



Building Safer Communities Program

Empowering Communities Grants
– Stream 3 (Round 2) Guidelines

COMMUNITY
CRIME PREVENTION



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Overview

Empowering Communities grants will deliver a supported approach to developing initiatives in priority communities to improve community safety and address crime. Empowering Communities grants are a key initiative under the Victorian Government's Crime Prevention Strategy.

Funding of up to \$700,000 (plus GST) per initiative is available to support innovative, evidence-based approaches to address crime and improve community safety in selected community areas.

Approved councils will be invited to lead a community partnership to design and deliver a crime prevention initiative, which will involve a range of activities designed to achieve the objectives of the grant funding.

A key role for councils will involve establishing and leading an Action Group, which will include a diverse group of community stakeholders and Department of Justice and Community Safety (the department) representation. The Action Group is the decision-making body for making recommendations to fund activities to be delivered within the broader initiative.

The development of the initiative will include the following steps, undertaken in collaboration and partnership with the department:

Step 1:
Establish the Action Group

Step 2:
Hold a Building Safer Communities Forum

Step 3:
Undertake further consultation to ensure broad community input

Step 4:
Agree on a common goal and options for achieving it

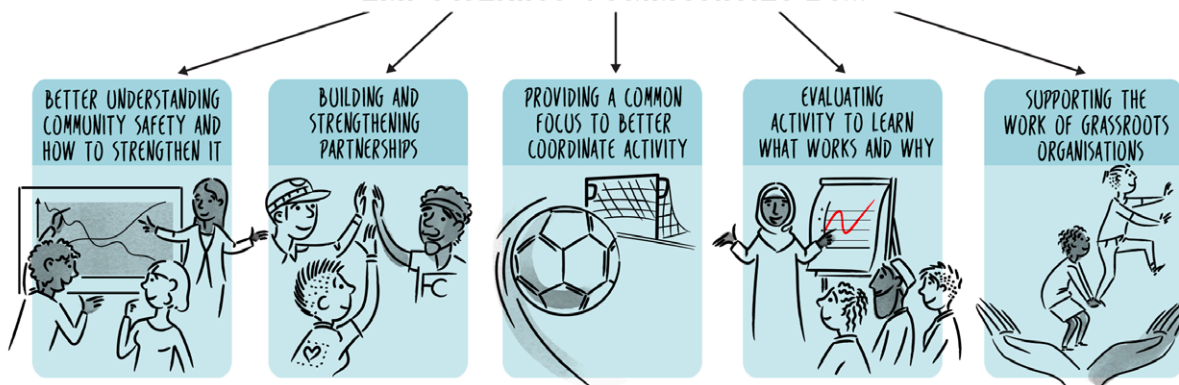
Step 5:
Develop and deliver community initiatives to achieve goals

Step 6:
Measure impact, identifying lessons and reporting on activity

Initiatives must be able to commence as soon as possible after funding is confirmed and be completed by 30 June 2024.

BUILDING SAFER COMMUNITIES

EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES BY...



Grant objectives

Empowering Communities funding aims to support community designed and delivered initiatives that take an evidence-informed, innovative approach to address local issues impacting on crime and perceptions of safety. This initiative also aims to:

- / build the capability of the community to understand crime related issues and design and implement effective crime prevention approaches
- / strengthen relationships between community stakeholders to work in partnership to deliver crime prevention activity, and leverage community capacity to deliver sustainable outcomes beyond the funding period
- / engage and mobilise the community to address issues of local concern
- / build the evidence base for successful community development initiatives that address crime and safety issues.

Supporting community innovation to address crime and its impacts

One of the greatest strengths in any community is the diversity of its members. **Empowering Communities** seeks to capture and build on the unique experiences of crime and its impact across the community to explore and support new ways of building community safety.

Addressing the causes of crime requires a coordinated approach with different sections of the community working together to achieve a common goal. A community-led approach encourages individuals and organisations to find areas of mutual interest and opportunities to partner and collaborate.

Empowering Communities supports innovation by establishing a community-led partnership that is able to allocate funds to projects or activities that meet the funding criteria outlined below and aim to deliver the overall objectives of the program. This flexible approach to funding empowers the community to consider and support initiatives that will best progress a common goal.

Building community capability

When provided with the right resources and support, the community is well placed to achieve effective, innovative and sustainable crime prevention approaches.

Empowering Communities is an investment into building the community's ability to understand crime related issues and address and evaluate activity to improve community safety. In addition to the financial investment, government will support the initiative by:

- / providing access to data and other information to assist the community to understand crime and perceptions of safety
- / providing expert advice on effective crime prevention practice and program evaluation to measure impact
- / coordinating effort with other related government initiatives
- / sitting on the Action Group to provide a link between the initiative and government.

