

Southeast Asia Free Trade Agreements Modernisation Grant Program Application

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Introduction

Southeast Asia Free Trade Agreements Modernisation Grant Program

Applications under this Grant Opportunity opened on 10 February 2025 and close at 11.30PM AEDST, 24 March 2025

The Australian Government has released the terms of reference for a comprehensive review of our Southeast Asian Free Trade Agreements (FTAs).

The review will identify gaps and opportunities to further strengthen trade and investment in Southeast Asian markets and examine if the rules and commitments in our FTAs remain relevant and fit-for-purpose.

The review will examine market access commitments to ensure they remain comprehensive and commercially meaningful for Australia and our Southeast Asian partners to maximise the benefits to our economies.

Views on how Australia can support accessions to regional FTAs with Southeast Asian economies, identify new FTA opportunities and examine whether Australia's agreements have kept pace with relevant international developments will be a focus of the review.

The department also welcomes views on new and emerging trade topics such as the green economy, digital economy and sustainable agriculture.

Through the provision of grants, Australian trade-exposed industries, peak bodies and representative organisations will be expected to identify opportunities for improved utilisation, upgrade and modernisation of Australia's network of FTAs.

A total of \$1,750,000 over two years (FY 2024/25 and 2025/26) is available. Applications may be from a single entity or be joint (consortia), represented by a 'lead' applicant. Grants are expected to range from \$100,000 to \$250,000, depending on the scope of the activity and the number of parties contributing to the activity.

All applicants are expected and strongly encouraged to co-fund and/or provide an in-kind co-contribution to the grant activities.

If you are successful, you will have six months to conduct your grant activity. Depending on the complexity and scope of the activity you may be provided longer than six months. Please note - all activities funded must be completed by no later than Friday 27 February 2026.

You must meet the applicant eligibility criteria and be delivering an eligible activity to participate in this grant opportunity. Please see Page 2 - Eligibility.

If you have any questions about this grant opportunity, please email us at:

ftamodernisation@dfat.gov.au

Assessment of grant applications

Expert Panel

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The Department will review all grant applications and provide the eligible applications to a selection panel made up of government officials with expertise in Australia's international trade, services or investment interests and free trade agreement negotiations.

Process

We first review your application against the eligibility criteria.

Only eligible applications will move to the next stage. We consider eligible applications through an open competitive grant process. If eligible, we will assess your application against the assessment criteria and against other applications. We consider your application on its merits, based on:

- how well it meets the criteria
- how it compares to other applications
- whether it provides value with relevant money^[1]

When assessing the extent to which the application represents value with relevant money, we will have regard to:

- the overall objective/s to be achieved in providing the grant
- the relative value of the grant sought
- extent to which the proposed activities in the application match identified priorities
- the extent to which the evidence in the application demonstrates that it will contribute to meeting the outcomes/objectives
- the extent to which the grant activities could contribute to the prioritisation of upgrade and modernisation negotiations of Australia's FTA network in Southeast Asia
- the application's potential risks to the Commonwealth, including financial and operational.

^[1] See glossary in the Grant Guidelines for an explanation of 'value with money'.

Who will approve grants?

The Expert Panel will provide advice to the Program Delegate on applications deemed eligible under the Program Guidelines.

The Program Delegate is the Assistant Secretary, FTA Implementation and Inclusive Trade Branch, Free Trade Agreements and Stakeholder Engagement Division. The Delegate will decide which grants to approve taking into account the recommendations of the Expert Panel and the availability of grant funds for the purposes of the grant program.

The Delegate's decision is final in all matters, including:

- the approval of the grant
- the grant funding amount to be awarded
- the terms and conditions of the grant

There is no appeal mechanism for decisions to approve or not approve a grant.

Eligibility

* indicates a required field

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Eligibility self-assessment

The information on this page relates to your eligibility to participate in this Grant Opportunity. Please take time to carefully read these details.

