

Regional Tourism Investment Fund – Competitive Round Program Guidelines

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1 Context

1.1 Visitor Economy Recovery and Reform Plan

The Victorian Government is helping to revitalise and grow Victorian tourism after the impacts of bushfires and the global pandemic, with a roadmap outlined in the [Visitor Economy Recovery and Reform Plan \(VERRP\)](#).

Informed by the findings of the [Regional Tourism Review](#), the VERRP will strengthen Victoria's nation-leading tourism offering through the development of new experiences, products and infrastructure.

The [VERRP](#), which is underpinned by an investment of \$633 million, outlines strategies to attract more international, interstate and intrastate visitors by making the most of marketing expenditure, transforming [Regional Tourism Boards](#) and ensuring state-wide collaboration.

The [VERRP](#) focuses on key experience pillars that are sustainable competitive strengths for Victoria, and which provide significant opportunities for growth.

Pillars relevant to the Regional Tourism Investment Fund (RTIF) – Competitive Round are:

1. **Nature** – experiences and products that activate regional Victoria's natural assets such as forests, parks, alpine areas, wildlife, geothermal and natural mineral springs, coastlines, rivers, lakes and oceans, and contribute to a healthy and resilient environment.
2. **Epicurean** – culinary and gastronomic experiences and products that highlight provenance and demonstrate innovation, including agricultural and regenerative farming experiences, cellar doors, distilleries and breweries.
3. **Arts and culture** – experiences and products that enable the visitor to engage with art and culture in new and innovative ways, such as museums, storytelling, multicultural centres, art and heritage trails, public art installations, galleries and creative venues.
4. **First Peoples' led experiences** – prioritising the world's oldest, continuous living culture that will contribute the future of Victorian tourism, through the creation of immersive experiences and products that are driven by Aboriginal self-determination.

The examples provided above are not intended to be prescriptive.

1.2 Tourism Infrastructure Program

The Tourism Infrastructure Program (TIP), funded through the 2020-21 State Budget, is a key part of the [VERRP](#) and is developing and delivering a strong pipeline of demand-driving tourism infrastructure projects. This includes a focus on strengthening public infrastructure to enable private investment and to facilitate the development of new tourism products.

The TIP comprises three separate funds:

- Flagship Projects – \$149 million;
- Regional Tourism Investment Fund (RTIF) – \$150 million (includes this Competitive Round); and
- Enabling Tourism Fund (ETF) – \$10 million.

2 Regional Tourism Investment Fund – Competitive Round – Application guidelines

2.1 Objectives and outcomes of the RTIF – Competitive Round

The RTIF – Competitive Round will drive the recovery and sustainability of regional Victoria's visitor economy by catalysing private and public investment and facilitating new and innovative tourism infrastructure projects.

The objectives of the RTIF – Competitive Round are:

- Deliver strategic tourism infrastructure projects that will increase visitation, improve quality of customer experience, and increase visitor yield and length of stay.
- Deliver projects that broaden Victoria’s tourism offering, and support and encourage year-round visitation and dispersal across regional Victoria.
- Leverage and facilitate private sector investment, including through strengthening public tourism infrastructure.
- Drive new jobs and improved outcomes for the State’s visitor economy.

Projects funded through the RTIF – Competitive Round must support the delivery of the outcomes identified for the TIP, which has three outcome metrics:

1. Increased yield (an increase in the total spend per visitor);
2. Dispersal across seasons and regions (strengthening year-round visitation and visitor dispersal across regions); and
3. Increased volume (growth in visitor numbers, repeat visitation and/or length of stay).

