

**Australia Japan Innovation Fund
Research Grants
Guidelines 2025-26**

Table of Contents

Australia-Japan Innovation Fund (AJIF) Mission.....	3
AJIF project attributes	3
AJIF priority funding areas 2025-26	4
Eligibility	6
Lead Applicant.....	6
Australia-Japan partnership requirement	7
Industry partnership requirement	7
What the grant funds may be used for	7
Overheads	8
What the grant funds may not be used for	8
Selection criteria checklist.....	8
Funding Amounts	9
Funding Conditions.....	9
How to apply	10

Australia-Japan Innovation Fund (AJIF) Mission

The Australia-Japan Innovation Fund (AJIF) fosters innovative bilateral collaborations between Australia and Japan. Our mission is to elevate the profile of Australia-Japan collaboration in science, technology and innovation, and support the people who are transforming the bilateral relationship through these partnerships.

We do this by strengthening and transforming Australia-Japan research and scientific collaboration through academic, industry and government partnerships.

To achieve its objectives, the AJIF uses its funding and networks as catalysts to encourage national and sector-wide cooperation that enables serious, transformative responses from Japan. We support projects that have the potential to attract interest and expanded financial support from the public and private sectors in Australia and Japan.

AJIF project attributes

To be eligible for AJIF funding, projects should have the following attributes:

- **innovative, high-quality research** that contribute to a measurable progression of the Australia-Japan bilateral relationship, demonstrated through existing, or well-developed plans for, collaboration between partners;
- **effective collaboration** between Australian and Japanese investigators, through established relationships and/or financial and other contributions;
- **evidence of contributions from other sources** either in cash or in kind;
- **sustainability**, demonstrated by a plan for future funding;
- **demonstrated need** for AJIF funding as critical to the success of the project;
- **diversity** of participation, including gender balance;
- **engagement with next-generation researchers** and thought-leaders in the bilateral relationship;
- **effective outreach** plans that include the public and/or industry, government or policy decision-makers in ways that :
 - communicate the significance of project questions and results for non-specialist audiences;
 - generate positive and effective media coverage and commentary on the Australia-Japan relationship, and

- promote a contemporary and positive image of Australia capturing the breadth and sophistication of new industries and research capacities; and
- **projected impact** for industry, business, economy, policy and/or society.

Projects that do not have a research element but are predominantly about strengthening Australia-Japan connections in other ways are not eligible, but may consider the Australia-Japan Foundation grant program. See: <https://dfat.gov.au/people-to-people/foundations-councils-institutes/australia-japan-foundation/Pages/australia-japan-foundation.aspx>

AJIF priority funding areas 2025-26

Since its establishment, the AJIF has funded projects in areas that bring together both countries' stated priorities in science, technology, innovation and health and that capture research complementarities. To date those have included:

Green steel enablers

Including but not limited to:

- Hydrogen-based direct reduction
- Electric Arc Furnaces (EAF)
- Carbon Capture, utilisation, and storage (CCUS)
- Biomass as a reducing agent
- Electrolysis of Iron Ore
- Circular Economy Practices
- Smart Manufacturing and Digitisation
- Alternative ironmaking technologies

Fleet and logistics decarbonisation

Including but not limited to:

- Electric Vehicles (EVs)
- Alternative fuels
- Fleet optimisation and route planning
- Lightweight materials
- Digital twins and IoT
- Sustainable supply chain practices
- Autonomous vehicles
- Carbon offsetting

New energy system technology

Including but not limited to:

- Renewable Energy Sources
- Energy storage systems
- Smart grids
- Green hydrogen production
- Microgrids

- Advanced nuclear technologies
- Vehicles to Grid (V2G) technologies
- Carbon neutral fuels

Circular economy and water treatment

Including but not limited to:

- Advanced recycling technologies
- Product life extension
- Material innovation
- Industrial symbiosis
- Membrane filtration
- Advanced oxidation processes (AOP)
- Biological treatment
- Zero liquid discharge (ZLD)
- Smart water management

