



Grant Opportunity Guidelines

Entrepreneurs' Programme - Incubator Support Initiative - New and Existing Incubators grant opportunity

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1. Entrepreneurs' Programme – Incubator Support Initiative – New and Existing Incubators processes

Entrepreneurs' Programme is designed to achieve Australian Government objectives

This grant opportunity is part of the above grant program which contributes to the Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources' Outcome 1. The department works with stakeholders to plan and design the grant program according to the [Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines](#).



The grant opportunity opens

We publish the grant guidelines on business.gov.au and GrantConnect.



Stage one - Expression of interest

You complete and submit an Expression of interest (EOI)



We assess all EOIs

We assess your EOI against eligibility criteria and suitability. The Regional Incubator Facilitator will review and make a decision.



We notify you of the outcome

We advise you of the outcome of your EOI. If you are successful, you will be invited to submit a grant application

Stage two - Grant application

You are invited to complete and submit a grant application

The application is to be developed with advice from the Regional Incubator Facilitators.



You complete and submit a grant application

You complete the application form, addressing all the eligibility and assessment criteria in order for your application to be considered.



We assess all grant applications

We review the application against eligibility criteria and notify you if you are not eligible. We assess eligible applications against the assessment criteria including an overall consideration of value with relevant money and compare it to other eligible applications.



We make grant recommendations

We provide advice to the decision maker on the merits of each application.



Grant decisions are made

The decision maker decides which applications are successful.



We notify you of the outcome

We advise you of the outcome of your application. We may not notify unsuccessful applicants until grant agreements have been executed with successful applicants.



We enter into a grant agreement

We will enter into a grant agreement with successful applicants. The type of grant agreement is based on the nature of the grant and proportional to the risks involved.



Delivery of grant

You undertake the grant activity as set out in your grant agreement. We manage the grant by working with you, monitoring your progress and making payments.



Evaluation of the Entrepreneurs' Programme and Incubator Support Initiative grant opportunity

We evaluate the specific grant activity and Incubator Support Initiative as a whole. We base this on information you provide to us and that we collect from various sources.

2. About the grant program

The objective of the Entrepreneurs' Programme (the program) is to connect small and medium sized businesses with the capabilities and networks they need to innovate, compete and grow in Australian markets and/or markets in other countries. In these guidelines, 'Australian markets' is defined to mean 'markets in States or Territories other than the State or Territory in which the relevant business is located.'

The program offers a suite of advisory and facilitation services that support:

- business improvement and innovation connections in targeted Growth Sectors which could benefit from increased trading in Australian markets and markets in other countries
- the development and growth of innovative globally focussed start-ups through Australia's innovation ecosystem
- the commercialisation of novel products, processes and services so that they can be sold in Australian markets and/or markets in other countries.

The primary focus of the Entrepreneurs' Programme is providing access to tailored advice and networks to help businesses solve problems, rather than focusing on financial assistance. It is delivered through four initiatives:

- Accelerating Commercialisation
- Business Management
- Incubator Support
- Innovation Connections.

Other initiatives may be added at the Minister's discretion.

The program is expected to deliver increased capability to trade in Australian markets and/or markets in other countries through the following outcomes:

- improved business capability
- effective business, research and commercialisation networks
- improved business and commercialisation performance.

We administer the program according to the [Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines](#) (CGRGs)¹.

2.1. About the Incubator Support Initiative

The \$23 million Incubator Support Initiative (ISI) launched as part of the National Innovation and Science Agenda (NISA) in September 2016 as an element of the Entrepreneurs' Programme. In December 2017, the initiative was re-launched to include a focus on regional activities and the establishment of Regional Incubator Facilitators (RIFs). The Australian Government has announced an additional \$5 million over four years from 2019-20 to 2022-23 to expand the ISI and include a focus on supporting first-generation migrant and refugee founders.

The ISI provides grant funding to incubators to deliver support services to Australian start-ups with an international focus through two streams:

¹ <https://www.finance.gov.au/government/commonwealth-grants/commonwealth-grants-rules-guidelines>

2.1.1. Expert in Residence

Supports incubators to increase their capabilities and improve the chance of commercial success for start-ups in international markets by organising and providing access to top quality research, managerial and technical talent through incoming and outgoing secondments of national or international experts.

2.1.2. New and Existing Incubators

Supports new and existing incubators to:

- deliver high quality services to start-ups to improve their chances of commercial success in international markets
- partner with first-generation migrant and refugee support organisations to assist migrant and refugee founders to establish their business both nationally and internationally
- assist start-ups with a regional focus to expand and scale their business.

2.2. About the New and Existing Incubators grant opportunity

These guidelines provide information on the ISI, New and Existing Incubators (NEI) grant opportunity.

The objectives of the NEI grant opportunity are to:

- assist Australian start-ups, including first-generation migrant and refugee founders, to develop the capabilities required to achieve commercial success in international markets
- boost the effectiveness of high performing incubators, including funding support to expand their services
- develop Australia's innovation ecosystem, including in Australian regions.

The intended outcomes of the grant opportunity are to:

- support Australian start-ups, including first-generation migrant and refugee founders, to access their international business potential and increase their capability to operate in international markets
- provide Australian start-ups with access to relevant information, training, networks, mentoring and other support
- further develop Australia's innovation ecosystem, including regional areas
- increase the number of start-ups operating in international markets
- create opportunities for Australian start-ups to develop sustainable international businesses through access to open public data.

