

Grant Writing and Funding

Participant Activity Workbook

Funding and sustainability remain ongoing challenges for volunteer-involving organisations (VIOs). Yet, according to Smartygrants (2026), total spending on grants distributed by Federal, State, and Local government and philanthropic sources is estimated at around \$125 billion each year.

This presents an important opportunity for VIOs to strengthen their approach to grant funding by building the skills and knowledge needed to identify suitable opportunities, develop competitive applications, and secure funding to support both immediate priorities and long-term sustainability.

Key observations from Victoria's State of Volunteering Report in 2025:

"The future of volunteering will be more flexible, inclusive, and digital. To get there, we must invest in volunteer infrastructure, support diverse pathways into volunteering, and resource the people and systems that make it all possible." (see p. 11)

46.3% of Leaders of Volunteers are unpaid

41.7% of VIOs have more volunteers than paid staff

72.5% of VIOs reported volunteer training and development as a top 3 method to retain volunteers

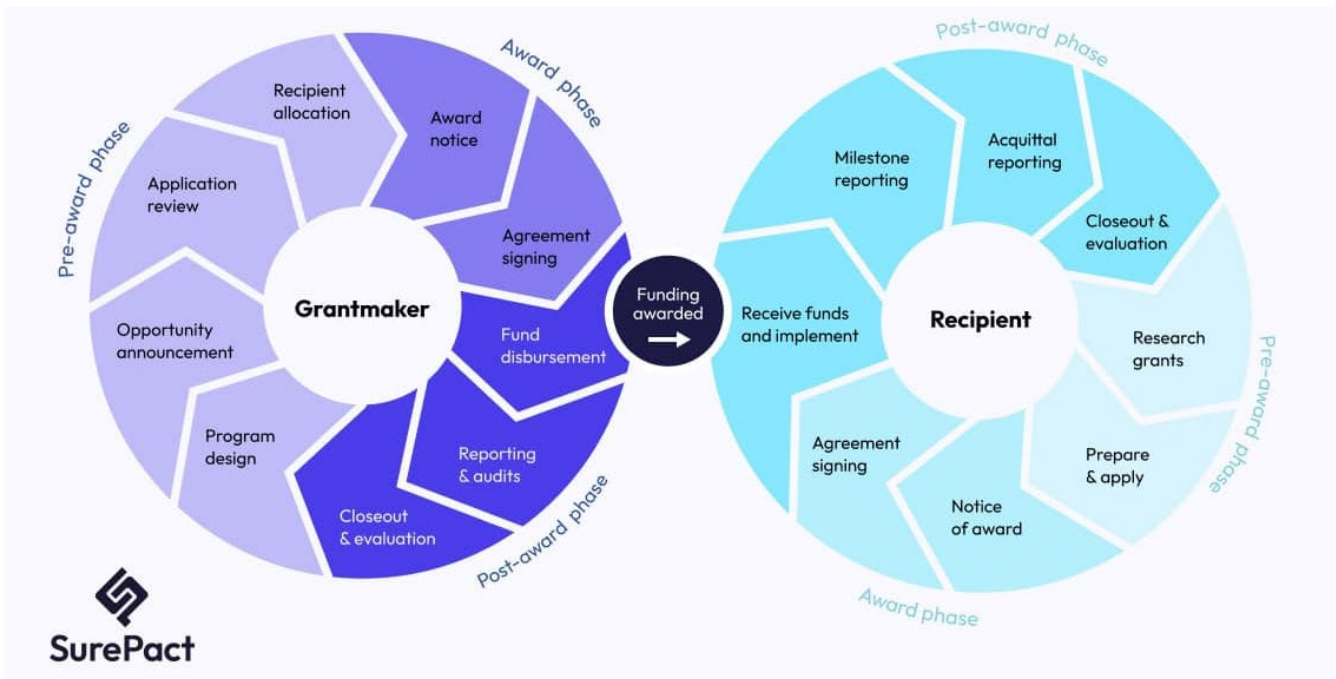
32.1% of Victorian volunteers identified income, costs or expenses as a barrier to volunteering

This emphasises the need for **investment** and **resources**.

Building the capacity of VIOs requires developing an understanding of the funding cycle (funder and applicant perspectives) and having a strategic approach to grants and funding strategy –

- » demonstrating capability and credibility;
- » using data to show the need and benefits of what will be achieved;
- » searching for grants and identifying suitable funders, and;
- » writing a strong application.

With a purposeful approach, effective data systems and clear evidence of impact, an organisation is more likely to secure funding to survive and build long-term sustainability.



