## Visual summary

This video shows three speakers presenting at the Recycling Victoria Innovation Fund Information Session on 2 December 2020.

The speakers are:

* Travis Hatton, Program Lead, Circular Business Grants
* Guy Pritchard, Manager, Climate Change Coordination
* Melanie Oke, Engagement Lead, Business Innovation

## Text

[*Opening visual of slide with text saying ‘Recycling Victoria Innovation Fund’, ‘Information session’, ‘2 December 2020’, ‘Sustainability Victoria’*]

[The visuals during this webinar are of a PowerPoint presentation being played on-screen.]

**Travis Hatton:**

Well, welcome all. Thank you so much for joining us today at our information session for the Recycling Victoria Innovation Fund.

Before we kick into today’s session, I would just like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the many lands on which we are working and living today, and recognise their continuing connection to land, water and community. I pay my respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

So thank you so much for joining us today for this information session. We are very excited to be able to talk to you about these grants and this fund that we’ve just announced. So today I just want to cover a little bit of an agenda. We’re going to be going over an overview of Recycling Victoria: A New Economy, so the circular economy policy that was launched earlier this year. We’ll provide an overview of the Circular Economy Business Innovation Centre, or the CEBIC, which we were very excited to launch the week before last. And then we’re going to go into a deep dive into the Recycling Victoria Innovation Fund. So we’re going to go through quite a few details on the fund, including guidelines, eligibility and common questions, and then we’re going to wrap up with probably a good half-an-hour to 40 minutes for question time.

What I’d like to advise you right now is this session is being recorded. Any questions that you post could be answered during the session or may be answered after the session, depending how tricky they are. But any questions you do ask may be posted publicly or published to the website following the information session.

So I’ll now hand over to Guy Pritchard, who’s going to be taking us through an overview of Recycling Victoria policy and the Circular Economy Business Innovation Centre. Over to you, Guy.

Guy Pritchard:

Alright. Thanks, Travis. Thank you, and welcome to everyone for coming along. My name’s Guy Pritchard. I manage the team that’s responsible for delivering the Circular Economy Business Innovation Centre and this fund here. I’ll just give you a quick overview of Recycling Victoria, which is where the Circular Economy Business Innovation Centre comes from. It’s a ten-year policy and action plan that aims to transform how our economy uses materials. It represents the government’s plan to reform our waste and recycling system over the next decade. It includes a complete overhaul of our recycling system, with reforms to kerbside recycling, the introduction of container deposit scheme, new investment in industry and creation of waste management as an essential service.

It’s also an opportunity to change the way that Victoria does business and to grow new jobs. Beyond recycling, this should transform Victoria’s economy. Victoria is really ideally placed to advance and grow the circular economy. We have a highly skilled workforce, well-connected supply chains. We have exceptional design and engineering expertise, and we have a world-class infrastructure and the leading education and research institutions. So whilst the Circular Economy Business Innovation Centre and this fund sits within the recycling policy, it is still very much looking at how we can develop that further.

The goals of the Recycling Victoria policy are very much related to these four different areas. Firstly, to design materials and products to last, and to be able to be repaired and recycled. We’re looking at how do you use products to create more value. We do want to recycle more resources, and we want to reduce the harm from waste. And those are the four main elements of the Recycling Victoria policy. The Circular Economy Business Innovation Centre and the Innovation Fund are focusing very much on the first two, in the design to last, repair and recycle, and using products to create more value, right up there in that sort of ‘make’ area. But we’re also looking at then how do you link up all of those different aspects in a sort of systematic way. So those are the sort of main focuses of the two areas there.

Just a bit more about the Circular Economy Business Innovation Centre. We’re aiming to foster business innovation and collaboration across those supply chains. We have a virtual centre, and you can see that there at cebic.vic.gov.au. And the idea of the centre is actually to provide a bit of a one-stop shop for government support for circular economy in Victoria. We will be running a variety of different events. We want to make that sort of research, insights and best practice accessible to everybody, and we are providing funding opportunities, of which the Circular Economy Innovation Fund is one of those.

The centre will have a focus on a specific material, and in this first year we are focusing on food waste. That’s not exclusive. We are prioritising that, but we also will be looking at other areas of the circular economy and how we can actually see and get some traction in those other areas as well. But very much the first year we want to work on that food waste area.

Just a quick overview of the two funding opportunities that we’re running through the CEBIC. The one we’re talking about today, the RV Innovation Fund, very much it is the collaborative partnerships that we want to fund. We want to look at designing out waste, and we want to make sure that we’re looking at that sort of product material value and retaining it over a longer period of time. So the projects that we’re looking for really need to identify opportunities and innovative circular economy business models. We are trying to look at how we can maximise our impact, and we want to look at how we can develop and scale up that sort of innovative business model and addressing more of systemic barriers. So that is a very collaborative process we see.

The second funding opportunity, which we won’t go into great detail about today, but is well worth keeping in mind, is the Recycle Victoria Business Support Fund. That can target individual businesses or collaborative partnerships, and more of a focus on waste prevention, reuse, remanufacture, upcycling and those recycling approaches. Doesn’t necessarily have to be innovative, but we do want to make sure that it still has impact. So the projects there are looking at investigating how to adapt and apply circular economy opportunities, or they’re implementing that sort of evidence-based solutions across one or multiple businesses. So a bit more of a known focus for that one, and a lot more of an innovation focus obviously in the Innovation Fund.

I’m going to hand back to Mel now, and she will go through a bit more about the Innovation Fund. I’ll introduce Mel first, sorry. There you go, Mel.

