



Frequently Asked Questions

Australia's Economic Accelerator (AEA) Seed Grants

Who will be eligible to apply for AEA Seed Grants?

Proposals must satisfy the eligibility criteria set out in the *Other Grants Guidelines 2017* (Research) and the *AEA Seed Program 2023* (AEA Seed) Program Administrative Guidelines.

Proposals for AEA Seed Grants can be made by Australian universities listed at Tables A and B in the [Higher Education Support Act 2003](#). Universities are encouraged to partner with other institutions including research organisations, industry, and businesses as part of their proposal.

To be eligible as a named participant on an AEA Seed grant, you must meet the criteria for a Lead, Collaborating, or Partner Entrepreneur. A Lead Entrepreneur is required to commit a minimum of 0.5 FTE to the project over its term.

What projects will be eligible for AEA Seed Grants?

AEA Seed Grants will consider projects that are seeking to test research relevance against commercial outcomes.

Priority consideration will be given to projects supporting research commercialisation activities that align with the national interest and address four priority areas including:

- low emissions
- medical technology
- value add-in resources
- value add-in agriculture, forestry and fisheries.

AEA Seed Grants will be run in two tranches with each round open for approximately six weeks. Each tranche will preference two of the four national interest priorities described above.

- Preference for the first tranche of AEA Seed Grants will be given to proposals or projects that align with *low emission technologies and renewables* and *medical technology*.
- Preference for the second tranche of AEA Seed Grants will be given to proposals for projects that align with *value add-in resources* and *value add-in agriculture, forestry and fisheries*.

Successful applicants to the AEA Seed Grants will present projects with clearly articulated research translation pathways that address progression through technology readiness levels.

Applicants may be invited to interview with the grants assessors to present their project rationale.

Program guidelines detailing proposal processes, assessment criteria and other information are published on the [department's website](#).

Can I collaborate with other universities?

Yes. Proposals can include more than one university and collaboration is encouraged. Proposals that include multiple universities will need to nominate a Lead Organisation. Australian universities listed at Tables A and B in the [Higher Education Support Act 2003](#) can enter into a grant agreement with the Commonwealth.

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

Grants will be awarded to universities rather than individuals. To be eligible as a named participant in an AEA Seed Grant you must fulfil the eligibility requirements of a Lead, Collaborating, or Partner Entrepreneur.

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

Yes. Your proposal can be submitted for the AEA Seed Grants without the support of a commercial partner. It is important that projects can demonstrate some engagement with industry. Projects with commercial investment partners will be prioritised.

Can I apply for the second tranche of AEA Seed grants if my application is not relating to value add-in resources and value add-in agriculture, forestry and fisheries?

Yes. It is important to note that applications that align with any one of the seven NRF priorities will also be considered for Tranche 2, but preference will be given to those applications that align with value add-in resources and value add-in agriculture, forestry and fisheries.

Can I be eligible for an AEA Ignite Grant if I was unsuccessful in the AEA Seed Grant?

Yes. An applicant can be eligible to apply for an AEA Ignite Grant (proof-of-concept) if they were unsuccessful for the AEA Seed Grant. Additionally, they do not need to apply to AEA Seed to be eligible to apply for the forthcoming AEA Ignite Grants.

Is there a limit on the number of proposals per university?

There is no limit to the number of proposals per university.



Grants

Why are we running the AEA Seed Grants?

The AEA Seed Grants are being undertaken by the Department of Education as a pilot for the AEA program (AEA Ignite and AEA Innovate). It will enable the program to test and refine key processes and decisions and demonstrate the capacity of the program to deliver limited grants and intended outcomes, prior to full implementation of the full AEA program later this year.

How much funding is available?

A total of \$10 million is available for AEA Seed Grants, with a minimum of \$50,000 and a maximum of \$500,000 available for each project.

Funds awarded to a project through the AEA Seed Grants will be deducted from potential AEA Ignite (proof-of-concept) proposals which will be available through the AEA program. For example: if \$200,000 is awarded through AEA Seed Grants, the project can progress to AEA Ignite Grants, at a higher Technology Readiness Level (TRL). As the total funds can't exceed \$500,000 per project, the project would only be eligible for a maximum of \$300,000 through AEA Ignite Grants.

Funds are associated with projects and not the applicant.

All grants funded under the AEA Seed Grants and AEA Ignite Grants will be for a period of up to 12 months from the date the project is awarded funding.

What are the co-investment requirements?

