

2025-26 Community Food Relief Program – Coordination Grants

Program guidelines

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Victoria and pay respects to their Elders past and present. We acknowledge that Aboriginal self-determination is a human right and recognise the hard work of many generations of Aboriginal people.

We are committed to safe and inclusive workplaces, policies, and services for people from LGBTIQA+ communities and their families.

To receive this document in another format, email the Food Relief Grants team at foodrelief.team@dffh.vic.gov.au

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# Message from the Minister for Carers and Volunteers, the Hon. Ros Spence MP

The Victorian Government is committed to supporting Victorians facing food insecurity to access healthy and culturally appropriate food.

Since 2020, we’ve invested more than $74 million into food relief and security initiatives.

We know Victorian families and communities are doing it tough with cost-of-living pressures. More people need help to put food on the table.

That’s why we’re delivering a second, larger round of the **Community Food Relief Program**. In this round, we’re doubling the investment to provide more food relief where it’s needed most – across metropolitan Melbourne and in regional and rural Victoria.

The Community Food Relief Program is part of our commitment to holistically tackle food insecurity across the state. We’re providing funding through two streams – Local Grants and Coordination Grants. This means ensuring we can provide food relief in local communities across the state and build a more sustainable and efficient food security sector.

The Coordination Grants stream will support stronger partnerships and collaboration between large-scale food relief distributors. These grants will help foster and strengthen those networks and encourage innovation and efficiency in Victoria’s food relief sector, so more food can be provided to individuals, families and communities.

State-wide and regional food relief providers play an important role in partnering with local community and volunteer-led organisations to ensure food relief reaches those people who need it most.

I look forward to seeing the fantastic partnership initiatives funded through the second round of the Community Food Relief Program – Coordination Grants.

# About the program

## Overview

The Victorian Government’s **2025-26 Community Food Relief Program** includes two grant streams to strengthen local food relief activities delivered by community organisations; and enhance coordination and partnerships between large-scale regional and statewide food relief providers.

These guidelines cover the **Community Food Relief Program – Coordination Grants** stream. This stream supports partnership projects focused on improving collaboration between major food relief providers to enhance the supply and distribution of food relief across Victoria and strengthen the state’s food security ecosystem.

Applications are sought from established large-scale regional and state-wide food relief distribution services. These services must provide centralised food rescue, warehousing and logistics to support a formal network of charity partners.

We encourage organisations that do not fit these criteria to consider applying through the Local Grants stream of the program instead.

## Context

Food relief services are experiencing unprecedented demand. This demand continues to rise with increased cost-of-living pressures facing many Victorians. According to the 2023 Taking the Pulse of the Nation survey rates of reported food insecurity among adults exceed 20 per cent in Victoria.

The Community Food Relief Programrecognises that some areas, including regional and rural Victoria and drought-affected communities, are experiencing greater food insecurity. This is alongside pockets of significant disadvantage in Melbourne.

Food insecurity also particularly affects those Victorians who already face disadvantage and vulnerability in the community. This includes people on lower incomes, experiencing unemployment or underemployment, or experiencing family violence.

Some communities may face extra barriers to accessing appropriate food relief when they need it. This includes young people, older people, single parent households, migrants, refugees or people seeking asylum, people with chronic illness, disability or mental health conditions.

## Funding objectives

The objectives of the **Coordination Grants** program are to:

* strengthen formal collaboration and enduring partnerships between major providers across the food relief sector to reduce duplication and improve system effectiveness and efficiency
* enhance access to healthy and culturally appropriate food relief for more Victorian communities currently facing food insecurity
* develop or enhance sustainable, cost-effective models for sourcing and distributing food relief across Victoria, filling critical service gaps and/or improving the quality and variety of food supply.

Grant applications must respond to **at least two** of the program objectives.

Organisations must identify the objectives that their proposal responds to and provide a rationale for how their proposed activities will meet the objectives, based on community need.

Applications that do not specifically respond to at least **two** program objectives **will not** be considered.

## Available funding

The minimum grant amount is $150,000. The maximum is $300,000.

Grant funding is one-off and fixed-term.

# How to apply

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

Applications are due by 4:00pm on Tuesday 5 August 2025.

