Australian Government

Department of Education

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Strong Beginnings (Excellence) Fund 2025–26

Below are some frequently asked questions to assist applicants in preparing and submitting applications for the 2025–26 Strong Beginnings (Excellence) Fund Grant Round 1.

Document version history	
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1. What is the Strong Beginnings (Excellence) Fund?

The Strong Beginnings (Excellence) Fund is a grant program established under Part 2-3 of the *Higher Education Support Act* 2003 to improve the quality of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) courses by supporting higher education providers to share best practice and foster improved performance in ITE across the sector.

2. Who is eligible to apply for the Strong Beginnings (Excellence) Fund?

An Australian ITE provider is eligible to receive a grant under the Strong Beginnings (Excellence) Fund if it:

- is a Table A provider or body corporate specified in subsection 67(1) of the Guidelines;
- has demonstrated that it has met all conditions specified in section 63E of the Guidelines for the Strong Beginnings (Transition) Fund, if it received a grant under that program;
- has demonstrated that it has met the requirements of the Accreditation Standards and Procedures with respect to core content for its ITE courses; and
- is willing participate in quality assurance processes on the implementation of core content for its ITE courses by the ITE Quality Assurance Oversight Board, where applicable.

Joint applications are permitted but need to be submitted by a lead applicant.

3. When are the funding rounds and how much funding is available?

Annual grants will be offered under the Strong Beginnings (Excellence) Fund, commencing with Round 1 in 2025–26. A total of $1.56 million available in Round 1.

Round 2 is expected to open in late 2026 with a total of $1.3 million available.

There will be $1 million per year available from Round 3 onwards.

4. What are the priority areas for the 2025–26 funding round?

The priority areas for the 2025–26 Grant Round 1 are:

1. Supporting providers to deliver the core content in ITE programs.
2. Improving the selection and retention of students in ITE programs.
3. Improving the quality of practical experience.
4. Attracting more mid-career professionals through best practice Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).

5. Do applications have to address all of the priority areas?

No. Applications only need to address one priority area, but can address multiple priority areas if desired.

6. Is there a maximum amount of funding available per project or application?

There is currently no limit on how much funding providers can apply for per project. However, the relative value of funding being sought will form part of assessment. As such, applicants will need to provide a sufficient justification as to why the funding amount being requested is necessary.

7. What is the duration of projects to be funded (i.e. one year only, or multiple years)?

Grants under the Strong Beginnings (Excellence) Fund are made in respect of a year.

The initiatives awarded in Round 1 are expected to run until the end of 2026. However, initiatives may run beyond this period if sufficient justification is provided in the grant application.

8. What sort of initiatives will be funded?

General examples of initiatives that may be funded include:

- course materials, guides and practical tools to share with ITE providers

- seminars and workshops for ITE providers
- data sharing platforms to track ITE student progress
- resources and programs for schools to improve ITE student practicums
- induction processes and mentoring programs.

This list is not exhaustive.

9. What will not be funded?

Funding cannot be used for:

- purchase of land
- wage costs not related to direct delivery of the initiative
- major construction or capital works
- overseas travel
- costs incurred in the preparation of a grant application
- retrospective costs (i.e. for work undertaken prior to the grant).

10. What is the deadline for applications?

Applications must be submitted to the department by 5pm (Australian Eastern Daylight Time) on 6 February 2026. Late applications will not be accepted.

11. How do I submit my application?

Complete the 'Strong Beginnings (Excellence) Fund Grant application form' and submit it, along with any attachments, via email to: StrongBeginnings@education.gov.au with 'Strong Beginnings (Excellence) Fund grants' in the subject line.

12. What are the reporting requirements for successful applicants?

Grant recipients will be required to submit an interim report, in the format requested by the department. At the end of the funding period, providers will be required to report on the implementation and outcomes of their initiatives, and acquit grant funding, in the format requested by the department.

13. How will the grant funding be paid?

Grants will be paid to recipients through the UniPay system, in instalments, as set out in the Conditions of Grant. Each recipient will be required to meet defined milestones before each payment instalment is made.

14. Is there a deadline for when questions about the Excellence Fund can be asked?

There is no deadline for asking questions. Questions can be submitted at any time via email to: StrongBeginnings@education.gov.au.

15. Is the Fund focused on scaling proven work only, or is it open to piloting new approaches?

The Strong Beginnings (Excellence) Fund is focused on lifting the overall capability of the ITE sector. Proposals for proven initiatives and/or new or innovative approaches are welcome, as long as they align with the objectives of the Strong Beginnings (Excellence) Fund and Round 1 priority areas.

16. Is the Department looking for overarching initiatives with several integrated workstreams, or a single tightly defined activity?

The department is open to either approach. Applications may include one activity/workstream, or multiple integrated activities/workstreams. In either case, applicants should clearly articulate the intended impact, outcomes, and how success will be demonstrated. In doing so, applicants should bear in mind that Round 1 has a relatively short delivery timeframe, with grants expected to commence from March 2026 with completion expected by the end of 2026.

17. For collaborations with other partners (e.g. universities or schools), is evidence required (such as a reference from the relevant organisation/person)?

It is considered best practice to do so. Evidence may be in the form of a letter, email, or other document which demonstrates that proposed partners are aware and supportive of their proposed involvement.

18. Can a provider be the lead applicant for more than one priority area within a joint application?

A single provider may lead activities for more than one priority area within an application. However, there can only be one overall lead applicant for each application which would be responsible for entering into a 'Conditions of Grant' agreement with the Department. Grant funding would be paid to the lead applicant, and the lead applicant would be responsible for ensuring compliance with the Conditions of Grant.

19. Can an individual provider submit more than one application?

Individual providers may submit as many individual applications as they wish. Each application will be assessed on its own merits.

However, it is preferred that individual providers are only listed as the lead for one joint application. To this end, the Grant Application Form requires applicants to confirm the lead applicant is *"not listed as the lead applicant in any other submission"*. The intent is to avoid having multiple projects overseen by a single provider. However, if an applicant has a strong case for leading multiple joint applications then exceptions may be made by the Department; please email the Department (StrongBeginnings@education.gov.au) if you would like to request an exception.

20. Does the Department intend to establish a centralised platform to host resources/tools developed by providers under the Excellence Fund, or should applicants propose one?

At this time, the Department does not intend to establish a centralised platform. Applicants should consider how resources developed using grant funds will be housed, shared with and accessed by other ITE providers and articulate this as part of their application.

21. Should applications include tiers or options for different funding levels?

Yes, especially if proposed initiatives cover more than one priority area, or where there are optional components or incremental costs depending on how activities are undertaken. This information will help assessors make judgements about value for money.

22. Is there a grant agreement that needs to be reviewed prior to submission?

No. A Conditions of Grant document will be provided to successful applicants after applications have been assessed.