CIVVIC

CIRCULAR AGRICULTURE CHALLENGE

Program Guidelines

launchvic

AGRICULTURE VICTORIA

OVERVIEW OF CIVVIC LABS

Run by LaunchVic – Victoria's startup agency - CivVic Labs invites aspiring and early-stage founders to work on innovation challenges identified by government.

Through a six-week bootcamp experience, entrepreneurs will learn from industry experts and test their startup ideas with policy makers and Victorian citizens, supported by $15,000 equity-free funding.

At the end of the experience, two teams will secure a further $35,000 funding to bring their prototype to life.

Since 2018, the program has helped more than 60 startups connect with government, co-design with real end users, and develop businesses ready to launch to market.

CivVic Labs is a proven program for generating commercial ready startups, with alumni startups raising nearly $20 million in investment capital since the program's inception.

OVERVIEW OF THE CHALLENGE

For this challenge, Agriculture Victoria is seeking technology solutions from Victoria's startup ecosystem to embed Circular Economy principles in farming systems.

Embedding circularity presents an opportunity to reduce organic residues throughout the supply chain, optimise efficiency and resource use, and enhance the economic, environmental, and social outcomes for agribusinesses. However, realising these benefits requires innovative solutions.

Several key statistics highlight the urgency of this transition:

- Each year, 26 million tonnes of materials could be diverted from landfill through improved circular economy practices[1];
- Australia currently has the fourth lowest rate of materials productivity in the OECD. We generate US$1.20 of economic output for every kg of materials consumed, which is under half the OECD benchmark of US$2.50[2];
- In 2020, Victoria wasted 2.4 million tonnes of food annually, with a goal to halve this amount by 2030[3];
- The current state of food waste in Victoria costs $6 billion annually, contributes 3 million tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions, and wastes 29 billion litres of water.[4]

The development of a stronger circular economy in agriculture will deliver significant benefits, including boosting Victoria's economy by up to $6.7 billion through improved material efficiency and recycling.[5]

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[1] Modelling Circular Economy Transition Targets, CSIRO, 2024
[2] Australia's circular economy: Unlocking the opportunities, Australian Government Productivity Commission, 2025
[3] Recycling Victoria: A new economy, Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA), 2020
[4] 'The Path to half', Sustainability Victoria, 2020
[5] Recycling Victoria: A new economy. Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA), 2020

For these reasons, Agriculture Victoria is seeking innovative, commercial solutions from startups and entrepreneurs to address these challenges and drive the adoption of circular economy principles in Victorian farming.

For startups, this challenge provides the opportunity to work with Agriculture Victoria, LaunchVic, and key stakeholders to contribute to a more sustainable and resilient agricultural sector, while building scalable solutions with global impact and investment potential. ClimateTech/CleanTech was the 2nd most funded sector in 2024, representing $609m AUD in startup investment in Australia[6]. As stated by Vela Georgiev, Chief Operating Officer and Operating Partner at Tenacious Ventures, "how we grow crops, manage waste, reduce emissions, and produce food sustainably" represents some of the key opportunities and imperatives for the future of AgTech[7].

THE PROGRAM & CHALLENGE STATEMENT

How can technology create circular economy opportunities in agriculture?

In agriculture, a circular economy means rethinking farming systems to maximise efficiency, minimise waste, and unlock new revenue streams. It's not just about sustainability, it's smart business.

By closing resource loops and reducing environmental impact, Circular Agriculture creates economic opportunities that drive long-term resilience and profitability.

Agriculture Victoria is on the lookout for innovative Circular Agriculture solutions in the latest CivVic Labs challenge with LaunchVic.

