GRANTS FOR EARLY-STAGE AGTECH PRE-ACCELERATOR PROGRAMS

Supporting early-stage AgTech startup entrepreneurs and the creation of new Victorian startups

launchvic

BACKGROUND

The Victorian startup ecosystem has undergone significant growth in the past 7 years, with the number of startups increasing over three times from around 1,000 to over 3,400. Globally leading startup ecosystems support many more startups, which in turn contribute to economic growth through job creation. It is therefore imperative that we continue to support the creation of new startups in Victoria.

Since 2021 LaunchVic and Agriculture Victoria, within the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action, have been working to increase the number of AgTech startups by delivering a suite of programs to improve the quantity and quality of early-stage AgTech startups across Victoria and to build entrepreneurial capability amongst our AgTech founders. This support has included grant-funding for three AgTech-focused pre-accelerator programs, an AgTech Grants Program delivering $50,000 non-dilutive grants to AgTech startups, and the Hugh Victor McKay Fund; a sidecar fund co-investing alongside private sector capital into early-stage AgTech startups. As a result, the AgTech sector has grown from less than 40, to approximately 100 idea-early stage AgTech startups.

AgTech is a priority industry of the future. It is a key driver to support adaptation of the agriculture sector with the potential to provide farmers with the tools, data and knowledge to make more informed, timely on-farm decisions and improve productivity and sustainability and better manage risk. Through this grant round, LaunchVic and Agriculture Victoria are seeking to continue supporting programming that will help founders start and grow AgTech startups in Victoria.

OVERVIEW & OBJECTIVE

LaunchVic is seeking to fund high-quality Pre-Accelerator Programming delivered by startup experts, specifically within the AgTech sector.

The successfully funded Program/s will build on the existing support in place for AgTech founders and continue to:

- Support startup entrepreneurs in AgTech by helping them bring their startup idea to life, and/or continue developing their startup idea;
- Increase the pipeline of startups being created across Victoria in the AgTech area; and
- Increase the pipeline of quality startups entering other programs in Victoria.

Applicants will need to demonstrate a deep understanding of startup creation, have demonstrable experience creating and growing startups, and startup communities, and request grant funding for a program that can realistically help startups to grow within the AgTech sector.

DEFINITIONS

The below definitions apply to this Grant Round:

Pre-Accelerator is a program targeted at Startup Entrepreneurs who have a technology-based idea for a startup and want to establish a business and develop a Minimum Viable Product (MVP). The program runs for a designated period (a minimum of 6-weeks), and participants 'graduate' from the program having followed a set methodology to establish a startup. A Pre-Accelerator program can provide a pathway to an Accelerator program.

Startups are technology-based businesses with high impact potential, that use innovation and/or address scalable markets. Their product/service/platform/hardware is driven by technology. Examples of technology include software / applications, 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.

AgTech is the collection of technologies that provide the agricultural industry with the tools, data and knowledge to make more informed, timely on-farm decisions and improve productivity and sustainability. Applications of these technologies can include: plant or animal science, crop protection & input management, precision agriculture, indoor agriculture, sensors & smart farm equipment, imagery, animal technologies, processing & packaging, supply chain and hardware.

Startup Entrepreneurs are individuals who have an idea for a technology-based Startup and are seeking to launch a Startup and register their new Company via ASIC in the State of Victoria.

Operating Costs include staff salaries, rent, event costs, insurance, accounting and legal costs, marketing and promotion costs, reasonable domestic travel costs, grants to startups and other reasonable operating costs.

ELIGIBILITY

Applicants must satisfy the following eligibility criterion:

1. **Program Focus** The proposed program must be an early-stage pre-accelerator focussed on AgTech startup creation and/or development. The program must primarily support Victorian Startup Entrepreneurs (over the age of 18). We are not providing funds directly to Startups or Startup Entrepreneurs through this Grant Round. The program can be new to market or be already established.

2. **Applicant Experience** Applicants that are eligible include a delivery team that has proven expertise in supporting early-stage technology startups to launch and grow, exemplified by experience in delivering AgTech pre-accelerator programs or other startup programs. Applicant must demonstrate strong startup experience as well as expertise or lived experience in the AgTech sector.

3. **Type of Organisation** The types of organisations that are eligible to apply include a:
   a) Registered company/organisation headquartered in the State of Victoria; or
   b) Registered company/organisation with an office in the State of Victoria; or
   c) Registered company/organisation located outside the State of Victoria (in Australia) proposing a program to be delivered in the State of Victoria; or
   d) An experienced delivery team (as per Criteria 2 above) who agrees to setup a new company to primarily run the Pre-Accelerator Program and register the new entity in Victoria before contract execution.

   Please note a company/organisation with an Australian Business Number (ABN) is defined as 'registered'. Not-for-profit organisations can apply. If you are unsure about your eligibility, please contact the LaunchVic Grants Team. Preference may be given to applications made by companies headquartered in Victoria or companies with an established office or actively working in Victoria.

4. **Grant Amount** Applications up to $500,000 (exclusive GST) over a minimum of two years are eligible.

   Application submission must be via the LaunchVic online application system before the closing date and time to be eligible.

KEY ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Applicants are required to address the following Key Assessment Criteria via the LaunchVic online application system. Included below are the required responses and the maximum word count for responses.

