

OFFICIAL

SHOP LOCAL BUSINESS FUND

PROGRAM GUIDELINES



Jobs, Skills,
Industry
and Regions

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Table of Contents

Table of Contents.....	1
1. Program Overview.....	1
1.1 About the Program.....	1
1.2 Program objectives.....	1
1.3 Program outcomes	1
2. Available Funding	1
2.1 Grant funding.....	1
3. Applicant Eligibility	2
3.1 Eligible applicants	2
3.2 Authorised representative	2
4. What will be funded	3
4.1 Project eligibility.....	3
4.2 Eligible activities & expenses.....	3
4.3 Ineligible activities & expenses	4
4.4 Project duration	4
5. How to apply	4
5.1 Key dates.....	4
5.2 Submitting an application.....	4
6. Assessment.....	5
6.1 Assessment process	5
6.2 Assessment criteria	5
6.3 Due Diligence checks.....	6
7. Conditions of Funding.....	7
7.1 Grant offer and terms	7
7.2 Grant payments	8
7.2.1 GST.....	8
7.2.2 Eftsure bank account verification.....	8
7.3 Deliverables at project completion	8
7.4 Publicity/acknowledgement of support.....	9



7.5 Program evaluation.....9

8. Privacy Statement.....9

9. Department Probity and Decision-making10

9.1 Conflicts of interest..... 11

9.2 Complaints 11

10. Record keeping for recipients and Audit 11

11. Inaccurate, false or misleading information..... 12

12. Further information 12

1. Program Overview

1.1 About the Program

The Shop Local Business Fund will provide grant funding to local business associations (inclusive of trader groups, business chambers and industry organisations) and local councils to support Victorian small businesses to grow their networks, capability and trade and celebrate and promote their achievements.

The program reflects the Victorian Government's ongoing support for small and family businesses and commitment to this program in the 2026-27 State Budget.

1.2 Program objectives

The objectives of the program are to support local business associations and councils to:

- Celebrate and promote the offerings and achievements of small and family businesses
- Support place-based activations that help increase business activity
- Support small businesses to grow their business capability
- Build the capability of local business associations to support delivery of services to their members.

1.3 Program outcomes

The program is expected to support the following outcomes:

- Business associations and/or local councils have better capability to support and promote small businesses
- Small businesses grow their networks, capability and trade and are more connected with business associations and/or local councils.

2. Available Funding

2.1 Grant funding

Applicants may apply for one grant of \$5,000 (exclusive of GST).

Funding will be made available until the total funding allocation has been exhausted. This means that the program may close earlier, if over-subscribed.

3. Applicant Eligibility

3.1 Eligible applicants

To be eligible, applicants must hold a current Australian Business Number (ABN) and meet the following criteria:

- Be a business association that is based in Victoria, operating only within the state or as the Victorian chapter of a national organisation¹, and:
 - be a not-for-profit member organisation that supports small businesses
 - have the core purpose of acting for its members
 - be registered with the responsible federal or state regulator².

OR

- Be a Victorian local government authority.

3.2 Authorised representative

For the purposes of this program the following definitions apply:

Authorised representative the person applying for the grant must be authorised to submit the application and agree to the terms and conditions of the grant on behalf of the Applicant. This must be a person authorised to execute contracts and legally bind the applicant.

Depending on the entity type, the following people are authorised representatives and can apply on behalf of the business association or local council:

- Incorporated associations: an authorised office holder
- Companies: a director listed at the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) or Register of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporations
- Local Council: staff that are formally delegated to enter into binding funding agreements.

¹ The dedicated Victorian chapter of a business chamber or trader group that operates Australia-wide is eligible, providing it operates solely in Victoria for Victorian businesses.

² Verification of business details provided may be undertaken with the Australian Business Register, Australian Securities and Investment Commission, Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission, Consumer Affairs Victoria and other applicable regulators.

4. What will be funded

The program will fund projects that support Victorian small businesses to grow their networks, capability and trade and celebrate and promote their achievements.

The Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (Department) reserves the right to determine eligible activities and expenditure in alignment with these program guidelines.

4.1 Project eligibility

Projects must benefit small businesses that operate in Victoria, with activities delivered that are consistent with this program's objectives and eligible activities and expenses.

