

Research and Development Grant Fund - Round II

Application Guidelines



Powerline Bushfire Safety Program



Environment,
Land, Water
and Planning

OFFICIAL

Acknowledgment

We acknowledge and respect Victorian Traditional Owners as the original custodians of Victoria's land and waters, their unique ability to care for Country and deep spiritual connection to it. We honour Elders past and present whose knowledge and wisdom has ensured the continuation of culture and traditional practices.

We are committed to genuinely partner, and meaningfully engage, with Victoria's Traditional Owners and Aboriginal communities to support the protection of Country, the maintenance of spiritual and cultural practices and their broader aspirations in the 21st century and beyond.



© The State of Victoria Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning 2020



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International licence. You are free to re-use the work under that licence, on the condition that you credit the State of Victoria as author. The licence does not apply to any images, photographs or branding, including the Victorian Coat of Arms, the Victorian Government logo and the

Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) logo. To view a copy of this licence, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

ISBN 978-1-76105-225-5 (pdf/online/MS word)

Disclaimer

This publication may be of assistance to you but the State of Victoria and its employees do not guarantee that the publication is without flaw of any kind or is wholly appropriate for your particular purposes and therefore disclaims all liability for any error, loss or other consequence which may arise from you relying on any information in this publication.

Accessibility

If you would like to receive this publication in an alternative format, please telephone the DELWP Customer Service Centre on 136186, email customer.service@delwp.vic.gov.au, or via the National Relay Service on 133 677 www.relayservice.com.au. This document is also available on the internet at www.delwp.vic.gov.au.

Contents

1. What is the Research and Development Grant Fund – Round II?	2
1.1 R&D Round II Objectives	2
2. Who can apply?	3
2.1 Co-contribution arrangements	3
2.2 Requirements for projects seeking/securing funds from other grant sources	3
3. What might be funded?	4
4. What will not be funded?	4
5. What are the assessment criteria?	5
5.1 Assessment of applications	6
6. What are the funding conditions?	7
6.1 Funding Agreement	7
6.2 Legislative and regulatory requirements	7
6.3 Acknowledgement	7
6.4 Cost	7
6.5 Payments	7
6.6 Tax implications	7
6.7 Reporting	7
6.8 Publicity	8
6.9 Probity for application procedures	8
6.10 Confidentiality	8
6.11 Intellectual Property (IP)	8
7. What is the application process?	9
8. Additional information	9
8.1 Reference Material	9
9. What is the notification process?	10
10. Key Dates	10
11. Checklist	10

1. What is the Research and Development Grant Fund – Round II?

The Research and Development (R&D) Fund is a component of the \$750 million Powerline Bushfire Safety Program (PBSP), adopted in direct response to the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission's recommendation to fund research and development to further reduce the likelihood that powerlines start bushfires. This program is administered by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (the Department).

The Victorian Government committed to expend \$10 million in a first allocation of R&D funding to research and develop further potential reductions in bushfire risk. The aim was to foster commercial development of new or enhanced products to further technology that prevents bushfires occurring from powerlines.

The first round of R&D funding, expended between 2012 and 2019, supported the testing and development of new powerline bushfire protection technology and fault detection capabilities in partnership with Victoria's electricity distribution businesses.

In 2017, the *Independent Review of Victoria's Electricity and Gas Network Safety Framework*, led by Dr Paul Grimes (Grimes Review), found that further research and development funding should be made available in order to deliver enhanced programs to address bushfire safety, particularly as it relates to powerlines (Grimes Review, Recommendation 29).

The Victorian Government has agreed to this recommendation and is making available a further \$2 million for a second round (R&D-II) of funding under the PBSP. This document sets out the objectives, application process and assessment criteria for this second round of funding.

1.1 R&D Round II Objectives

R&D Round II – Strategic Objective

To support the development or production of technologies, processes, and information systems that can further contribute to significant powerline bushfire risk reduction outcomes in a cost-efficient manner.

