

# Young Farmer Upskill and Invest Scholarship Program Guidelines 2024



**Photo credit**

Melissa Willard, 2018 Scholarship recipient.

**Acknowledgment**

We acknowledge and respect Victorian Traditional Owners as the original custodians of Victoria's land and waters, their unique ability to care for Country and deep spiritual connection to it. We honour Elders past and present whose knowledge and wisdom has ensured the continuation of culture and traditional practices.

We are committed to genuinely partner, and meaningfully engage, with Victoria's Traditional Owners and Aboriginal communities to support the protection of Country, the maintenance of spiritual and cultural practices and their broader aspirations in the 21st century and beyond.



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## 1. What is the Young Farmer Upskill and Invest Scholarship Program?

The Victorian Government's *Strong, Innovative, Sustainable: A new strategy for agriculture in Victoria* sets a vision for our sector in 2030, including supporting existing farmers to develop skills they need to innovate, and helping new entrants to agriculture to equip themselves so they can address the challenges and opportunities of farming in the future.

In recognition of this vision, the Victorian Government established a Young Farmer Upskill and Invest Scholarship program tailored to the professional needs of recently established farmers and new entrants to agriculture.

Since 2015, Agriculture Victoria has awarded 117 scholarships to recipients that demonstrated drive and innovation.

The Upskill and Invest scholarship program commits \$125,000 per year to award scholarships of up to \$10,000 to support upskilling and investing for eligible recipients.

The scholarship provides new farmers and people wanting to get into farming with up to \$5,000 towards training or study (Upskill), backed by further funds of up to \$5,000 to invest on-farm or into professional development, putting new skills into practice.

## 2. Who can apply?

The scholarship is to fund training and investment to support young farmers to upskill. The scholarship is open to individuals who can demonstrate commitment to their development in the agriculture industry. Those from diverse backgrounds and industries are encouraged to apply.

### Applicants must be:

- aged between 18 and 35 years at the time of the application close date
- be working in a food and fibre farm business in Victoria at least three days per week for the past three months
- have at least two years of total experience on-farm
- an Australian citizen or permanent resident currently residing in Victoria.

## 3. Who cannot apply?

The following cannot apply for a scholarship:

- Visa holders (non-permanent residents)
- Victorian Public Service employees.

## 4. What might be funded?

### Eligible study and training

Applications will be considered for any form of study or training that supports the applicant to build a productive and profitable career in agriculture, including professional short courses or workshops, as long as it:

- involves a minimum of 16 contact hours (this may involve more than one course or workshop, and may be across multiple institutions or organisations, or offered online)

### AND

- is delivered by a registered training organisation (RTO)

### OR

- is delivered by any other reputable organisation approved through discussion with the Department. For further information, contact the Young Farmer Coordinator.

Study or training in the areas of business planning and management, risk management and financial literacy are encouraged. Upskilling in climate adaptation and mitigation, specific skills or farm safety could also be a focus, but applicants should not be limited to these areas.

The Victorian Skills Gateway and training.gov.au provide information on vocational training and Learn Local organisations. Further information is also available from local industry or training organisations or local Victorian Farmers Federation branches.

The duration of study for which the scholarship applies should not be more than two years, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Department.

Applicants need to provide a clear study plan and timeline in their application including:

- education institution/training organisation name
- course name and code (if applicable)
- course commencement date

- total course duration (units/hours)
- cost of tuition.

Scholarships will be awarded based on the information provided in applications. Therefore, it is important that applicants take adequate steps to ensure that the cost and timing of the proposed study plan is accurate.

### Eligible invest expenditure.

Invest funds must:

- be directed towards activities that will support the application of learnings from the chosen Upskill study or training.
- be expended within six months of completion of study or training (unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Department).
- not be undertaken before the Upskill activities are completed. If an Invest activity is undertaken before the Upskill activities are completed, the Department may seek reimbursement of the scholarship funds.

Applicants will need to demonstrate, in their application, a clear link between the skills acquired through the Upskill activity and the application of those skills in the Invest activity. Invest activities that focus on putting skills into practice and focus on additional support and training (such as professional services, consultants, business management support) are encouraged.

## 5. What will not be funded?

### Upskill study or training that will not be eligible:

- Travel, accommodation, and childcare.
- International training courses (unless the applicant can demonstrate there is no equal learning opportunity in Australia).
- Training that has already commenced or been completed at the time of application. However, longer duration courses and training with distinct components (i.e., individual subjects) not yet undertaken at the time of applying may be eligible for reimbursement. Examples include future semesters of an Agribusiness Diploma or the second or subsequent year of a related degree. In these circumstances the subjects must be completed before the Invest activities commence.