Under the "Eligibility self-assessment" section below, you will be asked to answer several questions. Your responses will determine your eligibility to participate in this Grant Opportunity.

Eligibility criteria

We cannot accept an application if you do not satisfy relevant eligibility criteria.

We cannot provide a grant if you receive funding from another government source for the same purpose.

Who is eligible to apply for a grant?

To be eligible to receive a grant, the potential grantee must:

- have an Australian Business Number (ABN)
- be registered for the purposes of GST
- have an account with an Australian financial institution

and be one of the following entity types:

- a company incorporated in Australia
- a company incorporated by guarantee
- an incorporated trustee on behalf of a trust
- an incorporated association
- a joint (consortia) application with a lead organisation^[1]
- a registered charity or not-for-profit organisation
- a publicly funded research organisation
- an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Corporation registered under the [Corporations \(Aboriginal and /or Torres Strait Islander\) Act 2006](#)
- be a peak industry body (e.g. Australian Hotels Association), representative organisation or members organisation

Who is not eligible to apply for a grant?

You are not eligible to apply if you are:

- a Commonwealth, state, territory or local government agency or body (including government business enterprises)
- an individual or persons^[2]
- unincorporated association
- overseas resident/organisation
- any organisation not included in section 4.1 of the Grant Guidelines.

What the grant money can be used for

Eligible grant activities

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To be eligible for funding, the grant activity must address the intended outcomes of the program and be undertaken between the agreed start and end dates. The activity must also result in an informational product for use by government.

Eligible activities will be set out in the relevant grant agreement and may include:

- quantitative and qualitative research
- forecasting, modelling, statistical analysis and feasibility studies
- competitor, sector or market analyses
- stakeholder engagement and activities facilitating stakeholder engagement
- developing and drafting strategies to influence further liberalisation of one or many economies towards improved market access or regulatory reform
- result in an evidence-based informational product including recommendations
- provide priorities and identification of areas for improved trade and investment liberalisation

Eligible expenditure

You can only spend the grant on eligible expenditure you have incurred on eligible grant activities.

Eligible expenditure items are:

- specialist technical services
- software required for research or analysis related to the grant activity
- economy flights in Australia, modest accommodation costs (3-4 star hotel), meals and travel allowances - refer to ATO Tax Determination, noting limitations outlined in Section 5.3 of the Grant Guidelines
- communication and translation
- venue hire and catering
- advertising and promotion to your relevant stakeholders
- production costs, support staff wages and/or fees directly related to the activity (business-as-usual wages or fees will not be supported)
- labour costs of employees to deliver the core elements of the grant activity (business-as-usual labour costs will not be supported)

We may update the guidelines on eligible and ineligible expenditure from time to time. Any such update would ensure value with relevant money and would adhere to the policy outcomes identified in these Grant Guidelines. If your application is successful, the version in place when you submitted your application applies to your grant activity.

If your application is successful, we may ask you to clarify activity costs that you provide in your application. You may need to provide evidence such as quotes for major costs.

Not all expenditure on your grant activity may be eligible for grant funding. The Program Delegate makes the final decision on what is eligible expenditure and may give additional guidance on eligible expenditure if required.

You must incur the expenditure on your grant activities between the start date and end or completion date for your grant activity/grant agreement for it to be eligible.

What the grant money cannot be used for

You cannot use the grant for the following:

- activities that support or promote the benefit of a single commercial or government enterprise
- activities that may distort trade or disadvantage Australian industries

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- costs not directly incurred in carrying out the program (including overhead costs)
- capital expenditure, including purchase of real estate, land, vehicles and construction works.
- purchase of equipment (for example, musical instruments, computers, videos, photographic or printing equipment)
- activities which are already commercially viable in their own right
- overseas travel
- legal expenses
- costs incurred in the preparation of a grant application or related documentation
- subsidy of general ongoing administration of an organisation such as electricity, phone, rent, and/or administrative charges levied by the applicant's organisation
- activities for which other Commonwealth, state, territory or local government bodies have primary responsibility
- business-as-usual or ongoing salaries or wages that are not directly related to the activity (including for research staff) and honorariums
- covering of retrospective costs or recurrent funding of activities, and
- completed activities

We generally do not fund travel and accommodation for attendance at conferences or meetings; participation in fieldwork; or other events. Such activities must be of direct relevance to the proposal and objectives.