To assist in achieving this strategic objective, a number of desired outcomes have been developed to help guide project delivery. These desired outcomes seek to ensure that projects funded through R&D-II:

- contribute to, or enhance, the Victorian bushfire risk mitigation activities of the PBSP;
- support collection of up-to-date Victorian bushfire risk mitigation information and modelling;
- support collection of up-to-date information or modelling relevant to bushfire prevention, prediction, response or recovery;
- support the manufacture of new technology components or systems capable of being deployed on the electricity network that can prevent bushfires being ignited by electricity assets or otherwise rapidly identify or respond to bushfires regardless of their ignition source; and
- provide value for money to Victoria by demonstrating a capability to meet or exceed the objectives of the R&D-II fund.

2. Who can apply?

To be eligible to apply, Applicants must:

- be applying for funding for a project that aims to contribute to reducing powerline-related bushfire risk in line with the R&D-II's Strategic Objective;
- be financially solvent;
- be a non-tax-exempt company incorporated in Australia under the *Corporations Act 2001* OR a registered research institute;
- have an Australian Business Number (ABN);
- have access to, or the beneficial use of, any Intellectual Property (IP) necessary to carry out the project;
- undertake not less than 80 per cent of the R&D-II work in Victoria for the duration of the project;
- if the Project is technology-based and is ready for testing, partner with a Victorian electricity distribution business to test the product on its network, with preference given to projects undertaken in hazardous bushfire risk areas during a specified bushfire risk period (i.e. 1 November to the following 31 March); and
- be able to fully implement and acquit the project within 13 months from the time that successful applications are announced.

2.1 Co-contribution arrangements

Applications must include co-contributions of 50 per cent or more of the total project value.

In-kind contributions must not exceed 50 per cent of total Applicant contributions.

As recommended by the Grimes review, preference will be given to project proposals whose overall funding amount is at least partially matched by contributions from distribution companies. Preference will also be given to R&D proposals that are to be managed jointly with distribution companies and involve input from university researchers. Applicants must make both financial and in-kind contributions to the project's budget.

2.2 Requirements for projects seeking/securing funds from other grant sources

Applicants that have already secured funding or anticipate securing funding from other sources may also be considered for R&D-II funding.

Where this is the case, proposals for R&D-II funding must clearly indicate:

- how the funding from the R&D-II would expand the scope of the Project and/or hasten the rollout/findings of the Project;
- the status of funds sought from other grant sources (i.e. whether these funds are guaranteed, uncertain or contingent on a successful R&D bid);
- the capacity of the Applicant to meet the strategic objectives and implementation demands of all grant sources, including the R&D fund;
- if other grant sources are not guaranteed, how the project could proceed if R&D funds were allocated and grants from other sources were not secured by the Applicant; and
- options for ongoing funding of project and/or technological solutions post the R&D funding.

3. What might be funded?

Applications are open to a broad range of organisations and can include single entities or a consortium of participants. However, all Applications, whether by single entities or a consortium, must nominate a 'Lead Organisation' to:

- endorse the Application;
- verify any commitment of funds for the Project; and
- be authorised to enter into a Funding Agreement with the State if successful.

The Application must be approved by a duly authorised representative of the Lead Organisation.

Funding is available for projects in all stages of research and development.

Priority will be given to Applicants that offer cost effective, solution-based technologies/systems that can be deployed on the Victorian electricity system and align with and/or enhance technologies being deployed under the PBSP.

Applicants must also be able to demonstrate they can meet the following criteria:

- not less than 80 per cent of the Project must take place in Victoria¹;
- the Lead Organisation and any Participants must not have any unresolved issues with a Victorian government agency, including the Environment Protection Agency or WorkSafe Victoria.

Applicants must also be able to state whether there are any actual or perceived conflict of interest issues in relation to the proposed project for the Applicant, Lead Organisation and any Participants.

4. What will not be funded?

The R&D-II grant program will not fund the following activities:

- The purchase of land;
- Routine or ongoing maintenance activities;
- Activities that have already started;
- Where duplicate services are in operation or planned for in a targeted community;
- Recurrent operating costs, for example rent and utility costs, and/or activities establishing expectations of ongoing funding;
- Activities located outside the State of Victoria.

1. Applicants may be able to purchase services, supplies and technology from overseas, provided that the expenditure on overseas-sourced purchases is agreed to by the Department.