This document sets out:

- the eligibility and assessment criteria
- how we consider and assess grant applications
- how we notify applicants and enter into grant agreements with grantees
- how we monitor and evaluate grantees' performance
- responsibilities and expectations in relation to the opportunity.

The Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources (the department) is responsible for administering this grant opportunity.

We have defined key terms used in these guidelines in the glossary at appendix A.

You should read this document carefully before you fill out an EOI or application.

2.2.1. Regional incubator facilitators

In line with other elements of the program, this initiative offers the services of skilled facilitators to assist regional incubators to engage with the initiative and increase their chances of success. These facilitators will be allocated to particular regional areas. However, they may operate outside their regions where there is capacity and demand. This service is available to all applicants with a particular emphasis on regional incubators.

(RIFs) can be contacted via business.gov.au.

(RIFs) will work primarily with regional incubators to:

- a. assist applicants and potential applicants by:
 - providing advice, mentoring and specialist expertise
 - brokering partnerships between start-up incubators and migrant and refugee organisations
 - assisting them to develop their professional networks and improve their national and international connections
 - provide feedback on EOIs, for the NEI component to assist applicants to broker partnerships between organisations with start-up expertise and migrant and refugee experience
 - working with them to develop their stage two grant application
 - providing feedback to unsuccessful applicants on weakness with their applications.
- b. encourage innovation and links between business, industry, universities and research institutions and all levels of government by:
 - seeking to identify best practice techniques for regional economic development, and adapting and implementing these techniques in regional areas
 - supporting the five key areas of focus outlined in the Australian Government's [Regions 2030: Unlocking Opportunity](#) report (jobs and economic development, infrastructure, health, education and communications)
 - understanding and drawing on knowledge from the Industry Growth Centres
 - providing feedback to the department on issues facing incubators, particularly in regional areas.
- c. supporting the delivery of the program by:
 - promoting and marketing the ISI
 - facilitating referrals through engaging with advisers and facilitators from other elements of the program
 - undertaking other activities as determined by the program delegate (who is an AusIndustry Senior Responsible Officer with responsibility for the program).

3. Grant amount and grant period

The Australian Government has announced a total of \$10.4 million over 4 years for the program from 2019-20 to 2022-23.

3.1. Grants available

This grant opportunity is for the NEI support component of the ISI.

- The minimum grant amount is \$13,000.
- The maximum grant amount is \$250,000.

The maximum grant percentage varies depending on your project location as defined in the [mapping tool](#). For this initiative, we consider Inner Regional, Outer Regional, Remote and Very Remote locations as regional areas and all other locations as major cities.

- Incubators in major cities may receive a maximum grant of 50 per cent of the eligible project cost.
- Incubators with projects located in regional areas may receive up to 65 per cent of the eligible project cost.

If you apply for the greater percentage, you will need to demonstrate in your application that your project is located in a regional area. We consider your project is located in a regional area if you can attribute at least 80 per cent of your eligible project cost to activities in a regional area.

3.1.1. Your contribution and contribution from other government sources

You are required to provide co-funding towards your project, which demonstrates your commitment to the project. The minimum cash contribution you must make to your project also varies depending on your project location.

The breakdown of the funding limits for all projects are summarised in the following table.

Funding source	New and Existing Incubator projects in major cities	New and Existing Incubator projects in regional areas
Max Incubator Support Initiative grant (%)	50	65
Max other government sources* (%) <i>Including Commonwealth, State and Territory government</i>	10	10
Max in-kind contribution (%) <i>Where a contribution from another government source is in-kind it counts as both a contribution from another government source and an in-kind contribution (see appendix B)</i>	10	10
Minimum cash contribution (%)	30	15

Where a local government organisation is the lead applicant, it can fund the total eligible project cost through the grant and its own contributions.

3.2. Project period

The maximum project period is 24 months.

4. Eligibility criteria

We cannot consider your application if you do not satisfy all eligibility criteria.

4.1. Who is eligible?

To be eligible you must:

- be an incubator that can foster and facilitate the development of innovative start-ups focused on international trade
- have an Australian Business Number (ABN)

and be one of the following entities:

- a company, incorporated in Australia
- an incorporated trustee on behalf of a trust
- an incorporated not for profit organisation
- a publicly funded research organisation (PFRO) as defined in appendix A
- an Australian local government agency or body as defined in appendix A.

Joint applications are acceptable, provided you have a lead applicant who is the main driver of the project and is eligible to apply. For further information on joint applications, refer to section 7.2.

We cannot waive the eligibility criteria under any circumstances.

4.2. Additional eligibility requirements

We can only accept applications that provide the following mandatory documentation:

- evidence from your board (or chief executive officer or equivalent if there is no board) that the project is supported, and that you can complete the project and meet the costs of the project not covered by grant funding
- for grants over \$50,000, an Accountant Declaration that confirms you can fund your share of the project costs. You must use the Accountant Declaration form available on business.gov.au and GrantConnect.

We cannot waive the eligibility criteria under any circumstances.

4.3. Who is not eligible?

You are not eligible to apply if you are:

- an individual
- trust (however, an incorporated trustee may apply on behalf of a trust)
- a Commonwealth, state or territory government agency or body (including government business enterprises and corporate Commonwealth entities).

5. What you can use the grant for

5.1. Eligible activities

Eligible activities must directly relate to the project and benefit participating start-ups, these may include:

- providing or facilitating access for start-ups to new knowledge (such as customer acquisition and/ or business development methods) to promote or facilitate international trade
- facilitating start-ups' access to new international networks (e.g. investors and customers)
- providing or facilitating access for start-ups to resources (such as purchase of technical equipment) to promote or facilitate international trade.

