

# Data Impact Grants Program

2027 Round: Guidelines

Universities For All

[acses.edu.au](https://acses.edu.au)

# Acknowledgement of Country

The Australian Centre for Student Equity and Success (ACSES) acknowledges Indigenous peoples across Australia as the Traditional Owners of the lands on which the nation's campuses are situated. With a history spanning more than 60,000 years as the original educators, Indigenous peoples hold a unique place in our nation. We recognise the importance of their knowledge and culture, and reflect the principles of participation, equity, and cultural respect in our work. We pay our respects to Elders past, present, and future, and consider it an honour to learn from our Indigenous colleagues, partners, and friends.

# Table of contents

|                                                       |           |
|-------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Acknowledgement of Country .....                      | i         |
| <b>1. The 2027 Data Impact Grants Program.....</b>    | <b>1</b>  |
| 1.1 Introduction.....                                 | 1         |
| 1.2 Contact and submission details .....              | 1         |
| 1.3 Key dates .....                                   | 2         |
| <b>2. What the program will fund.....</b>             | <b>3</b>  |
| 2.1 Project scope.....                                | 3         |
| 2.2 Example project areas .....                       | 3         |
| 2.3 Required sector benefit.....                      | 3         |
| 2.4 Knowledge transfer and sector dissemination ..... | 4         |
| 2.5 Priority (equity) groups.....                     | 4         |
| 2.6 Data access, storage, and management.....         | 4         |
| <b>3. Funding.....</b>                                | <b>5</b>  |
| 3.1 Funding available.....                            | 5         |
| 3.2 Budget principles .....                           | 5         |
| 3.3 Eligible and ineligible expenditure.....          | 5         |
| <b>4. Eligibility .....</b>                           | <b>6</b>  |
| 4.1 Who can apply .....                               | 6         |
| 4.2 Additional requirements .....                     | 6         |
| <b>5. Preparing an application.....</b>               | <b>7</b>  |
| 5.1 Application structure .....                       | 7         |
| 5.2 Writing expectations .....                        | 7         |
| 5.3 Use of generative AI .....                        | 8         |
| <b>6. Assessment and selection .....</b>              | <b>9</b>  |
| 6.1 Selection process.....                            | 9         |
| 6.2 Assessment criteria .....                         | 9         |
| <b>7. Contracting and project management .....</b>    | <b>11</b> |
| 7.1 Funding agreement.....                            | 11        |
| 7.2 Monitoring and reporting .....                    | 11        |
| 7.3 Ethics, privacy, and data governance.....         | 12        |
| 7.4 Ownership, licensing, and publication .....       | 12        |
| 7.5 Privacy and communications .....                  | 12        |
| <b>8. Checklist before submission.....</b>            | <b>13</b> |

# 1. The 2027 Data Impact Grants Program

## 1.1 Introduction

The Australian Centre for Student Equity and Success (ACSES) Data Program is working to strengthen the national student equity evidence base and assist the higher education sector to make better use of student equity data. This activity extends across all facets of data collection and use, including definitions, quality and consistency, usability, accessibility, linkage, and interpretation.

The 2027 Data Impact Grants are a pilot funding round for the resourcing of high-impact, technically focused projects in the student equity data space. Funded projects must produce practical outputs that can be shared and translated across the higher education sector, and/or demonstrate clear sector-wide benefit.

**Project funding:** Total funding of \$200,000 is available, with up to \$100,000 (excluding GST) allocatable per project.

**Duration:** Up to 12 months. Duration may vary depending on the contractual agreement. Projects are expected to commence in May 2027, with projects to be finalised in May 2028 and completion and acquittal taking place thereafter.

**Application process:** Applications are sought from teams submitting a full, detailed proposal for consideration by ACSES.

