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| Victorian Neighbourhood Battery Initiative  Application Guidelines - Round 3 |

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| 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. |
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Contents

[Message from the Minister 2](#_Toc126317691)

[1. What is the Neighbourhood Battery Initiative? 3](#_Toc126317692)

[2. Grant amount and duration 3](#_Toc126317693)

[Stream 1 – Business Case 3](#_Toc126317694)

[Stream 2 - Neighbourhood Battery Implementation 3](#_Toc126317695)

[3. Who can apply? 4](#_Toc126317696)

[4. Who cannot apply? 4](#_Toc126317697)

[5. What might be funded? 5](#_Toc126317698)

[Stream 1: Project Development 5](#_Toc126317699)

[Stream 2: Implementation Projects 5](#_Toc126317700)

[6. What will not be funded? 5](#_Toc126317701)

[7. How will projects be assessed? 6](#_Toc126317702)

[8. What are the assessment criteria? 6](#_Toc126317703)

[Assessment criteria for Stream 1 – Business Case 6](#_Toc126317704)

[Assessment criteria for Stream 2 – Neighbourhood Battery Implementation 8](#_Toc126317705)

[9. What supporting documents will need to be provided? 10](#_Toc126317706)

[General 10](#_Toc126317707)

[Project Plans 10](#_Toc126317708)

[Submission Requirements 10](#_Toc126317709)

[10. What are the funding conditions? 11](#_Toc126317710)

[Funding agreements 11](#_Toc126317711)

[Legislative and regulatory requirements 11](#_Toc126317712)

[Tax implications 11](#_Toc126317713)

[Acknowledging the Victorian Government’s support 11](#_Toc126317714)

[Payments 12](#_Toc126317715)

[Monitoring 12](#_Toc126317716)

[Cost 12](#_Toc126317717)

[Probity for application procedures 12](#_Toc126317718)

[Privacy 12](#_Toc126317719)

[11. What is the application process? 13](#_Toc126317720)

[12. Additional information 13](#_Toc126317721)

[13. What is the notification process? 13](#_Toc126317722)

[14. Key dates 13](#_Toc126317723)

[15. Checklist 14](#_Toc126317724)

Message from the Minister

Our electricity system is changing for the better. We are working towards a future where a modernised distribution network can support a safe, secure and reliable electricity system in which all energy users benefit from the value of distributed energy resources (DER) such as solar panels, batteries, smart home appliances and electric vehicles, regardless of whether they have access to those resources.

The Victorian Government is actively promoting the uptake of DER as part of our wider strategy to transition to a clean energy future, including through our flagship $1.3 billion Solar Homes program. New ways of using technologies, like neighbourhood scale batteries can help transition our energy system from one designed for centralised generation and one-way flow of electricity to a decentralised system, enabling higher levels of DER and a greater use of local energy generation.

Energy storage in particular plays a key role in capturing the full value of renewable energy ensuring homes and businesses can be powered by green energy; using it to manage peaks and troughs in demand and operate the electricity network as efficiently as possible – including keeping costs down for consumers.

With record levels of renewable sources coming online to generate our power, energy can sometimes be produced when it is not needed and then lost. More batteries means more clean energy can be stored and used all year round.

The 2020-21 Victorian Budget saw significant funds committed to support neighbourhood scale battery trials in Victoria. In 2021, we awarded grants totalling $3.68 million to 16 community, local council and industry organisations for feasibility and implementation projects under Round 1 of the Neighbourhood Battery Initiative (NBI). In 2022, Round 2 of the NBI awarded a further $1.5 million to implement neighbourhood batteries in North Fitzroy and Tarneit.

Now in 2023, Round 3 of the NBI will expand on the benefits of the previous two rounds offering $2.32 million to continue modernising the Victorian distribution network, ensuring clean energy is stored and used efficiently for the benefit of all Victorians. The outcomes of the NBI will position Victoria as a leader in demonstrating the role this technology can play in our evolving energy system. It is also supporting the ambitions of Victorian communities to implement renewable energy storage projects that deliver social and economic benefits, and that support the decarbonisation of Victoria’s electricity system to tackle climate change.

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## What is the Neighbourhood Battery Initiative?

