

OFFICIAL

First Peoples Tourism Industry Strengthening Program Guidelines

February 2025

Acknowledgement of Country

The diverse landscapes of Victoria have been the home of, and of significance to, diverse Nations for more than 60,000 years. The First Peoples in Victoria have cared for and nurtured Country throughout this time. The lands and waters on which Victorians and visitors draw enjoyment and inspiration continue to be a living cultural landscape.

We proudly acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters throughout Victoria, and we pay our respects to their Elders past and present.

We recognise the rights and aspirations of Victorian First Peoples and acknowledge that First Peoples' Self-Determination is a human right as enshrined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Building on this and guided by the 11 principles of First Peoples' Self-Determination, we are working together to enable true self-determination for Victoria's First Peoples through work towards a treaty or treaties with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians.

Indigenous Cultural Intellectual Property

In the spirit of preservation and continuation of Indigenous Cultural Intellectual Property this document recognises First Peoples as the primary guardians and interpreters of their culture and observes their right to full and proper attribution for, and ownership over, their heritage. We commit to seek free, prior and informed consent for the use of any Indigenous traditional knowledge from the custodians of that traditional knowledge.

Language statement

We recognise the diversity of First Peoples living throughout Victoria. While the terms 'Koorie' or 'Koori' are commonly used to describe First Peoples of South-East Australia, we have used the term 'First Peoples' to include all Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people in Victoria.

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1. First Peoples Tourism Industry Strengthening Program

1.1. Background

The Victorian Government is prioritising First Peoples and their voice across Government policy and program implementation. This is evident with Victoria's progress towards Treaty, establishment of the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria, a Self-Determination Fund and the Stolen Generations Redress Scheme.

The *Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* recognises Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs) as the primary guardians, keepers and knowledge holders of First Peoples cultural heritage.

1.2. Program Overview

The First Peoples Tourism Industry Strengthening Program will support Victorian Registered Aboriginal Parties to develop and strengthen First Peoples tourism products that represent culture and traditions, are respectful to family, community, culture and Country. Projects will aim to strengthen First Peoples voices and engagement across the tourism industry.

The First Peoples Tourism Industry Strengthening Program is one element of a \$10 million investment into Aboriginal Cultural Tourism Initiatives in regional Victoria, which is being delivered as part of the broader \$20 million Aboriginal Economic Development Fund (AED Fund) managed by the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (the department).

1.3. Yuma Yirramboi, Invest in Tomorrow

[Yuma Yirramboi Strategy \(Invest in Tomorrow\)](#) is the Victorian Government and Aboriginal Victorians' shared vision to generate greater individual and collective wealth for Aboriginal Victorians. It celebrates the economic and entrepreneurial success of Aboriginal Victorians and ensures parity is considered in all government activities.

Yuma Yirramboi commits to support Aboriginal communities to achieve economic growth and economic independence. It is underpinned by six strategic pillars:

- culture – Aboriginal culture is our greatest asset
- people – nurture a strong and ready talent pool
- business – grow in size, scale, diversity and maturity
- wealth creation – accelerate the growth of the Aboriginal Estate and opportunities for wealth generation
- jobs – generate jobs and careers to reach employment parity
- accountability – transparent reporting against commitments.

Yuma Yirramboi identifies cultural tourism as an area of competitive advantage for Aboriginal businesses to deliver on the six strategic pillars. The First Peoples Tourism Industry Strengthening Program will support RAPs to develop and grow cultural tourism products and services in alignment with these pillars.

1.4. Experience Victoria 2033

[Experience Victoria 2033 \(EV33\)](#) is the state's strategic plan to shape the future of Victoria's visitor economy over the next 9 years. The plan will strengthen Victoria's enviable tourism offering by leveraging the state's competitive advantages. The plan has five product priorities which includes First Peoples led experiences, wellness, arts and culture, food and drink and nature. This program primarily aligns with the First Peoples pillar.

