

OCOC Leadership Development Grants 2025 Guidelines

Application Guidelines



Energy,
Environment
and Climate Action

We acknowledge and respect Victorian Traditional Owners as the original custodians of Victoria's land and waters, their unique ability to care for Country and deep spiritual connection to it.

We honour Elders past and present whose knowledge and wisdom has ensured the continuation of culture and traditional practices.

DEECA is committed to genuinely partnering with Victorian Traditional Owners and Victoria's Aboriginal community to progress their aspirations.



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1. What are the Our Catchments, Our Communities Leadership Development Grants?

The *Our Catchments, Our Communities* Leadership Development Grants support catchment stewardship through the development of future leaders in integrated catchment management in Victoria.

Catchment stewardship involves both individual and collective efforts in managing catchments to generate intergenerational benefits for the environment, people, and place. It is supported by the following guiding principles:

- A collaborative planning and delivery approach guided by a shared vision and place-based objectives.
- Support for Aboriginal self-determination and processes to bridge western and indigenous approaches to governing, planning and delivery.
- Values the diversity of perspectives and knowledge including local, scientific, and traditional ecological knowledge of landscapes and natural resources.

Integrated catchment management is an approach or tool that supports stewardship by coordinating the management of land, water and biodiversity resources based on catchment areas. This approach incorporates environmental, economic and social considerations and seeks to ensure the long-term viability of natural resource systems and human needs across current and future generations.

Funding of up to \$10,000 per grant will be provided for travel, study, research or other activities that contribute to leadership or professional development for integrated catchment management.

A total of \$30,000 will be awarded across the following categories:

Innovation – new approaches and knowledge to address contemporary issues in integrated catchment management

Aboriginal Leadership – recognising and supporting Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians as leaders

Women in Leadership – improving diversity and inclusion and the opportunity for women to lead

Grants recipients are required to share the knowledge and experience gained with others to strengthen the catchment management sector.

Why is the Victorian Government funding these grants?

The grants build on the previous program to support developing leaders in integrated catchment management. The program is aligned to the strategic directions statement *Our Catchments, Our Communities. Building on the Legacy for Better Stewardship*, in particular *Priority 4 Build the capacity of NRM communities – stewardship, adaptation to climate change impacts, recovery from extreme events*.

2. Who can apply?

These grants provide funds for activities that support **early and mid-career individuals** who are seeking to tackle big challenges and make an impact in the field of integrated catchment management and/or natural resource management to support improved catchment stewardship.

The grants are open to **individuals** working in the natural resource management sector for:

- Government agencies or bodies (DEECA staff are not eligible)
- Traditional Owner organisations
- Private sector businesses and agencies
- Educational institutions
- Local government authorities
- Not-for-profit organisations
- Non-governmental organisations
- Community networks and groups

Please note: only Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders are eligible to apply for the Aboriginal Leadership category.

3. Who cannot apply?

Applications will not be accepted from:

- Individuals not affiliated with a group, organisation, institution, agency or government body
- Individuals applying for a grant on behalf of another individual or group
- Individuals under 18 years of age
- Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action staff
- Groups, organisations, institutions, agencies or government bodies
- Anyone residing outside of Victoria at the time of application*
- Non-citizens or non-permanent residents of Australia

*Exception: Applications from people living in Victorian border areas of New South Wales and South Australia, who are working in Victoria and demonstrating leadership development that will benefit Victoria, will be considered by the assessment panel.

4. What types of activities might be funded?

The grants are to be used for activities that support leadership or professional development such as travel, study, research or training. Eligible activities include:

- Registration costs for training, course/s, or leadership program/s
- Travel costs (transport, accommodation, meals) – all flights must be economy class
- Costs associated with research, excluding purchase of equipment
- Mentoring
- Administrative costs associated with your professional development activity (e.g. communication materials, photocopying and printing)

5. What will not be funded?

- Contributions towards an academic/tertiary degree, certificate, diploma, or to support a post-graduate qualification. An exception for the Aboriginal Leadership category is the National Indigenous Knowledges Education Research Innovation (NIKERI) Institute, or a similar institution that specifically provides higher education units such as those listed on [Indigenous Higher Education Units | National Indigenous Australians Agency \(niaa.gov.au\)](https://www.niaa.gov.au)
- Support for a career change from a non-related field
- Help with gaining work experience or an internship
- Payments towards an existing project
- Purchase of equipment such as a laptop or other IT equipment
- Salaries
- The cost of other persons travelling (aside from mentoring activities), researching or studying with the grant applicant
- Activities being funded by another DEECA program

6. What are the funding details?

The total funding available is \$10,000 for each grant. Applicants may request any amount up to \$10,000. The number of recipients will be determined based on the applications and funding levels requested.

