

**auDA Public Benefit
Program
Research and
Development Grant
Applicant Guide**

**FY2024–25 Research and
Development Grant Program**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Contents

1.	Introduction	3
	About auDA and its vision	3
	Applicant Guide's Purpose	4
2.	Public Benefit Program overview	5
i.	Investing in innovation	5
ii.	Research and Development Grant Program	6
3.	Grant Program key elements	7
	Minimum and maximum grant request amounts:	7
	Maximum project duration:	7
	Project start date:	7
	Application window:	7
	Number of submissions per applicant:	7
i.	Grant Program Timeline	7
ii.	Grant Program contacts and additional resources	8
4.	Admissibility and eligibility	8
i.	Application admissibility	8
ii.	Applicant eligibility	8
iii.	Consortiums and collaborations	9
iv.	Eligible activities	9
v.	Ineligible activities	10
5.	Expert Panel Review	10
i.	Process	10
ii.	Assessment panel scoring	10
iii.	Process for Funding Decisions	11
6.	Proposal Submission Information	11
i.	Application Questions	11
ii.	Budget Preparation	13
iii.	Application Terms and Conditions	13
7.	Keeping in contact	14
8.	Grant Agreement	14

9.	Reporting, Monitoring, and Evaluation during the project	15
	Reporting	15
	Monitoring	15
	Evaluation	15
	Impact Assessment	15
10.	Personal Data Collection Statement	16
11.	Intellectual Property	16
12.	Probity	17
13.	Conflicts of interest	17
14.	Confidential Information	17
15.	Enquiries	17
16.	Checklist	18
17.	Definitions	18

1. Introduction

About auDA and its vision

.au Domain Administration Limited (auDA) is a not-for-profit organisation established by the Australian internet community. auDA works with a range of stakeholders including industry, government, civil society, academia and the Australian and international community to administer the .au domain for the benefit of all Australians, and champion an open, free, secure and global internet.

auDA is endorsed by the Australian Government to manage the .au country code Top Level Domain (ccTLD). Our core functions, as set out by our Terms of Endorsement from the Australian Government, are to:

- Ensure stable, secure and reliable operation of the .au domain, as part of Australia’s suite of critical infrastructure
- Administer a licensing regime for .au domain names based in multi-stakeholder processes that is transparent, responsive, accountable, accessible and efficient
- Advocate for, and actively participate in, multi-stakeholder Internet governance processes both domestically and internationally.

We represent .au’s interests internationally and have an agreement with the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) – the international body responsible for coordinating the internet’s naming and numbering systems.

We recognise the critical importance of our role and the work we do, and we hold

ourselves to high standards of corporate governance and integrity.

Applicant Guide's Purpose

The Public Benefit Program Research and Development Applicant Guide provides prospective applicants with resources and information on how to submit applications to the FY24 Research and Development Grant Program.

2. Public Benefit Program overview

i. Investing in innovation

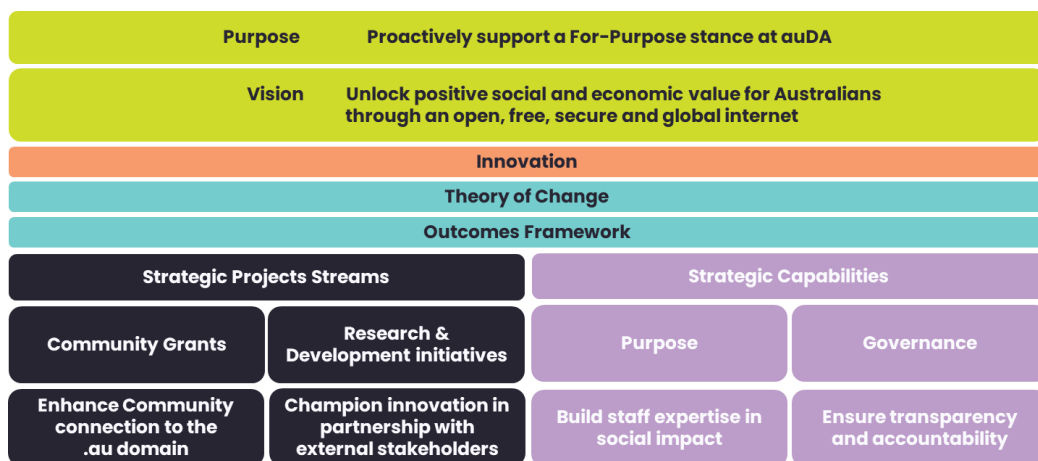
auDA’s work delivering a trusted .au domain means we regularly consider how Australians use and depend on the internet and how technologies and their use might evolve. This includes thinking about the key role of the domain name system (DNS), the challenges it might face and how best to manage the .au domain so that it supports Australia’s economy and community needs and expectations into the future.

