



ARENA Launchpad

Frequently Asked Questions

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This document covers the ARENA Launchpad Program, Startup Funding Round and Ecosystem Funding Round. It should be read with the applicable Program Guidelines, Funding Round Announcements and Funding Agreement templates. In the event of any inconsistency, the Program Guidelines and Funding Round Announcements will take precedence, in that order or priority.

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Overview

The ARENA Launchpad Program (Program) supports the development of early-stage Australian companies and innovators aligned with ARENA's statutory functions and Investment Plan. Funding is allocated through Funding Rounds, each with its own objectives, eligibility requirements, assessment process and grant parameters.

These FAQs provide general guidance only. If there is any inconsistency, the ARENA Launchpad Program Guidelines and Funding Round Announcements prevail. ARENA may update these FAQs from time to time. Applicants should use the current documents published on the relevant Funding Round webpage.

1 The Program

1. What is ARENA Launchpad?

ARENA Launchpad is a funding program designed to accelerate the development of early-stage Australian companies and innovators that support ARENA's mandate (as per ARENA's statutory functions in the ARENA Act) and Strategic Priorities.

2. What Funding Rounds are available?

The initial Funding Rounds are the Startup Funding Round and the Ecosystem Funding Round. The Startup Funding Round directly supports eligible early-stage companies. The Ecosystem Funding Round supports acceleration, incubation and other services for eligible Australian startups.

3. What is the difference between the two Funding Rounds?

The Startup Funding Round is a timebound, merit-ranked process for eligible for-profit startups developing and commercialising innovative technologies or solutions.

The Ecosystem Funding Round is a collaborative, open merit-based process for eligible organisations delivering startup support services.

4. Can an organisation apply to both Funding Rounds?

An organisation may apply to any Funding Round for which it meets the applicable eligibility requirements. Participation in one Funding Round for ARENA Launchpad does not affect an organisation's ability to seek funding under other ARENA Launchpad rounds or other ARENA programs.

5. How will ARENA decide which Applications to fund?

ARENA will assess Applications against the relevant Eligibility Criteria and Merit Criteria. ARENA may also apply a portfolio approach after merit assessment, including consideration of technology diversity, market coverage, geographic spread, founder diversity, ecosystem impact and strategic alignment.

6. Does the portfolio approach allow a low-merit Application to be funded?

No. ARENA may assess Applications of clear low merit as unsuccessful as part of the merit assessment process and the portfolio approach is applied after merit assessment process has been finalised.

7. Do proposed activities need to take place in Australia?

Requirements differ by Funding Round. For the Startup Funding Round, Eligible Activities must primarily take place in Australia or primarily advance an Australian-based business. For the Ecosystem Funding Round, Eligible Activities must provide acceleration, incubation or other support services to Australian startups developing renewable energy, electrification or energy efficiency technologies.

8. Can I apply with project partners or as part of a consortium?

Yes. Applicants may engage Applicant Partners, including through a joint venture or consortium or as contractors or consultants, to help deliver the proposed Activities. The Applicant must remain eligible and should clearly describe each partner's role, capability and contribution. Partner commitments and support may also be considered in the merit assessment.

9. Can I submit more than one application?

The Funding Round documents do not prescribe a limit on the number of Applications an organisation may submit. However, each Application should independently meet the relevant eligibility and merit requirements, and Applicants are expected to be able to deliver the Activities proposed in their respective Applications. ARENA may consider overlap or similarity between Applications when applying its portfolio approach, and may, in its absolute discretion, reject, refuse to consider or cease evaluating an Application at any time.

10. Can ARENA help me prepare my application?

This depends on the Funding Round. ARENA will not collaborate with Applicants to develop an Application for the timebound Startup Funding Round, although it may seek clarification where necessary. For the collaborative Ecosystem Funding Round, Applicants may engage with ARENA before submission and ARENA may provide limited guidance on suitability, alignment and proposal development.

11. Can I change my application after submission?

Applicants should notify ARENA promptly if material information changes after submission. ARENA may seek clarification or additional information, but Applicants should not assume they can revise an Application after the relevant due date or submission. ARENA may stop assessing an Application where a material change is observed that undermines the grant request, including but not limited to as a relevant change to the Activities or proposed technology, product or solution, ownership, control, or legal structure, key partners or financial position.

