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APPI
**Policy Challenge
Grant**

**Applicant
Guidelines**



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Introduction

The APPI Policy Challenge Grant program is an annual award to support academics and researchers to **make a public policy impact**.

The Australian Public Policy Institute (APPI) will award grants to outstanding academics, at any career stage, interested in undertaking applied public policy research, translating their existing research for a policy context and audience.

The purpose of the APPI Policy Challenge Grant is to:



TACKLE
the biggest public policy challenges

through the generation and communication of new insights.



FOSTER
engagement
between academics and policymakers.



SUPPORT
improved policy outcomes
informed by applied public policy research.

The APPI Policy Challenge Grant is unique: the Institute will offer dedicated support to grant recipients to communicate their insights for a policy audience, and to maximise the impact of their research through targeted engagement with policymakers.

Types of research we fund:

APPI funds applied, evidence-based public policy research that addresses complex, real-world policy challenges in Australia. Supported projects are expected to generate rigorous analysis and translate findings into clear, actionable policy insights and opportunities for government.

We prioritise collaboration between researchers and policymakers and work that advances public value, equity, and institutional effectiveness.

For examples of the work we fund, [see the published reports of previous grant winners](#).



Grant guidelines

THEMES	Eligibility	Funding	Recipient requirements	Selection criteria
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▶ Can you identify a major policy challenge facing Australia?

APPI Policy Challenge Grants can be awarded for:

- new applied research,
- translation of existing research for a policy audience,
- engaging with policymakers through outreach activities.

Grants will be awarded to projects with a focus on state, commonwealth and intergovernmental priorities.

▶ A First Nations focus

Projects bringing a First Nations focus on any of these themes will be of particular interest.

▶ A focus on under-represented minorities

Projects bringing a focus on under-represented minorities in relation to any of these themes will be of particular interest

In 2026, we are seeking applications relevant to the following themes where the proposed research has strong potential to generate public value and societal benefit in Australia:

1. Securing Australia's domestic supply chains and supporting high-potential industries

We are interested in identifying policy opportunities to protect, sustain and enhance Australia's long-term economic competitiveness.

This includes bolstering our primary industries, growing emerging and high-potential industries and technology, and strengthening supply chains against market, climate and national security risks.

2. Breaking cycles of disadvantage and supporting economic dignity

We are interested in identifying policy opportunities to address structural drivers of disadvantage and marginalisation.

This includes preventative and early-years interventions that support sustained participation in education, the economy, and community life.

3. Strengthening policy responses to the triple planetary crisis

We are interested in identifying practical policy opportunities to improve the effectiveness, coordination, and delivery of biodiversity, pollution, and environmental policies that balance community, political and economic realities.

This includes projects that support nature-positive outcomes and address persistent reform and implementation challenges across jurisdictions.



Grant guidelines

Themes	ELIGIBILITY	Funding	Recipient requirements	Selection criteria
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▶ Eligibility

Applications are welcome from academics at APPI's partner universities:



WESTERN SYDNEY
UNIVERSITY



While the lead researcher must be substantively employed at an APPI partner university, the project team can consist of experts from other universities, community and not-for-profit organisations, industry, and CSIRO.

Higher Degree Research students are not eligible to apply as a lead researchers but may be named team members.

▶ Valuing First Nations perspectives

Across all policy areas, the Institute highly values First Nations perspectives and is very interested in the impact of public policies on First Nations Australians. The Institute strongly encourages applications from First Nations researchers.

▶ Early career researchers

The Institute is interested in supporting early career researchers (ECRs) to make an impact on public policy, including in key leadership roles on project teams.

ECRs are defined as those who have been awarded their last postgraduate degree within the past five years (as at 8 May 2026) or have been awarded their last postgraduate degree together with an allowable period of career interruptions (covering caring responsibilities; disability; disaster management and recovery; limited or no access to facilities and resources; medical conditions; non-research positions, not concurrent with research employment; parental leave; unemployment; primary carer of a dependent child (up to two years per child, inclusive of parental leave) and disruption due to international relocation (up to three months)) that would be commensurate with an award of their last postgraduate degree within the past five years.



Grant guidelines

Themes

Eligibility

FUNDING

Recipient requirements

Selection criteria

▶ Funding

In 2026, the overall funding available for the grant program is up to \$650,000.

