



Tupu Pacific Research Grants Guidelines: Round 2

1. About this program

1.1. Program overview and objectives

The Tupu Pacific Research Grants are a collaboration between the ISC Regional Focal Point for Asia and the Pacific and the Pacific Islands Universities Regional Network (PIURN). The initiative is designed to ignite new ideas and strengthen research connections between Pacific regional universities and their Australian partners, tackling the region's most pressing ecological and developmental challenges.

Through the Tupu Pacific Research Grants:

- Multidisciplinary teams will collaborate on projects aligned with the Blue Pacific Strategy 2050.
- Up to five consortia will each receive funding of up to AUD \$40,000.
- All projects will be coordinated with the support of PIURN.

This is a unique opportunity for researchers ready to grow their networks, lead new collaborations, and develop their expertise. For many early- and mid-career academics, this could be the first funded project — a chance to bring ideas to life, build regional partnerships, and contribute to a stronger, more resilient Blue Pacific.

1.2. Program priorities

Proposals must respond to an issue that demonstrates relevance to the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific. The proposal may address any aspect of the issue provided that the project includes a clear outcome that contributes to a stronger, more resilient Blue Pacific.

2. Key dates

- **Call opens:** 7 October 2026
- **Applications close:** 11.59pm AEDT 16 November 2026
- **Applications reviewed and outcome advised:** December 2026
- **Funding agreements executed and projects commence:** January 2027
- **Mid-project reports due:** 31 May 2027
- **Projects completed:** 30 November 2027
- **Final reports due:** January 2028.

These timings may change. Applicants will be informed of any changes through the Tupu webpage and, where relevant, the application portal.



3. Eligibility

Tupu is intended for eligible regional consortia. At a minimum, each consortium must include:

- One Lead Organisation that is a member of the Pacific Islands Universities Regional Network (PIURN).
- One additional Pacific university or research institute (other than the Lead Organisation). A signed letter of support must be submitted.
- One Australian research institute or university. A signed letter of support must be submitted.

3.1. Lead Organisation eligibility:

The Lead Organisation must be a member of the Pacific Islands Universities Regional Network (PIURN). Eligible members are:

- The University of the South Pacific
- Christ University in Pacific (Tonga)
- Divine Word University (Papua New Guinea)
- Fiji National University (Fiji)
- National University of Samoa (Samoa)
- National University of Vanuatu (Vanuatu)
- Pacific Adventist University (Papua New Guinea)
- University of Fiji (Fiji)
- Solomon Islands National University (Solomon Islands)
- The Papua New Guinea University of Natural Resources and Environment (Papua New Guinea)
- The Papua New Guinea University of Technology (Papua New Guinea)
- The University of Goroka (Papua New Guinea)
- The University of Papua New Guinea (Papua New Guinea)
- Western Pacific University (Papua New Guinea)
- Université de la Nouvelle-Calédonie | University of New Caledonia (New Caledonia)
- Université de la Polynésie française | University of French Polynesia (French Polynesia)



3.2. Project Lead eligibility

The Project Lead must have the appropriate experience, authority and capability to lead the proposed project and coordinate the project team and partners. They will be the primary contact for the application and, if successful, for project delivery, reporting and communications with the administering organisation.

The Project Lead is responsible for ensuring the project is delivered in accordance with the approved proposal, budget, timeline and funding agreement.

A person may be named as Project Lead on more than one application in this round.

3.3. Partner Organisation eligibility

Projects must be delivered as a regional consortium. In addition to the Lead Organisation, the consortium must include at least two other partner organisations:

- One additional Pacific university or research institute (other than the Lead Organisation) in eligible countries¹.
- One Australian research institute or university.

Partner organisations must be legal entities in their respective countries. Each partner organisation must have a clear and relevant role in the project and contribute to its delivery, regional relevance and pathway to impact. Applicants must provide a letter of support from each partner organisation, outlining the partner's role, contribution and responsibilities.

Partner organisations must meet sanctions, conflict of interest and other compliance requirements set out in these guidelines.

3.4. Partner's Project Lead eligibility

Each partner organisation must nominate a Project Lead. The Partner's Project Lead must:

- be employed by the relevant partner organisation
- act as the main contact for their respective partner organisation and be responsible for coordinating that organisation's contribution to the project.
- be authorised to lead the partner organisation's contribution to the proposed project.

¹ Eligible countries for additional Pacific partner organisations are: Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Kiribati, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu.



- The Partner's Project Lead is responsible for ensuring that any personnel contributing from their organisation are appropriately engaged, supervised and able to support the approved project activities.

