

## FAQs for 2009 E-learning Innovations funding applications

The E-learning Innovations business activity of the Australian Flexible Learning Framework (Framework) is now inviting registered training organisations (RTOs) to apply for funding to embed innovative e-learning solutions in their services to clients.

E-learning Innovations funding is managed locally in every Australian state and territory and you should direct specific questions about funding in 2009 to your local Innovations Coordinator. State and territory pages are also where you will find the specific guidelines and application forms you should use as well as details of free information sessions being held locally in February.

The answers below are designed to provide **general guidance only** to commonly asked questions. When in doubt, always refer back to your local Innovations Coordinator.

Additional general questions that come up during this application period will be addressed in the national E-learning Innovations blog (<http://www.innovationblog.flexiblelearning.net.au/>) - please feel free to join the discussion and submit your questions using the 'comments' feature.

### ***Frequently asked questions:***

#### **Who is eligible to apply for funding?**

Applicants must be RTOs registered in the state/territory where they are applying and have scope in their registration for the accredited training the project will support. In many cases projects will need to show how they align with the VET priorities in that state/territory. Check your state/territory funding application guidelines for more specific details.

#### **How much funding can I apply for?**

Funding is generally in the range of \$10,000-50,000 per project, but can vary between states and territories, so it's best to check the funding application guidelines for the state or territory where you'll be applying.

Funding received through the program must be matched by the RTO, including through in-kind contributions.

#### **What counts as matched funding?**

Matched funding can include direct funding, or in-kind funding such as releasing paid staff to work on the project, covering project management costs, providing mentors, meeting room or equipment hire, and travel expenses. Direct and in-kind funding (that matches the Framework funding for which you have applied for) must be included in the budget you prepare as part of your application.

### **What kinds of projects will be funded?**

Two categories of projects will be funded:

- 1) Projects based on business-training provider partnerships (ie partnerships between RTOs and other organisations) where the e-learning solution is based in a specific workplace or organisational context.
- 2) Projects that are based on developing innovative solutions to meet the needs of specific learner groups or individual learners.

Projects in the first category will need to provide evidence of the business-training provider partnership as well as demonstrating the commitment of the partner(s) during the project. In some states/territories, projects need to show evidence of partnerships with the learner representatives as well. Check with your Innovations Coordinator for information specific to your state/territory.

### **Do I have to develop a whole qualification with the funding?**

Applicants are expected to specify how the project will contribute to the implementation of accredited training using e-learning. This could include anything from supporting a unit of competency to developing an implementation plan across a whole qualification. Speak with your state/territory Innovations Coordinator for specific information on your project idea.

### **Can organisations who are just starting out in e-learning receive funding?**

E-learning Innovations funding specifically supports e-learning solutions that will be applied and sustained beyond the life of the project. If your project will embed e-learning within a business or learner group in a way that is educationally sound and addresses a genuine business need, it is eligible - innovations or solutions do not need to be highly complex or specialised. Successful projects in 2008 included projects where the organisations were in the early stages of e-learning and implemented modest, simple and effective solutions for clients.

For RTOs at the initial stages who are wanting to explore a range of e-learning options or access professional development opportunities, there are other products, resources, support networks and activities that will help you get started and may be more appropriate for your purposes. Contact your local E-learning Coordinator from your state/territory page for more information on these.

### **How big should my project be?**

There is no constraint on the size of project beyond what you can budget for within the available Framework funds, together with your RTO's matched contribution. Selection committees in states/territories will be looking at the congruence between the project proposal and the budget items to ensure that funding levels are appropriate. A small project has as much chance of getting funded as a large project.

Projects in the past have reported that time passes very quickly in a Framework year, so when you're scoping your project, be realistic about what can be achieved within the timeline

and budget you set. That way you'll be on track and celebrating (rather than stressing!) at the end of the year regardless of the size of the project.

### **I've got a great idea - who can give me some advice before I apply?**

Your local Innovations Coordinator will be happy to give you feedback about your project ideas, and to offer general advice about how to put in a stronger application. Contact them by phone or email to discuss your ideas. Other general advice would include:

- attend an information session in your state/territory so that you can discuss your ideas with others
- search the Framework website to see what has been done before and how you could build on past work or use existing resources and infrastructure
- watch the *Top 10 Tips for Your E-learning Innovations Project in 2009* video which sums up advice from 2008 teams
- sign up for the Framework's monthly e-newsletter, *Flex e-News*, to keep up with the latest news on e-learning from the Framework, around Australia and internationally.