The Victorian Government’s Neighbourhood Battery Initiative (NBI) is funding pilots and demonstrations of a range of neighbourhood scale battery ownership and operational models to unlock the role that neighbourhood scale batteries can play in Victoria’s transitioning electricity system.

Neighbourhood scale batteries are a relatively new energy storage model with the potential to provide multiple benefits to consumers, communities and the electricity system. They are considerably larger than household batteries and range in size from approximately 100 kilowatts (kW) to five megawatts (MW). They are sometimes referred to as ‘community’ or ‘grid-scale’ batteries.

Neighbourhood scale batteries can ‘value stack’ different revenue streams to deliver a range of benefits including:

1. supporting integration of more solar on the network
2. providing network benefits such as voltage management, and mitigating minimum and/or peak demand
3. providing market services, including wholesale electricity market trading and Frequency Control Ancillary Services (FCAS)
4. providing consumer battery access services, helping to expand the benefits of storage to more energy users.

Different business models are still developing, and they currently face a range of barriers and challenges that must be addressed to support their deployment. The NBI is designed to support neighbourhood scale battery proponents to overcome these challenges and deliver trials that will enable the sector to adapt and develop.

Through the installation of neighbourhood batteries, Victorians will benefit from reduced bills, improved grid reliability and increased access to renewable energy. In addition, the NBI aims to achieve the following outcomes:

1. support understanding of the full range of benefits that neighbourhood scale batteries can provide
2. help to overcome barriers to the deployment of neighbourhood scale batteries
3. inform regulatory reform
4. determine which neighbourhood scale battery models provide the most benefits to the Victorian electricity system
5. assist optimisation of distributed energy generation within the low voltage network
6. support the decarbonisation of Victoria’s electricity system to tackle climate change.

## Grant amount and duration

Round 3 of the NBI makes available total funding of up to $2.32 million. Available grants are as follows:

### Stream 1 – Business Case

* Up to $200,000 for business case development and related works[[1]](#footnote-2) for neighbourhood batteries located behind or in front of the meter

### Stream 2 - Neighbourhood Battery Implementation

* Up to $750,000 for implementation of a front-of-meter neighbourhood battery (including installation and commissioning).

Additional funding can come from any source including Commonwealth and Local Government grants. Funding from these sources must not be used for the same items of eligible expenditure funded by this grant program.

Matched funding is not required, however applicants who have secured or plan to secure a cash contribution towards the project will be viewed favourably.

Projects must be completed by:

* 1 June 2024 for Stream 1 projects
* 31 December 2024 for Stream 2 projects.

## Who can apply?

The following organisations can apply for funding:

* private sector businesses and agencies
* educational institutions
* local government authorities
* not-for-profit organisations.

In addition, to be eligible for funding applicants must:

* be an incorporated body, cooperative or association (including business associations)
* be financially solvent.

All applications, whether single entities or a consortium, must nominate a ‘Lead Organisation’ to:

* endorse the Application
* verify any commitment of funds for the Project
* 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. Individuals are not eligible to apply as a Lead Organisation.

The Lead Organisation must:

* have an Australian Business Number
* be able to demonstrate that either the Lead Organisation or the Lead Organisation's parent company has at least three years’ operating history
* be able to provide three years of financial reports (preferably audited) for the Lead Organisation or the Lead Organisation's parent company.

Please note funding can only be given to the Lead Organisation throughout the duration of the whole project.

The Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) may request, during the Assessment Process, that unaudited financial reports be audited and resubmitted.

## Who cannot apply?

* The following organisations and individuals cannot apply for funding:
* individuals
* government agencies.

## What might be funded?

The following types of projects are eligible for funding:

### Stream 1: Business Case

Funding (of up to $200,000) will be provided for project(s) that:

* develop a business case for the implementation of front-of-meter and/or behind-the-meter neighbourhood scale battery(s) including:
  + the development of a project plan as described in Section *9 Project Plans*; and
  + where deemed necessary by the applicant, commissioning of technical, regulatory, legal and/or contractual advice or services to support the planning for implementation a neighbourhood scale battery such that the project would be ready to commence implementation by July 2025 (pending available funding).