Potential focus areas include:

- **Material flow and waste reduction:** Develop systems or platforms that optimise, manage and track resource flows to minimise waste and maximise reuse;

- **Waste-to-value innovation:** Transform agricultural residues—such as organic waste, crop by-products, and animal manure—into valuable new products or for reuse on farm;

- **Water, energy, and emissions efficiency:** Develop technologies that enhance water recovery and reuse, repurpose agricultural waste for energy generation, or significantly reduce emissions;

- **Synthetic inputs reduction:** Develop alternatives to synthetic fertilisers, plastics, and other conventional agricultural inputs to promote sustainable farming practices;

- **Data and decision-making tools:** Create software or analytics tools that use data to minimise material and energy footprints and inform better resource management;

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[6] State of Australian Startup Funding 2024, Cut Through Ventures, 2025
[7] State of Australian Startup Funding 2024, Cut Through Ventures, 2025

- **Supply chain and marketplace platforms:** Build digital solutions to connect businesses with waste streams, facilitating resource efficiency and circular market development; or

- **Any other technology** that creates circular economy opportunities in agriculture.

Your solutions should deliver economic benefits, drive sustainability, and strengthen the adaptability of Victoria's agricultural sector.

WHAT TO EXPECT

LaunchVic is seeking to admit 10 startups or startup entrepreneurs to the program. There is no fee for participation. Rather, participant teams will receive $15,000 equity-free funding on completion of the program.

The program is structured to cover topics such as lean startup, co-design, and hypothesis testing, delivered by startup experts. The program is designed to assist innovators in their solution design in the following ways:

- Access to world-class mentors and a cohort of top innovators to build a solution alongside;
- Access to community and stakeholder experts, with specific knowledge of agriculture industry, policy, and customer base; and
- The potential of promotional support from Agriculture Victoria and LaunchVic highlighting innovative startup solutions.

At the conclusion of the program, a judging panel will select two startups to receive $35,000 in equity-free seed funding to further develop their solution.

Successful applicants are expected to attend the program in person for seven days of programming over 6 weeks, the Pitch Day and Showcase Event (see Program Schedule) as well as commit to additional work outside of sessions to progress their ideas.

CivVic Labs is the perfect sandbox for aspiring or early-stage founders to build and test new ideas. All participants will be either idea stage or early-stage (see below definition) to ensure their journey is with like-minded entrepreneurs. We're looking for ambitious founders who recognise the value of CivVic Labs to help accelerate their startup journey.

TIMINGS

Startups must have capacity to participate in the program in-person. This includes a commitment of a minimum of seven full days (9:00am – 5:00pm), followed by a Pitch Day and Showcase Event (see Program Schedule for more details). Additional time outside of scheduled workshops will also be required to develop and refine the solution.

DEFINITIONS

The below definitions apply to this application process.

A Startup is a young technology-based business that uses innovation to scale rapidly and capture market at a high velocity. Examples of technology include software/apps, artificial intelligence (AI), blockchain, advanced manufacturing & robotics, Internet of Things (IoT), big data analytics, augmented / virtual reality, 3D printing, advanced materials, genomics & life sciences (including Biotech & MedTech) and autonomous vehicles.

A startup that is either **Idea or Early-Stage** and must meet at least one of the following two definitions. An **Idea Stage** startup is working on an idea that has not yet been fully developed or launched in market. An **Early-Stage** startup is testing a prototype in-market, without a significant customer base or revenue.

The **Applicant** must be the Founder, though multiple participants in the same team may be accepted into the program.

Victorian-based means the Startup must either be a Victorian registered and headquartered company or the Applicant (in the case of a startup that has not yet registered an ABN) must be domiciled in Victoria.

ELIGIBILITY

If you are eligible and have a startup idea aligned to the challenge, CivVic Labs can help you make it a reality. To be eligible to participate in CivVic Labs, a startup and/or startup entrepreneur must meet each of these criteria:

1. **Victorian-based**;
2. **Startup** (has a Startup Idea that is aligned to LaunchVic's definition of a Startup);
3. **Stage** (meet LaunchVic's definition of either an Idea or Early-Stage startup); and
4. **Participation** (must commit to participating in the Program, and related activities).

