



**Digital, AI and Technology**  
Centre of Excellence

# **VET Workforce Fellowship Application Guidelines**

**14 October 2026**

**2027 Inaugural Fellowship Round**

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# 1. About The Fellowship

The National Digital, AI and Technology Centre of Excellence VET Workforce Fellowship Program is a national applied research and professional development initiative designed to build VET workforce capability in emerging technologies and translate innovation into practical, scalable outcomes for the VET sector.

The inaugural 2027 round proposes 10 Fellowships. Each Fellow will undertake a six to ten-month applied research project, complete relevant professional development, produce at least one transferable educational asset, deliver at least two knowledge-sharing activities and contribute to the Centre's national community of practice. Each includes a \$10,000 Applied Research Project Grant and a professional development scholarship valued at up to \$10,000, a total of up to \$20,000 per person. A further 15 Fellowships are proposed for 2028, bringing the two-year total to 25.

## What the Fellowship aims to achieve

- Build VET workforce capability and digital leadership.
- Develop practitioner-researchers who can investigate and apply emerging technologies in teaching and learning.
- Generate evidence-based educational assets that can be adopted across the national TAFE network.
- Strengthen collaboration between TAFEs, industry and universities.
- Establish a national community of practice to drive ongoing innovation and capability uplift.



## 2. About The Digital, AI and Technology Centre of Excellence

The Digital, AI and Technology Centre of Excellence is helping build the workforce behind Australia's digital future. Led by Chisholm Institute and supported by the Australian and Victorian Governments, the Centre is based at Chisholm's Frankston campus and works with people and organisations across Australia. It brings together industry, government, TAFEs, universities and research partners to build digital, AI and technology capability, support innovation in vocational education and training, and prepare people for the jobs of tomorrow. Through training, applied research, collaboration and the development of evidence-based resources, the Centre helps educators, industry partners and learners build skills, explore new opportunities and respond to the changing needs of the digital economy. The VET Workforce Fellowship Program is one of the ways the Centre supports educator capability, practitioner-led research and knowledge sharing across the VET sector.

## 3. What is Applied Research?

Applied research within the Digital, AI and Technology Centre of Excellence is a systematic process undertaken to address a specific, real-world challenge or opportunity and generate evidence that can be applied in practice.

Applied research operates as the core discovery, testing and validation mechanism of the Centre. By generating tangible, empirical evidence, applied research drives innovation and translates validated findings into contemporary VET practice, curriculum, AI pedagogies, technology-enabled tools, and adaptable educational

assets that deliver tangible value across the VET workforce, learners, and industry partners.

Applied research is a structured way of investigating a practical problem or opportunity. It is designed to produce knowledge that can be used in real settings, rather than knowledge for its own sake.

A Fellowship project could examine an existing challenge, test a new approach, trial new tools or technologies, explore learning and teaching relating to emerging industry technology, build new digital tools, evaluate a practice, develop a resource or framework, or investigate how an idea could be adapted for vocational education and training.

The project should have a clear question or objective, methodology, connection to industry and explanation of how the findings will be applied and disseminated.

Examples of possible applied research activity:

- Evaluating the use of Generative AI in assessment design and learner support.
- Developing AI agents for VET compliance or administrative tasks.
- Developing tools that support AI enabled adaptive learning.
- Developing AI pedagogy frameworks for vocational education.
- Creating cyber security simulation environments for student learning.
- Applying robotics and automation technologies within trade training environments.
- Designing cloud-based learning laboratories.
- Investigating industry applications of digital twins, predictive analytics or AI agents.
- Developing educator toolkits, prompt libraries or implementation guides for emerging technologies.
- Reviewing existing evidence and leading practice.
- Consulting educators, learners, industry or other stakeholders.
- Observing or documenting current practice.
- Testing or piloting an educational approach, resource or process.
- Collecting and analysing qualitative or quantitative information.
- Evaluating outcomes and identifying practical recommendations.
- Developing a resource, model, framework or implementation guide.

**Important:** A Fellowship project must be manageable within the available time, funding and approval requirements. Applicants should not assume that ethics, privacy, data or organisational approvals will be automatic.

