



Australian Government
Department of Employment
and Workplace Relations

Indigenous Centre Of Vocational Excellence (ICOVE)

GRANT PROCESS – SECTOR INFORMATION SESSION

NOVEMBER 2025



Acknowledgement of Country.

The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations acknowledges and pays respect to the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the lands throughout Australia. We recognise the strength and resilience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and their continuing connections to land, seas and community. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and future. We also extend our respects to any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people attending these sessions. We acknowledge the stories, traditions and living cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples on this land and commit to building a brighter future together.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be aware that this presentation may contain images of deceased persons in photographs.



Introduction of Speakers



Emma Lattimore

First Nations Partnerships



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Coolamon Advisors

Agenda

01 Welcome and Housekeeping

02 Overview of the ICOVE

03 Grant Opportunity Guidelines

04 Financial Assessment

05 Timeline and Next steps



01

Welcome and Housekeeping

ICOVE GRANT PROCESS – SECTOR INFORMATION SESSION

Please email us your questions.

To comply with Commonwealth probity requirements, all information sessions will contain the same information.

Please send any questions to firstnationspartnerships@dewr.gov.au.

Questions will be collected, responded to and shared on the department's website, following the final session being held.

Presentation Slides will also be published on the department's website.



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Overview of ICOVE

ICOVE GRANT PROCESS – SECTOR INFORMATION SESSION

ICOVE Grant overview.

The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (the department) has commenced the process to establish the Indigenous Centre Of Vocational Excellence (ICOVE).

The ICOVE is designed to operate as a First Nations Vocational Education and Training (VET) hub and Skills Peak alternative to partner with governments on national First Nations VET matters.

Who?

The ICOVE grants program will select an eligible Aboriginal Community Controlled or First Nations Led/Owned Registered Training Organisations (RTO) to commence the design and management of the ICOVE.

Coolamon will conduct a thorough financial and organisational assessment to provide independent evidence-based advice to the Selection Advisory Panel. The Selection Advisory Panel will be convened by the Department. Coolamon Advisors will support the Panel as it assesses applications against the outlined selection criteria.

How?

This grant process is grounded in the principle that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination must guide every aspect of this process.

The following **core principles** will be applied:

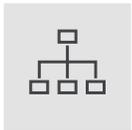
1. **Cultural safety and appropriate protocols**
2. **Transparency and accountability**
3. **Accessibility**
4. **Tailored process design and implementation**
5. **Respect for community-controlled governance models**

What is the ICOVE?

The ICOVE was borne from the commitment under the National Skills Agreement (Clause A99) to:



Establish and manage a nationally networked VET Policy Partnership, starting with the Interim Partnership Committee (IPC).



Enable a First Nations VET peak organisation(s) to represent communities and organisations on national VET matters.



Support First Nations peak organisations and affiliates to lead research, projects, pilots and initiatives on national VET matters.

The idea for the ICOVE was developed through engagement undertaken by the Coalition of Peaks with the First Nations and ACCO RTO sector.

The design of the ICOVE has been shaped by input from the Coalition of Peaks and sector stakeholders to ensure community priorities and perspectives are central to the ICOVE's approach.

What are the intended objectives and outcomes of the ICOVE?

The following strategic and core objectives and outcomes have been developed for ICOVE. These are to guide the design, establishment and operations of ICOVE.

Strategic objectives of ICOVE

Drive systemic reform in the VET sector to improve outcomes for First Nations learners

Ensure shared decision-making between Government and First Nations representatives through the VET Policy Partnership (to be established in early 2026)

Embed Closing the Gap Priority Reforms and outcomes (6,7 & 8)

Intended outcomes of the grant opportunity

Improved training outcomes for First Nations students

Strengthened First Nations RTO sector (ACCO and First Nations Owned/Led)

Transformation of approach to First Nations VET training and education

Shared decision-making and partnership governance

Supporting strong employment pathways for First Nations VET learners

Core objectives of the grant opportunity

Provide a national focal point for First Nations VET policy, practice and advocacy

Support First Nations VET reforms aligned to workforce needs

Build partnerships with government, industry and other policy areas

Embed Closing the Gap Priority Reforms into the broader VET system

How will the ICOVE be established?

The grant opportunity is scheduled to open **3 December 2025 and close on 15 January 2026***. Applications must be submitted via the Community Grants Hub.

This grant will support the establishment and operations of the ICOVE. It is expected that the ICOVE Host will build capacity, embed strong community governance systems, and ensure alignment with the VET Policy Partnership and broader VET system.

