

Our Catchments, Our Communities Leadership Development Grants 2026

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 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.

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. What are the funding details?

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

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.

The number of recipients under each category will be determined based on the applications and funding levels requested.

Applicants are allowed to submit multiple applications under different categories. However, applicants can only receive one grant.

3. 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** who:

- work in the natural resource management sector, including:
 - government agencies or bodies
 - Traditional Owner organisations
 - private sector businesses and agencies
 - educational institutions
 - local government authorities
 - not-for-profit organisations
 - non-governmental organisations
 - community networks and groups.
- live and work in the state of Victoria*

Please note:

- *only Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders are eligible to apply for the Aboriginal Leadership category.*
- **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. Who cannot apply?

Applications will not be accepted from:

- groups, organisations, institutions, agencies or government bodies
- individuals who are:
 - not affiliated with a group, organisation, institution, agency or government body
 - under 18 years of age
 - Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action staff
 - residing outside of Victoria at the time of application*
 - not a citizen or permanent resident of Australia
 - applying for a grant on behalf of someone else.

5. What might be funded?

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

The following types of activities (or projects) are eligible for funding:

- registration costs for training and leadership program/s
- stand-alone course or module
- travel costs, such as transport, accommodation, meals (all flights must be economy class)
- costs associated with research
- mentoring
- administrative costs associated with your professional development activity, such as communication materials, photocopying and printing.

6. What will not be funded?

The program will not fund the following activities:

- 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, IT equipment, research 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
- modules or courses which contribute to your undergraduate degree or post-graduate qualification from a university.
 - Exception for the Aboriginal Leadership category: 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 \(niaa.gov.au\)](#)

7. What are the assessment criteria?

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.

- **What are the details about your proposal for leadership development (70%):**
 - what activities are you proposing? (e.g. travel, study, research, mentoring and/or training)
 - how will these activities further your professional development and contribute to your leadership capabilities in integrated catchment management in Victoria?
 - how others will benefit from the knowledge and experience gained, and how will this be shared with the catchment and natural resource management sector?
 - are the proposed activities achievable within the timeframe and budget?
 - budget details
 - timelines and itinerary
- **What is your aspiration to be a leader in integrated catchment management (15%)**
- **What is your background/experience in natural resource management and/or integrated catchment management (15%)**

8. What supporting documents will need to be provided?

Please submit the following documents with your application:

- a written reference (third-party endorsement) and reference contact details

9. 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.

Sharing learnings

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

DEECA may invite recipients to present their learnings to relevant forums in person or online.

Legislative and regulatory requirements

In delivering the activity grant 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. Promotional guidelines will form part of the funding agreement, and are available at www.deeca.vic.gov.au/grants

Successful applicants must liaise with the Catchment Stewardship Team via our.catchments.our.communities@deeca.vic.gov.au to coordinate any public events or announcements related to the project.

Payments

Payment will be made in one lump sum payment at the beginning of the grant period as long as:

- the funding agreement has been signed by both parties
- all required documentation (e.g. payment details) has been received.

Monitoring and reporting

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 records and acquittal documentation.

Privacy

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 discussion regarding alternative or collaborative grant funding opportunities. 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.deeca.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.

10. What is the application process?

Applications are submitted online using the Grants Online portal. To apply, go to <https://deeca.my.site.com/grants/s/form?id=a0hRF0000G08PNYAZ> 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.

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.

Make sure your application is submitted by 5pm AEST on 15 June 2026.

Please note:

- no hard copy applications will be accepted
- late and incomplete applications will not be considered.

Attaching required documents

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

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.

11. Additional information

Additional information is available at: <https://www.water.vic.gov.au/grants/ococ-leadership-development-grants>

If you have any questions about the program guidelines, please contact the Catchment Stewardship Team via: ourcatchments.ourcommunities@deeca.vic.gov.au

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

12. What is the notification process?

Successful and unsuccessful applicants will be notified by email after the assessment process is completed. All decisions are final and are not subject to further review. Unsuccessful applicants can ask for feedback on their application.

Recipients may be requested to attend an event to receive their grant certificate from the Minister or her delegate. A photo opportunity may be requested to promote the grants program.

13. Key dates

Milestone	Date
Applications open	9am, 18 May 2026
Applications close	5pm, 15 June 2026
Applicants notified	Once approved by the Minister for Water
Funds spent by	31 August 2027
Activities completed and acquittal reports submitted	31 December 2027

14. Checklist

Before applying, read these guidelines carefully and complete the following checklist:

- Check your eligibility to apply** by reviewing the criteria in 3. Who can apply and 4. Who cannot apply
- Check that your activity is eligible** by reviewing the criteria in 5. What might be funded? and 6. What will not be funded?
- Plan your application**
 - confirm which category you're applying for
 - plan your proposed leadership development activities (including timing and budget)
- Seek a written reference** or third-party endorsement to support your application.