**James Hider:**

Welcome, everybody. Thank you for joining us today. I know it's a really busy time for probably most of us. There's been some pretty significant recent and ongoing events, which many of us have been impacted by security incursions, storms, and fires across the state. So it's been very busy, and I know many of you will have been impacted, certainly from an Agriculture Victoria perspective. We are busy doing Gippsland storm assessments. We've got the ongoing fires. We wrapped up the anthrax response IMT on Friday, varroa, abalone virus and so on. So it certainly is a busy time. My name is James Hider. I'm the Director Governance, Regulatory Improvement and Programs in Agriculture Victoria and the governance team who support the compensation committees and administer the Livestock Biosecurity Fund Grant Program are part of my team. So welcome, everybody. It's a really exciting day and a culmination of a lot of work by the committees and the secretariat to kick off the 2024 Livestock Biosecurity Funds Grant Program with this webinar, which is a new innovation.

So welcome, everybody, just like to acknowledge some of the members of the Livestock Advisory Committee that are online. Some of them you'll hear from later. So we've got Michael Craig, who's the chair of the Sheep and Goat Advisory Committee. Ron Harris is the Cattle Compensation Advisory Committee chair. Gail Rochelmeyer, who's the, well, previous chair of the Apicultural Industry Advisory Committee, and Tim Kingma, who's a member of SIPAC, the Swine Industry Project Advisory Committee. We've also got, I think, online, Scott Young from Sheep and Goat and Mark Higgins from Apicultural. So thank you all for making the time to attend. So today, we've got quite a good agenda, a fair bit to cover, and there'll be plenty of time for questions. So please keep them in mind. We'll talk a little bit about the role of the compensation funds and their respective advisory committees.

Provide a bit of an overview of the Livestock Biosecurity Fund Grant Program, the LBF grant program, and then outline some of the strategic focus for this year and the application process for 2024. So with that, we'll get started. Mary, next slide please, just like to start by acknowledging the traditional owners of the lands from which I'm coming from, which is the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation and pay my respects to Elders past and present and would also like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the lands from which you are all coming from. So a little bit of housekeeping.

So as you will have heard, we are recording this session, so hopefully, that will be okay. We will ensure that the video clip, transcripts, and slides are all available on the website. That website that you can see there is now live. I'm not sure if we can do this in Zoom, but if we can, we will put the link in the chat and we'll certainly follow up, but that's got all the information for you to go back to and have a look at in your own time. We've disabled cameras, microphones in the chat function, but there is the Q&A icon below. I'm looking to see if I can find it on my screen, please use that. And if you have any difficulty, just ask a question via the Q&A and we can work it out.

With that, the next slide please. So the agenda for today, as I said, we'll give you an overview of the Livestock Biosecurity Fund Grant Program, a little bit of background. I will talk you through that. I think it'll be useful context, and they'll have a couple of examples of previously funded projects that'll give you a bit of a sense of the program. We'll get people from each of the four committees to talk about the current challenges, some of the long-term vision and their statement of strategic intent to give you a sense of where each of the four committees are coming from. And then Monica Bird, who is the Manager Governance Support and Coordination will just give you a little bit more information about eligibility requirements and how to apply. And as I said, there should be plenty of time for Q&A. So say well, whack questions in the chat and we'll deal with them then. So let's get started. As I said, we're going to talk about the role of the funds and the committees, the program, and talk about a couple of the previously funded projects.

So I'll go through this fairly quickly. A lot of you'll know this, but it's always good to just make sure that everyone's on the same page. So under the Livestock Disease Control Act, four livestock compensation funds are established, one for cattle, sheep and goat, swine, and the honey bee compensation industry development fund. These funds are held in trust from the collection of duties and specified in the Duties Act, generated from the sale of cattle, sheep and goat, and pigs in Victoria, and the funds raised from the registration and annual fees for honeybees. For each fund, there's a corresponding advisory committee that's appointed by the Minister for Agriculture under the act.