2.2 Key dates

The following are the key dates for the RTIF – Competitive Round:

Step	Dates
Applications open	11 November 2021
Applications close	14 January 2022
Assessment and approvals process	January to April 2022
Successful projects announced*	From mid May 2022
Grant Agreements finalised	By 30 June 2022
Construction commencement	Within 9 months of executed Grant Agreement
Final project completion	By 30 June 2024
Acquittal report due	By 30 September 2024

* Note – some projects may be announced earlier if DJPR determines they are time-critical

3 Eligibility

3.1 Applicant eligibility

3.1.1 Eligible applicants

Applicants must be one of the following types of entities to apply:

- Private sector proponents (defined as an individual, privately-owned or commercial organisation that has overall control and responsibility for project that is predominantly funded through private capital);
- Local and State Government entities, including:
 - Public Land Managers, Land Management Authorities and Committees of Management
 - Local Government Authorities

- Alpine Resort Management Boards
- State or Local Government owned entities;
- Incorporated associations;
- Not-for-profit organisations, including community groups that are an incorporated body, cooperative or association; or
- Traditional Owner Corporations, organisations and groups, and Aboriginal-owned businesses.

In addition, to be eligible for funding applicants must:

- Be an incorporated body, cooperative or association (including business associations);
- Possess an Australian Business Number (ABN); and
- Be financially solvent.

3.1.2 Ineligible applicants

The following types of entities are not eligible to apply:

- Unincorporated organisations or joint ventures (unless under an auspice arrangement);
- Utility and services providers;
- Water corporations; or
- Commonwealth Government owned entities.

3.2 Funded projects

3.2.1 Eligible projects

To be eligible for funding under the RTIF – Competitive Round, a project must be:

- New tourism infrastructure and/ or significant enhancements that build on existing infrastructure; or
- Enabling infrastructure that directly and demonstrably unlocks private tourism investment.

All projects funded under the RTIF – Competitive Round:

- Must meet the objectives of this fund as set out in Section 2.1; and
- Should demonstrate strategic investment or support visitation outcomes in one or more of the following [VERRP](#) priority experience pillars:
 - Nature;
 - Epicurean;
 - Arts and Culture; and/ or
 - First Peoples' led experiences.

3.2.2 Ineligible projects

The following projects will not be considered for funding under the RTIF – Competitive Round:

- Project planning for infrastructure projects such as a feasibility study, a demand study, or a business case to enable prospective applicants to investigate the technical and or economic viability of an infrastructure project (design and construct projects may be considered);
- Local strategic planning including economic development strategies and plans for future growth and infrastructure needs;
- Projects that require ongoing funding from the Victorian Government for operation or maintenance;

- Retrospective funding, where projects have been completed or have started prior to receiving funding approval;
- Projects that are only purchasing plant and equipment; or
- Projects that are considered core business for local government, for example but not limited to:
 - Construction of carparks and toilets (unless they are a component part supporting a broader tourism project);
 - Construction and maintenance of Visitor Information Centres;
 - Enabling infrastructure not directly linked to unlocking private investment.

3.2.3 Ineligible expenses

The following expenses will not be funded under the RTIF – Competitive Round:

- General business operating costs and administrative running costs, such as:
 - Costs related to lease, rent and utilities;
 - Costs involved in the purchase or upgrade/hire of software and ICT hardware unless it directly relates to the project or experience (e.g. wayfinding technology for an experience);
 - Capital expenses such as purchase assets for everyday business activities;
 - Marketing, advertising, or product promotion including signage;
 - Maintenance of existing infrastructure / assets;
 - Staff wages, training and development costs; and
- Purchase of land.

