

# Regional Recovery Fund

## Application Guidelines

February 2021

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# REGIONAL RECOVERY FUND - APPLICATION GUIDELINES

## 1. Context

The spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) and the resulting measures to protect our communities has caused significant economic, social and environmental impacts. These impacts are being felt differently in Regional Victoria. The \$10 million Regional Recovery Fund (the Fund) has been established to help address these impacts, and those caused through bushfires and drought.

The Fund recognises the importance of regional communities and the significance of supporting place-based approaches to recovery in collaboration with those communities. To inform the focus of recovery activities five Regional Recovery Committees (Barwon South West, Grampians, Loddon Mallee, Hume and Gippsland) have been established to deliver place-based coordination to deliver local recovery plans to identify gaps and opportunities.

### 1.1 Purpose of this document

This document sets out the application guidelines for the Fund.

### 1.2 Definition of rural and regional Victoria

Rural and regional Victoria is defined under the Act as comprising the 48 Local Government Authorities outside of metropolitan Melbourne plus the six alpine resorts set out in Schedule 2 of the Act.

The Local Government Authorities include 10 regional cities and 38 rural municipalities.

### 1.3 Information only

These Guidelines and any discussions you may have with an RDV office representative are for information only, and do not constitute advice.

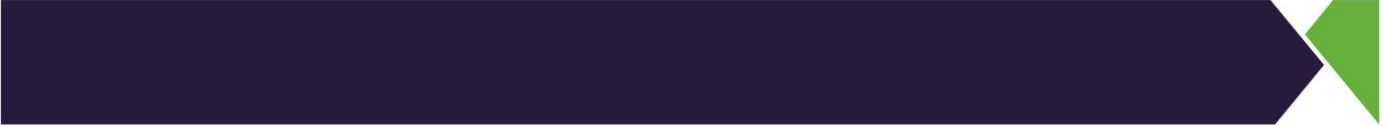
Applicants should seek independent advice before making an application or entering into a Grant Agreement.

Applications are at the cost of the applicant.

RDV makes no representation that a grant of funds will be made to any applicant and reserves the right to make no funds available under the Fund.

All grant applicants, as applicable, must operate under an appropriate [COVIDSafe Plan](#) to govern operations.

### 1.4 Assessment of non-financial risks



Applications to the Fund must include information to enable RDV to assess financial and other non-financial risks associated with the proposal as part of its due diligence. This includes consideration of elements that may pose a reputational risk to the State, such as:

- Whether the applicant has already received grants from the Victorian Government.
- 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 of Jobs Precincts and Regions' (DJPR) discretion.
- Where the proposal has already been fully funded by the applicant through other means (e.g. capital raising on the Australian Stock Exchange).
- Where due diligence (probity checks) uncovers adverse findings.

## 2. Regional Recovery Fund

The Fund was established through the Victorian Budget 2020-21 announced in November 2020 with an allocation of \$10 million in 2020-21.

The Fund has been established to provide flexible support for regional economic recovery, stimulating socio-economic growth and recovery, by investing in projects and innovative ideas that address regional needs, priorities addressing those immediate and persisting challenges, and opportunities (place-based needs).

Funding priority will be given to projects and programs that align with and/or support those priorities identified in the Regional Economic Recovery Plans informed by the five Regional Recovery Committees and community engagement activities.

The Fund will be administered by DJPR, through Regional Development Victoria (RDV).

## 3. Fund Objectives

The Fund aims to:

- Support place-based economic recovery initiatives;
- Support locally led approaches to identify the most appropriate actions (e.g. planning activities);
- Support businesses to create new jobs or secure at-risk jobs;
- Meet the different socio-economic needs of each region; and
- Leverage off private sector or local government investment wherever possible.

## 4. Timeframes

The Fund will be delivered through a targeted round. Interested parties are invited to speak with their local RDV office.

- Monday, 1 March 2021: program opens
- Late March: applications for funding close

- Late April 2021: successful applicants notified
- 30 June 2022: approved projects completed.

## 5. Funding

An upper limit of \$500,000 in funding will apply to individual projects.

Applicants are encouraged to seek financial contributions from other third-party sources. Projects should maximise their funding support from a range of sources, including Commonwealth/local government, higher and other education institutions, and community, private sector and regional organisations. In-kind contributions can be included as part of the total project costs.

Applicants may submit grant applications for more than one project. Applications will be asked to indicate which project they consider to be their priority.

