



ARENA Launchpad

Program Guidelines

September 2026

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1 Overview

Purpose

- 1.1 The Australian Renewable Energy Agency (**ARENA**) was established by the Australian Government on 1 July 2012 under the *Australian Renewable Energy Agency Act 2011* (as amended) (**ARENA Act**). ARENA's remit is to improve the competitiveness and increase the supply of renewable energy in Australia, to facilitate the achievement of Australia's greenhouse gas emission reduction targets and to contribute to the reduction of global greenhouse gas emissions in accordance with the Paris Agreement.
- 1.2 The purpose of these Program Guidelines (the **Guidelines**) is to provide a framework for the operation of the ARENA Launchpad Program (the **Program**).
- 1.3 These Guidelines should be read in conjunction with any relevant Funding Round Announcement published on ARENA's website arena.gov.au/funding.
- 1.4 Where a Funding Round Announcement is made, the requirements of both these Guidelines and any additional requirements specified in the Funding Round Announcement apply and are to be complied with. In the event of any inconsistency between other ARENA materials and these Guidelines, the Guidelines will prevail to the extent of the inconsistency.

Objective of the Program

- 1.5 The Program Objective is to accelerate the development of early-stage Australian companies and innovators that support ARENA's statutory functions and Investment Plan. Specific objectives for Funding Rounds will be detailed in each Funding Round Announcement.

Commencement and Authority for Guidelines

- 1.6 The Guidelines have been approved by the ARENA Board under the ARENA Act.
- 1.7 The Guidelines may be revoked or varied from time to time, in accordance with section 24 (1)(b) of the ARENA Act.
- 1.8 The ARENA Board is responsible for approving financial assistance under the Program.

Program funding

- 1.9 Funding will be allocated through Funding Rounds with the total funding allocation specified in each Funding Round Announcement.
- 1.10 ARENA funding awarded to individual Applications under the Program will not exceed \$15 million. Funding provided through the Program will be in the form of Grants. Minimum and maximum Grant amounts will be outlined in the Funding Round Announcement.

2 Assessment Criteria and Process

- 2.1 Applications will be assessed against Eligibility Criteria and if deemed eligible for further assessment, Merit Criteria. The assessment criteria including any weighting, will be outlined in the Funding Round Announcement.
- 2.2 ARENA may publish Round specific Frequently Asked Questions (**FAQs**) on its website. These FAQs may be updated throughout the process.

- 2.3 ARENA may apply a portfolio approach when making funding decisions under the Program. This may result in ARENA not funding an otherwise highly ranked Application. Examples of where this may occur include (but are not limited to) where ARENA considers the proposed Activities to be substantially similar to other Applications, projects or technologies already funded, or intended to be funded, by ARENA. ARENA may also consider factors including technology diversity, market coverage, geographic spread, founder diversity, ecosystem impact and strategic alignment to ARENA's mandate when constructing a portfolio of successful Applications.
- 2.4 Funding Rounds under the Program can be delivered as timebound, ranked processes or as collaborative, open merit-based processes (or staged with a combination of both). The Funding Round Announcement will specify which process will apply. Key parameters of each process are outlined below.

Timebound, ranked process

- 2.5 Under a timebound, ranked process, Applications must be submitted by the due date specified in the Funding Round Announcement.
- 2.6 ARENA will not collaborate with potential Applicants to support the development of an Application or may choose to only collaborate with Applicants at certain points in the application process as set out in the Funding Round Announcement.
- 2.7 ARENA may require Applicants to register their interest to apply. Where required, only those Applicants that are invited by ARENA will be assessed under the Funding Round.
- 2.8 ARENA will assess eligible Applications for merit against the Merit Criteria specified in the relevant Funding Round Announcement. Applications will be ranked and rated against other Applications received (including a subset of Applications) based on assessment against the Merit Criteria.

Collaborative, open merit-based process

- 2.9 In a collaborative, open merit-based process, ARENA will accept Applications at any time unless a due date is specified in the Funding Round Announcement.
- 2.10 ARENA may collaborate with potential Applicants to provide advice and support regarding the development of a funding Application. ARENA will determine the form and frequency of such collaboration and advice.
- 2.11 ARENA may select which Applications it recommends to progress through to eligibility and merit assessment.
- 2.12 Applications will be assessed for eligibility, and if deemed eligible, merit. Applications will be assessed for alignment with the Guidelines, Funding Round Announcement and any other specified documents.

