

Strategic Partnerships Program (SPP)

2024-2025 Funding Guidelines

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Application dates

Applications open: **10am 15 May 2023**

Applications close: **3pm 16 June 2023**

Who can apply?

To be eligible to apply for SPP funding, an organisation must be either:

- a not-for-profit organisation (see below for a full definition of this) registered under the Corporations Act 2001 (Cth) or the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012 (Vic), or
- a Victorian local council or local council-run entity, or a Victorian Government department, agency or statutory authority.

According to the Australian Taxation Office and the Commonwealth Government Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission, an organisation is not-for-profit if it meets all of the following criteria:

- It does not operate for the profit or gain of its individual members, whether these gains would have been direct or indirect. This applies both while the organisation is operating and when it winds up.
- It has a constitution or other governing document with a not-for-profit clause stating that all profits made by the organisation go back into its operation.
- The governing document contains a dissolution clause stating that proceeds from assets or income are not distributed to individual members of the organisation, either during operation or upon wind-up.

Where applicable, an organisation must:

- have satisfactorily acquitted and reported on previous SPP funding; and
- have or be able to secure appropriate levels of Betrayal of Trust Services to Children insurance or satisfactorily demonstrate the organisation is exempt.

Eligible organisations that have not previously received SPP funding are encouraged to apply.

Who cannot apply?

- Federal government departments and agencies
- Individuals and sole traders
- Commercial/for-profit enterprises
- Fixed trusts
- Registered primary and secondary schools, and preschools.

The Strategic Partnership Program

Aim of the SPP

The aim of the Department of Education's (DE) Strategic Partnership Program is to support curriculum enrichment and enhancement programs that improve student achievement across the Victorian curriculum and/or improve teacher capability. SPP-funded programs will provide opportunities that are not usually available in mainstream classrooms or professional development settings and enrich the learning experience of Victorian students.

We are seeking programs that:

- support students to expand their skills and knowledge, build their confidence in learning, and strengthen their engagement with the Victorian Curriculum;
- ignite students' passions, help them find their voice and broaden their experiences and interests; or
- expand teachers' capabilities to deliver curriculum aligned programs that improve student outcomes.

SPP programs

The SPP supports the delivery of a diverse range of programs. This includes the following:

- One-off activities through to more intensive programs involving a series of activities for a given participant group over an extended period
- Programs that have been custom-designed for the SPP, as well as programs that are delivered through an organisation's existing education programs where the intention is to extend their reach, improve access or enhance the program (all of which must meet the SPP's aim)
- Programs delivered by a single organisation as well as those that are delivered through partnership arrangements between multiple organisations or with community groups
- Programs that are broad in scope and reach as well as those that are more targeted
- Programs that are delivered in metropolitan areas and/or regional areas
- Programs that are delivered face-to-face and/or online.

Funding period

Grants made through the open 2024-2025 SPP funding round will be for a two-year funding period, commencing from 1 January 2024 and concluding 31 December 2025.

What we are looking for

Funding categories

SPP funding supports two program Categories, with separate applications required for each category:

Category 1: Student learning programs

These programs must provide opportunities for students to access specialised facilities, resources and expertise beyond what is typically available in the mainstream school environment.

Category 2: Teacher professional learning programs

These programs must build the capability of teachers to deliver curriculum aligned learning programs that improve student outcomes and demonstrate that they provide opportunities that are not available from other sources.

Note: We strongly encourage each individual program to focus on either students OR teachers. If the activities for which you are seeking funding fall across both categories you must submit two separate applications, with each application presenting a program that relates to just one category - student learning or teacher professional learning.

Selection criteria

For the 2024-2025 funding period, all programs must meet each of the following selection criteria:

1. Provide a strong and clear articulation of intended program outcomes, including a rigorous plan for appropriate data collection and analysis for the purpose of evaluation.
2. Support one or more of the Victorian Curriculum F-10 learning areas, cross-curriculum priorities and/or capabilities, or [Victorian Certificate of Education \(VCE\) Study Designs](#).
3. Demonstrate reach and value to a significant number of students or teachers, with a requirement that **at least 65%** of participants are from Government schools. Applicants are encouraged to maximise Government school access for their proposed program and exceed the 65% minimum requirement.
4. Prioritise and target students (or teachers of students) less likely to have access to the kind of learning experience offered, including:
 - Students from disadvantaged or low SES backgrounds
 - Koorie students
 - Students with disability
 - Rural and regional students
 - Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) students
 - Students in out of home care
 - Students in any other way identified as vulnerable or at risk of disengagement.

In addition to the above, there are also category-specific selection criteria as follows:

5. Proposed student learning programs must demonstrate that the program offering fills an identified gap and provides value-add for students beyond mainstream classroom offerings.

6. Proposed teacher professional learning programs must demonstrate that the program fills an identified gap and is substantively different from other teacher professional learning funded or delivered by DE.

In assessing applications, DE will also consider:

- the reach and accessibility of programs, including through online delivery
- consistency with department policies, priorities, guidance and resources. For example, any proposed program focusing on mathematics/numeracy should be consistent with the Mathematics Teaching Toolkit.

