TAFE Centre of Excellence Clean Energy Batteries Applied Research Grants Round 2

Grant opportunity opens:	**29 January 2026**
Grant opportunity closes:	**11:00pm AEST, 16 March 2026*** Note: The TAFE Centre of Excellence Clean Energy Batteries may amend the closing date and time at its own discretion by issuing a notice to those registered in SurePact grant management portal. * Please note that any tech support for the grant management portal will close at 2:00pm AEST 16 March 2026
Administering entities:	TAFE Centre of Excellence Clean Energy Batteries
Enquiries:	If you have any questions, contact: CleanEnergyBatteriesTCE@tafeqld.edu.au
Type of grant opportunity:	Open competitive (by application)

These Guidelines contain information for the TAFE Centre of Excellence Clean Energy Batteries Applied Research Grants (Grants) Round 2.

These Guidelines must be read prior to applying, with particular attention afforded to:

- the purpose of the Grants
- the eligibility and assessment criteria
- the grant consideration and selection process
- how successful applications will be notified and the payment schedule
- the reporting expectations of Grantees
- grantees' responsibilities in relation to the opportunity.

Note: The Centre endeavours to make application process as inclusive and accessible. If you require technical assistance with completing an application online, please contact us via email prior to 9 March 2026: CleanEnergyBatteriesTCE@tafeqld.edu.au

1. About the Centre

TAFE Centres of Excellence are joint initiatives between the Australian Government, and states and territories governments, which supports the development of a coordinated response to delivering a skilled workforce in strategically important industries as defined by the National Skills Agreement (the NSA).

TAFE Queensland has been selected to lead the TAFE Centre of Excellence Clean Energy Batteries (The Centre), a $20 million joint initiative between the Australian Government and the Queensland Government, with a focus on growth in the sustainable energy sector by improving and innovating training for emerging skills needs to deliver a pipeline of qualified workers across Australia.

2. About the Grants

The Grants have been designed to facilitate partnerships between a wide range of stakeholders in the battery and renewable energy sectors, including the industries transitioning to renewable energy and battery technologies, to advance applied research, focusing on innovation, sustainability, and workforce development to address industry needs and inform related education and training.

The objectives of the Grants are to:

1. *encourage collaborative research* – promote partnerships between and engagement among the key stakeholders in planning, designing and implementing applied research projects that address real-world challenges
2. *support evidence-based solutions* – fund research initiatives that generate actionable insights and evidence to inform training and education for the renewable energy and battery industry
3. *enhance TAFE capacity* – provide opportunities for professional development and capacity building for researchers, educators, and students involved in VET applied research
4. *facilitate knowledge transfer* – ensure the dissemination of research findings through publications, conferences, and workshops to maximise the impact and scalability of successful projects
5. *promote inclusivity and diversity* – prioritise research projects that address the needs of diverse communities, including First Nations peoples, to ensure equitable access to training and employment opportunities.

The intended outcomes of the Grants are to:

1. support the delivery of high-quality products, services and systems in the renewable energy and battery sector and enhance education and training within TAFEs
2. develop innovative solutions to realise the opportunities and address the challenges in the renewable energy and battery sector
3. enhance diversity, equity and inclusion in the renewable energy and battery workforce.

2.1 Research in partnership

To support the objectives of the Grants, all applicants must demonstrate that the proposed research activity will include a substantive partnership with TAFE Queensland and/or other TAFEs. Where the lead applicant is a TAFE, the application should demonstrate a partnership with industry, university and/or community organisations.

Interstate applicants are encouraged to apply in partnership with TAFE Queensland and/or Queensland-based organisations, as the Grants are designed to address the state's priorities while aiming to disseminate outcomes nationally.

A partnership arrangement with TAFEs may include, but is not limited to:

- co-design and/or co-delivery of research activities with TAFE educators and/or students
- inclusion of TAFE personnel as co-researchers and/or subject matter experts
- other in-kind contributions that enable or enhance research activities.

Partnership arrangements, including the key roles and responsibilities of each organisation listed in the research proposal should be clearly outlined in the application form. It is the applicant's responsibility to engage potential partners prior to submitting the application and to secure letters of support. Partnership arrangements verified through the letters of support will be viewed favourably by the Selection Advisory Committee.

Applicants seeking a partnership with TAFE Queensland must submit their expression of interest to the TAFE Queensland Commercial via the email TQCommercial@tafeqld.edu.au at least three weeks before the application closing date. The EOI should clearly outline the proposed project and partnership details, including the role and indicative contributions of TAFE Queensland. Please note that the EOI does not guarantee a partnership, which will depend on the needs and availability of staff and resources during the proposed project period.

Research proposals, particularly those directly involve First Nations peoples, are urged to ensure cultural safety in designing and implementing projects. The Centre can provide *Culturally Safe Training for First Nations People Guideline* and the flowchart outlining the process, should applicants have no framework in place to guide the process.

3. Grant opportunity process

Funding round is designed to achieve Australian and Queensland Governments policy objectives
This grant opportunity is part of the Centre's Applied Research Program, which contributes to the joint objectives of the Commonwealth Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, the Queensland Department of Trade, Employment and Training, and the Centre under the NSA.

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Grant opportunity opens
The Centre releases the Grant Opportunity Guidelines on the TAFE Queensland Applied Research Grants landing page.

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Application submission

Upon the opening of the SurePact grant management portal, applicants will be able to complete and submit their applied research project proposal, ensuring to address all eligibility and assessment criteria, along with compulsory support material, by the closing date to be considered.

Grant application assessment and approvals
The Centre considers all applications which meet the eligibility requirements (see Section 5) on an openly competitive basis against the assessment criteria (see Section 6). Application assessment is conducted by external, independent assessors. Written recommendations are then provided to the relevant sub-Committees and the Steering Committee for review and endorsement, and to the TAFE Queensland Executive for final approval.

Notifications of outcome
Successful and non-successful applications will be electronically notified of the outcome of the funding round approximately 12 weeks after the closing date.

Grant Agreement
Successful applicants are sent a Letter of Offer, which outlines the payment schedule and grant conditions. Upon acceptance of the Letter, the terms and conditions specified in the Letter will form a legally enforceable Grant Agreement between TAFE Queensland and the applicant.

Delivery of Grant
Grantees are provided with the grant monies and commence the delivery of the agreed upon grant activities as per their Grant Agreement. Grant Activity is monitored and managed through the reporting process (see Section 11).

4. Funding Amount and Duration

A total funding amount of $1,000,000 is available for the round 2 of the Grants. While applicants may submit more than one application per round, they are eligible to receive funding for one proposal per round. The round 2 grant opportunity will be published on the TAFE Queensland Applied Research Grants landing page on 29 January 2026, when the SurePact grant management portal will also open for submission.

Applications must nominate a specific amount of funding between **$50,000** and **$200,000** per proposal. The nominated funding amount should be proportional to the scope, scale and complexity of the proposed research activity. In seeking to support a diversity of projects, TAFE Queensland may offer reduced funding.