4.2 Eligible activities & expenses

The grant must be spent on eligible activities and expenses delivered for the benefit of Victorian businesses only and that support the program objectives.

Eligible activities that benefit local businesses may include:

- Business showcase and promotional events, including local business expos, awards and shop local campaigns to build community awareness and trade
- Website and other digital promotional activities to drive trade and boost activation for the relevant business cohort
- Business knowledge development, including through training, short courses, workshops and webinars either in-person and/or online
- Business continuity development, including strategic planning, mental health and wellbeing initiatives and business resilience planning
- Professional development of business associations to better serve their members, through improved governance and strategic planning and delivery training initiatives.

Eligible expenses are costs directly attributable towards the project and may include:

- New resource development, including digital content development costs
- Expert trainer or speaker engagement, including in language services
- Venue-hire, catering and equipment hire (i.e. microphones, lecterns, Audio-Visuals) up to no more than 10% of grant value
- Administration and marketing of activities being offered up to no more than 10% of grant value.

4.3 Ineligible activities & expenses

Activities that will not be funded include:

- Projects or expenses incurred prior to a grant agreement being executed
- Business-as-usual operating expenses, unless a percentage of such expense is deemed an eligible expense in advance by the Department
- Wages to existing staff or contractors
- Activities already funded via a local Special Rate Levy/Charge
- Activities that have already received government funding support
- Purchase or construction of property and/or assets
- Any other expenditure as determined by the Department that do not meet program objectives.

4.4 Project duration

Projects are expected to be **completed by 31 March 2027**.

Applicants will be required to supply project specific dates that fit within this timeframe, as part of their application.

5. How to apply

5.1 Key dates

Key dates are as follows:

- **Applications open:** 3 September 2026
- **Applications close:** 4:00pm on 30 September 2026.

Please note that late applications will not be accepted.

The Program may close earlier than the closing date, if over-subscribed.

5.2 Submitting an application

Applicants should complete the following steps to apply:

1. Carefully read these Program Guidelines and the 'Frequently Asked Questions' found on the [program website](#).
2. Submit the application online via the 'Apply now' button on the Program webpage. The application must be submitted by an authorised representative of the business association or local council (refer to section 3.2 Applicant Eligibility), as they must accept and agree to be bound by the terms and conditions of the grant (refer to section 7 for further details).
3. Ensure you receive an email confirmation of application submission. Please check spam/junk mail if the confirmation email cannot be seen in your inbox.

All questions in the application form must be completed.

Applicants will be required to declare in the application form that all information in their application is true and correct.

Only final applications that are lodged with the Department will be considered and assessed. Applications that are still in 'draft' and have not been submitted upon program close will not be assessed.

The Department may contact applicants to seek further details to inform the assessment process.

6. Assessment

6.1 Assessment process

The following assessment process will be followed:

1. Applications will be assessed against the eligibility and assessment criteria (at sections 3.1 and 6.2).
2. Applications that are assessed as being of sufficient quality by the Department will be recommended for funding.
3. Applications may undergo due diligence checks, including with other Victorian Government departments as required, which may be considered in the assessment process.
4. Funding approvals will be made by the appropriate Department executive under the authority of the Minister for Small and Family Business.

6.2 Assessment criteria

Eligible applications will be assessed on how well they meet the assessment criteria as outlined below and the value for money of the project to meet program outcomes for the Victorian Government.

Applicants will be asked to respond to the criteria and considerations (columns 1 and 2).

An application must address each assessment criterion and make a case for funding that can be substantiated.

Further information may be sought from applicants if required.

Assessment criteria	Criteria considerations
1. Project alignment with the program objectives and the potential to contribute to program outcomes	Applicants are required to: • Demonstrate how well the project aligns with one or more of the program objectives (Section 1.2) and has the potential to contribute to program outcomes (Section 1.3) • Identify the small business cohort that will benefit from the project and describe how the project meets their needs. • Identify the types of project activities to be delivered and the target group(s) • Describe the expected reach of the activity to support businesses and the ability to maximise the number of participating small businesses.
2. Project readiness and the capability of to deliver the project	Applicants are required to demonstrate: • Project delivery can be completed by no later than 31 March 2027 • Prior record of the successful delivery of projects to Victorian small businesses • Quality of delivery planning, including the following information: ○ project activities to be delivered ○ grant expenditure and costs ○ key dates for project deliverables ○ target audience ○ project location ○ resourcing and identification of support and delivery partners/potential suppliers ○ communications approach.