**Melanie Oke:**

Great. Thanks very much, Guy. And apologies. I’m having a few internet connectivity issues today, so if I do drop out again, Travis will step back in once again. So thanks, Guy.

As Guy said, the Recycling Victoria Innovation Fund is one of the two funds under the CEBIC. We have a total of $2.9 million in funding over four years for this fund, and it is split into two streams. There’s some overview details here, but I’ll go through in a lot more detail over the next few slides.

So the fund objectives is the next one. There are quite a lot of objectives here as you can see, which means that the fund is quite open to a range of projects, and you’ll see that also as we progress through the coming slides. So some of the key objectives is, that this is really about enabling innovative and commercial solutions that deliver a range of outcomes for Victoria. So increasing access to circular economy products and services, for example, increasing the duration of product and material lifecycles, and maintenance of product and material value and so on. So these objectives are all shown in the guidelines, which are available on the website, and I’ll be referring back to those guidelines a few times through this session, because that’s where all of this information is really clearly laid out.

So I’ll talk now about round one of the Innovation Fund. Round one does have two streams of funding, and this reflects the focus area that Guy mentioned earlier. So Stream 1 addresses that priority focus area of food and the food sector, whereas Stream 2 does not have a specific focus area, but it will support projects that address systemic barriers with innovative thinking and practices.

Both streams do support those innovative circular economy business models and practices, and we’ve really defined those as those that create, develop and implement a new, different or better material, product, service or system that aligns with the circular economy principles of designing out waste and pollution, and keeping materials and products in use at their highest value for as long as possible. And both streams will support collaborative partnerships.

So that brings me to the next section, where we’re talking about who will be funded. So each application must have a lead applicant and at least one project partner. You can of course have many more than one project partner in your collaborative partnership. So the lead applicants – in terms of what types of organisations can be involved in the projects – the lead applicants or project partners can be individual businesses, industry groups, research institutions or charities. Now in addition, project partners can also be other not-for-profit organisations, government or local government organisations. So those ones can’t be a lead applicant, but they can be a project partner.

The collaborative partnership will need to be demonstrated by a formal agreement between the parties that outlines the governance arrangements and the roles of each of those parties. The lead applicants need to have been operating for a minimum of two years, and they also need to agree to share their findings to a broader Victorian audience. That’s really important, because one of the aims of CEBIC is to understand what works in driving this transition to a circular economy. So we need to be able to really disseminate the outcomes and the findings of the projects so that the broader community and all of you here today can actually learn from each of the projects that have been funded.

So now we’ll talk a little bit about what will be funded. The fund will support collaborative projects that meet those objectives that we showed on the slide earlier. The project must be focused within Victoria, with more than half of the project activities taking place here, and it must be completed by May 2024.

If we think now about the two streams that I spoke about before, Stream 1, the projects, must focus on food waste prevention, and they must deliver on at least one of the outcomes here, being to reduce generation of food waste, redistribute food to people to prevent waste, or make new products from food waste. And as we said before, projects under Stream 2 don’t need to focus on a specific product, material or sector, but of course in the application you will need to outline exactly what it will focus on as part of the application.

So on the next slide we’ve got some examples of project focus and project activities that could be put forward. I won’t try and go through each of these. Again, they’re detailed in the guidelines on the website. But just to pull out a couple of examples: so, projects might be focused on improved uptake and adaptation of digital technologies, or on design-led changes, to achieve circular outcomes. In terms of activities, the projects might involve research, design and demonstration of innovative approaches. They might be really looking at challenges that address opportunities identified through research. So there’s really a range of different activities and focuses that could be put forward.

Now if we have a look at what types of costs can be funded, they do need to be directly associated with the project, and that includes costs such as purchases of equipment, dedicated consultancy costs, costs of demonstrations or trials. We’ve given some other examples here. So in your application you would need to really clearly outline what the costs are, and make sure that they are direct costs to the project or related to the project.

So now, of course, what won’t be funded. The Innovation Fund won’t support projects that have received funding or support for the same activities from other sources, or projects or activities that have already been undertaken. So we can’t support with retrospective funding. We won’t support projects that are primarily focused on reducing water, energy use or greenhouse gas emissions, although of course those may be co-benefits to the project.

And we can’t support projects that are focused on waste-to-energy, recycling or waste recovery, householder-focused activities, or development of standards and specifications. There may be some of you in the audience today who do have projects that focus in those areas. The reason we’ve excluded those are because there are other programs within the Recycling Victoria policy and the action plan that will address those activities. So I’d encourage you to have a look if you haven’t seen Recycling Victoria, the policy as a whole. I’d encourage you to have a look at that and see how those other areas can be supported.

In addition to that, there are certain types of costs that we can’t provide funding for. So they’re shown on the slide here. So for example, existing staffing costs. I’ll talk a bit more about those in a moment. Travel and conferences – well, not expecting a lot of travel to be happening right now, but of course hopefully over this next period we will, but those costs would not be covered through the project funding.

Now going on to co-contribution requirements: both of the streams for funding under this first round do have a one to one co-contribution requirement. And that means that for every dollar that you apply for in grant funding, the lead applicant or the project partners need to provide a total of one dollar in co-contribution. However up to 80% of that co-contribution can be in-kind, which means that that component of the contribution can be goods or services other than money. Now I mentioned before that the funding won’t cover existing staff time. In-kind costs can include existing staff time. It can also include time spent by volunteers or donated goods for example that are used in the project.

