

The background of the page features a large, abstract, curved shape in shades of teal and blue, resembling a stylized wave or a large letter 'C'. This shape is set against a white background with faint, thin green and blue lines that curve across the page.

Grant Program Guidelines

Influence and Collaboration Grants

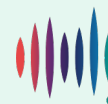
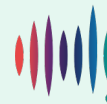


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1. Introduction

Energy Consumers Australia (ECA)'s Grants Program supports work that provides a strong, evidence base for positive system changes that benefit households and small businesses. We provide the following grants:

- **Influence Grants** - support advocacy and research initiatives with a purpose of immediate influence on a specific and achievable goal regarding matters of material significance to residential and small business consumers.
- **Collaboration Grants** - funding for complex, multi-year projects working in partnership with ECA. Projects will typically be ambitious, recognising that pathways to success are negotiated and developed over time.
- **Participation Grants** - provide up to \$15,000 to enable residential or small business consumer advocacy by participation in current or forthcoming government, regulatory, or industry decision-making processes, or for small, targeted research projects.
- **Gill Owen Scholarship** - supports an individual to travel internationally to research innovative ideas and initiatives that will be relevant to improving outcomes for consumers in the Australian energy market.
- **Kelvin Trimper Scholarship** (in partnership with South Australian Power Networks) – provides funding of up to \$10,000 to build knowledge and/or improve access to programs or initiatives that will achieve improved consumer outcomes, in a dynamic and changing Australian energy market.

All grants support projects that aim for systems change - to **shift energy market practices and behaviours** to deliver better consumer outcomes - and where we see a credible path to success. Applicants must make clear the pathways from the proposed project to influence and long-term impact.

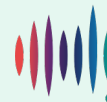
These guidelines set out the purpose of the Influence and Collaboration Grants, provide advice on what we look for in an application, how to apply, and the responsibilities of successful grant recipients. **Please read them carefully before commencing an application.**

2. Achieving a fair and equitable energy transition

Australian households and small businesses want affordable, clean, and easily accessible energy. They also want an energy system that balances costs and benefits fairly – and doesn't add to social and economic inequalities. ECA is working to achieve this by:

- Funding **grants and research** that generate consumer insights
- Advocating for **market reforms** and policy change
- Providing **data and evidence** to regulators and governments
- Promoting **systemic change** that centres equity, access, and participation

Our Three-Year Plan identified 7 targets which must be true for a modern energy system operating in a just society.



A successful grant application will align with one of these **targets**:



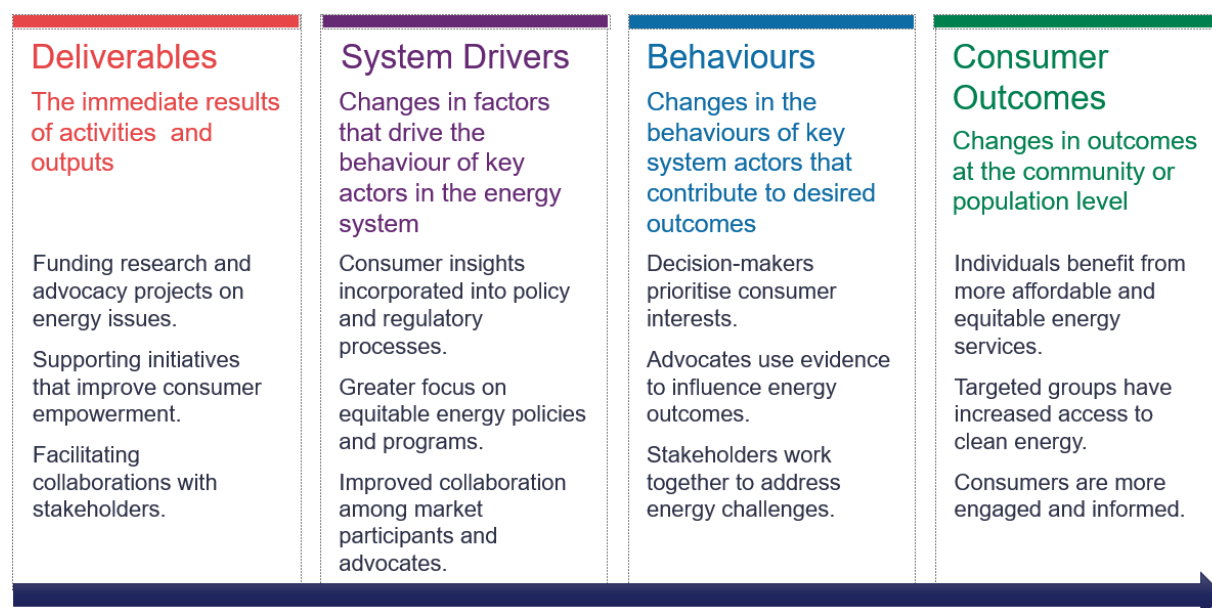
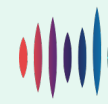
3. What do we mean by ‘system change’?