6.3 Due Diligence checks

Applications may be subject to due diligence checks to enable the Department to assess the risks associated with the application.



Such checks may include:

- whether the proposal has received funding through other Victorian Government programs
- applicant's track-record in delivering similar projects
- the delivery performance of other grants contracted with the Victorian Government and whether the applicant has failed to meet key contractual obligations
- the potential for reputational risk to the State.

Outcomes from such assessments may be taken into account in any decision to recommend or award a grant and in contracting with successful applicants.

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.

7. Conditions of Funding

7.1 Grant offer and terms

As part of the application process, an authorised representative from the applicant must accept and agree to be bound by the terms and conditions of grant in the application form and these guidelines. By completing the application form the applicant is making an offer to the department and will be bound by the terms of the offer if accepted by the department.

If your application is successful, the Department will notify you via an Email of Acceptance. This Email of Acceptance will form an agreement between you and the Department on the terms contained in your application, the Email of Acceptance, these guidelines and the conditions of grant in the application form. An authorised representative of the applicant will need to acknowledge the Email of Acceptance.

You must complete the project and expend grant monies by 31 March 2027. Any unspent funds must be returned to the Department unless otherwise agreed by the Department.

Funds must be spent on the project/items as described in the application.

Further conditions of the grant will be outlined in the application form.

7.2. Grant payments

Grant recipients will be required to actively manage and deliver projects.

Payments will be made in two instalments, as follows:

- 80% on the Email of Acceptance being acknowledged by the applicant and provision of a valid tax invoice
- 20% upon project completion and provision of all required documentation, inclusive of a project completion report, evidence of delivery and a valid tax invoice, to the satisfaction of the Department.

Payments will be made to the applicant's nominated bank account after all requirements are met to the satisfaction of the Department.

7.2.1 GST

The Department will add Goods and Services Tax (GST) to your grant payment if you are registered for the GST, where applicable. For example, if the approved funding is \$5,000 GST exclusive, the Department will process payments totalling \$5,500 (\$5,000 GST exclusive funding + \$500 GST).

The Department will not add GST to your grant payment if you are not registered for GST or if you are a local council.

7.2.2 Eftsure bank account verification

Prior to grant payments being issued, the Department will use Eftsure software for verification of bank details. Eftsure is an Australian digital software company that delivers real time payment verification assurance to payment issuers. It is used to help reduce payment fraud and errors by ensuring electronic funds transfers go to the right payees. For more information on Eftsure and how it securely verifies bank details, please visit the Eftsure website.

Successful applicants will be provided further information on how this process works and what is required of them.

7.3 Deliverables at project completion

Grant recipients will be required to report by 31 March 2027 on the outcomes of their project and contribute information and data about the funded project to the Department for the evaluation of the program.

Grant recipients may be required to provide copies of supporting documentation to evidence reported project expenditure and to return any unspent funds.

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

7.4 Publicity/acknowledgement of support

Grant recipients must co-operate with the Department in relation to all publicity and promotion of the grant and project.

The Department requires grant recipients to acknowledge the Victorian Government's support of the project on marketing and promotional materials, publications, media releases and appropriate signage, as specified and approved in advance by the Department.

The Department will supply the grant recipient instructions and guidance on the use of logos, associated brand guidelines, and the acknowledging the funding support. Supporting information for grant recipients from this program can be found [here](#).

Grant recipients must obtain written approval from the Department before making public announcements about the grant.

The Department may publicise the project and benefits accruing to a grant recipient associated with the grant and the State's support for the project. The Department may include the name of the grant recipient and the amount of funding granted in any publicity material and in the Department's annual report.

7.5 Program evaluation

Grant recipients may be required to provide additional information to the Department in relation to the evaluation of the program or participate in program evaluation activities initiated by the Department, for a nominated period after program completion.

Program evaluation is critical to the Department in understanding program impact, supporting continuous improvement in program design and delivery, and delivering effective grant program outcomes for Victoria.

