

Widening Participation Schools Outreach Grant

Grant Guide

This guide sets out how the Widening Participation Schools Outreach Grant works: who can apply, what it can fund, how applications are assessed, and what is required of successful applicants.

1. About this grant

The Widening Participation Schools Outreach Grant is seed funding intended to establish new, or expand existing, Widening Participation Outreach activities delivered in schools. It is funded from the University's allocation under the Commonwealth Outreach Fund.

This is an internal distribution mechanism, not an external funding application. The grant round exists to support faculties and teams already engaged in, or seeking to begin, schools outreach delivery.

2. Program objectives

Consistent with the Commonwealth Outreach Fund Guidance, this grant supports outreach activities that:

- build interest for higher education among students from equity priority cohorts
- inform participants about the benefits of, and pathways to, higher education, including vocational and other tertiary options
- address the societal, financial, informational, or geographic barriers these students face

Funded activities must build aspiration, interest and awareness broadly. They must not function as recruitment for a specific institution.

Successful programs are to be delivered to priority schools that are part of the Melbourne School Enrichment (MSEP) program– find out more [here](#).

3. Project Eligibility

Applications are open to University of Melbourne staff and enrolled students, in any faculty or professional area, who design or deliver school-facing outreach activities.

- Applicants must hold, or be able to secure, budget-owner sign-off before applying
- Student applicants must be in good academic standing
- Applicants must disclose all other sources of funding for the project or activity, including other grant schemes, in-kind support, and contributions from external partners
- Projects or activities that are primarily partisan or religious in nature are not eligible
- Only one application per applicant or entity will be accepted
- Applicants must be able to complete the project or activity, and expend the funds, within the stated grant period

4. Child Safety

We are a Child Safe Organisation

The University of Melbourne (UoM), as a child safe organisation, must comply with the [Victorian Child Safe Standards](#). The University's Child Safety Policy ([Child Safety Policy](#)) outlines our shared responsibilities to protect children and young people under the age of 18.

Child Safety is everyone's responsibility

All professional and academic staff, contractors and volunteers must contact the [Safer Community Program](#) when they have concerns about the safety or wellbeing of a child or young person under 18. This requirement applies across all areas of University activity, including residential settings, school programs, research, and any online engagement involving children or young people.

5. Ineligible activities

The following cannot be funded under this grant, consistent with the Commonwealth Outreach Funding Guidelines:

- General marketing or recruitment activity for a specific institution
- Support for students already enrolled in higher education (this is covered separately by Needs-Based Funding)
- Delivery of Fee-Free Uni Ready (FFUR) courses
- Activities not targeted at a defined equity priority cohort
- Activities aimed only at senior secondary students in a way that promotes a single institution rather than building broad interest

6. Audience

6.1 Target schools and student groups

- Activities must be delivered to schools on the University's priority schools list¹.
- Activities must target one or more equity priority cohorts²:
 - Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students
 - Students from low socio-economic backgrounds
 - Students from regional or remote areas
 - Students living with disability

6.2 Year level and curriculum alignment

- Activities may target any single year level, or year-level band, or multiple year levels between Prep and Year 12.
- Applications must state the year level(s) targeted and the rationale for that choice.

¹ Priority schools are Melbourne School Enrichment Program (MSEP) partner schools. The list of schools can be found here: <https://go.unimelb.edu.au/9u4h>

² University of Melbourne's widening participation outreach equity priority cohorts

- Activities must align to the relevant learning area(s) or general capabilities of the Victorian Curriculum F-10, or the senior secondary curriculum (VM or VCE) where the activity targets Years 11-12.
- Activities targeting only senior secondary students (VM or VCE students), in a way that functions as recruitment rather than broad interest-building, are not eligible.

6.3 Delivery requirements

- Activities must be free of charge for participating schools and students.
- Applications should set out a plan for the activity's ongoing sustainability, for example being folded into an existing offering or requiring no ongoing specialist staffing.
- Activities must be delivered and acquitted, including participation data, outcomes, and expenditure, by 31 May 2027.

7. Funding available

- Total pool for this round: approximately \$30,000
- Structured as three grants of approximately \$10,000 each
- Applicants should submit an itemised budget as part of their application

8. Principles for designing your activity

These ten principles are drawn from the Commonwealth Outreach Funding Guidance. Applications will be assessed against how well the proposed activity reflects them.

- **Reaching the right people.** Target students who are not already planning to attend university, rather than those already on a clear pathway.
- **Building aspiration and interest, not brand.** Build interest in higher education broadly, rather than promoting a single institution.
- **Targeting priority cohorts.** Respond to the specific barriers experienced by each priority cohort.
- **Targeting all life stages.** Consider the different barriers faced by students at different ages and stages of schooling.
- **Reaching across the community.** Consider coverage across metropolitan, regional, and remote schools, rather than concentrating on easily accessible ones.
- **Addressing barriers.** Design activities that respond to societal, financial, informational, or geographic barriers.
- **Collaboration.** Partner with other faculties and teams rather than duplicating effort.
- **Designing from evidence.** Base activity design on evidence of what is effective.
- **Building in improvement.** Establish data collection and evaluation arrangements at the planning stage, not after delivery.
- **Supporting a joined-up tertiary sector.** Connect students with the full range of tertiary pathways, not a single entry point.

