

**Gippsland Supply Chain
Resilience Program
Stream 2 – Highly Impacted Stream**

Program Guidelines

For supply chain businesses
impacted by changes
to the manufacturing of
white paper in Gippsland

March 2024

Background

In July 2023, the Victorian Government agreed to establish the Gippsland Supply Chain Resilience Program to support impacted businesses in the Gippsland supply chain due to changes to the manufacturing of white paper in Gippsland.

The Gippsland Supply Chain Resilience Program is a Victorian Government initiative. Its objectives are to support Victorian businesses, with a focus on Small to Medium Enterprises to develop new opportunities and strengthen their resilience to changes in industry sectors.

The Gippsland Supply Chain Resilience Program is part of the Victorian Government's Forestry Transition Program. Outcomes of the Program include endeavouring to maintain as many regional jobs as possible as the industry transitions away from native timber harvesting.

This program is administered by Regional Development Victoria.

Highly Impacted Product or Service Suppliers Stream – Summary

Stream 2 – the Highly Impacted Product or Service Suppliers Stream provides grants of up to \$20,000 directly to businesses that are highly affected by the changes to the manufacturing of white paper in Gippsland. There are 2 stages to this stream as outlined below.

In Stage 1, eligible businesses will engage a Qualified Service Provider to develop a Business Diagnostic and Future Opportunities Assessment. This provides a financial analysis and assists with identifying business opportunities and strategies to plan for the future.

In Stage 2, eligible businesses will engage a Qualified Service Provider to develop a Business Resilience Plan. This stage provides detailed specialist advice to assist the business to develop a greater level of resilience to market impacts.

Access to further support

Businesses that completed the Stage 2 Business Resilience Plan may be invited by Regional Development Victoria to apply for a further grant of up to \$100,000 (excluding GST) to implement the steps outlined in their plan. Program guidelines will be made available to eligible businesses as part of the invitation process.

Key Program Dates

The Gippsland Supply Chain Resilience Program – Stream 2 – Highly Impacted Stream will open for applications on Wednesday 20 March 2024 and close on Friday 28 June 2024 at 11:59 pm (AEDT).

The Business Diagnostic and Future Opportunities Assessment (Stage 1) must be completed by the Qualified Service Provider by 15 December 2024.

The Business Resilience Plan (Stage 2) must be completed by 28 June 2025.

Completed applications will be assessed in the order that they are received.

1. Who is eligible for a grant?

1.1. The business¹ must:

- a) Be a legally structured business with an active Australian Business Number (ABN) and have held that ABN on and from 1 July 2021².
- b) Be an employing business located in Victoria that is registered with WorkSafe Victoria³.
- c) Be a business providing a product or service for the purpose of white paper production in Gippsland.
- d) Derived 30% or more of the business's revenue from the supply of products or services for white paper production in Gippsland. This figure must be evidenced with invoices and for one completed financial year: either 2021–22 or 2022–23 that clearly identify that the impacts to revenue are due to the ending of the white paper production in Gippsland.

1.2. The following are not eligible to apply:

- a) Commonwealth, state and local government agencies or bodies.
- b) Publicly funded research institutions.
- c) Industry associations.
- d) Businesses that supply products or services that are not impacted by the ending of white paper production in Gippsland.
- e) Businesses accessing support via the Impacted Product or Services Suppliers Stream of the Gippsland Supply Chain Resilience Program.

2. Grant funding

- 2.1. Grant funding of up to \$20,000 in value may be available to businesses for eligible activities. A business (as defined by its ABN) can only receive one grant.
- 2.2. A business must intend to procure services to the value of at least \$20,000 (excluding GST) from their nominated Qualified Service Provider.

- 2.3. Grant funding will be provided to an eligible business in three payments:
 - a) Payment One: \$4,000 if assessed as eligible following submission of a completed application including a quotation for services from your nominated Qualified Service Provider.
 - b) Payment Two: up to \$6,000 on completion of the Business Diagnostic and Future Opportunities Assessment and submission of evidence to Regional Development Victoria of full payment to the Qualified Service Provider. If the Service Activity costs incurred are less than a total of \$10,000 (excluding GST). Payment Two will be adjusted to match the lower amount incurred.
 - c) Payment Three: up to \$10,000 on completion and submission of the Business Resilience Plan and submission of evidence to Regional Development Victoria of full payment to the Qualified Service Provider. If the Service Activity costs incurred are less than a total of \$10,000 for the Business Resilience Plan (excluding GST), payment three will be adjusted to match the lower amount incurred.
- 2.4. The grant provided under this Program is a taxable supply and therefore GST applies for GST registered applicants⁴.
- 2.5. If the Service Activity costs exceed \$20,000, grant recipients will be required to pay the costs above \$20,000. The State of Victoria will not be responsible or liable for any costs exceeding the \$20,000 grant, arising from or in connection with the funded Service Activity.
- 2.6. Funding will not be provided for activities that have been undertaken before the recipient has applied and been found eligible. The recipient must not commence the Service Activity before receiving and acknowledging the receipt of the Successful Email from Regional Development Victoria.
- 2.7. Grants will be allocated to businesses assessed as being eligible in the order that they are assessed and approved until the Program close date or until the available funds are allocated.

