



**Australian Government**

**Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade**

# Pacific Higher Education Partnerships Investment

## Invitation to Submit an Activity Proposal Template

### *INSTRUCTIONS FOR ORGANISATIONS*

Please read the Pacific Higher Education Partnerships Investment Guidelines carefully before filling out this template to ensure your proposal and organisation are eligible to apply for funding.

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## Section 1: Note to applicants

### *Instructions for Applicants*

DFAT is seeking proposals from applicants eligible to apply for grant funding under the Pacific Higher Education Partnerships Investment.

Please read the Pacific Higher Education Partnerships Investment Guidelines carefully before submitting a proposal to ensure you are eligible to apply for funding.

If you choose to lodge a proposal, it must be submitted, along with any accompanying documents in accordance with the requirements set out in the Pacific Higher Education Partnerships Investment Guidelines and the requirements set out in this invitation.

### *STRUCTURE OF THE INVITATION*

This document is separated into five (5) sections which together will be referred to as the “Invitation”.

**Section 1** (this section) explains the structure of the Invitation to submit a proposal.

**Section 2** specifies important details regarding the Invitation including the closing time, the contact person for the Pacific Higher Education Partnerships Investment and how to submit your proposal.

**Section 3** explains the template format in which applicants are to submit their proposal and includes the Selection Criteria against which applicants will have their proposal assessed.

**Section 4** details indicative program milestones.

**Section 5** details the terms and conditions under which this Invitation is offered.

Applicants are encouraged to fully inform themselves of the Invitation’s terms and conditions when preparing their submission and to make any enquiries to the DFAT Contact Person before the enquiry closing time.

This Invitation supersedes any prior information or advice provided by DFAT in relation to the Pacific Higher Education Partnerships Investment.

This Invitation should be read in conjunction with the Pacific Higher Education Partnerships Guidelines and draft contract agreement.

## Section 2: Invitation details

**Name of Program:** Pacific Higher Education Partnerships Investment

**Closing Time:** Friday 6 March 2026, 17:00 AEDT.

**DFAT Contact Person:** PacificEduPartnerships@dfat.gov.au

**Method of Submission:** Electronically to the following email address:

Pacifiedupartnerships@dfat.gov.au

**File Format for electronic submission of Activity Proposal:** PDF preferred, Microsoft Office suite application files acceptable.

**Information session details:** DFAT will hold an online information session via Microsoft Teams to answer questions on the Invitation on Friday 6 February 2026, 11:00-12:00 AEDT.

To ensure you receive an invitation to this information session, please register your interest in attending with the DFAT Contact Person.

If you are unable to attend but would like a record of questions and responses to be provided to you, please inform the DFAT Contact Person.

**Deadline for questions:** Any enquiries that Organisations may have concerning this Invitation must be submitted in writing to the DFAT Contact Person as soon as possible and not later than, Friday 20 February 2026, 17:00 AEDT.

**Deadline for responses to questions:** DFAT will respond to any Organisation's enquiries within 7 days of receipt.

## Section 3: Proposal Format

Applicants must respond to the Invitation as described in Section 3.1-3.3. Note that when scoring each of the Selection Criteria the Evaluation Committee will take into account all of the information provided in Sections 3.2-3.3, including annexes.

Applicants proposing a consortium must provide:

- Details for all consortium partners.
- A letter describing the organisation's mandate and the relationship with other consortium members in designing and implementing the program, and expressing the intent to collaborate.

### 3.1: Applicant Details

Applicants must provide the following information in their response.

- Organisation name and ABN
- Type of Organisation (eg non-government, national institution, company)
- Name of main contact person (including title ie Mr/Mrs/Dr etc and position)
- Physical address of the organisation (including city, postcode, country)

- Work phone number
- Mobile phone number
- Email address
- Has your organisation previously received funding from the Australian Government? If yes, please give details (name of activity, funding period, funding, funding amount, agreement numbers) for the most recent 3 occasions.

### *3.2: Response to Pacific Higher Education Partnerships Investment Selection Criteria (strict maximum 20 pages, excluding annexes)*

Applicants must provide a response to the below selection criteria.

