

**Regional Jobs and
Infrastructure Fund**

Regional Jobs Fund
Application Guidelines

1. Context

1.1 Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund

The Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund (RJIF) is the Victorian Government's overarching regional development package. It focuses on major projects, employment and communities. More details on the RJIF are available at www.rdv.vic.gov.au.

The RJIF has five strategic objectives:

1. create jobs of the future and diversify the regional employment base
2. improve productivity and enhance long-term competitiveness of regional Victoria through innovation and a transition to new growth opportunities
3. create the conditions for business growth by enhancing work force skills, providing enabling economic infrastructure and facilitating expansion into new markets
4. improve the liveability of our cities, centres and towns to attract and retain families and young people to live and work
5. enhance community capacity through collaboration, leadership development and regional planning.

The RJIF was established by the *Regional Development Victoria Act 2002* as a trust fund in the public account.

The Act describes the activities for which the trust is to be applied:

- providing better infrastructure, facilities and services in rural and regional Victoria
- strengthening the economic, social and environmental base of communities in rural and regional Victoria
- creating jobs and improving career opportunities in rural and regional Victoria
- supporting the development and planning of local projects in rural and regional Victoria.

Regional Development Victoria (RDV) will administer the RJIF's three programs:

- Regional Infrastructure Fund
- Regional Jobs Fund
- Stronger Regional Communities plan.

The Victorian Government will invest in six high potential, high value sectors to drive Victoria's economic growth including:

- food and fibre
- professional services
- new energy technology
- medical technology, life sciences and healthcare
- transport, defence and construction technology
- international education.

1.2 Purpose of this document

This document sets out the application guidelines for the Regional Jobs Fund (RJF) component of the RJIF.

2. Description and objectives of fund

2.1 Regional Jobs Fund

The primary aim of the Regional Jobs Fund (RJF) is to facilitate job creation and retain existing jobs. It is targeted at assisting regional businesses to grow their workforce, expand markets and create jobs of the future. It will attract and facilitate investment with a focus on regional competitive advantage or high-growth potential businesses and will help diversify the regional employment base. The fund aims to improve regional capacity and to innovate and capitalise on the potential of emerging industry sectors and new export markets.

The RJF will provide support for strategic projects and infrastructure through the following five program streams:

- Investment Attraction
- Innovation and Productivity
- Market Access
- Employment Precincts
- Skills Development.

2.2 Program streams

The objectives of each program stream are described below. More detail on each program stream is available at www.rdv.vic.gov.au.

2.2.1 Investment Attraction

This program stream aims to attract and facilitate investment in new and existing businesses in regional Victoria. It also focuses on regional competitive advantage and high-growth potential businesses and opportunities that create new jobs or retain existing jobs in regional Victoria. The program will be flexible to industry needs, but also targeted towards supporting activities that deliver an identified business growth opportunity. This includes footloose investment attraction, investment in facilities expansion and strategic industry investment planning.

2.2.2 Innovation and Productivity

This program stream aims to improve the productivity of regional industries and businesses to ensure the long-term sustainability of employment and business growth in regional locations.

It will provide funding for the adoption of new technology and innovative processes, as well as equipment that drives more efficient use of assets and greater supply chain integration.

This program stream will support activities linked to business innovation or commercialisation of technology. It will also provide support for collaboration between industry clusters and research centres that strengthen supply chains and competitiveness.

2.2.3 Market Access

This program stream aims to grow regional export potential and access to new markets for business and industry groups. It will support investments, projects and activities that provide more comprehensive engagement with new markets, domestically and abroad. It will also provide funding to support industry development, capability building, strategic export development planning and targeted industry cluster development projects for new markets.

This program stream includes the Food Source Victoria initiative.

2.2.4 Employment Precincts

This program stream aims to boost the capacity of new and existing regionally significant employment precincts (e.g. CBDs, health, education, innovation, industrial and special purpose precincts). It will provide funding to support the development or enhancement of land and facilities that generate greater job density and more productive industry clustering. This includes enabling infrastructure that facilitates long-term investment and jobs creation in a precinct by a foundation business or an anchor tenant.

2.2.5 Skills Development

The Regional Skills Fund is a targeted, place-based grant program driven by industry in partnership with the tertiary sector. This program stream aims to support regional business skills development and capability to ensure long-term sustainability of employment and industry growth. Priority will be given to strategic, whole-of-sector, new and innovative approaches to skills and workforce development that make a significant impact. The fund will support regional projects that improve business productivity; increase workforce and training participation and support disadvantaged groups as part of a long-term, strategic approach for meaningful career-based employment.

2.3 Activities that will generally not be funded

The following activities will generally not be considered for funding:

- projects primarily to meet regulatory requirements
- requests for retrospective funding where projects have been completed or have commenced prior to receiving funding approval
- ongoing operating costs or salary subsidies except where a salary subsidy provides administrative and project management support for business and industry cluster networks
- purchase of land
- projects undertaken by the private sector as a result of a government contract
- projects requiring full funding where funding is normally provided from state, commonwealth or local government sources
- projects requiring ongoing funding from the Victorian Government once completed
- projects without the potential for a sustained net increase in regional employment and economic activity.

