

Advanced Manufacturing Early Stage Research Fund (AMESRF) Grant Opportunity Guidelines

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CONTENTS

1. ADVANCED MANUFACTURING GROWTH CENTRE (AMGC)	1	7. MERIT CRITERIA	3
		Merit criterion 1	3
2. WHAT IS THE AMESRF PROJECT FUND?	1	Merit criterion 2	4
		Merit criterion 3	4
3. GRANTS AVAILABLE	2	9. RESEARCHERS	4
3.1 Project duration	2	10. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST	4
4. PROCESSES	2	Applicant conflict of interest responsibilities	4
Stage	2	AMGC's conflict of interest responsibilities	5
Activity	2	11. INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY	5
5. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA	3	12. PROJECT AWARD	5
5.1 Who is eligible	3	12.1 Grant Agreement	5
5.2 Additional eligibility requirements	3	12.2 Payments, milestones and governance	5
6. ELIGIBLE GRANT ACTIVITIES	3	12.3 Reporting	5
6.1 Eligible projects	3	13. PUBLICATION	5
6.2 Eligible expenditure	3	14. AMGC REPORTING OBLIGATIONS	5
6.3 Ineligible expenditure	3	15. APPENDIX	6
		Technology Readiness Level Definition	6
		Scoring Framework – Merit Criterion	6

1. ADVANCED MANUFACTURING GROWTH CENTRE (AMGC)

Advanced Manufacturing Growth Centre is an industry-led, not-for-profit organisation which supports the development of a world-leading advanced manufacturing sector in Australia. It is run by a board and management team of leading industry experts.

AMGC is connected with a nationwide network of research and development hubs. The Centre's role as an industry-led, government-supported organisation is to unlock new commercial opportunities and drive innovation in Australian manufacturing. It will do this by fostering collaboration between industry enterprises and the scientific and research community. It will also consolidate existing linkages.

2. WHAT IS THE AMESRF PROJECT FUND?

The AMESRF is a \$4 million (GST exclusive) funding initiative, and forms part of the \$100 million Advanced Manufacturing Fund which will boost innovation, skills and employment in advanced manufacturing. The grant will run over four years with funding of \$1 million (GST exclusive) per year from 2017–18 to 2020–21.

The intent of the AMESRF is to support small-scale and pilot research projects in advanced manufacturing, and benefit smaller firms and early stage research. The fund will provide grants to SMEs for rapid initial feasibility testing, allowing the projects to then move quickly to larger-scale research or commercialisation. The feasibility test element will allow for success or failure, and processes will accommodate a 'fast fail' exit for projects when a low prospect for success is realised.

Advanced Manufacturing Early Stage Research Fund (AMESRF) Grant Opportunity Guidelines

Proposed AMESRF projects should be undertaken in collaboration with other parties in the form of a consortium, whether from research, industry or other areas. The AMESRF funds may also be granted to single entity projects that otherwise meet the funding criteria.

3. GRANTS AVAILABLE

Grant funding can be between \$100,000 and \$400,000. The granting amount would be relative to the project size and complexity, and the extent it meets the merit criteria. The grant amount will be up to 50% of eligible project costs (grant percentage).

3.1 Project duration

Projects must be completed in 12 months.

4. PROCESSES

An overview of the sequential selection process and timeframe for assessment, decision making and disbursement of funds is included below.

AMGC will seek Expressions of Interest (EOI) from industry participants for AMESRF projects. AMGC will assess the EOIs against the merit criteria and appropriate proposals will be invited to prepare and submit a full application. All applicants have the opportunity to submit a draft Project Application for review.

The AMESRF is a non-competitive, open process under which applications may be submitted at any time over the life of the grant opportunity and are assessed individually against the merit criteria, with funding decisions in relation to each application being determined without reference to the comparative merits of other applications.

