Victorian Health Building Authority

Regional Health Infrastructure Fund 2022-23

Frequently asked questions (FAQs)

VICTORIA State Government

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General

What is the Regional Health Infrastructure Fund (RHIF)?

The Victorian Government established the Regional Health Infrastructure Fund (the Fund) in 2016 to assist rural and regional health services and other eligible agencies to improve service capacity, service efficiency and the ability to deliver contemporary models of care within the regional health sector through minor capital grants. The investment will ensure continuity of services to the public and assist economic recovery.

Key objectives

The key objectives of the Fund are to assist regional and rural health services to:

- mitigate infrastructure risk and to maintain patient safety, healthcare worker safety, service availability and business continuity
- enhance service capacity, support contemporary models of care and improve patient and staff amenity
- sustain and improve infrastructure assets that provide essential capacity for delivering responsive and appropriate clinical services across rural and regional public health facilities
- provide a stronger role for outer regional services that will allow care to be safely provided closer to where people live
- further incentivise health services and agencies to implement effective asset management that aligns with existing government frameworks and policies.

The capital funding will result in delivery of renewal, reconfiguration, and refurbishments across a range of projects and service delivery streams and deliver the key state government policy objective of ensuring all Victorians can access high quality health care, no matter where they live.

Scope

Grants can be used for minor infrastructure works, including replacement, reconfiguration, remodelling or refurbishment of existing facilities to provide greater comfort for patients and enable healthcare workers to deliver safer and more efficient care that improves patient outcomes.

Health services and other eligible agencies can also apply to the fund to buy equipment including medical equipment, or upgrade essential infrastructure such as plant equipment, systems to reduce power and water usage, and information and communications technology.

Funding upgrades to rural and regional hospitals are intended to help all Victorians access the high-quality care and facilities they need and deserve, no matter where they live.

Funding is available to Victorian regional and sub-regional health services, local and small rural health services, multipurpose services, public residential aged care services, registered community health services, bush nursing hospitals and centres, women's health services, Aboriginal community-controlled health organisations and publicly funded community specialist palliative care services.

Health portfolio allocation model

RHIF 2022-23 will be a submission-based process aiming to announce allocations by September 2022. VHBA encourages health services that have not previously accessed the RHIF program to engage with VHBA to discuss their requirements prior to grant submission deadlines. VHBA wishes to ensure that health services have confidence that annual grant funding rounds will be called.

Project streams

A major change in 2022 is that VHBA is prepared to consider funding for *Ready for Implementation* projects (Stream 1) as well as funding for projects still in *Planning* or *Design Development* (Stream 2).

In submissions, health services will be asked to nominate which stream the project falls into according to readiness:

Stream 1 – Ready for Implementation

- Submission ready to be considered for full funding
- Designs and/or specifications substantially complete
- Detailed design accompanied by a detailed cost plan
- Regulatory approvals in place
- Ready to invite market tenders for construction/delivery quotations.

Stream 2 projects – funding for ongoing Planning or Design Development

- Funding will be provided to advance projects to the next stage of readiness (seed funding)
- Projects can be funded for planning, design refinement or further technical work, to improve the site understanding and refine the accuracies of cost estimates before formal commitment to funding is provided
- This stream also allows for ongoing consultation with VHBA and Department of Health representatives to gain support for a refined proposal.

VHBA will consider all submissions in each Stream for potential funding.

Any application successful for funding under Stream 2 is not automatically guaranteed to receive funding in subsequent rounds. Stream 2 projects will be required to demonstrate progress and will be eligible to be submitted for continuation of funding in successive annual funding rounds

What types of projects will be considered under the Regional Health Infrastructure Fund?

The panel will consider projects including:

- construction: minor infrastructure including replacement, reconfiguration, remodelling and refurbishment projects to address aged building fabric, compliance and demand issues
- refurbishment projects
- information and communications technology
- new technologies including systems to reduce usage and increase efficiencies of power and/or water
- compliance-related capital and/or upgrade works (e.g., AS4187 including pandemic improvement / readiness, fire and life safety works)
- motor vehicles – eligibility restricted to bush nursing centres only.

