HOSPITALITY SECURITY FUND GRANT PROGRAM

PROGRAM GUIDELINES

Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions

1. Program Overview

The Hospitality Security Fund Grant Program provides grants to eligible licensed hospitality businesses to improve the security and fire suppression capacity and systems at their venue. It is funded by the Victorian Government.

The program supports Victoria Police's Operation Eclipse, which began on 27 April 2026, to target serious and organised crime groups linked to a series of criminal incidents in inner Melbourne.

The program is available to eligible licensed hospitality businesses in the City of Melbourne, City of Port Phillip, City of Stonnington and City of Yarra. These local government areas have been impacted by fire-related crime investigated by Operation Eclipse (see clause 4).

The program has two streams:

Stream 1: Security Uplift Grant –$5,000 to support eligible licensed hospitality businesses to improve security or fire prevention systems in their venue. Applicants must match this grant amount with a contribution of at least $5,000 towards the project.

Stream 2: Direct Impact Grant – up to $25,000 to support eligible licensed hospitality businesses with venues directly impacted by fire-related crime investigated by Operation Eclipse (for example arson) to improve security or fire prevention systems in their venue. This stream does not require a matched contribution from the applicant.

The grants are delivered as a rebate. This means a grant will only be paid to an eligible business once their approved project is successfully completed, assessed and acquitted.

The grants will support businesses to install safety and security equipment that will help create safer public business precincts.

The expected primary outcomes of this program are:

- affected business owners have increased capability and capacity to reduce the possible impact(s) of crime on business, staff and customers through the adoption of proven security measures and equipment
- increase business and customer confidence
- businesses will be more resilient to future disruptions
- strengthen local economies.

The program is administered by the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (the department) on behalf of the Victorian Government in accordance with these Guidelines.

Eligibility may be assessed through various verification means, including with other government departments, agencies, regulatory and other bodies.

2. Program Application Dates

The program opened for applications on 3 July 2026 and will close on 28 August 2026 at 4:00 pm unless funds are allocated earlier. Please note that late applications will not be accepted.

2.1 Victorian State Election impact on dates

As the Victorian State Election will be held on 28 November 2026, the Victorian Government will assume a caretaker role from 3 November 2026 until such time that it becomes clear that the incumbent government will be returned or when a new government is commissioned.

In line with the Caretaker Conventions, the incoming government will determine whether to proceed with this grant process and enter into a contract or award the grants after the caretaker period.

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.

3. Available Funding and Expenditure

The grants are delivered as a rebate. This means a grant will only be paid to an eligible business once their approved project is successfully completed, assessed and acquitted.

As part of the application, applicants must provide details of their proposed project to improve the security and/or fire suppression capacity of their venue. Where an application and proposed project are approved, rebates of:

- $5,000 are available under Stream 1, Security Uplift Grant or
- up to $25,000 are available under Stream 2, Direct Impact Grant.

3.1 Funding Streams

There are two available funding streams.

Stream 1 – Security Uplift Grant

This stream is available for eligible businesses which operate an eligible licenced hospitality venue or venues (refer to clause 4 and 5) to improve security and/or fire prevention systems in their venues. This stream is not for businesses that have incurred direct fire-related criminal damage investigated by Operation Eclipse since 1 March 2026 (those businesses should refer to Stream 2).

Funding

For these businesses, a flat grant of $5,000 is available. A minimum co-contribution of $5,000 is required. This means applicants must spend at least $10,000 up front on eligible expenditure to receive the $5,000 grant. The funding is paid as a rebate after the project is completed, assessed and acquitted.

Table 1. Stream 1 grant amount (and minimum eligible expenditure)

Minimum eligible up-front expenditure by grantee*	Grant amount paid as rebate	Co-contribution required by grantee

$10,000 excl GST	$5,000	$5,000

* The provision of grant funding is not considered a taxable supply and therefore Goods and Services Tax (GST) is not applicable. All costs associated with the project must be excluding GST.

Stream 2 – Direct Impact Grant

This stream is available for eligible businesses which operate an eligible licensed hospitality venue or venues (refer to clause 4 and 5) and that venue has incurred direct **fire-related criminal damage** investigated by Operation Eclipse (for example, due to arson) since 1 March 2026. This must be evidenced by a Victoria Police report (Notice to the Victim) and a statutory declaration (refer to clause 5.2).