International experience shows that business engagement and partnership is critical to commercialisation success. AEA Seed Grant and AEA Ignite Grant proposals must demonstrate some level of industry engagement, which may or may not include funding or in-kind support. Projects with commercial investment partners will be prioritised. AEA Innovate Grant proposals will be required to demonstrate a formal partnership and committed co-investment from an industry partner.

Do projects need to go through all the different stages of the AEA? Is there a need to complete the AEA Seed or AEA Ignite before progressing to AEA Innovate?

Grants administered through the AEA will be available in multiple stages. Projects do not need to receive AEA Seed or AEA Ignite funding to be eligible for AEA Innovate funding.

Applicants should consider the level of commercial readiness of their project to determine which grant to apply for. AEA Seed and AEA Ignite grants are for proof-of-concept (Technology Readiness Level 3-5) projects. AEA Innovate 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, AEA funding increases as projects mature towards at-scale commercialisation.

Where funded projects successfully progress along the TRL scale to TRL 3-5, subject to meeting the eligibility criteria, applicants may consider applying for an AEA Innovate grant opportunity to further accelerate projects to TRL 5-7.

AEA Seed grantees will not be eligible for AEA Innovate grants until they have achieved their AEA Seed Grant milestones and progressed to the proof-of-scale (TRL of 5 or above).

What funding opportunities are available for projects that successfully complete the AEA Seed and/or AEA Ignite milestone(s)?

AEA Seed is the pilot scale version of the AEA Ignite. After completing the AEA Seed milestones, applicants will have the opportunity to apply for either AEA Ignite (proof-of-concept) or the AEA Innovate (proof-of-scale) grants and/or the expanded CSIRO's Main Sequence Ventures program. Any funds received during the AEA Seed tranches will count towards total eligible grant funding (max \$500,000) for AEA Ignite grants. AEA Ignite and AEA Innovate grants will commence in mid-2023.

Where can I find more information on the National Reconstruction Fund Priorities which the AEA grant programs align with?

General information on the National Reconstruction Fund (NRF) Priorities and how the fund will operate can be found on the [Department of Industry, Science and Resources' website](#). Examples can also be found on the [department's website](#).

Interpretation of the Program Guidelines

Can you provide further details on eligible Organisations that fall under the definition of a Partner Organisation?

A Partner Organisation is an organisation that is providing cash or in-kind to the Lead Organisation with an interest in the research project or its commercial capabilities. For an organisation to be a Partner organisation, it must meet the criteria specified under Section 4.3 of the Program Guidelines.

It is important to note that the Program Guidelines also detail the types of organisations that *cannot* be a Partner Organisation and therefore are not eligible to participate in an AEA grant, including a controlled entity of any Lead or Collaborating Organisation.



Can an overseas company or institution be nominated as a Partner Organisation or Collaborating Organisation?

An overseas company or institution (which will make cash and/or in-kind contributions) can be nominated as a Partner Organisation if it satisfies the eligibility requirements under Section 4.3 of the Program Guidelines. A Collaborating Organisation cannot be based overseas.

Is it mandatory to nominate a Collaborating Entrepreneur and/or Partner Entrepreneur in the AEA Seed application?

No. Nominating a Collaborating Entrepreneur and/or Partner Entrepreneur for the AEA Seed Grants is an optional requirement and will not lead your application being excluded at the eligibility inspection stage if you don't nominate one.

It is important to note however that nominating a Lead Entrepreneur is a mandatory requirement in order to be eligible for the AEA Seed Grants.

If an organisation is listed as a Partner Organisation on a proposal, is it a requirement to have a representative from that organisation listed as a 'Partner Entrepreneur' on the project?

No. A Partner Organisation is an Australian or overseas organisation, other than a Lead or Collaborating Organisation, which satisfies the eligibility requirements under section 4.3 of the Program Guidelines. If an organisation is listed as a Partner organisation, there is no requirement to have a representative from that organisation listed as an 'Partner Entrepreneur'.

Partner Entrepreneurs must meet the eligibility criteria specified under section 4.4 of the Program Guidelines.

Why are the headings on the Business Base Template for AEA Seed Grants on the department's website different to the selection criteria headings under section 6 of the Program Guidelines? Which one do we use in developing a Business Case for AEA Seed Grant?

The selection criteria and the indicated weighting in section 6 of the Program Guidelines will be used by the panel to review the proposals. When developing a business case for the AEA Seed Grant, please use the [guidance](#) on the department's website.

Where can I find a copy of the AEA Seed Grant sample proposal in accordance with Section 7 of the Program Guidelines?

