EDUCATIONAL EQUITY
GRANTING GUIDELINES

... so Victorians can thrive.

OVERVIEW

In Australia there is widespread support for increasing equal access to quality education for young people. However, the current opportunities offered across Australia's education system are far from evenly distributed, which is reflected in student outcomes and results. Vulnerable students not only under perform in our current system but are also likely to fare worse compared with more advantaged children and young people who have access to social capital.

School retention and secondary school completion impact an individual's ability to gain secure employment, adequate income across a lifetime, and a flexible career path. They also have implications for Australia's economic growth, productivity, creativity, innovation, social progress and wealth. Lost opportunity creates both fiscal and social costs for the nation. The cost to the community in lost earnings, tax, and health and welfare for each early school leaver is conservatively estimated at $1 million over their lifetime.

There are many factors in a child's background which can play a significant part in their ability to succeed at school. Some of the known direct and indirect barriers that impede access to education include; poverty, experiences of violence and bullying, remoteness, lack of cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and coming from a refugee or migrant background.

Through a review of published research, sector expertise and intelligence from our grantees, it is clear certain cohorts of children and young people experience barriers to educational opportunity and attainment, particularly in early education and at school transition points.

These cohorts include:

- those living in rural or regional locations
- First Nations students
- those living in low socio-economic communities
- children and young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds
- young carers
- young people in Out of Home Care
- LGBTQIA+ students
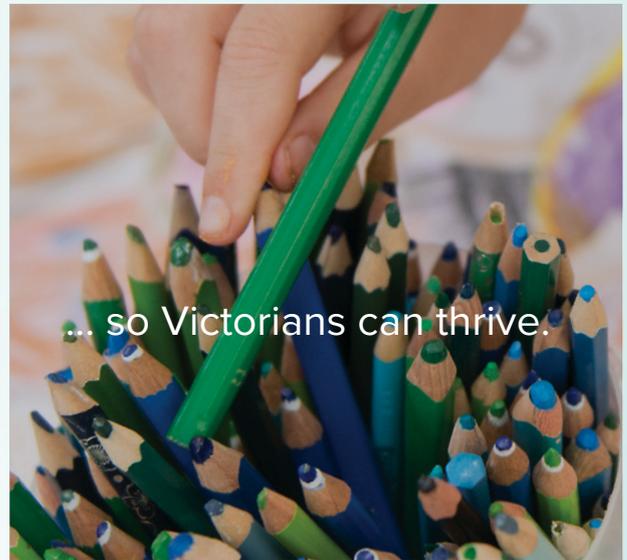
- children and young people experiencing family violence
- those experiencing or at risk of, homelessness
- children and young people living with mental health conditions.

The Ross Trust recognises the challenges to achieving educational equity and enabling young people to complete secondary schooling are particularly complex and multi-faceted. The Trust is working towards a desired change to support the improvement of educational outcomes for vulnerable students that engage and partner with students, not only in the classroom, but in the home and community. This desired change will guide the Trust's work and those seeking funding, to target and focus our work towards common outcomes.

The Ross Trust Educational Equity funding priority is focused on improving educational attainment of Victorian children. It is informed by the *United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 4*, knowledge from our grantees, published research and sector expertise.

The original corpus of the Ross Trust comprised the whole of the Estate of Mr Roy Everard Ross who died in 1970. Mr Ross left a portfolio of assets for the Trust comprising shares, real property and a quarry, today operating as Hillview Quarries. The quarry is located on the Mornington Peninsula and as such the Trust considers its continued support for this region as one of its priorities.

EDUCATIONAL EQUITY DESIRED CHANGE

Young people in Victoria have equitable access to educational opportunities so they complete secondary school.

LEVERS FOR CHANGE

Through a comprehensive approach of reviewing research and expert consultations, the Ross Trust has identified three levers for change that support and contribute to achieving the Educational Equity Desired Change:

- **Increase early learning participation** – support engagement in early learning (ages 0-5) and improve readiness to commence primary school.
- **Support at education transition points** – support students, schools and communities to reduce educational disengagement at critical transition points.
- **Strengthen school and community connections** – enhance school effectiveness and capability to establish and maintain engagement.