Funding

Grants of up to $25,000 are available to businesses eligible for this stream, with a minimum eligible project expenditure of $5,000.

There is no required co-contribution for this funding stream.

Table 2. Stream 2 grant amount (and minimum eligible expenditure)

Minimum eligible project expenditure*	Grant amount paid as rebate	Co-contribution required by grantee
$5,000 excl GST	Up to $25,000	$0

* The provision of grant funding is not considered a taxable supply and therefore Goods and Services Tax (GST) is not applicable. All costs associated with the project must be excluding GST.

3.2 Funding and Expenditure

One grant per venue

An eligible business (as defined by its ABN) can only receive one grant per eligible venue. If a business operates multiple eligible venues under its ABN, it must apply for each eligible venue separately.

Funding treatment

Grants under this program may constitute assessable income and be taxable under Australian tax legislations. They may result in financial, taxation, legal or other implications for the Applicant. Businesses may be able to claim tax deductions for appropriate expenditure funded by the grant. It is strongly recommended applicants seek independent financial advice regarding these possible impacts. Applicants may also seek advice from the Australian Tax Office on 1800 806 218 if they have questions about their individual situation.

Expenditure timelines

Approved grant recipients must spend all funding provided under this program by 28 February 2027 (that is 6 months from 28 August 2026) on approved project activities. They must retain records of this expenditure until 3 July 2030 in accordance with these Guidelines.

Expenditure already incurred

As part of their application, Stream 2 – Direct Impact Grant applications can claim for eligible expenditure incurred since 1 March 2026 due to direct fire-related criminal damage investigated by Operation Eclipse.

Where Stream 2 applicants are claiming a combination of incurred expenditure and expenditure for projects that have not yet been approved, no grant funds will be paid until the *full* minimum expenditure for the grant value being claimed has been evidenced.

4. Eligible venues

This program is for eligible employing businesses with a **venue**[1] located in the City of Melbourne, City of Port Phillip, City of Stonnington and City of Yarra. The applicant business must be registered under an eligible industry class with the Australian Business Register and must hold an eligible liquor licence for the venue in the application, which must have regular[2] public night-time trading hours past 6pm.

List of Eligible Local Government Areas

Local Government Areas	City of Melbourne
	City of Port Phillip
	City of Stonnington
	City of Yarra

List of Eligible ANZSIC classes:[3]

Sector	ANZSIC	Industry definition
Hospitality	4511	Cafes and Restaurant
	4520	Pubs, Taverns and Bars
	4530	Clubs (Hospitality)

List of Eligible Liquor Licences

Liquor Licence Type	General liquor licence
	On-premises liquor licence
	Late night (general) liquor licence
	Late night (on-premises) liquor licence
	Restaurant and café liquor licence

[1] **Venue** is as defined by its location as documented in the approved liquor licence.

[2] For the purposes of these Guidelines, regular public night-time trading hours means that the venue is open to the public at least once per week during trading hours that extend past 6pm.

[3] The department may in its absolute discretion allow an applicant business with an ABN which is not registered in one of the above Eligible ANZSIC classes to be assessed as eligible, provided that the business directly operates as a hospitality business, and meets other eligibility requirements.

5. Applicant and Application Eligibility

5.1 Eligibility criteria

To be eligible for the grant, the applicant must:

a. be an eligible entity type (Appendix 1) and employing business with fewer than 50 employees (by headcount)[4] on payroll and be currently registered with WorkSafe Victoria;[5]
b. hold an active Australian Business Number (ABN) and have held that ABN on and continuously from 27 April 2026;[6]
c. be registered for Goods and Services Tax (GST) and have held GST registration on and continuously from 27 April 2026;[7] [8]
d. be registered under and operating in an eligible industry sector identified in the **List of Eligible ANZSIC classes** on and continuously from 27 April 2026 (refer to clause 4);[9]
e. operate an eligible venue located in the LGA of City of Melbourne, City of Port Phillip, City of Stonnington, or City of Yarra with regular public night-time trading hours past 6pm (refer to clause 4)[2];
f. hold an eligible liquor licence for that venue on and continuously from 27 April 2026 (refer to clause 4),
g. not be insolvent or have owners/directors that are undischarged bankrupt; and

in addition, applicants to Stream 2 – Direct Impact Grant must:

h. demonstrate that the application is for a **fire-related property crime affected licensed venue** investigated by Operation Eclipse (refer to clause 3.1 and 5.2).