8. Privacy Statement

Any personal information provided for this program will be collected and used by the Department for the purposes of assessing eligibility, program administration, program review and evaluation.

The Department completes a range of eligibility assessments that may include data matching to clarify the accuracy and quality of information supplied. This is part of our auditing and monitoring processes and for confirming eligibility across this program.

In assessing an application for the program as well as in any audit or evaluation of a successful grant, it may be necessary to share personal information with State and Commonwealth Government departments and agencies, as well as other external experts. If personal information about a third party is included in the application, the applicant must ensure the third party is aware of and consents to the contents of this privacy statement.

The Department collects demographic information for economic reporting purposes. No personal information is used in reporting; all reports are presented with aggregated data.

Any personal information about the applicant or a third party will be collected, held, managed, used, disclosed, or transferred in accordance with the provisions of the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014* (Vic) and other applicable laws.

Enquiries about access or correction to your personal information can be emailed to events@business.vic.gov.au.

Other concerns regarding the privacy of personal information, can be emailed to the Department's Privacy Unit at privacy@ecodev.vic.gov.au. The Department's privacy policy is also available by emailing the Department's Privacy Unit.

9. Department Probity and Decision-making

The Victorian Government makes every effort to ensure the grant application and assessment process is fair and undertaken in line with the published program guidelines.

The Department's decisions on all matters pertaining to the award of funding under this program are at the Department's absolute discretion. All decisions made under this program are final, including:

- decisions on any aspect of the funding application, eligibility and assessment process or funding amount
- any decision to offer or award a grant under this program
- amending funding conditions without notice
- any decision to withdraw the offer or cancel the grant funding agreement.

These guidelines and application terms may be changed from time to time, within the discretion of the Department and the changes will apply to your application.

The Department may request the applicant provide further information should it be necessary to assess an application to the program's policy objectives.

9.1 Conflicts of interest

Victorian Government staff are required to act in accord with the Code of Conduct for Victorian Public Sector Employees (Section 61) issued under the *Public Administration Act 2004* (Vic). This includes an obligation to avoid conflicts of interest wherever possible and declare and manage any conflicts of interest that cannot be avoided.

Similar obligations apply to councillors, members of council staff and external members of delegated committees under the *Local Government Act 2020* (Vic). In addition disclosure and management requirements apply, including as required by each council's Governance Rules.

Applicants must advise the Department of any actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest they may have relating to a project for which they have applied for funding.

9.2 Complaints

If an applicant would like to lodge a complaint or provide feedback to the Department about the process for a grant application, requests can be made via this online [form](#) or by sending a written request to events@business.vic.gov.au.

Requests can be made in relation to the application process and adherence to these guidelines. Re-assessment of an application or overturning of a funding decision for a merit-based grant, will not be considered through the complaints process.

Once your complaint has been received by the Department, it will be acknowledged within 2 working days and provided to the review team to be resolved.

Your complaint will be resolved within 28 business days unless further investigation is required. If further investigation is required, you may be contacted by phone or email asking for additional information.

10. Record keeping for recipients and Audit

Grant recipients must keep proper accounts as required by law and in accordance with the terms and conditions of the grant agreement.

Recipients may be subject to audit and will be required to retain records following completion of the project and provide access and produce evidence (such as financial reports, invoices and documentation to demonstrate impact) and assist the Department, its representatives, and the Auditor General of Victoria with the conduct of the audit, as required. This may occur for up to four years from the date of program close (ie. four years from 30 September 2026).

11. Inaccurate, false or misleading information

By signing the application form, you are declaring that the information provided in the application form and supporting documentation is accurate and not false or misleading about a material fact.

If any information in the application is found to be inaccurate, false or misleading (as determined by the department in its discretion), or the grant payment is not applied in accordance with the terms of funding as set out in these guidelines and the application, the grant payment will be repayable and the department reserves the right to take action to recover grant funds in these circumstances, and refer the applicant to regulatory agencies, police or the other law enforcement agency where there may be suspected fraud.

Providing inaccurate, false or misleading information may result in an offence being committed and serious penalties may apply.

12. Further information

Further information may be obtained at business.vic.gov.au or by contacting Business Victoria at events@business.vic.gov.au or by phoning 13 22 15.