### Stream 2: Neighbourhood Battery Implementation

Funding (of up to $750,000) will be provided for projects that:

* implement a trial of a neighbourhood scale battery;
* demonstrate direct benefits to the local community; and
* deliver technical, social or operational innovations that have not been demonstrated by implementation projects funded under Rounds 1 or 2 of the NBI.

## What will not be funded?

The NBI will not fund the following activities:

* business as usual costs, including existing or ongoing staff salaries
* land acquisition and related expenses
* operational costs of running the neighbourhood battery
* costs of maintaining the neighbourhood battery
* expenditure on other projects
* projects that have already commenced construction
* projects that conclude after:
  + 1 June 2024 for Stream 1
  + 31 December 2024 for Stream 2
* the use of any new or nascent technologies that have not undergone appropriate testing
* feasibility studies[[2]](#footnote-3)
* installation of a storage device (e.g. battery) behind the meter to the electricity distribution network[[3]](#footnote-4)
* installation, operation or maintenance of generation technologies (e.g. solar panels, diesel generators)
* projects located outside the State of Victoria.

## How will projects be assessed?

The NBI is administered by DEECA. DEECA will review applications for completeness and confirm they meet the eligibility requirements. Applications that do not meet the eligibility requirements will not be considered further in the assessment process. All eligible applications will be assessed on merit against the assessment criteria.

Applications will be assessed against the criteria detailed below. Applications must address all relevant criteria and provide supporting documents as set out in sections 8 and 9. Percentage weightings are provided to show the relative importance of different criterion in the assessment process.

Although the assessment panel will rely primarily on the content of the applications and where relevant, applicant interviews, the assessment panel is not bound to limit their assessment scores only to information or material contained in an application. If assessment panel members have wider knowledge of an applicant, market or technology or any relevant factor that could be taken into account or are able to obtain wider information from sources external to the content of the applications they reserve the right to use this knowledge in their evaluation of an application. In addition to information provided in applications, the assessment panel may consider the mix of projects and locations that best achieve the program objectives when making a final recommendation.

Information contained in the applications may be shared with other State or Commonwealth Government agencies to seek clarification on an application or applicants and will be treated in accordance with section 10 of the Application Guidelines.

DEECA provides no guarantee that any of the projects applied for will be funded following evaluation of applications. No undertaking is given on the amount of individual or total grant monies that will be provided.

## What are the assessment criteria?

First, applications will be checked for eligibility (Sections 3 - 6) - both the project and proponent(s) must meet the eligibility criteria. After that, eligible applications will be assessed using the criteria listed below. Each criterion is given a percentage weighting to indicate its relative importance in the assessment process. Applications should address all relevant criteria.

### Assessment criteria for Stream 1 – Business Case

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| Criteria | Weighting | Requirements |
| What will be delivered? | 30% | Applicants are required to describe the project including:   * Development/delivery of a business case for one or more neighbourhood batteries[[4]](#footnote-5) – *priority will be given to business cases that relate to batteries located at more than one site* * a project plan as described in Section *9 Project Plans* as part of the business case for the future delivery of the battery(s) (mandatory) * proposed sites for batteries with a clear outline of how your project will lead to future battery implementation * identification of other pre-implementation works (e.g. legal, contractual, engineering work) (if required)[[5]](#footnote-6) * describe how the project will benefit the community and deliver on community expectations during and beyond the term of grant funding, including:   + the details of planned or completed community engagement on the selected neighbourhood battery location and its operation   + if there is a customer participation element, evidence that participants will be appropriately informed of the project, aware of their rights and responsibilities, and appropriate consumer protection arrangements are in place   + how many households (particularly those who don’t have access to locally generated renewable energy) will be serviced by the neighbourhood battery and estimated cost reductions for serviced households * work done to date to ensure the project is ready to begin and will be completed by 1 June 2024 * demonstrate that upon completion of the business case and any other preliminary works that your project will be ready to commence implementation by July 2025 (pending available funding) |
| How does the project align with the intended outcomes of the NBI? | 40% | Applicants are required to describe how the project will contribute to the intended outcomes of the NBI including:   * driving down power bills for consumers, particularly households who do not have access to solar photovoltaics (PV) * support understanding of the full range of benefits that neighbourhood scale batteries can provide * help to overcome barriers to the deployment of neighbourhood scale batteries – priority will be given to projects that demonstrate use of an innovative delivery model that aims to overcome barriers * inform regulatory reform * determine which neighbourhood scale battery models provide the most benefits to the Victorian electricity system * assist optimisation of distributed energy generation within the low voltage network * support the decarbonisation of Victoria's electricity system to tackle climate change |
| How will the project be delivered? | 30% | Applicants are required to describe how the project will be delivered, including:   * the project delivery and governance strategy, including a list of the key milestones, deliverables and associated timelines for the project * procurement processes and timelines, including any information on potential suppliers * your experience and knowledge of the required regulatory and other relevant approvals, and your proposed approach to obtaining them * your strategy to maintain momentum for the project beyond the term of grant funding including progressing the business case to implementation. * project reporting and knowledge sharing outcomes to further the development of neighbourhood batteries in Victoria * Complete the attached cash flow template and describe project funding sources including:   + the cash-contribution secured from your organisation or other project partners (excluding government grants) - *priority will be given to projects that provide more than 10% cash contribution*   + other government grants or payments identifying the status of any applications, timing of funding and how the project will be funded if any outstanding applications are unsuccessful   + in-kind contributions |