1 A business must be a legal entity. Trustees may apply on behalf of a trust and partners on behalf of partnerships see Section 6. Sole Traders and Partnerships are eligible to apply if they are employing staff and registered with WorkSafe Victoria. Where required by relevant and applicable legislation, be registered with responsible regulators, including; Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC); the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) for charities and not-for-profits; and Consumer Affairs Victoria (CAV) for incorporated associations.

2 A business registered earlier than 1 July 2021 and maintaining that registration is considered as having an ABN "on and from" the relevant date. If the business ABN was activated after 1 July 2021, please contact Regional Development Victoria at InformationGippsland@rdvic.gov.au.

3 Business operating within Victorian and registered with WorkSafe Victoria must be able to provide a their WorkCover Employer Number and WorkCover Certificate of Currency at the point of Application.

4 If GST is payable, the Grant shall be increased by an amount equal to any GST payable with respect to the taxable supply for which payment is made provided that with the claim for payment, the Recipient submits a tax invoice.

3. Who is a Qualified Service Provider?

- 3.1. The Qualified Service Provider is the preferred professional adviser to the business, who may be a financial advisor, accountant, lawyer or Tax or BAS Agent, who is qualified to deliver an approved Service Activity (section 4) to the business.
- 3.2. Details of the work to be provided by the Qualified Service Provider will be required as a payment deliverable within the grant agreement.

If Applicants do not have access to an existing Qualified Service Provider, further guidance will be provided by Regional Development Victoria at information.gippsland@rdv.vic.gov.au.

- 3.3. The nominated Qualified Service Provider must:
 - a) Be a professional business advisor who is a member of, or registered with, an approved professional service body⁵.
 - b) Operate as a business and be registered for tax purposes in Australia with an active ABN, and
 - c) Not be an employee or director of the recipient business, or an associated entity or related entity of the recipient business.
- 3.4. To confirm the identity of the Qualified Service Provider, the information below must be provided by the Applicant at the time of application:
 - a) Professional membership details (refer to clause 3.1 and footnote 5), and
 - b) A valid Tax Practitioners Board (TPB) registration number (where applicable).

4. Service Activity

- 4.1. The business may select the type of Qualified Service Provider that will assist with informing future business decisions to suit its individual needs.

- 4.2. The Service Activity provided by the Qualified Service Provider must support one or more of the scope of services listed below for the Business Diagnostic and Future Opportunities Assessment (Stage 1):

- a) Advice and analysis regarding the management of cash flow, preparation or cash flow budgets and projections.
- b) Profitability analysis and formulation of financial management and/or operational business strategies.
- c) Tax advice and planning.
- d) Market and strategic gap analysis to revise business planning.
- e) Advice regarding the management of debts and liabilities.
- f) Advice regarding workforce management and employee matters.
- g) Legal advice relating to the business.
- h) Identification of suboptimal business strategies or planning, processes, technologies, accreditations, or skills.
- i) A project scope to deliver a full Business Resilience Plan (Stage 2).

- 4.3. The Service Activity provided by the Qualified Service Provider must support one or more of the scope of services listed below for the Business Resilience Plan (Stage 2):

- a) Business technology systems and process certifications.
- b) Tender response assistance.
- c) Industry specific compliance requirements.
- d) Supply chain collaboration and partnering activities.
- e) Development of industry research and development.
- f) Processes, product development and skill development.
- g) Other relevant activities.