[\[1\]](#) The Australian Government recognises that some organisations may seek to form consortia in order to apply for a grant under the Program. Consortia are eligible to apply and the relevant conditions applicable to consortia are at 7.2 'Joint Applications'

[\[2\]](#) A person is a natural person, an individual, a human being.

Eligibility self-assessment

You must answer all of the first three questions. If you answer No to any of these questions, you will be ineligible to submit an application under this Grant Opportunity

You must also select one of the 'entity types'. In this part, if you select 'Other', you will be asked to describe your legal entity. You will then have two options:

a) you can email us at ftamodernisation@dfat.gov.au to seek our feedback on whether the entity type you describe is an eligible entity for the purposes of this Grant Opportunity, or

b) you can choose to exit this form and consider making a submission to the Review outside the Grant Opportunity process.

Do you have an Australian Business Number (ABN)? * ☐ Yes ☐ No

Are you registered for the purposes of GST? * ☐ Yes ☐ No

Do you have an account with an Australian financial institution * ☐ Yes ☐ No

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Select which of the following apply to your entity. *

- ☐ A company incorporated in Australia
- ☐ A company incorporated by guarantee
- ☐ An incorporated trustee on behalf of a trust

☐ An incorporated association

☐ A joint (consortia) application with a lead organisation

☐ A registered charity or not-for-profit organisation

☐ A publicly funded research organisation

☐ An Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Corporation registered under the Corporations (Aboriginal and /or Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006

☐ A peak industry body (e.g. Australian Hotels Association), representative organisation or members organisation

☐ Other:

Please contact us by email (ftamodernisation@dfat.gov.au) to discuss your entity type so that we can consider your eligibility.

I have received confirmation that my organisation type is eligible to apply for this Grant Opportunity *

☐ Yes

☐ No

Conflicts of interest

Any conflicts of interest could affect the performance of the grant opportunity or program.

There may be a [conflict of interest](#), or perceived conflict of interest, if the Department's staff, any member of a selection panel or advisor and/or you or any of your personnel:

- has a professional, commercial or personal relationship with a party who is able to influence the application selection process, such as an Australian Government officer or member of an external panel
- has a relationship with or interest in, an organisation, which is likely to interfere with or restrict the applicants from carrying out the proposed activities fairly and independently or
- has a relationship with, or interest in, an organisation from which they will receive personal gain because the organisation receives a grant under the grant program/ grant opportunity.

You must declare (see below), as part of your application, any perceived or existing conflicts of interests or that, to the best of your knowledge, there is no conflict of interest.

If you later identify an actual, apparent, or perceived conflict of interest, you must inform the Department in writing immediately.

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I declare that, to the best of my knowledge, no personnel involved in the proposed Activity have any conflict of interest *

- ☐ Conflict of Interest
☐ No known conflict of Interest

If you are awarded a grant and you later identify an actual, apparent, or perceived conflict of interest, you must inform the Department in writing immediately at ftamodernisation@dfat.gov.au

Any partner organisations participating in this application have declared to me that, to the best of their knowledge, they have no conflict of interest *

- ☐ Conflict of Interest
☐ No known conflict of Interest
☐ Not applicable

If you are awarded a grant and any partner organisations later identifies an actual, apparent, or perceived conflict of interest, you must inform the Department in writing immediately at ftamodernisation@dfat.gov.au

If you are not eligible to apply for funding under this Grant Opportunity, you may still make a submission to the Review outside the grant process. Details on the submission process can be found at the following link: **[INSERT URL ONCE KNOWN]**.

