

**Regional Jobs and
Infrastructure Fund**

**Stronger Regional
Communities Plan**
Application Guidelines

1. Context

1.1 Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund

The Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund (RJIF) is the Victorian Government's overarching regional development package. It focuses on major projects, employment and communities. More details on the RJIF are available at www.rdv.vic.gov.au.

The RJIF has five strategic objectives:

1. create jobs of the future and diversify the regional employment base
2. improve productivity and enhance long-term competitiveness of regional Victoria through innovation and a transition to new growth opportunities
3. create the conditions for business growth by enhancing work force skills, providing enabling economic infrastructure and facilitating expansion into new markets
4. improve the liveability of our cities, centres and towns to attract and retain families and young people to live and work
5. enhance community capacity through collaboration, leadership development and regional planning.

The RJIF was established by the *Regional Development Victoria Act 2002* as a trust fund in the public account. The Act describes the activities for which the trust is to be applied:

- providing better infrastructure, facilities and services in rural and regional Victoria
- strengthening the economic, social and environmental base of communities in rural and regional Victoria
- creating jobs and improving career opportunities in rural and regional Victoria
- supporting the development and planning of local projects in rural and regional Victoria.

Regional Development Victoria (RDV) will administer the RJIF's three programs:

- Regional Infrastructure Fund
- Regional Jobs Fund
- Stronger Regional Communities plan.

The Victorian Government will invest in six high potential, high value sectors to drive Victoria's economic growth including:

- food and fibre
- professional services
- new energy technology
- medical technology, life sciences and healthcare
- transport, defence and construction technology
- international education.

1.2 Purpose of this document

This document sets out the application guidelines for the Stronger Regional Communities Plan (SRCP) component of the RJIF.

2. Description and objectives of fund

2.1 Stronger Regional Communities Plan

The SRCP aims to support rural and regional towns in attracting families and young people to live and work. It will do so by investing in community-led initiatives and partnerships that create or enhance the conditions for economic growth and build resilient, diversified and sustainable economies.

Communities are important. They provide resources, information and opportunities. They help shape our identity and promote feelings of safety, security and belonging. They provide social, recreational and learning opportunities and help foster positive civic norms. They can be sources of creativity and enterprise and are invaluable in the face of disaster. Studies have shown they impact on our belief in what we can achieve in our lives as well as our ability to rise to challenges, and deal with change.

Strong communities are characterised by high levels of social and economic participation. They demonstrate effective decision-making and strong networks and are attractive to people considering moving to live and work.

The SRCP will support initiatives under the following two program streams:

- Community Capacity Building
- Population Attraction.

Further more, the Stronger Creative Regions program stream will support the arts and creative industries in regional Victoria. This program stream is delivered by Creative Victoria.

2.2 Program streams

The objectives of each program stream are described below.

2.2.1 Community capacity building

This program stream aims to develop and strengthen local people's capacity to make a difference in their communities. It will do this by increasing participation and diversity in priority projects, processes and planning that address local challenges.

Activities that may be considered include initiatives that:

- encourage and provide opportunities for local community participation in the design and delivery of significant projects, processes and planning within a region
- address economic development challenges through locally-led partnerships
- build the skills of people to participate in projects, processes and planning significant to the region.

2.2.2 Population attraction

This program stream aims to attract groups, such as professionals and skilled labour, businesses, families and young people to regional Victoria. It will do this by supporting priority projects that promote relevant lifestyles and employment opportunities.

Activities that may be considered include, but are not limited to:

- events designed to promote the benefits and abilities of the local area and industries
- engaging community groups to welcome new and potential families to the area
- developing marketing and promotion strategies for towns undergoing significant change
- using existing networks to identify and promote employment opportunities.

2.3 Activities that will generally not be funded

The following activities would generally not be considered:

- requests for retrospective funding, where projects have commenced (i.e. equipment purchased, contracts entered into or construction has begun) or have been completed prior to receiving funding approval
- projects requiring ongoing funding from the Victorian Government
- ongoing operating costs or salary subsidies except where a salary subsidy provides administrative and project management support for groups of local government authorities and project partners
- private sector projects undertaken as a result of a Victorian Government contract
- projects where funding is normally provided by other state, commonwealth and/or local government sources
- any costs to meet regulatory requirements
- the purchase of land.

2.4 Who can apply

Applications will be considered from:

- private sector businesses and agencies
- business and industry groups including:
 - chambers of commerce and business associations
 - industry peak bodies
 - business and industry clusters and networks
- local government authorities
- government agencies
- not-for-profit organisations, including community groups that
 - are an incorporated body, cooperative or association
 - have an Australian Business Number (ABN) or can provide written advice from the Australian Tax Office that no withholding tax is required from the grant payment
- higher and other education institutions
- regional organisations e.g. regional strategic planning alliances.

Individuals are not eligible to apply.

