

VicTrack Community Grants Program 2026

Not-for-profit community groups that lease rail land, buildings and other assets from VicTrack for community purposes are once again being offered the chance to apply for grants through VicTrack's Community Grants Program.

The funding is being offered to tenants that have community leases with VicTrack, including not-for-profit community groups and Tourist and Heritage (T&H) railway organisations.

Community groups that lease VicTrack assets from their local council are eligible to apply, as well as regional and rural councils in fire-affected communities that lease land and buildings from VicTrack.

The grants are being made available to tenants to support them with managing their community assets, which include public open spaces, art galleries, museums, libraries, T&H railways, creative spaces, and community hubs.

Funding can be used for conserving and restoring buildings, land, or other state-owned assets leased from VicTrack - which could include painting, gardening, landscaping or other small projects groups would like to undertake.

As many groups are subject to environmental and heritage regulations relating to the assets they lease, they can also use the grants to support them with these obligations.

Groups can apply for the grants through the VicTrack website and applications are open for four weeks.

Applications will be assessed by VicTrack, and it is expected that the grants will be released later this year.

Eligibility criteria

To be eligible, community groups and eligible councils must:

- be a not-for-profit group that is incorporated and operated primarily by volunteers, or
- be a regional or rural council in a fire-affected community that has a community lease with VicTrack, and
- have a current lease with VicTrack for land and/or buildings or a sub-lease/licence from a local council for a VicTrack asset.

To be eligible, tourist and heritage rail groups must:

- be a T&H operator registered under the Voluntary Registration Scheme, a static museum on VicTrack land, or a group that is a custodian of state-owned assets, and
- If on VicTrack land, have a current lease or other land tenure as agreed by VicTrack.

Selection criteria

Funding will be provided for community groups and eligible councils for:

- restoring or refurbishing a building, land or other asset leased from VicTrack – works can include painting, small projects, beautification, and gardening etc.
- helping meet regulatory obligations, for example in relation to safety, accessibility, or environmental management.

Tourist and heritage railway projects that could be funded include:

- repairing, restoring or refurbishing state-owned assets
- improving access to assets

- delivering approved projects on buildings or state-owned rolling stock
- works in the rail corridor such as weed control or vegetation management
- assistance with regulatory compliance.

Funding will not be provided for:

- paying staff or volunteers
- providing catering or hospitality or hosting events or functions
- paying for ongoing overheads, loans or other operating costs
- works on a non-VicTrack owned building.

Groups are responsible for ensuring their works comply with all heritage, environmental and other obligations.

Q&As - general

What is the Community Grants Program?

In conjunction with the Department of Transport and Planning, VicTrack is providing funding to support not-for-profit community groups and tourist and heritage rail groups leasing VicTrack assets for community purposes.

The program provides funding to help groups with small projects and general maintenance of the buildings, land, and other assets they lease from VicTrack.

How much funding is being allocated?

A total of \$400,000 is available to groups.

How much funding can each group apply for?

Community groups can apply for up to \$5,000 each in support.

Tourist and heritage rail groups can apply for up to \$15,000 each in support.

These groups are being offered a higher amount, as a portion of the total funding is allocated to tourist and heritage rail groups only. These groups also have responsibilities for managing historic state-owned assets and many must meet specific safety and compliance obligations.

How can I apply?

Applications must be submitted using the online application form on the VicTrack website, victrack.com.au/communitygrants

How many applications can I submit?

Each group can submit one application only.

Can I see the questions before I apply?

Yes. We have provided a preview of the application forms at victrack.com.au/communitygrants so you can see the questions and the documents you will need to provide with your application.

How long will applications be open for?

Applications are open until 9am on Monday 14 September.

Who is eligible for funding?

Not-for-profit groups that lease VicTrack land, buildings or other assets, or sub-lease VicTrack land and buildings from their local council, are eligible to apply.

Regional and rural councils that have been affected by the recent fire season and have VicTrack community leases may also be considered for support.