⁵ A Qualified Service Provider is any of the following:

- Qualified accountant who belongs to one of the following professional bodies at the declared membership classification i) CPA Australia (i.e., CPA and FCPA), ii) Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand (i.e., CA, ACA and FCA) and iii) Institute of Public Accountants (i.e. AIPA, MIPA and FIPA) and comply with the body's continuing professional education requirements; or
- A registered BAS Agent who belongs to one of the following associations at the declared membership classification, including i) the Institute of Certified Bookkeepers (FICB, MICB, AICB), and ii) the Australian Bookkeepers Association (Member), and iii) Association of Accounting Technicians (Australia) Limited and comply with the body's continuing professional education requirements; or
- A registered Tax Agent who belongs to one of the following professional bodies, including i) The Tax Institute, ii) National Tax Agents' Association (NTAA PLUS) and iii) Tax & Super Australia and comply with the body's continuing professional education requirements; or
- A lawyer registered with the Victorian Legal Services Board.

5. Types of ineligible expenditure

- 5.1. The grant payment cannot be used for the following expense types:
 - a) Service activities that have commenced or concluded prior to applying for funding from this Program.
 - b) Activities that could ordinarily be obtained in the usual course of business such as operating expenses, rent, stock purchases, utility payments, salaries/wages and associated entitlements, travel costs or routine maintenance.
 - c) Capital expenditure.
 - d) Financing fees, servicing creditors or personal debts and expenses.
 - e) The purchase, hire or lease of physical goods, plant or equipment.
 - f) Payment of fines or regulatory charges.
 - g) Any amount paid on account of goods and services tax.
 - h) Personal, non-business-related legal advice, or
 - i) Any other expenditure as determined by Regional Development Victoria that does not meet the program's objectives.

6. Who can make an application?

- 6.1. The person applying must be an authorised representative of the business (such as an owner or director) or be a person given authorisation by an authorised representative to apply. The Qualified Service Provider cannot make an application on behalf of the business.
- 6.2. An incorporated trustee can apply on behalf of a trust and a Partner can apply on behalf of a partnership provided that the trustee or partnership would otherwise be eligible and be able to meet the obligations under the signed agreement.
- 6.3. If proof of identity is unable to be confirmed, the applicant will receive a follow-up email with instructions on how to provide their proof of identity details.

7. How the program works

- 7.1. Step 1 – Businesses will have initial discussion with Regional Development Victoria Gippsland in relation to the program. Potential applicants will receive an invitation to apply via Regional Development Victoria's portal application system.
 - a) Businesses must provide the following as part of their application:
 - Evidence of revenue impact from the supply of products or services for the production of white paper in Gippsland, in the form of:
 - paid invoices, orders, and receipts for one completed financial year: either 2021–22 or 2022–2023 that clearly identifies that the impacts to revenue are due to the changes to the manufacturing of white paper in Gippsland, and
 - a completed declaration from the Director or authorised person stating that the impact of the changes to the manufacturing of white paper in Gippsland had a direct revenue loss of 30% or greater for the business.
 - b) As part of the application process, the business acknowledges that all information is true and correct.
 - c) At the time of applying, the business must nominate their Qualified Service Provider and provide their contact details and professional membership details.
 - d) The application will be assessed against the eligibility criteria in these guidelines.
 - e) Applicants may be required to provide additional information as requested by Regional Development Victoria.
 - f) All questions in the application need to be completed and requested information and evidence provided to ensure timely assessment.
- 7.2. Step 2 – Applicants are notified of an outcome.
 - a) Successful applicants will be invited to enter into a legally binding grant agreement with the department. The successful grant is not binding on the department unless and until both the department and the applicant execute the grant agreement. The project must not commence until the grant agreement has been executed (signed) by both the department and the applicant.

The grant agreement details all funding obligations and conditions contained in the application form, and these guidelines, including:

- payments
- funding use
- grant activity deliverables
- monitoring and milestones
- reporting and acquittals
- audit and
- termination and refund conditions.

b) Once the agreement has been executed, the grant recipient (successful applicant) will be required to commence the project within the agreed timeframe. If a recipient does not commence the project by the commencement date, the department has at its absolute discretion the option of terminating the agreement.

c) On signing of the grant agreement and submission of acquittal documents for the first milestone as outlined in the agreement, the first payment of \$4,000 will be made to the applicant.

d) The business can then engage their nominated Qualified Service Provider to undertake the Service Activity, which must be completed by 28 June 2024.

7.3. Step 3 – Service Activity completion and grant instalment payment for the Business Diagnostic and Future Opportunities assessment.

a) The business will receive the second payment of up to \$6,000 as a milestone requirement within the grant agreement. All milestone requirements must be completed and submitted to receive the payment.

b) The business must attest that the Service Activity has been completed by their Qualified Service Provider, and evidence is provided of payment for the full cost of the Service Activity.

c) If the Service Activity costs incurred are less than a total \$10,000 for all services (excluding GST), the grant payment will be adjusted to match the lower amount incurred.