auDA’s [2021-25 Strategy](#) sets out auDA’s purpose, vision and strategic focus areas: trust, innovation, and multi-stakeholder engagement.

Under our innovation strategic focus area, we set a strategic objective to invest to enable innovation and research by others.

To support this strategic objective, auDA established its **Public Benefit Program**. Through the Public Benefit Program, auDA delivers two grant programs:

- The **Research and Development Grant Program**, which provides funding to partner organisation for projects that deliver impact across four key areas
- The **Community Grant Program**, which delivers an annual grant round for education, research and community-based projects that enhance the utility of the internet for Australians.



auDA Public Benefit Program overview

The Public Benefit Program supports auDA’s vision to unlock positive social and economic value for Australians through an open, free, secure and global internet.

auDA also produces leading insights from our data and community research. This is another strategic objective under our innovation strategic focus area. Through this, we undertake our

own research to understand the experiences of .au and internet users. Our research reports include [Digital Lives of Australians](#), [Atlas of Australia Online](#) and [Future Scenarios Report](#).

ii. Research and Development Grant Program

The Research and Development Grant Program will fund initiatives that support the auDA Public Benefit Program goal to deliver impact through projects on the following themes:

- The role of the DNS
- Governance of the internet (including the DNS)
- Technical resilience of the DNS
- Digital Inclusion.

Proposed initiatives should address one or more of the themes and a desired outcome through research and/or development projects detailed at Section 4 (iv).

The inaugural Research and Development Grant Program will be delivered in FY2024-25.

Impact

The Research and Development Program seeks to deliver impact through research and development projects, where impact is defined as a meaningful contribution to the long-term safeguarding of, trust and public participation in, an open, free, secure global internet.

Research and Development Initiatives will be proactive, collaborative, long term and large-scale funding designed to drive meaningful change at a societal level.

auDA's definitions of research and development for the purpose of the Grant Program are provided at Section 17.

Partners

Through the Research and Development Program, auDA will fund and partner with organisations with extensive experience in collaborating with multiple stakeholders and delivering complex research and/or development projects.

We will look favourably on a demonstrated ability to engage in and deliver your project through a multi-stakeholder approach that supports input from a diverse array of stakeholders. Proposals that include collaborators and/or co-investment from across the multi-stakeholder community to maximise the impact of grant funding – encompassing industry, technical experts, academics, government and civil society – are encouraged.

3. Grant Program key elements

Minimum and maximum grant request amounts:

Applications can be submitted for grant awards between \$300,000 and \$500,000 per annum for up to 3 years. Grants are considered a gift and are GST exclusive.

We recommend you seek independent professional advice on your taxation obligations or seek assistance from the Australian Taxation Office. We do not provide advice on your particular taxation circumstances.

Maximum project duration:

The maximum project duration is 42 months. This should enable three years for project delivery and additional time for reporting and acquittal.

Project start date:

Projects should start within 60 days of signing the grant agreement.

Application window:

The application window in the grants management platform **opens on 30 September and closes 5pm on 14 November 2024.**

Number of submissions per applicant:

Applicants may submit one application per organisation except universities which may submit one application per faculty, up to a maximum three applications each from different research disciplines.

All applications from universities must be approved for submission by the university Advancement team.

