JOBS VICTORIA INNOVATION FUND

Round Two
Program Guidelines
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<th>Version number</th>
<th>12</th>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>April 2018</td>
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<td>Summary of change</td>
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1. INTRODUCTION

Victoria’s job growth over the last few years has been strong. This includes the creation of more than 100,000 jobs in the year to end January 2018, of which more than 66,000 were full-time. Despite this, 2016 Census data indicates that there are approximately 210,000 Victorians who are unemployed, approximately one in five of which has been unemployed for 12 months or more. Furthermore, certain Victorian demographic cohorts as well as geographic locations experience significantly higher than average rates of unemployment, leading to pockets of significant disadvantage.

The Victorian Government has allocated over $68 million to establish Jobs Victoria to ensure that all Victorians have the opportunity to share in the social and economic benefits that come from employment. The aim of Jobs Victoria is that jobseekers facing barriers to employment benefit from a coordinated and streamlined approach to delivering tailored employment support that not only increases work readiness but also results in sustainable employment outcomes. To date, more than 5,200 Victorians who face barriers to employment have been supported into work through Jobs Victoria.

The Jobs Victoria Innovation Fund is an element of Jobs Victoria that has been established to enable the Victorian Government to support new and innovative approaches to employment support and employment services through the provision of small grants. The Fund aims to support projects that deliver pathways to employment for long-term unemployed jobseekers through the improved effectiveness of existing support services or new approaches to employment support that improve access to jobs and deliver employment outcomes. The Jobs Victoria Innovation Fund is administered by the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources (DEDJTR).

The awarding of grants under Round One of the Jobs Victoria Innovation Fund has been completed. Details of projects that received funding under Round One are available at https://jobs.vic.gov.au/about-jobs-victoria/jobs-victoria-innovation-fund.

These guidelines relate to applications for funding under Round Two of the Jobs Victoria Innovation Fund. Up to $2.45 million is available to fund projects under Round Two.

The Victorian Government has allocated over $68 million to establish Jobs Victoria to ensure that all Victorians have the opportunity to share in the social and economic benefits that come from employment.
2. FUND OBJECTIVES

The Jobs Victoria Innovation Fund will provide grants to support new and innovative approaches to employment support and the delivery of employment services for long-term unemployed jobseekers facing barriers to employment. These barriers to employment may include factors such as:

- Limited or no work experience relevant to existing job opportunities
- Low education and skills levels
- Lack of professional networks and personal support
- Lack of job search experience in a dynamic labour market
- Lack of mobility or access to transport
- Personal issues that require flexible employment options.

Projects must address one or more of the following objectives:

- **Improving connections between long-term jobseekers and employers to deliver employment outcomes** – this could be through new and innovative approaches to jobseeker engagement and support provision, identifying and trialling new employment pathways, new and innovative approaches to promoting the benefits that jobseekers facing barriers to employment offer to employers, assisting employers to make their workplaces more inclusive and supportive of staff from diverse backgrounds and experiences, or other similar initiatives; and

- **Improving the capability of Victoria’s employment services sector** to adequately support jobseekers facing barriers to employment through improved knowledge, research and capacity.

Proposals for innovative place-based approaches that target locations with above average unemployment rates or complex employment issues will also be considered.

Projects may take the form of:

- a pilot of a new and innovative employment support service
- an action research or similar research based project analysing a new and innovative employment support service; and/or
- another similar innovative model.
All proposals are required to incorporate an evaluation component to measure the benefits and identify key learnings of the project.

All proposals are required to identify opportunities for knowledge sharing and must demonstrate the potential to be transferable, repeatable and/or scalable.

**DISABILITY PROJECT STREAM**

A total of $700,000 of funding under the Jobs Victoria Innovation Fund has been set aside for a Disability Project Stream to specifically support new and innovative approaches to employment support and employment services for people with disability.

This funding has been contributed by the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services to support the implementation of Every opportunity: Victorian economic participation plan for people with disability 2018-2020 a key priority of Absolutely everyone: state disability plan 2017-2020.

Every opportunity recognises that Victorians with disability remain significantly underrepresented in the workforce and that more can be done to increase sustainable employment pathways.

Proposals for funding under the Disability Project Stream are required to comply with the objectives of the Fund.

**FUNDING EXCLUSIONS**

The Jobs Victoria Innovation Fund will not support proposals for:

- the duplication or expansion of existing services
- the establishment or ongoing operational costs of an organisation (including social enterprises)
- the recruitment or training of staff within the applying or any partner organisation (unless associated with the delivery of the project).

3. **ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

To be eligible for funding, an applicant must:

- be an incorporated entity with an Australian Business Number (ABN)
- have an organisational presence in Victoria
- have sufficient resources to manage the proposed project.
4. FUNDING

LEVEL OF FUNDING

Grants of between $50,000 and $250,000 will be available for any one project. Grants of more than $250,000 will be considered in exceptional circumstances and on a case by case basis. Applications are required to demonstrate how the proposed outcomes justify the grant investment and why Victorian Government funding is required for the delivery of the project.

Applicants are advised to explore the use of partnerships and/or the leveraging of additional funding in the development of their proposals. Indicatively the department will expect to support up to 75 per cent of total project costs, depending on project need.

