

Seasonal Workforce Accommodation Program (SWAP)

AGRICULTURE VICTORIA

The Seasonal Workforce Accommodation Program (SWAP) supports the safe accommodation and transport of seasonal workers across Victoria during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

PROGRAM GUIDELINES

The \$6 million SWAP works with local government, industry, accommodation providers and regional stakeholders to provide accommodation and transport, facilities hire and support services for seasonal horticultural workers that meets COVIDSafe standards.

Funding will support local solutions that address the accommodation needs of seasonal workers.

The program complements the *Agriculture Workforce Plan* – a component of the *Working for Victoria* Fund – which provides grants to agriculture and food supply chain businesses. The grants assist with relocation and accommodation costs such as rental costs or building modification. Grants may also support business adaptation to enable the business to continue operating and to maintain production capacity during the pandemic.

SWAP steps in when needs cannot be met through these existing grant arrangements, for example where a supply of COVIDSafe accommodation is unavailable.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

The SWAP has been designed to provide broad support to deliver regional or local solutions for the provision of COVIDSafe accommodation and transport for the seasonal workforce, in line with Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) guidance. This includes works or activities that support:

1. Accommodation and Transport, including:

- the supply of COVIDSafe temporary and permanent accommodation and transport for seasonal workers,

- logistics and coordination services to develop, oversee and implement the COVIDSafe accommodation and transport of the seasonal workforce,
- development of proposals and business cases that encourage private sector investment in accommodation for agricultural workers,
- billeting coordination where this meets COVIDSafe standards.

2. Facilities Hire, including:

- portable accommodation, toilets, shower blocks, kitchens or other facilities that encourage COVIDSafe practices including social distancing and hygiene,
- facilitation services to support COVIDSafe projects.

3. Seasonal Worker Support Services, such as pastoral care services to the seasonal workforce, particularly where temporary accommodation exists.

PROGRAM PARAMETERS

Preference will be given to activities that support the 2020-21 harvest up to June 2021. Activities that have a plan for supporting future seasons will be considered.

- Grant funds cannot be used for the purchase of plant or vehicles (but hire costs associated with accommodation and transport may be considered).
- The funding is for new activities or works that are not already provided as part of the business's normal practice.
- The minimum grant amount is \$10,000.
- The maximum grant amount is \$1 million.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- Projects must meet the program objectives and eligibility criteria.
- Projects must be exclusively for the housing, transport and support of agriculture workers.
- The funding is used solely to support the Victorian seasonal workforce. (The project can be delivered in another state as long as this condition holds.)
- Applicants are able to fund 50% of the project value. Not for Profits and community organisations may be exempt from this requirement.
- Project is compliant with [DHHS industry directions](#) for COVIDSafe accommodation.
- Applicants will undergo a Probity Check and Financial Risk Assessment check.
- Applicants meet reporting and monitoring requirements.

Who can apply?

Local Government Authorities are eligible to apply.

- Labour hire providers licenced with the Labour Hire Authority, industry bodies, local accommodation supply businesses and Not for Profits including religious organisations and community groups are eligible to apply, if they meet the following criteria:
 - they employ staff and have a business operation located in Victoria;
 - they hold an Australian Business Number (ABN) and held that ABN at 16 March 2020 (date that the COVID-19 State of Emergency was declared); the proposal is exclusively designed for the benefit of the agriculture seasonal workforce; and
 - the supported job roles in eligible businesses are based in rural, regional or outer metropolitan Victoria¹ and are for the seasonal agriculture workforce.
- Farm businesses are eligible to apply for support if they meet the following criteria:

- they employ staff and have a business operation located in Victoria;
- they hold an Australian Business Number (ABN) and held that ABN at 16 March 2020 (date that the COVID-19 State of Emergency was declared);
- they have, or are expected to have, a turnover of more than \$75,000 in the 2019-20 financial year; and/or had a turnover of more than \$75,000 in 2018-19; or can show that under normal conditions² would generate a turnover of more than \$75,000;
- they are a private sector business and are an incorporated body, company, partnership, incorporated not-for-profit or trust;
- they can demonstrate a track record of providing a safe and healthy workplace, including accommodation or travel to work transportation if provided; and
- their proposed solution aligns with diminished capacity to provide safe transport or accommodation for seasonal workers.

