

**Regional Jobs and
Infrastructure Fund**

Regional Infrastructure Fund
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 Regional Infrastructure Fund (RIF) component of the RJIF.

2. Description and objectives of the program

2.1 Regional Infrastructure Fund

The RIF is the primary infrastructure program of the RJIF. It will provide funding for major infrastructure projects through the following four program streams:

- Visitor Economy
- Productive and Liveable Cities and Centres
- Enabling Infrastructure
- Rural Development.

The RIF aims to harness key regional strengths to improve the productivity and liveability of regional Victoria. It will invest in major infrastructure projects to create or enhance the conditions for economic growth, and to build diversified and sustainable regional economies that are resilient to change.

2.2 Program streams

The objectives of each program stream are described below. More detail on each program stream is available at www.rdv.vic.gov.au.

2.2.1 Visitor economy

This program stream aims to harness the economic strength of regional Victoria's visitor economy. It will create new or redevelop existing tourism and cultural assets that improve the attractiveness of regional Victoria and stimulate increased visitation and private sector investment. These projects will diversify regional Victoria's economic and social base.

2.2.2 Productive and liveable cities and centres

This program stream aims to stimulate new investment opportunities and jobs growth.

It aims to increase the use and dollar-spend within regional Victorian cities, centres, towns and precincts as well as improve access and connectivity to transport, retail and service hubs. Projects supported under this program stream will coordinate a number of economic and social services and activities and create or enhance economic growth conditions.

2.2.3 Enabling infrastructure

This program stream supports regional industries to innovate, build resilience and improve adaptability to changing economic and environmental conditions. This program stream recognises that investments in strategic and enabling infrastructure are critical to providing a competitive environment for existing and emerging regional industries to operate in.

At the same time, they help unlock the region's growth potential.

2.2.4 Rural development

This program stream will assist rural Victorian businesses and communities to create opportunities for economic growth. It will also assist in enhancing the appeal and liveability of rural towns and surrounding areas by improving local infrastructure.

This program stream is only available to the 38 rural local government areas (refer section 2.5). Separate guidelines are in place for this program and are available at www.rdv.vic.gov.au.

2.3 Activities that will generally not be funded

The following activities will generally not be considered for funding:

- requests for retrospective funding where projects have commenced (i.e. equipment purchased, contracts entered into or construction has begun), or those projects which are completed prior to receiving funding approval
- feasibility studies, business plans, cost benefit analyses and economic impact studies
- projects requiring ongoing funding from the Victorian Government
- ongoing operating costs or salary subsidies
- private sector projects undertaken as a result of a government contract
- projects where funding is normally provided by other state, commonwealth or local government sources
- projects that are considered streetscaping and beautification activities (refer to the Rural Development program stream for these types of activities within the 38 rural local government areas)
- projects primarily 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
- local government authorities
- government departments and agencies
- not for profit organisations and community groups that:
 - are an incorporated body, cooperative, or
 - 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

Individuals are not eligible to apply.

2.5 Definition of regional and rural 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 support

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 and local government, community, private sector and regional organisations. 'In kind' contributions are not accepted as part of the funding contribution except in the Rural Development program stream.

3. Application and assessment process

To ensure the suitability of projects, all applicants will need to go through the following four-step process.

Step 1: Prior to application

Prior to submitting an application, applicants are advised to:

- read these guidelines and the information sheet of the relevant RIF program stream carefully to establish eligibility
- discuss the proposed application with your local RDV office
- read the terms and conditions for the funding offered.

Applicants should note that projects may not proceed to the formal application and assessment process where the project:

- can be implemented through another government funding program, and if appropriate, applicants may be referred to this funding program
- does not relate to the program streams of the RIF
- does not strongly demonstrate economic, social and environmental benefits
- is not implementation ready
- is not strongly aligned to state or regional priorities
- does not strongly demonstrate a need
- does not maximise funding support from other sources.

An RDV officer will help you determine your project's potential suitability, before an application form is completed. See Section 5 of this guide for RDV contact details.

Step 2: Prepare an application

Applicants should use the application form to clearly and succinctly describe the project by detailing: the challenge or opportunity it is looking to address; the objectives; the desired outcomes; the outputs to be delivered; and any infrastructure requirements. Documentation to support the project such as a feasibility study, business plan or letter of support should be attached to the application.

GST

Applicants should note that all project costs included in the application must be exclusive of GST. The grant to be paid by RDV will be 'grossed up' by the amount of GST, provided the applicant provides details of registration for the GST, or proof of exemption from being required to register.

