

Aboriginal Business Support Program

Guidelines

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the traditional Aboriginal owners of country throughout Victoria, their ongoing connection to this land and we pay our respects to their culture and their Elders past, present and future.

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1. Program Summary

1.1. About the Program

The *Victorian Aboriginal Business Support Program* provides grants to support Aboriginal businesses to access activities and services that contribute to the operation of the businesses and help them to be more operationally and financially sustainable.

The Program reflects the Aboriginal community focus on Connection to culture and Country and the Victorian Government's commitment to self-determination and economic inclusion.

Funding of between \$5,000 and \$10,000 is available per successful applicant.

1.2. Program Objectives

The objectives of this Program are to:

- support Aboriginal businesses to access capital, information and expertise
- increase the skills and capability of Aboriginal business owners and their employees
- support business improvement leading to the sustainability and overall competitiveness of the Aboriginal business.

1.3. Program Outcomes

The *Victorian Aboriginal Business Support Program* is part of the broader *Victorian Aboriginal Business Investment Program* which has the following intended outcomes:

- Aboriginal business owners have increased business capability
- Aboriginal businesses have more resources to support business growth
- more Aboriginal people are becoming economically independent
- Aboriginal community enterprises have increased ability to attract more investment
- Aboriginal communities have more opportunities to participate in economic activity.

2. Applicant Eligibility

3. Available Funding

Applicants may seek a minimum of \$5,000 and up to a maximum of \$10,000 in grant funding per ABN, for eligible activities under the program.

2.1. Eligible Applicants

Applicants applying to this program must meet all of the following criteria:

- a) be an Aboriginal owned and operated business¹
- b) be based in Victoria and have an economic connection to regional Victoria²
- c) hold a current Australian Business Number (ABN)
- d) be registered for GST
- e) be registered with the responsible federal or state regulator³.

2.2. Ineligible Applicants

The following are not eligible to apply:

- not-for-profit organisations
- unincorporated associations
- Commonwealth, state and local government agencies or bodies.

4. Program Timeline

Applications Open and Close dates	22 July to 6 September (5.00pm)
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Outcomes Announced	October 2024 onwards
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Grant Agreements Executed	October 2024 onwards
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Completion	All activities must be completed by 31 May 2025
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1. An Aboriginal business is one where it is majority Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander-owned and operated. Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people must own and operate at least 51% of the business. Verification that the business is an Aboriginal business may be undertaken with Aboriginal organisations, such as Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, Traditional Owner Groups and organisations such as Kinaway Chamber of Commerce and Supply Nation.

2. The business must primarily operate in Victoria and either have an operating presence in regional Victoria or activity that services regional Victorian places or engages with regional suppliers and supply chains.

3. 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/or other applicable regulators.

5. Eligible Activities – what will be funded

Applicants must propose to use the grant funding for activities that will support the business to become more competitive and sustainable in the way they operate their business.

Applicants must be able to explain how the proposed activities will help the business achieve its goals by, for example:

- improving the skills of owners and employees by targeting skills gaps
- developing the businesses' product or service offering
- supporting market expansion (e.g. access new markets or to use new platforms to reach new customers)
- increasing efficiency of operational processes and procedures e.g. new software and systems or advice on how to run the business.

5.1. Eligible Activities & Expenses

Eligible activities and expenses may include:

- business advisory services e.g. financial planning, accounting, legal, statutory planning
- purchasing equipment and materials
- capability and skills building activities, including mentoring services
- membership of networks and organisations
- business accreditations e.g. ISO or other operational or product standards
- registration to attend business conferences and events within Victoria
- marketing and promotion activities, including digital media
- product development and testing.

The department reserves the right to determine eligible activities and expenditure in alignment with Program objectives and outcomes.

Note: Eligible activities and expenses must be costed with GST excluded up to the grant amount.

5.2. Ineligible Activities & Expenses

Ineligible activities and expenditure include:

- operational expenditure, including existing staff wages, travel, entertainment, accommodation, vehicle hire
- international travel for conferences or events
- project and activities that have already received government funding support
- retrospective funding for activities and expenses that have already occurred.