ECA is working toward an energy system that is fair, affordable, reliable, and meets the needs of everyone. To do this, ECA acts as a strategic intermediary between consumers and the organisations working on their behalf and the energy sector. We aim to influence the system so that consumer voices, especially those of residential and small business users, are heard and valued in the decisions shaping the future of energy in Australia.

We work in partnership with organisations to support deliverables that contribute to long-term, systemic change in the Australian energy system. We recognise that this type of change is complex, collaborative, and often non-linear.

Systems change means addressing the deeper structures that shape how a system behaves. In the energy context, this goes beyond fixing isolated problems and aims to reshape the policies, power dynamics, resource flows, and mental models that determine outcomes for energy consumers.

A system includes interconnected parts: policies, organisations, funding mechanisms, infrastructure, behaviours, and beliefs. That includes regulators, industry, governments, consumer advocates, community groups, and everyday people.



To help understand, imagine the system as a garden:

- The **deliverables** (submissions, research, events) produced by grantees are like tools, or fertilisers—they are carefully chosen interventions designed to change the garden's conditions.
- The **system drivers** (rules, relationships, resources) are like the soil, sunlight, and water—they shape how everything in the garden grows.
- The **system actors** (organisations, regulators, industry) are like the plants—they respond to those conditions.

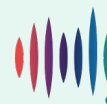
If we improve the soil or give the right amount of sunlight, the plants start to grow differently.

In other words, when you influence system drivers, you create new conditions that allow actors to change their behaviours. And when those behaviours shift, better outcomes can grow—like more equitable access, stronger protections, or increased consumer voice.

What are system drivers?

System drivers are the underlying forces that influence how the system functions. These are the levers that must shift for real, lasting change to occur. Drawing on frameworks popularised by Mark Cabaj and others, we encourage applicants to consider which of these your project may help influence:

Driver	Example in the Energy System
Rules	Market regulations, policy frameworks, compliance structures
Resource Flows	Access to funding, data, technology, or support
Relationships and Power	Who has a seat at the table, whose voice counts
Mental Models	Assumptions about affordability, hardship, or what 'consumer choice' means



We support a wide range of deliverables—such as submissions, research, tools, events, campaigns, or resources—but we are particularly interested in how your work is designed to influence one or more of the system drivers outlined above. These drivers shape how decisions are made, how resources are distributed, whose voices are heard, and how problems are understood within the energy system.

How will your work contribute to changing one or more system drivers?

Your project might influence these drivers directly, or it may provide others with the tools, insights, or evidence needed to do so. In some cases, your work may shift mindsets, build relationships, or lay the groundwork for future change. We encourage you to articulate your theory of influence in relation to the system context you are addressing.

This could happen in different ways:

- By influencing a regulator or policy process
- By changing the public narrative
- By equipping others to act—like advocates or communities
- By creating partnerships that unlock new ways of influencing

In your application, please tell us:

- What deliverable(s) you will produce through the grant (e.g. submission, report, resource, campaign, or event)
- Which system driver(s) your deliverable is intended to influence
- What steps you will take to ensure your deliverable has influence—such as who you will engage, how it will be shared and amplified, or whether it will be positioned for others to build on
- What success could look like, even if it is indirect, long-term, or still emerging

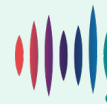
Example

A small consumer group develops a report on barriers to affordable energy for renters. The report identifies regulatory barriers (**rules**), shares lived experience stories to challenge dominant assumptions (**mental models**) and is co-developed with community partners (**relationships**). The group briefs regulators and shares findings widely. Later, ECA uses the report in a submission to a federal review. The work contributes to a national policy shift.

