



Queensland  
Mental Health  
Commission

## **Grants Program: *Alcohol and Other Drugs – System Reform Research Grants***

### **Guidelines**

<b>Opening date for applications</b>	<b>Closing date</b>
27 January 2026	2pm, 27 February 2026

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## 1. Background

The *Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) System Reform Research Grants* (Grants Program) offering up to \$1,000,000 non-recurrent funding, supports the Queensland Mental Health Commission's (the Commission) commitment to strengthen and broaden Queensland's evidence-based responses to AOD use.

This commitment is reflected in *Achieving balance: The Queensland Alcohol and Other Drugs Plan 2022-2027 (Achieving balance)* Queensland's whole of government plan. *Achieving balance* highlights the critical importance of the evidence base that translational research generates and the impact research has on effective, equitable and sustainable responses. The research findings and recommendations will support AOD reform in Queensland. The Commission has been allocated non-recurrent funding to support the implementation of *Achieving balance*.

The Grants Program aims to support meaningful reductions in AOD-related harms and is aligned with *Achieving balance* priorities and actions. The research priorities, focus on supporting high-quality translational research that strengthens the evidence-based to progress system reform and reduce AOD harm through effective, systemic approaches and responses to AOD use.

## 2. About the Queensland Mental Health Commission (Commission)

The Commission is a statutory body established under the *Queensland Mental Health Commission Act 2013* to drive systemic reform of Queensland's mental health, AOD, and suicide prevention systems. The Commission encourages and facilitates change to improve the mental health and wellbeing of all Queenslanders, with a focus on:

preventing and reducing the impact of mental illness

preventing and reducing the impact of AOD related harm

preventing and reducing the impact of suicide

One of the Commission's primary functions is to develop and facilitate the implementation of a whole-of-government strategic plan to improve the mental health and wellbeing of Queenslanders, particularly people living with mental illness, AOD use, and those affected by suicide. The current strategic plan is [Shifting minds: The Queensland Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drugs, and Suicide Prevention Strategic Plan 2023-2028](#), which is complemented by three sub-plans:

- [Achieving balance: The Queensland Alcohol and Other Drugs Plan 2022-2027](#)
- [Every life: The Queensland Suicide Prevention Plan 2019-2029](#)
- [The Queensland Trauma Strategy 2024-2029](#)

*Achieving balance* puts into action Queensland's commitment to reducing AOD related harms and enhancing safety for individuals and the community.

The five priorities areas are:

1. Prevention and early intervention
2. Enhancing treatment and supports
3. Expand diversion
4. Reduce stigma and discrimination
5. Reduce harm

The Grants Program contributes to the implementation of *Achieving balance*, by;

- ✓ informing evidence-based policy reform in key areas
- ✓ promoting equity and inclusion by prioritising research that reflects the needs and voices of First Nations peoples and other priority groups
- ✓ responding to emerging trends
- ✓ accelerating translation and impact by fostering partnerships between researchers, policy makers, service providers and communities, ensuring that findings are implemented in practice and inform system-wide change.

### 3. About the Grants Program

The Grants Program will address critical knowledge gaps and focus on translational research, ensuring that new evidence is effectively moved from discovery into real-world policy and practice.

To be competitive for this **non-recurrent funding**, applicants must propose research that:

- aligns with the grant objectives (outlined below)
- aligns with the actions and objectives in *Achieving balance*, and
- incorporates knowledge translation activities to allow the application of evidence to AOD system reform in Queensland.

#### 3.1. Principles

The Grants Program is guided by the following principles:

**Person-centred and rights-based:** Research must uphold the dignity, safety, rights and autonomy of people who use AOD. Projects should adopt ethical, non-stigmatising approaches that promote inclusion and benefit to participants and communities.

**Evidence-informed and impact-driven:** Research should be informed by existing evidence and have potential to generate actionable evidence that improves health, wellbeing and social outcomes for people who use AOD, their families and communities.

**Lived – Living experience (LLE) leadership and partnership:** Research should support meaningful involvement of people with LLE at all stages and demonstrate how the project is aligned with the Commission's [Commitment to partnering with people with lived-living experience in Queensland](#).

**Cultural safety and self-determination:** Projects involving First Nations communities must be culturally safe, community-led and aligned with principles of self-determination, data sovereignty and ethical research practice.

**Innovation and responsiveness:** Research should support innovation, emerging methods, and be responsive to changes in drug trends, markets, patterns of use and system needs.

**Collaboration and system integration:** Research should promote cross-sector collaboration and whole-of-system solutions.

**Methodological rigour:** Research must demonstrate methodological rigour, transparent reporting, robust governance, and adherence to ethical and scientific standards.

