

Future Ready

2025–2026 program guidelines

OFFICIAL

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In this document, ‘Aboriginal’ refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

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# Message from the Minister for Youth

I am thrilled to launch the Future Ready program.

Future Ready (formerly known as Advance) will provide pivotal opportunities for secondary school students around the state to meet new challenges, build confidence in their skills, and unleash their talents.

Through this program, we are offering two-year grants of between $24,000 and $56,000 to Victorian government secondary schools, not-for-profit community organisations and social enterprises.

Young people’s energy and enthusiasm are powerful catalysts for positive change.

Future Ready will support young people to achieve their full potential through activities including mentoring, leadership opportunities, recognised training, work-placement or volunteering. These experiences will set them up with lifelong skills that will build confidence, character and community.

I am proud that Future Ready has been designed to empower young people of all backgrounds, cultures, faiths and abilities. I warmly welcome applications that support all young people to be confident and strong in their identity and connected to their communities.

I encourage Victorian Government secondary schools, not-for-profit community organisations and social enterprises across Victoria to apply and help ready our young people for their bright futures.



**The Hon. Natalie Suleyman MP**

Minister for Youth

# 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.

Future Ready 2025–2026 offers two-year funding for government secondary schools,  
not-for-profit community organisations (in partnership with government secondary schools) and social enterprises (in partnership with government secondary schools) to deliver a variety of student supports. Activities will take place over the 2025 and 2026 school calendar years (from the start of Term 2, 2025 to the end of Term 4, 2026).

Through Future Ready, secondary school students will take part in valuable opportunities to understand their potential, develop their skills, reach their goals and be confident in their identity. This may involve a wide variety of activities that achieve the program priorities including (but not limited to):

* mentoring, supporting students to understand and reach their potential
* recognised training, work placement or volunteering, with a focus on practical, hands-on learning opportunities, supporting students on their path to higher education or employment
* leadership opportunities, supporting students to develop practical skills in teamwork, decision making, communication and project management
* inclusive learning and development opportunities, including creative learning (such as art and music), supporting students of all cultural and faith backgrounds and all abilities in an environment that is culturally safe, values diversity and supports students to connect to their identity.

Funding can also be used flexibly. It can cover transport to support students who may otherwise face barriers to taking part. More on this can be found below at [Activities or costs the program can fund](#_Activities_or_costs) and [Activities or costs that cannot be funded](#_Activities_or_costs_1).

## Program priorities

Future Ready will prioritise applications aligned to **three priority areas**:

1. **Young people achieve their goals through education, training, volunteering or employment.** Young people are positively engaged with and progress in education. They have the knowledge and skills to move into meaningful work or further study.
2. **Young people are respected and involved in decision making.** Young people have their voices, lived experience and solutions heard. They have genuine opportunities to influence decisions.
3. **Young people are confident and strong in their identity and culture.** Young people are connected to their culture, language, beliefs and identity. They feel accepted and valued within their communities.

These principles align with [*Our promise, your future: Victoria’s youth strategy 2022–2027*](https://www.vic.gov.au/victorias-youth-strategy-2022-2027)*[[1]](#footnote-2)*.

We will also prioritise applications that show your organisation has capabilityin key areas:

* As a school, you can deliver effective supports to help young people improve their educational and wellbeing outcomes.
* As a not-for-profit community sector organisation or social enterprise, you can leverage existing or emerging connections, networks or partnerships with schools to reach young people and improve their educational and wellbeing outcomes.
* You can apply youth-led approaches to program delivery.
* You can support a significant number of students, showing value for money.
* You can deliver program activities using staff resourcing and/or in-kind contributions.

## Available funding

Grants worth between $12,000 and $28,000 each year are available over two years. (This is a total of $24,000 to $56,000 over 2025 and 2026.)

Organisations delivering the program across multiple schools can access the maximum grant amount for each school they are partnering with. This is capped at three times the maximum grant amount (up to $168,000 over two years) for delivery across at least three schools. This does not prevent organisations from delivering in more than three schools. For example, an organisation delivering the program across four or more schools will still be eligible for up to $168,000 over two years.