## 4. Fellowship focus and priority areas

Applicants will come from Australian TAFEs and dual-sector institutions and undertake projects aligned to uplift in digital, AI and technology capability within the VET Sector or building educator expertise and teaching methodologies aligned with the Centre of Excellence priority domains including AI, Cyber Security, Data Analytics, Robotics and Automation, Cloud and Software, and Enterprise Systems.

Applications must respond to at least one of the Centre's published applied research priorities. Applicants should explain the connection clearly and show how the project could produce a practical benefit for vocational education and training.

Where a project relates to more than one priority, applicants should nominate a primary priority and may identify relevant secondary priorities.

| Priority area           | What applicants should address                                                                                    |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Artificial Intelligence | Projects that build educator expertise, teaching methodologies or practical VET applications involving AI.        |
| Cyber Security          | Projects that strengthen cyber security capability, education or practice in the VET sector.                      |
| Data Analytics          | Projects that build capability to use data effectively in education, training or institutional practice.          |
| Robotics and Automation | Projects relating to robotics, automation and their implications for skills, teaching or industry practice.       |
| Cloud and Software      | Projects that strengthen capability in cloud technologies, software development or their educational application. |
| Enterprise Systems      | Projects that build capability in enterprise platforms, systems and related teaching or workforce practice.       |

## 5. Who can apply?

Applicants must meet all published eligibility requirements at the time applications close. Eligibility is separate from merit. Meeting the eligibility requirements allows an application to be assessed but does not guarantee selection.

### Eligibility requirements

- Be employed by an eligible TAFE
- Have the support of their employing organisation.
- Be able to complete the project within the Fellowship period.
- Submit an applied research proposal aligned with at least one approved priority area.
- Identify a professional development program aligned to your research area and submit the relevant details.
- Agree to the Fellowship participation, reporting and knowledge-sharing requirements
- Applications must be submitted by an individual Fellow. While Fellows may choose to collaborate informally with colleagues or other stakeholders during the project, the grant is awarded to a single individual and all associated professional development funding and entitlements remain with that person. Funding and professional development opportunities cannot be transferred to another individual.

## 6. What does the Fellowship involve?

Fellows will be expected to plan and complete an applied research project, participate in Fellowship activities and share their learning with relevant audiences. The exact program design and schedule will be provided to successful applicants before they accept an offer.

### Fellow commitments

- Attend an online induction and any scheduled capability-building sessions.
- Refine the project plan with support from the Centre.
- Secure and maintain all required organisational, ethics, privacy, data and other approvals.
- Undertake the project in accordance with the approved proposal and agreed milestones.
- Participate in check-ins, peer learning and the Fellowship community.
- Manage the Project Grant funding, which is paid to the Fellow's employing institution and may be used for approved project costs such as backfill, travel, equipment, software, conference participation and dissemination activities.
- Work with the Centre to arrange payment of approved Professional Development funding, with training providers invoicing the Centre directly where applicable.
- Provide any required financial information, invoices and reporting documentation associated with both funding streams.
- Prepare progress updates and a final report or agreed output.
- Share findings through presentations, resources, workshops or other agreed activities.
- Participate in evaluation of the Fellowship and its impact.
- Applied research projects will run for six to ten months, with the first round proposed from

February to October 2027. The program includes national induction, research and governance briefings, community-of-practice activity, project updates, a June–July midpoint review, final reporting and dissemination.

## 7. Funding and eligible expenditure

Each Fellowship includes a \$10,000 Applied Research Project Grant, paid directly to the Fellow's employing TAFE, and a professional development scholarship valued at up to \$10,000, paid on invoice for enrolment in an approved professional certification program. Funding is intended to enable delivery of the approved project and capability development.

The Applied Research Project Grant will be administered by the Fellow's employing institution in accordance with its financial policies and procedures.

Professional development activities must be approved by the Centre prior to enrolment or commitment of funds. The Centre will pay approved training providers directly upon receipt of a valid invoice, up to the approved scholarship value.

All costs must be inclusive of GST where applicable. Any in-kind, co-contributions or additional costs that exceed the approved funding allocation are the responsibility of the Fellow and/or their employing institution.

