Skills Solutions Partnerships

Grant Guidelines

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# Program Summary

## 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 a Skills Solution Partnerships Grant Application.

Grant funding of up to $1.2 million is available through SSP for Pilot Project Development and Delivery (refer to diagram below) to:

* complete detailed course design and development (if required); and
* deliver and evaluate the pilot training solution.

Grant applications will only be considered for projects which have:

* successfully progressed through the program’s project discovery stage;
* identified SSP grant funding as the most appropriate pathway; and
* been deemed suitable by the department to progress to the grant application stage.

There are separate guidelines which explain how to submit an Expression of Interest to participate in a co-design process (Stage 1 below). For more information refer to the SSP Expression of Interest Guidelines.

## 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​ |

## 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.

## 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. The 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.

Pilot projects delivered through SSP should aim to:

* 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.

## Pilot project development and delivery stage objectives

* Develop a quality training solution that meets industry needs
* Provide pathways to employment and/or job progression for training recipients
* Build trust and enduring relationships between industry and education providers.

## Outcomes

The following outcomes are intended to be achieved:

* Innovative training products that can be rapidly developed to meet industry needs are developed and delivered
* Industry gains access to the workers they need to fill skill gaps
* Victorian workers develop new skills and find safe, secure and fair employment
* Project evaluation captures outcomes and identifies opportunities for system-wide improvements.

Applicants will be asked to articulate how their project will achieve any or all of these outcomes.

# Available Grant Funding

Funding of up to $1,200,000 is available for pilot projects that have successfully completed the Project Discovery stage to undertake detailed course design and development (if required), deliver the pilot training solution and on-the-job learning and evaluate outcomes.

# Co-contribution Requirements

## General co-contribution funding requirements

* Grant funding under SSP will be provided on the basis that the lead applicant and partners provide a co-contribution which is equal to the funding being applied for (1:1 co-funding ratio).
* This can be made up of cash and/or in-kind contributions.
* Lead applicants agree to provide DJSIR evidence, to its satisfaction, that any cash co-contributions have been applied to the applicant’s project.

## In-kind and cash contributions*:*

* An in-kind contribution is a contribution of a good or a service other than cash.
* Applicants are required to outline the nature and value of the in-kind and cash contributions, and where applicable, provide evidence of how those values have been calculated.
* Acceptable in-kind and cash contributions are listed in section 6.2 (Eligible Project Expenses). In-kind co-contributions which are not accepted are listed in section 6.3 (Ineligible Project Expenses).

# Eligibility Criteria

## Eligible Applicants

A single lead applicant must apply on behalf of the partnership.

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.\*

\* Where the funding being sought is greater than $500,000 (exclusive of GST) and where the project includes an objective to deliver new jobs in Victoria, lead applicants may be required to hold a Fair Jobs Code Pre-Assessment Certificate and submit a Fair Jobs Code Plan as part of the conditions of their grant agreement. The department will confirm whether the FJC will apply to a project should an application for funding be approved.

The Fair Jobs Code (FJC) is implemented by Victorian Government departments, agencies and public bodies to support and promote fair labour standards and ensure compliance with employment law. The FJC aims to improve employment outcomes for people employed by businesses that receive funding from the Victorian Government.

For further information and full details of the requirements of the FJC, grant applicants should refer to the FJC and FJC Guidelines which can be found at: [buyingfor.vic.gov.au/fair-jobs-code-suppliers-and-businesses](https://www.buyingfor.vic.gov.au/fair-jobs-code-suppliers-and-businesses)

Furthermore, lead applicants must attest that:

* they can comply with the co-contribution funding requirements specific to their application (in accordance with these guidelines);
* they will deliver the funded project in collaboration with their project partners;
* they and their partners agree to recognise and promote their partnership and any training outcomes in the development of future marketing materials; and
* they and their partners will participate in future SSP program evaluation activities.

## Ineligible Applicants

Unless specified in section 4.1, the following entities are not eligible to apply for the Program:

* a Commonwealth department, agency or body;
* Registered Training Organisations (RTOs);
* non-Victorian accredited dual sector universities and TAFEs;
* 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.

