



Frequently Asked Questions

Australia's Economic Accelerator (AEA) Seed Grants

Why were the Program Administrative Guidelines updated?

The AEA Seed program is the pilot for stage one proof-of-concept grants that will be known as AEA Ignite. As a pilot program, the Department of Education has closely monitored the implementation of AEA Seed Tranches One and 2 to identify feedback and improvements moving forward.

These identified improvements have been incorporated into the 2023 Seed Tranche 3 (AEA Seed) Program Administrative Guidelines (Program Guidelines) to maximise program efficiency and further strengthen the preparations for AEA Ignite.

What updates were made to the Program Administrative Guidelines?

The Program Guidelines have been updated to govern the administration of Tranche 3 of AEA Seed. Updates have been incorporated into the Program Guidelines to both improve the overall structure and clarity of the document.

It is strongly recommended that potential applicants familiarise themselves with the updated Program Guidelines for AEA Seed Tranche 3.

Key updates in the latest Program Guidelines include:

- Improved structure and clarity of information, including around eligibility, named participants and organisations.
- Revised selection criteria for assessment of applications.
 - There are now 4 selection criteria, down from 5. This streamlines the application and assessment processes and reduces repetition.
 - Weighting has been adjusted to better emphasise applications with research translation and commercialisation potential.
 - Further detail in each selection criterion will help guide applicants to support higher quality applications.
- Proposals must make a minimum contribution of at least 10 per cent of the total budget in cash and/or in-kind support from the combined participating organisations.

- Partner Organisation/s must be an Australian business entity/ies and must provide specified ASIC or equivalent documentation.
- Additional detail on eligible and ineligible grant activities.
 - This includes a formula for calculating eligible salary costs.

Who will be eligible to apply for AEA Seed grants?

Proposals must satisfy the eligibility criteria set out in Chapter 5 of the *Other Grants Guidelines 2017* (Research) and section 2 of the Program 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, 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. Your proposal must include only one Lead organisation and nominate only one lead entrepreneur to be eligible.

What projects will be eligible for AEA Tranche 3 grants?

AEA Seed Tranche 3 grants will consider projects that are seeking to test research relevance against commercial outcomes.

AEA Seed Tranche 3 will seek to support projects for research commercialisation activity in the following three priority areas (listed below) identified in the National Reconstruction Fund, with a special emphasis on projects that focus on advanced and additive manufacturing technologies:

- transport,
- defence capability, and
- enabling capabilities.

Projects outside of these priorities may be considered if funding allocations are not fully utilised.

AEA Seed Tranche 3 will run as a single round and will be open for approximately 8 weeks.

Successful lead organisations to the AEA Seed grants will present projects with clearly articulated research translation and commercialisation pathways that address progression through technology readiness levels.

Lead organisations 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 AEA [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 one 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. However, it is important that projects can demonstrate some level of engagement with industry. Projects with relevant and substantive industry engagement and/or investment will be prioritised.

Do I need to have a minimum cash and/or in-kind support in my proposal to be eligible for an AEA Seed grant?

Yes. You are required to have a minimum contribution of at least 10 per cent of the total budget in cash and/or in-kind support from the combined participating organisations included in your proposal.

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

Yes. A lead organisation 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 have applied for 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.

Is there a limit on the number of proposals and projects per named participant?

Yes. Named participants (lead entrepreneur, partner entrepreneur or collaborating entrepreneur) involved in a project must have the capacity to undertake each project in which they are involved. Hence, it is the responsibility of the lead organisation to determine if applying for, or holding, a project under the Program Guidelines will affect an individual named participant's ability to carry out their duties under an AEA Seed grant, should their proposal be successful.

The Program Delegate may not provide grant funding to the lead organisation if the Department of Education assesses that the named participants specified in the project will be unable to carry out their duties as specified in the proposal.



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. AEA Seed supports early-stage research translation and commercialisation through competitive grants for universities to undertake testing a prototype of the technology, product, or service to establish 'proof-of-concept'. This is after completion of basic research, and testing has verified the concept or process in an industrially relevant environment that simulates the intended commercial use of the technology.

How much funding is available?

A total of \$12 million is available for AEA Seed Tranche 3, 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 apply for further funding to AEA Ignite grants, either at a higher Technology Readiness Level (TRL) or with demonstrated progress within the original TRL. As the total funds cannot 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 Lead organisations.