5. What are the assessment criteria?

First, applications will be checked for eligibility to make sure that the applicant and their activity are eligible for funding. After that eligible applications will be considered on the basis of the key assessment criteria. These assessment criteria are outlined below in conjunction with their relative weightings and key questions Applicants should consider in developing their applications.

Please limit responses to 750 words per question.

Note: Diagrams, charts, tables, pictures, etc do not count against the total.

Assessment criteria	Weighting
1. Project technical viability and merit	30%
2. Appropriateness of the proposed budget, amount of funding sought, and leverage with other sources of funding	10%
3. Ability to deliver evaluation of the project within the timeframe	10%
4. Project / risk management approach and governance arrangements	10%
5. Applicant track record and capability	10%
6. Value to Victoria including potential powerline bushfire mitigation benefits	30%

1. Project merit and readiness for commercialisation (Weighting: 30%)

- Provide a detailed explanation of the Project.
- Provide evidence of IP ownership and describe the strategy for IP protection. If the Applicant does not own the IP then evidence of entitlement of IP use is required. Attach documentation as required.

- Provide evidence that any prior stage of development of the technology has been completed successfully and that results are available for assessment. Attach documents as required.
- Describe how the technology compares to the current best practice in the field domestically / internationally, including who else is known to be working on similar technology(/ies) and provide evidence of cost competitiveness.

2. Appropriateness of the proposed budget, amount of funding sought, and leverage with other sources of funding (Weighting: 10%)

- Identify other funding sources (if any) that will be secured to support the delivery of this project.
- Identify any in-kind support, including sources, nature of the support and estimated market value of each element of in-kind support identified. Attach documents evidencing each commitment of support.
- Identify if funds are already secured or if they are still the subject of competitive assessment.
- Provide details to ensure that the objectives of the R&D Fund are fully met in the delivery of the proposed project.

3. Ability to deliver evaluation of the project (Weighting: 10%)

- Explain how the proposed outcomes of the project will be measured, i.e. how will project success be known?
- Identify existing surveys/evaluation data that will be utilised in order to demonstrate how the project met its outcomes.
- Describe, in detail, the review processes that will be put in place and whether these reviews will support future activity to reduce bushfire starts by powerlines.

4. Project / risk management approach and governance arrangements (Weighting: 10%)

- Provide a breakdown of the project delivery strategy.
- Outline the key risks (e.g. technical, commercial, financial, environmental, social, etc.) the project faces and explain the mitigation strategy for each.
- Detail the project management arrangements in place to deliver the project.
- Identify the key project milestones and when each milestone will be delivered.
- If the Application includes multiple organisations, identify which Applicant member will lead the project and therefore receive R&D funds
- If the project requires live testing on the Victorian electricity distribution network, identify the distribution business that has provided approval for this testing. Attach documents evidencing such approval.
- For research projects, Applicants should identify if they have linkages with a university or research institute. Attach documents evidencing such linkages.

5. Applicant track record and capability (Weighting: 10%)

- Demonstrate the Applicant's ability to secure funding from other sources over the life of a project.
- Provide evidence from previous projects where private or public funding was secured over the life of a project.
- Where relevant, provide an outline of previous funding allocations and evidence of delivery success.

6. Value to Victoria including potential powerline bushfire mitigation benefits (Weighting: 30%)

- Describe the project's direct value to Victoria and how Victoria will gain ongoing benefit from the project's outcomes.
- Quantify, or otherwise explain, the financial benefits to Victoria from funding the proposal.

- Identify the expected impact of the project on reducing bushfire ignitions from powerlines (preference for quantitative data over qualitative data but both are acceptable).

5.1 Assessment of applications

Eligible applications will be assessed by an expert panel against the assessment criteria contained in this document. This panel will advise the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change (the Minister) on the merit of applications received.

As part of the assessment process, the Department may:

- request further information or clarification of an Application;
- require an Applicant to attend an interview where it may be called to provide a presentation on its proposal and to discuss its Application. These interviews will be available via tele- or video conferencing to Applicants unable to meet face-to-face; and
- request a demonstration of the solution or a site visit.

Applicants will be given a reasonable time, but not more than 14 days, to respond to the Department's request(s).

