

Innovation Fund 2021 Guidelines

Commonwealth policy entity: Department of Education, Skills and Employment

Administering entity English Australia
(Program Administrator)

Enquiries: If you have any questions, please contact
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1. About the grant

The purpose of the Innovation Fund commencing from 1 July 2021, is to allow eligible Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students (CRICOS) registered private higher education and private English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS) providers to apply for up to \$150,000 to change their business models.

The grant is targeted to the private higher education and private ELICOS providers, most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and border closures in 2020.

The main objective of the grant is to support eligible private higher education and ELICOS providers most affected by COVID-19 border closures to change their business models to grow offshore and online delivery.

This grant will be administered by an appropriate peak industry body, known as the Program Administrator. The Program Administrator will act on behalf of the Department of Education, Skills and Employment (the department).

The Program Administrator will be responsible for:

- Administering the Program on behalf of the department
- Assessing applications from eligible providers
- Approving the allocation of funding to eligible providers
- Distributing grant funding to successful providers
- Acquitting funding provided to successful providers in line with the objectives of the Program
- Reviewing, collating and presenting grant statistics upon completion.

The department will be responsible for undertaking further suitability and compliance checks if required prior to the application being considered by the Program Administrator.

This grant will be administered by the Program Administrator on behalf of the department.

The grant is to be undertaken in accordance with the [Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines \(CGRGs\)](#)¹

¹ <https://www.finance.gov.au/sites/default/files/commonwealth-grants-rules-and-guidelines.pdf>

2. Grant amount and grant period

The total Program funding available under this grant opportunity for private higher education and private ELICOS providers, for activities in the first half of the 2021-22 financial year, is \$9 million GST exclusive.

If eligible, you will be able to apply for funding of up to \$150,000 to change your business models to deliver more education online and to international students offshore, in line with the objectives of the grant activity outlined in Section 1.

Grantees must only use their grant funding on developing new business models, establishing new markets and growing offshore and online delivery methods that align with the above-mentioned acceptable innovation and investment proposals.

Grantees are encouraged to consider contributing additional funding from their own resources to support these grant funding opportunities.

Commonwealth grant funding under this grant opportunity cannot exceed the amount of available funds.

2.1 Grant amount

Grantees will receive up to \$150,000.

Providers may apply for less than \$150,000.

If the Program is oversubscribed, the Program Administrator will reduce the amount of funding allocated to each grantee in proportion with the reduction in international student revenue each grantee has experienced between the 2019 and 2020 calendar years.

2.2 Grant period

This grant opportunity is available in the 2021–22 financial year. The opening date for applications is 2 June 2021 and the closing date for applications is 30 June 2021.

Grant funding must be expended by 31 December 2021.

The maximum grant period is one (1) year, noting that expenditure is between 1 July 2021 and 31 December 2021.

3. The grant selection process

In your application, you will provide evidence against eligibility and selection criteria. The Program Administrator will use this information to ensure funds are allocated to private higher education and private ELICOS providers most affected by COVID-19 border closures. The department may verify the information you provide in your application.

3.1 Eligibility criteria

If the applicant does not satisfy the eligibility criteria, their application will not be considered.

To be eligible to receive a grant the applicant must:

- Demonstrate the effect of border closures on their business turnover by providing evidence they:
 - received more than 50% of revenue² from international students in calendar year 2019
 - Had international student revenue decline by 30 per cent or more between calendar year 2019 and calendar year 2020
- Be a CRICOS-registered private higher education or private ELICOS provider
- Be privately owned
- Not be a Table A, Table B or Table C provider (outlined in *Higher Education Act 2003*), as registered by Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA)
- Agree to the sharing of any information provided to the Program Administrator in the context of this application with the department
- Agree to have international student revenue information verified with that reported to the Tuition Protection Service for calendar year 2019 and calendar year 2020

3.2 Selection criteria

In addition to meeting the eligibility criteria as outlined in Section 3.1, you must address the following requirements in your application:

- a. Ability to adapt to the current environment
 - Outline your business' efforts to adapt to the current environment. This may include how your business has/will deliver more education online and to international students offshore
- b. Benefits of the grant funding to your business
 - Outline how the grant opportunity will assist your business to achieve long-term viability, beyond the completion of the grant. This can include detailing how you plan to engage with stakeholders across new target markets, to grow student numbers and ensure the pivot to new markets

² Revenue from international students will be taken to mean the funds received from international students to pay for their tuition, in line with information reported to the Commonwealth Tuition Protection Service.

