

# Visitor Experience Enhancement Program round 8 guidelines

## Overview

The Northern Territory Government is providing \$3 million of grant funding through a further round of the Visitor Experience Enhancement Program (VEEP), to assist the tourism industry undertake projects that will improve the on-ground visitor experience in the NT.

The VEEP seeks to enable the tourism industry to improve its customer experience through product enhancements, generating positive promotion for the Territory.

Funding of up to \$100,000 (excluding GST) is available per business.

Businesses will be expected to provide a minimum matching cash co-contribution.

Successful projects must:

- a) be strategic in nature by delivering benefits to an individual business, multiple businesses or to a region and aligned to a relevant strategic plans. Tourism related strategies include:
  - Alice Springs and MacDonnell Ranges, Lasseter, Barkly, Big Rivers, East Arnhem Land or Greater Darwin Destination Management Plan
  - Kakadu Tourism Master Plan
  - NT Drive Tourism Strategy
  - NT Cruise Tourism Strategy
  - Long-Term Business Events Strategy
  - NT Aboriginal Tourism Strategy 2030
  - NT's Tourism Industry Strategy 2030
  - NT Parks Masterplan 2023-2053
  - short-stay accommodation market analysis reports for Katherine, Nhulunbuy and Tennant Creek.
- b) demonstrate how the proposal will enhance the visitor experience and increase favourable visitor feedback. This can include improved sustainability or accessibility features and new product innovation
- c) provide an itemised project budget accompanied by quotes from NT suppliers. Applications without accompanying budget and quotes will not be considered. Quotes and invoices from family or other registered businesses aligned to the applicant will not be accepted
- d) outline a project plan with timeframe and commit resources to completing the project as outlined
- e) include at a minimum a matching cash co-contribution. This means if you are requesting a \$40,000 grant then you need to provide a minimum further \$40,000 in cash towards the nominated project. Projects with a larger Return on Investment (ROI) than 1:1 will be regarded highly by the panel. Please note that in-kind contributions and in-eligible items are not considered towards matching funds.

These grants will complement other business focused grants offered and administered by the [NT Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade](#).

This is a competitive grant funding program, we encourage all applicants to ensure the guidelines are met and that your project clearly demonstrates the benefits to visitors to the Northern Territory.

## Funding available

VEEP round 8 has a budget allocation of \$3 million.

Priority will be given to:

- applications who have clearly demonstrated alignment with the relevant strategies, plans and reports
- projects which demonstrate the greatest need for visitor enhancement as supported by evidence
- projects that have a particular focus on accessibility and sustainability improvements
- projects that have a ROI greater than 1:1
- projects that clearly demonstrate a planned approach and demonstrate resources to complete within the allocated timeframe

Applications under this program will be considered with reference to other NT Government funding which you may have accessed or be qualified for. Applicants should provide evidence that local NT suppliers and local content will be used to deliver the project. If NT suppliers are not available, justification for consideration of interstate suppliers detailing attempts to secure Territory suppliers must be clearly demonstrated.

Applications will not be accepted where an applicant has not fully acquitted or met funding agreement obligations from previous funding from Tourism NT, such as previous VEEP.

## Eligible applicants

This program is designed to support Northern Territory tourism business enterprises. To be supported through this program, businesses must:

- be a Territory enterprise with a significant Northern Territory tourism focus
- be Australian registered
- have a current Australian Tourism Data Warehouse (ATDW) listing or have applied for one at time of application
- a member of Tourism Top End, Tourism Central Australia, Hospitality NT or their local tourism organisation
- have an online booking system or have applied for one at time of submitting the grant application
- currently operate in the NT and employ resident Territorians.

Local Government, for profit and not for profit organisations are eligible to apply. Agencies of the NT Government and Regional Tourism Organisations are not eligible to apply.

## Eligible projects and activities

As a guide only, examples of projects may include (but are not limited to):

- Infrastructure upgrades to address shortcomings in the existing tourism visitor experience (e.g. new walking trails, upgraded or additional visitor accommodation, upgraded reception areas or foyers, retrofitting existing tour buses or cruise vessels).

- Implementation of new technology to improve the on-ground tourism visitor experience in the NT.
- Development of additional tourism visitor experiences that diversify the tourism offering in the region based on customer feedback.
- Upgrades to infrastructure or product that improves safety for customers or staff.
- Applications that can demonstrate improved disability access (e.g. access ramps, accessible bathrooms, audio tours, vehicle modifications).
- New tourism offerings and/or products that contribute to the conservation of the Territory's natural and cultural values through enhanced sustainability (e.g. weather mitigation works leading to year round product delivery).

## Ineligible activities

Applications will not be accepted for:

- the purchase or lease of mobile/ portable assets including, but not limited to, computers (e.g. desktops or laptops), televisions, power tools, motor vehicles (e.g. cars, buses or motorcycles) and boats
- activities/works/product orders that have commenced before the grant has been approved
- upgrading or developing facilities predominantly for local community use or where there is no clearly defined visitor benefit
- marketing, advertising and product promotion activities
- regular repairs and maintenance
- administrative or running costs that are normally the responsibility of a business (e.g. rent, insurances, auditing and finance costs etc.), state or territory administration or local council
- wages or salaries for an applicant's employees
- training costs for implementation of new technology
- purchase or lease of real estate of any type.

