

Disability Self Help Grants Program 2023–2025

Application guidelines

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on 1300 880 043, or email the Office for Disability [disabilityshg@dffh.vic.gov.au](mailto:disabilityshg@dffh.vic.gov.au)

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In this document, ‘Aboriginal’ refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

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Contents

[About the Disability Self Help Grants Program 5](#_Toc149213888)

[Information session 5](#_Toc149213889)

[Eligibility criteria 6](#_Toc149213890)

[Who can apply? 6](#_Toc149213891)

[Limitations and restrictions on groups 6](#_Toc149213892)

[Grant program priorities 7](#_Toc149213893)

[Priority 1: Empowerment and resilience 7](#_Toc149213894)

[Priority 2: Sustainability and reach 7](#_Toc149213895)

[Priority 3: Diversity and inclusion 7](#_Toc149213896)

[Priority 4: Pride and recognition 8](#_Toc149213897)

[Examples of activities that are funded 8](#_Toc149213898)

[Examples of activities that are not funded 9](#_Toc149213899)

[Application process 10](#_Toc149213900)

[Step-by-step guide to applying 10](#_Toc149213901)

[Key dates and required documents 11](#_Toc149213902)

[Evaluation criteria 12](#_Toc149213903)

[Tips for a successful application 12](#_Toc149213904)

[Funding conditions 13](#_Toc149213905)

[Funding agreements 14](#_Toc149213906)

[Payments 14](#_Toc149213907)

[Auspice arrangements 14](#_Toc149213908)

[Insurance 15](#_Toc149213909)

[Privacy 15](#_Toc149213910)

[Frequently asked questions (FAQs) 16](#_Toc149213911)

[Can we apply for one year of funding only? 16](#_Toc149213912)

[What if there are more applications than available funding? 16](#_Toc149213913)

[How is disability defined? 16](#_Toc149213914)

[What type of minor equipment can the group buy using the grant? 17](#_Toc149213915)

[Does the program fund food and meals? 17](#_Toc149213916)

[Are online meetings and activities covered under the program? 18](#_Toc149213917)

[Are guest speaker fees covered under the program? 18](#_Toc149213918)

[What is disability pride and recognition? 18](#_Toc149213919)

[When would a group need to use an auspice? 18](#_Toc149213920)

[What support is available for groups to complete an online application? 19](#_Toc149213921)

[More information 19](#_Toc149213922)

# About the Disability Self Help Grants Program

The Disability Self Help Grants Program provides grants to Victorian disability self-help groups. The grants give financial help to meet costs to provide social, emotional and practical support to their members.

The Victorian Government recognises the important role that self-help groups play in supporting people with disability to live satisfying everyday lives.

Self-help groups are self-managed groups that:

* bring people together who deal with similar experiences and barriers through a peer support network
* support their members to share insights and information gained through personal and lived experience
* support people to:
  + become active members of their community
  + take control of their own situation or circumstance
  + raise awareness in the broader community about the experiences of people with disability and their carers.

Grants up to $7,000 per year are available for one or two years to help strengthen the operation of the self-help group, including:

* administration costs
* communications
* activities.

The Office for Disability at the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing administers the Disability Self Help Grants Program.

## Information session

**Date:** Week starting 21 November 2023 (to be confirmed)

**Time:** 10:00 to 11:30 am

Platform: Zoom webinar

To register your interest, please email Office for Disability [disabilityshg@dffh.vic.gov.au](mailto:disabilityshg@dffh.vic.gov.au)

# Eligibility criteria

## Who can apply?

The department invites applications from all Victorian-based disability self-help groups. To be eligible for funding, applications must address at least one of the grants program’s priorities, and the self-help group must:

* have a focus on disability
* be led or managed by members who have lived experience of disability either as:
  + people with disability
  + family members of people with disability.
* have an ongoing membership
* be a non-government and non-profit making group at the time of application and for the grant’s duration
* have an Australian Business Number (ABN). To check your ABN, visit the [Australian Business register](https://abr.business.gov.au/) <https://abr.business.gov.au/>
* can provide a completed Australian Tax Office ‘Statement by a supplier’ form or be under an auspice with an organisation that has an ABN (see ‘[Auspice arrangements’](#_Auspice_arrangements))
* have a bank account in the name of the self-help group or under an auspice by a not-for-profit organisation that has a bank account, and both parties have signed the letter of agreement
* have satisfactorily met reporting requirements on any grants previously received from the department or from the former Department of Health and Human Services (if applicable).