3.3 Ineligibility

You are not eligible to apply for this grant opportunity if you:

- Do not meet eligibility criteria listed at Section 3.1
- Do not address selection requirements at Section 3.2
- Currently are receiving funding from another government source for the same purpose
- Are currently facing any sanctions or being investigated for any compliance breaches
- Are a consortium.

3.4 Suitability and risk assessment

As a part of eligibility assessment, you **may** be subject to further suitability and compliance checks with the assistance of governing bodies including the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA), the Australian Skills and Quality Authority (ASQA) and Tuition Protection Service (TPS).

This will assist in determining any relevant information including:

- Compliance and quality assessment
- Accreditation/s held
- Financial viability

By submitting an application, you agree to these types of checks being conducted. This includes relevant information being shared with a determined Commonwealth entity.

The Program Administrator may reject your application based upon these assessments.

3.5 Length of operation

To be eligible for the grant, your business must demonstrate involvement and operation within the industry as a registered CRICOS provider before border closures were announced on 19 March 2020.

Your business must also be currently operating and registered as a CRICOS provider.

4. How to apply?

4.1 Application process

Applications will open on Wednesday 2 June 2021.

You will have four (4) weeks to submit your application.

You will need to apply to the Program Administrator addressing the criteria set out in Sections 3.1 and 3.2 within these guidelines by no later than 11:59pm AEST on 30 June 2021.

Any questions specific to the application process are to be directed to the Program Administrator.

4.2 Documentation and attachments

You will need to attach any supporting evidence to your application, including financial statements where applicable.

The Program Administrator or the department may seek further clarification about the documentation and information provided as a part of your application.

4.3 Grant Assessment

The Program Administrator will assess each application against the criteria outlined in Section 3.

5. Grant timeframe

The grant will be delivered across the 2021-22 financial year, with funds being distributed from 15 July 2021.

The application period will run from 2 June 2021 until 30 June 2021 (four weeks).

You must submit the application before the closing date, by 11:59PM AEST on 30 June 2021.

5.1 Late applications

Late applications will not be accepted.

5.2 Expected timeframe

Table 1: Expected timing for this grant opportunity

Activity	Timeframe
Application process opens	2 June 2021
Applications process closes	30 June 2021
Assessment of applications	Completed by 9 July 2021
Advice to applicants	From 9 July 2021
Grant payments made	From 23 July 2021 (or when agreement is signed, whichever comes first)
End date of grant activity	31 December 2021
Reconciliation of all grant expenditure	Before 30 June 2022

6. Grant activities

6.1 Eligible grant activities

Grantees may choose to spend grant funding in line with the objectives of the Program as outlined in Section 1, as long as funding is not used for activities outlined in Section 6.2.

Grantees must commit grant funds to, or incur costs of, eligible grant activities between 1 July 2021 and 31 December 2021. Grantees must complete all eligible grant activities before 30 June 2022. Grantees must reconcile their grant funding with the Program Administrator before 30 June 2022.

Eligible expenditure items could include:

- Developing new educational products and online programs for the delivery of private higher education and private ELICOS courses
- Engaging professional consultation services
- Creating new business plans and models
- Promoting new market opportunities.

Not all expenditure on grant activities may be eligible for grant funding.

The department has overarching and final determination authority on eligible expenditure of grant funding. If there are any clarification on spending eligibility, the Program Administrator is to be approached initially, where advice may be sought from the department in making determinations. Grantees must incur the expenditure on their grant activities between the commencement date and completion date of their grant agreement for it to be eligible.

6.2 Ineligible grant activities

Grantees cannot use the grant for:

- Ordinary administration costs such as rent, electricity and other utility bills
- Purchase of land
- Repayment of debts
- Purchase of vehicles
- Covering of retrospective costs
- Major construction/capital works
- Activities for which other Commonwealth, state, territory or local government bodies have primary responsibility
- Payment of ongoing or permanently employed staff salaries.

The Program Administrator cannot provide grant funding to applicants that receive funding from another government source for the same purpose.

6.3 Evidence of expenditure

The grantee is required to provide the evidence of their expenditure when reconciling their grant funds with the Program Administrator. The grantee must also prove no funds have been used for ineligible grant activities. Grantees must reconcile their grant funds between 1 January 2022 and 30 June 2022.

Any unspent grant funds or grant funds used for ineligible activities will be required to be returned to the Commonwealth.