The application should only identify the project lead for each partner organisation and describe their role, responsibilities, relevant expertise and expected contribution to the project. The application does not need to list all personnel at each partner organisation.

3.5. Additional partners

Additional partners are organisations that contribute to the broader project on a self-funded basis but are not part of the funded consortium. They may be based in Australia, the Asia-Pacific region or any other country, where their involvement strengthens the project's relevance, delivery or pathway to impact.

Additional partners may provide expertise, advice, networks, implementation support, access to data, facilities or other in-kind contributions. They are not eligible to receive grant funding, have their activities covered by the grant, or count towards the minimum project partner requirements.

3.6. Project and activity eligibility (what can be funded)

Projects must support one or more of:

- United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);
- 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent;
- The Pacific Regional Research Agenda

Projects must be feasible within the available grant amount and project period. Individual grants will be up to a maximum of AUD \$40,000 and projects must be completed by November 2027.

Applications must identify clear deliverables, milestones and intended users of the project outputs. They must also explain how the project will be delivered through the proposed consortium and how the outputs could be used, adapted or scaled beyond the immediate project.

Projects must not duplicate activities already funded through another source. Grant funding cannot be used for the same activities, personnel time, equipment, travel or other costs that are already supported by another grant, contract or funding arrangement.



4. Funding

4.1. Grant amount and duration

Each project may request up to a maximum of AU\$40,000.00 over the project duration.

Grant funding is provided as a contribution to the costs of delivering the approved project. Applicants are expected to propose a budget that is realistic, justified, and aligned with the scope of the proposed activity.

The project duration must not extend beyond 30 November 2027.

4.2. Use of grant funds

Grant funds must be used only for costs directly associated with delivering the approved project.

To be eligible, expenditure must:

- be necessary for delivering the approved project activities and outputs
- be incurred within the approved project period
- be included in the approved project budget
- comply with these guidelines and the funding agreement
- be reasonable, proportionate and supported by appropriate records.

Funding is provided to the Lead Organisation, which is responsible for receiving, managing and acquitting all grant funds.

The Lead Organisation is responsible for:

- ensuring that all expenditure complies with these guidelines and the funding agreement
- ensuring that any payments to approved partner organisations or service providers are governed by appropriate written agreements
- ensuring that any payments to partner organisations or service providers are governed by appropriate written agreements
- ensuring that any expenditure by partner organisations or service providers is clearly defined, justified and included in the approved budget.

Participation in the funded consortium does not automatically mean that a partner organisation will receive grant funding.

The Lead Organisation may use grant funds for eligible expenses incurred by approved partner organisations where the expenses are included in the approved budget and covered by a written contract or funding agreement before funds are expended.



Grant funding must not be used for:

- activities or costs that are already funded from another source for the same purpose
- costs incurred before execution of the funding agreement
- expenditure outside the approved project scope, budget or period.

Detailed rules on eligible and ineligible expense types are set out in Section 4.3.

4.3. Eligible and ineligible expenses

To be eligible, expenditure must be directly required to deliver the approved project activities and outputs, incurred during the approved project period, included in the approved budget, reasonable and proportionate, and supported by appropriate records.

Funding is provided to the Lead Organisation, which is responsible for managing grant funds, administering all expenditure in line with these guidelines and the executed funding agreement, and ensuring that any payments to approved partner organisations or service providers are governed by appropriate written agreements.

Eligible expenses

Eligible expenses may include:

1. Project-specific research and delivery costs directly required for approved project activities, including:
 - a. research consumables, sampling, testing and analysis
 - b. data collection, data access, data cleaning and data management
 - c. fieldwork costs directly required for the approved project activities
 - d. reasonable ethics, permits or project-specific compliance costs, where required and approved
 - e. other direct costs required to deliver approved project activities, milestones and outputs.
2. Project-specific translation, accessibility and end-user engagement costs directly required to support the use, adaptation or dissemination of approved project outputs, including:
 - a. Translation and interpretation
 - b. Accessibility formatting
 - c. Design and production of approved outputs
 - d. Policy briefs, guidance materials, toolkits or implementation resources
 - e. Workshops, stakeholder engagement, co-design and end-user testing



- f. Reasonable participant support for non-project participants, where clearly justified and approved in the project budget.
3. Direct project activity costs incurred by approved partner organisations or service providers, where the costs are necessary to deliver approved project activities, included in the approved budget, governed by a written agreement with the Lead Organisation, and supported by itemised invoices or equivalent records, including:
 - a. local delivery of approved project activities
 - b. data collection, fieldwork, testing and analysis
 - c. translation, interpretation and accessibility services
 - d. workshop delivery, stakeholder engagement and co-design activities
 - e. technical, specialist or advisory services
 - f. design, production and dissemination of approved project outputs
 - g. other direct project activity costs approved in the project budget.