If your group is based in Victoria but also has national membership and focus, you need to show that you are using the funding to support activities taking place in Victoria. You may also need to give some detail about how many national and Victorian members you have. We recognise that some groups require a national focus to serve members’ needs.

You can use the grants to support resuming activity that stopped in recent years, particularly due to the COVID 19 pandemic. If your group or a closely related group stopped activity for a period, particularly because of COVID, we encourage you to talk to the Office for Disability about your application.

## Limitations and restrictions on groups

The following types of groups **are not** eligible for funding:

* generalist health and wellbeing groups
* groups with a closed membership. For example based on attending a specific school or engaging in a therapy
* groups whose applications do not show the need for financial help.

# Grant program priorities

## Priority 1: Empowerment and resilience

This could include:

* sharing formal and informal information such as personal experiences
* supporting members to make informed decisions about their own situation or circumstances
* facilitating peer support for people with disability and their families and carers
* strengthening the capacity of people with disability to live independently in their own community and actively take part in community activities
* providing social connections for people who are otherwise isolated
* increasing opportunities for self-help groups to provide information and education on lived experiences of people with disability.

## Priority 2: Sustainability and reach

This could include:

* increase the number of people it is supporting
* improve operational effectiveness
* improve long-term sustainability.

## Priority 3: Diversity and inclusion

This could include:

* Aboriginal people
* young people (aged 12 to 25)
* women and girls
* people who are autistic and neurodiverse
* people from culturally diverse communities
* people who identify as:
  + lesbian
  + gay
  + bisexual
  + trans
  + gender diverse or
  + intersex
* groups based in and provide clear evidence of supporting members in regional or rural Victoria.

## Priority 4: Pride and recognition

This could include:

* groups marking and celebrating important days of recognition, for example:
  + Disability Pride Month
  + International Day of People with Disability
* initiatives that explore:
  + history
  + culture
  + language
  + disability community.

## Examples of activities that are funded

All funding requests must link to delivering one or more of the priorities listed under ‘[Grant program priorities](#_Grant_program_priorities)’ and may include:

* supporting groups to increase their online presence and transition to online distribution of information, including but not limited to:
  + website upgrades and development
  + video streaming
* increasing a group’s membership base, including:
  + resources to support groups to have a presence at local events
  + promotional materials in other languages
  + supporting Aboriginal and culturally diverse communities
* supporting information and communication distribution, including:
  + printing brochures, posters, newsletters and information booklets
  + printing supplies – including paper and toner refill
* increasing group members’ access to information relevant to their specific disability, including reference materials
* general overheads and supports associated with meetings, including:
  + venue hire
  + online streaming
  + transport to and from meetings
  + interpreters
  + childcare
  + support worker costs
* improving the operational effectiveness and efficiency of groups including training and development of group members
* minor works or equipment that aid the group to operate and supports its members to stay connected, take part in meetings and activities, for example:
  + handrails
  + portable ramps
  + laptops
  + computer
  + tablets
* guest speakers, including professional hourly fees and transport costs (local only)
* purchasing food – only if it’s central to the activities of the group, for example:
  + providing tea and coffee supplies at group meetings or gatherings
  + where cooking a meal together brings group members together
  + where offering light food and refreshments is culturally significant
* an event to mark or celebrate pride and recognition
* Please note that guest speakers must help with educating group members, this could include:
* psychologists and other allied health professionals, to help maintain physical and mental wellbeing
* a guest speaker at a gathering or event that marks and or celebrates important days of recognition.

## Examples of activities that are not funded

Activity examples **not funded** include:

* accommodation expenses
* travel expenses priorities
* staff salaries
* equipment or aids for personal use
* donations or subscriptions to other groups or organisations
* treatment centre fees or travel to treatment centres
* buy or leasing vehicles
* gifts
* alcohol
* items bought before the closing date of the grant application
* costs associated with writing the grant.