7. Grant delegate and approval process

7.1 Assessment of grant applications

The Program Administrator will review your application against the eligibility criteria. Only eligible applications will be considered through an ad-hoc grant process as detailed within the Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines 2017 - 2.4 (c).

The Program Administrator will assess whether the application is eligible utilising the criteria at Section 3.1.

7.2 Who will approve the grants application

The Program Administrator will decide which applications to approve for receipt of a grant in accordance with these guidelines and the availability of grant funding for the grant opportunity.

If the Program is oversubscribed, the Program Administrator will reduce the amount of funding each grantee will receive in line with the reduction in international student revenue³ each grantee saw between 2019 and 2020.

There is no appeal mechanism for decisions to approve or not approve a grant.

7.3 Dispute resolution

Grantees should seek to resolve any disputes directly with the Program Administrator. In the unlikely event a dispute cannot be satisfactorily resolved directly between the grantee and the Program Administrator, the grantee may refer the dispute to the department.

8. Successful grant applications

8.1 The grant agreement

The grantee must enter into a legally binding agreement with the Program Administrator.

The Program Administrator must execute a grant agreement with successful applicants before they can make any payments. The Commonwealth and the Program Administrator are not responsible for any of your expenditure until a grant agreement is executed. If successful applicants choose to start their projects before they have an executed grant agreement, they do so at their own risk.

Each grant agreement may have specific conditions determined by the assessment process or other considerations made by the decision maker. These are identified in the agreement.

Successful applicants will have ten (10) business days from the date of a written offer to sign and return the grant agreement. The grant agreement is not considered to be executed until both the successful applicant and the Program Administrator have signed the agreement.

The offer may lapse if both parties do not sign the agreement within this time. Under certain circumstances, the Program Administrator may extend this period.

The Program Administrator or the Commonwealth may recover grant funds if there is a breach of the grant agreement.

8.2 Commonwealth Child Safe Framework

Grantees will be required to comply with all child safety obligations included in the agreement with the Program Administrator. Irrespective of the child safety obligations in the agreement grantees must always comply with your state and territory legislative requirements for working with children and mandatory reporting.

³ Revenue from international students will be taken to mean the funds received from international students to pay for their tuition, in line with information reported to the Commonwealth Tuition Protection Service.

8.3 How the grant will be paid

The agreement will state the maximum grant amount to be paid. Payment will only be made once the agreement has been executed.

The payment will not exceed the maximum amount under any circumstances. Grantees are responsible for meeting any additional costs they incur under the grant opportunity.

To determine the amount to be paid to successful applicants, the Program Administrator may take into account the reduction in international student revenue⁴ each applicant saw between 2019 and 2020.

8.4 Grant payments and GST

Successful applicants should consider speaking to a tax advisor about the effect of receiving funding before they enter into an agreement. They can also visit the [Australian Taxation Office website](#) for more information.

9. Notification of the grant

The Program Administrator will advise you of the outcome of your application in writing. The Program Administrator will advise you of any specific conditions attached to the grant.

9.1 Grant acquittal and reporting

The grantee must submit reports in line with the timeframes in the agreement with the Program Administrator. The grantee must provide permission for the Program Administrator to share these reports with the Commonwealth.

Reports will include:

- acquittal of the grant monies in line with the objectives of the program as listed at Section 1
- contributions of participants directly related to the grant activity
- the actual or anticipated impact on international student numbers caused by the activities funded through this grant

The Grantee will [also] be responsible for:

- meeting the terms and conditions of the agreement with the Program Administrator and managing the grant activity efficiently and effectively
- complying with record keeping, reporting and acquittal requirements as set out in the agreement
- participating in a grant Program evaluation.

⁴ Revenue from international students will be taken to mean the funds received from international students to pay for their tuition, in line with information reported to the Commonwealth Tuition Protection Service.

10. Announcement of the grant

If you successfully apply for grant funding, your grant will be listed on the GrantConnect website 21 calendar days after the date of effect as required by Section 5.3 of the [CGRGs](#).

The Minister for Education and Youth or the department may publicly announce grantees. You may not announce the outcome of your application to this grant round unless advised by the department.

The department may also publish details of subsequent activities completed as a result of this grant opportunity on its website or through other media.

Such public details may also include information provided by grantees, which is compiled or obtained during the assessment of applications and negotiation of grant agreements. This excludes information that the Commonwealth determines is confidential.

11. Grant evaluation

The department may evaluate the particulars of this grant to gather statistical data to measure if policy outcomes and objectives have been achieved, and the department may use any information provided to the Program Administrator during the grant activity for this and related purposes.