

Faculty of Science

Ideas2Impact (I2I) Initiative

2026 Guidelines



1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Researcher-led discoveries hold immense potential to drive innovation and deliver impact by transforming industry and other organizations. Simultaneously, the challenges faced by external organizations can catalyse academic innovation. *Advancing Melbourne 2030* highlights Investigator-driven research as the engine of discovery and emphasizes the opportunity to grow our impact through meaningful collaborations and partnerships. These can involve diverse communities, affiliates, State and Federal governments, not-for-profits and non-government organisations, and companies in all sectors.
- 1.2 The Faculty of Science (FoS) *Research Strategy 2023-2030* commits to advancing our research through fundamental discovery, targeted investment, and strategic partnerships. These efforts aim to support Australia's participation in a global knowledge economy and leveraging our expertise to deliver meaningful impact for next and end users. A key priority is to cultivate sustainable and mutually beneficial partnerships between FoS researchers and organisations, at local, national and global levels, and to engage with diverse communities. However, various barriers can hinder successful collaboration with external enterprises, limiting the realization of synergies and the full impact of our research. The '*Maximising Impact via Industry-Science Enterprise*' ([MAXIMISE](#)) discussion paper outlines the virtuous cycle that emerges when these synergies are effectively realized at the Industry-Academia nexus.
- 1.3 The Problem-Solution-Impact (PSI) framework is an approach for evaluating research impact by tracing the journey from problem identification to real-world outcomes. This framework begins by defining and assessing a significant problem, ensuring that the research addresses a well-argued need. Next, it emphasizes the development and implementation of solutions through research methodologies. The final stage involves assessing impact, which requires tracking how research outcomes translate into practical applications, policy changes, or societal benefits. Key considerations in applying the PSI framework include establishing a clear theory of change, engaging stakeholders throughout the process, and comprehensive evaluation of impact.

2. OBJECTIVES

- 2.1 The Ideas2Impact (I2I) Initiative seeks to unearth ideas with impact potential, support the aspirations of FoS researchers, address barriers to translation and commercialisation, and foster collaboration through partnerships across the University and with industry, government and not-for-profit sectors.
- 2.2 Recognizing that ideas and partnerships vary in their stage of development on the discovery-to-adoption journey, the Faculty offers funding support help projects progress to the next stage in development.
- 2.3 The primary objective of the I2I initiative is to support translation and commercialization projects on a pathway to financial sustainability¹ and impact. Additional objectives include:

¹ We define financial sustainability as: 1) the capacity of a project to secure a steady flow of funds and generate revenue for maintaining and continuing the work. In the longer term financial sustainability may require profitability or other considerations for a resultant business or non-profit enterprise formed as a result of the project.

- Developing initial data to support engagement with industry partners and act as a pathway for increased research income.
- Developing entrepreneurship skills and experience in FoS staff and graduate students;
- Supporting the identification and disclosure of FoS derived intellectual property;
- Facilitating the commercialisation of University of Melbourne majority-owned intellectual property into products or services.

3. APPLICATION PROCESS

- 3.1 Applications must be submitted through the online application form by the due date. Applications received after the deadline will not be considered.
- 3.2 Applications should include an assessment of the technology or societal readiness levels (TRL/SRL), applying a rating that aligns with the project's stage of development and its relevant industry sector.
- 3.3 Typically, projects should fall within TRL 2-5 or SRL 3-6.
- 3.4 Applications must provide a clear plan for how I2I funding will help to develop the project, and where next-stage funding will be sought to sustain momentum. In some cases, the University of Melbourne Proof-of-Concept fund or the Genesis Pre-Seed Fund is a likely source of next-stage funding. However, applicants are encouraged to propose alternative funding sources that align with their project's translation or commercialization pathway.
- 3.5 Applicants must liaise with the Business Development team to write a draft Action Plan, describing their development pathway for their project, to be included in their application.
- 3.6 Applicants must complete all sections of the online application form. Where a question cannot be completed, it should be marked with 'not applicable'. No section of the form should be left blank.
- 3.7 Incomplete applications and/or failure to comply with the eligibility criteria may render an application ineligible.

4. ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES AND FUNDING LEVELS

- 4.1 Examples of activities eligible for funding support include, but are not limited to:
- Applied and/or critical research activities
 - Development of external outreach material
 - Travel to meet partners/end-user groups
 - Support for running of targeted industry workshops directly related to the project
- 4.2 Requests for funding will be considered for funding up to \$50k, with funds awarded to be used over 12 months from commencement of the project.
- 4.3 Only costs directly related to the project will be eligible for support.
- 4.4 In 2026 funding will be provided from the Shimmins Trust.

5. SELECTION CRITERIA AND ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 Submitted and complete applications will be assessed by a panel chaired by the Assistant Dean, Enterprise & Innovation that includes Associate Dean, Enterprise & Innovation, and School Research Translation and Commercialisation Advocates.
- 5.2 Applications will be assessed by academic members of the FoS Enterprise & Innovation committee (or delegates of), and representatives from the Science Research Office, according to the following assessment criteria:

- The Problem, Solution and associated Impact are clearly articulated, with strong potential to address a significant unmet need and deliver meaningful outcomes
- The project has a high likelihood of advancing along the Technology Readiness Level (TRL) scale (or its social equivalent), potentially resulting in a novel product, technology, policy or service, whether for profit or social enterprise.
- The project is likely to foster existing partnerships and/or cultivate new opportunities for collaboration, growth, and future funding.
- The team has demonstrated clear commitment and investment—either directly or indirectly—in advancing their research toward translation and commercialization.
- The project is well-aligned with the objectives and intent of the I2I Initiative.