12. If successful, can I publicly announce that I have received ARENA funding?

No public announcement should be made until a Funding Agreement has been executed and ARENA has made the relevant public announcement, unless ARENA agrees otherwise. Applicants must keep assessment outcomes confidential until that time. Once a public announcement is able to be made, recipients must acknowledge in its public announcements that it has received from funding from the ARENA Launchpad program.

2 Startup Funding Round

Eligibility and scope

13. Who can apply to the Startup Funding Round?

The Applicant must hold a valid ABN, be an Australian incorporated for-profit entity, own or develop the relevant technology, product or solution and have freedom to operate in relation to relevant IP and assets. An Australian subsidiary of an international entity may apply where it can demonstrate a presence and commitment to operating and commercialising its technology or solution in Australia.

14. Are universities and research organisations eligible?

Universities, publicly funded research organisations and government entities are not eligible Applicants. However, entities that are related to publicly funded research organisations and government entities, such as university spin-outs and research commercialisation companies, may be eligible if they meet all applicable criteria. Research organisations may also participate as Partners to an application, partial owners/investors in an applicant or other arm's-length roles.

15. What does ARENA mean by an early-stage company?

ARENA will consider whether the Applicant is a genuine early-stage company seeking to develop and commercialise an innovative technology or solution. Well-established companies, including those with established workforces and operating histories or that have raised meaningful capital, may be excluded through preliminary screening. ARENA will assess the circumstances of each Applicant.

16. What activities are eligible?

Activities must primarily take place in Australia or primarily advance an Australian-based business, relate to a technology that has achieved at least TRL 3 at the time of Application, and align with ARENA's mandate and Strategic Priorities.

17. What sectors / areas of focus is ARENA targeting with the Launchpad?

The Startup Funding Round is open to technologies and solutions aligned with ARENA's statutory functions, Investment Plan and Strategic Priorities. Applications will be grouped and ranked against others aligned to the same Strategic Priority, and ARENA intends to fund a diverse portfolio subject to merit. Applicants should refer to ARENA's current Investment Plan and Strategic Priorities when considering alignment.

18. Are idea-stage or blue-sky concepts eligible?

No. Concepts that have not achieved at least TRL 3 are ineligible. Research without a clear commercialisation pathway is also ineligible.

19. Can consulting or advisory businesses apply?

Any entities meeting the eligibility criteria may apply. However, Activities primarily focused on consulting, advisory services or brokerage are ineligible where they do not deliver a novel technology or innovation outcome.

20. Can offshore start-ups apply?

An offshore entity cannot apply directly unless it meets the Australian incorporation requirements. An Australian subsidiary of an international entity may apply if it holds an ABN, is an Australian incorporated for-profit entity and can demonstrate a presence and commitment to operating and commercialising its

technology or solution in Australia. These criteria and all other eligibility requirements must be demonstrated at the time of application.

21. What if I can't work out if my concept is within ARENA's remit or how it aligns to the Investment Plan?

Consider the extent to which your proposal accelerates Australia's transition to renewable energy. It is up to applicants to demonstrate this in their application, regardless of alignment to any specific one of ARENA's named Strategic Priorities. Alignment of a concept to ARENA's Investment Plan and the Strategic Priorities therein is likely to support merit assessment.

22. Can an Applicant submit more than one Application?

The Funding Round documents do not prescribe a limit. Each Application should be complete and independently demonstrate eligibility, merit, team capacity and a credible use of funds. ARENA may consider overlap between Applications when applying its portfolio approach. Applicants should also note that they are expected to be able to deliver the Activities proposed in their respective Applications. ARENA may consider overlap or similarity between Applications when applying its portfolio approach, and may, in its absolute discretion, reject, refuse to consider or cease evaluating an Application at any time.

23. Does an Applicant require meaningful technology validation and/or commercial traction to be considered for funding?

Applicants must have achieved at least TRL 3 at the time of Application and provide evidence supporting the claimed TRL. ARENA will also consider evidence of customer need, market demand, industry validation, progress and traction. The Funding Round documents do not prescribe a minimum level of commercial revenue or customer traction, but stronger and well-supported validation will contribute to the merit assessment.