How to describe your contribution

To help describe the progress or contribution your project is making to systems change, we will ask you to use the following categories in your application and progress reporting. These are not about proving impact, but about helping you (and us) understand where your work sits in the broader arc of change:

Category	Description
Emerging	Laying the groundwork—raising awareness, generating interest, or identifying critical issues
Building	Actively engaging others—developing relationships, evidence, or early influence pathways
Shifting	Seeing signs that a system driver is changing (e.g. uptake by decision-makers)
Embedding	Contributing to sustained change (e.g. institutionalised shifts in rules, practices, funding)



You do not need to change the system alone. But you need to tell us **how your work contributes** to shifting the system.

If ECA can play a role in amplifying your work or influencing others on your behalf, we want to know. Indeed, you will be required to have check-ins with ECA's Communications Team to discuss your amplification strategy and how ECA might be able to support this.

4. Influence vs Collaboration Grants

Influence Grants: these grants are designed to target immediate influence on a specific and achievable goal regarding matters of material significance to residential and small business energy consumers. Influence Grants projects tend to be less complex than Collaboration Grants and are typically 12-18 months in duration.

Collaboration Grants: these grants support complex, multi-year projects and often involve more than one project partner. Collaboration Grants will focus on contributing to policy or advocacy outcomes and will involve close cooperation with advocates and other stakeholders. These projects will answer key questions identified in our 3-Year Plan and will involve ECA as a collaborator.

As these programs fund projects, successful applications will outline a clear project structure with a beginning, middle and end. Funding will not be provided for ongoing activity or an organisation's BAU.

What's the difference between advocacy and research?

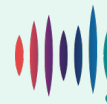
Advocacy Initiatives: Projects that work to achieve change by seeking to influence public policy – including regulations, market practices and government policy that enhance consumer outcomes. It can be working to put a problem on the agenda of decision-makers, identify a solution to that problem, and build support for action on the problem and the solution.

Advocacy can involve working with peers, allies, and coalitions. It can be undertaken by a range of organisations and stakeholders. There are organisations, groups and individuals who have a core focus of undertaking advocacy for residential and small business energy consumers, however, there are other voices involved in energy advocacy, and we welcome applications from those who can contribute to this advocacy.

Research Projects: Initiatives that provide evidence-based insights and data that will **support advocacy efforts** and inform stakeholders. The Australian Research Council defines research as:

“the creation of new knowledge and/or the use of existing knowledge in a new and creative way so as to generate new concepts, methodologies, inventions and understandings. This could include synthesis and analysis of previous research to the extent that it is new and creative. This definition of research is consistent with a broad notion of research and experimental development (R&D) as comprising ‘creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of man [human-kind], culture and society, and the use of this stock of knowledge to devise new applications’”

Taking a translational research approach seeks to produce more meaningful, applicable results that directly benefit people, communities and society. The goal of translational research is to translate (move) basic science discoveries or knowledge more quickly and efficiently into practice.



Eligible grant activities

Translational research and analysis

- Conducting quantitative or qualitative research.
- Policy analysis and development.
- Surveys, focus groups, and data collection.

Advocacy and engagement

- Hosting forums, workshops, and roundtables to build awareness and foster discussion.
- Stakeholder engagement and partnership development with relevant communities.
- Coalition-building with other advocacy groups or community organisations.
- Engagement with policymakers, including consultations, briefings, or testimony.

Strategic development & capacity building

- Developing advocacy strategies or action plans.

Communications and media

- Digital engagement strategies (e.g., social media campaigns, webinars).
- Producing advocacy materials such as reports, fact sheets, toolkits, and infographics.

Ineligible expenditure

- BAU core business. We are looking for bold, impactful projects that go beyond core activities.
- Major capital expenditure or capital works.
- Activities already funded by other grants.
- Costs incurred in the preparation of a grant application or related documentation.
- Commercial or profit-driven research.

