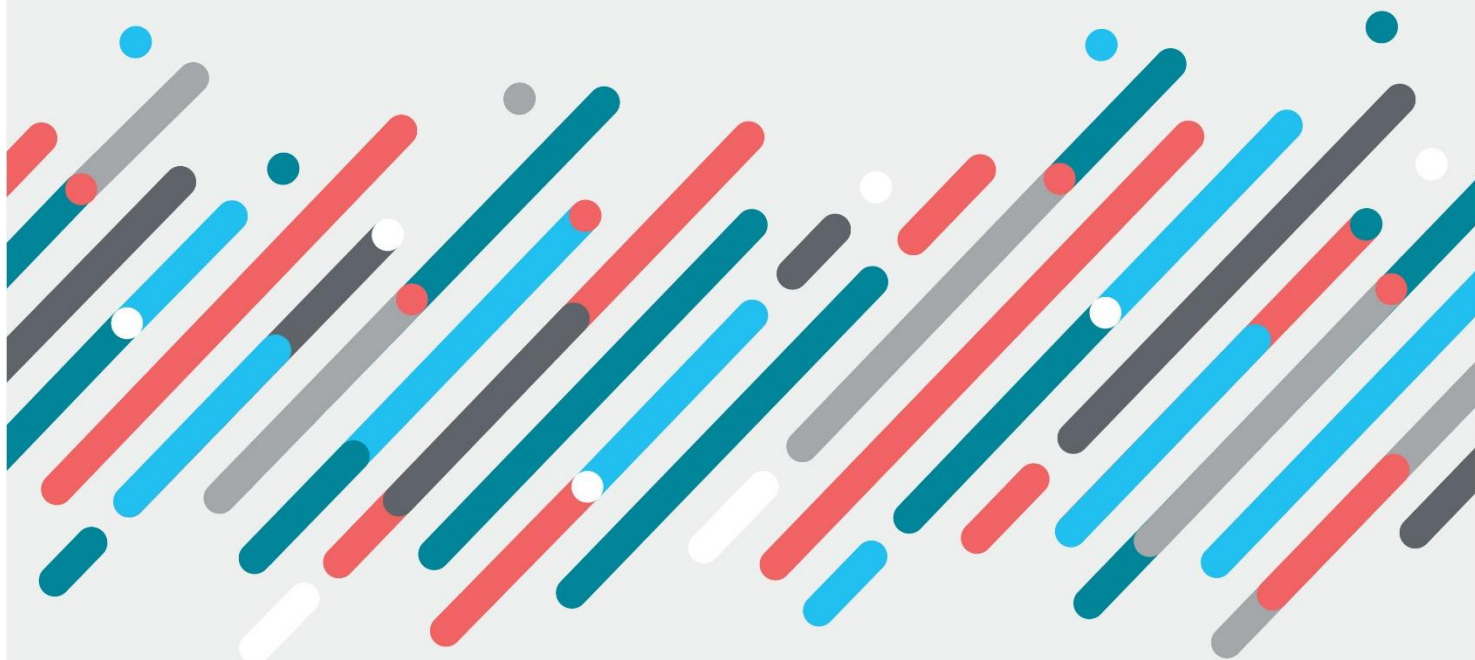




Australian Government
Department of Education

Strong Beginnings (Excellence) Fund

Administrative information for applicants (Round 2)





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The document must be attributed as the Strong Beginnings (Excellence) Fund: Administrative information for applicants (Round 2)

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Glossary

The following terms used in this document have the meanings provided below.