We may also approve other activities.

5.2. Eligible expenditure

You can only spend grant funds on eligible expenditure you have incurred on an agreed project as defined in your grant agreement.

- For guidance on eligible expenditure, see appendix B
- For guidance on ineligible expenditure, see appendix C.

We may update the guidance on eligible and ineligible expenditure from time to time. If your application is successful, the version in place when you submitted your application applies to your project.

If your application is successful, we may ask you to verify project costs that you provided in your application. You may need to provide evidence such as quotes for major costs.

Not all expenditure on your project may be eligible for grant funding. The program delegate makes the final decision on what is eligible expenditure and may give additional guidance on eligible expenditure if required.

To be eligible, expenditure must:

- be a direct cost of the project
- be incurred by you for required project audit activities.

You must incur the project expenditure between the project start and end date for it to be eligible unless stated otherwise.

You must not commence your project until you execute a grant agreement with the Commonwealth.

6. The assessment criteria

6.1. EOI (stage one)

You must address the following questions in your EOI to determine your eligibility and suitability to apply for a NEI grant. You may be contacted by a RIF to discuss your EOI in more detail. If your EOI is successful, you will be notified and invited to submit a stage two grant application.

6.1.1. EOI Questions

You must be a new or existing incubator to be eligible to apply for the grant opportunity.

Demonstrate your experience in assisting start-ups by identifying:

- a. your project activities and what you intend to use the grant funding for
- b. the experience and track record of your organisation or project team in providing incubator support activities to a cohort of start-ups
- c. how you propose to improve the access and participation of Australian businesses in the start-up ecosystem, and how the services you will provide will assist start-ups to commercialise in international markets
- d. how your proposed incubator program will provide incubator services that are not already available
- e. what methods (means) of inclusion and diversity does your incubator currently/intend to provide to start-ups from different backgrounds and locations

- f. if your proposal aims to support first-generation migrant and refugee founders to expand internationally, and if so demonstrating your experience and knowledge of migrant and refugee businesses. Explain how will they be supported (e.g. through a partnership with an organisation that currently provides support services to migrants and refugees in Australia)
- g. how your incubator program will realise the economic potential of migrant and refugee founders and start-ups in the incubator ecosystems to scale internationally
- h. if your project is located in a regional or remote area describe the demand for incubator services and level of community support.

6.2. Grant Application (stage two)

If your EOI is successful, you will be invited to submit a grant application. Your RIF will assist you in developing your application. You must address all assessment criteria in your application. We will assess your application based on the weighting given to each criterion.

The application form asks questions that relate to the assessment criteria below. The amount of detail and supporting evidence you provide in your application should be relative to the project size, complexity and grant amount requested. You should provide evidence to support your answers. The application form displays size limits for answers.

We will only award funding to applications that score highly against all (where applicable) assessment criteria, as these represent value with relevant money.

Applications that support first-generation migrant and refugee start-up businesses to access international markets may receive up to an additional 10 points by responding to assessment criterion 4.

6.2.1. Assessment criterion 1

Management and business capability (50 points)

Demonstrate your ability to assist Australian start-ups to develop the capabilities required to succeed in international markets.

- a. your access to personnel with the right expertise and experience including:
 - time commitment to your incubator
 - evidence of national or global entrepreneurship and commercialisation experience and linkages to international innovation ecosystems
 - community management skills including evidence of investment attraction into start-ups.
- b. your track record (including your team) in managing similar services, including examples of start-ups previously supported and evidence that these are bringing new-to-market or new-to-world innovative products and services to markets outside Australia.
- c. your organisation's capacity to build and maintain relationships to deliver services and opportunities to start-ups. Provide evidence of linkages, agreements and support from other players in the innovation ecosystem.
- d. What services do you provide? These may could include:
 - seed funding
 - co-location
 - structured program
 - mentoring

- cohort-based entry and exit
- professional services
- networking events.

6.2.2. Assessment criterion 2

Benefit to your incubator, start-ups and the broader innovation ecosystem (40 points)

Describe the distinct value proposition of your incubator. Outline the gap in the market that your project will address and describe how your project will address this gap in terms of two or more of the following outcomes:

- a. improving the commercial prospects of innovative start-ups in international markets
- b. developing Australia's innovation ecosystem so that innovative start-ups can thrive and flourish in international markets
- c. developing new and/or existing incubators' capabilities in regional Australia, that support internationally focussed start-ups
- d. developing the capability of incubators to facilitate and foster innovative start-ups with the potential to operate in international markets
- e. developing and collaborating with start-ups that use [public data](#) as part of their business.

6.2.3. Assessment criterion 3

Impact of the grant funding on your project (10 points)

You should demonstrate this by identifying:

- a. the likelihood your project would not proceed without the grant
- b. the positive impact the grant will have on the size, scale or timing of your project
- c. the total additional investment the grant will leverage and explain how this benefits your project.

6.2.4. Assessment criterion 4 (if applicable)

How your project will support first-generation migrant and refugee founders to expand internationally (10 points)

If applicable to your project, you should demonstrate this by identifying:

- a. how your incubator project will help develop the capabilities of first-generation migrant and refugee start-ups to expand their international linkages and increase their chances of successfully commercialising in international markets
- b. your experience and knowledge of migrant and refugee start-ups
- c. how first-generation migrant and refugee start-ups will be supported (e.g. through a partnership with an organisation that currently provides support services to migrants and refugees in Australia).

