

# Rural Councils ICT Infrastructure Support Program

## What is the Rural Councils ICT Infrastructure Support Program?

As part of the Victorian Government's assistance to rural councils, \$3.8 million will be provided to support rural councils in improving their information technology to facilitate remote governance and community engagement.

This program recognises that remote working caused by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has created added pressure on rural councils due to the costs of providing appropriate and timely facilities, infrastructure and services to effectively support the introduction of virtual meetings and remote working by councillors and council staff. Rural councils generally face lower levels of digital connectivity, limited budgets to provide virtual meeting facilities, equipment and services and greater distances between council facilities.

As part of this, Victoria's 38 rural councils will each receive a grant of up to \$100,000 to enhance their ICT facilities, equipment and services and undertake training.

## Who is eligible?

Alpine Shire Council	Mansfield Shire Council
Ararat Rural City Council	Mitchell Shire Council
Bass Coast Shire Council	Moira Shire Council
Baw Baw Shire Council	Moorabool Shire Council
Benalla Rural City Council	Mount Alexander Shire Council
Buloke Shire Council	Moyne Shire Council
Campaspe Shire Council	Murrindindi Shire Council
Central Goldfields Shire Council	Northern Grampians Shire Council
Colac-Otway Shire Council	Pyrenees Shire Council
Corangamite Shire Council	Borough of Queenscliffe
East Gippsland Shire Council	South Gippsland Shire Council
Gannawarra Shire Council	Southern Grampians Shire Council
Glenelg Shire Council	Strathbogie Shire Council
Golden Plains Shire Council	Surf Coast Shire Council
Hepburn Shire Council	Swan Hill Rural City Council
Hindmarsh Shire Council	Towong Shire Council
Indigo Shire Council	Wellington Shire Council
Loddon Shire Council	West Wimmera Shire Council
Macedon Ranges Shire Council	Yarriambiack Shire Council



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## Conditions of Funding

Councils will be required to provide a proposal of how this funding will be used to enable the successful convening of council meetings and community engagement activities. This includes increasing the quality of community connectedness to the council governance process.

Councils must demonstrate the need or purpose for the purchase of iPads/2in1s/mobile devices or any other equipment that will be distributed to council staff, and ensure it contributes to overarching governance and community engagement practices.

Funds can be used for, but not limited to:

- The purchase of infrastructure, hardware and software to facilitate virtual council meetings and community engagement
- Delivery of services remotely using IT and focusing on community engagement and governance to enable the community to access services remotely
- Set up of remote locations for the purpose of delivering virtual council meetings or community engagement
- Labour costs for technicians to be present during streaming of virtual council meetings or community engagement
- Training costs for councillors and relevant council staff
- The purchase of service support eg: to assist with IT hardware/software
- One-off service or capital costs to increase bandwidth or capacity
- Any eligible equipment/infrastructure costs incurred from the State of Emergency declaration on 16 March 2020, which have enabled or enhanced council's ability to deliver services, virtual council meetings or hardware/software.

Funding will not be provided to cover the following costs:

- Purchase of infrastructure, hardware, software or services that do not support delivery of virtual council meetings, community engagement activities or remote service delivery opportunities
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- Other costs incurred by council as a result of COVID-19 that do not support delivery of virtual council meetings, community engagement activities or remote service delivery.

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## Sample Budget

Council will also be required to complete budget table detailing their proposed expenditure within the on-line application form.

For example:

Expenditure Item	\$ Amount
Video screens for 3 locations	\$6,000
Training costs for Mayor and councillors	\$5,000
Technical support (5 x 2hrs)	\$500
Video cameras x 3	\$2,000
Audio system – remote council location x 2	\$20,000
Audio system - council chamber	\$10,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$43,500</b>

Councils are encouraged to consult with neighbouring councils within their region to seek compatibility of purchased equipment and software to increase opportunities for future joint governance and community engagement activities.

## How to apply

Applications will be received through a single application opening on 16 June 2020 and closing on 20 July 2020 at 2.00pm.

Applications Open	16 June 2020
Applications Close	20 July 2020
Funding Agreements Executed	By 31 August 2020
Acquittal of grant	26 February 2021

Some applications may be requested to submit further information following initial assessment of applications by the Department.

Applications must be submitted via the link at [www.localgovernment.vic.gov.au/funding-programs/ict-infrastructure-program](http://www.localgovernment.vic.gov.au/funding-programs/ict-infrastructure-program) or by using the direct link below.

These should be received by the Department no later than 2.00pm on 20 July 2020.

Direct link to application form:

<https://delwp1.force.com/publicform?id=a0h4P00001dYBDN>

If you have any queries, please contact DELWP on (03) 9948 8536 or email [ICTinfra@delwp.vic.gov.au](mailto:ICTinfra@delwp.vic.gov.au).

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## Funding Agreement

Applicants must enter into a funding agreement with the Department. Funding agreements establish the parties and outline their commitments and obligations to each other, as well as setting out the general funding terms and conditions. It is recommended that applicants review the Common Funding Agreement standard terms and conditions before applying.

Funding will be released upon the execution of the funding agreement and project budget. In the event of a project being delivered for less than the budget stated in the funding agreement, applicants will be required to return unspent funds.

A final report with financial acquittal for all project income and expenditure is required to be submitted to the Department together with media coverage material.

Funded recipients are responsible for project delivery, including any project cost overruns should they occur. Councils must take full responsibility for the cost of ongoing operation and maintenance as this is a one-off funding program.

## Acknowledgement

Councils are expected to acknowledge the Victorian Government's support and promotional guidelines will form part of the funding agreement. Applicants must liaise with the departmental program area to coordinate any announcements related to the project.

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