launchvic

GRANTS FOR UNIVERSITY PRE-ACCELERATOR PROGRAMS

Supporting university-based startup entrepreneurs and the creation of new Victorian startups

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BACKGROUND

The Victorian startup ecosystem has undergone significant growth in the past 7 years, with the number of startups more than tripling from 1,000 to over 3,500. However, there's potential for even more growth with other ecosystems supporting many more startups which return higher economic growth. It is therefore imperative that we continue to support the creation of new startups in Victoria.

Previous experience has shown that pre-accelerator programs are a key drivers of startup creation, providing aspiring entrepreneurs with access to support, advice and networks to help them on their journey as they build their new companies. For the purpose of this grant round, LaunchVic defines a pre-accelerator as a new program which supports entrepreneurs at the beginning of their journey.

With over 420,000 current Victorian university students, we see a big opportunity to increase the reach and quality of on-campus pre-accelerator programs. We've seen some our biggest success stories come from student entrepreneurs; examples include Airwallex, Acusensus, Mindset Health and Tixel. However, more than 115,000 students in Victoria do not currently even have access to on-campus pre-accelerator programs.

LaunchVic has already supported 24 pre-accelerator programs in a range of sectors and we are now looking to support the establishment of pre-accelerators in university environments to boost startup creation.

OVERVIEW & OBJECTIVE

LaunchVic is seeking to fund the establishment of high-quality Pre-Accelerator Programs delivered by Victorian-based Universities to support aspiring startup entrepreneurs.

The successfully funded University Pre-Accelerator Programs will:

- Support startup entrepreneurs by helping them bring their startup idea to life and create an MVP; and
- Increase the pipeline of startups being created across Victoria.

This Project will give Victorian Universities the opportunity to apply for funding to develop a greater entrepreneurship focus within the university, and deliver a pre-accelerator program.

Applicants will need to demonstrate a clear need or gap within their university ecosystem, have demonstrable experience growing startups and startup communities (or commit to working with delivery partner/s who do), and request grant funding for a pre-accelerator program that can realistically help aspiring founders to start and grow startups.

DEFINITIONS

The below definitions apply to this Grant Round:

Pre-Accelerator is a new program targeted at Startup Entrepreneurs who have a technology-based idea for a startup, want to establish a business and develop a Minimum Viable Product (MVP). The program runs for a designated period (a minimum of 6-weeks), and participants 'graduate' from the program having followed a set methodology to establish a startup. A Pre-Accelerator program can provide a pathway to an Accelerator program.

Startups are defined by LaunchVic as an innovative, technology-based business that can scale rapidly and capture mass markets. Examples of technology-based businesses include: software and application development (Artificial Intelligence (AI), blockchain, big data analytics, e-commerce or marketplaces, augmented or virtual reality, Software as a Service (SaaS)), hardware, advanced manufacturing, sensor technology, robotics, autonomous vehicles, quantum technology, deep tech, and genomics and life sciences (including biotech & medtech). Once a startup has demonstrated accelerated growth sufficiently it becomes a scaleup.

Startup Entrepreneurs are individuals who have an idea for a technology-based Startup and are seeking to launch a Startup and register their new Company via ASIC in the State of Victoria.

Victorian University Students are studying at a Victorian University and currently reside in the state of Victoria. A student completing their degree online who resides outside of Victoria is not considered a Victorian University Student.

Operating Costs include staff salaries, rent, event costs, insurance, accounting and legal costs, marketing and promotion costs, reasonable domestic travel costs, grants to startups and other reasonable operating costs.

ELIGIBILITY

Applicants must satisfy the following eligibility criterion:

1. **Program Focus** The proposed program must be a new Pre-Accelerator program. The program must primarily support Victorian University students and research teams who are aspiring Startup Entrepreneurs (over the age of 18). We are not providing funds directly to Startups or Startup Entrepreneurs through this Grant Round.

2. **Applicant Experience** Applicants that are eligible include a delivery team that has proven expertise in supporting early-stage technology startups to launch and grow. Where there is no current delivery team, applicants must outline a clear plan to recruit these key personnel or intended collaborations with experienced delivery teams/partners.

3. **Type of Organisation** Applicants must be a Victorian University as listed on the Live In Melbourne website: https://liveinmelbourne.vic.gov.au/live/education-and-childcare/victorian-universities

   While dual-sector universities are eligible to apply, dedicated TAFE and other research institutes are not eligible to apply.

4. **Grant Amount** Applications up to $400,000 (exclusive of GST) over a minimum of two years are eligible.

5. **Matched contribution** is required for the program with a minimum expectation of cash or in-kind funding from the lead applicant to match the Grant.

6. **Application submission** must be via the LaunchVic online application system before the closing date and time to be eligible.

   If you are unsure about your eligibility, please contact the LaunchVic Grants Team.

KEY ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Applicants are required to address the following Key Assessment Criteria via the LaunchVic online application system. Included below are the required responses and the maximum word count for responses.

