



Fixing Country Roads Program

Application Guidelines



1. Context

1.1 Fixing Country Roads Program

The Fixing Country Roads Program (FCRP) is the Victorian Government's commitment to regional Victorians to improve the condition of regional local roads. The 2018-19 State Budget provided \$100 million to establish a Fixing Country Roads Program to provide grants to rural and regional councils to undertake local road projects beyond regular road maintenance.

This \$100 million statewide program will invest in improving the current state of regional local roads to enhance connectivity, reliability and efficiency of regional communities.

The program will support practical projects and programs that predominantly benefit improving local road conditions in regional areas. These may involve an array of works including bridge strengthening/replacement, shoulder widening, pavement rehabilitations and capacity upgrades.

The program will be administered and managed by Regional Roads Victoria (RRV).

Projects funded through this program are to complement the Government's significant investment on road infrastructure across the state. Particularly in regional areas through programs such as TAC's Towards Zero Action Plan, which looks at improving the safety on regional roads.

1.2 Purpose of this document

This document sets out the application guidelines and eligibility for the Fixing Country Roads Program.

2. Description of the program

2.1 Funding round

The Fixing Country Roads Program will be delivered over two years, with two rounds of funding.

Round one

The first round is a contestable merit based program for rural and regional councils to apply for up to \$500,000 to fund project(s) in their council area. Each council is required to submit a proposal outlining the merits of each project for RRV to assess. Councils that choose to invest additional funds beyond \$500,000 will be met with a State Government co-contribution. Please refer to section 2.6 for further information.

As part of the \$500,000 cap, Councils can apply for up to \$15,000 to develop projects for submission in Round 2, such as intersection improvements, road upgrades, bridge upgrades and safety upgrades. It cannot be used for development of pavement upgrades.

Round two

The second round is a contestable merit based program for rural and regional councils to apply for up to \$1.5 million in funding to deliver projects, which will be matched by a co-contribution from the State Government.

Councils are required to submit a proposal for each individual project, which will be assessed by RRV. State Government funding contributions to projects in Round 2 will be capped at \$1.5 million per project. Councils are required to make a co-contribution for projects in Round 2. Please refer to section 2.6 for further information.

Councils can submit a joint submission with other adjoining councils where a road crosses municipal boundaries.

2.2 Projects that will be considered

This program aims to capture projects that can demonstrate that they will improve current road conditions on local roads. This may include the following:

- Projects that will improve pavement quality including, pavement rehabilitations and sealing of gravel roads.
- Reconstructing damaged roads, with priority given to strategic transport links or connections to essential community services.
- Bridge improvement works including bridge strengthening/replacement on strategic routes.
- Capacity upgrades to promote better traffic flow and journey efficiency and reliability including intersection improvements.
- Local road intersection improvements (including intersection with arterial roads where it forms part of a broader project).
- Safety upgrades on local roads.

Construction of projects funded in Round 1 must be completed by 30 June 2019 and Round 2 projects must be completed by 30 June 2020.

2.3 Projects that will generally not be funded

The following activities will not be eligible for funding:

- Business as usual road maintenance.
- Requests for retrospective funding where projects have been completed or have commenced (i.e. contracts entered into or construction has begun) prior to receiving funding approval.
- Ongoing operating costs or corporate overheads.
- Private sector projects undertaken as a result of a government contract.
- Projects primarily aiming to meet regulatory requirements.
- The purchase of land.
- Upgrade of major arterial roads.
- Private roads/ driveways.

Moreover, business as usual (BAU) road maintenance is defined as maintenance activities which maintain the service standard of a road. Examples of ineligible projects are listed below:

- Routine or periodic maintenance
- Road resurfacing
- Line marking replacement
- Upgrade of local road signage.

Whether a proposed project is a beyond BAU road maintenance activity will be determined on a case by case basis, by referring to existing maintenance practices. Project proposals should clearly articulate how the project goes beyond these activities.

2.4 Assessment criteria

Applications for Fixing Country Roads that demonstrate consideration to the following criteria will be strongly considered:

- Demonstrated project feasibility and delivery
- Increased user safety
- Increased active transport use
- Benefits to regional industries, including efficiency improvements
- Alignment to state, regional or council transport plans and strategies
- Broad community/industry support, including consultation outcomes where applicable
- Longer-term sustainability for the road network
- Other relevant supporting information.

2.5 Who can apply

Applications will be considered from all rural and regional councils as listed in Schedule 2 of the Regional Development Victoria Act 2002, with the exception of the Alpine Resorts.

Moreover, from these councils, only those that are participating in Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning's Regional Council Transformation Program (RCTP) through submission of an Expression of Interest will be eligible to apply for funding in Round 2.

2.6 Funding support

Through this grant process applicants are encouraged to make a financial contribution or source third party funding for each submission. Projects should maximise their funding support from a range of sources, such as the Commonwealth Government. This is optional in round one and mandatory in round two.

Round one

Recognising that not all councils have the same capacity to source co-contributions, this is not mandatory in round one, to ensure all eligible councils are able to deliver projects. However, if councils choose to fund projects beyond \$500,000, this will be met with a co-contribution from the State Government on the Round 2 funding co-contribution basis (refer below). This co-contribution is limited up to the project cap of \$1.5 million.

Round two

Co-contribution is mandatory in round two. Recognising rural councils have a lower ratepayer base in comparison to the size of the network, a 2:1 State/ Council funding contribution will be offered to rural councils and a 1:1 funding contribution to regional councils.

Regional councils are recognised as Ballarat City Council, Greater Bendigo City Council, Greater Geelong City Council, Horsham Rural City Council, Latrobe City Council, Mildura Rural City Council, Greater Shepparton City Council, Wangaratta Rural City Council, Warrnambool City Council, and Wodonga City Council. All other eligible councils are considered rural councils.

