## International Clean Innovation Researcher Networks grants – Information Sessions

The below questions were raised during the Information Sessions for International Clean Innovation Researcher Networks that were held on 1 and 2 March 2023.

Whilst comments were made from participants throughout the Information Sessions, we have sought to answer relevant questions posed by participants in the table below. Should the below answers not fully answer the question, or if you have further questions, please contact the Business Grants Hub on 13 28 46 to discuss your individual circumstances.

| **Question/Comment** | **Answer** |
| --- | --- |
| **Grant amounts and contribution** | |
| 1. **What is the minimum size of the grant, $330,000 or $200,000?** | The program offers up to a **maximum** of a 60:40 funding ratio based on eligible project costs.  The minimum grant amount available is $200,000 per project. This means a project must have a minimum of $335,000 in eligible project costs. |
| 1. **Does it (contributions) mean 20% must be cash?** | Yes. At least 20% of total project costs must be a cash contribution. The cash contribution may come from the Applicant, project partner(s) or state, territory and local government grants. However, total contributions from state, territory and local government grants must not exceed 20% of total project costs. |
| 1. **Can the researchers from private organisations include more than 20% in-kind contribution?** | No, up to 20% of total eligible expenditure can come from in-kind contributions. This can be provided by the lead applicant or project partner such as a private organisation.  The total of all in-kind contributions cannot exceed 20% of total eligible project expenditure. |
| 1. **The grant will provide 60% of project costs, does the remaining 40% co-contribution have to be all cash, or can this include in-kind contributions too?** | The grant amount will be up to 60% of eligible project expenditure. The remaining 40% of eligible project costs can be composed of cash contributions and in-kind contributions.  **Cash contributions** must be at least 20% of eligible project expenditure and can come from any source including project partner(s), state, territory and local government grants. However, no more than 20% of total eligible project expenditure can be funded from state, territory or local government grants.  Up to 20% of eligible expenditure can come from **in-kind contributions**. This can be provided by the lead applicant or project partner(s). In-kind contributions cannot come from state and territory governments. |
| 1. **Can cash contributions come from Australia or overseas?** | Yes, cash contributions can come from Australian or overseas project partners. |
| 1. **Can you leverage funding from external governments, e.g. a grant in the UK and another grant in the US to build an international network?** | Yes, you can leverage overseas funding from international governments as part of your cash contributions. |
| **Eligibility** | |
| 1. **Are companies or private organisations that have a research component eligible? Or is it just research institutes that can apply?** | We are interested in seeing applicants from Australian research institutes, universities and industry, including start-ups or companies undertaking research.  The focus is on how you plan to make or grow a network that is both across Australia and then internationally as well. So it’s not just about a 1 to 1 bilateral project collaboration, but a network of entities, and you will need to demonstrate that a company can be the lead applicant for establishing or growing such a network.  Eligible entities are described at Part 4.1 of the Grant Opportunity Guidelines. |
| 1. **The guidelines state: *"We cannot fund your project if it receives funding from another Commonwealth government grant*.*"* Does this mean CRCs are not eligible?** | Cooperative Research Centre’s may be eligible if they can demonstrate that the project is additional to and goes beyond the original scope of activities that the CRC had initially received Commonwealth funding for. The key thing here is additionality; this program will not support activities or projects that are already receiving Commonwealth funding.  The application should also be clear on the source of the cash contribution and demonstrate it is not Commonwealth funds. The CRC must also meet the eligibility criteria outlined in section 4 of the Grant Opportunity Guidelines. |
| **Program scope and project eligibility** | |
| 1. **Is the grant more technology focused or can it be interdisciplinary including social sciences, certification and policy?** | Grants can support interdisciplinary projects beyond technological research, but it needs to be centred around one of the focus clean energy technology areas outlined.  Mission Innovation (MI) and the Clean Energy Ministerial (CEM) span the development to deployment spectrum of clean energy, from R&D through to policy, enabling environments and market signals. For example, a project may be based on a network of researchers working within or through the CEM on developing certification measures to pull through clean energy technologies, or on the need for social engagement or gender equality. |
| 1. **Could you please explain further how you anticipate the networks linking with the Mission innovation themes?** | Australia is a member of seven missions within Mission Innovation, and open to non‑government engagement in all. Each mission comprises key research priorities and sub‑components of work that could be adapted as the focus area of your network, and you could create a specific network of organisations around this.  For example, the [Green Powered Future Mission](http://mission-innovation.net/missions/power/) has 50 research priority areas across 3 pillars of work: *Affordable and Reliable Variable Renewable Energy*, *System Flexibility and Market Design* and *Data and Digitalisation for System Integration*. Under each pillar there are smaller sub-components. You could put forward a project that links into the Mission’s research priorities or sub‑components and create a network of entities or organisations to drive the project in alignment with the Mission’s objectives and framework.  This interplay is applicable to the other international initiatives, partnerships and programs described in the program, including the Clean Energy Ministerial and IEA’s Technology Collaboration Programs. |