A [sample proposal](#) is available on the department's website, and is also available on the [Research Management System](#).



In regard to demonstrating the two phases for projects requesting over \$200,000, are the phases to be separated in timeframe and budget? Can they overlap in terms of timeframe? Are these separations to be incorporated into our proposal within the business case?

Proposals seeking more than \$200,000 must identify and cost at least two phases of work that break the project into distinct steps in accordance with section 3.1 of the AEA Seed Grants 2023 Program Administrative Guidelines (the guidelines). These two phases are to be separated in timeframe and budget and must be carried out within the grant period- between three to 12 months from the project's commencement (section 3.2 of guidelines). Further information including budgeting information regarding the two phases should be recorded in your Business Case.

Application process

When will proposals open and close?

The AEA Seed will accept proposals across two rounds which will be open for approximately six weeks each. The first tranche opened on 6 February 2023 and closed on 17 March 2023, and the second tranche opened on 27 March 2023 and will close on 5 May 2023. Further details on the application process are provided in the Program Guidelines. AEA Ignite and AEA Innovate grants will open later in 2023.

What Technology Readiness Level (TRL) does my proposal need to be at to apply for AEA Seed and AEA Ignite funding?

Your proposal should be at proof-of-concept TRL 3-5. Projects below TRL 3 may be considered depending on potential to progress to higher TRL and following consideration by the AEA Executive Director and/or the research commercialisation Expert Advisors.

What is the difference between the three AEA grants? How do I know which one to apply for?

AEA Seed – will be open across two tranches, for approximately six weeks per tranche. The first tranche will open in early February 2023. The second tranche will open late-March 2023. Grants of up to \$500,000 per-project for up to one year will be awarded across both tranches.

AEA Ignite – funding will be awarded each year through the AEA Ignite grants (proof-of-concept), with funding of up to \$500,000 available per grant for up to one year. Opening and closing dates has not yet been determined for AEA Ignite grants.

AEA Innovate – funding will be dedicated to proof-of-scale projects and will require at least one industry partner with co-contributions. Applicants will be able to apply for up to \$5 million in funding



for a period of up to two years. Applicants will need to provide a detailed business plan, clearly articulating the commercial potential, and have a TRL of 5 or above.

Both AEA Seed and AEA Ignite are focussed on translating research activity into commercial outcomes including demonstrating *proof-of-concept* to validate research in a laboratory. In comparison, AEA Innovate is focussed more on *proof-of-scale* which tests the usability, functionality and design of a working model and how the idea would work in a real-life scenario and solve problems for the end user.

In deciding which AEA grant to apply for, you must take in to account the level of commercial readiness of your project and the volume of funding you require.

Submitting a proposal

How do I submit my proposal?

Proposals are submitted through the Australian Research Council's [Research Management System](#) (RMS). RMS registration is required to gain access to the proposal form and to submit an AEA grant. You will need to apply for an applicant role in the RMS system to be able to submit a proposal.

Is this proposal similar to submitting a grant application to the ARC?

Yes. RMS is managed by the Australian Research Council (ARC). Applicants that have applied for funding with the ARC will be familiar with RMS. The ARC can only provide technical support for the RMS system and will not be able to provide support and information specifically regarding the AEA. All communication relating to the AEA program only and not the RMS system should be directed to the Department of Education at accelerator@education.gov.au.

RMS Support Desk Phone: 02 6287 6789

RMS Support Desk Email: RMSSupport@arc.gov.au

There is also information about RMS on the ARC Website – [Research Management System \(RMS\) Information](#) and on the RGS Website – [General Information about RMS](#)

Do I need to submit the webform pitch before submitting a proposal for AEA Seed grants? Is the pitch compulsory?

No. For AEA Seed grants, applicants may submit proposals directly through the Research Management System (RMS).

Applicants may be invited to interview with the grants assessors to present their project rationale.

For AEA Ignite grant proposals, the pitch process will provide applicants with an opportunity to have a research translation specialist review their proposal **prior to** applying to further develop their proof-of-scale business case.



How many proposals do you anticipate funding out of AE Seed Grant Tranche 1, Tranche 2?

A total of \$10 million is available for AEA Seed Grants, with a minimum of \$50,000 and a maximum of \$500,000 available for each project. We anticipate funding between **50 to 100** AEA Seed Grants.

My AEA Seed Tranche 1 Proposal has multiple Partner Organisations, can I include multiple letters of support in B2 of the application form?