Evidence of eligibility and compliance

- Applicants will be required to attest to their eligibility and may be required to provide supporting documentation through the application process.
- Applicants will be required to make a statutory declaration and must apply any funding awarded only to the project for which it is granted. At the Department's request, applicants must provide evidence that funding has been applied in line with these Guidelines and binding legal agreements. This will include regular reporting, statutory declarations, and the provision of audit opinions depending on the value of the grant. If requested, this includes allowing a Department staff member to visit and view the accommodation premises that are relevant to the funding that has been awarded.

APPLICATION, ASSESSMENT AND CONTRACTING PROCESS

- Applicants must demonstrate that the proposal cannot be met through the Agriculture Workforce

¹ Rural, regional or outer metropolitan Victoria is defined as the Local Government Areas listed in Schedule 1 and Schedule 2 of the *Regional Development Victoria Act 2002* – refer Appendix 2.

² Normal meaning not impacted by drought, COVID or other economic stress events.

Plan Worker Relocation and Transport funding stream, or that the project complements a request for funding from these programs.

- Prior to submitting a formal expression of interest, applicants are required to discuss their proposal with their local Seasonal Workforce Coordinator or Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Engagement Officer. These officers will advise on how to bring together the EOI document and ensure alignment with the objectives of the program.
- Applicants will be required to provide evidence that the accommodation and transport provided meets minimum hygiene and safety standards, as per DHHS guidelines.
- Applicants will be required to contribute at least 50 per cent of the value of the project. At the discretion of the Minister for Agriculture, not-for-profits and community organisations may be exempt.

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI) PROCESS

Applications open: Monday 2 November and close on 31 December 2020 and will be assessed on a first come, first served basis.

An EOI process will be undertaken to field applications from eligible businesses on innovative approaches to safely house and transport seasonal workers.

Step 1: Make contact with the Agriculture Victoria Seasonal Workforce and CALD Engagement Coordinators in your area to ensure your project aligns with the program objectives and to assist with populating the template.

- **Sunraysia:** [Sue McConnell](#) 0418 572 087
- **Goulburn Murray:** [Aimee McCutcheon](#) 0407 545 966
- **Other regions:** [Sze Flett](#) 0419 573 886
- **CALD Engagement:** [Del Delpitiya](#), 0436 649 860

Step 2: Complete the EOI form.

Assessment will be completed against program objectives, program parameters and eligibility criteria outlined above. Further detail on assessment and eligibility criteria is provided in The EOI Scoping Template.

Step 3: Approval process

The following process will be used:

- Eligibility assessment against criteria
- Approval in principle by assessment panel
- Agreements countersigned.

The Department will endeavor to notify all applicants of the outcome of the EOI process within four weeks of receipt of an application.

OTHER INFORMATION

Funding agreements

Successful applicants will be required to enter into a grant agreement with the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (DJPR). The grant agreement aims include to protect the Victorian Government's interests and to ensure the efficient and effective use of public money. It also ensures there is appropriate recognition of Victorian Government support on project related publications, media releases and promotional material.

Reporting, monitoring and evaluation

Successful applications will be required to provide evidence of project completion and may be required to report on progress of project milestones, outputs and outcomes. Reporting and monitoring may include:

- **Mid-grant FRA and Probity Check**

For large grants to ensure that the entity is still in a position to deliver the project.

- **Claim Checks**

To ensure the validity of claims made, that sufficient evidence for the claim has been provided and that the submitted deliverables are in accordance with the funding agreement and are satisfactory to the department or the submitted evidence of expenditure meets requirements,

- **Variation Checks**

To ensure that the grant project under the requested variation meets the policy outcome requirements of the department.

Privacy

Any personal information provided to DJPR in your application will be collected by DJPR for the purpose of grant administration. This information may be provided to other Victorian Government agencies for the purposes of assessing your application. If applicants intend to include personal information about third parties in the application, please ensure that the third parties are aware of the contents of this privacy statement.

Any personal information included 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.

The Department is committed to protecting the privacy of personal information. The Department's Privacy Policy can be viewed at DJPR's website.

Amendment to guidelines

DJPR reserves the right to amend these guidelines at any time.

DJPR reserves a general discretion to apply the guidelines and eligibility criteria in line with the Program Objectives.

Provision of grants

The provision of any grant will be solely at the discretion of the State of Victoria.

Other disclosures

These guidelines or any discussions with the Department are not advice, and applicants should seek independent advice before making an application.

Applications costs are the responsibility of the applicant.

No representations are made that grant funds will be made available to any applicant, and the Department reserves the right to make no funds available under the program.

Any tax implications of funding are sole responsibility of applicant.

Applications may be required to cooperate with the Victorian Government in promotional activities.

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Accessibility

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