Assessment principles

- 2.13 ARENA may engage consultants or advisers, including the ARENA Advisory Panel, to help assess Applications against the Eligibility Criteria or Merit Criteria.
- 2.14 Assessment outcomes and/or feedback will be provided in a form and substance determined by ARENA.
- 2.15 ARENA may seek to clarify information provided in an Application where necessary.
- 2.16 Applications that fail to meet all of the Eligibility Criteria will be considered unsuccessful.
- 2.17 ARENA may carry out an initial screening check of Applications (including concepts where sought) (a **Preliminary Screen Process**) to identify any Applications that are of clear low merit. These Applications will be assessed as unsuccessful.
- 2.18 ARENA, at its discretion, retains the right to stop the assessment process where a material change is identified that undermines the grant request including but not limited to as relevant:
- a change in the focus of Activities or proposed technology, product or solution;
 - a material change to the ownership, control or legal structure of the Applicant;
 - the withdrawal of a key project partner, customer, investor or supporter where that party formed an important part of the Application;

- a material change to the Applicant's financial position or funding circumstances that could reasonably affect its ability to undertake the proposed Activities; and
 - any other change that, in ARENA's opinion, would negatively affect the assessment of the Application against the Eligibility Criteria or Merit Criteria.
- 2.19 With the exception of timebound processes, unsuccessful Applicants may be permitted one resubmission of a similar concept where such Applications passed initial screening and eligibility assessment. Resubmissions made on this basis are expected to adopt any and all ARENA feedback provided.
- 2.20 ARENA may, at its absolute discretion, reject, refuse to consider or cease evaluating an Application at any time. This may occur for example if ARENA determines that the Application is unlikely to be successful or will pose a material risk to ARENA or its reputation.
- 2.21 At any stage of the assessment process, ARENA may undertake due diligence activities, including seeking clarification, requesting additional information, undertaking reference checks and / or consulting external advisers.
- 2.22 ARENA assessment decisions are final.

General Application requirements

- 2.23 All Applications under the Program must be submitted using ARENA's Grants Management System (ARENANet) unless otherwise advised by ARENA. ARENANet can be accessed at <https://arenanet.arena.gov.au/>.
- 2.24 The Funding Round Announcement will detail the number of application stages required for the Funding Round as well as the information and form that should be provided, including any evidence and attachments.

3 Knowledge Sharing

- 3.1. ARENA has a legislated function under the ARENA Act to collect, analyse, interpret and disseminate information and knowledge relating to renewable energy technologies, electrification technologies and energy efficiency technologies, and projects relating to such technologies.
- 3.2. If awarded funding under the Program, you will be required to participate in the knowledge sharing activities outlined in the Knowledge Sharing Plan in the Funding Agreement template for the relevant Funding Round.

4 Funding Agreements

- 4.1. Where Applicants are successful and approved for funding offer, ARENA funds will be paid as per terms agreed under a Funding Agreement.
- 4.2. The Funding Agreement template will be published on the Funding Round website when the round is launched. ARENA may use different Funding Agreement templates across Funding Rounds as required.
- 4.3. All offers of funding and any payment of funds by ARENA under the Program are non-binding until the execution of Funding Agreement with ARENA. ARENA may stipulate conditions to the funding offer which will be outlined in the Funding Outcome Letter.
- 4.4. ARENA may publish aggregated and non-identifiable data from the Applications received under Funding Rounds at the conclusion of the application assessment process.

