

Small Business Ventilation Program Ventilation Grant

Guidelines

Program Summary

The *Small Business Ventilation Program – Ventilation Grant* assists employing businesses that have commercial premises open to the public to reduce the spread of COVID-19 by providing up to \$5,000 towards the cost of a ventilation improvement project.

Program funds can be used to invest in equipment, undertake building works and/or engage services to improve ventilation and air filtration in areas that are physically open to and accessed by the public. Businesses can request a grant between \$1,000 and up to \$5,000 under this Program stream to cover 50 per cent of the costs associated with the ventilation project.

The Victorian Government has released [guidance on building ventilation for workplaces](https://coronavirus.vic.gov.au/ventilation#ventilation-guidance-for-businesses) such as hospitality venues, shops and gyms to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission (coronavirus.vic.gov.au/ventilation#ventilation-guidance-for-businesses). Businesses are encouraged to use these guidance materials to assist in making informed decisions on how to improve ventilation in public-facing areas of their business and in line with their COVIDSafe Plan.

Businesses can apply in two ways. Applicants can request grant funds are paid once the business is found eligible by submitting evidence of eligible expenditure and proof of payment, such as receipts and paid invoices. At the time of application, or businesses can apply by proposing a ventilation project, with grant funds to be paid at a later date, once eligible items have been purchased and evidence of expenditure has been submitted.

If requesting grant funds at the time of application, the purchase of equipment and works must be made between 1 January 2022 and the date of applying. If requesting to purchase and receive grant funding at a later date, applicants must apply by the program close date [8 September 2022] but have until 15 November 2022 to make eligible purchases and submit evidence.

Applications will be assessed for eligibility on a 'first in' basis until available funds are allocated.

A second stream of the Program offers a \$500 Rebate to eligible businesses; see separate [program guidelines](https://business.vic.gov.au/grants-and-programs/small-business-ventilation-program/ventilation-rebate#program-guidelines) (business.vic.gov.au/grants-and-programs/small-business-ventilation-program/ventilation-rebate#program-guidelines). Applicants can apply to both streams of the Program for separate and eligible expenditure.

2 Who is eligible for a grant?

- 2.1 This Program is for employing businesses that operate from a Victorian fixed address commercial premises that is physically open to the public for in-person purchases or use of the business's products and services.
- 2.2 The business as defined by its ABN must:
- a) hold an active Australian Business Number (ABN) and have held that ABN on and from 18 February 2022
 - b) be registered with the responsible Federal or State regulator¹
 - c) be registered for Goods and Services Tax (GST) on and from 18 February 2022²
 - d) have an annual Victorian payroll below \$10 million for the 2020-21 financial year on an ungrouped basis as determined by the State Revenue Office (SRO)
 - e) are registered with WorkSafe Victoria³
 - f) hold public liability insurance sufficient to cover its operations.
- 2.3 Tenants wishing to apply must ensure that they obtain any required consents where necessary from their landlord before undertaking work.

3 Business who operates from more than one premises

- 3.1 A business that operates more than one premises under its ABN may apply for a grant for each location. A separate application is required for each premises.
- 3.2 Each location must be a Victorian fixed address commercial premises that is physically open to the public for in-person purchase or use of the business's products and services.
- 3.3 A business (as defined by its ABN) can only receive one grant per premises.

¹ Where required by relevant and applicable legislation. Responsible regulators are the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC); the ACNC for charities and Not-for-profits Commission; and Consumer Affairs Victoria (CAV) for incorporated associations.

² A business or enterprise must register for GST if it has a GST turnover of \$75,000 or more. Not-for-profit entities with annual turnover between \$75,000 and \$150,000 that are not registered for GST and are registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profit Commission are eligible to apply. Businesses with annual 2020-2021 turnover of \$75,000 or more that are not required by relevant taxation legislation to be registered for GST are eligible to apply, subject to provision of a statutory declaration from a registered tax agent. Businesses that backdate their GST registration date will not be eligible.

³ Businesses operating within Victoria that hold an equivalent worker's compensation policy in another Australian jurisdiction in accordance with Victorian WorkCover legislation are eligible. Evidence of the valid interstate insurance policy and operation located within Victoria is required.