Who signs the application?

Applications from local government authorities must be signed by the Chief Executive Officer. Applications from other parties must be signed by the Chief Executive Officer (or equivalent).

Core RIF criteria

Applicants will be asked to demonstrate the project's ability to address each of the following criteria:

- a) economic benefits
- b) social and environmental benefits
- c) alignment with state and regional priorities and demonstrated project need
- d) demonstrated project feasibility and delivery
- e) financial viability
- f) maximising value to the state
- g) program stream criteria.

a) Economic benefits

Applications should clearly demonstrate how the proposed project will:

- result in new investment and complement other investments in the designated region
- create jobs or retain jobs and stimulate regional economic growth
- facilitate the integration of your region into global markets (e.g. generate, promote or expand exports /export markets and/or replace imports)
- result in strategic industry development or build resilience in the supply chain
- remove barriers to create a direct incentive for business investment in a regional location.

b) Social and environmental benefits

Applications should clearly demonstrate how the proposed project:

- provides adequate social return to the community
- is consistent with environmentally sustainable development and results in demonstrated environmental benefits e.g. addresses the impacts of climate change on the economy, environment and community
- builds on identified regional strengths and/or
- has relevant community and industry support.

c) Alignment with state and regional priorities and demonstrated project need

Applications will need to demonstrate how the project aligns with the relevant regional strategic plan priorities and any relevant state government policies (e.g. tourism policy). Applicants can contact the relevant RDV regional office to determine the alignment of the project with the relevant regional strategic plan priorities. For contact details please refer to section 5 of this guide.

Applications will need to clearly demonstrate the project need including the problem that the project is seeking to resolve and the compelling reason for state government assistance.

d) Demonstrated project feasibility and delivery

Applications should clearly demonstrate:

- that all legal, land tenure, planning and environmental issues have been identified and resolved or satisfactory resolution strategies are in place
- access to suitable project management in both the developmental and operational phases of the project
- that project risks have been identified and strategies are in place to manage them.

e) Financial viability

Applicants will be asked to provide copies of annual reports and audited financial statements covering the last three years with their application. This will enable RDV to assess the financial viability of the applicant and their ability to manage and complete the project.

Note: Victorian Government departments and statutory agencies, local government authorities and publicly funded universities and educational institutions are exempt from this step.

f) Maximising value to the state

Applications should demonstrate and provide evidence of how the project maximises value to the state through leveraging funding from a range of sources, including commonwealth and local government, community, private sector and regional organisations.

Applicants must be able to demonstrate that the viability of the project is not dependent on ongoing funding or continuing government support.

Where future operating costs are an issue, the applicant needs to clearly demonstrate how these costs will be underwritten without recurrent subsidy from Victorian Government sources.

Applicants should consider contacting the Industry Capability Network (www.icn.org.au), which can work collaboratively with applicants to help identify competitive local suppliers.

g) Program stream criteria

Applicants may need to demonstrate how the project responds to the relevant program stream criteria (see section 2.1 of this guide for details of the program stream operating under the RIF).

Step 3: Assessment process

Applications will undergo a two-stage assessment process. The first stage involves determining the proposed project's eligibility. This will be done by assessing the project's ability to meet the core RIF criteria and the relevant program stream criteria. The first stage will also consider key risks and issues associated with the project.

In the second stage, the application will proceed to the Regional Infrastructure Development Committee (RIDC) for assessment prior to consideration by the Minister for Regional Development.

The RIDC will make a recommendation to the Minister after considering a range of matters including the project's fit with the eligibility criteria, alignment with government policy, availability of funding, and the outcomes realised from previous funding, if any, provided to the applicant.

The RIDC is chaired by RDV and includes representatives from the Department of Premier and Cabinet, the Department of Treasury and Finance and the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources (DEDJTR). Where relevant, comments and advice will be sought from a range of state government agencies.

Step 4: Approval process

The Minister for Regional Development will consider the advice received from the RIDC and where appropriate, advice from other Ministers, and determine whether or not to approve the application for funding.

In the case of applications seeking funding of \$5 million or more, the Victorian Treasurer's authorisation is also required.

Applicants are advised of the decision relating to their application in writing. Successful applicants will receive a letter of offer from the Minister for Regional Development. The letter of offer will outline the funding obligations attached to the offer of funding.

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 www.rdv.vic.gov.au or via contacting RDV on **(03) 9027 5456**.

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 signed, 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 project's success 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 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 output 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 governments 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 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, AUS
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, AUS 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. 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