To be eligible, community groups and eligible councils must:

- be a not-for-profit group that is incorporated and operated primarily by volunteers, or
- be a regional or rural council in a fire-affected community that has a community lease with VicTrack, and
- have a current lease with VicTrack for land and/or buildings or a sub-lease/licence from a local council for a VicTrack asset.

To be eligible, tourist and heritage rail groups must:

- be a T&H operator registered under the Voluntary Registration Scheme, a static museum on VicTrack land, or a group that is a custodian of state owned assets, and
- if on VicTrack land, have a current lease or other land tenure as agreed by VicTrack.

Tourist and heritage railways must be recognised as a tourist and heritage railway operator under the *Tourist and Heritage Railways Act (2010)*.

Which councils are eligible to apply?

Regional and rural councils that have been affected by the recent fire season and have VicTrack community leases may be considered for support, with applications assessed on a case-by-case basis by VicTrack.

Other local councils are not eligible to apply for the grants.

Are councils and their subtenants both eligible to apply for different projects for the same lease lot?

No. Only one application per lease lot will be accepted, so councils and their subtenants should liaise to ensure only one application is submitted.

What can the funding be used for?

Examples of eligible projects for community groups and eligible councils are:

- Restoring or refurbishing a building, land, or other asset you lease from VicTrack – this could include painting, gardening, landscaping or other general maintenance.
- Helping your group meet regulatory obligations under the lease – for example relating to safety or environmental management.

Tourist and heritage railway projects that could be funded include:

- repairing, restoring or refurbishing state-owned assets
- improving access to assets
- delivering approved projects on buildings or state-owned rolling stock
- works in the rail corridor such as weed control or vegetation management
- assistance with regulatory compliance.

What restrictions are there on how the funding is used?

The funding cannot be used for:

- paying staff or volunteers
- providing catering or hospitality, or hosting events or functions
- paying any outstanding expenses or costs incurred by the group
- repayment of loans incurred by the group
- paying for on-going overheads or other operating costs
- works on a non-VicTrack owned building.

Who can I contact if I have any questions?

If you have any questions, or you are unsure if your project meets the eligibility criteria, please email communitygrants@victrack.com.au or phone VicTrack on 03 9619 8889.

Can I submit a late application?

Any applications received after the closing date will not be considered.

How do I update or withdraw my application?

If you need to edit or cancel your application, please email communitygrants@victrack.com.au

Changes to applications will not be accepted after the closing date, but applications can be withdrawn up to the point funds are allocated.

How will my application be assessed?

VicTrack will assess each application against the eligibility criteria.

VicTrack may request further information from groups as part of the assessment process.

How will I be notified of the outcome of my application?

VicTrack will contact you using the email address you provided in your application with the outcome of your application.

Please ensure you check all spam or junk mail folders. If possible, we recommend adding communitygrants@victrack.com.au to your email's safe senders or contacts list.

If my project is approved, how do I receive the funding?

If your application is successful VicTrack will pay funds to your nominated bank account.

If you have not previously received a VicTrack grant, you will be required to complete a vendor form to enable us to pay the funds into your account.

Will there be additional funding allocated?

Once the \$400,000 has been allocated there will be no additional funding allocated through this round of grants.

Q&As – heritage, safety and environmental obligations

Groups are responsible for managing heritage, safety, and environmental obligations around their works.

There are many resources online where you can obtain advice about these obligations, and some of them are set out in the questions below.

For some works you must engage a registered or licensed tradesperson by law. If you are unsure about delivering any other works, particularly if these may involve disturbing hazardous materials, we recommend engaging a qualified tradesperson.

How do I find out if a building or other asset is subject to heritage protections?

If you manage a VicTrack owned building, there will be information about heritage protections in your lease.

You can also search the Heritage Victoria website to find out whether an asset is on the Victorian Heritage Register, the Victorian Heritage Inventory, or is protected by a Heritage Overlay - heritage.vic.gov.au

How do I receive a heritage permit if I require one?

You can find out more about heritage permits and whether you require one by visiting the Heritage Victoria website - heritage.vic.gov.au/permits-and-approvals

How do I know if I require a planning or building permit?

