

OFFICIAL

MRNA VICTORIA
RESEARCH
ACCELERATION FUND

GUIDELINES – ROUND 4 2024



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Authorised by the Minister for Economic Growth, Tim Pallas MP

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1. Program Overview

1.1. About the program

The fourth round of the mRNA Victoria Research Acceleration Fund program (mVRAF Program) is being launched by mRNA Victoria, a business unit within the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (the department) as part of the Victorian Government's investment to grow mRNA capability in the state. The mVRAF Program is designed to capitalise on Victoria's comparative advantages in research, increase the RNA candidate pipeline of next generation vaccines and therapies and enhance the Victorian economy by growing the RNA ecosystem.

This fourth round of the mVRAF Program fund will provide \$1.7 million to support and accelerate mRNA- based therapeutics research through the provision of one-off grants to successful applicants.

The mVRAF Program is designed to complement the Victorian Government's existing Victorian Medical Research Acceleration Fund by providing a dedicated funding stream for mRNA-based therapeutics projects. Projects submitted to the mVRAF Program will not be eligible to be submitted to the Victorian Medical Research Acceleration Fund.

mRNA Victoria and the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (the department) will administer this program.

1.2. Program objectives

The objectives of this program are:

- Provide support to innovative early-stage mRNA-based therapeutics research, that is moved to proof-of-concept stage faster and will bring health and economic benefits to Victoria.
- Provide direct funding to accelerate the translation of mRNA-based therapeutics and vaccines research to increase Victoria's mRNA-based candidate pipeline.
- Facilitate collaboration between medical research institutes, universities and industry to support the translation of research into more commercially attractive products.

1.3. Program outcomes

The intended outcomes of this program are:

- The pipeline of Victorian mRNA-based therapeutic and vaccine candidates reaches clinical research and manufacturing phases of development faster and eventually are delivered to the public faster
- Research collaborations support effective translation of research and foster a more cohesive mRNA ecosystem

Over the longer-term the intended outcomes of the mVRAF Program are:

- Victorian production of world-leading mRNA therapeutic candidates
- Increased attractiveness of Victorian mRNA therapeutics research to investors
- Increased capability, knowledge, and expertise across the Victorian mRNA research sector
- Victoria's reputation as a world leader in mRNA therapeutics research is bolstered and attracts global investment
- A stronger mRNA therapeutics research sector supports growth of the broader mRNA ecosystem.
- A stronger therapeutic candidate pipeline supports a self-sustaining manufacturing industry

1.4. Promoting Gender Equality

Under the Gender Equality Act 2020 (VIC), the department has a duty to promote gender equality. This Program seeks to promote gender equality by encouraging the increase in participation of women in Applicant project teams.

This mVRAF Program allocates a proportion of the Assessment Criteria weighting (5% total) in favour of Applicants with project teams who include at least 50% members who identify as women or are led by a person who identifies as a woman as Chief Investigator (CI).

1.5. marra ngarrgo, marra goorri: The Victorian Aboriginal Health, Medical, and Wellbeing Research Accord

marra ngarrgo, marra goorri endeavours to improve the ethical standards of health, medical and wellbeing research that impacts Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Victoria. The implementation of the Accord is being led by the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO).

The Victorian Government has endorsed the Accord and strives to uphold its values and guiding principles to ensure improved ethical standards and cultural safety in research, and adherence to self-determination principles.

Applications from organisations and collaborative partners that have endorsed marra ngarrgo, marra goorri are strongly encouraged to apply. Further, applicants are encouraged to outline how they and their organisation uphold the objectives and principles of the Accord.

Further questions regarding the Accord can be directed to the Accord Administrator at VACCHO (varap@vaccho.org.au).

2. Available Funding

The fourth round of the mVRAF Program will provide \$1.7 million total (excluding GST) of funding to successful mRNA projects.

Up to \$500,000 (excluding GST) of funding is available for each project.

