



LOCAL ECONOMIC RECOVERY PROGRAM - VICTORIA

FUNDING GUIDELINES FOR THE BUSHFIRE RECOVERY LOCAL COMMUNITY PROJECTS GRANTS FUND

Program description	Bushfire Recovery Local Community Projects Grants – three competitive rounds. Eligible projects must directly benefit one or more local communities in a fire affected area (East Gippsland and/or North East Victoria)
Available funding	\$26.6 million
Eligible applicants	See Section 7.2
Administered by	Bushfire Recovery Victoria
More information	Web: www.br.vic.gov.au Phone: 1800 560 760 Email: connect@br.vic.gov.au

1.0 Background

The 2019-20 bushfire season was unprecedented in intensity and devastation. Throughout the summer, fires burnt large areas of Victoria, primarily in East Gippsland and North East Victoria. These fires burned about 1.5 million hectares and had significant impacts on communities, businesses and the environment.

The economic impacts of the fires were profound, with around 8,600 businesses located within five kilometres of the fires, and 656 farms destroyed or sustained infrastructure damage. 10,000 head of livestock was lost.

More information is available at: www.br.vic.gov.au

2.0 Local Economic Recovery Program

The Local Economic Recovery (LER) Program was announced by the Commonwealth Government in May 2020. The LER Program supports programs and projects that contribute to recovery of communities most heavily impacted by the 2019-20 Victorian bushfires.

The \$68.6 million LER Program for Victoria is co-funded by the Victorian and Commonwealth Governments under Category D of the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA).

The LER Program is being implemented in two components:



1. **Bushfire Recovery Regional Economic Projects and Programs** (\$42 million). This includes:
 - Regional Economic Stimulus and Resilience Grants Fund (\$34 million)
 - Regional Economic Programs Fund (\$8 million)
2. **Bushfire Recovery Local Community Projects Grants Program** (\$26.6 million)

Funding applications will be invited for the Bushfire Recovery Regional Economic Stimulus and Resilience Grants Program and the Bushfire Recovery Local Community Projects Grants Program.

The programs funded under the Bushfire Recovery Regional Economic Recovery Programs Fund will be delivered by the Victorian Department of Jobs Precincts and Regions (DJPR) and be drawn from approved economic recovery plans developed at regional and/or municipal levels. The regional and municipal recovery plans have been developed in consultation with the local community, and the local industry and business sectors.

These guidelines apply to the **Bushfire Recovery Local Community Projects Grants Program**.

3.0 Bushfire Recovery Local Community Projects Grants Program

The \$26.6 million Bushfire Recovery Local Community Grants Program has been established to support local community recovery by funding projects that are important to achieving the aspirations and priorities of local communities. Every community in an identified fire affected region (East Gippsland or North East Victoria) can apply to access grant funding.

4.0 Program objectives

- increase economic and social benefits through investment in enabling infrastructure
- increase employment opportunities and decrease skills shortages in key sectors
- increase the capacity of the business community by enhancing employment, business and economic opportunities with a focus on tourism and primary industries, including small businesses
- increase business capability and continuity by providing increased opportunities to collaborate, innovate and drive change
- increase longer term economic, infrastructure and community resilience for future emergency events
- increase and restore visitor confidence in the region
- improve community wellbeing and community / social development
- restore or improve the natural environment
- promote Aboriginal participation and ownership



- protect and enhance Aboriginal culture
- addresses a need of the community that has arisen due to the impact of the 2019-20 bushfires.

5.0 Timeframes

A small number of shovel-ready projects were approved in September 2020.

There will be three further rounds of funding applications:

- **Round 1 (approximately \$5.3 million is available)**
 - Application opening date: **29 October 2020**
 - Applications due to Bushfire Recovery Victoria (BRV) by close of business **30 November 2020**
 - Grants to be awarded in **January 2021**
- **Round 2 (approximately \$14.6 million is available):**
 - Application opening date: **15 March 2021**
 - Applications due to BRV by close of business **12 April 2021**
 - Grants to be awarded in **May 2021**
- **Round 3 (Approximately \$5.3 million is available)**
 - Application opening date: **26 July 2021**
 - Applications due to BRV by close of business **23 August 2021**
 - Grants to be awarded in **October 2021**

BRV may, at its discretion, consider projects submitted prior to the application closing date, or call for new applications after the application closing dates if required to fully allocate the program.