Grantees must use the funding amount awarded for the approved Grant Activity over the duration of the project of up to one year (12 months), otherwise specified in the Letter of Offer. The Grant Activity must be delivered between the project start date and project end date as defined in the Grant Schedule. Grantees must advise the Centre and request approval for variations, if needed.

Grant monies are awarded in three separate payments as per the schedule outlined in the Letter of Offer, and below:

Project start date	The date that the parties agree for the project start date or 06 July 2026, whichever is later.
Release 1	50% of the total amount of funds awarded are released upon the Grant Agreement being finalised, or commencement of Grant Activity, whichever is later.
Release 2	30% of the total amount of funds awarded are released upon acceptance of Report 2: Interim Report (Milestone 3) due approximately 6 months after the commencement of the grant activities, or as otherwise set out in the Grant Schedule.
Release 3	20% of the total amount of funds awarded are released upon acceptance of Report 3: Final Report (Milestone 4) due upon completion of the grant activities, or as otherwise set out in the Grant Schedule
Project end date	The date that the parties agree for the project end date.

* Note: Payment is typically made within four weeks of signing the Letter of Offer or upon acceptance of any required reports, unless otherwise agreed in writing.

4.1 Eligible/ineligible expenditure

A grant is an arrangement for the provision of financial assistance as provided by the Centre, under which relevant awarded money is paid to a Grantee, for the intended use of addressing one or more of government policy priority areas, as outlined in the Priority Areas of Applied Research (Section 7). Grantees can only use Grant monies for eligible expenditure directly related to the project.

Eligible expenditure can include:

- appointment of temporary contracted labour such as research support staff directly employed for the grant activities (tuition and/or scholarship for students are ineligible expenditure, while the employment of students for project is eligible)
- data collection, analysis and reporting
- community engagement, co-design and other stakeholder consultation activities (including domestic travel and accommodation)
- the development and delivery of innovative education and/or training resources for individuals and/or organisations
- the promotion and dissemination of the project outputs across multiple channels in collaboration with relevant organisations.

Examples of ineligible expenditure includes, but is not limited to:

- any activity that does not have a direct link to achieving the outcomes as proposed in the application form

- existing staff member salaries/wages and oncosts, except where those staff are directly engaged in undertaking the project or where backfilling is required to enable their participation
- the purchase, planning or maintenance of significant assets (including building infrastructure, construction)
- general ongoing business operation/recurring expenses, including core business activities, business start-up cost, utilities, rent and other organisational costs not directly associated with the project or grant program
- financial costs, including interest and debt financing, the use of any form of security for the purpose of obtaining or complying with any form of loan, credit, payment or other interest
- budget contingency and management fee of more than 10% of grant funding
- any expenditure that are already being supported through other sources
- costs incurred prior to the date of your Letter of Offer
- other expenditures that are not deemed appropriate use of public resources in accordance with Section 4.3 of the Code of Conduct for the Queensland Public Service (e.g., purchase of alcohol).

5. Eligibility criteria

To be eligible to receive funding:

- Applications must be completed and have been received within the nominated open and closing dates.
- Applicant's affiliated organisation must have a registered Australian Business Number (ABN).
- Applicant's affiliated organisation must be an Australian owned entity with the capacity to enter into a legally binding agreement.
- Applicant's affiliated organisation must have an account with an Australian financial institution.
- Applicant must include a partnership with TAFE Queensland and/or other TAFEs.
- TAFEs may be eligible to apply, provided they partner with an industry, university, and/or community organisation, and the proposed research project falls outside the scope of its routine operational activities.

You are not eligible to apply if you are:

- an individual
- an unincorporated association

- an organisation whose main operations are outside Australia
- Commonwealth and State Government Departments
- education institutions seeking funding for core business.

6. Assessment criteria

Eligible applications will be assessed against the following criteria. Please note that the amount of detail and supporting evidence you provide in your submission should be relative to the scope and complexity of the research activity outlined and the proposed amount of funding.

Applications are ranked in order of merit against the weighted criteria to determine a rank of:

- highly meritorious: meets all the assessment criteria to a high standard
- meritorious: meets the criteria in an above satisfactory manner
- competitive: meets the criteria to a satisfactory level
- uncompetitive: application is ineligible, does not meet minimum standards, and/or does not represent value with relevant money.

Incomplete applications, including those not providing **supporting materials** in the application, may be deemed ineligible.

Assessment Criterion		Details
1	Overall project design and innovation (40%)	The application must clearly demonstrate how the project aligns with the Grant's overarching objectives and outcomes, as well as the Priority Areas of Applied Research. This includes: • a clear articulation of the project's purpose and relevance to the renewable energy and battery sectors • evidence of the proposal to contribute and build into existing knowledge and practices and avoid the duplication • a robust plan to engage and collaborate with TAFEs and relevant stakeholders such as industry, education, and community partners, to support the effective delivery of the project, where applicable, in the form of in-kind and/or financial support • evidence of how stakeholder input will be embedded into project activities and decision-making processes to ensure relevance, impact, and real-world application.
2	Capacity and capability to deliver applied	The application must outline the capacity and capability of both their organisation and any partner organisations to successfully deliver the project. This should include:

Assessment Criterion		Details
	research project, including feasibility and practicality (20%)	• a detailed description of the proposed research methods and timeline • evidence of organisational infrastructure, governance, and resources to support project delivery • demonstrated experience in managing and delivering similar applied research or workforce development projects specified in the resumes • outline of existing linkages with stakeholders or industry that support feasibility. • Matching funds, while not mandatory, will be highly regarded and should be clearly identified, along with letters of support.
3	Application, scalability and replicability (20%)	The application must demonstrate the project's potential to improve education, training, and workforce development for the battery and renewable energy sectors. This includes: • potential to translate research findings into practical outcomes such as new or improved training products, pilot programs, or industry initiatives • discussion of how outcomes can be applied across different contexts, with clear potential for scalability and replication across regions or sectors • evidence that findings will have long-term utility beyond the life of the project.
4	Efficient and effective use of grant funds (10%)	The application must demonstrate how the project will achieve high-quality outcomes in a cost-effective way, including: • a detailed indicative budget showing cost breakdowns for each project component • a rationale for how resource allocation will lead to value for money.
5	Risk management and research ethics (5%)	The application must show how they will manage risks effectively, including: • a clear plan to identify, monitor, and mitigate risks, particularly those that may impact delivery timelines or stakeholder engagement • where applicable, a strategy to address ethical considerations, including compliance with human research ethics protocols.
6	First Nations training and employment (5%)	As part of the Centre's commitment to the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap*, the application is encouraged to demonstrate how the project will benefit First Nations communities and peoples. • Proposed research activity to be led by, or in partnership with, Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations (ACCOs).

Assessment Criterion		Details
		• One or more of researchers and staff members included in the application, are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples, as defined in the Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs. • Proposed research activity and its outcomes have strong potential to empower First Nations communities and peoples.

