FReeZA

2025–2027 program guidelines

OFFICIAL

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# Message from the Minister for Youth

I am thrilled to launch the FReeZA program for 2025-27.

After feedback from young people and our partners across the youth sector and local government, we’ve refreshed the program’s guidelines, to be more response to the needs of our young people.

Since 1997, FReeZA has underscored the Government’s commitment to empowering young people. The program helps young people reach their potential by supporting access to opportunities and career pathways into music and the creative industries.

As we enter this new era, FReeZA will offer 3-year grants to community organisations, local governments and social enterprises to deliver safe, youth-friendly events for Victorians aged 12 to 25.

The program will support a range of events, from large-scale to smaller initiatives. We will prioritise applications that engage all young people, bolster sector partnerships and build capacity.

I am proud that FReeZA will continue to equip young people with practical skills like sound and lighting production, event management, first aid and risk assessment. It will also deliver performance opportunities for emerging musicians and artists. The program supports the future of Victoria’s music and creative industries, which have always been supported by the development that FReeZA provides.

To support the development of new talent in the creative sector, our long-standing partnership with The Push continues. The Push brings expert industry advice, support and training to FReeZA providers and participants.

I encourage local governments and community organisations throughout Victoria to apply and look forward to seeing new and innovative events come to life through the program.



**The Hon Natalie Suleyman MP**

Minister for Youth

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# About the program

## Overview

The Victorian Government supports young people to realise their full potential. It does this with access to programs that focus on:

* improving skills
* career pathways
* community engagement.

FReeZA 2025–2027 offers 3-year funding for community organisations, local governments and social enterprises to deliver safe, youth-friendly events for young Victorians aged 12 to 25. Service delivery will take place between 1 January 2025 and 31 December 2027.

Through FReeZA, young people will take a central role in staging events that:

* showcase their skills and talents
* celebrate the important contribution they make to the cultural life of their communities.

The FReeZA program is based on a youth participation model where young people lead the planning, development and delivery of music, creative arts and cultural events. FReeZA events are diverse and reflect the needs and interests of young people in their local area. The program also offers performance opportunities for local musicians and emerging artists.

The program’s longstanding partnership with The Push will continue. The Push will offer expert industry advice, support and training to FReeZA providers and young people. This will further enable them to plan and take part in local events.

## Program priorities

Our vision is thatyoung people are central in decision making and supported to build our future creative workforce.This aligns with [*Our promise, your future: Victoria’s youth strategy 2022–2027*](https://www.vic.gov.au/victorias-youth-strategy-2022-2027)https://www.vic.gov.au/victorias-youth-strategy-2022-2027.The FReeZA program will prioritise applications that show the following:

* **Youth involvement in decision making:** ensure young people play a lead role in all aspects of planning and delivering events
* **Youth leadership:** support young people to play active leadership roles in staging a diverse range of events that meet the needs and interests of young people
* **Training and career development:** provide young people with training, mentoring and performance opportunities that help deliver events and/or develop career pathways in creative industries
* **Recognition and celebration:** recognise, value and celebrate young people’s contribution to the program and their community
* **Community connections:** foster connections with local businesses, schools and other community organisations in delivering events
* **Inclusion and accessibility:** put in place strategies to ensure the FReeZA program is inclusive and accessible to all young people in the local community. This includes young people identifying as LGBTIQA+, multicultural and multifaith young people including from newly arrived and refugee communities, Aboriginal young people and young people living with disability
* **Organisational capacity:** show the organisation’s capacity to deliver the program and its objectives including:
  + previous experience delivering youth-led events
  + existing or emerging connections, networks or partnerships to collaborate and share learnings or resources
  + organisational commitment to support the program through staff resourcing and/or in-kind contributions.

## Available funding

The FReeZA program supports events of all sizes. It also supports initiatives that help develop sector capacity.

Eligible organisations may apply for funding under 1 of 3 funding levels. The minimum attendance expectations for each funding level are:

* **Level 1: between $45,000 and $60,000 over 3 years** ($15,000 to $20,000 per year)
* **Level 2: between $60,001 and $90,000 over 3 years** ($20,001 to $30,000 per year)
* **Level 3: between $90,001 and $120,000 over 3 years** ($30,001 to $40,000 per year).

Expected reach per year (total attendees)

| Funding level | Metropolitan areas | Regional cities or peri-urban areas | Regional towns or rural areas |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Level 1 | 400 | 250 | 150 |
| Level 2 | 800 | 500 | 400 |
| Level 3 | 1,200 | 750 | 600 |

Please note that attendee figures provide a benchmark for the expected reach associated with different levels of funding. Relative to the amount of funding requested, the selection criteria will also consider the project’s:

* reach
* outcomes
* level of youth participation.