Applications from groups that **mainly** focus on any of the following activities **are not** eligible for funding:

* advocacy
* sport
* exercise
* therapy
* singing
* painting
* music-making or other creative activity.

Exceptions may be considered where activities:

* bring people with disability and their families together to deal with similar barriers and experiences, offering peer support
* allow people to support each other by sharing insights and information gained through personal experience
* support people to become active members of their community, take control of their own lives and raise awareness in the broader community about the experiences of people with disability.

# Application process

## Step-by-step guide to applying

### Step 1: Check the guidelines

Check the detailed information in this guide to see if your self-help group and your proposed activities are eligible for funding.

### Step 2: If required, seek help in preparing your application

Contact the Office for Disability:

* email [disabilityshg@dffh.vic.gov.au](mailto:disabilityshg@dffh.vic.gov.au)
* phone 1300 880 043.

### Step 3: Complete your application via Grants360

Starting in 2023, the department is using Grants360 to administer the grants program. It is an online grant management system that provides:

* easy-to-use online application forms
* a report management function for successful applicants.

Access the Grants360 link on [Grants Gateway](https://grantsgateway.dffh.vic.gov.au/) https://grantsgateway.dffh.vic.gov.au/

### Step 4: Complete your application checklist

Application checklist – please mark ‘yes’ or ‘no’ with an X

| Information required | Yes | No |
| --- | --- | --- |
| I have provided current contact details |  |  |
| I have provided quotes for all goods or services |  |  |
| I have provided a budget outline |  |  |

# Key dates and required documents

The funding round opens on Friday, 27 October 2023 and closes on   
Thursday, 14 December 2023, at 4:00 pm.

Late or incomplete applications are not considered.

All applications must be submitted via the online Grants360 portal and include relevant supporting documentation:

* proposed activities to be funded
* project budget detailing activities for each year.

# Evaluation criteria

Eligible applications are assessed by the Office for Disability based on information provided in the application form. Other relevant areas of the department may also be consulted as part of the assessment process.

The assessment process considers how the application:

* addresses one or more program priorities
* shows an identified need for the grant
* explains how the grant will respond to the identified need.

**Please note:**

* eligibility does not guarantee success
* assessment of applications is undertaken by an independent panel
* the assessment process and awarding of the grant may take up to two months from the closing date.
* applicants receive written notification of the outcome of the assessment process once it is finalised
* funding decisions are entirely at department’s discretion.

## Tips for a successful application

### Buying goods and services

In your application, you **must** describe the:

* need for any goods and services you plan to buy (if any)
* benefits the goods and services will provide to the group.

Applications that do not provide this detail are not considered.

For buying goods or services, we recommend you provide a quote that includes the:

* details of goods or services
* number of items to buy
* individual and total cost of items to buy.

### Events and guest speakers

For attending conferences and workshops, we recommend you provide information including:

* details of the training conference or workshop to be undertaken
* cost of registration for the conference or workshop
* if you propose for guest speakers to attend a group’s gathering or event, we recommended that you provide information including:
  + a description of the information to be provided by the speaker and the benefits to group members
  + cost of speaker to attend (their hourly rate)
  + a breakdown of speaker estimated travel costs (local only).

# Funding conditions

The following conditions will apply to self-help groups that receive a grant:

* Grant recipients must enter into a funding agreement with the department which sets out conditions and requirements over the two-year period.
* Grants of up to $7,000 per year are available for a two-year period.
* Groups must outline and provide an indicative budget for each of the year being funded.
* Grant funding for the first financial year must be spent in that year. Similarly, grant funding for the second year must be spent in that year.
* The department must be notified of any unspent funds and, if requested, these unspent funds must be returned to the department.
* Funds must be spent on the activities as described in the group’s application and documented in the common funding agreement.
* Any proposed variation to the approved activities or time frames must be discussed with the Office for Disability before implementation.
* Grant recipients must provide either:
  + a bank account in either, the name of the group or the name of the auspice organisation
  + an Australian Business Number (ABN) **or**
  + provide a completed [Australian Tax Office form (Statement by a supplier)](mailto:https://www.ato.gov.au/uploadedfiles/content/mei/downloads/statement%20by%20a%20supplier.pdf) **or**
  + be under an auspice with an organisation that has an ABN, so that tax is not withheld from any grant payments.
* If your group is applying for funds to support:
  + groups of young people who are 12 to 25 years old
  + Families with children

Or provide:

* + childcare
  + support workers

We will contact you to make sure you have everything in place to provide a safe and compliant experience.

