

Our Catchments Our Communities Leadership Development Grants 2026

Aboriginal Leadership Category – Fact Sheet

Key dates

Grants open: 9am, 18 May 2026

Grants close: 5pm, 15 June 2026

Final report submission 31 December 2027

Who to contact?

ourcatchments.ourcommunities@deeca.vic.gov.au

Phone: Luke Murphy on 03 8508 1601

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 to 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.

What is an early to mid-career individual?

In the context of this grants program, an early to mid-career individual is:

A natural resource management practitioner or professional who is building independence and

leadership capability, typically taking or increasing responsibility for projects, partnerships, and people.

How much funding is available?

Any amount up to \$10,000 can be sought. 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 normally have 12 months from receipt of payment to complete grant activities and spend allocated funds.

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 Knowledge 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 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 from 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?

Link to the application, guidelines, frequently asked questions, and eligibility criteria are online at <https://www.water.vic.gov.au/grants/ococ-leadership-development-grants>

We acknowledge Victorian Traditional Owners and their Elders past and present as the original custodians of Victoria's land and waters and commit to genuinely partnering with them and Victoria's Aboriginal community to progress their aspirations.



© The State of Victoria Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action 2026.

Creative Commons

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International licence, visit the [Creative Commons website](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

You are free to re-use the work under that licence, on the condition that you credit the State of Victoria as author. The licence does not apply to any images, photographs or branding, including the Victorian Coat of Arms, and the Victorian Government and Department logos.

ISBN 978-1-76176-849-1 (pdf/MS word)

Disclaimer

This publication may be of assistance to you but the State of Victoria and its employees do not guarantee that the publication is without flaw of any kind or is wholly appropriate for your particular purposes and therefore disclaims all liability for any error, loss or other consequence which may arise from you relying on any information in this publication.

Accessibility

To receive this document in an alternative format, phone the Customer Service Centre on 136 186, email customer.service@delwp.vic.gov.au, or contact National Relay Service on 133 677. Available at [DEECA website](http://www.deeca.vic.gov.au) (www.deeca.vic.gov.au).