

**Regional Jobs and  
Infrastructure Fund**

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Application Guidelines

February 2021

# Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund

## 1. Context

The COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic has impacted all industries, regions and communities. It has created significant new challenges for Victoria's rural and regional communities and exacerbated some existing ones.

The \$156 million Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund (RJIF) is one of the Victorian Government's key regional development packages and will be crucial in driving recovery in rural and regional Victoria. It will create and retain jobs, leverage private sector investment, grow and diversify our significant regional economy, enable regional population growth, improve the liveability of our cities, centres and towns, and improve economic and social outcomes for over 1.5 million regional Victorians to make regional Victoria an even better place to live, work and invest.

The fund will focus on priority projects to meaningfully support regional communities in their immediate response and recovery efforts, address complex local challenges and lay the groundwork for future growth.

More details on the RJIF are available at [www.rdv.vic.gov.au](http://www.rdv.vic.gov.au).

The RJIF has five strategic objectives:

- drive long-term regional growth through support of key economic development projects and the delivery of community-led responses to social and economic challenges.
- support regions and industries to recover from the coronavirus (COVID-19), pandemic, economic transition and natural disasters by leveraging opportunities to create jobs of the future and diversify the regional employment base.
- catalyse and increase private sector project investment in regional Victoria and respond to market failures that prevent high quality and transformative economic projects in the regions from reaching the shovel-ready investment stage.
- improve productivity and enhance long-term competitiveness of regional Victoria through innovation and transition to new growth opportunities.
- Improve the livability of our cities, centres and towns to attract and retain families and young people to live and work.

The RJIF was established by the [Regional Development Victoria Act 2002](#) (Act) as a trust fund in the public account. The Act describes the activities for which the trust is to be applied:

- to provide better infrastructure, facilities and services in rural and regional Victoria.
- to strengthen the economic, social and environmental bases of communities in rural and regional Victoria.
- to create jobs and improve career opportunities in rural and regional Victoria.
- to support the development and planning of local projects in rural and regional Victoria.

Regional Development Victoria (RDV) administers the programs within the RJIF. Programs currently open include:

- Regional Jobs Fund
- Regional Infrastructure Fund

**Note:** the Accelerating Readiness Fund will open in 2021. Further details will be provided in due course at [www.rdv.vic.gov.au](http://www.rdv.vic.gov.au).

## 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.

## 3. Information only

These Guidelines and any discussions you may have with a 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 RJIF.

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

## 4. Assessment of non-financial risks

Applications to the RJIF 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'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).
- Where due diligence (probity checks) uncovers adverse findings.

## 5. Eligible locations

Projects delivered within the following locations can apply for RJIF funding, in accordance with relevant program eligibility criteria.

Regional Cities	Large Rural Councils	Small Rural Councils and Alpine Resorts
Ballarat	Bass Coast	Alpine
Greater Bendigo	Baw Baw	Ararat
Greater Geelong	Campaspe	Benalla
Greater Shepparton	Colac-Otway	Buloke
Horsham	Corangamite	Central Goldfields
Latrobe	East Gippsland	Gannawarra
Mildura	Glenelg	Hepburn
Wangaratta	Golden Plains	Hindmarsh
Warrnambool	Macedon Ranges	Indigo
Wodonga	Mitchell	Loddon
	Moira	Mansfield
	Moorabool	Murrindindi
	Mount Alexander	Northern Grampians
	Moyne	Pyrenees
	South Gippsland	Queenscliffe
	Southern Grampians	Strathbogie
	Surf Coast	Towong
	Swan Hill	West Wimmera
	Wellington	Yarriambiack
		Mt Baw Baw
		Falls Creek
		Mt Hotham
		Mt Buller
		Mt Stirling
		Lake Mountain

Table 1 – Eligible Locations

## 6. Additional information and resources

Regional Partnerships Outcomes Roadmaps:

- [Barwon Regional Partnership](#)
- [Central Highlands Regional Partnership](#)
- [Gippsland Regional Partnership](#)
- [Goulburn Regional Partnership](#)
- [Great South Coast Regional Partnership](#)
- [Loddon Campaspe Regional Partnership](#)
- [Mallee Regional Partnership](#)
- [Ovens Murray Regional Partnership](#)
- [Wimmera Southern Mallee Regional Partnership](#)

# Regional Jobs Fund

## 1. Application Guidelines

The Regional Jobs Fund (RJF) looks to support projects which create employment opportunities across industry sectors where regional competitive advantage exists. This includes, but is not limited to:

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

## 2. Description and objectives of the fund

The RJF provides Victorian Government financial assistance primarily to businesses seeking to develop and expand operations in regional Victoria.

The aim of the RJF is to attract new investment, create new jobs, and in some cases retain existing jobs in regional Victoria and to support businesses to improve their productivity and competitiveness.

The RJF program will consider the following types of projects resulting in the retention and creation of new jobs, development of business innovation and productivity, as well as the provision of utilities and infrastructure:

- investment projects where regional Victoria is in competition with interstate or international locations (i.e. footloose investments)
- projects attracting footloose capital into new and/or existing facilities
- investment to develop new facilities, expand existing facilities and repurposed facilities.
- projects that underpin the sustainability of businesses and the retention of jobs in regional Victoria
- projects introducing new technologies, plant and equipment and systems to improve productivity, competitiveness and business growth
- projects enhancing the skills of the workforce to raise productivity
- the introduction of innovations, technologies, equipment and processes to develop and increase exports
- projects improving supply chain efficiencies through collaborative projects
- projects boosting the capacity of new and existing regionally significant employment precincts such as CBDs, health, education, innovation, industrial and special purpose precincts
- projects that involve utility and service connections and/or upgrades to activate business investment and create jobs (i.e. typically, consideration will be given to projects that require upgrades to electricity supply, gas supply, water supply and wastewater treatment services).
- projects that focus on water and energy savings that improve the operational sustainability of a business in a regional location such as solar and water recycling projects.

### 3. Funding assistance

Applicants are expected to attempt to maximise funding from a range of sources, including:

- loans from financial institutions
- equity from business investors
- grants from the Commonwealth Government
- contributions from Local Government Authorities
- contributions from utility / service providers
- other sources.

Priority will be given to projects that are considered investment ready, have a well demonstrated need for government assistance and which deliver a place-based economic impact.

### 4. 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
- purchase of property
- projects undertaken by the private sector as a result of a Victorian Government contract
- projects normally funded through commonwealth, state or local government sources
- projects requiring operational funding from the Victorian Government once completed
- telecommunication service improvements and access road upgrades will not be considered.

### 5. Who can apply?

The RJF is primarily a regional business development program. Individuals are not eligible to apply under this program.

Applications will be considered from:

- private sector businesses
- business and industry groups including:
  - chambers of commerce and business associations
  - industry peak bodies
  - business and industry clusters and networks.

Applications that involve the provision of enabling infrastructure necessary to activate projects delivering investment and jobs may be considered from:

- utility and services providers
- water corporations
- Local Government Authorities
- incorporated not-for-profit organisations operating businesses.

### 6. Fund details

The RJF is a competitive fund with applications received throughout the 2020-21 and 2021-22 financial years, or unless the funds are exhausted prior.

## 7. Application and assessment process for RJF

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

### 7.1. Step 1: Prior to application

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

- read these Application Guidelines to establish eligibility
- discuss the proposed project with your local RDV Business Centre
- read the terms and conditions for the funding offered
- express interest in applying for financial assistance by preparing a short description of the project, including the magnitude of the investment and jobs to be retained and created through the project

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 (applicants may be referred to alternative funding programs, if appropriate)
- does not meet the objectives of the fund
- does not strongly demonstrate economic benefits to regional Victoria
- is not ready for implementation
- is not strongly aligned to regional priorities identified through the nine Regional Partnerships
- does not strongly demonstrate a need
- does not strongly demonstrate that Victorian Government financial assistance is necessary for the investment/project to proceed.