9. Application process and timeline

Activity	Timeframe
Applications open	24 September 2026
Applications close	15 October 2026
Applications assessed by the Outreach Funding Advisory Group	16 – 27 October 2026
Outcomes communicated to applicants	28 October 2026
Funding agreements completed	4 November 2026
Funding released	Up to 4 weeks from the agreement date
Progress report due	31 March 2027
Acquittal due	31 May 2027

Applications are submitted through SmartyGrants. Application guidance and the link to the online form will be provided when applications open.

10. Assessment

Applications are assessed by a selection panel against the eligibility criteria (Section 4) and the principles for designing outreach activities (Section 7), as well as:

- Whether the activity responds to a real barrier facing a specific cohort, rather than being a generic offering.
- Whether the proposed delivery, short-term change, and longer-term outcome form a clear, credible chain.
- Whether the activity is realistically deliverable with the resources available or securable.
- Whether there's a credible plan for the activity to continue beyond the grant period.

11. Reporting and evaluation

Consistent with SEHEEF, every funded activity should be evaluated against three questions: how much did we do, how well did we do it, and what outcomes did we achieve. At the design stage, applicants should identify a supporting outcome (a short-term change expected shortly after the activity) and a primary outcome (a longer-term milestone it is expected to contribute to)³.

³ Refer to the SEHEEF Guidance Manual for examples and detailed explanations (<https://www.education.gov.au/heppp/resources/student-equity-higher-education-evaluation-framework-seheef-guidance-manual>)

The University's consolidated Financial Acquittal and Performance Report is due to the Department of Education each year. Data and reporting from funded activities feed into this report.

- Reporting requirements for successful WPSO Grant Program applications will typically include (unless further information is specifically requested in individual cases): a progress report due 31 March 2027 and acquittal due 31 May 2027
- Agreement: Successful Applicant(s) are required to complete the compulsory online briefing module and Agreement via SmartyGrants prior to receiving the awarded WPSO Grant Program funds; any funding caveats stipulated will be documented through an agreement.
- Receipts: Original itemised and dated receipts are required to support the financial acquittal of the grant. Expenditure without receipts must be accounted for with a completed and witnessed statutory declaration. Unspent funds of >\$100 must be returned to the University at the conclusion of the program, within the funding period and should be highlighted throughout the activity reports and expenditure (e.g. Progress Report and/or Acquittal Report).
- Variation Requests: If there are variations to the budget or reallocations of funds >20% of the total awarded WPSO Grant Program funding amount, or an Acquittal Extension request, please email the Senior Grants Advisor for approval.
- Variation Requests are to be submitted no later than 3 weeks prior to agreed Acquittal date with an outcome to be notified within 7 business days.
- Submission of Variation form is a request only and not confirmation of variation or proposed actions.
- Acquittal Report: must be completed by 31 May 2027. This involves completing a final report evaluating the completed activities and project outcomes and a full record of the project/activity's expenditure.
- Any unspent funds must be declared in the acquittal. Unspent funds of \$100 or greater must be refunded to the University.
- The University of Melbourne may use information provided in the WPSO Grant Program applications and Progress Report, Acquittal Reports and other activity reports for promotional purposes.

12. Conditions of grant

Successful applicants agree to:

- Deliver the activity in line with this guide, the Commonwealth Outreach Funding Guidelines, and the funding agreement
- Provide the data and reporting required for the University's Student Equity in Higher Education Evaluation Framework (SEHEEF) obligations, including participation records for continuous quality improvement (CQI) reporting
- Submit an acquittal by 31 May 2027, including a description of the activity, target cohort, participant numbers, outcomes achieved, and lessons learned

13. Payment

- Funding will be distributed within six weeks following notification of a successful application outcome.
- All successful Applicant(s) will be asked to provide the Applicant(s) /Project Leader's individual Australian bank account and local contact address details to enable release of grant funds.

- Student Applicant(s) must be based in Australia and have Australian bank account, and they also must ensure their details are updated correctly in the my.unimelb student portal.
- Staff Applicant(s) must be able to provide a full Workday Account allocation to receive the funds to the nominated budget area
- Payment information will be provided via the Agreement, for successful Applicant(s) . Student grant recipients with grants above \$7000 will receive their payments in two instalments, with the second instalment released once the initial \$7000 has been spent and a Funds Release Form has been submitted (this must be done in advance to accommodate payment schedules).
- GST will not be paid on the grant funds; however, Grantees are obliged to adhere to any service contract where GST is applicable).
- A salary or Fee for the administration or coordination of the grant is prohibited.

14. Contact

For questions about this grant or to discuss a proposed activity before applying, contact:

- Hanna Kwak, Schools Outreach Lead: hanna.kwak@unimelb.edu.au
- Cat Black-Dinhan, Senior Grants Advisor: impactgrants-team@unimelb.edu.au