Engage!

2025–2027 program guidelines

**OFFICIAL**

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# Message from the Minister for Youth

The Engage! program is part of our commitment to making sure every young Victorian has the support and opportunities they need to reach their potential.

Our Government is proud to continue our investment in youth participation activities across the state, because we know the benefits that it delivers for young people. From mentoring, volunteering, community engagement or leadership development, the Engage! program builds the skills that equip our young people for the future.

Engage! invests in initiatives that support young people to build important life skills, foster connections with their peers and local communities, and enhance their health and wellbeing.

Activities focus on substantial youth participation, so that young people have a say in the programs that support them. This means young people play a lead role in the decision-making process, and all aspects of planning and delivering Engage! activities.

Engage! 2025–2027 offers grants ranging from $60,000 to $180,000 over 3 years for local governments, youth and community organisations.

Funded projects prioritise youth development through training, mentoring and volunteering opportunities. They aim to help young Victorians develop skills they can use and take forward into the rest of their lives. The program celebrates the contributions of young people to the project and their local communities.

I encourage local governments, youth and community organisations throughout Victoria to apply. I look forward to seeing the innovative projects that will form the round of the Engage! program.



**The Hon Natalie Suleyman MP**

Minister for Youth

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# About the program

## Overview

The Victorian Government supports young people to realise their full potential. It does this with access to programs that focus on:

* improving skills
* career pathways
* community engagement.

Through Engage!, young people can take part in activities and projects that meet their goals and aspirations. This may include:

* leading a project
* learning new skills to support their transition to adult life
* connecting with peers and trusted adults
* showcasing their skills and talents in their local community.

Engage! 2025–2027 offers funding over 3 years for community organisations, local governments and social enterprises to deliver a range of activities for young Victorians aged 12 to 25. Service delivery will take place between 1 January 2025 and 31 December 2027.

Applicants will have to partner with young Victorians between the ages of 12 and 25 to co-design and deliver activities across 3 categories:

* **Category 1: Youth engagement and participation** – activities that promote the voices of young people and participation in decision making
* **Category 2: Youth development** – activities that support young people to develop new skills through training, mentoring and volunteering
* **Category 3: Youth celebration** **and events** – activities that showcase and recognise young people’s contribution to the community.

## Program priorities

Our vision is thatyoung people are central in decision making. This aligns with [*Our promise, your future: Victoria’s youth strategy 2022–2027*](https://www.vic.gov.au/victorias-youth-strategy-2022-2027) https://www.vic.gov.au/victorias-youth-strategy-2022-2027. As such, Engage! will prioritise applications that show the following:

* **Meaningful youth engagement and participation:** provide opportunities for young people to have their voices and contributions heard. Ensure young people lead the decision-making process in all aspects of planning and delivering the activities.
* **Youth development:** provide training, mentoring and volunteering opportunities for young people to develop new skills to support future independence and transition to adult life.
* **Youth celebration:** recognise, value and celebrate young people’s contribution to the project and their local community.
* **Inclusion and accessibility:** put in place strategies to ensure the program is inclusive and accessible to all young people in the local community. This includes young people identifying as LGBTIQA+, multicultural and multifaith young people including from newly arrived and refugee communities, Aboriginal young people and young people living with disability.
* **Community support and partnerships:** foster connections with community and explore potential partnerships to help deliver the project and expand young people’s networks.
* **Organisational capacity:** show the organisation’s capacity to deliver the program and its objectives.

## Available funding

Engage! 2025–2027 will provide grants **between $60,000 and $180,000 over 3 years** (or $20,000 to $60,000 per year). Grants are for eligible organisations to deliver a broad range of youth-led activities within the activity categories outlined below.

### Annual participation guidance

The table below outlines participation levels per year for the maximum funding amount of $180,000 over 3 years (or $60,000 per year). This provides a benchmark for the expected reach associated with different funding amounts. Relative to the amount of funding requested, the selection criteria will also consider the project’s:

* reach
* outcomes
* level of youth participation.

Indicative participation levels per year for the maximum funding amount

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Area | Young people participating |
| Metropolitan areas | 600 |
| Regional cities or peri-urban areas | 400 |
| Regional towns or rural areas | 300 |

Please note that due to the competitive nature of this program we may allocate less funds to a project than requested.