**Sustainability:** Research should contribute to the cumulative evidence base and support long-term improvements and AOD system reform.

## 3.2 Research objectives

The overarching aim of the Grants Program is to support high-quality translational research that strengthens the evidence-base to progress system reform and reduce AOD harm through effective, systemic approaches and responses to AOD use.

Research proposals should support one or more of the following objectives:

Priority area	Objectives
<b>Harm reduction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Accelerate the development, evaluation and scale-up of emerging and innovative harm reduction approaches that reduce drug-related harms, strengthen public health outcomes and improve the wellbeing and rights of people who use AOD</li><li>• Develop evidence to support responses to evolving drug markets and use patterns</li><li>• Build evidence to support policy options for reducing alcohol-related harm</li></ul>
<b>Diversion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Strengthen evidence on what works to prevent and reduce contact with the justice system</li><li>• Build evidence for innovative diversion models that integrate health, social, and justice responses</li></ul>
<b>Workforce development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Generate system-level evidence on workforce capability, experience and needs, training pathways, cultural capability and wellbeing to inform reforms that ensure a sustainable, skilled and supported workforce across sectors</li></ul>
<b>Prevention and early intervention</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Strengthen the evidence base for effective primary prevention approaches</li><li>• Improve understanding of early risk indicators to enable early preventative responses across systems</li><li>• Identify effective models and approaches that integrate AOD prevention and early intervention with non-health sectors, for example education, family support, housing, employment services and other sectors</li></ul>
<b>Stigma and discrimination</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Build a comprehensive understanding of how stigma develops, how stigma is sustained, and affects people who use AOD, their families and communities</li><li>• Generate evidence on the policies, systems and organisational practices that perpetuate or reduce stigma</li><li>• Identify, implement and evaluate interventions that reduce AOD-related stigma at individual, community and systems level</li></ul>

Across priority areas, the research proposals may also:

- Strengthen the evidence base on the effectiveness, impact and value of LLE- led AOD initiatives
- Improve understanding of drug use trends, policy and intervention effectiveness, impacts and needs for priority populations:
  - First Nations
  - young people
  - people in contact with the criminal justice system
  - people experiencing homelessness or housing instability
  - rural and remote communities

- older adults
- families and carers
- Identify conditions and system enablers that support successful implementation of innovative prevention, early intervention, treatment, diversion and harm reduction approaches across geographic, workforce and system contexts.

The proposed research must:

- support AOD system reform and align with the strategic intent of *Achieving balance*
- support the development of new and/or emerging evidence
- have a focus on translational research that can inform and support AOD reform
- demonstrate inclusivity and suitability for diverse populations
- include a clear research plan
- include a project timeline
- include a detailed and itemised budget, with clearly identified overhead and administrative costs
- incorporate knowledge translation activities
- have ethical clearance proposed or obtained through a registered Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) in accordance with National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) requirements.

### 3.3 Partnerships and engagement

The Commission invites research proposals that include partnerships/collaborations between multiple parties, with one party identified to lead on the application and funding contract. The lead on the application must be a Queensland-based organisation.

Partnerships/collaborations are encouraged to maximise impact of investment and to ensure the proposed research is of relevance to people with LLE and to support translation of research outcomes into practice.

Some examples of partner/collaborator organisations may include but are not limited to:

- non-government organisations and charities
- education institutions
- community organisations
- peak body organisations
- those working in state, territory or local government – including health or those impacting health, such as social, justice or economic policy (e.g. criminal justice, child safety, housing, education)
- those working in the private sector
- other healthcare providers
- professional and community groups.

While partnerships are encouraged, they are not mandatory and may not be relevant for all research proposals.

Where an organisation is contributing cash or in-kind support, this information should be provided as part of your application and will contribute to the assessment of financial grant or in-kind support and strategic alignment and benefits.

### 3.4 Lived-living experience (LLE) engagement

The Commission recognises the importance of LLE in informing, guiding and leading the reform of AOD systems. The Commission considers it critical that people with LLE of AOD use are actively involved in the proposed research design, development and implementation. For the purposes of this Grant Program, the Commission defines a person with a 'lived and/or living experience' as:

- having a direct personal experience of AOD use, current or past, including recreational use
- being a family member, carer or support person for someone who uses AOD

The approach must align with the values outlined in the Commission's [Commitment to partnering with people with lived-living experience in Queensland](#) and use non-stigmatising, trauma-informed language and approaches.