Approved projects must be completed by 30 June 2022.

Project close-out reports are due to BRV within three months of completing the project and by no later than 30 September 2022.

6.0 Funding

An upper-limit of \$2 million in funding will apply to individual projects.

Applicants may submit grant applications for more than one project. Applicants will be asked to indicate which project they consider to be their priority project.



7.0 Eligibility criteria

7.1 Eligible Local Government Areas and Alpine Resort Areas

Applicants delivering projects within the following Local Government Areas (LGAs) and Alpine Resort Areas can access LER Program funding:

- East Gippsland:
 - East Gippsland Shire
 - Wellington Shire
- North East Victoria:
 - Towong Shire
 - Alpine Shire
 - Indigo Shire
 - Mansfield Shire
 - Rural City of Wangaratta
 - Wodonga City
 - Falls Creek Alpine Resort
 - Mount Hotham Alpine Resort
 - Mount Buller & Mount Stirling Alpine Resort

It is anticipated that most funding will go to the LGAs most directly impacted by the 2019-20 bushfires: East Gippsland Shire, Towong Shire and Alpine Shire (in that order).

7.2 Eligible organisations

To be eligible, an organisation must be a:

- Community Recovery Committee (CRC)
- not-for-profit organisation, including community groups that are an incorporated body, cooperative, association or social enterprise
- private sector businesses
- business and industry groups, including:
 - chambers of commerce and business associations
 - industry peak bodies
 - business and industry clusters and networks.
- utility and services providers and water corporations
- TAFE institution and university
- public/private partnership, through an incorporated entity
- LGAs and resort management boards



- other organisation agreed between the National Bushfire Recovery Agency and the Victorian Government.

and must:

- be an incorporated legal entity
- have a current Australian Business Number (ABN)
- have no outstanding final reports or final reports required for any previous grant programs

Note that eligible Traditional Owner / Custodian groups and Aboriginal businesses are encouraged to apply.

7.3 Auspice organisations

An auspice organisation is when a larger organisation assists a smaller organisation to fund a project. Auspice organisations can support unlimited applications from lead applicants.

If your organisation is not incorporated or does not have an ABN you may still apply if you are supported by an eligible auspice organisation that has agreed to manage the grant for you.

7.4 Ineligible organisations

- State and Commonwealth Government departments and agencies
- Unincorporated community organisations (must have an auspice organisation)
- Fixed trusts

7.5 Eligible projects

Eligible projects must directly benefit one or more local communities within a fire affected region (East Gippsland and/or North East Victoria) and align with one or more of the following LER Program categories:

Enabling infrastructure	New infrastructure and functionality enhancements or upgrades to existing infrastructure including betterment.
Industry and business development	Initiatives supporting entrepreneurship and innovation, business retention, development of regional specialisations, economic diversification, expansion and attraction, capacity building, workforce participation, skills development, small business development, and local and regional industry networks.
Social development	Community development and wellbeing, social support or social development initiatives.
Natural environment and resource development	Natural resource restoration and environmental improvement initiatives.
Built environment adaptation	Disaster risk reduction through adapting the built environment to future climate and natural hazard conditions.

Aboriginal Culture and Healing	Initiatives that value and respect aboriginal culture and promote Aboriginal participation and ownership.
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7.6 Ineligible projects

Examples of the types of projects that will not be supported include:

- projects that, in the State’s opinion, may have a negative impact on existing businesses / services
- projects that require ongoing or recurrent funding to succeed or deliver benefits, unless there is demonstrated agreement from the relevant entity, including Australian, State or Local government, to provide that funding
- projects where, in the State’s opinion, funding is normally provided, or has otherwise been provided, by other state, commonwealth and/or local government sources.