You can’t claim any operating expenses that are not directly associated with delivering the project, or opportunity costs like staff downtime, if there’s some kind of downtime due to the implementation of activities.

So now moving on to the assessment criteria and the process. The applications will be assessed by a panel in a competitive merit-based assessment. The application needs to provide enough detail so that we can actually assess the projects to understand which ones will best meet the fund outcomes and maximise the public value that we are getting from this funding. So I won’t go through all the questions that you need to respond to. You can see all of those in the guidelines. But just suffice to say that they are structured around this focus to really help us understand the what, who, why, how and how much of the project. So make sure you answer all the questions in the application form, and keep those answers very clear and concise when you’re going through that process.

In terms of due diligence, we take a risk-based approach to understand the applicant’s social, economic and environmental risks in relation to the project. This assessment includes the applicant’s related entities, and it may include project partners. Applicants need to declare any compliance issues with EPA and WorkSafe, and provide evidence of financial viability. They also need to provide insurances and declare any conflicts of interest. And the project delivery history with any other SV funding programs will also be considered.

So if the application is identified to have some compliance issues during the assessment, it doesn’t make it ineligible, but it indicates a level of risk associated with that proposal, and as part of the due diligence with the grant process, we need to take that into account.

So now the application process itself, some sort of simple steps if you like. And I’m sure there’s much more to it than this, but just to give you a bit of an overview. Firstly, absolutely have a really good look through those guidelines, check that you’re eligible and that you meet the assessment criteria, and read the terms and conditions and the terms of participation. Plan, research and gather the information you need. And that includes working with your project partners to establish that collaborative approach and what you will achieve together, what your roles and their roles will be.

Then moving on to the second part of the application process. When you’re ready to start your application, you can register or log in to SmartyGrants. The SmartyGrants is the system that we’re now using to manage all of our grant applications. If you need support in setting up an account, you can contact our grant enquiries email or our 1300 number. They’re shown on this slide, and they’re also available through the Contact Us page of our CEBIC website. We recommend that you give yourself plenty of time to upload and submit your application, and remember to save as you go through. And when you finish and submit the application, at that point you won’t be able to add anything to the application, so make sure that you’ve put everything in there that you wanted to, all the background documentation and so on, and then when you finish you will receive an electronic reply to let you know that it’s gone through.

So Guy, if you want to move to the next slide. Thank you. Just a few key dates. So applications are open. They opened on Friday 20th of November. They close at 3:00 pm on Monday the 15th of February. We wanted to allow enough time for you to get together with your project partners and really come up with a great project and a great application. So we have them open until the 15th of February. Following that, we will go through our assessment process, and we will provide applicants with updates about the progress of their applications as soon as possible and as often as we can, but we can’t provide a definitive sort of approval or announcement date. Some indicative dates here around when we expect funding agreements, the later date in which we expect funding agreements to be established and projects commenced, and as I said earlier, all projects would need to be completed by May 2024.

So now I think we’ll move on to some commonly asked questions. So these are some questions that we’ve heard about in previous grant projects or ones that we think might come up. So we’ll go through these, and then we can take questions that have come through the Q&A. So firstly:

Question: Can you provide some examples of collaborative partnerships?

Absolutely. So for example, we could have an industry group as the lead applicant forming a collaborative partnership with, for example, a research organisation. Ten of the members of the industry group, they could all be individual businesses. They might include a design consultancy, also an individual business and two local governments to work together on an integrated project. Another example could be a large food manufacturing company who could be the lead applicant as an individual business. They could form a collaborative partnership with three of their main suppliers, each being individual businesses as well, and a research organisation to undertake a project together.

The next one is about the responsibilities of the lead applicant. So I’ve spoken a little bit about this already. The lead applicant is responsible for all the details that are submitted in the application, and they’re then responsible for the contractual obligations of the funding agreement with us if successful for grant funding. The lead applicant is also responsible for managing those project outcomes and deliverables of the collaborative partnership.

Question: Can I be a project partner in more than one project or funding application?

Yes, you can. You will be required to outline in the application. The lead applicant needs to specify the resources and capabilities of themselves and of each of their project partners, and what they will contribute to the project. So you can be a project partner in more than one, but each of those would have to demonstrate that you had the resources and capabilities to deliver.

Question: Can you submit multiple applications for different projects?

Yes, you can. Eligible organisations can submit multiple applications for different projects. For example, you could apply to both Stream 1 and Stream 2. All applications will be assessed using the contested process and the merit criteria in the guidelines, and again, need to demonstrate that you’ve got the resources and capabilities to deliver those.

Question: Can a single funding application include funding for multiple projects?

No. So one funding application can only include funding for one project, but that project could include multiple elements.

Question: Can you apply for multiple grants?

I’m not sure if all of these questions are on the slide, but anyway.

Question: Can I apply for multiple grants?

You can apply for multiple grants if they are for different projects. You can’t apply for funding for the same project in more than one of our SV funding programs. So as we mentioned, right now we’ve got open the RV Innovation Fund and the Business Support Fund. So you could not put an application for the same project to each of those, because each funding program does have different objectives, eligibility requirements and assessment criteria, and you need your application to be specific to the funding program that you’re applying to.

If you have submitted an application to another funding program and then you find that this program is more relevant and suitable, you can withdraw the other application by emailing the grants enquiries email. That may not be a concern right now, because we’ve only got the two funds open.

Have I answered all these questions? Maybe not.

Question: Can SV review a draft of my application?