3.2.4 Eligible project locations

Projects delivered within the following locations can apply for funding through the RTIF – Competitive Round, in accordance with relevant program eligibility criteria:

Tier 1 locations Local Government Areas	Tier 2 locations Local Government Areas and Alpine Resorts	
Ballarat	Alpine	Moirá
Greater Bendigo	Ararat	Moorabool
Greater Geelong	Bass Coast	Mount Alexander
Greater Shepparton	Baw Baw	Mount Buller & Mount Stirling
Horsham	Benalla	Mount Hotham
Latrobe	Buloke	Moyne
Mildura	Campaspe	Murrindindi
Mornington Peninsula	Central Goldfields	Northern Grampians
Nillumbik	Colac Otway	Pyrenees
Wangaratta	Corangamite	Queenscliffe
Warrnambool	East Gippsland	Southern Alpine (Lake Mountain & Mount Baw Baw)
Wodonga	Falls Creek	Southern Grampians
Yarra Ranges	Gannawarra	South Gippsland
	Glenelg	

	Golden Plains	Strathbogie
	Hepburn	Surf Coast
	Hindmarsh	Swan Hill
	Indigo	Towong
	Loddon	Wellington
	Macedon Ranges	West Wimmera
	Mansfield	Yarriambiack
	Mitchell	

3.2.5 Environmental and design considerations

Projects should be consistent, where possible, with the following:

- Environmentally Sustainable Design (ESD): Infrastructure proposals are encouraged to incorporate ESD initiatives into project designs;
- Universal Design (UD): A philosophy that encourages building development beyond what is required by the Disability Standards for Access to premises. The intent of UD is to create environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible; and
- [The Burra Charter](#) (BC): The BC is a set of principles that have been adopted to create a nationally accepted standard for heritage conservation practice in Australia. It is not a legal requirement to adopt the BC guidelines, however they are well entrenched in policy.

4 Funding details

4.1 Available funding

Applicants may apply for funding up to \$10 million per project, with a minimum funding request of \$150,000 per project.

4.2 Funding ratios and co-contribution requirements

Applicants are required to meet the funding ratios and co-contributions outlined in the table below:

Applicant	Maximum funding ratios for co-contributions	Notes
Private applicants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private sector proponents 	Up to RTIF \$1:\$2 other	Higher applicant co-contributions will be considered favourably during assessment.
Public, not-for-profit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local and State Government entities • Incorporated associations • Not-for-profit organisations 	Tier 1 location* Up to RTIF \$2:\$1 other Tier 2 location* Up to RTIF \$3:\$1 other	Projects located across both a Tier 1 and Tier 2 location* will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
Traditional Owner applicants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional Owner corporations, organisations and groups 	Up to RTIF \$3:\$1 other	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aboriginal-owned businesses 		
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* See Section 3.2.4 for the list of Tier 1 and Tier 2 locations.

In-kind contributions will not be considered as part of the funding co-contribution, however any such in-kind contribution will be taken into account during the assessment process.

Funding co-contributions must be from sources other than the Victorian Government (including other Victorian Government departments or agencies) in order to satisfy the required funding ratio.

Projects that have received or will receive Victorian Government funding from other sources outside this Fund may apply, however any such funding will be considered as part of funding assessment criteria.

4.3 Considerations

Projects requesting funding outside the grant gap or lower than the stated applicant co-contribution ratios will be considered on a case-by-case basis and subject to Ministerial discretion.

4.4 Project costing treatment of GST

Applicants should note that all project costs included in the application and project documentation must be exclusive of GST.

5 Application process

5.1 Prior to application

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

- Read these Program Guidelines to ensure it satisfies the applicable eligibility criteria;
- Read the terms and conditions upon which any funding offered under the Fund may be offered; and
- Complete the Registration of Interest (ROI) form online via the link on the [Business Victoria \(RTIF\) page](#).

An online link to the full application form will be sent to the applicant following submission of the ROI.

5.2 Registration of Interest stage

Applicants will be able to fill in an on-line ROI form and will be contacted by a representative from the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (the **Department**).

The Department will provide applicants with advice on the project's alignment with the broad eligibility criteria of the program (see Section 3) prior to being provided with a link to the full application form.

It is up to potential applicants to decide whether to apply. All potential applicants that submit an ROI can apply.

5.3 Prepare an application

Applicants will need to use the supplied link to the online application form to clearly and succinctly address the assessment criteria outlined in Section 6.2.1.

