

REGIONAL EVENTS FUND GUIDELINES





MINISTER FOR TOURISM, SPORT AND MAJOR EVENTS STEVE DIMOPOULOS

The Victorian Government's Regional Events Fund supports a robust and sustainable calendar of events and one-of-a-kind experiences that bring significant economic benefits to communities across Victoria. But more than that, the program brings communities together in celebration of what makes our regions so special – amazing natural wonders, 20,000 year old rock art, world-class food and wine, and tourism attractions you cannot find anywhere else.

Since 2016, the Regional Events Fund has supported more than 350 events and festivals across music, arts and culture, food and drink, and sport, bringing tens of thousands of visitors to our regions.

This year, the Victorian Government is proud to expand the investment as part of the Regional Tourism and Events Program for event proposals over the next 4 years.

The Regional Events Fund will support a program of events across all corners of the state and give event organisers even more reasons to bring world-class events to regional Victoria. Perhaps most importantly, it will create a raft of new opportunities for communities to get behind events in their towns – coming up with ideas and showcasing what makes their regions special. Regional events bring visitors, boost jobs, support local businesses and supply chains, while fostering civic pride throughout Victoria and further entrenching our state as Australia's events capital.

I look forward to seeing what bold, diverse and exciting events and experiences this round of funding brings to regional Victoria.



REGIONAL EVENTS FUND GUIDELINES

The Regional Events Fund (REF) has been established to attract and support events held in regional Victoria, that bring visitors from outside the region, create job opportunities and contribute to the local visitor economy.

Since the fund began in 2016 it has supported more than 350 events across regional Victoria, attracting thousands of visitors to the regions and boosting Victoria's credentials as an events destination.

As a component of the recently announced Regional Tourism and Events Fund, the Regional Events Fund has been extended over the period from 2023/24 to 2026/27.

This investment will continue to showcase everything that regional Victoria has to offer – creating new jobs and attracting more visitors from across Victoria, Australia and the world ensuring cities and towns across regional Victoria can benefit.

Objectives

The REF supports the attraction, development, marketing and growth of events in regional Victoria with the aim of:

- increasing economic benefits by driving visitation from outside the region, and the State, and extending length of stay and yield;
- showcasing Victoria's key regional tourism attributes and build Victoria's reputation as an events destination;
- delivering strong benefits to the host region's community; and
- developing a sustainable calendar of regional events.

Support will be considered for events that:

- can deliver economic impact and priority will be given to events held over more than one day;
- drive visitation from outside the local area (intrastate/ interstate);
- provide a benefit to the host city's community and/or showcase homegrown events;
- demonstrate growth and event innovation;
- align with State and regional tourism brands and attributes;
- align with broader government priorities;
- show financial support beyond the State Government including, but not limited to, local government;
- demonstrate financial sustainability and management capacity;
- are positioned and staged to derive greatest benefit (outside of holiday periods or long weekends);
- appropriately showcase and celebrate Victorian First Nations culture;
- rebuild tourism in regions impacted by natural disasters or designated areas of priority;
- demonstrate consideration of local supply chains and showcase Victorian produce; and
- demonstrate considerations to minimise waste and negative environmental impacts and promote sustainability.

Funding Streams

The REF is available through three funding streams.

Funding Stream	Investment Rationale	Purpose of Funding	Timing
1. Regional Event Acquisition (REA)	<p>One off or ongoing major events for the State, held in regional locations that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> are exclusive to Victoria have the capacity to attract large scale visitation from core markets are of international or national significance deliver state-wide profile to a region due to the scale of the event are aligned to the strategic pillars of Sport, Creative, Culinary and Festivals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acquisition Costs associated with securing, hosting, marketing and delivering the event 	Applications received and reviewed on an on-going basis. Discussion must be held with Visit Victoria prior to submission.
2. Event Growth and Development (EGD) Up to \$500,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Events that can demonstrate plans to achieve economic impact Existing events that have demonstrated economic impact growth Existing events that have demonstrated innovation in delivery and/or content Medium to large scale events Capacity to attract intrastate and interstate visitation Events of national, state or regional significance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of innovative strategies to increase visitation for existing events Event development Feasibility planning Multi-year support for events that have a proven track record of success Operational support, capped at 50 per cent of total funding request Event resource support, capped at 25 per cent of total funding request 	3 funding rounds per year
3. Event Industry Support (EIS) Up to \$50,000	<p>Events that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> have the capacity to attract intrastate and interstate visitation are of state or regional significance deliver strong benefits to the host region's community Investment will generate an audience commensurate with funding request 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offset costs of marketing to an intrastate audience Strategies to increase event capability Operational support, capped at 50 per cent of total funding request Event resource support, capped at 25 per cent of total funding request 	Applications assessed on a monthly basis