Term	Description
Accreditation Standards and Procedures	The nationally agreed standards, the <i>Accreditation of initial teacher education programs in Australia: Standards and Procedures</i> , that all initial teacher education programs are required to align with.
The Act	<i>Higher Education Support Act 2003.</i>
AITSL	The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership.
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
Core Content	As listed in Schedule 1 of the <i>Accreditation of Initial Teacher Education programs in Australia Standards and Procedures</i> , as developed by AITSL.
The department	The Australian Government Department of Education.
ITE	Initial Teacher Education.
ITE course	A <u>course recognised by AITSL</u> under the Accreditation Standards and Procedures.
ITE Quality Assurance Oversight Board	The ITE Quality Assurance Oversight Board is an expert advisory body responsible for overseeing a systematic approach to assessing and improving the quality, consistency and outcomes of ITE programs.
ITE provider	A higher education provider offering ITE courses.
Recognition of prior learning (RPL)	RPL is an assessment of skills and knowledge ITE students have acquired through previous training, work or life experience which are relevant to the course.
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
The TEEP Report	Refers to the <i>Strong Beginnings: Report of the Teacher Education Expert Panel</i> .
Teacher Regulatory Authority (TRA)	TRA is a state or territory authority that is responsible for the registration of qualified teachers and for accrediting ITE courses under the Accreditation Standards and Procedures.

1. General Information

Introduction

The *Strong Beginnings (Excellence) Fund: Administrative information for applicants (Round 2)* (this document) sets out detailed information about the administration of the Australian Government's Strong Beginnings (Excellence) Fund.

This document should be read alongside the [Higher Education Support \(Other Grants\) Guidelines 2022 \(the Guidelines\)](#), and the Act. If there are any inconsistencies between these documents, the Guidelines prevail to the extent of the inconsistency.

Further conditions on the Grant will also be imposed in writing by the Minister or their delegate, under subsection 41-25(2) of the Act. Successful applicants will be issued with a Conditions of Grant document.

2. Overview

Legislative Authority

The Strong Beginnings (Excellence) Fund is established as a grant program under Part 2-3 of *Higher Education Support Act 2003* (the Act). Section 238-10 of the Act provides that the Minister for Education may make Other Grants Guidelines to, amongst other things, provide for matters necessary or convenient to be provided in order to carry out or give effect to Part 2-3 of the Act in relation to grants payable under that Part.

Background

The Strong Beginnings (Excellence) Fund was established in response to the [Strong Beginnings: Report of the Teacher Education Expert Panel](#) (TEEP Report), released on 6 July 2023, which made recommendations to enhance the link between performance and funding of ITE, improve the quality of practical experience in teaching, and improve postgraduate ITE courses for mid-career teacher entrants. This included the establishment of a Transition Fund (Recommendation 6) to support embedding of core content in ITE programs, and the establishment of an Excellence Fund (Recommendation 7) to support higher education providers identified as high performing, fast improving or excellent in a particular aspect of ITE delivery to take a leadership role in fostering improved performance across the sector.

The implementation of the TEEP Report recommendations is in line with the Government's broader teacher workforce agenda and delivers on Action 8 of the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan.

In 2024, as part of the one-off grant round of the Strong Beginnings (Transition) Fund, \$4.275 million was distributed to 46 (at the time) eligible ITE providers to support them to embed core content in their ITE programs (see [The Teacher Education Expert Panel](#)).

The Strong Beginnings (Excellence) Fund builds upon this investment.

Objectives

The objectives of the Strong Beginnings (Excellence) Fund are to:

- support select higher education providers to share best practice and foster improved performance in the delivery of ITE courses across the sector; and
- build the capability of the higher education sector in the delivery of ITE courses and strengthen the overall quality of ITE programs in Australia.

Funding available

\$1.3 million.

Contact information

Please contact the department at StrongBeginnings@education.gov.au with any queries relating to the Strong Beginnings (Excellence) Fund.

3. Eligibility for grant funding

Eligible higher education providers

Under section 63G of the Guidelines, an Australian higher education 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;
- delivers ITE courses;
- 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
- has agreed to participate in quality assurance processes on the implementation of core content for its ITE courses by the ITE Quality Assurance Oversight Board, where applicable.