In addition to responding to the selection criteria, applicants may also include the following optional annexes (up to a combined maximum of 10 pages):

1. List of relevant existing partnerships with Pacific higher education or research institutions (for instance, through Memorandums of Understanding, research partnerships, twinning courses etc.).
2. Biographies of key proposed staff (maximum of five individuals).
3. Further details on proposed co-funding/resourcing, including issues that may impact the institution/consortium's resourcing of the proposal (i.e., considerations/approval processes for co-contributions, staff resourcing etc.).

### **Selection Criteria**

#### **1. Organisational expertise and achieving development impact (45%)**

- 1.1 Demonstrated understanding of Pacific higher education and research challenges and demonstrated capability to achieve development outcomes (30%)
  - How would your institution/consortium seek to improve Pacific research and scholarship capability for both Pacific researchers and Pacific higher education institutions? Are there any specific research/development issues you would seek to prioritize in the program? Draw on your existing partnerships and understanding of Pacific development challenges and opportunities where appropriate.
- 1.2 Demonstrated capacity to communicate research with influence, including an understanding of research to policy knowledge needs and effective communication mediums. (15%)
  - How will your institution/consortia ensure research is communicated effectively to, and meets the needs of a range of Australian and Pacific stakeholders, including policymakers?

#### **2. Effective partnerships and ways of working (40%)**

- 2.1 Demonstrated capacity to build and maintain effective partnership arrangements with different institutions, and coordinate efforts to achieve shared outcomes. (20%)
  - The program seeks to strengthen and expand Australian higher education partnerships with Pacific counterparts. How will your institution/consortia facilitate greater collaboration between Australian institutions and Pacific counterparts, including

maintaining and building mutually beneficial research partnerships within the program?

2.2 Demonstrated understanding of ways of working in the Pacific to achieve locally-led, sustainable development impact. (20%)

- In line with Australia's International Development Policy focus on locally-led development\*, how will your institution/consortia ensure program activities respond to Pacific priorities, partnerships respect local ways of knowing and being, and the research agenda is shaped by Pacific stakeholders as well as Australian interests.

\*Resource available at: DFAT, Guidance Note: Locally led development. Online: <https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/dfat-guidance-note-locally-led-development.pdf>

**3. Value for money (15%)**

3.1 Demonstrated intent to co-contribute to the program through financial and/or other resourcing and ability to leverage DFAT funding for greater impact. (15%)

- How will your institution/consortia provide value-for-money? Will the applicant provide co-funding or other resources to the program? What in-kind contributions will be provided by the applicant? Are there opportunities to leverage other funding or resources to support achievement of program outcomes?

*Section 3.3: Response to cross-cutting issues, risk and design*

**Maximum 7 pages.**

**1. Cross-cutting issue: Gender, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI)**

- **Outline how the applicant will ensure people with disability, women, and people from disadvantaged groups actively participate in and benefit from the program.**
- Addressing gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI) as a cross-cutting issue helps ensure all DFAT investments are effective in reaching socially disadvantaged groups – by preventing unintended harm, exclusion, and further marginalisation, and by promoting their rights, equitable opportunities and benefits. This can also include efforts as part of advancing Australia's Indigenous Diplomacy Agenda, where appropriate (see: <https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/indigenous-diplomacy-agenda.pdf> ).
- The Australian Government is firmly committed to gender equality and advancing the human rights of women and girls, as outlined in Australia's new International Gender Equality Strategy. DFAT investments valued at \$3 million and over must include a gender equality outcome as either an end of program outcome or intermediate outcome (See: DFAT, Gender Equality Outcomes Good Practice Note. Online: <https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/gender-equality-outcomes-good-practice-note.pdf> ).
- In line with Australia's International Disability Equity and Rights Strategy (IDEARS), the Australian aid program adopts a twin-track approach to

disability equity by supporting both targeted and mainstream approaches. (See: DFAT, Disability Equity and Rights in Australia's International Development Program: Good Practice Note. Online: <https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/disability-inclusive-development-guidance-note-good-practice-note.pdf> ).