The Commission believes that providing financial remuneration is an important part of recognising the valuable contribution that people with LLE bring. As such, the Commission expects the successful recipients to manage the participation payments in accordance with the Commission's paid participation fees\*, unless the applicant can demonstrate that its own paid participation policy offers better conditions. **Applications need to outline how people with LLE will be engaged in initiative design, implementation and evaluation including a budget for all paid participation expenses.**

\*Paid participation time should be remunerated in accordance with fees table below.

Participation level		Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Indicators				
	Regulatory and investigative powers. Registration, licensing or accreditation responsibilities. Significant influence on or reform of a particular industry, sector of the government or community or a profession.	Administration and management of a range of activities and resources. Research activities or independent expert advice on programs that impact the State of influence Government policy.	Consultation, advisory and liaison activities. Policy/operational advice with influence on a specific aspect of Government policy or a particular region.	
Chair or Co-chairperson				
Whole Day (Maximum of 7.25 hours)	\$650	\$520	\$390	
Half a day (Maximum of 4 hours)	\$325	\$260	\$195	
≤ 2 hours	\$162.50	\$130	\$97.50	
Member/ Participant				
Whole Day (Maximum of 7.25 hours)	\$500	\$400	\$300	
Half a day (Maximum of 4 hours)	\$250	\$200	\$150	
≤ 2 hours	\$125	\$100	\$75	

### 3.5 Sustainability: non-recurrent funding

This grant funding is non-recurrent. The Commission is unable to offer funding to successful applicants beyond the term of the grant. Applicants are required to consider how a research proposal and its outcomes could be scalable and will impact ongoing AOD reform beyond the funding period.

## 4. Eligibility

### 4.1 Eligibility

This Grants Program is suitable for organisations with suitable experience, demonstrated capability and skills to deliver research that meets the objectives identified under these guidelines.

To be eligible, the applicant must:

- have the capabilities and expertise to undertake AOD research
- identify a Principal Investigator (PI) at a senior level. The PI must demonstrate approval from the supporting organisation to undertake the research
- have a registered Australian Business Number and be registered for GST purposes, where relevant
- be **Queensland based** with established staff operating in Queensland, and the research must be undertaken in Queensland. Consideration will be made for partnerships that include non-Queensland based partnerships, so long as the lead applicant is Queensland-based and meets all the eligibility requirements outlined in section 4.1 *Eligibility*.
- hold or will obtain the appropriate workers' compensation, public liability and professional indemnity insurance required to undertake this initiative and all related activities
- have no outstanding financial liability, service delivery or performance issues for funding previously and/or currently provided by the Queensland Government
- Have included a detailed research plan, project timeline and budget in the application.

### 4.2 Who is not eligible to apply?

Applicants are not eligible where they:

- are a Local, State or Commonwealth Government agency/statutory entity
- are an unincorporated association, a sole trader, or an individual
- declared bankrupt or subject to insolvency proceedings (as relevant to the entity type)
- accept any form of funding from tobacco and/or alcohol companies or their related foundations either directly or indirectly or promote the use of tobacco, alcohol or illicit drugs
- initiatives that seek to promote political or religious views or ideologies.

## 5. Grant funding

### 5.1 Grant funding available

A total of \$1,000,000 is available for the Grants Program

The Commission invites applications from \$100,000, up to a maximum of \$200,000, per research proposal, to be spent and complete by 30 June 2027. Applicants may submit more than one application, provided the applications are for a different research project.

Where an application exceeds the upper limit of a funding category, the applicant must detail the funding source to cover the gap in funding. Funding requests that exceed the upper limit without an identified source for the balance of funds required will not be considered.

Applicants must include a proposed budget, using the template linked in SmartyGrants and available on the Commission website <https://www.qmhc.qld.gov.au/documents/budgetproposaltemplate4xlsx>

## 5.2. Eligible grant activities

Grant funding can be utilised for:

- research as defined by the [Australian Research Council's definition](#)
- salaries for research proposal personnel
- teaching relief
- equipment or consumables that are for the specific purposes of the proposal (e.g., specialised computing requirements)
- expert services of a third party if the services are directly related to and essential for the proposal (e.g., language translation services, transcribing services)
- travel (not interstate or overseas) that is essential to the proposal (e.g., travel to field sites to collect data or undertake co-design)
- workshops, co-design and similar activities that are considered essential for the conduct of the proposal (including reasonable hospitality costs such as morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea)
- activities to share and promote the findings and learnings from the work.