Priority Areas for funding

Eligible ITE providers are invited to submit applications setting out their proposed initiative and how it delivers on **one or more** of the priority funding areas, approved by the Minister for Education. The Round 2 priorities are:

Priority Area	Description
1. Improving provider-school relationships to support practical experience and transition into the classroom	This priority area focuses on strengthening partnerships between ITE providers and schools to improve the quality, consistency and effectiveness of professional experience. Strong provider-school relationships can enhance mentoring, supervision and feedback arrangements, better integrate theory and classroom practice, and support high-quality placement experiences. This can help ITE candidates develop the knowledge, skills and confidence needed for successful entry into the teaching profession and a smoother transition into the workforce.
2. Supporting targeted ITE strategies to attract and retain candidates from diverse cohorts and workforce priority areas (e.g. First Nations; CALD; STEM; inclusive education; regional, rural and remote locations)	This priority area focuses on increasing the supply and diversity of the future teaching workforce by supporting the attraction, participation and retention of candidates from under-represented cohorts and workforce priority areas. Building a more diverse workforce can help address teacher workforce challenges, strengthen representation within the profession, and better meet the needs of students, schools and communities across Australia. It also aligns with broader teacher workforce priorities, including efforts to increase the number and retention of First Nations teachers.
3. Supporting professional identity development for ITE candidates to improve retention and readiness for teaching	This priority area focuses on supporting ITE candidates to develop a strong sense of professional identity, purpose and belonging within the teaching profession. Strengthening professional identity can improve engagement and persistence throughout ITE, support transition into the profession, and better prepare graduates for the realities and responsibilities of teaching. It can also contribute to improved retention, enhanced professional capability and greater confidence in applying evidence-based practice.
4. Supporting ITE students to develop and practice skills in Core Content, digital literacy (e.g. artificial intelligence, social media), and/or strategies to support student wellbeing and respectful relationships	This priority area focuses on ensuring ITE students are equipped with the knowledge, skills and practical strategies needed to respond to contemporary teaching and learning environments. It supports the development of evidence-based teaching practices aligned with Core Content reforms, while strengthening capability in digital literacy, including digital technologies, artificial intelligence and responsible online engagement. It also helps prepare graduates to support student wellbeing, foster respectful relationships, and create safe, inclusive and positive learning environments.

4. Application and assessment process

Preparing an application

Applicants must complete the 'Strong Beginnings (Excellence) Fund Grant application form' in full. The form is included as Attachment A in the document.

Joint or collaborative applications are permitted but need to be submitted by a lead applicant. Grant funding for successful applications will be paid to the lead applicant. The lead applicant is responsible for ensuring compliance with the Conditions of Grant, such as co-ordinating and submitting required reporting to the department (refer to Section 5 below).

Attached evidence should be clearly labelled. There is space in the application form to list each attachment. The declaration in the application form should be made by the ITE provider's Dean of Education or similar, or their representative.

Lodging an application

Email completed application forms, along with any attached evidence, to StrongBeginnings@education.gov.au. Please use 'Strong Beginnings (Excellence) Fund grants' in the subject line.

Assessment of applications

Eligible applications will be assessed against the following selection criteria:

Criteria	Description
1. Alignment with Priority Areas	Clearly addresses one or more of the specified priority areas for the funding round.
2. Organisational capability and risk management	Demonstrates the provider's capacity to deliver the proposed initiative effectively, including financial viability, and identifies potential risks and mitigation strategies.
3. Impact and Outcomes	Demonstrates clear, measurable outcomes and strong potential to improve ITE quality or sector capability.
4. Collaboration and Sector Sharing	Demonstrates the provider's approach to taking a leadership role in collaborating with other providers and actively sharing project outputs with the ITE Sector.

Your application will be considered on its merits, based on:

- how well it meets the criteria;
- how it compares to other applications; and
- whether it provides value for money.

When assessing the extent to which the application represents value for money, regard will be given to:

- the overall objective/s to be achieved in providing the grant;

- the extent to which the evidence in the application demonstrates that it will contribute to meeting the objectives;
- how the grant activities will target the priority areas; and
- the relative value of the grant sought.

The suitability of proposed funding amounts in the application will be assessed based on the strength of the application, the priority area(s) it relates to, and overall funding available for the program. The Minister or appropriate delegate will determine the grant amounts for each grant recipient under paragraph 41-30(b) of the Act. Where appropriate, final funding amounts will be subject to negotiation with the department. Successful applicants are not guaranteed the full funding amount as outlined in their application.