6. How to apply

Applications must be made online via the Victorian Aboriginal Business Investment Program webpage on the Business Victoria website.

Applications must be submitted no later than 5:00pm on 6 September 2024.

Please note that late applications will not be accepted. Applications that are still in 'draft' and have not been submitted by the closing date will not be assessed.

6.1. Making an Application

Carefully read these Program Guidelines (and 'Frequently Asked Questions' for the Aboriginal Business Support Program) and:

- Compile necessary supporting documents to apply as detailed in the 'Documentation and Information Requirements' below.
- Confirm submission of the application by checking your nominated email address (or spam/junk mail) for email confirmation of application submission.
- Applicants are encouraged to contact their relevant Aboriginal business support organisation or Aboriginal Economic Development in the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions, to discuss their project if needed.

6.2. Documentation and Information Requirements

The application form will ask you to provide information and enable you to add supporting documents and material:

- You can upload and submit up to 5 files and/or 5 URLs (external links).
- Attached files can be no more than 25MB in size each.
- You may need to combine documents as one file.

Specific information you will also need to provide as part of your application is listed in the table below:

Item	Description
Aboriginal-owned business	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attest to being a member of Kinaway Chamber of Commerce or Supply Nation OR <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A letter of support from an Aboriginal-led organisation – confirming the applicant is a Victorian based Aboriginal business.
Intended use of funds	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Quotations or pricing for proposed goods (e.g. equipment) from suppliers (may be sales website information)• Quotations with itemised goods and/or services provided from a proposed third-party service provider. <p>Note: Eligible activities and expenses must be costed with GST excluded up to the requested grant amount.</p>

7. Assessment Process

The following assessment process will be followed:

1. All applications will be assessed for eligibility and may undergo due diligence checks.
2. Eligible applications will be assessed by an assessment panel of representatives of the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions.
3. All supplementary attachments and information provided as part of the application will be taken into consideration during the assessment process.
4. Applications will be reviewed and scored against the assessment criteria (at [section 7.1](#))
5. The Department will approve grants, based on the recommendations of an executive panel and the availability of grant funds.

7.1. Assessment criteria

Eligible applications will be assessed on how well they meet the assessment criteria as outlined below.

Assessment Criteria	Considerations	Weighting
	These are the considerations used by the assessors in making an assessment.	
1. How well the proposed activities support the program objectives and outcomes	How well the application: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> describes how the activity will help improve the operation of the business and its financial sustainability demonstrates a need for government funding by undertaking activities that would not otherwise be funded. 	50%
2. Activity planning and delivery	How well the application shows planning, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> identification of appropriate goods and/or services for the identified business goal timeframes for undertaking the activities and payment are within the program timeframes has detailed supporting quotes and proposals for use of the funds. 	30%
3. Supporting regional Victorian Aboriginal Community and Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How the business creates benefits for or services regional Victoria, either by having operations in regional Victoria or activity that services regional Victorian places or engages with regional suppliers and supply chains. How the business enables economic connections among Aboriginal people and businesses and contributes to Aboriginal community, Country and culture. 	20%
		100%

7.2. Applicant checks

Applicants may be subject to due diligence assessments to enable the department to assess financial and other non-financial risks associated with the application. 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.

The department may request further information to confirm eligibility if required.

8. Notification of Outcomes

Applicants will be advised of the outcome of their grant application via email.

The department will attempt to notify applicants of the outcome of their application from October onwards.

9. Conditions of Funding

9.1. Funding Offer and Grant Agreements

Applicants will be advised in writing if they are successful and will be invited to enter into a legally binding grant agreement with the department within 14 days from the date of the offer.

An offer of funding is not binding on the department unless and until both the department and the applicant execute the grant agreement. Agreement execution means the grant agreement has been signed by both the department and the applicant.

The offer may be withdrawn if the grant agreement is not signed within the timeframe given.