### Requirements

* All applications must include **capacity development initiatives** that support young people to develop skills for delivering events and/or employment pathways in the creative industries.
* **Collaboration initiatives** are optional but highly regarded. They aim to foster networks or partnerships to enhance project outcomes and learning. This could be part of a [partnership application](#_Partnership_applications_1) (refer to ‘Eligibility criteria’) or plans to partner with other funding organisations during implementation. For example, collaborating with other FReeZA organisations to deliver a joint regional event or convening a regional network to share knowledge.
* For each funding level, organisations may choose to deliver a **series of events** that could include:
  + large-scale events that engage a diverse range of young people (for example, live music performances at a festival with 500+ attendees)
  + medium-sized events (for example, Battle of the Bands performance with 200+ attendees)
  + events targeting priority cohorts – these may attract smaller numbers but need intensive planning to support access needs and to ensure they are inclusive.
* Organisations applying for funding will have to set up a FReeZA committee of young people between the ages of 12 and 25. This committee will lead the planning and delivery of events.
* All events must be drug, alcohol and smoke-free.

Please note that due to the competitive nature of this program we may allocate less funds to a project than requested.

## Activity period

This grant round is for events and activities that take place between 1 January 2025 and 31 December 2027.

## Timeline

* Applications open at 11:00 am on 26 August 2024.
* Applications close at 11:59 pm on 30 September 2024.

Refer to the ‘How to apply’ section for more details.

# Eligibility criteria

## Eligibility overview

To be eligible to apply for funding:

* You must be an [eligible organisation](#_Eligible_organisations) (refer below).
* You must be seeking funding for [eligible activities](#_Activities_the_program).
* Your organisation must have no overdue reports from previous or current grants funded via the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (the department).
* You must include the relevant [attachments](#_Mandatory_attachments) for your application type as outlined in the ‘[mandatory attachments](#_Mandatory_attachments)’ section.

## Eligible organisations

Funding is available to organisations based in Victoria.

Applicants must have a **current Australian Business Number (ABN) and be either**:

* **a Victorian local government authority**
* **a not-for-profit legal entity** – that is, either:
  + registered as a charity with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission
  + registered with Consumer Affairs Victoria (or equivalent in a neighbouring state) as an incorporated association, or
  + registered under the *Corporations Act 2001* (Cth) or the *Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012* (Vic)
* **an Aboriginal entity** that is incorporated including Aboriginal not-for-profit organisations, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, Traditional Owner groups or land trusts
* **a social enterprise** that is an incorporated entity with a clear purpose or mission related to supporting young people and/or the creative industries. Social enterprises must attach their constitution with their application.

Social enterprises:

* have an economic, social, cultural or environmental mission consistent with a public or community benefit
* get most of their income from trade
* reinvest most of their profit/surplus in fulfilling their mission (at least 50%).

Unincorporated associations and community organisations with no ABN are not eligible. But they can apply using an auspice. Refer to ‘[Auspiced applications](#_Auspiced_applications)’ for more information.

**Entities that are not eligible include:**

* private (for profit) companies
* sole traders and individuals
* charitable trusts.

## Auspiced applications

Auspice arrangements are allowed under the program.

### Auspiced arrangements

If your organisation is not incorporated or does not have an ABN, you may still apply. In this case, an eligible auspice organisation must agree to manage the grant.

An auspice arrangement is when an organisation helps another to fund a grant activity or event. Your community group or organisation is the grant recipient. The organisation auspicing is the auspice organisation.

All applications with auspicing arrangements must include a letter of support from the auspice organisation.

#### Responsibilities of an auspice organisation

If your grant application is successful, your auspice organisation will be responsible for:

* signing the grant funding agreement
* all legal and financial aspects of the grant on your organisation’s behalf
* receiving and distributing grant funds under the grant agreement
* ensuring all grant activities or events are completed
* ensuring final reports and financial acquittals are submitted by the due dates.

## Partnership applications

The department encourages partnership applications from groups of 2 or more organisations.

Organisations or groups can work together to submit a single application. These applications should:

* show strong value for money
* achieve wide benefit
* aim to achieve common goals and outcomes for all organisations or groups involved.

For example, several organisations in the same region or neighbouring regions could work together. These organisations could submit a partnership application to share resources as a larger group.