PAYMENT STRUCTURE

Grant payments will be linked to the achievement of agreed milestone deliverables. A grant agreement will specify the payment arrangements, but an indicative payment schedule is as follows:

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<th>Component</th>
<th>Payment amount</th>
<th>Milestone</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Approximately 35% of total funding</td>
<td>Commencement/signing of contract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Approximately 60% of total funding</td>
<td>Satisfactory progress toward agreed milestones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Approximately 5% of total funding</td>
<td>Compliance with contractual requirements, such as completion reporting and financial acquittal</td>
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TIMING

Projects will be required to commence implementation within three months of receiving grant funding. Specific payment dates and associated milestone deliverables will be negotiated with each funded organisation in line with the approved project and will form part of the grant agreement.
5. APPLICATION AND ASSESSMENT PROCESS

ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Applications will be subject to a staged assessment process, as follows:

Step 1 – Expression of Interest
Applicants complete the online application form to clearly and succinctly describe the proposed project and how it meets the Fund objectives. These will be assessed within the department and in consultation with regional offices and other Victorian Government departments where necessary.

Step 2 – Panel interview
Applicants whose project proposals have been supported will be invited to an interview with a selection panel of departmental representatives. Applicants are expected to provide an overview of their proposal and should be ready to respond to questions concerning the specifics of the proposal.

Applicants will be:
• required to provide an implementation plan for the delivery of the project, and
• subject to a Financial Risk Assessment, which will require the submission of financial reports such as balance sheets, profit and loss statements, and business plans to the department for review.

Step 3 – Approval
The Minister for Industry and Employment will receive all recommendations from the department and will determine the final application approvals and allocation of grant funding.
In assessing project proposals, the department will consider the following:

- **Relevance:** The proposed project aligns with the objectives of the Jobs Victoria Innovation Fund.

- **New and innovative:** The project is a new approach, process or technology or a significant adaptation from conventional employment support methods. The proposal also demonstrates an awareness of existing State and Commonwealth programs and services and will not duplicate these.

- **Evidence based:** The proposal provides evidence of the problem within the Victorian employment services sector that the project will address. The proposal clearly articulates the project’s targets and outcomes and how the proposed project model is expected to achieve these.

- **Growth and knowledge sharing:** The project has the potential to be transferable, repeatable and/or scalable including in other contexts. There are clear project processes to document lessons learned and share these with the department and other organisations.

- **Organisational capacity:** The proposal demonstrates the current capacity of the organisation and its partners, including infrastructure, to successfully deliver the outcomes proposed within the duration of the Funds operation. Proposals should identify any prior demonstrated experience or expertise of the staff and organisation in delivering similar or relevant projects.

- **Value for money:** The proposal demonstrates how the proposed outcomes justify the funding sought. There is a clear benefit to the Victorian Government. Partnerships and/or other leveraged funding sources have been identified.
6. GRANT APPROVAL AND GRANT AGREEMENT

The Minister for Industry and Employment is responsible for the approval of grant funding. Subject to acceptance of a formal letter of offer sent from the Minister to a successful applicant organisation, a legally binding grant agreement will be prepared describing the services to be delivered, proposed outcomes, milestones, timeframes and conditions of payment. Services can only commence once the agreement is executed by both parties.

The State of Victoria has full discretion and authority to determine which organisations are eligible to receive funding under the program and the amount of funding offered.

The State of Victoria also reserves the right to withdraw the offer of funding if the grant agreement is not finalised or if the project has not commenced within a specified timeframe.

REPORTING

Successful applicants will be required to enter into a grant agreement with the State of Victoria detailing all funding obligations and conditions.

Successful applicants will be required to:

• cooperate with the department in communicating and promoting the benefits of the program, such as the preparation of media releases and case studies
• consult with the department prior to the publication of any promotional materials relating to Jobs Victoria
• liaise with the department to coordinate any events or announcements related to the activity
• provide annual company and financial reports upon request
• report on project delivery, as specified by the department, including details of any clients assisted, activities undertaken, progress against milestones and achievement of agreed outcomes
• contribute information on outcomes for use in program evaluation reviews and/or marketing materials
• cooperate fully with evaluations undertaken either during or after the completion of the Fund
• acknowledge financial and any other support from the Victorian Government according to the Acknowledgement and Publicity Guidelines as amended from time to time, which can be found at www.dpc.vic.gov.au/index.php/communication/brand-victoria

NEGOTIATION ON GRANT FUNDS

The State of Victoria reserves the right to negotiate with recommended applicants on the level of funding and outcomes.

Payment of grant funds is only to be made following documented evidence of milestone conditions being met. The approval and allocation of funding will comply with the Financial Management Act.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The department will, to the extent permitted by law, treat all information as strictly confidential and commercial-in-confidence where relevant. Any personal information will be managed in accordance with the published Privacy Policy, which can be found at www.business.vic.gov.au/privacy.
7. CONTACTS AND FURTHER INFORMATION

For more information visit the Jobs Victoria website: https://jobs.vic.gov.au/about-jobs-victoria/jobs-victoria-innovation-fund

Email: jobsvictoria@ecodev.vic.gov.au

Phone: 1300 208 575

Please note that engagement with the department or any Victorian Government representative does not constitute endorsement of any application for funding.