### Non eligible invest activities, include but are not limited to:

- Activities located outside the State of Victoria
- Activities that are required by law or that replace an individual's, group's, or government's legal responsibility for sustainable management of resources under their control, unless able to demonstrate specific value to the project. For example, training to gain a licence required by law to undertake an activity is not eligible (such as dairy licencing fee, driver's licence).
- Day-to-day operating costs of the business, for example, rent, power, cleaning, telephones, laptops, administration, legal or insurance costs, preparation of tax returns.
- Routine or ongoing maintenance including standard variable inputs, for example seed, fertiliser, chemical, fodder, standard boundary and house fencing that would fall within a landholder's normal responsibility.
- Purchase, lease or acquisition of land, livestock, permanent or temporary water rights.
- Purchase, leasing or maintenance and repair of transportation vehicles such as utility vehicles, boats, cars, quad bikes, motorbikes, trailers, and trucks.
- Drainage works, unless identified as part of an integrated local catchment plan or with technical input.
- Works, activities, or purchases already undertaken prior to submitting your application for the scholarship.
- Works that have been paid for from other sources for the same or similar project.

## 6. What are the funding details?

There is one scholarship round per year worth \$125,000. Approximately 12-14 scholarships are awarded per round. Scholarships valued up to \$10,000 are available to successful applicants. Applicants may request any amount up to \$5,000 for Upskill activities and any amount up to \$5,000 for Invest to a total of up to \$10,000.

Scholarship recipients are expected to pay for their Upskill and Invest activities and will be reimbursed via a claims process.

If you are experiencing financial hardship or there are special circumstances which may impact your ability to accept this scholarship as per the Program Guidelines, please contact the Young Farmer Coordinator.

The number of recipients will be determined based on the applications and funding requested.

## 7. What are the assessment criteria?

Eligible applications will be assessed using the criteria listed below. Each criterion is given a percentage weighting to indicate its relative importance in the assessment process.

### Criteria

- 1) In 200 words or less describe your aspiration to build skills and boost your food and fibre agricultural career prospects (25%).
- 2) Provide a clear, detailed study plan and timeline that sets out how you will achieve your aspirations through the scholarship.
  - a) Your Upskill study plan should detail the (25%):
    - education institution/training organisation name
    - course name and code (if applicable)
    - course commencement date
    - total course duration (units/hours)
    - cost of tuition, up to \$5,000\*.
  - b) Your Invest study plan should detail the (25%):
    - name of the activity and / or items requested.
    - total values of the activity and or items requested, up to \$5,000\*.

\*Refer to goods and services tax section for more information.

- 3) In 200 words or less describe how the knowledge and skills obtained through selected study or training will benefit your career in agriculture (25%).

## 8. What is the application process?

### Step 1. Check your eligibility

Check you are eligible to apply by reviewing the eligibility criteria in sections 2 and 3 of these guidelines. Other information about this scholarship program can be found at

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<https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/support-and-resources/networks/young-farmers/young-farmers-scholarships>

### Step 2. Planning your application

If you are eligible (refer to Step1), before you submit your application you should:

- Review guidelines in full and other information on <https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/support-and-resources/networks/young-farmers/young-farmers-scholarships>.
- Plan your proposed Upskill and Invest activities including timing and budget. Make sure your Upskill and Invest budget reflects your GST status. Refer to the Goods and Services Tax section for information.

### Step 3. Apply

You can submit an application via the grants portal from 9:00am 27 May 2024. Go to the grants portal and click on the 'Start New Application' button.

Your online application form (via the grants portal) must:

- respond to all of the required fields
- address the assessment criteria, refer section 7.
- be submitted by **5:00pm 17 June 2024. Late applications will not be accepted.**

Applicants that are not registered for GST must include a completed statement by a Supplier form available from the Australian Tax Office website, [www.ato.gov.au](http://www.ato.gov.au).

### Step 4. Shortlisting

The Scholarship Selection Committee (the Committee) assesses all applications and shortlisted applicants for an online interview. Applicants may be required to provide proof of identity at the interview.

The Department considers diversity criteria when assessing applications to ensure that each year's cohort includes a diverse range of scholarship recipients, including by geographic location, industry, gender, cultural background, employment type (i.e., owner or employee) and professional experience.

### Step 5. What is the notification process?

Successful and unsuccessful applicants will be notified by email after the assessment process is completed. All decisions are final and are not subject

to further review. Successful applicants will be invited to attend an event to receive their scholarship certificate. A photo opportunity will be requested to promote the scholarship program.

## 9. Key dates

Applications open	9:00am 27 May 2024
Applications close	17:00pm 17 June 2024
Successful Applicants notified by email	August 2024
Scholarship agreements executed	September 2024
Awards Ceremony Activities commence	Late November 2024
Activities completed, and acquittal reports submitted	30 June 2027

## 10. What are the funding conditions?

### Funding agreements

Successful applicants must enter into a funding agreement with Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA).

It is recommended that applicants review the terms and conditions before applying.

The activity does not include using the Funding for political campaigning or advocacy activities for political parties.