No. This is a competitive process, so we’re unable to review a draft or provide feedback on the potential merit of a project. We encourage applicants to consider and address how the project meets the eligibility criteria and to describe how the project addresses those outlined in the fund guidelines in their application form.

Okay. So hopefully I’ve answered all of those questions. Are there other questions, Travis? Could you let me know if we’ve got some other questions that we need to answer.

**Travis:**

Hey Mel, I sure can. So let me have a look at what’s coming through from the Q&A. So let’s have a look. Great. So one of the most popular questions – and please continue voting on questions in the Q&A. If you like something, just tick the ‘like’ button and we’ll get to those first. So Glen’s asked a question, Mel.

Question: The guidelines say waste to energy projects will not be funded. Is that targeted
at waste-to-energy infrastructure, or does it mean any project that involves waste to energy as part of it?

So he provides an example.

Question: If there’s a project that helps organisations separate food waste at the source but that food waste later goes to waste-to-energy, would that kind of project be eligible?

Melanie:

I would think that that probably would not be eligible, because it is about separation for recovering that waste and sending it to waste-to-energy. So I think that would not be eligible.

**Travis:**

Awesome. No worries. Next question coming in from David, and a great question in these COVID times.

Question: Can we meet with SV face-to-face to discuss potential projects to ensure it’s eligible before we spend time and submit an application?

Melanie:

Great question. Unfortunately we can’t meet face-to-face with individual applicants or potential applicants.

But what you can do is that you can submit your enquiry through our grants enquiries email, and we will provide you with an answer through that means. The reason that we can’t meet face-to-face is that we need to make sure that we’re giving everyone really equal access to information, and we’re not giving any particular individual or group any specific kind of direct support. So we encourage you to put those questions through the grants enquiries.

**Travis:**

Awesome. Thanks, Mel. And just a little reminder, people can reach out to talk to us via the website. You can book a one-on-one chat. We can’t talk to you about your grant and your application, but we can talk about different opportunities to work with the CEBIC. So you can visit that on cebic.vic.gov.au and check out the Contact Us page where you can book a one-on-one chat with Mel or I. Now we have another question coming through from someone at Melbourne University.

Question: If a research institute submits an application with an industry partner – let’s says it’s a $200,000 project and they need to front 20% as a cash contribution – who can make that cash contribution? Is that the lead applicant, the project partner, or does it not really matter?

Melanie:

It doesn’t really matter. It can be lead applicant or project partner. You will need to specify in the funding application who is providing the co-contributions, both the financial and the in-kind contributions; and for the in-kind, provide an indication of what types of in-kind contributions those are. But for the financial contribution, absolutely right. It can be the lead or the project partners.

**Travis:**

Awesome. Thanks, Mel. Peter’s asked a question. He says that:

Question: The grant amounts seem quite high compared to the total of $2.9 million over four years. Can you explain that in a little more detail?

Melanie:

Yeah. Sure. Great question. Thank you. So you’re right. We have $2.9 million over four years, and we have put some fairly substantial grant amounts that we’re offering for funding. We are really looking for projects and applications that will really help us get on this way to transforming Victoria to a circular economy. So we are looking to support some substantial projects that will really be transformative in an industry, across a supply chain, within a whole sector or across multiple sectors. So we know that’s quite ambitious, and we are really actually quite – from the discussions that have been had during the development of the Recycling Victoria policy, from everything we’ve heard so far from people, there are people who are really on that journey already, are very ambitious and have lots of great ideas for projects that they would love to implement. So that’s really why we’ve decided to go with larger-scale projects and larger amounts of funding for this first round of funding.

And I should say, Travis or Guy, if you wanted to jump in at any point with some other answers or additions to my answers, please feel free.

**Travis:**

Thanks, Mel. Guy’s responding to some of the questions as well live in the chat.

Melanie:

Yes. Great. Thank you. I can’t see those.

**Travis:**

Now we’ve had a question come in from Anonymous, and that’s about the duration that a company or an organisation has been operating.

Question: If the lead applicant has not been operating for two years but will reach two years prior to commencement of funding agreements, which looks like it’s around May next year, would they still be eligible to apply?

Melanie:

That is a great question, and it’s one that I’ll have to take on notice and get back to you, because I’ll need to confirm that with my colleagues who are the experts in terms of the eligibility and those requirements.

So I think we’ve probably already mentioned or perhaps posted in the Q&A, but any questions that we answer today or ones we don’t answer, ones such as that great question, we will publish those in the information bulletin that is on the CEBIC website, and we’ll let you know when we’ve updated that with the answers that we’re not able to get back to you today.

**Travis:**

Awesome. Thank you, Mel. We actually have another question along a similar line.

Question: If the lead applicant has operated less than two years but the project partner has operated more than two years, would that be eligible to apply, or does the lead applicant have to have two years operating behind them?

Melanie:

Yeah. The lead applicant has to have been operating for two years. So I would say if it’s possible in that instance for the project partner to become the lead applicant and switch those roles, but of course I understand there are certain requirements and capabilities required for the lead applicant. So that’s of course a decision that you would have to make.

**Travis:**

Awesome. Thank you, Mel. Next question from Anonymous.

Q: Is biomass waste projects included in Stream 2? So for example, if the focus is on creating high-value products with bioenergy a side-product, would that be eligible?

Melanie:

That’s a great question. I think if the primary focus is on creating high-value products from that material and as part of the process you also have some material going to bioenergy, then I think that would be eligible. But I think we would probably encourage you to give us some more information and submit that through the grants enquiries so that we can have a bit more of a considered view before we said absolutely yes or no, eligible or not eligible.