## 6. Eligibility Criteria


### 6.1 Who can apply?

All projects must benefit regional and rural Victoria. Applications will be considered from:

- Local Government Authorities;
- Alpine Resorts Management Boards;
- 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.
- Incorporated not-for-profit organisations, including community groups that are:
  - Cooperatives or associations;
  - Social enterprise organisations.
- Higher and other education institutions;
- Legally represented regional organisations e.g. regional strategic planning alliances.

Councils can also sponsor (auspice) projects on behalf of the business and industry groups including:

- Chambers of commerce and business associations;
- Industry peak bodies;
- Business and industry clusters and networks
- Incorporated not-for-profit organisations and community groups that 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.

Individuals are not eligible to apply.

## 6.2 Ineligible organisations

- State and Commonwealth Government departments and agencies;
- Unincorporated organisations or joint ventures (unless under an auspice arrangement, see above);
- Trusts ;
- Pre-schools, primary and secondary schools;
- Individuals are not eligible to apply.

## 6.3 Eligible projects

Eligible projects include those that identify, address and deliver recovery priorities that align with recovery planning activities developed by regions and informed by community engagement.

Projects that stimulate socio-economic growth and recovery, address regional needs, support locally led approaches to identify the most appropriate actions (e.g. planning activities), implement priorities addressing those immediate and persisting challenges, and investment/development opportunities.

## 6.4 Ineligible projects

Examples of the types of projects that will not be supported include:

- projects that, in the state's opinion, may have a negative impact on existing businesses / services;
- Projects that require ongoing or recurrent funding to succeed or deliver benefits, unless there is demonstrated agreement from the relevant entity, including Commonwealth, state or Local government, to provide that funding;
- Projects where, in the State's opinion, funding is normally provided, or has otherwise been provided, by other state, Commonwealth and/or local government sources.

## 6.5 Ineligible costs

Examples of program costs that will not be covered by grant funding:

- Strategic and growth plans and township planning (business cases and design and construct projects are not considered ineligible);
- Business-as-usual operational costs and expenditure, including overhead costs;
- Costs of works completed prior to approval of funding for the project (retrospective funding);

- The purchase of land or buildings
- Private sector projects undertaken as a result of another government contract;
- Projects that the State considers are normally funded through commonwealth, state or local government sources;
- Costs of works and activities that are reimbursable under other funding sources, including insurance;
- Projects requiring operational funding from the Victorian Government once completed;
- Activities that that the State considers are Local Government Authority and Alpine Resort Area core business; and
- Passing on the funding to a third party in the form of a sponsorship, grant, cash prize or commercial gift.

## 6.6 Further mandatory requirements

For a successful application, applicants must ensure:

- The proposed project is delivery in rural and regional Victoria and you are an eligible applicant;
- That all regulatory requirements for the project including land tenure, planning and environmental issues have been identified and will be met;
- Applications for projects on public land are endorsed by the relevant land manager (e.g. Local Council or the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning); and
- The proposed project will comply with Victorian COVID-19 restrictions and requirements.

Funding applications must also include information and evidence regarding whether the applicant has already applied for and/or received funding from the Commonwealth, State or local government, for the same or a similar project(s).

## 7. Application Process

The Fund will be delivered as an invitation only program, whereby only those applications submitted by eligible organisations invited to apply by letter will be considered.

## 7.1 Step 1: Expression of interest

Prior to submitting an application, applicants must:

- Familiarise themselves with these guidelines;
- Discuss their project idea with the relevant RDV representative and provide evidence of that discussion with their application;
- Read the terms and conditions for the funding offered, within these guidelines and the grant agreement template;
- Express interest in applying for financial assistance by preparing a short description of the project, including things such as the magnitude of the investment and jobs to be retained and created through the project.

RDV regional offices will undertake an initial assessment against program eligibility and assessment criteria and provide feedback. If this initial assessment is positive, the applicant will be invited to apply for funding. A positive assessment at this expression of interest stage is not approval of an application.

## 7.2 Step 2: Prepare an application

RDV regional offices will provide applicants with an application form as soon as possible following the assessment of their initial expression of interest. Applicants will be required to address the assessment criteria of the program and provide the supporting documents required, including as appropriate:

- A completed project plan including a risk plan;
- Cost estimates/quotes;
- Letters of support, as appropriate;
- Evidence confirming funding sources;
- Evidence of land ownership/tenure.


As required by RDV, applications may also need to include:

- a copy of completed Cultural Heritage Management Plan, Vegetation Assessments, Environmental Management Plans, etc. as appropriate or evidence that these types of plans are not required;
- Evidence that relevant approvals to commence the project have been obtained, such as Planning Permit, Heritage Victoria Permit, etc;
- Schematic plans for the project. For projects over \$300,000 a quantity surveyor's estimate and construction plans for the project (desirable) should be provided.

