

GLOBAL CONNECTIONS FUND GUIDELINES

The Global Connections Fund — Bridging Grants (BG) are a program of assistance that target early-stage proof of concept and knowledge transfer, product and services development and market testing, innovation and commercialisation activities.

They are designed to support international SME-Researcher partnerships to grow beyond an initial level of engagement into a strong collaboration which leads to the translation of research knowledge and intellectual property into market ready products or services.

The Bridging Grants provide between AUD 25,000 to AUD 50,000 per grant and act as seed funding capital to enable viable projects to grow in scope and scale, to test commercialisation and proof of concept activities. They are highly competitive and are additionally supported on a matching funds/ in-kind basis of additional resources from the applicant partners.

Bridging Grants are not to be used for basic research funding, for the acquisition of major capital equipment, or for conference travel.

Only one application per partnership proposal can be submitted. The Bridging Grants (BG) program is administered by the Academy of Technology and Engineering (hereafter referred to as ATSE or the Academy) and is funded by the Australian Government Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources. This initiative aligns with the newly established Global Science and Technology Diplomacy Fund, announced in the 2021-22.



Australian Academy of
Technological Sciences
& Engineering

1. Call Details

Calls for Bridging Grants are announced on the ATSE/GCF website, through the ATSE and GCF mailing lists and through Australian Government media releases and their associated websites. All Australian universities and research organisations are notified of calls as well as relevant industry groups that support SMEs.

Each call has two phases: (1) an eligibility screening test and (2) if eligibility is approved, completion and submission of a full application due by the nominated close date. Please visit the Bridging Grants timetable section of the ATSE/GCF website for up-to-date details on the call dates, process and stages.

1.1 Priority areas covered

Projects must be in one of the four priority areas below:

- Resources Technology & Critical Minerals Processing
- Food & Beverage
- Medical Products
- Recycling & Clean Energy

The project aims to increase linkages with global economies, promote researcher-industry engagement and knowledge transfer, encourage translational activities, end user development and commercialisation outcomes.

1.2 Which economies can you partner with?

You can partner with any economy except for those that are subject to the [United Nations Security Council \(UNSC\) sanctions regimes](#) and the [Australian autonomous sanctions regime](#).

1.3 SME status of international partners

If you are an Australian researcher your international partner will be an SME. As the definition of SMEs differs for each economy, it is important for you to establish and confirm that the partner fits the definition of an SME within their own economy. The applicant will be required to declare that the proposed partner complies with this requirement and be prepared to provide the Academy with documented evidence if so requested by the Academy during the application process. Misleading declarations will lead to disqualification from the application process.

2. Funding arrangements

Bridging Grants are available for projects ranging from AUD 25,000 up to AUD 50,000. Grant applications for less than AUD 25,000 will not be considered eligible.

2.1 Matching funds

It is a requirement that the partners will collectively contribute cash and/or in-kind totaling 50 per cent of the value of the grant applied for. Cash and in-kind are treated as equal for the purposes of the Bridging Grants matching funds component. The proportion contributed by each partner (cash and/or in kind) is left to the Applicant to determine.

For example, if the applicants applied for a AUD 40,000 grant, then a cash and/or in-kind equivalent to 50 per cent of this value will be required which is AUD 20,000. Of this amount, if each partner equally contributed to this component then they would each be required to contribute AUD 10,000 as cash and/or in-kind.

Cash and in-kind contributions as detailed in the application will need to be validated by the Australia applicants through a signed declaration and the overseas partner will also be required to declare their contributions in writing.

These documents will be requested only if the grant has been approved and will form part of the required documentation to be submitted to the Academy in order to fulfil acceptance of the grant offer.

However, to avoid delays and uncertainty in this post assessment phase we strongly advise all applicants to make sure these cash and/or in-kind arrangements are agreed upon between partners prior to the submission of a Bridging Grant proposal. Examples of in-kind contributions could be:

- Use of equipment, laboratory or test-bed facilities, or specialist machinery used in undertaking prototyping activities, based on hours used and operating costs
- Staff time allocated to the project for the purposes of carrying out the tasks identified in the project proposal
- Travel expense contributions from either partner

2.2 Institutional on costs

Many research institutions impose a charge on grants received to cover institutional internal administrative costs. Due to the small size and focused purpose of these grants the Global Connections Fund does not support the charging of institutional on costs.