Projects recommended for funding by the panel require endorsement by the PBSP's Director and final approval by the Minister.

6. What are the funding conditions?

6.1 Funding Agreement

Successful Applicants will be required to enter into a binding funding agreement with the State. The funding agreement includes the terms of the funding, monitoring, evaluation and reporting processes required by the Department to ensure that the project is well managed.

Opportunities to make variations to the funding agreement template are limited and will only be accommodated in exceptional circumstances.

A letter from the Minister will be issued to each Applicant selected for funding under the Program. The funding offer in the Minister's Letter of Offer is subject to execution of a Funding Agreement within a period of up to two months as specified by the Department in the Minister's Letter of Offer. Failure to execute in this time period may result in withdrawal of the funding offer. The Minister's Letter of Offer may list other conditions of funding.

6.2 Legislative and regulatory requirements

In delivering the activity grant recipients are required to comply with all relevant Commonwealth and Victorian legislation and regulations, including but not limited to:

- *The Privacy Act 1988* (Cth)
- *The Freedom of Information Act 1982* (Vic)
- *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004* (Vic)
- *Local Jobs First Act 2003* (Vic)

6.3 Acknowledgement

Successful Applicants are expected to acknowledge the Victorian Government's support and promotional guidelines (<https://www2.delwp.vic.gov.au/grants>). Successful Applicants must liaise with the Department's program area to coordinate any public events or announcements related to the project.

6.4 Cost

The Department is not liable for any costs, expenses, losses, claims or damages that may be incurred by Applicants in connection with the Application Process, including preparing or submitting an Application, providing further information to the Department, or participating in negotiations with the Department.

6.5 Payments

Payments will be made as long as:

- the funding agreement has been signed by both parties;
- grant recipients provide reports as required, or otherwise demonstrate that the activity is progressing as expected; and
- other terms and conditions of funding continue to be met.

6.6 Tax implications

Applicants should consult the Australian Taxation Office or seek professional advice on any taxation implications that may arise from this grant funding.

DELWP uses Recipient Created Tax Invoices (RCTIs) for grant payments. An RCTI is a tax invoice, including the relevant amount of GST, that is issued by DELWP rather than the grant recipient. The Australian Tax Office (ATO) considers DELWP to be the recipient of the goods or services provided by the grant recipient, and the organisation/individual receiving a grant is the supplier of those goods or services.

RCTIs can only be created for grant recipients with a valid ABN that are registered for GST.

6.7 Do I need to include GST in my budget?

Yes. Regardless of your GST status, all expenditure should include GST.

Where quotes are provided for components of the project, quotes must include GST and must be current, and obtained within the last six months. Where quotes are for a large piece of work, please ensure they are itemised to enable assessment of the costing methodology.

6.8 Reporting

All recipients of grant funds must agree to:

- comply with performance monitoring requirements, including written reports and face-to-face meetings with the Department; and
- participate in formal evaluations of the program by the Department.

6.9 Publicity

All recipients must agree to:

- cooperate with the Department in the preparation of materials used to promote the benefits of the program, such as media releases or case studies; and
- consult with the Department prior to the publication of any promotional materials related to the project.

6.10 Probity for application procedures

The Applicant and any of its associates must not offer any incentive to, or otherwise attempt to influence any of the persons who are either directly or indirectly involved in the Application Process, or in awarding any subsequent contract. If the Department determines that the Applicant or any of its associates have violated this condition, the Applicant may be disqualified from further consideration, in the Department's absolute discretion.

By submitting an application, the Applicant consents to the Department performing probity and financial investigations and procedures in relation to the Applicant or any of its associates. The Applicant agrees, if requested by the Department, to seek consents from individuals to allow such probity checks.

6.11 Confidentiality

Any personal information about the Applicant or a third party related to the Application will be collected by the Department for the purposes of administering the grant and funding agreement and informing Members of Parliament of successful applications.

Personal information may also be disclosed to external experts, such as members of assessment

panels, or other Government Departments for assessment, reporting, advice, comment or for discussions regarding alternative or collaborative grant funding opportunities. If an Applicant intends to include personal information about third parties in its application, please ensure that they are aware of the contents of this privacy statement.