## 5.3. Funding exclusions

Grant funding **cannot** be used for:

- research proposals that do not align with the grant objectives
- research activities delivered outside Queensland
- research that is already funded through another source, including another Queensland Government organisation. For example, you cannot expend against two funding sources for the same activity (sometimes referred to as 'double dipping')
- research that is not unique or is a duplicate of existing research
- research focused on evaluation of a service delivery program, unless there is a systems reform focus
- PhD or Honours stipends (including stipend 'top ups')
- recurrent or retrospective funds, including enhancements to existing research or initiatives; reimbursement of costs already incurred or expended; and any component of the initiative or related activities that have taken place prior to the application being approved
- for-profit activities
- interstate or overseas travel
- costs not directly related to the proposal (e.g., professional membership fees, professional development courses, insurance, mobile phones and other indirect costs)
- organisational salary on-costs above standard salary on-costs
- organisational over-heads and operational costs, including salaries and wages for permanent and/or existing positions, salaries or wages for staff not engaged in direct delivery of the research, general facility and accommodation related costs.
- general operational expenses or purchasing and repair of equipment not related to the proposal

- recurring maintenance or operational costs of the organisation/private entity or their facilities
- activities that involve lobbying or commercial ventures for personal gain or fundraising activities
- major capital works or upgrades to existing infrastructure
- the purchase of vehicles or similar depreciable assets
- activities that cannot be covered by public liability insurance.

Note, these items may be considered as in-kind contributions.

## 5.4. Applicant

An applicant is the organisation applying for the Grants Program. If an applicant's research proposal is selected, the applicant will enter into a Contract with the Commission. The applicant will assume full responsibility for the research proposal and meet all deliverables and reporting requirements, even if other parties undertake components of the initiative.

The applicant will be responsible for the governance of the research project and will have the capacity to monitor and report on the progress and achievement of deliverables and manage risks.

Applicants must have no outstanding financial accountability, service delivery or performance issues for funding provided by the Queensland Government and must hold insurance which will cover the period during which activities are funded.

## 5.5. Timing

The grant will commence on the execution of a Contract between the successful applicant and the Commission and will be subject to the specific requirements of the research proposal. The timeframe outlined in the application is expected to include appropriate time allocated for the research, with the Contract to conclude no later than 30 June 2027. Contracts are anticipated to be executed for proposal commencement no later than June 2026.

# 6. Selection criteria

Research proposals are assessed on the below selection criteria. All research must conform to privacy provisions under the [Information Privacy Act \(Qld\) 2009](#), the [Privacy Act \(Cth\) 1988](#), and the ethical standards outlined in the [National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2023 | HMRC](#). Decisions to approve or reject research proposals are also subject to the [Human Rights Act 2019 \(Qld\)](#).

Selection Criteria	Response	Weighting
<b>Selection criteria 1.</b> The research proposal meets the objectives of the Grants Program	<p>Responses must demonstrate <u>all</u> of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• an evidence-informed justification for the proposed research, including a clear explanation of the problem, knowledge gap, or unmet need the research will address, and its significance within the current evidence base.</li> <li>• how the research aligns with the objectives of the Grants Program</li> <li>• expected <u>outcomes</u> of the research and how these meet the objectives of the Grant Program</li> <li>• expected <u>outputs</u> of the research and how these meet the objectives of the Grant Program</li> </ul>	30%

Selection Criteria	Response	Weighting
<b>Selection criteria 2.</b> Quality and feasibility of the research proposal	Responses must demonstrate <u>all</u> of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a detailed research plan including timeline</li> <li>• suitability of the methodology to the program of work and timeframes</li> <li>• a budget with clearly identified costs for each key component of work to be undertaken and how the costs represent good value for money</li> </ul>	25%
<b>Selection criteria 3.</b> The research team demonstrates the capability to successfully deliver the initiative	Responses must demonstrate <u>all</u> of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the organisation and research team has the capacity and capability to successfully undertake the proposed research; through demonstrated experience in delivering high-impact AOD research reports and publications</li> <li>• the proposal includes clearly defined roles and responsibilities of key personnel and partners/collaborators to undertake specific activities</li> <li>• how people with LLE of AOD use and other communities that may be a focus of the research are engaged in research activities</li> </ul>	25%
<b>Selection criteria 4:</b> Significance and impact	Responses must demonstrate <u>all</u> of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the anticipated evidence-base, policy and/or economic impacts of the research</li> <li>• how the research could be replicated and applied across settings and regions</li> <li>• demonstrates how the research will be translated, including knowledge sharing activities</li> <li>• how the research will drive AOD reform beyond the grant funding.</li> </ul>	20%

## 7. Additional contextual information

Applicants are encouraged to consider the following strategic plans for additional contextual information:

- [Shifting minds: Queensland Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drugs and Suicide Prevention Strategic Plan 2023-2028](#)
- [Achieving balance: The Queensland Alcohol and Other Drugs Plan 2022-2027](#)
- [Every life: The Queensland Suicide Prevention Plan 2019-2029](#)
- [The Queensland Trauma Strategy 2024-2029](#)

Messaging about AOD can be sensitive and nuanced, and it is important to use safe, inclusive language when communicating about these topics. Words matter and can have either a positive or negative impact on stigma. For guidance, please refer to the Network of Alcohol and Other Drugs Agencies: [Language matters](#).