Applicants are welcome to collaborate with other applicants on additional applications.

i. Grant Program Timeline

Grant Program Timeline:	
Grant Guidelines available	1 August 2024
Grant platform opens for application submission	30 September 2024
Grant platform closes for applications	5pm, 14 November 2024
Admissibility and eligibility checks (internal review)	November 2024
Expert Panel review	November–December 2024

auDA Board decision	February 2025
Grant Agreement finalised	April 2025
Public Announcement	April 2025

ii. Grant Program contacts and additional resources

Additional resources including Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) will be available on the auDA web site.

For comments, questions or feedback regarding the program, please contact PublicBenefit@auda.org.au.

For technical support in using the application platform, please contact the Public Benefit team at PublicBenefit@auda.org.au and we will respond during business hours.

4. Admissibility and eligibility

All applications must meet admissibility and eligibility criteria through an administrative review conducted by auDA staff.

Applications will be reviewed by a panel of subject matter experts appointed by auDA.

i. Application admissibility

Applicants should review all criteria carefully to ensure applications are complete and submitted on time with all required attachments.

ii. Applicant eligibility

To be considered eligible applicants must:

- Be an Australian University or research organisation registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profit Commission (ACNC) www.acnc.org.au
- Declare any conflicts of interest
- Meet due diligence standards:
 - Correct and current reporting on the ACNC Charity Register
 - Strong financial position and ability to manage a large grant
 - Track record of delivering large research and/or development projects
 - Has successfully acquitted funding for previous projects including any previous grants from auDA

- References and/or letters of support
- Appropriate Information Security Policy and Processes.

iii. Consortiums and collaborations

Consortiums and collaborations are encouraged, particularly if they operate consistent with multi-stakeholder processes, involve international participants and/or have co-investment. In these circumstances, you must appoint a 'lead organisation'. auDA will enter into a grant agreement with the lead organisation which must meet all eligibility requirements. Applicants must ensure all participating organisations, including any international partners, are listed in their application and include a letter of support from each of the partner organisations.

The lead organisation will be responsible for communications regarding the program with auDA or its authorised vendors, signing the grant agreement and ensuring reporting requirements are met.

iv. Eligible activities

To be eligible, your proposed activities must:

- Deliver public benefit consistent with auDA's vision to unlock positive social and economic value for Australians through an open, free, secure and global internet
- Address one of the following themes and a related outcome through Research and/or Development:
 - **The role of the DNS**

Outcome 1: Improve understanding of how the role of the DNS could evolve to enhance its public utility in naming and digital identity (e.g. to improve internet users' privacy)

Outcome 2: Increase practical support of stakeholders to help them understand and/or strengthen the role of the DNS (e.g. new tools, methods)
 - **Governance of the internet (including the DNS)**

Outcome 3: Improve understanding of how the governance of the internet (including the DNS) could evolve to better support an open, free, secure, global internet.

Outcome 4: increase practical support to stakeholders to help them engage in the internet's governance (e.g. advice on governance arrangements, including regulations)
 - **Technical resilience of the DNS**

Outcome 5: Improve understanding on how to strengthen DNS technical resilience (e.g. evaluating emerging security challenges, sustainability risks)

Outcome 6: Increase practical support to stakeholders to help them strengthen DNS technical resilience (e.g. assist DNS capability/expertise development in Australia)

- **Digital inclusion**

Outcome 7: Assist identified local communities/groups to improve digital inclusion

Outcome 8: Enhance trust in internet-based services.

- Not duplicate activities that have already been funded through a grant or commissioned [research by auDA](#).

v. Ineligible activities

You are not eligible to apply if you are proposing to engage in the following activities:

- Political lobbying activity, including activities to influence the outcome of any specific public election
- Any religious or sectarian purpose
- Any activity that may lead to private financial benefit of individuals beyond incidental items such as payment of reasonable employment salaries
- Any unlawful activity in Australia.

5. Expert Panel Review

i. Process

auDA will convene an Independent Expert Panel to review and assess eligible applications against the criteria outlined below which are aligned with the specific application questions.

Panel activities will include:

- Review and assessment of eligible applications.
- Meeting/s to discuss and rank a shortlist of eligible applications.
- Providing funding recommendations to the auDA Board.

ii. Assessment panel scoring

We will first review your application against the eligibility criteria. Only eligible applications will move to the next stage.