Community Digitisation

Including but not limited to:

- Smart infrastructure
- Smart health and wellbeing
- Smart energy management
- Smart mobility solutions
- Data-driven decision making
- Digital cultural and educational resources

New Technology Contribution to GHG Reduction

Including but not limited to:

- Green Hydrogen
- Electrification of transportation
- Methane emission reduction technologies
- Low-carbon materials
- Advanced biofuels
- Nuclear energy
- Carbon farming and soil sequestration
- Direct air capture (DAC)
- Carbon-neutral synthetic fuels
- Afforestation and reforestation

Efficiency improvement in mining

Including but not limited to:

- Automation and robotics
- Real-time data analytics and monitoring
- Energy efficiency and optimisation
- Advanced mine planning and simulation
- Digital twin technologies
- High-efficiency separation and processing technologies

- Waste reduction and recycling
- Enhanced drilling and blasting techniques

Mining Wellness

Including but not limited to:

- Occupational Health
- Remote Diagnostics
- Portable Medical Devices
- Mining Workforce Wellbeing
- Telehealth for Mining
- Health Tech Innovation in Mining
- On-Site Medical Services

Green maritime enablers

Including but not limited to:

- Wind-assisted propulsion
- Electrification and battery technologies
- Shore power (cold ironing)
- Advanced hull designs
- Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) on ships
- Zero-emission ports
- Ballast water treatment systems
- Low-emission ship designs

Space innovation for environmental preservation

Including but not limited to:

- GHG reduction
- Environmental preservation
- Environmental monitoring

Eligibility

Lead Applicant

Applications must be lodged by a lead applicant.

The lead applicant must be applying on behalf of one of the following entity types, based either in Australia or Japan:

- an Australian or Japanese research institution or company
- an Australian or Japanese registered charity, not-for-profit organisation or educational institution (such as a university)
- an Australian or Japanese government entity

Individuals or organisations outside these six categories cannot be lead applicants.

Australia-Japan partnership requirement

These grants are designed to foster Australia-Japan partnerships. While the lead applicant can be based in Australia or Japan (as a research institution, university, charity, not-for-profit organisation, government entity or corporation), they must demonstrate collaboration with one or more partners in the other country.

There is no limit to the number of partners in the application. Applications from consortia (groups of entities) are acceptable, but each partner must be an eligible entity of the kind listed below:

- research institution
- university
- registered charity or not-for-profit organisation
- educational institution
- government entity
- corporation

Industry partnership requirement

These grants are designed to foster research partnerships between research institutions and industry partners. At least one partner in the application should be an industry partner.

The lead applicant is generally not the industry partner.

For the purpose of this program, 'industry partner' means a non-university entity, such as a corporation, government agency, NGO, or other non-university partner entity.

Partners that are corporations should note that AJIF funds may not be used for:

- activities which are already commercially viable; or
- activities which will provide commercial advantage to the applicant (e.g. promotion of the applicant's own business)

What the grant funds may be used for

You must use the grant for the following activities:

- The project outlined within the application.
- Costs detailed in your budget and grant agreement, including:

- Economy class airfare (domestic & international), modest accommodation costs, meals and travel allowances, other transport;
- Communication and translation;
- Venue hire and catering for promotional events that present research results to appropriate stakeholders;
- Advertising and promotion, graphic design, photography and printed material;
- Attendance at a conference or workshop or meeting by a project representative who is a speaker (limited to one participant in a conference/workshop/ meeting that is of direct relevance to the project);
- Costs directly related to the project that are agreed with the AJIF, including essential equipment and salaries for research assistants or fixed-term early career researchers.

You can only spend grant funds on eligible grant activities as defined in the grant details in your grant agreement.

