### **What is the First Peoples Tourism Growth Program?**

The Growth Program is a competitive grant program targeted to Victorian First Peoples-owned and operated businesses, Traditional Owners, Traditional Owner Corporations and Registered Aboriginal Parties and delivered over a 12-month period.

The Growth Program will be rolled out in 2 stages – expressions of interest (EOI), followed by a targeted invitation to apply based on outcomes of the EOI stage.

The program aims to empower First Peoples within the tourism sector by increasing the capacity of businesses to pursue economic development activities as they relate to tourism

### **How much funding is available under this program?**

Eligible applicants who are invited to apply following the EOI process have the opportunity\* to apply for up to $125,000 (exclusive of GST).

\*An invitation to apply for program funding does not guarantee your project will be approved for funding.

### **What types of projects could be funded under this program?**

Four types of activities will be funded through the Growth Program.

A – Workforce Development

This will support accredited and non-accredited tourism training for owners and staff/tourism skills training and membership/certification to expand or grow existing tourism offerings or capture a new market segment. This may include:

* micro-credentials, accredited and non-accredited training
* tourism certification e.g. Quality Tourism Framework, Ecotourism or Strive4Sustainability
* tourism and/or business Memberships e.g. Kinaway, Supply Nation or Victoria Tourism Industry Council
* other

B – Industry Excellence and Planning

This will support tourism product development and growth, undertaking strategic planning and progressing investment readiness. This may include:

* meeting, gathering place and cultural centre concept design
* product development
* business case development
* funding strategy development
* pre-feasibility and operational viability studies
* tourism asset and equipment requirement assessments
* relevant technical investigations, plans and reports to progress initiatives
* strategic asset management plans
* tourism marketing plans and website development

C – Cultural Heritage Stewardship

This will support cultural practice projects, language and intergenerational knowledge transfer initiatives, amalgamation of sense of place, history and protocols as they pertain to tourism. It may include:

* digitising and archiving of knowledge
* legal costs for ICIP strategies
* placemaking, including wayfinding and interpretive signage
* video production and cultural practice recording and documentation of traditional songs, dances, and ceremonies
* cultural mentorship programs
* initiatives that preserve significant cultural sites and artifacts including revitalisation of Indigenous languages, oral histories, and cultural practices

D – Asset Investment

This will support the purchase or lease of fixed assets, plant and equipment to expand or deliver a new tourism product. It may include:

* commercial leases for the term and purpose of the project
* purchase of assets and equipment for the purpose of the project e.g. vehicles, watercraft, boats and kayaks, outdoor equipment for hiking and camping\*\*
* traditional instruments and artifacts
* craft workshop tools, supplies and equipment
* hospitality plant, equipment and fit out
* display cabinets and shopfitting
* furnishings and lighting

### **Who is eligible for this program?**

This is a targeted program, and funding is only available to recognised Victorian First Peoples-led businesses that are either already operating in the tourism sector or plan to explore opportunities in tourism.

### **What is the definition of a First Peoples-led business?**

A First Peoples-led business is one where it is majority Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander-owned and operated. Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people must own and operate at least 51% of the business.

Applicants must hold an active Australian Business Number (ABN) registered in Victoria and have held that ABN on and from 1 July 2022 and be registered for GST.

### **How do I submit my Expression of Interest?**

### Businesses should complete an online Expression of Interest application using the designated template on the Business Victoria Grants Portal by 8 August 2025.

### Program Guidelines, and an example EOI, can also be found on the Business Victoria Website. EOIs will only be accepted via the online template.

### **What documents do I need to submit with my application?**

Applicants may be required to download a template letter from the EOI template if required to evidence their eligibility. This can then be uploaded as an attachment.

Applicants may be subject to due diligence assessments to enable the Department to assess eligibility and any risks associated with proposed activities.

**What else do I need to include with my application?**

Applicants will need to include the following details in their EOI:

* applicant details
* opportunity - brief business idea outline
* solution - benefits and impacts
* market analysis - competitive landscape
* business model – to progress the idea
* team – directly related to the project
* investment ask – funding required, need and use
* evidence of eligibility

### **Will the Department hold information session/s to support businesses with their applications?**

### Program information sessions about the First Peoples Tourism Growth Program will be held in July 2025.

### Potential applicants can register at this link. [Registration for Growth Program EOI Info Session](https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=vqAuchw-EUutb5QB1oVuJFjH5dTSMZdNjHP6SqGM19ZUNzNBRVRRUjBNM0NaSE1RQlZNUjE2VjZVNS4u)

### **When do Expressions of Interest close?**

EOIs will close on 8 August 2025.

### **Who do I contact if I have questions?**

### Please contact Darcy Maine at darcy.maine@ecodev.vic.gov.au if you have any questions.

### **When will successful outcomes be announced?**

The Department aims to notify all applicants of EOI outcomes from October 2025 onwards.

### **What happens if your EOI is successful?**

Successful EOI proposals will be invited to submit a grant application to the First Peoples Tourism Growth Program. Applications must be closely aligned to the EOI submitted and under the same entity details.

### **Are invited applicants guaranteed funding for their project?**

An invitation to apply does not guarantee funding through the First Peoples Tourism Growth Program. The program is competitive and will be assessed on merit.

### **When do projects need to be completed by?**

### All projects and activities must be completed by April 2027.

### **What other initiatives is the government delivering to support First Peoples tourism in Victoria?**

First Peoples-led experiences is one of the key pillars under the *Experience Victoria 2033* strategic plan.

As part of the pillar’s focus, and a commitment in the *Visitor Economy Recovery and Reform Plan*, we’re developing a First Peoples Tourism Plan.

The primary objectives include:

* Coordinating and advancing First Peoples tourism.
* Leveraging and enhancing participation for economic development.
* Empowering First Peoples within the tourism industry.

### **What is Experience Victoria 2033?**

[Experience Victoria 2033](https://tourism.vic.gov.au/about/experience-victoria-2033) was released in May 2023 and is the state’s strategic plan to shape the future of Victoria’s visitor economy. The plan will strengthen Victoria’s enviable tourism offering by leveraging the state’s competitive advantages. First Peoples-led experiences is identified as one of five product priorities in Experience Victoria 2033, alongside wellness, arts and culture, food and drink, and nature.

**Additional Q&As:**

**What types of expenses are eligible for funding?**

* costs directly associated with delivering the growth projects
* reasonable administration and overhead costs up to 10% of the total budget that relate to and/or benefit the project which have been demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Department
* external professional services/consultant fees directly associated with delivering the project.

The Department reserves the right to determine eligible activities and expenditure in alignment with program objectives and outcomes.

**What types of expenses are not eligible for funding?**

* costs not directly associated with delivering the growth projects
* usual operational expenditure, including existing staff wages that do not relate to or benefit the project
* requests for retrospective project funding, where projects have been completed prior to receiving funding approval
* costs related to preparing the grant application
* any ongoing expenses, leases and other expenses after the program completion date as agreed in the funding agreement
* projects previously funded through the *First Peoples Tourism Industry Strengthening Program*, unless applicants can demonstrate additional or new outcomes.

The Department reserves the right to determine any other ineligible activities and expenditure.

**Is there a project plan template?**

The EOI template is designed to act as a pitch for your project.

A project plan is not required at EOI stage.