## 8. How to apply

### 8.1. Using AI tools in your grant application

The applicant may use generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools to support the preparation of their application, such as assisting with editing, formatting, or clarifying text. AI tools should not be used to generate entire applications or to develop research proposal ideas.

All content produced with the assistance of AI tools must be carefully reviewed and verified by the applicant to ensure it is accurate, original, and aligns with the objectives of the Grants Program. The applicant remains fully responsible for the content of their submission, including compliance with intellectual property and copyright requirements.

### 8.2. Submitting an application

**All applications must be submitted online via Smartygrants.**

Visit the Commission's Grant [landing page](#) or access the direct link to the Grant application form <https://qmhc.smartygrants.com.au/AODSRRG>

Offline applications **will not be accepted**.

Shortlisted applicants may be required to provide further information and/or participate in an interview.

**No extensions to application submissions** will be permitted and **no late submissions or amendments will be accepted**.

### 8.3. Timeline and key dates

Activity	Timeline
Applications opened via SmartyGrants - Amendments permitted up to due date	27 January 2026
Briefing Session	4 February 2026
Closing date on SmartyGrants for questions	16 February 2026
<b>Closing date for SmartyGrant online applications</b>	2pm AEST, 27 February 2026
Further information requested and interviews (if required)	26 March 2026
Intended completion date for evaluation of offers	2 April 2026
Successful applicants notified	14 April 2026
Intended Contract start date	June 2026

#### Briefing Session

The Commission will hold an online briefing session via Microsoft Teams **4 February 2:30pm-3:30pm AEST**. Attendance is encouraged, but it is not mandatory. Please register your attendance via the link [here](#).

## 9. Successful recipients

### 9.1 Contract

The Commission will only enter into a Contract with the applicant organisation (one party). The Contract sets out the terms and conditions that will apply to the grants, but some inclusions will be made based on information from successful applications. The Commission may choose to negotiate directly with a successful applicant in relation to some aspects of selected initiatives.

The Contract will outline payment instalments and the conditions for receiving each instalment. The final payment will be made following the acceptance of the final report and financial statement by the Commission. The final payment will be progressed prior to 30 June 2027. Accordingly, applicants should consider the requirements outlined in the Contract prior to completing the application.

Prior to offering a grant, the Commission reserves the right to undertake further Due Diligence checks of the applicant, including but not limited to the following:

- Solvency checking
- Australian Business Number checking
- Liaising with relevant Queensland Government agencies
- Liaising with the proposed partner organisation
- Checking references.

### 9.2 Promotion

The Commission is likely to promote selected research projects through its various communication processes, at certain events, and/or at key stages in the life of the Grants Program. The Commission expects successful applicants to work in collaboration with Commission staff to provide relevant information in a timely manner to support these processes.

The Commission supports successful applicants promoting their research locally through their communication processes and networks, for instance, on the applicant's website and newsletters. The Commission may also be supportive of successful applicants promoting their research through a formal external process or third-party publication, for example, at a national conference or peer-review publication. However, approval must first be obtained from the Commission.

In both instances, acknowledgement of the Commission's contribution will be required. Further information about the Commission's branding and acknowledgement requirements will be provided to successful applicants.

### 9.3 Reporting

In line with the Contract conditions, it is expected that a successful applicant (the Supplier) will provide regular progress reports on the funded research proposal, and in addition will provide a detailed written report on the research at its conclusion.

Grant recipients will also be required to provide regular financial acquittal reporting aligned with progress reporting and projected proposal budget.

If the Commission is not satisfied with the progress of a research proposal, further payment of funds will not be

made until satisfactory progress has been made. If satisfactory progress is not achieved within a reasonable time, the Contract may be terminated, and all unspent funds will be recovered by the Commission via invoice. Where there is significant underspend against the approved budget, the Commission may withhold further payments until the underspend is addressed or reallocated in agreement with the Commission.

## **9.4 Knowledge translation activities**

In addition to reporting activities outlined in section 9.3 *Reporting* and knowledge translation activities outlined as part of your response to section 6 *Selection criteria*; as part of the grant conditions, successful applicants are to participate in a Research Practice Exchange Forum towards the end of the project in 2027. This will explore the future impacts of research projects and to inform policy and practice exchange. The details of this knowledge translation activity will be confirmed at a later date.