1.5. Objectives

The objectives of the program are to:

- empower First Peoples within the tourism sector in Victoria and increase the capacity of RAPs to pursue economic development activities as they relate to tourism
- ensure First Peoples have autonomy in setting tourism development priorities
- prioritise protecting and promoting First Peoples' cultural heritage, history, and intellectual property in mainstream tourism.
- foster economic prosperity by creating meaningful career pathways in tourism for First Peoples

- improve RAPs capability in line with the principles and objectives of Yuma Yirramboi Strategy (Invest in Tomorrow) and/or Experience Victoria 2033.

1.6. Outcomes

The intended outcomes of the program are to:

- support RAPs to identify their priorities for tourism development and growth through development of a Cultural Tourism Plan
- identify and promote co-investment opportunities with First Peoples communities
- support the implementation of new tourism initiatives and experiences representing culture and traditions, are respectful to family, community, culture and Country and enable RAPs to tell their stories
- enable the establishment of RAP partnerships with the wider regional tourism network.

The anticipated longer-term outcomes of the program are to support:

- robust, thriving First Peoples businesses and communities in Victoria, creating wealth and contributing to positive outcomes for their communities and Country
- First Peoples in Victoria generating greater individual and collective wealth
- visitors have more opportunities to connect with and learn from First Peoples' culture and knowledge, including truth telling
- Victoria attracting a greater share of visitors participating in First Peoples Tourism experiences.

1.7. Program Timelines

Applications open	14 February 2025
Closing date	10 April 2025
Assessment and approvals	April 2025 – May 2025
Contracting and first instalments paid	June 2025
Project delivery period	June 2025 – February 2027

2. Funding Details

2.1. Available funding

Funding of up to a total value of \$300,000 (exclusive of GST) is available to each eligible RAP.

2.1.1 Co-contribution

Total project value can be greater than the grant amount requested, however co-contribution is not mandatory.

2.2. Activity costing treatment of GST

Applicants should note that costs included in the application and activity documentation must be exclusive of GST.

2.3. Project timing

Funding may be spent over a period of up to 20 months from June 2025.

As noted in **Section 6.2**, the project, and any expenditure of funds associated with the project, must not commence until the grant agreement has been executed. Agreement execution means the grant agreement has been signed by both the department and the applicant.

3. Eligibility

3.1. Eligible Applicants

This is a targeted program and funding is only available to recognised Victorian [Registered Aboriginal Parties \(RAPs\)](#).

Applicants must hold an active Australian Business Number (ABN) registered in Victoria.

3.2. What will be funded

Projects should seek to develop or progress a Cultural Tourism Plan, Action Plan or Strategy, or implement activities or products identified under an existing one.

RAPs will need to determine the focus and stage/s of their proposed project funding (i.e. scoping, planning, implementing).

All initiatives should deliver tourism outcomes and align with one or more existing strategies i.e. Country Plan, Destination Management Plan/s, Yuma Yirramboi Strategy and Experience Victoria 2033.

Grant funds may be expended on eligible activities delivered under 2 Stages: Scoping and Planning Stage and Implementation Stage. Eligible activities under each Stage include:

Scoping and Planning stage:

- master planning
- identification of the RAP's role and aspirations within tourism
- mapping of cultural and geographical landscape
- identification of key locations and cultural tourism opportunities
- tourism products and experiences audit
- analysis of strengths, opportunities and challenges
- Indigenous Cultural Intellectual Property (ICIP) and Aboriginal Knowledge (AK) protection strategies
- community and stakeholder engagement
- identification of opportunities for collaboration and partnerships.

Implementation stage:

- product development
- business case development
- funding strategy development
- feasibility and operational viability studies
- tourism asset and equipment requirement assessments
- relevant technical investigations, plans and reports to progress initiatives
- strategic asset management plan
- storytelling projects
- placemaking, including wayfinding and interpretive signage
- tourism skills training and certification
- tourism marketing plans and website development.

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

3.3. Eligible expenses

Funding received under this program may be expended on the following project costs:

- costs directly associated with delivering the ISP projects
- external professional services/consultant fees directly associated with delivering the ISP project
- the department reserves the right to determine eligible activities and expenditure in alignment with program objectives and outcomes.