Project categories

RHIF 2022-23 applications will be categorised into one of the following:

1. Regulatory and Compliance
2. Quality and Safety

3. Respond to Growing Demand/Capability.

How many applications can eligible agencies submit?

A maximum of two applications per health service will be accepted for RHIF 2022-23. Where health services have been amalgamated, the amalgamated health service may seek VHBA approval to submit more applications. If more than one submission is made, the agency must indicate the priority order (Priority 1 or Priority 2) of each submission.

Funds are available for:

- construction: minor infrastructure including replacement, reconfiguration, remodelling and refurbishment projects to address aged building fabric, compliance and demand issues
- non-construction: equipment (standalone medical equipment, engineering infrastructure and plant)
- information and communications technology
- new technologies including systems to reduce usage and increase efficiencies of power and/or water
- compliance related capital and /or upgrade works (e.g., AS4187 including pandemic improvement/readiness, fire, and life safety works)
- motor vehicles – eligibility restricted to bush nursing centres only.

Refer to the RHIF *2022-23 Guidelines* for examples of items which may be included in funding applications.

Should different proposals be combined in the same application?

No. Each project will require a separate application to the Regional Health Infrastructure Fund. Health services/agencies are required to rank the relative priority of each application on the first page of the application form. Bundled applications may not be considered.

Can I apply for projects that may be eligible under other funding sources?

Yes. Health services and agencies can still apply but health services are required to identify in their applications that they have submitted proposals to other funding sources. Note that under the conditions of funding, funding is not available for projects previously funded or already approved for funding from another source.

When does my project need to be completed?

For Stream 1 – Ready for Implementation Projects, construction projects must be completed with two years of contracts awarded and/or in accordance with the signed Funding Agreement. Stream 1 non-construction projects must also be completed within two (2) financial years.

Stream 2 projects (funding for ongoing Planning or Design development) will be subject to clarification of project timelines, and the two-year timeframe may be varied by agreement with VHBA.

Specific timelines should be developed and proposed as part of any application. Applications should demonstrate the current status of planning and ‘readiness’, which will enable the project to meet the proposed timelines. Capital/construction projects will be formalised with a Project Agreement that includes milestones and payment schedules.

Can funds be sought for projects to leased properties?

Projects that relate to capital works to property not owned or controlled by the Victorian Government will be considered. However, it is preferred that such property should not be mortgaged nor encumbered. In such circumstances the department will require a legally binding agreement with the mortgagee or charge of the property. Applications should clearly outline the lease term.

Applications

When does the RHIF 2022-23 round open?

5.00pm, Friday 17 June 2022.

When does the RHIF 2022-23 application process close?

5.00pm, Friday 22 July 2022.

How do I apply?

Applications must be submitted through the SmartyGrants Portal <https://dhhs.smartygrants.com.au/rhif-22-23>.

The application form must be completed in its entirety. Further supporting information is to be provided as attachments.

Will hard copies be accepted?

No. All submissions must be submitted via the SmartyGrants Portal <https://dhhs.smartygrants.com.au/rhif-22-23>.

What information should the application include?

Applicants should read the *Regional Health Infrastructure Fund Guidelines* 2022-23 in full before submitting. Please consider your eligibility and alignment of the proposal with the guidelines and criteria, prior to submitting your proposal.

The application form and the CEO declaration must be completed for each proposal to the Regional Health Infrastructure Fund. Relevant supporting documentation must be included as attachments to the application.

What file types and naming conventions should be used in applications?

The conventions and file types to be used in the submission are on the 2022-23 Regional Health Infrastructure Fund application form.

Assessment

How will my application be assessed?

All applications will be considered in the context of the Regional Health Infrastructure Fund objectives, a Statewide priority context, whole-of-health system planning and alignment with Victorian Government objectives.