Participation in the funded consortium does not automatically mean that a project partner organisation will receive grant funding.

4. Direct labour costs for employees of the Lead Organisation working directly on core elements of the project, as detailed in the approved budget, including role level and FTE by financial year.
5. Up to 30% labour on-costs for eligible project personnel at the Lead Organisation to cover employer-paid superannuation, payroll tax, workers compensation insurance, and limited overheads directly related to those staff delivering the project.
6. Travel expenses for Pacific project personnel, including employees of the Lead Organisation and approved Pacific contracted project partners, travelling within Australia or internationally where directly required for project delivery. Travel expenses must not exceed 25% of the proposed project budget.
 - a. Eligible travel is limited to economy travel, reasonable accommodation, and reasonable meal and incidental allowances in line with the Lead Organisation's travel policy.
7. Project-specific specialised equipment, technology, software or licences, including
8. Specialised ICT hardware, software, analytical platforms, data access or technical tools, where they are essential to deliver the approved project, clearly justified in the application, proportionate to the project scale, and approved in the project budget. This does not include routine computers, printers, standard



- software, general user licences or business-as-usual ICT used for general administration.
9. Other direct project expenditure incurred by the Lead Organisation, where the expenses are included in the approved budget and covered by a written contract or funding agreement with ISC RFP-AP before funds are expended.

Ineligible expenses

1. Costs incurred by organisations other than the Lead Organisation, unless the costs are incurred under a written contract or funding agreement with the Lead Organisation, including in the approved budget, and invoiced or acquitted in accordance with that agreement.
2. Salaries, salary on-costs, travel, accommodation, living allowances, per diems or other personal costs for Australian personnel.
3. Indirect costs not listed as eligible, including institutional overheads, administration fees, bench fees or other general operating costs beyond the approved labour on-cost allowance.
4. Capital or operational facility costs, including construction or renovation of facilities, and ongoing facility operating costs such as general rental, utilities, or similar business-as-usual expenses, unless explicitly covered within eligible on-costs for project staff.
5. Routine ICT hardware for general administration, including standard computers, printers and other business-as-usual ICT.
6. Routine software purchase, upgrade or hire, standard user licences, and routine ICT software for general administration and project management. Software, licences or analytical platforms are only eligible where they are demonstrably project-specific and have been explicitly approved in the project budget.
7. Activities that would be undertaken in the normal course of business, including standard website development, routine business software acquisition, general business development, debt financing and related financial charges.
8. Costs associated with preparing internal finance statements or independent, external audit costs, unless an audit has been specifically requested by ISC RFP-AP.
9. Activities, equipment, supplies or services that are already being supported through another funding source for the same purpose.
10. Insurance costs, including travel or medical insurance.
11. Alcohol and unreasonable hospitality expenses.



12. Staff recruitment and relocation costs.
13. Prizes, scholarships, donations, sponsorships, contingency amounts or onward grant-making, unless expressly approved in writing as part of the approved budget.
14. Payments, procurement, subcontracting or supply chain activity involving entities, individuals, goods or services that are prohibited under applicable sanctions, national security, due diligence, export control or funding agreement requirements.
15. Costs incurred before execution of the funding agreement.

4.4. Evidence of costs

If an application is successful, the Lead Organisation may be required to provide evidence to verify budgeted costs. They may include quotes for major items, itemised partner or service provider costs, travel estimates, or employment cost evidence such as enterprise agreement rates.

4.5. Payment, contracting and project commencement

Funding will be provided following the execution of a funding agreement between the Lead Organisation and ISC RFP-AP. Project activities may only commence after the funding agreement has been executed. Any expenses incurred before the agreement is executed are not eligible for grant funding.

The Lead Organisation is responsible for:

- receiving and managing all grant funds
- ensuring that all project expenditure complies with these guidelines
- establishing and managing any agreements required to engage project partner organisations or service providers.

Funding must not be used for activities or costs that are already funded from another source for the same purpose.

Payments are made in instalments linked to project milestones:

1. 70% on execution of the funding agreement
2. 20% following acceptance of the mid-project report
3. 10% following acceptance of the final report.

