

Great Start Community Playgroup Program

GUIDELINES 2026

Birth to five years is a vital period of development, laying the foundations for future years. Playgroup welcomes families to come together during this significant time in life. During this period, the parent and child relationship is crucial, and the family unit needs support from their community. At Playgroup Victoria, we want to continue to make a positive difference in the lives of Victorian families and communities- this involves key support for community-led playgroups.

Purpose of the Program

To make sure playgroup is a mainstay, Playgroup Victoria has created a perpetual fund to provide an ongoing source of support for new community playgroups. The program will assist playgroups to start strong and have longevity. The program is called ***The Great Start Community Playgroup Program***.

Playgroup is all about building positive relationships, finding a sense of belonging and maintaining family wellbeing, for without, everyone misses the opportunity to reach their full potential and, above all, the opportunity to connect meaningfully.

Playgroup Victoria's exciting funding and support program creates opportunities for new playgroups to have a great start.

The program will provide recipients with monetary support for items such as toys, books, arts and crafts kits. Successful applicants will also receive mentoring and resources from Playgroup Victoria.

Key Dates

Applications for round one and two have now closed. All past successful applicants have been notified. Round three opens 30 March 2026 and closes 30 April 2026. Applicants will be notified of the outcome during the week commencing 4 May 2026.

What Will Successful Great Start Applicants Receive?

- \$500 to purchase equipment
- Mentoring from Playgroup Victoria's Support and Development Team
- A six-month extension on current Playgroup Victoria Playgroup Registration
- Guidance accessing, implementing and engaging with Playgroup Victoria's full suite of resources, templates, booklets and play ideas
- Online networking opportunities and peer support

Eligibility Criteria:

To be eligible for *The Great Start Community Playgroup Program*, applicants must meet the following criteria:

- Be a **new community playgroup**, defined as a playgroup that began within six months prior to the application close date
- Be a **not-for-profit** group
- Be **registered with Playgroup Victoria** at the time of applying

Up to 25 applicants may be selected per round. All new community playgroups registered with Playgroup Victoria between 1st October 2025 and 30th April 2026 are eligible to apply.

Not a registered playgroup yet? [REGISTER HERE](#)

How Do Playgroups Apply?

A representative of the playgroup must complete and submit the online application form in full. [Round Three will open 30 March 2026 - APPLY HERE.](#)

FAQs

How will successful recipients receive their funding? How will recipients be required to report their playgroup purchases?

- Successful applicants will receive funds via Playgroup Victoria's allocated financial management system to purchase equipment, toys or resources for the playgroup.
- Spending is restricted to purchasing equipment for the playgroup.
- Successful applicants will be required to supply evidence of their expenditure.
- Playgroups will have six months to spend the funds, after which, the balance is forfeited.

How will applicants be assessed? Will priority be given to certain groups?

All new playgroups are encouraged to apply. Applicants will be individually assessed based on the needs of the group and local community. Priority may be given to not-for-profit community playgroups that showcase any of the following:

- The playgroup is run in a location where there are limited playgroup opportunities available to the community
- The playgroup does not have access to external support
- The playgroup has a focus area of any of the following: Inclusive practices, first-time parents, Indigenous families, culturally and linguistically diverse families, Dads and male caregivers, young parents, disability and/or any other group that represents diversity, supports parental wellbeing and advocates for the benefits of early years support networks

What does the Playgroup Victoria mentoring entail?

Individualised mentoring will be provided by the Playgroup Victoria Support and Development Team. The mentoring sessions and conversations may take place on the phone, online (via Teams, for example), or in person, where possible. Playgroup staff will guide playgroups, sharing knowledge about the best ways to promote their playgroup, implement best practice, and source play ideas and tips on how to create an inclusive and welcoming playgroup community.

What resources are available for new playgroups?

- The Playgroup Starter Guide
- The Playgroup Toolkit – a digital portal that is home to the best playgroup tools and resources including editable templates, posters, fact sheets, guides and heaps more.
- Downloadable activity booklets with topics that include Nature, Health and Wellbeing, Music, Creative Play, Sustainability and more
- Digital play ideas library, with over 100 downloadable activity sheets

What is a community playgroup?

A community playgroup is managed and run by community members. A community playgroup is made up of parents, carers and/or other volunteers. Community playgroups are not-for-profit and exist to support local families and carers.

Can supported playgroups apply for the program?

No, supported playgroups are not eligible under this fund.

Can a playgroup apply if they are not registered with Playgroup Victoria?

No, all eligible applicants will need to have current Playgroup Victoria playgroup registration.

Not a registered playgroup yet? [REGISTER HERE](#)

How will I receive the six-month playgroup registration extension?

If successful as a Great Start recipient, your playgroup registration will be extended by six months from your current expiry date.