3.4. Ineligible expenses

Funding received under this program may not be expended on the following:

- costs not directly associated with delivering the ISP projects
- usual operational expenditure, including existing staff wages, equipment and IT purchases, communications, travel, entertainment, accommodation and vehicle hire
- requests for retrospective project funding, where projects have been completed prior to receiving funding approval
- costs related to preparing the grant application, preparing any project reports and preparing any project variation requests
- the department reserves the right to determine any other ineligible activities and expenditure.

4. Application process

4.1. Submitting a grant project proposal

Applicants must undertake the following steps to apply:

1. Carefully read these Program Guidelines.
2. Access the project proposal template via the Business Victoria website or as attached with these guidelines.
3. Compile all necessary supporting documents as detailed below.
4. Submit project proposal and supporting documentation via email to: darcy.maine@ecodev.vic.gov.au.

The project proposal template will outline the information and documentation required to apply for the program. This will include the following:

- applicant details
- project description
- project objectives and outcomes
- stakeholder engagement plan
- project budget
- risks and mitigation
- financial reports

Applicants can submit one application per RAP.

Applications will be accepted up until 10 April 2025.

5. Assessment and approval process

This is a non-competitive grant process, eligible project proposals that are deemed by the department to be of sufficient quality will receive funding.

Applications will be assessed using the following process:

- Applications are assessed for eligibility in accordance with the eligibility criteria outlined in Section 3 by representatives from the department.
- Eligible applications are assessed against the below assessment criteria (Section 5.1) by representatives from the department to ensure they align with the program objectives.
- Proposals from applicants will be considered against the assessment criteria by a panel of department staff and need to meet a threshold of 50 per cent or above.
- All supplementary attachments and information provided as part of the application will be taken into consideration during the assessment process. The department may request further information or detail about a proposal.
- Eligible applicants may undergo due diligence checks (Section 5.2) to enable the department to assess financial and non-financial risks associated with the proposed activities.
- Recommended applications will be presented to Yuma Yiramboi Council for noting.
- The department will provide funding recommendations to the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events for decision.

5.1. Assessment criteria

Eligible applications will be assessed against the criteria outlined below.

Assessment Criteria	Considerations	Weighting
1. Supporting regional First Peoples community and Culture	<p><i>First Peoples outcomes:</i></p> <p>how the project enables economic development among First Peoples and businesses and contributes to community, Country and culture as they relate to Tourism*</p> <p>*may include consideration for procurement and resourcing of First Peoples</p>	35%
2. Project planning, readiness and capability to deliver	<p><i>Project and implementation planning, including:</i></p> <p>how the proposed activities support project readiness</p> <p>who will oversee and manage the day-to-day processes of the project (who is the project manager and team?)</p> <p>budget information including costs are based on verified estimates (e.g. current quotes and proposals where appropriate)</p> <p>timing and key dates for project delivery within the program timeframes</p> <p>identification of appropriate service delivery partners for the identified activities, where applicable</p> <p>risks have been considered and mitigation measures incorporated into project planning</p> <p>project incorporates appropriate stakeholder consultation (where appropriate)</p>	35%
3. How well the proposed activities support the program objectives and outcomes	<p><i>Activities and outcomes are clearly outlined and align to program objectives:</i></p> <p>project outcomes are clearly outlined and align to program objectives</p> <p>project aligns with the principles and objectives of Yuma Yirramboi and/or Experience Victoria 2033</p> <p>project aligns with existing cultural tourism plans, action plans or strategies and/or other regional plans and strategies as appropriate</p> <p>project demonstrates that it can deliver against policy objectives while ensuring efficient, economical and ethical use of public funds.</p>	30%
	Total	100%

5.2. Due diligence assessments

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

Such checks may include:

- the potential for reputational risk to the State
- the risk profile, financial viability and management capacity of the applicant's business over the duration of the proposed activity
- where the proposal has already been fully funded by the applicant through other means

- the delivery performance of other grants contracted with the Victorian Government and whether the applicant has failed to meet key contractual obligations.

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

Applicants will be advised via email of the outcome of their application in writing in June 2025.