An RDV representative will help determine the project's eligibility before an application form is completed. Applicants requiring further information should contact the local [RDV Business Centre](#)

### 7.2. Step 2: Prepare an application

In preparing an application for financial assistance through the RJF, applicants should clearly and succinctly describe the project by detailing:

- the key activities to be undertaken as part of the project
- the business need that the project is addressing
- project management arrangements
- resource requirements

Documentation to support the project such as a feasibility study, business case, business plan and letters of support should be attached to the application.

Applicants will need to demonstrate how the project will address the core criteria of the RJF program.

### 7.3. Step 3: Assessment process

Applications will undergo a two-stage assessment process.

1. Determining the eligibility of the proposed project by assessing the project's ability to meet the core RJF criteria (see section 8 below).
2. All eligible applications will be considered by the Minister for Regional Development for funding under the core RJF criteria. The Minister may grant funding in their absolute discretion.

## 8. Core RJF criteria

The primary aims of the RJF are to attract investment, create new jobs and retain existing jobs in regional Victoria. Therefore, assessment criteria are weighted towards these 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) Improvements to Business Sustainability

Applications should demonstrate clearly how the proposed project will:

- increase productive capacity of the business
- improve operating efficiencies
- reduce costs
- enhance productivity
- improve competitiveness
- strengthen competitive advantage
- remain after funding has ceased.

### b) Economic Benefits to Regional Victoria

Applications should demonstrate clearly how the proposed project:

- attracts investment to regional Victoria through the construction of facilities, purchase and installation of new plant and equipment, creation of productive enterprises
- creates new jobs and retain existing jobs
- creates indirect employment (e.g. construction jobs, supply chain jobs, etc.)
- builds on identified regional competitive advantage
- creates flow on investment in supply chain partners
- enhances the strength and sustainability of the industry in the region
- enhances utility services infrastructure to regional Victoria
- produce additional regional exports or import replacement
- generate long-term benefits that remain after funding has ceased.

### c) Rationale for Government Support

Applications will need to explain why Victorian Government support is required to allow the project to proceed, for example to:

- secure the investment
- address a funding gap
- improve an uncommercial payback period
- bring the project forward by a number of years
- deliver greater scale jobs and benefits
- provide encouragement and confidence to lenders, equity partners and foreign investors.

### d) 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
- suitable project management arrangements are in place in both the developmental and operational phases of the project
- project risks have been identified and strategies are in place to manage them

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

**e) Financial Viability of Applicant**

Applicants will be asked to provide copies of annual reports and audited financial statements (i.e. audited profit and loss statements and balance sheets) 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.

**9. Lodgment of Applications**

Completed applications should be submitted online to RDV via the supplied Application Form.

## Compliance and Governance

### 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.

### 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).

### 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.

Projects with a grant amount of \$1 million or more are required to meet the Local Jobs First Policy requirements: <https://localjobsfirst.vic.gov.au/>.

### 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 RJIF.

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.

## 5. 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 (if applicable) in respect of any commercial goods or services offered by the body as a result of the grant.

## 6. Acknowledgement

Successful applicants need to acknowledge the Victorian Government's support through the provision of a grant from the RJIF. 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 Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (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.

## 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 department'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)

## 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**

300-304 Mair Street  
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, 156-60 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**

110 Natimuk Road  
Horsham 3400  
**Tel:** (+61 3) 4344 3111  
**Fax:** (+61 3) 4344 3187  
**Email:** [information.horsham@rdv.vic.gov.au](mailto:information.horsham@rdv.vic.gov.au)

### **Mildura**

131 Langtree Avenue  
Mildura VIC 3500  
**Tel:** (+61 3) 50512000  
**Fax:** (+61 3) 50512020  
**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)

### **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**

703-709 Raglan Parade  
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**

Level 2, 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)