	Criteria	Response
1. Overview	a) Outline the proposed program, including: • The focus for the program, including any targeted areas i.e. an industry (vertical) or technology (horizontal) focus and how this relates to the university strengths • What impact and benefits to Victorian startup entrepreneurs will the program deliver • Why are you uniquely placed to deliver this pre-accelerator	500 words
	b) Demonstrate the need for this university-based program including: • What is your University innovation or entrepreneurship strategy and current program ecosystem (if one exists) • How will this program complement or add to existing programs in the University (if applicable)	Upload (max 2 page executive summary PDF)
	c) Provide details on your current university population and support (Approximate numbers will be accepted) • Current Victorian University Student population at the University • Number of students/researcher/staff currently supported through entrepreneurial programs annually • Historical/cumulative number of students/researchers/staff supported through entrepreneurial programs	Number Number Number
2. Program Delivery	a) Provide details on how the program will be delivered including: • Proposed number and length of cohorts; • Target audience and your plans for recruitment; • Number of startup entrepreneurs supported through each cohort; • Curriculum and structure overview; • Format for delivery (in person/online) and location (if applicable); • Proposed timeline of program activities; • Cost of the program to the participant (if any); • Details on partners to support program delivery (if any); • Details on post-program support (if any); and • Details of other community building activities (if any)	Upload Pitch Deck (max 10 page PDF)
3. Outcomes	a) What are the expected outcomes and learnings of graduated participants? And how does the program delivery and curriculum described above help achieve these outcomes?	250 words

4. Experience and expertise	a) Outline how you meet the Applicant Experience eligibility criteria: • Proven expertise in supporting early-stage technology startups to launch and grow; or • Collaborations with experienced delivery teams/partners; or • Clear plan to recruit these key personnel.	250 words
	b) If known, who are the proposed key personnel who will deliver or facilitate the pre-accelerator program? Nominate up to 3 individuals, including delivery team (internal facilitator/s or delivery partner) and a key person that will have overall responsibility for the program. If not known, please describe the key attributes you will look for in the key person(s).	Names LinkedIn 100 words
	c) If known, please provide a capability statement of the key personnel or delivery partners including: • Understanding of key issues relevant to early-stage startups • Experience supporting or delivering pre-accelerator or other entrepreneurship programs	Upload (no more than 1 page per person)

5. Funding	Provide details on the following:
	a) Funding amount requested from LaunchVic
	
	b) Contributions by the Applicant (Mandatory minimum matched contribution).
	
	   i) Cash contributions by the lead applicant.
	
	   ii) In-kind contributions by the lead applicant.
	
	c) Contributions by Partner Organisations (not mandatory but will be viewed favourably)
	
	   i) Cash contributions by partner organisations.
	
	   ii) In-kind contributions by partner organisations.
	
	If partner contributions are included, letters of support that commit funding/contributions must be provided to be considered. The letters must clearly state cash and in-kind contributions separately
		Numbers
		
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		Numbers
		
		Upload

	d) Budget: Provide a budget for the project (complete the budget table), including income and expenditure. Expenditure of the LaunchVic Grant can only be used for Operating Costs.	Table
6. Diversity and Inclusion	a) How will you incorporate the values of diversity, equity and inclusion in your operations? How do you ensure your program design and delivery is upholding these values?	200 words

ASSESSMENT AND SELECTION

Applications must be submitted via the [LaunchVic online application system](#) by the specified deadline.

Eligible applications will be assessed against the Key Assessment Criteria by an Assessment Panel comprising at least three LaunchVic personnel. LaunchVic may appoint an external expert to the Assessment Panel. Applications that do not meet the eligibility criteria will not be assessed.

Interview: Shortlisted applicants will be required to attend an interview with the Assessment Panel. Applicants may be required to provide additional information as part of the application process.

LaunchVic may enter negotiations with shortlisted applicants to refine project proposals. Funding outcomes are ultimately determined by the LaunchVic Board and their decision is final.

Information provided will be kept strictly confidential.

All applications are made at the applicants' own cost and will not be reimbursed, whether the application is successful or unsuccessful.

LaunchVic is under no obligation to award a grant, however we expect to award 4 grants under these Grant Round Guidelines. We are unlikely to fund more than 1 grant per university however multiple applications from the same university are welcome. Where quality permits, preference may be given to universities who do not currently have any pre-accelerator programs.

CONTRACT

Successful applicants will be required to enter a legal contract (Grant Agreement) with LaunchVic and provide project reporting and evidence of project progress against KPIs (such as number of Participants and number of new Companies registered in Victoria via ASIC) to receive payments under agreed milestones. Approximately 15 percent of the total grant is allocated to milestone 1 and contracts typically include approximately five to seven milestones. The number of milestones, and amounts, are determined by LaunchVic and are dependent on factors such as the funding amount, scope and length of project.

APPLICATION FORM

To preview and start an application form please go to the [LaunchVic online application system](#).

Applicants will be required to address Eligibility Criteria and provide Applicant Information including: Organisational Details, Key Contact and Secondary Contact. Applicants will also need to provide Project Details as outlined above. Applicants will also need to address Key Assessment Criteria and complete the Declaration before submission.

TIMINGS

Indicative timings listed below, please refer to the LaunchVic website for the most up to date timings:

Stage 1
- **Round launched:** Wednesday 26 February 2025
- **Information Session:** Thursday 13 March 2025 11am (AEDT) by webinar
- **Round Closes:** Thursday 22 May 2025 10am (AEST)
- **Communications:** to unsuccessful and shortlisted applicants by 4 June 2025

Stage 2
- **Interviews:** Tuesday 10 or Wednesday 11 June 2025
- **Communications:** to unsuccessful and applicants expected late June
- **Contracting:** Contract execution with recipients expected in mid-late June
- **Announcement:** An announcement will follow once contracts are executed

QUESTIONS?

If you have a question regarding this program, please email grants@launchvic.org. Relevant

questions will be posted on the LaunchVic website via the Grant Frequently Asked Questions.

CHANGE REGISTER

Number	Section	Change description summary	Date change issued
1			