5 Further Program Information

Confidentiality and Disclosure of Information

- 5.1. Subject to this clause, information of a confidential nature provided by you as part of, or in connection with, any Application or negotiation process will be treated as commercial-in-confidence information by ARENA.
- 5.2. ARENA may disclose confidential information provided by you to the following parties:
- the Minister and the Minister's office;
 - the Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia in response to a request by a House or a Committee of the Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia;
 - the Auditor General, Ombudsman, Information Commissioner or Privacy Commissioner;
 - ARENA personnel, consultants and advisers;
 - any Commonwealth agency or body, or any other organisation or individual considered by ARENA to have a need or an entitlement to know that information (including any state or territory agency or body), where that need or entitlement arises out of or in connection with ARENA's assessment, verification or due diligence of any aspect of a Proposal; or
 - where authorised or required by law to be disclosed, to those parties.
- 5.3. ARENA will otherwise only publicly disclose confidential information provided by you with your consent.
- 5.4. Information provided to Applicants regarding the outcomes of the ARENA assessment process must be kept confidential until a round or Application specific public announcement (as relevant) has been made by ARENA and/or Government, unless otherwise agreed.

Review of Decisions and Complaints

- 5.5. Complaints concerning assessments or processes will, in the first instance, be reviewed by ARENA. If you are not satisfied, information on ARENA's complaints process can be found [here](#), in which case it will be dealt with in accordance with ARENA's Complaints Handling Policy and Procedure. If you are not satisfied with the complaint resolution procedure, you can approach the Commonwealth Ombudsman for external review of the administrative actions of ARENA.

Conflicts of Interest

- 5.6. ARENA has in place robust policies and procedures to manage any Conflicts of Interest that may arise. These apply to Board members, ARENA staff and contracted consultants and advisers including the ARENA Advisory Panel.
- 5.7. Applicants must declare any Conflicts of Interest they may have in their Application (including that of their personnel), and proposed management for any conflicts declared. ARENA handles conflicts in accordance with ARENA's Conflict of Interest policy and procedures. Declarations made against ARENA, its staff or Advisory Panel members should be justified with clear reasons and specific information (including timing, relevance and nature of the relationship) where available. Broad statements about individuals or organisations are unlikely to be considered a Conflict of Interest and sufficient detail of any conflicts should be provided for ARENA to consider.

ARENA's Discretion

- 5.8. By submitting an Application, you acknowledge and agree to ARENA's right (at its absolute discretion) to reject, refuse to consider or cease evaluating your Application, at any time, if ARENA is of the view (at its absolute discretion) that your Application is unlikely to be successful.

No Contract or Liability

- 5.9. Despite anything in the Guidelines or in any Application submission, or any other documentation that forms part of this process (in part or together), by submitting an Application you:
- acknowledge that neither you nor ARENA intend to create any contract or other relationship under which ARENA is obliged to conduct the process in relation to the Program in any manner or at all, and that there is in fact no such contract or other relationship in existence;
 - accordingly, acknowledge that neither the Guidelines nor any submission will create any legal or other obligation upon ARENA to conduct the process in any manner or at all; and
 - release ARENA from any claim you might otherwise have been able to make or bring against ARENA, arising out of or in connection with ARENA's conduct of, or failure to conduct, the process in any manner or at all.

6 Glossary

Term	Definition
\$	All references to dollars or \$ are in Australian Dollars.
Activities	The stated tasks, deliverables or approaches the Applicant proposed to undertake as detailed in its Application.
ARENA Act	Means the <i>Australian Renewable Energy Agency Act 2011</i> (Cth)
Applicant	An entity that submits an Application for funding under the Program.
Application	An application or submission made to ARENA for support under the Program, submitted in line with the requirements in these Guidelines and a relevant Funding Round Announcement.
ARENA Advisory Panel	Information on the members of the ARENA Advisory Panel is available from the ARENA website at arena.gov.au/about/advisory-panel/ .
Conflict of Interest	Means a situation where a person makes a decision or exercises a power in a way that may be, or may be perceived to be, influenced by either material personal interests (financial or non-financial) or material personal associations.
Funding Round	Funding under the Program will be allocated across one or more rounds, with a Funding Round Announcement detailing the specific parameters and requirements of each Funding Round.
Funding Round Announcement	A call to market for Applications to address specific outcomes as published on the ARENA Funding website. A Funding Round Announcement will clarify the process and requirements Applicants must adhere to when submitting an application.
Funding Agreement	the contractual agreement between a Recipient and ARENA for funding under the Program.
Grant	a funding amount awarded by ARENA paid in accordance with the terms as outlined in the Funding Agreement. A Grant is not a gift or a loan. Grants are subject to normal taxation treatment as income and no special taxation arrangements will apply to Grants under the Program.
Guidelines	The ARENA Launchpad Program Guidelines.
Overseas Expenditure	Cash expenditure, or equivalent expenditure, incurred or paid for goods or services procured from a non-Australian entity, and expenditure on overseas travel.
Program	The ARENA Launchpad Program.
Program Objective	As defined in item 1.5.
Recipient	An entity that has entered into a Funding Agreement with ARENA

for funding of a Project.