Preparing for Success – Grant Ready Assessment

Determine readiness to apply for a grant

The first step to determine grant readiness and identify areas in need of capacity building is to assess current information, systems, and resources to support grant writing and satisfy the needs of funders.

CATEGORY	Not ready yet or limited progress	Close to ready or have an approach in place	Ready or well established in this area
<i>Pre-award of grant phase</i>			
1. Collating key data and information (to show capability, credibility and reach) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Description of purpose, operational information » Key outcomes/milestones, annual reports » Demographic profiling 			
2. Documenting needs and aspirations (using data to show the need and benefits of what will be achieved) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Evidence of organisation or community need » Clear description of project (purpose, delivery partner [if applicable], capacity to deliver, budget, timelines) 			
3. Searching for grants and identifying suitable funders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Searched for grants, accessing grant directories » Reviewed guidelines and satisfy eligibility criteria » Project aligns with prospective funding partner (review organisation, values and purpose) 			

4. Writing and submitting a strong application (what funders look for) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Compelling story, emphasise scale or importance of issue » Demonstrated capabilities to deliver » Explanation of how service will reach intended recipients 			
<i>Post-award of grant phase</i>			
5. Systems to support successful grant implementation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Defining roles and allocating responsibilities » Setting up tracking or evaluation system to capture evidence 			
6. Closing the loop with evidence and acquitting the funds <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Gathering evidence such as photos and receipts to show funds have been spent correctly » Using data and stories to demonstrate impact 			

Priority areas for action

Write three actions to take for the lowest-rating areas ↓

Collating key data and information

Key data and information to collate about your organisation (to demonstrate legitimacy)

Name of organisation	
Key contact person for grant application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name • Role • Email • Phone
Physical address of premises or facility	
Website details	
Social media details	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facebook • Instagram • Other (describe):

Incorporation number or CAN	
ABN or ACN	
Evidence of legal status	
GST status	<input type="checkbox"/> Registered for GST <input type="checkbox"/> Not registered for GST
Insurance certificates of currency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Liability • Other (describe):
Latest annual financial report	<input type="checkbox"/>
Latest annual report	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other information about the organisation (to show reach)

Our mission or purpose	
Business/operational plan	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, we have a current plan <input type="checkbox"/> No, not yet <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure
Governance structure in place	<input type="checkbox"/> Committee <input type="checkbox"/> Board <input type="checkbox"/> Other (describe):
People actively involved (headcount and/or EFT estimates)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committee = • Employees = • Volunteers = • Supporters/life members = • Members = • Consumers • Clients = • Other (describe):
Characteristics of people we serve (members, consumers, clients, people)	<input type="checkbox"/> Age grouping/s (describe): <input type="checkbox"/> Genders (describe): <input type="checkbox"/> Geographical location or suburbs (describe): <input type="checkbox"/> Birthplace, cultural or other identities (describe): <input type="checkbox"/> Cognitive, physical or other abilities (describe): <input type="checkbox"/> People who are likely to be in vulnerable or disadvantaged situations (describe): <input type="checkbox"/> Other (describe):

Writing and submitting strong grant applications

Be clear and purposeful from the beginning

- » Have some ideas and projects already documented with evidence of need (e.g., survey your members/ clients, refer to ABS data, refer to relevant government or industry research, talk with your League/ Association/Network members or local MPs)
- » Subscribe for e-newsletters from potential funding organisations to be informed of opportunities
- » Subscribe to the most appropriate grant search engines

Consider utilising AI to help you

- » Below are some sample AI prompts to get started
- » Customising is critical for a compelling story
- » Open your AI tool and upload the grants program information or guidelines or paste the public URL.
- » Only upload PUBLIC documents. Ensure all uploaded documents contain NO personal information or financial details.
- » Narrow focus to specific funding category or funder – government, non-government
- » Refer to your group’s specific needs or aspirations (committee, community group, community)
- » Produce as a downloadable MS word document and include a reference list with hyperlinks to all website sources cited.

Suggested AI Prompts:

“Summarise the << eligibility criteria>> for the <<name>> grants program in simple English suitable for an organisation with <<volunteers / volunteer leaders>>.”

“Write as the Grants co-ordinator of <<name or type of group>>. Please provide a list of 2026/27 grant programs that award funding to xxx community groups to create/improve/increase/reduce <<idea or need>>. Funding organisations may be government or non-government. Include grant programs that are currently open, closed and not yet published. Please tailor the list for <<location (suburb/Council/Victoria) and cohort (age/gender)>>.”