7. How to apply

Before applying you should read and understand these guidelines and the sample [grant agreement](#) published on business.gov.au and GrantConnect.

To apply, you must:

- complete the online [expression of interest form](#) and if successful the program application form via business.gov.au
- provide all the information requested
- address all eligibility and assessment criteria
- include all necessary attachments.

You will receive confirmation when you submit your application. You should retain a copy of your application for your own records.

You are responsible for making sure your application is complete and accurate. Giving false or misleading information is a serious offence under the *Criminal Code 1995* (Cth). If we consider that you have provided false or misleading information we may not progress your application. If you find an error in your application after submitting it, you should call us immediately on 13 28 46.

If we find an error or information that is missing, we may ask for clarification or additional information from you that will not change the nature of your application. However, we can refuse to accept any additional information from you that would change your submission after the application closing time.

You can only have one funded project from either the NEI or Expert in Residence (EIR) component at any one time. You must have successfully completed one project, including submitting a satisfactory final report, before a subsequent grant will be approved. You cannot have two projects running at the same time.

If you need further guidance around the application process, or if you are unable to submit an application online, [contact us](#) at business.gov.au or by calling 13 28 46.

7.1. Attachments to the application

Provide the following documents with your application:

- detailed project budget
- detailed project plan
- evidence from your board (or chief executive officer or equivalent if there is no board) that the project is supported, and that you can complete the project and meet the costs of the project not covered by grant funding.
- accountant declaration (template provided on business.gov.au and [GrantConnect](#))
- trust deed (where applicable).

You must attach supporting documentation to the application form in line with the instructions provided within the form. You should only attach requested documents. We will not consider information in attachments that we do not request.

7.2. Joint applications

We recognise that some organisations may want to join together as a group to deliver a project. In these circumstances, you must appoint a lead organisation. Only the lead organisation can submit the application form and enter into the grant agreement with the Commonwealth. The application should identify all other members of the proposed group and include a letter of support from each of the project partners. Each letter of support should include:

- details of the project partner

- an overview of how the project partner will work with the lead organisation and any other project partners in the group to successfully complete the project
- an outline of the relevant experience and/or expertise the project partner will bring to the group
- the roles/responsibilities the project partner will undertake, and the resources it will contribute (if any)
- details of a nominated management level contact officer.

You must have a formal arrangement in place with all parties prior to execution of the grant agreement.

7.3. Timing of grant opportunity

You can submit an application at any time while the grant opportunity remains open.

If you are successful we expect you will be able to commence your project within three months of receiving the offer of grant funding.

Table 1: Expected timing for this grant opportunity

Activity	Timeframe (up to)
Assessment of EOI (Stage one)	4 weeks
Outcomes of EOI process	2 weeks
Assessment of grant applications (Stage two)	8 weeks
Approval of outcomes of selection process	4 weeks
Negotiations and award of grant agreements	1-3 weeks
Notification to unsuccessful applicants	2 weeks
Earliest start date of grant activity	Upon execution of grant agreement
End date of grant commitment	Grant agreement end date

8. The grant selection process

We first review stage one EOIs against the eligibility criteria. If eligible, we will provide the EOI to a RIF for review, the RIF will determine whether the applicant will be invited to submit a stage two grant application.

The program delegate will decide whether a stage two grant application progresses to the committee for merit assessment.

We will assess your application based on its merits taking into account:

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

When assessing whether the application represents value with relevant money, we will have regard to:

- the overall objectives of the grant opportunity
- the evidence provided to demonstrate how your project contributes to meeting those objectives

- the relative value of the grant sought.

We will refer your application to the Entrepreneurs' Programme committee, an independent committee of experts. The committee may also seek additional advice from the RIFs.

The committee will assess your application against the assessment criteria and compare it to other eligible applications before recommending which projects to fund.

If the assessment process identifies unintentional errors in your application, we may contact you to correct or clarify the errors, but you cannot make any material alteration or addition.

8.1. Who will approve grants?

The Minister decides which grants to approve taking into account the recommendations of the committee and the availability of grant funds.

The Minister's decision is final in all matters, including:

- the grant approval
- the grant funding to be awarded
- any conditions attached to the offer of grant funding.

We cannot review decisions about the merits of your application.

The Minister will not approve funding if there is insufficient program funds available across relevant financial years for the program.

9. Notification of application outcomes

We will advise you of the outcome of your application in writing. If you are successful, we will advise you of any specific conditions attached to the grant.

If you are unsuccessful, we will give you an opportunity to discuss the outcome with us. You can submit a new application for the same (or similar) project in any future funding rounds. You should include new or more information to address the weaknesses that prevented your previous application from being successful. If a new application is substantially the same as a previous ineligible or unsuccessful application, we may refuse to consider it for assessment.

10. Successful grant applications

10.1. Grant agreement

You must enter into a legally binding grant agreement with the Commonwealth. The grant agreement has general terms and conditions that cannot be changed. A sample [grant agreement](#) is available on [business.gov.au](#) and GrantConnect.

We must execute a grant agreement with you before we can make any payments. Execute means both you and the Commonwealth have signed the agreement. We are not responsible for any expenditure you incur until a grant agreement is executed. You must not start any ISI NEI activities until a grant agreement is executed.

The approval of your grant may have specific conditions determined by the assessment process or other considerations made by the program delegate. We will identify these in the offer of grant funding.

The Commonwealth may recover grant funds if there is a breach of the grant agreement.

We will use a simple grant agreement for projects.

You will have 30 days from the date of a written offer to execute this grant agreement with the Commonwealth. During this time, we will work with you to finalise details.