7.4. The Business Diagnostic and Future Opportunities Assessment (Stage 1) will inform the business if there is value or benefit in developing a full Business Resilience Plan (Stage 2). The business is not obliged to undertake a Business Resilience Plan (Stage 2)

and should discuss proceeding with Stage 2, or otherwise, with Regional Development Victoria Gippsland.

7.5. If the scope of the Business Resilience Plan (Stage 2) cannot be agreed between the service provider and the business, Regional Development Victoria may determine that Stage 2 services should not proceed.

7.6. Step 4 – The Qualified Service Provider will develop the Business Resilience Plan in accordance with the scope of work prepared for the Business Diagnostic and Future Opportunities Assessment and agreed between the Qualified Service Provider and the business.

a) Upon submission of the Business Resilience Plan and invoice to Regional Development Victoria, the business will be eligible to receive a payment of up to \$10,000 for completion of the final milestone within the grant agreement. All milestone requirements must be completed and submitted to receive the payment.

b) The business must attest that the Service Activity has been completed by their Qualified Service Provider, and evidence is provided as set out in the grant agreement of payment for the full cost of the Service Activity.

c) If the Service Activity costs incurred are less than a total \$10,000 for all services (excluding GST), the grant payment will be adjusted to match the lower amount incurred.

8. Grant funding for business resilience implementation

8.1. Businesses that have completed a Business Resilience Plan may be invited to apply for a grant of up to \$100,000 (excluding GST) to implement the steps outlined in their plan. Program guidelines will be made available to eligible businesses.

8.2. Applications of up to \$100,000 (excluding GST) in funding support are by invitation only and only for businesses that have completed the Business Resilience Plan, unless otherwise agreed by Regional Development Victoria.

9. Assessment of eligibility

- 9.1. The applicant will be required to confirm and attest that the business meets the eligibility criteria at the time of application and agrees to be bound by the conditions of the program.
- 9.2. Applications will be assessed using the information and evidence provided in the application form.
- 9.3. As part of this process, any information provided by the business may be shared and subject to verification with other State and Commonwealth government agencies, including but not limited to Australian Business Register and applicable Qualified Services Provider⁵ professional registration or membership.
- 9.4. Businesses must ensure that the information listed with the Australian Business Register (ABR) as part of their ABN registration is current and accurate at the time of application.
- 9.5. Business registration details filed with the Australian Securities and Investments Commission, Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission, Consumer Affairs Victoria and/or other applicable regulators may be checked.
- 9.6. Without limiting the Department's assessment, the following circumstances may be taken into consideration in any decision about eligibility:
 - a) Duplicate applications by a trustee and a trust.
 - b) Misleading amendments to information provided to public registers describing the business or any authorised officer of the business.
 - c) Any adverse findings by a government agency or local council regarding a business or its operation.
 - d) A business is, or notice has been given that it will be placed under external administration.
 - e) There is a petition for bankruptcy or to wind up or deregister a company or business, and
 - f) A step is being taken to deregister the company or business (including cancellation or lapse in registration of any relevant permit).
- 9.7. Applications will be carefully considered and assessed against the eligibility criteria. The State may, in its absolute discretion, determine: (a) whether the type of business of an applicant is eligible for the grant; or (b) whether the changes to the manufacturing of white paper in Gippsland is material to the business of the applicant. The State's decision about eligibility for a grant is final.
- 9.8. Regional Department Victoria may request further information or clarification to assist with assessment of the application. The Victorian Government reserves, in its absolute discretion, the right to refuse the application where eligibility criteria are not met, or where the applicant does not or cannot provide sufficient information in the required time frame to assess whether eligibility criteria have been met.
- 9.9. Only completed applications that are lodged with Regional Development Victoria will be assessed. Applications that are in draft or are incomplete and that have not been submitted will not be considered as received and will not be assessed.
- 9.10. The business must attest that all industrial relations obligations as an employer, in accordance with the National Employer Standards, are being met.

10. Outcome notification

- 10.1. Regional Development Victoria will endeavour to notify Applicants of the outcome of their complete application within four weeks of submission.
- 10.2. There may be longer processing times and delays in notification of the outcome of the application if it:
 - a) Does not meet the eligibility criteria.
 - b) Is incomplete.
 - c) Has incorrect information, such as ABN (Australian Business Number) or bank details (for successful business).
 - d) Does not include current or accurate information registered with relevant regulators or partner agencies, such as the Australian Business Register, WorkSafe Victoria, Tax Practitioners Board, professional membership bodies, or
 - e) Requires further information or evidence to verify or validate the application.
- 10.3. Regional Development Victoria may at any time remove a business from the application or assessment process, or terminate an agreement if, in the Department's opinion, association with the business may bring the Department, a Minister or the State of Victoria in disrepute.