7. Priority areas of the Grants

The second round of the Grants invites applicants to submit a proposal that aligns with the needs of training providers, industry and community presented across nine themes and three streams. Outlined below is a description of each stream, and applicants should refer to the **Priority Areas of Applied Research** available in Appendix, which provides details of each theme including the background, objectives, suggested approaches, and expected outcomes.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to engage and partner with relevant organisations, including TAFE Queensland and/or other TAFEs, to ensure that applied research projects will respond to emerging industry needs and support education and trainings to deliver a skilled workforce.

7.1 Stream 1: Building TAFE capabilities through applied research – Innovation and collaboration

This stream focuses on strengthening the capacity of TAFEs to deliver future-ready training through innovation, collaboration and applied research. The stream invites applied research projects that upskill educators with immersive technologies and foster deep collaboration with industry to ensure relevance and responsiveness. It also invites the research to design integrated learning pathways, thereby leveraging evidence-based practices to create a system where educators, learners, and industry work in synergy to meet the evolving demands of renewable energy transition facilitated by battery technologies.

The Centre seeks applied research proposals on:

- upskilling teachers and trainers: Adoption of immersive technologies (Innovation)
- strengthening VET-industry collaboration (Collaboration)
- designing an integrated learning pathway (Innovation).

7.2 Stream 2: Addressing industry needs and opportunities

This stream addresses the emerging workforce and operational challenges emerging from Australia's transition to renewable energy and battery technologies. It prioritises building inclusive pathways for

diverse cohorts, supporting industries in integrating battery storage systems, and skilling relevant workforce for battery decommissioning. Through applied research and collaboration, this stream seeks to deliver scalable solutions that enhance workforce capability and ensure safety and sustainability across the battery lifecycle, while promoting equity and participation.

The Centre seeks applied research proposals on:

- building pathways for diverse workforce
- supporting industry's transition to battery storage and maximising the utilisation of assets
- developing skilled workforce for battery decommissioning.

7.3 Stream 3: Bringing innovation to communities

This stream recognises the success of battery and renewable energy initiatives depends on community engagement and trust. It focuses on improving energy security in remote First Nations communities through innovative solutions and local capacity building, alongside developing competencies for social licence to operate in the battery sector. By combining technical innovation with social and educational strategies, this stream aims to empower communities, strengthen collaboration, and ensure that renewable energy projects deliver long-term benefits aligned with local needs and values.

The Centre seeks applied research proposals on:

- addressing energy security in First Nations communities
- developing competencies for social licence to operate.

8. How to apply

Before applying you must read and understand the Opportunity Guidelines and other key documents available on the Centre's Applied Research Grants webpage. Any alterations and addenda will also be published via the webpage.

To apply you must:

- familiarise with the Grant Opportunity Guidelines, related application materials, and the application process
- complete and submit the application form outlining the proposed applied research project through the SurePact grant management portal, unless the Centre has approved an alternative application method
- address all eligibility and assessment criteria
- include all supporting materials:

- resumes[1] of the Project Lead / Chief Investigator
- budget in a provided template
- risk mitigation plan in a provided template
- letters of support (if applicable)

- submit the application by 11:00pm AEST 16 March 2026[2].

When two or more organisations are involved in designing and delivery of the grant activities in partnership, only a "Lead Organisation" needs to submit the application for grant funding. Other members of the proposed partnership may provide letters of support, including:

- an overview of how partner organisation(s) will work with you to successfully complete the research project
- an outline of the relevant experience and/or expertise partner organisation(s) will bring to the group
- roles/responsibilities of partner organisation(s) and the resources they will contribute (if any)
- a nominated contact officer or Partner Investigator(s).

Applications cannot be changed after the closing date and time. If errors are found, in the application after submission, please contact the Centre. If the applicants' intent is unclear, we may ask for clarification or additional information that will not change the nature of the application. The Centre may decline to accept any amendments after the submission deadline.

The Centre will acknowledge the receipt of an application within two working days. If applicants require further guidance about the process or are unable to submit an application online via the SurePact grant management portal, please contact: CleanEnergyBatteriesTCE@tafeqld.edu.au

9. Selection process

As per Section 5 applications will first be assessed for their eligibility. Only eligible applications will move to the next stage, after which they will be assessed against the weighted criteria set out in Section 6.

Applications which meet the eligibility criteria are assessed on an openly competitive basis against both the weighted criteria, and other applications. This ensures that the awarding of grant monies is allocated based on the quantitative scoring, and qualitative recommendations which document how it compares to other applications.

After this merit-based process of review, which is undertaken by external, independent assessors who form the Selection Advisory Committee, all outcomes and written recommendations are compiled for reporting. Short-listed applications and written recommendations are presented to the relevant sub-committees and Steering Committee for review and endorsement. Should applications be

[1] Please do **not** include personal information such as your date of birth, home address, phone numbers, or any identification numbers in your resume.

[2] Please note that any tech support for the SurePact grant management portal will close at 2:00pm AEST 16 March 2026

successful in receiving endorsement, they will progress to TAFE Queensland Executives for final approval.

The Centre reserves the right, in their absolute discretion, to not make any grants, or not award up to the maximum amount of grants available in this round.

The expected timelines for application assessment are as outlined below, however, they are indicative only and may be subject to change depending on the volume and quality of applications received. In the event that clarification is required, the Centre may contact applicants for further information.

Activity	**Timeframe**
Assessment and review	April 2026
Approval of assessment and review outcomes	May 2026
Notification of outcomes	May / June 2026
Earliest commencement date of Grant Activity	June / July 2026

10. Notification of outcomes

The Centre will electronically notify all applicants of the outcomes of the assessment process via their provided email. The Centre is committed to the timely appraisal of all applications in the assessment process to avoid possible inequities and waste which may arise through unnecessary delay. Successful Grantees will be publicly announced on the Applied Research Grants webpage upon finalisation of the Funding Agreement.

If you are unsuccessful, a request for individual feedback can be made within 30 days of being notified of the application's outcome through contacting: CleanEnergyBatteriesTCE@tafeqld.edu.au. The Centre will respond to requests for feedback in writing within 30 days. The opportunity to receive feedback on unsuccessful applications promotes transparency in the decision-making process and improves the capacity of potential grantees to apply for future grant activities.

11. Monitoring of approved Grant Activity

Grantees should immediately notify the Centre of any events that could impact the delivery of Grant Activity. If unforeseen circumstances arise (e.g., a natural disaster), organisations should propose alternative methods for activities or research and obtain approval from the Centre for any changes. Unless affected by such events, grantees must meet reporting requirements through the SurePact grant management portal within the agreed timeframes outlined in the Letter of Offer and Grant Schedule.