7.7 Ineligible costs

Examples of project costs that will not be covered by grant funding include:

- business-as-usual operational costs and expenditure, including overhead costs
- costs of works completed prior to approval of funding for the project (retrospective funding)
- the purchase of land or buildings
- private sector projects undertaken as a result of another government contract
- projects that the State considers are normally funded through commonwealth, state or local government sources
- costs of works and activities that are reimbursable under other funding sources, including insurance
- projects requiring operational funding from the Victorian Government once completed
- activities that that the State considers are considered Local Government Authority core business
- passing on the funding to a third party in the form of a sponsorship, grant, cash prize or commercial gift.

7.8 Further mandatory requirements

Applicants must ensure:

1. the proposed project is located within an eligible LGA or eligible Alpine Resort Area
2. that all regulatory requirements including land tenure, planning and environmental issues have been identified and will be met
3. applications for projects on public land are endorsed by the relevant land manager (e.g. Local Council or the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning)
4. the proposed project will comply with Victorian COVID-19 restrictions and requirements.



Funding applications must also include information and evidence regarding whether the applicant has already applied for and/or received funding from the Commonwealth, State or local government for the same or a similar project.

8.0 Application process

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

Step 1: Prior to application

It is recommended that applicants register their interest in the LER Program and request a call back from a BRV representative to discuss your project. This will assist in determining eligibility for this grants program or provide advice on an alternative funding stream. BRV can be contacted at:

- Web: www.brv.vic.gov.au
- Phone: 1800 560 760
- Email: connect@brv.vic.gov.au

Prior to submitting an application for a Bushfire Recovery Local Community Projects Grant, applicants must:

- familiarise themselves with these guidelines
- discuss their project idea with their local CRC (contactable via BRV) or relevant Municipal Recovery Committee (contactable via your local council) and provide evidence of that discussion (and support for the project) with their application.

Step 2: Prepare an application

The application form will be available on the BRV website from the application opening date. To assist with preparation, a sample application form will be made available on the website.

Applicants must demonstrate how they meet each of the selection criteria and further mandatory requirements, and provide supporting evidence. They also need to indicate a start/commencement and end/completion date in their applications, and whether their funding request includes GST.

Applicants will be required to address the assessment criteria of the program (see section 9) and provide the supporting documents required, including:

- a completed project plan including a risk plan
- cost estimates/quotes
- letters of support, as appropriate
- evidence confirming funding sources
- evidence of land ownership/tenure.



As required by BRV, applications may also need to include:

- a copy of completed Cultural Heritage Management Plan, Vegetation Assessments, Environmental Management Plans, etc. as appropriate or evidence that these types of plans are not required
- evidence that relevant approvals to commence the project have been obtained, such as Planning Permit, Heritage Victoria Permit, etc.
- schematic plans for the project. For projects over \$500,000, a quantity surveyor's estimate and construction plans for the project (desirable) should be provided.

For grants above \$500,000, applicants are required to provide copies of annual reports and audited financial statements (i.e. audited profit and loss statements and balance sheets) of the applicant organisation covering the last three years with their application. This will enable BRV to assess the financial viability of the applicant and their ability to manage and complete the project.

Where the applicant proposes to enter the grant agreement on behalf of a supported organisation (auspice arrangement), the application must include written confirmation from the supported organisation that it has reviewed the application and agrees to its content, and that the project will be delivered by the auspice organisation on behalf of the supported organisation.

Applicants may submit grant applications for more than one project. Applicants will be asked to indicate which project they consider to be their priority project.

Step 3: Assessment process

Applications will undergo a multi-stage assessment process:

- applications will be reviewed by the relevant Municipal Recovery Committee who will provide advice to the Assessment Panel on the merits of the project against recovery objectives
- an Assessment Panel comprising State government representatives will assess the application against the LER criteria and other requirements and make recommendations for approval
- the National Bushfire Recovery Agency will review the project to provide Commonwealth co-funding support

Final approval, including for the Victorian funding component, will then be sought from the relevant Victorian Minister/s.

All persons involved in the assessment project will have to declare and demonstrate appropriate management of any real or perceived conflicts of interest.

At any stage of the assessment process, there may be further discussions or refinement of the proposed project with the applicant.

8.4 Step 4: Letter of offer

Successful applicants will be notified in January 2021.

