OCOC 2025 Aboriginal Leadership Category factsheet

Recognising and supporting Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians as Leaders

Key dates

Grants open: 17 July **2025**

Grants close: 14 August **2025**

Final report submission **31 December 2026**

Who to contact?

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What are the grants?

The grants support the development of future leaders who are involved in the coordinated management of land, water and biodiversity. They provide early and mid-career individuals with funding towards leadership and professional development opportunities to improve their skills and capabilities.

The Aboriginal Leadership category can support connection or custodianship of Country with funding specifically for people who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders. The grants help to:

- undertake a specific project, which could be to fill cultural knowledge/skills gaps, identify or assess cultural values or undertake activities on Country linked to land, water and biodiversity

- undertake formal or informal training e.g., participation in a specific course, or traditional or cultural methods of learning and mentoring.

How much funding is available?

Any request up to $10,000 is eligible. The number of successful applications will be determined by the total amount of funding requested. Funding will be awarded in a one lump sum payment. Applicants will have 12 months from receipt of payment to complete grant activities and spend allocated funds.

Accessibility

To receive this document in an alternative format, phone the Customer Service Centre on 136 186, or via the Contact us Form at: www.deeca.vic.gov.au/our-department/contact-us, or contact National Relay Service on 133 677. Available at DEECA website (www.deeca.vic.gov.au).

What can funding be spent on?

The funding is provided for travel, research, training, or to increase knowledge and skills that will support leadership and professional development in natural resource management. It can be spent on:

- 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)
- 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 academic/tertiary qualification at university.
  - 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)

What is to be included in the final report for the grant?

People who receive the grants will be required to prepare a final report that includes:

- a description of the activities undertaken
- a description of the leadership objectives and how the activities contributed to these
- an overview of how the learnings will be applied into the future
- where appropriate, high-quality photos of funded activities for promotion of the program
- records of all expenses including travel, courses, meals, and accommodation
- DEECA will seek permission of the use of photos to promote the program and will be mindful of Indigenous Data Sovereignty.

What are examples of activities that could be funded?

Aboriginal Victorians have previously been funded to complete a range of professional activities. Funding has supported future leaders to:

- Attend and present at First Nation conferences, undertake research and learning form indigenous land managers and knowledge holders about water management and land stewardship.
- Increase Aboriginal participation and knowledge contribution to healthy Country and waters
- meet and shadow leaders, connect with mentors, engage with other Traditional Owners, and undertake training to build knowledge in water management and support Traditional Owners and partners.
- undertake training in wetland ecology and management with cultural mentorship from senior Traditional Owner community leaders with experience in cultural waterway management.
- attend a coaching program to develop leadership skills as a female Indigenous employee at a catchment management authority, and within as a member of an Indigenous community.
- undertake a two-week visit to two key South Australian water precedents and share key learnings gained through the experience with other Aboriginal Water Officers and representatives.
- attend a fire workshop in Cape York to build cultural knowledge as an Elder, particularly on fire, ecology, and catchment management issues.

Where can I get further information and apply?

Guidelines, frequently asked questions, and eligibility criteria are online at https://www.water.vic.gov.au/grants/ococ-leadership-development-grants