**Example funding amounts:**

For delivery in at least one school:

* a minimum of $12,000 each year, over two years ($24,000 over 2025 and 2026)
* a maximum of $28,000 each year, over two years ($56,000 over 2025 and 2026).

For delivery in at least two schools:

* a minimum of $12,000 each year, over two years ($24,000 over 2025 and 2026)
* a maximum of $56,000 each year, over two years ($112,000 over 2025 and 2026).

For delivery in at least three schools:

* a minimum of $12,000 each year, over two years ($24,000 over 2025 and 2026)
* a maximum of $84,000 each year, over two years ($168,00 over 2025 and 2026).

Applications for the maximum funding must include a proposal to support at least 20 students per school per year (at least 60 students for organisations delivering Future Ready in 3 or more schools). We may prioritise applications proposing to support a higher number of students. We will consider this in balance with other program priorities (outlined above).

Organisations can only submit one application per funding round.

## Activity period

This grant round supports events and activities that take place between the start of Term 2 (22 April 2025) and the end of the following calendar year (31 December 2026).

## Timeline

* Applications open at 9:00 am on 7 October 2024.
* Applications close at 3:00 pm on 29 November 2024.

Refer to the [How to apply](#_How_to_apply) section for more details.

# Eligibility criteria

## Eligibility overview

To be eligible to apply for funding through the Future Readyprogram:

* your application must be submitted by an [eligible organisation](#_Eligible_organisations) as outlined below
* you must be seeking funding for [eligible activities](#_Activities_the_program) as outlined below
* 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 [mandatory attachments](#_Mandatory_attachments) in an acceptable format.

## Eligible organisations

Funding is available to organisations based in Victoria.

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

* **a registered Victorian government secondary school**,or
* **a not-for-profit organisation** incorporated under the *Corporations Act 2001* and registered as a not-for-profit through the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission, or
* **an Aboriginal entity** that is incorporated including Aboriginal not-for-profit organisations, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs), Traditional Owner groups and land trusts, or
* **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 can apply using an auspice. Refer to [Auspiced applications](#_Auspiced_applications) for more information.

### Entities that are *not eligible* include:

* all government entities and agencies
* individuals and sole traders
* private (for profit) companies
* non-government schools
* 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 can still apply if an eligible organisation has agreed to manage the grant for you.

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 called 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 (called a Victorian Common Funding Agreement or ‘VCFA’)
* all legal and financial responsibility for 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 between:

* community organisations (or social enterprises) with secondary schools
* two or more secondary schools.

Organisations or schools can work together on a single application. These applications should:

* show strong value for money
* achieve wide benefit (reach a significant number of students)
* aim to achieve common goals and outcomes for all organisations or groups involved.

For example, if there are several schools or community organisations in the same region or neighbouring regions that would benefit from working together in delivering Future Ready, these organisations can submit a partnership application to coordinate and access and share resources as a larger group.

One organisation will need to:

* identify as the **lead applicant** and submit the application on behalf of the partnership
* nominate the primary contact person coordinating the partnership and application.

Community organisations that deliver Future Ready across more than one school can access the maximum grant amount (over 2 years) for each school they partner with. They would need to provide a letter of support from each school to confirm their commitment to the project. Applications for the maximum funding must include a proposal to support at least 20 students, per school, per year.

We may prioritise applications proposing to support a higher number of students, considering other [program priorities](#_Program_priorities_1) (outlined above).

## Activities or costs the program can fund

Eligible activities and costs may include:

* all activities that address the program priorities and costs directly associated with delivering associated objectives, and supporting students to take part
* a reasonable amount of funding (based on your project’s scale) may be allocated for project coordination and staffing costs including:
  + ongoing staff or short-term staffing costs directly related to the activity
  + relevant training and development activities to enhance the skills, knowledge and safety of young people and volunteers in the program
* reasonable transport costs to support participants, staff and volunteers to get to and from program activities – covering transport costs for students is highly encouraged, particularly for students in rural and regional areas where these costs can be a barrier to taking part
* initiatives that support higher education or employment pathways for students
* inclusive social or cultural events or opportunities for creative learning (such as art and music), if they align with the program priorities.

