



Frequently asked questions

Australia's Economic Accelerator (AEA)

Eligibility

Who will be eligible to apply for AEA grants?

Subject to the passage of legislation, the AEA program grants will be open to Australian universities listed at Tables A and B in the *Higher Education Support Act 2003*. Universities will be encouraged to partner with other institutions including research organisations and businesses as part of their proposal.

What projects will be eligible for AEA grants?

Universities will be eligible to apply for AEA grant funding for projects that satisfy the eligibility criteria set out in the *Other Grants Guidelines (Research) 2017* and administrative guidelines.

As international experience shows that business engagement and partnership is critical to commercialisation success, a level of industry engagement is also a requirement for Stage 1 applicants. Proposed project activities will also need to be designed to provide an experimental proof of concept.

Stage 2 applicants will have to demonstrate a formal partnership and committed co-investment from an industry partner as well as a plan to demonstrate proof of scale; that the technology will be validated in an industrially relevant environment. Program guidelines detailing application processes, assessment criteria and other specific information will be published on the Department's website ahead of the program's commencement.

Can I collaborate with other universities?

Yes, applications can include more than one university and collaboration is encouraged. Project applications that include multiple universities will need to nominate a lead university to enter into a grant agreement with the Commonwealth.

I am not an Australian citizen. Can I apply for an AEA grant?

Grants will be awarded to universities. Researchers employed at those universities will be eligible for AEA grant funding, subject to fulfilling the other eligibility requirements.

Can I apply for a grant without the support of a commercial partner?

All Stage 1 projects must demonstrate some engagement with industry, and projects with commercial investment partners will be prioritised. Stage 2 projects must have a formal partnership with industry and co-investment is required to receive an AEA grant.

Grants

What is the difference between Stage 1 and Stage 2 grants?

Grants under the AEA program will be available in two stages. Stage 1 grants are for proof-of-concept (Technology Readiness Level 3-5) projects. Up to \$500,000 is available per project. Projects must be completed between 3 months to 1 year from the project's commencement. Stage 1 applications must demonstrate some industry engagement, which may include matched funding or in-kind support. Projects with commercial investment partners will be prioritised.

Stage 2 grants are for proof-of-scale (Technology Readiness Level 5-7) projects. Up to \$5 million is available per project. Projects must be completed between 3 months to 2 years from the project's commencement. Stage 2 applications must demonstrate a formal partnership and committed co-investment from an industry partner.

How much funding is available?

Up to \$500,000 is available per Stage 1 project and up to \$5 million is available per Stage 2 grant.

What are the co-investment requirements?

International experience shows that business engagement and partnership is critical to commercialisation success. Stage 1 applications must demonstrate some industry engagement, which may include matched funding or in-kind support. Projects with commercial investment partners will be prioritised. Stage 2 applications must demonstrate a formal partnership and committed co-investment from an industry partner.

Do projects need to complete Stage 1 to be eligible for Stage 2?

Grants under the AEA program will be available in two stages. Projects do not need to have received Stage 1 funding to be eligible for a Stage 2 grant.

Applicants should consider the level of commercial readiness of their project to determine which stage grant to apply for. Stage 1 grants are for proof-of-concept (Technology Readiness Level 3-5) projects. Stage 2 grants are for proof-of-scale (Technology Readiness Level 5-7) projects.

Projects may progress through the Stages, based on continued success and achievement of milestones. To incentivise ongoing excellence, the quantum of AEA funding increases as projects mature towards at-scale commercialisation.

Where projects funded under a Stage 1 grant opportunity successfully progresses along the TRL scale to TRL 4-5, subject to meeting the eligibility criteria, applicants may consider applying for a Stage 2 grant opportunity to further accelerate projects to TRL 5-7.

Stage 1 recipients will not be considered for Stage 2 funding until they have achieved their Stage 1 milestones and progressed to the proof-of-scale level of commercial readiness.

What funding opportunities are available for projects that successfully complete Stage 2?

The expanded Main Sequence Ventures fund provides a high-value opportunity for projects that successfully progressed through the AEA. Alternatively, outcomes from the AEA can be picked up by businesses who can take them forward or by other sources of venture capital investment (including through other schemes such as the Clean Energy Finance Corporation).

Application process

When will applications open and close?

Subject to the passage of legislation, the AEA program will operate on a rolling basis with applications accepted at any time throughout the year. Further details on the application process will be provided in the program guidelines, which will be released ahead of the commencement of the program.

Selection process

Who will govern the AEA program?

Subject to the passage of legislation, the AEA will be governed by an expert commercialisation board (AEA Board), supported by expert Priority Managers. The AEA Board will consist of up to eight members appointed by the Minister for Education. Board members will possess experience and knowledge in research and its commercialisation, and represent government, industry and research sectors.

Priority Managers will be highly qualified, experienced and motivated business and technology specialists. Priority Managers will also work with successful applicants to foster connections and formal collaboration arrangements with industry partners.

The AEA Board will oversee the Priority Managers and advise the Minister for Education on the commercialisation of research through a Research Commercialisation Strategy which is to be developed every five years.

How will successful projects be selected?

Applications will be assessed against selection criteria by the Priority Managers and/or the AEA Board. The selection criteria will be published in the program guidelines prior to the program commencement. The Priority Managers and/or the AEA Board will recommend successful applicants to the Program Delegate. The Department of Education will award funding to successful applicants under Conditions of Grant.

Priority Managers will both assess applications and ‘work with the sector to identify emerging opportunities for the program’. How will conflicts of interest be managed?

As consultants engaged by the Department of Education, Priority Managers will be obligated to comply with the Department’s probity framework. Conflicts of interest will be managed in accordance with the relevant legislative framework including:

- *Public Service Act 1999*
- *Public Service Regulations 1999*
- *Crimes Act 1914*
- *Criminal Code Act 1995*
- *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*
- *Foreign Influence Transparency Scheme Act 2018.*

Further information

If you have any questions on the AEA Program, please do not hesitate to contact the Department at accelerator@dese.gov.au.