

DIABETES AUSTRALIA

DIABETES AUSTRALIA GRAND INNOVATION CHALLENGE GUIDELINES 2026

*Please read these Guidelines before completing your application
via the SmartyGrants portal*

<https://diabetesaustralia.smartygrants.com.au/>

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OVERVIEW

Diabetes Australia is dedicated to reducing the incidence and impact of diabetes on people, health systems and society. We work with people living with or at risk of diabetes, their families and carers, health professionals, researchers, funders, other diabetes organisations and the community to positively change people's lives.

Diabetes Australia supports and develops outstanding diabetes research and innovation in Australia. We do this by funding research towards the prevention of diabetes, living well with diabetes, reducing the health and financial impact of diabetes, or finding a cure for diabetes. We foster young and upcoming diabetes researchers, innovators, entrepreneurs, and diversity in research across many areas of importance.

The Diabetes Australia Research Program has invested more than \$49 million in 800 diabetes research projects across Australia since 2008. The Diabetes Australia Research Program is made possible by the generous support of numerous generous supporters, partners, and donors.

Diabetes Australia is pleased to offer the Grand Innovation Challenge (the Challenge), proudly supported by the [Charles Campbell Coghlan OAM Estate](#), launched in December 2025. This is a national initiative designed to fast-track the development and adoption of breakthrough innovations that address the more pressing needs in diabetes prevention, management and care.

This Challenge will identify, support, and showcase some of the most promising innovations – ranging from digital and technology health tools, pharmacological therapies, diagnostics, to advanced medical devices – that are ready for real-world impact.

The purpose of the Challenge is to provide non-dilutive grant funding to support commercially orientated innovations in diabetes with high impact potential to reduce the impact of diabetes on people, health systems and society.

DIABETES AUSTRALIA GRAND INNOVATION CHALLENGE

By providing targeted funding and national recognition, the Challenge will bridge critical gaps in the innovation pipeline, helping to translate research and prototypes into scalable, accessible solutions that are strategically aligned with Diabetes Australia's goals:

- Cure Diabetes – Advance discoveries that bring us closer to a cure.
- Eliminate Complications – Address the medical and psychosocial complications caused by diabetes
- Prevent Diabetes – Understand the causes, tackle risk factors, enhance screening and awareness and interventions to prevent diabetes.
- Reduce financial burden – Develop solutions to ease the financial impact on individuals and the health system.

The Challenge is part of [Diabetes Australia's diverse research funding platform](#) and will also provide the opportunity to connect innovators with investors and donors to deliver Diabetes Australia's ambition to eliminate the impact of diabetes on Australians, our health system, and society.

The Challenge provides non-dilutive grant funding to the successful recipients. The funding supports commercially orientated projects with high impact potential to reduce the impact of diabetes on people, health systems and society.

Successful applicants will benefit from support of the [Diabetes Australia network](#) alongside the support from Industry Partner, [MedTech Compass](#), a MTAA initiative.

Built for early-stage medical device, biotech and digital health companies, MedTech Compass provides targeted, post-accelerator support where it's needed most, across regulation, reimbursement, investment, and market access.

Through expert networks with government, industry, and the private and non-profit sectors, proven toolkits, and strategic mentorship, including access to MedTech Compass will provide founders the clarity and confidence to grow. And as they scale, they're welcomed into MTAA's wider industry community, amplifying their impact and influence to improve the lives of people living with and at risk of diabetes.

Central to the Challenge is a commitment to person-centricity and health equity. Innovations will be evaluated not only for their technical merit but also for their potential to improve the everyday experience of people living with and at risk of all types of diabetes, advance equity of access, and deliver sustained benefits across diverse communities.

The Challenge launched on 2 December 2025. Expression of Interest applications can be submitted online prior to 5:00pm (AEDT), 31 March 2026. Finalists will pitch their ideas to a panel of expert judges and winner/s will be announced at a showcase event at the IDF-WPR 2026 & ADC 2026 & Metabolic Disease 2026 Congress at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centres on 18th August 2026.