## Funding agreements

Successful applicants must enter into a common funding agreement contract with the department. Common funding agreements establish the parties and their commitments and obligations to each other and set out the general terms and conditions of funding.

If your organisation is not incorporated or is not under an auspice, the signatory will be personally responsible for the contract entered into (refer to ‘[Auspice arrangements’](#_Auspice_arrangements)).

## Payments

Payments are made if:

* the common funding agreement is signed by both parties
* groups provide an indicative budget outlining spending for one or both of the two years of funding
* note: grant funding for the first financial year must be spent in that year. Similarly, grant funding for the second year must be spent in that year
* an invoice is provided for the relevant funded period
* grant recipients provide reports as required, or otherwise demonstrate that the activity is progressing as expected
* other terms and conditions of funding continue to be met
* a letter of agreement or equivalent with the auspice organisation is provided
* the second year of funding is provided automatically, as long as the department is confident that your organisation is still operating and using the funds for the purposes outlined in your agreement.

## Auspice arrangements

If a self-help group is not incorporated with an ABN, or does not have a bank account in the group’s name or a joint bank account among key members, it must either:

* become incorporated
* arrange for an incorporated organisation to manage the funds.

This organisation will be the ‘auspice’ organisation for the grant application. If the application is successful, the grant will be paid to the auspice organisation.

Self-help groups that enter an auspice arrangement must have in place a letter of agreement (or equivalent) with their auspice organisation. The letter or agreement must specify the nature of the auspice relationship and each organisation’s roles and responsibilities. The letter of agreement should also specify the ownership of all assets and funds and a copy should be submitted with the grant application.

## Insurance

Self-help groups are **not** covered by the department’s insurance.

Each group should arrange adequate insurance coverage:

* to protect any physical assets against loss and damage, and
* to indemnify the group against legal liability for personal injury and property damage.

More information about public and product liability cover for community and non-profit organisations is available on:

* [Our Community](https://communitydirectors.com.au/tools-resources/insurance-and-risk-management) https://communitydirectors.com.au/tools-resources/insurance-and-risk-management or
* by phone 1800 803 315.

## Privacy

The department is committed to protecting your privacy. We collect and handle any personal information about you in your application for:

* administering your grant application, and
* informing the public of successful applications.

For us to administer your grant application effectively and efficiently, we may need to disclose your personal information with others for:

* assessment
* consultation
* reporting.

This can include departmental staff, external experts, such as members of assessment panels or other government departments. If we do not receive all the relevant information, we cannot consider your application.

You may access information that you provide to the department.

For more information on our privacy management:

* refer to the department’s [privacy policy](https://www.dffh.vic.gov.au/publications/privacy-policy) https://www.dffh.vic.gov.au/publications/privacy-policy
* email the Information Sharing and Privacy team in Legal Services [privacy@dffh.vic.gov.au](mailto:privacy@dffh.vic.gov.au).

# Frequently asked questions (FAQs)

## Can we apply for one year of funding only?

Yes. You can apply for up to $7,000.

## What if there are more applications than available funding?

* While the maximum possible grant amount to any group is $7,000 per year, if the number of requests for funding exceeds the funding available, the department may choose to partially fund your application, see the following:
* In the case where requests for funding exceeds the funding, assessment criteria will be non-competitive and will consider:
  + the value of the proposed activities to your community
  + how critical the proposals are to the group’s ongoing activity (for example, utility bills and other basic costs will be prioritised)
* Alternately, the department may choose to not fund an application at all.

