

2026-27 Grants Program:

# Guidelines for applicants



**Cover image:**

Courtesy of Willum Warrain Aboriginal Association, 2025-2026 grantee (*We are Empowered, We Belong, We are One*).

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## 2026-27 Grants Program: Guidelines for Applicants

“I love watching the progress of all the innovative, creative programs funded by the Con Irwin Sub-Fund, undertaken by a range of wonderful community groups.

It gives me great satisfaction to see my own social justice and feminist principles in action through the Victorian Women's Benevolent Trust.”

– Hilary Irwin, founder of the Con Irwin Sub-Fund

### Our new approach

At the Victorian Women's Trust, we believe that paperwork shouldn't be a barrier to making a difference in the community. That's why we have chosen to simplify our application process.

### What has changed?

You no longer need to choose a specific Sub-Fund. Instead, simply tell us about your project's theme and area of focus. Our Trustees will then do the work of matching your project to one of our 17 unique Sub-Funds.

We encourage you to view all of our Sub-Funds, and learn more about each Fund's distinct purposes. Visit our website to learn more: [www.vwt.org.au/grants/sub-funds](http://www.vwt.org.au/grants/sub-funds)

## Our grants ethos

**Before applying, please ensure your project aligns with our core principles:**

- **Catalysing change:** We fund circuit-breaking projects that offer innovative, new ways of creating real change in women's lives.
- **Seeding new ideas:** We prefer to fund new projects, or new components that extend the ambitions and reach of existing work.
- **Supporting grassroots:** We prioritise smaller community organisations that often fly under the radar of larger funders.
- **Funding with care:** We look past the "perfectly written" application to find the real potential for change.
- **Beyond the binary:** Our primary beneficiaries are women, girls, and gender-diverse people. This includes transwomen and non-binary people.
- **Fair pay:** If a funding request includes a salary component, we recognise that grant recipients should be properly remunerated for their work according to industry standards.
- **Co-funding:** When we receive requests for our small grants to contribute to a larger project, we carefully weigh the impact our specific portion of funding will have and whether it is a strategic project to be part of.
- **Grant amount:** Most grants awarded are between \$2,000 and \$10,000.

## Are you eligible?

To keep the process fair, we have strict legal requirements. Please check these before starting your application:

-  **Location:** Your project must benefit women, girls and gender diverse people living in Victoria.
-  **Legal status:** Your organisation (or your auspice partner) must have DGR Item 1 and Tax Concession Charity (TCC) status. For more info on auspicings, please see pages 10 and 11.
-  **Partnerships:** We welcome applications for projects delivered in partnership by two or more eligible organisations.
-  **Individuals:** We cannot fund individuals.
-  **Amount:** Most grants are between \$2,000 and \$10,000.

## Find your theme

When you apply, you will be asked to select which theme best fits your project. You may select more than one if your work overlaps.

### **Theme A: Safety & Justice**

For projects focusing on: Housing and homelessness; family violence; older women's safety; or supporting women exiting the justice system.

### **Theme B: Economic Security**

For projects focusing on: Financial empowerment; poverty and income insecurity; or specific support for single mothers and their children.

### **Theme C: Culture & Rights**

For projects focusing on: First Nations rights and leadership; support for refugee and migrant women; or combating racism and promoting social cohesion.

### **Theme D: Health & Wellbeing**

For projects focusing on: Mental health recovery; disability rights and access; or physical activity and wellbeing.

### **Theme E: Education & Voice**

For projects focusing on: Leadership training; creative expression for female writers; or advocacy for gender equality and equal opportunity.

## Connecting themes and Sub-Funds

The following table outlines how each theme and focus area relates to our Sub-Funds. In your application, you will be asked to select which theme best fits your project. You can select more than one theme.

Theme	Focus areas	Sub-Funds
<b>Safety &amp; Justice</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Housing:</b> Finding a safe and secure place to live.</li> <li>• <b>Safety &amp; Family Violence:</b> Keeping women and children safe from harm.</li> <li>• <b>Justice System Support:</b> Helping women who are in or leaving prison.</li> <li>• <b>Older Women’s Safety:</b> Helping women age with dignity and security.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Con Irwin:</b> Prevention of violence against women/children.</li> <li>• <b>Jan Webster &amp; Sue Peterson:</b> Women in/exiting prison; homelessness.</li> <li>• <b>Fleur Spitzer:</b> Safety and security for older women.</li> <li>• <b>Loula Rodopoulos:</b> Mental health and trauma recovery.</li> </ul>
<b>Economic Security</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Financial Empowerment:</b> Learning about money, finding jobs, or being independent.</li> <li>• <b>Poverty &amp; Insecurity:</b> Support for women and families who are struggling with basic costs.</li> <li>• <b>Single Parent Support:</b> Specific help for mothers and their children to thrive.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Supriya Singh:</b> Financial independence (post-violence).</li> <li>• <b>Joan Hudson:</b> Mothers and children from disadvantaged backgrounds.</li> <li>• <b>Ruth Owens &amp; Kevin Lynch:</b> Single mothers and families in need.</li> <li>• <b>Jean McCaughey:</b> Research into poverty and housing.</li> </ul>

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## Connecting themes and Sub-Funds