Where a proposed program is deemed either inconsistent with Departmental policies, priorities, guidance or resources, or duplicates other efforts in the Department, the application may not be supported.

Key concepts to inform your Application

Alignment with the Victorian Curriculum and VCE Study Designs

All proposed programs must be aligned to the Victorian Curriculum F-10 learning areas, cross-curriculum priorities and/or capabilities, or to VCE Study Designs. Applications should demonstrate:

- **F – 10: a thorough knowledge of the targeted Learning Area(s), Level(s), the specific Content Description(s) and Curriculum Code(s), and the associated Achievement Standard(s).**
- **VCE: a comprehensive understanding of the area(s) of study and outcome statement(s), including the key knowledge and key skills identified in the outcome statements for each unit, as well as assessment task requirements for the different unit levels.**

Note 1: Applications should provide a clear and specific description of how a proposed program will contribute to curriculum delivery and student learning or teacher development. A list of reference codes and descriptors/unit names only, without any other context or information, is an inadequate response to question 2.2.1 of the Application Form. Include **only the key** units/areas your proposed program will directly and substantively address.

Note 2: The Victorian Curriculum is currently undergoing revision by the VCAA. Organisations must be prepared to make changes to their program if required to reflect any changes to the Victorian Curriculum.

Measuring results – Outcomes, Outputs and Monitoring and Evaluation

Applications should demonstrate a clear understanding of their program's intended outcomes, have realistic and achievable outputs, and have a plan to measure the achievement of those outcomes and outputs.

Outcomes: Your outcomes explain what difference your program will make for participants.

In stating your outcomes in the application, consider the following questions:

- What measurable change are you trying to achieve with your program?
- What difference will this program make for participants?

The table below provides examples of well-articulated outcomes based on a response to Question 2.2 in the Application Form (i.e., addressing the Victorian Curriculum).

Example response to Question 2.2, addressing the Victorian Curriculum

Our program will address students' connection to the environment around them through a Geography lens. We will do this with a focus on curriculum area Geography, Levels 3 & 4 - Place, Space & Interconnection (VCGGC072 and 073) as well as Diversity & Significance of Places & Environments (VCGGK078, 080 & 083)

Example **outcomes** based on the above

At the conclusion of the program, participants will be able to demonstrate: improved knowledge of the countries of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia and the relationship between custodial responsibility and views on environmental sustainability (25 words - specific to VCGGK080).
[OR]

Participants will develop new practical skills such as: how to use digital geographical tools to explain the interconnections, similarities and differences between locations in Australia and the Asia-Pacific region (21 words - specific to VCGGC073 and elaborations therein).

Outputs: These are the specific and quantifiable deliverables that will be produced through your program activities. Outputs are usually tangible and can be easily counted (e.g., the number of students or teachers participating, the number of workshops you will run, or the number of resources you will develop).

Monitoring and evaluation: Each SPP-funded organisation is required to monitor, evaluate and report on the outputs and outcomes of their program. Collecting data on program outcomes and outputs provides your organisation with insight into what difference you have made and gives you the opportunity to make changes to your program during the funding period.

The application requires you to specify how you will collect data for the purpose of monitoring and evaluation, including pre- and post-program data. If successful in your application, you will be required to report on how you have used data to improve the way you work.

Equity and access

If successful, funded organisations are required to take intentional and proactive steps to target and engage the participants they identify in 4.2 of the Application Form, and to report on the success of these actions.

Programs should be inclusive and accessible to all participants in the target cohort, and be responsive to different participant needs and requirements.

Partnerships

DE encourages organisations to work in partnership to deliver programs when this will increase benefits and outcomes for participants and generally improve the program. For the purposes of the SPP application process, a formal partnership is defined as an arrangement whereby two or more organisations share SPP funding and resources, collaborate and have shared input into and ability to make decisions about the delivery of a program.

DE will assess the proposed value and productivity of partnerships when assessing applications.

Note: Sharing knowledge or expertise across organisations without input into program direction or shared funding is not considered a formal partnership.

Guidance on grant funding amount

In the current 2022-2023 funding period, the average SPP grant is about \$100,000 over two years (\$50,000 ex GST per annum). This average grant amount is consistent with past funding rounds.

Tips for preparing a strong Application

- Read the Guidelines thoroughly to make sure you are eligible and that your application meets all of the Selection Criteria.
- Read the application questions in full and make sure you understand what information is being requested for each question before beginning to write your responses. Answer the questions as clearly and directly as possible.
- Write in clear, plain English. Be succinct in your answers. Avoid jargon and 'education speak'.
- Be specific about what you will do and achieve through your program. Avoid using generic, promotional language or broad sweeping statements.
- Do not assume the assessor of your application will have prior knowledge of your organisation or of your program.
- In determining the scale of your proposed program and the grant request amount, consider both your organisational capability and experience and take into account the average SPP grant size.
- Contact the SPP team well in advance of the closing date for applications if you have any questions.