Refer to specific program stream guidelines for further information on funding eligibility.

2.4 Who can apply

Applications will be considered from:

- private sector businesses and agencies
- business and industry groups including:
 - chambers of commerce and business associations
 - industry peak bodies
 - business and industry clusters and networks
- local government authorities
- government agencies
- not-for-profit organisations and community groups that:
 - are an incorporated body, cooperative or association
 - have an Australian Business Number (ABN) or can provide written advice from the Australian Tax Office that no withholding tax is required from the grant payment
- higher education and private training institutions
- regional organisations e.g. regional strategic planning alliances.

Individuals are not eligible to apply.

2.5 Definition of rural and regional 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 10 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 support

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, community, private sector and regional organisations.

Priority may be given to projects that are considered investment ready.

3. Application and assessment process

To ensure the suitability of projects, all applicants will need to go through the following four-step process.

Step 1: Prior to application

Prior to submitting a formal application, applicants are advised to:

- read these application guidelines and the information sheet of the relevant RJF program stream carefully to establish eligibility
- discuss the proposed project with your local RDV office
- read the terms and conditions for the funding offered.

Applicants should note that projects may not proceed to the formal application and assessment process where the project:

- can potentially be implemented through another government funding program, and if appropriate, applicants may be referred to this funding program
- does not relate to the program stream of the RJF
- does not strongly demonstrate economic benefits
- is not implementation ready
- is not strongly aligned to state or regional priorities
- does not strongly demonstrate a need
- does not present good value to the state or maximise funding support from other sources.

An RDV officer will help you determine your project's potential suitability, before an application form is completed. See Section 5 of this guide for RDV contact details.

Step 2: Prepare an application

Applicants should use the application to clearly and succinctly describe the project by detailing: the challenge or opportunity it is looking to address; the objectives; the desired outcomes; the outputs to be delivered; and any resource requirements. Documentation to support the project such as a feasibility study, business plan, letter of support should be attached to the application.

GST

Applicants should note that all project costs included in the application must be exclusive of GST. The grant to be paid by RDV will be 'grossed up' by the amount of GST, provided the applicant provides details of registration for the GST, or proof of exemption from being required to register.

Who signs the application?

Applications from local government authorities must be signed by the Chief Executive Officer. Applications from other parties must be signed by the Chief Executive Officer (or equivalent).

Core RJF criteria

The primary aim of the RJF is to facilitate job creation and therefore assessment criteria are weighted towards quantifiable economic development benefits. In preparing the application, applicants will be asked to provide relevant supporting documents to demonstrate the project's ability to address each of the following criteria:

- a) direct economic development benefits
- b) additional economic development benefits
- c) social and environmental benefits
- d) alignment with state and regional priorities and demonstrated project need
- e) demonstrated project feasibility and delivery
- f) financial viability
- g) maximising value to the state.

Applicants will also be asked to demonstrate the project's ability to address program stream specific criteria, which will be provided prior to the application.

a) Direct economic development benefits

Applications should demonstrate clearly how the proposed project will:

- result in investment and an increase in gross value add (turnover/sales minus cost of sales) or potential future industry growth
- create or retain sustainable employment or create an increased potential for future employment
- produce additional regional exports or replace imports
- generate long-term benefits that remain after funding has ceased.

Applications that can demonstrate how projects will contribute to long-term benefits will be looked at more favourably than those that have short term impacts.

b) Additional economic development benefits

Applications should demonstrate clearly how the proposed project:

- creates indirect employment (e.g. construction, supply chain jobs)
- builds on identified regional competitive advantage
- complements and creates incentive for other investments to occur in the region (e.g. through industry spill-overs or creation of critical mass)
- supports the integration of the region into global markets
- delivers innovation and productivity benefits (e.g. through the introduction of a new technology; the enhancement of the local skills base; the introduction of new management techniques; a reduction in the relative cost of inputs; or raising the value of outputs).

c) Social and environmental benefits

Applications should demonstrate clearly how the proposed project:

- has relevant community and industry support
- is consistent with environmentally sustainable development
- supports inclusive growth
- provides additional social and environmental benefits (e.g. addresses the impacts of climate change on the economy, environment and community).

d) Alignment with state and regional priorities and demonstrated project need

Applications will need to identify how the project aligns with the relevant regional strategic plan and any relevant state government policies (e.g. high growth sectors as identified in the Victorian Government's Back to Work plan).

e) Demonstrated project feasibility and delivery

Applications should clearly demonstrate:

- that all regulatory requirements including land tenure, planning and environmental issues have been identified and resolution strategies are in place to the satisfaction of RDV
- access to suitable project management in both the developmental and operational phases of the project
- that project risks have been identified and strategies are in place to manage them.