Funding will be awarded in one lump sum payment at the beginning of the grant period. Applicants will have 12 months from receipt of payment to complete grant activities and spend allocated funds.

7. What are the assessment criteria?

First your application will be reviewed to make sure that you and your proposed activity are eligible for funding (refer to Section 2 Who can apply? and Section 4 What types of activities will be funded?), and aligns with the chosen grant category (refer to Section 1 What are the Our Catchments, Our Communities Leadership Development Grants?). After that, eligible applications will be assessed using the criteria below. Each criterion is given a percentage weighting to indicate its relative importance in the assessment process. Applications should address all relevant criteria.

- ☐ your aspiration to be a leader in integrated catchment management (15%)
- ☐ your background/experience in natural resource management and/or integrated catchment management (15%)
- ☐ details about your proposed leadership development activities (70%):
 - purpose of activities (i.e., travel, study, research, mentoring and/or training)
 - how these will contribute to your leadership in integrated catchment management in Victoria
 - how these will further your professional development and improve your leadership capabilities
 - how others will benefit from the knowledge and experience gained, and how this will be shared with the catchment and natural resource management sector
 - timelines and itinerary
 - budget details
 - demonstration that the proposed activities are achievable within the timeframe and budget

The shortlisted applicants will be presented to a selection panel to assess the proposals and recommend the grant recipients. The Minister for Water, the Hon. Gayle Tierney will approve the final grant recipients.

8. What are the funding conditions?

Funding agreements

Successful applicants must enter into a funding agreement with DEECA. The Victorian Common Funding Agreement is used for funding agreements with individuals. It is recommended that applicants review the terms and conditions before applying. Information about the Victorian Common Funding Agreement is available at <https://www.vic.gov.au/victorian-common-funding-agreement>. The activity does not include using the Funding for political campaigning or advocacy activities for political parties.

Legislative and regulatory requirements

When undertaking activities under this grants program, recipients are required to comply with all relevant Commonwealth and state/territory legislations and regulations, including but not limited to:

- *The Privacy Act 1988 (Commonwealth)*
- *The Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Commonwealth) (FOI Act)*
- *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004.*

Tax Implications

Applicants should consult the Australian Taxation Office or seek professional advice on any taxation implications that may arise from this grant funding.

Successful applicants without an ABN will need to provide a completed Australian Taxation Office form 'Statement by a Supplier' so that no withholding tax is required from the grant payment.

Acknowledging the Government's support and promoting successes

Successful applicants are expected to acknowledge the Victorian Government's support and promotional guidelines which will form part of the funding agreement. Successful applicants must liaise with the departmental program area via ourcatchment.ourcommunities@deeca.vic.gov.au to coordinate any public events or announcements related to their grant. Successful applicants may be required to contribute information on activity outcomes for use in program evaluation reviews or the department's marketing materials.

The payment will be made in 1 lump sum at the beginning of the grant period following receipt of all required documentation, including the funding agreement signed by both parties. Applicants will have 12 months from receipt of payment to spend allocated funds.

Variations to proposed activities

It is possible to vary your proposal after you have received funding, although we would request that the original intent of your grant is maintained. Any changes must be discussed with, and approved by, the appropriate DEECA officer via ourcatchments.ourcommunities@deeca.vic.gov.au as soon as possible. You are ineligible to spend grant funds on any activities not outlined in your application until changes have been approved.

Monitoring and reporting

DEECA reserves the right to contact recipients at any time for further information and updates relating to their grant. Grant recipients are required to comply with project monitoring and reporting requirements as outlined in the funding agreement. This may include progress reports, site inspections, completion reports and acquittal documentation. Reporting requirements include:

- Final report submission by 31 December 2026 including:
 - a description of the activities undertaken
 - a description of your leadership objectives and how the activities contributed to these
 - an overview of how you will apply your learnings into the future
 - records of all expenses including travel, courses, meals, and accommodation
 - It is strongly encouraged to provide high quality photos of funded activities for print and online program promotion purposes.
- Invitations may be extended to present the report to relevant forums in person or online
- DEECA will seek permission of the use of photos to promote the program and will be mindful of Indigenous Data Sovereignty and cultural protocols.
- The report or extracts may be used by DEECA and the Catchment Management Authorities. The report may be made available on the DEECA website.

Privacy

Payments

Any personal information about you or a third party in your application will be collected by the department for the purposes of administering your grant application and informing Members of Parliament of successful applications. Personal information may also be disclosed to external experts, such as members of assessment panels, or other Government Departments for assessment, reporting, advice, comment or for discussions regarding this grant program. If you intend to include personal information about third parties in your application, please ensure that 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 *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014* and other applicable laws.