The Diabetes Australia Grand Innovation Challenge will award up to six early-stage innovations (TRL 5-7) with a prize ranging from \$50,000–\$200,000 AUD from a \$500,000 AUD pool across six categories, targeting diabetes prevention, cure, management, treatment, complications, or care for over 2 million Australians.

Each project is expected to provide Diabetes Australia periodic updates over a 2-year period of the progress of the innovation's development in alignment with the proposed use of the funding provided.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Stage 1: Submit an Expression of Interest

Stage 1 Expression of Interest applications open **2 December 2025** and close **31 March 2026**. Applicants will be notified regarding eligibility and progression to Stage 2 in late April 2026.

Interested parties with eligible projects are invited to submit an online EOI for review by the Innovation Prize Judging Panel. EOIs should articulate the opportunity, the problem/target market, the competitive advantage, technology and stage of development, intellectual property position and/or opportunity, business case, and proposed plan and budget.

All applications are reviewed by an expert Innovation Prize Judging Panel made up of lived experience experts, health professionals, business, innovation and commercialisation leaders.

Please refer to the section titled "Assessment Criteria for Diabetes Australia Project Grant" of these Guidelines for further details. Applications that do not comply with any element of the Guidelines, may be deemed ineligible.

Stage 2: Full application

All Full Applications will be assessed using the same criteria. Applicants may optionally incorporate feedback into their Full Application. A full application including a 5-minute video presentation will be reviewed by the Innovation Challenge Prize Judging Panel. Applicants will need to provide a full outline of the project specifics and address the Innovation Challenge Judging Panel feedback.

The full application should expand on the information provided in the EOI, to provide a full outline of the project, including a proposed plan of how funding will support the advancement of the proposed innovation in alignment with the funding levels available. For example, it would be useful to outline how each of the \$50k, \$100k and \$200k prize monies would support your proposed innovation and project. Details and template documents will be available via the Smarty Grants platform upon the opening of the full application period.

Full Applications are scheduled to close on **31 May 2026** at 11.59pm (AEDT).

Stage 3: Finalist: If shortlisted as a Finalist, the Challenge team will work with the applicant to complete corporate due diligence, IP review, project planning, timing, budgets and milestones. Finalists that successfully complete due diligence will be invited to the Challenge's live showcase pitching competition to be held on 18th August 2026 at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centres.

Successful applicants will be announced at an Award Ceremony later the same day.

Travel and accommodation for at least 1 night for interstate applicants will be provided for one representative to each Finalist team.

Total Funding available and Structure

A total of \$500,000 AUD is available across six funding categories described below.

Prize Categories	Amount (\$ AUD)	Name	Description
1 st Prize (Grand)	\$200,000	Grand Innovation Prize	This is the highest honour of the Diabetes Australia Grand Innovation Challenge, awarded to the entry that demonstrates the most outstanding and transformative innovation in diabetes prevention, management, or treatment. The Grand Innovation Prize recognises a solution with the potential to make a significant, lasting impact on the lives of people living with diabetes across Australia, setting a new benchmark for excellence in the field.
2 nd Prize	\$100,000	Excellence in Innovation Prize	The Excellence in Innovation Prize is awarded to a project that exemplifies exceptional creativity, rigour, and promise in advancing diabetes care. This prize celebrates an entry that stands out for its originality, technical merit, and potential for real-world application, acknowledging a truly excellent contribution to diabetes innovation.
3 rd Prize	\$50,000	Technology Impact Prize	This prize recognises a solution that demonstrates clear, measurable impact in addressing a key challenge in diabetes prevention, management, or treatment. The Technology Impact Prize is awarded to an innovation that shows strong potential to improve outcomes for people living with diabetes, whether through clinical, social, or economic benefits.
4 th Prize	\$50,000	Innovation Merit Prize	The Innovation Merit Prize is presented to a project that displays notable ingenuity and progress in diabetes prevention, management, or treatment. This award acknowledges a high-quality entry that, while not taking out the top honours, still represents significant merit and advancement in the field.
5 th Prize	\$50,000	Emerging Technology Prize	This prize is designed to encourage and support promising new ideas and early-stage technologies in diabetes care. The Emerging Technology Prize is awarded to a project that shows great potential for future development and impact, even if it is not yet fully realised.
6 th Prize	\$50,000	Advancement Prize	The Advancement Prize recognises a project that has made meaningful progress in developing or scaling up a diabetes innovation solution. This award is intended to support continued advancement and help bring innovative ideas closer to widespread adoption and benefit for the diabetes community.