Should a project exceed its Total Estimated Cost, it will be the responsibility of councils to source the additional funds required.

2.7 How do I apply?

Applications will be accepted online through SmartyGrants, and evaluated on a case-by-case basis, subject to the availability of funding. The application period for Round 1 will be open until 5:00pm on 15 October 2018. Where a council may require additional time to prepare a submission, councils may seek agreement to an extension through Regional Roads Victoria. The following section outlines the application process in detail.

3. Application and assessment process

To ensure the suitability of projects, all applicants will need to comply with the following process.

Step 1: Prior to application

Prior to submitting an application, prospective applicants are advised to:

- Read these application guidelines to establish eligibility and conditions for the funding offered.
- Contact RRV to discuss the proposal.

Prospective applicants should note, projects may not proceed to the formal application and/ or assessment stage where the project:

- Can be normally implemented through another government funding program, and if appropriate, applicants may be referred to such funding options.
- Does not strongly demonstrate benefits to improving current local road conditions.
- Is not implementation ready.
- Is not complementary to state and/ or industry priorities.
- Does not strongly demonstrate a need for government funding.
- Does not maximise funding support from other sources.

A RRV officer will assist you to determine your project's suitability before an application form is completed.

Step 2: Prepare an application

Applicants should use the application form in SmartyGrants to describe the project by identifying the challenge or opportunity it is seeking to address, the objectives, the desired outcomes, the outputs to be delivered, and the infrastructure requirements.

Demonstration to support the project such as a feasibility study, business plan, cost benefit analysis or economic impact assessment is highly regarded and should be attached to the application.

A project estimate should be provided in support of the funding required for the project.

GST

Applicants should note that all project costs included in the application must be exclusive of GST. The grant to be paid by RRV will be 'grossed up' by the amount of the GST, provided the applicant provides details of registration for the GST, or proof of exemption from being required to register.

Who signs the application

Applications from local government authorities must be approved by the Chief Executive Officer.

Addressing core selection criteria

Applicants will be asked to demonstrate the project's ability to meet a considerable number of the selection criteria.

4. Conditions of funding

4.1 Funding agreements

Successful applicants will be notified once the Minister for Roads and Road Safety had made a decision via correspondence.

Successful applicants will be required to enter into a funding agreement with RRV detailing all funding obligations and conditions.

The funding agreement is a legally enforceable document that defines the obligations of both parties. The funding agreement aims to protect the Victorian Government's interests and to ensure the efficient and effective use of public money. It also ensures there is appropriate involvement and recognition of Victorian Government support on project related publications, events, media releases and promotional material.

Funding agreements must be signed by the organisation's Chief Executive Officer (or equivalent) and will:

- Describe the purpose for which the funding must be used.
- Set out any requirements or conditions that must be met prior to the payment of a grant instalment.
- Outline agreed milestones and project outcomes that must be achieved before payment of a grant instalment.

Once the funding agreement has been signed, the applicant will be required to actively manage and deliver the project, and provide progress reports to RRV. During the course of the project, RRV may conduct site visits as necessary.

In some instances, based on project size, complexity and the amount of funding being provided, a project control group (or equivalent) may need to be established with regular meetings and reports. RRV may be either a participant or observer in these meetings.

The applicant must work with RRV to ensure projects specifications are fit for purpose and the scope of the projects is delivered. The applicant must also ensure it complies with the Victorian Government Purchasing Board policies.

Details of the required reporting will be set out in the funding agreement.

Successful applicants must enter into a funding agreement and complete the project within the financial year the funding is provided. If a project is not expected to be completed within this timeframe, the grant will be reviewed by RRV.

The State funding contribution is capped at the amount allocated by RRV for each project. No additional State funds can be allocated.

The successful applicants will be listed on RRV's website.

4.2 Evaluation and reporting

Successful applicants will be required to cooperate fully with RRV in providing monthly reporting, assess progress of the project against milestones, outputs and outcomes, and provide evidence of project completion.

After completion of the project, applicants must submit annual evaluation reports assessing the project's success in meeting its stated objectives, outputs and outcomes.

Successful applicants may be required to contribute information on project outcomes, including longer term impacts beyond project completion for use in the program evaluation reviews. It is the responsibility of successful applicants to put in place adequate data collection arrangements to capture the appropriate data in relation to output and outcomes. These arrangements will assist RRV to undertake a robust evaluation of the FCRP.

4.3 Audits

Audits of the program may periodically be carried out by RRV. Councils will be advised if an audit is scheduled and will be required to support the audit with information requested for the nominated project.

4.4 Competitive neutrality

All successful applications to the FCRP from a government body, including local governments, will be required to comply with the Competitive Neutrality Policy Victoria, in respect of any commercial goods or services offered by the body as a result of the grant.

4.5 Privacy

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

Any personal information about you or a third party 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 (Vic) and other applicable laws. RRV is committed to protecting the privacy of personal information.

Please note, RRV is a division of VicRoads. VicRoads privacy policy is available from the VicRoads website.

4.6 Acknowledgement

Successful applicants need to acknowledge the Victorian Government's support through the provision of a grant from the FCRP. Promotional guidelines form part of the funding agreement and include the requirements that all activities acknowledge Victorian Government support through logo presentation on any activity-related publications, media releases and promotional material.

Successful applicants must liaise with RRV to coordinate any events or announcements related to the activity. Successful applicants may be required to contribute information on activity outcomes for use in communications materials.

5. Contacts and further information

For further information regarding the program, please contact:

Regional Roads Victoria

Ph: 133 RRV (133 778)

Email: fixingcountryroads@roads.vic.gov.au