2.1. Co-contribution

Grants will be provided on a co-contribution basis, meaning the applicant must provide a financial or in-kind contribution towards the proposed project. This financial or in-kind co-contribution must come from the applicant's own funds and is based on a 1:1 funding ratio (between the department and successful applicant).

Applicant co-contributions must comply with the requirements set out in these guidelines (section 2.2 and 2.3).

See section 6.3 for evidence requirements that will need to be provided to confirm the co-contribution.

Examples:

- If the total project cost is \$82,000 (excluding GST), the Grant will cover up to \$41,000 (excluding GST). The remaining \$41,000 (excluding GST) must be covered by the Applicant.
- If the total project cost is \$780,000 (excluding GST), the Grant will cover up to \$390,000 (excluding GST). The remaining \$390,000 (excluding GST) must be covered by the Applicant.
- If the total project cost is \$1.2m (excluding GST), the maximum Grant contribution will be \$500,000 (excluding GST). The remaining \$700,000 (excluding GST) must be covered by the Applicant.

2.2. Financial Co-contribution

For a financial co-contribution to be eligible for the purposes of an Applicant's Co-contribution, the financial co-contribution must be applied to the Applicant's project but does not need to comply with the specific criteria at Sections 4.2 and 4.3 (Eligible Project Expenditure and Ineligible Project Expenditure).

Grant funding received by an Applicant from other Commonwealth Government programs in relation to an Applicant's project can form part of an Applicant's required Co-contribution. The Applicant will be required to provide detail in their application of how much Commonwealth Government funding makes up the Applicant's Co-contribution.

Co-contributions from the Applicant and collaborative partner/s cannot be sourced from other Victorian State Government funding/ programs.

2.3. In-kind contributions

An in-kind contribution is a contribution of a good or a service other than cash.

In-kind contributions may be eligible for the purposes of an Applicant's Co-contribution where the in-kind contribution:

- relates directly to the costs of delivering an Applicant's project; and

- satisfy the requirements listed in section 4.2 (Eligible Project Expenditure).

In-kind contributions that relate to expenses/activities listed in section 4.3 (Ineligible Activities/Expenditure) are not eligible for the purposes of satisfying an Applicant's in-kind Co-contribution obligations.

3. Applicant Eligibility

3.1. Eligible applicants

Applicants must meet the following criteria to be eligible (Eligibility Criteria):

- Hold an active Australian Business Number (ABN)
- Hold insurance policies in accordance with the following minimum requirements:
 - public liability insurance to a value appropriate for the project
 - insurance against any loss or damage to the project infrastructure for full replacement cost

Applicants must attest that:

- they can comply with the Co-contribution requirements specific to their project (in accordance with these guidelines) and provide evidence of this capability in their application
- they will participate in future mVRAF Program evaluation activities
- they will deliver the funded project in collaboration with a Collaborative Partner
- they will spend the majority of the grant funding in Victoria
- research activities will predominately be led from and conducted in Victoria.

Applicants must meet all of the following criteria:

- hold an Australian Business Number (ABN)
- be an eligible legal entity type as at Section 3.2
- comply with the Co-contribution requirements specific to their project (in accordance with these guidelines) and provide evidence of this capability in their application
- participate in future mVRAF Program evaluation activities
- deliver the funded project in collaboration with a Collaborative Partner
- spend the majority of the grant funding in Victoria
- undertake the majority of research activities to be led from and conducted in Victoria.

3.2. Eligible entity types

Applicants must be one of the following legal entity types:

- a company incorporated pursuant to the Corporations Act 2001 (Cth) and registered with the Australian Securities and Investment Commission; or
- an incorporated association incorporated pursuant to the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012 (VIC) or equivalent legislation of another Australian jurisdiction;
- an education body established by statute;
- a public health service established under the Health Services Act 1988 (Vic); or
- other incorporated entity approved by the department.

