

# GLOBAL CONNECTIONS FUND

**The Global Connections Fund – Bridging Grants (BG) provide assistance for early-stage, proof of concept, knowledge transfer, product and services development, market testing, and innovation and commercialisation activities.**

They are designed to support international partnerships between Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) and Researchers to grow beyond an initial level of engagement into a strong collaboration leading to the translation of research knowledge and intellectual property into market-ready products or services.

The current and final round of the Global Connections Fund – Bridging Grants will focus on partnerships between Australia and the Republic of Korea, either between Australian researchers and Korean SMEs or Australian SMEs and Korean researchers.

The Bridging Grants provide between AUD 35,000 to AUD 75,000 per grant and act as seed funding capital to enable viable projects to grow in scope and scale, and to test commercialisation and proof of concept activities. They are highly competitive and are supported by funds and/or in-kind contributions by the applicant partners.

Bridging Grants are not to be used for basic research funding, for the acquisition of major capital equipment, or for conference travel.

Only one application per partnership proposal can be submitted. The Bridging Grants (BG) program is administered by the Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering (hereafter referred to as ATSE or the Academy) and is funded by the Australian Government Department of Industry, Science and Resources. This initiative aligns with the newly established Global Science and Technology Diplomacy Fund.



Australian Academy of  
Technological Sciences  
& Engineering  
1975-2025



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Industry,  
Science and Resources**

## GLOBAL CONNECTIONS FUND

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## 4. CALL DETAILS

Bridging Grants for 2025 will be announced on the ATSE website, through ATSE mailing lists and social media, and through Australian Government media releases and their associated websites.

Please visit the Bridging Grants section of the [ATSE/GCF website](#) for up-to-date details on the call dates, process and stages.

### 1.1 Priority areas covered

Projects must be in one of the four priority areas below:

- Robotics
- Quantum technology
- Biotechnology
- Renewable energy and batteries

The project aims to increase linkages with global economies, promote researcher-industry engagement and knowledge transfer, encourage translational activities, support end user development and commercialisation outcomes.

### 1.2 Which economies can you partner with?

The current and final round of the Bridging Grants will focus on partnerships between Australia and the Republic of Korea, either between Australian researchers and Korean SMEs or Australian SMEs and Korean researchers.

### 1.3 SME status of international partners

If you are an Australian researcher, your international partner will be a Korean SME. As the definition of SMEs differs for each economy, it is important for you to establish and confirm that the partner fits the definition of an SME in the Republic of Korea.

The Korean Framework Act on Small and Medium Enterprises defines SMEs according to the following criteria:

- 3-year average sales by business type
- Total asset limit
- Independence criteria i.e. the SME is independent and not under the control of a large enterprise or public institution.

Further information about the requirements is available at [Ministry of SMEs and Startups](#).

The applicant will be required to declare that the proposed partner complies with this requirement and be prepared to provide the Academy with documented evidence if requested during the application process. Misleading declarations will lead to disqualification from the application process.

## 2. FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS

Bridging Grants are available for projects ranging from AUD 35,000 up to AUD 75,000. Grant applications for less than AUD 35,000 will not be considered eligible.

### 2.1 Matching funds

It is a requirement that the Australian and Korean partners will collectively contribute cash and/or in-kind support totalling a minimum of 50 per cent of the value of the grant applied for. Cash and in-kind are treated as equivalent for the purposes of the Bridging Grants matching funds component. The proportion contributed by each partner (cash and/or in kind) is left to the Applicant to determine.

For example, if the applicants applied for a AUD 35,000 grant, then a cash and/or in-kind equivalent to 50 per cent of this value will be required, which is AUD 17,500. Of this amount, if each partner equally contributed to this component then they would each be required to contribute AUD 8,750 as cash and/or-kind.

Cash and in-kind contributions as detailed in the application will need to be validated by the Australian applicants through a signed declaration and the overseas partner will also be required to declare their contributions in writing.

These documents will be requested only if the grant has been approved and will form part of the required documentation to be submitted to the Academy in order to fulfil acceptance of the grant offer.