The offer may lapse if both parties do not sign the grant agreement within this time. Under certain circumstances, we may extend this period. We base the approval of your grant on the information you provide in your application. We will review any required changes to these details to ensure they do not impact the project as approved by the program delegate.

10.2. Project specific legislation, policies and industry standards

You must comply with all relevant laws and regulations in undertaking your project. You must also comply with the specific legislation/policies/industry standards that follow. It is a condition of the grant funding that you meet these requirements. We will include these requirements in your grant agreement.

In particular, you will be required to comply with:

- State/Territory legislation in relation to working with children.

10.3. How we pay the grant

The grant agreement will state the:

- maximum grant amount we will pay
- proportion of eligible expenditure covered by the grant (grant percentage)
- any in-kind contributions you will make
- any financial contribution provided by you or a third party.

We will not exceed the maximum grant amount under any circumstances. If you incur extra costs, you must meet them yourself.

We will make an initial payment on execution of the grant agreement. We will make subsequent payments six monthly, in advance, based on your forecast eligible expenditure and adjusted for unspent amounts from previous payments. Payments are subject to satisfactory progress on the project.

We set aside a 10 per cent of the total grant funding for the final payment. We will pay this when you submit a satisfactory end of project report demonstrating you have completed outstanding obligations for the project. We may need to adjust your progress payments to align with available program funds across financial years and/or to ensure we retain a minimum 10 per cent of grant funding for the final payment.

10.4. Tax obligations

If you are registered for the Goods and Services Tax (GST), where applicable we will add GST to your grant payment and provide you with a recipient created tax invoice. You are required to notify us if your GST registration status changes during the project period. GST does not apply to grant payments to government related entities².

Grants are assessable income for taxation purposes, unless exempted by a taxation law. We recommend you seek independent professional advice on your taxation obligations or seek assistance from the [Australian Taxation Office](#). We do not provide advice on tax.

² See Australian Taxation Office ruling GSTR 2012/2 available at ato.gov.au

11. Announcement of grants

We will publish non-sensitive details of successful projects on GrantConnect. We are required to do this by the *CGRGs* unless otherwise prohibited by law. We may also publish this information on business.gov.au. This information may include:

- name of your organisation
- title of the project
- description of the project and its aims
- amount of grant funding awarded
- Australian Business Number
- business location
- your organisation's industry sector.

12. How we monitor your project

12.1. Keeping us informed

You should let us know if anything is likely to affect your project or organisation.

We need to know of any key changes to your organisation or its business activities, particularly if they affect your ability to complete your project, carry on business and pay debts due.

You must also inform us of any changes to your:

- name
- addresses
- nominated contact details
- bank account details.

If you become aware of a breach of terms and conditions under the grant agreement you must contact us immediately.

You must notify us of events relating to your project and provide an opportunity for the Minister or their representative to attend.

12.2. Reporting

You must submit reports in line with the grant agreement. We will provide the requirements for these reports as appendices in the grant agreement. We will remind you of your reporting obligations before a report is due. We will expect you to report on:

- progress against agreed project milestones
- project expenditure, including expenditure of grant funds
- contributions of participants directly related to the project.

The amount of detail you provide in your reports should be relative to the project size, complexity and grant amount.

We will monitor the progress of your project by assessing reports you submit and may conduct site visits to confirm details of your reports if necessary. Occasionally we may need to re-examine claims, seek further information or request an independent audit of claims and payments.

12.2.1. Progress reports

Progress reports must:

- include company data on start-ups participating in project activities
- include details of your progress towards completion of agreed project activities
- show the total eligible expenditure incurred to date
- include evidence of expenditure
- be submitted by the report due date (you can submit reports ahead of time if you have completed relevant project activities).

We will only make grant payments when we receive satisfactory progress reports.

You must discuss any project or milestone reporting delays with us as soon as you become aware of them.

12.2.2. End of project report

When you complete the project, you must submit an end of project report.

End of project reports must:

- include company data on start-ups participating in project activities
- include the agreed evidence as specified in the grant agreement
- identify the total eligible expenditure incurred for the project
- include a declaration that the grant money was spent in accordance with the grant agreement and to report on any underspends of the grant money
- be submitted by the report due date.

12.2.3. Ad-hoc report

We may ask you for ad-hoc reports on your project. This may be to provide an update on progress, or any significant delays or difficulties in completing the project.

12.3. Independent audits

We may ask you to provide an independent audit report. An audit report will verify that you spent the grant in accordance with the grant agreement. The audit report requires you to prepare a statement of grant income and expenditure. The report template is available on business.gov.au and GrantConnect.

12.4. Compliance visits

We may visit you during the project period, or at the completion of your project to review your compliance with the grant agreement. We may also inspect the records you are required to keep under the grant agreement. We will provide you with reasonable notice of any compliance visit.

12.5. Grant agreement variations

We recognise that unexpected events may affect project progress. In these circumstances, you can request a variation to your grant agreement, including:

- changing project milestones
- extending the timeframe for completing the project but within the maximum 24 month period
- changing project activities.

The program does not allow for:

- an increase of grant funds.

If you want to propose changes to the grant agreement, you must put them in writing before the project end date. We can provide you with a variation request template.

If a delay in the project causes milestone achievement and payment dates to move to a different financial year, you will need a variation to the grant agreement. We can only move funds between financial years if there is enough program funding in the relevant year to allow for the revised payment schedule. If we cannot move the funds, you may lose some grant funding.

