

2025-26 Community Food Relief Program
 – Local Grants

Question and answer

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

**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.**

# About the program

## Will there be future grant rounds?

This is a one-off program for 2025-26.

## Can we apply for less than $15,000?

No, $15,000 is the minimum amount you can apply for. If you’re unsure if your organisation can manage this amount of funding, consider approaching a larger organisation or local council to auspice your project.

## How long do we have to complete the project?

Organisations have until 30 June 2027 to complete their project activities.

## What types of projects may be appropriate?

Projects must align with **one or more** of the program objectives outlined in the program guidelines and seek funds for eligible activities. While projects may include multiple types of activities, **all projects must involve an element of providing direct food relief to the community**.

Example projects/activities could include, but are not limited to:

* establishing or expanding programs that avoid duplication and encourage greater collaboration between local food relief providers and other community partners
* improving cultural safety and accessibility, and reducing stigma, for those who may experience barriers to accessing food relief
* programs to educate people at risk of food insecurity on healthy eating and cooking with local ingredients, which may also involve providing ingredients or meals to address immediate needs
* delivering models of food relief that promote choice and dignity (such as community food pantries, markets and social supermarkets)
* initiatives to increase volunteer participation and support volunteers in the food relief sector, to increase the accessibility and quality of community food relief.

# Eligibility

## We have an overdue report for another project, what should we do?

If you have an overdue report for another grant through the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (the department), please contact the responsible team. Your key contact should be on the funding agreement for that grant program.

Applicants with overdue milestones for another grant funded by the department may be ineligible for this program.

## How do we find our Australian Business Number (ABN)?

To check your ABN, visit the [Australian Business Register (ABR)](https://abr.business.gov.au) https://abr.business.gov.au

## What if our organisation or group doesn’t have an ABN or is not incorporated?

You must nominate an auspice to enter into a funding agreement for you:

* if your organisation doesn’t have an ABN
* if your organisation has an ABN but is not an incorporated entity (*Note: the department cannot enter into a funding agreement with an entity that is not incorporated, even if they have an ABN).*

Your auspice organisation must be an eligible organisation under the program guidelines.

## How do we check our organisation type?

You can find your organisation’s registration status on the [Australian Business Register](https://abr.business.gov.au/) https://abr.business.gov.au. You can also find more details via the regulator for your organisation type:

* for incorporated associations, co-operatives or organisations incorporated through other means, go to [Consumer Affairs Victoria](http://www.consumer.vic.gov.au) https://www.consumer.vic.gov.au
* for a Company Limited by Guarantee, go to the [Australian Securities and Investment Commission](https://asic.gov.au/) https://asic.gov.au
* for registered charities, go to the [Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission](https://www.acnc.gov.au/) https://www.acnc.gov.au
* for Aboriginal corporations, go to the [Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations](https://www.oric.gov.au/) https://www.oric.gov.au.

## What kinds of applications are eligible if we are a local council, peak body or public health service?

Local councils, peak bodies, and public health services (including Local Public Health Units) are eligible to apply for projects that:

* are delivered by a neighbourhood house service that they are responsible for, or
* will support and fund other local community organisations, for example as part of a partnership or consortium.

Your organisation may also be the auspice organisation for community group or groups who wish to apply for a grant.

If you’re unsure if your organisation or project is eligible for funding, email the Food Relief Grants team at foodrelief.team@dffh.vic.gov.au

## What is an auspice organisation?

An auspice organisation can support community groups to meet the grant program's financial and legal requirements by taking on the legal and financial responsibility of the grant. This would include signing the grant funding agreement on your organisation’s behalf. They would be responsible for ensuring grant funds are used appropriately and that all activities or events are completed.

An organisation or group that does not have an ABN and/or is not incorporated **must** nominate an auspice to be eligible for a grant.

Your organisation would still be responsible for submitting progress reports, and the final report with financial acquittal.

## How do we apply with an auspice?

You must identify your auspice organisation before starting your application. You will need a letter of support signed by an authorised officer of the auspice (chief executive officer or equivalent). You must also include the details of a key contact at the auspice organisation in the application form.

