



ACT
Government

Energy Innovation Fund

Grants Application Guidelines

Funding Stream 1: **Technology Demonstration Grant** – Refer section 5

Funding Stream 2: **Policy Challenge Grant** – Refer section 6

Funding Stream 3: **Innovation Ecosystem Grant** – Refer section 7

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Ngunnawal people as traditional custodians of the ACT and recognise any other people or families with connection to the lands of the ACT and region. We acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region.

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1. Canberra, the energy innovation capital

Canberra is home to leading Australian research institutions, industry partners and skilled workers. It is a city of early adopters and a test bed for new ideas and new technologies, where innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship are celebrated. Recognised globally as one of the world's most sustainable cities, Canberra continues to attract talent and create opportunities for innovation in our net zero industry.

The ACT has achieved and maintained 100% renewable electricity since 2020. Our world-leading ambition is creating business, research and training opportunities. The ACT is attracting and expanding companies that support the energy transition, creating commercial opportunities for new and emerging ventures and jobs of the future for Canberrans.

As the world economy decarbonises, energy systems globally are transitioning away from traditional centralised models to a more dynamic, decentralised web of renewable energy generation, storage and control systems. There is significant opportunity to accelerate solutions.

2. The Energy Innovation Fund

The ACT Government's industry-funded Energy Innovation Fund (the Fund, previously known as the "Renewable Energy Innovation Fund" or the "REIF") is driving the long-term development of the ACT's industries and jobs that support the energy transition. The Fund has invested \$12 million since its inception in 2016 and has been instrumental to the growth of a vibrant renewable energy sector in the ACT.

An additional \$19 million was committed to the Fund following the fifth round of the ACT renewables auction (which help maintain the ACT's 100% renewable electricity achievement). This additional funding will help develop innovative, emerging energy technologies and solutions required to support the net zero transformation.

The Fund is administered by the ACT Government, through the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSDD). An independent Industry Advisory Board comprising leaders from Canberra's renewable energy business, academic and innovation community provides input and guidance to support the Fund Administrator's decision-making regarding allocation of funding.

3. Fund objectives

The purpose of the Fund is to drive the development of a vibrant, sustainable, export-oriented energy transition industry in the Territory to create jobs and grow and diversify the ACT economy. The Fund's four objectives are:

1. Supporting energy transition innovation, with potential to export outside the ACT
2. Supporting energy transition policy innovation in the ACT
3. Building energy innovation ecosystems in the ACT
4. Delivering ACT's energy innovation policy and industry development strategy

The Fund may be used to support early-stage and exploratory applied research, development, and deployment (RD&D), and resulting emerging ventures in the ACT. The Fund aligns with key themes and goals of the *ACT Climate Change Strategy 2019-25*, including providing a just transition to sustainable energy, developing a thriving renewable energy knowledge economy in the ACT, to support innovation, research and partnerships and accelerate the transition to a net zero emissions economy.

4. Funding priorities

The Energy Innovation Fund Program offers three funding streams for applications:

Funding stream 1: Technology Demonstration Grant	Funding stream 2: Policy Challenge Grant	Funding stream 3: Innovation Ecosystem Grant
Objective: Supporting energy transition innovation, with potential to export outside the ACT	Objective: Supporting energy transition policy innovation in the ACT	Objective: Building energy innovation ecosystems in the ACT

When applying for funding, all applicants should note:

- Applicants must provide a plan outlining the proposed project and the funding requested, articulating the benefits to the net zero transition and the ACT economy and alignment with the relevant grant objective.
- For Stream 1, applicants must provide matched co-contribution to support the ACT Government's contribution. This matched funding may be sourced from private, public funding or a combination of these sources. It may include in-kind contributions.
- Organisations must be able to demonstrate they have sufficient funds, resources, and capabilities to commence and complete proposed projects.
- Where applicable, applicants should consider how their proposal aligns with complementary government objectives and policies including, but not limited to:
 - » [CBR Switched On: ACT's economic development priorities 2022-2025](#)
 - » [ACT Climate Change Strategy 2019–2025](#)
 - » [The ACT Zero Emissions Vehicle Strategy 2022-30](#)
 - » [Our Pathway to Electrification – Position Paper](#)
 - » [10th Legislative Assembly Parliamentary and Governing Agreement](#)
 - » [Canberra's Living Infrastructure Plan](#)
 - » [Zero-Emission Transition Plan for Transport Canberra](#)
 - » [ACT Circular Economy Strategy 2023-2030](#)
 - » [ACT Waste to Energy Policy 2020-2025](#)