Any personal information about the Applicant 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* and other applicable laws.

The Department is committed to protecting the privacy of personal information. You can find the Department's Privacy Policy online at www.delwp.vic.gov.au/privacy.

Requests for access to information about you held by the Department should be sent to the Manager Privacy, P.O. Box 500 East Melbourne 3002 or contact by phone on (03) 9637 8697.

6.12 Intellectual Property (IP)

The Applicant will own all IP developed through all stages of the project, including the content provided in milestone completion and final reports and will be free to commercialise the IP as it sees fit.

Details around the licensing of IP to the Victorian Government will be articulated in the relevant agreements.

Any existing or background IP will be detailed in a signed schedule prior to project commencement.

7. What is the application process?

Applications for R&D Round II funding will be open from **10 August 2020 to 5 October 2020**.

Applications are submitted online using the Grants Online portal.

To apply, go to the grant program web page <https://delwp1.force.com/publicform?id=a0h4P00001dYC73> and Register or Login. To return to a saved draft application, go to <https://delwp1.force.com/>.

Applicants must clearly and explicitly address the Assessment Criteria listed in part 4 of this document. Applications must be endorsed by the Applicant's Chief Executive Officer (or equivalent).

Applications for R&D-II funding must be made using the electronic form and submitted online.

Documents and other supporting materials attached to the application must be in .pdf, .xls or .jpeg format and no more than 5MB in size.

Applicants will be notified of their success and funding awarded, or otherwise, within three months of the Closing Date.

Note: No hard copy applications will be accepted. Late and incomplete applications will not be considered.

5.1 Questions

Any questions regarding the Application Process or the R&D Fund can be made in writing via the email address:

safer.powerlines@delwp.vic.gov.au. Questions must be lodged at least seven days prior to the Closing Date.

Applicants acknowledge and agree that:

- if the Department provides additional information to a potential Applicant, it may issue a copy of this additional information to each of the other potential Applicants; and
- any information provided by the Department in response to any question raised by the potential Applicant the Department may provide that information to all Applicants via a "Frequently Asked Questions" web page dedicated to R&D-II.

8. Additional information

General information on the Powerline Bushfire Safety Program can be found at <https://www.energy.vic.gov.au/safety-and-emergencies/powerline-bushfire-safety-program>

Any questions regarding the Application Process can be made in writing to the Program contact via the following email address

safer.powerlines@delwp.vic.gov.au

If you require assistance submitting your application online, **contact the Grants Information Line on 1300 366 356 or grantsinfo@delwp.vic.gov.au**

8.1 Reference Material

References	Link to document
2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission Report	http://royalcommission.vic.gov.au/Commission-Reports/Final-Report.html
Powerline Bushfire Safety Taskforce Report	https://esv.vic.gov.au/safety-education/bushfire-and-powerline-safety/powerline-bushfire-safety-taskforce/
Powerline Bushfire Safety Program website	https://www.energy.vic.gov.au/safety-and-emergencies/powerline-bushfire-safety-program
Independent Review of Victoria's Electricity and Gas Network Safety Framework	https://esv.vic.gov.au/about-esv/reports/corporate-governance-statements-and-reports/review-electricity-gas-safety-framework/

9. What is the notification process?

Successful and unsuccessful applicants will be notified in writing after the assessment process is completed. All decisions are final and are not subject to further review. Unsuccessful applicants can ask for feedback on their application.

10. Key Dates

Stage	Due Date
Applications open	10 August 2020
Applications close	5 October 2020
Technical feasibility assessment	30 October 2020
Grants approvals	13 November 2020
Funding agreements finalised	27 November 2020
Projects commence	30 November 2020
Project complete	No later than 14 January 2022

11. Checklist

Read these guidelines and the information about this grant program at www.energy.vic.gov.au/safety-and-emergencies/powerline-bushfire-safety-program/research-and-development before applying, and complete the following checklist.

Have you:

- read these guidelines carefully?
- checked if you are, or your organisation is, eligible for this grant funding?
- checked if your activity is eligible for this grant funding?
- checked that you would be able to comply with all relevant laws and regulations in delivery of your activity?
- prepared the appropriate supporting documents?