3.3. Ineligible applicants

Unless specified in section 3.2, the following are not eligible to apply:

- a Commonwealth, state or local government agency or body
- a State department, agency, entity or other body established under the Public Administration Act 2004 (VIC) or equivalent legislation of another Australian jurisdiction; or
- partnerships; or
- a company not incorporated in Australia; or
- individuals/sole traders; or
- an unincorporated association.

Note: Commonwealth agencies, like CSIRO, are not eligible to apply for the program, but are eligible to be Collaborative Partners as long as they are not the primary/lead applicant for the program.

3.4. Criteria specific to certain applicants

The following criteria apply to certain categories of Applicants:

- Applicants that are medical research institutes or industry and health services organisations are invited to apply for funding for up to four research projects that are independent to each other.
- Universities are invited to apply for up to four research projects per faculty.
- The Applicants to which these rules apply will need to provide assurance to mRNA Victoria and the department that their institutes, organisations or faculties have sufficient resources and can undertake multiple concurrent projects (if approved).
- Applicants who previously applied to an earlier round of the mVRAF Program and were unsuccessful are eligible to reapply.

- Applicants who previously applied to an earlier round of the mVRAF Program and were successful are eligible to reapply. However, they will be required to provide justification for their reapplication for funding, addressing any similarities and/or differences to the previously funded project, and clarify if it is a continuation of the previously funded project or a new project.

4. Project Eligibility – what will be funded

Projects should aim to develop a new mRNA-based medicine for human use (either prophylactic or treatment) with a clear pathway for translation. The program is agnostic to disease targets, but candidates must use mRNA technology (synthetic RNA approaches will not be eligible).

Eligibility of projects will be determined at the sole discretion of the department.

Applicants are only eligible to submit one project to the mVRAF Program.

Previous applicants are eligible to apply again whether they have received funding or not.

Previous successful applicants must provide justification for their application for funding, addressing any similarities or differences to the previously funded project, and if it is a continuation of the previously funded project or a new project.

4.1. Project budget

Applicants are required to submit a project budget summary, detailing how the grant funds and the Applicant's Co-contribution will be spent. Budget should be shown as GST exclusive.

Grant funds provided to the Applicant under this mVRAF Program must only be committed to expenditure in accordance with the eligible project expenditure criteria outlined in section 4.2.

Where the eligibility of an expense included in the project budget is uncertain, the department or mRNA Victoria may seek further information from an applicant.

4.2. Eligible activities & expenses

The grant amount and co-contribution must be spent on eligible activities and expenditure as listed below.

Eligible project expenditure items are:

- Regulatory and intellectual property fees and charges associated with registering domestic or international patents or other intellectual property enforcement expenses.
- Equipment, consumables and services required for the research activity as outlined in the project description provided that such equipment, consumable or service is not listed as an ineligible activity/expense in section 4.3.
- Staffing costs that relate solely to either:

- new employees; or
- the expansion of hours for current employees, provided these employees are working on the funded projects.

The majority of grant funding received must be spent in Victoria.

The department reserves the right to determine eligible activities and expenditure in alignment with program objectives.

4.3. Ineligible activities & expenses

The grant amount and co-contribution may not be spent on ineligible activities and expenditure. These include:

- retrospective funding for activities that have already begun
- usual operational expenditure, including existing staff costs, communications, travel, entertainment, accommodation and office computing equipment
- routine replacement or minor upgrade of plant and equipment
- printing, stationery, postage, and bank charges
- basic and routine professional services including legal and accounting fees
- any amount paid on account of goods and services tax
- costs related to preparing the grant application, preparing any project reports and preparing any project variation requests
- building routine websites, sales and promotional activities, marketing or communications campaigns
- Funding for projects that have already:
 - been completed prior to receiving an offer of grant funding under this mVRAF Program; or
 - commenced prior to receiving a successful funding approval under this mVRAF Program, except in circumstances where the application of the funding can be demonstrated to effect a change of scope or acceleration of a project commenced prior to any funding approval.
- Any other expenditure as determined by the department or mRNA Victoria in its sole and absolute discretion.