Yes. The page limit of the PDF upload in section B2 of the application form for AEA Seed Tranche 1 has been expanded from two to **ten pages**, allowing you submit multiple letters of support for Partner Organisations.

Data and Privacy Protocol for online applications

How is personal information provided by applicants on an AEA Seed grants application proposal being used and disclosed?

In accordance with section 13.3 of the Program Guidelines, the department is bound by the [Australian Privacy Principles](#) in the [Privacy Act 1988](#) (Privacy Act). Any personal information provided on an AEA Seed grants application form is collected by the department for the purposes of administering the AEA Seed program.

The department may:

- provide personal information contained in the AEA Seed proposal to third parties for the purposes of assessment for potential other funding opportunities
- copy, modify and otherwise deal with information contained in the AEA Seed proposal for the purpose of conducting the funding round
- share the personal information contained in the AEA Seed proposal with other government departments and agencies.

The department takes all reasonable steps to ensure that the personal information it holds is protected against loss, unauthorised access, use, modification or disclosure and other misuse.

How is information relating to a person's indigenous status on an AEA Seed grants application proposal used?

In order to complete an RMS profile, participants must answer a question about their indigenous status. If participants prefer not to answer this question they should choose "unstated". Information about indigenous status is not used to assess applications. However, it will be visible to other users of RMS. It will also be used as part of the department's evaluation of the program as a whole.



Do I need consent from a third party if I have included their personal information in the AEA Seed project summary?

Yes. Applicants should not include third-party personal information in the Project Summary unless the third-party individuals have consented to publication of that information.

What are the privacy impact requirements for Lead Organisations who submit an AEA Seed grants proposal?

Lead Organisations are to ensure that:

- if any personal information in an AEA Seed proposal submitted through RMS has not been provided directly by the individual to which the information relates to (named or unnamed participant), the individuals named in the proposal must have consented to that information being used and disclosed in accordance with the Program Guidelines
- they obtain the consent of researchers to the publication of their names, fields of research and institution provided in an AEA Seed Proposal
- they notify individual researchers (including from Collaborating or Partner Organisations) involved in the AEA Seed proposal, that if their proposal is successful, their name, field of research and institution may be published by the ARC, the department and/or the Minister in accordance with section 11 of Program Guidelines.

Selection process

Who will govern the AEA Seed grants?

The AEA Seed grants will be governed by an Executive Director and a team of research commercialisation Expert Advisors.

The AEA Executive Director is a highly qualified, experienced, and motivated business and technology specialist, who will also work with successful applicants to foster connections and formal collaboration arrangements with industry partners. The research commercialisation Expert Advisors will support the AEA Executive Director by providing technical expertise within the priority areas.

How will successful projects be selected?

Proposals will be assessed against selection criteria by the AEA Executive Director and Expert Advisors. The selection criteria are published in the [Program Guidelines](#). The AEA Executive Director and the research commercialisation Expert Advisors will recommend successful applicants to the Program Delegate. The Department of Education will award funding to successful applicants under [Conditions of Grant](#).



When will I know if my grant proposal is successful or not?

For AEA Seed, a decision is expected to be made within six weeks of the round closing. Successful grants will be published on the Department of Education website.

If my grant proposal is successful, can I start the project in 2024?

In accordance with section 1.3 of the Program Guidelines, if you are successful, we expect you will be able to commence your project upon approval of, and conditions being imposed on, the grant through a Conditions of Grant document (CoG).

AEA Seed is the pilot scale version of the AEA Ignite. AEA Ignite and AEA Innovate grants will commence in the second half of 2023. This may present a better option for you to consider if your project can only commence next year.

How do I appeal a decision on my proposal?

There is no appeal process for AEA Seed Grants. Decisions made on AEA Seed Grants proposals go through a rigorous assessment. The process also allows applicants who are declined to refine their proposal and resubmit for an AEA Ignite grant if desired.

As the AEA Executive Director will both assess proposals and work with the sector to identify emerging opportunities for the program, how will any conflicts of interest be managed?

The role is appointed by the Department of Education and, as such, the AEA Executive Director 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.*

If I am successful in the AEA Seed Grant, do industry partners or Partner Organisations have to be signatories of the funding agreement?

The Department of Education will award funding to successful applicants under Conditions of Grant. This will be an agreement between the Commonwealth, represented by the Department of Education, and the Lead Organisation (including the details of the Lead Organisation and Lead Entrepreneur representative).



Further information

If you have any further questions on the AEA program, please contact the Department of Education at accelerator@education.gov.au.

