Victorian Early Years Awards Nomination

Tips for writing a great application

The best applications tell a story about a person or organisation by highlighting their achievements and the outcomes of their outstanding performance. Below you will find some helpful tips for how to respond to the selection criteria.

## Responding to the selection criteria

The selection criteria are what the judges will be assessing your application against, so make sure you have read and understood these carefully, and make sure your application addresses each consideration relevant to your category.

You need to provide responses that are detailed enough so that the judges can see that what you are doing is effective (i.e. is having an impact), and is exceptional or innovative in some way.

## STAR Model

To ensure you cover all the information judges need to assess your application, it is recommended you use the **STAR model** (Situation, Task, Action, Result) when drafting your responses for each selection criterion. This framework makes it easy to draw a link between the task, action and results. It can be a helpful way to get your ideas flowing and document your response against the selection criteria in a structured way that makes sense.

The 4 elements of a good STAR response are:

* **Situation**
	+ What was the problem that needed solving or the practices/circumstances that needed changing?
	+ Set the scene briefly so that the judges understand the context of your example.
		- E.g. challenging behaviours, disengagement of children, poor learning outcomes, difficulty with transitions.
* **Task**
	+ Explain the specific task/s that you/your team undertook to address the problem.
	+ What was the solution you identified?
* **Action**
	+ Detail the approach you/ your team took towards the task.
	+ What steps were involved in the action?
	+ What did you/your team personally do?
	+ What did you/your team have to consider along the way?
* **Result**
	+ What was the measurable result of your action?
	+ What outcome/s did this achieve?
	+ What data and/or evidence can be drawn on to demonstrate the impact?
	+ In what way did you/your team’s actions lead to a change or improvement?

## Measuring results

Demonstrating the result of your/your team’s actions is key to a successful application. Your comments about the outcome should be supported by evidence that is observable and measurable.

A good test is to ask yourself: ‘Would someone else be able to confirm the results I’m describing?’

Include quantifiable changes and data where appropriate and be precise, avoiding vague, subjective statements such as, ‘Everyone appeared happy with the outcome.’

Judges want to know:

* + What evidence was collected and how? For example, did you use an online or printed survey? Was an assessment tool used?
* In what way and to what extent does this evidence demonstrate the effectiveness and positive results of your actions?

## Refer to the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework

The [Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF)](https://www.vic.gov.au/victorian-early-years-learning-development-framework-veyldf) underpins all Victorian early childhood learning. Where appropriate, your nomination should reference how the initiative supports and implements the VEYLDF and its [practice principles](https://www.vic.gov.au/practice-principles-teaching-birth-eight-years).

## Sentence Starters

**Here are some suggestions of ways to start sentences that will help you express yourself clearly.**

**Initiating Context or Role**

* In my role as [insert role], I was responsible for...
* While working at [insert setting], I identified an opportunity to...
* Drawing on my knowledge of [framework/policy], I initiated...
* I recognised the need to improve [issue], so I...
* During [insert project, initiative, or timeframe], it became clear that [insert challenge, change, or opportunity] needed to be addressed to achieve [insert goal or outcome]…

**Describing Actions or Strategies**

* To address this, I collaborated with...
* I/the team led the planning and implementation of...
* I/the team designed and delivered [insert task] on...
* To ensure inclusivity, I/the team adapted the program to...
* The task required me to [insert key duty or objective], while also aligning with [insert framework, policy, or organisational priority if relevant]…

**Linking to Evidence, Frameworks, Outcomes or research**

* This initiative supported learning outcomes [insert reference]...
* This approach was informed by the [insert document/resource], which highlights the importance of...
* I aligned my practice with the VEYLDF Practice Principles, specifically [insert principle], by...
* Research from [insert framework, policy or resource] emphasises that...
* This strategy was based on evidence from the [VEYLDF ], which supports...
* Drawing on the [insert policy or resource], I developed a program that...
* Data and guidance from [insert framework/resource] informed my decision to...
* This work was underpinned by the principles outlined in [insert policy or resource] which state that...
* Insights from [insert framework/resource] shaped the way we approached...

**Highlighting Results and Impact**

* This resulted in improved outcomes such as...
* Feedback from families/colleagues highlighted...
* Quantitative/qualitative data showed...
* As a result, children demonstrated greater...
* The program was recognised for its impact through...
* The practice change was supported by evidence from [insert research or resource], demonstrating the impact of...
* Following the implementation of [insert resource], we recorded [insert specific and measurable evidence of success, e.g., higher engagement rates, improved assessments, positive feedback from families]

**Reflecting or Demonstrating Professional Growth**

* This experience strengthened my skills in...
* I reflected on the outcomes and identified areas for improvement such as...
* Following this, I adapted my approach to better support...

## Word count

If you are asked for 1,200 words and you have provided 200, you have not sufficiently addressed the criteria. The word count is an indicator of the level of detail required.

If you are over the word count, the system will not accept more than what is prescribed so you will need to edit.

## Spelling and grammar

Check that what you have written is clear and your spelling is correct. It helps to read what you’ve written out loud. If possible, we recommend asking another person to proofread your application before you submit it.

## Summarising and repetition

Avoid summarising at the end of a section because it will be too repetitive. Use the word count to include another element of your good news story.

Each criterion asks for something different, so if you have repeated something this could indicate your answer is not addressing the criteria.

## Sentences

Keep your sentences as brief as possible, and to a single topic as this makes them clearer and easier to read.

## Active voice

Use active voice, for example, *‘We did x’* or *‘I achieved x’*, instead of saying *‘x was achieved’*. This helps judges attribute actions and results to the right person.

## Acronyms

Acronyms are appropriate to use, but the first time you use one, remember to write the full name with the acronym in brackets next to it, for example: *Victorian Baby Company (VBC)*.

## Final Review

Always refer back to the criteria during the writing process and make sure that what you have written, answers the question. Ask yourself whether you have written in specific terms and provided relevant examples that show what an outstanding practitioner you are.

Before submitting your nomination:

* Check your word count against each selection criteria
* Engage a colleague to do a peer review
* Complete a final spelling and grammar check.

## Further Information

**Review of your application**

If you would like feedback on your nomination, send a draft of your application (including responses to each of the selection criteria) in a Word document, along with your application ID number to the VEYA team by Monday 9 June 2025 by email: early.years.awards@education.vic.gov.au.