Key information for completing a grant application

| Key dates | Tasks |
| --- | --- |
| Applications open3 July 2025 | * Make sure your organisation and proposed activity meets the [eligibility criteria](#_Eligibility_criteria_2).
	+ read the program guidelines (this document)
	+ attend the information session (optional, but recommended).
* Download templates and the factsheet at: [Community Food Relief Program – Coordination grants](https://www.vic.gov.au/community-food-relief-program-coordination-grants) https://www.vic.gov.au/community-food-relief-program-coordination-grants.
 |
| Prepare and submit application | * Register or log in to the [DFFH Grants Gateway](https://grantsgateway.dffh.vic.gov.au/) https://grantsgateway.dffh.vic.gov.au
* Complete the online application form
	+ draft forms will be saved and can be returned to through-out the application period
	+ answer all questions and attach mandatory documents.
 |
| Applications close4:00pm 5 August 2025 | * We will not accept incomplete or late applications.
 |

# Eligibility criteria

To be eligible for the **2025-26 Community Food Relief Program – Coordination Grants**, your application must:

* respond to at least two of the [program objectives](#_Funding_objectives)
* be submitted by an [eligible organisation](#_Eligible_organisations) in a formal partnership with at least one other organisation
* seek funding for [eligible activities](#_Eligible_activities)
* include the [mandatory attachments](#_Mandatory_attachments).

## Eligible organisations

Organisations must be established, large-scale food relief distribution services with existing donor relationships, significant warehousing and logistics capacity, and a formal approach to supporting a network of charity partners.

Eligible organisations must have a **current Australian Business Number (ABN)**

**And be either:**

* a not-for-profit entity – that is:
	+ registered as a charity with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission; or
	+ registered with Consumer Affairs Victoria (or equivalent body in a neighbouring state) as an incorporated association; or
	+ registered under the Corporations Act 2001 (Cth) and
	+ demonstrated through your organisation’s constitution or governance documents.
* an Aboriginal entity incorporated under Commonwealth or Victorian legislation, including Victorian Aboriginal not-for-profit organisations, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, Traditional Owner groups and land trusts.
* a social enterprise that is an incorporated entity with a clearly stated purpose or mission related specifically to supporting food relief or food security.

*Definition: Social enterprises are led by an economic, social, cultural, or environmental mission consistent with a public or community benefit. They derive a substantial portion of their income from trade and reinvest the most of their profit/surplus into achieving their mission.*

**Organisations must not have any overdue reports** from other grant programs or service agreements managed by the department.

### Entities that are not eligible

* unincorporated associations and groups
* private (for profit) companies
* sole traders and individuals
* charitable trusts
* local government entities.

Auspice arrangements are not appropriate for grants provided through this program.

## Eligible activities

Activities funded through the **2025-26 Community Food Relief Program – Coordination Grants** must benefit Victorians and focus on strengthening Victoria’s food security system. Activities may include:

* enhancing shared infrastructure or facilities such as commercial kitchens or food storage to increase food relief system capacity
* sourcing program supplies, such as nutritious and culturally appropriate food and packaging materials
* building formal partnerships and networks and undertaking strategic planning to strengthen the capacity, efficiency or sustainability of food distribution programs or supply models
* training and development activities to enhance skills, knowledge and safety of staff and volunteers involved in providing food relief
* direct program delivery costs including transport, logistics and coordination, with a focus on collaboration and shared approaches to reduce inefficiencies
* reimbursing volunteer expenses directly related to the project’s delivery and proportionate to the project cost.

Where appropriate, organisations can allocate up to 10 per cent of funding to project management and administration to directly support the project. This includes human resources, governance and program oversight costs. For example, the extra hours for a project manager to onboard and directly support staff or volunteers who are delivering the project.

Organisations that are not registered for GST can use grant funds to cover the cost of GST from goods and services purchased with DFFH grant funds.

### Funds cannot be used for

* Retrospective costs for activities that were started before funding approval.
* Activities and programs extending beyond 30 June 2027.
* Core operational expenses such as rent, insurance, current wages, overheads and consumables.
* Staff catering (food or alcohol), gifts and other benefits.
* Duplicating activities that are already funded through other Local, State, or Commonwealth government programs.

## Mandatory attachments

Eligible applications must include:

* project plan in the template provided
* evidence of partnership such as letters of intent or memoranda of understanding
* Insurance certificates of currency.

# Selection criteria

All aspects of your application will inform the assessment. This includes the project details, responses to the selection criteria and the content of mandatory attachments.

Eligible applications will be assessed against the criteria listed below.

