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| Women in Energy and Manufacturing funding program 2024 |
| Application feedback |
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# General feedback on applications

We thank all applicants for submitting applications to the **Women in Energy and Manufacturing funding program.**

We received a great deal of interest in this program from various organisation types. We were pleased to see such varied and innovative projects to improve gender equality within the Victorian energy and manufacturing sectors.

We received 78 applications to the program. We were only able to fund approximately 13% of these within the available budget. This was because the assessment process was highly competitive. The strong demand shows the need and appetite to deliver initiatives to support women’s participation and equity in these sectors.

This document summarises feedback from the assessment process to:

* help you consider the outcome of your application
* help you prepare for future opportunities
* provide examples from some of the highest-scoring applications.

## Overarching considerations during assessment

Given the competitive nature of the program, the strongest applications:

* supported evidence-based outcomes
* supported achievable delivery
* demonstrated ability to drive sector-wide change
* focused on structural gender-based barriers within the energy and manufacturing sectors.

Other overarching considerations in the assessment process included:

* individual merits of each application
* ensuring an even distribution of funding across the manufacturing and energy industries
* promoting geographic diversity with initiatives in metro, regional and rural locations
* representing a range of applicant and project types
* enabling a high degree of reach and impact, demonstrating strong value for money.

### Style and length of answers

We appreciate the time and effort required to complete a grant application. We know this can be difficult for small organisations. For this reason, we are happy to receive responses in the application form in dot points. We encourage you to submit short and focused responses.

Attachments can support your responses. However, you are not marked down for not including them. The assessment is mainly focused on your responses to the application questions.

### Applications with limited reach and scope

Although in scope of this grant program, applications that scored lower focused on:

* supporting only a few women employed in an organisation to access professional development
* programs in a particular sub-sector within the energy and manufacturing sectors
* programs that were business-as-usual for an organisation.

Applications that scored higher were able to show:

* broader and enduring gender equality impacts in the sectors
* need for government funding.

## Feedback on responses to weighted application questions

### Planned activities

#### Question: What will the project achieve?

The highest-scoring applications identified and addressed a specific need or barrier faced by women in the Victorian energy and manufacturing sectors. They clearly explained the issue and provided evidence for how their activity would address that need or barrier.

##### Example

A strong problem statement might look like this:

* Women in [Local Government Area] have inequitable access to career information and support networks. This impacts their:
* understanding of job search skills in Australia
* awareness of local employment pathways and opportunities.
* Added to this are the cultural and societal attitudes toward gender-appropriate roles.
* This project will work in community-based settings to provide culturally appropriate and accessible information to women about job opportunities in their local energy and manufacturing industries.

##### Example

The activities described were focused and achievable for the funding requested. They also demonstrated how the funding would be spent.

Applications with a clearly defined scope and reach of activities built a convincing case that their project was achievable, relevant and aligned with the program's goals.

A clear project scope might look like:

* With the $100,000 requested, we plan to partner with a gender equality expert to pilot culture change initiatives with three manufacturing businesses in Melbourne, Geelong and Ballarat. This will foster more inclusive and respectful workplaces, for at least 350 participants.

##### Example

Strong applications also clearly demonstrated the outcomes and how they would achieve them. The outcomes were realistic and connected to the activities.

Focusing on specific activity outcomes is more compelling than stating broadly ‘women’s participation will improve’.

More particular outcomes might look like:

* Up to 100 women will receive manufacturing or energy sector training throughout the pilot stage. This will increase their promotion opportunities.
* Women-friendly workplace policies in at least six manufacturing and energy companies will improve workplace culture and retention.
* This will increase the community’s understanding of the benefits of more women in manufacturing and energy. It will show that these sectors are becoming more welcoming.

##### Example

Successful applications focused on structural barriers preventing women’s ability to thrive in the sectors. They did not solely focus on building women’s skills, experience or confidence.

They considered the structural causes of gender inequality. They provided steps to address them within the available funding. These applications included initiatives focused on fixing the systems that create barriers for women rather than on individual women.