### Eligible expenditure

- Project materials and resources.
- Approved travel directly related to the project.
- Specialist advice or services that cannot reasonably be provided internally.
- Data collection, transcription, analysis or evaluation costs.
- Backfill or release time approved by the Fellow's employing institution.
- Design, production or dissemination of approved project outputs.
- Other project costs permitted under the funding agreement.

### Ineligible expenditure

- Costs incurred before the funding agreement starts.
- Business-as-usual operating expenses not directly attributable to the project.
- Capital equipment or assets unless specifically approved.
- Activities primarily intended to deliver a qualification.
- Personal expenses, entertainment or unsupported travel costs.
- Expenditure that duplicates another source of funding.
- Any cost prohibited by the funding agreement or relevant policy.

## 8. Key dates

| Milestone                                            | Timing                     |
|------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Applications open                                    | Mid October 2026           |
| Applicant information sessions                       | October-November 2026      |
| Applications close                                   | Mid November 2026          |
| Eligibility review and panel assessment              | End November 2026          |
| Applicants notified                                  | End November 2026          |
| Funding agreements completed                         | End November 2026          |
| Fellows announced and participant profiles published | December 2026-January 2027 |
| Fellowship induction and orientation                 | January-February 2027      |
| Professional development program commences           | February-July 2027         |
| Applied research projects commence                   | February 2027              |
| Midpoint review and progress reporting               | June-July 2027             |
| Research projects completed                          | October 2027               |
| Final reports and educational assets submitted       | October 2027               |
| Showcase and dissemination activities                | October-December 2027      |
| Program evaluation                                   | December 2027              |

**Please note:** The timeline above is indicative. Confirmed application dates, information sessions, deadlines and program milestones will be published on the Digital, AI and Technology Centre of Excellence website and communicated through official channels prior to launch.

## 9. How to apply

Applications should be submitted through the Digital, AI and Technology Centre of Excellence online application form by the published closing date. Applicants should review this guide before starting and prepare longer responses in a separate document before entering them into the form.

1. Read the eligibility requirements, priority areas and conditions.
2. Discuss the proposal with your manager and relevant organisational areas.
3. Develop the project concept, outcomes, methodology, timing and budget.
4. Secure the required employer endorsement and supporting documents.
5. Complete every mandatory question in the online form.
6. Review the declarations, retain a copy of the application and submit before the deadline.
- 7.

**Submission tip:** Do not wait until the closing day to upload documents or submit the form. Applicants are responsible for allowing enough time to resolve technical issues.

## 10. Required attachments

| Attachment                                                   | Proposed status                | Purpose                                                                  |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Employer endorsement letter on official institute letterhead | Mandatory                      | Confirms organisational support, release time and relevant commitments.  |
| Itemised project budget                                      | Optional                       | Shows how funding will be used and why each cost is required.            |
| Project milestones or work plan                              | Mandatory.<br>Captured in form | Demonstrates feasibility and timing.                                     |
| Curriculum vitae                                             | Optional                       | Provides evidence of relevant capability and experience.                 |
| Additional letter of support or recommendation               | Optional                       | Provides external evidence of need, relevance or sector benefit.         |
| Other supporting evidence                                    | Optional, subject to limits    | Supports the identified need without replacing the application response. |

## Employer endorsement

The employer endorsement must be provided on company letterhead and signed by an authorised representative who understands the proposed project and is able to confirm the organisation's support. It should address release time, access to relevant people or systems, project oversight, financial administration and any other organisational commitment required for the project.

## 11. Selection criteria

Eligible applications are proposed to be assessed against the criteria below. Final criteria, weightings and scoring guidance must be approved before applications open.

| Criterion                                 | What assessors may consider                                                                                                       |
|-------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Project clarity and need                  | The proposal clearly defines the problem, need or opportunity, the research question or objective, and the work to be undertaken. |
| Alignment with priorities                 | The proposal demonstrates a strong and credible connection to one or more approved applied research priorities.                   |
| Potential impact and sector benefit       | The project has the potential to produce meaningful benefits for educators, learners, TAFEs, industry or the broader sector.      |
| Approach and feasibility                  | The methodology, timing, resources, risks and approvals are appropriate and achievable within the Fellowship period.              |
| Applicant capability                      | The applicant demonstrates relevant experience, credibility, relationships and capacity to undertake the project.                 |
| Use of funding and value                  | The budget is reasonable, clearly justified and directly supports the project.                                                    |
| Organisational support                    | The employing organisation demonstrates practical support for the applicant and project.                                          |
| Dissemination and Fellowship contribution | The applicant presents a credible plan to share findings, encourage application and participate in the Fellowship community.      |

## 12. Assessment and selection process

Applications will be handled through a fair and consistent process. The proposed process is outlined below and must be confirmed before publication.