Overheads

Not for profit applicants and partners (registered charities, not-for-profit organisations, universities and government entities) that usually include overhead as part of their project budgets are permitted to do so. The maximum overhead payable by AJIF is 25% (across all budget items).

What the grant funds may not be used for

You may not use the grant for the following:

- retrospective costs incurred by the project;
- recurrent funding of non-project activities;
- salaries for continuing (permanent) researchers.
- activities which are already commercially viable;
- activities which will provide commercial advantage to the applicant (e.g. promotion of the applicant's own business);
- costs incurred in the preparation of a grant application or related documentation;
- travel and accommodation for attendance at conferences or meetings, except as indicated above.

Selection criteria checklist

1. **Relevance:** Alignment with the strategic objectives of the Fund.
2. **Saliency:** Demonstrable outcomes that will contribute to industry, business, economic, policy and/or societal aspects of the bilateral relationship.
3. **Innovation:** Originality of research, contribution to innovation and the advancement of knowledge.

4. **Track Record:** Research experience and standing of project participants.
5. **Networks:** Potential for building new networks and links between industry, universities and government or other multiplier effects of the research activity.
6. **Sustainability:** Prospect for sustained activity beyond the grant period.
7. **Diversity:** Evidence of diversity in the composition of the project participants, including efforts to achieve gender balance, early career researchers and participants from underrepresented groups.
8. **Co-contribution:** Evidence of contributions (either financial or in-kind) from partners or other research grant bodies. In-kind contributions may include access to data or equipment, or provision of research time by partner employees.

Funding Amounts

Grant applications should be in the range of AUD\$50,000 to AUD\$250,000. The Board reserves the right to award an amount that varies from the requested funding amount.

Funding Conditions

Grants are made to a single lead applicant. The lead applicant may distribute the grant to its partners in line with the policies of the lead and partner institutions.

Because there are limits on the use of the funds by corporate entities, we do not expect that money will be transferred to the industry partner, but the lead institution may use funds to cover industry partner expenses, such as travel for joint research.

Grants will normally run for 12 months. No-cost extensions of up to 12 months may be considered. The maximum completion time of a grant will be 24 months.

Multi-year awards to the same applicant or consortium will generally not be considered.

Awards to the same application or consortium in consecutive years are unlikely and would require evidence of exceptionally strong performance in the first award period.

Successful grantees will be required to comply with the laws of the jurisdiction(s) in which the project is being carried out and with the internal regulations of the lead and partner entities.

AJIF does not assert any claim to intellectual property in prior work or work arising from the funded projects.

Successful grantees will be required to submit mid-term and annual reports on project progress and outcomes, evaluating their performance against the selection criteria.

Selection process

The selection process is a two-step approach designed to identify and support the most promising projects:

1. Expression of Interest (EOI) (6 weeks):

- Interested lead applicants submit a simplified application through the online system. The initial stage requires providing the documents outlined in the "How to Apply" section.
- Submitted EOIs are reviewed against the selection criteria based on the provided project summary, budget justification, and other required information.
- Successful applicants from the EOI stage are invited to proceed to the Detailed Proposal Submission phase of the selection process.

2. Detailed Proposal Submission (2.5 weeks):

- Applicants selected through the initial EOI review are asked to submit a comprehensive application.
- This full application requires a detailed project plan, including methodology, expected outcomes, and impact assessment.
- Additionally, applicants must prepare a full budget and budget justification in support of the detailed proposal.
- Detailed proposals are reviewed by the AJIF Selection Committee.
- The Selection Committee recommendations are considered by the AJIF Board.
- The AJIF Board determines fund recipients.

How to apply

Applicants should fill in the Expression of Interest form and upload supporting documents through the online system. The link to the online application system can be found at

<https://www.australiajapaninnovation.org/2025-2026-applications>

The EOI form requires, among other information, the following:

- Project summary that includes responses to the selection criteria
- Budget summary
- Declaration that all named project partners agree to participate
- Details of lead applicant and partner(s)