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[4] 'Headcount' includes all full-time, part-time and casual employees employed by the business at the time of application. However, business owners, non-executive directors and contractors are *not* included.
[5] The department may verify payroll data held by the State Revenue Office and that the employer is registered as an employer with WorkSafe Victoria.
[6] Businesses that registered after 27 April 2026 but have backdated their ABN registration date to an earlier date will not be eligible, unless an exceptional circumstances application under clause 5.3 is approved for a business registered before 27 April 2026.
[7] Businesses that registered after 27 April 2026 but have backdated their GST registration date to an earlier date will not be eligible.
[8] A business or enterprise must register for GST if it has an annual GST turnover of $75,000 or more. Incorporated Associations, registered with Consumer Affairs Victoria, with an annual turnover between $75,000 and $150,000 that are not registered for GST and charities, registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profit Commission, that are exempt from GST registration are eligible to apply. Businesses with annual 2024-2025 turnover of $75,000 or more that are not required by relevant taxation legislation to be registered for GST are eligible to apply. A statutory declaration from a registered tax agent may be required.
[9] Your industry ABN registration includes your self-nominated ANZSIC industry classification, and this will be used to determine your eligibility for this criterion. Applicants must certify that they have checked that these details are up to date and reflect their current business activity prior to submitting their application. The department may request further information or evidence from the applicant business to verify that the business's operations are accurately reflected by their self-nominated ANZSIC industry classification. Please note the department's discretion to determine that a business meets this eligibility criterion as described in footnote 3 of clause 4.

5.2 How is fire-related property crime proven?

Stream 2 – Direct Impact Grant applicants will be asked to provide a Victoria Police Report (Notice to the Victim) and a statutory declaration which must include the following details:

- a brief description of the fire-related property crime incident
- the date, time and location of the incident and the impacted venue(s)
- the impact of the fire-related property crime that has affected the venue listed in the application
- a statement that a non-anonymous report was lodged with Victoria Police
- the details of the person who lodged the report
- the Incident Number contained on the Victoria Police Report (Notice to the Victim).

The statutory declaration template is available here.

The department may verify any information provided in the application with other government agencies, including Victoria Police.

5.3 Exceptional Circumstances

In exceptional circumstances, consideration may be given to applicants who do not meet all the eligibility criteria outlined in clause 5.1. Exceptional circumstances applications are entirely at the department's discretion and may include circumstances such as financial hardship.

The applicant is responsible for providing sufficient reasons and evidence in support of an exceptional circumstances application.

The department may consider applications in the following exceptional circumstances:

a. If a business has received a grant for a venue under Stream 1 – Security Uplift Grant but is later directly impacted by fire-related criminal damage to that venue, the business can apply for Stream 2 – Direct Impact Grant.

   In this situation, if the business is successful for the Stream 2 – Direct Impact Grant, the available funding increases to $25,000 in total. If a Stream 1 rebate of $5,000 has already been paid, a maximum of $20,000 can be paid under Stream 2 for the same venue.

b. **Landlord eligibility:** The landlord of an eligible tenant's commercial premises may seek a grant for an eligible project that benefits the tenant but for which the landlord is responsible for commissioning the works. Note:

   i. Only one application per venue is permitted. If a landlord makes an exceptional circumstances application for a project at an eligible venue, the tenant cannot apply for a rebate in relation to the same venue, and vice-versa.

The applicant landlord must provide written permission from an authorised representative of the tenant business as part of their application.