# Partnerships

## Partnership requirements

To apply for a grant for the pilot project development and delivery stage, an applicant is required to collaborate with at least one other organisation (project partner). Partnerships comprising multiple businesses or those convened by an industry association are encouraged to ensure broader impact across the relevant industry sector.

## Partner eligibility

Grant applications 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; and
* Has met all industrial relations obligations as an employer in accordance with the National Employment Standards.

Furthermore, project partners that are employers in the given sector must attest that:

* They will provide opportunities for on-the-job learning and opportunities for job progression for employees participating in pilot projects aimed at upskilling existing staff; and/or
* They will provide work placement or job opportunities for new entrants to the industry that successfully complete the pilot training course.

# Project Eligibility

## General Project Eligibility

Grant applications will only be accepted following the completion of the Project Discovery stage.

Eligibility of projects will be determined at the sole discretion of the Department.

## Eligible Expenditure

Eligible expenditure and eligible in-kind and cash co-contribution items are:

* Costs associated with the creation of new training products or modifying existing training products identified through the Project Discovery stage;
* Costs associated with undertaking recognition/certification processes for the new training products;
* Costs associated with coordinating and facilitating work on-the-job learning models for training participants;
* Costs associated with equipment access and running costs for training;
* Costs associated with training location or facilities;
* Costs associated with the development of materials and promotional support;
* Costs associated with time release staff undertaking the training;
* Partially (or fully, where required) subsidising the enrolment cost i.e. course fees for participants; and
* Staffing costs for the lead applicant and project partners that relate solely to either:
	+ new employees; or
	+ the expansion of hours for current part-time employees,

provided these employees are working on the funded projects.

## Ineligible Activities/Expenditure

Grant funding delivered through the program and eligible in-kind co-contributions must not support the following expenditure items:

* Usual operational expenditure, including existing staff costs, travel, entertainment, vehicles, accommodation, and office computing equipment
* Staffing costs of any kind beyond the life of the project
* Ongoing funding or existing initiatives
* Ongoing training delivery
* Capital works
* Printing, stationery, postage, and bank charges
* Basic and routine professional services including legal and accounting fees
* Any amount paid on account of goods and services tax
* Costs related to preparing the grant application
* Building routine websites
* Retrospective funding of projects that have already
	+ been completed prior to receiving an offer of grant funding under the program; or
	+ commenced prior to receiving an offer of grant funding under the program
* Any other expenditure as determined by DJSIR in its sole and absolute discretion.

## Project Budget

Applicants are required to submit a project budget summary, detailing how the grant funds will be spent.

Grant funds provided to the Applicant and any eligible in-kind co-contribution need to meet the eligible project expense criteria outlined in 6.2.

Where the eligibility of an expense included in the project budget is uncertain, DJSIR may seek further information from an Applicant.

## Program Timeline

To assist applicants, DJSIR is targeting the following indicative timeline for the Program:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| November 2023 | Program launch |
| January 2024 | Commencement of first Project Discovery project stages |
| April 2024 | First grant applications submitted and approved |
| 31 May 2024 | Applications to seek grant funding 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.

Projects funded by a grant under the Skills Solutions Partnership Program must be commenced by the applicant following execution by the applicant and DJSIR of a grant agreement and completed, including pilot evaluation, within 12 months of the commencement date recorded in that grant agreement.

Projects initiated or completed beyond the timeframe of the program may still be eligible if the proposed activities supported by funding are completed within twelve months in accordance with the conditions of the applicant’s grant agreement.

# Assessment Criteria

This is a competitive program and successful applications will be required to rate highly against the program’s assessment criteria compared to other eligible applications. Eligible applications will be assessed by the department, however individuals with subject matter expertise, who come from other organisations and government agencies, may be invited to provide advice, if required.