An assessment committee will assess each application on its merit and compare it to other eligible applications before recommending which grant applications should be awarded a grant to the Minister (or their delegate), who will consider those recommendations when deciding to approve grants under the Strong Beginnings (Excellence) Fund program.

The assessment committee will be made up of staff within the Australian Government Department of Education and may include representatives from outside of the department, as appropriate.

Timing, lodging an application and notification of approval

Date	Activity
October 2026	Applications open Tuesday 6 October 2026.
November 2026	Applications close Wednesday 4 November 2026, 5pm AEDT Assessment Panel assesses applications (anticipated)
December 2026	Conditions of Grant finalised with successful applicants (anticipated)
January 2027	Funding awarded to successful applicants (anticipated)

Email completed application forms, along with any attached evidence, to StrongBeginnings@education.gov.au. Please use 'Strong Beginnings (Excellence) Fund grants' in the subject line.

Note: The department will not accept applications submitted after the submission deadline or by post or fax. Some applicants may be requested to clarify or verify information contained in their application to support the Assessment Panel. These clarifications are not an opportunity to expand on an application beyond what was included in the written submission. All relevant information applicants wish to be considered must be included in their submitted application documents.

The department will inform each applicant of the outcomes of their applications in writing.

5. Conditions of grant

The conditions of grant are specified in the Guidelines. Further conditions on the grant will also be imposed in writing by the Minister or their delegate, under subsection 41-25(2) of the Act. Successful applicants will be issued with a Conditions of Grant document.

Priority Areas

Grant recipients must use the grant funding in line with one or more of the Priority Areas listed under **Section 3. Eligibility for grant funding (Priority Areas)**.

Reporting Requirements

Grant recipients will be required to submit a Project Plan in line with the Conditions of Grant, that must, at a minimum, include:

- the objectives and intended outcomes of the Grant activity;
- the scope of activities to be delivered over the Grant period, including key deliverables and timeframes, and approaches to stakeholder engagement and risk management; and
- arrangements for sharing outputs (reports, resources or other materials developed using Grant funding) and learnings with Australian ITE providers and other key stakeholders.

Grant recipients will be required to submit an Interim Report in line with the Conditions of Grant, that must, at a minimum, include:

- expenditure of the Grant funding to date;
- implementation to date of the Grant activity detailed in the application to receive the Grant;
- preliminary outcomes of the Grant activity; and
- planned next steps for the Grant activity.

Grant recipients will be required to submit a Final Report in line with the Conditions of Grant on the following areas:

- acquittal of expenditure of the Grant funding; and
- reporting on the following areas:
 - how the provider implemented the Grant activity detailed in its application;
 - the deliverables from the Grant activity; and
 - how the Grant activity is achieving the program objectives, including its alignment with any priority areas.

The department will provide further information to Grant recipients about reporting, including a template.

Payment of grants

Grants will be paid to ITE providers through the Unipay system, in instalments, as set out in the Conditions of Grant by the Program Delegate.

Each Grant recipient will be required to meet defined milestones before payment of each instalment is made.

6.Accountability

Privacy and freedom of information

The department is bound by the *Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)* and the *Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)* and any information will be handed in accordance with the department's obligations under those laws.

The application form requires that contact information be provided for two people in relation to the application, as well as the name and position in the organisation of the applicant or authorised representative. A privacy notice in the application form provides further information about the collection, use and disclosure of this information.

Note: Giving false or misleading information to the department is a serious offence under section 137.1 of the *Criminal Code Act 1995*.

Reporting Fraud

The department is committed to preventing fraud in all aspects of its business. If fraudulent activity is suspected, it should be reported. Fraud can be reported anonymously through the [department's fraud reporting tool](#). The tool allows direct communication with the department without the disclosure of an individual's identity. Find out more about how to report fraud on the [department's website](#) (www.education.gov.au/how-report-fraud).



Attachment A: Grant application form

Strong Beginnings (Excellence) Fund Round 2

Important information for applicants

Closing date

Applications must be submitted to the Australian Government Department of Education (the department) by close of **Wednesday 4 November 2026, 5pm AEDT**.