However, to avoid delays and uncertainty in this post assessment phase we strongly advise all applicants to make sure these cash and/or in-kind arrangements are agreed upon between partners prior to the submission of a Bridging Grant proposal. Examples of in-kind contributions could be:

- Use of equipment, laboratory or test-bed facilities, or specialist machinery used in undertaking prototyping activities, based on hours used and operating costs
- Staff time allocated to the project for the purposes of carrying out the tasks identified in the project proposal
- Travel expense contributions from either partner

### 2.2 Institutional on costs

Many research institutions impose a charge on grants received to cover institutional internal administrative costs. Due to the small size and focused purpose of these grants the Global Connections Fund does not support the charging of institutional on costs.

## ELIGIBLE EXPENDITURE

### 2.3 What activities do Bridging Grants support?

- Direct labour costs of Australian employees directly employed on the core elements of the project. We consider a person an employee when paid a regular salary or wage, out of which regular tax instalment deductions are made
- Up to 30 per cent labour on costs for Australian employees to cover employer paid superannuation, payroll tax, workers compensation insurance, and overheads such as office rent and the provision of computers for staff directly working on the project
- Contract expenditure covering the cost of eligible project activities that are contracted to others. All contractors must have a written contract prior to starting any project work. Invoices from contractors must contain a detailed description and breakdown of the work including hours and hourly rates
- Domestic and international travel limited to the reasonable cost of accommodation, visa, insurance and transportation required to conduct agreed project activities
- Direct support costs of research, translation and promotion of outcomes
- Salaries and travel related costs for Australian personnel including consultants

#### Examples

- Product and service development activities (e.g. technical development, compliance testing, proof of concept, product testing, validation, laboratory verification and certification)
- Product or services design (e.g. design work, prototyping, innovation design, manufacturing establishment)
- Software development and beta testing for a specific application
- Market testing and analysis, small run supply of prototypes for testing and evaluation
- IP scanning: Freedom to Operate searches and provisional patent applications. Expenses for these IP related items are capped at AUD 5,000
- A limited travel component to enable specific project activities to occur. This amount is capped at AUD 3,000

## INELIGIBLE EXPENDITURE

### 2.4 What activities are not supported by Bridging Grants?

- Basic research projects
- Capital expenditure for the purchase of assets such as office furniture and equipment, motor vehicles, computers, printers or photocopiers; and the construction, renovation or extension of facilities such as buildings and laboratories
- Costs involved in the purchase, upgrade or hire of software (including user licences) and ICT hardware
- Activities that would be undertaken in the normal course of business, such as website development, or the purchase, development and/or integration of standard software for core purposes (e.g. accounting, financial management), business planning, sales and promotional activities
- Retrospective activities (i.e. where expenditure is incurred prior to the award of a Bridging Grant)
- Institutional overheads and administrative charges
- Costs associated with the internal preparation of finance and audit statements
- Any activities, equipment or supplies that are already being supported through other sources
- Indirect costs of research, not listed in eligible expenses
- Costs associated with market research for products or research carried out by surveys to assess the size of the market and the price of a particular service or product
- Costs associated with marketing projects (activities aimed at creating demand for goods and services of consumers, businesses and government)
- Costs such as rental, renovations and utilities
- Fees for international students, or the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) and Higher Education Loan Programme (HELP) liabilities for students
- Insurance costs (project partners must maintain adequate insurance or similar coverage for any liability arising as a result of their participation in the programme)
- Staff recruitment and relocation costs
- Debt financing
- Salaries and travel related costs for non-Australian personnel including consultants
- Costs of Australia's membership of international science and technology projects
- Anything else as determined by ATSE as not meeting the Bridging Grant objectives

### 3. WHO CAN APPLY?

Applicants must either be an Australian Researcher, or an Australian-incorporated SME, and have a proposal supporting an international SME-Researcher partnership.

Only the following partnership collaborations are supported:

- Australian SMEs looking to partner with Korean Researchers.
- Australian Researchers seeking to partner with Korean SMEs.

We do not support Researcher-Researcher or SME-SME Partnerships.

Applicants can only submit one Bridging Grant application, and only one application per research group or SME will be considered.

