1. Context

The Stronger Regional Communities Plan (SRCP) is one of three programs of the Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund (RJIF).

The SRCP aims to support rural and regional towns in attracting families and young people to live and work. It will do so by investing in community-led initiatives and partnerships that create or enhance the conditions for economic growth and build resilient, diversified and sustainable economies.

Communities are important. They provide resources, information and opportunities. They help shape our identity and promote feelings of safety, security and belonging. They provide social, recreational and learning opportunities and help foster positive civic norms. They can be sources of creativity and enterprise and are invaluable in the face of disaster. Studies have shown they impact on our belief in what we can achieve in our lives as well as our ability to rise to challenges, and deal with change.

Strong communities are characterised by high levels of social and economic participation. They demonstrate effective decision-making and strong networks and are attractive to people considering moving to live and work.

The SRCP will support initiatives under the Regional Community Leadership program stream.

2. Description and objectives

2.1 Regional Community Leadership Program

The Regional Community Leadership program aims to support initiatives that develop and facilitate the emergence of local leaders, strengthen existing community leadership capabilities and develop stronger connections between local leaders and regional development initiatives.

The objectives of the program are to:

> support the development of emerging leaders across government, business and community sectors to effect change in their local communities and region

> increase the diversity of local leaders including those that identify as indigenous, disabled, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) or disadvantaged (from a low socio-economic background)

> increase participation by community leaders in significant regional projects, processes and planning

> increase collaboration between networks of community leaders to effect change in local communities and regions

> improve the financial sustainability of community leadership programs in rural and regional Victoria

> develop a sound evidence base on the impact and effectiveness of leadership development activities.

2.2 Activities that will be considered

Activities that may be supported include:

> the delivery of community leadership programs

> facilitation of community leadership networks

> collaborative activities that increase the impact and sustainability of programs and networks

> program and network evaluations.

2.3 Activities that will generally not be funded

The following activities would generally not be considered:

> Professional development programs for specific industries or trade organisations (e.g. Housing Industry Association, Victorian Employers' Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VECCI), Australian Institute of Management, unions)

> Projects that primarily target school aged participants (under 18)

> Programs that are usually delivered by TAFEs, universities, registered training organisations, community colleges

> Programs restricted to members of a business, community or industry association

> Welfare and health programs that are usually delivered by community service agencies, charitable organisations, health clinics and hospitals

Regional Development Victoria

State Government Victoria
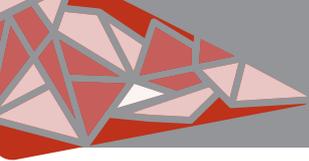
> Sports programs normally delivered through sports clubs and sports associations

> Faith programs

> Projects offering cash prizes and commercial gifts

> Activities for which more suitable sources of funding are available.

2.4 Who can apply

Applications will be considered from the following existing community leadership programs and their secretariat:

> Alpine Valleys Community Leadership Program

> Community Leadership Loddon Murray

> Fairley Leadership Program

> Gippsland Community Leadership Program

> Leaders for Geelong

> Leadership Ballarat & Western Region

> Leadership Great South Coast

> Leadership Wimmera

> Northern Mallee Leaders

> Rivers and Ranges Community Leadership Program

> Victorian Community Leadership Program Secretariat

Funding will only be available for activities related to rural and regional Victoria.

2.5 Definition of regional and rural Victoria

Rural and regional Victoria is defined as the 48 local government areas including six alpine resort areas set out in Schedule 2 of the *Regional Development Victoria Act 2002* and available at www.rdv.vic.gov.au

The ten regional city local government areas are Ballarat, Greater Bendigo, Greater Geelong, Greater Shepparton, Horsham, Latrobe, Mildura, Wangaratta, Warrnambool and Wodonga. The remaining 38 local government areas including six alpine resort areas are referred to as the rural local government areas.

2.6. Funding details

Applicants are expected to make a financial contribution or source third-party funding. Projects should maximise their funding support from a range of sources, including commonwealth/ local government and community, private sector and regional organisations.

Funding will be available on the following basis:

Region	Funding available	Maximum funding ratios for co-contributions
Rural and regional Victoria	Up to $800,000	RJIF $3: $1 other

While joint investment with other Victorian Government program funding is encouraged, co contributions from 'other' sources to meet the required funding ratio must be derived from non Victorian Government sources. In determining the RJIF funding level, the total Victorian Government contribution will be taken into consideration

In-kind contributions can be included as part of the total project costs in calculating the level of grant assistance.

