

GIVVIC

ENERGYTECH CHALLENGE

Program Guidelines



launchvic



VICTORIA
State
Government

Energy,
Environment
and Climate Action

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 twelve-week bootcamp experience, entrepreneurs will learn from industry experts and test their startup ideas with policy makers and Victorian citizens, supported by \$10,000 equity-free funding.

At the end of the experience, four 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, the Department of Energy, Environment, and Climate Action (DEECA) is seeking technology solutions from Victoria’s startup ecosystem to accelerate the transition to renewable energy.

For DEECA, this transition represents the critical need to be bolder and act faster in moving away from legacy energy sources, such as ageing coal-fired power stations, towards cheaper and more reliable renewable energy like wind and solar¹.

The transition is a priority both locally and globally. Over the past five years, the Victorian Government has committed over \$3.7 billion AUD to support the energy transition². In 2023, global investments in clean energy infrastructure spending reached \$1.8 trillion USD³. This presents a huge opportunity for technological innovations. The adoption of digital innovations by energy companies, such as generative AI, could enable over \$500 billion USD in potential savings globally².

Significant capital investments in ClimateTech and CleanTech are set to continue, presenting opportunities for aspiring founders. ClimateTech/CleanTech was the 2nd most funded sector in 2024, representing \$609m AUD in startup investment in Australia, and is considered one of the most exciting sectors for investment in 2025⁴. Michael Perak and Penny Wang, Directors at Wollemi Capital, have highlighted potential opportunities in areas such as “distributed energy generation and storage solutions aggregating small-scale behind the meter assets to avoid challenges with interconnectivity and power distribution”³.

¹ Cheaper, Cleaner, Renewable: Our Plan for Victoria’s Electricity Future (Summary), Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action, 2024

² Includes funding announced in the 2020-21, 2021-22, 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25 Victorian Budgets, Victoria’s Renewable Energy Investment Prospectus 2024

³ Fostering Effective Energy Transition Insight Report, World Economic Forum, 2024

⁴ State of Australian Startup Funding 2024, Cut Through Ventures, 2025

As such, DEECA is seeking innovative, commercial solutions from startups and entrepreneurs to help deliver the Victorian Government's vision for the future energy system. One that enables large scale renewable energy projects, empowers households and businesses to lower their energy bills, manages the transition away from fossil fuels, and create new jobs, skills and supply chains¹.

THE PROGRAM & CHALLENGE STATEMENT

How can we use technology to accelerate the transition to renewable energy?

In this challenge, LaunchVic and DEECA are on the lookout for innovative EnergyTech solutions that can help overcome critical barriers to Victoria's energy transition while developing scalable business models with global potential.

The energy transition encompasses far more than technological shifts. It requires mass adoption of new technologies by everyday consumers and innovation in how we produce and distribute energy.

Therefore, this challenge will be split across two streams:

- **Empowering People and Communities** – encouraging households, small businesses and communities to adopt and manage renewable energy technologies by overcoming financial, technical, and behavioural barriers; and
- **Powering the Grid of the Future** – transforming how energy is produced, managed, stored and moved by rethinking systems, workforce, infrastructure, logistics, and coordination across the grid.

There are many unique challenges and opportunities associated with both streams. LaunchVic and DEECA acknowledge, however, that some solutions may fit under both headings – startups are encouraged to identify the stream with the closest alignment. Some potential solutions include:

Empowering People and Communities

- Simplifying electrification journeys;
- Bridging the knowledge gap between consumers and available energy technologies;
- Helping manage energy demand through energy efficiency, smart technologies and behavioural change;
- Ensuring vulnerable and underserved communities can participate in and benefit from the energy transition; and
- Improve the payback period for consumers for electrification and energy efficient appliances as well as using behind-the-meter assets like solar, batteries, EVs, and smart appliances.

Powering the Grid of the Future

- Improving the way grid supply and demand is balanced using better optimisation and forecasting of demand, supply and prices;
- Applications of artificial intelligence e.g. digital twin to simulate real world assets;
- Digitising and streamlining regulatory processes for large projects;
- Decreasing production costs and increasing the use of alternative energy carriers (bioenergy, green hydrogen);

- Increasing social licence for the energy transition, particularly for large-scale infrastructure projects;
- Workforce platforms that make it easier to employ, train and match workers with energy jobs; and
- New long-duration storage technologies (>8 hours).

The CivVic Labs EnergyTech Challenge welcomes solutions addressing any of these key opportunity areas or any other technology or solution that could accelerate the transition to renewable energy.

WHAT TO EXPECT

LaunchVic is seeking to admit 16 startups or startup entrepreneurs to the program across the two challenge streams (Empowering People and Communities & Powering the Grid of the Future). There is no fee for participation. Rather, participant teams will receive \$10,000 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 energy industry, policy, and customer base; and
- The potential of promotional support from DEECA and LaunchVic highlighting innovative startup solutions.

At the conclusion of the program, a judging panel will select four 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 12 weeks and the 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 solutions. 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 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 Environment, Social and Governance or 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. **Assessment of Support:** This is a measure of 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, 14 May 2025	Challenge Launch Event (Public Event)
14 May 2025	Expression of Interest Open
27 May 2025	Information session and office hours for potential applicants
10:00am, 6 June 2025	Expression of Interest Close
6 June 2025	Applicants that have completed an EOI are invited to submit an application
1:00pm, 19 June 2025	Applications Close
30 June 2025	Shortlisted applicants invited to Interview
30 June 2025	Unsuccessful applicants notified
2 – 4 July 2025	Interviews with Shortlisted applicants
23 July 2025	Selected applicants notified and contracted to participate in the program
23 July 2025	Unsuccessful applicants notified
6 August 2025	Program Commences
23 October 2025	Program Ends
16 – 22 October 2025	Funding Application Period
20 November 2025	Showcase Event (Public Event)
November 2025	4 Recipients of additional Seed funding are announced

PROGRAM SCHEDULE

Program Day's will be held in person within the Melbourne Metropolitan area. As there are two streams to this challenge (**Empowering People and Communities** and **Powering the Grid of the Future**) there will be some activities that are combined for the two streams, and some that will be separate.

Date	Time	Activity	Program Stream
August 6, 2025	9:00am – 5:00pm	Program Day #1	Combined
August 7, 2025	9:00am – 5:00pm	Program Day #2	Combined
August 20, 2025	9:00am – 5:00pm	Program Day #3	Stream #1
August 21, 2025	9:00am – 5:00pm	Program Day #3	Stream #2
September 3, 2025	9:00am – 5:00pm	Program Day #4	Stream #1
September 4, 2025	9:00am – 5:00pm	Program Day #4	Stream #2
September 17, 2025	9:00am – 5:00pm	Program Day #5	Stream #1
September 18, 2025	9:00am – 5:00pm	Program Day #5	Stream #2
October 8, 2025	9:00am – 5:00pm	Program Day #6	Stream #1
October 9, 2025	9:00am – 5:00pm	Program Day #6	Stream #2
October 15, 2025	9:00am – 5:00pm	Program Day #7	Combined
October 16 – 22, 2025	n/a	Funding Application Period	Combined
November 20, 2025	5.30pm – 7.30pm	Showcase Event	Combined

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 the 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.