Review each grant program and present details in a table stating name of grants program, funding amount, who can apply, what it suits <<name or type of group>>, status/timing, key cautions, and kit with <<name or type of group>>. Prepare a practical shortlist for most groups like <<name or type of group>>.”

“Write as a professional grant writer assisting <<name or type of group>>. You are preparing to write a grant application seeking \$xxxx for <<project idea>> from <<funder>>. Review the uploaded grant guidelines and write a grant application that demonstrates the importance of funds being allocated for <<outline need or project idea>>. Provide a description of the project (up to 300 words) and outline this project will contribute to the objectives outlined in the grant guidelines. Please produce as a downloadable MS word document.”

“Write as the <<role>> of <<name or type of group>>. You are preparing to write a grant application seeking funds for <<project idea>> from <<funder>>. Outline what information needs to be collected about the group and this project idea. Please produce as a downloadable MS word document.”

“Write as the <<role>> of <<name or type of group>>. You have been awarded a grant from <<funder>>. Outline what the group needs to do to successfully implement, track and record progress to meet the acquittal requirements. Please produce as a downloadable MS word document.”

Common adjustments required for AI drafts

- » Add or verify your organisation's facts and numbers (history, years in operation, locations, sites, participants).
- » Remove generic AI buzzwords, passive tone, invented statistics, language and phrases that do not reflect your organisation.

Documenting needs and aspirations

What is our idea or aspiration – what are we aiming to start, achieve, develop, improve, increase, reduce or create? And how do we know there is a need or benefit? (evidence)

Some examples of ideas and aspirations:

- » **Board level for good governance, compliance and sustainability:** More volunteers, building capacity, knowledge or skills, formalised systems, IT/digital systems, and developing a strategy/plan.
- » **Project delivery level to recruit, retain and grow members, clients, volunteers or improve systems or processes:** More volunteers, building capacity, knowledge or skills, accreditations, increased or upgraded equipment, facilities, events, and financial support for some members.
- » **Community level to raise awareness, increase access or participation or improve connections, community health, community safety, inclusion:** Events, come and try days, open houses, competitions, increased or upgraded equipment, expanded programs, upgraded facilities, other initiatives to meet the needs of the community or specific segment within the community.

Some examples of evidence:

- » Community endorsements by stakeholders, professional association, or local members of parliament
- » Letters of support from prospective or actual beneficiaries
- » Demographic statistics for clients, members, users, volunteers or intended beneficiaries
- » Demographic statistics for specific communities or cohorts (<https://www.id.com.au/>)
- » Evaluation feedback or expert evidence
- » Photos, videos or images

Priority idea or aspiration for action

Describe your priority idea or aspiration and supporting evidence areas ↓

Our idea or aspiration is to...
Supporting evidence that demonstrates the need or benefit is...

Preparing your pitch

Name of organisation	
Key contact person for grant application	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Name• Role• Email• Phone
Physical address of premises or facility	
Website details	
Incorporated	Yes or No
Grant amount sought (approx.)	\$

1. Which funding body are you pitching to?

2. Provide a short title for your application.

3. Provide a brief description of your project or services to be delivered and how it will contribute to the objectives outlined in the Grant Program Objectives or Guidelines.

- » This should be a stand-alone summary of the project or explanation of how you will implement the services – may be used for reporting or grant agreement.
- » Review the assessment criteria before commencing.

This project will fund <<group name>> to <<achieve/develop/improve/increase/reduce/create/start>> a new <<service/program>> across <<geographical area>>.

This project involves <<explain the steps that will be undertaken or implemented and timeframes>>. It will support <<volunteers/players/clients/vulnerable people (men and/or women)>> within the <<group (or community) of all ages (or specify groups)>>, who are facing or impacted by <<describe need or challenge that you are aspiring to overcome>>.

Project activities for participants include <<workshops/field trips/work readiness activities/mentoring/life skills/cultural experiences/community events/social engagement/social support/cooking/physical activities/mental health activities/training/accreditations>>.

Project outcomes will be <<raised awareness, community participation and improved/increased/reduced xxx (consider short-term, medium-term, and long-term outcomes)>>.

4. The main participants (primary cohort) for this project are:

- » Age groups:
- » Genders:

- » Geographic area/suburbs serviced:
- » Other specific characteristics*:

**If applicable, also refer to other specific characteristics, as projects that support one or more of the funder’s priority populations will score higher in the assessment process. Priority population groups experience increased barriers to participation with inequities apparent such as First Nations people, People with disability, Older people, Young people, LGBTIQ+ communities, People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, Carers, People experiencing housing insecurity and homelessness or Single parent families.*

How many participants will your project support or involve? (estimate number)	
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5. Present a budget showing funding breakdown.