5. Funding stream 1: Technology Demonstration Grant

The ACT is an internationally recognised destination for world-class renewable energy research and innovation. It is an incubator for energy technologies, from software management systems for renewable energy assets, to distributed energy resources (DER), virtual power plants (VPP), energy storage and grid integration, renewable hydrogen, 'sector coupling' and electrification. These strengths are supported by the ACT's excellent research and development capabilities.

Funding stream 1 will support energy innovation projects, through technology research, development and demonstrations, that have relevance and applicability to the ACT's energy transformation as well as potential for export.

The expected outcomes from funding stream 1 are to enhance:

- Energy transition innovation technologies with the potential to export outside the ACT
- The acceleration of research, development, and commercialisation of critical renewable energy and enabling technologies
- Translating research into commercial applications
- Incentivising collaboration across industry and research organisations
- The growth and development of the ACT renewable energy sector

Funding stream 1 will remain open at all times for submissions, with a deadline each quarter for proposals to be assessed.

Grant amount

A total of up to \$10 million for Stream 1 is available over 5 years.

Organisations can apply for funding between \$50,000 and \$1,000,000 (excluding GST) per grant. The same application can only be made once each year, unless invited to resubmit by the assessment panel.

Funding scope

Funding stream 1 aims to provide early-stage funding to businesses within the ACT to support new and emerging technologies, ventures, and activities consistent with the funding scope provided at [Appendix A](#).

Funding will focus on commercially oriented energy transition innovation, while remaining technology agnostic. The Fund is open to innovative proposals from companies irrespective of the energy subsector they represent. Examples could include but are not limited to: emerging storage technologies; innovative electricity demand-side solutions; or innovative business models for zero emissions transport.

Eligibility

A lead organisation seeking a Technology Demonstration Grant must:

- Be able to achieve all project milestones within three years of commencement.
- Be able to demonstrate the minimum 1:1 matched co-contribution. While co-contributions can include in-kind contributions, higher cash contributions will be viewed favourably during assessment.
- General eligibility criteria are listed in Section 8.

6. Funding stream 2: Policy Challenge Grant

The Policy Challenge Grant supports the advancement in ACT's energy transition policy.

EPSDD will welcome applications from the business sector, regulatory experts, as well as think tanks and research institutions that focus on the stated policy challenge.

Successful applications will be supported with funding to test new ideas that respond to the policy challenge. The expected outcomes from funding stream 2 are:

- Incentivising research-innovation-policy partnerships and collaborative proposals between research and industry.
- Accelerating the ACT's energy transition.

Funding stream 2 will open by announcement on the [ACT's Everyday Climate Choices](#) website, once per year, with a deadline each quarter for proposals to be assessed.

Grant amount

Up to \$3.75 million is available to support solutions addressing the energy transformation policy challenges in the ACT.

Organisations can apply for funding between \$20,000 and \$500,000 (excluding GST) per grant. The same application can only be made once each year, unless invited to resubmit by the assessment panel.

Funding scope

Grants will provide support for proposals consistent with the funding scope provided at [Appendix A](#).

Further detail on the prescribed policy challenge will be made available on the [ACT's Everyday Climate Choices](#) website.

The grants will support the development of projects including policy white papers, new business solutions, or new regulatory sandboxing trials tailored to address the ACT's specific energy transition needs.

Eligibility

- Businesses with expertise in the energy transition, with an independent ABN.
- Universities, think tanks and other research institutions with expertise in the energy transition. Partnership with businesses is particularly encouraged.
- General eligibility criteria are listed in Section 8.

7. Funding stream 3: Innovation Ecosystem Grant

This funding stream includes two sub-categories of support:

- **Innovation Clusters:** we welcome proposals to facilitate collaboration and investment opportunities in developing energy innovation sub-sectors and clusters in the ACT.
- **Business Accelerator:** funding support for technological or product-based innovation based in the ACT to scale up to Australia and markets beyond.