24. What evidence is required to substantiate a Technology Readiness Level (TRL) of 3?

ARENA does not prescribe specific evidence to substantiate a TRL. It is the Applicant's responsibility to demonstrate that the technology has achieved at least TRL 3 at the time of Application, using the TRL definitions referenced in the Program Guidelines.

TRL 3 is generally reached when analytical and experimental work has demonstrated proof of concept for the critical functions of the technology. Applicants should clearly explain what has been tested or demonstrated, how it was tested and what the results show. If the business is built on technologies that have achieved widespread TRL 3 or greater elsewhere in the industry and this learning has been leveraged, there is no need to substantiate this in great detail (for example many software applications are built on mature technologies).

Funding

25. How much funding is available?

ARENA has allocated up to \$15 million to the Startup Funding Round and may allocate a greater or lesser amount where it considers this represents value for money.

26. How much can an Applicant request?

Applicants must apply for a \$500,000 Baseline Grant. They may also request an optional Top Up Grant of up to \$500,000, for total grant funding of up to \$1 million.

27. Is matched funding required?

No. There is no matched funding requirement for the Baseline Grant. However, available cash contributions may be considered positively in the merit assessment. Only funds the applicant has secured or can access should be considered as matched funding. A planned capital raise that has not progressed will carry little weight and may count against merit if it creates a risk.

28. Who should request a Top Up Grant?

A Top Up Grant is intended for Applicants that can demonstrate a valid need associated with deep technology or capital-intensive development. ARENA expects these requests to be reserved for clear, high-impact capital expenses or large cost barriers.

29. What is a strong justification for a Top Up Grant?

Examples may include necessary equipment access, purchase or leasing, highly specialised talent or services, or delivery of a capital-intensive prototype. The Applicant should show that other options have been pursued and are not suitable or available, and that progress would be materially constrained without the additional funding or materially accelerated with it.

30. What is not a strong justification for a Top Up Grant?

Requests justified only by extending runway, funding administrative activity or advertising, delaying fundraising or repaying debt will not be considered high merit.

31. Can ARENA approve only part of the requested funding?

Yes. ARENA may offer no funding, the Baseline Grant only, the full amount requested or another amount it considers appropriate.

32. How does milestone funding work under this Funding Round?

While the Funding Round documents do not prescribe a standard milestone or payment structure, ARENA expects payments will generally be made in advance of work done, across a proposed 60/30/10 milestone split. The Funding Agreement template available online sets out the default payment terms. ARENA may tailor the Funding Agreement where required to manage funding risks.

33. What duration of activities are grants expected to support?

ARENA expects Startup Funding Round grants to support Activities over approximately 12 months. Applicants should propose an achievable timetable that is proportionate to the Activities and clearly identifies key deliverables and performance measures.

34. How are in-kind contributions treated?

In-kind contributions should not be included in the budget, but legitimate, material in-kind contributions relevant to the project can be described elsewhere in the application and will be considered under the merit criteria. There is no set format – hours, type of contribution, resources or a dollar value (clarifying the calculation) are acceptable.

Application and assessment

35. How do I apply?

Applications must be submitted by the Application Due Date in accordance with the instructions on the Funding Round webpage. The Application includes written responses in the Application form, a pitch deck, a short video, a completed Conflict of Interest declaration form and any essential supporting evidence permitted by the Funding Round documents.

36. What must be included in the pitch deck?

The pitch deck must be no more than 10 slides and should provide a comprehensive introduction to the Applicant's proposal, and should address the team and Applicant Partners, technology or solution and IP ownership, addressable market and target customers, validation and traction, proposed Activities and performance measures, timetable, budget, commercialisation roadmap, and key risks and mitigants.

37. What are the video requirements?

The video must be no more than two minutes and should explain the problem the Application is solving, differentiation of the technology or solution, why the team is positioned to succeed and what would be achieved with ARENA funding. Applicants should follow the file type and size requirements in the Funding Round Announcement.

38. Can I include additional attachments?

Optional attachments should be limited to material essential to ARENA's assessment. Supporting evidence should not be used to extend written responses. ARENA may disregard superfluous material, and excessive material may affect the broader merit assessment.