Applications must have the approval of the Chief Executive Officer (or person authorised to bind the organisation), and the person submitting the application form will be required to attest to this as part of the application process.

Before applying for funding under this program or making any decision, applicants should seek advice from their legal, business and financial advisers to determine their eligibility and the terms of the funding.

Any costs or risks associated with an application are the sole responsibility of the applicant.

The Department makes no representation that a grant of funds will be made to any applicant and reserves the right to amend, suspend or withdraw funding under the RTIF – Competitive Round.

5.3.1 Regional Tourism Boards

Applicants are encouraged to work with [Regional Tourism Boards \(RTBs\)](#) and industry organisations to identify and refine potential projects. Letters of support from RTBs may be attached as part of the application.

5.4 Documentation and information requirements

Mandatory documentation	Other supporting documentation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project management plan (which must include risk management plan, itemised and detailed project budget, and ongoing operating model) (<i>template is provided on the Business Victoria (RTIF) page</i>) • Completed Cultural Heritage Management Plan, Vegetation Assessments, Environmental Management Plans etc. as appropriate, or evidence that processes have commenced. Alternatively, evidence that these types of plans are not required • Evidence that demonstrates all relevant approvals and permits required to commence the project can be obtained within the proposed delivery timeframe (e.g. Planning Permit, Heritage Victoria Permit etc.) • Landowner consent form (<i>template is provided on the Business Victoria (RTIF) page</i>) (where the applicant is not the landowner) or evidence of land ownership and tenure (where the applicant is the landowner) • Cost estimates/ quantity surveyor estimates/ quotes (not more than 12 months old) • Funding structure and evidence confirming all funding sources • Designs and drawings/ schematic project plans • Public Liability Insurance Certificate of Currency • Evidence of appropriate registration (not-for-profit organisations, incorporated associations and Aboriginal-owned businesses) • Evidence of financial stability*, including, at a minimum: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Audited Financial Reports for the last three financial years. This should be the ‘final accounts’ with Directors’ Report and Declaration and should include 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business or feasibility planning documents • Asset management plan • Marketing strategy • Letters of support, including from RTBs, local councils, local business and tourism associations, Traditional Owner organisations etc. • Letters of intent from any project partners • Evidence to support claims made in response to Assessment Criteria 1 (e.g. Visitation Impact Assessments, Economic Impact Assessments)

<p>Profit & Loss Statement, Balance Sheet, Cash Flows, and notes to the accounts. If accounts are not audited, unaudited accounts from an Accountant will be accepted</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If the latest financial report is more than six months old, up-to-date Management or Interim Accounts for the current year including Profit & Loss Statement and Balance Sheet, and, in the case of public listed corporations, a half yearly financial report - Current Business Plan, or project proposal - The company's financial projections for the next three financial years, including Profit & Loss and Cash Flow 	
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** Not required for Local Government Authorities, Alpine Resort Management Boards, State Government Departments and statutory agencies, and publicly funded universities and educational institutions.*

5.5 Information only

These Guidelines and any discussions you may have with representatives of the Department are for information only, and do not constitute advice.

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

6 Assessment and approval process

6.1 Assessment process

Applications will undergo the following multi-stage assessment process:

1. The Department will determine the project's eligibility against the relevant eligibility criteria, undertake the requisite probity checks and financial risk assessments of the applicant organisations where necessary, and review applications to ensure all mandatory documentation is included. Applications with incomplete documentation relating only to eligibility (e.g. not-for-profit status or financial information) may be contacted during this period if required. Applicants will not be able to submit any documentation that will be directly assessed by the Internal Assessment and Executive Assessment Panels).
2. Applications that are incomplete or deemed ineligible will not proceed to assessment.
3. Eligible applications will be considered by Initial Assessment Panels. The Initial Assessment Panels will competitively assess the applicant projects against the assessment criteria in Section 6.2.1 and score and rank the projects from this assessment. In exceptional cases where projects are strategically significant and time critical, applications may be subject to a fast-tracked process.
4. Applications will subsequently be considered by an Executive Assessment Panel that will:
 - a) Review and confirm the assessment undertaken by the Initial Assessment Panel
 - b) Undertake an overall moderation based on the dispersal of tourism outcomes across regional Victoria and the key experience pillars
 - c) Confirm the final list of projects and the proposed grant amounts for recommendation to the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events.