Transition points in a child's education present a set of opportunities and challenges as they grow and progress in their learning. The three critical transition points in education are:

- from early childhood education and care into formal schooling
- from primary school into secondary school
- from secondary school into senior secondary, further education, training or employment.

FUNDING APPROACHES

The Ross Trust has identified the following funding approaches which will be given preference when considering and reviewing grant applications:

- initiatives which provide a range of pathways to education and improved educational attainment for vulnerable students
- initiatives that engage, support and encourage parents and carers to be partners in their child's learning
- individual, community and school-based partnerships and approaches that improve educational opportunities and attainment for the identified at risk cohorts
- programs that reduce or prevent educational disengagement at critical transition points
- models or initiatives that improve teaching and community-based practices to better understand, support and engage diverse cohorts of students at risk of educational disengagement
- place-based approaches to improve educational outcomes in low socio-economic communities
- programs that improve school readiness
- activities that support the collection and application of data to improve policy practice and cultural support of disadvantaged students
- projects that address the mental health resilience of children and young people who are at risk of disengagement
- initiatives which encourage children and young people's sense of belonging and connection to their community and school
- initiatives that are scientific and evidence-based with measurable outcomes and provide opportunities to share data about educational program effectiveness.

ELIGIBILITY

The Ross Trust can only consider funding requests from organisations that:

- clearly demonstrate alignment to one or more of the strategic priority levers for change as outlined in the Educational Equity Theory of Change diagram in these guidelines
- are one of the following eligible entities:
  - Incorporated Association
  - Company Limited by Guarantee
  - Indigenous Corporation, Association or Cooperative
  - Cooperative
  - Victorian state government schools
- operate in Victoria or who will use the grant for the benefit of Victorians
- have an Australian Business Number
- are registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (Victorian state government schools are exempt).

HOW WE FUND

Types of grants available:

- **Smart Grants:** up to $40,000 per year for up to three years.

Organisations can only have one active Smart Grant at any one time. For universities, the Trust will only accept one funding request for Educational Equity at a time.

- **Advocacy Grants:** up to $50,000 per year for up to three years (by invitation only)
- **Challenge and Change Grants:** $40,000 to $100,000 per year for up to three years (by invitation only).

The Ross Trust undertakes research and analysis to understand the field and relevant issues for the Educational Equity funding priority. We partner with organisations whose mission and activities align with the Trust's Educational Equity funding priorities.

Challenge and Change and Advocacy Grants are therefore available by invitation only and may be invited throughout the year.

ROSS TRUST THEORY OF CHANGE

EDUCATIONAL EQUITY

DESIRED CHANGE: Young people in Victoria have equitable access to educational opportunities so they complete secondary school

THE ROSS TRUST

CONTEXT

The Trust has developed a desired change to improve educational outcomes for vulnerable students by supporting evidence based practices which engage and partner with students, not only in the classroom, but in the home and community.

Levers for achieving change include:

- increasing participation in early learning education (ages 0-5)
- supporting students, schools and communities at transition points
- encouraging school and community practices that increase educational effectiveness and student outcomes.

LEVERS FOR CHANGE

Increase early learning participation

Reduce barriers to attending early learning education

▲

Increase engagement in early learning education

▲

Support at education transition points

Reduce educational disengagement at critical transition points

▲

Improve school and community knowledge of risks and support required at transition points

▲

Strengthen school and community connections

Improve policies, practice, partnerships and culture to support vulnerable students

▲

Increase in quality and effectiveness of school and community support

▲

DESIRED OUTCOMES

Improved readiness to commence and participate in primary school

▲

Increased student preparedness and engagement at transition points

▲

Greater school effectiveness and capability to establish and maintain engagement

▲

INDICATORS OF CHANGE

- Improved Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) scores in target locations
- Increased early learning participation and enrolment rates
- Increased parents/carers knowledge of the benefits of early learning education
- Increased enrolment in the first year of primary school

- Increased partnerships with parents/carers and community
- Increased retention rates at transition points
- Improved student wellbeing including mental health and community connection
- Increased personal resilience and cultural connection
- Increased school capability to support vulnerable students

- Increased secondary school completion rates
- Improved data collection processes and capacity to utilise data
- Increased school and community connection and collaboration

Greater opportunities