An empowered community has the skills it needs to act to address areas of concern. Building capability within grass-roots community organisations is an important focus of this initiative and will help to sustain benefit beyond the period of funding. This could focus on building capability in the following areas:

- / project design and management
- / identifying funding opportunities and preparing quality grant applications
- / effectively managing grant funds to deliver community benefit
- / effective governance
- / evaluation and impact measurement
- / consulting and communicating.

Why is the Victorian Government funding these initiatives?

At the heart of the Victorian Government's approach to crime prevention is a focus on empowering and investing in Victorian communities to deliver tailored and effective interventions addressing the causes of offending.

It recognises that crime prevention approaches are most effective when government partners with communities to understand and address issues that make some communities more vulnerable to crime and victimisation.

Empowering Communities is an important government priority as it supports Victoria's recovery from the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Coordinating local Empowering Communities activity

The council will be responsible for:

- / entering into and managing a funding agreement with the department
- / meeting all milestone requirements and submitting reports to the department
- / establishing and coordinating an Action Group (see below) across the life of the initiative and providing both leadership and practical administrative support to ensure its success
- / negotiating and managing funding agreements with organisations approved by the Action Group to deliver activities as part of the initiative.

Reasonable costs associated with this coordination role are able to be covered by the grant and will be negotiated as part of the funding agreement.



Key stages to set up a strong initiative

Stages of development

The **Empowering Communities** initiative will be developed and implemented over a number of stages as outlined below.

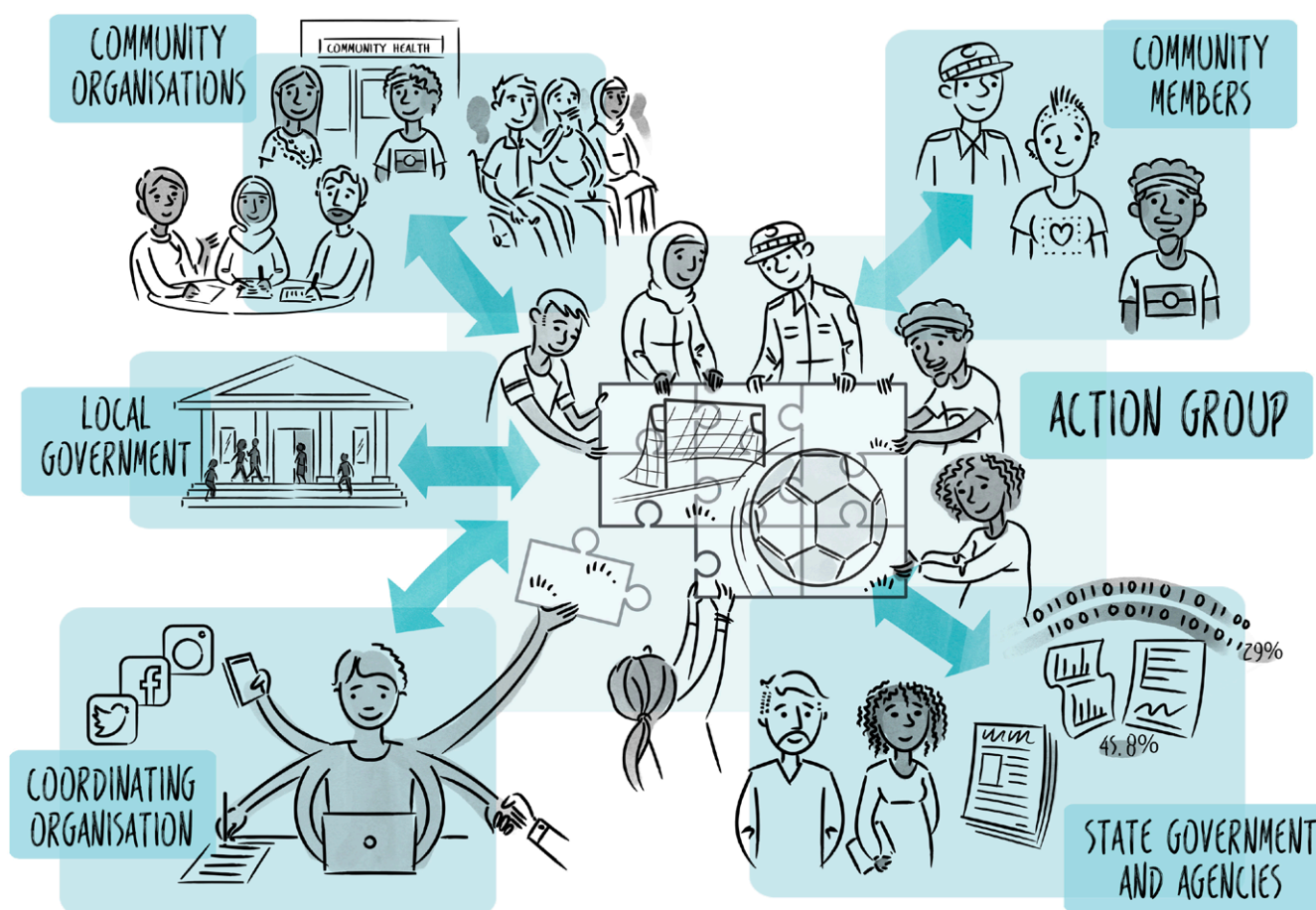
Step 1: Establish Action Group

The council will establish a community Action Group, with support from the department.