9.0 Assessment criteria

Projects must align with one or more of the eligible LER Program categories (Section 7.5) for the Bushfire Recovery Local Community Projects Grants Program.

Applicants must demonstrate an evidence base for the project need and benefit. The more evidence (qualitative or quantitative) provided to demonstrate adherence with Assessment Criteria 1-5, the greater the likelihood that the project will be funded.

1. Local community benefit

Applicants must explain how and why the project:

- addresses a need of one or more communities that has arisen due to the impacts of the 2019-20 bushfires, including a description of how the fires have impacted on the community targeted by the project
- will deliver direct benefits to a fire affected community, including the type of benefits and timeframe over which they will accrue
- aligns to the one or more of the LER Program categories for the Bushfire Recovery Local Community Projects Grants Program
- will build the resilience of local communities
- will be accessible to all community members, including supporting vulnerable groups/diverse populations
- cannot be delivered through other funding sources
- avoids unintended consequences (for example, adverse impacts on neighbouring local businesses, vulnerable groups or the environment, or ongoing costs for the community or local government).

2. Local participation and support in project planning and delivery

Applicants must demonstrate that the project:

- is supported by the community (for example, through letter/s of support from the Community Recovery Committees or Municipal Recovery Committee)
- will encourage the participation of the community including Traditional Owners (e.g. through job creation, involvement in planning processes and development)
- considers ways to enhance local and Aboriginal employment and procurement opportunities, including opportunities for local trades, services and other input-supplying businesses.

3. Alignment with recovery plans and other programs

Applicants must demonstrate how the project:

- aligns to and supports one or more of the medium-long term recovery needs identified in the State Recovery Plan, Community Recovery Plan or Municipal Recovery Plans
- is linked to any other funding program

4. Long term outcomes

Applicants must demonstrate clearly how the proposed project:

- will achieve positive long-term outcomes for a bushfire affected community
- supports one or more of the priorities from the National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework (e.g. helping to understand or reduce disaster risk, enhancing investment, encouraging greater uptake of adequate insurance)
- supports one of the characteristics of a resilient community identified in the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience (functioning well under stress, successful adaptation, self-reliance and social capacity)

5. Project feasibility and delivery

Applicants must demonstrate:

- how the project will be delivered and anticipated completion date
- that project costs are accurate and reasonable (including any in-kind or co-contribution funding support) and represent value for money
- that suitable project management arrangements are in place and included in the project budget, including clear project timeframes and an anticipated completion date
- that project risks have been identified and strategies are in place to manage them
- that delivery partners have the capacity and experience to deliver the project

10.0 Assessment weighting

Applications received will be assessed against the assessment criteria as outlined in the table below:

Assessment Criteria	Weighting
Local community benefit	40%
Local participation and support in planning and delivery	20%
Alignment with recovery plans and other programs	20%
Long term outcomes	20%
Project feasibility and delivery	Yes/No



11.0 Compliance and Governance

11.1 Acknowledgement guidelines

Grant recipients must agree to follow guidelines for acknowledging joint Commonwealth and Victorian Government funding under the DRFA. These guidelines can be found at:

- [Bushfire Recovery Victoria website](#).
- [Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements 2018](#)

A breach of these guidelines is considered a breach of the funding agreement with BRV.

As the project is being delivered, applicants will need to identify announcements, progress and finalisation of program media opportunities. The applicant must communicate these opportunities in line with the terms of the grant agreement, which will include protocols.

A Victorian and Commonwealth Government endorsed sign must also be placed at the site of infrastructure activities.

BRV will oversee approval of joint media releases and associated materials for government agencies and councils, in consultation with the National Bushfire Recovery Agency.

11.2 Funding Agreements

Organisations approved for funding will enter into a Victorian Common Funding Agreement (VCFA) with BRV. The VCFA will outline:

- the grant's terms and conditions, including use of funds
- agreement terms
- key deliverables and due dates, and
- reporting requirements.

Organisations that are successful in receiving funding will have 30 days in which to enter into a VCFA. If a grant offer is not accepted during this period, the grant may be withdrawn.

