the activity will reach and support students in regional Victorian locations.

5. Describe how the organisation intends to manage the delivery of this activity (15% Weighting)	The panel may consider whether the applicant and activity partners: • have a clearly established partnership to deliver the project, and whether they are suitable to the delivery of the proposed activities; • have defined the relevant roles and responsibilities to deliver the project; • have the resources to deliver the activity, manage the funding, and report on the progress and outcomes; and • have experience in the international education sector and/or working with international students.
6. How will the organisation record progress and report the end results? (10% Weighting)	The panel may consider: • whether the activity and its intended outcomes have been well considered; • what, if any, evaluations will be undertaken as a way of measuring project success; • whether funding has been allocated in the applicant’s budget plan for monitoring and evaluation activities i.e. student surveys; and • whether the lead applicant has outlined any relevant experience in the satisfactory acquittal of external funding.
7. How does the organisation intend to promote Study Melbourne as part of the activity? (10% Weighting)	The panel may consider: • whether the applicant has provided a detailed approach towards marketing and promotion of their project; • whether funding has been allocated in the applicant’s budget plan for marketing activities and/or has outlined any in-house marketing expertise; • whether there are marketing and communication channels which have not been considered; and • whether the promotions intended for Study Melbourne are appropriate.

6. If your application is approved

Your organisation will be sent a formal **Letter of Offer**.

- You will have two weeks to accept the offer to enter into a legal funding agreement with the State of Victoria, through the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (DJSIR). The funding agreement will set out the agreed terms and conditions, how and when you will receive the funding and what you will be expected to achieve in return for the funding.
- The funding agreement will be between the lead applicant and the State of Victoria through DJSIR. If you have activity partners, they will not be parties to the funding agreement, though you may be asked to provide supporting documents from the partners as part of the application process.
- You will have 12 months from the date of the funding agreement to deliver the activity. In exceptional circumstances, DJSIR may agree to allow a longer timeframe to complete the activity and may consider multi-year funding.

7. Additional information

Your information will be confidential

To the extent permitted by law, the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (DJSIR) will treat your application as confidential. If required, you agree to allow DJSIR to provide copies to other government agencies or external experts for review as part of the assessment process.

Sometimes we see opportunities to link up two or more applicants so they can partner to develop a stronger, joint proposal. You agree to allow DJSIR to share your name and contact details with other applicants for this purpose. Please advise us if you do not wish this to happen.

Funding decisions are final

Decisions made by the Minister for Economic Growth in how we allocate funding under the Study Melbourne Inclusion Program are final. Study Melbourne reserves the right to allocate funds outside the formal funding rounds in exceptional circumstances, such as urgently needing to address a priority issue that affects student wellbeing.

Promoting Study Melbourne

All funded activities must be conducted under the Study Melbourne brand. You will need to display the Study Melbourne logo on promotional and information materials and at events relating to the activity.

Logos and brand guidelines will be supplied to each successful applicant once their funding agreement has been executed.

Absolute discretion

The Department's decisions on all matters pertaining to the award of grant funding under this Program are at the Department's absolute discretion. This includes not making any funding available, approving a lesser amount than that applied for and amending funding conditions prior to executing a grant agreement without notice.

The Department reserves the right to request the applicant provide further information should it be deemed necessary.

The Department reserves the right to amend these guidelines and the application terms at any time as it deems appropriate.

Further information and advice

Websites

<https://business.vic.gov.au/grants-and-programs/study-melbourne-inclusion-program> – provides up-to-date information about the SMIP, including dates for funding rounds, and the online application forms and templates.

www.studymelbourne.vic.gov.au – provides information for international students in Victoria, including other support programs such as the Study Melbourne Empowered Series, Study Melbourne Hub and International Student Employment and Accommodation Legal Service.

Frequently Asked Questions

If you have any questions about the SMIP, these guidelines or the application process, please refer to the **Frequently Ask Questions (FAQ) page**: <https://business.vic.gov.au/grants-and-programs/study-melbourne-inclusion-program/faqs>

Examples of activities that have been funded by the SMIP in the past can be found on the FAQ page. If you still have questions, please contact the program team.

Subscribe

Information will be available for potential applicants during the year, including information sessions and webinars, advertised via the Study Melbourne International Education Insider. Subscribe to the Newsletter: <https://studymelbourne.vic.gov.au/about-study-melbourne/subscribe>.

Contact

A member of the SMIP team can be contacted by emailing: smip@studymelbourne.vic.gov.au.