Stage	Activity
1) Expressions of interest (EOI) completed by firm	The EOI is a one-page description of the project and anticipated outcomes. AMGC will evaluate project proposals in order of receipt and provide applicants with written feedback on whether the proposal has satisfied the eligibility and minimum requirements of the merit criteria. Proposals that satisfy both sets of criteria will be invited to complete a full AMESRF Project Application. EOIs can be submitted at any time throughout the year. EOI templates can be found on the AMGC website here .
2) AMESRF Project Application completed by firm	AMGC will email Project Application forms to applicants following a successful EOI evaluation. AMGC will provide regular written and verbal feedback to applicants throughout the development of the Project Application. The AMESRF Project Application includes the following sections: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Project participants b. Project description c. Alignment to AMESRF Project Evaluation Criteria d. Project budget e. Costed milestones f. Market potential
3) Applicant submits draft Project Application to AMGC for review	Formal project evaluation will be completed by the AMGC at this stage. AMGC will undertake due diligence checks and examine appropriate assurance documentation including conflict of interest procedures.
4) AMGC submits Project Application evaluation for Board assessment	AMGC will prepare Project Applications received from all applicants for AMGC Board consideration in order of receipt. The AMGC Board will assess all Project Applications including scoring against the merit criteria. The AMGC Board may re-evaluate AMGC scores against the merit criterion at this stage.
5) Funding Decision and Announcements	All Project Applications will receive feedback. The AMGC Board will provide written confirmation of the outcome. AMGC will provide Applicants that submitted unsuccessful applications feedback against the merit criteria.
6) AMESRF Project Agreement completed	Successful Projects will be subject to an AMGC Project Agreement, which is a legal contract between AMGC and the lead project participant. The Project Agreement sets out expectations and deliverables for the Project, including Project contributions and funds, reporting obligations, confidentiality, IP, Audits, GST, dispute resolution and termination.
7) Project starts	AMGC Project Governance requires participants to provide project updates for tracking actual project delivery outcomes against the cost, schedule and scope objectives stated in the Project Agreement, on a milestone by milestone basis.

Advanced Manufacturing Early Stage Research Fund (AMESRF) Grant Opportunity Guidelines

5. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

5.1 Who is eligible

To be eligible the applicant must:

- have an Australian Business Number (ABN)
- be an SME with less than 200 employees
- be non tax-exempt
- be registered for the Goods and Services Tax (GST)

and be one of the following entities:

- a company, incorporated in Australia
- an incorporated trustee on behalf of a trust

Joint applications are acceptable, provided there is a lead applicant who is the main driver of the project, and the lead applicant is eligible to apply.

5.2 Additional eligibility requirements

Applicants must have access to, or ownership of, the intellectual property (IP) necessary to conduct the Project should it be required.

Project participants must demonstrate the financial capacity to complete the project. This could be demonstrated through the provision of financial accounts during the EOI stage of the application process. The AMESRF grant will be up to 50 per cent of eligible project costs (grant percentage).

6. ELIGIBLE GRANT ACTIVITIES

6.1 Eligible projects

To be eligible the Applicant's project must:

- be industry led and involve collaboration with SMEs

6.2 Eligible expenditure

Grant funds may be used for activities directly related to the project, for example:

- equipment development, testing and installation
- software development, testing and deployment
- materials, consumables and laboratory disposables
- salaries and consulting fees directly related to the activities in the project
- travel and accommodation for field activities in Australia
- capital expenditure where the equipment/works are directly related to the project.

Questions and consultation around eligible expenditure items can be obtained from AMGC by emailing enquiries@amgc.org.au

6.3 Ineligible expenditure

Grant funds cannot be used for the following activities:

- capital works of buildings or facilities, including renovations, extensions and fit-out of buildings, unless otherwise agreed in writing with AMGC
- reimbursement of in-kind contributions, or to pay indirect costs of the Project such as administration costs and rent
- international travel and salaries for international personnel, students or any overseas activities, unless the parties can demonstrate to AMGC's satisfaction that the activities are directly related to the Project
- AMESRF funding cannot be used to duplicate funding obtained from other government funding sources, but may complement and leverage funding obtained from state or territory governments. Any additional government cash contributions must be matched with equal additional industry cash co-contributions.

7. MERIT CRITERIA

To be accepted for funding, applicants will need to address all merit criteria in their application. AMGC will assess applications against each merit criterion using a scoring framework. The scoring scale for AMESRF merit criterion is in the Appendix.

The Project Application form asks questions that relate to the merit criteria listed below. The amount of detail and supporting evidence the applicant provides in the application should be relative to the project size, complexity and grant amount requested. The applicant should provide evidence to support their answers. The application form displays size limits for answers.