**Travis:**

Awesome. Thank you, Mel. Now just having a look through the questions, and please all keep adding questions to the live event Q&A, and please keeping voting ‘like’ to see what’s going to be the most popular questions getting answered next. So Anonymous has asked:

Question: How many projects are we approving for each stream?

Melanie:

That’s a really good question, but actually we don’t have a definitive answer on that question. We haven’t decided how many projects would be approved for either Stream 1 or Stream 2 or as a total. We really want to see what projects are submitted. The number that we do approve through this round one will depend on the quality and the scope of those applications, and that’s a decision that we’ll make when we look at those applications as a whole.

**Travis:**

Awesome. Thank you, Mel. A question about the team.

Question: Who will be on the assessment panel for the applications?

I’m not sure if we’re able to answer that yet, Mel, but I’ll throw it back to you.

Melanie:

The assessment panel will be a range of people from within Sustainability Victoria, and we may also call on experts to provide us advice. Through the assessment process, those assessment panel members will all be agreed and appointed before we close the application date, and equally, any experts that we think that we will need to call on, we will decide on those and ensure that they have the right kind of conflicts of interest declared and so on, have that all in place before the applications close.

**Travis:**

Awesome. Thank you, Mel. Now Guy’s answered a great question in the chat, but I think it would be worth talking about publicly as well, because I think it’s a great example of the kind of project that we’re looking for.

Question: So would transforming and processing waste into a retail product, for example, let’s say processing waste and turning it into a sauce for retail shelves, would that kind of project be in-scope for the streamline food priority grants?

Melanie:

And did you say Guy’s answered that question already, Travis?

**Travis:**

Guy has provided an answer to the question as well, but I think it’s a great question that I wanted to bring to the audience.

Guy:

I’ll answer that one if you like, Mel. I think definitely looking at new products from existing waste streams is what we’re looking for. We’re looking for that. But I’d also check whether the specifics of the project may be better suited to the Business Support Grants rather than this one as well. So this one here, we’re really trying to address innovative and systemic issues. If you’ve got something really specific, and especially if you’re an individual business, that might be better off suited to the Business Support Grants. Check the guidelines for both and the criteria for both before you decide which way you want to go.

Thanks. Back to you Mel, Travis.

**Travis:**

Thanks Guy. And a shameless self-plug for the Business Support Fund. If you do have more questions around specific projects like that, please sign up online, register for the event tomorrow and come along to the information session just for those grants at 10:00am tomorrow.

Now back into questions. So we have a few more coming through at the moment. Okay. So from Sarah. This is a long one, so bear with me for a moment.

Question: Funding will not be provided for the following costs. Existing staffing costs. Can you please give additional detail on how this is expected to work for research institutions? So for example, collaboration with research typically wants to leverage the knowledge of research staff who work with industry to scope a project. Research staff time can comprise much of a project cost. This rule suggests that research staff time allocated to the project is not eligible for funding.

Sarah isn’t sure how the research institutes are able to engage with a fund under that rule. Are you able to answer that?

Melanie:

Yeah. Sure. Thanks, Travis, and thanks for the great question, Sarah. That’s the reason why we have allowed in-kind contributions of up to 80% within the co-contribution requirement. So the way the funding will be structured is that there’s a one-to-one funding ratio, so that the contribution from the applicants and the project partners in that co-contribution component, up to 80% of that can be in-kind, and the in-kind component can include the existing staff time. So that’s the primary way that I would suggest that that could work.

If you don’t think that that will work for your project, please do send us some more details through to the grants enquiries email and we can have a look at that in more detail. The requirement is there, but we do, for example, support the funding in terms of the financial funding provided by SV through the grant fund. That component can cover, for example, direct consultancy costs. So if the research time was undertaken through a consultancy, then that could then fall into that category. So I don’t want to say there’s ways to work around it, but I’m just saying if the in-kind contribution component, if you don’t think that will work, then please give us some information and we can give you a more detailed answer.

**Travis:**

Awesome. Thank you so much, Mel. Questions are coming in quite fast now at the moment, so I’m going to jump to a couple more. Matthew has asked:

Question: One of our potential partners is not quite ready for the first round. If we plan for a second round application, can we proceed in confidence knowing there will still be funds available and that the second round will go ahead?

Melanie:

Yeah. Absolutely. So we are intending to have multiple funding rounds over the funding period, and we don’t have the details in terms of the timing and the exact specifications for those rounds, but we would suggest that if you’re not ready for this first round, definitely work in developing your project and seek to look at that for future rounds.

**Travis:**

Awesome. Thank you, Mel. Now Peter has asked a great question that it looks like Guy is responding to in text at the moment, but I’m going to throw it to you Mel as well.

Question: Are we right to assume you are prioritising reduce and reuse activity with this funding?

Melanie:

Yeah. Absolutely. So that’s a good way to put it. We are very much keen to focus in that kind of ‘up the waste’ hierarchy, if that’s the kind of language that you’re familiar with. So avoiding and preventing waste, and reduce and reuse. Really looking at some of these – we talk a bit about the circular business models and practices. So a lot of those really innovative business models that we might be seeing overseas but we’re not seeing here as much. So things like product as a service, sharing and rental arrangements. There’s some of this that’s sort of emerging within Australia, and we can see that there is really great opportunities for us here, and so we’re really keen to look at how we can actually build some of these new innovative approaches into the Victorian economy and help us grow our economy through some of these new ways of doing things.

**Travis:**

Awesome. Thank you, Mel. Now Helen’s asked a question. She’s asked:

Question: Why so late? August 2021 seems like quite a delay.

