GUIDELINES

Business Skills Mentoring program

Updated 20 October 2026

1 Program summary

The Business Skills Mentoring program will support up to 1,000 eligible small business owners with free 1-hour business mentoring sessions. Eligible small business owners can access up to 3 confidential mentoring sessions with a qualified professional over a 3-month period.

The Business Skills Mentoring program is an initiative of the Economic Growth Statement announced in December 2024 and reflects the Victorian Government's ongoing commitment to providing businesses with the confidence to invest, expand and innovate.

1.1 Program objectives

The objective of this program is to support existing small business owners to build capacity so they can continue to develop their business and navigate challenges to innovation, investment and growth.

1.2 Program outcomes

The intended outcomes of this program are that mentoring supports business owners gain the skills to:

- achieve, or work towards achieving, their mentoring goal
- build greater resilience to economic challenges
- be more open to innovation and investing in growth
- establish strategic and operational capability and/or implement change.

2 Eligibility criteria

2.1 Eligible businesses

The Business Skills Mentoring program is open to owners of existing Victorian small businesses.

To be eligible, the business must be:

- registered in Victoria
- employ fewer than 20 full-time equivalent (FTE) employees
- hold an active Australian Business Number (ABN) continuously from 6 November 2025.

2.2 Ineligible businesses

Small businesses that do not meet the eligibility criteria are ineligible to participate in this program.

Ineligible business owners are encouraged to subscribe to the Business Victoria newsletter for updates on other available business advice, programs and resources.

3 Business mentoring sessions

All mentoring sessions provided via the Business Skills Mentoring program are confidential and must be used to develop the business named in the expression of interest.

Mentors will provide advice based on the information shared by the business owner, so it is advisable to engage with the mentor as openly as possible. The mentoring sessions are a confidential space for

business owners to discuss their business goals and plans. The mentor will share discussion notes with the business owner after each session and identify any agreed actions to take before the next session.

The focus of mentoring sessions is based on individual business needs, goals and plans. This may include (but is not limited to):

- developing a business plan for future development
- addressing problems or issues causing barriers to growth
- frameworks for investment and innovation
- establishing key business skills and practices.

3.1 Business mentors

The business mentors assigned to participants are qualified professionals with relevant small business experience. Mentors will offer advice to help business owners build skills, set goals, and navigate challenges that are relevant to the identified business needs.

The business mentors will advise on a wide range of business topics including, but not limited to, marketing, communication, finance, strategic planning, digitalisation and change management.

All efforts will be made to match the business owner with a mentor whose experience is relevant to the business owner's needs. Participants will have the opportunity to provide feedback during the program and adjustments may be made to ensure they receive full mentoring benefit.

4 Expression of interest and enrolment process

4.1 Expression of interest

Business owners are required to submit an online expression of interest to participate in the program. The applicant will receive a confirmation email that their expression of interest has been received once all mandatory fields have been completed and the form submitted.

Expressions of interest received by the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (department), will be assessed against the eligibility criteria.

Only finalised expressions of interest that are lodged with the department will be assessed.

4.2 Pre-mentoring stage

Eligible business owners will complete a mandatory pre-mentoring stage before enrolment to the program. Pre-mentoring assists mentors to provide customised, relevant advice.

Business owners will be supported to complete the pre-mentoring stage. This stage must be completed before the business owner can progress to mentoring enrolment.

4.3 Mentoring enrolment

Business owners that successfully complete the pre-mentoring stage will receive confirmation of enrolment into the mentoring program and will be paired with a suitable mentor.

Business owners enrolled to the mentoring program will be contacted within 5 business days to book their first mentoring session.

4.4 Department checks

Businesses and business owners may be subject to due diligence checks to enable the department to assess financial and other non-financial risks associated with the expression of interest.

The checks may include:

- ABN registration details
- potential for reputational risk to the Victorian Government

- risk profile, financial viability and management capacity of the business over the duration of the proposed activity
- whether the business owner has failed to meet key contractual obligations in the delivery performance of grants previously contracted with the Victorian Government.

Outcomes from such assessments may be considered in any decision to enrol a program participant.

The department may, at any time, remove an expression of interest from the enrolment process, or terminate the business mentoring, if in the department's opinion, association with the business or the business owner may bring the department, a minister or the State of Victoria into disrepute.

5 How to enrol

Business owners must visit the Business Victoria website to submit an online expression of interest.

Expressions of interest will close on 31 December 2026. Expressions of interest may close early if all mentoring places are filled.

Eligibility will be assessed in the same order that expressions of interest are received.

A business owner must submit an eligible expression of interest and complete the pre-mentoring stage before they can be enrolled to mentoring.

Mentoring places are limited, and enrolment is subject to availability.

Accessibility needs

If you need an interpreter call TIS National on 13 14 50 and ask for the Business Victoria hotline. The operator will connect you with an interpreter in the language you need. You will be asked to provide your name and the name and phone number of the organisation you need to contact.

Please call the Business Victoria hotline number on 13 22 15 for general accessibility enquiries please call or email Business Victoria at info@business.vic.gov.au

6 Publicity/acknowledgement of support

The department may require participating businesses to acknowledge the Victorian Government's support on promotional materials and appropriate signage, which must be consistent with the Guidelines for Victorian Government Advertising and Communications (available at www.dpc.vic.gov.au) or as otherwise specified by the department.

7 Notification of outcomes

Business owners will be advised of the outcome of their expression of interest by email.

The department will endeavour to notify business owners of their eligibility for the program within 10 business days of receiving an expression of interest.

8 Post project evaluation

By enrolling in this program, all participating business owners agree to comply with the department's performance monitoring and evaluation processes.

Business owners are required to take part in any program monitoring and evaluation activities initiated by the department as a condition of participating in the mentoring program. This may include completing surveys during the program and for a nominated time after program close to measure progress to achieving outcomes.

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.

9 Privacy

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 business owner 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 business owner 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 info@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.

10 Probity and decision-making

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

Decisions in recommending and approving applications under this program are at the Minister for Small Business and Employment and department discretion.

These guidelines and mentoring enrolment terms may be updated from time to time.

The department may request the business owner provide further information should it be necessary to assess an expression 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.

10.1 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 business owner:

- 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 business owner from carrying out the proposed activities fairly and independently.

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

10.2 Complaints or feedback

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

- timeliness of the process
- communication provided by the department
- adherence to the published program guidelines
- mentoring and support provided.

Your complaint will be acknowledged within 2 working days of receipt and progress to the review team for resolution.

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.

You can send your written complaint or feedback to info@business.vic.gov.au

11 Other information

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