You should not assume that a variation request will be successful. We will consider your request based on factors such as:

- how it affects the project outcome
- consistency with the program policy objective, grant opportunity guidelines and any relevant policies of the department
- changes to the timing of grant payments
- availability of program funds.

12.6. Evaluation

We will evaluate the ISI - NEI grant opportunity to measure how well the outcomes and objectives have been achieved. We may use information from your application and project reports for this purpose. We may also interview you, or ask you for more information to help us understand how the grant impacted you and to evaluate how effective the program was in achieving its outcomes.

We may contact you up to two years after you finish your project for more information to assist with this evaluation.

12.7. Grant acknowledgement

If you make a public statement about a project funded under the program, including in a brochure or publication, you must acknowledge the grant by using the following:

'This project received grant funding from the Australian Government through the Incubator Support Initiative funding as part of the program.'

13. Probity

We will make sure that the grant opportunity process is fair, according to the published guidelines, incorporates appropriate safeguards against fraud, unlawful activities and other inappropriate conduct and is consistent with the *CGRGs*.

13.1. Conflicts of interest

Any conflicts of interest could affect the performance of the grant opportunity or program. There may be a conflict of interest, or perceived conflict of interest, if our staff, any member of a committee or advisor and/or you or any of your personnel:

- has a professional, commercial or personal relationship with a party who is able to influence the application selection process, such as an Australian Government officer or member of an external panel
- has a relationship with or interest in, an organisation, which is likely to interfere with or restrict the applicants from carrying out the proposed activities fairly and independently or

- has a relationship with, or interest in, an organisation from which they will receive personal gain because the organisation receives a grant under the grant program/ grant opportunity.

As part of your application, we will ask you to declare any perceived or existing conflicts of interests or confirm that, to the best of your knowledge, there is no conflict of interest.

If you later identify an actual, apparent, or perceived conflict of interest, you must inform us in writing immediately.

Conflicts of interest for Australian Government staff are handled as set out in the Australian [Public Service Code of Conduct \(Section 13\(7\)\)](#)³ of the [Public Service Act 1999 \(Cth\)](#)⁴. Committee members and other officials including the decision maker must also declare any conflicts of interest.

We publish our conflict of interest policy on the department's [website](#)⁵.

13.2. How we use your information

Unless the information you provide to us is:

- confidential information as per 13.2.1, or
- personal information as per 13.2.3,

we may share the information with other government agencies for a relevant Commonwealth purpose such as:

- to improve the effective administration, monitoring and evaluation of Australian Government programs
- for research
- to announce the awarding of grants.

13.2.1. How we handle your confidential information

We will treat the information you give us as sensitive and therefore confidential if it meets all of the following conditions:

- you clearly identify the information as confidential and explain why we should treat it as confidential
- the information is commercially sensitive
- disclosing the information would cause unreasonable harm to you or someone else
- you provide the information with an understanding that it will stay confidential.

13.2.2. When we may disclose confidential information

We may disclose confidential information:

- to the committee and our Commonwealth employees and contractors, to help us manage the program effectively
- to the Auditor-General, Ombudsman or Privacy Commissioner

³ https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2017C00270/Html/Text#_Toc491767030

⁴ <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2017C00270>

⁵ <https://www.industry.gov.au/sites/g/files/net3906/f/July%202018/document/pdf/conflict-of-interest-and-insider-trading-policy.pdf>

- to the responsible Minister or Assistant Minister
- to a House or a Committee of the Australian Parliament.

We may also disclose confidential information if

- we are required or authorised by law to disclose it
- you agree to the information being disclosed, or
- someone other than us has made the confidential information public.

13.2.3. How we use your personal information

We must treat your personal information according to the Australian Privacy Principles (APPs) and the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth). This includes letting you know:

- what personal information we collect
- why we collect your personal information
- to whom we give your personal information.

We may give the personal information we collect from you to our employees and contractors, the committee, and other Commonwealth employees and contractors, so we can:

- manage the program
- research, assess, monitor and analyse our programs and activities.

We, or the Minister, may:

- announce the names of successful applicants to the public
- publish personal information on the department's websites.

You may read our [Privacy Policy](#)⁶ on the department's website for more information on:

- what is personal information
- how we collect, use, disclose and store your personal information
- how you can access and correct your personal information.

13.2.4. Freedom of information

All documents in the possession of the Australian Government, including those about the program, are subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (Cth) (FOI Act).

The purpose of the FOI Act is to give members of the public rights of access to information held by the Australian Government and its entities. Under the FOI Act, members of the public can seek access to documents held by the Australian Government. This right of access is limited only by the exceptions and exemptions necessary to protect essential public interests and private and business affairs of persons in respect of whom the information relates.

If someone requests a document under the FOI Act, we will release it (though we may need to consult with you and/or other parties first) unless it meets one of the exemptions set out in the FOI Act.

⁶ <https://www.industry.gov.au/data-and-publications/privacy-policy>

13.3. Enquiries and feedback

For further information or clarification, you can contact us on 13 28 46 or by [web chat](#) or through our [online enquiry form](#) on business.gov.au.

We may publish answers to your questions on our website as Frequently Asked Questions.

Our [Customer Service Charter](#) is available at business.gov.au. We use customer satisfaction surveys to improve our business operations and service.

If you have a complaint, call us on 13 28 46. We will refer your complaint to the appropriate manager.

If you are not satisfied with the way we handle your complaint, you can contact:

Head of Division
AusIndustry – Support for Business
Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources
GPO Box 2013
CANBERRA ACT 2601

You can also contact the [Commonwealth Ombudsman](#)⁷ with your complaint (call 1300 362 072). There is no fee for making a complaint, and the Ombudsman may conduct an independent investigation.