In-kind contributions will be considered subject to the following requirements:

> no more than 50% of applicant (and partners) contribution can be in-kind

> skilled labour costed at $45 per hour

> unskilled labour costed at $20 per hour

> equipment costed at standard commercial hire rate

> local government authorities are ineligible from providing in-kind support as part of their funding contribution.

3. Application and assessment process

The process for applying for funding under the program is briefly outlined below:

> develop a draft application

> contact your local RDV office to discuss your draft application

> RDV will undertake an initial assessment against program eligibility and assessment criteria and provide you with feedback

> after considering feedback, you can finalise and submit your application for funding

> RDV will assess your application against the assessment criteria

> RDV will make a recommendation to the Minister for Regional Development
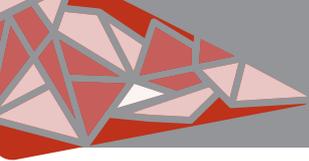
> the Minister will consider the advice and determine whether or not to approve the application for funding

> you will receive a letter confirming the outcome of your application.

Applicants should use the online application form to clearly and succinctly describe the initiative by detailing: the challenge or opportunity it is looking to address; the desired outcomes; the outputs to be delivered; and any resource requirements.

The assessment criteria will be based around the 'What, Why, How and Who' of the project as follows:

What

The application:

> outlines clear objectives and proposed outcomes of the leadership program or secretariat

> demonstrates the link to the objectives of this program stream

> outlines plans to prepare for sustaining the program once funding ceases.

Why

The application:

> quantifies the scale and nature of the challenge the initiative is seeking to address

> is strongly supported at a community level including by local councils

> is supported by local knowledge and information demonstrating the challenges being confronted by the community such as natural disasters, rapid economic change, population growth and/or decline.

How

The application:

> is based on a comprehensive, multi-year work plan (i.e. strategic plan)

> is viable and represents value for money

> outlines plans for evaluation and continuous improvement of the program.

Who

The application:

> outlines the governance of the organisation including details of current board members and executive officers

> outlines how the program will facilitate connections into other local and regional networks and encourage program participants (past and present) to engage with significant regional projects, processes and planning.

4. Conditions of funding

4.1 Funding agreements

Successful applicants will be required to enter into a funding agreement with RDV detailing all funding obligations and conditions. The standard terms and conditions on which the funding is offered are available from RDV.

The funding agreement is a legally enforceable document that clearly defines the obligations of both parties. The funding agreement aims to protect the Victorian Government's interests and to ensure the efficient and effective use of public money. It also ensures there is appropriate recognition of Victorian Government support on project related publications, media releases and promotional material.

Funding agreements must be signed by the organisation's Chief Executive Officer (or equivalent) and will:

> describe the purpose for which the funding must be used

> set out any requirements or conditions that must be met prior to the payment of a grant instalment

> outline agreed milestones and project outcomes that must be achieved before payment of a grant instalment.

Once the funding agreement has been executed, the applicant will be required to actively manage and deliver the project, and provide progress reports to RDV.

During the funding period, RDV will facilitate annual meetings of key regional development stakeholders relevant to individual community leadership programs to assist to identify opportunities to develop stronger connections between local leaders and projects, processes and planning significant to the region.

4.2 Evaluation and reporting

Successful applicants will be required to cooperate fully with an evaluation which is undertaken either during or after completion of the project. Successful applicants will also generally be required to submit progress and completion reporting, assess progress of the project against milestones, outputs and outcomes, and provide evidence of project completion.

After completion of the project, applicants must submit annual evaluation reports assessing the success of the project in meeting its stated objectives, outputs and outcomes. These evaluation reports may be required for up to three years following completion of the funded project.
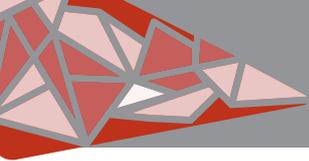
Successful applicants may be required to contribute information on project outcomes, including longer-term impacts beyond project completion, for use in program evaluation reviews and/or RDV marketing materials. It is the responsibility of successful applicants to put in place adequate data collection arrangements to capture the appropriate data in relation to outputs and outcomes. These arrangements will assist RDV to undertake a robust evaluation of the RJIF.