How to lodge an application

Complete this 'Grant Application Form' and submit it via email along with any attachments to StrongBeginnings@education.gov.au with the subject line 'Strong Beginnings (Excellence) Fund Grants'.

The department will not accept late applications or applications by post/fax.

Grant Guidelines

You should read the Guidelines that establishes the Strong Beginnings (Excellence) Fund.

You should also read the *Strong Beginnings (Excellence) Fund: Administrative Information for Applicants* as it contains important information to assist you in completing this application, including Grant eligibility requirements and available funding amounts.

Preparing your application

When preparing your application, you must:

- read the privacy statement;
- provide answers to each question in this application form;
- attach any supporting evidence; and
- complete the Declaration.

What happens after the application is submitted?

The Assessment Panel will assess applications received by the closing time.

The department will inform each applicant of the outcomes of their application in writing.

Need assistance?

Please contact StrongBeginnings@education.gov.au if you would like further information about the Strong Beginnings (Excellence) Fund or for assistance with completing the application form.

Privacy Statement

Your personal information is protected by law, including under the *Privacy Act 1988* (Privacy Act).

Personal information

Personal information is information or an opinion about an identified or reasonably identifiable individual. Personal information includes an individual's name and contact details.

Collection of your information

Your personal information is collected by the department in the application form for the Strong Beginnings (Excellence) Fund (the Program) as part of your organisation's application for the Program.

Collection of personal information about others

The department needs consent to collect personal information from someone other than the individual concerned, unless certain exceptions apply. Where you provide personal information about another individual, including in Part 1 and/or Part 5 of the application form, you need to check with them first that they agree to the information being provided and being handled by the department in accordance with this privacy statement.

Please do not provide personal information about any other individual unless you have their consent.

Privacy policy

The department's [Privacy Policy](#) contains more information about how the department will manage your personal information, including information about how to make a complaint and seek access to and correction of your personal information.

To contact the department about your personal information, email privacy@education.gov.au.

- ☐ By checking the box, I confirm that to the extent I have provided personal information about another individual, I have obtained that individual's consent to provide their personal information and for their personal information to be handled in accordance with this privacy statement and consent form.

Purpose of collecting your information

The application form requires that personal information, including the contact details for two nominated contact people in your organisation and the name and position title of the applicant or their authorised representative be provided. Personal information will be used for the purpose of assessing applications for the Program, and contacting applicants in relation to their application and any Grants provided under the Program.

The information may also be used for the purposes of evaluating the Program and policy development and research relating to ITE.

Your personal information may also be used for other purposes where you have agreed, or where it is otherwise permitted under the Privacy Act.

If you do not provide some, or all, of the personal information requested, the department may not be able to assess your application.

Disclosure of your personal information

Your personal information may be disclosed to third parties, including but not limited to:

- the ITE Quality Assurance Oversight Board;
- the Minister's Office and to Education Ministers at the provider level for reporting on Grant outcomes;
- a contracted service provider engaged by the department to conduct an evaluation of the Program; and
- the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) for the purpose of providing information technology support and services to the department for the Program.

Your personal information may also be disclosed to other parties where you have agreed, or where it is otherwise permitted under the Privacy Act.

Your personal information and the personal information about other individuals collected by this form is unlikely to be disclosed to overseas recipients.

Part 1: Grant applicant details

Instructions: Please complete all sections, including contact details for a primary and secondary contact for this application.

Section	Description	Grant applicant to complete
Lead Applicant Name:	Full name of the lead organisation applying for the Grant.	
Legal entity name:	If different to trading or business name, otherwise write "N/A".	
ABN:	Provide your Australian Business Number (ABN).	
Business Address:	Include street, suburb, state, and postcode.	

Consortium Participation

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Section and description	Grant applicant to complete
If yes, list all consortium members:	
Confirm the lead applicant is an eligible ITE provider and not listed as a lead applicant in any other submission (unless granted an exemption):	☐ Confirmed

Primary contact

Name:		Position:	
Phone:		Email:	

Secondary contact

Name:		Position:	
Phone:		Email:	

Part 2: Priority Areas and Funding Proposal

Instructions: Select relevant priority areas and describe your proposed initiative.