## 2. Cross cutting issue: Climate change

- **Outline how the program will integrate climate change as a cross-cutting issue in the program, including how the program might strengthen the availability and quality of climate-focused research on Pacific challenges (proposed Intermediate Outcome 2).**
- *Australia's International Development Policy makes climate action central to our development efforts including via the following investment level target: "From 2024–25, at least half of all new bilateral and regional investments that are valued at more than \$3 million will have a climate change objective, with a goal of reaching 80 percent by 2028-29". (See: DFAT, "Integrating climate change into Australia's development assistance: Good Practice Note. Online: <https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/climate-change-integration-guidance-for-implementing-partners.pdf>*

## 3. Risk Management

- **Outline key potential risks to the program and proposed management arrangements, including information on programmatic and organisational risks. Include possible and realistic management/mitigation strategies.**
- A full risk management plan and risk matrix will be required during the design stage, however possible risks at this stage may include:
  - Risks relevant to the outcomes of the program (ie what would prevent the applicant from achieving the outcomes)
  - Any organisational risks
  - Risks relevant to social safeguards and adherence to DFAT social safeguards for PSEAH (Preventing Sexual Exploitation and Harassment) and Child Protection.
  - Fraud and financial management risks (DFAT has a zero tolerance to fraud policy).
- For resources on DFAT's approach to risk management please see: <https://www.dfat.gov.au/development/topics/development-risk-management>

## 4. Design process

- As outlined, the preferred partner will receive initial funding to undertake a full program design process, producing a design document to guide program activities and ensure development outcomes are achieved. This design document will be subject to DFAT appraisal, including an assessment against design standards and development objectives.
- **Outline how your institution/consortia would mobilise and coordinate a rapid design process (approx. 3 months, TBC), including who would lead the process, any specific**

**resourcing/personnel you would draw on or key identified gaps you would seek to engage external expertise on.**

- *Note: it is anticipated most, if not all, higher education institutions would have to draw on supplementary technical expertise to meet DFAT design standards and grant funding will be provided to do so.*

## Section 4: Indicative Milestones

### Instructions for Applicants:

The milestones below are indicative only and applicants may propose changes and dates that would be more suitable in their experience.

Number	Indicative Milestone	Completion date
1.	<b>STAGE 1 – DESIGN: Investment Design</b> a. Partner-led design document, appraised and approved by DFAT in writing.	30 October 2026
2.	<b>STAGE 2 – IMPLEMENTATION: First Year Workplan</b> a. First year workplan, approved by DFAT in writing, including planned activities and budget forecast.	15 December 2026
3.	<b>STAGE 2 – IMPLEMENTATION: Annual Report and Audited Financial Statement</b> a. Annual Report 2026, approved by DFAT in writing. b. Audited Financial Statement 2026, approved by DFAT in writing.	February 2027
4.	<b>STAGE 2 – IMPLEMENTATION: Annual Report and Audited Financial Statement</b> a. Annual Report 2027, approved by DFAT in writing. b. Audited Financial Statement 2027, approved by DFAT in writing.	February 2028
5.	<b>STAGE 2 – IMPLEMENTATION: Annual Report and Audited Financial Statement</b> a. Annual Report 2028, approved by DFAT in writing. b. Audited Financial Statement 2028, approved by DFAT in writing.	February 2029
6.	<b>STAGE 2 – IMPLEMENTATION: Annual Report and Audited Financial Statement</b> a. Annual Report 2029, approved by DFAT in writing. b. Audited Financial Statement 2029, approved by DFAT in writing.	February 2030



Number	Indicative Milestone	Completion date
7.	<b>STAGE 2 – IMPLEMENTATION: Final Report</b> a. Final Report (including annual reporting from Jan-Sept) b. Final Audited Financial Statement 2030	September 2030

## Section 5: Terms and Conditions

### *Section 5.1: Lodgement of Proposals*

- 5.1.1 Proposals *must* be lodged in accordance with the procedures set out in Section 2 to this Invitation and prior to the closing time specified in Section 2 of this Invitation (“Closing Time”).
- 5.1.2 Subject to Section 4.3 (Late Submissions) below, DFAT will reject any proposal that is not submitted in accordance with Section 2.
- 5.1.3 Applicants must include all information required in this Invitation in their proposal.
- 5.1.4 The proposal and any additional documents submitted with the proposal must be in English.
- 5.1.5 A person or persons with authority to lodge the proposal on behalf of the applicant must complete, sign and submit the Organisation’s Certification provided as Attachment 1 to this Invitation. For consortia, a Certification must be completed and signed for each partner in the consortium. DFAT may reject proposals that do not submit relevant Certification(s).