#### 3.1 Australian Researcher applicants

The applicant must be an Australian citizen or an Australian permanent resident and living in Australia at the time of submitting the grant application.

If successful, Bridging Grant applicants will need to provide proof of citizenship or permanent residency if requested, as a condition of receiving funds.

Australian research applicants are defined as those employed by a tertiary education institution, publicly funded research organisation, not-for-profit research organisation, or cooperative research centre. Where an applicant's institutional arrangements are such that the institution is deemed the applicant, then the applicant should ensure institutional sign off.

#### 3.2 Australian SME applicants

SME applicants must meet the Australian Government definition of an SME, which is the term used to refer to a business which has less than 200 full time equivalent employees.

SME applicants:

- Must be incorporated as a Pty Ltd or Ltd entity
- Must have an Australian Business Number (ABN)
- Must be incorporated and registered for GST
- Must not be set up as a trust structure
- Must not be a sole trader
- Must not be engaged in any litigation, arbitration, administrative proceedings, investigations, or of or before any court, tribunal, commission, arbitral body or other agency in any jurisdiction in the Commonwealth of Australia (for enterprises based in Australia) or in the nominated priority economy.

#### 3.3 Who is not eligible?

Grants will not be provided to organisations:

- included on the National Redress Scheme's website on the list of 'Institutions that have not joined or signified their intent to join the Scheme' [www.nationalredress.gov.au](http://www.nationalredress.gov.au)
- named by the Workplace Gender Equality Agency as an organisation that has not complied with Workplace Gender Equality Act (2012)

#### 3.4 Project specific legislation, policies and industry standards

Successful applicants must comply with all relevant laws and regulations in undertaking your project. You must also comply with the specific legislation/policies/industry standards that follow. It is a condition of the grant funding that these requirements are met where necessary. In particular, project leads will be required to comply with state or territory legislation in relation to working with children.

##### Ethics and research practices

The [Australian Research Council](#) provides a series of publications that outline the principles of ethical conduct in research. All proposals and funded research projects must conform to the principles and requirements of these publications (and their successor documents), including but not limited to:

- [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research 2018](#)
- [National Statement of Ethical Conduct in Human Research \(2007\) - Updated 2023](#)
- [Australian Code for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes \(2013\)](#)

If there is any conflict or inconsistency between a successor document and its predecessor, then the successor document prevails.

##### Intellectual property rights

Project leads must provide details of intellectual property (IP) arrangements in their applications. This includes both the use of IP in the project and the proposed ownership rights to IP generated by the project as well as strategies for protecting Australia's interests. Where IP is likely to be generated by the project, successful applicants are required to conclude protocols or contracts with their Australian partners and global partners on the management of IP issues. These agreements should be in accordance with laws and regulations in Australia and the relevant global economies, and provide for:

- adequate and effective protection and equitable distribution of any benefits from IP rights created in or resulting directly from cooperative activities (foreground IP rights)
- ownership of foreground IP rights to be allocated on the basis of respective contribution and equitable interests
- terms and conditions for the commercialisation and other forms of dissemination of the foreground IP rights
- adequate and effective protection of IP rights provided by the organisations, enterprises and institutions prior to or in the course of such cooperative activities, for example, the licensing or utilisation of such IP rights on equitable terms (background IP rights).

Australian participants should approach IP negotiations in line with the principles outlined on [business.gov.au](http://business.gov.au) and the [National Principles of Intellectual Property Management for Publicly Funded Research \(2017\)](#).

### Export Controls

As this program involves research collaboration with foreign entities, some provisions of Australia's export controls regime may apply to projects. It is the responsibility of project leads to consider the implications, if any, of the relevant legislation on the proposed project before submitting applications, and to comply with any applicable requirements if it is successful. Further information is available on the [Department of Defence website](#).

### National security

Collaboration with foreign entities must be transparent, undertaken with full knowledge and consent, and in a manner that avoids harm to Australia's national interests. It is your responsibility to consider the national security implications of the proposed project and identify and manage any risks, including risks relating to the unwanted transfer of sensitive knowledge technology.