During a project, BRV 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. At its discretion, BRV may either participate or observe in these meetings.

Grant recipients are subject to the requirements of Local Jobs First Policy where the value of the program funding is above \$1 million. Local Jobs First requirements can be found at: <https://localjobsfirst.vic.gov.au/>

11.3 GST

Applicants should note that all program costs included in the application must be exclusive of GST. Applicants must have an ABN and be registered for GST or provide written advice from the Australian Taxation Office that no withholding tax is required to be withheld from the grant payment.



11.4 Reporting and evaluation

Once the VCFA has been signed, grant recipients will be required to actively manage and deliver the programs and provide accurate progress reports to BRV.

The VCFA will set out the agreed reporting requirements and timelines.

Grant recipients will be required to submit progress and completion reporting, assess progress of the project against milestones, outputs and outcomes and provide evidence of program completion.

After completion of the project, grant recipients must submit annual evaluation reports assessing the project's success in meeting its stated objectives, outputs and outcomes. Appropriate data will need to be collected by the grant recipient to demonstrate how the project has achieved the objectives and desired outcomes of the project. Depending on the significance of the project, these evaluation reports may be required for up to three years following completion of the funded project.

BRV may request funding information and progress reports outside of this agreed reporting activity if required.

Grant recipients will be required to cooperate with an evaluation which is undertaken during and/or after completion of the project.

11.5 Privacy

Any personal information about the applicant or a third party in the application, will be collected by BRV, an Administrative Office in relation to the Department of Justice and Community Safety for the purpose of grant administration. This information may be provided to other Victorian Government agencies for the purposes of assessing applications. If personal information about third parties is included in the application, the applicant must ensure that the third parties have consented to their information being collected and used for the purpose of assessing the application, and are aware of the contents of this privacy statement and the BRV Privacy Policy available from the Privacy Officer (details below).

Any personal information about the applicant or a third party in correspondence will be collected, held, managed, used, disclosed or transferred in accordance with the provisions of the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic)* and other applicable laws. BRV is committed to protecting the privacy of personal information.

BRV's privacy policy is available from:

Privacy Officer
Evaluation and Reporting Unit
Bushfire Recovery Victoria
GPO Box 4912
MELBOURNE VIC 3001
Email: privacy@brv.vic.gov.au



Enquiries about access to information about you held by BRV should be directed to:

Freedom of Information Manager

Bushfire Recovery Victoria

GPO Box 4912

MELBOURNE VIC 3001

Email: privacy@brv.vic.gov.au

11.6 Record keeping

All organisations must keep an accurate audit trail. DRFA records must be available for seven years from the end of the financial year the claim is acquitted by the Commonwealth Government. For audit purposes, the Commonwealth Government may at any time via BRV request documentation from the grant recipient to evidence the State's compliance with any aspect of the DRFA. This may include, but not be limited to, access to project level information to confirm acquittal in accordance with the DRFA.

11.7 Information only

These Guidelines, and any discussions the applicant or its advisors may have with a BRV representative, are for information only, and do not constitute advice. Applicants should seek independent advice before making an application or entering into a VCFA.

Applications are at the sole cost of the applicant.

BRV makes no representation that program funds will be made available to applicants and reserves the right to make no funds available under the Bushfire Recovery Local Community Projects Grants Program.

BRV reserves the right to amend these guidelines and the application terms at any time as it deems appropriate.

11.8 Discretion to grant funding

The final assessment of an application and any decision to approve funding are matters for the State of Victoria in its absolute discretion acting through its Ministers and BRV.



12.0 Additional information and resources

Municipal Recovery Plans

- East Gippsland Municipal Recovery Plan
- Towong Municipal Recovery Plan
- Alpine Municipal Recovery Plan

Regional Business and Economy Recovery Plans

- Regional Business and Economy Recovery Plan – Gippsland
- Regional Business and Economy Recovery Plan – Hume

State Recovery Plan

- [State Recovery Plan](#)

Regional Partnerships Outcomes Roadmaps

- [Gippsland Regional Partnership Outcomes Roadmap](#)
- [Ovens Murray Regional Partnership Outcomes Roadmap](#)