1. Administrative review to confirm application completeness and eligibility
2. Independent assessment of eligible applications against the published selection criteria
  - Panel moderation and portfolio review to ensure alignment with the Centre priorities, sector relevance and cohort diversity
3. Conflict-of-interest declarations and management in accordance with approved governance arrangements
4. Final recommendations and approval under the agreed governance framework
5. Notification of successful and unsuccessful applicants
6. Completion of funding agreements with successful applicants.

The Centre may seek clarification of information provided in an application where required during the assessment process.

## 13. Conditions of participation

Successful applicants will be required to accept an offer and enter into the relevant agreement before project activity or expenditure begins. Proposed conditions include the following:

- Complete the project within the agreed period and approved scope
- Use funding only for approved purposes
- Obtain and comply with all required approvals
- Advise the Centre promptly of material changes, delays, risks or conflicts of interest
- Participate in agreed Fellowship and evaluation activities
- Submit progress information and agreed final outputs
- Acknowledge the Centre and relevant funders or partners in approved communications
- Share findings and resources in accordance with the funding agreement
- Comply with intellectual property, privacy, confidentiality, records and publication requirements.

## 14. Preparing a strong application

A strong application is clear, evidence-informed and realistic. It explains the practical need, the proposed response, the likely benefit and why the applicant is well placed to deliver the work.

### Writing tips

- Use plain English and define specialised terms
- Answer the question directly before adding supporting detail
- Use specific evidence rather than broad claims
- Distinguish project activities from intended outcomes
- Keep the scope achievable within the time and funding available
- Show who will benefit and how the benefit will be assessed
- Explain how findings will be shared and used by others
- Make sure the budget, timeline and narrative tell the same story
- Ask a colleague unfamiliar with the proposal to review it for clarity
- Do not include confidential or sensitive information unless the form specifically requires it.

### Before you begin

Applicants should have the following information ready: project title and summary; evidence of need; research question or objective; proposed activities; milestones; expected outcomes; measures of success; key partners; risks and approvals; dissemination plan; budget; and employer endorsement.

## 15. Application questions and guidance

The questions below are drafted to align with the proposed online form. Word limits should be treated as maximums unless the final form states otherwise.

| Application question                                                     | Guidance                                                                                                                    | Proposed limit |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| Project title                                                            | Provide a short, descriptive title that communicates the focus of the project.                                              | Short text     |
| Plain-English project summary                                            | Summarise the issue, proposed work and intended result for a non-specialist audience.                                       | 200 words      |
| Explain how the proposal aligns with the selected priority or priorities | Describe what is happening now, who is affected and why the issue matters. Include relevant evidence, observations or data. | 300 words      |

| Application question                                                                   | Guidance                                                                                                                                  | Proposed limit         |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| What outcomes or changes do you expect the project to produce?                         | Describe the expected improvements, insights, resources, practices, capabilities or other changes that will result from the project.      | 150 words              |
| How will you know whether the project has been successful?                             | Explain how success will be measured, including indicators, evidence sources, feedback mechanisms or evaluation methods.                  | 400 words              |
| What is the potential value of the project beyond your immediate team or organisation? | Explain how the project's findings, approach or resources could benefit the broader VET sector, industry, learners or other stakeholders. | 250 words              |
| How will you share the project findings, resources or lessons?                         | Describe how findings will be communicated, who the intended audiences are and what dissemination channels may be used.                   | 300 words              |
| How could the findings be adopted or adapted by other teams or TAFEs?                  | Explain how other organisations could implement, adapt or build on the project's outputs, findings or approaches.                         | 250 words              |
| Explain why each cost is necessary to deliver the project.                             | Justify each proposed expense and explain how it contributes to the achievement of project objectives and outcomes.                       | 250 words              |
| Organisational support                                                                 | Confirm the support provided by your organisation and upload the required endorsement.                                                    | Upload letter          |
| Conflicts and approvals                                                                | Declare actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest and provide the status of relevant approvals.                                | Choice and explanation |
| Declarations                                                                           | Confirm accuracy, authority to apply, privacy consent and acceptance of the published conditions.                                         | Mandatory checkboxes   |