### Assessment criteria for Stream 2 – Neighbourhood Battery Implementation

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| Criteria | Weighting | Requirements |
| What will be delivered? | 25% | Applicants are required to describe the project including:   * details of what will be delivered including the battery’s technical specifications and operational objectives. * proposed location(s) and why site(s) selected * describe how your project will benefit the community and deliver on community expectations during and beyond the term of grant funding, including:   + the details of completed community engagement on the selected neighbourhood battery location and its operation   + if there is a customer participation element, evidence that participants are/or will be appropriately informed of the project, aware of their rights and responsibilities, and appropriate consumer protection arrangements are in place   + how many households will be serviced by the neighbourhood battery and estimated cost reductions for serviced households (including those who don’t have access to locally generated renewable energy)   + work done to ensure the project will not result in additional network issues (e.g. weaken network hosting capacity and/or negatively impact existing customers). * any work done to date to ensure the project is ready to begin and will be completed by 31 December 2024. |
| How does the project align with the intended outcomes of NBI? | 35% | Applicants are required to describe how the project will contribute to the intended outcomes of the NBI including:   * driving down power bills for consumers, particularly households who do not have access to solar PV * support understanding of the full range of benefits that neighbourhood scale batteries can provide * help to overcome barriers to the deployment of neighbourhood scale batteries – priority will be given to projects that demonstrate use of an innovative delivery model that aims to overcome barriers * inform regulatory reform * determine which neighbourhood scale battery models provide the most benefits to the Victorian electricity system * assist optimisation of distributed energy generation within the low voltage network * support the decarbonisation of Victoria's electricity system to tackle climate change. |
| How will the project be delivered? | 40% | Applicants are required to describe how the project will be delivered, including:   * provision of a detailed Project Plan as described in Section *9 Project Plans[[6]](#footnote-7)* * describe:   + the current status of contract negotiations between all relevant parties – priority will be given to projects that have all contractual relationships necessary for battery operation and participation in relevant value streams in place and/or shortlisting completed with relevant parties for battery operation.   + your capacity to install, operate and maintain the neighbourhood battery for the life of the battery with licensed tradespeople where required.   + your access, or future access to, any infrastructure, capital equipment, technology and intellectual property – priority will be given to projects where data sharing arrangements between relevant parties have been agreed upon.   + your experience and knowledge of the required regulatory and other relevant approvals, and your proposed approach to obtaining them. The time required to gain approvals must be accounted for in project timelines.   + your strategy to maintain momentum for the project beyond the term of grant funding.   + project reporting and knowledge sharing outcomes that will be adopted to further the development of neighbourhood batteries in Victoria. * Complete the attached cash flow template and describe project funding sources including:   + the cash-contribution secured from your organisation or other project partners (excluding government grants) - *priority will be given to projects that provide more than 10% cash contribution*.   + other government grants or payments identifying the status of any applications, timing of funding and how the project will be funded if any outstanding applications are unsuccessful   + in-kind contributions |

## What supporting documents will need to be provided?

### General

All applications for Stream 1 and Stream 2 must attach the following:

1. completed project cash flow/budget using DEECA template
2. completed project delivery schedule
3. completed project risk register

DEECA templates for the above are available at from <https://www2.delwp.vic.gov.au/grants>. Applicants must use DEECA’s cash flow/budget template but are permitted to use their own templates for the project delivery schedule and risk register, where they contain all the same information as a minimum and are comparable in format. The risk register must include risk associated with the delivery of the project as funded by this grant, and ongoing operational risks associated with the battery operation for Stream 2 applications).