This Action Group will be responsible for supporting the implementation of the initiative within the community and will be the main decision-making body. The group should be made up of key community representatives.

The Action Group will be responsible for:

- / ensuring the diverse voices and opinions of the community are heard and considered, including the issues raised at the initial community forum and further consultation undertaken
- / agreeing on a common goal consistent with the **Empowering Communities** objectives and possible strategies to achieve that goal
- / considering proposals for funding and recommending the allocation of funds to activities or projects that meet the funding criteria and program objectives outlined in these guidelines, and supporting the initiative to achieve the common goal
- / meeting regularly to ensure the initiative progresses and remains focused on achieving the program objectives
- / monitoring progress and overseeing evaluation of activity to ensure objectives are achieved
- / supporting sustainability by maximising opportunities for additional investment and encouraging others to support the initiative by undertaking activity that will help achieve its objectives and goal
- / supporting the coordinating organisation to meet the requirements of its funding agreement with government.



The Action Group brings community representatives together



Step 2: Hold Building Safer Communities Forum

The council in partnership with the department and the Action Group, will hold a forum in the municipality to bring a range of stakeholders together to:

- / consider data and other evidence of issues that impact on crime and perceptions of safety in the community
- / identify priority areas for action to inform a focus for Empowering Communities activities
- / identify strengths the community can build on including activity that is already underway or planned that complements the Empowering Communities work.

The forum should include representation from key community organisations and government agencies (including Victoria Police), schools and other relevant services, and a diverse range of community members. The invitation list will be agreed in consultation with the department.

A broad theme for the forum should be determined and agreed by the Action Group.

Reasonable costs associated with holding the forum will be covered by the department subject to agreement, including any remuneration for community participants.

Step 3: Undertake further consultation to ensure broad community input

The Action Group should determine whether any further targeted consultation is required to ensure the diverse views of the community are heard and considered.

This further consultation should aim to reach community members who may have a unique experience of crime or whose voices are not often heard in public forums.

Reasonable consultation costs can be covered by the grant.

Step 4: Agree on a common goal and options for achieving it

Once consultation has been completed, the Action Group will be well placed to consider the issues raised and agree on a common goal and objectives that the initiative can focus on over the period of funding. The goal should have a clear connection with the issues emerging from the community forum and any subsequent consultation.

With a clear goal in mind the Action Group will be able to identify projects or activities that it can support to achieve goals and the broader program objectives.

Step 5: Develop and deliver community activities to achieve the goal

It is expected that the council agree on a suitable process for allocating funding with the Action Group to ensure funds are properly managed. This should include how any conflicts of interest will be managed.

Once the Action Group has identified potential activities to achieve its goal and objectives, it can assist the council to identify suitable local organisation/s to deliver the activities. A proposal should be developed by the organisation that outlines how the activity will be delivered and project funds used. The level of information required should reflect the level of funding available.

Where there is more than one organisation in the local area that would be suitable to deliver a particular activity, the council should invite suitable organisations to develop a proposal for funding. The Action Group should then assist the council to select the strongest proposal. Where Action Group members represent an organisation that has submitted a proposal, or have a financial interest in the proposal, they should not be involved in the decision-making process.

Funding agreement/s will be negotiated between the council and the organisation/s responsible for delivering approved activity.

Step 6: Measure impact, identify lessons learnt and report on activity

Funded activity must be evaluated to determine whether it met its aims and to identify lessons learnt that can be shared with the broader community. Grant funding may be used to resource a research organisation to support evaluation activities and capability building as part of the project. The department will provide a checklist to support the development of an evaluation approach that enables reporting against the outcomes of the Crime Prevention Strategy. Evaluation findings will be published on the department's website.

At the end of the initiative the Action Group and the council will be responsible for preparing and submitting to the department a final report that provides a detailed report of income and expenditure, describes funded activity and provides an analysis of how the initiative achieved the program objectives and the common goal agreed at the beginning of the funding period. The report should also outline how the benefits from the initiative will be leveraged and sustained beyond the funding period.



Criteria for funded activity

Initiative funds should be used for activities that:

- / directly support the program objectives and the goal of the Action Group
- / are informed by evidence and demonstrate a strong problem-solving logic
- / test new, more effective approaches
- / can be completed within the agreed timeframe and funding available.

The following costs should not be approved for funding by the Action Group:

- / overseas or interstate travel
- / payments to state government departments or agencies including Victoria Police or schools for example
- / costs that duplicate the funding responsibility of other state or local government agencies (such as family violence, mental health or drug and alcohol support for example) or that could be funded through other government grant programs
- / the development of software applications (apps)
- / activities that have already commenced for which retrospective funding is sought.