## Activity categories

Youth participation is an essential part of the 2025–2027 program. Organisations have to partner with young Victorians between 12 and 25 to design and deliver their program. We encourage applicants to form a youth advisory group. This group should provide insights, feedback and leadership throughout the project. This will ensure the project meets the interests and aspirations of young participants in their community.

Applicants must deliver activities across at least 2 of the 3 categories. Examples are below.

### Category 1: Youth engagement and participation

Activities that promote the voices of young people and participation in decision making. Examples include youth support groups, civic participation groups or youth-led projects.

### Category 2: Youth development

Activities that support young people to develop new and transferable skills through training, mentoring and volunteering. Examples include technical or life skills training, personal development training, volunteering initiatives or mentoring.

### Category 3: Youth celebration and events

Activities that showcase and recognise young people’s contribution to the community. Examples include youth awards or showcase events or youth-led projects/events planned by young people under ‘youth-led projects’ from Category 1.

## Activity period

This grant round is for activities that take place between 1 January 2025 and 31 December 2027.

## Timeline

* Applications open at 3:00 pm on 19 August 2024.
* Applications close at 11:59 pm on 23 September 2024..

Refer to the ‘How to apply’ section for more details.

# Eligibility criteria

## Eligibility overview

To be eligible to apply for funding through the Engage!program:

* You must be an [eligible organisation](#_Eligible_organisations_1) (refer below).
* You must be seeking funding for [eligible activities](#_Activities_the_program).
* Your organisation must have no overdue reports from previous or current grants funded via the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (the department).
* You must include the relevant attachments for your application type as outlined in the ‘[mandatory attachments](#_Mandatory_attachments_1)’ section.

## Eligible organisations

Funding is available to organisations based in Victoria.

Applicants must have a **current Australian Business Number (ABN) and be either**:

* **a Victorian local government authority**
* **a not-for-profit legal entity** – that is, either:
  + registered as a charity with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission
  + registered with Consumer Affairs Victoria (or equivalent in a neighbouring state) as an incorporated association, or
  + registered under the *Corporations Act 2001* (Cth) or the *Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012* (Vic)
* **an Aboriginal entity** that is incorporated including Aboriginal not-for-profit organisations, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, Traditional Owner groups or land trusts
* **a social enterprise** that is an incorporated entity with a clear purpose or mission related to engaging and empowering young people. Social enterprises must attach their constitution with their application.

Social enterprises:

* have an economic, social, cultural or environmental mission consistent with a public or community benefit
* get most of their income from trade
* reinvest most of their profit/surplus in fulfilling their mission (at least 50%).

Unincorporated associations and community organisations with no ABN are not eligible. But they can apply using an auspice. Refer to ‘[Auspiced appli](#_Auspiced_applications)[cations](#_Auspiced_applications)’ for more information.

**Entities that are not eligible include:**

* private (for profit) companies
* sole traders and individuals
* charitable trusts.

## Auspiced applications

Auspice arrangements are allowed under the program.

### Auspiced arrangements

If your organisation is not incorporated or does not have an ABN, you may still apply. In this case, an eligible auspice organisation must agree to manage the grant.

An auspice arrangement is when an organisation helps another to fund a grant activity or event. Your community group or organisation is the grant recipient. The organisation auspicing is the auspice organisation.

All applications with auspicing arrangements must include a letter of support from the auspice organisation.

#### Responsibilities of an auspice organisation

If your grant application is successful, your auspice organisation will be responsible for:

* signing the grant funding agreement
* all legal and financial aspects of the grant on your organisation’s behalf
* receiving and distributing grant funds under the grant agreement
* ensuring all grant activities or events are completed
* ensuring final reports and financial acquittals are submitted by the due dates.

## Partnership applications

The department encourages partnership applications from groups of 2 or more organisations.

Organisations or groups can work together to submit a single application. These applications should:

* show strong value for money
* achieve wide benefit
* aim to achieve common goals and outcomes for all organisations or groups involved.

For example, several organisations in the same region or neighbouring regions could work together. These organisations could submit a partnership application to share resources as a larger group.

