

ECA GRANT GUIDELINES

The ECA Grants Program funds high quality and innovative projects that deliver tangible benefits for consumers.

Energy Consumers Australia (ECA) is directed by article 4.1 of its [Constitution](#) to promote the long term interests of energy consumers in terms of the price, quality, safety, reliability and security of supply of energy services by providing and enabling consumer advocacy on National Energy Market matters which is:

- strong;
- coordinated;
- collegiate; and
- evidence-based.

The Constitution emphasises that the National Energy Market matters should be of strategic importance or material consequence for energy consumers, in particular for residential and small business energy consumers.

AIM

To build knowledge and energy sector capacity supporting policy development and consumer education in the National Energy Market.

GRANT PROGRAM STRUCTURE

ECA manages three grant programs

- **Advocacy:** to support advocacy on issues of material importance to residential and small business consumers, and to build sectoral capacity.
- **Research:** to inform and support advocacy by providing a robust, topical and well-informed evidence base, and to build knowledge among advocates, decision-makers and industry on the long term interests of consumers.
- **CEO Grants** for grants of up to \$10,000 to enable
 - consumer engagement and advocacy in government, regulatory, or industry decision-making processes
 - advocates to research relevant international programs, policies or initiatives that advance the long-term interests of consumers

The following provides an overview of each – for more information visit the ECA website.

ADVOCACY GRANTS

Advocacy funding is used to primarily support advocacy on issues of material importance to residential and small business consumers, and to build sectoral capacity.

The definition of advocacy for the purposes of the Grants Program is the following:

Energy advocacy is an activity designed to influence or create change that improves outcomes in the long term interests of electricity and gas consumers.

Consumers are engaged in processes that can take significant time and planning. In future, to build the capacity to pursue longer term, strategic and substantive advocacy projects, organisations will be able to apply for grants on a funding horizon they choose. Where projects are longer than one year, gateway reviews will be needed at appropriate stages to ensure that the project is ready to proceed to the next stage of implementation.

RESEARCH GRANTS

ECA Research Grants will inform and support advocacy by:

- providing a robust, topical and well informed evidence base
- building knowledge among advocates, decision makers and industry.

Community education projects which address structural and systemic knowledge gaps are usually best suited to ECA research grants.

It should be noted that ECA will not prioritise funding for public education and awareness campaigns which are the responsibility of regulators and government. Projects targeting the education or information needs of individual consumers are likewise not seen as a priority of the Grants Program.

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CEO GRANTS PROGRAM (FOR SMALL GRANTS VALUED UP TO \$10,000)

ECA is trialling a small grants program to complement the quarterly advocacy and research grants made by ECA. The CEO Grants Program may be used to accommodate advocacy and research involving time-constrained regulatory or policy decisions.

The CEO Grants Program provides funding - capped at \$10,000 (ex GST) - to applicants

for the purposes of consumer engagement or international scholarship.

CEO Consumer Engagement Grants

The CEO Grants Program will support advocates' engagement in government, regulatory and or industry decision making processes, recognising the need for consumers to respond within short time-frames.

Examples of activities that could be funded include:

- engaging a consultant to provide technical or specialist expertise for a submission;
- undertaking research to inform advocacy; and
- funding for reasonable travel costs (flights, accommodation, transfers) to engage in government, regulatory and industry forums relating to that process, and where video conferencing is not provided.

CEO International Scholarships Grants

The International Scholarships Program enables consumer advocates to research relevant international programs, policies or initiatives that will advance the long-term interests of Australian energy consumers.

ECA will work with scholarship recipients to help them identify appropriate opportunities to communicate the findings of their research, and to help identify relevant international contacts.

Examples of activities that could be funded include:

- visits to one or more countries to learn from energy consumer activities and experiences
- meetings with key stakeholders in selected countries
- research on issues of relevance to Australian energy consumers
- written report documenting the learnings from the research and/or overseas stakeholder meetings, and their potential relevance for Australia
- in Australia, meetings with consumer groups, energy companies, government officials to promulgate research findings and recommendations.

CEO Grant recipients would be expected to disseminate their research findings widely in Australia to advocates and decision makers.

ECA GRANT PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY AND SELECTION CRITERIA

To be eligible for Advocacy, Research and CEO (Consumer Engagement) Grants must undertake advocacy, research or participate in engagement that:

- builds knowledge and/or sectoral capacity supporting policy development and consumer education in the National Energy Market
- advances the long term interests of consumers, particularly residential and small business consumers
- has relevance to National energy market advocacy and research
- complies with the ECA Grants Program Selection Criteria.

There are different eligibility criteria for the international scholarship program. Applications are open to any individual or organisation with some or all of the following attributes/experience:

- is working in a consumer or related organisation at present (or with recent experience), preferably one which has worked on national energy market issues
- is relatively experienced and/or senior in the relevant sector
- has good knowledge of the key issues facing Australian energy consumers
- has good networking skills
- has good writing skills – ECA will want a comprehensive report of their experiences
- has the ability to prepare and deliver presentations – for their meetings overseas and on their return to Australia
- complies with the ECA Grants Program Selection Criteria.

The eligibility and selection criteria are included in the Attachment.

HOW TO APPLY

[Application Process for an Advocacy and Research Grant](#)

Applicants should first read the guidance provided through these Guidelines.

All grant applications must be made on the ECA Application Form, available to be downloaded from the website.

The ECA [Grants Archive](#) outlines applications previously received including projects considered by the Consumer Advocacy Panel, and provides reports and outputs from those projects that were funded. You can also contact ECA directly if you have any

questions about your application. For further information or to submit the form, contact ECA at grants@energyconsumersaustralia.com.au.