39. Can I contact ARENA for help developing my Application?

The Startup Funding Round is timebound and merit-ranked. ARENA will not collaborate with Applicants to develop an Application for this funding Round, although ARENA may seek clarification where necessary.

40. How will Applications be assessed?

ARENA will first conduct preliminary screening, then assess for eligibility and then for merit.

The Eligibility Criteria are outlined at Section 3 of the Funding Round Announcement.

The Merit Criteria are Market and Technology (30%), Team Capability and Capacity (30%), Activities and Business Plan (20%) and Financials (20%). As part of the merit assessment process, Eligible Applicants may be shortlisted for an Assessment Pitch.

41. What happens at the Assessment Pitch?

Shortlisted Applicants may be invited to present virtually to an assessment panel comprising ARENA staff and some Advisory Panel members. Where Applicants are invited to pitch, ARENA will provide further information. Pitch slots will have an equal time and structure and may include a short question and answer session. An invitation does not indicate whether funding will be offered.

42. When will I know the outcome?

Applicants should refer to the current timetable on the Funding Round webpage. ARENA aims to notify Applicants and issue Funding Outcome Letters as soon as practicable after the Assessment Pitch stage, but may amend the timetable.

43. In terms of the Funding Agreement (contract), how long will a Startup Applicant have to sign?

From the date the Funding Agreement is provided, ARENA will request applicants sign and return the Funding Agreement within a set period. Per the Round Announcement, after 14 days ARENA may withdraw the offer, unless ARENA extends that period. ARENA may provide that funding to other parties should the offer lapse.

44. If I am unsuccessful in securing funding, can I expect to receive detailed feedback?

ARENA will notify unsuccessful Applicants of the outcome. Any assessment feedback, including its level of detail and form, will be provided at ARENA's discretion. Applicants should not assume that detailed feedback will be available.

45. Should I include broader/ongoing business spending in my budget (the Sources and Uses table)?

Sources and Uses in the budget should relate only to Eligible Activities (ie the incremental activity you are asking ARENA to support), and both sections should add up to the same total.

Where you are also proposing that ARENA's funding could catalyse additional cash contributions from Partners, investors or other, this can be included and should be evidenced by detailed letters of support.

Existing staff salaries and similar expenses are unlikely to demonstrate high value use of grant funds.

46. Can spending before the application be treated as Eligible Expenditure or a contribution to the Project?

No, the budget should reflect new spending on Eligible Activities during the period from execution of a Funding Agreement to approximately 1 year forward.

47. Can I use Launchpad funding as my co-contribution to another grant?

It is up to applicants to demonstrate that the ARENA grant requested is a high value use of funds. It is unlikely that using ARENA funding as matched funding in another grant program would demonstrate this, where that matched funding role was expected to be filled by private funding. ARENA takes a whole-of-government lens in testing the need/value of grant funding, and in such a case may view sufficient concessional funding as having already been provided.

48. Is my application confidential? Will ARENA own or share my IP if I'm funded?

ARENA may publish aggregated and non-identifiable data from Applications after the assessment process concludes. Public disclosure of confidential Applicant information is otherwise subject to the confidentiality provisions in the Program Guidelines.

ARENA does not own Project IP and does not ask Recipients to share confidential IP. Applicants should review the Funding Agreement template. ARENA will expect Recipients to participate in Knowledge Sharing, which may involve discussing project details in formats such as surveys, light reporting on lessons learned, and participation in events.

49. Where is the Conflict of Interest form or other application docs?

Please see the [Launchpad Startup Round](#) webpage.

50. Will there be another Startup Round if I miss this one?

While ARENA has not announced any future funding opportunities under Launchpad at this stage (see the Guidelines for further information), ARENA may in future consider opening further startup rounds. These would be announced publicly, and made available on the Launchpad webpage.

3 Ecosystem Funding Round

Eligibility and scope

51. Who can apply to the Ecosystem Funding Round?

Applicants must hold an ABN and be an eligible Australian entity, including a company, government statutory corporation, university or research institution, registered not-for-profit or charity, or industry association.

52. What activities are eligible?

Activities must provide acceleration, incubation or other support services to Australian startups developing renewable energy, electrification or energy efficiency technologies, and have the potential to contribute to the Program and Funding Round objectives.