Eligibility Criteria

Eligible Applicants

Applications will be considered from:

- Private sector organisations (where projects will deliver a clear public benefit);
- Victorian Local Government Authorities;
- Regional Tourism Boards (RTB) and Visitor Economy Partnerships (VEP);
- Not for profit organisations, including sporting, cultural and community groups that are an incorporated body, cooperative or association; or
- Joint proponents/consortia applications (identifying the consortia lead agency for funding).

Funded organisations must:

- have an Australian Business Number (ABN); and
- have a minimum of \$20 million public liability insurance and other relevant insurance cover.

Ineligible events

The REF will not allocate funding to support:

- Community events;
- Agricultural/country shows/farmers markets;
- Charity fundraising events;
- Regional racing carnivals;
- Business events and conferences, including trade/exhibitor shows;
- Events with religious ceremony or celebration as the principal focus such as Easter or Christmas celebrations; and
- Community public holiday celebrations.

What will not be funded

The REF is a competitive funding program and applicants should not assume they will receive funding, nor the level of funding requested. Funding allocations will be determined by the strength of the application, alignment with the REF objectives and benchmarking against other events of similar size and scale.

The REF will not fund:

- Events that do not align with the REF objectives;
- Events that have failed to acquit previous funding;
- Applications that are incomplete or fail to meet the fund requirements;
- Events where the funding being requested has been provided by other state and Commonwealth sources for similar outcomes;
- Events that do not demonstrate benefits and attendance estimates commensurate with the funding requested;
- Events staged outside Victoria;
- Purchase of assets;
- Purchase of land;
- Rental or lease of office space;
- Prize money and charitable donations;
- Events with commencement dates which do not align with the specified time frame for each stream as detailed [here](#); or
- Events that commence after 31 December 2027.

Applying for a REF Grant

Applicants seeking Stream 2 or Stream 3 funding from the REF must contact the Regional Tourism Boards (RTB) or Visitor Economy Partnership (VEP) for the area in which the event is to be staged. Consultation with the RTB/VEP will help to determine the tourism strength of the proposed activity and alignment to the regional tourism brand attributes. This consultation must take place prior to submitting a REF proposal for consideration.

Applicants must provide a formal written endorsement from the RTB/VEP for the event to proceed within the region.

RTB/VEP contacts are available [here](#).

The application process varies slightly for each funding stream:

- **Stream 1** – Regional Event Acquisition – Applicants will be invited to submit a proposal following consultation with Visit Victoria and as appropriate with the RTB/VEP.
- **Stream 2** – Event Growth and Development – application process via [link](#)
- **Stream 3** – Event Industry support – application process via [link](#)

Application process and detailed information can be found [here](#).

Application Requirements

Applicants must include the following details:

- Overview of the event;
- Projected and past attendance, including local, intrastate, interstate and international (if applicable);
- Economic impact/ feasibility studies from independent organisations (where available);
- Marketing plans that include:
 - Specific details relating to tourism marketing targeting intrastate audiences;
 - Description of target markets to understand where the event audience will be drawn from;
 - Proposed marketing activity and timelines;
- Demonstrated event feasibility and delivery including:
 - Event plans;
 - Resource management plans;
- How the event aligns with and supports:
 - State and regional tourism brands and attributes;
 - Broader Victorian Government priorities;
- Consultation with and support from key stakeholders including RTB/ VEPs, local government authorities;
- Calendar fit and timing;
- Detailed revenue and expenditure budget, including financial support beyond the State Government; and
- Demonstrated management capacity and plans to achieve future commercial sustainability.