**Due Date:** Proposals are due at **4pm (AWST) on Friday, 22 January 2027.**

## 1.2 Contact and submission details

Associate Professor Gemma Cadby  
Director – Data Program  
Australian Centre for Student Equity and Success  
Curtin University  
PO Box U1987 PERTH WA 6845

**Email:** [acses@curtin.edu.au](mailto:acses@curtin.edu.au) (**Subject:** 2027 Data Impact Grants Program)

**Web:** [acses.edu.au](https://acses.edu.au)

## 1.3 Key dates

| Milestone                                                               | Date                                                 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| Request for applications                                                | Wednesday, 28 October 2026                           |
| <b>Closing date for applications</b>                                    | Friday, 22 January 2027, 4pm AWST *                  |
| Assessment of proposals by ACSES and the external Expert Advisory Panel | Wednesday, 27 January to Wednesday, 24 February 2027 |
| Notification of outcomes                                                | Wednesday, 3 March 2027                              |
| Funding agreement negotiation and execution                             | Early March 2027 – early May 2027                    |
| Project work                                                            | May 2027 – May 2028 (up to 12 months)                |
| Project completion and financial acquittals                             | May 2028 – June 2028                                 |

\* Acknowledgement of applications will occur via email upon receipt. Applications submitted after this time will not be considered as part of this funding round.

**Application documentation:** The *Data Impact Grants Guidelines 2027* (this document) and the *Application Pack* are available on the [ACSES website](#).

## 2. What the program will fund

### 2.1 Project scope

Projects must be technically focused and demonstrate a direct contribution to the quality, usability, consistency, accessibility, linkage or interpretation of student equity data. They must generate practical outputs with clear potential for sector-wide application and/or impact.

### 2.2 Example project areas

- Sector-wide training resources or micro-credentials for effective use of student equity data.
- The design and piloting of national student surveys, such as a student exit survey.
- Institutional equity data quality audit frameworks.
- The development and piloting of new measures for identifying equity student groups or educational disadvantage.
- Tertiary admissions student data harmonisation, with a focus on equity reporting.
- Data linkage projects addressing student equity evidence needs.
- Open-source tools, dashboards, or technical resources for equity analysis that can be applied across the sector.

These examples are illustrative only and do not limit the types of eligible projects.

### 2.3 Required sector benefit

- Outputs must be practically usable, suitable for sharing, and ready for adoption or adaptation beyond the lead institution.
- The proposal must identify intended sector end users and explain how those users will benefit.
- Methods, findings, tools, or resources must be made available in a form that supports broader use, subject to legal, ethical, privacy, and contractual requirements.

## 2.4 Knowledge transfer and sector dissemination

Every funded project must include a distinct knowledge transfer and sector dissemination phase. Activities may include webinars, workshops, technical guides, implementation resources, conference presentations, or other forms of sector engagement. A strong proposal will show how these activities drive uptake and use of the outputs across the sector.

## 2.5 Priority (equity) groups

All proposals should be able to identify one or more priority (equity) groups who are potential beneficiaries of this work—including First Nations Australian students; students from low socio-economic status (SES) backgrounds; students with disability; and students from regional and remote Australia.

However, proposals are not limited to the stated priority groups and can nominate other groups experiencing forms of disadvantage and/or underrepresentation in higher education, in addition to addressing the issue of compounding disadvantage where relevant.

## 2.6 Data access, storage, and management

Where a project requires, uses, produces, or collects data, the proposal must demonstrate that the data can be obtained and handled appropriately within the life of the project. It must also outline provisions for utilisation and storage of data at the project's conclusion.

- Data access must be secured, or be credibly achievable, within the funded period. Proposals must identify what data is required, from whom, and the status of any requests, approvals or agreements needed to obtain it.
- Where a project relies on data held by a third party, the proposal must show that acquisition is feasible within the proposed timeline, including any expected lead times for data requests.
- Sensitive or personal data must be stored securely and managed in accordance with relevant legal, ethical, and privacy requirements, with appropriate safeguards against loss, misuse, or breach.
- Where a project depends on data being kept current, the proposal must explain how the data will be refreshed and maintained, including any ongoing or recurring access arrangements.

## 3. Funding

### 3.1 Funding available

- The total funding pool is \$200,000.
- Individual grants are limited to \$100,000, excluding GST.
- Funding amounts may be negotiated as part of the contracting process.

### 3.2 Budget principles

Budgets must be reasonable, clearly justified, and directly connected to delivery of the proposed project and its sector-wide outputs. Applicants must identify GST, and any cash or in-kind contributions from their institutions separately.