For grants above \$50,000 applicants (excluding Local Government Authorities) are required to provide copies of annual reports and audited financial statements (i.e. audited profit and loss statements and balance sheets) of the applicant organisation 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.

Where the applicant proposes to enter the grant agreement on behalf of a supported organisation (auspice arrangement) the application must include written confirmation





from the supported organisation that it has reviewed the application and agrees to its content and that the project will be delivered by the auspicing applicant on behalf of the supported organisation.

### **7.3 Step 3: Assessment process**

Applications will undergo a multi-stage assessment process:

- RDV will determine the project's eligibility against the applicant and project eligibility criteria and undertake probity checks and financial risk assessments of the applicant organisations where necessary. Ineligible applicants will not proceed to assessment.
- An Assessment Panel comprising state government representatives will assess eligible applications against the Assessment Criteria to determine a list of recommended projects.
- Funding approval will then be sought from the Minister for Regional Development.

All persons involved in the assessment of the projects will have to declare and demonstrate appropriate management of any real or perceived conflicts of interest.

### **7.4 Step 4: Letter of offer**

Applicants will be advised of the decision relating to their application in writing. Successful applicants will receive a letter of offer from the Minister for Regional Development.

## **8. Assessment Criteria**

Projects must align with the Eligible Project criteria (section 6.3) for the Fund. Applicants must demonstrate alignment with the relevant Economic Recovery Strategy or other regional priority strategy/plan, an evidence base for the project need and benefit. The more evidence (qualitative or quantitative) provided to demonstrate adherence with Assessment Criteria 8.1-8.5, the greater the likelihood that the project will be funded.

### **8.1 Regional economic benefit**

Applicants must explain how and why the project:

- Aligns with the Eligible Project criteria (section 6.3);
- How well the project addresses one or more of the program objectives;
- Outlines clear objectives and proposed outcomes particularly demonstrating how the funding will support socio-economic growth/recovery in regional Victoria and is consistent with the relevant Regional Economic Recovery Plan and/or Regional Partnership priorities and addresses an existing gap;
- Define the quantum and type of socio-economic benefit/s and timeframe over which it will be realised;

- Avoids unintended consequences (for example, adverse impacts on neighbouring local businesses, vulnerable groups or the environment, or ongoing costs for the community or local government); and
- Cannot be delivered through other funding sources.

## **8.2 Local participation, support and delivery**

Applicants must demonstrate that the project has local participation and support showing the community was engaged at the project planning stage (where relevant) and/or there are identified pathways for the project benefits to be shared in the community.

The project should demonstrate one or more of the following:

- Support from the community (e.g. through letter/s of support or resolutions of industry or community groups, Municipal Recovery Committees, Community Recovery Committees, Traditional Owners and/or local government);
- Encourage the participation of communities including Traditional Owners (e.g. through job creation, involvement in planning processes and development); and/or
- Enhance local and Aboriginal employment and procurement opportunities, including opportunities for local trades, services and other input-supplying businesses.

## **8.3 Alignment with relevant Regional Economic Recovery Plans and other Economic Development Strategies**

Applicants must demonstrate how the project:

- Aligns with and supports one or more of the identified priorities/needs in the relevant Regional Economic Development Plan and/or other relevant local Economic Development Strategies/Plans.
- Will support socio-economic reliance, adaptation, capability uplift, self-reliance and capacity.

## **8.4 Enduring socio-economic outcomes**

Applicants must demonstrate how the project:

- Supports vulnerable groups/diverse populations;
- Supports socio-economic outcomes for communities; and
- Local and regional recovery is tangible, sustainable (i.e. delivers ongoing benefits and employment opportunities), builds future resilience, and reduces future risk.

## 8.5 Project feasibility and delivery

Applications must demonstrate all of the following:

- They are financially viable and have the capacity to manage and complete the project;
- That suitable project management arrangements are in place and included in the project implementation plan and budget, including clear project timeframes and milestones, and an anticipated completion date;
- That project costs are accurate and reasonable (including any in-kind and/or co-contribution funding support);
- That project risks have been identified and strategies are in place to manage them;
- That delivery partners have the capacity and experience to deliver the project;
- If relevant, how the project incorporates principles of environmentally sustainable design and addresses Universal Design while complying with relevant anti-discrimination legislation; and
- If relevant, that the project is consistent with good heritage practice, i.e. The Burra Charter (if heritage listed).

## 9. Assessment weighting

Applications will be assessed against the Assessment criteria as outlined in the table below.