Your auspice organisation must have an ABN, be incorporated, and be an eligible organisation type (outlined in the program guidelines).

## Our organisation is outside of Victoria but is near the border and services Victorians. Are we eligible?

Your organisation may be eligible if you are an incorporated entity registered with an appropriate state regulator. You must show that your project will benefit Victorians.

## Can we apply to prevent a service from ceasing rather than expanding or starting a new service?

Local Grants can support activities that may have previously been funded or already exist but are no longer funded or will scale back or cease to exist without new funding. The grant can be used to cover the costs for sustaining the existing level of service. For example:

* you used to supply 200 households with weekly food packages. But due to increased costs you can now only support 100. A Local Grant can cover the cost of providing food packages to the 100 households that would have missed out
* last year, a local council funded you to run five cooking classes a month. This included providing meals or ingredients to participants. That funding has now ceased. A Local Grant can support you to continue to run those classes this year.

# Application process

## Do we need to apply online?

Yes. The department’s Grants Gateway is the only way to apply.

If you have accessibility concerns or questions about how to use Grants Gateway, contact the Food Relief Grants team via email at foodrelief.team@dffh.vic.gov.au well before the application closing date.

An information checklist is available 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

## Can we attach extra supporting information?

All information for assessing your application must be in the application form or project plan. You must also attach evidence of insurance and letters of intent for partnerships or auspice arrangements.

For complex or larger projects up to $100,000 you should attach further evidence of planning – such as a detailed timeline, partnership agreements, risk management or stakeholder engagement plans, and evidence of aligning with organisational objectives.

The assessment panel will only read the required documentation and information directly relevant to your application.

## What happens if we can’t submit on time?

The closing date and time for the grants is 4:00pm on Tuesday 19 August 2025.

We will not accept late applications.

Plan ahead to avoid any last-minute technical difficulties. Aim to submit your application well ahead of the closing time.

If you feel you have an exceptional circumstance, email the Food Relief Grants team **before** the closing time at foodrelief.team@dffh.vic.gov.au.

## Can we submit more than one application?

The department will only assess one application per organisation. Organisations should focus on developing a quality application for the project that would have the biggest impact in their community.

If your organisation submits more than one application, the department will only progress the proposal that best fits the program objectives.

## Can we submit an individual application and be a partner for another?

The department’s Grants Gateway system will allow this. But we recommend that organisations focus on developing one quality application for the project that would have the biggest impact in their community. You can do this either as a single organisation or as part of a partnership.

## Can we apply as a partnership or consortium?

Larger organisations and organisations seeking higher amounts of funding are strongly encouraged to partner with grassroots and volunteer-led community groups.

For the purposes of this program, a partnership is two or more organisations who will share the grant funds and work together on a single project to maximise impact. Each partner should have clear roles and responsibilities in project delivery. The lead organisation must be an eligible organisation as per the program guidelines.

Applications that do not include formal partnerships should still describe the community networks, informal partnerships and relationships that will support the initiative, where relevant.

## Can we put in an application for our organisation and also auspice other organisations?

You can both apply as an individual organisation and be the auspice for other organisations.

In the case of an auspice arrangement, the organisation you are auspicing will submit the application and refer to your organisation as their auspice within the application.

# Budget

## Should we include other in-kind contributions?

Where applicable, outline any in-kind funding or support that will be provided by the applicant or other sources in the project plan and budget.

The online application form will allow you to identify which project costs would be covered by the grant or through other funding sources.

## How does the goods and services tax (GST) work?

This depends on whether your organisation is registered for GST or not. You can check your organisation’s details on the [Australian Business Register](https://abr.business.gov.au/) https://abr.business.gov.au.

If your organisation **is registered for GST**:

* provide your budget excluding GST
* if your application is successful, grant payments will have the GST added to your approved funding amount.

If your organisation is **NOT registered for GST**:

* provide your budget with the GST included
* if your application is successful, GST is not added to your payments. But you may cover the cost of GST with grant funds.

## Can this grant cover staff costs?

Staff working directly on your food relief project and delivering food relief activities consistent with the objectives of the Local Grants can be included in your budget. (This is in addition to project management costs of up to 10%). This could include increasing the hours of an existing staff member or recruiting for the required expertise and capacity to deliver the proposed activities.