The question below cannot be changed and means you will not be able to complete any further questions or submit this application.

This number/amount is calculated.

Applicant Details

* indicates a required field

Applicant Organisation and Contact Details

If you are leading a consortia/have partners, please also complete the 'Joint (consortia) details' section below

Organisation Name *

Organisation Name

Type of Organisation *

☐ Community Group ☐ Peak body ☐ Research body ☐ Other:

Which sector/s do you represent? *

Please list all that are applicable eg. agriculture, fishing, digital economy, green economy, competition, labour, critical minerals/mining, First Nations trade, gender and inclusivity, sustainable agriculture etc

ABN *

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The ABN provided will be used to look up the following information. Click Lookup above to check that you have entered the ABN correctly.

Information from the Australian Business Register	
ABN	
Entity name	
ABN status	
Entity type	
Goods & Services Tax (GST)	
DGR Endorsed	
ATO Charity Type	More information
ACNC Registration	
Tax Concessions	
Main business location	

Must be an ABN.

Please include your organisation's ABN here (you can also use the lookup function to do that)

Contact details

Postal Address *

Address

Address Line 1, Suburb/Town, State/Province, and Country are required.

Primary Contact *

Title

First Name

Last Name

Position *

Phone Number *

Please include Country Code eg. +61...

Email *

Must be an email address

Evidence of Support and Accountant Declaration

We require your organisation to confirm that it supports the proposed activity and that funds have been made available to deliver the grant activity.

Letter of Support: you need to provide a Letter of Support from an officer who represents your organisation eg. CEO or Chair, that addresses the following:

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- details of your organisation
- an overview of how your organisation will successfully complete the grant activity
- an outline of the relevant experience and/or expertise your organisation will bring to the activity
- the roles/responsibilities of members of your organisation and their contributions
- details of a nominated management level contact officer in your organisation

Accountant Declaration: you need to provide an Accountant Declaration confirming that your organisation has budgeted sufficient funds to cover your proposed activities

The template for this purpose can be downloaded [here](#).

Signed Letter of Support and Accountant Declaration *

Attach a file:

Click the button to upload the completed Letter of Support/ Accountant Declaration for your organisation

Joint (consortia) details

Are you leading a Joint (consortia) application? *

☐ Yes

☐ No

If Yes, please add all Joint (consortia) member details in the next section

Click "Add More" below to insert additional consortia members.

Joint (consortia) member Name *

Location *

Industry/Sector *

How will the consortia member work with you / other partners to deliver the activity? *

Word count:

Must be no more than 400 words.

Relevant experience / expertise *

Word count:

Must be no more than 400 words.

Roles / responsibilities *

Word count:

Must be no more than 400 words.

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Contact officer name *

Title

First Name

Last Name

Contact officer phone *

Letter of Support and Accountant Declaration

If you are leading a Joint (consortia) application, each of those other organisations needs to provide a Letter of Support signed by an appropriate officer of their organisation eg. CEO or Chair, and an Accountant Declaration signed by a suitably qualified person.

Letter of Support: the partner organisation needs to provide the following:

- details of the partner organisation
- an overview of how the partner organisation will work with the lead organisation and any other partner organisations in the group to successfully complete the grant activity
- an outline of the relevant experience and/or expertise the partner organisation will bring to the activity
- the roles/responsibilities of the partner organisation and the resources they will contribute (if any)
- details of a nominated management level contact officer

Accountant Declaration: all partner organisations need to confirm that their organisation has sufficient funds to cover their contribution to the activity.

The template for this purpose can be downloaded [here](#).