5. The final decision on application outcomes will be at the discretion of the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events.

The Initial Assessment Panel will include representatives from the Department. The Executive Assessment Panel is chaired by the Department and includes representatives from other departments and agencies across the Victorian Government.

Where relevant, comments and advice may be sought from independent external experts and used in assessing applications against the assessment criteria.

6.2 Criteria assessment of applications

All attachments and information provided as part of the application will be taken into consideration during the criteria assessment.

The Department reserves the right to request the applicant provides further information as it deems necessary.

6.2.1 Assessment criteria

Criteria 1 – Tourism outcomes and objectives (35%)
<p>This criterion assesses how well the project meets the objectives and outcomes of the RTIF – Competitive Round (see Section 2.1).</p> <p>Assessed on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ability of the project to broaden regional Victoria's tourism offering as a compelling visitor proposal, demonstrated by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Increased (or support for increased) visitation volume, length of stay (including overnight visitation) and yield in regional Victoria; and – Support of year-round visitation. <p>Use of project modelling and data sources are encouraged in response to this criterion.</p>
Criteria 2 – Strategic alignment (25%)
<p>This criterion assesses how well the project meets the strategic direction of Victoria's visitor economy and the regional project location.</p> <p>Assessed on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extent to which the project aligns with and supports one or more of the following strategic pillars outlined in the VERRP: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Nature – Epicurean – Arts and culture – First Peoples' led experiences. • The extent to which the project aligns to other State, regional or local strategic tourism plans (e.g. RTB plans, Regional Partnership priorities, Local Government strategies). <p>Letters of support, including from RTBs and local councils, are encouraged in response to this criterion.</p>

Criteria 3 – Project feasibility and readiness (25%)

This criterion assesses implementation planning and project readiness.

Assessed on:

- Evidence that feasibility and market need assessments have been undertaken.
- Readiness of the project to commence construction within **nine months** of an executed Grant Agreement (e.g. approved permits, confirmation of co-investments, commitments to delivery etc.).
- Strength of project planning including scope, budget and timeframes.
- Articulation of longer-term planning for activation, operation and maintenance following construction (including marketing strategy, operational plan, asset management plan etc.) or, for enabling infrastructure, how well the proposed activity enables the commercial viability of the underlying project.
- Evidence of the organisation's ability to finance the co-contribution.
- Risk planning for the project has been documented with appropriate risk mitigation strategies (e.g. access to materials, workforce planning, cost over-runs etc.).
- Community consultations or stakeholder engagement undertaken in the development of the project (include any letters of support), and plans for engaging stakeholders through construction.
- Level of consistency with environmental and design considerations as noted in Section 3.2.5.

Criteria 4 – Organisational capability and capacity (10%)

This criterion assesses the financial viability of the organisation and its capacity to deliver the outcomes associated with the project.

Assessed on:

- The applicant organisation's previous experience in successfully delivering comparable projects.
- The applicant organisation's capacity to lead and deliver the necessary expertise and workforce for the project.
- Financial health and capacity to undertake the project and to deliver the tourism outcomes beyond the project's timeframe.

Criteria 5 – Need for funding and value for money (5%)

This criterion assesses whether there is a strong argument for government support and whether the project represents value for money for the Victorian community.

Assessed on:

- Funding leveraged from other sources.
- The level of previous support the project may have received from the Victorian Government.
- Demonstrated need for government assistance for the project to proceed.
- The potential of the project to drive or enable strong economic impacts, including job creation, in the local area and for the State.