If a proposed activity included mentoring, networking opportunities or a leadership program, a strong application also included an element that focused on structural or cultural change, such as:

* supporting employers to embed gender-equitable workplace practices, or
* providing training to employers or educators.

### Strategic alignment

#### Question: How does your project align with program objectives?

The program objectives are to increase the participation and equity of Victorian women in the energy and manufacturing sectors by supporting:

* clear and attractive career pathways
* access to education and training
* economic equity and leadership opportunities
* accountability for workplace culture, diversity and wellbeing.

Applicants were asked to demonstrate alignment with at least one of the four focus areas. Applications that could also demonstrate alignment with priority considerations outlined in the funding program guidelines were scored higher.

Many applications tried to demonstrate alignment with all program focus areas and the six priority considerations.

We acknowledge the overlap between the focus areas and that some applications took a multi-pronged approach to addressing gender inequity at different stages of the career lifecycle. However, strong applications had a focused scope that was feasible for the delivery time. Alignment with program objectives and priority considerations was strategic, intentional and specific to the proposed initiative. They did not simply repeat information from the funding guidelines.

The highest-scoring applications provided solid evidence for their proposals and understood the problem the proposed activity was designed to address.

#### Example

An application that outlines how evidence has been used to design the proposed activities may include:

* Across numerous strategies and initiatives (such as Our Equal State: Victoria’s gender equality strategy and action plan), the Victorian government has recognised that the presence of women in media significantly influences gender equity outcomes. The same evidence underpins the theory of change for this project.
* Research shows social media changes attitudes and behaviour that leads to structural change through both ‘(1) an individual or direct effect, and (2) a social or indirect effect’ (*Political Science Research and Methods*, Volume 7, Issue 3, July 2019, pp. 561 – 578).
* Video content with high engagement rates, high search engine optimisation, strong emotional connections, cost-effectiveness, accessibility and shareability has become one of the most powerful social media tools.

### Resourcing

#### Question: How will your project be resourced?

Strong applications considered how their organisation might be able to deliver a project catering to the needs and experiences of a specific group of women or girls in their local community, organisations or sector.

The highest-scoring applications demonstrated strong connections within the energy or manufacturing sectors. They provided specific details on delivery timeframes, project governance and staffing resources required. They provided clear, detailed information on how to recruit participants or promote the project. They demonstrated a strong capacity to take a sector-wide view.

Projects were scored higher if they:

* showed they could be scaled up in the future
* created resources or tools that could be shared widely
* showed potential for longer-term impacts after the funding period ended
* demonstrated the need for government funding and how the project supported activities beyond their business-as-usual work.

#### Example

An example of an application that demonstrates a strong plan to recruit participants and promote the project may include:

* As an organisation that has been serving the local community in [Local Government Area] for 50 years, we have developed several ways to engage the community, promote programs, and recruit participants. This includes using:
* website and social media profiles
* bi-cultural staff and volunteers
* multi-lingual information
* community advisory groups
* service coordination networks
* local manufacturing and energy employment partners such as [example 1] and [example 2].
* The organisation’s existing services provide a way to promote the project and recruit participants.

### Previous experience/gender equality expertise

#### Question: Provide details of your organisation or company's expertise or experience delivering similar initiatives, and/or your partnership approach to deliver this project

The highest-scoring applications demonstrated their expertise and track record of success delivering similar projects. They outlined plans to collaborate or partner with other organisations where appropriate. This gave assessors confidence that the initiative was evidence-based and would use relationships in the sector to create deeper and longer-term impacts.

#### Example

Successful applicants outlined plans to partner with industry or gender equality experts to ensure the project was:

* informed by best practices
* took an intersectional approach
* was industry-specific.

This might look like:

* We recognise the need for continuous improvement. We plan to engage a specialised external gender equality expert to refine our training programs to ensure they reflect current standards. The updated training will then be provided. We will also draw on the expertise of partner workplaces that have delivered similar initiatives.

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