Each grant application must be between \$25,000–\$100,000 excluding GST.

Typical grant awards have fallen in the range of \$50,000 – \$80,000 with only a small number exceeding this range in circumstances where it was clearly justified.

▶ Eligible costs

Grant funding can be used for the direct costs of research. APPI does not fund overheads or infrastructure costs.

Eligible project costs that can be covered by the grant funding include:

- personnel such as postdoctoral research associates and research assistants, technicians and laboratory attendants who are recruited to work on the proposed research;
- access to research and infrastructure facilities and technical workshop services;
- essential field research;
- expert third party services;
- equipment and consumables;
- dissemination of project research outputs and outreach activities;
- specialised computer equipment and software;
- travel costs essential to the project;
- web hosting and development;
- workshops, survey costs, focus groups and conferences;
- data science and analysis costs;
- reasonable essential costs for academics who are carers or who themselves require care, where such costs are directly linked to the execution of grant project activities and these direct costs would not be covered by the home institution.

Please note that teaching buy-out is not covered by this grant.



Grant guidelines

Themes

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Funding

**RECIPIENT
REQUIREMENTS**Selection
criteria

▶ Grant recipient requirements

Successful recipients of a Policy Challenge Grant must agree to the following requirements:

1

Publication of a APPI Policy Insights Paper

This is an APPI-branded report, of approximately 10-15 pages, which captures the key insights from your research for a policy-focused audience. The paper will identify actionable policy insights and opportunities for government. It must be accessible to a non-academic audience. The report will be signed off by APPI, published on our website and promoted to key policymakers and stakeholders to maximise impact. It will be published under a Creative Commons licence. APPI will provide support to grant recipients to develop, edit and proofread their paper, and ensure it reaches relevant policy audiences.

[SEE PREVIOUS EXAMPLES](#)

2

Participation in research communications

As this is an applied policy grant with a focus on generating public value, it is critical that research insights are effectively communicated to policy audiences. All grant recipients must participate in research communications activities, with dedicated support from the Institute. APPI will also host an event to announce grant recipients. Depending on the nature of the project, research communications could include:

- Researchers being profiled on our website and having their work highlighted.
- Op-eds and other short-form outputs – APPI will support grant recipients to share findings via mainstream platforms.
- Interviews, videos or podcasts – to showcase key findings and insights.
- Policymaker roundtables or briefings – APPI will work with grant recipients to organise events that enable them to share and discuss their research insights with relevant policymakers and stakeholders.

3

Maximum project timeframe

The project must be delivered within 12-18 months from the date the grant is awarded (contract signed).

Projects of shorter timeframes (6-9 months) are also encouraged. APPI grants support the translation of existing research and government engagement activities, not just new applied research.

Any academic outputs in addition to the above requirements are at the discretion of the grant recipient(s) and are not a requirement of the APPI grant.



Grant guidelines

Themes

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Recipient requirements

SELECTION CRITERIA

▶ Selection criteria

Grant applications will be assessed against the following selection criteria. All applications must also be relevant to one or more of the themes listed on page 4. Advice on submitting a strong application can be found in [our tips for submitting a strong application](#).

ESSENTIAL CRITERIA



Relevance to public policy

Applicants must demonstrate the proposed project has clear relevance to a current or emerging public policy challenge facing government(s).

Advice on how to evidence this in your EOI is available in our guide - [how to present strong evidence of policymaker Interest](#).



Positive impact on a policy challenge

Applicants must show the proposed project has strong potential to generate socially beneficial policy research and translation.



Approach to engagement with policymakers

Applicants must demonstrate a clear understanding of how they plan to engage with policymakers and practitioners throughout the project.



Project feasibility

Applicants must demonstrate the team's expertise and the project's robustness (the extent to which the project's activities and budget support the timely and successful completion of the project).



Grant guidelines

Themes

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SELECTION CRITERIA

▶ Selection criteria

DESIRABLE CRITERIA (non-essential)

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| ✓ | Interdisciplinary approach and/or team | Applicants must demonstrate that the proposed project brings together a range of disciplinary approaches and/or perspectives to address a defined public policy problem. |
| ✓ | Potential to build on existing relationships with policymakers | Applicants must demonstrate existing, or clearly planned, connections with relevant government or policy stakeholders, and explain how the proposed project will build on these relationships to add value for policymakers. |
| ✓ | Additional funding | Applicants should provide evidence of co-funding, an intention to seek co-funding, and/or the capacity to leverage additional resources to maximise the project's impact. |
| ✓ | Collaboration between APPI partner universities | Applicants must demonstrate that the project involves meaningful collaboration across one or more APPI partner universities. |

The desirable criteria will help the Institute better understand your project and assess its potential impact. However, projects do not have to demonstrate they meet any or all of these criteria to secure a grant.