Strategic Priorities

ARENA's current Strategic Priorities, available on ARENA's website: <https://arena.gov.au/about/arena-strategic-priorities/>.

TRL

Technical Readiness Level is a method used to estimate the maturity of a particular Technology as defined by the US Dept. of Defence with TRL 1 being blue-sky research and TRL 9 being proven technology. A full TRL explainer is available [here](#).

7 Eligible Expenditure

This Appendix sets out the principles that apply when determining whether expenditure is eligible under the ARENA Launchpad Program. ARENA will not be liable for and will not pay for expenditure that is not in accordance with the Guidelines deemed by it to be eligible.

Applicants are responsible for preparing realistic, reasonable and evidence-based budgets that clearly demonstrate how expenditure supports the proposed Activities and outcomes. Where an Applicant is in any doubt as to the eligibility of proposed expenditure, the Applicant must bring the matter to ARENA for decision. ARENA reserves the right to determine whether any expenditure item is eligible and may request additional information or evidence to support proposed expenditure. ARENA's determination on the eligibility of expenditure will be final.

General Principles

Eligible Expenditure must:

- directly contribute to the delivery of the Activities described in the Application;
- be necessary and reasonable for achieving the proposed objectives and outcomes;
- represent value for money;
- be incurred during the Funding Agreement period unless otherwise agreed by ARENA;
- be calculated net of GST;
- be capable of being substantiated through appropriate records and supporting documentation; and
- be consistent with the approved budget and Funding Agreement.

Applicants should ensure expenditure is proportionate to the scope, scale, risk and maturity of the Activities and is aligned with the objectives of the Funding Round.

Related Party Transactions

Where expenditure involves related parties, Applicants may be required to demonstrate that expenditure has been determined on reasonable and arm's-length commercial terms. ARENA may seek further information regarding the basis of any related party transactions.

Ineligible Expenditure

Without limiting ARENA's discretion, examples of expenditure that is generally not eligible include:

- Activities completed prior to execution of a Funding Agreement.
- Repayment of existing debts or loans.
- Interest payments and financing costs.
- Acquisition of land.
- Dividends or distributions to shareholders.
- Opportunity costs.
- Costs associated with litigation or legal disputes.
- Entertainment expenses.
- Donations and sponsorships.
- Expenditure unrelated to the Activities.

Apportionment of Costs

Where resources, personnel, equipment or services are used for both funded Activities and other business activities, costs should be apportioned on a reasonable basis that reflects actual use. Applicants must be able to explain and substantiate the basis for any allocation methodology used.

Expenditure Assumptions and Evidence

Applicants must ensure that Eligible Expenditure is based on reasonable assumptions and may be required to provide supporting evidence, including:

- supplier quotations;
- budget estimates;
- benchmarking information;
- salary assumptions;
- contractor proposals; and/or
- other documentation relevant to the proposed expenditure.

ARENA may adjust, remove or seek clarification on expenditure items during assessment or contracting.

Overseas Expenditure

Applicants should seek to minimise Overseas Expenditure, other than where required for the purchase of equipment or materials that are not reasonably available and/or able to be cost-effectively sourced in Australia. A substantial level of Overseas Expenditure may adversely affect merit assessment unless the Applicant demonstrates to ARENA's satisfaction at its discretion that such expenditure is critical to delivering the Activities and represents value for money.

Accounting Systems

Applicants are required to have in place suitable accounting systems and to provide to ARENA assurances that the accounting system allows for:

- the separate and accurate identification of Eligible Expenditure; and
- a clear audit trail of Eligible Expenditure to be available on request and as required to meet the requirements in the Funding Agreement.

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