DEECA is committed to protecting the privacy of personal information. You can find the DEECA Privacy Policy online at www.delwp.vic.gov.au/privacy.

Requests for access to information about you held by DEECA should be sent to the Manager Privacy, P.O. Box 500 East Melbourne 8002 or contact by emailing foi.unit@deeca.vic.gov.au.

9. What is the application process?

Step 1: Check your eligibility.

Check that you are eligible to apply by reviewing the eligibility criteria below. Other information about this grant program can be found at <https://www.water.vic.gov.au/grants/ococ-leadership-development-grants>

Eligibility criteria

To be eligible to apply for the 2025 OCOC Leadership Grants, you must meet all the following criteria, at the time of application:

- ☐ be over 18 years of age
- ☐ live in Victoria (or living across the border and working in Victoria*)
- ☐ be a citizen or permanent resident of Australia
- ☐ be applying for a grant for yourself (you cannot apply for someone else or on behalf of an organisation, group, agency, or institution)
- ☐ be an early or mid-career individual in the natural resource management sector working for one of the following:
 - a government agency or body
 - local government authority

- private sector business or agency
- educational institution
- not for profit organisation
- community network or group
- non-governmental organisation
- ☐ only for the Aboriginal Leadership Category: identify as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.
- ☐ you can apply for funding to complete a stand-alone course or module facilitated by a university institution, but you cannot apply for a grant to complete modules or courses which contribute to your undergraduate degree or post-graduate qualification from a university.

*Applications from people living in Victorian border areas of New South Wales and South Australia, who are working in Victoria and demonstrating leadership development that will benefit Victoria, will be considered by the assessment panel.

Step 2: Planning your application

If you are eligible (refer to [step 1](#)), before you submit your application you should:

- ☐ review these guidelines in full and other information on <https://www.water.vic.gov.au/grants/ococ-leadership-development-grants>
- ☐ confirm which category you're applying for (Women in Leadership, Aboriginal Leadership, or Innovation)
- ☐ plan your proposed leadership development activities (including timing and budget)
- ☐ seek a written reference/third party endorsement (employer preferred) to support your application.

Step 3: Apply

You can commence an application via the grant's portal from the 17 July 2025. Applications are submitted online using the Grants Online portal. To apply, go to <https://www.water.vic.gov.au/grants/ococ-leadership-development-grants> and click on the 'Start New Application' button. To return to a saved draft application, click on the 'Access Saved Application' button to continue the application.

Note: No hard copy applications will be accepted.

Your online application form (via the grants portal) must:

- ☐ respond to all of the required fields
- ☐ include a written reference (third-party endorsement) and reference contact details*
- ☐ be submitted on the 14 August 2025, by 5pm AEST - **Late applications will not be accepted.**

Your online application form should address the following general criteria:

- ☐ your aspiration to be a leader in integrated catchment management
- ☐ your background/experience in natural resource management and/or integrated catchment management
- ☐ details about your proposed leadership development activities:
 - purpose of activities (i.e., travel, study, research, mentoring and/or training)
 - how these will contribute to your leadership in integrated catchment management in Victoria
 - how these will further your professional development and improve your leadership capabilities
 - how others will benefit from the knowledge and experience gained, and

12. Key dates

Applications open	17 July 2025 (9am AEST)
Applications close	14 August 2025 (5pm AEST)
Applicants notified*	Once approved by the Minister for Water
Funds spent by	End of September 2026
Final Report completed	31 December 2026
how this will be shared with the catchment and natural resource management sector <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • timelines and itinerary • budget details • demonstration that the proposed activities are achievable within the timeframe and budget 	

Applicants are allowed to submit multiple applications under different categories. However, applicants cannot receive more than one grant.

Attaching required documents:

Supporting documents must be in an acceptable file type, such as Word, Excel, PDF, or JPEG. The maximum file size for each file is 10MB.

You will receive an application number when you submit an application online. Please quote this

number in all communications with the department relating to your application.

If you have documents to submit that cannot be attached to your online application, you can email them to grantsinfo@deeca.vic.gov.au quoting your application number. Attach all documents to one email, zipping the files if required.

10. Additional information

Additional information is available at the program web page <https://www.water.vic.gov.au/grants/ococ-leadership-development-grants>. Please contact ourcatchments.ourcommunities@deeca.vic.gov.au if you have any questions about the program guidelines.

If you require assistance submitting your application online, email grantsinfo@deeca.vic.gov.au.

11. What is the notification process?

Successful and unsuccessful applicants will be notified by email after the assessment process is completed. Unsuccessful applicants can ask for feedback on their application.

All decisions are final and are not subject to further review. Successful applicants may be requested to attend an event to receive their grant certificate, or to receive the certificate in person from the Minister or her delegate. A photo opportunity may be requested to promote the grants program.