



Grant Program Guidelines

Participation Grant Program

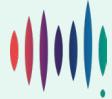
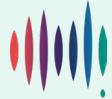


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1. Introduction

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 \$20,000 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.

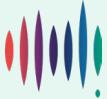
These guidelines set out the purpose of the **Participation** Grants, provide advice on what we look for in an application, how to apply, and the responsibilities of successful grant recipients. **Please read them carefully before commencing an application.**

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:



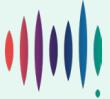
3. What do we mean by 'system change'?

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.



4. Participation Grant Program

The Participation Grants program funds projects that target system change on a small scale, either through engagement in regulatory or policy decision processes or through small, targeted research projects that investigate a system barrier in the energy system.

The maximum grant amount available for projects in each stream is **\$20,000** (ex-GST).

There are two streams within the Program.

Stream 1: Regulatory engagement

Energy regulation and market reform processes are often highly technical and resource intensive. Without targeted support, consumer perspectives can be under-represented. This stream seeks to address that imbalance by funding projects that:

- Equip consumer advocates with the evidence and resources needed to influence regulatory outcomes.
- Ensure that consumer interests are embedded in regulatory decisions, particularly those affecting affordability, reliability, fairness, and sustainability.
- Build the capacity and expertise of the consumer advocacy sector to engage effectively with regulators, market bodies, and governments.
- Strengthen collaboration across consumer groups, experts, and stakeholders to deliver a more coordinated consumer voice.
- Support collaboration between researchers, advocates, and community organisations to maximise the reach and use of findings.

Eligible grant activities

The program funds targeted, time-limited projects that:

- Engage directly in regulatory processes where consumer perspectives can influence decisions (e.g., network revenue determinations, rule changes, pricing reviews, or market reforms).
- Strengthen the capacity of the consumer advocacy sector to represent energy consumers in regulatory or policy forums.
- Generate and share evidence about consumer needs, impacts, and experiences to inform regulatory decisions.
- Ensure the voices of vulnerable and disadvantaged consumers are meaningfully included in regulatory and policy processes.
- Promote systemic change by improving transparency, fairness, and long-term consumer outcomes in energy markets.



Examples of projects that may be funded include:

- Preparing evidence-based submissions to regulatory determinations or rule change proposals.
- Commissioning expert analysis or modelling to inform consumer advocacy positions.
- Conducting research into consumer impacts, particularly for vulnerable or disadvantaged groups, to support representation in regulatory forums.
- Facilitating targeted consumer or community engagement to capture lived experiences that can inform regulatory decisions.
- Building coalitions or partnerships to strengthen coordination and amplify the consumer voice in complex energy reform processes.
- Participating in public hearings, workshops, or other consultation processes where consumer perspectives need to be represented.
- Developing tools or resources that improve the capacity of consumer advocates to engage in regulatory processes over time.

Projects must have a clear link to a specific regulatory or policy process and demonstrate how funded activities will lead to outcomes in the long-term interests of energy consumers.

Stream 2: Small research projects

Energy systems are changing rapidly, creating both opportunities and challenges for households and small businesses. To ensure that consumers are at the centre of these changes, strong evidence is needed to inform advocacy, policy, and decision-making.

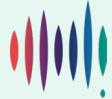
This grants stream supports small, targeted research projects that generate timely, credible insights to strengthen the voice of energy consumers in system change processes. The stream is designed to fund projects that are proportionate in scope and cost, but which can make a meaningful contribution to consumer advocacy and influence. Projects within this stream will:

- Build the evidence base that consumer advocates can use to influence energy policy, regulatory, and market reform.
- Ensure the perspectives and experiences of consumers, particularly those facing disadvantage or vulnerability, are reflected in research.
- Create pathways for research to translate into advocacy impact, supporting systemic changes that deliver fairer, more affordable, and more accessible energy outcomes.

Eligible grant activities

The program funds projects that are:

- Small in scale – with targeted objectives, modest budgets, and a clear, achievable scope.
- Research-focused – producing new evidence, data, or insights that strengthen advocacy.



- Consumer-centred – addressing issues that matter to energy consumers, particularly those experiencing vulnerability or disadvantage.
- Impact-oriented – designed with a clear pathway to influence advocacy, regulatory processes, or system change.

Examples of projects that may be funded include:

- Consumer research that identifies barriers to accessing affordable or clean energy.
- Evidence reviews or data analysis that support submissions to regulatory or policy processes.
- Pilot studies testing new approaches to engaging vulnerable households in energy programs.
- Research partnerships between community groups and research institutions to document lived experience of energy hardship.
- Advocacy groups hosting forums, workshops, and roundtables to build awareness and foster discussion around issues facing consumers in the energy transition.

Ineligible expenditure

- 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

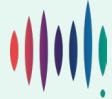
To be eligible you must be either:

- 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.

All grants must be able to demonstrate benefits to households and small businesses in the jurisdictions of the National Energy Market (through its constitution, ECA is not able to provide grants to projects that are focusing on WA consumers).

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.

Participation Grant applications are accepted all year round through the SmartyGrants portal. To apply, please visit Energy Consumers Australia's [website](#).

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

It is unlikely that any organisation would receive more than one Participation Grant per year, unless exceptional circumstances justify additional support.

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.

6. Selection Process

Assessment Criteria

Each application is assessed against the selection criteria to ensure a fair, transparent, and merit-based selection process.

The Participation Grants are assessed against the following criterion:

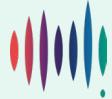
1. Builds knowledge and/or sectoral capacity supporting policy development and consumer education in the National Energy Market
2. Advances the long-term interests of consumers, particularly residential and small business consumers
3. Has relevance to national energy market advocacy and research
4. Alignment to one of ECA's 3-Year Plan's 7- targets.

Timeframe for a decision

- Stream 1 – 3 weeks from submission.
- Stream 2 – 6 weeks from submission

Notifications of application outcomes

Grantees will be notified of the outcome of the application via email within the timeframes mentioned above.



7. Successful grant applications

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 in writing.

Grants Archive

Once a grant contract has been executed, the grant will be listed in Energy Consumers Australia's [Grants Archive](#). This listing includes the grant applicant's name, grant title, approved funding amount, jurisdiction, consumer type(s) and the grant period. It is a useful resource to see what sort of grants have been successful in the past.

Upon successful acquittal, any final outputs that have been approved for publication will also be made publicly available in the archive.