## Assessment Criteria

Eligible applications will be assessed on how well they meet the assessment criteria as outlined below. All supplementary attachments and information provided as part of the application will be taken into consideration during the assessment and scoring process.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Assessment Criteria** |  **How this will be assessed** | **Weighting** |
| 1 | Pilot training solution idea | * Outline the:
* aims of the project
* skills gap/s to be addressed
* training course/s or module/s to be created, or adapted from existing course/s or module/s
* target participant (learner) cohort/s and estimated number of enrolments
* on-the-job learning models

You may wish to include further details such as entry/selection processes, mode of delivery, and strategies/supports to assist participants’ successful completion of the training. | 30% |
| 2 | Capability and capacity to deliver project  | * Demonstrate the capability and capacity of the education provider to:
* collaborate with industry
* design and deliver high-quality training solutions under tight timeframes
* resource the project with quality trainers
* Outline the capacity of the industry partners to:
* provide on-the-job learning opportunities for participants (including time release for current employees, if relevant)
 | 20% |
| 3 | Project feasibility and delivery  | * Outline the:
* project timelines
* implementation strategy
* the key roles, tasks and responsibilities of the project partners
* any identified project risks and mitigation strategies
* a basic marketing plan on how participants will be recruited to undertake the training
 | 20% |
| 4 | Recognition, project sustainability | * Describe the process and timing involved to attain any recognition / accreditation for the proposed training model, if required
* Outline a high-level plan for:
* How the project could remain sustainable beyond the funding period; and/or
* How the pilot may provide a test bed for new approaches in developing training courses / credentials and on-the-job learning to inform and provide ideas for system-wide reform
 | 20% |
| 5 | Delivery, evaluation and continuous improvement | * Outline the approach to monitor project development, delivery, evaluation (including any job outcomes) and continuous improvement
* Provide the contact details of key stakeholders from the project partners who will be responsible for:
* engaging in monitoring and reporting back to the department on key milestones, project outcomes and budget expenditure
* potential marketing opportunities to share the outcomes and lessons learnt from the project
 | 10% |

## 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 award a grant:

* 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.

Where DJSIR undertakes a financial risk assessment (FRA) of an applicant to assess the ability of the applicant to deliver its proposed project, the outcomes of that FRA may be taken into consideration in any decision to recommend and award a grant to an applicant.

## Financial Risk Assessments

Subject to certain exceptions[[1]](#footnote-2), DJSIR will undertake FRAs of applicants.

If an FRA is required, the applicant will be required to provide the following documents to DJSIR:

* Audited Financial Reports for the last three financial years. This should be the ‘final accounts’ with Directors’ Report and Declaration and should include:
	+ Profit and Loss Statement
	+ Balance Sheet
	+ Cash Flows
	+ Notes to the accounts.
* If the latest financial report is more than six months old:
	+ up-to-date Management or Interim Accounts for the current year including: Profit and Loss Statement and Balance Sheet

# Application Process

## How to apply

Lead applicants will be sent an electronic link to apply for funding​.

Applications can only be made using the link provided by the department and must be submitted online.

Printed, facsimile, posted or other methods of delivery of the application form will not be accepted. All sections of the application form must be completed in full and all requested attachments provided.

All applications must be accompanied by the following supporting documentation:

* A detailed estimate of how key program costs, including funding and in-kind co-contributions have been calculated;
* A project and marketing plan outlining how program participants will be recruited to undertake training;
* If required, audited Financial Reports for the past three years (including Profit & Loss, Balance Sheet and notes to the accounts); and
* If the most recent Financial Report is more than six months old, management or interim accounts for the current year.

## Open and Close Dates

Formal grant applications will be considered until 31 May 2024, unless all program funds are committed earlier.

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

# Conditions of Funding

## Grant agreements

If successful, Applicants will be issued a letter of offer (Letter of Offer) inviting them to enter into a legally binding grant agreement with DJSIR (Grant Agreement).

The Grant Agreement will detail all funding obligations and conditions including payment deliverable milestones and reporting requirements. An example of the Grant Agreement can be provided upon request.