4.4. Project Timing

Projects will be expected to commence on execution of the grant agreement with the department.

Projects must be completed within 2 years from commencement (as outlined in the grant agreement).

Applicants will be required to supply project start and end dates as part of their application.

Projects initiated or completed beyond the timeframe of this mVRAF Program may still be eligible if the proposed activities supported by the grant funding are completed within two years in accordance with the conditions of the Applicant's grant agreement.

5. Collaborations

5.1. Collaborative Partner Requirement

To apply for the mVRAF Program, an Applicant is required to collaborate with at least one other organisation (Collaborative Partner).

Applications must identify the Collaborative Partner and must attach relevant proof of collaboration as an attachment to their application in accordance with the requirements set out in the 'Documentation and Information Requirements' in section 6.3 of these guidelines.

The application and supporting evidence should demonstrate how the Applicant and Collaborative Partner organisations will work together under the collaborative partner arrangements to maximise research impact, innovation, and overall quality of research, and how this will lead to effective translation and/or commercialisation of research.

Organisations based outside of Australia are eligible to be collaborative partners, providing that the majority of research activity will be led from and conducted in Victoria.

5.2. Collaborative Partner Eligibility

Applicants and their Collaborative Partners must be entirely separate entities. They may not be owned by the same parent company, share governance or have common directors.

In the application, Applicants are required to declare there are no existing governance relationships between themselves and the nominated Collaborative Partner, including that they:

- are not subsidiaries or related bodies corporate within the meaning of the Corporations Act 2001 (Cth); and
- do not share common directors, officers, or senior managers.

5.3. Priority Partners

The Victorian Government, through mRNA Victoria, has signed a series of collaboration agreements to exchange information, facilitate connections and support the development of RNA ecosystems across regional and international jurisdictions.

mRNA Victoria has signed Memoranda of Understanding with the Government of Korea through the Korean Health Industry Development Institute (KHIDI), the South African Medical Research Council and Afrigen Biologics & Vaccines, and the Department of Health - Abu Dhabi. These agreements will foster international collaboration across all aspects of the RNA

lifecycle, including research and development, manufacturing, clinical trials, and workforce training.

This mVRAF Program allocates a proportion of the Assessment Criteria weighting (5% total) in favour of Applicants with project partners from one of the listed priority partner jurisdictions. Project partners must still comply with Section 5.2 above.

Priority Partner Jurisdictions:

- South Korea
- South Africa
- Abu Dhabi

Applications with project partners from other jurisdictions not listed above are still eligible to apply but will not receive the 5% additional weighting.

6. How to apply

6.1. Key dates/Open and Close Dates

- Opening and closing dates will be listed on the Program website. <https://business.vic.gov.au/grants-and-programs/mrna-victoria-research-acceleration-fund-round-four>
- Applications will remain open for 8 weeks.
- Applications must be submitted in the portal by **1 pm** on the closing date. Please note that late applications will not be accepted.

To assist Applicants, the department is targeting the following indicative timeline for the Program:

<i>Applications Open:</i>	<i>Start September 2024</i>
<i>Applications Close:</i>	<i>Early November 2024 (8 weeks after opening)</i>
<i>Formal Applications Assessment:</i>	<i>November 2024 – April 2025</i>
<i>Letters of Offers issued:</i>	<i>Start of April 2025</i>
<i>Announcements:</i>	<i>End of May 2025</i>

The above indicative timeline is subject to change at the sole discretion of the department. Applicants are not to rely on this indicative timeline and neither mRNA Victoria nor the department accept any liability in relation to any consequences attributable to reliance on this timeline.

Projects funded by a grant under this mVRAF Program must be commenced by the Applicant following execution by the Applicant and DJSIR of a grant agreement and completed within two years of the commencement date recorded in that grant agreement.

Projects initiated or completed beyond the timeframe of this mVRAF Program may still be eligible if the proposed activities supported by the grant funding are completed within two years in accordance with the conditions of the Applicant's grant agreement.

