

Energy Consumers Australia Grant Guidelines

Energy Consumers Australia (ECA) is directed by article 4.1 of its Constitution to promote 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
- 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.

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 and Gill Owen Scholarship** for grants of up to \$15,0000 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.

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.

Energy Consumers Australia has defined energy advocacy as:

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

Advocacy can also be described as a set of actions that lead to realising a goal. Or it can be working to place 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. In energy markets in Australia, there are groups and individuals who

have a core focus on undertaking advocacy for residential and small business energy consumers. However, there are other voices involved in energy advocacy and Energy Consumers Australia welcomes grant applications from others who can contribute to this advocacy.

Requirements for advocacy projects

Advocacy projects need to show:

- What is the problem you are trying to address?
- Why is this critical for the long-term interests of consumers?
- Who is the project aimed at influencing? Why now?
- What actions will you take to address the problem and create influence? Why those actions?
- How will you engage with other advocates?
- Why you are best placed or have the capability to undertake the project and achieve impact?
- What will be the measurable impact of your project?
- Who will benefit?
- Will there be wider benefits?

Research Grants

Research projects are more likely to be future-focused and address longer-term or emerging consumer issues. These grants will inform and support advocacy by:

- Providing a robust, topical, and well-informed evidence base
- Building knowledge among advocates, decision makers and industry

Research projects can contribute to the building of evidence and knowledge through empirical research or through non-empirical research. Energy Consumers Australia expects applicants for research projects to identify existing foundational or relevant research on which they intend to rely, or to build upon.

Where empirical research is part of a project it will be essential that the methodologies are robust. Social research should use ethical frameworks such as the professional and quality standards of the Australian Market and Social Research Society.

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- How will you engage with advocates?
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- What will be the measurable impact of your project? Who will benefit?
- Will there be wider benefits?

Applicants for research project grants can include organisations or individuals who are not advocates.

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 priorities 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.

An important consideration for all grant applications - both advocacy and research projects to support advocacy - is how these projects intend to **achieve impact or influence**.

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 and research 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.

Successful grant projects

Successful projects, will:

- Address a clearly defined, topical issue for residential and small business energy consumers.
- Be aimed at effective advocacy or supporting such advocacy.
- Have an effective approach for having influence or achieving change or a robust methodology for research.
- Show how they intend to create impact or influence.

For more information on previous successful grants, visit the [Grants Archive](#) on Energy Consumers Australia's website.

CEO Grants Program

The CEO Grants Program is a small grants sub-program to complement the quarterly advocacy and research grants made by ECA. Funding of up to \$15,000 (ex-GST) is provided to support and accommodate advocate engagement in government, regulatory and or industry decision making processes, recognising the need for consumers to respond within short timeframes.

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

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.
- 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.

To apply for a CEO Grant, the applicant must be proposing to undertake a work program, or participate in engagement, that:

- Builds knowledge and/or sectoral capacity supporting policy development and consumer education in the National Energy Market.
- Supports energy advocacy, which is designed to influence or create change that improves the long-term outcomes of electricity and gas consumers.
- Considers how the project or engagement will achieve impact or influence.

Previous CEO Grants can be found by accessing the [Grants Archive](#) on Energy Consumers Australia's website.

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.

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 Grants Program Selection Criteria.

There are different eligibility criteria for the Gill Owen Scholarship Program. Applications are open to any individual or organisation with some or all 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 key issues facing Australian energy consumers.
- Has good networking skills.
- Has good writing skills – ECA will require a comprehensive report of their experience.
- 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.

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 on a quarterly basis, ensuring the program is responsive enough to support new projects when they are required. Please check the ECA's website for the timing of each grant round. 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 Market ^{Error!} Reference source not found. 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 administration.

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.