These committees are selected through an open expression of interest process against prescribed selection criteria. The purpose of these committees is to and is processed to ensure we've got well-rounded committees that can provide the minister with good advice informed by industry experience and skills along the supply chain, as well as expertise in biosecurity animal health and veterinary science. It's quite a busy time at the moment, SIPAC and the AIAC. So swine and apicultural appointments process has been underway, and we expect the new committees will be appointed in time to do the assessment for this round, of this grant round and the expression of interest process for the cattle and the sheep and goat compensation advisory committees will open soon, but the timing will be such that the existing committees will do their assessments of this grant round.

Next slide, Mary, please. So the act provides that payments can be made from the compensation funds for specific reasons. First and foremost, for this webinar, programs and projects aimed at benefiting the industry. These are really funds focused on preparedness. They're not used in an actual response or recovery. The funds can be used for compensation for specified endemic diseases, so not exotic diseases, endemic as specified, and administration of the compensation funds. So the purpose of the committees are to make recommendations on the expenditure of funds to the Minister for Agriculture, and then the minister approves payments.

The total balance for the funds are broken really into three components. Committees decide on an appropriate reserve for disease compensation payments. They make allowance for existing committed projects to ensure that on delivery of milestones, payments can be made to the proponents. And then there's some funds that are available for future projects and that informs the decisions around recommendations to the minister. So this is probably a key point just to make here that the committees don't set a budget as such for this grant round expenditure, recommendations on expenditure in the end depend on an assessment of the required reserves for compensation, existing commitments, and the merits of the grant applications that they get in this round.

The next slide, please, Mary. So the LBF grant program was created just to streamline and strengthen the grant application process. So because there's four separate funds, we run it as a single grant program. This is particularly useful because often applications are funded out of more than one fund, and it's useful to have the same process at the same time. So since 2020, there've been three annual rounds and one targeted round. Experienced campaigners will have noticed that this LBF round is earlier in the year. So the intention is we'll have annual rounds each autumn. So timing will depend a little bit, but we wanted to get away from that pre-Christmas rush and better align with the financial year. So on the slide, you'll see kind of four key points that I just wanted to highlight. The grant round has broad objectives as defined by the act. It aims to fund projects and programs that prevent, monitor, and control diseases to improve animal health, biosecurity, and market access for the benefit of the Victorian livestock industries.

I'll probably add the point here that LBF is only one source of funds in a very complex biosecurity system. So it's really worthwhile thinking about where this program fits in the system and with other funding sources. Second point is that grants are targeted projects that provide benefits to the Victorian industry as a whole. So the committees in the assessment process definitely look at what are the benefits for the industry. It's not the intent of these funds to fund kind of core business of government or where there might be commercial products that are private benefit. It's really focused on that public benefit for the industry. The focus of each round is determined by each of the committees via their separate statements of strategic intent, and we'll hear a bit more about that later.

And the assessments are made against some selection criteria. Each committee member will assess applications individually receive for their fund against the selection criteria. The committee then comes to a consensus recommendation for the minister after considering their own assessments and the assessment of an independent assessment panel. And we will provide you with a bit more information in a minute as well. Really, the committee's looking for projects that demonstrate innovative solutions that address livestock by security risks. Ideally, they work along the value chain and collaborate where possible and that you can provide quantifiable benefits to the industry as a whole. So I think that's the end of the background. I can't see if there is any questions in the chat.

Let's just jump to the next slide, Mary. Look, here's a couple of examples and I'm not going to read all this. You can read as I'm talking. I guess we just picked a couple of examples out of this, across each of the five key areas that we tend to sort of categorise the kind of applications. This is just the way the committees think about it. It's not formal, but the five areas around preparedness, traceability, early detection, education, and research. Different committees have slightly different weightings across those five areas, but a good example of preparedness here is the National Bee Biosecurity Program. It's done some fantastic work over the years in traceability.

This is the subsidy for the electronic cattle and sheep and goat ear tags is the largest expenditure from the funds. As you can see there, quite a lot of money, but a real source of competitive advantage for Victoria and also really strong traceability that's so critical in a biosecurity response. If we go to the next slide, we've got early detection. So the SDI program is funded across cattle, sheep and goat, and swine, quite a bit of money over the last six years. I'll give you a moment just to read some of that, but a very significant program of work.