⁷ <http://www.ombudsman.gov.au/>

Appendix A. Glossary

Term	Definition
Application form	The document issued by the program delegate that applicants use to apply for funding under the program.
AusIndustry	The division of the same name within the department.
Department	The Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources.
Entrepreneurs' Programme Committee	The body established by the Minister to consider and assess eligible applications and make recommendations to the program delegate for funding under the program.
Eligible activities	The activities undertaken by a grantee in relation to a project that are eligible for funding support as set out in 5.1.
Eligible application	An application or proposal for grant funding under the program that the program delegate has determined is eligible for assessment in accordance with these guidelines.
Eligible expenditure	The expenditure incurred by a grantee on a project and which is eligible for funding support as set out in 5.2.
Eligible expenditure guidance	The guidance that is provided at Appendix B.
First-generation migrant	Immigrants who were born in another country and have become citizens and residents in Australia.
Grant agreement	A legally binding contract between the Commonwealth and a grantee for the grant funding
Grant funding or grant funds	The funding made available by the Commonwealth to grantees under the program.
GrantConnect	The Australian Government's whole-of-government grants information system, which centralises the publication and reporting of Commonwealth grants in accordance with the CGRGs
Grantee	The recipient of grant funding under a grant agreement.
Growth Sectors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Advanced Manufacturing b. Food and Agribusiness c. Medical Technologies and Pharmaceuticals d. Mining Equipment, Technology and Services e. Oil, Gas and Energy Resources
Guidelines	Guidelines that the Minister gives to the department to provide the framework for the administration of the program, as in force from time to time.

Term	Definition
Incubator	A business support organisation that fosters innovative start-ups, focused on international trade, through the provision of services such as seed funding, co-location, mentoring, professional services and access to business networks. It can include accelerators.
Innovation and Science Australia	The statutory board established by the <i>Industry Research and Development Act 1986</i> (Cth) (the Act) and amended in 2016.
Local government agency or body.	A local governing body as defined in the <i>Local Government (Financial Assistance) Act 1995</i> (Cth).
Minister	The Commonwealth Minister for Industry, Science and Technology.
Personal information	<p>Has the same meaning as in the <i>Privacy Act 1988</i> (Cth) which is:</p> <p>Information or an opinion about an identified individual, or an individual who is reasonably identifiable:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. whether the information or opinion is true or not; and b. whether the information or opinion is recorded in a material form or not.
Program delegate	An AusIndustry general manager or manager within the department with responsibility for the program.
Program funding or Program funds	The funding made available by the Commonwealth for the program.
Project	A project described in an application for grant funding under the program.
Publicly funded research organisation (PFRO)	All higher education providers listed at Table A and Table B of the <i>Higher Education Support Act 2003</i> (Cth) and corporate Commonwealth entities, and State and Territory business enterprises which undertake publicly funded research.
Refugee	People who have been forced to leave their country in order to escape war, persecution, or natural disaster, and residing in Australia.
Regional area	Locations listed in as Inner Regional, Outer Regional, Remote and Very Remote in the mapping tool .

Appendix B. Eligible expenditure

This section provides guidance on the eligibility of expenditure. We may update this guidance from time to time, so you should make sure you have the current version from the business.gov.au website before preparing your application.

The program delegate makes the final decision on what is eligible expenditure and may give additional guidance on eligible expenditure if required.

To be eligible, expenditure must:

- be incurred by you within the project period
- be a direct cost of the project
- be incurred by you to undertake required project audit activities
- meet the eligible expenditure guidelines.

How we verify eligible expenditure

If your application is successful, we will ask you to verify the project budget that you provided in your application when we negotiate your grant agreement. You may need to provide evidence such as quotes for major costs.

The grant agreement will include details of the evidence you may need to provide when you achieve certain milestones in your project. This may include evidence related to eligible expenditure.

If requested, you will need to provide the agreed evidence along with your progress reports.

You must keep payment records of all eligible expenditure, and be able to explain how the costs relate to the agreed project activities. At any time, we may ask you to provide records of the expenditure you have paid. If you do not provide these records when requested, the expense may not qualify as eligible expenditure.

At the end of the project, you will be required to provide an independent financial audit of all eligible expenditure from the project.

Labour expenditure

Eligible labour expenditure for the grant covers the direct labour costs of employees you directly employ on the core elements of the project. We consider a person an employee when you pay them a regular salary or wage, out of which you make regular tax instalment deductions.

We consider costs for technical, but not administrative, project management activities eligible labour expenditure. However, we limit these costs to 10 per cent of the total amount of eligible labour expenditure claimed.

We do not consider labour expenditure for leadership or administrative staff (such as CEOs, CFOs, accountants and lawyers) as eligible expenditure, even if they are doing project management tasks.

Eligible salary expenditure includes an employee's total remuneration package as stated on their Pay As You Go (PAYG) Annual Payment Summary submitted to the ATO. We consider salary-sacrificed superannuation contributions as part of an employee's salary package if the amount is more than what the Superannuation Guarantee requires.

The maximum salary for an employee, director or shareholder, including packaged components that you can claim through the grant is \$175,000 per financial year.

For periods of the project that do not make a full financial year, you must reduce the maximum salary amount you claim proportionally.

You can only claim eligible salary costs when an employee is working directly on agreed project activities during the agreed project period.

