

# Skills Solutions Partnerships

## Expressions of Interest Guidelines

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# 1 Program Summary

## 1.1 Overview

The Skills Solutions Partnerships (SSP) program provides a platform for collaboration between government, industry, TAFEs and dual sector universities to pilot new training approaches including short courses and on-the-job learning models to address emerging workforce skill shortages in priority areas.

This document sets down the guidelines for industry and education provider partners wishing to submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) to undertake a co-design process through the program.

EOIs must be submitted by a lead applicant, acting on behalf of the partnership, and will be assessed for suitability by the department.

Supported EOIs will undertake a co-design process to support project partners to agree on the required training solution. The type of co-design will depend on the project needs and may range from meetings or roundtables or matching a co-design facilitator to the project partners. All costs associated with the co-design stage will be fully funded by the department.

At the conclusion of the co-design, the facilitator will produce a report outlining the recommended training solution.

The department will review the report, and projects that are identified as being suitable for SSP funding as the most appropriate pathway can then submit a grant application of up to \$1.2 million for course design (if required) and pilot delivery of the training solution.

There are separate guidelines which explain how to submit a grant application for the course design and pilot delivery (Stages 2 and 3 below). Please refer to the SSP Grant Funding Guidelines for more information.

## 1.2 Skills Solutions Partnerships model

Stages	Steps
STAGE 1: Project discovery and co-design	Discovery of skills gap and partnership formation
	Submission of project EOIs
	Co-design of training solutions and on-the-job learning models
STAGE 2: Grant application and assessment	Submission of grant applications
	Awarding of grants
STAGE 3: Pilot project delivery and evaluation	Course design and delivery of pilot programs
	Program evaluation

## 1.3 Support for industry sectors

The following Victorian industry sectors are in focus for SSP, however proposals from other industry sectors may also be considered on a case-by-case basis:

- Clean economy
- Construction
- Digital
- Healthcare and social services
- Manufacturing

## 1.4 Overall program objectives

The Skills Solutions Partnerships (SSP) program aims to develop and invest in pilots of industry-led short courses and on-the-job learning models designed to quickly address skills gaps. Pilots will leverage existing short courses where available or develop new training options where current settings do not meet employer or learner needs and provide clear pathways to employment.

## 1.5 EOI objectives

Identify pilot projects that have potential to:

- Bring industry and education providers together to collaborate in a meaningful way
- Respond rapidly to deliver timely training solutions to meet industry's emerging skills needs
- Upskill or re-skill workers and provide an opportunity for job progression or employment
- Inform and provide ideas for system-wide reform, with the pilots providing a test bed for new approaches in developing training packages/credentials and on-the-job learning models
- Demonstrate the benefits of partnerships to education providers and industry and establish lasting and sustainable relationships between them.

## 1.6 EOI outcomes

The following outcomes are intended to be achieved through the co-design stage:

- Partnerships undertake a co-design process that may involve meetings or roundtables through to an external facilitator working with the project partners to scope a training solution to address a workforce skill shortage.

## 2 Funding and co-contribution

All costs associated with the co-design process will be paid by the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (DJSIR).

Partners applying through EOI process must commit to actively participate in the co-design process, including attending all workshops.

## 3 Eligibility Criteria

### 3.1 Eligible Applicants

The applicant must meet the following criteria, as assessed by DJSIR, to be eligible to apply:

- Is a legal entity with an operating presence in Victoria;
- Has a current Australian Business Number (ABN) and held that ABN on and from 1 January 2023;
- Has been registered for Goods and Services Tax (GST) on and from 1 January 2023;
- Is one of the following:
  - a dual sector university or TAFE headquartered in Victoria (and subject to the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*); or
  - a business industry group or professional association that has a direct role in supporting businesses in one of the eligible industry sectors in Victoria (as determined by the department); or
  - a business leading on behalf of a group of businesses (such as a business with a large supply chain looking for joint training, or a business acting on behalf of a business network) located in Victoria; and

- Has met all industrial relations obligations as an employer in accordance with the National Employment Standards.

### 3.2 Ineligible Applicants

Unless specified in section 3.1, the following entities are not eligible to apply for the Program:

- a Commonwealth department, agency or body;
- Registered Training Organisations (RTOs);
- Any accredited dual sector university and TAFE not headquartered in Victoria;
- a State department, agency, entity or other body established under the *Public Administration Act 2004* (VIC) or equivalent legislation of another Australian jurisdiction;
- unincorporated associations; or
- individuals/sole traders.

### 3.3 Criteria Specific to Certain Applicants

Applicants who have previously submitted an EOI and were unsuccessful are eligible to submit an EOI for a separate project.

Unless confirmed by the department prior to applying, applicants are not permitted to resubmit an EOI for a project previously deemed unsuccessful.

## 4 Partnerships

### 4.1 Collaboration

Expressions of Interest (EOI) are invited from businesses, industry associations and education providers.

To submit an Expression of Interest (EOI), the lead applicant is encouraged to collaborate with other businesses. Partnerships comprising multiple businesses or those convened by an industry association are encouraged to ensure broader impact across the relevant industry sector.

The EOI must demonstrate how the applicant and partners will work together to maximise the impact of the co-design and develop and deliver the pilot project (should it be required), and how the pilot project will meet the SSP program objectives.

### 4.2 Partner eligibility

Expressions of Interest must identify the project partners and confirm that each meets the following eligibility:

- Is a legal entity with an operating business presence in Victoria;
- Has a current Australian Business Number (ABN) and held that ABN on and from 1 January 2023;
- Has been registered for Goods and Services Tax (GST) on and from 1 January 2023;
- Has met all industrial relations obligations as an employer in accordance with the National Employment Standards;

Furthermore, all partners must attest that:

- They will actively participate in the co-design process, including attending all workshops.