One organisation will need to:

* submit the application on behalf of the partnership
* nominate the primary contact person coordinating the partnership and application.

Partnership applications are still subject to the maximum funding of $120,000 per application over 3 years. They should outline the relevant capability and experience of each partner.

## Activities the program can fund

Eligible activities and costs may include:

* all events that meet the objectives of this program and costs linked to the events
* project coordination and staffing costs at a reasonable amount based on your project’s scale including:
  + ongoing staff or short-term staffing costs with a direct link to the activity
  + reimbursements, allowances and honoraria for volunteers supporting the project – for example, to recognise the contributions of FReeZA committee members
* training and development activities to enhance the skills, knowledge and safety of staff, young people and volunteers involved in the program
* initiatives that support employment pathways for young people
* transport costs for young people related to an event or activity (higher proportion allowed for rural, regional and peri-urban areas)
* some recreational and social events if they align with the objectives of the program
* activities to create or strengthen partnerships or networks to leverage resources and opportunities with other organisations.

## Activities or costs the program cannot fund

Activities or costs that the program will not fund include:

* activities outside of Victoria
* activities that are already funded through other local, state or Commonwealth government programs
* projects that include a large proportion of recreational, sporting or social-focused events
* admin, staff or operational costs that don’t relate to the project
* venue hire fees where the applicant owns the venue (you can include the value of this cost as an in-kind contribution)
* funding for equipment purchases that the project does not need for its ongoing life.

## Mandatory attachments

Eligible applications must include:

* for partnerships, a letter of support from a partnering community organisation
* for auspice arrangements, a letter of intent (or similar) from the auspice organisation
* for social enterprises, their constitution.

# How to apply

Submit your application by 30 September 2024 via the [DFFH Grants Gateway](https://grantsgateway.dffh.vic.gov.au/) https://grantsgateway.dffh.vic.gov.au.

Checklist for completing an application

| Stage | Requirements |
| --- | --- |
| **Applications open**  26 August 2024 | * Read the program guidelines (this document). * Check that your organisation and proposed activity meets the [eligibility criteria](#_Eligibility_criteria_1). |
| **Prepare and submit your application**  26 August – 30 September 2024 | * Register or log in to the [DFFH Grants Gateway](https://grantsgateway.dffh.vic.gov.au/) https://grantsgateway.dffh.vic.gov.au. Complete an application under ‘Available Grants’. * Complete the online application via the DFFH Grants Gateway. Submit by 11:59 pm on 30 September 2024.   + You can save your application as a draft and finish it later.   + Attach all mandatory and supporting documents with the application.   + You will receive acknowledgement of submission via email.   + Note the application number for reference when contacting us about your application. |
| **Applications close**  11:59 pm, 30 September 2024 | * To ensure a fair process, the department cannot accept late applications. |

# Assessment process

All applications to the programwill undergo the following review and assessment process:

| Assessment component | Details of assessment component |
| --- | --- |
| Eligibility assessment | * We will review all applications against the [eligibility criteria](#_Eligibility_criteria_1). * The eligibility assessment determines whether your application will proceed to merit assessment. |
| Merit assessment – ratings against selection criteria | * An assessment panel reviewseligible applications. The panel scores applications against the selection criteria outlined below. * The assessment panel includes departmental staff and other government representatives. |
| Funding recommendations | * The assessment panel provides the Minister for Youth with funding recommendations. |
| Application outcome | * The Minister for Youth makes the final decision based on panel recommendations. * We will notify all applicants of the outcome of their application by email. |

## Application outcomes

All applicants will receive written notification of the outcome of their application. If your application is successful, the department will let you know about any specific conditions attached to the grant.

Unsuccessful applicants can ask for feedback within one month of the outcome. The department aims to provide written feedback within 20 business days of any request.

All assessment decisions are final. This includes decisions about eligibility, the assessment process and:

* any decision to offer or award a grant under the program
* any decision to withdraw the offer or cancel the funding agreement.

## Selection criteria

All aspects of your application will inform the assessment. This includes:

* the project details
* responses to the selection criteria
* the content of mandatory attachments.