Applicants should only address the desirable criteria if they are demonstrably relevant to the proposed project. For example, some teams may be seeking to establish new relationships with policymakers rather than building on existing ones.



How to 3 apply

Stage 1: EOIs

Stage 2: Interviews

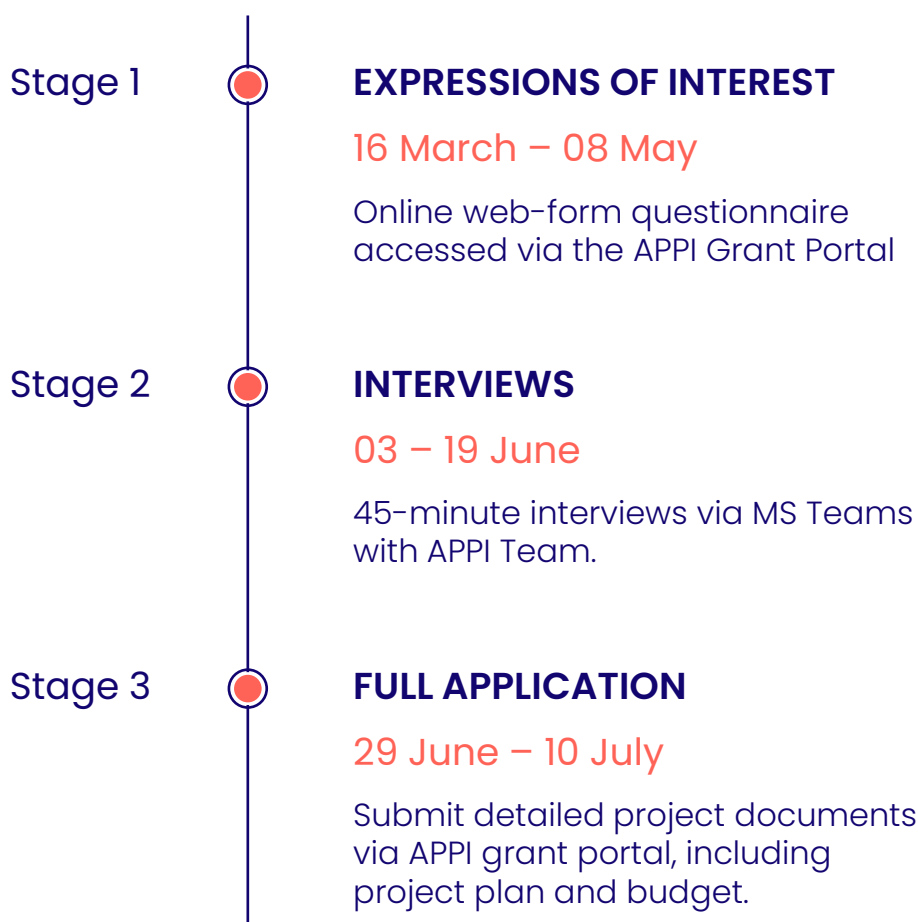
Stage 3: Full applications

▶ About the application process

The Policy Challenge Grant has a three-stage application process, intended to limit the amount of time required from applicants.

This three-stage, cumulative process constitutes your Policy Challenge Grant application. Each stage of the application process builds on the previous stage, giving the Institute a holistic view of your proposed project. The only applicants that will complete all three stages are those that make it to the final shortlist.

Visit our online grant portal at apply.appi.org.au, where you can submit your application.





How to apply

STAGE 1: EOIS

Stage 2: Interviews

Stage 3: Full applications

▶ STAGE 1: Expressions of Interest

You can download the [EOI questions here](#).




The EOI questions provide an overview of the nature of your proposed grant project. You will be asked a series of questions designed to assess the project's suitability against the selection criteria.

All EOIs will be assessed against the essential criteria. Successful EOIs will progress to the second stage and will receive an interview invitation via email.