Application Process

Stream 1 - Regional Event Acquisition

Applicants to contact Visit Victoria to discuss the proposed event. Applicants are encouraged to provide significant detail relating to the timing, size, scale and proposed benefits of the event.

Stream 2 - (Event Growth and Development) and Stream 3 - (Event Industry Support)

Step 1 – For stream 2 and 3, applicants are required to submit an online application.

Step 2 – Visit Victoria will assess the application against the application requirements and will consult with Government departments relevant to the application, such as Creative Victoria, , Regional Development Victoria and the Sport and Experience Economy unit and Tourism and Events Strategy and Reform unit within the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions.

Step 3 – Applicants will receive notification within ten business days of submission with one of the following outcomes:

- 1 – Notification that the application has been unsuccessful and will not proceed to assessment stage
- 2 – Request for further information
- 3 - Application will proceed for assessment against REF criteria (see below)
- 4 – Application has been referred to another funding program for assessment.

Step 4 – Visit Victoria will make a funding recommendation to the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events.

Step 5 – Applicants will receive notification by email regarding the outcome of the assessment process, in line with published timelines.

Step 6 – Successful applicants will receive an official letter of offer from the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events.

Step 7 – Successful applicants will enter into a funding agreement with Visit Victoria.

Please note: Funding announcements are at the discretion of the Victorian Government and funding amounts are commercial-in-confidence.

Funding Rounds

Information on when funding rounds open and close for streams 2 and 3, and expected announcement dates can be found on the Visit Victoria website (link).

It is the applicant's responsibility to understand the timelines and process required to be considered for a REF grant.

Events must be scheduled to commence not less than three months for stream 3 applications and six months for stream 2 after the grant rounds announcement date (subject to the discretion of Visit Victoria).

Applicants are encouraged to submit their applications at the earliest opportunity taking into consideration the length of time the round is open and the time it takes for assessment.

Timings are subject to change at the discretion of Visit Victoria and published on the website [here](#).



Criteria for Assessment

Eligible applications will be assessed using the information provided in the application, as well as required supporting documentation.

Applicants must respond to each question. Applications that do not address each question adequately may not be considered.

REF applications will be assessed against the following criteria:

Economic benefits

Economic benefits relate to the ability of an event to drive benefits into regional Victoria in the form of new expenditure and/or future investment in regions. Key factors that demonstrate economic impact include:

- Anticipated number of participants including attendees, spectators, organisers and other visitors that will travel to the region specifically for the event.
- Average length of stay: the number of days and (if applicable) nights that participants will stay in the region.

- Expenditure: estimated daily expenditure by participants.
- Local employment: number of local workers employed to deliver event.

If the proposed event is a new event, assessments will be made through comparison of events of a similar nature. If the application is from a previously held event, data from past events should be provided to assist VV in its assessment.

Financial viability and deliverability

- Demonstrated financial sustainability and management capacity;
- Generate financial support beyond State Government funding including, but not limited to, local government; and
- Program management.

Increasing brand equity

Visit Victoria will assess the event's effectiveness in driving strategic brand and marketing outcomes for Victoria, including:

- Strategic alignment: the event aligns with the relevant RTB's/VEP's Strategic Plan and Destination Management Plan;
- Brand alignment: the event delivers against the attributes of the State and regional tourism brands, and reflects the host region's identity and community;
- Audience: the nature and size of the event audience;
- Marketing alignment: how promotional strategies for the event support the marketing objectives of Victoria and the region;
- Expertise: how the event may raise or create awareness of the region's expertise e.g. innovation, event delivery, cultural, sporting venues;
- Media Impact: the potential for intrastate, interstate and/or international media coverage; and
- Regional events reputation: how the event may enhance regional Victoria's national and global profile through broadcast, social and digital media or the reputation of regional Victoria as a major events destination through the acquisition of prestigious national and international events.