### Project Plans

A project plan does not need to be submitted as part of an application under Stream 1. However successful Stream 1 applicants will be required to prepare a project plan consistent with the requirements of this section as part of their business case development.

All applications submitted under Stream 2 **must** submit a project plan that is consistent with the following requirements as part of their application.

Project plans for neighbourhood scale battery implementation and operation must include:

* project budget, including installation costs
* description of the proposed technology type and size of the neighbourhood battery energy storage system in your chosen location
* a map showing the site where the neighbourhood battery would be installed
* project schedule outlining key milestones, delivery dates and dependencies
* proposed financial arrangements for the operation of the neighbourhood battery including costs and revenue (e.g. costs for engineering works, connection, operation and maintenance, tariff arrangements and value streams, including other income such as network services and subscriptions)
* project risk management framework identifying risks, impacts and mitigation strategies
* your plan to manage safety including your plan to prevent and manage fire risk
* your engagement plan to inform local residents of any upcoming impacts, construction periods or information sessions
* governance arrangements for the delivery of the project beyond the grant including key entities (who will own and operate the community battery, maintain the community battery, and any other entities involved), and
* your plan to manage decommissioning and disposal of the community battery at the end of its operational life.

The project plan must also include the following supporting information:

* a letter of support from the Distributed Network Service Provider (DNSP) giving in principle support to connect a neighbourhood battery
* landholder agreements or letter of support for battery installation from relevant landholders
* letter of support from local council where planning permission is required (if applicable).

### Submission Requirements

Failure to provide all supporting documents may render your application ineligible. Attachments should be restricted to the requested information – any additional information will not be considered.

## What are the funding conditions?

### Funding agreements

Successful applicants must enter into a funding agreement with DEECA. The Victorian Common Funding Agreement is used for funding agreements with not-for-profit organisations and Local Government Authorities.

The Commercial Funding Agreement is used for funding agreements with commercial entities.

It is recommended that applicants review the terms and conditions before applying:

* For information about the Victorian Common Funding Agreement visit <https://www.vic.gov.au/victorian-common-funding-agreement>
* For information about the Victorian Commercial Funding agreement please email [neighbourhood.batteries@delwp.vic.gov.au](mailto:neighbourhood.batteries@dewlp.vic.gov.au)

Funding agreements must be **signed within one month** of notification of successful grant application. Failure of singing within this timeframe may result in loss of grant funding.

Funding must not be used for political campaigning or advocacy activities for political parties.

### Legislative and regulatory requirements

In delivering the activity grant recipients are required to comply with all relevant Commonwealth and state/territory legislations and regulations, including but not limited to:

* The Privacy Act 1988 (Commonwealth)
* The Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Vic)
* Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004
* Planning and Environment Act 1987
* Climate Change Act 2017
* Electricity Safety Act 1998
* National Electricity (Victoria) Act 2005
* Electricity Industry Act 2000.

### Tax implications

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

Successfully funded projects will be offered funding as a **GST exclusive** amount. However, for non-government related organisations with an ABN and who are GST registered, payment will be made **GST inclusive**. Recipients are responsible for determining their tax liabilities for grant payments. Grants provided by DEECA are classified as income and tax may be payable by recipients. Each applicant is responsible to investigate their own tax structure and treatment.

### Acknowledging the Victorian Government’s support

Successful applicants are expected to acknowledge the Victorian Government’s support and promotional guidelines (<https://www2.delwp.vic.gov.au/grants>) will form part of the funding agreement. Successful applicants must liaise with the departmental program area to coordinate any public events or announcements related to the project.