6. Conditions of funding

6.1. Acceptance of Letter of Offer

Successful applicants will be provided a letter outlining an offer of funding (Letter of Offer). A recipient of a Letter of Offer will have to accept the offer of funding by responding in writing within two weeks as outlined in the Letter of Offer.

An offer of funding is not binding on the department or the applicant unless and until both the department and the applicant execute a grant agreement.

6.2. Grant Agreements

Successful applicants will be required to enter into a legally binding grant agreement with the department on its standard terms and conditions. The Agreement details all funding obligations and conditions.

Grant Agreements must be signed by individuals duly authorised to bind the organisation and will:

- describe the purpose for which the funding must be used
- set out any requirements or conditions that must be met prior to the payment of a grant instalment
- outline agreed milestones and outcomes that must be achieved before payment of a grant instalment.

The activity does not commence until a Grant Agreement has been duly executed by both the department and the successful applicant.

Once an Agreement has been executed, the successful applicant will be required to commence the activity within the agreed timeframe recorded in the Agreement and provide regular accurate progress reports to the department. If a successful applicant does not commence the activity by the commencement date, the department has at its absolute discretion the option of terminating the Agreement.

The application provided (as outlined in **Section 4**), will become an annexure to the Agreement and form part of the final executed Agreement.

6.3. Grant Payment Structure

Grant payments will be released according to an agreed schedule set out in the grant agreement. Payments are subject to satisfactory progress on the project and in accordance with the milestone deliverables stipulated in the Grant Agreement.

6.4. Evaluation reporting

As a condition of funding, grant recipients will be consulted and asked 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 after program completion to measure progress to achieving outcomes.

Monitoring and evaluation will be consistent with the Burra Lotjpa Dunguludja (AJA4) Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.

Reporting 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.

6.5. Publicity/Acknowledgement

The department requires grant recipients to acknowledge the Victorian Government's support on marketing and promotional materials, which must be approved in advance by the department. Acknowledgement of the Victorian Government's support in marketing and promotional material will depend on the grant given and should be specified in the Grant Agreement, e.g., required representation on channels or collateral such as websites, signage, advertisements, and brochures. The department will supply the grant recipient with a logo suite and associated brand guidelines, as well as a guide on how to acknowledge government support, for the purposes of acknowledgment.

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.

7. General terms

7.1. Privacy Statement

Any personal information provided by an applicant for the purpose of seeking First Peoples Tourism ISP Funding will be used by the department for the purposes of assessment of eligibility, program administration, 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 local, 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 an 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 darcy.maine@ecodev.vic.gov.au. Enquiries about access to personal information, or for other concerns regarding the privacy of personal information, can be emailed to the department's Privacy Unit by emailing privacy@ecodev.vic.gov.au. The department's privacy policy is also available by emailing the department's Privacy Unit.

7.2. 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 discretion. This includes reserving the right to amend, suspend or withdraw funding 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 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.

7.2.1. Applicant Conflict 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.

7.3. Tax advice

Tax implications for grant recipients may differ depending on individual circumstances. The department recommends successful entities seek independent tax advice, or alternatively liaise with the Australian Tax Office (ATO) for advice that is specific to their individual circumstances. The ATO website also provides guidance in relation to specific grants payments which may be used for tax determination purposes.

7.4. GST

If you are registered for the Goods and Services Tax (GST), where applicable, we will add GST to your grant payment.

- Example: If the approved funding is \$100,000 GST exclusive, the department will process payments totalling \$110,000 (\$100,000 GST exclusive funding + \$10,000 GST).

7.5. Complaints

If an applicant wants to lodge a complaint about the process for a grant application, requests can be made to the department by sending a written request to Sarah Wilson Manager - Aboriginal Tourism and Industry Development, DJSIR at sarah.x.wilson@ecodev.vic.gov.au

Requests can be made in relation to any of the following:

- dissatisfaction with the process and/or timeliness of the process
- communication provided by the department, or
- 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.

8. Support for applicants

If you have any questions regarding this program or the application process, please contact Darcy W Maine, Senior Project Officer - First Peoples Tourism | Tourism Policy and Programs unit, DJSIR via darcy.maine@ecodev.vic.gov.au