## 5 EOI Timeline

To assist applicants, DJSIR is targeting the following indicative timeline for the EOI and co-design stage:

November 2023	Program launched and Expressions of Interest open
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November/December 2023	Commencement of first co-design processes for recommended EOIs (the co-design process is expected to take up to four weeks to complete)
15 March 2024	Expressions of Interest for co-design close
June 2024	Funding for all pilot SSP projects committed and projects underway

The above indicative timeline is subject to change at the sole discretion of DJSIR. Applicants are not to rely on this indicative timeline and DJSIR accepts no liability in relation to any consequences attributable to reliance on this indicative timeline.

## 6 Application Process

### 6.1 How to apply

Applicants are requested to submit an EOI via the online application form available on the Business Victoria website at [www.business.vic.gov.au/ssp](http://www.business.vic.gov.au/ssp).

The EOI can only be made using this online form. Printed, facsimile, posted or other methods of delivery of the EOI form will not be accepted. All sections of the EOI form must be completed in full.

The EOI will:

- Determine the applicant's eligibility
- Advise the department as to the principal objectives of the project
- Outline the skills problem/training need that is not currently being met
- Provide the name and a brief description of the project seeking support; and
- Outline how the project aligns with the EOI objectives.

All EOIs will be considered by the department. There is no guarantee that an applicant will be short-listed or recommended to undertake a co-design. EOI applicants may, at the department's discretion, be provided alternative support such as:

- invited to attend a meeting with DJSIR and/or other government areas to discuss the skill issue; and/or
- provided with contact details of other organisations (related businesses and/or the Victorian dual sector universities and TAFEs and/or industry association/s and/or government area/s) so that they may explore the issue and/or initiatives in more detail; and/or
- joined with an existing project exploring a similar/same skill issue; and/or
- referred to an alternative government program; and/or
- the issue logged for potential future consideration.

### 6.2 Due Diligence Assessments

Where required, applicants may be subject to an assessment which verifies business details provided with the Australian Business Register, Australian Securities and Investment Commission, Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commissioner, Consumer Affairs Victoria and/or other applicable regulator.

Any of the following circumstances may be taken into consideration in any decision whether to recommend an EOI:

- Any adverse findings by a regulator regarding an applicant;
- If an applicant is placed under external or voluntary administration or is subject to receivership;
- There is a petition to wind up or deregister the applicant

- If an applicant is or becomes deregistered or unregistered in respect of its registration regulatory body (including cancellation or lapse in registration); and
- Whether the applicant has failed to meet key contractual obligations for previous grant agreements with the State. Note: as appropriate, delays due to COVID-19 restrictions and responses will be taken into consideration at the department's discretion.

### 6.3 Open and Close Dates

Expressions of Interest open at 9:00am on 21 November 2023 and will close at 11:59pm on 15 March 2024, or until funds for co-design are fully allocated.

Apply via the online application form available on the Business Victoria website at [www.business.vic.gov.au/ssp](http://www.business.vic.gov.au/ssp)

Further information with respect to the program, including closing dates will be listed on the Skills Solutions Partnerships website: [www.business.vic.gov.au/ssp](http://www.business.vic.gov.au/ssp)

## 7 Recommendation for Approval

If successful, Applicants will be issued a letter of offer confirming their approval to undertake a co-design process.

## 8 Compliance and Audit

### 8.1 False or misleading information

If any declaration or statement made or information provided by the applicant is found to be incomplete, inaccurate, false or misleading, the application may not be approved.

### 8.2 Verification

The applicant acknowledges that as part of the assessment process, evidence provided by the applicant will be subject to verification by DJSIR.

## 9 Program evaluation

Partners will be required to participate in any evaluation activities initiated by DJSIR. This may include completing surveys at the conclusion of the co-design process to measure program outcomes. Non-compliance could impact future applications to DJSIR's programs.

Reporting is critical to DJSIR in understanding program impact, supporting continuous improvement in program design and delivery, and delivering more effective grant programs to the people of Victoria.

## 10 Privacy and confidentiality

Information provided by the applicant for the purpose of this application will be used by DJSIR for the purposes of assessment of applications, program administration and program review.

In making an application, the applicant consents to the provision of their information (including personal information) to State and Commonwealth Government departments and agencies and third-party assessors for the purpose of assessing applications.

If there is an intention to include personal information about third parties in the application, please ensure they are aware of and consent to the contents of this privacy statement.

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 to personal information, or for other concerns regarding the privacy of personal information, can be emailed to DJSIR's Privacy Unit by emailing [privacy@ecodev.vic.gov.au](mailto:privacy@ecodev.vic.gov.au). DJSIR's privacy policy is also available by emailing the DJSIR's Privacy Unit.

## 11 General conditions

### 11.1 Approval of Expressions of Interest

DJSIR's decisions on all matters pertaining to EOIs is at DJSIR's absolute discretion.

### 11.2 Further information

DJSIR reserves the right to request the applicant provide further information should it be deemed necessary.

### 11.3 No right of appeal

A decision in relation to an application is not subject to review or appeal of any kind. Applicants will be notified if feedback on an application can be provided.

### 11.4 Disrepute

DJSIR may at any time, remove an applicant from the EOI and assessment process, if in DJSIR's opinion association with the applicant may bring DJSIR, a Minister or the State of Victoria into disrepute.

### 11.5 Amendments

DJSIR reserves the right to amend these guidelines at any time as it deems appropriate.

## 12 Further Resources

Further information regarding this EOI can be found here: [www.business.vic.gov.au/ssp](http://www.business.vic.gov.au/ssp)

For email inquiries relating to the Skills Solutions Partnerships Program, email [SkillsSolutions@ecodev.vic.gov.au](mailto:SkillsSolutions@ecodev.vic.gov.au)