4 Grant funding and applicant funding

- 4.1 Grant funding of up to \$5,000 per premises is available for eligible projects under the Program.
- 4.2 Applicants can request a grant amount of between \$1,000 and up to \$5,000 to cover part of the costs of their ventilation project.
- 4.3 Grant funds are to cover 50 per cent of the costs associated with the Ventilation Project. This means that for every \$1 of grant funding, the applicant must show \$1 of expenditure of their own funds.
- 4.4 For example, if the applicant requests \$2,000, they must spend at least \$2,000 of their own funds on the project. For this example, this means the total ventilation project budget must be at least \$4,000.

5 Eligible Ventilation Projects

- 5.1 The project is eligible if expenditure supports the business' preferred ventilation strategy where:
 - a) it improves ventilation and/or air filtration to reduce the spread of COVID-19 for areas in commercial premises that are physically open to the public;
 - b) the total eligible expenditure for the project includes the grant amount (of between \$1,000 and up to \$5,000) and an equal contribution from the applicant business;
 - c) the expenditure has been purchased and paid for in full between 1 January 2022 and the date of claiming the grant inclusive; and
 - d) the ventilation upgrade will lead to an improvement in one or more of the following types of air ventilation:
 - **Natural ventilation** – that brings air from outside through and around an indoor occupied space, or to make airflow improvements to a covered outdoor space used by customers;
 - **Mechanical ventilation** – that uses mechanical equipment to increase airflow by replacing or diluting indoor air with outside air;
 - **Augmented ventilation** - that uses portable filtration units to catch particles in a filter to increase the clean air delivery rate and reduce the concentration of viral particles in the air.
- 5.2 The Victorian Government has provided resources and information about the types of ventilation listed above and [guidance on ventilation for businesses](https://coronavirus.vic.gov.au/ventilation#ventilation-guidance-for-businesses) (coronavirus.vic.gov.au/ventilation#ventilation-guidance-for-businesses).
- 5.3 Applicants are encouraged to view this guidance which is designed for information only. Business owners must make their own judgement and take decisions about optimising air flow and ventilation appropriate for their business. This may involve seeking professional advice before committing to a purchase. The State of Victoria is not responsible or liable for the purchasing decision of a business, nor any loss or

damage whatsoever arising from or in connection with the purchase or works which are the subject of the grant.

- 5.4 The grant is a one-off payment. The State of Victoria will not be responsible or liable for the maintenance or replacement costs whatsoever arising from or in connection with the funded equipment or works beyond the provision of the Ventilation Grant.

6 Types of Eligible Expenditure

- 6.1 Eligible expenditure must meet the requirements in Section 5.
- 6.2 Expenditure can include equipment and works that improve air ventilation and/or purification for the installation, upgrade, maintenance and repair of building infrastructure and ventilation systems.
- 6.3 Expenditure may cover direct costs to deliver the ventilation project such as labour, regulatory approvals or cost of building modification directly related to and required to accommodate the ventilation strategy.
- 6.4 The following are examples of types of eligible expenditure:

Natural ventilation:

- Works to the building to maximise ventilation, for example fixing windows to ensure they open or adding additional windows or doors to create greater air flow.

Mechanical ventilation:

- Purchase and installation of spare parts to ensure the existing ventilation system operates effectively,
- Upgrading or replacing filters in a ventilation system, such as installing a HEPA filter capable of 4-6 Air Changes per hour (ACH),
- Repairs, servicing or cleaning of an existing heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) system or air conditioning unit,

Augmented ventilation:

- Purchasing an air purifier using a high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter for the premises.

Other measures:

- Inspection by a qualified professional service provider for the purpose of a ventilation audit, HVAC health check or assistance with items identified in the self-assessment ventilation guidance,
- Whirlybirds or extractor fans to enhance the effects of other ventilation strategies,
- Electric fans to promote air movement if there are existing ventilation strategies in place,
- Wall mounted split systems and cassette units that do not have a function to bring fresh air into a space are only eligible if they are used in conjunction with other natural and mechanical ventilation.