| 1. **If you have a brief idea for a potential project that could interlink with some of these international programs, e.g. Mission Innovation, but haven’t been able to connect yet – is there an opportunity to explore this idea and get access to key people involved in these multilateral fora or partnerships to test ideas?** | As a first step, we recommend looking at the international program or fora's website.   * Mission Innovation: <http://mission-innovation.net/missions/> * Clean Energy Ministerial: <https://www.cleanenergyministerial.org> * The Breakthrough Agenda: <https://climatechampions.unfccc.int/system/breakthrough-agenda/> International Energy Agency – Technology Collaboration Programme: <https://www.iea.org/programmes/technology-collaboration-programme> * Global Power Systems Transformation Consortium: <https://globalpst.org/>   Programs within these have very clear roadmaps and action plans that detail their research activities and focus areas. If you would like to test your idea with a program, we can connect you to the program lead. Please identify specifically which initiative you’d like to link into and get in touch with us at [ICIRN@industry.gov.au](mailto:ICIRN@industry.gov.au) if you need help with introductions. DCCEEW can also, in the first instance, connect you to existing Australian researchers or industry engaging with those programs. |
| 1. **Is there any preference given to engagement with countries with which Australia already has clean technology partnerships (US, UK, Japan etc.)?** | Yes, your project must be aligned with supporting Australian action through international partnerships or multilateral fora. This includes those Australia has an [international clean energy partnership](https://www.dcceew.gov.au/climate-change/international-commitments/international-partnerships) with, or Mission Innovation, the Clean Energy Ministerial, the Breakthrough Agenda, the International Energy Agency’s Technology Collaboration Programs or the Global Power Systems Transformation Consortium, or other international collaborations that underpin global commitments to support the goals of the Paris Agreement. |
| 1. **On page 7 of the Guidelines, it says that “*networks may include one or more partners with whom Australia has an international clean energy partnership*.” This list only contains a handful of countries. Does it mean collaborators from other countries (e.g., France or Belgium) are unacceptable?** | Collaborators from other countries (that Australia does not have a clean energy partnership with) are welcome to be part of the project, provided;   * at least one of the other project partners are from a country that we have an [international clean energy partnership](https://www.dcceew.gov.au/climate-change/international-commitments/international-partnerships) with, OR * that the proposed network is linked into Mission Innovation, the Clean Energy Ministerial, the Breakthrough Agenda, the IEA’s Technology Collaboration Programmes or the Global Power System Transformation Consortium. There are numerous countries involved across the multilateral fora listed.   The program is designed to support networks for Australian innovation and research contributions in alignment with these bilateral or multilateral initiatives. |
| 1. **How many organisations need to be in it to be defined as a network, can it just be two?** | There are two components to be considered here. Firstly, how many organisations need to be part of the application process and secondly if a bilateral partnership with just one other institution is considered sufficient under this program. On the first item, there must be one lead applicant per application. A lead applicant may include other institutions or organisations who are interested in being part of this network to be identified as project partners in the application. The application should demonstrate how you would then create or grow a network.  On the second item, the program’s intent is to foster the domestic connectivity of Australian researchers working on specific clean energy technology areas, and then being able to connect that domestically built network internationally. As such, we expect that a network needs to have more than two members.  Note, you do not need to have all members of the network established at the time of applying for the grant, but the proposed project (of a network) needs to be about more than just two organisations. For example, an application could have just one organisation, which wants to establish a new network. The application must demonstrate how they will do this, who they plan to bring into the network, identify organisations or entities that have already expressed interest in being part of the proposed network. A best practice example is the Australian Hydrogen Researcher Network. |
| 1. **You mention 'green metals.' There are a number of minerals important to energy transitions that are not metals. Are these minerals also in scope?** | The phrasing ‘green metals’ derives from the Government’s Powering Australia policy which outlines a core focus on industry decarbonisation, decarbonisation of regional Australia, and new industries for Australia. We are interested in technologies around the production of green metals, such as steel and aluminium, and their supply chains, so this can stretch back to their ore components, such as iron ore and bauxite.  This program does not seek to support the emissions reductions of different critical minerals or metallic elements on the periodic table. The Department of Industry, Science and Resources has an existing program to target wider critical minerals through the [Critical Minerals Development Program](https://business.gov.au/grants-and-programs/critical-minerals-development-program). |
| 1. **What can the grant be applied to? It talks about establishment or enhancing networks. Could it be about a platform that brings the networks together, facilitates R&D partnerships, matchmaking needs with capabilities and is a way for them to be able to better work together and have more effective R&D partnerships across the ecosystem? Or must the funding be directed towards establishing the network or research that’s being done by that network?** | Yes, activities that seek to enhance an existing international researcher network or domestic network to include research partners may be supported under this program, provided it focuses on at least one of the clean innovation technology areas described. |