The assessment will include consideration by divisional departmental officers and, where applicable, relevant program areas. Applications will be assessed against criteria outlined in the *Regional Health Infrastructure Guidelines.*

Assessment of applications will be assessed in three phases:

1. Initial review of application for completeness, compliance, eligibility, buildability (scope has been defined, cost planning performed and detailed design complete) and project commencement readiness.
2. Internal departmental reviews including regional representative assessment, health program area assessments and specialist assessments (as required).
3. Review by evaluation panel and combined steering committee for prioritisation prior to submission to the Minister for Health for approval.

What are the assessment criteria?

Applications will be assessed by a VHBA evaluation panel using a defined set of assessment criteria. Submissions should reflect agreed policy objectives and how the proposed works will meet the objectives of better health for people in regional and rural Victoria.

The criteria outlined in Table 1 will be applied to assess each application and will be considered with the evidence provided. Applications should fully address all criteria.

Table 1: Assessment criteria

#	Criteria	Descriptor	Weighting
1	**Improved patient experience and quality of care**	How will this proposal result in improved patient experience and quality of care? (e.g., improved access to care, reduced incidence of patient harm, increased patient satisfaction)	40%
2	**Increased system efficiency**	How will this proposal increase system efficiency? (e.g., increased system throughput, reduction in reactive maintenance expenditure) Include supporting data to summarise current problems and predicted improvements where possible.	35%
3	**Improved workforce experience and safety**	How will this proposal improve workforce experience and safety? (e.g., increased workforce satisfaction, reduction in health sector job vacancies) Provide evidence of safety, quality, regulatory issues, or standards non-compliance. Provide copies of PIN notices or adverse audits to support the case for the proposal, if applicable	10%
4	**Stronger regional communities and economies**	How will this proposal strengthen regional communities and economies? (e.g., decreased distance to treatment, increased employment in health sector) Include supporting data to summarise current problems and predicted improvements where possible	15%
5	**Project risks, mitigation and dependencies**	Organisational readiness to implement the project, including key milestones and timeframe for completion. Describe key risks and mitigation activities to ensure you meet project milestones and delivery, e.g., technical difficulties, procurement, local supply issues, consultants, etc. Please describe any key dependencies that may impact upon the delivery of this project (including their potential impact on the project cost, schedule, scope and benefits). Attach additional documentation as required.	Projects will be assessed as ready, partially ready or not ready
6	**Governance and project oversight**	The degree to which health service/agency governance structures and processes are in place to oversee the proposed project development, implementation, monitoring and reporting. Please describe the governance framework, including oversight bodies and meeting regimes (Executive Steering Committee, Project Control Group, working team, etc.) to oversee proposed project development, implementation, monitoring and reporting. Confirm the commitment and experience of the nominated project manager for this proposal.	Project governance will be assessed as strong, good or inadequate

Embedding sustainability in VHBA grant programs

What are the benefits of embedding sustainability in my project?

Delivering sustainable and resilient buildings promotes better patient outcomes, higher employee satisfaction and productivity, lowers operating costs and emissions, and ensures the building is operational at all times to ensure fair and timely access to healthcare.

What sustainability requirements must I include on my project?

All eligible projects approved under grant funding for VHBA need to apply the minimum sustainability requirements as outlined in the *Sustainability Checklist for Grants Programs <https://www.vhba.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2022-06/RHIF-2022-23-Sustainability-Checklist-for-Grants-Programs.pdf>*. Eligible projects over $5m must also apply a sustainability budget of 2.5% of the total construction cost for enhanced sustainability initiatives.

What if the minimum requirements cannot be included in my project?

The grant application is required to identify which of the minimum sustainability requirements are being included in the project based on the project scope, under the relevant project type using the *Sustainability Checklist for Grants Programs***.** Reasons for not including minimum requirements into your project would be:

- it is not applicable, such as the requirements for below ground carparks where below ground carparks are not part of the project, or;
- it is not technically or economically viable to retrofit the initiative into an existing building, or;
- the level of investment or effort required outweighs the potential benefit of inclusion.