Funding will only be awarded when Project Applications score satisfactorily against all merit criteria. As a merit-based program only applications which obtain a minimum eligibility score of 3 out of 5 on the scoring scale against each criterion will be eligible to progress to the next stage. The same merit criterion applies to both the EOI process and the Project Application process.

Merit criterion 1

Technology Readiness Level (TRL). The AMESRF is for early stage development of new technologies and products. Projects should start at Technology Readiness Level (TRL) 1–4 and conclude at TRL 5 or higher. TRL definitions can be found in the Appendix.

Advanced Manufacturing Early Stage Research Fund (AMESRF) Grant Opportunity Guidelines

Merit criterion 2

Alignment with AMGC’s Knowledge Priorities for business. AMGC research identified several R&D priorities to help Australian manufacturers become globally competitive, by increasing the technical leadership in their products and expanding their associated value-adding services.

- Robotics and Automation
- Advanced Materials and Composites
- Digital design and Rapid Prototyping
- Sustainable Engineering and Lifecycle management
- Additive Manufacturing
- Sensors and Data Analytics
- Materials and Repair
- Bio-Manufacturing and Bio-logical integration
- Nano-Manufacturing, micro-manufacturing and precision manufacturing
- Augmented or virtual reality systems

Information on AMGC Knowledge Priorities can be found [here](#).

Merit criterion 3

Demonstration of Advanced Characteristics. AMGC research describes how industry transformation can be achieved through implementing one, or a combination of, the following traits:

- Advanced Knowledge: continuously innovate with a high degree of R&D investment
- Advanced Process: focus on using state-of-the-art technology, become familiar with digitalisation
- Advanced Business Model: offer niche solutions, often highly customised and highly valuable.

Information on AMGC Advanced Characteristics can be found [here](#).

8. MATCHED FUNDING CONTRIBUTIONS

To be eligible, industry participants must fund at least 50% of the eligible project costs, either individually or collectively (if the application is made by a consortium), for example:

Item	In-kind	Cash
The industry project participants’ collective contribution	–	\$100,000
AMESRF grant matches financial contribution from industry	–	\$100,000
Total project value		\$200,00

In-kind contributions can be made by participants, but will not be included in determining the cash contribution of participants.

Item	In-kind	Cash
The industry project participants collective contribution	–	\$100,000
AMESRF matches financial contribution from industry	–	\$100,000
University provides use of equipment and facilities	\$50,000	–
Total project value		\$250,00

Contributions received from other government agencies, whether they are federal and/or state, do not count towards the matched funding contribution required by the project participants, and must also be matched with at least equal cash contributions. For example, if AMESRF provides grant funds of \$100,000 and other government contributions to that project are \$50,000, the minimum cash contribution required from industry participants is \$150,000.

Project Applications include a project budget by milestone, which details cash contributions and costed activities. AMGC will undertake a review of each milestone completed. Successful completion of a milestone activates subsequent milestone payment.

AMGC will require successful applicants to provide regular reports on milestones, and the use of grant funds and the cash contribution of participants.

The terms and conditions of the funding, and timing of instalments, will be set out in a contract (Project Funding Agreement) between the project participants and AMGC. AMGC reserves the right to terminate grant funding to the project if agreed milestones are not met.

9. RESEARCHERS

Research can be completed by public and/or private agencies. Private organisations not registered as research providers must first be authorised by AMGC.

10. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Applicant conflict of interest responsibilities

A conflict of interest will occur if the applicant’s private interests conflict with their obligations under the grant. Conflicts of interest could affect the awarding or performance of the grant. A conflict of interest can be:

- real (or actual)
- apparent (or perceived)
- potential

AMGC will ask the applicant to declare, as part of the application, any perceived or existing conflicts of interests or that, to the best of the applicant’s knowledge, there is no conflict of interest.

Advanced Manufacturing Early Stage Research Fund (AMESRF) Grant Opportunity Guidelines

If the applicant later identifies that there is an actual, apparent, or potential conflict of interest, or that one might arise in relation to their grant, the applicant must inform AMGC in writing immediately.

AMGC's conflict of interest responsibilities

AMGC recognises that conflicts of interest may arise with our staff, technical experts, Board members and others delivering the program between:

- their program duties, roles and responsibilities and
- their private interests

AMGC officials must declare any conflicts of interest when EOIs and Project Applications are received. If AMGC identifies and considers a conflict of interest is a cause for concern, the relevant AMGC individual will not access or take part in the assessment of relevant applications under the program. AMGC officials are compliant with conflict of interest policy as part of the Industry Growth Centres Programme Guidelines.

11. INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

AMGC seeks to promote practical approaches to IP which drives innovation, increases speed to market, and improves outcomes for the Australian manufacturing sector.

All Project IP will be jointly owned by the Participants in shares proportionate to their respective Contributions of the total Contributions made to the Project by the Participants.

12. PROJECT AWARD

12.1 Grant Agreement

Successful Projects will be subject to an AMGC Project Agreement, which is a legal contract between AMGC and the lead project participant. The Project Agreement sets out expectations and deliverables for the project, including Project contributions and funds, reporting obligations, confidentiality, IP, Audits, GST, dispute resolution and termination.

12.2 Payments, milestones and governance

AMESRF grants are payable by instalment, as determined by AMGC, and may be linked to milestones defined in the Project Application. Funding payments will be made on the basis of completion of milestones and provision of progress reports. Projects will be administered and governed according to the risk profile of the project, and as determined by AMGC.

12.3 Reporting

AMGC Project Governance requires participants to provide project updates for tracking actual project delivery outcomes against the cost, schedule and scope objectives stated in the Project Agreement, on a Milestone by Milestone basis.

13. PUBLICATION

AMGC will promote the AMESRF through traditional media via media releases, social media channels, AMGC website, GrantConnect, other Growth Centres, mainstream media, and an existing base of 1,000+ network contacts and partner networks.

AMGC will continually promote the AMESRF and encourage industry to contact the AMGC with EOIs for funding throughout the funding period. Funding criteria and assessment processes will be published on the AMGC website.

14. AMGC REPORTING OBLIGATIONS

AMGC will report on the outputs and outcomes of AMESRF projects in the AMGC Annual Report.

Once an AMGC Project Agreement is in place, AMGC reserves the right to publicly report on the progress and outcomes of the project, consulting with the project participants prior to doing so.

AMGC may produce and publish a case study covering an overview of the challenges addressed, the approach, solution/learnings, and the planned benefits and general findings observed in the Project.

On Project completion, AMGC will produce a final report, which reviews project processes, learnings, workforce training, IP, and firm level outcomes. The final report is a mandatory requirement for 'in confidence' disclosure to the Commonwealth Department of Industry, Innovation and Science.

AMGC may request performance metrics on market share, entry into new markets, sales, or other data for three years post project completion.

Within 14 days of award, AMGC is required to publish details of the Project on its web page including:

- a description of the Project, and an overview of how the Project meets the strategic priorities of the Growth Centre and the objectives of the Growth Centre Project Fund
- a list of the Project participants
- the total amount of government funding for the Project
- the total industry co-contributions for the Project.

Advanced Manufacturing Early Stage Research Fund (AMESRF) Grant Opportunity Guidelines

15. APPENDIX

Technology Readiness Level Definition

TRL 9	Actual system “flight proven” through successful mission operations
TRL 8	Actual system completed and “flight qualified” through test and demonstration (ground or space)
TRL 7	System prototype demonstration in a space environment
TRL 6	System/subsystem model or prototype demonstration in a relevant environment (ground or space)
TRL 5	Component and/or breadboard validation in relevant environment
TRL 4	Component and/or breadboard validation in laboratory environment
TRL 3	Analytical and experimental critical function and/or characteristic proof-of-concept
TRL 2	Technology concept and/or application formulated
TRL 1	Basic principles observed and reported

Scoring Framework – Merit Criterion

Scoring Guide	Score
No Case Made – Commensurate with the project size, complexity and grant amount sought, to receive this rating the applicant has not demonstrated any of the requirements.	1
Poor Case Made – Commensurate with the project size, complexity and grant amount sought, to receive this rating the applicant has provided a poor response.	2
Satisfactory Case Made – Commensurate with the project size, complexity and grant amount sought, to receive this rating the applicant has provided a satisfactory response.	3
Good Case Made – Commensurate with the project size, complexity and grant amount sought, to receive this rating the applicant has provided a good response.	4
Strong Case Made – Commensurate with the project size, complexity and grant amount sought, to receive this rating the applicant has provided a clear and comprehensive response.	5