Milestone	**Deliverable**	**Details**
Milestone 1	Grant Agreement	Grantee signs the Letter of Offer containing the Grant Schedule which forms the Grant Agreement

Milestone 2	Report 1 Commencement of research project report	This report will outline the progress achieved on the research project and risks identified from the date of commencement, including a delivery plan, governance and oversight framework, updated budget (if applicable), a copy of human research ethics approval or evidence of application, recruitment activities, and stakeholder engagement plan. The submission date for this deliverable is approximately three-months post-commencement of the Grant Activity as outlined in the Grant Schedule or as otherwise specified in the Grant Agreement.
Milestone 3	Report 2: Interim report	This report provides a research project progress update on the work undertaken post-submission of Report 1. It should detail any initial results from data collection and analysis, and/or a comprehensive literature review, as well as an overview of expenditures to date. The submission date for this deliverable is approximately six-months post-commencement of Grant Activity as outlined in the Grant Schedule or as otherwise specified in the Grant Agreement.
Milestone 4	Report 3: Final report	This report will provide an overview of Grant Activity undertaken over the duration of a grant, data collected and methods of analysis, key findings, identified areas for future research, challenges and/or learnings, outline of potential legacy impact, complete budget representing actuals which will be used for acquittal, a dissemination plan for findings, and any supporting material. This deliverable is to be provided upon completion of Grant Activity as set out in the Grant Schedule, or as otherwise specified in the Grant Agreement.

* Note: The Centre has the right to request further information from Grantees upon review of submitted reports.

12. Intellectual property and marketing

12.1 Intellectual property (IP)

All Grant Activity IP will vest in and is assigned to TAFE Queensland on creation. The Grantee must, at own expense, execute all documents and do all things required to give effect to this clause, including obtaining as soon as possible and providing to TAFE Queensland legally effective releases or assignments to TAFE Queensland from any of the Grantee's personnel in respect of any Grant Activity IP.

Each party acknowledges and agrees that the other parties' background IP remains the property of that other party; and must not be used or disclosed for any purpose other than in the performance of Grant Agreement.

Where an application is submitted in partnership with one or more organisations, and matching funds are being provided by a partner organisation, the Lead Organisation is responsible for notifying the partner organisation(s) of the intellectual property (IP) conditions of the Grants. Specifically, all Grant Activity IP that is discovered, developed, or otherwise come into existence as a result of the Grants will vest in, and be assigned to, TAFE Queensland upon creation. By submitting an application, the Applicant warrants that all partner organisations have been informed of, and accept, the IP clauses outlined in the Grant Conditions in the **Letter of Offer** available under Key Documents.

Due to the nature of the Funding Agreement for the TAFE Centre of Excellence Clean Energy Batteries, the intellectual property requirements outlined in these Guidelines, the Letter of Offer, and the FAQ's are fixed and cannot be negotiated.

12.2 Marketing and publicity

TAFE Queensland, in conjunction with the Queensland Government, reserve the right to issue public statements and will retain the right to release information in the first instance in relation to the Grants.

The Grantee must not:

- advertise, market, or promote the Grant in any medium (including, but not limited to, online, social media, print, radio, or television) without submitting the proposed marketing material to TAFE Queensland for approval, and the Grantee must publish marketing material in the exact form approved by TAFE Queensland.
- make any critical or misleading public statements in relation to this Grant, including statements that are critical of the level of funding or actions taken by TAFE Queensland pursuant to this Grant.
- allow any other party to advertise, market, or promote the Grant on behalf of the Grantee including, without limitation, a sub-contractor, agent, or investigator.

The Grantee must ensure that all advertising, marketing, and/or promotional activities, as well as research findings and outputs related to the Grant including, but not limited to, industry reports, rapid literature reviews, conference presentations, and peer-reviewed publications, clearly and prominently note the relevant Funding Acknowledgement:

> *This work is/was supported by the TAFE Centre of Excellence Clean Energy Batteries, led by TAFE Queensland and jointly funded by the Australian and Queensland Governments.*

The Grantee must use best endeavours to remove or amend any advertising, marketing and/or promotional activities undertaken by the Grantee, if requested by TAFE Queensland.

For successful grantees, a Letter of Offer, and any acceptance thereof, must remain strictly **confidential.** Details of a successful grant application are subject to **embargo** until an **official government announcement** is made public. It is the responsibility of the successful grantee to ensure that any stakeholders and partners connected to the application are aware of the embargo.

The intellectual property in the outcome of the applied research, including curricula materials, subject content, and teaching materials is to be owned by TAFE Queensland. Research findings and outputs produced as a result of this Grant including, but not limited to, industry reports, rapid literature reviews, conference presentations, and peer-reviewed publications, as well as any publicity, advertising and marketing must adhere to strict marketing and publicity requirements as outlined in the Letter of Offer.

13. Probity

The Centre will ensure the grant opportunity process is fair and reasonable; runs in accordance with these Guidelines; and incorporates appropriate safeguards against fraud, corruption and unlawful activities and other inappropriate conduct. The Centre commits to the public sector values and duties of honesty, integrity, impartiality, accountability, and transparency.

We demonstrate our commitment to transparency via being open to scrutiny about grant administration and the grant opportunity process. This involves the provision of the reason(s) for decisions and information to relevant government department(s), potential grantees, beneficiaries and the community. Our commitment to transparency provides the assurance that the grant administration is appropriate, that legislative obligations and policy commitments are met, and that our decision(s) are impartial, appropriately documented and reported, publicly defensible and lawful.

This includes processes which ensure a separation of duties where there is no single officer who is responsible for appraising or approving an application for a grant, the declaration of any perceived or actual conflicts of interest, and procedures for financial approval.

14. Glossary

The following glossary has been provided as a quick reference for terms used by the Centre.

Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) – not-for-profit organisations that are controlled and operated by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples, with the goal of empowering their communities.

Application Form – an online form accessible via the SurePact grant management portal, to be used by applicants to apply for the Grants.

Applied Research Grants (Grants) – financial assistance offered by the Centre to successful applicants, aimed at supporting growth in the sustainable energy sector by enhancing and innovating training programs for emerging skills needs, to ensure a pipeline of qualified workers throughout Australia.

Assessment criteria – the standards, against which application will be evaluated. These criteria ensure an objective, transparent process that assess the merits of proposals and determine application rankings.

Australian Business Number (ABN) – is a unique 11-digit identifier issued by the Australian Business Register (ABR) that helps businesses, and the government interact more efficiently. Applicant's organisation must have an ABN to apply for the Grants.

Battery Decommissioning – refers to the process of safely retiring, dismantling and recycling batteries at the end of their useful life. For Round 2 grant opportunity, the focus is on safe removal, storage and transportation of the used or defective batteries.

Budget – a financial plan that outlines income and expenses over a specific period, including in-kind contributions. For a template, refer to the Key Documents.

Chief Investigator (CI) – a named researcher/ investigator on a grant application who plays a substantial role in the conception, design, implementation, and interpretation of the proposed research.

Commencement of project report – is to be submitted by Grantee to meet the Milestone 2 of this grant opportunity. The report consists of a delivery plan, governance and oversight framework, stakeholder engagement plan, and any updates on budget, ethics application status, and recruitment activities. The submission is due approximately three-months after the grant starting date, or as outlined in the Grant Schedule.

Competitive (Open competitive) – refers to a grant process where applications are openly invited and assessed against set selection criteria.

Cultural safety – education and training approaches that recognise and address the ongoing impact of colonisation and racism on First Nations learners, which are embedded within teaching methods, curricula, and institutional systems.

Dissemination plan – a summary of how Grant Activity findings and outputs will be shared with stakeholders to boost awareness, impact, and implementation.

