Raising Rural and Regional Student Aspirations

2024-2025 Grant application guidelines

VICTORIA State Government | Department of Education

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Grant Guidelines

Purpose

In May 2023 the Victorian Government announced $1.3 million in funding to raise rural and regional student aspirations, helping these students to expect and strive for more in their learning and career pathways. The Aspirations Program will deliver on this commitment.

To implement the Aspirations Program, the Department of Education is seeking to fund one or more providers and/or consortia to deliver activities that will increase rural and regional students' knowledge of learning and career pathways, and increase their confidence to pursue post-school opportunities.

These Guidelines provide interested organisations with the information that they will need to apply for funding.

Application dates

- Applications open: 9am Monday 11 September 2023
- Applications close: 5pm Monday 9 October 2023

Why the Department of Education is funding the Aspirations Program

The 2019 Expert Advisory Panel for Rural and Regional Students found that it is critical to ensure rural and regional students have the foundations and access to support necessary for them to engage productively in education; are provided with learning environments that engage and inspire them regardless of location; and are surrounded by cultures and attitudes that expand their career aspirations and expectations for their future.

Consultations highlighted that living in smaller communities can limit young people's exposure to the range of business, industry or employment models available in metropolitan Melbourne and this impacts on their awareness of available career options, and has impacts that reverberate through their schooling in relation to subject choices and pathways.

The panel heard clearly that the task of ensuring that all students have wide aspirations, high career expectations, and are equipped to make informed choices about their future is the job of the whole community. Whilst parents and carers play a major role for their children in instilling positive attitudes towards aspiration and achievement, local industry and employers, higher education providers and schools all have a shared responsibility to inspire students by ensuring they are exposed to a diverse set of experiences, opportunities and role models.

The Aspirations Program

Description

The Aspirations Program seeks to build the aspirations of rural and regional students at the primary and secondary school levels. Examples of possible activity include:

- providing students with direct exposure to mentoring, role models and post-school pathways
- providing teachers with professional development opportunities that link with raising student aspirations
- delivering activities that connect with parents, the local community or industry to collectively build student aspirations.

Program delivery dates

Funding will be provided for a two-year delivery period, commencing from January 2024 and concluding December 2025.

Selection criteria

Applications will be assessed according to the following selection criteria:

1. Clear description of the program activities including how the program will raise student aspirations
2. Clear plan for program evaluation including methods used
3. The reach and value of the program including:
    - number of students/Victorian Government schools that will benefit
    - geographical area the program will be delivered to
    - cost of the program
4. Demonstration of program equity considering the following cohorts:
    - students from small or remote schools,
    - students with disability,
    - Koorie students,
    - culturally and linguistically diverse students,
    - students from disadvantaged or low SES backgrounds.
5. Relevant past work experience.

Key concepts

Outputs

Outputs are the quantifiable deliverables that will be produced through your activities. These are usually numerical and can be counted (e.g. number of students or teachers engaged, number of resources produced, number of workshops delivered, etc.). Outputs will differ depending on the types of activities you will deliver and who your target cohort is.

Outcomes

Outcomes focus on impact and should define what participants will learn from taking part in your proposed activity, such as what teachers or students should know or be able to do after participation in your proposed activity. Outcomes also include what will have changed after students/teachers have participated in your proposed activity.

Consider the following questions when writing your application:

- What change are you trying to achieve with this activity?
- What difference will this activity make for participants?

Evaluation

Organisations are expected to evaluate the effectiveness of their proposed activity, and analyse, respond to and report on their findings. Collecting and evaluating data on outcomes is critical as it provides your organisation with insight into what difference you have made for participants and gives your organisation the opportunity to be responsive to feedback and make changes to your activity across the life of the funding period.

Value

Value of an individual activity will be determined by the department during the assessment process based on the information provided in the application. We will be looking at a combination of factors to determine an activity's overall value to the department. These include, as a composite for value of a proposed activity: the amount of funding requested, the number of students/schools engaged, and geographic reach. A high value program will reach a significant (but proportionate) number of students/schools in relation to program size, is delivered to a defined geographic area, demonstrates that it is meaningful for participants and provides a well balanced budget.

Application process

This is an open market process. You can apply for the total or a portion of the funding amount required to deliver your proposed program.

How to apply

Your application must be lodged through the SmartyGrants application portal. (Emailed and hand-written applications will not be accepted.)

The department's Rural and Regional team will be available to answer any queries you may have. Contact email: rural.regional.reform@education.vic.gov.au.