The project, and any expenditure of funds associated with the project, must not commence until the grant agreement has been executed.

Once the agreement has been executed, the grant recipient (successful applicant) will be required to commence the project within the agreed timeframe. If a recipient does not commence the project by the commencement date, the department has at its absolute discretion the option of terminating the agreement.

9.2. Grant payment structure

Grant funds will be released under agreed milestone payments after the grant agreement has been executed by both parties, anticipated as follows:

- 85% upon grant agreement being executed
- 15% upon receipt of the final project report, to the satisfaction of the department.
- Grant recipients will be required to report by 31 May 2025 on the outcomes of their project and contribute information and data about the funded project to the department for the evaluation of the program.

9.3. Payment of GST on grant funding

Eligible applicants are required to be registered for the Goods and Services Tax (GST). We will add GST to your grant payment.

For example, if the approved funding is \$10,000 GST exclusive, the department will process payments totalling \$11,000 (\$10,000 GST exclusive funding + \$1,000 GST).

9.4. Publicity/acknowledgement of support

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

The department may publicise the benefits accruing to a grant recipient associated with the grant and the State's support for the project, and recipients must cooperate with the department in promoting the program. These requirements are currently outlined in the Grant Agreement. 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.

9.5. Program Evaluation

As a condition of funding, grant recipients will be required to participate in any program monitoring and evaluation activities initiated by the department. This may include completing surveys throughout the program and for a nominated period of time after program completion to measure progress to achieving outcomes. An interim evaluation will be conducted for this program.

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.

10. Applicant Conflicts of Interest

A conflict of interest arises where a person makes a decision or exercises a power in a way that may be, or may be perceived to be, influenced by either material personal interests (financial or non-financial) or material personal associations. A conflict of interest may arise where a grant applicant:

- has a professional, commercial, or personal relationship with a party who is able to, or may be perceived to, influence the application assessment process, such as a Victorian Government staff member, or
- has a relationship with, or interest in, an organisation which is likely to interfere with or restrict the applicant from carrying out the proposed activities fairly and independently.

Applicants must advise the department of any actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest relating to a project for which it has applied for funding.

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.

10.1. Related Entities

A Grant Recipient cannot use grant funding available through this program to engage the services (including supplier or consultancy services) and/or purchase products from another entity that is wholly or partly owned or controlled by the applicant without the department's written consent. Applicants and service providers must be entirely separate entities. They may not be owned by the same parent company, share governance or have common directors.

11. Compliance and Audit

Grant recipients may be subject to audit by the Victorian Government or its representatives on the accuracy of their application, accounting records relating to the project, and use of government funds at the request of the Victorian Government, for a period of one year from conclusion of the project.

If any information in the application is found to be 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, the application and the grant agreement, the grant payment will be repayable on demand.

If the grant recipient fails to complete the project, the Department may require the refund of the whole or part of the grant as it deems/determines appropriate, in its absolute discretion.

12. 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 the assessment of an application for the program, 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 AED@ecodev.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.

13. 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.

Decisions in recommending and awarding grant funding under this program are at the minister's and department's discretion. This includes not making any funding available or approving a lesser amount than that applied for.

These guidelines and application terms may be changed from time to time, as appropriate.

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

Victorian Government staff work to the Code of Conduct for Victorian Public Service Employees (Section 61) of the *Public Administration Act 2004* (Vic), including processes set out to avoid conflicts of interest.

13.1. Complaints and feedback

Any complaints or feedback you have about this grant opportunity may be made in relation to:

- The timeliness of the process
- Communication provided by the department
- Adherence to the published program guidelines.

The department aims to respond to all complaints within 28 days. Re-assessment of an application or overturning of a funding decision for a merit-based grant, will not be considered through the complaints process.

You can send your written feedback to AED@ecodev.vic.gov.au.

14. Other Information

Further information may be obtained at business.vic.gov.au or by contacting AED@ecodev.vic.gov.au or by phoning 13 22 15.

business.vic.gov.au/aboriginal-business-grants