### 3.3 Eligible and ineligible expenditure

#### **Eligible**

- Personnel time directly attributable to the project.
- Data access, preparation, linkage, analysis, and validation costs.
- Specialist technical services, software, or licences required specifically for project delivery.
- Testing, consultation, workshops, and user engagement that directly support the outputs.
- Design, accessibility, documentation, hosting, or dissemination costs for sector resources.

#### **Ineligible**

- Institutional overheads or general administrative charges. We anticipate that these will form an in-kind contribution to the project from participating institutions.
- General-purpose equipment or assets.
- Costs incurred before execution of the funding agreement.
- Retrospective reimbursement for completed work.
- Activities not directly related to the approved project, including general conference attendance.

## 4. Eligibility

### 4.1 Who can apply

- The lead applicant must be based at a Table A institution listed in the *Higher Education Support Act 2003*.
- The application must be submitted through the lead institution.
- Applications may include external project partners where their involvement supports sector-wide outcomes.
- For multi-institution proposals, one submitting (lead) institution and one project lead must be identified. All external team members must complete the consortium declaration in the Application Pack.

### 4.2 Additional requirements

- The proposed project must fit the program purpose and scope.
- The requested funding must not exceed \$100,000 (excluding GST).
- The application must be complete, submitted by the deadline, and comply with page limits.
- The project team must be available to deliver within the contracted period.

# 5. Preparing an application

## 5.1 Application structure

- Project details.
- Project abstract (160 words max).
- Priority student groups.
- Project overview and sector impact (3 pages max).
- Technical approach and innovation (2 pages max).
- Team experience and expertise (1 page max).
- Project quality and value for money (1 page max).
- Knowledge transfer and sector dissemination (1 page max).
- Ethics, privacy, and data governance (1 page max).
- Proposed use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) during the project (150 words max).
- Timeline and deliverables (1 page max).
- Budget.
- Risk management (1 page max).
- Disclosure of generative AI used in preparing the application.
- Appendix A: Signatures.
- Appendix B: Consortium Declaration (where required).
- Appendix C: One-page CV for each project team member.

## 5.2 Writing expectations

- The application should be completed in Arial 11 font and be within all page limits.
- Write for a broad panel that may include technical, sector, and student equity expertise.
- Use clear, concise, and strengths-based language.
- Explain technical concepts and acronyms.

- Provide enough information for assessment without relying on unsubmitted material.
- Distinguish confirmed data access, approvals, and partnerships from those still being negotiated.

## 5.3 Use of generative AI

Generative AI tools cannot be listed as authors or treated as responsible for research design, conduct, analysis, or outputs.

Project teams remain fully responsible for the integrity, accuracy, originality, and appropriate referencing of all work produced with the assistance of generative AI. Any substantive use of generative AI—including in research design, data collection or analysis, coding, writing, or the production of images and other outputs—must be transparently disclosed, identifying the tool used and how it was used.

Generative AI must be used consistently with applicable research ethics, privacy, confidentiality, data-security, copyright, and research-integrity requirements. Routine tools used only for spelling, grammar, or basic editing do not require disclosure.

## 6. Assessment and selection

### 6.1 Selection process

Eligible applications will be assessed by a panel comprising external reviewers with relevant technical, sector, or student equity expertise. The panel will assess applications against the published criteria and make recommendations to ACSES. ACSES may seek clarification or negotiate project scope, deliverables, timing, or funding before a funding agreement is executed.

### 6.2 Assessment criteria

| Criterion                                | What assessors will consider                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Project overview and sector impact (30%) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Significance of the data need.</li><li>• Practical usefulness of outputs.</li><li>• Transferability, adoption, scalability, or other sector-wide benefit.</li></ul>                                                                                                              |
| Technical approach and innovation (25%)  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Soundness and suitability of methods.</li><li>• Data quality, governance, privacy, security, and reproducibility.</li><li>• Clarity about technical dependencies, limitations, and risks.</li><li>• Extent to which the work advances or improves existing approaches.</li></ul> |
| Team experience and expertise (20%)      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Relevant technical, student equity, project management, and engagement expertise.</li><li>• Clear roles, time commitments, and availability.</li></ul>                                                                                                                           |