How can I fund enhanced sustainability initiatives?

A budget allocation of up to 2.5% of the total construction cost is available to support enhanced sustainability initiatives, where the application demonstrates the benefit of the additional investment.

For construction projects above $5m, the allocation of up to 2.5% sustainability budget is mandatory. The application must identify the sustainability focus areas that can be further refined in design development.

What are some examples of enhanced sustainability initiatives for my project?

Examples of enhanced sustainability initiatives for the project types within the RHIF application are outlined in Table 2.

Table 2: Examples of enhanced sustainability initiatives for different project types

Category	Project Type	Enhanced sustainability initiatives
New Construction	New Construction	Provide a 10% or 20% improvement on minimum insulation, glazing, building sealing, HVAC, lighting, domestic hot water, and monitoring requirements under Section J of the NCC 2019. At least 10 per cent of the building, by floor area, is to undergo JV4 air tightness testing and the builder is not to be informed which areas are to undergo testing. Install embedded generation solar panel that is sized to the base load of the building. Install reed switches on openable windows in rooms with individual thermal controls to manage heating and cooling. Providing advanced air purification through carbon filtration, air sanitisation and air quality maintenance. Incorporating biophilic design elements.
Refurbishment and infrastructure upgrade works	Refurbishment Engineering Infrastructure Works (e.g., engineering plant & equipment, electrical work, generators, Heating Ventilation and Air Conditioning) DDA & Universal Access Works Client meal preparation	Kitchen conversion to all-electric. Converting HVAC equipment such as boilers to all-electric. Incorporate extended external building design to extend and improve building summer shading. Improving on minimum requirements for total volatile organic compounds (TVOC) limits for paints, adhesives, sealants, and carpets. Provide access to healthy food and drink options in meal preparation areas. Provide external shading and low-conductive materials for handrails to enable safe use in extreme heat days.
Planning and Design Development	Planning and Design Development	Planning for an all-electric site. Maximising initiatives to reduce the urban heat island effect such as increased greenery and shading. Engaging an ESD consultant for a dedicated ESD strategy to enhance sustainability initiatives for the development. Developing a climate adaptation plan.
Equipment and procurement	Fixtures Fittings and Equipment (for construction and refurbishment works only)	Electric vehicle procurement with solar powered charging stations. Install super-efficient equipment with an energy rating of 7 to 10 stars.

	Motor vehicle (bush nursing centres only) Information & Communication Technology	Sustainable procurement, supply chain, and green cleaning policies. Exceeding minimum requirement of 30% of loose furniture to be third party certified by an environmental scheme.
Categories with limited opportunity for sustainability outcomes	Equipment (Medical) Fire safety Nurse Call Security Wi-Fi upgrade Software / Hardware Duress alarms Infection Prevention and Control Healthcare Worker Safety Other	Upload of minimum sustainability checklist is not required for these project types. These projects have limited enhanced sustainability initiatives.

Application process

How do I show evidence of compliance of sustainability initiatives?

All applicants are required to upload the *Sustainability Checklist for Grants Programs* as part of the SmartyGrants application. For projects with limited opportunity for sustainability outcomes, completion of the *Sustainability Checklist for Grants Programs* is not required.

What are the implications for not including sustainability initiatives in my application?

Sustainability initiatives contribute to better patient and staff outcomes, lower operating costs and carbon emissions, and support government policy on climate change. Therefore, not embedding sustainability in projects will result in higher carbon emissions, higher operating costs, and the project not potentially complying with government policy.

Projects that do not have provision for minimum sustainability requirements in their application will be subject to additional design, cost, and scope clarification meetings, for resolution in the application review phase, and may be viewed less positively as applications which have embedded sustainability.