And then the last slide here is we go to the next one, please, Mary. Education. So the VFF run their Stock Sense program, building awareness and capability of industry to manage biosecurity risks, which is all important. And then research and example here on the sheep and goat compensation fund around an on-farm test for barber's pole worm. So I think that just gives you a little bit of sense. I would just highlight if you go to the website, we provide examples of, well, we provide a list of all the projects that were funded in the previous round. So go there, that will give you a sense of the kind of projects that are funded, the amount of money that's funded and so on. So with that, I might just jump to the next section where we'll hear from each of the four committees around the objectives of the 2024 LBF grant program. And we will start with Michael Craig, who is the outgoing chairperson for the Sheep and Goat Compensation Advisory Committee, Mick.

**Mick Craig:**

Thanks, James. I think we're covering a lot of ground and encourage people to use that question and answer board if we're going too quickly in any way. Just might quickly touch on in a way, a bit of background, so the point of having the funds, and let's just touch on some broad, what are the current challenges for the Victorian livestock industries? And I'm probably talking in a very generic way at the moment, but we'll drill down to some detail later. So I think we're all really aware of the increased biosecurity risks that we have in terms of there's this change of livestock movement patterns that we've seen by different factors of travel and trade. And for the comp funds, then we've got to always be saying, well, do we have the most robust disease control measures available? So let's call that increased biosecurity risk, and that's exacerbated by this thing we call climate change that the diseases might eventually that we aren't aware of.

And for these funds, we are available for emerging new diseases. We are not in the space of emergency events that it's quite different and there is a fair bit of crossover, but these funds have the ability to deal with emerging diseases. I should keep reading the notes properly. So increased biosecurity awareness actually of those biosecurity risks. That's another key challenge. And this is I suppose quite a generic risk that we're identified. It's actually really large though this demographic and generational change with agriculture and land use and the peri-urban sector and the recreational crossover between the commercial farming world and the risk that potentially creates.

So take for example, Stock Sense and some of the peri-urban work that's been done. Even though not a lot of livestock come out of there, so therefore, they're actually not paying a huge amount of levies, they actually may be the highest risk because there might be spoon-feeding or there might be things that are exposing our wider industry to risk. Okay, I think I've touched on it all. I might hand over to Ron to look at some of those longer term issues.

**Ron Harris:**

Right, thanks very much for the handover. So in terms of next slide, please, Mary. Yeah, so these are all about long-term sustainability and productivity for Victoria, and it is about market access and the competitive advantage for Victoria. So Victoria's very lucky in the sense that we have these funds. They are producers duties or levies, but we have these funds and we really want it to be a competitive advantage for Victoria. So some of the common long-term outcomes, these apply to all the four funds. So the improved on-farm biosecurity for detecting and managing diseases.

And as Michael said, this is not a fund about funding exotic animal diseases, etc., but it is about detecting and managing, building the capability of government and industry to respond. So that's a really strong partnership and improving general animal health, not on an individual property as James mentioned, but very much about across the sector. So for instance, cattle producers can pay up to $5 a head and those funds go into this. So we take it very seriously in terms of putting up proposals which can then have an industry impact. So they're the big ones, they're the big headings, but we'll get into a bit more detail. Next slide, please, Mary.

So specifically on cattle, what have we learned from previous applications? And this webinar is very much about improving the quality of applications and the number of really good applications. In the case of cattle, it's not about dollars limiting anything. It's about really good ideas that can have some industry impact. So define the problem, is it different to the other programs or existing policy out there? So have a look what's already being funded. This one's huge, the clear impact and benefit for the Victorian cattle industry. So it has to have an impact at that whole industry sector. How do we evaluate the project? And some projects, and we've spoken about somewhere they run some seminars or whatever may be at the activity level, but equally for some of those bigger projects, we're saying that's right at the outcomes level. And if people aren't aware, things like Bennett's hierarchy, have a look at that because this needs to be built into your project at the front end, not at the very end of a project, and we'll go and ask a few people some questions.