## Activities or costs that cannot be funded

Activities or costs that will not be funded include:

* activities outside of Victoria
* activities that are already funded through another local, state or Commonwealth Government program
* buying, maintaining or upgrading facilities or non-related equipment
* admin, staff or operational costs that are not directly associated with the implementing or delivering the project
* venue hire fees where the applicant owns the venue (the value of this cost can be included in as an in-kind contribution)
* significant equipment purchases for use beyond the scope of the project.

## Mandatory attachments

Eligible applications must include the following:

* For partnerships, a letter of support from each partnering organisation or school. This should include details on each partner’s role in delivering the program.
* For auspice arrangements, a letter of intent (or similar) from the auspice organisation.
* Social enterprises must attach their constitution with their application.

# How to apply

Applications must be in by 3:00 pm on 29 November 2024 via the [DFFH Grants Gateway](https://grantsgateway.dffh.vic.gov.au/)[[2]](#footnote-3).

Checklist for completing a grant application

| Application stage | Requirements |
| --- | --- |
| **Applications open**  7 October 2024 | * Read the program guidelines (this document). * Check that your organisation and proposed activity meet the [eligibility criteria](#_Eligibility_criteria_1). * [Read grant writing tips on the department’s website](https://www.dffh.vic.gov.au/how-write-good-grant-applications)[[3]](#footnote-4). * Contact the Office for Youth if you have any questions: [futureready@dffh.vic.gov.au](mailto:futureready@dffh.vic.gov.au). |
| **Prepare and submit application**  7 October – 29 November 2024 | * Register or log in to the [DFFH Grants Gateway](https://grantsgateway.dffh.vic.gov.au/)[[4]](#footnote-5). * Find the grant under ‘Available Grants’. * Complete the online application form and submit by 3:00 pm on 29 November 2024.   + You can save your application as a draft and finish it later.   + Attach all supporting documents with the application.   + You will receive an acknowledgement of submission via email.   + Please note the application number for reference when contacting us about your application. |
| **Applications close**  3:00 pm, 29 November 2024 | * To ensure a fair process, we cannot accept applications after the closing date. * We will publish successful outcomes and notify applicants in February 2025. |

# Assessment process

All applications to the Future Ready programwill undergo the following review and assessment process:

| Process stage | Details of process |
| --- | --- |
| **Eligibility assessment** | * All applications will be reviewed against the [eligibility criteria](#_Eligibility_criteria_1). * The assessment decides 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 panel has representatives from the department and other relevant government bodies. |
| **Funding recommendations** | * The panel makes recommendations to the Minister for Youth. |
| **Application outcome** | * The Minister for Youth makes the final decision based on the panel’s recommendations. * All applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application by email. |

## Application outcomes

All applicants will receive written notification of the outcome of their application. If your application is successful, the department will advise you of any specific conditions attached to the grant.

Unsuccessful applicants can ask for feedback within one month of being advised of the outcome. We aim to give written feedback within 20 business days of a request.

All decisions to do with the funding application, eligibility and assessment process are final. This includes any decision to offer or award a grant under the program or to withdraw 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 and the content of mandatory attachments.

Eligible applications will be assessed against the criteria listed below.