Assessment Criteria	Weighting
Regional economic benefit	30%
Local participation and support in planning and delivery	20%
Alignment with relevant Regional Economic Recovery Plans and other Economic Development Strategies	20%
Enduring socio-economic benefits	20%
Project feasibility and delivery	10%

## 10. Compliance and Governance

### 10.1 Project costing treatment of GST

Applicants should note that all project costs included in the application must be exclusive of GST. Applicants must have an Australian Business Number (ABN) and be registered for GST or provide written advice from the Australian Taxation Office that no withholding tax is required to be withheld from the grant payment.

## 10.2 Who signs the application?

Applications from Local Government Authorities must be signed by the Chief Executive Officer.

Applications from other proponents must be signed by the Chief Executive Officer (or person authorised to bind the organisation).

## 10.3 Conditions of funding

Successful applicants will be required to enter into a Grant Agreement with RDV, detailing all funding obligations and conditions.

The standard terms and conditions on which the funding is offered for each program are available from:

- The RDV website at [www.rdv.vic.gov.au](http://www.rdv.vic.gov.au) or
- By contacting their local RDV representative.

Grant Agreements are legally enforceable documents that clearly set out the obligations of both parties. The Grant 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.

Grant Agreements must be signed by the organisation's Chief Executive Officer (or equivalent person with authority to bind the organisation) 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 Grant Agreement has been signed, the applicant will be required to actively manage and deliver the project and provide accurate progress reports to RDV. During a 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. At its discretion, RDV may be either a participant or observer in these meetings.

Successful applicants must enter into a Grant Agreement and commence the project within three months from the date of the funding offer.

If a project does not commence within this timeframe, the grant will be reviewed by RDV.

## 10.4 Monitoring, evaluation and reporting

Successful applicants will be required to cooperate with an evaluation which is undertaken during and/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. Depending on the significance of the project, 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 Fund.

RDV reports on grants and programs it administers. The reporting includes the identity of successful applicants and projects and, where applicable, deviations from or exceptions to the assessment and approvals processes set out in these guidelines.

### **10.5 Competitive neutrality**

All successful applications to the Fund from a Government body, including Local Government Authorities and Government agencies will be required to comply with the Competitive Neutrality Policy Victoria (if applicable) in respect of any commercial goods or services offered by the body as a result of the grant.

### **10.6 Acknowledgement**

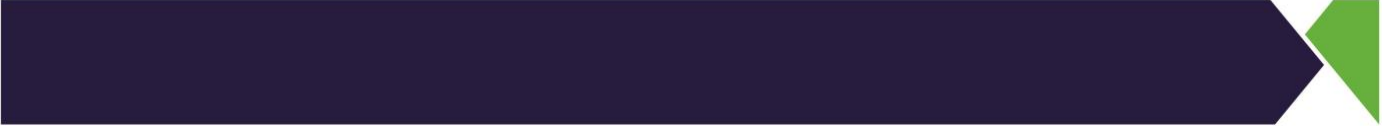
Successful applicants need to acknowledge the Victorian Government's support through the provision of a grant from the Fund. The Grant Agreement includes a requirement that all activities acknowledge Victorian Government support through logo presentation on any activity-related publications, media releases and promotional material in accordance with the DJPR guidelines.

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 the state to use in communications materials.

### **10.7 Privacy**

Any personal information about the applicant or a third party in the application will be collected by RDV, a statutory body within DJPR for the purpose of grant administration. This information may be provided to other Victorian Government agencies for the purposes of assessing applications. If personal information about third parties is included in the application, ensure third parties are aware of the



contents of this privacy statement and the contents of the DJPR Privacy Policy available from the Privacy Officer (details below).

Any personal information about the applicant or a third party in correspondence will be collected, held, managed, used, disclosed or transferred in accordance with the provisions of the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic), Health Records Act 2001 (Vic) and other applicable laws. DJPR is committed to protecting the privacy of personal information.

The DJPR's privacy policy is available from:

***Privacy Officer***

Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions GPO Box 2392  
Melbourne, VIC, 3001, AUS  
Email: [privacy@ecodev.vic.gov.au](mailto:privacy@ecodev.vic.gov.au)

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

***Freedom of Information Manager***

Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions GPO Box 2392  
Melbourne, VIC, 3001, AUS Email: [foi@ecodev.vic.gov.au](mailto:foi@ecodev.vic.gov.au)

## 11. Contact Details of Regional Offices:

**Note:** regional offices are currently closed in response to COVID-19 restrictions. The preferred method of contact is via telephone or email.

### **Ballarat**

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