2.5 Definition of rural and regional Victoria

Rural and regional Victoria is defined as the 48 local government areas including six alpine resort areas set out in Schedule 2 of the *Regional Development Victoria Act 2002* and available at www.rdv.vic.gov.au.

The 10 regional city local government areas are Ballarat, Greater Bendigo, Greater Geelong, Greater Shepparton, Horsham, Latrobe, Mildura, Wangaratta, Warrnambool and Wodonga.

The remaining 38 local government areas including six alpine resort areas are referred to as the rural local government areas.

2.6 Funding details

Applicants are expected to make a financial contribution or source third-party funding. Projects should maximise their funding support from a range of sources, including commonwealth/ local government and community, private sector and regional organisations.

Priority may be given to projects that are considered as investment ready.

Funding will be available on the following basis:

Local government area	Funding available per project	Maximum funding ratios for co-contributions
Regional city	Up to \$50,000	Up to RDV \$2: \$1 other
Rural	Up to \$50,000	Up to RDV \$3: \$1 other

While joint investment with other Victorian Government program funding is encouraged, co-contributions from 'other' sources to meet the required funding ratio must be derived from non Victorian Government sources. In determining the RDV funding level, the total Victorian Government contribution will be taken into consideration.

In-kind contributions can be included as part of the total project costs in calculating the level of grant assistance.

In-kind contributions will be considered subject to the following requirements:

- no more than 50% of applicant (and partners) contribution can be in-kind
- skilled labour costed at \$45 per hour
- unskilled labour costed at \$20 per hour
- equipment costed at standard commercial hire rate
- local government authorities are ineligible from providing in-kind support as part of their funding contribution.

3. Application and assessment process

The process for applying for funding under the program is briefly outlined below:

- contact your local RDV office to discuss your project
- RDV will undertake an initial assessment against program eligibility and assessment criteria and provide you with feedback
- after considering feedback, you may decide to apply for program funding
- RDV will assess your application against the assessment criteria
- RDV will make a recommendation to the Minister for Regional Development
- the Minister will consider the advice and determine whether or not to approve the application for funding
- you will receive a letter confirming the outcome of your application.

Applicants should use the online application form to clearly and succinctly describe the project by detailing: the challenge or opportunity it is looking to address; the desired outcomes; the outputs to be delivered; and any resource requirements.

The assessment criteria will be based around the 'What, Why, How and Who' of the project as follows:

What

The application:

- outlines clear objectives and proposed outcomes particularly demonstrating key elements of the relevant sub-program
- addresses an existing gap in these areas
- outlines a way to sustain project benefits once funding ceases.

Why

The application:

- quantifies the scale and nature of the challenge the project is seeking to address
- is strongly supported at a community level and consistent with local Council Plans
- is identified by or consistent with the directions of Regional Strategic Plans
- is supported by local knowledge and information demonstrating the challenges being confronted by the community such as natural disasters, rapid economic change, population growth and/or decline
- for population attraction initiatives, the following additional criteria applies:
 - targeting specific markets to suit specific town characteristics and location
 - finding a balance between promotional strategies and realistic assessment of its local potential.

How

The application:

- is supported by a clear scope and realistic time-frames
- is viable and represents value for money.

Who

The application:

- demonstrates a collaborative approach with a range of partners and resources required to undertake the project.

4. Conditions of funding

4.1 Funding agreements

Successful applicants will be required to enter into a funding agreement with RDV detailing all funding obligations and conditions. The standard terms and conditions on which the funding is offered are available from the RDV website at www.rdv.vic.gov.au or contacting RDV on **13 22 15**.

The funding agreement is a legally enforceable document that clearly defines the obligations of both parties. The funding agreement aims to protect the Victorian Government's interests and to ensure the efficient and effective use of public money. It also ensures there is appropriate recognition of Victorian Government support on project related publications, media releases and promotional material.

Funding agreements must be signed by the organisation's Chief Executive Officer (or equivalent) and will:

- describe the purpose for which the funding must be used
- set out any requirements or conditions that must be met prior to the payment of a grant instalment
- outline agreed milestones and project outcomes that must be achieved before payment of a grant instalment.

Once the funding agreement has been executed, the applicant will be required to actively manage and deliver the project, and provide progress reports to RDV. During the course of the project, RDV may conduct site visits as necessary.

In some instances, based on project size, complexity and the amount of funding being provided, a project control group (or equivalent) may need to be established with regular meetings and reports. RDV may be either a participant or observer in these meetings.

Successful applicants must enter into a funding agreement and commence the project within one year from the date of offer of the funding. If a project does not commence within this timeframe, the grant will be reviewed by RDV.

4.2 Evaluation and reporting

Successful applicants will be required to cooperate fully with an evaluation which is undertaken either during or after completion of the project. Successful applicants will also generally be required to submit progress and completion reporting, assess progress of the project against milestones, outputs and outcomes, and provide evidence of project completion.

After completion of the project, applicants must submit annual evaluation reports assessing the success of the project in meeting its stated objectives, outputs and outcomes. These evaluation reports may be required for up to three years following completion of the funded project.