6.3 Due diligence assessments

Applicants will be subject to a risk assessment to verify business details provided by an applicant with the Australian Business Register, Australian Securities and Investment Commission, Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commissioner, Consumer Affairs Victoria and/or another 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;
- An applicant is placed under external administration;
- There is a petition to wind up or deregister the applicant; or
- The applicant is or becomes deregistered or unregistered (including cancellation or lapse in registration).

The Department may at any time, remove an application from the process, if in the Department's opinion association with the applicant may bring the Department, a Minister or the State of Victoria in disrepute.

Where applicants are not Local Government Authorities, Alpine Resort Management Boards, State Government Departments or statutory agencies, or publicly funded universities and educational institutions, the Department will undertake a financial risk assessment of the applicant to assess the ability of the applicant to deliver the proposed project.

This requires at a minimum, the provision of the following:

- Audited Financial Reports for the last three financial years. This should be the 'final accounts' with Directors' Report and Declaration and should include Profit & Loss Statement, Balance Sheet, Cash Flows, and notes to the accounts. If accounts are not audited, unaudited accounts from an Accountant will be accepted.
- If the latest financial report is more than six months old, up-to-date Management or Interim Accounts for the current year including Profit & Loss Statement and Balance Sheet, and, in the case of public listed corporations, a half yearly financial report.
- Current Business Plan, or project proposal.
- The company's financial projections for the next three financial years, including Profit & Loss and Cash Flow.
- An attestation of whether the applicant is or has been the subject of any investigations by the State Revenue Office (SRO) and/ or Australian Taxation Office (ATO).

Outcomes from the financial risk assessment will be taken into consideration in any decision to recommend and award the grant.

6.4 Assessment of non-financial risks

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

- 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 the proposal has already been fully funded by the applicant through other means (e.g. capital raising on the Australian Stock Exchange).
- Whether the applicant is or has been the subject of any investigations by the SRO and/ or ATO.

6.5 Approval process

The Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, in consultation with other relevant Ministers, will consider the advice received from the Executive Assessment Panel and determine whether to approve the granting of funds in accordance with a successful application. The Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events has the discretion to make any number of grants available or withdraw funding under the RTIF – Competitive Round in its entirety.

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 Tourism, Sport and Major Events.

6.6 Discretion in awarding grant funding

Decisions on all matters pertaining to the award of grant funding under this Fund are at the Department's and Minister's absolute discretion. This includes approving a lesser amount than that applied for, amending funding conditions or withdrawing the RTIF – Competitive Round without notice.

7 Conditions of funding

7.1 Acceptance of Letter of Offer

Successful applicants will have [10] business days from the date of the Letter of Offer to accept the offer in writing after which a Grant Agreement will be drawn up between the applicant and the Department.

7.2 Grant Agreements

Successful applicants will be required to enter into a legally binding grant agreement with the Department on its standard terms and conditions. The Grant Agreement details all funding obligations and conditions.

Grant Agreements must be signed by the organisation's Chief Executive Officer (or equivalent duly authorised representative with the requisite 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; and
- 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 regular accurate progress reports to the Department.

The documents provided as part of the application and as outlined in Section 5, will become addendums to the Grant Agreement and form part of the final executed agreement.

7.3 Program evaluation reporting

Reporting is critical to the Department in understanding program impact, supporting continuous improvement in program design and delivery, and delivering more effective grant programs to the people of Victoria.

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 the Department 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. Non-compliance could impact future applications to the Department's programs.

7.4 Project commencement

The project and any expenditure of funds associated with the project must not commence until after the Grant Agreement has been duly executed by both the Department and the successful applicant.

Once the Grant Agreement has been executed, the successful applicant will be required to commence the project within the agreed timeframe. If a successful applicant does not commence the project by the commencement date, the Department may terminate the agreement in its absolute discretion.