7 Ineligible Expenditure

7.1 The grant payment cannot be used for the following expense types:

- a) Expenditure incurred prior to 1 January 2022,
- b) Works where the primary intention is not to maximise air ventilation or purification in public facing business spaces,
- c) Project components that are not related to the improvement of natural, mechanical or augmented ventilation,
- d) Exhaust/ventilation works in non-customer areas (e.g. kitchen spaces in a non-public facing area),
- e) Equipment using ultraviolet (UV) radiation technology and air ionisation devices,
- f) Where relevant, works where recipients did not receive necessary building or planning permits, permission from the building owner and/or landlord before completing the project,
- g) Where relevant, expenditure that does not comply with local council and state government laws and regulations,
- h) Business operating expenses,
- i) Running costs of equipment, including but not limited to energy costs,
- j) Costs associated with obtaining quotes, where the work has not been contracted with the quote provider (e.g. Call out fee),
- k) Project delivered by a provider not qualified as a licensed service provider to undertake the contracted services,
- l) Electrical installation work undertaken without a certificate of electrical safety or compliance report where applicable– as demonstration of compliance to electrical standards, occupational health and safety requirements,
- m) Equipment that is not compliant with Australian standards,
- n) Loss of income due to premise's inability to operate as normal whilst the work is being undertaken,
- o) Equipment hire,
- p) Expenses paid for using the funding received under the Small Business Ventilation Program – Ventilation Rebate.

7.2 Expenditure that does not comply with Section 5 of these Guidelines is considered ineligible, as determined by the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (the Department) at the Department's discretion.

8 How to apply for a grant

- 8.1 Applications are submitted online via the Business Victoria website (business.vic.gov.au). All questions in the application need to be completed and requested information is to be provided to ensure timely assessment.
- 8.2 The Program will be open for applications until funds are allocated or 11.00 pm **8 September 2022**, whichever is earlier.

9 How to claim grant funding

- 9.1 Applicants may apply to receive the grant funding either:
- i) at the time of their application if they have incurred all their eligible expenditure (one-step process); **or** ii) after they have applied to the program and have been deemed eligible (two-step process).

9.2 ***One-step process: At time of application***

Applicants can request to claim the grant at the time of application if the eligible expenditure was made between 1 January 2022 and the time of applying inclusive. Evidence of expenditure (such as a receipts) covering the project budget must be submitted with the application.

OR:

9.3 ***Two-step process: After being found to be eligible and through a separate claim***

At the time of application, applicants can nominate to submit their evidence of expenditure at a later date through a separate claim form. If found to be eligible, these applicants will be sent a form to provide evidence of eligible expenditure occurring between 1 January 2022 to 15 November 2022.

- 9.4 The person submitting evidence of eligible expenditure to claim the funds must attest to the following on behalf of the business:
- a) the business has reviewed the information on ventilation guidance for businesses available on the Victorian Government [Coronavirus website](#) and made an assessment or secured professional advice as to the appropriate improvements being made;
 - b) the business has complied with all relevant permits, laws and regulations as applicable (for example, using licensed electricians);
 - c) the business holds public liability insurance sufficient to cover its operations;
 - d) if the business is a tenant of the relevant premises, that any necessary approvals from the landlord have been obtained;
 - e) the business will take part in any evaluation surveys for the program as required.
- 9.5 Grants to successful applicants will be paid into the bank account nominated on the application form.

10 Who can make an application and claim?

- 10.1 To confirm the identity of the person applying details of the one of the following current proof of identity document must be provided at the time of application:
- a driver's licence or learner permit issued in any Australian jurisdiction; or
 - an Australian Passport; or
 - a Medicare Card; or
 - a foreign passport for those issued with an Australian Visa.

11 Assessment of Eligibility

- 11.1 Grants will be allocated on a 'first-in basis' to applicants assessed as eligible until the Program's available funding is exhausted.
- 11.2 Applications will be assessed using the information and evidence provided in their application form and through verification with other data sources. As part of this process, any information provided by Applicants may be shared and subject to verification with other government agencies (state and federal) including (but not limited to) the Victorian State Revenue Office, WorkSafe Victoria, the Australian Business Register and the Commonwealth Department of Home Affairs.⁴ Valuer General data may be used to confirm property type and the location of the premises as a separate address.⁵
- 11.3 Businesses must ensure that the information listed with the Australian Business Register (ABR) as part of their ABN registration is current and accurate at the time of application.
- 11.4 Evidence of expenditure (with proof of payment such as receipts and paid invoices) must be to the department's satisfaction that the expenditure is paid⁶ and is eligible.
- 11.5 Businesses registration details filed with the Australian Securities and Investments Commission, Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission, Consumer Affairs Victoria and/or other applicable regulators will be checked. Without limiting the

⁴ The Department is not responsible for any delays caused by third party validation of an Applicant's eligibility. By making an application, the Applicant consents to the assessment and verification process.