### **What is a business case?**

If you complete the application form using the section headings provided, you will have prepared your business case, which will become a valuable project management tool for you to use during the project. The submitted business case is the document the selection panel will use to determine which projects will receive funding.

### **How do I improve my chances of receiving funding?**

In a nutshell, RTOs that make a compelling business case and propose a realistic and achievable e-learning solution that will be embedded and sustained will make a strong case for funding.

Make sure that you address the guidelines clearly and succinctly with a firm eye on the selection criteria when answering the questions in the application form. The dot points included with the questions are designed to draw out information relevant to those criteria and get you thinking about the sorts of things you could include - you need not answer every dot point.

### **What kinds of 'business' can be included in partnerships?**

Businesses may include anything from local government bodies, small businesses, non-profit organisations, support organisations, land councils, volunteer organisations, all the way up to mining companies and corporations.

### **Which learner groups should projects address?**

In general, projects addressing the learning needs of learners with disabilities, Indigenous learners, mature age learners and at-risk youth are encouraged. State and territory guidelines provide specific information on identified learner groups being targeted by those

states/territories in 2009. However, any identified learner group that will benefit from an innovative e-learning solution being embedded and sustained will be considered.

### **What outcomes are you looking for in return for the national investment?**

The E-learning Innovations business activity has been funded in 2009 after the Framework has spent almost a decade of work in developing a national e-learning infrastructure, including products, resources and support networks. For this reason, projects are expected to use, modify or extend what the Framework has already developed for e-learning rather than reinventing the wheel.

A successful project will have looked at what's around within the Framework, aiming to produce something new that can be sustained and embedded in the RTO's e-learning approach as well as adding something to national e-learning infrastructure on completion of the project.

These contributions will vary depending on the nature of the project. They could be a new resource, a customised existing resource, guidelines for an innovative e-learning approach, or a case study on the innovative use of a new technology. It will not necessarily be a "learning resource" unless your project is about developing learning resources.

Speak with your state/territory Innovations Coordinator for more information.

### **If I develop a resource, who owns the intellectual property and copyright?**

The intellectual property and copyright developed by your project belongs to the Commonwealth of Australia. This will ensure that projects benefit not only the participants, but also add to national e-learning resources and expertise from which other RTOs, businesses and learners can also benefit.

### **Can I partner with RTOs in another state/territory?**

If you are thinking about a partnership with RTOs in another state or territory, it is important to get talking as soon as possible with the Innovations Coordinators in the states and territories involved. This will help RTOs at an early stage determine what sorts of collaborations will be workable, and knowing what kinds of cross-border proposals may be planned will be useful for selection panels.

### **What commitment will I need to make to the project?**

You will need to formally report twice during the project - once mid-year about your progress, and then again at the end of the year on your final outcomes. You will be asked to complete survey information at other times in the year to provide data for research purposes and reporting to Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR). The guidelines provide information on requirements in relation to branding, copyright, intellectual property, and sharing outcomes from the project.

States and territories differ slightly in commitments such as participation in end-of-year showcases and other events - please speak with your Innovations Coordinator for specific details for your state/territory.

### **What help will I get during the project?**

There's lots of support available for funded projects. Induction workshops will be held in each state and territory when projects start, and there will be monitoring and support of projects by state and territory Innovations Coordinators throughout the year.

There will be opportunities to network and collaborate with other teams during the year so that the benefits of innovation are shared with showcases held in most states/territories at the end of the year.

You will also be linked in with the Framework's E-learning Coordinators and Toolbox Champions, and be encouraged to engage with Framework networks and events.

### **OK, how do I apply?**

Applications must follow the funding application guidelines - including the submission deadline - for the relevant state or territory. Applications include a project justification, a description of the client focus, learning strategy and desired outcomes, a project management plan and your proposed budget. They also require a statement of support from the RTO and business partner (where applicable).

Applications throughout Australia close at 5.00pm on **5 March 2009**.

### **When are successful applicants told, and when must their projects start?**

Successful applicants in most states/territories will be told at the end of March following the assessment of applications by state and territory selection panels. Projects will start after contractual arrangements are completed in late March/early April. See your state/territory guidelines for specific timeframes.

### **What if I've had Framework funding in the past - will this disadvantage me?**

No. We ask for this information in the application for statistical purposes only. All applications are assessed against the stated selection criteria.