



Australia's National
Science Agency

CSIRO Kick-Start

Program and Eligibility Guidelines

Version 2.10

July 2025

1 Introduction

The CSIRO Kick-Start program helps Australian start-ups and small SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises) access dollar-matched funding to undertake research and development (R&D) activities with CSIRO. It is a targeted program, which forms part of CSIRO's strategic commitment to deepen our direct support for Australian technology start-ups and SMEs in areas of national growth priorities.

The research activities can include, for example, the development of prototypes, improving methods and processes, or the testing of novel materials to inform R&D. Eligible companies less than three years old, **or** with a turnover and operating expenditure of less than \$10 million, can access a Kick-Start voucher of between \$10k-50k (matched dollar-for-dollar to the company cash contribution) to assist in accessing CSIRO research capability.

SME Connect's dedicated Kick-Start team, along with other members of the wider SME Connect team, take a customer first approach and will assist in:

- Connecting the business to the best CSIRO research expertise, utilising our national CSIRO network of facilitators and contacts.
- Expediting the application process and helping with project design, if required, to ensure the project meets customer needs and expectations.
- Maintaining end-to-end engagement – remaining in communication with both researchers and businesses during the course of, and after completion of, the project, to ensure expectations are met, and knowledge transfer is smooth and effective.

The program forms part of the wider CSIRO SME Connect program, which provides facilitation and matched funding services to eligible SMEs. For more information on our other offerings see www.csiro.au/SMEconnect

All enquiries regarding new projects, eligibility and applications should be directed to the Kick-Start Program team:

Dr Megan Sebben
Kick-Start Program Manager
CSIRO SME Connect
(03) 9545 8543
megan.sebben@csiro.au

Dr Rhea Cornely
Kick-Start Program Officer
(02) 9490 5530
rhea.cornely@csiro.au

Dr Michael Breedon
Kick-Start Program Officer (part-time)
(03) 9545 7826
michael.breedon@csiro.au

2 Program guidelines and funding

The CSIRO Kick-Start program is eligibility based and has an on-going application process (subject to change and availability of funding). CSIRO SME Connect will dollar-match the company cash contribution in the form of a Kick-Start voucher of between \$10k and \$50k to undertake a project with CSIRO. Eligible companies are able to apply for a second Kick-Start voucher, after completion of their first Kick-Start project. Projects can be larger than \$100k, but the Kick-Start voucher amount will be capped at \$50k per project. The minimum total project cost is \$20k. The project timing will be subject to researcher availability.

The project budget, payment schedule, intellectual property arrangements and scope of work will be negotiated between the company and the relevant CSIRO research unit, with the CSIRO Kick-Start program playing a facilitator role, where appropriate. The Kick-Start voucher funds will be transferred internally from CSIRO SME Connect to the relevant CSIRO research area to partially cover its costs of performing the eligible project incurred in relation to:

- Salary and on-costs of researcher(s)
- Travel and accommodation (if required)
- Administrative/overhead/operating costs
 - Consumables*
 - Project-critical external facilities access/services/contractors*

*No more than 20% of the total project budget can be applied to these items combined.

The Kick-Start voucher will NOT cover:

- Capital works and expenditure
- Infrastructure costs

Notwithstanding approval of a Kick-Start application, all Kick-Start vouchers and projects are conditional upon the company and CSIRO entering into a binding research agreement governing the project and payment arrangements. Companies will be invoiced in accordance with individual project and company circumstances, for example businesses that have been in operation for less than one year may be expected to pay a higher proportion of funding up front. Kick-Start vouchers will be transferred directly to the relevant CSIRO research group as agreed milestones are met.

The CSIRO Kick-Start program is an initiative targeted to provide entry level assistance to Australian start-ups and very small SMEs to undertake research activities with CSIRO in accordance with CSIRO's Strategy. Kick-Start vouchers are designed to facilitate projects that would not occur without financial assistance, or to increase the size and breadth of a project in order to develop more advanced outcomes. CSIRO reserves the right to change the program rules and eligibility guidelines from time to time. The program is also subject to the availability of funding and may be withdrawn by CSIRO at any time. The level of support which is provided to assist start-ups and SMEs under this program is specific to this program, and should not be taken as indicative of co-investment policies of CSIRO in other contexts.