Eligibility criteria - the specific requirements or conditions that must be met for an applicant to qualify for a grant. These criteria help ensure that only suitable candidates are considered, which can improve the accuracy and relevance of the outcomes. Assessment criteria apply in addition to eligibility criteria.

Evidence-based practices – approaches and interventions that are grounded in systematic research and empirical evidence. These practices are designed to ensure that the methods used are effective and have been proven to produce positive outcomes.

Ethics approval – a formal process that ensures any research involving human participants, their data, biospecimens, or observations about them is conducted ethically, responsibly, and in line with established national and institutional guidelines. The approval must be sought from Grantee's or Partner's organisations. Should Grantee or Partner organisations not establish the procedure for human research ethics clearance, Grantee may seek ethics clearance through NHMRC registered Human Research Ethics Committees (HREC). If successful, Grantee should provide the TAFE Centres of Excellence the evidence of ethics approval or exemption.

Expenditure report – detailed document that tracks and summarises all expenses incurred by the Grantee over the duration of a grant. This report is used to monitor spending, ensure budget compliance, and provide transparency in financial management.

Final report – will summarise the Grant Activity, highlight key findings, propose future research directions, outline challenges or lessons learned, describe potential long-term impacts, and provide a full budget for acquittal. It will also include plans to share results and supporting documents. The report must be submitted after the Grant Activity as stated in the Grant Schedule.

Grant Agreement – sets out the legal relationship between the parties to the agreement and specifies the details of a grant. It is also used as a collective noun for grant agreement, schedule, and activities.

Grant opportunity – a specific round of the Grants available to potential grantees.

Grantee – an organisation that receives funds from the Centre at TAFE Queensland to support a specific project, program, or initiative.

Goods and Services Tax (GST) – is a value-added tax levied on most goods and services sold for domestic consumption. The Grants provided by the Centre are consideration for a taxable supply and, therefore, GST is payable. Where applicable, TAFE Queensland will pay the GST provided that the Grantee is registered for GST.

Immersive technologies – refers to digital tools such as virtual reality (VR) or augmented reality (AR) used to enhance learning and training experiences.

In-kind contributions – refers to non-cash resources provided to support the project, such as staff time, equipment, or facilities.

Intellectual property (IP) – refers to the creations of the mind. IP can include a brand, logo, images, or an invention. All IP creations aligned to the Centre's Grants will remain the IP of TAFE Queensland.

Interim report – provides updates on project progress since Commencement of Project Report, including initial data findings, analysis, or a literature review, plus a summary of expenses. This is due about six months after the grant starting date, or as outlined in the Grant Schedule.

Letter of Offer – A Letter of Offer, as it relates to the Centre's Grants, is a formal document issued by the Centre to the successful applicant that outlines the terms and conditions of the Grants. Once this document has been signed by both parties, it will be referred to as the Grant Agreement.

Knowledge transfer – refers to the process of sharing expertise, skills, and research findings between organisations, sectors, or communities.

Letters of Support – endorse the proposed research, highlighting its importance and impact, and outline the support committed by partner organisations.

Marketing – involves the activities and processes used to create, communicate, deliver, and exchange offerings that provide value for customers, clients, partners, and the broader community.

Matching funds – additional financial contributions from Grantee or partner organisations to support the project, alongside the grant funding.

Measurable – something that can be quantified, assessed, or evaluated using criteria or data.

Milestone – a significant event or stage in a project that marks a key achievement or point of progress.

Milestone report – includes commencement of project report, interim report, and final report.

National Skills Agreement (NSA) – The National Skills Agreement is a five-year joint agreement between the Commonwealth, states, and territories. It aims to strengthen the vocational education and training (VET) sector in Australia and ensure a skilled workforce for the future. For more information, please refer to *National Skills Agreement - Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, Australian Government*

Outcomes – are the results or effects that follow from an action, program, or project.

Outputs – are tangible products, services or deliverables that are a direct result of project activities or initiatives.

Partnership – is a collaborative relationship between two or more individuals, groups or organisations who work together toward shared goals.

Probity – is the adherence to high ethical standards with an emphasis on honesty, integrity, and fairness in professional and public settings.

Professional development – the continuous process of acquiring new knowledge, skills, and experiences to advance in a chosen field or career.

Project end date – date the approved grant project is to be completed by.

Project start date – date the approved grant project is to commence.

Proportionality – is a principle that ensures methods, risk and resources used, are appropriate and justified by the importance and potential benefits.

Replicability – refers to the potential for a project or its outcomes to be repeated or adapted in other contexts or locations.

Risk Management Plan – a structured document that outlines how an organisation or project team will identify, assess, manage, and monitor risks. For a template, refer to the Key Documents.

Scalability – the ability for a project or its outcomes to be expanded or implemented on a larger scale.

Scope – defines the boundaries, objectives, deliverables, and constraints of a project.

Selection Advisory Committee – made up of representatives with relevant education, training, and/or industry expertise who review applications and advise the Centre on rankings and merits of the applications.

SurePact – The Centre's online grant management portal, designed for application intake, review and Grant Activity reporting.

Stakeholder engagement – process of involving individuals, groups, or organisations that may affect or be affected by a project, decision, or policy. Effective engagement builds trust, improves outcomes, and ensures that diverse perspectives are considered.

Steering Committee – as it relates to the Centre, is a governance body that provides strategic oversight for the Centre's operations and initiatives. The Steering Committee also provides strategic alignment of the Grants and budget allocation.

TAFE – is an acronym for Technical and Further Education. It is a system of vocational education and training in Australia, providing a wide range of courses that focus on practical and technical skills.

Value for money – refers to the extent to which the project delivers high-quality outcomes efficiently and effectively for the funding provided.

VET – is an acronym for vocational education and training.

15. Appendix (Priority areas of applied research)

Upskilling teachers and trainers: Adoption of immersive technologies

Background

As digital transformation accelerates, vocational and educational training sectors are increasingly exploring immersive technologies such as Extended Reality (XR) and Augmented Reality (AR) to enhance teaching, learning, and skills development. These technologies offer interactive and experiential learning opportunities that can improve learner engagement, knowledge retention, and practical skill acquisition, particularly in technical and hands-on disciplines (Tene et al., 2024). Therefore, the technologies have potential to innovate relevant training for the battery workforce, which may involve exposure to hazardous environments.

However, the adoption of XR and AR across TAFE institutions remains uneven. Teachers and trainers often face barriers such as limited access to technology, lack of confidence in digital pedagogies, and insufficient professional learning opportunities. Applied research can explore effective strategies, frameworks, and capacity-building models that can enable educators to confidently integrate XR and AR into their teaching practice.

Objectives

- To review the current state and best practice of XR and AR adoption in the VET sector and the pedagogical impact of XR and AR on teaching quality, learner engagement, and learning outcomes.
- To identify the skills, knowledge and support needed for educators to effectively use XR and AR for renewable energy battery training.
- To develop scalable, evidence-based professional learning models to enhance educator capability.
- To provide recommendations for sustainable integration of immersive technologies in VET.

