



Introduction

The Centre for AI and Data Science Innovation (CADSI) is based at James Cook University, Australia’s leading tropical research university. We bring together researchers, industry, government and communities to apply AI and data science in ways that matter for the Tropics.

The CADSI Seed Grants (CSG) aims to a) enhance multi-disciplinary and external research collaborations; and b) foster research capacity and capability building. To achieve this, we are offering competitive seed research funding for pilot projects to create new connections across CADSI and/or with new industry/government partners. Seed Grant applications will be competitively assessed for quality, innovation, potential impact, and likelihood of attracting further funding.

Project Funding

The Seed Grant scheme is primarily aimed at supporting early career researchers and promoting collaborative projects. Grants are designed to support small pilot projects that are achievable within an eight-month timeframe. Successful applications will be awarded from \$1000 *up to* \$5,000 for 6-8 months.

General Expenses and Conditions

- Specialised computer packages, field work expenses, lab consumables, lab analytical expenses, minor equipment, and research assistance salary.
- Project costs cannot be used for applicant salaries, conference attendance or items for everyday work.
- Grant funding is subject to audit by the University’s Internal Auditor.

Eligibility

- The lead applicants must be a PhD student (post-confirmation), Post-Doctoral Researcher, or Level B/C academic. Any enquires related to eligibility should be directed to cadsi@jcu.edu.au .
- Funds **MUST** be spent through the University system for purchases from Australian or overseas suppliers.
- The research team **MUST** either
 - identify at least one end-user who will be a collaborator/co-investigator/advisor on the project (e.g., from community, industry and government agencies).
 - be comprised of at least two researchers across two different academic groups with different backgrounds (e.g., from IT and Marine Sciences, or Engineering and Psychology)
- The research team **MUST** include at least one early career researcher (ECR is defined as those who have completed their PhD in the past 5 years. Research breaks will be taken into account, similar to the ARC Rope guidelines for Research Opportunity) and at least one senior researcher (at a minimum academic level C). A team of mixed experience levels facilitates skills, experience and knowledge development in less experienced researchers.

General Funding Guidelines

- All applicants are required to submit a short 1-page progress report to CADSI every 3 months.
- All successful applicants are required to present the findings or preliminary findings of their research in at least 1-2 CADSI in-person and/or online events during the project or within 6 months of the final report being submitted.
- Note that availability of grants does not equate to a quota to be met. Funding will be provided to grants that meet the relevant criteria to the satisfaction of the grant review committee and final approval by CADSI leadership committee.
- Successful applicants must acknowledge CADSI seed grant funding in any publications, presentations, media releases, or reports arising from the project.

- If a lead applicant leaves JCU during the project, it is their responsibility to notify CADSI immediately. CADSI reserves the right to transfer grant management to another team member or recover unspent funds.
- Intellectual property arising from seed grant projects is governed by JCU's Intellectual Property Policy. Where end-user partners are involved, applicants are encouraged to discuss and agree on IP and publication arrangements prior to submission. Any formal agreements must be consistent with JCU policy and should be noted in the application.

Application Details

Applications close on COB Monday 30 March 2026. To apply please submit the application by email to cads@jcu.edu.au. The application will ordinarily be endorsed by the relevant Head of Discipline of the lead applicant.

Selection Process

Applications will be assessed by the CADSI Seed Grants Assessment Panel. Successful applications will be announced by Monday the 20th of April 2026. Feedback will be provided to unsuccessful applicants in the following weeks.

Reporting

The project funding must be spent by **31 Dec 2026**. A final report on the outcomes of the project must be submitted upon completion, (a pro-forma report form will be provided for this purpose) by **31 Jan 2027**. Final reports will be referred to the CADSI Leadership committee for review.

Further information

If you have questions about the grant, please send email to cads@jcu.edu.au.

Selection Criteria

Selection Criteria 1 – Project Proposal (25% weighting): Describe the proposed research project and the contribution of research to the CADSI Strategic Research Themes/Vision/Mission (see <https://www.jcu.edu.au/cads>). Please include an evidence-based rationale (literature background) and proposed methods in your description. Citations should be included throughout, with a reference list attached to the end of the application.

Selection Criteria 2 – Research Team (30% weighting): Outline the relevant track record for each investigator specific to the project. Please include a rationale for how the structure of the research team supports the development of researcher capacity. Please also specify what the end-user's role is in the project.

Selection Criteria 3 – Expected Research Outcomes (30% weighting): Please provide a description of the expected research outcomes. Critically, your expected research outcomes should specify you will build on the partnership with the end-user and what other specific outcomes are relevant for the end-user. Your outcomes should also specify how the project will generate quality pilot data to leverage a future external funding application, specifying the funding schemes and timelines.

Selection Criteria 4 - Budget and budget justification (15% weighting): Provide an itemised budget with a short justification for each cost. Costs must be realistic, essential to the proposed methods, and demonstrate value for money. Clearly separate CADSI funds requested from any co-investment (cash or in-kind) from faculties/centres/end-users (e.g., staff time, data/field access, equipment). State key assumptions (e.g., samples, trips, participants, compute) and, where relevant, include indicative quotes. Explain how the budget enables pilot data and a future external funding application.