Funding stream 3 will remain open at all times. Focus areas for funding support will be updated on the ACT's [Everyday Climate Choices](#) website, with a deadline each quarter for proposals to be assessed.

Grant amount

A total of up to \$3.25 million is available to support innovation ecosystems building in the ACT over 5 years.

Organisations can apply for funding between \$30,000 and \$300,000 (excluding GST) per grant. The same application can only be made once each year, unless invited to resubmit by the assessment panel.

Funding scope

The funding scope for stream 3 is consistent with the funding scope provided at [Appendix A](#).

Innovation Clusters: EPSDD is looking for proposals that can facilitate capacity building activities in the energy innovation sectors. These activities could include connecting the ACT's innovation network through networking events, accessing investors and capital, knowledge workshops, professional conferences and roundtables in the ACT, and showcasing Canberra in international roadshows.

Business Accelerator: Funding will support improved commercialisation, and access to consumers, that can help ACT-based energy innovation to turn from prototypes into potentially commercially successful products and services.

Eligibility

- **Innovation Clusters:** Businesses, and industry building not-for-profit organisations are encouraged to apply.
- **Business Accelerator:** This funding is available to businesses only.
- General eligibility criteria are listed in Section 8.

8. General eligibility

A lead organisation seeking a grant under the Energy Innovation Fund must:

1. Have an Australian Business Number (ABN).
2. Hold all insurances required by law, including \$10 million public liability insurance and workers compensation, or be prepared to acquire these if successful in gaining an Energy Innovation Fund grant.
3. Be an ACT based organisation, OR the majority of the proposed funded activities must occur within the ACT.
4. Have demonstrated satisfactorily acquitted or meeting outstanding grant milestones, reporting requirements, and obligations, including financial acquittals for previous Energy Innovation Fund funding.
5. Be able to demonstrate a contribution towards the ACT's target of net zero emissions by 2045.
6. Be registered for the Goods and Services Tax (GST) if applicable (if turnover is greater than \$150,000 per annum).
7. Businesses that support First Nations communities and people experiencing and people experiencing vulnerability will be regarded positively. Registered Indigenous businesses are particularly encouraged to apply.

Who is not eligible to apply?

The following are not eligible to receive funding under the Energy Innovation Fund:

- Organisations who are unsuccessful in securing a grant during the same calendar year, for the same project.
- A Commonwealth, state or territory government agency.
- Universities and other research institutions are only eligible if they partner with a business, with an independent ABN, as the lead applicant. **Universities and other research institutions may not apply as the lead applicant, except under stream 2: Policy Challenge Grant.*

Applicants must disclose any legal proceedings or investigation deemed relevant to the grant, including litigation, arbitration, mediation or conciliation that are taking place, pending or (to the best of the applicant's knowledge, after having made proper enquiry) threatened against the applicant or a related body corporate (as defined in the Corporations Act).

Applicants are not eligible if:

- the Territory determines that any information provided by the applicant regarding legal proceedings or investigations materially impacts their suitability as a grant recipient
- the organisation and individual shareholders of the organisation are subject to any insolvency event.
- the applicant or organisation are named on the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade sanctions list.

Eligible expenditure

To be eligible, expenditure must:

- be expenditure directly related to undertaking the project
- be incurred by the applicant within the project duration
- be a direct cost of the project and not be provided for the benefit or profit of related bodies
- meet the conditions set out in these guidelines and the Deed of Grant.

Eligible expenditure is calculated as the GST inclusive amount less any GST credits the recipient, or its representative member, is entitled to claim. Where equipment and resources purchased to undertake the project are also used for activities unrelated to the project, the total cost of those resources considered eligible expenditure may be adjusted proportionally. Successful applicants must keep payment records of all eligible expenditure and be able to explain how the costs relate to the agreed project activities. EPSDD may ask successful applicants to provide records of the expenditure they have paid. If successful applicants do not provide these records when requested, their expense may not qualify as eligible expenditure.