Signed Letter of Support and Accountant Declaration *

Attach a file:

Click the button to upload the completed Letter of Support/ Accountant Declaration for all other organisations who are a party to this activity

Previous Funding

Have you or any Joint (consortia) members previously received funding from the Australian Government for the activity you have proposed in this grant application? *

☐ Yes

☐ No

If Yes, please complete the following section for yourself or any applicable Joint (consortia) members.
Note:

Previous Australian Government funding

If Yes, please provide details

Organisation name	Overview of previously funded activity	Amount funded	Financial year/s
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

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Proposed Activity - summary

* indicates a required field

Activity Summary

This page is intended to capture, at a high level, information about your activity
You will be asked to address specific Selection Criteria on the Activity Details page

Name of Activity *

Word count:
Must be no more than 20 words.

Activity Description *

Word count:
Must be no more than 500 words.

Proposed Start Date *

Must be a date and between 1/5/2025 and 27/2/2026.

Expected End Date *

Must be a date and between 1/5/2025 and 27/2/2026.

Activity Details

* indicates a required field

Deliverables

Each Criterion has a weighting to reflect the assessment process. For clarity, weighting is as follows:

Criterion 1 (20%); Criterion 2 (20%); Criterion 3 (40%) and Criterion 4 (20%)

Criterion 1

The activity must be in the scope of and relate to modernising or enhancing at least one of Australia's in-force FTAs with a Southeast Asian economy, or a possible future Australian FTA in the region.

You may choose to address Criterion 1(a), 1(b) or both.

Which of the following points are you addressing? *

- ☐ 1a. how your activity is in the scope of FTA upgrade negotiations with one or more of Australia's in-force FTAs with Southeast Asian partners
- ☐ 1b. how your activity is in the scope of FTA negotiations with one or more Southeast Asian economies

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1a. Describe how your activity is in the scope of FTA upgrade negotiations with one or more of Australia's in-force FTAs with Southeast Asian partners? *

Word count:

Must be no more than 400 words.

1b. Describe how your activity is in the scope of FTA negotiations with one or more Southeast Asian economies *

Word count:

Must be no more than 400 words.

Criterion 2

The activity must relate to the export of goods, services or investment from Australia or new and emerging progressive trade issues eg. digital and green economy, labour, gender and energy/ climate change.

You must address Criteria 2(a) and 2(b).

2a. Which industry, sector, good or service will your activity relate to? *

Word count:

Must be no more than 400 words.

2b. Describe why your organisation is representative, recognised or well-placed to conduct activities and provide information about the particular industry, sector, good or service *

Word count:

Must be no more than 400 words.

Criterion 3

The activity must relate to the enhancement or modernisation of FTAs with a view to identifying barriers, opportunities, ways or approaches to increase Australian exports and investment in Southeast Asia and/or to facilitate trade for Australian businesses.

You may choose to address Criterion 3(a) or 3(b) or 3(c), two of these criteria or all three.

Which of the following points are you addressing? *

☐ 3a. current or possible barriers or impediments to trade or investment faced by Australian businesses, and potential options to address impediments

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- ☐ 3b. opportunities for increased trade or investment for Australian businesses
 - ☐ 3c. opportunities to enhance Australia’s approach to new and emerging trade issues (e.g. digital economy, the green economy, sustainable agriculture etc)
- Select all that apply

3a. Describe current or possible barriers or impediments to trade or investment faced by Australian businesses, and potential options to address impediments *

Word count:
Must be no more than 400 words.

3b. Describe opportunities for increased trade or investment for Australian businesses *

Word count:
Must be no more than 400 words.

3c. Describe opportunities to enhance Australia’s approach to new and emerging trade issues (e.g. digital economy, green economy, sustainable agriculture etc) *

Word count:
Must be no more than 400 words.

Criterion 4

The activity must be forward looking and have consideration for the relevance of the activity to at least 2040.

4a. Describe how the activity will inform Australia’s FTA modernisation priorities to 2040 *

Word count:
Must be no more than 400 words.

Milestones

Describe your milestones, including delivery timeframes and dependencies.

Milestone	Delivery Timeframe	Dependencies
Must be no more than 200 words.		