Payments are made in accordance with the agreed milestone schedule and are subject to:

- submission of required reports



- acceptance of those reports by the administering organisation

Payments may be deferred where reporting or other requirements under the funding agreement are not met.

5. How to apply

5.1. Application submission

The Lead Organisation will make a submission through the Australian Academy of Science GoodGrants portal: <https://science.grantplatform.com/>

5.2. Required application components and supporting documents

The research proposal will be comprised of:

- a completed application form, including a project summary, project team details, partner organisation details, responses to the assessment criteria, workplan and budget
- brief CV (6 pages max including publications) of the Project Lead and Partners' Project Leads.
- supporting letters from the Lead Organisation and two Partner Organisations (one Pacific and one Australian).

6. Assessment and selection

6.1. Assessment process

Applications will be reviewed in three stages:

- eligibility screening
- merit assessment
- final approval

Only applications that meet the eligibility requirements set out in Section 3 will proceed to merit assessment.

- Applicants may be contacted by ISC RFP-AP to clarify information in an application.

Clarifications may be used to confirm or explain information already provided but will not allow substantial changes to the application after the closing date.

6.2. Assessment criteria

Eligible applications will be assessed against the following criteria:



1. Scientific Quality and Rigor (5):

Quality of research questions, objectives, methodology and appropriateness of study design and analytical approaches.

2. Regional Relevance and Impact (5):

Potential to address urgent challenges in the Pacific Region and Alignment with local priorities and communities' needs.

3. Collaboration and Partnership Quality (3):

Strength of partnerships, evidence of genuine collaboration including shared leadership and responsibilities and regional reach, cross-institutional knowledge sharing.

4. Innovation and originality (2):

Proposed new ideas, approaches or solutions.

5. Potential for continuity (3):

Clear vision for the future of the project or collaboration beyond the grant.

6. Capacity building potential (3):

Opportunities to develop skills and research capacity among early career researchers and institutions.

7. Feasibility and Project management (2):

Realistic timeline, clear workplan and achievable milestones.

8. Dissemination and Knowledge sharing (2):

Plans for sharing results with stakeholders, policymakers, communities, and the wider scientific community.

9. Right to Science (2):

Demonstration of active engagement of researchers and institutions from underrepresented or under resourced groups (for example women, early-career researchers, regional researchers, smaller or less-resourced universities.)

10. Resource Efficiency and Budget Justification (3):

Appropriate use of funds, alignment between budget and project activities; demonstration of co-investment or in-kind participation.

6.3. Selection committee and decision-making

Eligible applications will be considered by a selection committee with relevant expertise.

The selection committee will assess applications against the assessment criteria and make recommendations. Final funding decisions will be made by the authorised decision-maker within ISC RFP-AP.



Funding decisions are final. ISC RFP-AP may, at its discretion, provide limited feedback to unsuccessful applicants.

6.4. Conflicts of interest and confidentiality

All persons involved in the assessment and selection process will be required to declare any actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest. Conflicts of interest will be managed in accordance with the policies and procedures of ISC RFP-AP.

Application information will be treated confidentially and used only for the purposes of assessment, due diligence, selection, program administration, and any other lawful purpose connected with the program.

7. Grant conditions

Successful applicants must comply with the conditions set out in this section and any additional requirements specified in the funding agreement.

7.1. Acknowledgement, communications and publicity

Recipients must acknowledge the support of ISC RFP-AP in any communications, publications or outputs arising from the funded project. This includes:

- acknowledging ISC RFP-AP in reports, publications and public communications
- complying with any branding and acknowledgement requirements specified in the funding agreement
- seeking approval from ISC RFP-AP for public statements, media releases or significant announcements relating to the project, where required.

Recipients may be requested to:

- participate in program evaluation or promotional activities
- provide material for communication purposes, including summaries, images or other outputs

Any public communications must be accurate and not misrepresent the program or the role of ISC RFP-AP.

7.2. Compliance

Recipients must comply with all applicable laws, regulations and policies relevant to the delivery of the project.

This includes, but is not limited to:

- workplace health and safety requirements
- ethical standards and approvals relevant to the research



- relevant intellectual property and data management obligations
- applicable Australian Government requirements, including sanctions, export controls and related compliance obligations.

Recipients are responsible for ensuring that all project participants, including partner organisations, meet these requirements.

8. Reporting and monitoring

Recipients must provide reports to demonstrate progress, outputs and expenditure in relation to the approved project. Recipients will be required to submit:

- A mid-project report
- A final report.

Additional reporting may be requested where required for program management or evaluation purposes.

9. Further information

For further information contact

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