Grant funding does not cover:

- expenditure that does not directly support the successful completion of the project
- ongoing operational expenses
- salaries for positions that have already been funded by the organisation, or already funded by other grants for the same project
- business-as-usual staff costs unrelated to the project, for example redundancy or retirement benefits, workers compensation payments, professional fees or memberships
- activities carried out or committed to before the grant is offered and accepted
- legal costs associated with a consortium, disputes or funding arrangements not agreed to as part of the Deed of Grant
- the purchase and installation of established technology, equipment or assets. Examples include but are not limited to solar photo-voltaic panels or battery storage systems.

9. Selection process

Appendix B provides a flow chart illustrating the selection process for the three funding streams.

Once proposals have been submitted, the assessment panel will review all eligible proposals against the merit criteria below. More information or clarifications may be requested before the final assessment and approval.

Merit criteria for all funding streams

The Fund will support projects that contribute to the ACT Government's vision of Canberra as an internationally recognised centre for renewable energy research, innovation and investment. Each application will be assessed against the guidelines and selection criteria on the application form. The assessment panel will consider the application and make an assessment as to the merit of the application in meeting the aims and objectives of the Program.

Proposals that meet the eligibility criteria will be considered against the following merit criteria:

1. Innovation and knowledge sharing (30%).

- Innovation and broadening the knowledge base in the ACT energy transition sector is an important objective of the Fund. The following will be assessed under this criterion:
 - a. The project clearly demonstrates innovative and transformational approaches to supporting the net zero transition. This can be demonstrated via the technology used, business model or other aspects; and
 - b. The approach to sharing the learnings gained from the project.

2. Technical and commercial viability (30%).

→ The proposal demonstrates a pathway from ideation to development. The project applies robust processes to develop innovative energy transition solutions. The application shows a high potential for demonstration and scalability. Criteria also include the potential commercial opportunities flowing from the funded activity and the strength of the proponent's business model.

3. Application quality and organisation capacity (30%).

→ The applicant has demonstrated their capability to deliver the project and described previous experience in delivering similar projects and managing risks.

→ The applicant has demonstrated an understanding of, and ability to obtain, any permission or approvals required to deliver the project (where appropriate).

→ The application must provide sufficient information to make an informed assessment.

4. Return on investment (10%).

→ The level of funding requested is proportionate to the project outcomes and benefits for the ACT. In the context of the entire project, and its timing, the amount of requested funding and the planned expenditure demonstrates a sound investment.

→ Enhanced public-private collaborations in developing and demonstrating new solutions, and leveraging private investments, are particularly important.

→ The Government will aim to leverage at least \$1 in new co-contributions for every dollar it invests, on average, in energy innovation technologies. Proposals that demonstrate job creation will be viewed favourably.

10. How to apply

Grant timelines

Full proposal	Funding stream 1: Open. Funding stream 2: By announcement, timeframes will be provided online each year. Funding stream 3: Open.
Application outcome	Proposals assessed quarterly and outcomes released in the following quarter.
Negotiation and finalisation of funding agreement	Quarterly.

Applicants are required to submit their application via an online application management system called SmartyGrants. Applications must address the eligibility criteria and requirements for funding. The application will not be assessed for funding if the criteria are not addressed. Applications can be submitted at any time. Applications will be assessed periodically (every quarter) and results advertised on the [Everyday Climate Choices Website](#).

A public announcement of the successful grant recipients is expected within three months of the end of each quarterly assessment period.

How to submit your application

All applications must be submitted online via the Energy Innovation Fund SmartyGrants application forms. The links to the application forms are provided on the [Everyday Climate Choices Website](#).

The proposal must include:

- a detailed project description and objectives;
- proposed project timeline;
- project benefits and expected outcomes;
- implementation plan, including timing of key milestones and deliverables;
- a knowledge sharing plan;
- the benefits of the funded activities to the ACT renewable energy ecosystem; and
- details on existing or proposed co-funding arrangements.

Applications must be received by the due time and date, as outlined on the website. Late applications will be assessed in the following quarterly period.

If you do not comply with the above eligibility requirements, your application will not be assessed for funding.

Unsuccessful applicants may request verbal feedback on applications from the Directorate. Requests for feedback must be submitted in writing to EPSDD.EnergyInnovationFund@act.gov.au

Hardcopy or email applications will not be accepted.