Successful applicants may be required to contribute information on project outcomes, including longer-term impacts beyond project completion, for use in program evaluation reviews and/or RDV marketing materials. It is the responsibility of successful applicants to put in place adequate data collection arrangements to capture the appropriate data in relation to outputs and outcomes. These arrangements will assist RDV to undertake a robust evaluation of the RJIF.

4.3 Competitive neutrality

All successful applications to the RJIF from a government body, including local government authorities and government agencies, will be required to comply with the Competitive Neutrality Policy Victoria, in respect of any commercial goods or services offered by the body as a result of the grant.

4.4 Privacy

Any personal information about you or a third party in your application will be collected by RDV, a statutory body within the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources (DEDJTR) for the purpose of grant administration.

This information may be provided to other Victorian Government agencies for the purposes of assessing your application. If you intend to include personal information about third parties in your application, please ensure they are aware of the contents of this privacy statement.

Any personal information about you or a third party in your correspondence will be collected, held, managed, used, disclosed or transferred in accordance with the provisions of the *Information Privacy Act 2000 (Vic)* and other applicable laws. DEDJTR is committed to protecting the privacy of personal information.

The Department's privacy policy is available from:

Privacy Officer
Department of Economic Development,
Jobs, Transport and Resources

GPO Box 2392
Melbourne, VIC, 3001
Tel: (+ 61 3) 9665 9535
Email: privacy@ecodev.vic.gov.au

Enquiries about access to information about you held by DEDJTR should be directed to:

Freedom of Information Manager
Department of Economic Development,
Jobs, Transport and Resources

GPO Box 2392
Melbourne, VIC, 3001
Tel: (+61 3) 9208 3112
Email: foi@ecodev.vic.gov.au

4.5 Acknowledgement

Successful applicants need to acknowledge the Victorian Government's support through the provision of a grant from the RJIF. Promotional guidelines form part of the funding agreement and include the requirement that all activities acknowledge Victorian Government support through logo presentation on any activity-related publications, media releases and promotional material. A Victorian Government endorsed sign must also be placed at the site of infrastructure activities.

Successful applicants must liaise with RDV to coordinate any events or announcements related to the activity. Successful applicants may be required to contribute information on activity outcomes for use in communications materials.

5. Additional information and resources

Regional Strategic Plans and the Rural Councils
Victoria Migration and Trends Analysis Toolkit may
be useful in planning for delivering activities.

6. Contact details of regional offices:

Applicants requiring further information should contact your local RDV office or email: rdv@rdv.vic.gov.au

Ballarat

111 Armstrong Street Nth. Ballarat 3350
Tel: (+61 3) 5327 2800
Fax: (+61 3) 5327 2830
Email: information.ballarat@rdv.vic.gov.au

Bendigo

Level 1, 56-60 King Street, Bendigo 3550
Tel: (+61 3) 4433 8000
Fax: (+61 3) 4433 8099
Email: information.bendigo@rdv.vic.gov.au

Geelong

Level 2, Harrison Place, 237 Ryrie Street, Geelong 3220
Tel: (+61 3) 5215 6000
Fax: (+61 3) 5215 6099
Email: information.geelong@rdv.vic.gov.au

Horsham

Wimmera Business Centre
62 Darlot Street, Horsham 3400
Tel: (+61 3) 5381 2762
Fax: (+61 3) 5381 2514
Email: information.horsham@rdv.vic.gov.au

Mildura

131 Langtree Avenue, Mildura VIC 3500
Tel: (+61 3) 5051 2000
Fax: (+61 3) 5051 2020
Email: information.mildura@rdv.vic.gov.au

Shepparton

79a Wyndham Street, Shepparton 3630
Tel: (+61 3) 5895 4100
Fax: (+61 3) 5822 2554
Email: information.shepparton@rdv.vic.gov.au

Swan Hill

324 Campbell Street, Swan Hill 3585
Tel: (+61 3) 5036 4823
Email: information.swanhill@rdv.vic.gov.au

Traralgon

33 Breed Street, Traralgon 3844
Tel: (+61 3) 5116 7300
Fax: (+61 3) 5175 0324
Email: information.traralgon@rdv.vic.gov.au

Wangaratta

Wangaratta Government Centre
1st Floor, 62 Ovens Street, Wangaratta 3677
Tel: (+61 3) 5722 7101
Fax: (+61 3) 5722 7109
Email: information.wangaratta@rdv.vic.gov.au

Warrnambool

Old Police Station
South West TAFE
9 Gilles Street, Warrnambool 3280
Tel: (+61 3) 5561 4135
Fax: (+61 3) 5561 3851
Email: information.warrnambool@rdv.vic.gov.au

Wodonga

111-113 Hume Street, Wodonga 3690
Tel: (+61 2) 6059 0200
Fax: (+61 2) 6059 0250
Email: information.wodonga@rdv.vic.gov.au