Applicants will have 14 calendar days from the date of the Letter of Offer to respond to DJSIR indicating their interest to enter into a Grant Agreement on the terms of the Letter of Offer and must execute the Grant Agreement within 30 calendar days of the Applicant’s response to DJSIR. Failure by the applicant to respond indicating their interest to enter into a grant agreement or to sign the grant agreement within the specified periods, may result in DJSIR withdrawing its offer of grant funding.

Projects to be funded by the grant must not commence until a Grant Agreement has been duly executed by both DJSIR and the successful Applicant. If a successful applicant does not commence the project by the commencement date recorded in the Grant Agreement, DJSIR has at its absolute discretion the option of terminating the agreement.

## Publicity/Acknowledgement

Successful applicants must agree to cooperate with DJSIR in the promotion of the program. This may include involvement in media releases, case studies or promotional events and activities.

Successful applicants may be required to attend program events and agree to be photographed for news articles or appear in videos regarding the SSP Program.

Successful applicants must not make any public announcement or issue any press release regarding the receipt of a grant without prior written approval from DJSIR.

DJSIR may publicise the benefits accruing to the successful applicant and/or the State associated with the provision of the grant and the State’s support for the Project. DJSIR may include the name of the successful applicant and/or grant amount in any publicity material and in DJSIR’s annual report.

DJSIR may request successful applicants fact check any text and seek approval to use any owned imagery associated with the activity prior to the publication of any such promotional materials.

Successful applicants are required to acknowledge DJSIR in any publications, public announcements, presentations or discussion forums, pertaining to any training developed and conducted with the assistance of the Program’s funding. Signage and promotional materials must be consistent with the Guidelines for Victorian Government Advertising and Communications or as otherwise specified by DJSIR.

# Compliance and Audit

## Audit

Applicants may be subject to audit by the Victorian Government or its representatives and will be required to produce evidentiary materials (including records of regulatory and intellectual property fees and project expenses) at the request of the Victorian Government. For this reason, DJSIR requires that successful Applicants maintain records of the evidentiary material referred to in this section for a period of at least four years from the date of their grant agreement.

## 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 or any grant will be repayable on demand.

## Verification

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

# Reporting for Program Evaluation

As a condition of funding successful applicants will be required to deliver regular project reports in accordance with conditions set out in the Grant Agreement.

Grant recipients will also be required to participate in any Program monitoring and evaluation activities initiated by DJSIR. This may include completing surveys throughout the Program to measure progress to achieving outcomes, and for up to three years after Program completion. 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.

# 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. DJSIR’s privacy policy is also available by emailing the DJSIR’s Privacy Unit.

# General Conditions

## Award of grant funding

DJSIR’s decisions on all matters pertaining to the award of grant funding under this Program is at DJSIR’s absolute discretion. This includes approving a lesser amount than that applied for and amending funding conditions without notice.

## Further information

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

## 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.

## Disrepute

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

## Amendments

DJSIR reserves the right to amend:

* these guidelines the application terms at any time as it deems appropriate; and
* the form of any example or template Grant Agreement provided to an applicant prior to the parties formally entering into a Grant Agreement.

# Tax Advice

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

# GST

Grant payments will be paid on a ‘GST Exclusive’ basis. If a grant payment to a specific applicant is determined to be a taxable supply, subject to DJSIR receiving a valid tax invoice from the relevant applicant, DJSIR will make payment to that applicant of an additional amount equivalent to 10% of the grant payment to account for the GST payable in relation to that taxable supply. Grant payments will be made following receipt of a valid tax invoice from the successful applicant.

Grants are assessable income for taxation purposes, unless exempted by a taxation law. DJSIR recommends applicants seek independent professional advice on their taxation obligations or seek assistance from the Australian Taxation Office. DJSIR does not provide advice on applicants’ particular taxation circumstances.

# Further Resources

Further information regarding this program 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

1. Exemptions for Financial Risk Assessments include: entities applying for a grant of up to and including $50,000, and publicly funded universities and educational institutions. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)