An energy and water inefficient building can also negatively impact the NABERs[1] energy and water ratings that some health facilities are required to publish from 2022-2023 as part of the operational management of health facilities.

Project delivery

Who is responsible for implementing sustainability requirements on my project?

Like all project requirements, health services are responsible for ensuring sustainability requirements are implemented as part of the project. It is recommended that a dedicated ESD workshop is held early in the project to ensure all stakeholders are aware of the sustainability objectives, key opportunities are identified and there is role clarity for implementing the sustainability requirements.

Options for ensuring the full sustainability potential for the project is achieved include:

- engaging a dedicated ESD consultant (recommended for construction projects over $5mn),
- building requirements into the role of the architect, services engineer or project manager,
- specifying sustainability objectives and requirements in the tender package for the contractor.

What sustainability data must I provide to VHBA upon project completion?

For all construction and refurbishment projects that:

- changes an existing assets floor area,
- changes the type of service provided in an asset,
- builds a new asset,
- changes the electricity or gas retailer, or
- installs or removes a new 'gate' meter for electricity, water or gas,

the health service must complete and send to VHBA the environmental data management system template as shown in *Appendix 4: Environmental data management system requirements* contained in the Guidelines for sustainability in health care capital works <https://www.vhba.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-10/Sustainability-guidelines-for-capital-works-VHBA-Revised-October-2021.pdf>.

Projects that install a solar array must meet the requirements of VHBA's reporting solar photovoltaic data < https://www.vhba.vic.gov.au/reporting-solar-photovoltaic-data>.

For construction projects over $5mn, post occupancy evaluations of energy, water, and waste targets require completion against actual building performance within 6 months of project completion.

Resources

Where can I access more information on sustainability guidelines and initiatives for my project?

Applicants should refer to the following resources in the preparation of grant applications and delivery of grants projects, referred to throughout this document:

- Sustainability Checklist for Grants Programs <https://www.vhba.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2022-06/RHIF-2022-23-Sustainability-Checklist-for-Grants-Programs.pdf>, to be included in your grant application.
- Guidelines for sustainability in health care capital works <https://www.vhba.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-10/Sustainability-guidelines-for-capital-works-VHBA-Revised-October-2021.pdf>.

Who can I contact if I have any questions regarding sustainability on my application?

Please email rhif.applications@health.vic.gov.au for any questions relating to sustainability on your project.

[1] The National Australian Built Environment Rating System (NABERS) is a Commonwealth initiative that measures the environmental performance of Australian buildings. It provides a rating from 1 Star (making a start) to 6 Stars (market leading). More information on NABERS is available at www.nabers.gov.au.

Further information

Can I make changes to my application after it has been submitted?

If you need to alter your application after it has been submitted but before the application period closes, please contact us via email at <RHIF.Applications@health.vic.gov.au>.

Once RHIF 2022-23 closes on Friday 22 July 2022, applications are unable to be altered.

How will I know the outcome of my submission?

All applicants will receive written notification of the outcome of their submission following completion of the assessment process. Successful projects will be listed in due course on the Regional Health Infrastructure Fund webpage.

Where can I get further information or assistance?

If you require further information or assistance in relation to the requirements of RHIF 2022-23 please contact us via email at <RHIF.Applications@health.vic.gov.au>.

Technical assistance regarding completion of the SmartyGrants online form can be obtained through reviewing the SmartyGrants online guide <https://applicanthelp.smartygrants.com.au/help-guide-for-applicants/> or contacting SmartyGrants via email <service@smartygrants.com.au> or by calling (03) 9320 6888.

To receive this publication in an accessible format, email Regional Health Infrastructure Fund <RHIF.Applications@health.vic.gov.au>

Authorised and published by the Victorian Government, 1 Treasury Place, Melbourne.

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Available at the Regional Health Infrastructure Fund page on the Victorian Health Building Authority website <https://www.vhba.vic.gov.au/health/regional-facilities/regional-health-infrastructure-fund>

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