- 5.3 Applicants will be notified of their outcome within 2 weeks following the panel’s review.
- 5.4 FoS Assistant Dean (Enterprise & Innovation) is the final approver of the principles, rules and resulting support recommendations of the I2I Initiative.
- 5.5 All matters and applications relating to the I2I Initiative are considered Commercial-in-Confidence. In the event of a conflict of interest for panel member, conflict of interest principles will apply. This includes disclosure of the potential conflict to the panel and exclusion from deliberation on that project. Applicants invited to present will be asked for written permission to discuss their proposal more widely (e.g. with the applicant’s Head of School, or other researchers, or Knowledge and Technology Transfer team).

6. POST-AWARD PROJECT MANAGEMENT

- 6.1 Successful applicants should meet with the Business Development team member supporting their project to finalize the Action Plan shortly after notification of a successful award.
- 6.2 At 6 months, the lead CI of a supported project must submit a progress report that demonstrates progress of the finalized Action Plan.
- 6.3 Shortly afterwards, the lead Chief Investigator must meet with the Business Development team to assess progress towards finalized Action Plan.
- 6.4 At 12 months, the lead CI should submit a final report working with the Business Development team to assess the progress against the Action Plan, and to provide advice for next steps.
- 6.5 Successful recipients of funding are required to keep record of their expenditure for the 12 months of the project.
- 6.6 Well-justified requests for a project extension may be approved by the Associate Dean, Enterprise & Innovation and submitted to the FoS Research Office team three months prior to the Action Plan end date. Only one extension will be granted.

7. KEY DATES

- 7.1 Table of Key Dates:

Applications open	1 June 2026
Applications close	10am, 3 August 2026
Panel assessment and recommendations	17 August 2026 – 4 September 2026
Applicants advised of recommendations	7 September 2026
Meeting with Business Development to finalise action plan and identify milestones	Mid – End of September
6 Months Progress Report due	April 2027
Final report on Action plan	October 2027

8. ELIGIBILITY

- 8.1 Academic staff and PhD students from the Faculty of Science are eligible to apply.
- 8.2 Where an application is made by a PhD student there must be Academic Supervision listed within the application.
- 8.3 Each application must be led by a salaried Academic staff member.
- 8.4 The lead Academic staff member must be employed throughout the duration of the support.
- 8.5 PhD student applicants should be within their candidature or hold an academic appointment throughout the duration of the support.

9. OUT OF SCOPE

- 9.1 Activities and requests that are out of scope for support (including funding) for the I2I Initiative include:
 - Requests for large pieces of equipment or infrastructure
 - Requests for journal publication and webpage development
 - Requests for funding for support of running of conferences or symposia
 - Requests that lack a compelling translation or commercialization goal
 - Requests that lack a realistic argument for long-term financial sustainability

10. OTHER

- 10.1 Pre-existing intellectual property (IP) must have at least 50% ownership by the University. In the case of co-ownership, the University of Melbourne should be the lead institution and all required agreements for the development and exploitation of the IP have been put in place. IP derived from I2I funded work will be wholly owned by the University of Melbourne (unless in the instance of pre-agreed co-ownership) and shall be subject to University of Melbourne's Intellectual Property Policy.
- 10.2 Non-University of Melbourne personnel should be identified within the Action Plan and their role within the project should be defined.
- 10.3 The idea or invention must not be encumbered by any other prior obligations that would preclude the University of Melbourne from commercialising it (i.e. a pre-existing exclusive license, sponsored research agreement, ongoing collaboration with an industry partner, or consulting agreement).

11. CONDITIONS OF FUNDING

- 11.1 Successful applicants should note that in the event of the award and acceptance of FoS I2I Initiative support, a non-confidential description of their research may be published. Acknowledgement of the FoS I2I Initiative support of the project must be included in any publications or presentations.
- 11.2 The Chief Investigator is responsible for the project, for its concept, the strategic decisions called for in its pursuit and for the communication of the results.
- 11.3 The Chief Investigator must ensure the research is conducted in accordance with University of Melbourne policies, including compliance with the Code of Conduct for Research and human research ethics, conflict of interest, animal experimentation ethics, requirements of the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator, health and safety, conflict of interest, and intellectual property. No project may proceed unless the appropriate ethical or other required clearances have been obtained.
- 11.4 Funding is for a maximum of one year only. Unless variation is approved by the Assistant Dean, Enterprise & Innovation, Projects must be completed, and funds expended within 12 months of project start date. FoS reserves the right to reclaim unspent funds at any time.
- 11.5 Successful recipients of funding are required to keep record of their expenditure for the project.
- 11.6 Successful recipients must provide a progress report at 6 months.

- 11.7 Successful recipients must provide a final report at the end of 12 months demonstrating their progress against the Action Plan and milestones.
- 11.8 Unless special conditions are set down by the Associate Dean, Enterprise & Innovation, the Chief Investigator is responsible for ensuring that the expenditure of any awarded funds is broadly in accord with the budget approved in the action plan and is consistent at all times with the nature and aims of the project and objectives of the I2I Initiative.

12. ADMINISTRATIVE CONTACT

- 12.1 All enquiries regarding this initiative can be directed to the FoS Ideas2Impact Initiative coordinator at science-research@unimelb.edu.au