



LOCAL ECONOMIC RECOVERY PROGRAM - VICTORIA

FUNDING GUIDELINES FOR THE BUSHFIRE RECOVERY REGIONAL ECONOMIC PROGRAMS FUND

Program description	Bushfire Recovery Regional Economic Programs – single round. Eligible programs must produce an economic benefit to a fire affected region (East Gippsland and/or North East Victoria)
Available funding	\$8 million
Eligible applicant	Victorian Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions
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 had infrastructure damaged or destroyed, with 10,000 livestock 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. These plans have been finalised in consultation with the local community, and the local industry and business sectors.

These guidelines apply to the **Bushfire Recovery Regional Economic Programs Fund**.

3.0 Bushfire Recovery Regional Economic Programs Fund

The \$8 million Bushfire Recovery Regional Economic Programs Fund has been established to support regional economic recovery by providing direct support to businesses in bushfire affected regions.

The programs funded under the Bushfire Recovery Regional Economic Recovery Programs Fund will 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.

4.0 Program objectives

- 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, consistent with the objectives of local and state government
- increase business capability and continuity by providing increased opportunities to collaborate, innovate and drive change
- increase longer term economic and community resilience for future emergency events
- increase and restore visitor confidence in the region
- addresses a need of the communities that has arisen due to the impact of the 2019-20 bushfires.

5.0 Timeframes

- Applications for funding will open on 29 October 2020
- Applications for funding will close on 20 November 2020
- Approved programs must be completed by 30 June 2022 and
- Program close-out reports are due to Bushfire Recovery Victoria (BRV) within three months of completing the project and by no later than 30 September 2022.

6.0 Funding

An upper-limit of \$2.5 million in funding will apply to individual programs.

DJPR may submit a funding application for more than one program. DJPR will be asked to prioritise programs.

7.0 Eligibility criteria

7.1 Eligible Local Government Areas and Alpine Resort Areas

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

DJPR is eligible to apply for funding under the Bushfire Recovery Regional Economic Programs Fund.

7.3 Eligible programs

Eligible programs must produce an economic benefit to a fire affected region (East Gippsland and/or North East Victoria) and align with the following LER Program category:

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.
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7.4 Ineligible programs

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

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

7.5 Ineligible costs

Example of the types of costs that program funding cannot be used for:

- Offsetting of salaries, operating costs for existing staff or contactors
- Costs of works completed prior to approval of funding for the project
- Projects that 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 to provide that funding
- The purchase of land or buildings
- Non-specific indirect and overhead costs
- Profit margins of applicant including (but not limited to) the applicant's supply or use of plant, labour or materials
- Costs of works and activities that are reimbursable under other funding sources, including insurance
- Business-as-usual operational costs and expenditure
- Passing on the funding to a third party in the form of a sponsorship, grant, cash prize or commercial gift

7.6 Further mandatory requirements

DJPR must ensure:

1. The proposed program is to be delivered within an eligible LGA or Alpine Resort Area
2. That all regulatory requirements including land tenure, planning and environmental issues have been identified and will be met
3. The proposed program will comply with Victorian COVID-19 restrictions and requirements.

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

8.0 Application process

Applications for program funding submitted by DJPR will be assessed through the following process:

Step 1: Prepare an application

In preparing an application for assessment, DJPR must demonstrate how the program meets the assessment criteria (see section 9.0) and further mandatory requirements and must provide supporting documents, including:

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

Step 2: Assessment process

Applications will undergo a two-stage assessment process:

- An Assessment Panel comprising BRV 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 program 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 process 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 or program with DJPR.

Step 3: Letter of offer

DJPR will be notified no later than four weeks after submitting the application.

9.0 Assessment criteria

Programs must align with the eligible LER Program category (section 7.3) for the Bushfire Recovery Regional Economic Programs Fund.

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

1. Regional economic benefit

DJPR must explain how and why the program:

- addresses a need of the communities that has arisen due to the impact of the 2019-20 bushfires, including a description of how the fires have impacted on the communities targeted by the project
- will deliver regional economic benefits in a fire affected area, including the quantum and type of economic benefit and timeframe over which it will be realised
- aligns to the one or more of the LER Program categories for the Bushfire Recovery Regional Recovery Programs
- supports vulnerable groups/diverse populations
- 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).
- cannot be delivered through other funding sources.

2. Local participation and support in planning and delivery

DJPR must demonstrate that the program:

- is supported by the community (for example, through letter/s of support or resolutions of industry or community groups, Municipal Recovery Committees, Community Recovery Committees, Traditional Owners and/or local government)
- will encourage the participation of the communities including Traditional Owners (e.g. through job creation, involvement in planning processes and development)
- enhances local and Indigenous employment and procurement opportunities, including opportunities for local trades, services and other input-supplying businesses.

3. Alignment with economic recovery plans and other programs

DJPR must demonstrate how the program:

- aligns to and supports one or more of the medium-long term economic recovery needs identified in the State Recovery Plan, Municipal Recovery Plans and/or other endorsed economic recovery plans
- intersects, is linked to or relies on any other funding program.



4. Long term socio-economic outcomes

DJPR must demonstrate clearly how the program:

- will achieve long term socio-economic outcomes for communities in a bushfire affected region
- 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

DJPR must demonstrate:

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

10.0 Assessment weighting

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

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

11.0 Compliance and Governance

11.1 Acknowledgement guidelines

DJPR 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, DJPR will need to identify announcements, progress and finalisation of program media opportunities. DJPR must communicate these opportunities to BRV.

DJPR is responsible for organisation and drafting of media events and associated materials. BRV will oversee approval of these media events and associated materials for government agencies and councils, in consultation with the National Bushfire Recovery Agency.

11.2 Funding Agreements

DJPR and BRV will execute a project/funding schedule under the existing Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for approved for funding. The project/funding schedule will outline:

- The grant's terms and conditions, including use of funds
- Agreement terms
- Key deliverables and due dates, and
- Reporting requirements.

DJPR will have 60 days in which to execute a project/funding schedule. If funding is not accepted during this period, the funding may be withdrawn.

During a program, BRV may conduct site visits as necessary. In some instances, based on program 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 observer in these meetings.

DJPR is 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

DJPR should note that all program costs included in the application must be exclusive of GST. DJPR 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 funding/program schedule has been executed, DJPR will be required to actively manage and deliver the programs and provide accurate progress reports to BRV.

The funding/program schedule will set out the agreed reporting requirements and timelines. DJPR will be required to submit progress and completion reporting, assess progress of the program against milestones, outputs and outcomes and provide evidence of program completion.



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

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

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

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

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 DJPR 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 an BRV representative, are for information only, and do not constitute advice. DJPR should seek independent advice before making an application or entering into a grant agreement.

Applications are at the sole cost of DJPR.

BRV makes no representation that program funds will be made available to DJPR and reserves the right to make no funds available under the Bushfire Recovery Regional Economic Programs Fund.

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](#)