2.3 What activities do Bridging Grants support?

- Product and service development activities (e.g. technical development, compliance testing, proof of concept, product testing, validation, laboratory verification and certification)
- Product or services design (e.g. design work, prototyping, innovation design, manufacturing establishment)
- Software development and beta testing for a specific application
- Market testing and analysis, small run supply of prototypes for testing and evaluation
- IP scanning: Freedom to Operate searches and provisional patent applications. Expenses for these IP related items are capped at AUD 5,000
- A limited travel component to enable specific project activities to occur. This amount is capped at AUD 3,000

2.4 What activities are not supported by Bridging Grants?

- Basic research projects
- Routine replacement, purchase and/or upgrade of equipment
- Activities that would be undertaken in the normal course of business, such as website development, or the purchase, development and/or integration of standard software for core purposes (e.g. accounting, financial management), business planning, sales and promotional activities
- Retrospective activities (i.e. where expenditure is incurred prior to the award of a Bridging Grant)
- Airfares to attend conferences etc.
- Anything else as determined by the Academy as not meeting the Bridging Grant objectives

3. Who can apply?

Applicants must be an Australian Researcher or an Australian-incorporated SME and have a proposal supporting an international SME-Researcher partnership.

Only the following partnership collaborations are supported:

- Australian SMEs looking to partner with Researchers.
- Australian Researchers seeking to partner with International SMEs.

We do not support Researcher-Researcher or SME-SME Partnerships.

Applicants can only submit one Bridging Grant application, and only one application per research group or SME will be considered.

Applicants need to include COVID-19 contingency plan.

3.1 Australian Researcher applicants

The applicant must be an Australian citizen or an Australian permanent resident and living in Australia at the time of submitting the grant application.

If successful, Bridging Grant applicants will need to provide proof of citizenship or permanent residency if requested, as a condition of receiving funds.

Australian research applicants are defined as those employed by a tertiary education institution, publicly funded research organisation, not-for-profit research organisation, or cooperative research centre.

Where an applicant's institutional arrangements are such that the institution is deemed the applicant, then applicant should ensure institutional sign off.

3.2 Australian SME applicants

SME applicants must meet the [Australian Government definition of an SME](#), which is the term used to refer to a business which has less than 200 full time equivalent employees.

SME applicants:

- Must be incorporated as a Pty Ltd or Ltd entity
- Must have an Australian Business Number (ABN)
- Must be incorporated and registered for GST
- Must not be set up as a trust structure
- Must not be a sole trader
- Must not be engaged in any litigation, arbitration, administrative proceedings, investigations, of or before any court, tribunal, commission, arbitral body or other agency in any jurisdiction in the Commonwealth of Australia (for enterprises based in Australia) or in the nominated priority economy.

3.3 Who is not eligible?

Grants will not be provided to organisations:

- included on the National Redress Scheme's website on the list of 'Institutions that have not joined or signified their intent to join the Scheme'
www.nationalredress.gov.au
- named by the Workplace Gender Equality Agency as an organisation that has not complied with Workplace Gender Equality Act (2012)

3.4 Project specific legislation, policies and industry standards

Successful applicants 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 these requirements are met where necessary. In particular, project leads will be required to comply with state or territory legislation in relation to working with children.

Ethics and research practices

The Australian Research Council provides a series of publications that outline the principles of ethical conduct in research. All proposals and funded research projects must conform to the principles and requirements of these publications (and their successor documents), including but not limited to:

- [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research 2007](#)
- [National Statement of Ethical Conduct in Human Research \(2007\) - Updated 2018](#)
- [Australian Code for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes \(2013\)](#)

If there is any conflict or inconsistency between a successor document and its predecessor, then the successor document prevails.

Intellectual property rights

Project leads must provide details of intellectual property (IP) arrangements in their applications. This includes both the use of IP in the project and the proposed ownership rights to IP generated by the project as well as strategies for protecting Australia's interests. Where IP is likely to be generated by the project, successful applicants are required to conclude protocols or contracts with their Australian partners and global partners on the management of IP issues. These agreements should be in accordance with laws and regulations in Australia and the relevant global economies and provide for:

- adequate and effective protection and equitable distribution of any benefits from IP rights created in or resulting directly from cooperative activities (foreground IP rights)
- ownership of foreground IP rights to be allocated on the basis of respective contribution and equitable interests

- terms and conditions for the commercialisation and other forms of dissemination of the foreground IP rights
- adequate and effective protection of IP rights provided by the organisations, enterprises and institutions prior to or in the course of such cooperative activities, for example, the licensing or utilisation of such IP rights on equitable terms (background IP rights).