One organisation will need to:

* submit the application on behalf of the partnership
* nominate the primary contact person coordinating the partnership and application.

Partnership applications are still subject to the maximum funding of $180,000 per application. They should outline the relevant capability and experience of each partner.

## Activities the program can fund

Eligible activities and costs may include:

* a reasonable amount of funding based on your project’s scale. You can use these for some project coordination and staffing costs. This includes:
  + ongoing staff or short-term staffing costs with a direct link to the activity
  + reimbursements, allowances and honoraria for volunteers supporting the project
* training and development activities to enhance skills, knowledge and safety of staff, young people and volunteers involved in the program
* initiatives that support employment pathways for young people
* transport costs for young people related to an event or activity (higher proportion allowed for rural, regional and peri-urban areas)
* activities to create or strengthen partnerships or networks to leverage resources and opportunities with other organisations.

## Activities or costs the program cannot fund

Activities or costs that the program will not fund include:

* activities outside of Victoria
* activities that are already funded through other local, state or Commonwealth government programs
* projects that include a large proportion of recreational, sporting or social-focused events
* admin, staff or operational costs that don’t relate to the project
* venue hire fees where the applicant owns the venue (you can include the value of this cost as an in-kind contribution)
* significant funding for equipment purchases
* funding for construction or building-restoration work.

## Mandatory attachments

Eligible applications must include:

* for partnerships, a letter of support from a partnering community organisation
* for auspice arrangements, a letter of intent (or similar) from the auspice organisation
* for social enterprises, their constitution.

# How to apply

Submit your application by 23 September via the [DFFH Grants Gateway](https://grantsgateway.dffh.vic.gov.au/) https://grantsgateway.dffh.vic.gov.au.

Checklist for completing a grant application

| Stage | Requirements |
| --- | --- |
| **Applications open**  19 August 2024 | * Read the program guidelines (this document). * Check that your organisation and proposed activity meets the [eligibility criteria](#_Eligibility_criteria_2). |
| **Prepare and submit your application**  19 August – 23 September 2024 | * Register or log in to the [DFFH Grants Gateway](https://grantsgateway.dffh.vic.gov.au/) https://grantsgateway.dffh.vic.gov.au. Complete an application under ‘Available Grants’. * Complete the online application via the DFFH Grants Gateway. Submit by 11:59 pm on 23 September 2024.   + You can save your application as a draft and finish it later.   + Attach all mandatory and supporting documents with the application.   + You will receive acknowledgement of submission via email.   + Note the application number for reference when contacting us about your application. |
| **Applications close**  11:59 pm, 23 September 2024 | * To ensure a fair process, the department cannot accept late applications. |

# Assessment process

All applications for the programwill undergo the following review and assessment process:

| Assessment component | Details of assessment component |
| --- | --- |
| Eligibility assessment | * We will review all applications against the [eligibility criteria](#_Eligibility_criteria_2). * The eligibility assessment determines whether your application will proceed to merit assessment. |
| Merit assessment – ratings against selection criteria | * An assessment panel reviewseligible applications. The panel scores applications against the selection criteria outlined below. * The assessment panel includes departmental staff and other government representatives. |
| Funding recommendations | * The assessment panel provides the Minister for Youth with funding recommendations. |
| Application outcome | * The Minister for Youth makes the final decision based on panel recommendations. * We will notify all applicants of the outcome of their application by email. |

## Application outcomes

All applicants will receive written notification of the outcome of their application. If you are successful, the department will let you know about any specific conditions attached to the grant.

Unsuccessful applicants can ask for feedback within one month of the outcome. The department aims to provide written feedback within 20 business days of any request.

All assessment decisions are final. This includes decisions about eligibility, the assessment process and:

* any decision to offer or award a grant under the program
* any decision to withdraw the offer or cancel the funding agreement.

## Selection criteria

All aspects of your application will inform the assessment. This includes:

* the project details
* responses to the selection criteria
* the content of mandatory attachments.