	Criteria	Response
1. Overview	a) Outline the proposed AgTech program, including: • The focus for the pre-accelerator program • How it differentiates from other programs in market? • What impact and benefits to Victorian AgTech startup entrepreneurs will the program deliver? • Why are you uniquely placed to deliver this program?	500 words
	b) Demonstrate the market need for this program	200 words
2. Program Delivery	a) Provide details on how the program will be delivered including: • Delivery mechanisms, including location • Cost of the program to the participant (if any) • Number and length of cohorts • Curriculum overview • Details on partners to support program delivery (if any) • Details on post-program support (if any) • Details on community building initiatives that will be undertaken.	300 words
	b) Upload a proposed timeline of program activities.	Upload
3. Outcomes	a) What are the expected outcomes and learnings of graduated participants? And how does the program delivery and curriculum described above help achieve these outcomes?	250 words
	b) Provide details of expected program outputs, including; • Number of Startup entrepreneurs supported and graduated (per cohort and cumulative) • Other activities that will support the growth of the Victorian ecosystem (e.g. events for the broader community).	200 words
4. Experience and expertise	a) For existing programs, list the program's success and achievements to date including number of startups supported and other metrics (further progression into other startup programs, capital raised, jobs created within startups etc.). If your program is for a new program outline your experience in founding and running a startup program, or experience in early-stage startup support.	250 words

	b) List the key personnel (program management and delivery team members etc.) and their relevant expertise and/or experience in delivering programs. Nominate the Project Manager who will oversee and manage project delivery, and outline staff to be based in Victoria.	Table (Name, Role, 1 page CV's, Victorian based (up to 50 words)
	c) To demonstrate experience and expertise, please list at least 3 Startup Entrepreneurs you have helped to launch a technology-based company in the last two years. Provide details including: (i) Company Name (ii) Company Website (iii) Summary of support provided (up to 50 words) (iv) Summary of their outcomes as a result of participation in your program (up to 50 words).	Table
5. Funding	Provide details on the following: a) Why should LaunchVic fund this program and what are you hoping to achieve by working with LaunchVic?	150 words
	b) Funding amount requested from LaunchVic.	Numbers
	i) Cash and/or in-kind contributions by the Applicant (not mandatory but will be viewed favourably).	Numbers
	ii) Cash and/or in-kind contributions by Partner Organisations (not mandatory). Letters of support that commit funding must be provided to be considered.	Numbers Upload
	d) Budget: Provide a budget for the project (complete the budget table), including income and expenditure. Expenditure of the LaunchVic Grant can only be used for Operating Costs.	Table
6. Diversity and Inclusion	How will you incorporate the values of diversity, equity and inclusion in your operations? How do you ensure your program design and delivery is upholding these values?	200 words
7. Recruitment of Participants	a) Provide details on your recruitment methods, communication channels and what groups and organisations do you/will you partner with to ensure you're reaching your target audience.	250 words
	b) If you have an established database/list of prospective participants (Startup Entrepreneurs) for the program please upload.	Upload (not mandatory)

ASSESSMENT AND SELECTION

Eligible applications will be evaluated against the Key Assessment Criteria by an "Assessment Panel" (comprising at least three LaunchVic staff). LaunchVic may appoint external members including a representative from Agriculture Victoria to assess applications.

Preference may be given to applications made by companies headquartered in Victoria or companies with an established office/actively working in Victoria.

Video Submission and Virtual Q&A: Shortlisted applicants will be required to submit a video response and then attend a virtual Q&A session with the Assessment Panel to be held during the day on **9th May 2024** (these dates are subject to change). If there is no representation from the applicant, the application may be rejected.

Due Diligence: shortlisted applicants will undergo due diligence by LaunchVic and the Agriculture Victoria (or approved third parties), who will conduct a Financial Risk Assessment where applicable. Financial reports (up to 3 years) will be required for a Financial Risk Assessment. The Reports required include (but not limited to):

- Profit and loss statements
- Balance sheets; and
- Cash flows

For new entities, information on the Company and Directors for the newly established organisation will be required including (but not limited to), the following information on the Company Directors:

- Full Name
- Date of Birth
- Address
- List of other Company Director Positions

Information provided will be kept strictly confidential.

Applicants may be required to provide additional information as part of the application process.

LaunchVic may enter negotiations with shortlisted applicants to refine project proposals. Funding

outcomes are ultimately determined by the LaunchVic CEO and Board Chair and their decision is final.

All applications are made at the applicants' own cost and will not be reimbursed, whether the application is successful or unsuccessful.

CONTRACT

Successful applicants will be required to enter a legal contract (Grant Agreement) with LaunchVic and provide project reporting and evidence of project progress against KPIs (such as number of Participants and number of new Companies registered in Victoria via ASIC) to receive payments under agreed milestones. Approximately 15 percent of the total grant is allocated to milestone 1 and contracts typically include approximately five to seven milestones. The number of milestones, and amounts, are determined by LaunchVic.

APPLICATION FORM

To preview and start an application form please go to the [LaunchVic online application system](#). Applicants will be required to address Eligibility Criteria and Applicant Information including: Organisational Details, Key Contact and Secondary Contact. Applicants will also need to provide Project Details including: Project Title, Project Summary (100 words), Project Start and End Date, Funding Amount, Funding Contributions (if any). Applicants will also need to address Key Assessment Criteria and complete the Declaration before submission.

TIMINGS

Indicative timings listed below, please refer to the LaunchVic website for the most up to date timings:

Stage 1

- **Round launched:**   5th April 2024
- **Round Closes:**   Thursday 2nd May 2024 10:00am (AEST)
- **Communications:**   To unsuccessful and applicants moving to Stage 2 by 3rd May 2024

Stage 2

- **Q&A Session:**   9th May 2024
- **Communications:**   To unsuccessful and applicants moving to the next stage by the 17th May 2024
- **Contracting:**   Contract execution with recipients expected by 30th May 2024
- **Announcement:**   An announcement will follow once contracts are executed.

QUESTIONS?

If you have a question regarding this program, please email grants@launchvic.org. Relevant questions will be posted on the Grant Round **FAQs.**

CHANGE REGISTER

NUMBER	SECTION	CHANGE DESCRIPTION SUMMARY	DATE CHANGE ISSUED