List estimates for income sources and expenses. Total income and total expense amounts must equal the same amount. Consider referencing volunteer hours, in-kind support and adding quotations.

Proposed income	\$ estimate	Proposed expenses	\$ estimate
Up to xx participants x \$xx per head		Presenter/trainer/contractor	
Grant request		Materials and activity costs	
Private donation		Promotional and advertising costs	
Other...		Approvals/permits/insurance	
		Venue hire and catering	
		Equipment	
		Project management/admin (in-kind)	
		Evaluation costs	
		Travel, transport or courier costs	
		Other...	
Total income (estimated)	\$	Total expenses (estimated)	\$

Examples of assessment criteria

<p>Example 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Alignment with Grant Objectives/Community Benefit (40%) » Project Planning and Feasibility (30%) » Organisational Capacity and Track Record (15%) » Outcomes and evaluation (15%) 	<p>Example 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Need for the project in the community and relevance to government priorities (20%) » Describe the project (30%) » Describe the intended outcomes of the project (30%) » Capability to deliver the project and governance arrangements to support delivery (20%) 	<p>Example 3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Does the initiative address an identified need or increase the capacity of the organisation or group to deliver programs and activities for the community? » How does the initiative contribute towards the goals of the funding body? » Has the applicant demonstrated their capacity to deliver the initiative? » Is a clear, realistic and value-for-money budget presented with quotes?
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Useful Links

The following linked resources and examples are provided by our Grants and Funding partner [Ignite Community](#). You may find these useful for grants searching and building your organisation's capacity to write a strong grant application and secure funding and support financial sustainability.

Searching for potential grants and funding sources

Grant search engines and directories (subscription based and free resources):

- » Australian Government Community Grants Hub: <https://www.communitygrants.gov.au/>
- » Funding Centre (Our Community): www.fundingcentre.com.au/grant/home
- » Grant Guru: <https://www.grantguru.com/au>
- » Grant'd platform: <https://grantd.com.au/>
- » Sports Central: <https://sportscentral.org.au/grants/>
- » Strategic Grants: www.strategicgrants.com.au
- » The Grants Hub: <https://www.thegrantshub.com.au/>

Government grants (examples):

- » Victoria – Grants Victoria: <https://www.vic.gov.au/grants-and-programs>
- » Grant Connect: www.grants.gov.au/
- » Business: www.business.gov.au/Grants-and-Programs
- » Strong and Resilient Communities: <https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities-communities-and-vulnerable-people/strong-and-resilient-communities>
- » Search your local Council's website for "2026 community grant program"

Philanthropic trusts, foundations, and charities (examples):

- » www.philanthropy.org.au/seek-funding/how-to-seek-funding/
- » Variety – the Children's Charity of Victoria supports Victorian kids aged 0-17 with illness, disability or experiencing disadvantage: <https://fundraise.variety.org.au/how-we-help>
- » Bendigo Bank Community Enterprise Foundation: <https://www.bendigobank.com.au/community/foundation/>
- » Equity Trustees grant funding: <https://www.eqt.com.au/our-services/community/grant-funding>

Writing a strong grant application

- » Australian Government Community Grants Hub: <https://www.communitygrants.gov.au/grant-support/applying-grant/strong-evidence>
- » Better Boards: <https://betterboards.net/non-profit-fact-sheets/auspicing/>
- » Community Directors: <https://www.communitydirectors.com.au/articles/can-a-robot-write-your-next-funding-application> and <https://www.communitydirectors.com.au/articles/mistakes-that-will-hurt-your-grant-application>
- » Funding Centre (Our Community): <https://explore.fundingcentre.com.au/help-sheets/writing-grant> and <https://explore.fundingcentre.com.au/help-sheets/grant-statistics>
- » GEM local grants calendar and database: <https://gemlocal.com.au/>
- » Grant'd: <https://grantd.com.au/article/top-10-tips-for-successful-grant-writing/>
- » ID Consulting (demographic statistics for specific communities or cohorts: <https://www.id.com.au/>
- » Smartygrants software (and resources): <https://www.smartygrants.com.au/>
- » SurePact grant management software (and resources): <https://surepact.com/>

Further Information

As Victoria's peak body for volunteering, you can always come to us for reliable resources and advice. Below are some helpful links and resources to continue your understanding of *Grant Writing and Funding*.

- » The [Volunteering Victoria website](#) is your go-to resource for all things volunteering, with timely and reliable support, training, resources, and expert advice.

Can't find what you're looking for?

Contact the Volunteering Victoria team at info@volunteeringvictoria.org.au anytime with your questions.