Your local council is responsible for issuing a planning permit. If you need a planning permit, it must be issued from your local council before you can obtain a building permit.

Not all building projects require a building permit. Possible exemptions may include:

- some minor alterations or demolitions
- pergolas associated with houses
- some garden sheds with a floor area less than 10m²
- repair work for maintenance purposes.

More information about planning and building permits can be found on the Victorian Building Authority's website - vba.vic.gov.au/consumers/home-renovation-essentials/permits

How do I know if I require a certificate of compliance for electrical or plumbing work?

Electrical work must be carried out by a registered electrical contractor, and gas fitting work must be carried out by a licenced gasfitter.

They will be able to provide all necessary certificates of compliance.

More information about working with electrical or plumbing tradespeople can be found on the Energy Safe Victoria website - energysafe.vic.gov.au/community-safety/working-tradespeople

How do I know whether the building I manage contains asbestos?

If you manage a VicTrack-owned building there will be information in your lease about asbestos and other hazardous materials, and you will have access to the building's asbestos register.

All known asbestos in the building will be clearly labelled, and it will be inspected on a periodic basis.

If you are not occupying a VicTrack-owned building, you can learn more about finding and identifying asbestos by visiting asbestos.vic.gov.au/about-asbestos/finding-and-identifying

How should I manage the removal of lead paint?

Most Australian dwellings built before 1970 were coated with paints containing lead. Exposure to even small amounts of lead in old paint coatings presents a serious health risk, if and when the old paint coatings are disturbed by either hand or power tools.

There is useful information about detecting and removing lead paint on the Dulux Australia website - dulux.com.au/applicator/technical-advice/general/lead-in-paint/

What precautions should I take if my project involves working at a height of more than 2 metres?

If possible you should avoid working at heights, or engage a professional contractor to carry out any works above 2 metres.

There is information about fall prevention on the WorkSafe Victoria website worksafe.vic.gov.au/fall-prevention

What should I do if I plan to work on a station platform or rail corridor on an active rail line?

To carry out work on a station platform or rail corridor on an active railway line you must have appropriate permissions from the rail operator and comply with the rail operator's requirements.

These permissions and requirements vary depending on the work you are carrying out and the rail operator you are working with.

Links to apply for access to a rail operator's leased land or assets are as follows:

Metro Trains Melbourne: metrotrains.com.au/metrositeaccess/

V/Line: corporate.vline.com.au/Network-Access/Network-Access

ARTC: artc.com.au/work/external-parties/

If you are unsure whether you are next to an active railway line or who the rail operator is, please email communitygrants@victrack.com.au

Remember, an active rail line is any line that carries trains, even if they are infrequent.

How do I find out whether I could disturb underground services when digging or excavating?

There is advice on locating services, and information about how to lodge a free enquiry about the location of underground services, on the Before You Dig Australia website - byda.com.au

Am I allowed to plant shrubs or trees that are capable of growing higher than 3 metres on VicTrack-owned land?

You are only permitted to plant shrubs or trees that grow to a height of less than 3 metres.

This is to avoid the risk of damage to underground or overhead infrastructure, or the risk of roots causing damage to buildings.

What precautions should I take if I am planting edible plants?

Edible plants, such as fruit, vegetables or herbs, should only be planted in contained raised beds, and not planted directly into the ground.

The soil used in the raised beds must be clean soil suitable for growing edible produce. This is to ensure edible plants do not come into contact with potentially contaminated soil. If you are leasing VicTrack land, your lease will include information about any contaminants within the soil on your land and how to manage them.

What are high-risk works?

According to Safe Work Australia, high risk work includes:

- scaffolding work
- dogging and rigging work
- operating certain types of cranes and hoists
- operating a forklift truck
- operating a reach stacker
- operating a boom-type elevating work platform with a boom length of over 11 metres
- operating a boiler, steam turbine or reciprocating steam engine.

You must have the right high risk work licence and be over the age of 18 to perform high risk work.

Information about obtaining a high-risk work licence is available on the WorkSafe Victoria website - worksafe.vic.gov.au/high-risk-work-licence