53. What activities are ineligible?

Ineligible activities include support for idea-stage concepts below TRL 3, support unrelated to ARENA's mandate or Strategic Priorities, passing ARENA grant funding through to startups as investments, non-dilutive cash payments, recycled grants or debt, and activities completed or funded before a Funding Agreement is executed.

54. Can ARENA funding be passed directly to participating startups?

No. The ARENA grant cannot be passed through to startups as an investment, non-dilutive cash payment, recycled grant or debt. The funded Applicant must use the grant to deliver eligible acceleration, incubation or other support services.

55. Must the program be sector-specific?

No specific sub-sector focus is mandatory. If an Applicant proposes a focus or specialisation, it should explain how that focus responds to an identified market need or opportunity. Similarly, a generalist program that does not demonstrate clear alignment to ARENA's Investment Plan and Strategic Priorities may not rank highly as part of merit assessment.

Funding and application process

56. How much funding is available?

ARENA has allocated up to \$15 million to the Ecosystem Funding Round and may allocate a greater or lesser amount where it considers this represents value for money.

57. How much can an Applicant request and for how long?

The maximum grant is \$5 million per Applicant. There is no prescribed minimum. Applicants may seek funding for Eligible Activities for a period of up to four years.

58. Is co-funding required?

No minimum co-funding requirement is prescribed. However, assessment against Merit Criterion D - Financials includes consideration of co-contributions and in-kind support from partners, value for money and the Applicant's pathway to a model that is not solely reliant on ARENA funding.

59. Can I discuss my proposal with ARENA before applying?

Yes. The Ecosystem Funding Round is a collaborative, open merit-based process. Applicants may engage with ARENA before submission, and ARENA may provide guidance on suitability, alignment and proposal development. ARENA determines the form and frequency of that engagement. Applicants should reach out to the Launchpad inbox (launchpad@arena.gov.au) with a preliminary concept.

60. How do I apply?

Applicants must submit a complete Application through ARENANet. Application materials include written responses to questions contained in an online Application form, a Design and Execution Plan, a completed Conflict of Interest declaration form and any supporting evidence.

61. What should the Design and Execution Plan cover?

The Design and Execution Plan should provide the information needed to assess the Application against the Merit Criteria, including market need, target startup cohort, team and partner capability, program design and delivery, startup selection, expected outcomes, budget, value for money and the pathway to

a model that is not solely reliant on ARENA funding. For further information to support preparation of a Design and Execution Plan, please refer to the Guide on the Launchpad Ecosystem Round webpage.

62. How will Applications be assessed?

ARENA will assess complete Applications against the Eligibility Criteria and, if eligible, the four Merit Criteria: Market Need and Opportunity, Team and Partners, Solution and Program Delivery, and Financials. Applications are assessed on a rolling basis, subject to ARENA assessment capacity, until the funding allocation is exhausted or the Funding Round closes.

63. Will Applicants need to present to ARENA?

ARENA may invite an Applicant to give a short presentation to the ARENA Advisory Panel and answer questions about the Application.

64. How many ecosystem providers does ARENA expect to fund?

ARENA expects to fund at least two Applicants and intends, subject to merit, to support a portfolio where appropriate rather than award all funding to one entity.

Budget and eligible expenditure

65. What can ARENA funding be spent on?

Expenditure must directly support the approved Activities, be necessary and reasonable, represent value for money, be incurred during the Funding Agreement period unless otherwise agreed, be net of GST, be supported by records and be consistent with the approved budget and Funding Agreement.

66. What expenditure is generally ineligible?

Examples include investment, pre-agreement Activities, repayment of debt, interest and financing costs, land acquisition, dividends or shareholder distributions, opportunity costs, litigation costs, entertainment, donations, sponsorships and expenditure unrelated to the Activities.

67. Are related-party costs eligible?

They may be, but Applicants may need to demonstrate that related-party expenditure is on reasonable, arm's-length commercial terms.

68. How should shared costs be treated?

Where people, equipment or services support both funded Activities and other business activities, costs must be apportioned on a reasonable basis that reflects actual use. Applicants must be able to explain and substantiate the allocation method.