⁵ Property and parcel search: <https://www.land.vic.gov.au/property-and-parcel-search>.

⁶ The Department reserves the right to seek additional information from the applicant to confirm that the payment has been made and received by the supplier. Any applicants paying in cash must provide a receipt verifying that payment has been made.

Department's assessment, the following circumstances may be taken into consideration in any decision whether to award a grant:

- duplicate applications by a trustee and a trust;
- misleading amendments to information provided to public registers describing the business;
- any adverse findings by a Government agency or local council regarding a business or its operation;
- a business is, or notice has been given that it will be, placed under external administration;
- there is a petition for bankruptcy or to wind up or deregister a company or business; and
- a step is being taken to deregister the company or business (including cancellation or lapse in registration or any relevant permit).

11.6 Each application will be carefully considered and assessed against the eligibility criteria. The Department's decisions on all matters pertaining to the award of funding under this Program is at the Department's absolute discretion.

11.7 Only final applications that are lodged with the Department will be considered and assessed, and applications in draft stage that have not been submitted will not be considered.

12 Applicable regulations and insurance

12.1 The business must comply with all relevant laws and obtain all planning, environmental, regulatory and other approvals and permits (as applicable) related to the improvements undertaken in connection with the grant, including meeting all relevant health and safety and building standards.

12.2 Grant recipients must hold public liability insurance sufficient to cover its operations.

13 Outcome notification

13.1 The Department will endeavour to notify all Applicants of the successful outcome of their complete application within 30 business days.

13.2 There may be longer processing times and delays in notification of the outcome of the application if it:

- a) does not meet the eligibility criteria;
- b) is incomplete;
- c) has incorrect information, such as ABN (Australian Business Number) or bank details (for successful Applicants);
- d) does not include current or accurate information registered with relevant regulators or partner agencies, such as the State Revenue Office, Australian Business Register or WorkSafe Victoria; or
- e) requires further information to verify or validate the application and claim for funding.

14 Post Project Evaluation

- 14.1 By receiving a grant payment, all recipients agree to comply with the Department's performance monitoring and evaluation processes. The grant recipient may receive an evaluation survey from the Department and may be required to participate in program evaluation activities.

15 Compliance and Audit

- 15.1 The business provided with a grant may be subject to audit by the Victorian Government or its representatives on the veracity of their application and use of government funds at the request of the Victorian Government, for a period of one year from receipt of payment.
- 15.2 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 and the application, the grant payment will be repayable on demand.

16 Privacy Statement

- 16.1 Information provided for this program will be used by the Department for the purposes of assessment of eligibility, program administration and program review. In registering for a grant, the applicant applying on behalf of the entity consents to the sharing of information as outlined in Section 10 above.
- 16.2 If there is an intention to include personal information about a third party in the application, the applicant applying must ensure the third party is aware of and consents to the contents of this privacy statement.
- 16.3 Any personal information about the applicant applying 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 the privacy of personal information and the Department's privacy policy can be emailed to the Department's Privacy Unit at: privacy@ecodev.vic.gov.au.

17 Other Information about this Program

- 17.1 The Department reserves the right to amend these guidelines and application terms at any time as it deems appropriate.
- 17.2 As the Victorian State election will be held on Saturday 26 November 2022, the Victorian Government will assume a caretaker role from 6.00pm on 1 November 2022 until such time that either it becomes clear that the incumbent government will be

returned, or when a new government is commissioned. In line with the caretaker conventions, applicants should be aware that:

- all information about this grant process represents the position of the current government only, and is subject to change; and
- the incoming government may decide to not proceed with this grant process.

17.3 If an unsuccessful Applicant considers that their application has been incorrectly assessed, they can lodge a complaint. More information can be found at this site.

17.4 If you have any queries about your application or require further information on the program visit business.vic.gov.au or contact the Business Victoria Hotline at 13 22 15.