Suggested approach

Proposals may consider, but are not limited to, the following research approaches:[3]

- Literature review to synthesise existing knowledge and practices in utilising immersive technologies in VET, with a focus on renewable energy batteries, and the impact of the technologies on learner experience.
- Undertake case studies or pilot projects in collaboration with TAFE educators to evaluate XR/AR-enabled training modules in simulated or hazardous environments.

[3] The suggested approach and expected deliverables are provided as guidance only. Specific details may vary and should align with the content and methodology of the submitted proposal.

- Develop and test professional learning frameworks or training toolkits that build educator capability in immersive technology adoption.
- Explore partnership models between TAFEs, EdTech providers, and industry to ensure practical and scalable implementation.

Expected outcomes

Successful projects are expected to deliver and/or inform:

- A comprehensive report on the current landscape, opportunities, and challenges of adopting XR and AR in VET.
- Evidence-based recommendations for integrating immersive technologies into training programs, particularly for renewable energy and battery safety education.
- A validated professional learning model or capability framework supporting educators in XR/AR adoption.
- Practical resources (e.g. toolkits, guides, or frameworks) to support teachers and trainers.
- Demonstration or pilot modules showcasing how immersive technologies can be applied to enhance practical, safety-critical training in the battery sector.
- Dissemination of findings through workshops, sector briefings, and publications to promote adoption across the wider VET network.

Strengthening VET–industry collaboration

Background

Effective collaboration between the VET sector and industry is crucial for developing a skilled workforce. Its importance has become even more pronounced since COVID-19 and amid persistent skills shortages (Trimboli et al., 2023). Effective VET-industry collaboration should move beyond the "shallow" partnerships focused on training for intermediate need towards the "deep" partnerships for future-focused workforce development (Smith et al., 2017). This is particularly relevant to the emerging batteries industry that incorporates battery manufacturing, installation, and end-of-life management. The collaboration should focus on developing diverse and inclusive talent pipelines based on emerging skills and opportunities and avoid competing for skilled workforces where shortages already exist (e.g. develop training pathways for electricians for the renewable energy battery sector rather than taking electricians from another sector to fill the gap).

Existing research has identified models and frameworks for effective VET-industry collaboration (e.g. "school-in-factory" and "factory-in-school" models) (Smith & Somers, 2024). However, many successes remain under-recognised and person-dependent, limiting scale and sustainability. Therefore, the Centre seeks applied research to identify, test, and refine VET-industry collaboration models tailored for the emerging battery workforce, enabling timely training-to-market and greater sharing of resources and expertise.

Objectives

- To identify and document best-practice models for VET–industry collaboration tailored to the battery sector.
- To improve learner work-readiness and safety through industry-validated learning and assessment resources.
- To establish feedback loops so current safety standards, technologies, and workplace practices inform TAFE training products.
- To provide structured exposure for teachers and trainers to new technologies and standard operating procedures.
- To ensure VET-industry collaboration also benefits underrepresented groups and supports diverse workforce participation.

Suggested approach

Proposals may consider, but are not limited to, the following research approaches: [4]

[4] The suggested approach and expected deliverables are provided as guidance only. Specific details may vary and should align with the content and methodology of the submitted proposal.

- Conduct a literature review to identify models, frameworks, and examples of VET-industry collaboration.
- Engage with stakeholders to co-design a collaboration model suited to battery industry needs.
- Implement a pilot project to test the proposed model, followed by evaluation of effectiveness, scalability and sustainability.

Expected outcomes

Successful projects are expected to deliver and/or inform:

- A report on the current state of VET–industry collaboration, highlighting strengths, gaps, and opportunities for the battery sector.
- A tested collaboration model for VET and battery industry partnerships, including practical guidelines for implementation.
- Pilot evaluation findings with recommendations for improvement and scalability, supported by evidence.
- Practical resources (e.g. toolkits, templates) to support replication across other training organisations.

Designing an integrated learning pathway

Background

The discussion about aligning VET and higher education is not new but has a long history involving policies and research, which has gained a renewed interest due to the changing needs of the Australian workforce that requires both practical skills and advanced theoretical knowledge. While there are different models and terminologies, the success of any higher-level pathway will hinge on the training and education being fit for purpose for industry, learners, and education providers.

The Centre engaged extensively with key industry stakeholders on four higher-level pathway options for the battery sector through an online survey, industry roundtables and one-on-one targeted consultation to identify their needs and priorities. One of the outcomes was a strong demand for an integrated learning pathway system, which enables cross-matching learning content from multiple qualifications to enhance efficiency and streamline educational pathways. The system will map knowledge content to maintain the same or a similar volume of learning (VoL) and ensure that assessment requirements are not diminished. The Centre seeks applied research to design, prototype, and evaluate an integrated learning pathway system for battery-specific training and qualifications.

Objectives

- To enhance design and delivery by maximising use of training time, removing duplication, and clarify an approach to the pathway that would allow students to ‘stack’ their training from Certificate/Diploma to Bachelor/equivalent, providing more flexibility for students.
- To ensure mapped pathways maintain the learning volume consistent with existing standards.
- To preserve assessment integrity and rigorous requirements, upholding qualification standards, licencing and non-negotiable time served for supervised on-the-job experience across different industries.

Suggested approach

Proposals may consider, but are not limited to, the following research approaches:

- Needs and policy analysis: map battery-related vocational and degree-level program offerings and requirements across TAFEs and universities.
- Build a machine-assisted mapping pipeline that aligns learning outcomes, assessment tasks, and VoL components across multiple qualifications/providers.
- Define equivalence matrices (e.g. capstone, practicum) and non-negotiables (e.g. licensing, safety-critical assessments).

- Co-design program maps that show stacked routes (skill sets → Cert/Dip → AdvDip → vocational degree/AQF7) with multiple entry/exit points, work-integrated learning blocks, and credit/recognition of prior learning (RPL) rules.
- Develop a prototype pathway application, enabling it to import course data, map to skills/occupations, and generate program maps and credit/RPL proposals, with VoL and assessment checks.

Expected outcomes

Successful projects are expected to deliver and/or inform:

- A framework and system design for integrated learning pathways that support higher-level pathways for the battery workforce.
- Validated program maps outlining coherent sequences, milestones, and mapped learning outcomes for multiple qualifications.
- A prototype application tested with TAFE and university partners, including evaluation of findings and recommendations for scalability.
- Practical resources (e.g. mapping templates, implementation guides) to support adoption across sectors.

Building pathways for diverse workforce

Background

Australia's transition to renewable energy equipped with battery storage systems presents an opportunity to build a diverse and inclusive workforce that draws talent from underrepresented groups, including but not limited to, First Nations peoples, people with disability, veterans, and immigrants. While each group of people faces different challenges, common barriers include limited recognition of prior learning (RPL), lack of tailored support, and inconsistent processes for translating existing skills into accredited qualifications.

While frameworks for RPL including a specific pathway (e.g. military skill recognition) exist, the number of RPL requests granted remains low and the process is characterised as manual and inefficient with conservative outcomes (Serich & Osborne, 2020). Applied research can support the design of systematic, scalable solutions that enable diverse cohorts to transition effectively into emerging battery industries. This includes developing tools and frameworks that standardise skill translation, while maintaining compliance with existing standards.