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

7.5 Project control groups

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, the Department may request to be either a participant or observer in such meetings.

7.6 Audit

The Department may conduct, or the Department may engage a third party to conduct, a performance review or audit of funding recipients. Funding recipients must:

- Actively cooperate with and provide assistance to the Department or any third party engaged by the Department to conduct an audit or performance review;
- Make available to the Department or any third party engaged by the Department all information and Records needed for the audit or performance review in accordance with any written request from the Department or third party engaged by the Department; and
- Provide the Department or any third party engaged by the Department with access to the Organisation's premises or place of business to carry out the audit or performance review.

7.7 Privacy and confidentiality

Information provided by the applicant for the purpose of this application will be used by the Department for the purposes of assessment of applications, program administration and program review. In making an application, the applicant consents, and authorises to the provision of their information to any State or Commonwealth Government department, agency or third party that may be engaged by the Department, for the purpose of assessing applications or conducting a review of the program or application process. 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 set out in 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 the Department's Privacy Unit by emailing privacy@ecodev.vic.gov.au. The Department's privacy policy is also available by emailing the Department's Privacy Unit.

7.8 Competitive neutrality

All successful applications to the RTIF – Competitive Round 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.

7.9 Local Jobs First (LJF)

LJF is a procurement policy that ensures that small and medium size enterprises are given a full and fair opportunity to compete for both large and small government contracts, helping to create job opportunities. Per the Local Jobs First Policy and *Local Jobs First Act 2003* this Program is subject to LJF. Therefore, program applicants should engage with the Industry Capability Network (ICN) when applying and consider submission of an LJF Plan with their application. Further information can be found at <https://localjobsfirst.vic.gov.au/>.

8 Terms of applying

8.1 Amendment of Guidelines

The Department reserves the right to amend these guidelines and the application terms at any time as it deems appropriate without notice.

8.2 Disrepute

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

8.3 Conflict of interest

A conflict of interest is a situation in which someone in a position of trust or influence has competing professional or personal interests.

Applicants must advise the Department of any real or perceived conflict of interest relating to a project for which it has applied for funding.

Conflicts of interest for Victorian Government staff will be handled as set out in the Code of Conduct for Victorian Public Service Employees (Section 61) of the *Public Administration Act 2004 (Vic)*.

8.4 Related entities

The applicant cannot use grant funding available through this program to engage the services (including supplier or consultancy services) and/or purchase products from another entity that is wholly or partly owned or controlled by the applicant. Applicants and Service Providers must be entirely separate entities. They may not be owned by the same parent company, share governance or have common directors.

In the application, applicants are required to declare any existing governance relationships between themselves and the nominated service providers. Including whether any of the project Service Providers are subsidiaries or related bodies corporate within the meaning of the *Corporations Act 2001* or share common directors, officers or senior managers.

The Department may apply this provision at any time to disqualify an applicant from receiving grant funding if a connection between the applicant and an associated entity is identified that is not in keeping with the purpose and objectives of the program.

9 Additional information and resources

9.1 Support for applications

To help applicants prepare their application, additional information and resources will be available on the [Business Victoria \(RTIF\) page](#), including relevant application templates and frequently asked questions.

Complete the Registration of Interest (ROI) form online via the link in the [Business Victoria \(RTIF\) page](#) for assistance. Please check with the Department representative prior to submitting if you are unclear about any part of the application.

To contact the Department regarding RTIF, please contact – tourism.projects@ecodev.vic.gov.au

9.2 Links to online resources

[Visitor Economy Recovery and Reform Plan](#)

[Regional Tourism Boards](#)

[Visit Victoria](#)

[Tourism industry research and data](#)

[Creative Victoria](#)

[Tourism Australia](#)

[The Burra Charter](#)

[Australian Tourism Awards](#)

[Accessible Tourism – Tourism Accessibility Resource Kit](#)

[Regional Partnerships](#)