### *Section 5.2: Enquiries*

- 5.2.1 Any enquiries that you may have concerning this Invitation *must* be submitted in writing to the DFAT Contact Person in Section 2 as soon as possible and not later than Friday 20 February 2026, 17:00 AEDT (14 days prior to the Closing Time).
- 5.2.2 DFAT will respond to any enquiries within 7 days of receipt.
- 5.2.3 DFAT will publish answers to enquiries on the DFAT website (without identifying the organisations which submitted the enquiries).
- 5.2.4 DFAT recommends that, up until the Closing Time, organisations check DFAT’s website regularly for updates.

### *Section 5.3: Late Submissions*

- 5.3.1 Proposals that are submitted after the Closing Time will not be evaluated.
- 5.3.2 The judgement of DFAT as to the time a proposal was submitted will be final.

### *Section 5.4: Non-Conforming Proposal*

- 5.4.1 Subject to Section 4.3 (Late submissions), proposals will be regarded as non-conforming if they fail to conform with one or more of the requirements of this Invitation.
- 5.4.2 DFAT may seek clarification of non-conforming proposals.
- 5.4.3 Subject to Section 4.3 (Late submissions), DFAT may, at its absolute discretion, assess or exclude from evaluation any non-conforming proposal.

## Attachment 1: Organisation's Certification

- I hold the position of (xxxxxxx) with the Organisation and am duly authorised by the Organisation to make this declaration. I make this declaration on behalf of the Organisation and on behalf of myself.
  - I have read the information provided in the [Insert program name] Guidelines.
  - The statements in this proposal are true to the best of my knowledge
  - I acknowledge that if the Organisation is found to have made false or misleading material claims or statements in this proposal or in this certification, DFAT will reject at any time any proposal lodged by or on behalf of the Organisation.
  - I acknowledge that this proposal will be assessed on its merits, and compared to other proposals, and that it may not be funded, or it may not be funded at the amount requested.
  - I warrant that the Organisation will use its best endeavours to ensure that all personnel involved in the Activity are of good fame and character.
  - I warrant that the Organisation will use its best endeavours to ensure:
    - (a) that individuals or organisations involved in implementing the Activity are in no way linked, directly or indirectly, to organisations and individuals associated with terrorism; and
    - (b) that the Grant is not used in any way to provide direct or indirect support or resources to organisations and individuals associated with terrorism.
  - I warrant that the Organisation is not:
    - (a) **listed on a World Bank List or a list maintained by any other donor of development funding;**
    - (b) subject to any proceedings or informal processes which could lead to listing on a World Bank List or a list maintained by any other donor of development funding;
    - (c) the subject of an investigation by the World Bank or any other donor of development funding.
- "World Bank List" means a list of organisations maintained by the World Bank in its "Listing of Ineligible Firms" or "Listings of Firms, Letters of Reprimand" posted at: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/procurement/debarred-firms>;
- I warrant that the Organisation will have regard to the Australian Government guidance "[Safeguarding your organisation against terrorism financing](https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/safeguarding-your-organisation-against-terrorism-financing)" ([homeaffairs.gov.au](https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au))".
  - I warrant that neither the Organisation nor any of its employees, agents or contractors have been convicted of an offence of, or relating to fraud or corruption, including bribery of a public official, nor are they subject to any proceedings which could lead to such a conviction.
  - I undertake that the Organisation will not permit any of its employees, agents or contractors, to work with children if they pose an unacceptable risk to children's safety or well-being. Refer to [www.dfat.gov.au/childprotection](https://www.dfat.gov.au/childprotection).
  - I warrant that none of the personnel who are involved in the Activity have been convicted of a criminal offence relating to child abuse, nor are they subject to any proceedings which could lead to such a conviction.
  - I warrant that the Organisation has not received grant funding for this Activity from another source other than that declared in Section 3.5 of this proposal.

- I warrant that this proposal has not been prepared with the assistance of any current DFAT employees or Former DFAT Employees or with improperly obtained information.

**Signature:**

**Name in Full:**

**Position in Organisation:**

**Date:**