11. Program Evaluation

- 11.1. The grant recipient agrees to take part in the program's evaluation by participating in evaluation surveys. The evaluation enables the effectiveness/impact of the program to be assessed.

12. Compliance and Audit

- 11.1. 12.1. Grant recipients may be subject to audit by the Victorian Government or its representatives on the accuracy of their application, accounting records relating to the Service Activity, and use of government funds, at the request of the Victorian Government, for a period of three years from receipt of payment.
- 12.2. If any information in the application is found to be false or misleading (as determined by Regional Development Victoria in its discretion), or the grant payment is not applied in accordance with the terms of funding as set out in these guidelines and the application, the grant payment will be repayable on demand.
- 12.3. It is an offence under the *Oaths and Affirmations Act 2018* (Vic) for a person to make a statement in a statutory declaration that they know to be untrue.
- 12.4. If the grant recipient fails to demonstrate completion of the Service Activity, Regional Development Victoria may require the refund of the whole or part of the grant as it deems/determines appropriate, in its absolute discretion.

13. Probity and Decision-making

- 13.1. The Victorian Government makes every effort to ensure the grant application and assessment process is fair and undertaken in line with the published program guidelines.
- 13.2. The decisions on all matters on recommending and awarding grant funding under this program is at the absolute discretion of the Minister and Department. This includes approving a lesser amount than that applied for.
- 13.3. These guidelines and application terms may be changed from time to time, as appropriate.
- 13.4. The department may request the applicant provide further information should it be necessary to assess an application to the Program's policy objectives.

- 13.5. Victorian Government staff work to the Code of Conduct for Victorian Public Service Employees (Section 61) of the *Public Administration Act 2004* (Vic), including processes set out to avoid conflicts of interest.

14. Conflict of Interest for Applicants

- 14.1. A conflict of interest is a situation in which someone has competing professional or personal interests or duties.
- 14.2. Applicants must advise the department of any real, potential, or perceived conflict of interest relating to a project for which is has applied for funding.

15. Privacy Statement

- 15.1. Any personal information provided for the purposes of this program will be used by Regional Development Victoria for the purposes of assessing eligibility, program administration, program review, evaluation, and auditing. When applying for a grant the applicant consents to sharing their information with the Qualified Service Provider/s for the purpose of delivering the services and with each and any relevant State and Commonwealth Government department and agency for the purpose of assessing applications.
- 15.2. If there is an intention to include personal information about a third party in the application, the applicant must ensure the third party is aware of and consents to the contents of this privacy statement.
- 15.3. 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 at privacy@ecodev.vic.gov.au. The Department's privacy policy is also available by emailing the Department's Privacy Unit

16. Other Information about this Program

- 16.1. Regional Development Victoria reserves the right to amend these guidelines and application terms at any time, and as it deems appropriate.
- 16.2. If an unsuccessful business considers that their application has been incorrectly assessed, it can request a review by emailing InformationGippsland@rdv.vic.gov.au.
- 16.3. Complaints and feedback
- a) Any complaints or feedback you have about this grant opportunity may be made in relation to:
- the timelines of the process
 - communication provided by the Department
 - adherence to the published program guidelines
- 16.4. Send your written feedback to the program team by emailing information.gippsland@rdv.vic.gov.au

Glossary

Term	Definition
Application	The application submitted by the business to the Regional Development Victoria for funding under the program for the Service Activity.
Applicant or business	The legal entity specified in the application.
Regional Development Victoria	The State of Victoria represented by Regional Development Victoria.
Grant	The funding provided by Regional Development Victoria to the Recipient under an Agreement that is part of the Application for the Service Activity.
Guidelines	This document.
Person applying	An authorised representative of the business (such as an owner or director) who can execute contracts and legally bind the business or be a person given authorisation by an authorised representative to apply.
Program	The Gippsland Supply Chain Resilience Program – Impacted Stream.
Recipient	The business as specified in the Application where the application has been accepted by the Department, by the issue of a formal notification of success.
Service Activity	A Service Activity is a detailed work order and an activity conducted by a Qualified Service Provider that is supported by a Grant. A scope of service helps define the services being sought and details what services are required.
Qualified Service Provider	An eligible professional service provider selected by the Recipient to provide service activities to the business.