4.3 Competitive neutrality

All successful applications to the RJIF from a government body, including local government authorities and government agencies, will be required to comply with the Competitive Neutrality Policy Victoria, in respect of any commercial goods or services offered by the body as a result of the grant.

4.4 Privacy

Any personal information about you or a third party in your application will be collected by RDV, a body within the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources (DEDJTR), for the purpose of grant administration. This information may be provided to other Victorian Government agencies for the purposes of assessing your application. If you intend to include personal information about third parties in your application, please ensure that they are aware of the contents of this privacy statement.

Any personal information about you or a third party in your correspondence will be collected, held, managed, used, disclosed or transferred in accordance with the provisions of the *Information Privacy Act 2000 (Vic)* and other applicable laws.

DEDJTR is committed to protecting the privacy of personal information. The Department's privacy policy is available from:

Privacy Officer
Department of Economic Development,
Jobs, Transport and Resources

GPO Box 2392
Melbourne, VIC, 3001, AUS
Tel: (+ 61 3) 9665 9535
Email: privacy@ecodev.vic.gov.au

Enquiries about access to information about you held by DEDJTR should be directed to:

Freedom of Information Manager
Department of Economic Development, Jobs,
Transport and Resources

GPO Box 2392
Melbourne, VIC, 3001, AUS
Tel: (+61 3) 9208 3112
Email: foi@ecodev.vic.gov.au

4.5 Acknowledgement

Successful applicants need to acknowledge the Victorian Government's support through the provision of a grant from the RJIF. Promotional guidelines form part of the funding agreement and include the requirement that all activities acknowledge Victorian Government support through logo presentation on any activity-related publications, media releases and promotional material. A Victorian Government-endorsed sign must also be placed at the site of infrastructure activities. Successful applicants must liaise with RDV to coordinate any events or announcements related to the activity. Successful applicants may be required to contribute information on activity outcomes for use in communications materials.

5. Additional information and resources

Discussions with local RDV staff and reviewing relevant Regional Strategic Plans may be useful in planning for delivering activities.

6. Contact details for Regional Offices

Applicants requiring further information should contact the local RDV office in their region or by email: rdv@rdv.vic.gov.au

Ballarat
111 Armstrong Street Nth.
Ballarat VIC 3350
T 03 5327 2800
F 03 5327 2830
E: information.ballarat@rdv.vic.gov.au

Bendigo
Level 1
56-60 King Street
Bendigo VIC 3550
T 03 4433 8000
F 03 4433 8099
E: information.bendigo@rdv.vic.gov.au

Geelong
Level 2, Harrison Place
237 Ryrie Street
Geelong VIC 3220
T 03 5215 6000
F 03 5215 6099
E: information.geelong@rdv.vic.gov.au

Horsham
Wimmera Business Centre
62 Darlot Street
Horsham VIC 3400
T 03 5381 2762
F 03 5381 2514
E: information.horsham@rdv.vic.gov.au

Melbourne
Level 31, 121 Exhibition Street
Melbourne VIC 3000
Tel: 13 22 15
E: rdv@rdv.vic.gov.au

Mildura
131 Langtree Avenue
Mildura VIC 3500
T 03 5051 2000
F 03 5051 2020
E: information.mildura@rdv.vic.gov.au

Shepparton
79a Wyndham Street
Shepparton VIC 3630
T 03 5895 4100
F 03 5822 2554
E: information.shepparton@rdv.vic.gov.au

Swan Hill
324 Campbell Street
Swan Hill VIC 3585
T 03 5036 4823
F 03 5032 9682
E: information.swanhill@rdv.vic.gov.au

Traralgon
33 Breed Street
Traralgon VIC 3844
T 03 5116 7300
F 03 5175 0324
E: information.traralgon@rdv.vic.gov.au

Wangaratta
Wangaratta Government Centre
1st Floor, 62 Ovens Street
Wangaratta VIC 3677
T 03 5722 7101
F 03 5722 7109
E: information.wangaratta@rdv.vic.gov.au

Warrnambool
Old Police Station
South West TAFE
Gilles Street
Warrnambool VIC 3280
T 03 5561 4135
F 03 5561 3851
E: information.warrnambool@rdv.vic.gov.au

Wodonga
111-113 Hume Street
Wodonga VIC 3690
T 02 6059 0200
F 02 6059 0250
E: information.wodonga@rdv.vic.gov.au

www.rdv.vic.gov.au