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Undertaking of my responsibilities

I understand that if my proposed activity receives funding, it must be completed by no later than 27 February 2026. *

☐ Yes
We may ask that less-complex activities and/or those that receive a smaller amount of grant funding be delivered in a shorter timeframe eg. six months

Funding & Budget

* indicates a required field

Budget

Please provide an expected budget overview.

- The Budget in this section is intended to capture each line item in your activity, including the total of any contributions made by Joint (consortia) members. Note: individual Joint (consortia) member contributions are to be added in the section "Consortia Contributions" below
- Ensure all costs quoted in the budget are in Australian dollars (ex-GST)
- You need to enter them as whole numbers only.

In the table below, click "Add more" to insert additional lines to show all budget items associated with your activity

Line item	Cost of line item	Total cost	Applicant contribution	Consortia organisation/s contribution (if applicable)	Australian Government Contribution
eg. research, communication/translation, domestic travel	Must be a whole number (no decimal place)	Must be a whole number (no decimal place).	Must be a whole number (no decimal place).	Enter 0 if not applicable. Must be a whole number (no decimal place).	Must be a whole number (no decimal place).

Total Cost *

This number/amount is calculated.

Total Applicant Contribution *

This number/amount is calculated.

Total contribution from joint (consortia) organisation/s *

This number/amount is calculated.

Total Australian Government Contribution *

This number/amount is calculated.

Validation: Total Cost less [Total Applicant Contribution + Total contribution from each Joint (consortia) organisation + Total Australian Government Contribution]

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This number is calculated
and must be equal to
zero.

In-Kind Contribution

Will you be providing an in-kind contribution? * ☐ Yes ☐ No

Contribution	Details	Approximate Value
		Must be a dollar amount.

Total In-Kind Contribution Value

This number/amount is calculated.

Consortia Contributions

Consortia Partner	Amount
Organisation name	Must be a dollar amount.

Total Consortia Contributions

This number/amount is calculated.

Validation: Total Consortia Contributions less Total contribution from Joint (consortia) organisations

This number/amount is calculated and must be equal to zero.

Application Submission Details

* indicates a required field

The deadline for submitting applications is 11.30PM AEDST, 24 March 2025

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Privacy of your information

We treat your personal information according to the [Privacy Act 1988](#) and the [Australian Privacy Principles](#). This includes letting you know:

- what personal information we collect
- why we collect your personal information
- who we give your personal information to.

Your personal information can only be disclosed to someone else for the primary purpose for which it was collected, unless an exemption applies.

The Australian Government may also use and disclose information about grant applicants and grant recipients under this grant opportunity in any other Australian Government business or function. This includes disclosing grant information on GrantConnect as required for reporting purposes and giving information to the Australian Taxation Office for compliance purposes.

We may share the information you give us with other Commonwealth entities for purposes including government administration, research or service delivery, according to Australian laws.

As part of your application, you declare your ability to comply with the *Privacy Act 1988* and the Australian Privacy Principles and impose the same privacy obligations on officers, employees, agents and subcontractors that you engage to assist with the activity, in respect of personal information you collect, use, store, or disclose in connection with the activity. Accordingly, you must not do anything, which if done by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade would breach an Australian Privacy Principle as defined in the Act.

I declare my ability to comply with the Privacy Act 1988 *

☐ Agree

If you are awarded a grant and you have partner organisation/s, this declaration will also include those organisations

This application is submitted by:

Name *

Title

First Name

Last Name

Position *

Email *

Must be an email address.

Add additional email details if the person lodging the application is different to the person on the Applicant Details page

Phone Number

Please include Country Code eg. +61. Add phone number if the person lodging the application is different to the person on the Applicant Details page

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Date *

Must be a date.

Submit application

When you select 'Review and Submit' from the 'Form navigation' list, the entire draft application will be presented. Please carefully read your application and once you are satisfied the application is complete, select 'Submit' at the bottom of the form'.

You should receive an auto-generated email confirming that your application has been lodged. If you do not receive an acknowledgement email, please contact us at ftamodernisation@dfat.gov.au.