6 What the grant can be used for

Grant funding can be used on eligible expenditure (clause 6.1) for a project that supports a business' preferred security and fire-prevention and response strategy where:

a. it improves security and/or fire prevention in a commercial venue open to the public;

b. the project materials and equipment have been purchased and paid for in full between:

   i. the date the grant was approved and 6 months from the date of program closure; or

   ii. for Stream 2 – Direct Impact Grant applicants only, between 1 March 2026 and 6 months from the date of program closure; and

c. the security and/or fire suppression upgrade will lead to an improvement above and beyond any existing minimum standard required under any law, regulation, instrument or permit that applies to the venue.

Guidance and information are publicly available on the types and installation of equipment and systems that can improve security and fire suppression. Refer to the Frequently Asked Questions for the Hospitality Security Fund Grant Program on the Business Victoria website for more information.

Applicants are encouraged to view this guidance, which is designed as information only. Business owners must make their own judgement and take decisions about optimising security and fire suppression appropriate for their venues. 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.

It is at all times the responsibility of the applicant to obtain its own advice (as required) and to comply with all laws and regulations, including but not limited to for any project funded through a grant under this program:

- for the works and installation of items and equipment, to comply with all permits, licences and approvals, and
- for the operation and use of any surveillance and detection (for example CCTV), to comply with all applicable privacy, surveillance, workplace, and other legal obligations such as appropriate notice, proportionate use, and secure storage and handling of recorded footage.

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 Hospitality Security Fund Grant.

6.1 Types of Eligible Expenditure

Eligible expenditure must meet the requirements in clause 6.

Expenditure can include equipment and works that improve security and fire suppression for the installation, upgrade, maintenance and repair of building infrastructure and relevant systems.

Expenditure may cover direct costs to deliver the security and fire-suppression project such as labour, regulatory approvals or cost of building works directly related to and needed for the approved project.

The following are examples of types of eligible expenditure:

Security or Fire Audit:

- inspection by a qualified professional for the purpose of a security and/or fire suppression audit

Security:

- works to the building to restrict access or make forced entry more difficult, (must not impede fire safety and best informed by a fire safety audit);
- repairs or servicing (including purchase of parts) to an existing security system to ensure it operates effectively;
- upgrading or installing surveillance and detection systems, such as CCTV cameras[10] (except where it is an existing condition of the liquor licence), alarm systems, motion detectors or glass break detectors;
- upgrading physical security items (for example lockable cash drawers, tills, and safes)
- emergency lighting and illuminated exit signage beyond regulatory minimums.

Fire suppression and response:

- works to the building to improve the venue's capacity to identify, resist, suppress or control a fire, such as sprinkler systems;
- purchase and installation of fire suppression or control equipment;
- purchase and installation of spare parts to ensure the existing fire alarm system operates more effectively;

Training:

- emergency security and/or fire evacuation training;
- emergency response training.

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[10] Applicants should refer to the Frequently Asked Questions for the Hospitality Fund Grant Program on the Business Victoria website for guidance material on CCTV.

All grant funding must be spent in accordance with these guidelines by no later than 6 months from the program close date (28 February 2027).

Applicants must be able to provide evidence of how grant funds were used, and grant expenditure may be subject to audit as per clauses 7, 8 and 9 of these guidelines.

Any expenditure must be in accordance with clause 6 of these guidelines. Upon request by the department, any unspent funds or funds that were not spent in accordance with these guidelines, either whole or in part, must be repaid (See clause 9 – Audit).

6.2 Ineligible activities & expenses

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

a) expenditure incurred:
   - for Stream 1 applications – before the approval date and 6 months after program closure; or
   - For Stream 2 applications – before 1 March 2026 and 6 months after program closure;

b) works where the primary intention is not to improve security or fire suppression,

c) project components that are not related to the improvement of security or fire suppression,

d) where the applicant is entitled to, has received, or has been approved to receive, an amount under a policy of insurance for the relevant expenses claimed,

e) business operating expenses, including salaries and wages,

f) running and maintenance costs of security or fire suppression equipment, including but not limited to energy costs,

g) costs associated with obtaining quotes, where the work has not been contracted with the quote provider (for example, call-out-fee),

h) project work delivered by a provider that is not qualified as a licensed service provider to undertake the contracted services,

i) 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,

j) equipment that is not compliant with Australian standards,

k) loss of income due to venue's inability to operate as normal whilst the work is being undertaken,

l) equipment hire,

m) obligations required under the requisite liquor licence,

n) any other expenditure as determined by the department that does not meet program eligibility.