01

Selection and Establishment

The ICOVE Host will work with governments and the Coalition of Peaks to **establish governance, staffing and implementation plans.**

02

Operational

It is expected that ICOVE is operational by 1 July 2026, **delivering training innovation, policy advocacy, sector capacity building, and research.**

03

Evaluation Phase

The ICOVE will be evaluated by the Department throughout the life of the Grant Agreement. The ICOVE is evaluated **against the Strategic Objectives and Intended outcomes.**

*Indicative dates are subject to change. Please register on [GrantConnect](#) to be notified of any changes.

How to apply.

Before applying, you must read and understand the **published** Grant Opportunity Guidelines and the sample application form on GrantConnect. The Guidelines are expected to be published on 3 December 2025.

To register on GrantConnect click [here](#).

Registration is a simple process.

1. Create your account
2. Mandatory fields are marked with an asterisk.
3. Establish notification settings
4. Monitor your emails
5. Adjust notification settings periodically

If you require any technical support, you can contact the Community Grants Hub via email at **support@communitygrants.gov.au**



03

Grant Opportunity Guidelines Eligibility Criteria

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The grant opportunity guidelines have not yet been published. All information presented is subject to change.

Grant Opportunity Guidelines.

The purpose of the eligibility criteria is to ensure an appropriate and sustainable ACCO or FNO RTO is selected for the grant. One grant will be awarded.

To be eligible, you must be one of the following entity types:

	Eligibility
Company	✓
Cooperative	✓
Incorporated Association	✓
Indigenous Corporation	✓
Consortia*	✓

Applications from consortia are acceptable, as long as you have a lead applicant who is solely accountable to the Commonwealth for the delivery of grant activities and is an eligible entity as per the list above.

The Australian Government recognises that some organisations may seek to form consortia in order to apply for the grant under the ICOVE program.

The grant opportunity guidelines have not yet been published. All information presented is subject to change.

Grant Opportunity Guidelines.

The purpose of the eligibility criteria is to ensure an appropriate and sustainable ACC or FNO RTO is selected for the grant.

Eligibility

You must also be one of the following entity types:

Be an Aboriginal Community Controlled (ACC) Registered Training Organisation (RTO)



First Nations Led/Owned RTO – a business, charity, not-for-profit organisation, that has at least 51% Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander ownership and/or directorship and is operated for the benefit of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.



In line with the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, Priority Reform 2, preference will be given to ACCO RTOs, noting, a community-controlled organisation implicitly recognises the strength, the expertise and the right to self-determination by Indigenous communities.

Grant Opportunity Guidelines.

You are not eligible to apply for a grant if you:

- Do not meet the individual requirements to be one of the listed entity types
- A Commonwealth, state, territory or local government agency or body (including government business enterprises)
- An individual
- Unincorporated association
- Overseas resident/organisation
- Are an organisation, or any one of your program partners is an organisation, that is included on the non-compliant list on the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) website
- Are an organisation, that has adverse findings and/or rulings from the Fair Work Commission and/or the Fair Work Ombudsman
- An organisation, or your program partner is an organisation, included on the National Redress Scheme's website on the list of 'Institutions that have not joined or signified their intent to join the Scheme

Who will be undertaking the assessment?

This grant opportunity and process will be administered by the Community Grants Hub on behalf of the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations according to the Commonwealth Grants Rules and Principles 2024 (CGRPs).

01

The Community Grant Hub will first review all applications for eligibility and compliance against the requirements of the application process. Applicants will be rated as eligible or ineligible, compliant or not compliant. The department will verify eligibility. The Community Grants Hub will notify you if you are not eligible.

02

A Financial Viability Assessment will be undertaken by Coolamon Advisors as a First Nations led consultancy with financial advisory expertise. A Selection Advisory Panel will be convened by the department to assess eligible applications.

03

If you are eligible, the Selection Advisory Panel will then assess your eligible application against the assessment criteria including an overall consideration of value with relevant money and compare it to other applications. The Selection Advisory Panel will then provide advice and recommendations to the decision maker (delegate) on the merits of each application.

Selection Advisory Panel

A Selection Advisory Panel will be convened by the department to review applications and assessment outcomes and make final recommendations to the decision maker as part of the competitive selection process.

The Selection Advisory Panel will be established by the department and will include a mix of employees of the Department, experts from the sector (including First Nations representatives), state and/or territory representatives and other Commonwealth officers with relevant specialist expertise.



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Financial Assessment

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Financial Assessment .

The Financial Viability Assessment will be undertaken by Coolamon Advisors, a consultancy with expertise in financial and organisational assessments and experience working with the community-controlled sector.