Select Priority Area(s)

Applications to align with **one or more** of the below priority areas¹:

- ☐ **Priority Area 1:** Improving provider-school relationships to support practical experience and transition into the classroom
- ☐ **Priority Area 2:** Supporting targeted ITE strategies to attract and retain candidates from diverse cohorts and workforce priority area
- ☐ **Priority Area 3:** Supporting professional identity development for ITE candidates to improve retention and readiness for teaching
- ☐ **Priority Area 4:** Supporting ITE students to develop and practice skills in Core Content, digital literacy, and/or strategies to support student wellbeing and respectful relationships

Submit a proposal

When providing examples, ensure that no detailed or specific information is included that could inadvertently disclose sensitive or personally identifiable information about individuals. Instead, you are encouraged to use high-level descriptions, anonymised case studies, or aggregate data that illustrate impact and outcomes without compromising privacy.

1. Project Summary

- Provide a high-level overview of the proposed initiative and the grant application

Recommended word limit: 250 words

¹ Check the box to indicate which the priority area(s) you are applying for.

2. Proposed initiative and alignment with Priority Areas

- Describe the proposed initiative and how it aligns with the selected priority area(s).
- Include proposed activities and specific timeframes for delivery.

Recommended word limit: 1,000 words

3. Organisational capability and risk management

- Describe and provide evidence of your capability to deliver the proposed initiative effectively, including evidence of financial status/viability.
- Identify risks that may affect successful delivery of the project and describe strategies to manage or mitigate those risks.

Recommended word limit: 1,000 words

4. Impact and Outcomes

- Outline expected project outcomes and broader sector impact.
- Describe how success will be monitored and measured (e.g. key performance indicators, evaluation plan etc).

Recommended word limit: 1,000 words

5. Collaboration and Sector Sharing

- Explain how you will share project outcomes and lessons learned beyond your own institution(s) to support broader sector improvement.
- Responses should outline how project outputs, resources, tools, effective practices and learnings will be promoted and shared with relevant stakeholders, including other ITE providers.
- Applicants should describe their approach to stakeholder engagement and how they will encourage the adoption, adaptation or scaling of successful approaches across the sector.

Recommended word limit: 1,000 words

Part 3: Funding and Expenditure

Funding

Describe how the funding sought will be used to improve the performance of the ITE sector via the proposed initiative.

Recommended word limit: 500 words

Total funding sought (GST exclusive):

\$

Proposed Expenditure Table (GST exclusive)

Expenditure item	Grant Funds	Recipient Contributions	Other Contributions	Total Cost ²
[*insert a description of the expenditure item here]	[*insert the amount of grant funds allocated to the expenditure item here]	[*insert any contributions towards this item that the Recipient may be making from its own funds]	[*insert any contributions which may be made towards this item by a third party – e.g. state govt funding or a contribution from a third party]	[*add columns 1 to 4 here]

² The total cost should equal the amount of funding sought in Part 3.

Part 4: Evidence to support the application

Instructions: Applicants may provide attachments to support their proposal. Where attachments are provided, they must be labelled clearly and listed in the table below.

No.	Attachment name	Course(s) the attachment relates to	Comments, if relevant e.g. early adoption of core content
1			
2			

Part 5: Declaration

Declaration Statement

I, the applicant or an authorised representative, declare that:

- The information provided is true and accurate.
- I have read and understood the *Higher Education Support (Other Grants) Guidelines 2022* and agree to the Grant conditions (including any proposed conditions to be imposed by the Minister or his delegate in writing under subsection 41-25(2) of the *Higher Education Support Act 2003*).
- I have read and understood the privacy statement and agree to the department's handling of my personal information in accordance with the privacy statement.
- To the extent I have provided personal information about another individual, I have obtained that individual's consent to provide their personal information and for their personal information to be handled in accordance with the privacy statement.
- I understand that incomplete or late applications may not be considered.

Signature Section

Name:	
Position in organisation:³	
Signature:	
Date:	

³ The declaration in the application form should be made by the ITE provider's Dean of Education or similar, or their representative.