Australian participants should approach IP negotiations in line with the principles outlined on business.gov.au and the [National Principles of Intellectual Property Management for Publicly Funded Research \(2017\)](#).

Export Controls

As this program involves research collaboration with foreign entities, some provisions of Australia's export controls regime may apply to projects. It is the responsibility of project leads to consider the implications, if any, of the relevant legislation on the proposed project before submitting applications, and to comply with any applicable requirements if it is successful. Further information is available on the [Department of Defence](#).

National security

Collaboration with foreign entities must be transparent, undertaken with full knowledge and consent, and in a manner, that avoids harm to Australia's national interests. It is your responsibility to consider the national security implications of the proposed project and identify and manage any risks, including risks relating to the unwanted transfer of sensitive knowledge technology. You should ensure that you are informed about who you are collaborating with by undertaking appropriate due diligence, proportionate to the risk and subject to available information, of your global partners and their personnel participating in the project. This should take into account any potential security, ethical, legal and reputational risks, and, where necessary, you should be prepared to demonstrate how you will manage and mitigate any identified risks. You and any entities participating in the project must disclose all foreign ownership (including foreign government ownership), affiliations with foreign governments, organisations, institutions or companies, or membership of foreign government talent programs. You must report any material changes in the nature of the activity or key personnel involved, including affiliations/links with foreign governments or companies.

To assist with managing security risks, you are strongly encouraged to review the department's [Guide to undertaking international collaboration](#), Australian Government Information Security Manual as well as the [Guidelines to counter foreign interference in the Australian university sector \(UFIT\)](#). Although focused on the university sector, many objectives and best practice considerations in the UFIT guidelines are applicable to other research institutions and businesses that may be Australian partners in projects funded by this program.

4. Assessment

All grants will undergo a peer review assessment process by the Academy. Assessors are specialists in the grant priority areas with expert knowledge of translational research and development activities. Each project will be assessed against 4 main Assessment Criteria (equally weighted). These are:

Project description (25 points)

Assessment will be based on:

- Clear definition of the problem being addressed
- Clear market need is being addressed
- Approaches proposed are realistic and achievable
- How the proposed product fits within a competitive landscape
- Resources available to complete project

Project Activities & Resources (25 points)

Assessment will be based on:

- Clearly defined list of actions to achieve outcomes
- Time scale is realistic and achievable
- Personnel appropriate to the task
- Budget is realistic
- In-kind and cash contributions are appropriate

Impact of the work (25 points)

Assessment will be based on:

- Is the project likely to result in an ongoing collaboration?
- What is the likelihood of a successful demonstration of the project technology?
- What is the likelihood that the project will result in a commercialised product or service?
- What impact will a successful outcome have on the current market?
- Are there likely to be returns on investment to both the researchers and SME partners involved in the project?

What are the benefits of this work to Australia? (25 points)

Assessment will be based on:

- Is it disruptive and likely to create new business opportunities?
- Will it contribute to growth in the priority area it covers?
- Will it provide training opportunities for researchers and SME staff?
- Will it foster bilateral business, scientific and technology relationships?

5. Grant duration and reporting

The grant activity must be completed within 12 months of the award being accepted.

Acceptance of grant offers must be taken up within one month of the letter being issued by the Academy.

Bridging Grant activities should be initiated within 3 months of grant payment and must be actively underway by 6 months. All grants must be completed within 12 months of grant payment. No extensions are possible.

The Academy reserves the right to withdraw the funding/ offer of funding if collaborations are not commenced within these timeframes.

There will be 2 reporting points; an interim progress report at 6 months and a final report due at 13 months. i.e. one month after the grant period expires.

Grantees will also be required to participate in an exit survey.

It is the responsibility of the Australian Applicants to prepare and file the reports.

There may be a requirement for the applicant to provide a signed financial statement of expenditure of the grant on request.

All grantees will be required to provide a small vignette on the project for public use by the Academy and/or the Australian Government when reporting publicly on the outcomes of the project.

atse.org.au/GCF2022



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