For ongoing programs, and we have funded programs and one was mentioned earlier about the special disease investigations, the SDI program, what evaluation has been completed previously? And if we have a look at those focus areas, preparedness for response, traceability, early detection, education, research, again research where we can apply some of those research learnings in a very practical sense. And the big ones that we're targeting for this round, building the capability and capacity of large livestock veterinarians who deal with large animals, not large livestock veterinarians to respond to an exotic animal disease, and also the data management and animal health or potential residue feedback, where I believe we're significantly behind countries like New Zealand in some of those issues. So there are some of the specific target areas for us.

Next, please, Mary. Right. This one's a one which we've targeted and thank you very much to the massive work that Jenny O'Sullivan from Leongatha has done on this. So this is about Victoria maintains the capacity and capability to respond in an exotic animal disease. And right across Australia, this has been a big issue and attracting and retaining livestock veterinarians so they thrive in regional Victoria. And at the moment, we've got business models where large corporates are running them. Grads have worked very hard in some of those establishments. We've got other models where really you're much better off dealing with cats and dogs and large animals. So there's some different business models, but we're looking at ideas to build this capability and capacity to assist bodies like Agriculture Victoria in dealing with exotic animal disease outbreaks. Cattle are leading this, but certainly sheep and goats are part of this as well.

We're looking for a whole range of ideas. Some are graduates working in vet clinics along senior vets and subsidising some of those graduates. Mentoring programs, and again, Jenny's done some really good work with some people who specialise in mentoring. Training sessions and events and working with Agriculture Victoria so that people are comfortable and aware of what is required in an exotic animal disease. There might be other ideas that people have out there and this is what this is about. This will be a combination of a range of ideas. So please have a chat to Jenny if you're not sure, but we want all the ideas you've got there, and we'll be looking at putting up some dollars to support some of those good ideas. So thanks very much. That's the cattle overview and we're taking questions at the end, aren't we, James? Yep.

**James Hider:**

Yes, we are, Ron. Thanks, Ron.

**Ron Harris:**

I'll pass back to Michael Craig for the sheep and goat component. Thank you.

**Mick Craig:**

Thanks, Ron. And what you're about to hear from me is actually very similar to some of the points that Ron has made. At the end of the day, we are looking at projects that align to our strategic intent. What's the purpose of these funds and what's the point of producers? Because at the end of the day, these are producer levy in dollars. What value can we create to assist having a future industry? So I keep coming back to statement of strategic intent, and we've summarised it just here in key focus areas around preparedness, traceability, early detection, education, research, and you'll find them in appendix two of the guidelines. It's very important to link applications to, again, the core focus of these funds. And look, we are very comfortable with joint funding applications where one would be put to the cattle and one would be put to the sheep. In the sheep industry, we haven't had some good years, but we haven't had the run of really good years like the cattle industry.

So we're probably not as financially endowed as the cattle industry. So if you want to put most of the funding into cattle, that's a good thing. Okay, so where was I? Sorry, Ron. So keep coming back, targeted projects to the benefit of the industry, and we actually open to some innovative blue sky ideas. It's thinking about what does industry need to be there for the future and around those five key areas. Some of our specific targeted areas will be as Ron's just talked about, livestock veterinarian capability, which we are hopefully going to be able to help out. So we'd love to see in the application that Ron's talking about saying, well, can we have a sheep specific component?

Because at the end of the day, vets for large animals do both sheep and cattle. We're talking about antimicrobial stewardship, data management and animal health feedback, and some livestock treatment and potential residue for vaccines and things like that. Just a bit of background in terms of, I'll give last year as an example, we had 13 applications and we approved eight of them for a funding in total of around 4.1 million, but a large part of that is the electronic tag subsidy that we do. So we are open to any ideas that researchers and extension organisations have that are very targeted to our statement of strategic intent and to the sheep industry and the wider livestock industry. Okay, I think I've grab it on enough. Perhaps I'll hand over to Tim. Are you online there, Tim?

**Tim Kingma:**

Yeah, thanks. Tim Kingma, for those that don't know me, I'm a pig farmer up North Central Victoria, been on our SIPAC, which is the swine compensation fund for a fair few years now. And I guess a first thing I'd say is our fund is quite small. We're obviously a smaller industry as well in the state, and we have very similar key focus areas in terms of around biosecurity, traceability, early detection, education, and research. And I guess what I was just quickly, my key three points would be really around the lessons from previous applications. And I find when we've assessed projects in the past, there's a lot of research already in our industry and it's really having a look what is the industry or government or other projects already done in this space. And if you don't know a lot of people in the industry, there is some real key people and people to reach out to and even just run it by them and just say, thinking of this, I think it's beneficial to Victorian pig farmers.