You must provide a risk management plan, along with any supporting documentation, describing how you propose to monitor, manage and report identified risks. The risk management plan should give specific consideration to risks associated with cyber security attacks and national security as outlined in these guidelines. You should detail how you intend to address risks relating to foreign interference and unwanted transfer of technology, data or other knowledge, including your intended process to conduct due diligence on potential consortia partners.

You must inform us of any relationships between project participants and foreign parties that could influence or benefit from the proposed activity. Such relationships may include foreign ownership or sponsorship, connections to foreign governments, militaries, political parties, or other organisations, and membership of foreign talent programs. You must also inform us of the establishment of any such relationships throughout the life of the grant.

You must inform us if you, your project partners or any project personnel are receiving funding or benefits from, or otherwise affiliated with, a foreign government, including:

- a foreign state or local government
- a foreign military, intelligence organisation or police force
- an organisation owned or sponsored by a foreign government (such as a state-owned corporation or state-sponsored university)
- a foreign government talent program.

You must also inform us of the establishment of any such relationships throughout the life of the grant.

This grant will not fund any procurement, commercial, business development or supply chain activity with any Russian or Belarusian entity as lead, partner or subcontractor. This includes any goods or services originating from a Russian and Belarusian source.

To assist with managing security risks, you are strongly encouraged to review the [Department of Industry, Science and Resources Guide to undertaking international collaboration](#), the [Australian Government Information Security Manual](#) as well as the [Guidelines to counter foreign interference in the Australian university sector \(UFIT\)](#). Although focused on the university sector, many objectives and best practice considerations in the UFIT guidelines are applicable to other research institutions and businesses that may be Australian partners in projects funded by this program.



## 4. ASSESSMENT

All grants will undergo a peer review assessment process by the Academy. Assessors are specialists in the grant priority areas with expert knowledge of translational research and development activities. Each project will be assessed against 4 main Assessment Criteria (equally weighted). These are:

### **Project description** (25 points)

Assessment will be based on:

- Clear definition of the problem being addressed
- Clear market need is being addressed
- Approaches proposed are realistic and achievable
- How the proposed product fits within a competitive landscape
- Resources available to complete project

### **Project activities & resources** (25 points)

Assessment will be based on:

- Clearly defined list of actions to achieve outcomes
- Time scale is realistic and achievable
- Personnel appropriate to the task
- Budget is realistic
- In-kind and cash contributions are appropriate

### **Impact of the work** (25 points)

Assessment will be based on:

- Is the project likely to result in an ongoing collaboration?
- What is the likelihood of a successful demonstration of the project technology?
- What is the likelihood that the project will result in a commercialised product or service?
- What impact will a successful outcome have on the current market?
- Are there likely to be returns on investment to both the researchers and SME partners involved in the project?

### **What are the benefits of this work to Australia?** (25 points)

Assessment will be based on:

- Is it disruptive and likely to create new business opportunities?
- Will it contribute to growth in the priority area it covers?
- Will it provide training opportunities for researchers and SME staff?
- Will it foster bilateral business, scientific and technology relationships?

The shortlist of successful projects will be agreed to by the department prior to being publicly announced. National interest considerations may be taken into account.

## 6. GRANT DURATION & REPORTING

The grant activity must be completed within 12 months of the award being accepted.

Acceptance of grant offers must be taken up within one month of the letter being issued by ATSE.

Bridging Grant activities should be initiated within 3 months of grant payment and must be actively underway by 6 months. All grants must be completed within 12 months of grant payment. No extensions are possible.

The Academy reserves the right to withdraw the funding/offer of funding if collaborations are not commenced within these timeframes.

There will be two reporting points; an interim progress report and a final report due at the completion of the grant activities.

The grant activities must conclude by 30 May 2026.

Grantees will also be required to participate in an exit survey.

It is the responsibility of the Australian Applicants to prepare and file the reports.

There may be a requirement for the applicant to provide a signed financial statement of expenditure of the grant on request.

All grantees will be required to provide a small vignette on the project for public use by the Academy and/or the Australian Government when reporting publicly on the outcomes of the project.

[atse.org.au/GCF2025](https://atse.org.au/GCF2025)