Australian Government

Department of Education

Strong Beginnings (Excellence) Fund Grant Round 1

Background

- **Strong Beginnings Fund**: established to encourage providers to improve the quality of initial teacher education (ITE) programs.

- Two components:

  - **Transition Fund**: one-off grant funding to embed core content in ITE programs.

  - **Excellence Fund**: annual grant funding to encourage excellence in the delivery of ITE programs.

Excellence Fund: Objectives

1. Support select higher education providers to share best practice and foster improved performance in the delivery of ITE courses across the sector.

2. Build the capability of the higher education sector in the delivery of ITE courses and strengthen the overall quality of ITE programs in Australia.

Available funding

Round 1 (current funding round)

- Total of **$1.56 million** available.
- No limit on how much funding providers can apply for.

Round 2

- Expected to open in late 2026.
- Total of $1.3 million available.

Round 3 onwards

- $1 million per year.

Who can apply?

An ITE provider that:

- is a Table A provider, or body corporate specified in subsection 67(1) of the *Higher Education Support (Other Grants) Amendment (Strong Beginnings (Excellence) Fund) Guidelines 2025*

- has met all conditions of the **Strong Beginnings (Transition) Fund**

- has met the requirements of the Accreditation Standards and Procedures with respect to **core content**

- is willing to participate in **quality assurance processes** for the implementation of core content.

Joint applications permitted.

Round 1 Priority Areas

Applications only need to address one Priority Area, but can address multiple if desired.

01 Supporting providers to deliver core content in ITE programs

02 Enhancing selection and retention of ITE students

03 Improving the quality of practical experience

04 Attracting mid-career professionals through best practice recognition of prior learning

What will be funded?

Examples:

- 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.

What will <u>not</u> be funded?

Examples:

- 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).

Examples of potential activities for each priority area

Priority Area 1: Supporting providers to deliver core content in ITE programs

Example activities:

- Develop, evaluate and disseminate course materials and other resources (e.g. student assessments, professional development resources).

- Develop and deliver workshops with ITE providers to share best practice and build capability.

01

Priority Area 2: Improving selection & retention of students in ITE programs

Example activities:

- Develop culturally responsive tools that assess the suitability of prospective ITE students for teaching, with a focus on First Nations perspectives and strengths.

- Develop data sharing platforms to track ITE student progress and identify those needing additional support.

- Collaboration between ITE providers and employers (schools), to facilitate a seamless transition from ITE to the teaching profession.

Priority Area 3: Improving the Quality of Practical Experience

Example activities:

- Develop evidence-based guides and assessment approaches to help put core content into practice during professional experience placements.

- Such as:
    - how supervising teachers can deliver feedback to ensure ITE students develop core content skills
    - establishing diverse practical experience placements to ensure students can apply core content skills in a range of settings.

Priority Area 4: Attracting more mid-career professionals through best practice recognition of prior learning (RPL)

04

Example activities:

- Use the RPL in ITE Framework to:
    - develop and share successful practices, practical tools and guidance to help ITE providers to effectively embed RPL into their programs
    - develop and share induction processes, mentoring programs and support materials for mid-career professionals as they transition to the teaching workforce.

Duration of project activities

- Activities funded in Round 1 are expected to run until the end of 2026.
- Activities can run beyond this period where justified.

Selection criteria

1. Alignment with Priority Areas
2. Organisational capability and risk management
3. Impact and Outcomes
4. Collaboration and Sector Sharing

Regard also given to:
- overall objective/s
- evidence to demonstrate that activities will contribute to meeting objectives
- how the grant activities will target the priority areas
- relative value of the grant sought.

Timing

- **Closing Date:** 6 February 2026 (5pm AEDT, Canberra local time).

- Grants are expected to be offered to successful applicants in March 2026.

How to apply

- Complete the 'Strong Beginnings (Excellence) Fund Grant application form'.

- Email completed applications, along with any attachments, to: StrongBeginnings@education.gov.au

- Use the subject line "Strong Beginnings (Excellence) Fund grants".

For more information

- *Administrative Information for Applicants* document
  - Available on the Department's website*:*
    https://www.education.gov.au/quality-initial-teacher-education-review/teacher-education-expert-panel/strong-beginnings-fund

- FAQs
  - Published on the department's website:
    https://www.education.gov.au/quality-initial-teacher-education-review/teacher-education-expert-panel/strong-beginnings-fund

- Email queries to: StrongBeginnings@education.gov.au