



Dr Jeremy Leggoe  
Director, CEED WA  
The University of Western Australia  
jeremy.leggoe@uwa.edu.au  
www.ceed.wa.edu.au

30<sup>th</sup> October 2020

**Re: National Priorities and Industry Linkage Fund**

To the Minister and Department

The CEED WA program, based at the University of Western Australia, is a long established and self-sustaining example of industry-university partnership that integrates research partnership with Work Integrated Learning. I am writing to contribute to the discussion of the consultation paper, based on the program's 31 years of experience and success as an exemplar in this space.

The CEED WA program creates and manages industry sponsored research projects for students. Industry (which may be private enterprise, government or community organisations) defines the topic of the research – our students work on site with the client during the summer vacation, and then complete the project for academic credit as part of a research project unit (such as Honours). Each student has a mentor from the industry partner and an academic supervisor, and receives a \$10,000 studentship from the project fee paid by the client. Examples of past projects are available in our seminar proceedings at <http://ceed.wa.edu.au/about/seminar-proceedings/>

The CEED WA program directly engages the University's research capability with industry, government and the community, and integrates our students in that engagement, uniquely enhancing employability, leadership and interpersonal skills. It is in many respects a unique example of the nexus between Industry, Research, and Education. Past projects have evolved into deeper collaborations that have secured ARC funding – one example being the Western Power project that created the "Grid Transformation Engine" currently used to redevelop the Southwest Grid.

Importantly, the program currently operates on a sustainable self-funding model. At present we typically undertake 15-25 projects per year – we have already secured 16 projects that will be completed in 2021, and expect more to be confirmed shortly. The establishment of the NPILF is likely to offer opportunities to increase project numbers, particularly if the block grant allocation is used to cover some or all of our overhead, enabling the program to reduce project fees. I don't believe it is advisable to eliminate project fee. The provision of a studentship is an important factor in maintaining equitable access to the CEED opportunity – unpaid internships are not a viable option for many students. Furthermore, the willingness of industry to pay fees ensures that the project remains sustainable as funding priorities in shift in the long term.

In addition to introducing the CEED WA program as an exemplar of existing practice (Question 15), based on our experience I would make the following submissions on some of the questions for discussion:

#### Metrics (Question 4)

- For long term success, the metrics should include a measure of industry contributions (in kind and financial). CEED WA continues to be able to offer opportunities because a sustainable (industry-funded) model was developed when the original government seed funding for the program lapsed (in the early 1990s). The inclusion of such a metric in the NPILF program will encourage the development of sustainable partnerships.
- The metrics should also include a measure addressing the value added for the industry partners. While supporting WIL activities offers recruiting and workforce readiness benefits to employers, it does also impose a significant burden on them. The establishment of the NPILF is likely to see our industry partners being flooded with WIL offerings – those that add direct business value (as CEED WA does) stand the best chance of becoming permanently embedded.

#### SME Challenges (Question 13)

- Integration of SMEs into WIL and partnership programs is a significant challenge – their business circumstances change more dynamically than larger enterprises, which can make it challenging for them to sustain commitments over even a semester. This in turn means that Universities engaging SMEs in WIL activities will need to design their programs to accommodate the occasional loss of a project or partner mid-stream. In CEED WA's experience we have had projects where we had to support a student to complete a project who was cut off after the original partner was sold.
- SME's discretionary funds are limited, meaning that it is essential that activities add value to their operations – something CEED WA is designed to do. In the absence of immediate value add, direct subsidies will be necessary to expand SME participation in WIL activities. As a research program, CEED WA project fees qualify for the R&D tax credit; most WIL activities will not, and other means of subsidy will be needed.

Naturally, I would be happy to discuss the program and this submission further if it would be useful. I wish the department all the best in the development of this important program.

Yours sincerely



Dr Jeremy Leggoe  
Director