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 proposals must demonstrate some level of industry engagement, in addition to making a minimum contribution of at least 10 per cent of the total budget in cash and/or in-kind support from the combined participating organisations included in the proposal. Projects with relevant and substantive industry engagement and/or investors will be prioritised.

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?

No. 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.

Lead organisations 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.

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 AEA Ignite. After completing the AEA Seed milestones, lead organisations 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.

Where can I find more information on the National Reconstruction Fund Corporation priorities which the AEA Grant programs align with?

General information on the National Reconstruction Fund Corporation's (NRFC) priority areas and how the fund will operate can be found on the NRFC'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 working with 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 2.3 of the Program Guidelines. A partner organisation can be a business, body or agency with an interest in the success of the project. The inclusion of partner organisations should be used to strengthen the commercialisation potential of the project and be clearly explained in the proposal.

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 an IP holding company or University Technology Transfer Office (or equivalent) that specialise in industry-university collaborations, such as UniQuest or ANU Enterprise Pty Limited.

Can an overseas company or institution be nominated as a partner organisation or collaborating organisation?

No. Partner Organisations must be an Australian business entity that is a corporation; a company proprietary limited; or a non-profit organisation that either have an Australian Business Number (ABN) or Australian Company Number (ACN) and operate in Australia. In addition, they must also satisfy the eligibility requirements under section 2.3 of the Program Guidelines.

A collaborating organisation must be an Australian University from Table A and Table B providers listed in the *Higher Education Support Act 2003* and therefore cannot be based overseas.



If an AEA Seed proposal has a collaborating organisation, is it mandatory to nominate a collaborating entrepreneur?

No. Although it is not mandatory, collaborating organisations are encouraged to contribute at least one collaborating entrepreneur to carry out the responsibilities specified in the proposal, in accordance with section 2.2 of the Program Guidelines. A nominated collaboration entrepreneur will further strengthen the proposal by demonstrating individuals associated with the collaboration.

Collaborating entrepreneurs must meet the eligibility criteria specified under section 2.4 of the Program Guidelines.

What level of information about stakeholders is required in the capitalisation table for each partner organisation for an AEA Seed proposal?

In accordance with section 2.3 of the Program Guidelines, partner organisations are required to submit relevant ASIC documents in an AEA Seed proposal, including:

- current and historical company information,
- roles and relationship extract, and
- Capitalisation (CAP) table for each partner organisation listed in the proposal. For the CAP table as a minimum, it should list shareholders and the percentage of shares held.

When submitting a CAP table as part of your AEA Seed proposal, the department only requires high level information, including the shareholders register with percentage of shares. There is no requirement for the value of the shares to be listed in the table. It is also important to note that any personal information contained in the supporting documentation for partner organisations submitted as part of your proposal will be managed in accordance with the privacy policy outlined in section 12 of the Program Guidelines.

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 organisation, other than a lead or collaborating organisation, which satisfies the eligibility requirements under section 2.3 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 a 'partner entrepreneur'.

Although it is not mandatory, it is strongly encouraged that each partner organisation named in the proposal nominate a partner entrepreneur to carry out the responsibilities specified in the proposal. A nominated partner entrepreneur will further strengthen the proposal by demonstrating individuals associated with the collaboration.

Partner entrepreneurs must meet the eligibility criteria specified under section 2.4 of the Program Guidelines.



Where can I find a copy of the AEA Seed grant sample application form?

A sample application form is available on the AEA [website](#), and is also available on the [Research Management System](#).

Can a partner organisation be a start-up and/or spin out company controlled by either of the organisations and participants listed in the proposal?

Yes, it is permissible for the partner organisation to be a start-up and/or spin-out company controlled by either of the organisations and participants listed in your proposal.

Where the partner organisation is a start-up and/or spin-out company controlled by either of the organisations or named participants listed in the proposal, those involved in project activities must act with the highest standards of probity in disclosing and managing conflicts. In accordance with section 2.3 of the Program Guidelines, each individual or organisation with an actual, potential or perceived financial or non-financial interest or role in the spin-out or start-up company, must disclose their conflict of interest and provide mitigation strategies on how this conflict will be managed in the proposal.

Application process

When will proposals open and close?

The AEA Seed Tranche 3 will accept proposals in a single round which will be open for approximately 8 weeks. The opening and closing dates for AEA Seed Tranche 3 will be provided on the AEA [website](#). Unless otherwise specified, grant rounds will open at 9 am AEST or ADST and close at 5pm AEST or ADST.