The outcome of the financial viability assessment will be considered when assessing and/or selecting applications.

Where you are applying as a consortia, the financial viability assessment will apply to all consortia partners.

The financial viability assessment can include:

- assessing the financial health of the applicant
- assessing any risks to the financial health of the applicant
- assessing the business continuity of the applicant
- establishing whether you or relevant persons of the applicant (as applicable) have any adverse business history (for example, current or past bankruptcy).

Documentation to prepare.

01

Audited financial statements for two financial years: 2024-25 (if available), 2023–24 and/or 2022–23, including statement of financial performance (P&L), statement of financial position (Balance sheet) and Statement of Cashflows.

02

Current Statement of Tax Record (STR) as issued by the Australian Taxation Office.

You may be requested to provide further information or documentation to support the Financial Assessment including:

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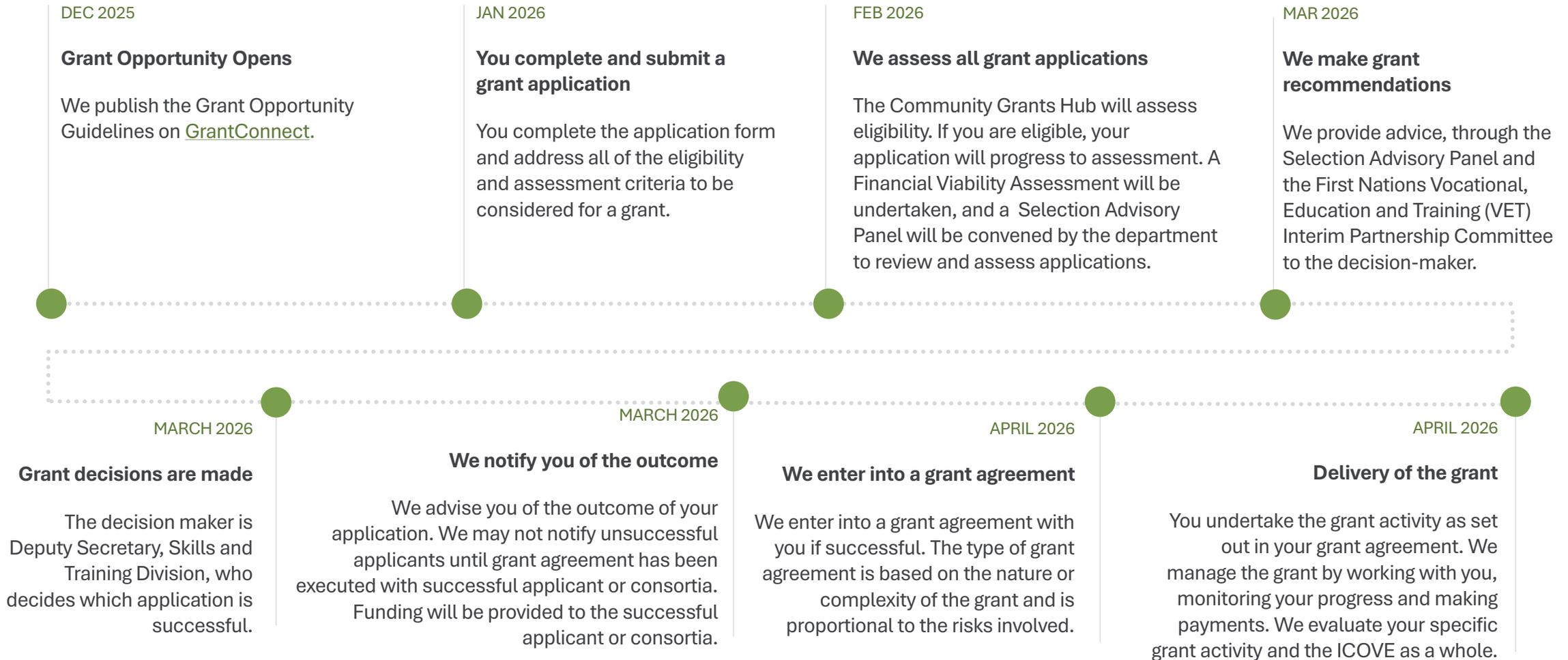
Financial policies and procedures, delegations and business continuity plans (where available) and may reference risk management plans, business plans and governance practices.

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Timeline and Next Steps

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Indicative Timeline and Next Steps.





Australian Government

Department of Employment
and Workplace Relations

Thank you for your time today

 www.dewr.gov.au

 FirstNationsPartnerships@dewr.gov.au