Note: the criteria are linked to the program priorities listed under [About the program](#_About_the_program).

| Criteria | Weighting |
| --- | --- |
| 1. **Program overview**  * The application clearly describes the proposed Future Ready program for delivery. This includes the aims, objectives and benefits for young people. These link to [the three program priorities](#_Program_priorities_1). * The application describes the local needs and opportunities for the program in your community. Use statistics, data and consultations conducted with young people. | 15% |
| 1. **Project delivery**  * The application clearly says what the project will deliver. It defines expected outcomes including methods for measurement. Project delivery aligns with the program’s objectives. These are described under [About the program](#_Program_priorities). * The project includes risk management processes. It outlines how the Victorian Child Safe Standards will be implemented to ensure the safety and wellbeing of young people taking part in Future Ready. * The project’s cost estimates and student reach show value for money. The scale, number of participants and overall impact align with the requested funding amount. * Project delivery incorporates youth-led approaches. | 35% |
| 1. **Effective support for all students to reach their potential**  * The application outlines strategies that will be implemented so the project is inclusive and accessible to students of all culture and faith backgrounds. This includes young people from newly arrived and refugee communities, Aboriginal young people, young carers, young people with disability and LGBTIQA+ young people. * The application outlines how the project will reach priority students:   + young people facing complex challenges to take part in their education and local community and those either disengaged or at risk of disengagement from education   + young people in areas of socioeconomic disadvantage. * The project offers opportunities for transferable skill development for students such as opportunities:   + for hands-on learning   + to lead the planning and delivery of Future Ready activities   + to develop skills in decision making, communication, teamwork, project management and leadership. | 30% |
| 1. **Organisational experience and capability**  * The application shows your organisation’s capacity to successfully deliver the program and achieve its objectives, including:   + (for community organisations) evidence of past success in partnering with schools and delivering programs in schools   + strategies to foster connections, networks or partnerships to help deliver the project and/or share learnings   + good governance, program management and risk management processes to oversee delivery and respond to challenges   + your commitment to supporting program delivery through staff resources or in-kind contributions. | 20% |

# Conditions of funding

* Any variation to the approved project must be submitted to the department for approval before starting.
* A youth worker, teacher or other qualified person must be available to support young people to take part in the program.
* All staff and people aged 18 or older who have unsupervised contact with young people must have a Working with Children Check.
* The grant recipient must have policies and processes in place to meet the [Victorian Child Safe Standards](https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/child-safe-standards)[[5]](#footnote-6). This includes changes that came into effect from 1 July 2022.

## Funding agreements

If successful, you must enter a Victorian Common Funding Agreement (VCFA) with the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing within 30 days of notification. If a funding offer is not accepted during this period, it may be withdrawn.

The VCFA outlines:

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

All funded activities must be completed by 31 December 2026.

If successful, project details including project name, description and grant amount will be published on Victorian Government websites.

## Payment of grant funds and reporting requirements

Funded organisations will:

* be paid on completing agreed project milestones and deliverables outlined in the VCFA
* complete progress reports including updates on progress against your project plan and budget
* deliver a final report including a project acquittal and evidence of project outcomes.

Funds must be spent on the project as described in the VCFA and any unspent funds must be returned to the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing.

### Goods and services tax

* GST will be paid if the grant is funding a good or service and if the recipient organisation is registered for GST.
* GST will not be paid if the recipient organisation is not registered for GST, a government entity (such as a school) or if the grant is *not* funding a good or service.

## Funding acknowledgement

Successful applicants must acknowledge funding from the Victorian Government. Guidelines are included the VCFA.

Activities to acknowledge Victorian 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 coverage and any other insurance that is relevant to the activities of your project. The department may ask for proof of insurance that covers the project period.

# More information

Please refer to:

* *Frequently asked questions*
* *How to apply* factsheet

on [Future Ready grants](https://www.vic.gov.au/future-ready-grants) https://www.vic.gov.au/future-ready-grants.

You can also contact the Future Ready program team in the Office for Youth at [futureready@dffh.vic.gov.au](mailto:futureready@dffh.vic.gov.au).

1. https://www.vic.gov.au/victorias-youth-strategy-2022-2027 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. https://grantsgateway.dffh.vic.gov.au [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. https://www.dffh.vic.gov.au/how-write-good-grant-applications [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. https://grantsgateway.dffh.vic.gov.au [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/child-safe-standards [↑](#footnote-ref-6)