You will need to create a log in to begin your application and you may begin anywhere in the Program Application Form. Please ensure you save as you go.

SmartyGrants provides an online help guide for applicants. This guide will explain the essential steps you need to take to complete and submit your Program Application Form. The help guide is accessible at: <https://applicanthelp.smartygrants.com.au/help-guide-for-applicants/>. If you have any questions, or difficulty in accessing or using the online application form, please contact the Energy Innovation Fund Team for assistance via email at EPSDD.EnergyInnovationFund@act.gov.au

Navigating (moving through) the grants application form

On the left-hand side of every screen, there is a box which links directly to every page of the application. Click on any page to jump directly to that page. You can also click 'next page' or 'previous page' on the top or bottom of each page to move forward or backward through the application.

Saving your draft application and returning

You can press 'save progress' at any point and log out. When you log back in, your draft application will be saved, and you can start where you left off.

Submitting your application

The submit button is on the final page. You will not be able to submit your application until all the questions are completed.

Attachments and support documents

You may wish to upload/submit attachments to support your application. For some categories you will have to include attachments. This is very simple but requires you to have the documents saved on your computer, on a portable drive, or similar. If you are not able to upload a document, please contact the [Contact Officer](#) for support.

Completing an application in a group/team

A number of people can work on an application using the same log-in details provided that only one person is working on the application at any given time. Ensure you save as you go.

Once you have completed your Application Form it will be submitted to the Program Officer.

PLEASE NOTE: Energy Innovation Fund staff are unable to view your application until it is submitted. All supporting documentation must be submitted with the grant application.

You can upload supporting documentation to your Application Form on the page after the declaration and privacy statement.

For any technical difficulties, or to amend your submission, please contact the Energy Innovation Fund Team for assistance on 13 22 81 during business hours or via email at EPSDD.EnergyInnovationFund@act.gov.au.

11. Accepting a grant

Grant requirements and payment process

Successful applicants will be required to enter into a Deed of Grant (Grant) with the ACT Government setting out the terms and conditions for which funding will be provided. No funding will be released until EPSDD and the applicant have executed the Grant and the appropriate milestone evidence identified in the Grant has been met. EPSDD reserves the right to withhold payments in cases where evidence has been provided but the EPSDD deems that there are concerns relating to the delivery of the Project. In this instance, the EPSDD will release funding when appropriate actions have been taken to ensure the Project is delivered within the agreed timeframes.

Following notification, successful applicants are required to develop and agree to reporting arrangements with the Program Administrator. Payments will be paid upon agreed milestones outlined in the Grant. Payments can take up to 30 days to process following the execution of the Grant and upon receipt of an invoice. The payment amount will be determined per the milestones in the Grant and may be either a lump-sum or instalment based.

Goods and Services Tax (GST)

GST is payable to organisations that receive financial assistance under this Program if they are GST registered with the Australian Tax Office (ATO) and can provide an Australian Business Number (ABN) – i.e. if turnover is greater than \$150,000 per annum. For successful applicant organisations, EPSDD will gross up the grant/s by 10% if registered for GST and after receipt of a Tax Invoice. Organisations that are not registered for GST will not have their grants grossed up. Recipients are responsible for determining their tax liabilities for grant payments.

Publication

All successful applicants and the funded amount will be published on the [Everyday Climate Choices](#) website following notification and the execution of the Deed of Grant. Grant recipients should not publish any announcement of their success prior to the ACT Government announcement of the list of grant recipients.

Acknowledgement

Recipients are expected to acknowledge the ACT Government's support, and this will form part of the Deed of Grant. Recipients must consult EPSDD prior to the public release of any Project promotional materials and liaise with EPSDD to coordinate any public events or announcements related to the Project. Successful applicants may be required to contribute information on activity outcomes for use in Fund evaluation or EPSDD's communication materials. Subject to any specific requirements in an executed Deed of Grant, if successful applicants make a public statement about a funded project, it is a requirement to acknowledge the support provided by EPSDD. The following wording is suggested: "This Project received grant funding from the ACT Government's Energy Innovation Fund and [other funding body – where applicable]."

12. Acquittal of funding

All successful applicants/organisations must expend the funds within the timeframes nominated in the Agreement for the Energy Innovation Fund grant.