Theme	Focus areas	Sub-Funds
<b>Culture &amp; Rights</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>First Nations Rights:</b> Supporting the rights and leadership of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.</li> <li>• <b>Migrant &amp; Refugee Support:</b> Helping women who have moved to Australia from other countries.</li> <li>• <b>Anti-Racism:</b> Stopping unfair treatment based on race or background.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Christine Friday &amp; Kathleen Pooley:</b> First Nations women and girls.</li> <li>• <b>Essie Burbridge:</b> Anti-racism and multi-cultural harmony.</li> <li>• <b>Jan Webster &amp; Sue Peterson:</b> Women in/exiting prison; homelessness.</li> <li>• <b>Prue Myer:</b> Refugee and migrant girls (mentoring).</li> <li>• <b>Humanitas:</b> Support for women of African heritage.</li> <li>• <b>Union of Australian Women (Vic):</b> Indigenous leadership and community</li> </ul>
<b>Health &amp; Wellbeing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mental Health &amp; Wellbeing:</b> Supporting recovery and emotional health.</li> <li>• <b>Disability Rights:</b> Ensuring access and fairness for women with disabilities.</li> <li>• <b>Physical Activity:</b> Staying healthy and active in the community.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Alma &amp; Albert Tivendale:</b> Physical activity and health crises</li> <li>• <b>Nancye &amp; John Cain:</b> Support for women with disabilities/hearing loss</li> <li>• <b>Loula Rodopoulos:</b> Wellbeing through writing and storytelling</li> </ul>

**Continued >**

## Connecting themes and Sub-Funds

Theme	Focus areas	Sub-Funds
<b>Education &amp; Voice</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Leadership &amp; Education:</b> Learning new skills or leading in your community.</li> <li>• <b>Creative Voice:</b> Telling stories through writing, books, or the arts.</li> <li>• <b>Equal Opportunity:</b> Working to make laws and workplaces fairer for women.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Fay Marles:</b> Equal opportunity and professional leadership</li> <li>• <b>Deborah Ganderton &amp; John Henry:</b> Strategic leadership and planning</li> <li>• <b>Loula Rodopoulos:</b> Female writers and creative expression</li> <li>• <b>Fleur Spitzer:</b> Literacy and educational advancement</li> </ul>

### See our grants in action

Want to better understand what we mean by circuit-breaking change?

We highly recommend reading our latest Annual Report. It’s the best way to explore stories of past grantees, understand the scale of projects we fund, and see how different grants come to life across Victoria.

**Read the 2025 Annual Report here:**  
[www.vwt.org.au/about/annual-reports](http://www.vwt.org.au/about/annual-reports)



## Working with an auspice partner

### What is an auspice?

An "auspice" is an organisation that manages grant funding on behalf of another group. If your community group or collective does not have DGR Item 1 status, you can still apply for a grant by partnering with a larger, incorporated organisation that does. This is a common and supported way for smaller groups to access funding.

### How does it work?

- **The agreement:** You must first find a parent organisation (the auspice) that supports your mission and holds DGR1 and Tax Concession Charity (TCC) status.
- **The application:** You write the grant application, but you provide the auspice organisation's ABN and legal details.
- **Funding:** If successful, we will pay the grant money directly to the auspice organisation.
- **The project:** The auspice organisation holds the funds in their bank account and pays for your project expenses (such as hiring a venue or paying a facilitator) as you need them.

## Our requirements for auspicing

To ensure the safety of the funds and the success of your project, the Victorian Women's Benevolent Trust requires that an auspicing arrangement satisfies the following conditions:

1. **Status:** The auspicing organisation must be endorsed by the ATO for Item 1 DGR and TCC status.
2. **Accountability:** The auspicing organisation is legally accountable for the project under its auspices and provides the necessary legal and administrative support.
3. **Active engagement:** The auspicing arrangement must be active, not passive. This means the auspice is involved in the oversight of the project, not just acting as a "pass-through" for the bank account.
4. **Formal Relationship:** The relationship must be genuine, appropriate, and legally aligned. It must be formalised through a written agreement between your group and the auspice.

### What you need to provide in your application

If you are using an auspice, you will be required to provide:

- The auspice organisation's **ABN**.
- The name of a **Primary Contact Person** at the auspice organisation.
- A **Letter of Support** from the auspice (confirming they have a formal agreement with you and agree to manage the funds for this specific project).

## How to apply

We recommend a 'measure twice, cut once' approach to save you time:

- **Check your ABN:** Use the [ABN Lookup](#) to confirm you have DGR1 status.
- **Download the Budget Template:** Use our template to ensure your budget is correct before you start the online form.
- **Draft your answers:** We recommend writing your "Project Details" (100 words each) in a Word Doc first, then copying them into the form.
- **Submit online:** Complete the application by midnight, Friday 19 June.

## Timeline for 2026

- **Applications open:** Thursday 23 April, 2026
- **Applications close:** Midnight, Friday 19 June, 2026
- **Notification of outcome:** October, 2026

## Frequently asked questions (FAQs)

**Q: Do I need to mention a specific Sub-Fund in my application?**

**A:** No. You just need to select the themes that match your project. Our Trustees will handle the allocation to the relevant Sub-Fund (e.g. the Fleur Spitzer or Con Irwin Sub-Fund).

**Q: Can I apply for funding to help my organisation grow, rather than just a specific project?**

**A:** Yes! While we don't fund business as usual expenses (like existing rent or utility bills), we do fund capacity building. This means if you need a new staff member to coordinate volunteers, a consultant to help with a 3-year strategic plan, or a new software system to help you advocate for women's rights more effectively, we want to hear about it.

**Q: Can we submit more than one application?**

**A:** Yes, provided they are for entirely different projects. However, as we prefer to spread our funding broadly, it is rare for one organisation to receive two grants in one cycle.

**Q: What if our project fits into three different themes?**

**A:** That's great! Many projects do. Tick all that apply; it helps us see the full impact of your work.

**Q: We don't have DGR1 status. Can we still apply?**

**A:** Yes, but only if you have an auspice partner (a larger organisation with DGR1) who agrees to manage the funds for you. You will need their ABN and a letter of support.

Contact

Questions? We are here to help.  
Email: [grants@vwt.org.au](mailto:grants@vwt.org.au) | Phone: (03) 9642 0422

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