69. What evidence may be required for the budget?

ARENA may request supplier quotations, budget estimates, benchmarking, salary assumptions, contractor proposals and other evidence relevant to proposed expenditure.

70. What accounting systems are required?

Applicants must have accounting systems that separately and accurately identify eligible expenditure and provide a clear audit trail when requested and as required by the Funding Agreement.

71. Are international activities in scope?

Only where they show a direct benefit to Australia, Australia's transition to renewable energy, and/or the impact of Australian startups in Australia; most activities should take place in Australia.

72. Are top-of-funnel activities eligible?

Applicants should demonstrate high impact use of ARENA funds; the majority of the funding should deliver programs, rather than driving top-of-funnel activities (e.g. marketing, pipeline, cohort management etc.).

Funding Agreements, confidentiality and knowledge sharing

73. When does an offer of funding become binding?

An offer and any payment remain non-binding until a Funding Agreement is executed by ARENA and the successful Applicant. Conditions may be specified in an Offer Letter.

74. Can Applicants negotiate the Funding Agreement?

For the Startup Funding Round, successful Applicants are required to accept the published Funding Agreement terms without changes.

For the Ecosystem Funding Round, Applicants may submit a compliance table with proposed departures for ARENA to consider. However, Applicants should note ARENA has limited appetite to consider material departures to the terms and conditions and may alter terms where needed to manage funding risks.

75. How long will a Startup Applicant have to sign?

From the date the Funding Agreement is provided, a successful Startup Applicant will have 14 days to accept ARENA's terms and sign, unless ARENA extends that period.

76. How will ARENA protect confidential information?

ARENA will generally treat confidential information provided through an Application or negotiation as commercial-in-confidence, subject to the disclosure rights in the Program Guidelines, including disclosure to government, Parliament, oversight bodies, ARENA personnel and advisers, and where required by law.

77. Can an Applicant announce that it has been successful?

Assessment outcomes must remain confidential until ARENA or Government makes the relevant public announcement, unless otherwise agreed.

78. What knowledge sharing is required?

Successful Applicants must participate in the limited knowledge sharing activities set out in the Knowledge Sharing Plan forming part of the Funding Agreement. Requirements will be tailored to the relevant Funding Round and Activities. Further detail on knowledge sharing activities is contained in the Funding Agreement template available on the ARENA Launchpad webpage.

79. Will ARENA publish information from Applications?

ARENA may publish aggregated and non-identifiable data from Applications after the assessment process concludes. Public disclosure of confidential Applicant information is otherwise subject to the confidentiality provisions in the Program Guidelines.

4 Other questions

80. Will ARENA conduct due diligence?

ARENA may undertake due diligence at any stage, including seeking clarification, requesting additional information, conducting reference checks and consulting external advisers.

81. What happens if circumstances change after submission?

Applicants should promptly notify ARENA of material changes. ARENA may stop assessment where a material change undermines the grant request, including, but not limited to, changes to Activities, technology, ownership or control, a key partner, investor or customer, or the Applicant's financial position.

82. Can an unsuccessful Applicant resubmit?

Resubmission is not available for the timebound Startup Funding Round. For collaborative open processes, ARENA may permit one resubmission of a similar concept where the Application passed preliminary screening and eligibility assessment, and the resubmission is expected to address ARENA's feedback.

83. Can an assessment decision be reviewed?

ARENA assessment decisions are final. Complaints about the assessment or process may be reviewed under ARENA's complaints process, as described in the Program Guidelines.

84. Where can I find more information?

Applicants should refer to the ARENA Launchpad webpage, Program Guidelines, relevant Funding Round Announcement, Application form and Funding Agreement template.

85. Are Applicants expected to have insurance coverage?

The Program Guidelines and Funding Round Announcements do not prescribe specific insurance requirements at the Application stage. Successful Applicants should review the applicable Funding Agreement template, which sets out the contractual requirements that will apply if funding is awarded.

86. Will external advisors be involved?

ARENA may engage consultants or advisers, including members of the ARENA Advisory Panel, to assist with assessment against the Eligibility Criteria and/or Merit Criteria. ARENA may also consult external advisers as part of due diligence. Confidential information may be disclosed to ARENA personnel, consultants and advisers in accordance with the Program Guidelines.