

2025-26 Community Food Relief Program – Local 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 we can provide food relief in local communities across the state and build a more sustainable and efficient food security sector.

The Local Grants stream will back the efforts of frontline food relief organisations – building stronger, more resilient communities. Funding will support community and volunteer-led organisations, including neighbourhood houses, to respond to local need. Local food relief initiatives are critical to ensuring more people can access food when and where they need it most.

This further investment will help to support these important efforts and strengthen local food relief capacity and partnerships.

I look forward to seeing the fantastic projects that will be funded through the second round of the Community Food Relief Program – Local 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. The program also aims to enhance coordination and partnerships between large-scale regional and statewide food relief providers.

These guidelines cover the **Community Food Relief Program – Local Grants** stream. This stream supports food relief activities and food security initiatives delivered by neighbourhood houses, community groups and volunteer-led organisations. The program aims to:

* help meet increased demand for food relief
* strengthen and expand food security initiatives in local communities
* begin to address the related drivers of food insecurity.

Applications are sought from organisations with established community food programs or similar.

Applications must have a well-developed project proposal aligned with existing services. They must demonstrate capability, capacity and community partnerships to deliver effective food support and respond to local needs.

## Context

Food relief services are experiencing unprecedented demand. This continues to rise with increased cost-of-living pressures faced by 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. These include young people, older people, single parent households, migrants, refugees or people seeking asylum, people with chronic illness, disability or mental health conditions.

Victoria’s First Peoples in particular may experience barriers to accessing food relief. The Government is committed to supporting initiatives that align with the principles of self-determination and cultural safety.

## Funding objectives

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

* support more people and families facing food insecurity to access healthy and culturally appropriate food, in accessible and dignified ways
* develop or enhance effective community food models, enabling community and volunteer-led organisations to expand and strengthen current food relief efforts and increase their sustainability
* support people accessing food relief to make connections to other related community supports and services, such as financial wellbeing and food literacy, where relevant
* develop or strengthen enduring partnerships and networks to enhance community food relief access, reduce duplication and improve effectiveness.

Grant applications must respond to **at least one** of the funding objectives above.

Organisations must identify the primary objective that their proposal responds to. They must also provide a rationale for how their proposed activities will meet the objective, based on community need (noting some projects may address multiple objectives).

Applications that do not specifically respond to at least one program objective **will not** be eligible.

## Available funding

The minimum grant amount is $15,000. The maximum is $100,000.

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 19 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_1)
	+ read the program guidelines (this document)
	+ attend an information session (optional but recommended).
* Download templates and review the factsheet at: [Community Food Relief Program – Local Grants](https://www.vic.gov.au/community-food-relief-program-local-grants) https://www.vic.gov.au/community-food-relief-program-local-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 19 August 2025 | We will not accept incomplete or late applications. |

## Application detail

Applications should provide a level of detail in line with the complexity of the project and level of funding being sought from the program.

| Grant value | Detail required |
| --- | --- |
| Simple projects up to $25,000 | * Project plan setting out the key activities and dates for delivery
* The completed budget section of the online application form.
 |
| Complex or larger projects up to $100,000 | * Detailed project plan setting out activities, dates for delivery, roles and responsibilities of partner organisations.
* Detailed budget spreadsheet provided as an attachment, as well as the high-level budget in the application form
* Other relevant attachments such as a detailed timeline, partnership agreements, risk management or stakeholder engagement plans, evidence of alignment with organisational objectives.
 |

# Eligibility criteria

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

* respond to at least one of the [program objectives](#_Funding_objectives_1)
* be submitted by an [eligible organisation](#_Eligible_organisations_1)
* seek funding for [eligible activities](#_Eligible_activities_1)
* include the [mandatory attachments](#_Mandatory_attachments_1).

**Each organisation may only submit one application.**

* If organisations submit more than one application, the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (the department) will only progress the application that best fits the funding objectives. All other submitted applications will not progress to assessment.
* Where multiple organisations propose to work in partnership, we only need one application from that partnership. The lead organisation must submit this.

## Eligible organisations

Funding is available to organisations based in Victoria or servicing Victoria’s cross-border communities.

Applicants 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 that is incorporated, including 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.*

* a Victorian local government entity, or public health service.

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

### Auspice arrangements

* If your organisation or group is not an incorporated entity, your application must identify an auspice organisation that has agreed to enter into a funding agreement on your behalf.
* Auspice organisations must meet the ‘eligible organisation’ criteria outlined above.

### Local government, health services and peak bodies

* May be the auspice organisation for a community group or groups.
* May apply for grant funding for projects that:
	+ are delivered by their neighbourhood house service, or
	+ as the lead applicant for a project that will support and provide funding to other local community organisations – for example as part of a partnership or consortium, or through delivering a local small grants program.