3 Eligibility

Projects will be developed between the company and the relevant CSIRO researcher(s). If required this can be facilitated by the SME Connect team. Eligible projects must:

- Include one of the following activities:
 - Research into a new idea or discovery with commercial potential
 - Development of a novel or improved product or process
 - Testing of a novel product, developed by the company, to inform research and development activities.
- Be delivered by CSIRO research units and/or facilities. This currently includes:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Agriculture and Food– Data61– Energy– Health and Biosecurity– Environment– Manufacturing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Mineral Resources– Science Connect– Astronomy and Space Science– Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness (ACDP)– National Facilities and Collections
---	---
- Be less than 1 year in length
- Have a mutually agreed budget and scope of work

Businesses will need to provide evidence they meet the following criteria as part of the application process:

- Be registered, and have their primary place of business, within Australia.
(Australian subsidiary companies of foreign entities are not eligible)
- Be an operating business with an Australian Company Number (ACN) or Indigenous Corporation Number (ICN).
- Be a non-tax-exempt company that is registered for GST.
- Have an annual turnover and operating expenditure of less than \$10 million in the last complete financial year

OR

- Have been a registered company for less than 3 years.

Where a company is part of a corporate group, additional information may be requested regarding the group structure and operations to enable assessment of suitability for the Kick-Start program.

Upon successful completion of a first Kick-Start project, businesses can apply for a second Kick-Start voucher providing they:

- Continue to meet all the eligibility criteria above.
- Have satisfactorily completed all required reporting.
- Have not received more than one Kick-Start voucher (including vouchers received by any related company).

4 Reporting requirements

All successful applicants are required to participate in end-of-project reporting.

Through involvement in the program, successful applicant companies agree that their name and logo, as well as the project title and voucher amount awarded, may be used publicly, with information on voucher recipients and projects published on the SME Connect website. Companies must also agree to be approached for SME Connect Case Studies if requested.

5 Application process

Companies without previous relationships with CSIRO researchers should fill out an Expression of Interest form, available from the website www.csiro.au/kick-start, and return these to the Kick-Start team.

Full applications are to be completed by the relevant CSIRO researcher or business development professional in collaboration with the applicant company. Please discuss with your CSIRO contacts whether it is appropriate to enter into a confidentiality agreement with CSIRO before disclosing company confidential information.

Completed application forms must be signed by a director or authorised officer of the company and an authorised CSIRO representative, before emailing a scanned copy to:

Dr Megan Sebben, Kick-Start Program Manager, CSIRO SME Connect kickstart@csiro.au

6 Assessment process

Applications will be assessed by the SME Connect Kick-Start review team against the eligibility guidelines. Approval of any application is at the discretion of CSIRO and is subject to the application falling within the intent of the program and the availability of Kick-Start program funds. Kick-Start vouchers and projects are conditional upon the parties entering into a binding agreement governing the project. Agreements must be signed within 60 days of funding approval, or the funding offer may be withdrawn. All applicants will be notified of the outcome of the assessment process.

Copyright

© Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation 2016. To the extent permitted by law, all rights are reserved and no part of this publication covered by copyright may be reproduced or copied in any form or by any means except with the written permission of CSIRO.

CSIRO is committed to providing web accessible content wherever possible. If you are having difficulties with accessing this document please visit csiro.au/contact

As Australia's national science agency and innovation catalyst, CSIRO is solving the greatest challenges through innovative science and technology.

CSIRO. Unlocking a better future for everyone.

Contact us

1300 363 400
+61 3 9545 2176
csiro.au/contact
csiro.au

For further information

SME Connect
Dr Megan Sebben
+61 3 9545 8543
kickstart@csiro.au
csiro.au/kick-start