Expenditure that does not comply with clause 6 of these Guidelines is considered ineligible, as determined by the department at the department's discretion.

7 How the program works

Step 1 – Applicants submit a proposal for an eligible project

a) Submit your details online on the Business Victoria website application portal.

b) If your business and venue may meet the eligibility criteria, you will be able to proceed to submit the details of your proposed project.

c) All questions in the application need to be completed and requested information provided to ensure timely assessment.

d) The application must be submitted by an authorised representative of the business. An authorised representative is a person who can legally bind the Applicant and cannot be a Third Party (e.g. accountant). [11]

e) At the time of applying, the Applicant must provide:

   i. Liquor Licence Number

   ii. Liquor Licence Certificate

   iii. Venue details

   iv. Australian Business Number

   v. Authorised Representative Details

   vi. WorkCover Insurance Certificate of Currency

   vii. Attestations and written submissions addressing eligibility criteria

   viii. Details of your proposed project, photographs of the current state, and evidence of estimated cost.

Additionally, Stream 2 – Direct Impact Grant applications will require:

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[11] **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 business.

Depending on the entity type, the following people are authorised representatives and can apply on behalf of their organisation:

- Companies: a director listed at the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) or Register of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporations
- Sole traders: the sole trader
- Partnerships: a partner.
- Trusts: an authorised representative of the trustee, being either the trustee (if an individual) or a director of the trustee (if a company)

ix. A Victoria Police Report (Notice to the Victim) and a statutory declaration which contains the information listed in clause 5.2.

f) As part of the application process, the Applicant must accept and agree to be bound by the terms and conditions of the grant in the application form and these guidelines. Submitting the application will constitute an offer to the department.

The application information will be assessed against the eligibility criteria. If the business, venue and proposed project are found to be eligible, the Applicant will be advised of the outcome. This will constitute acceptance of the applicant's offer.

The program will be open for applications until 28 August 2026 or when funds are exhausted, whichever is earlier.

Step 2 – Project approval

a. If the application is successful, the Applicant (i.e. authorised representative) will receive a Successful Email advising that the proposed project is eligible for a rebate (refer to Clause 6 – eligible expenditure).

b. The Applicant will be required to submit a claim form to demonstrate expenditure.

c. The Applicant must spend the funds on eligible expenditure by 28 February 2027 (+ 6 months from program close).

d. The Applicant must keep before and after photographs of the project. The photographs must clearly show the venue before the commencement of security and/or fire suppression upgrades, and after these upgrades have been completed.

Step 3 – Payment of grant

a. Funding is paid via rebate on acquittal and assessment at project completion, where an eligible applicant will be sent a claim form to provide evidence of eligible expenditure, photographic evidence of the completed works, and that the minimum eligible expenditure and any required co-contribution have been met, and to provide any further details (e.g. bank account details). The eligible applicant can expect to receive up to 3 emails occurring between 3 July 2026 to 28 February 2027 as a reminder to submit claim documentation.

b. The person submitting evidence of eligible expenditure to claim the funds must attest to the following on behalf of the business:

    i. the business has reviewed publicly available guidance and resources and made an assessment or secured professional advice as to the appropriate improvements being made;

    ii. the business has complied with all relevant permits, laws and regulations as applicable (for example, using licensed electricians);

    iii. the business holds public liability insurance sufficient to cover its operations;

    iv. if the business is a tenant of the relevant premises, that any necessary approvals from the landlord have been obtained;

v. that none of the works undertaken as part of this project were completed to enable the business to meet existing required minimum standards under any permit, liquor licence, law and regulation that applies to the business.

c. the business is to complete the questions in the evaluation section of the claim form.

d. Applicants must keep evidence of eligibility and evidence of how their grant funds were spent for 4 years from 3 July 2026.

e. The Department will aim to pay the business within 10 working days of receipt of the completed acceptance form. Grants to successful applicants will be paid into the bank account nominated on the application form.

f. Applicants may be asked to participate in a program evaluation survey in 2027, which will include a request for information on how grant funds were spent.

g. The department reserves the right to audit the grant (refer to Clause 9). The Applicant must retain their evidence documents for a minimum period of 4 years from the program open date (until 3 July 2030), for audit purposes (refer to Clause 9). Successful applicants will be provided further information on how this process works and what is required of them.