## 16. Additional considerations

The questions below are not part of the application form but may help you develop a stronger proposal and prepare information that may be needed throughout the Fellowship.

| Consideration                    | What to think about                                                                                                                            |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Project planning and timing      | What are the major stages of the project? What outputs will be delivered, and when? Is the project achievable within the Fellowship timeframe? |
| Resources, approvals and support | What people, systems, data, partnerships, approvals or organisational support will be needed to complete the project successfully?             |
| Risks and mitigation             | What factors could affect delivery, participation, timing, access to information or project outcomes? How might these risks be managed?        |

## 17. Application checklist

- ☐ I have checked that I meet all eligibility requirements.
- ☐ My proposal aligns with at least one approved priority area.
- ☐ I have discussed the application with my manager and relevant organisational areas.
- ☐ The project scope, timing and budget are achievable.
- ☐ I have identified required ethics, privacy, data, information security and organisational approvals.
- ☐ My employer endorsement is signed by an authorised representative.
- ☐ I have prepared all mandatory attachments in the required format.
- ☐ My responses address the published selection criteria.
- ☐ The budget totals are correct and match the amount requested.
- ☐ I have reviewed the declarations and privacy information.
- ☐ I have retained a copy of the complete application.
- ☐ I will submit before the closing date and time.

## 18. Privacy, confidentiality and enquiries

Information collected through the application process will be used to administer, assess and evaluate the Fellowship and to meet governance, reporting and records obligations. Access should be limited to authorised staff, assessors and advisers who need the information for these purposes.

### Enquiries

Applicants may contact the Digital, AI and Technology Centre of Excellence for clarification about the process, eligibility, form or published requirements. To support fairness, the Centre may publish answers to questions that are relevant to all applicants.

## Appendix A: Employer endorsement letter

The following template is proposed for completion on the employing organisation's letterhead.

**To whom it may concern** Re: Endorsement of [applicant name] for the [official Fellowship name]

I confirm that [organisation] supports [applicant name] to apply for the Fellowship and undertake the proposed project, titled "[project title]".

If the application is successful, the organisation supports the applicant to meet the agreed project and Fellowship commitments, including:

- appropriate release time or work arrangements;
- access to relevant people, systems, information and facilities, subject to approval;
- completion of required ethics, privacy, data, information security and organisational processes;
- administration of funding and financial reporting, where applicable;
- issue of invoice or grant amount to The Digital, AI and Technology Centre of Excellence
- participation in Fellowship activities and dissemination of findings; and
- completion of the project within the agreed period.

The proposed project is relevant to our organisation because: [insert explanation].

The anticipated benefit to learners, educators, industry, our organisation or the broader sector is: [insert explanation].

Authorised representative name: [insert]

Position: [insert]

Email and telephone: [insert]

Signature: [insert]

Date: [insert]

## Appendix B: Project milestone template

| Milestone or activity               | Target date | Output or evidence | Dependencies / approvals |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|--------------------|--------------------------|
| [Milestone 1]                       | [Date]      | [Output]           | [Dependencies]           |
| [Milestone 2]                       | [Date]      | [Output]           | [Dependencies]           |
| [Milestone 3]                       | [Date]      | [Output]           | [Dependencies]           |
| [Final reporting and dissemination] | [Date]      | [Output]           | [Dependencies]           |



## **Digital, AI and Technology** Centre of Excellence

The Digital, AI and Technology Centre of Excellence is a joint initiative between the Australian Government and Victorian Government.

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**TAFE VICTORIA**

  
Australian Government  
Department of Employment  
and Workplace Relations