Please take care to ensure ineligible activities are not included in any application as this will preclude further consideration.

## Key dates

Nomination period opens	18 March 2024
Closing date for nominations	4.00pm ACST 7 May 2024
Consideration of projects	May 2024
Notification of successful recipients	June 2024
First payment	on receipt of signed funding agreement and first supplier invoice
Second and final payment	on acquittal
Final date for projects to be completed	30 April 2025 and in line with funding agreement terms

## Nomination process

The program will operate via a merit based nomination process. Assessment of projects is by a panel based on written project proposals.

All nominations will be accepted via the Grants NT portal only. Businesses can register online via [grantsnt.nt.gov.au](https://grantsnt.nt.gov.au). Late applications will not be accepted and the business must allow time to ensure the application process is completed prior to closing time.

Handwritten submissions will not be accepted.

An email confirmation will be sent within two working days of receipt of each application. In the event a confirmation is not received, applicants should phone 8999 3808 to check receipt of the nomination form.

Further discussions with applicants may be required to confirm details in the nomination form and/ or supporting documents.

## Assessment criteria

Applicants must demonstrate their capacity, capability and resources to deliver the project. This could be demonstrated through the following:

- your track record, or the track record of organisations you will partner with or contract to, in managing similar projects
- how you will manage risk or constraints to the project's viability (e.g. labour supply, availability of materials, supply chain issues or delays)
- your ability to obtain the relevant approvals and permits required to complete the project within the proposed delivery timeframe
- a clear and realistic timeline for project completion.

Applicants must be able to demonstrate how the nominated project will enhance the tourism visitor experience, increase favourable visitor reviews and increase visitor numbers. This could be through providing evidence of customer feedback via social or other platforms (e.g. review websites, customer satisfaction surveys) where there is a documented product gap or identified upgrade.

In accordance with its Buy Local policy, the NT Government is committed to the development of business and industry in the NT and supporting Territory enterprises. Except where it is impractical for technical reasons, projects must use labour available within the NT and source services, supplies and materials from within the NT.

Tourism operators must have approvals of the relevant Land Council or other land management authority for current and proposed/new tourism product related to the application.

All applications must include a copy of current Public Liability Insurance.

The NT Government may conduct credit checks and other due diligence processes, involving checks with other Government agencies including but not limited to NT Parks and Wildlife Commission, Licencing and Health as part of the assessment process.

## Funding agreement

A legally binding funding agreement will be entered into between the Northern Territory Government and successful applicants. The terms and conditions of the agreement will be determined based on the nature of the activity proposed. The agreement will set out:

- the rights and obligations of the Northern Territory Government and the funding recipient
- requirements with respect to “buy local” provisions and cash co-contribution, noting if these conditions, are not met during project acquittal, applicants will be required to repay grant funding to the Department
- agreed project plan, timeline and budget as per application
- half way progress report requirements
- reporting and funding acquittal requirements
- public liability insurance requirements.

Applicants should note details of successful funding recipients will be advised publicly and recorded in the Department’s annual report

## Payment of funding

Successful recipients will receive their funding via two payments. The payments will be made as follows:

### First payment

Successful recipients will have 14 days from notification to accept the funding offer, returning a signed funding agreement and statutory declaration to confirm the applicant is project ready, financially resourced to complete the project and will meet the guidelines of the grant program. The first half of the funding will then be paid on submission of the recipient’s first supplier invoice.

### Second payment

The remaining funding will be paid on receipt of accepted acquittal documentation including a final report (in the requested format with accompanying photos and images of the project/s), copies of invoices, permits and insurances.

The panel may include special conditions such as evidence of financial contribution, permits in place or project support from third parties (such as NT Parks and Wildlife Commission) which may be imposed as a condition of releasing any funding payments.

## Requests for variations

Once a funding agreement has been signed, successful recipients may find that their project needs to alter. Any variations to approved funding recipients must be requested in writing.

The panel will consider minor variations to successful projects such as:

- minor variation to the project completion date with revised project plan
- minor variation to the materials used
- minor total budget variations.

Approved variations will require a signed Deed of Variation.

Requests for a major variation to successful projects will not be considered. For example, if a project is approved to build new cabin accommodation, the project cannot be varied to build an ablution block. In this case the recipient will be required to return the initial funding payment.

## Further information

For further information contact [strategy.tourism@nt.gov.au](mailto:strategy.tourism@nt.gov.au) or telephone 08 8999 3808.

A copy of these guidelines is available at: <https://www.tourismnt.com.au/industry-toolkit/grants-funding/visitor-experience-enhancement-program>

Tourism NT's corporate website [www.tourismnt.com.au](http://www.tourismnt.com.au) is a valuable resource for accessing information to support applications including tourism research and strategies.