8 Assessment and verification

8.1 Assessment process

Applications will be assessed against the eligibility criteria, attestations and evidence provided; and the proposed project aligns with the eligible expenditure (Clause 6).

When assessing your application, the department reserves the right to request further information to verify the application. Failure to provide further information may result in the department refusing the application.

Applicants must ensure that the information listed with the Australian Business Register (ABR) as part of their ABN registration, Liquor Licence and WorkSafe Victoria in relation to their business, licence, employing status and location, is current and accurate at the time of application.

Applications will be assessed using the information and evidence provided in that application. As part of the assessment and any further verification process or audit post-assessment, any information provided by an applicant may be shared and subject to verification with other government agencies (Local, State and Commonwealth) including (but not limited to) the Australian Taxation Office, Australian Securities and Investments Commission, Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission, Consumer Affairs Victoria, Liquor Control Victoria, WorkSafe Victoria, Victoria Police, State Revenue Office, the ABR, local government and the Australian Government Department of Home Affairs.[12]

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[12] The department is not responsible for delays caused by third party validation of eligibility. By making an application,the applicant consents to the assessment and verification process.

The department reserves in its absolute discretion the right to refuse an application where eligibility criteria are not met, or where the applicant does not or cannot provide sufficient information for the department to assess whether eligibility criteria have been met.

Applicants must attest that they meet the eligibility criteria at the time of application. They will also need to meet the eligibility criteria at the time the application is assessed by the department.

8.2 Evidence that may be requested

Evidence that must be provided upon request includes the following, or any other document that the department considers necessary to make an assessment, review, acquittal or audit determination.

8.2.1 Other eligibility evidence requirements

- evidence of where the applicant's business operates and the relevant property details;
- ABN and GST registration of the business;
- evidence of operations that verifies the business's operating sector and/or defined ANZSIC industry classification registered with the ABR;
- evidence of the connection between the Liquor Licensee and the applicant business;
- banking and financial information relating to the business; and
- evidence of the number of full-time equivalent employees employed by the business
- evidence of the fire-related property crime, such as the Notice to the Victim issued by Victoria Police.

8.2.2 Evidence of how grant funds were used

Applicants must keep evidence of expenditure to verify that grant funds have been expended on business related activities (refer to clause 6) as demonstrated by paid tax invoices linked to proof of payment e.g. official receipt,[13] and photographic evidence of completed works. This evidence must be produced upon request.

8.3 Due Diligence checks

Without limiting the department's assessment, the following circumstances may be taken into consideration in any decision whether to award a grant:

a. duplicate applications, including by a trustee and a trust;
b. misleading amendments to information provided to public registers describing the organisation;
c. any adverse findings by a government agency or local council regarding an organisation or its operation;
d. The organisation is insolvent, a notice has been given that it is under, or will be placed under external administration, there is an application for liquidation or bankruptcy or to wind up a company or organisation, or a step has been taken to deregister the

[13] **Official receipt:** means a receipt including the name and address and ABN (if applicable) of the entity that issued the receipt and a description of each item to which the receipt relates.

company or organisation (including cancellation or lapse in registration or any relevant permit for the business, as required by law);

e. whether the applicant has received funding for the same costs through other means;

f. the delivery or performance of other grants contracted with the Victorian Government and whether the applicant has failed to meet grant conditions and obligations, or failed to respond to review, audit or repayment requests in relation to another grant;

g. whether the applicant has or is reasonably suspected of having provided inaccurate, false or misleading information in relation to this or any other grant program, including under a grant application or attestation;

h. the applicant has engaged or may engage in any conduct which affects or may adversely affect the goodwill or reputation of the Recipient, the Department, a Minister, or the State; and

i. whether the applicant has or is likely to have engaged in any unlawful conduct.

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.