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

Your proposal should be at proof-of-concept TRL 3, 4 or 5. It is also important to note that your proposal must demonstrate advancement during the life of the project. However, there is no expectation that all projects will progress to a higher TRL by completion.

Does my proposal need to demonstrate that I have undertaken a market analysis to identify the market which my project aims to target?

Yes. The selection criteria in the Program Guidelines requires the Lead organisation to demonstrate the commercial value of the activity that their project will improve on and identify by how much. This requires quantifying in your proposal how the project will make a meaningful impact or change on the market, by using market sizing to estimate demand or benefit of your project.



When responding to this criterion, it is recommended that lead organisations undertake a market analysis to demonstrate their understanding of the market that their project aims to target and support this by providing relevant references from credible sources such as market research reports from online databases.

What is the difference between the 3 AEA grants? How do I know which one to apply for?

AEA Seed: funding will be awarded in specific tranches through AEA Seed grants (proof-of-concept), with funding of up to \$500,000 available per grant for up to one year. AEA Seed is the pilot for AEA Ignite.

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.

AEA Innovate: funding will be dedicated to proof-of-scale projects and will require at least one industry partner with co-contributions. Lead organisations will be able to apply for up to \$5 million in funding for a period of up to 2 years. Lead organisations 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 are seeking.

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 a Lead organisation role in the RMS system to be able to submit a proposal.

How do I get technical support with the application form in RMS?

RMS is managed by the Australian Research Council (ARC). Lead organisations that have applied for funding with the ARC will be familiar with RMS. The ARC provides 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 Seed 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](#)

Are collaborating organisations included in the proposal required to make any certifications to the lead organisation?

Yes. In completing the AEA Seed application form on RMS, all participants will be required to certify that their organisation will contribute the resources (cash and/or in-kind contributions) outlined in the AEA proposal and that they have met the appropriate clearances or other statutory requirements, prior to project commencement.

Collaborating organisations named in a proposal must ensure they have obtained the relevant internal approvals to contribute the resources pledged to the lead organisation for the AEA project, to provide the certification confirmation on the AEA application form.

It is important for lead organisations to ensure they have collected written evidence from their collaborating organisations detailing the contribution of support they are providing towards AEA project, prior to submitting their AEA Seed proposal. The lead organisation may determine the format for written evidence, and it must be retained and kept on file and provided to the department if requested.

Data and Privacy Protocol for online proposals

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

In accordance with section 12 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 proposal to third parties for the purposes of assessment for potential other funding opportunities,
- copy, modify and otherwise deal with information contained in the proposal for the purpose of conducting the funding round,
- share the personal information contained in the proposal with other government departments and agencies for the purposes of the AEA.

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 proposal used?

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 proposals. 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 12 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 translation and commercialisation expert advisors, who will assess your eligible proposal against the selection criteria, including an overall consideration of value with money.

The AEA Executive Director is a highly qualified, experienced, and motivated business and technology specialist, who will also work with successful lead organisations to foster connections and formal collaboration arrangements with industry partners. The research translation and 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 translation and commercialisation expert advisors will recommend successful lead organisations to the program delegate. The Department of Education will award funding to successful lead organisations (grantees) under [Conditions of Grant](#).

When will I know the outcome of my grant proposal?

As AEA Seed is a newly established program, the department is unable to advise on the timeframes for when an expected decision on the grant outcomes will be made. Successful grants will be published on the Department of Education website and the department will advise all applicants of the outcome of their grant proposals.

The Lead organisation will receive notification of the outcome of their proposals through RMS. The department may not notify unsuccessful lead organisations until Conditions of Grant have been finalised with successful lead organisations.

If my grant is successful, can I negotiate a delayed start date?

No. In accordance with section 1.6 of the Program Guidelines, if you are successful, we expect you will be able to commence your project no later than 6 weeks after the approval of, and conditions being imposed on, the grant through a Conditions of Grant document (CoG).

Projects that have a delayed start date of more than 6 weeks must contact the department as this may impact funding available to be fully awarded.

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 Lead organisations who are declined to refine their proposal and resubmit for future AEA Ignite and AEA Innovate grants if desired.

As the AEA Executive Director and expert advisors 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 only award funding to successful lead organisations 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.