The startup and/or startup entrepreneur must also **Adhere to Victorian Government Policy on ESG Prohibited Activities to be eligible.** This means that the business must not be involved with:

    a. Tobacco or tobacco-related products;
    b. Cluster munitions and other controversial weapons;
    c. Thermal coal;
    d. Gambling;
    e. Logging of old growth forests;

f. Uranium;

g. Unregulated animal testing; or

h. Fracking.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Applicants will be assessed through a selection process based on the following factors.

1. **Action and Alignment**: This is a measure of how well the applicants' proposed solution responds to the challenge outlined in this document (weighted 25%);

2. **Impact**: Does the applicant have a clear understanding of the challenge and how does the proposed solution meaningfully address the challenge outlined in this document? Is it realistic and feasible? (weighted 15%);

3. **Applicant's Capability and Capacity**:
   a) Is the applicant capable of delivering their solution (weighted 25%);
   b) Does the applicant have the capacity to focus on their solution during the program? (weighted 10%);

4. *LaunchVic Assessment of Support*: LaunchVic will assess how much direct value might be realised through the program by the applicant. Priority will be given to applicants that are keen to participate in co-design and are open to iterating upon their solution (weighted 25%).

If an applicant is shortlisted, they will be required to participate in a 15-minute interview.

TIMELINE

The Application Process includes an initial Expression of Interest (EOI), with applicants that complete the EOI invited to submit a full application.

Full applications will be shortlisted based on the Selection Criteria. Following the Shortlisting Process, successful applicants will be invited to participate in the program and will be required to confirm their participation via a signed contract. Contracts must be signed and returned to LaunchVic as per the schedule outlined in the Timeline below.

Date	Activity
5:30pm – 7:30pm, 27 March 2025	Challenge Launch Event (Public Event)
27 March 2025	Expression of Interest Open
8 April 2025	Information session and office hours for potential applicants
1:00pm, 16 April 2025	Expression of Interest Close
17 April 2025	Applicants that have completed an EOI are invited to submit an application
1:00pm, 30 April 2025	Applications Close
12 May 2025	Shortlisted applicants invited to Interview
12 May 2025	Unsuccessful applicants notified
15-16 May 2025	Interviews with Shortlisted applicants
23 May 2025	Selected applicants notified and contracted to participate in the program
23 May 2025	Unsuccessful applicants notified
3 June 2025	Program Kick Off Event (Private Event)
11 June 2025	Program Commences
16 July 2025	Program Ends
Tuesday 29 July 2025	Pitch Judging Day (Private Event)
Thursday 31 July 2025	Showcase Event (Public Event)
August 2025	2 Recipients of additional Seed funding are announced

![launchvic logo]

PROGRAM SCHEDULE

Program Day's will be held in person within the Melbourne Metropolitan area.

Date	Time	Activity
Wednesday 11 June 2025	9:00am – 5:00pm	Program Day #1
Thursday 12 June 2025	9:00am – 5:00pm	Program Day #2
Wednesday 18 June 2025	9:00am – 5:00pm	Program Day #3
Wednesday 25 June 2025	9:00am – 5:00pm	Program Day #4
Wednesday 9 July 2025	9:00am – 5:00pm	Program Day #5
Thursday 10 July 2025	9:00am – 5:00pm	Program Day #6
Wednesday 16 July 2025	9:00am – 5:00pm	Program Day #7
Tuesday 29 July 2025	12:00pm – 5:00pm	Pitch Judging Day
Thursday 31 July 2025	5:30 pm – 7:30 pm	Showcase Event

MORE INFORMATION

For more information about expressing an interest or to apply to CivVic Labs, please visit https://launchvic.org/programs/civvic-labs/.

QUESTIONS?

If you have a question regarding expression of interest form, eligibility, or anything to do with the CivVic Labs, please email civvic@launchvic.org.

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