9 Audit and Review

Applications and grant expenditure may be subject to review and/or audit by the department, the Victorian Government, its representatives or agents, or the relevant Auditor-General for a period of four years commencing from program open date (until 3 July 2030).

Reviews and/or audits may be conducted either before or after the provision of grant funding, and may be used to determine eligibility to receive the grant funds including whether information provided in the grant application was accurate, and/or to determine whether expenditure of the grant funds was in accordance with the program guidelines.

Evidence of eligibility and evidence of expenditure of the grant, must be kept for the entire duration of the audit period (four-year period ending on the date set out above) and be produced on request by the applicant.

9.1 Right to demand repayment

The grant will be repayable on demand if:

- The grant recipient fails to participate in any acquittal or audit process or to provide any evidence requested by the department; or
- The department deems, following an audit or review process, that the recipient was ineligible for the grant; or
- Any information provided by any person in the application, during the application process or during an audit or review process is found to be inaccurate, false or misleading; or

- Grant funds are applied for purposes other than for the purposes of the business as permitted in accordance with the terms of funding as set out in these Guidelines (refer to clause 6) and any attached application; or
- The grant recipient fails to meet any term or condition of the grant funding.

Failure to repay the grant upon demand may result in the department taking action to recover the funds.

10 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, including evaluation surveys during the period of the program, or 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 recovery support to Victorians.

11 Privacy Statement

Any personal information provided for this program will be collected and used by the department for the purposes of assessing eligibility, comparing eligibility and compliance with other Victorian grant programs you have previously received (if any), program administration, auditing, 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 may be undertaken as part of our assessment, auditing and/or 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, the department may share and verify data including 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 in respect of that third party personal information.

The department collects demographic information for departmental reporting purposes. No personal information is used in program 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 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.

12 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 discretion. This includes a decision regarding eligibility and not making any funding available or approving a lesser amount than that applied for, or requiring repayment of a grant where conditions of the grant are not met.

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.

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.

12.1 Complaints and decision reviews

If an applicant wants 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, by sending a written request to info@business.vic.gov.au or by calling 1800 878 969.

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 14 days unless further investigation is required. If further investigation is required, you may be contacted by phone or email asking for additional information.

Requests to review an outcome

Applicants may request a review of the decision not to approve a grant application up to 30 days after the department notifies the applicant of the outcome. Requests to review an outcome decision will not be accepted after this timeframe.

13 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.

It is an offence under the Oaths and Affirmations Act 2018 (Vic) for a person to make a statement in a statutory declaration that they know to be untrue.

Appendix 1

Eligible entity types

The applicant business must be a legal entity registered as a business in the state of Victoria and can be any of the following entity types (and provided it is not an Ineligible entity type as set out below):

- A company registered under the Corporations Act 2001 (Cth) with the Australian Securities and Investment Commission (ASIC)
- An indigenous organisation incorporated under the Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006 (Cth).
- A Franchisee if they are part of a chain and can demonstrate that they operate through a separate legal entity.
- A sole trader
- A Partnership[14]
- A trustee on behalf of a trust[15].

Ineligible entity types

The following are not eligible to apply:

- A Commonwealth, state or local government agency or body, including
    - a State Body as defined in the State-Owned Enterprises Act 1992 (Vic)
    - A Crown land committee of management
    - a Victorian local government authority
- Publicly funded research institutions
- An incorporated association registered under the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012 (Vic) with Consumer Affairs Victoria (CAV)
- An incorporated not-for-profit organisation registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission
- A Public company within the meaning of the Corporations Act 2001.
- A company not incorporated in Australia
- An unincorporated association
- An unincorporated not-for-profit
- A co-operative registered under the Co-operatives National Law

[14] Provided all individuals in the partnership will be legally liable for the performance of any agreement the individual signs.

[15] Trustees can apply on behalf of a Trust, provided the Trustee:

- remains sufficiently liable for the performance of any agreement it signs
- has a right to be indemnified from the assets of the Trust
- is indemnified from the assets of the Trust.

Eligible incorporated trustees exclude self-managed super funds.

- A body corporate under the Local Government Act 2020 (Vic)
- A statutory corporation such as a university, hospital or TAFE
- Incorporated and Unincorporated community sporting and active recreation clubs and associations.