What's your thoughts? Because that can be a bit of a limit when we see the same projects over and over. Also being a smaller fund, if there can be support, whether it's from government or industry and whether it is a support of a letter, but also co-funding from other industries within the pig industry or between all the comp funds, which we've seen in the last round of cycles with us doing a project altogether. And I guess as I said, just have a look at potentially some of our past projects and reference that for scale because we are a smaller fund, we can't afford projects that are crazy money when it's not a massive fund. So really look into that bit of background about our fund and I'll leave it at that. Thank you.

**Gail Rochelmeyer:**

There we go. I'm sorry about that. I'm on now. Sorry about that. Problems with the iPad. Thank you to Mick, Ron, and Tim for bringing us up to date on the challenges of their funds. Just like to point out that the honeybee fund is the smallest of the four funds, and we do share many similarities with the other three funds, and we're often on farm checking or moving our hives. So we are similar to the other funds and I'd just like to address some elements for applicants to keep in mind, taken from the committee review of past applications, will this project provide a biosecurity benefit for the agriculture industry as a whole? So projects really need to clearly describe how they're aligned with their application. The capacity to fund large projects, again, I just want to reiterate is limited with the revenue from registration fees in the tens of thousands annually that we receive for beekeeper registrations.

So please take a look at the website for previous projects as a reference for the scope and scale of projects that you want to apply for. Larger projects may be successful where the available balance allows but will need a very robust application. So we need to have really good applications if you are applying for larger amounts of money. It's important to understand how an application sits within the broader Victorian agricultural context. So does it align or differ from government or industry policy best practise? Do you have letters of support and is there a potential to co-fund, which is something that we've done in the past quite successfully? The committee reviewed its statement of strategic intent at Appendix four of the guidelines and agreed to the key focus areas for the honey bee compensation fund and it's agreed to, given the incursion of varroa in Australia, we have the potential to expand preparedness beyond AFB in future years. So what we're looking for is a preparedness for response, so building response capability, capacity and planning, including the development of innovative control techniques to prevent and manage significant pests and diseases including AFB.

As with the other funds, we're also looking at traceability. So to enhance system surveillance, to enhance system integrity and effectiveness, early detection and improve surveillance and monitoring where possible. Education, awareness and training for the industry to better manage biosecurity. We have done this in the past. It's looking at risks, disease management and management and improved beekeeper competency as well. For research, particularly technologies for nutrition and genetic breeding programs including for AFB, building honeybee resistance to significant pests and diseases, understanding of supplementary feeding of bees, husbandry practises to maintain healthy honeybee pollination stocks, and benchmarking against national and international AFB standards. Now just onto the slide, if you would please, Mary. There we go. Let's see how to apply. So we've covered those key points, and I might hand over to Monica now, hand back to Monica and to lead on the next discussion.

**Monica Bird:**

Thanks, Gail. I'm hoping that everyone can hear me. Excellent. So just wanted to provide a bit of an overview on the eligibility criteria requirements and the application process, the nitty-gritty. So now you've heard from everyone about what they're looking for. So as James shared earlier, the guidelines are now available on the website, which I've popped the link into the Q&A, but if you just search and we'll have it up multiple times, you can have a look. The guidelines are available on the website and have the full details on eligibility and assessment criteria to help you prepare your application. To be eligible to apply your project must be an eligible organisation with an ABN. So that's private sector businesses, university research institutions, cooperatives within state government and department or departmental entities, local government and incorporated associations. The activities largely have to take place in Victoria itself.

You have to comply with industrial relations obligations, partake in future program evaluations and public communications, and provide that tangible benefit to the Victorian industry. So again, I'd just point you back to what Ron, Tim, and Gail just talked about what that benefit is for each of their respective industries. And I think importantly it's not constituting core business activities for your organisation. So the key items and supporting documents that you'll require and need to start getting work on is a project plan detailing the problem statement, anticipated impact, outcomes methodology, planned evaluation. We'll also need CVs for your key project leads. So if you've got a large project team, we're looking at sort four or five, not necessarily every single person who's working on the project, just those key people, letters of support, so both for in principle support of your idea or whether it's financial as well.