| 1. **Is the objective of the program to try and engage with clean energy research programs abroad? Is fusion energy in scope?** | The technologies that are listed in the grant opportunity guidelines are in scope, so technologies needed to deliver the Australian Government’s emissions reduction policies, including renewable energy (solar, wind, energy storage, grid integration), green metals and their supply chains.  An application could be put forward where interested parties have a compelling business case of why they need an international researcher network. Please be explicit in demonstrating how you will establish the network, its linkages to bilateral or multilateral initiatives listed, the network’s objectives, its alignment with at least one of the key technologies (or supply chains listed), as well as how it will directly support the Government’s decarbonisation goals. |
| 1. **Is the focus about developing the network rather than straight research activity?** | Both; it’s about developing the network and supporting the substance of that, including research collaborations or deliverables (e.g. events, conferences, joint projects).  The intent of the network is to first create efficiencies through connecting the dispersed research landscape, then utilising that network. The first aim is to establish or enhance the network (e.g. by growing and connecting internationally), then consider what it will deliver. |
| 1. **Can grants be used to support visiting researcher exchange on direct projects, as well as more generic networks?** | Yes, see section 5.1 (Eligible activities). Supporting visiting researchers to undertake collaborative projects could be part of the grant, but it is key to demonstrate how you will establish a network, the network’s objectives and how this visiting researcher component fits with developing the network. Be explicit in how this component provides additionality and why this may not go ahead should you not receive grant funding. |
| 1. **Does the grant support engagement with international non-academic (say corporate R&D or commercial) entities with an aim to advance research commercialisation?** | Yes, it could. The focus is how you plan to make or grow a network that is both across Australia and then internationally as well. So, it’s not just about a 1 to 1 bilateral project collaboration, but a network of entities.  Please be explicit in demonstrating how you will establish the network, its linkages to bilateral or multilateral initiatives listed (e.g. Mission Innovation or the Clean Energy Ministerial), the network’s objectives and its alignment with at least one of the key technologies (or their supply chains) listed. |
| 1. **Is wind energy (such as wind turbine optimisation) included as one of the focuses of this scheme?** | Wind energy (and their supply chains) is identified as one of the focus technologies of this program. |
| 1. **Are technologies for cleaner water treatment part of the scope or is it only energy production focused?** | The program is designed to support research in technologies needed to deliver the Australian Government’s emissions reduction policies, including renewable energy (solar, wind, storage and grid integration), green metals and their supply chains.  If your project involves networks that focus on improving water treatment processes as part of these technologies or their supply chains, it could be eligible. Please be explicit in demonstrating how you will establish the network, its linkages to bilateral or multilateral initiatives listed (e.g. Mission Innovation or the Clean Energy Ministerial), the network’s objectives and its alignment with at least one of the key technologies (or their supply chains) listed. |
| 1. **Are hydrogen projects within scope at all?** | Clean hydrogen research networks are not included in this grant, as they are already being addressed through CSIRO and the Australian Hydrogen Research Network. However, projects involving hydrogen utilisation more broadly, for example green steel production or hydrogen fuel cell vehicles, could be eligible.  The Applicant must be explicit in demonstrating how the proposed network links in with the bilateral or multilateral initiatives listed, the network’s objectives and how it will directly support the Government’s decarbonisation goals. The applicant must be clear on the source of the project’s cash contributions and demonstrate that it is not receiving other Commonwealth funds for the same activity.  Projects relating to clean hydrogen production, transport, storage and distribution are not eligible for ICIRN funding. |
| **Eligible expenditure** | |
| 1. **For international partners, can some funds be spent in overseas partner institutions?** | The lead organisation in the application can include overseas expenditure on eligible activities undertaken through project partners located overseas. Eligible overseas activities are generally limited to 10% of total eligible expenditure. The expenditure needs to be incurred by the applicant to be eligible. It is possible for overseas partners to invoice the applicant for services provided to the network. |
| 1. **Do expenses need to be incurred within Australia, or can it be overseas as well? Does the grant mainly support activities or events in Australia?** | The cost of eligible project activities undertaken overseas, such as networking events or research activities, should not exceed 10% of total eligible expenditure. The Program is designed to have the majority of eligible expenditure undertaken on eligible activities in Australia. The focus of the grant is to support Australian researchers and their networks. We are encouraging activities to occur in Australia as much as possible. For example, the grant could support Australian researchers to engage in overseas events, but it would not be used to fund the overseas event in its entirety. Alternatively, it could be used to host an international event in Australia. |
| 1. **Are on-costs considered as eligible project expenditure? For example on-costs are add-ons to a base salary.** | An application may increase eligible salary costs by an additional 30% to cover labour on-costs and administrative overhead such as: employer paid superannuation, payroll tax, workers’ compensation insurance, and overheads such as office rent and the provision of computers. This removes the need for Applicants to itemise and claim individual labour on-costs and administrative overheads in their budget. |
| 1. **Can we include overheads as eligible project expenditure? For example, electricity.** | Overheads are supported through labour on-costs and administrative overheads up to 30% of eligible salary costs. If an Applicant itemises overheads in their budget, they will be assessed against the list provided in Appendix B of the Grant Opportunity. Electricity is listed as ineligible expenditure within this list. The ability to claim labour on-costs and administrative overheads up to 30% of eligible salary costs removes the need for Applicants to itemise and claim overheads. |