Application process

How to apply

Your application must be lodged through the SmartyGrants application portal. Handwritten, postal, emailed and/or hand delivered applications will not be accepted.

You can register for SmartyGrants here: [Strategic Partnerships Program 2024 - 2025](#)

During the application period you will be able to register for scheduled Q & A sessions through Eventbrite. [Strategic Partnerships Program 2024 - 2025 Eventbrite page](#). The department's SPP team will also be available to answer individual queries.

Contact the SPP team at: strategic.partnerships@education.vic.gov.au

Please note:

- Late applications will not be accepted.
- Incomplete applications will be considered ineligible.
- Each application will be judged on its merit. Previously funded organisations may apply for SPP funding but are not guaranteed to receive funding.
- Demand for SPP funding is extremely high. Applicants should not assume that they are successful, or enter into commitments based on that assumption, before receiving formal written notification of funding decisions from DE.

Key dates

The application process commences on **15 May 2023**, with applications due by **3pm on 16 June 2023**.

The Department will notify organisations about the outcome of their application as soon as practical following the close of applications. This process may take approximately 14 - 16 weeks.

Assessment process

Eligible applications will be reviewed by advisory panels comprised of subject-matter specialists who will assess and rank each application based on the selection criteria and aims of the SPP. Recommendations will be finalised by DE including giving consideration to the overall reach of funded programs across curriculum areas and cohorts. The final decision is made by the Minister for Education.

Value-for-money

During the assessment process, DE will determine the value-for-money of each proposed program based on a combination of factors, including:

- identification of a learning gap or unmet need being filled by a proposed program,
- the amount of funding requested,
- the number of participants to be engaged, and
- the significance of the outcomes for participants.

Payments and reporting

Common Funding Agreement

Successful applicants will be required to enter into a Victorian Common Funding Agreement with DE (<https://www.vic.gov.au/victorian-common-funding-agreement>).

Payment of grants and GST

Payments to successful organisations will be made in two instalments each year (four payments total over the funding period) and will include GST if your organisation is registered for GST. Payments will be subject to satisfactory completion of agreed milestones and submission of associated reporting by funded organisations.

Betrayal of Trust Services to Children insurance and incorporation requirements

From 1 July 2019 the Victorian Government requires all non-government organisations that are funded by the Victorian Government to deliver services to children, to be both incorporated and insured against child abuse. These requirements improve the ability for child abuse survivors to bring a legal claim for compensation and ensure that there is enough money to pay successful claims.

If your application is successful and your program provides incursions or excursion activities, and/or your program provides activities to children where you will have control or authority over children (even where the teacher may be present) then your organisation must be:

1. incorporated and have the requisite insurance (unless exempt from insurance requirements)
- OR
2. a Victorian Government department, agency or entity, or Local Council or Local Council entity (and thus does not require incorporation and does not need separate insurance).

DE will only enter into a Common Funding Agreement with successful applicants that are incorporated and have appropriate Betrayal of Trust Services to Children insurance coverage in place (or are exempt from the requisite insurance coverage).

Minimum coverage is \$5m for a single instance (\$10m in the aggregate) for the insurance period. The requirement for insurance and the minimum insurance amounts are mandated in legislation and are not able to be changed, reduced or waived. Visit the [Department of Justice and Community Safety website](#) for full details.

Child Safe Standards

From July 2022, organisations that work with children are required by Victorian law to comply with the Child Safe standards. Victoria's Child Safe Standards are a set of mandatory requirements to protect children and young people from harm and abuse. Most organisations that work or volunteer with children and young people are required to meet the Standards. The Standards are not voluntary.

Information about the 11 standards, who has to comply and other important information about the child safe standards can be found on the [CCYP website](#).

The Commission may also be able to directly provide advice about whether your organisation or business has to comply with the Standards. You may also wish to seek your own legal advice.

You can contact the Child Safe Standards team to ask any questions:

- by email contact@ccyp.vic.gov.au
- phone 1300 78 29 78.

Reporting and accountability

Successful applicants are fully responsible for the planning and implementation of their program/s, as well as ensuring financial management and reporting accountability. DE expects funded organisations to leverage existing contacts and professional networks to successfully reach school leaders and teachers and be able to independently form new connections, as required, to successfully implement their program.

Successful organisations will also be required to provide two reports each year (a mid-year interim and an end-of-year annual report) on the progress and outcomes of the program.

Funding conditions

The SPP is a discretionary, competitive and merit-based grants program. All decisions by the Department or Minister for Education in relation to any aspect of the funding application and assessment process, including any decision to offer or award a grant under this program, or to withdraw the offer or cancel the grant funding agreement, are final. Successful applicants will be paid based on completion of agreed milestones, deliverables and reporting.

Organisations must be compliant with Betrayal of Trust and Services to Children requirements (or can provide proof of exemption), and the requirements must be in place before DE can execute a Common Funding Agreement.

Enquiries

Enquiries about these Guidelines, the application process and the SPP more generally should be directed to the team at strategic.partnerships@edumail.vic.gov.au or on (03) 7022 0375.