So letters of support I think from industry is government is really important for the committees to see, a milestone summary, and there is a milestone template to help you fill out what your milestones will look like in both a deliverable and a payment sense. Also, a budget, so use the budget that's loaded into the application or feel free to have your own spreadsheet if you are looking at multiple funds or you've got some more detail to break down each of your costs, and also an evaluation report. So if you're a project that has previously been funded, it's really important that you have some sort of evaluation for your project. So if you've got a question on eligibility or documentation required, please reach out to me and the team. So our email address is livestockbiosecurityfund, all one word, no spaces, @agriculture.vic.gov.au. I'll also post that into the chat and it is on the website as well. Next slide, Mary.

So applications are open from today and they will close at 11:59 on Monday, the 15th of April. So six weeks application period. So to apply, jump onto the Agriculture Victoria website. So if you are searching on the website support and resources, funds, grants, programmes, and then you'll find livestock biosecurity funds there. If you jump into the different home pages for each of the funds, it'll link you back to the main page. So there's just that main pages is where you want to find the links. The guidelines are there, so carefully review the guidelines, which at the end, Appendix 1, 2, 3, and 4, the fund's strategic statement of intent, and that's the really key one for what each of those funds is trying to focus on. Assess your eligibility and determine the documents that you'll need. From the LBF website, that main page, follow the link for the relevant fund to create your grant enterprise management system.

GEMS as we like to refer to it. Account, so you'll need to log in and get your account. Once you've got your account, you'll be able to make multiple applications and multiple funds, but you will have to jump back to the main page to follow the link for the first time every time you want to create an application. But once you have created your application and you're in draught stage, you can jump back into your login and you'll have them all there on your home page, then start preparing your application, collating your documents. If you want to prepare offline, suggest you can create a PDF. So at the bottom of the first page, you'll be able to create a PDF of the application form to take offline so you can work on it and jump back in and load it in one go. You can load information, save it, and come back at another time. And you can do that as many times as you need before the 15th of April.

If you do submit and you realise you need to make an edit, you'll need to email the GEMS support team. So the email address is loaded into GEMS and you'll email them and they can lodge it, send it back to you so you can make some more edits. Uploading the required documents, so there's two mandatory documents, milestone extracts and CVs. Anything else is optional. So you will see the two sections when you jump in. Please combine the CVs for your program into one file. And if you're having difficulty with this or uploading any other emails, then just email the GEMS team and they can load them up into the application. There are a few limitations with sizes and numbers, but we'll absolutely accept them. So please just email them through if you are having any issues and then there's some space to upload anything else that may support your application. That'd be great.

And then submit it by 11:59 on Monday the 15th. And then congratulations, you've submitted and we'll go through the assessment stage. So again, just reaching out to the team if you've got any questions as we go through. Mary, just the next one. Lucky last slide. So once the applications are closed, that's when the LBF team will come in and we'll commence the assessment phase. So we have an independent assessment panel and the committees themselves will receive a probity presentation to outline the conflict of interest and assessment process for this round assessment to ensure the integrity of the assessments and the recommendations to the minister.

All assessors that's committee and panel members will make individual assessments against the selection criteria for every application received, and they spend a bit of time and then they come together and finalise their assessments. The panel will provide a report to the committee and then the committee come together and it's the committee who make the meet in person, and they will discuss the individual assessments of every committee member and the panel report, and they'll come up with a consensus report, a consensus recommendation for your project. And when they're assessing and recommending the projects to the minister, they'll also be thinking about what the balance of their available fund is and what might be the best mix for recommending those projects and what those future years might look like.

And sometimes during this stage, we may ask for additional information. So if you do hear from us, there will be a bit of a quick turnaround so we can get the assessments progressing along. So then the committee will recommend to the minister and announcements of successful projects will be after the ministers approve the funding based on the committee's recommendations. And this year, we're looking at announcements in June. If you're successful, applicants contracts will be negotiated and executed commencing no earlier than July, and example template is on the website for you to have a look at.