## How is disability defined?

* People with disability are a diverse group. What they have in common is a shared experience of encountering negative attitudes and barriers to full participation in everyday activities.
* Some conditions and impairments are present from birth.
* In other cases, people acquire or develop a disability during their lifetime – this could be from an accident, condition, illness or injury.
* For some people, support needs can increase over time.
* Others can experience fluctuating or episodic disability – this can particularly be the case for some people with mental illness.
* Some people have a dual disability, such as intellectual disability and mental illness, with different support needs.

People with disability can be treated unfairly based on other parts of the person’s identity, not just their disability. This discrimination can affect:

* women and girls
* children and young people
* Aboriginal people
* people who are autistic and neurodiverse
* people from culturally diverse backgrounds including those from refugee backgrounds
* people who are members of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) communities.

The disadvantages associated with disability are often made up of other sources of discrimination. Recognising and responding to this multi-layered impact requires particular attention.

## What type of minor equipment can the group buy using the grant?

The types of equipment that groups can buy through this grant program includes items that help a group to carry out its activities.

For example, a computer or laptop to:

* produce newsletters for members
* maintaining a group’s website or social media.

Any equipment you buy will belong to the group. It is not to be used for personal use. The maintenance of or upgrading of equipment is also the responsibility of the group.

When applying to buy minor equipment, groups should consider if they could access the equipment in other ways.

For example, could they meet at a venue where the cost of the room hire includes use of equipment such as:

* a laptop
* projector
* technical support.

## Does the program fund food and meals?

Sometimes. The grants program supports buying food or meals **only** if it’s central to the activities of the group. For example:

* when preparing or cooking a meal together is an activity that brings group members together
* when offering light food and refreshments is culturally important
* providing tea and coffee supplies at group meetings or gatherings
* when offering light food and refreshments for significant days that highlight disability pride and recognition.

## Are online meetings and activities covered under the program?

Yes. Online groups or meetings can be a way to communicate with members and share information. This is particularly useful for people who are isolated by their location or the nature of their disability or condition.

## Are guest speaker fees covered under the program?

Yes. Groups can pay for speakers who help with educating group members.

For example, you can have a psychologist or other allied health professionals come and speak about:

* building resilience
* maintaining physical or mental wellbeing.
* You can invite a speaker to help celebrate:
* disability pride
* mark important days of recognition.

If they are in line with a new priority area for the grant program, guest speaker fees are covered.

The grant can also cover the local travel costs of the speaker to attend a gathering or event.

## What is disability pride and recognition?

The Victorian Government recognises the importance of people with disability celebrating their identity, achievements and community.

Pride and recognition is a new action area under [Inclusive Victoria: state disability plan 2022-2026](https://www.vic.gov.au/state-disability-plan) https://www.vic.gov.au/state-disability-plan.

To learn more about disability pride and recognition, you can watch some short videos from the [Victorian Disability Advisory Council](https://www.vic.gov.au/victorian-disability-advisory-council) https://www.vic.gov.au/victorian-disability-advisory-council.

## When would a group need to use an auspice?

An auspice is an organisation that manages grant funding on your group’s behalf. The auspice will receive the grant funding and the group undertakes the funded activities outlined in its application.

Groups would use an auspice if they do not have a bank account in the name of the group, or an Australian Business Number (ABN).

When approaching an organisation to be your group’s auspice, it's a good idea to make sure you are:

* on the same page philosophically and ethically
* that there is a good working relationship between both parties before applying for funding.

## What support is available for groups to complete an online application?

The Office for Disability will hold an online information session about the 2023–2025 Disability Self Help Grants Program after the round opens.

Find out about the information session on [Disability Self Help Grants Program](https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/disability-self-help-grants-program) https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/disability-self-help-grants-program

If groups cannot apply for a grant online, they can get support from the Collective of self-help Groups (CoshG) by:

* email [info@coshg.org.au](mailto:info@coshg.org.au)
* phone 0438 567 096.

# More information

For more information contact the Office for Disability:

* email [disabilityshg@dffh.vic.gov.au](mailto:disabilityshg@dffh.vic.gov.au)
* phone 1300 880 043.