If eligible, the Independent Expert Panel will assess your application against the assessment criteria and against other applications. auDA staff may contact you to seek clarification and answers to questions from panellists should they arise. We ask that applicants not initiate communication with the Independent Expert Panel.

The following criteria will be used by panellists to assess the merits of grant applications and make recommendations for funding to the Board

- **Innovation and relevance:** assesses the project's innovativeness, originality and alignment with the four Research and Development Grant Program themes.
- **Effectiveness:** assesses the significance of the project's intended impact, its response to a specific theme and its ability to clearly state expected outcomes that are meaningful and measurable.
- **Implementation and feasibility:** assesses the project's workability, practicality and preparedness to mitigate potential risks.
- **Competency and expertise of project team:** assesses the skill or knowledge of applicants and project partners in their fields and in delivering similar types of multi-year, complex projects.
- **Value and impact:** assesses the lasting impact of the project and its ability to continue to deliver results beyond the initial grant period.

iii. Process for Funding Decisions

The auDA Board will consider the Independent Expert Panel's recommendations and make the final decision on grant recipients.

Successful applicants will be notified via email and will proceed to grant agreement stage.

Unsuccessful applicants will be notified via email. The auDA team can provide feedback by request.

The decision of the auDA Board is final.

6. Proposal Submission Information

auDA uses **Giving Data** as the online grants management platform for the Research and Development Grant Program. The link to the application form will be available at <https://auda.givingdata.com/portal/campaign/FY25ResearchandDevelopmentGrantProgram>.

Please ensure you read and follow all instructions on the platform to ensure your application is successfully submitted.

For technical support in use of the platform, please contact the Public Benefit team at PublicBenefit@auda.org.au and we will respond during business hours.

i. Application Questions

The online application form includes several questions to enable you to provide detail on your project, about your project team, your intended impact, your proposed approach, anticipated risks and mitigation. This also includes highlighting your experience delivering such projects, any

partner organisations and how you will measure success. The following questions appear in the online application:

- **Summarise your proposed project:**
 - Provide a statement of public benefit about your project. The statement should be in plain English (the audience is the general public)
 - Describe how your proposal fits with auDA's definitions of Research and Development.
- **Innovation and relevance:** Provide a project summary for the Independent Expert Panel which includes:
 - How your project aligns with auDA's vision.
 - How your project aligns with one (or more) of the themes of the auDA Public Benefit Program
 - The problem or challenge you seek to solve?
 - What is different about your approach to solving this problem?
- **Competency and expertise of project team:**
 - Who is implementing the project, and what is their role?
 - What are the team's monitoring and project management skills and structure?
 - Provide confirmation that the key project team members will have tenure for the duration of the project including any time contingency?
 - Who are your project partners (research institutes, civil society organisations, industry) and what contribution will they make (funding, in-kind, expertise)?
 - What track record do team members have in this area of research and/or development?
 - Why are you best placed to deliver this work? Please provide Letters of Support from research and/or development partners and other stakeholders.
 - Provide recent examples of your previous work that has received significant funding e.g. ARC grant, philanthropic grant, funding as part of a research collaboration led by a different organisation. A weblink to the announcement will be sufficient.
 - Provide recent examples of your previous work that has been cited by others including in research journals, industry media, policy or legislation development or amendment. A weblink to the citation will be sufficient.
 - Provide any recent examples of research and/or development collaboration with international colleagues of high global research ranking (if relevant).
- **Implementation and feasibility:**
 - What is your workplan and budget?
 - What contribution will your organisation and any partners make to this project (in-kind, funding)?

- What risks may be associated with the project, and what is your plan to mitigate them?
- **Effectiveness:**
 - What does success look like and how will you measure and evaluate?
 - What outputs and outcomes will you deliver in order to achieve success?
 - What indicators will you use?
- **Value and Impact:**
 - How will you share your findings or products? What are your communications and dissemination plans?
 - How should we measure the long-term impact of your project once the auDA Grant is complete?

ii. Budget Preparation

Applicants should use the following eligible expenditure cost categories to prepare a detailed budget for your project.