6.2. Preparing an application

Applicants must undertake the following steps to apply:

1. Carefully read these Program Guidelines and 'Frequently Asked Questions'.
2. Ensure all eligibility requirements are met.
3. Compile all necessary application supporting documents as detailed in the 'Documentation and Information Requirements' section of these Program Guidelines.
4. Submit application online via 'Apply now' button on the Business Victoria Program website.
5. Ensure you receive an email confirmation of application submission. Please check spam/junk mail if confirmation email cannot be seen in your inbox.
6. Only final applications that are lodged with the department will be considered and assessed. Applications that are still in 'draft' and have not been submitted upon program close will not be assessed.

6.3. Documentation and Information Requirements

Notes on support documents and material:

- You can upload and submit up to 5 files and/or 5 URLs (external links).
- Attached files can be no more than 25MB in size each.
- It may be necessary to combine supporting material into one document in some instances, i.e. multiple images or letters of support may be compiled into one PDF or PowerPoint file.

Requirement	Reason for requirement
<p>Evidence of Co-contribution:</p> <p>Applicants must provide evidence which demonstrates, to the satisfaction of the department, that the Applicant has the required Co-contribution amount for the project.</p> <p>For financial Co-contributions, this may include evidence of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written confirmation from the Board or business owner that the business can undertake the project and meet the required co-contribution amount • An approved loan facility (including loan amount) • Sufficient cash in a bank (current bank statement) • Management accounts demonstrating satisfactory cash flow or liquid assets <p>For in-kind Co-contributions, this may include evidence of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written confirmation from the Applicant that it can provide the required in-kind co-contribution amount • What form this in-kind co-contribution takes and if it meets the eligibility criteria at section 4.2 • Details of the source of the in-kind co-contribution and any materials supporting the commitment of the in-kind co-contribution where sourced from a third party • Valuation of the in-kind contribution in monetary terms 	Eligibility criteria
<p>Evidence of Financial Records:</p> <p>For applications of \$50,001 or more, financial accounts are required. Unless an exemption applies (see section 7.3), applicants must provide evidence which demonstrates, to the satisfaction of the department, that the Applicant is financially viable and able to deliver the project and its outcomes. This requires at a minimum, the provision of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audited Financial Reports from the last three financial years (including Profit & Loss Statement, Balance Sheet, Cash Flows, and notes to the accounts). If accounts are not audited, unaudited accounts from an Accountant will be accepted. • If the most recent Financial Report is more than six months old, then up to date management or interim accounts for the current year, including Profit and Loss Statement and 	Due diligence



<p>Balance Sheet, Also, in the case of public listed corporations, a half yearly financial report.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If less than 3 years of financial records are available, then the company’s financial projections for the next three financial years, including Profit and Loss Statement and Cash Flow. See Section 7.3 for more information. 	
<p>Evidence of Collaborative Partner:</p> <p>Applicants must provide evidence of an agreed Collaborative Partner or arrangement for the project, including;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A copy of any agreement, letter or memorandum of understanding entered into between the Applicant and Collaborative Partner or Letter of support from the Collaborative Partner, in relation to the proposed project or activities. <p>To receive the Priority Partner weighting, the evidence must show the current address of the Collaborative Partner.</p>	<p>Assessment and eligibility criteria</p>

7. Assessment Process

This is a competitive program and successful applications will be required to rate highly against the Program’s assessment criteria compared to other eligible applications.

7.1. Assessment criteria

Eligible applications will be assessed by an expert assessment panel (external to the department) on how well they meet the assessment criteria as outlined below. All supplementary attachments and information provided as part of the application will be taken into consideration during the assessment process.