And she’s wondering if activity could start before that time.

Melanie:

Yeah. Great question. So it does sound like a long time doesn’t it? So when we receive the applications, we will go through that assessment process, and once we have finalised the successful applications, we will go through a process of entering into funding agreements with the successful applicants. And we know from past experience with grant programs, sometimes that process takes a little while.

So really the start date will be determined by the time that it takes for us to assess and have the applications approved, and then the time to go through those funding agreements. So we know that we will be asking for your patience in terms of how we’re working through that, and we will certainly endeavour to have those activities starting before that time. But we do have that process that we need to go through.

**Travis:**

Cool. Thank you, Mel. We’ve had just an admin question come through.

Question: Are all questions and answers going to be posted on the Q&A section and made publicly accessible?

Melanie:

Yes. Absolutely. We will publish the questions in the information bulletin that is on the grant web page. So if you’ve had a look at the CEBIC grants web page, there is I think three tabs there. Firstly from the grants page, you can access the information about the Innovation Fund or you can access information about the Business Support Fund. And then once you go into the Innovation Fund page, you will see some tabs there that provide sort of an overview, the guidelines and the information bulletin. And if you click on that information bulletin, there’s already some questions there which I went through earlier in the presentation, and we will be adding the questions and answers that we’re getting through this session today. Because as I mentioned earlier, we want to make sure that everyone has equal access to the information.

Now I’m not watching the questions as they’re coming through, so there might be two or three questions that are essentially the same thing, just from a slightly different angle. So in that information bulletin, we might combine those and make sure that we’ve got the answer that covers all of those different aspects.

**Travis:**

Awesome. Thanks, Mel. We’ve got another popular question come through, and I think it’s clarifying what Helen was asking earlier.

Question: So with decisions being made in February and funding agreements not being executed until May, does that mean funding will not be provided before these dates, or could it cover costs following the date of submission?

Melanie:

Yeah. That’s a good question. So the funding will not be provided until the funding agreement has been finalised and signed and executed if you like. In terms of covering costs that have already been undertaken from the date of submission, I will need to take that on notice and get back to you. I think the answer will be no, that we couldn’t do that. We would have to cover costs from when the agreement is signed and executed. But just me take that one on notice and confirm that.

**Travis:**

Awesome. Thank you, Mel. Now I’m just going through to see the most liked questions at the moment that haven’t been answered. Okay. So Mark asked a question probably about half an hour ago. Thanks Mark.

Question: Does sharing findings also include developed IP?

Melanie:

Yeah. That’s a really good question. So the developed IP, I think we would need to look at that on a case-by-case basis, and I’ll definitely be drawing on the experience of my colleagues who have worked in the markets acceleration sort of work around the research and development programs that we’ve had, funding programs that we’ve had at SV for quite a few years. I know they’ve got some good systems that are in place for dealing with that. And absolutely, if you have any concerns about what that requirement means, then please let us know and send us a follow-up. In the information bulletin, I think we can probably give a bit more detail around this, but I think it’s something that we need to give a little bit more thought to.

**Travis:**

Awesome. Thank you Mel. Now Anonymous has asked:

Question: Is it possible to apply for funding for a project under the $75,000 minimum threshold?

Melanie Oke:

Yeah. Good question. Unfortunately, no. That minimum threshold is the amount that is the minimum that we’re providing funding for. So if your project falls below that amount, then no, it would not be able to be funded through this program.

**Travis:**

Awesome. Thanks Mel. Now we’ve had a question here about readiness levels of technology.

Question: Are there guidelines available on tech readiness levels?

I assume this question is a little bit about the innovation and the readiness for a project to go. We don’t have a lot more to go on the question, so Mel I’ll throw it to you to try and answer that.

Melanie:

Sure. We don’t have guidelines on tech readiness levels. So if that’s something that you need some more guidance to help you support your application, then please let us know and we can look into that.

**Travis:**

Awesome. Thank you Mel. Now just scrolling through questions. Okay. So June’s asked a question here about biochar.

Question: Is converting agri-waste to biochar considered a product from food waste?

I could probably answer that question myself June, having led SV’s food waste strategy for the last couple of years. I think it depends what the agri-waste is. If it’s stubble from wheat for example, that wouldn’t be considered a food waste product. So if it’s part of the plant, I would say no. If it’s part of the food, I would say yes.

If you wanted to have a little bit more detail about what you’re looking for, the kind of product you’re looking for, in terms of whether it’s kind of wheat stubble or an actual food product, reach out and we can provide some information around what is considered food waste and what isn’t, and then probably put some information on the information bulletin afterwards.

The other thing to consider as well is maybe coming along to tomorrow’s Business Support Fund session, which in the Business Support Fund we’re going to be product- or material- agnostic. So it could be food waste, textile waste, construction waste, you name it, if it’s a waste issue that can be dealt with with the circular economy. They’re certainly the kind of projects that we’re looking to support, either individual businesses or collaborations with the Business Support Fund. So I’d really encourage you to come along tomorrow, and feel free to ask that question there as well.

Now Jess has asked a question on:

Question: What is deemed an established organic solution, and therefore ineligible to apply for funding?

Mel?

Melanie:

That’s a good question, and in terms of more food waste related – Travis, I’ll probably throw back to you. But I think really we don’t have a definition of what’s an established – we would need to look at that as an individual case-by-case basis, so please let us know if there’s something in particular that you’re thinking about. But I guess as a kind of guidance to that, I would say if it’s already readily being used within Victoria, then we would consider it to be established. So for example, dehydrator technologies that have been in use for quite a few years now, I’d probably say that we would consider that to be an established system in place. Trav, did you have anything to add to that in terms of on the food waste side?

