



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Strong Beginnings (Excellence) Fund Grant Round 2

Below are some frequently asked questions to assist applicants in preparing and submitting applications for the Strong Beginnings (Excellence) Fund Grant Round 2.

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
- is willing 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.

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.

Round 1 opened in December 2025 through which six (6) projects were awarded a total of \$1.56 million. Projects focused on classroom management, professional experience placements, assessment practices, mentor feedback, and improving outcomes for First Nations teaching students.

A total of \$1.3 million is available for Grant Round 2. Applications opened on 6 October 2026 and will close on 4 November 2026.

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

4. What criteria will applications be assessed against?

Eligible applications will be assessed against the following selection criteria outlined in the [Strong Beginnings \(Excellence\) Fund Round 2 - Administrative Information for Applicants](#) document:

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

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

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

5. What are the priority areas for Round 2?

The priority areas for Round 2 are:

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

6. 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. There is no requirement to submit a separate application for each priority area.

Where an application addresses multiple priority areas, applicants should clearly demonstrate how the project aligns with each of the selected priority areas. For assessment purposes, applications will be considered on the strength of their alignment to the nominated priority areas, regardless of whether the project focuses on a single area or spans several areas.

7. Are projects that target rural and regional ITE programs seen as being valued/more valuable?

While projects focused on rural and regional settings are not automatically given greater weight than other proposals, their relevance to the Fund's priority areas will be considered as part of the assessment process. Applicants should clearly demonstrate how their project addresses identified needs and aligns with the relevant priority area/s and assessment criteria.

8. 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.

9. 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.

It is preferred that individual providers are only listed as the lead for one joint application. 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, please email the Department (StrongBeginnings@education.gov.au) if you would like to request an exemption.

There are no limitations on the number of applications in which an institution may be named as a consortium member.

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

There is currently no maximum funding amount that may be requested per project or application. Applicants are encouraged to seek the level of funding they reasonably require to deliver their proposed project and to clearly justify all proposed expenditure. Applications will be assessed against the assessment criteria, including consideration of whether the proposed budget represents value for money and is appropriate to the scope and objectives of the project.

11. How many projects will be funded?

The number of projects funded, and the size of individual grants, will depend on the quantity and quality of applications received, and their alignment with the assessment criteria. As a result, the department cannot provide an expected number of successful projects or an average grant amount. Applicants should seek the level of funding they reasonably require to deliver their proposed project and clearly justify all proposed expenditure.

12. Can 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.

13. Can funding be used to scale or extend an existing initiative, or only new initiatives?

The Strong Beginnings (Excellence) Fund is focused on lifting the overall capability of the ITE sector. Proposals for both 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 2 priority areas. Grant funding cannot be used for retrospective costs or activities that have already been completed.

14. What is the duration of projects to be funded under Round 2?

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

Grants awarded in Round 2 are expected to be delivered in 2027. However, initiatives may run beyond this period if sufficient justification is provided in the grant application.

15. 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.

16. 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).

If an institution is uncertain about the eligibility of any proposed costs, please contact the Department via email: StrongBeginnings@education.gov.au.

17. Is there a cap on overheads or institutional overhead charges?

No. The department has not set a specific cap on overheads or institutional overhead charges. Applicants may include overhead costs in their project budget where these are relevant to the delivery of the project and should clearly explain how they support the proposed activities and outcomes.

18. Can retrospective costs be considered as in-kind contributions?

Yes. Retrospective costs may be considered as an in-kind contribution to a project, provided that grant funding is not used to reimburse those costs.

19. Should in-kind contributions of academic time be included in the funding and expenditure sections of applications?

Yes. In-kind contributions, including academic staff time and other non-cash resources provided to support the project, can be included in the Recipient Contributions or Other Contributions columns of the Proposed Expenditure Table as appropriate.

20. Is there a preferred way to account for institutional levy loadings?

The Department does not prescribe a preferred approach for accounting for institutional levy loadings. As with all proposed expenditure, applicants should present these costs in a way that clearly explains their basis and relevance to the project.

21. How will the grant funding be paid?

Grants will be paid to recipients through UniPay, in instalments. Each recipient will be required to meet defined milestones before each payment instalment is made.

22. Will applications be advantaged if collaborators or partners contribute funding to the project?

No. Financial contributions from collaborators or partners are not given additional weight in the assessment process. While applicants may choose to include cash or in-kind contributions from project partners, applications will be assessed on how well they meet the assessment criteria, how they compare to other applications and overall value for money.

23. Can organisations other than tertiary institutions be added as collaborators?

Yes. The Department welcomes collaboration with organisations beyond tertiary institutions, such as schools and other stakeholders that contribute to or have an interest in ITE outcomes. However, the lead applicant must meet all eligibility requirements outlined in the administrative information.

24. For consortium applications, is partnership evidence required from consortium members?

It is considered best practice to do so. All lead applicants are encouraged to provide evidence that consortium members are aware and supportive of their role in the proposed project. Evidence may be in the form of a letter, email, or other document confirming the stakeholder's involvement or endorsement.

The Department does not prescribe a template or a specific organisational delegate for providing evidence of support. Applicants should ensure that any endorsement is provided by an appropriately authorised representative of the relevant organisation.

25. Does the Department place greater value on formal consortium arrangements, or on an applicant's ability to share findings across the broader ITE sector?

As the purpose of the Strong Beginnings (Excellence) Fund is to share best practice and drive improved performance across the ITE sector, greater emphasis is placed on the applicant's ability to share project findings, outcomes and learnings across the broader ITE sector. As such, applicants should clearly articulate how project outcomes will be shared beyond its own institution or consortium.

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

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

27. 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.

28. What is the deadline for applications?

Applications must be submitted to the department by **5pm (AEDT) Wednesday 4 November 2026**. Late applications will not be accepted.

29. 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.

30. Where can applicants go for more information?

Questions and requests for further information can be emailed to the Department at StrongBeginnings@education.gov.au.