Example activities where staff costs could be included in your proposed budget include:

* increasing the hours of a staff member to recruit, manage and train volunteers who will deliver your project
* recruiting a casual staff member to work directly with community to deliver food relief
* staff time to develop strategic plans and develop partnerships that will directly support your project
* engaging a trainer to enhance skills, knowledge and safety of staff and volunteers who are working on your project
* reimbursing volunteer expenses directly related to your project.

## What can the ‘project management’ budget item cover?

You can allocate up to 10% of your proposed budget to project management expenses. These are ‘back of house’ organisational costs that are indirectly related to your project’s delivery.

These could include costs for:

* human resources related to recruitment
* for a staff member to oversee the project (not including their current salary)
* IT software or hardware to help deliver the funded project
* engage contractors with specialised skills to support the project, such as an accountant.

Your application should outline how any project management expenses relate to delivering activities funded through the grant.

## Are vehicle costs eligible to be covered?

Yes, buying a vehicle and associated costs such as fuel is eligible. But the vehicle must be used for activities funded through the grant. Organisations must show capacity to maintain the vehicle and its operating costs after the funding period, as these grants provide one-off funding only.

This means your application needs to show that your organisation can cover the ongoing costs of insurance, servicing, fuel and other expenses.

## Are food vouchers eligible to be covered?

Yes, vouchers are considered a form of ‘direct food support’. They align with the following eligible activity stated in the program guidelines:

*‘Program delivery including additional staffing costs, volunteer recruitment, community education and awareness, and promotional activities’.*

## Are infrastructure costs eligible to be covered?

Yes, infrastructure or capital costs that improve facilities and increase the availability of community food programs are eligible. This could include refurbishing or expanding existing facilities or constructing new facilities. These facilities must directly support delivering food relief and align with the eligible activities stated in the program guidelines.

# Selection criteria

## How will you rate applications?

We assess applications against the selection criteria in the program guidelines.

The final selection of highly rated applications will also consider:

* geographical spread
* targeting communities and cohorts in need
* targeting communities where there are current gaps or unmet demand.

## What do you mean by ‘value for money’?

Value for money means the grant funds would be spent efficiently, effectively and sustainably to achieve maximum impact and benefit for the intended community.

## Why are drought-affected communities considered high need?

Applications must clearly identify the community need the project is responding to.

Your project should identify the cohorts and/or areas of the state experiencing high need that will benefit from your initiative. This may include:

* drought-affected communities
* First Peoples
* multicultural communities
* rural or regional communities
* other cohorts or geographic areas.

Your application should include evidence to show this need, and how your project will appropriately address it.

Focusing on drought-affected communities recognises that some areas of Victoria are now recording significant rainfall deficiencies - for example, areas in the south-west of Victoria. This increases food insecurity for many members of these communities.

## Are partnership applications preferred?

We will assess all eligible proposals against the same selection criteria.

A strong proposal will show how the project will increase effectiveness, efficiency or innovation. Organisations applying individually will need to outline the effective networks and community relationships that will support the project. Projects delivered through a partnership or consortium will need to outline the roles, capacity and experience of all partner organisations.

# Application outcomes

## How will you notify us of the outcome?

We will notify all organisations via the email address on your application form. It is important that you provide a correct and current email address.

## Will we get the full amount we applied for?

During the assessment process, the department will review project budgets. We may recommend a lower amount:

* based on analysis of the proposed activities, deliverables and project budgets
* to ensure a fair distribution of projects across the state in areas of identified need.

# Conditions of funding

## What reporting will we need to do?

Funded organisations will have to provide quarterly reports on the status of their projects, and a final report with financial acquittal. Forms for reporting will be on the department’s Grants Gateway portal.

The final report must:

* include a short evaluation of the grant activities and outcomes
* outline how you acknowledged government funding
* provide a transaction list of the items you spent the funds on.

You may also need to provide copies of invoices or receipts for any individual purchase over $10,000.

## When will funds be paid?

We will make the first payment after you sign the funding agreement. Other payments will be tied to submitting progress reports.

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