**Travis:**

Yeah. I would agree with what you’re saying. I think probably a more pointed example in the circular economy around food waste may be not the dehydration – because that’s a little bit more in the recycling, composting end – would be if you take dairy waste for example, a lot of the large dairy manufacturers have been using spray driers to convert what is a liquid food waste into powdered protein powder for all us gym junkies out there etcetera. If you were a medium-sized producer, maybe you couldn’t afford that technology at the moment and you needed a new innovation to help you dehydrate that liquid waste and create a new product from it. I think that kind of idea would be more suitable for this, because it would be developing a new innovation for an existing issue that can’t be dealt with at the moment. But if you were just looking to purchase that spraydrying technology within your cheesemaking facility, that wouldn’t be considered an innovation, because you’re buying an off-the-shelf product that’s already been used to recover or create a new product from food waste.

Melanie:

Great. Thanks Trav. I knew that you would have a more detailed and thorough answer for that question than what I did.

**Travis:**

Now we’ve got another question coming through.

Question: Do all the collaborators need to be based in Australia?

Melanie:

That’s a really good question. We have not required that they’re all based in Victoria. So we’ve put requirements around the project activities being undertaken in Victoria. I think we need to take that on notice, as to whether as a project partner we can have international organisations included. I think the answer will be yes, because we absolutely understand that there is a need to collaborate and to learn from the experience from overseas. But I’d probably want to understand that a little bit more, and just confirm whether there is any requirement in terms of the agreements that we can enter into. So that’s something that I’d just need to check with our legal and governance team.

**Travis:**

Awesome. Thank you, Mel. Now we’ve had a question come through from Anonymous.

Question: Are projects making circular economy products and internalising end-of-life recycling over the longer term through extended producer responsibility eligible?

Melanie:

Yeah. That’s a good question. So as Guy sort of mentioned earlier, we’re looking at projects that are seeking to meet the objectives that we’ve talked about, and that are really dealing with sort of systemic barriers to creating these circular economy systems I guess in place. So if you think that the project will address those objectives and sort of is in line with that, then yes, it would be eligible. If the project is entirely focused on the recycling component, that’s where we’ve talked about waste recycling and recovery projects would not be eligible. But it sounds to me like that probably would be eligible what you’re talking about, because I imagine that would involve working in a collaborative manner across your entire supply chain. It might even be looking at multiple different types of organisations working together to achieve that. So probably need a little bit more information to understand exactly what you’re looking at, but it wouldn’t be an outright ‘no, it’s not eligible’.

**Travis:**

Awesome. Thanks, Mel. We’ve got a question coming through from Ian about collaboration. So Ian’s part of a not-for-profit, and has multiple potential lead partners who would like to collaborate with him on grants. Is Ian able to be part of multiple grant collaborations, or can he only be part of one?

Melanie:

Yeah. Good question Ian. You can be part of multiple grant collaborations if you have the capacity and resources and interest to do so.

**Travis:**

Thanks, Mel. And I guess a clarifying point there would be they would need to be different projects I understand.

Melanie:

Yeah. That’s right. And also you might look at whether those organisations could also benefit from collaborating. So maybe there’s a larger project that involves one lead applicant, and then some of those other potential – you might have thought of them as potential lead applicants, but maybe they could actually be project partners in a more collaborative project.

**Travis:**

Awesome. Thanks Mel. We’ve got a question about food innovation.

Question: Will projects focused on food innovation be considered in Stream 2 to access a

higher grant amount, or are they only going to be able to be applying through Stream 1?

Melanie:

Yeah. They could apply to either stream. So Stream 2 does not have a requirement for the product or focus area or sector and so on, so you could submit that into Stream 2 if you had a really substantial project that needed the greater amount of funding.

**Travis:**

Yep. Cool. Thank you, Mel. And likewise, applicants can submit grant applications to multiple projects. You won’t receive funding for multiple projects from SV, but for example, if you did have a food waste project and you thought it was eligible for an Innovation Fund project and a Business Support Fund project, you could apply to both. There are different funding eligibility requirements for each of those grants and you would need to list this on your SmartyGrants application. It will ask the question. So that’s an option for you as well.

Now we have a question through here from Ajeev.

Question: Any project that comes up with an innovative solution for waste uptake that interests both waste producers and end-users and bring them onboard as part of the application, the project that not only brings out waste utilisation but curbs greenhouse gas emissions, is this an eligible project?

So I think what you’re asking is, if curbing greenhouse gas emissions is a co-benefit of a waste reduction project, is that in scope?

Melanie:

Yeah. So absolutely. We understand that if you reduce, avoid, prevent waste from being generated, then that absolutely has greenhouse gas implications and benefits. So yes. The requirement is that if it was solely focused on greenhouse gas reduction, that wouldn’t be eligible to be funded, but if it’s focused on that sort of avoid, reduce, prevent waste, and then there are co-benefits, then that’s fantastic.

**Travis:**

Awesome. Thank you, Mel. Just scrolling through these questions now. We’ve had 65 almost posted, so that’s been fantastic. Still a few more to answer, but we’re probably at the ten-minute mark before we wrap up Mel, just to let you know. So we’ll probably take a couple more questions before wrapping up.

So Mark has asked:

Question: Would it be possible for SV to list the research institutions that are looking for industry collaboration to help industry find the right partner?