To prepare your application you should:

1. Read these guidelines thoroughly and in their entirety.
2. Register for Smarty Grants: https://stratplan.smartygrants.com.au/ruralandregionalraisingaspirations
3. Contact the Rural and Regional team if you have any questions
4. Complete and submit your application online using Smarty Grants by **5pm Monday 9 October**.

Please note:

- Late applications will not be accepted.
- Incomplete applications will be considered ineligible and will not be assessed. You must attach and submit all supporting documentation with your application.

Assessment process

An application will be assessed by the department only if it is complete (with no missing required information or documentation).

A Panel from the department will assess and rank applications based on the selection criteria. The Panel may contact the shortlisted applicants to negotiate the terms of funding prior to seeking an approval to appoint. This may include discussions about scaling. The panel recommendations will be finalised by the department and decisions made through internal processes. When a decision is made the department will contact all applicants to let you know if you are successful or not.

Payments and reporting

Victorian Common Funding Agreement

Successful applicants will be required to enter into a Victorian Common Funding Agreement (VCFA) with the department. Both parties will be required to comply with the Terms and Conditions of the VCFA.

Betrayal of Trust Insurance and incorporation requirements

From 1 July 2019 the Victorian Government requires all non-government organisations that are funded by the Victorian Government to deliver services to children, to be both incorporated and insured against child abuse. These requirements improve the ability for child abuse survivors to bring a legal claim for compensation and ensure that there is enough money to pay successful claims.

If your application is successful and your program provides incursions or excursion activities, and/or your program provides activities to children where you will have control or authority over children (even where the teacher may be present) then your organisation must be incorporated and have the requisite insurance (unless exempt from insurance requirements).

Visit the Department of Justice and Community Safety website for full details.

Services to Children

The Victorian Child Safe Standards require organisations that work or volunteer with children or young people to have policies, procedures and practices to keep them safe. Department VCFAs include clauses regarding compliance with this standard.

The Standards can be viewed in full on the Commission for Children and Young People CCYP website. The website gives a breakdown of each of the 11 standards, including minimum requirements and documents which will normally demonstrate compliance with the standards.

Local Jobs First Policy

The Local Jobs First (LJF) Policy issued under the Local Jobs First Act 2003 supports businesses and workers by ensuring that small and medium size enterprises are given a full and fair opportunity to compete for government contracts, helping to create job opportunities. The LJF Policy is implemented by Victorian Government departments and agencies to help drive local industry development. Local Jobs First applies where the value of the grant sought meets the Local Jobs First thresholds of $1 million and above in regional Victoria or $3 million and above in metropolitan Melbourne or for State-wide projects. Further information can be found on the Local Jobs First website.

Reporting and accountability

Successful applicants are fully responsible for driving the planning and implementation of their program/s, as well as ensuring financial management and reporting accountability. The department expects funded organisations to leverage existing contacts and professional networks to successfully reach school leaders, teachers, and students and/or be able to independently form new connections, as required, to successfully implement their program. If your application is successful, you will be required to:

- notify the Rural and Regional Unit as soon as practicable of any proposed changes to your funded activity or issues in meeting the agreed deliverables during the year if/when they occur;
- acknowledge the funding support by including the department's logo on all public promotional materials; and
- provide project plans, interim and annual reports each year on progress and outcomes, as required by the department and as will be detailed in the Victorian Common Funding Agreement.

Reporting will include:

- data on the number of students/teachers and schools participating in the program
- qualitative data collection and analysis of program outcomes and outputs

- detailed financial information, including program revenue and expenditure

We will provide further details on monitoring and evaluation requirements to successful applicants.

Activity, deliverables and payments

Payment of funding is based on the annual reporting cycle. A percentage breakdown of the total funding amount available by each milestone payment is outlined in the table below.

	Evidence of completion		
Deliverable	**How is completion demonstrated?**	**Due date**	**Milestone payment**
Agreement executed	Signed	20 December 2023	10.5%
2024 Project Plan	Signed	2 February 2024	24%
2024 Interim Report	Signed	21 June 2024	17%
2024 Final Report and 2025 Project Plan	Signed	20 December 2024	29%
2025 Interim Report	Signed	20 June 2025	17%
2025 Final Report	Signed	19 December 2025	2.5%
TOTAL funding available (Excluding GST)			$1.3 million

Enquiries

If you have any inquiries please contact rural.regional.reform@education.vic.gov.au. The deadline for inquires will be 5.00pm, Friday 29 September 2023.