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| Cemetery grants program guidelines |
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# Introduction

The cemetery grants program was established to provide funding as a contribution to the cost of cemetery infrastructure, amenities, maintenance, equipment and training. Grants are available to both Class A and Class B cemetery trusts, however it is acknowledged that Class B cemetery trusts, operated by volunteer members, are often unable to generate sufficient funds to maintain or improve their facilities.

The *Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2003* (the Act) requires Class A cemetery trusts to pay an annual levy to the Victorian Government. The cemetery grants program is funded by this levy.

# Priority areas and partial grants

Cemetery trusts may apply to the department for grants relating to specific issues at their cemeteries in circumstances where they do not have funds available to allocate to the required expenditure.

Grants are prioritised based on need. Items relating to construction of structures or areas to generate revenue, the maintenance of significant infrastructure, or issues which pose a threat to personal safety, such as dangerous trees, are generally considered priority issues. Standard items include equipment required for the operation of a cemetery. Items that may enhance the quality or amenity of the cemetery, but are not necessary to its function, are considered a low priority.

Cemetery trusts are encouraged to consider submitting joint applications that will benefit more than one cemetery trust, for example an application for funding to purchase a lawn mower that will be shared between local cemeteries.

Due to the limited funds available for cemetery grants, the department may be unable to grant the full amount requested in an application and may allocate a partial grant. Trusts that receive partial grants are expected to draw upon their own funds to undertake the proposed expenditure.

# Application process

To apply for a grant, a cemetery trust must submit a completed grant application form, and the grant approved before work commences. The department will not reimburse trusts that have expended funds in anticipation of receiving a grant (see heading below Ineligible grant requests and retrospective grants). Applications should include two quotes (GST inclusive) for each item of the proposed expenditure and photos (where appropriate). If a trust is unable to obtain two quotes, a written explanation outlining why this is not possible must be submitted with the application.

The trust will be contacted if additional information is required, although this is likely to delay the application. To avoid such delays please read these guidelines and the application form carefully.

Unsuccessful applications can be resubmitted in the next round of grants with updated quotes.

Grant applications are assessed twice each financial year in October and March. A selection panel will assess each application against the assessment criteria. The selection panel will include a representative from the Health Infrastructure Division and the Divisional Portfolio Entity and Appointments Advisory Unit.

Written notification of the outcome of all applications will be provided to trusts following completion of the assessment process. Grants received must be spent in accordance with the proposal made in the application.

# Eligibility criteria

1. Cemetery trusts are required to have an ABN.
2. Cemetery trusts are required to have **fully expended all previous cemetery program grants and provide evidence of the grant acquittal to the department**.
3. Cemetery trusts **are required to have submitted their Abstract of Accounts**.

**Please note:** Trust members cannot quote or be paid to carry out any part of the proposed works, as this is a direct conflict of interest.

# Assessment criteria

1. Whether the application aligns with the grant program’s objectives.
2. The extent to which the application will benefit the cemetery and/or the community. The application should clearly explain the works or item/service required, including any occupational health and safety aspects, heritage considerations and risks associated with NOT undertaking the works.
3. The extent to which the trust has demonstrated the support of the local community for the application.
4. The extent to which the project’s budget is comprehensive, realistic, provides value for money and enables the delivery of objectives within the proposed timelines.
5. The extent to which alternative and complimentary funding sources have been explored or secured.
6. The demonstrated financial need of the trust.
7. The suitability of the trust’s scale of fees.
8. The trust’s ability to undertake or implement the funded activity should they be successful.

# Suitable grant requests

Examples of suitable grant requests include (but are not limited to):

* Removal of infrastructure or other items that pose a public safety risk
* Purchase of lawnmowers, garden tools, fuel, poison, paint, watering systems, water tanks
* Construction or repairs to fences, gates, roads, driveways, pathways, car parks, toilets **(specification must provide access for those with a disability)**, storage sheds, rotundas
* Construction/establishment of new burial areas or niche walls
* Removal or lopping of trees or other vegetation that pose a public safety risk\*
* Grave covers and shoring equipment
* Computer hardware and software\*\*
* Health and safety training (for example, Grave Safe).
* Consultants for environmental assessments, permit applications or cemetery planning (for example, development of a master plan)
* Legal advice or surveyor fees
* Surveys to detect unmarked graves\*\*\*

## \*Removing, destroying or lopping vegetation

Prior to removing, destroying or lopping vegetation in cemetery grounds, trusts may be required to consider heritage and environmental restrictions, appropriate health and safety processes and community views. Vegetation removal may also require approval from the local council and/or Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning. Trusts will need to demonstrate that they have addressed these matters appropriately by completing the additional Removing, destroying or lopping vegetation attachment when applying for funding for this type of work.

## \*\*Computer hardware and software

The department will fund up to $4,000 to assist trusts to purchase IT equipment such as a desktop or laptop computer, printer-scanner and software (including databases). Grant requests for ongoing software licencing or subscription fees, as well as grant requests for the installation and ongoing costs of internet connection and usage, will not be considered. The same requirement for quotes applies to IT equipment and software as to other grant applications.

## \*\*\*Surveys to detect unmarked graves

The trust’s application should indicate why the particular area of the cemetery has been selected for surveying and the urgency of the survey. For example, if the survey is necessary in order to develop a new area for burials, the trust should note the remaining capacity of the cemetery in the areas already established and indicate if delaying the survey will affect the provision of cemetery services to the community.

# Ineligible grant requests and retrospective grants

Grant money will not be provided for the normal operations of a cemetery (for example, salary and wages of employees or ongoing maintenance such as groundskeeping) or for the repair and restoration of memorials.

Where a cemetery trust has received a partial grant via the cemetery grants program, ‘top-up’ grants will not be provided for the same item in subsequent years.

Grant money cannot be provided to reimburse trusts that have expended funds in anticipation of a grant. Commencement of work or the purchase of requested items must not take place until the trust has received the approved amount of funding from the department.

A retrospective grant may be considered when a trust is applying for a grant for urgent health and safety matters (such as removal of a tree which is confirmed to pose an immediate threat to visitors, or compliance with a Work Safe order) or health and safety training (such as Grave Safe). **Trusts must contact the department to discuss** the possibility of applying for a retrospective grant **before** submitting an application.

# Payment

Approved grant funds will be deposited into a nominated cemetery trust bank account.

# Expenditure of grant funds

Any grant money transferred to a trust must be spent within six months of allocation and appear in the following year’s Abstract of Accounts. If a grant is not expended within six months of receipt, the trust must provide a written explanation to the department explaining the delay and providing a revised completion date.

Trusts must fully account for the grant allocation by advising the department in writing when the grant is spent and providing copies of invoices/receipts as well as photos (where appropriate). **Trusts that have received a grant in previous years and not provided verification of the expenditure will be ineligible for future grants until the department receives the information.**

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