Assessment Criteria	Considerations	Weighting
<p>1. The quality of the research project proposal and the extent to which it aligns with the program objectives as set out in section 1.2</p>	<p>These are the considerations made by the assessors in making their assessment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describes how this grant will support innovative early-stage mRNA research or accelerate the translation of research to increase Victoria’s mRNA medicines pipeline. 	<p>30%</p>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describes the unmet medical need for this research. • Articulates how the partnership will collaborate to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ strengthen the research activity ○ progress the research to the investment-ready stage; and ○ stimulate translational activities. 	
<p>2. The extent to which the proposal could meet the outcomes of the program as set out in section 1.3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defines the value of the expected outcome/s of the research proposal to Victoria, Victorians and to growing Victoria’s mRNA therapeutics pipeline. • Articulates potential future pathways to translation and/or commercialisation of mRNA medicines. 	<p>25%</p>
<p>3. Demonstrated project feasibility and delivery</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear implementation strategy and resourcing to be able to deliver the project • Appropriate organisational commitment to the project • Commitment from Collaborative Partner/s or demonstrating support from industry, philanthropy, or research institutes • The required Co-Contribution has been identified and committed to the project • Identified appropriate technical resources, skills and capabilities, including where appropriate a strong track record of key personnel • A well-developed and suitable budget for the project • Evidence of agreed and suitable environment in which to undertake the proposed research • Identified project risks and mitigation strategies 	<p>25%</p>

4. Ability to deliver within timeframe and need for government support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The applicant demonstrates the ability to deliver the project within the set timeframe and realise its outcomes. Whether the project would proceed without Government support due to considerations such as timing, resourcing and/or level of risk impacting project initiation. 	10%
5. Priority Partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The applicant has a collaborative partner from one of the listed Priority Partner jurisdictions. 	5%
6. Promotion of gender equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The applicant demonstrates that at the time of project commencement, the project team will consist of at least 50% members who identify as women. 	2.5%
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The applicant's project is led by a Chief Investigator who identifies as a woman 	2.5%
Total		100%

7.2. Due Diligence checks

Applicants may be subject to due diligence checks to enable the department to assess financial and other non-financial risks associated with the application. Outcomes from such checks may be taken into account in any decision to recommend or award a grant and in contracting with successful applicants.

Such checks may include:

- Any adverse findings by a regulator regarding an Applicant
- If an Applicant is placed under external or voluntary administration or subject to receivership
- There is a petition to wind up or deregister the Applicant
- The Applicant is or becomes deregistered or unregistered in respect of its registration regulatory body (including cancellation or lapse in registration)
- the potential for reputational risk to the State
- where the proposal has already been fully funded by the applicant through other means
- the delivery performance of other grants contracted with the Victorian Government and whether the applicant has failed to meet key contractual obligations
- business regulator checks.

The department may, at any time, remove an applicant from the application and assessment process, if in the department's opinion, association with the applicant may bring the department, a minister or the State of Victoria into disrepute.

Where the department undertakes a financial risk assessment (FRA) of an Applicant to assess the ability of the Applicant to deliver its proposed project, the outcomes of that FRA may be taken into consideration in any decision to recommend and award a grant to an Applicant.

7.3. Financial Risk Assessments

Applicants will be required to undergo a Financial Risk Assessment. The documents required are listed in section 6.3.

Applicants with less than 3 financial years of operation are still eligible to apply. If the last three financial years reports are not available, then Profit and Loss and Cashflow projections for the next three financial years are required.

Applicants may be exempt from an FRA if they satisfy one of the following conditions:

- Entities applying for a grant of up to and including \$50,000
- Publicly funded universities and educational institutions.

8. Notification of Outcomes

Applicants will be advised of the outcome of their grant application via email.

9. Conditions of Funding

9.1. Funding Offer

Applicants will be advised in writing (via email) if they are successful and if they are required to countersign and accept the funding offer in writing [14 days from the date of the offer].

An offer of funding is not binding on the department unless and until both the department and the applicant execute the grant agreement.

9.2. Grant agreements

To receive the grant funding, successful applicants will be invited to enter into a legally binding grant agreement with the department.