Applicants that have not been longlisted for interview will be notified by APPI in June confirming their application has not been selected.

EOIs will open Monday 16 March and close 5.00pm (AEST) Friday 8 May 2025.

There are several resources available to support you with submitting a strong EOI:

-  [Tips for submitting a strong grant application](#)
-  [How to submit strong evidence of policymaker interest](#)
-  Please refer to our [Frequently Asked Questions](#) (FAQs).



16 March – 08 May 2026



Online web-form questionnaire accessed via the APPI Grant Portal.

**Submit your EOI at
apply.appi.org.au**



How to apply

Stage 1: EOIs

STAGE 2: INTERVIEWS

Stage 3: Full applications

▶ STAGE 2: Interviews

Longlisted applicants will be asked to select a preferred timeslot for a 45-minute online interview with Institute staff. Where a research team is applying for a grant, the entire team is encouraged to attend the interview, but this is not mandatory.

During the interview, you will be given the opportunity to share more details on your proposed project. The Institute will have the opportunity to ask you questions about the details of your project proposal. These will link primarily to the essential and desirable criteria.

The interview will also provide an opportunity for you to learn more about the aims of the Policy Challenge Grant, and the various forms of support the Institute will provide to grant recipients.

Applicants that have successfully progressed through the interview stage will be notified via email. Applicants who do not make the final shortlist will be notified in July.

Interviews will be held over two weeks, in the period between 3 – 19 June 2026. Please ensure that you are available to participate in an interview during this period.



03 – 19 June 2026



45-minute interviews via MS Teams with APPI Team.



How to apply

Stage 1: EOIs

Stage 2: Interviews

STAGE 3: FULL APPLICATION

▶ STAGE 3: Full application

After the longlist interviews are complete, applicants will receive an email confirming if they have progressed to the final shortlist.

Applicants that have successfully passed through the interview stage will be asked to submit responses to additional questions and submit supplementary documents to complete their grant application. They will be given two weeks to submit these documents.

Applicants will be asked to submit:

1 A detailed project plan

Applicants will need to provide details of the key project stages and milestones and key activities over those project stages, including timelines. APPI will provide a template to support the development of this plan. Applicants are required to use the template provided.

2 Detailed project budget and budget justification

Applicants will be asked to provide a breakdown of project costs, including allocation of key project resources. APPI will provide a template to support the development of this budget. Applicants are required to use the template provided.

3 Any additional documents requested by APPI

During the interview process, the Institute team might require some additional documentation or further detail on certain aspects of your proposed project. You will be asked to upload any supplementary documentation.

The documents provided to the Institute during the supplementary evidence stage will be compiled with the information submitted during earlier stages.

**20 June – 10 July 2026**

Submit detailed project documents via APPI Grant portal, including project plan and budget.

References

APPI reserves the right to seek a reference or independent expert advice for any individual grant application.



Assessment & award

▶ Assessment & award

The independent APPI Research Advisory Group will review all applications that have progressed through to Stage 3 and will advise APPI's Executive. The APPI Board will approve the final allocation of grant awards.

Grants will be awarded in late August 2026.

Shortlisted applicants will be notified of their application outcome via email at the end of August. Applicants that are longlisted but are not selected for the final shortlist will be notified by mid-July.

APPI will be happy to provide feedback on individual applications on request.

The Institute will work with the lead researcher of projects awarded a grant to execute a grant delivery agreement. Once signed, initial funding will be provided, and the project will commence.



Grants will be awarded in late August 2026

▶ Advice to applicants on the use of AI

Applicants are advised to exercise caution when using generative AI tools in the preparation of grant applications, as such tools may generate content that is factually incorrect or that incorporates the intellectual property of others. Applicants should not input confidential, personal, or third-party proprietary information into public generative AI tools, as it may not be possible to monitor or manage subsequent use of information entered.

By submitting an application to APPI, applicants certify that all information provided is accurate and accept responsibility for any misinformation or factual errors, including those arising from the use of generative AI.

Applicants whose projects progress to the full application stage and involve the use of AI will be required to provide details of the AI systems used, including deployment arrangements and safeguards in place to manage associated risks.



5 Contact us

For further grant-related enquiries, please either refer to the FAQs section on the APPI website or contact us via email.

✉ grants@appi.org.au



Good public policy starts with evidence.

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