**We will assess all eligible applications against the below criteria.**

Note: The criteria relate to the program priorities listed in the [‘About the program’](#_About_the_program) section.

| Criteria | Weighting |
| --- | --- |
| 1. **Program overview**  * The application clearly describes your proposed Engage! project. This includes the aims, objectives and benefits for young people. The application aligns with the program’s objectives. * The application describes the local needs and opportunities for the program in your community. Use statistics, data and consultations conducted with young people. | 20% |
| 1. **Project delivery**  * The application sets out what the project will deliver. It defines expected outcomes including methods for measurement. It’s alignment to program priorities and activity categories is clear. * The project includes risk management processes. It outlines how the program will consider the Victorian Child Safe Standards to ensure the safety of young people taking part in Engage! events. * The project’s cost estimates and reach show value-for-money against the scale and number of activities/attendees. Its planned impact matches with the requested funding amount. | 30% |
| 1. **Meaningful participation and engagement with young people**  * The application outlines how young people will be supported to lead the planning, delivery and evaluation of your Engage! program. * The project provides meaningful training, mentoring and volunteering opportunities for young people to develop new skills. These skills support their transition to adult life. * Young people are rewarded and recognised for their contribution to the program and their local community. * The application outlines the strategies the project will use so the Engage! committees and events are inclusive and accessible to all young people. This includes those identifying as LGBTIQA+, multicultural and multifaith young people including from newly arrived and refugee communities, Aboriginal young people and young people living with disability. | 35% |
| 1. **Organisational experience and capability**  * The application shows your organisation’s capacity to deliver the program and achieve its objectives including:   + evidence of success in delivering youth-led initiatives   + strategies that foster connections, networks or partnerships to support the project and/or share learnings   + good governance, program management and risk management processes to oversee delivery and respond to challenges   + organisational commitment through staff resources or in-kind contributions. | 15% |

# Conditions of funding

Funded activities begin from January 2025. This includes refining project proposals and developing project plans. Projects must complete by 31 December 2027.

If successful, project details (project name, description and grant amount) will be published online at [Engage! 2025-27 grants to support youth development](https://www.vic.gov.au/engage-2025-2027) <https://www.vic.gov.au/engage-2025-2027>.

## Funding agreements

If successful, you must enter into a Victorian Common Funding Agreement (VCFA) with the department within 2 weeks of notification. If you do not accept the funding offer during this period, the department may withdraw it.

The VCFA outlines:

* the grant’s terms and conditions, including use of funds
* key deliverables and due dates
* reporting requirements.

## Program requirements

* You must submit any variation to the approved project to the department for approval before implementation.
* A youth worker (or other qualified person) must be available to support young people to take part in the program.
* Any events delivered through the program must be drug, alcohol and smoke-free, and fully supervised.
* All staff and people aged 18 or older who have unsupervised contact with young people in the program must have a Working with Children Check.
* The grant recipient must have policies and processes in place to meet the Victorian Child Safe Standards. This includes changes that came into effect from 1 July 2022.

## Payment of grant funds and reporting requirements

Funded organisations will:

* be paid after completing agreed project milestones and deliverables outlined in the VCFA
* complete progress reports including an update on progress against your project plan and budget
* submit a final report including a project acquittal and evidence of project outcomes at the end of the activities.

Funds must go to the project as described in the VCFA. Any unspent funds must go back to the department.

### Goods and services tax

* GST is included if the recipient organisation is registered for GST.
* GST will not be paid if the recipient organisation is not registered for GST or is a government entity (school, local council, etc.).

## Funding acknowledgement

Successful applicants must acknowledge funding from the government. We will provide guidelines to all successful grant recipients in the VCFA.

Activities to acknowledge government support include:

* logo presentation on any activity-related publications, media releases and promotional material
* inviting the minister to open 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 conduct your work.

## Insurance requirements

You must have public liability insurance of at least $10 million to cover all aspects of your project. The department may ask for proof of insurance that covers the project duration.

# More information

Please refer to the Frequently Asked Questions at [Engage! 2025-27 grants to support youth development](https://www.vic.gov.au/engage-2025-2027) https://www.vic.gov.au/engage-2025-2027.

For any questions, please email the Office for Youth in the department at [Engagegrants@dffh.vic.gov.au](mailto:Engagegrants@dffh.vic.gov.au).