5. How to apply

Eligibility

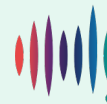
To be eligible you must be either:

- A not-for profit organisation within Australia, with a purpose or a mandate that permits you to carry out advocacy for household and small business energy consumers. This can include a social enterprise that is registered as a not-for-profit within Australia; or
- A bonafide research organisation with a public purpose.

Further requirements for all grantees:

- An Australian Business Number (ABN)
- A legal entity with the capacity to enter into a legally binding funding agreement

Ineligible applicants include councils, government agencies, an unincorporated association, or an overseas organisation.



How to apply

The Influence and Collaboration Grant Programs involve a two-stage application process:

Stage 1: Expressions of Interests (EOI)

The first stage is to complete an Expressions of Interest (EOI) application form for your project idea. The form is available through the online grant platform SmartyGrants.

The form will ask for details regarding what problem you're trying to solve, project methodology, intended project deliverables, and how the outcomes will benefit consumers.

All submitted EOIs are reviewed against selection criteria and shortlisted applicants will then be invited to submit a full application based on their EOIs. See Appendix A for selection criteria.

Applicants not progressing beyond the EOI stage will be notified, and general feedback can be provided upon request.

Stage 2: Submission of a full application

Shortlisted applicants are formally invited to submit a full application through SmartyGrants. This stage is more competitive and will require further details of the project to determine which applications offer high-quality, well-planned projects.

After the submission deadline, full applications proceed to an evaluation stage. Each application is assessed against selection criteria to ensure a fair, transparent, and merit-based selection process.

Once submitted, applicants will receive an automated acknowledgement of receipt, confirming that the application has been received.

If you need further guidance about the application process or if you are unable to submit an online application, contact us at grants@energyconsumersaustralia.com.au or by calling 02 9220 5500.

Who approves the grant applications?

Influence and Collaboration Grants are approved by the ECA board. As the programs are open for applications twice each year, the board considers these applications at their April and October board meetings.

Timeframe

There are two Influence/Collaboration Grant rounds each year. Applications open in June and December.

Funding agreement

Successful grant recipients will enter into a legally binding funding agreement with ECA.

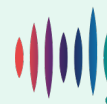
We must execute a funding agreement with successful grantees before we can make any payments. If you choose to start your project before you have an executed funding agreement, you do so at your own risk.



You will have 30 days from the date of the project's approval to execute the funding agreement with ECA. During this time, we will work with you to finalise details.

The offer may lapse if both parties do not sign the funding agreement within this time. Under certain circumstances, we may extend this period. We base the approval of your grant on the information you provide in your application.

You may request changes to the funding agreement. However, we will review any required changes to these details to ensure they do not impact the grant as approved by the ECA board.



Appendix A: Selection Criteria

Stage 1 Selection Criteria

Alignment with ECA's targets: The project aligns with ECA's targets or where the project does not align, a clear rationale is given for why the work is a priority

Problem statement: The policy gap, market failure, consumer disadvantage, lack of representation, or data insufficiency this project is targeting.

System change: The applicant has targeted system change and has identified a theory of influence, outlining the intended outcomes and success indicators.

Organisational capacity: The organisation demonstrates the capacity (experience, relationships, or infrastructure) to deliver the proposed project

Potential for impact: The EOI outlines expected outcomes or change the project seeks to achieve, and the scale or significance of the impact is appropriate to the size and scope of funding.

Stage 2 Selection Criteria

1. The project aligns with ECA's targets or where the project does not align, a clear rationale is given for why the work is a priority
2. The project will have a material impact on residential and/or small business consumers
3. The applicant has targeted system change and has identified a theory of influence, outlining the intended outcomes and success indicators.
4. The project builds capacity for future advocacy
5. The project demonstrates value to the applicant's organisation
6. The project demonstrates value to the sector
7. The project is of relevance to the National Electricity Market (NEM)
8. The project offers value for money, with benefits outweighing the costs, and costs that are prudent and minimised
9. The project offers partnership opportunities with ECA and/or other organisations
10. The applicant is providing a proportionate co-contribution and has provided a rationale for ECA funding