**We will assess all eligible applications against the criteria listed below.**

Note: The criteria relate to the program priorities listed in the [‘About the program’](#_About_the_program) section.

| Criteria | Weighting |
| --- | --- |
| 1. **Program overview**  * The application clearly describes your proposed FReeZA project. This includes the aims, objectives and benefits for young people. The application aligns with the program’s objectives. * The application describes the local needs and opportunities for the program in your community. Use statistics, data and consultations conducted with young people. | 15% |
| 1. **Project delivery**  * The application sets out what the project will deliver. It defines expected outcomes including methods for measurement. Its alignment to the program priorities is clear. * The project includes plans to stage an event or events that respond to the needs and interests of young people. * The project includes risk management processes. It outlines how the program will consider the Victorian Child Safe Standards to ensure the safety of young people taking part in FReeZA events. * The project’s cost estimates and reach show value-for-money against the scale and number of events/attendees. Its planned impact matches with the requested funding amount. | 35% |
| 1. **Participation and engagement with young people**  * The application outlines how young people will be attracted, retained and supported to lead the planning and delivery of events. * The project provides skill development for young people to lead event delivery and to develop transferable skills. * Support for young people to develop career pathways in the creative industries is described. This may include training, mentoring and referrals to other opportunities. * Young people are rewarded and recognised for their contribution to the FReeZA program. * The application outlines the strategies the project will use so the FReeZA committees and events are inclusive and accessible to all young people. This includes those identifying as LGBTIQA+, multicultural and multifaith young people including from newly arrived and refugee communities, Aboriginal young people and young people living with disability. | 30% |
| 1. **Organisational experience and capability**  * The application shows your organisation’s capacity to deliver the program and achieve its objectives including:   + evidence of success in delivering youth-led events   + strategies that foster connections, networks or partnerships to support the project and/or share learnings   + good governance, program management and risk management processes to oversee delivery and respond to challenges   + organisational commitment through staff resources or in-kind contributions. | 20% |

# Conditions of funding

Funded activities begin from January 2025. This includes refining project proposals and developing project plans. Projects must complete by 31 December 2027.

If successful, project details (project name, description and grant amount) will be published online at https://www.vic.gov.ay/freeza-2025-27.

## Funding agreements

If successful, you must enter into a Victorian Common Funding Agreement (VCFA) with the department within 2 weeks of notification. If you do not accept the funding offer during this period, the department may withdraw it.

The VCFA outlines:

* the grant’s terms and conditions, including use of funds
* key deliverables and due dates
* reporting requirements.

## Event conditions

* You must submit any variation to the approved project to the department for approval before implementation.
* A youth worker (or other qualified person) must be available to support young people to take part in the planning and staging of events and other program activities.
* All events are drug, alcohol and smoke-free, fully supervised and no pass-outs issued.
* Events are attended by:
  + fully qualified first aid officer(s)
  + security personnel registered in line with the *Private Agents Act 1966*
  + a youth worker with drug and alcohol training to provide advice and support to young people.
* All staff and people aged 18 or older who have unsupervised contact with young people in the program must have a Working with Children Check
* The grant recipient must have policies and processes in place to meet the Victorian Child Safe Standards. This includes changes that came into effect from 1 July 2022.

## Payment of grant funds and reporting requirements

Funded organisations will:

* be paid after completing agreed project milestones and deliverables outlined in the VCFA
* complete progress reports including an update on progress against your project plan and budget
* submit a final report including a project acquittal and evidence of project outcomes at the end of the activities.

Funds must go to the project as described in the VCFA. Any unspent funds must go back to the department.

### Goods and services tax

* GST is included if the recipient organisation is registered for GST.
* GST is not included if the recipient organisation is not registered for GST or is a government entity (school, local council, etc.).

## Funding acknowledgement

Successful applicants must acknowledge funding from the government. We will provide guidelines to all successful grant recipients in the VCFA.

Activities to acknowledge government support include:

* logo presentation on any activity-related publications, media releases and promotional material
* inviting the minister to open any funded activities.

## Legal responsibilities

You must ensure the project activity follows relevant legislation, regulations, by-laws and codes. It must also meet the requirements of any Commonwealth, state, territory or local authority. It is your responsibility to be aware of laws and protocols that regulate the way you conduct your work.

## Insurance requirements

You must have public liability insurance of at least $10 million to cover all aspects of your project. The department may ask for proof of insurance that covers the project duration.

# More information

Please refer to the Frequently Asked Questions at [FReeZA 2025-27 grant program: Announcing the opening of grants supporting youth-friendly events](https://www.vic.gov.au/freeza-2025-27https:/www.vic.gov.au/freeza-2025-27) https://www.vic.gov.au/freeza-2025-27https://www.vic.gov.au/freeza-2025-27.

For any questions, please email the Office for Youth at [freezagrants@dffh.vic.gov.au](mailto:freezagrants@dffh.vic.gov.au).