Labour on-costs and administrative overhead

You may increase eligible salary costs by an additional 30 per cent allowance to cover on-costs such as employer paid superannuation, payroll tax, workers compensation insurance, and overheads such as office rent and the provision of computers.

You should calculate eligible salary costs using the formula below:

$$\text{Eligible salary costs} = \text{Annual salary package} \times \frac{\text{Weeks spent on project}}{52 \text{ weeks}} \times \text{percentage of time spent on project}$$

You cannot calculate labour costs by estimating the employee's worth. If you have not exchanged money (either by cash or bank transactions) we will not consider the cost eligible.

Evidence you will need to provide can include:

- details of all personnel working on the project, including name, title, function, time spent on the project and salary
- ATO payment summaries, pay slips and employment contracts.

Contract expenditure

Eligible contract expenditure is the cost of any agreed project activities that you contract others to do. These can include contracting:

- another organisation
- an individual who is not an employee, but engaged under a separate contract.

All contractors must have a written contract prior to starting any project work—for example, a formal agreement, letter or purchase order which specifies:

- the nature of the work they perform
- the applicable fees, charges and other costs payable.

Invoices from contractors must contain:

- a detailed description of the nature of the work
- the hours and hourly rates involved
- any specific plant expenses paid.

Invoices must directly relate to the agreed project, and the work must qualify as an eligible expense. The costs must also be reasonable and appropriate for the activities performed.

We will require evidence of contractor expenditure that may include:

- an exchange of letters (including email) setting out the terms and conditions of the proposed contract work
- purchase orders
- supply agreements

- invoices and payment documents.

You must ensure all project contractors keep a record of the costs of their work on the project. We may require you to provide a contractor's records of their costs of doing project work. If you cannot provide these records, the relevant contract expense may not qualify as eligible expenditure.

Travel and overseas expenditure

Eligible travel and overseas expenditure may include

- domestic travel limited to the reasonable cost of accommodation and transportation required to conduct agreed project and collaboration activities in Australia
- overseas travel limited to the reasonable cost of accommodation and transportation required in cases where the overseas travel is material to the conduct of the project in Australia.

Eligible air transportation is limited to the economy class fare for each sector travelled; where non-economy class air transport is used only the equivalent of an economy fare for that sector is eligible expenditure. Where non-economy class air transport is used, the grantee will require evidence showing what an economy air fare costs at the time of travel.

We will consider value for money when determining whether the cost of overseas expenditure is eligible. This may depend on

- the proportion of total grant funding that you will spend on overseas expenditure
- the proportion of the service providers total fee that will be spent on overseas expenditure
- how the overseas expenditure is likely to aid the project in meeting the program objectives

Overseas travel must be at an economy rate and you must demonstrate you cannot access the service, or an equivalent service in Australia.

Eligible overseas activities expenditure is generally limited to 10 per cent of total eligible expenditure.

Other eligible expenditure

Other eligible expenditures for the project may include:

- staff training that directly supports the achievement of project outcomes
- financial auditing of project expenditure
- costs of acquiring technology
- reasonable fitout expenditure directly related to the project
- for new incubators only, marketing, communications, promotional costs and website design
- costs relating to provision of interpreter services or English as a Second Language (ESL) education/curriculum.

Other specific expenditures may be eligible as determined by the program delegate.

Evidence you need to supply can include supplier contracts, purchase orders, invoices and supplier confirmation of payments.

In-kind contributions

In-kind contributions are non-cash contributions towards your eligible project cost. In-kind contributions can count towards a maximum of 10 per cent of your eligible project cost.

In order for in-kind contributions to count towards your eligible project cost they must directly relate to the project and eligible activities. They may include:

- staff salaries, including where the staff member is not employed by your organisation
- access to facilities such as office accommodation
- access to services such as coaching and mentoring, business planning
- access to resources such as ICT software.

Where the program delegate considers that the reported value of in-kind contributions is not consistent with current market rates or is otherwise unreasonable, we may ask you to increase the cash contributions to the project.

Appendix C. Ineligible expenditure

This section provides guidance on what we consider ineligible expenditure. We may update this guidance from time to time, so you should make sure you have the current version from the business.gov.au website before preparing your application.

The program delegate may impose limitations or exclude expenditure, or further include some ineligible expenditure listed in these guidelines in a grant agreement or otherwise by notice to you.

Examples of ineligible expenditure include:

- investment of money in exchange for equity into start-ups
- prize money awarded to start-ups through competitions
- research not directly supporting eligible activities
- financing costs, including interest
- costs such as rental, renovations and utilities
- non-project-related staff training and development costs
- marketing, communications, promotional costs and website design – except for New Incubators – see Appendix B
- insurance costs (the participants must effect and maintain adequate insurance or similar coverage for any liability arising as a result of its participation in funded activities)
- debt financing
- costs related to obtaining resources used on the project, including interest on loans, job advertising and recruiting, and contract negotiations
- maintenance costs
- costs of purchasing, leasing, depreciation of, or development of land
- routine operational expenses, including communications, accommodation, office computing facilities, printing and stationery, postage, legal and accounting fees and bank charges
- costs related to preparing the grant application, preparing any project reports (except costs of independent audit reports we require) and preparing any project variation requests
- travel or overseas costs that exceed 10 per cent of total project costs except where otherwise approved by the program delegate.

This list is not exhaustive and applies only to the expenditure of the grant funds. Other costs may be ineligible where we decide that they do not directly support the achievement of the planned outcomes for the project or that they are contrary to the objective of the program.

You must ensure you have adequate funds to meet the costs of any ineligible expenditure associated with the project.