When you have expended the funds, you are required to log on to SmartyGrants (<https://actgovt.smartygrants.com.au/>) and complete the acquittal process. Use the same username and password to log in that you used to register with SmartyGrants when you applied for the grant.

Within three months of the termination date of the grant period, the successful recipients must provide EPSDD the completed acquittal and expenditure with the following:

1. A copy of the relevant audited financial statement or invoices, receipts, bank statements or other financial documentation that clearly identifies the income and expenditure of the grant, in accordance with the matching funding requirement; or
2. Documentation that clearly identifies the income and expenditure of the grant signed by the official auditor, CPA or accountant of the organisation; and
3. Pictures of the completed project.

13. Important information for applicants

Accessibility

The ACT Government is committed to making its information, services, events, and venues accessible to as many people as possible. If you have difficulty reading a standard printed document and would like to receive this publication in an alternative format – such as large print or audio – please phone the Access Canberra Contact Centre on 13 22 81.

If English is not your first language and you require the translating and interpreting services, please phone 131 450.

If you are deaf or hearing impaired and require **National Relay Service**, please phone 133 677 then ask for 133 427.

Addendum

Any additional information provided by EPSDD as part of the Energy Innovation Fund will be posted online at [Everyday Climate Choices Website](#). In addition, all applicants that have started or submitted an online application form will be notified by email to the address that is registered with SmartyGrants.

Confidentiality

All material submitted to EPSDD is provided in confidence. However, the ACT Government may promote successful applicants for the mutual benefit of the Grants Program and the applicant. Details of applications will not be made available to third parties without permission. However, applicants should be aware that the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2016 apply to documents in EPSDD's possession.

Complaints

A complaint is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction in relation to the application process and/or an unsuccessful application for a grant. You or your representatives have the right to raise your concerns. This information supports us to improve services and supports your right to ask questions about the grant application process as well as decisions made in relation to an unsuccessful application.

You can expect to:

1. be treated respectfully, fairly and in confidence.
2. have your concerns dealt with as soon as possible.
3. be informed of progress.
4. be told of the outcome.

Further information

For more information on the Energy Innovation Fund, the eligibility requirements or to lodge a complaint, please contact the Energy Innovation Fund Team:

Email: EPSDD.EnergyInnovationFund@act.gov.au

Phone: 13 22 81

These guidelines and the attachments may be revised and re-issued at the Territory's discretion; in which case a revised version will be emailed to the successful Grant recipients.

Appendix A – Funding scope

Developing solutions to facilitate the energy transition will require innovation and collaboration across Canberra's energy transition innovation ecosystem. The Energy Innovation Fund Grants will focus on the demonstration and scale-up of new technologies, ventures, policy solutions, and ecosystems which will support the development of the ACT as an export-oriented hub for energy transition research, innovation and investment. New technologies, ventures and ecosystems that have applicability and relevance to the ACT's energy transformation will be preferred.

Projects funded by Energy Innovation Fund Grants must align with the following research and education in science, engineering and social sciences, and business sectors:

- Renewable energy generation
- Energy storage
- Power generation asset management
- Distributed energy resources (DER) and market integration
- Electrification in the transport, residential and commercial sectors
- Renewable hydrogen
- Energy efficiency and demand management solutions
- Digital enabling technologies for the energy transition
- Distribution and transmission network operations

The ACT Government has legislated commitments to becoming a net-zero emissions city by 2045. Since the ACT achieved 100 per cent renewable electricity in 2020, our attention has shifted to the next biggest source of emissions in transport and natural gas use. The ACT Government encourages proposals that contribute towards these policy goals and help consolidate and grow the ACT's energy transition sector, including but not limited to:

- supporting the electrification of transport, complex buildings and other sectors in the ACT.
- addressing barriers to uptake of zero emission vehicles and facilitate vehicle fast charging solutions.
- reducing peak electricity demand, support resilience and reliability of the grid.
- assisting the transition pathway away from fossil fuel gas use for residential and commercial applications and address the associated impacts on consumers and the grid.
- providing solutions to re-purposing and recycling of renewable energy components and batteries.

Appendix B – Selection process