### Payments

Scholarship recipients have up to two years (from the time they are awarded the scholarship) to complete their agreed Upskill activities. Funds will be provided to **reimburse** the tuition expenses paid by the scholarship recipient.

**Upskill** funding payment will be **reimbursed** when the recipient:

- provides evidence of acceptance and enrolment at their chosen institution(s) (for example, a letter from the institution)
- provides an invoice for tuition fees from the training provider and evidence of payment (for example, receipt, Commonwealth Assistance Notice or Fee Account Statement).

**Invest** funding will be **reimbursed** when the recipient has:

- completed the Upskill activity and provided a certificate of completion
- provided proof of purchase of agreed Invest activity for example, a receipt
- completed the monitoring activity, refer to monitoring section.

When scholarship recipients have fulfilled these requirements, they will receive a payment via electronic funds transfer to a nominated bank account. Payment may take up to four weeks to process.

### Variations to the proposed activities

It is possible to vary your proposal after you have received funding. However, any changes must be discussed with, and approved by the appropriate DEECA officer via [Youngfarmer.coordinator@agriculture.vic.gov.au](mailto:Youngfarmer.coordinator@agriculture.vic.gov.au) as soon as possible.

Variations cannot exceed the amount agreed in the funding agreement. You are ineligible to spend funds on any activities not outlined in your application until changes have been approved.

### Goods and Services Tax (GST)

The Young Farmer Upskill and Invest Scholarships are GST exclusive.

If applicants are registered for GST, the application amount for both Upskill and Invest should be GST exclusive.

If applicants are not registered for GST, the application amount should include GST as shown in the example below.

Table 1. Examples of GST Cost Calculations

	Registered for GST	Not registered for GST
Proposed Upskill activity, e.g., Grazing course	\$2,600.00	\$2,600.00
GST	236.36	236.36
<b>Total Upskill requested</b>	<b>\$2,363.64</b>	<b>\$2,600.00</b>
Proposed Invest, e.g., soil moisture monitoring tool.	\$3,000	\$3,000
GST	\$272.73	\$272.73
<b>Total Invest requested</b>	<b>\$2,727.27</b>	<b>\$3,000.00</b>
<b>Total funding requested</b>	<b>\$5,090.91</b>	<b>\$5,600.00</b>

Applicants should consult the Australian Taxation Office or seek professional advice on any taxation implications that may arise from this grant funding.

### Monitoring

Scholarship recipients are required to comply with project monitoring and reporting requirements as outlined in the funding agreement. On completion of the Upskill and Invest components, each Scholarship recipient will be required to provide feedback on their experience. Questions will be provided at the appropriate time.

### Responsibility of scholarship recipients

Scholarship recipients are expected to manage all aspects of their scholarship independently (this includes study arrangements and Invest activities) and must notify the Department in writing of any changes to their contact details.

### Legislative and regulatory requirements

In delivering the activity scholarship recipients are required to comply with all relevant Commonwealth and state/territory legislations and regulations, including but not limited to:

- *The Privacy Act 1988 (Commonwealth)*
- *The Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Vic)*
- *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*

### Acknowledging the Victorian Government's support

Successful applicants are expected to acknowledge the Victorian Government's support and promotional guidelines (<https://www2.delwp.vic.gov.au/grants>) will form part of the funding agreement. Successful applicants must liaise with the departmental program area to coordinate any public events or announcements related to the project.

### Privacy

Any personal information about you or a third party in your application will be collected by the department for the purposes of administering your grant application and informing Members of Parliament of successful applications. Personal information may also be disclosed to external experts, such as members of assessment panels, or other Government Departments for assessment, reporting, advice, comment or for discussions regarding alternative or collaborative grant funding opportunities. If you intend to include personal information about third parties in your application,

please ensure that they are aware of the contents of this privacy statement.

Any personal information about you or a third party in your correspondence will be collected, held, managed, used, disclosed, or transferred in accordance with the provisions of the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014* and other applicable laws.

DEECA is committed to protecting the privacy of personal information. You can find the DEECA Privacy Policy online at [www.delwp.vic.gov.au/privacy](http://www.delwp.vic.gov.au/privacy).

Requests for access to information about you held by DEECA should be sent to the Manager Privacy, P.O. Box 500 East Melbourne 8002 or contact by emailing [Foi.unit@delwp.vic.gov.au](mailto:Foi.unit@delwp.vic.gov.au).

### Review and amendments

The Department in its absolute discretion may review and amend the Upskill and Invest Young Farmers Scholarship Program Guidelines.

## 11. Additional information

Additional information is available at the program web page <https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/support-and-resources/networks/young-farmers/young-farmers-scholarships>. Including examples of how scholarships might work in practice can be found at [www.vic.gov.au/youngfarmers/scholarship-examples](http://www.vic.gov.au/youngfarmers/scholarship-examples)

If you require assistance submitting your application online, email [grantsinfo@delwp.vic.gov.au](mailto:grantsinfo@delwp.vic.gov.au).