Financial modelling/budgeting for proposed projects is required to be submitted.

f) Financial viability of proponent

Applicants will be asked to provide copies of annual reports and audited financial statements covering the last three years with their application. This will enable RDV to assess the financial viability of the applicant and their ability to manage and complete the project.

Note: Victorian Government agencies, statutory authorities and publicly funded education institutions are exempt from a financial risk assessment.

g) Maximising value to the state

Applications should demonstrate how the project provides a good value proposition to the state and also provide evidence of how the project maximises funding support from a range of sources, including commonwealth and local governments, community, private sector and regional organisations.

Step 3: Assessment process

Applications will undergo a two-stage assessment process. The first stage involves determining the eligibility of the proposed project by assessing the project's ability to meet the core RJF and relevant program stream criteria. The first stage will also consider key risks and issues associated with the project.

All applications within the RJF will be forwarded to the Investment Committee of the Department of Economic Development Jobs, Transport and Resources (DEDJTR) for assessment prior to consideration by relevant Ministers including the Minister for Regional Development.

Step 4: Approval process

The Minister for Regional Development, in consultation with relevant Ministers, will consider the advice received from the Investment Committee and determine whether or not to approve the application.

In the case of applications seeking funding of \$5 million or more, the Victorian Treasurer's authorisation is also required.

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 the RDV website at www.rdv.vic.gov.au or by contacting RDV on **(+61 3) 9027 5505**.

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 the efficient and effective use of public money. It also ensures there is appropriate recognition of Victorian Government support in 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 signed, the applicant will be required to actively manage and deliver the project, and provide progress reports to RDV. During the course of the project, RDV may conduct site visits as necessary.

In some instances, based on project size, complexity and the amount of funding being provided, a project control group (or equivalent) may need to be established with regular meetings and reports. RDV may be either a participant or observer in these meetings.

Successful applicants must enter into a funding agreement and commence the project within one year from the date of the funding offer. If a project does not commence within this timeframe, the grant will be reviewed by RDV.

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 project's success 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 RDV marketing materials. It is the responsibility of successful applicants to put in place adequate 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 statutory body within 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 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. Contact details of regional offices:

Applicants requiring further information should contact your local RDV office or email: rdv@rdv.vic.gov.au

Ballarat

111 Armstrong Street Nth. Ballarat 3350
Tel: (+61 3) 5327 2800
Fax: (+61 3) 5327 2830
Email: information.ballarat@rdv.vic.gov.au

Bendigo

Level 1, 56-60 King Street, Bendigo 3550
Tel: (+61 3) 4433 8000
Fax: (+61 3) 4433 8099
Email: information.bendigo@rdv.vic.gov.au

Geelong

Level 2, Harrison Place, 237 Ryrie Street, Geelong 3220
Tel: (+61 3) 5215 6000
Fax: (+61 3) 5215 6099
Email: information.geelong@rdv.vic.gov.au

Horsham

Wimmera Business Centre
 62 Darlot Street, Horsham 3400
Tel: (+61 3) 5381 2762
Fax: (+61 3) 5381 2514
Email: information.horsham@rdv.vic.gov.au

Mildura

131 Langtree Avenue, Mildura VIC 3500
Tel: (+61 3) 5051 2000
Fax: (+61 3) 5051 2020
Email: information.mildura@rdv.vic.gov.au

Shepparton

79a Wyndham Street, Shepparton 3630
Tel: (+61 3) 5895 4100
Fax: (+61 3) 5822 2554
Email: information.shepparton@rdv.vic.gov.au

Swan Hill

324 Campbell Street, Swan Hill 3585
Tel: (+61 3) 5036 4823
Email: information.swanhill@rdv.vic.gov.au

Traralgon

33 Breed Street, Traralgon 3844
Tel: (+61 3) 5116 7300
Fax: (+61 3) 5175 0324
Email: information.traralgon@rdv.vic.gov.au

Wangaratta

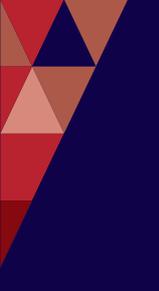
Wangaratta Government Centre
 1st Floor, 62 Ovens Street, Wangaratta 3677
Tel: (+61 3) 5722 7101
Fax: (+61 3) 5722 7109
Email: information.wangaratta@rdv.vic.gov.au

Warrnambool

Old Police Station
 South West TAFE
 9 Gilles Street, Warrnambool 3280
Tel: (+61 3) 5561 4135
Fax: (+61 3) 5561 3851
Email: information.warrnambool@rdv.vic.gov.au

Wodonga

111-113 Hume Street, Wodonga 3690
Tel: (+61 2) 6059 0200
Fax: (+61 2) 6059 0250
Email: information.wodonga@rdv.vic.gov.au



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