Great question, Mark.

Melanie:

Yeah. Thanks for the question, Mark. That’s actually something that we’ve been talking about within our team, as to how we can meet that need for one, industry partners who are looking for a research partner, another might be businesses who are looking to other businesses along a supply chain or to create a new supply chain, to create a new system that they want to put in place. We don’t have a system for doing that currently, but we’re certainly looking at how we can provide that information to you. And certainly we’re looking at how we can actually do that.

**Travis:**

Awesome. Thank you very much Mel. And that might be another chance just to plug that booking a time for a one-on-one chat via the website. Those kind of ideas on how we can collaborate and support you to work better and to connect with other people, it’s certainly the things that we want to be having conversations about. So Mark, please feel free to visit the website, the Contact Us page. Book a session to chat with Mel and I, and we’d love to hear your ideas on how we could best support you to network with potential collaborators moving forward.

Now just going through a couple of the last questions. Anonymous has asked:

Question: Just to clarify, if you apply for multiple different projects, let’s say under the Innovation Fund and Business Support Fund, is there a chance that SV would fund more than one of these?

I can answer that from a Business Support Fund perspective, and just having that grants overview. If you apply for multiple different projects, as long as they’re two discrete different projects, I think it is possible that you would be able to be funded. If you’re applying for the same project across different funding avenues, then no. You would only be eligible for getting funding through one of those if you were successful in the competitive process.

Now it looks like Mel has just logged out. Her Wi-Fi out in the country where she’s living at the moment, taking a little break from the city, is not the best. So I’ll just continue on with having a look through a couple of the last questions. So Anonymous has asked:

Question: Are food packaging recycling projects eligible for Stream 1?

I think that’s a great question. I think we’d need to have a little bit more information about what that food packaging recycling project is. For example, if you’re just looking at increasing the recycling of food packaging itself or utilising recycled materials back into the packaging, I would say no, because it’s not going to actually reduce food that is wasted.

But for example if you were looking at designing new packaging to reduce food waste, whether that’s a new kind of design to help users get more food out or something that extends the duration of a product, or potentially it’s a smaller portion size that would lead to a waste reduction, those kind of projects could potentially be in scope for the Innovation Fund, or even the Business Support Grants. So I’d encourage you to have a look through the guidelines and application form just to see whether or not that kind of project is in scope.

Now I think we’ve answered most of the questions here. I’m just having a little scroll-through at the moment. We’ve had a lot of questions about start-ups here.

Question: Can start-up companies, like a university spin-off company with less than two years since incorporation, apply?

I would say for this question I’ll take it on notice, because Mel has more familiarity with the guidelines and application for these specific grants. I would say no. There is a minimum threshold here for a lead applicant at least to be operating more than two years.

Under the Business Support Fund however, for Stream 1 identification grants, which we’ll be talking a little bit more tomorrow, there is a provision for start-ups operating less than two years to provide a director’s guarantee to receive up to a maximum of the minimum viable amount as a grant, which is $75,000 for that stream. So I would also encourage you to come along to the grant session tomorrow. Now there are some significant differences between these two grants, one being focused on innovation and one being focused more on the identification and uptake of established circular economy projects. So that’s probably another area where you need to think about. If you’re a start-up, is this a brand-new innovation which you may not be eligible for the Business Support Fund?

And maybe I’ll just wrap up with this last question.

Question: So how will SV support the businesses once a grant is approved?

That’s great. So once a grant is approved, we’ll be working with you across the duration of that fund. We have a great team of project support grant officers, as well as program leads that will be working with you to support you through the duration of the program. I’m not sure what kind of support you’re looking for there, but we will be talking to you, calling with you, looking to promote the outcomes of your program, looking to help network across, to amplify the success of your program. That’s the kind of thing that we’re looking for. This isn’t ‘we give you money, go off do the project in isolation’. We really want to be collaborating through the Circular Economy Business Innovation Centre and helping promote the outcomes. Because the aim that we’re looking for is to spark and kickstart a circular economy in Victoria, and we know that we can’t do that alone. We know that we need to do that together, and we know that we need to be promoting the outcomes and sharing the outcomes so people know what the benefits are to businesses of the circular economy so they start doing things themselves. So certainly we’re not going to be chucking in money and then running and just hoping you deliver it. We will be there to support you through the process. Part of that with a grant application will be setting up milestones in a contract, making sure they’re timely, delivering the right things and working with you to make sure that the milestones are met, and giving you support in that way.

So if you wanted to talk more about support or have ideas on the kind of support you’re looking for, please reach out and get in touch with us.

I see Mel is back online now. So Mel, I might throw it over to you to wrap up now that we’ve got a few minutes to go.

Melanie:

Great. Thanks Travis, and thanks for your patience everyone. So thank you so much for the awesome questions and for attending today’s session.

So all the information about the fund, as we’ve mentioned, can be found via the CEBIC website. So someone will post a link to that in the Q&A section. And Travis has just given you a bit of background on the Business Support Fund I believe, so I’d encourage you to register for that information session tomorrow morning if you’re interested in that fund. There should also be a link in the Q&A to the Eventbrite registration shortly. And for both funds, once you’ve attended the information session and reviewed the info on the website, please, if you have any further questions, get in touch through the grant enquiries email or through the 1300 number during our business hours.

So thank you again for attending today, and we look forward to receiving your applications.

[*Opening visual of slide with text saying ‘Recycling Victoria Innovation Fund’, ‘Information session’, ‘2 December 2020’, ‘Sustainability Victoria’*]