Application Process for a CEO Grant

In no more than 4 pages, please provide the following information:

1. Applicant details, including the organisation details, and a CV demonstrating how you meet the eligibility criteria and outlining relevant experience
2. What it is you plan to do (how/when)
3. How your proposal benefits consumers
4. Budget (including details of any other funding available for your proposal)

Contact ECA at grants@energyconsumersaustralia.com.au for further information about the Program and to discuss submitting an application.

Applicants should expect to be interviewed by the CEO (or delegate).

GRANT APPROVAL PROCESS

The ECA Board considers Advocacy and Research grant applications on a quarterly basis, ensuring the program is responsive enough to support new projects when they are required.

Application due dates for 2015/16 and 2016/17 are:

Application due date	Decision date
29 April 2016	19 May 2016
9 July 2016	18 August 2016
8 September 2016	21 October 2016
13 January 2017	February 2017
14 April 2017	May 2017

CEO grants can be submitted at any time and are approved by the ECA CEO, and turnaround time is typically a week.

GRANTS MANAGEMENT

ECA is committed to a transparent, accountable and robust grants management framework.

ECA's operations, including its grants program, are funded by National Energy Market¹ consumers through a small market levy. The Program is therefore focused on being strictly accountable for the allocation of grant funds and on achieving the best possible outcomes for the gas and electricity consumers who support it.

To guarantee transparency and integrity, its Grants Program is developed on the Australian National Audit Office's key principles of best practice grants administration². ECA will therefore:

- help identify opportunities for greater collaboration and partnerships where there are potential synergies in advocacy or research projects;
- introduce the application and reporting processes proposed in the Issues Paper;
- share the results of its advocacy and research funding across its digital channels, including organising a 2-3 minute 'end of project' podcast or video outlining key findings or lessons learned to disseminate the project recommendations and learnings; and
- seek a co-contribution from the applicant, in line with the organisation's capacity to pay.

An **Evaluation Framework** will be developed with stakeholders later in 2016 for assessing the tangible benefits of advocacy and research projects to consumers.

¹ The National Energy Market means the National Electricity and National Gas Markets established under national energy law.

² *Implementing Better Practice Grants Administration, Better Practice Guide*, ANAO December 2013

Attachment

Eligibility Criteria

Eligibility criteria	How ECA will assess eligibility
1. Build knowledge and/or sectoral capacity supporting policy development and consumer education in the National Energy Market	<p><u>ALL APPLICATIONS MUST MEET THIS CRITERION TO BE ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Project proposal demonstrates some of following<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ how proposed change to policy, regulation or practices will benefit consumers○ how project will build the capacity of consumers and/or consumer advocates○ how the project may empower consumers○ how project will influence decision makers○ (RES) how the project will inform/support advocacy• Will the project produce or contribute to the robust evidence to support advocacy?<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ alignment with ECA value to promote strong and evidence-based advocacy• Benefits to consumers<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Size of consumer class○ Potential to improve situation of those consumers

Selection Criteria

Set out below are the selection criteria against which all applications for ECA grants will be assessed. For a project proposal to be considered for a grant, it must meet most of the criteria. The criteria are not ranked – so for example, compliance with criterion 9 is as important as compliance with criterion 1.

Selection Criteria	How ECA will assess projects against the selection criteria (ADV refers to advocacy and RES to research projects)
1. Align with ECA strategic priorities and functions 2. For other priorities, including jurisdiction priorities, outline why A) the work is a priority and B) its material impact on consumers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity of objectives of planned project • Match with ECA strategic priority <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ alignment with ECA value to promote strong and evidence-based advocacy • If not, rationale made by applicant that the work is a priority - has the applicant adequately explained the extent of the problem and/or consumer detriment? Has the applicant provided information on the material impact of the project on the targeted consumers?
3. Build capacity for future advocacy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Demonstrating value to the organisation b. Demonstrating value to the sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity of organisation to deliver project outcome(s) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Organisation's expertise (or potential to acquire) ◦ Organisation network – capacity to build new and/or leverage existing partnerships/coalitions with advocates/decision-makers • Project methodology and proposed outputs will deliver/contribute to achievement of outcomes • Mechanisms to share project findings/learnings with ECA and other advocates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ alignment with ECA value to promote coordinated and collegiate advocacy
4. Be relevant to a national energy market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (ADV) Correct identification of potential influencers and decision-makers, as well as the forums/opportunities to advocate for change <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ alignment with ECA value to promote strong and evidence-based advocacy • (RES) Correct identification of potential influencers and decision-makers, as well as the forums/opportunities to disseminate project findings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Or partnerships with advocates to facilitate dissemination of project findings
5. Offer value for money: the benefits should outweigh the costs, and costs should be prudent and minimised	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget demonstrates consideration of most effective and efficient way to achieve outcome • Methodology and budget appropriately aligned

6. Offer partnership opportunities where possible with ECA and/or other organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent to which applicant plans to build new and/or leverage existing partnerships/coalitions with advocates/decision-makers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ alignment with ECA value to promote coordinated and collegiate advocacy
7. Provide a co-contribution, and a rationale for the provision of ECA funding (ECA will consider the organisation's or its members' ability to meet the project costs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact of the project outcome compared to the project cost • Assessment of organisation's resources able to be committed to the project
8. Provide a viable project plan, outlining the intended outcomes and success indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soundness of organisation/project governance, management and organisational structures • Calibre and experience of key staff members • Quality of consultants • Applicant's track record