| Criteria | Weighting |
| --- | --- |
| Identified community need* Application clearly describes the community need and key issues that the project is seeking to address. This includes outlining the target locations and cohorts (for example, drought-affected communities), and the identified gaps or opportunities.
* Application demonstrates how the proposed project is an appropriate response to the community need. This includes improvements in effectiveness and efficiency and, where appropriate, alignment with the principles outlined in the [Victorian healthy food relief guidelines](https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/community-food-relief) https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/community-food-relief.
 | 25% |
| Demonstrated effectiveness and efficiency* Application provides a credible and efficient plan for delivering the proposed project, based on sound cost estimates and represents value for money.
* Project plan includes realistic objectives and measures of success; sound methods for data capture and reporting; and strategies to identify and share good practice across the food relief sector.
* The organisations have robust approaches to monitoring and evaluation and demonstrated ability for continuous improvement.
 | 30% |
| Demonstrated experience and capability* Application relates to an established food relief distribution service and leverages existing capability to support a network of community food programs.
* Organisations have demonstrated successful delivery of outcomes through food relief programs and/or other relevant projects.
 | 15% |
| Organisational capacity and readiness* Project plan provides a detailed and specific plan for delivery, including realistic timeframe for deliverables, consideration of risks and mitigation strategies, and clear roles and responsibilities.
* The organisations have robust governance, program management and risk management processes to oversee delivery and respond to challenges.
* The organisations have existing community partnerships and engagement channels to support the project.
 | 15% |
| Sustainability* Application demonstrates how the project will strengthen sustainability for the food relief sector and/or provide longer-term benefits for the community.
* The organisation demonstrates strategies to limit any negative environmental impact of their operations and the proposed project.
 | 15% |

# Assessment process

All applications will undergo the following review and assessment process:

| Process | Description |
| --- | --- |
| Eligibility check | * All applications will be reviewed against the [eligibility criteria](#_Eligibility_criteria_2)
	+ the eligibility check determines whether the application will proceed to further assessment.
 |
| Ratings against selection criteria | * Eligible applications will be assessed against the [selection criteria](#_Selection_criteria_1) based on responses provided in the application and content of mandatory attachments
	+ applications should outline the relevant capability and experience of each partner.
* We may ask for more information during the assessment period. This could include requesting revised proposals to maximise the distribution and impact of funding allocations.
 |
| Funding recommendations | * The final selection of highly rated applications will consider:
	+ demonstrated effectiveness, efficiency or innovation
	+ geographical spread and targeting to communities in need.
 |
| Application outcome | * The Minister for Carers and Volunteers will make the final decision based on recommendations from the department’s assessment.
* All applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application by email.
 |

The department may withdraw from the application process for any reason, before signing any agreement with any organisation.

Organisations should not try to influence the outcome by lobbying, directly or indirectly, departmental staff or members of parliament.

## Application outcomes

All applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application by email. If your application is successful, the department will advise you of any specific conditions attached to the grant and next steps for establishing a grant agreement.

Unsuccessful applicants may ask for feedback within one month of the outcome. The department will aim to provide written feedback within 20 business days of a request.

All decisions are final and no discussion or review will be entered into. This includes any aspect of the application, eligibility and assessment process and any grant decisions.

# Conditions of funding

Organisations must be able to start the project immediately after receiving written confirmation from the department.

The project activities must be delivered by 30 June 2027.

If successful, project details including the project name, description and grant amount will be published online at [Community Food Relief Program – Coordination grants](https://www.vic.gov.au/community-food-relief-program-coordination-grants) https://www.vic.gov.au/community-food-relief-program-coordination-grants.

## Data collection requirements

Successful applicants will provide evidence of project outcomes in their final reports. These should be in line with the objectives and key measures outlined in their project plan and subsequently agreed with the department.

## Funding agreements

Successful organisations must sign a Victorian Common Funding Agreement (VCFA) with the department within two weeks of notification. If a funding offer is not accepted during this period, it may be withdrawn.

The VCFA outlines:

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

### Payment of grant funds and reporting requirements

Funded organisations will:

* be paid in instalments on meeting agreed project milestones and deliverables outlined in the VCFA
* complete quarterly progress reports
* submit a project acquittal, including an audited financial acquittal and evaluation report at the end of the project.

Milestone payments are made via Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) once deliverables are met, in line with the VCFA.

### Goods and Services Tax (GST)

* GST will be paid, in addition to the approved grant amount, if the organisation is registered for GST.
* GST will not be paid if the organisation is not registered for GST or is a government entity (such as local council or health service).

## Funding acknowledgement

Successful applicants must acknowledge funding from the Victorian Government. We will provide guidelines for doing this. The guidelines will also be part of the VCFA.

Activities to acknowledge Victorian Government support include:

* logo on any activity-related publications, media releases and promotional material
* inviting the minister to launch or attend 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 work.

## Insurance requirements

You must have public liability insurance and any other insurance that is relevant to the activities of your project. The department will ask for proof of insurance that covers the project period.

# More information

Please refer to the ‘Questions and answer’ and ‘How to apply’ factsheets on [Community Food Relief Program – Coordination grants](https://www.vic.gov.au/community-food-relief-program-coordination-grants) https://www.vic.gov.au/community-food-relief-program-coordination-grants.

You may contact the Food Relief Grants team at foodrelief.team@dffh.vic.gov.au with any other questions.