The applicant will be required to sign the grant *agreement in 30 days from acceptance of offer*. The offer may be withdrawn if the grant agreement is not signed within the timeframe given.

The project, and any expenditure of funds associated with the project, must not commence until the grant agreement has been executed. Agreement execution means the grant agreement has been signed by both the department and the applicant.

Once the agreement has been executed, the grant recipient (successful applicant) will be required to commence the project within the agreed timeframe. If a recipient does not commence the project by the commencement date, the department has at its absolute discretion the option of terminating the agreement.

Grant payments will be made using Recipient-Created-Tax-Invoices. Grant recipients will not be required to send invoices to the department.

The grant agreement details all funding obligations and conditions such as:

- payments
- funding use
- grant activity deliverables and due dates
- monitoring and milestones
- reporting and accounting
- audit
- publicity and acknowledgment
- termination.

A copy of the template is available to view on <https://business.vic.gov.au/grants-and-programs/mrna-victoria-research-acceleration-fund-round-four>

9.3. Publicity/acknowledgement of support

Successful Applicants may be required to attend a presentation ceremony and agree to be photographed for news articles or appear in videos regarding the mVRAF Program. The department requires grant recipients to acknowledge the Victorian Government's support on marketing and promotional materials, which must be approved in advance by the department. Acknowledgement of the Victorian Government's support in marketing and promotional material will depend on the grant given and should be specified in the grant agreement, e.g., required representation on channels or collateral such as websites, signage, advertisements, and brochures. The department will supply the grant recipient with a logo suite and associated brand guidelines, as well as a guide on how to acknowledge government support, for the purposes of acknowledgment.

Grant recipients must obtain written approval from the department before making public announcements about receiving the grant.

Successful Applicants may be required to attend a presentation ceremony and agree to be photographed for news articles or appear in videos regarding the mVRAF Program.

The department may publicise the benefits accruing to a grant recipient associated with the grant and the State's support for the project, and recipients must cooperate with the department in promoting the program. These requirements are currently outlined in the Grant Agreement. The department may include the name of the grant recipient and the amount of funding granted in any publicity material and in the department's annual report.

9.4. Program Evaluation

As a condition of funding, successful Applicants will be required to deliver regular project reports in accordance with conditions set out in the Grant Agreement.

As a condition of funding, grant recipients will be required to participate in any program monitoring and evaluation activities initiated by the department. This may include completing surveys throughout the program and for a nominated period of time after program completion to measure progress to achieving outcomes.

Reporting is critical to the department in understanding program impact, supporting continuous improvement in program design and delivery, and delivering effective grant program outcomes for Victoria.

10. Privacy Statement

Any personal information provided for this program will be collected and used by the Department for the purposes of assessing eligibility, program administration, program review and evaluation.

The Department completes a range of eligibility assessments that may include data matching to clarify the accuracy and quality of information supplied. This is part of our auditing and monitoring processes and for confirming eligibility across this program.

In the assessment of an application for the program, it may be necessary to share personal information with State and Commonwealth Government departments and agencies, as well as other external experts. If personal information about a third party is included in the application, the applicant must ensure the third party is aware of and consents to the contents of this privacy statement.

The Department collects demographic information for economic reporting purposes. No personal information is used in reporting; all reports are presented with aggregated data.

Any personal information about the applicant or a third party 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.

Enquiries about access or correction to your personal information, can be emailed to mrnavictoria@ecodev.vic.gov.au.

Other concerns regarding the privacy of personal information, can be emailed to the Department's Privacy Unit at privacy@ecodev.vic.gov.au. The Department's privacy policy is also available by emailing the Department's Privacy Unit.

11. Department Probity and Decision-making

The Victorian Government makes every effort to ensure the grant application and assessment process is fair and undertaken in line with the published program guidelines.

Decisions in recommending and awarding grant funding under this program are at the minister's and department discretion. This includes not making any funding available or approving a lesser amount than that applied for.