|                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|---------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contribution of partners to successful delivery.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                            |
| Project quality and value for money (10%)         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Realistic scope, timeline, and deliverables.</li> <li>• Effective governance, quality assurance, and risk management.</li> <li>• Budget proportional to anticipated outputs and benefit.</li> </ul>    |
| Knowledge transfer and sector dissemination (15%) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear users and pathways to uptake.</li> <li>• Appropriate, accessible, and reusable sector outputs.</li> <li>• Credible plans for dissemination, implementation, and ongoing availability.</li> </ul> |

# 7. Contracting and project management

## 7.1 Funding agreement

Successful applicants will be required to enter a contract with Curtin University, the host institution for ACSES, of up to 12 months duration, commencing in May 2027. Project leads and team members must be capable of providing consistent high-quality and timely outputs for that period.

Acceptance of a proposal will be subject to negotiation and execution of the funding agreement and contract. A draft version of this can be made available by ACSES upon request. ACSES has allowed two months from the date of notification of successful outcomes for the contractual execution process. In cases where the contract is not executed within two months, ACSES reserves the right to terminate the offer of funding.

ACSES may accept the whole or part of the proposal offered. The final project will be defined in negotiation with the successful applicants.

## 7.2 Monitoring and reporting

- Funded projects will be monitored by the Director and staff of the ACSES Data Program.
- Progress and final reporting requirements will be specified in the funding agreement.
- At a minimum, funded projects will be required to provide two final deliverables:
  - the agreed project output(s), such as a tool, resource, framework, methodology, dataset, training resource, or other technical product; and
  - a short final report (maximum 5 pages) describing the project, the output(s) produced, key findings or learnings, and how the output(s) can be accessed, used, or adopted by the higher education sector.
- Final reports and outputs will be reviewed by the ACSES Data Program team.
- Projects must complete final reporting, dissemination, acquittal, and contract closure by the stated deadline.

## 7.3 Ethics, privacy, and data governance

Where there is a research component to the design of a resource, the design and conduct of the research should be guided by the [National Health and Medical Research Council \(NHMRC\)/Universities Australia \*Joint Statement and Guidelines on Research Practice\*](#) and individual university policy and procedures. In this case, project leads and teams may be required to obtain ethics clearance for projects, and the outcomes of this process will form part of the contract milestones. If your project uses sensitive data, ensure you have secure means of storing the data and preventing unauthorised access, use, disclosure, loss, or breach.

Applicants should bear in mind that projects requiring activities in other parts of the education system will often require special clearance. There may be state/territory protocols that need to be followed when conducting work involving vocational education and training (VET) institutions in their jurisdictions. Further, work involving schools may require obtaining ethics approval from the Department of Education in the relevant state or territory before the project can proceed, even where the proposed project builds on an existing activity.

## 7.4 Ownership, licensing, and publication

Applicants should identify any restrictions that could limit sector access to proposed outputs, including third-party intellectual property, software licensing, data-sharing conditions, hosting costs, or maintenance requirements. ACSES will consider these matters during assessment and contracting.

## 7.5 Privacy and communications

ACSES will take all reasonable measures to ensure that any personal information contained in a proposal will be dealt with in accordance with the provisions of the *Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)*.

No applicant shall provide any information, make any statement, or issue any document or other written or printed material concerning their proposal to any of the media without the prior written approval of ACSES.

## 8. Checklist before submission

- ☐ Application Pack completed in Arial 11 and within all page limits.
- ☐ Lead applicant and submitting institution are eligible.
- ☐ Funding request does not exceed \$100,000 (excluding GST).
- ☐ Timeline includes technical delivery and knowledge transfer.
- ☐ Budget totals and GST treatment are clear.
- ☐ Risk management plan is completed.
- ☐ Ethics, privacy, data access, and governance requirements are addressed.
- ☐ Proposed use of generative AI is addressed.
- ☐ All declarations and consortium signatures are included.
- ☐ A one-page CV for each project team member is included.
- ☐ Application submitted by 4.00 pm AWST on Friday, 22 January 2027.