### Entities that are not eligible

* Private (for profit) companies
* Sole traders and individuals
* Charitable trusts

## Eligible activities

Projects funded through the **2025-26 Community Food Relief Program – Local Grants** must benefit Victorian communities and/or people accessing services in Victoria.

Eligible activities will increase the effectiveness, capacity, sustainability and availability of community food relief, and may include:

* buying, hiring or installing equipment and appliances
* improving infrastructure or facilities such as kitchens or food storage
* sourcing program supplies such as nutritious and culturally appropriate food and packaging materials
* building partnerships and networks and undertaking strategic planning to strengthen food relief activities
* training and development activities to enhance skills, knowledge and safety of staff and volunteers involved in providing food relief
* program delivery costs including for extra staff, volunteer recruitment, community education, awareness and promotional activities
* reimbursing volunteer expenses directly related to the project’s delivery and proportionate to the project cost.

While projects may include multiple types of activities, **all projects must involve an element of providing direct food relief to the community**.

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 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 supplied template**
* insurance certificates of currency
* for partnerships, letters of intent or similar
* for auspice arrangements, a letter of intent (or similar) from the auspice organisation.

# 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 relevant attachments.

Eligible applications will be assessed against the criteria listed below.

| Criteria | Weighting |
| --- | --- |
| **Identified community need*** Application clearly describes the community need that the project is seeking to address. This includes outlining target locations and/or cohorts (for example, drought-affected communities), the key issues responded to and/or identified gaps in services.
* Application demonstrates how the proposed project is an appropriate response to the community need and aligns with the principles outlined within the [Victorian healthy food relief guidelines](https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/community-food-relief) https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/community-food-relief. This includes dignified approaches to food relief, accessibility and cultural appropriateness where relevant.
* In alignment with the Victorian Government’s commitment to self-determination, First Nations-led organisations will be prioritised for projects designed to support Victorian Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities.
 | 25% |
| **Demonstrated effectiveness and efficiency*** Application provides a clear proposal with reasonable cost estimates that show value for money.
* Project plan includes realistic goals and measures of success; a clear approach for collecting and reporting data and outcomes; and opportunities to identify lessons and good practice that can be shared with others.
* The organisation has a clear approach to monitoring and evaluation and is committed to continuous improvement.
 | 25% |
| **Demonstrated experience and capability*** Application relates to expanding or continuing an established community food program and/or the organisation can show capability to deliver food security initiatives that complement existing services.
* Organisation has demonstrated successful delivery of outcomes through community food programs and/or other relevant projects.
 | 20% |
| **Organisational capacity and readiness*** Application provides a sufficiently detailed and specific plan for delivery including realistic timeframe for deliverables, consideration of risks, and clear roles and responsibilities.
* The organisation has good governance, program management and risk management processes to oversee delivery and respond to challenges.
* The organisation has existing community partnerships and networks to support project delivery.
 | 20% |
| **Sustainability*** Application demonstrates how the project will strengthen partnerships to improve local food relief and/or how the project will provide longer term benefits for the community.
* The organisation explains how they will limit any negative environmental impact of the proposed activities.
 | 10% |

# Assessment process

All applications will undergo the following review and assessment process:

| Process | Description |
| --- | --- |
| Eligibility check | * We will review all applications against the [eligibility criteria](#_Eligibility_criteria_2)
	+ the eligibility check determines whether the application will proceed to further assessment.
 |
| Ratings against selection criteria | * We will assess eligible applications against the [selection criteria](#_Selection_criteria_1) based on responses provided in the application form and mandatory attachments
	+ applications should outline the relevant capability and experience of each partner, if applicable
	+ the assessment panel will not read supporting documents (other than mandatory or relevant attachments)
	+ excessive attachments or long documents will not be read in their entirety.
 |
| Funding recommendations | * The final selection of highly rated applications will consider:
	+ geographic spread and targeting to areas/communities in need
	+ supporting a variety of food relief activities and initiatives
	+ demonstrated effectiveness, efficiency or innovation.
 |
| Application outcome | * The Minister for Carers and Volunteers will make the final decision based on recommendations from the department’s assessment.
* We will notify all applicants of the outcome 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 aims 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 decision.

# Conditions of funding

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

Most project activities should be delivered and acquitted by no later than 30 June 2027. If successful, project details including the project name, description and grant amount will be published online at [Community Food Relief Program – Local Grants](https://www.vic.gov.au/community-food-relief-program-local-grants) https://www.vic.gov.au/community-food-relief-program-local-grants.

## Data collection requirements

Successful applicants will need to provide evidence of project outcomes in their final reports. This evidence should demonstrate how they have met the objectives outlined in their project plan.

## 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, and
* submit a project acquittal and evaluation report at the end of the project.

Milestone payments will be 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 a 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 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 – Local Grants](https://www.vic.gov.au/community-food-relief-program-local-grants) https://www.vic.gov.au/community-food-relief-program-local-grants .

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