### Payments

Payments will be made as long as:

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

### Monitoring

Grant recipients are required to comply with project monitoring and reporting requirements as outlined in the funding agreement. This may include progress reports, site inspections, completion reports and acquittal documentation.

Recipients are responsible for project delivery, including any project cost overruns should they occur. In cases where a project is delayed for an unreasonable length of time, where substantive changes to scope are made after funding has been approved without prior approval of DEECA, or where a project fails to be delivered, DEECA reserves the right to cancel the grant and, if applicable, recoup any payment that has already been provided.

### Cost

DEECA is not liable for any costs, expenses, losses, claims or damages that may be incurred by applicants in connection with the application process, including in preparing or submitting an application, providing further information to DEECA, or participating in negotiations with DEECA.

### 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 DEECA determines that the Applicant or any of its associates have violated this condition, the Applicant may be disqualified from further consideration, at DEECA’s absolute discretion.

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

### Privacy

Any personal information about you or a third party in your application will be collected by the department for the purposes of administering your grant application 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 you intend to include personal information about third parties in your application, please ensure that 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* and other applicable laws.

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

Requests for access to information about you held by DEECA should be sent to the Manager Privacy, P.O. Box 500 East Melbourne 8002 or contact by emailing [Foi.unit@delwp.vic.gov.au](mailto:Foi.unit@delwp.vic.gov.au).

## What is the application process?

Applications are submitted online using the Grants Online portal.

To apply, go to the grant program web page (<https://www2.delwp.vic.gov.au/grants>) and click on the ‘Start New Application’ button. To return to a saved draft application, click on the ‘Access Saved Application’ button.

**Attaching required documents:**

Supporting documents must be in an acceptable file type, such as Word, Excel, PDF, or JPEG. The maximum file size for each file is 10MB.

If you have documents to submit that cannot be attached to your online application you can email them to grantsinfo@delwp.vic.gov.au, quoting your application number. Attach all documents to one email, zipping the files if required.

Make sure your application is submitted by 5.00 pm on 21 April 2023.

**Note:** No hard copy applications will be accepted. Late applications or applications lodged other than in accordance with the requirements of section 11 of this document will only be accepted where the Department believes acceptance of the late application, or an application lodged other than in accordance with the requirements of section 11 of this document, will not compromise the integrity of the Application process. The Grants Online Portal can be found at <https://www2.delwp.vic.gov.au/grants>

## Additional information

Additional information is available at the Neighbourhood Batteries Initiative web page <https://www.energy.vic.gov.au/grants/neighbourhood-battery-initiative>

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| If you require technical assistance submitting your application online, email grantsinfo@delwp.vic.gov.au. |

## 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.

## Key dates

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Applications open | 27 February 2023 |
| Questions close | 5.00 pm 7 calendar days before applications close. |
| Applications close | 21 April 2023 |
| Applicants notified | May/June 2023 |
| Activities commence | June 2023 |
| Activities completed and acquittal reports submitted | Stream 1: 1 June 2024  Stream 2: 31 December 2024 |

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| Should you have any questions, email neighbourhood.batteries@delwp.vic.gov.au |

## Checklist

Read these guidelines and the information about this grant program <https://www.energy.vic.gov.au/grants/neighbourhood-battery-initiative>

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?

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1. Related works include legal, engineering or other technical advice required to support the neighbourhood battery business case such that the project would be ready to commence implementation by July 2025 (pending available funding). If a business case has already been developed, funding can be used just for this additional advice with both the advice and completed business case to be provided to DEECA upon completion of the project [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. For the purposes of these grants a feasibility study is an assessment to determine if a project is possible, a business case presents the details of a project and the fully costed case for its delivery. Business cases and associated works will be funded. Feasibility studies will not be funded. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Business cases and associated works to support the planning for behind the meter batteries are eligible. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Projects where a business case has been developed but other pre-implementation works are still required are eligible to apply. Business cases must be provided as part of project delivery and a project plan consistent with the requirements of Section *9 Project Plans* must be developed. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Please specify if you are seeking funding for these pre-implementation works under this application [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. If information requested by an assessment criterion is included within an attached project plan, please direct to relevant section(s) of project plan – do not repeat content. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)