Calendar fit

- Location and timing: the event location and time of year for which it is proposed maximises benefits to the region; and
- Positive consideration will be given to events that promote visitation in low or shoulder seasons, periods of off-peak demand and that avoid holiday or long weekend periods.

Alignment with Government priorities

Visit Victoria will assess events ability to deliver against some or all of the below priorities:

- Recognise and celebrate the unique history and cultures of First Nations peoples;
- the event is held in a Government funded venue or priority area;
- ensure that the community and visitors have a positive event experience that enhances their perception of the region;
- Community engagement: the opportunity for visitors and locals alike to participate in the event;
- How the local community and/or regional institutions can engage with the event, including but not limited to local supply chains;
- Showcase diversity and inclusion including women and girls, multicultural communities, LGBTIQA+, and all abilities; and
- Contribute to regional focus areas including sport development, creative industries, trade and investment.

Conditions of funding

Conflict of interest

All applicants will be required to declare any interests of which they are aware, which could reasonably raise an expectation of a conflict of interest or material interference with an application, including financial or other interests that:

- have been held;
- are currently held; and
- will accrue.

Examples of a substantial financial or other interest include being a principal or key employee of a material professional adviser supplying services; and/or interests in contracts, trusts or other business arrangements.

Conflicts of interest can be actual, potential or perceived, and should be declared to ensure that any risks are managed.

Detailed guidance can be found on the Victorian Public Sector Commission website in its Conflict of Interest Policy Framework www.vpsc.vic.gov.au and in its eLearning guide on Conflicts of Interest.

Funding agreements

Successful applicants will be required to enter into a funding agreement with Visit Victoria detailing all funding obligations and conditions.

The funding agreement will, at a minimum, detail the purpose for which the funding must be used and set out any requirements or conditions, including reporting requirements, that must be met by the funding recipient.

Multi-year funding agreements may be available; however, these will be determined on a case-by case basis and significant consideration will be given to the presentation of long-term plans for financial sustainability.

Evaluation and reporting

Visit Victoria will provide pre-event and post-event reporting templates to successful applicants.

Events may also be required to undertake an independent economic impact assessment. If requested, access to the Visit Victoria survey tool will be provided and the data collected will be managed by Visit Victoria and provided back to the recipient. A database of ticketed attendees is a mandatory requirement to facilitate this process.

Payments

Payments will be facilitated in a timely manner, according to the terms of the contract, as long as:

- the funding agreement has been signed by both parties;
- reports are provided that demonstrate that the event is progressing as expected;
- other terms and conditions of funding continue to be met; and
- a tax invoice is received by Visit Victoria with a valid purchase order attached.

Acknowledgement

Successful applicants are required to acknowledge the Victorian Government's support. The funding agreement will include the minimum requirements to appropriately recognise the Victorian Government's contribution to this event. These include, but are not limited to:

- the inclusion of an approved logo on appropriate materials such as event collateral, media releases and signage;
- Offer of a Potential Ministerial Opportunity (PMO) as soon as practically possible. This is an opportunity for a Minister or Government representative to be involved in the event; and
- Successful applicants must liaise with Visit Victoria to coordinate any events or announcements related to the event.



Privacy

Any personal information about applicants or a third party in an application will be collected by Visit Victoria. This information may be provided to Victorian Government bodies for the purpose 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 the 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 Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 and other applicable laws (Vic).
- Visit Victoria is committed to protecting the privacy of personal information. You can find Visit Victoria's Privacy Statement online at www.visitvictoria.com.au.
- Enquiries about access to information about you held by Visit Victoria should be directed to the Privacy Officer of Visit Victoria at privacy@visitvictoria.com.au.

Important Information

Please note the Regional Event Fund is highly competitive and both new and previous applicants must not assume they will be successful, or enter into commitments based on that assumption before receiving formal notification of the outcome of their funding application.

Applicants also should not assume that if they are successful once, they will be successful again in the future.

Consideration of applications outside the criteria of the published guidelines are at the discretion of the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events.