Objectives

- To map transferable skills from a chosen target group against competencies required for the battery workforce.
- To develop a standardised translation framework that converts prior technical and safety competencies into evidence requirements for VET units of competency.
- To inform the design of accelerated pathways that preserve assessment integrity, maintain compliance, and support inclusive participation.
- To identify delivery adjustments and support mechanisms that improve engagement and completion for diverse learners.
- To produce a pilot design with evaluation metrics to demonstrate feasibility, quality and scalability.

Suggested approach

Proposals may consider, but are not limited to, the following research approaches:[5]

- Competency mapping: Select relevant units of competency for battery-related training and deconstruct performance criteria, knowledge evidence, and assessment requirements.

[5] The suggested approach and expected deliverables are provided as guidance only. Specific details may vary and should align with the content and methodology of the submitted proposal.

- Skill translation research: Review job roles and qualifications from the chosen target cohorts and map them against VET requirements using interviews, document analysis, and stakeholder workshops.
- Framework development: Design a technical translation matrix or digital tool that supports assessors in making consistent and compliant RPL decisions.
- Pilot planning: Design a pilot plan for the framework and proposed pathway.

Expected outcomes

Successful projects are expected to deliver and/or inform:

- A validated skill translation framework (or matrix) that enables VET assessors to make transparent, consistent RPL decisions for the chosen target group.
- An implementation guide detailing how to apply the framework within TAFE operations, including compliance checks and recommended delivery adjustments for the target group to align their learning styles, all while maintaining compliance with VET competency and regulatory standards.
- Inclusion framework and resources relevant to the chosen target group (e.g. mentoring, cultural safety guideline, LLN support, etc.)
- Practical resources (e.g. templates, evidence mapping tools) to support assessors and streamline RPL processes.
- Recommendations for pilot program design, continuous improvement and scalability to ensure pathways remain current with technology, standards, and workforce needs.

Supporting industry's transition to battery storage and maximising the utilisation of assets

Background

The new Queensland Government's energy roadmap (2025) puts battery energy storage as one of the key pillars for transition toward affordable, reliable and sustainable energy. It is essential to firm variable renewable energy and manage minimum system load. Some energy-intensive industries have embarked on this transition by electrifying their operations and equipment, presenting an opportunity to address both economic and environmental challenges (Strazzabosco et al., 2022).

While promising, integrating battery systems into renewable energy sources is complex and there are several issues that need to be addressed, including but not limited to, technical integration, economic viability, lifecycle management, and workforce capability. There may be no one size fits all approach as different industries require specific and tailored solutions according to their operations and energy needs. Applied research is needed to develop scalable, cost-effective models for battery integration across diverse industries, identify best practices for asset optimisation, and inform workforce development to support this transition.

Objective

- To review national and international best practices for integrating battery storage systems into a chosen industry's operations and optimising the asset utilisation.
- To evaluate technical and economic performance of battery systems under different operational conditions, including modelling for peak demand, reliability, and lifecycle costs.
- To identify the emerging skills and knowledge – both generic and industry-specific – required for design, operation, and maintenance of battery-integrated systems, and inform the development or contextualisation of education and training.
- To explore partnership models between industry, technology providers, and training organisations to accelerate adoption and workforce readiness.

Suggested approach

Proposals may consider, but are not limited to, the following research approaches:[6]

- Identify a target industry for renewable energy and battery integration.
- Literature and best practice review: Analyse global case studies of battery storage integration and asset optimisation strategies in the identified industry.

[6] The suggested approach and expected deliverables are provided as guidance only. Specific details may vary and should align with the content and methodology of the submitted proposal.

- Industry partnership and pilot case studies: Collaborate with industry partners and technology providers to design and implement pilot demonstrations of battery storage integration to renewable energy sources at selected operational sites; collect and analyse real-world data on performance, energy savings, and emissions outcomes.
- Economic and technical modelling: Assess financial feasibility, lifecycle emissions impacts, and sensitivity to variables such as energy tariffs, seasonal demand, and battery degradation.
- Workforce and skills mapping: Map the emerging technical competencies required for battery system deployment and optimisation; engage with training providers and industry to co-design curriculum recommendations or contextualised training products.

Expected outcomes

Successful projects are expected to deliver and/or inform:

- A comprehensive evidence base on best practices and lessons learned from battery storage adoption and asset optimisation in the identified industry.
- Validated pilot models demonstrating feasible, scalable approaches for battery integration tailored to the industry's specific operational contexts.
- Quantified performance data on energy efficiency, emissions reduction, and cost-benefit outcomes to inform future investment and policy directions.
- Workforce capability insights and training recommendations to build the skills pipeline necessary for energy transition backed by battery technologies.
- Strengthened industry-research partnerships supporting innovation, economic resilience, and environmental sustainability.

Developing skilled workforce for battery decommissioning

Background

With the rapid growth of the battery industry and the start of the Australian Government's Cheaper Home Batteries Program, the number of batteries reaching their end-of-life stage is increasing quickly, as are the demand and interest for recycling and reusing these batteries. Therefore, battery decommissioning, including safe removal, disassembly, and transport, is emerging as critical work for both environmental and safety reasons. Improper handling of used lithium-ion batteries poses fire, chemical, and electrical hazards, yet if done properly, decommissioning enables valuable materials to be recovered and reintroduced into the supply chain, supporting a circular economy.

Meeting this challenge creates a critical demand for a skilled workforce trained in battery decommissioning and safe handling. However, the majority of research and industry focus is currently on material recovery at the recycling state, with limited attention to the upstream processes of safe decommissioning and reuse pathways (Furtado, 2024). The battery recycling industry is in its infancy and best practice techniques are still emerging (Powering Australia, 2025). This gap underscores the urgent need for skilled technicians and operators trained in safe decommissioning practices, compliance requirements, and innovative technologies that can improve efficiency and safety.

Objectives

- To define the end-to-end decommissioning workflow for lithium-ion batteries in energy storage and EVs, including the specific skills and knowledge required for safety.
- To evaluate technologies and methods that can assist in battery decommissioning and determine the training implications of adopting these innovations in industry.
- To identify gaps in the current training products against the required skills and knowledge and inform the development or contextualisation of training products for the relevant workforce.
- To inform and develop best-practice guidelines and industry standards for battery decommissioning.

Suggested approach

Proposals may consider, but are not limited to, the following research approaches:[7]

- Literature review and environmental scan: Review and synthesise existing knowledge and industry practices on battery decommissioning.
- Task and job analysis: Identify a real world context and the processes of battery decommissioning and conduct a task analysis to detail the knowledge/skills needed to do it

[7] The suggested approach and expected deliverables are provided as guidance only. Specific details may vary and should align with the content and methodology of the submitted proposal.

properly at each step; identify failure points or safety incidents that would occur with untrained workers.