- **Staff** – The costs of personnel to oversee and implement the project’s activities, evaluation and grant reporting.
- **Travel** – Reasonable travel that is necessary to perform the proposed activities.
- **Durable Goods and Equipment** – Equipment and/or infrastructure costs deemed necessary to launch and operate the project. Generally, these goods have a useful life of more than a year. Equipment purchased with grant funds must remain in charitable use after the project ends.
- **Subcontractors or consultants** – Subcontractors may provide external technical expertise, professional services, or other resources on a limited basis beyond the lead applicant staff’s capabilities and resources.
- **Other Direct Costs** – marketing, supplies for project activity etc.
- **Overhead / Indirect Costs** – auDA acknowledges that organisations incur overhead costs to successfully deliver their projects. Up to 15 percent of the total grant request – may be included in the budget to cover indirect costs or costs such as office rent, utilities, and general administrative expenses that are necessary to deliver the project.

iii. Application Terms and Conditions

All applicants must agree to Terms and Conditions to submit an application.

This includes the understanding that the program is an open request for applications meaning that the amount of grant funds available per cycle, the number of grants awarded and the applications selected for grants are at the discretion of auDA's Board.

Requests to review decisions will not be accepted.

7. Keeping in contact

Applicants can maintain and update their contact information as needed in the grant management platform. Contacts listed for applications may be contacted by auDA staff during any stage of the review process. Please ensure multiple contacts are available during the grant application and assessment process. If we do not receive the information by the due date your application may not be able to progress to further consideration.

We may contact you to seek:

- Clarification regarding your admissibility and eligibility information.
- Further detail on your workplan, budget or Impact measures.
- Notify you of grant award decisions.
- If awarded, instructions on completing the grant agreement.

Please note, requests for information do not imply an application will be funded.

8. Grant Agreement

After notification of a successful application, a grant agreement will be finalised with the applicant outlining the terms of the grant including, but not limited to, project start and end dates, agreed milestones, reporting requirements and payment schedule. Each agreement has general terms and conditions that cannot be changed. The grant agreement may have specific conditions determined by the assessment process or other considerations made by auDA.

Funding will be paid in annual instalments. Payment will depend on timely submission of progress and financial reports detailing how the funds were spent and any milestones or deliverables achieved during the reporting period.

Instalment dates and amounts will vary based on the duration and scope of each funded project.

- The first instalment will be made in a timely manner after signing the grant agreement
- Annual instalments will be disbursed after submission and approval of grant activity and financial update reports aligned with agreed milestones
- A final instalment will be made after submission and approval of a final impact report.

9. Reporting, Monitoring, and Evaluation during the project

Reporting

Progress reports will be required throughout the duration of the grant. These reports should include quantitative and qualitative data regarding the progress of the project against the agreed milestones as well as a financial report detailing expenditure to date.

A final acquittal report will also be due at the conclusion of the project and should detail achievement of goals and objectives and final expenditures for the project.

Monitoring

Projects may be subject to additional monitoring activities, such as site visits to verify and document project activities as reported. On the occasion of any such activity, auDA will contact the grantee directly to make arrangements for the visit at no cost to the grantee.

Grantees may also be subject to periodic reviews and evaluations. This may include surveys; participation in virtual or in-person meetings and interviews with auDA staff; or other activities that require data collection related to implementation of the project and use of grant funds. We may also inspect the records you are required to keep under the grant agreement.

Evaluation

We will evaluate the grant program to measure how well the outcomes and objectives have been achieved. We may use information from your application and reports for this purpose. We may also interview you, or ask for more information to help us understand how the grant impacted you and to evaluate how effective the program was in achieving its outcomes. We may contact you up to one year after you finish your grant for more information to assist with this evaluation.

Impact Assessment

An Impact Report should be delivered six months after the final acquittal report has been provided.

This report should include:

- The implications of your findings or products for the theme and outcome you addressed
- How the findings or products may be used by stakeholders
- Recommendations for further areas of research and/or development
- Examples of where the findings or products have been applied, shared or cited as a result of your collaboration and your dissemination plan
- Additional impact such as increasing profile, knowledge and experience of the research and/or development team.

10. Personal Data Collection Statement

We are committed to protecting privacy and ensuring the confidentiality of personal information.

