

Advice for Grant Applicants

4 August 2021

Backing great ideas

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 are

- 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, for both 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 sub-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** up to \$15,000 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

Length of funding

Consumers are engaged in processes that can take significant time and planning. To pursue longer term, strategic and substantive projects, applicants can apply for grants on a funding horizon they choose.

However, where projects are longer than one year, gateway reviews may be needed at appropriate stages to ensure that the project is ready to proceed to the next stage of implementation.

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:

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

More detailed information is contained in Guidance Note 1.

Research Grants

ECA Research Grants should inform and support advocacy by:

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

More detailed information is contained in Guidance Note 1.

CEO Grants Program

CEO Grants are a small sub-category of the Grants Program. CEO Grants are capped at \$15,000 (ex GST). CEO Grants provide funding to applicants for the purposes of consumer engagement or international scholarships.

They will support and accommodate advocates engagement and decision making in:

- government
- regulatory areas
- the energy sector as a whole

Applications for this grant must be able to show that the matter is time-constrained and could not reasonably have been anticipated or planned for.

Examples of activities that may be funded include:

- engaging a consultant to provide technical or specialist expertise for a submission.
- undertaking research to inform advocacy.
- 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.

More detailed information is contained in Guidance Note 2.

Gill Owen Scholarship (International Scholarship)

The Gill Owen Scholarship 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 or 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.

Funding exclusions

ECA will not prioritise funding for:

- Public education and awareness campaigns
- Projects targeting the education or information needs of individual consumers.

Eligibility and selection criteria

To be eligible for Advocacy, Research and CEO Grants, applicants 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 Eligibility and Selection Criteria.
- aligns with the ECA Strategic Priorities

To be eligible for a Gill Owen Scholarship Grant, applicants must demonstrate some or all of the following attributes/experiences:

- be working as a Consumer Advocate 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 require a comprehensive bio of grantees work 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.

ECA Strategic Priorities

ECA will fund projects that can effectively show how they will address each of the strategic priorities listed below:

1. lowering energy bills
2. enabling consumer agency
3. building trust and confidence
4. an energy system transition led by consumer choices and values.

More information on ECA strategic priorities can be found in the [ECA 2020-21 Business Plan](#).

How to apply

Grant applications must now be made through the Energy Consumers Australia *SmartyGrants* website <https://energyconsumersaustralia.smartygrants.com.au>

Information on previously awarded grants can be viewed in ECA's [Grant Archive](#) 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 at grants@energyconsumersaustralia.com.au.

Grant Approval Process

The ECA Board considers Advocacy and Research grant applications and information about application deadline and Board dates can be found on the [Grants/For Applicants](#) page of the ECA website.

CEO Grant applications can be submitted at any time with an assessment turnaround time of typically one 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 the 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

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

- Seek a co-contribution from the applicant in line with the organisation's capacity to pay.

For further information

Energy Consumers Australia Grants Program

Email: grants@energyconsumersaustralia.com.au

www.energyconsumersaustralia/grants/applicants