- Training-product mapping: Create a detailed matrix showing which decommissioning tasks and evidence of competencies identified are already satisfied by existing units/skill sets versus those needing contextualisation or new micro-credentials.
- Develop a competency framework: Synthesise the findings into a set of competency standards or a framework for technicians or others handling decommissioned batteries.
- Training product design: Propose a new training product or contextualisation of existing training to cover these competencies. Depending on findings, this could be adding specific units to existing qualifications or creating a new skill set or short course for battery decommissioning. Also outline any necessary practical training facilities or equipment required.

Expected outcomes

Successful projects are expected to deliver and/or inform:

- A detailed report documenting current practices and challenges in battery decommissioning, which underscores a training need.
- A detailed skills needs analysis for the workforce involved in battery decommissioning, clearly defining the competencies required at different stages and the current gaps in training provision.
- A clear definition of the roles and competencies required for battery decommissioning, which could be used by industry to create new job descriptions and by training providers to develop curricula.
- Evidence-based recommendations for industry to adopt best practice guidelines and for TAFE partners to develop and innovate training and conduct pilot training.

Addressing energy security in First Nations communities

Background

Most remote First Nations communities rely on off-grid systems powered by diesel generators, which are expensive, unreliable, and logistically challenging to maintain. High rates of power outages and self-disconnections are common. Many renewable energy installations from previous decades are nearing end-of-life, with no clear plans for replacement (Mahmud & Roy, 2025). Addressing these challenges, however, is not only a technical challenge but also a cultural and educational one. Therefore, empowering communities to recognise and make the most of available opportunities to address their energy needs is fundamental to achieving energy security in these remote First Nations communities (McMaster et al., 2024).

By fostering local skills, knowledge, and engagement, communities are better positioned to identify solutions that are both effective and culturally appropriate. Developing this capacity ensures that energy initiatives are sustainable and aligned with the unique needs and aspirations of each community.

Objectives

- To investigate viable models for improving energy security in remote First Nations communities through renewable energy and battery storage, documenting both technical solutions and community engagement processes that lead to sustainable outcomes.
- To identify the skills and training needs required to support the new energy systems – for example, building local workforce capacity for operating and maintaining batteries and renewable energy generation.
- To strengthen collaboration between communities, TAFEs, and industry partners for long-term energy security and workforce development.

Suggested approach

Proposals may consider, but are not limited to, the following research approaches:[8]

- Community engagement and needs analysis: Work with a target community to conduct local capacity assessment and develop community capacity framework for energy transition along with battery integration.
- Technical options study: Compare feasible configurations (e.g. solar panel plus battery energy storage, demand management, pre-payment), factoring logistics, safety, warranties, and maintainability.

[8] The suggested approach and expected deliverables are provided as guidance only. Specific details may vary and should align with the content and methodology of the submitted proposal.

- Training and workforce pathway (tailored): Co-design micro-learning modules (short, practical, assessable) or consider existing ones for local trainees (e.g. routine maintenance, remote support workflows).
- Co-design and pilot delivery: Develop and trial a tailored training program in partnership with the community, incorporating (as per the community feedback) local language, cultural protocols, and practical learning.
- Knowledge translation (generalisation): Synthesise what is community-specific vs transferable, and document a community typology (population, climate, remoteness, tariff, etc.), solution archetypes (bundle technical, operational, governance and training choices for recurring situations), decision trees linking context with the solutions, and modular training kits that can be re-contextualised.

Expected outcomes

Successful projects are expected to deliver and/or inform:

- A co-designed energy security plan (technical, operational, governance, financing, maintenance) with agreed roles and escalation pathways.
- A community-specific training and implementation model for renewable energy and battery systems, validated through pilot delivery.
- First Nations remote energy toolkit, comprising the community typology, solution archetypes, decision trees, and modular training units for effective adaptation across the communities.
- A scale and support model: options for regional technical hubs, remote diagnostics, parts logistics, funding/ownership models, and pathways to accreditation/recognition for local trainees.

Developing competencies for social licence to operate

Background

As Australia transitions toward a renewable energy future, batteries play a pivotal role in enabling storage, grid stability, and sustainable electrification. However, the uptake and success of battery technologies across mining, manufacturing, deployment, and recycling depends not only on technical innovation but also on social licence to operate (SLO) (Russo, 2025). The successful rollout of relevant infrastructure relies on personnel equipped with communication, negotiation, and complex conflict management skills. While SLO has been high on the agenda in Australia's resource sector for decades, an emerging renewable energy battery sector poses additional challenges to SLO. It requires trust, transparency and confidence in environmental, social, and safe practices underpinning the entire battery lifecycle.

Currently, relevant trainings for SLO are provided by the companies leading the projects. Within VET, there are no specific provisions regarding SLO. Relevant trainings are fragmented and exist in silos which are not linked to the renewable energy battery sector. The term social licence has also gained some negative connotations with a view that it may be used to manipulate community relations and manufacture consent (Kurniawan et al., 2022). Therefore, consideration should be given to updating training to address these concerns. The Centre seeks applied research to deliver a pedagogical framework for the delivery of training specifically targeted at supporting SLO in the renewable energy battery sector.

Objectives

- To review national and international best practices for community engagement specific to large-scale BESS and associated infrastructure.
- To develop a competency matrix detailing the SLO skills required for the BESS workforce by decomposing identified activities into measurable knowledge and performance.
- To design innovative delivery methods and assessment requirements suitable for TAFE.
- To inform the design and implementation of piloting the new training modules or learning resources.

Suggested approach

Proposals may consider, but are not limited to, the following research approaches:[9]

- Literature review and industry/community consultation: Review existing research and engage with companies and project teams in the battery sector to gather insight on their experiences with community relations, including challenges faced in gaining community acceptance and what skills or knowledge their staff needed in those situations; talk to

[9] The suggested approach and expected deliverables are provided as guidance only. Specific details may vary and should align with the content and methodology of the submitted proposal.

community representatives, local government officials, and advocacy groups who have interacted with battery or renewable energy projects, highlighting where communication or engagement fell short.

- Define competency framework: Articulate a set of competencies for social licence to operate (e.g. community engagement planning, effective communication, cultural competence, environmental and safety transparency, conflict management).
- Curriculum integration: Develop recommendations or sample content for incorporating these competencies into training (e.g. suggest where a unit or element on community engagement could fit for VET qualifications related to the battery industry; propose a dedicated short course).
- Pilot training session: Test a component of this training with a group of current workers or students (e.g. participants practice explaining a battery system to a layperson and get feedback; simulate a community forum scenario as a classroom exercise) and use feedback to refine the approach.

Expected outcomes

Successful projects are expected to deliver and/or inform:

- Evidence-based insights on social licence, highlighting barries, enablers, and strategies.
- Competency framework for social licence skills: A clearly defined set of skills and behaviours that the battery industry workforce should possess to effectively manage community relations.
- Recommendations for VET training product innovation, including proposed new units or skill set, or enhancements to existing qualifications and micro-credentials.
- Pilot results and toolkit for industry and trainers, including scenario exercises, communication tip sheets (e.g., FAQs about battery safety for community audiences), and checklists for cultural protocols.

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