Then the project starts and it's delivered with milestone reporting and payments consisted with that milestone extract that was agreed during the assessment phase. And at the end of the project, an evaluation of project outcomes for the Victorian industry of project outcomes for the Victorian livestock industry is required. And please factor this into your application. So if you are, you can ask for additional money to complete this activity. Please don't do it as an add-on, please do consider it. I think evaluation is a really key important thing. And then that's it, we're going to hand over to questions. So James, I'm hoping that you can jump.

**James Hider:**

Okay. There's not too many questions at the moment, Mon. So a few people have asked this, the slide deck will be made available on the website. And look, we are really keen that you engage with your broader networks, potential co-funders and the like. So have all this information that you can share and engage with and work on. I think Michael asked a question about, are the criteria any different? Largely the same, but of course, we'd always recommend that you look at the guidelines on the website closely just to make sure that you are nailing your application. Is there any others? We'll give it sort of the five seconds.

**Monica Bird:**

Yes, there's a few in the chat. So just a reminder, please load them into the Q&A. I'll feed them into James or the relevant person and we'll hand over. And then if there's any other thing in the end, if you have any issues, raise your hand and we can unmute, but we're just trying to manage it this way. So James, I've popped one in for you if you want to answer.

**James Hider:**

So do the grants cover overhead charges for universities? Not sure on the answer for that one. Monica, do you know?

**Monica Bird:**

Yeah. So there are some charges that I think as part of the project would be reasonable to be included as part of the grant. I think perhaps one of the chairs might want to come and correct me and provide any advice, but I think...

**Mick Craig:**

Yeah, I might add to that. Yeah, look, if a project's been done, you can't expect organisations to do it for free and we understand overheads will be included in that, but I suppose the applicants have to be aware that the committees are predominantly producers who are relatively tight with their dollars. We can sense if things are probably being over-allocated, if that makes sense. So yeah, we do cover overheads, but don't be unrealistic because it would actually probably hurt the application. Thanks, Mon.

**Monica Bird:**

No worries. Thank you.

**James Hider:**

Thanks. I'm sure you've spoke for all four committees in that answer. Matt asks, is there a best practise application that you might be able to share? We do have-

**Monica Bird:**

I can take that one James. No, we don't currently have one. It's something that we'd like to work on in a future round. I think the application itself has undergone some improvements this round, so I think if you work your way through the questions of the application, that'll give you a really good feel for what the committee are after. We've been quite targeted in the questions. Ron.

**Ron Harris:**

And Matt, so really to find the problem very clearly and then how will the project that you are leading or involved in have an impact on the industry and have an evaluation plan up front and have a budget which is clear that everybody can understand. I think they're the main elements.

**James Hider:**

Thanks, Ron. Hopefully, that was useful. I think you're probably getting a good sense of how the committees are going to look at the applications. So Brenton's asking when, and it's just disappeared on me. Will they start on the 1st of July? Hopefully, that's the earliest. It will all depend on obviously the minister making her decisions in the first instance and then the time it takes to finalise the contract. And the most important part of the contract obviously is milestones and the associated payments. If all went well, 1st of July would be fantastic, but in the past, some contracts have taken slightly longer, particularly for larger and more innovative projects. Does anyone want to add anything to that? Someone is a little bit quick on the moving the questions. Do we have to log onto the GEMS if it's a departmental application? Thanks, Kim. I'm pretty sure you do, Mon.

**Monica Bird:**

Yes, yes, you'll need to load in. It doesn't matter who you are, departmental application or external. Everyone will need to load in an application through the portal.

**James Hider:**

And perhaps can I just add that's part of the reason why my team supports the committees and provides the secretariat, because we are not part of the department that applies for funds. Other parts do and they are treated exactly the same as any other applicant. The next question, you mentioned that the bulk of work needs to be carried out in Victoria. If there's a need to investigate new technology from overseas, could this be feasible? I'm sure the answer will be you need to make your case. Mon is nodding. Anything to add there?

**Monica Bird:**

No, that's right I think, Ron.