Our application processes are streamlined to request only essential information for thorough assessment of the applications. Any data for public disclosure will be explicitly identified (i.e. project summary or description).

Throughout grant administration, auDA will adhere to data protection principles, ensuring clear and transparent data collection and retention practices.

Further information on [auDA's Privacy Policy](#) may be found on the auDA website.

11. Intellectual Property

auDA is committed to maximising public benefit through the effective management and use of intellectual property (IP) arising from auDA funded research.

auDA does not seek to own, or benefit from, IP created from auDA funded research. IP arising from auDA funded research will vest as agreed between the organisations collaborating on the research.

auDA has adopted a flexible approach to IP with a focus on:

- Supporting a collaborative research sector encompassing the Australian and international higher education sectors, industry, civil society, business and government;
- Enabling access for business, civil society and industry, as major investors in research and innovation, to IP arising from auDA funded research; and
- Supporting the protection of IP.

auDA requires the Grantee to provide auDA with a copy of any material or publication that is created as part of the Project (Project Materials).

The Grantee will make Project Materials, available to the public at no charge under a Creative Commons Attribution–Non Commercial–No Derivatives 4.0 International (CC BY–NC–ND 4.0).

auDA may publish details of the Grant and its Project Materials in its communications including website, annual report and social media.

12. Probity

auDA will make sure that the grant opportunity process is fair, according to the published guidelines, incorporates appropriate safeguards against fraud, unlawful activities and other inappropriate conduct.

13. Conflicts of interest

Any conflicts of interest could affect the performance of the grant opportunity or program. There may be a conflict of interest, or perceived conflict of interest, if:

- auDA staff, any member of a committee or advisor and/or you or any of your personnel:
 - has a professional, commercial or personal relationship with a party who is able to influence the application selection process
 - has a relationship with or interest in, an organisation, which is likely to interfere with or restrict the applicants from carrying out the proposed activities fairly and independently or
 - has a relationship with, or interest in, an organisation from which they will receive personal gain because the organisation receives a grant under the grant program/ grant opportunity.

You will be asked to declare, as part of your application, any perceived or existing conflicts of interests or that, to the best of your knowledge, there is no conflict of interest. If you later identify an actual, apparent, or perceived conflict of interest, you must inform auDA in writing immediately.

Conflicts of interest for auDA staff will be handled as set out in auDA's conflict of interest policy available on our website here: at: <https://www.auda.org.au/about-auda/corporate-strategies-values-and-policies>. The decision makers must also declare any conflicts of interest.

14. Confidential Information

You agree to not disclose any non-public confidential information relating to the grant application and/or agreement to any third party, without our prior written approval. This is unless you are required to do so by law, a government agency, Parliament or a stock exchange.

To the extent you request us to do so in writing, we agree to keep your non-public commercially sensitive information relating to the grant agreement confidential, though nothing prevents us from disclosing this information to other auDA employees and contractors or where we are required to do so by law, a government agency, Parliament or a stock exchange.

15. Enquiries

Any questions you have about this grant opportunity should be sent to publicbenefit@auda.org.au.

16. Checklist

You should source these items in preparation for your application:

- Approval for your application from CEO or Head of Department
 - For Universities: you will also need approval from your Advancement team
- Letter of Support and Commitment from listed partners
- Letters of Support from other stakeholders
- Weblink for ACNC registration
- Weblinks to recent funding announcements for your team
- Weblinks for recent citations, news articles and other reports
- Weblink to most recent global ranking
- A one-page Workplan including milestones
- Budget.

17. Definitions

Development - Work that leads to new or improved skills, processes or products.

Impact is about enhancing the long-term safeguarding of, and public participation in, an open, free, secure global internet.

Initiative - Creative, novel, systematic and reproducible activity that delivers new or improved knowledge, skills, processes or products for public benefit.

Public Benefit program is to enhance the auDA's contribution to Australian society and the use of the internet. The Public Benefit program's aim is to enable innovation by others.

Research - Work to acquire new knowledge. Such work may have a specific objective. In the auDA Research and Development Grant Program, we are asking for research related to four themes and related outcomes.

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