These guidelines and application terms may be changed from time to time, as appropriate.

The department may request the applicant provide further information should it be necessary to assess an application to the Program's policy objectives.

Victorian Government staff are required to act in accord with the Code of Conduct for Victorian Public Sector Employees (Section 61) issued under the *Public Administration Act 2004* (Vic). This includes an obligation to avoid conflicts of interest wherever possible and declare and manage any conflicts of interest that cannot be avoided.

11.1. Applicant conflict of interest

A conflict of interest arises where a person makes a decision or exercises a power in a way that may be, or may be perceived to be, influenced by either material personal interests (financial or non-financial) or material personal associations. A conflict of interest may arise where a grant applicant:

- Has a professional, commercial, or personal relationship with a party who is able to, or may be perceived to, influence the application assessment process, such as a Victorian Government staff member, or
- Has a relationship with, or interest in, an organisation which is likely to interfere with or restrict the applicant from carrying out the proposed activities fairly and independently.

Applicants must advise the department of any actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest relating to a project for which it has applied for funding.

11.2. Complaints

Any complaints you have about this grant opportunity may be made in relation to:

- the timeliness of the process
- communication provided by the Department
- adherence to the published program guidelines.

The department aims to respond to all complaints within 28 days.

Re-assessment of an application or overturning of a funding decision for a merit-based grant, will not be considered through the complaints process.

You can email your complaint to: mrnavictoria@ecodev.vic.gov.au.

11.3. Feedback

Due to the expected high volume of applications for this program, feedback on individual application outcomes will not be able to be provided.

12. Payment of GST on grant funding

If you are registered for the Goods and Services Tax (GST), where applicable, we will add GST to your grant payment.

Example: If the approved funding is \$100,000 GST exclusive, the department will process payments totalling \$110,000 (\$100,000 GST exclusive funding + \$10,000 GST)

Grants to successful applicants not registered for GST are exempt from GST.

Example: If the approved funding is \$100,000 GST exclusive, the department will only process payments totalling \$100,000 GST exclusive.

13. Tax advice

Tax implications for grant applicants may differ depending on individual circumstances. DJSIR recommends successful applicants seek independent tax advice, or alternatively liaise with the Australian Tax Office (ATO) for advice that is specific to their individual circumstances. The ATO website also provides guidance in relation to specific grants payments which may be used for tax determination purposes.

14. Information only

Any discussions you may have with the department are for information only and do not constitute advice. Applicants should seek independent advice before making an application or entering into a Grant agreement.

15. Further Information

Further information regarding this program can be found here:

<https://business.vic.gov.au/grants-and-programs/mrna-victoria-research-acceleration-fund-round-four>

If you have any questions during the application period, please contact us via the Business Victoria contact form/ chat function or by calling 13 22 15.

For email inquiries relating to the mRNA Victoria Research Acceleration Fund, contact mrnavictoria@ecodev.vic.gov.au.

16. Glossary

- **Applicant** means an individual or organisation that has submitted the application for funding for a grant
- **Application** means the application submitted by the applicant to the department for funding
- **Chief Investigator** means the overall lead researcher for the whole project who will have responsibility of managing the grant funding and will make decisions with regards to the project
- **Department** or **State** means the State of Victoria through its Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions
- **Fast-track** means to accelerate the progress of something
- **Innovation** means the implementation of a new or significantly improved product (good or service), a process, a new marketing method, or a new organisational method in business practices, workplace organisation or external relations
- **Research translation** means the process whereby knowledge is passed anywhere along the translational pathway, i.e., research findings are translated into practice, policy or further research
- **Program** means mRNA Victoria Research Acceleration Program
- **Project** means the activities specified in the application by the applicant for which the grant is provided
- **Grant** means funding given to organisations or individuals for a specified purpose to meet government policy objectives
- **Grant Agreement** means a document that details the conditions of the grant and sets out the relationship between the parties
- **Grant Recipient** means the legal entity that has entered into a grant agreement with the department.