**Ron Harris:**

Yeah, and if it's an overseas technology, great as long as it can be applied in Victoria and Victoria can gain a competitive advantage. If it's a statewide issue, let's say for cattle and Victoria has no competitive advantage, then I'd be going to Meat & Livestock Australia.

**James Hider:**

Thank you, Ron. Becky asked, with proposed budgets within the application, is there any scope for toing and froing negotiation if the budget is deemed too steep or the application be rejected? I might see one of the committees wants to respond to that one.

**Ron Harris:**

Sorry, I'll just have a go because I know Becky's doing some fantastic mentoring stuff with vets, so that's for our target area. I would be putting in a reasonable budget but as long as the idea's good enough. If we think the budget's a bit high, we'll be coming back to you and saying you need to trim this, but the key is the idea in some of those other elements we were talking about, Becky.

**James Hider:**

Mon, did you want to add anything? Because once the committee makes its recommendations, we need to finalise the contract as well.

**Monica Bird:**

Yeah.

**James Hider:**

Yeah. Mon, do you want to add anything?

**Monica Bird:**

No, that was it. I think Ron covered that really well.

**James Hider:**

Fantastic. Question, do you have to create a GEMS account in order to see the questions for the application? Mon.

**Monica Bird:**

Yes. So you'll need to log in and you can create just that blank one and download that, and then you'll be able to see all of the questions.

**James Hider:**

Is there a draught? Is there some detail in the applications on the website that people can get a sense of?

**Monica Bird:**

There's not one loaded up onto the website, but if you follow the link, create your account, you'll be able to open up the application. They are all broadly the same, although each of them is a little bit different because of course each of the funds and the strategic statements of intent are a little bit different, but they are broadly the same for the bulk of questions.

**James Hider:**

Yeah, thanks. Thanks, Monica. There is a milestone template, I think, on the website.

**Monica Bird:**

Yep, milestone template on the website.

**James Hider:**

And it'll also be handy. Sarah asked, to understand the targeted applications better, can we access the committee chairs for more information? So I would suggest you could maybe in the first instance talk to email the livestock biosecurity fund email address and we can get in touch. I know Ron, Jenny O'Sullivan has done a lot of work around a bit of work, but perhaps if we go through the email, it might just be more manageable that way, unless somebody wants to jump in from one of the committees. No. Okay.

**Ron Harris:**

James, I think you're spot on it. It should be through Monica and then Monica will palm it out to the respective chair or whatever, and that way, we've got the independent group who are managing the process in control of it.

**James Hider:**

Thanks, Ron. I think certainly when we've had targeted rounds, there has been some toing and froing cattle and sheep and goat very keen to fund some work in the capability of veterinary capacity across Victoria. So that can be a bit of an ongoing conversation over the next six weeks. Someone said it'd be great if a PDF was on the website so we could look at the criteria and the details before we go ahead and apply for a GEMS account. We'll see what we can do there. I'm not sure technically if there's any reason why not. We just have to make sure people don't fill that out to avoid adding a GEMS account. I think I've covered everything if I can work Zoom properly. Looks like that is everything. We'll just give it a few seconds. We're coming right up to time.

**Monica Bird:**

And I don't think anyone's got their hands up, but...

**James Hider:**

No. Well, fantastic. Look, thank you everybody for your time. Can I just give a big shout-out to the amount of work to get this grant program up and running, both for the committees and the secretary of the governance team that Monica leads? It's a huge amount of work. We are really looking forward to seeing what comes out of this program, really encourage people to think about applications. Hopefully today, you've got a good sense of the sweet spot where the committees are looking to fund the kind of projects, the kind of scale.

Can I also thank the committees have either wrapped up or they are about two, the last three years? A huge amount of work has been done by the committee, the chairs and the members to incrementally improve this grants program in terms of clarity around strategic intent, but also the process and the rigour around assessing applications, looking at how it will benefit the industry. So thank you to all the committees, the committee chairs for the huge amount of work they've done over next, the last three years. We really look forward to your applications coming in over the next six weeks and the assessment process and some announcements towards the end of June and July. So thank you very much. Remember that LBF email address and the website, that's your first point of call for any information. Thank you very much for your time. Have a really nice day. See you.