* Whilst it is expected that all funds will be distributed, should the circumstance arise where there are less than 6 winners, Diabetes Australia reserves the right to amend these Guidelines, timelines, funding amounts, or assessment processes at any time at its discretion, subject to applicable law.

WHO CAN APPLY (ELIGIBILITY)

- Applicant must have an Australian ABN (or be sponsored by an entity with an ABN). Open to startups, entrepreneurs, businesses, research teams, healthcare providers and technology developers.
- One award per applicant and technology ABN group per round is permitted.
- Technology maturity: TRL 5–7 for the relevant category (devices/digital/diagnostics/therapeutics). Applicants must justify TRL (**Technology Readiness Level**) classification and have been validated in relevant environments.
- Technologies must address diabetes prevention, management, complications, treatment, care or cure with demonstrable person-centred design and equity impact.

TRL is a standardised framework used to assess how mature an innovation is, from initial concept to full-scale deployment. In MedTech (medical technology), TRLs help innovators, investors, and regulators understand how close a new device, diagnostic, or digital health tool, therapy or pharma technology is to being used in real-world healthcare settings.

Level	Phase	Description
9	Deployment	Actual System Proven in Operational Environment
8	Deployment	System Complete and Qualified
7	Deployment	System Prototype Demonstration in Operational Environment
6	Development	Technology Demonstrated in Relevant Environment
5	Development	Technology Validated in Relevant Environment
4	Development	Technology Validated in Lab
3	Research	Experimental Proof of Concept
2	Research	Technology Concept Formulated
1	Research	Basic Principles Observed

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Applications and forms must be completed in full and submitted online using the Diabetes Australia SmartyGrants platform; any incomplete forms may not be accepted. You may submit more than one application per applicant, however, an applicant may be eligible for one prize only from the Diabetes Australia Grand Innovation Challenge.

Applicants must submit a proposal that addresses:

- The specific problem faced by people living with diabetes and the target population
- Person-centred design and how lived experience has informed the solution
- Technical approach, differentiation from existing solutions, and anticipated impact on health outcomes, people, health systems and/or society
- Business model and competitive analysis
- A plan for collecting and validating patient-reported and clinical outcomes at 6-, 12 and 24-months, post award.

The applicant must have secured the appropriate approval from the supporting organisation or company approving delegate prior to submitting an application. The accuracy of the information in the application is solely the responsibility of the applicant and the supporting organisation or company.

Any proposed funded research activities involving humans or animals, must conform to the general ethical principles set out by the National Health and Medical Research Council and must not commence until appropriate ethics approvals are obtained.

Funds provided are to be used exclusively for the Challenge-aligned activities outlined in the application proposal, including but not limited to, Research and Development, trials, IP protection, and regulatory approvals. No equity dilution or repayment is required.

APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS

Assessment Criteria

Applications will be assessed by the Innovation Prize Judging Panel against the alignment with priorities (equity, outcomes), novelty/impact/sustainability, person-centric evidence, competitive advantage and commercial scalability, and team strength.

Special Consideration will be given to:

- **Uniqueness** – the Challenge will select novel, outstanding, maturing projects that address a significant unmet need and are competitively differentiated from existing standards of care and emerging products.
- Extent to which the product/solution **delivers value** through improved diagnosis, prevention, treatment, management and/or cure of diabetes to reduce the impact of diabetes on people, health systems and society.

- **Clinical and commercial differentiation**, IP position, market opportunity, maturity, and development stage with the aim that the Challenge funding will progress the opportunity to a clear de-risking value inflection point.
- **Innovative science** – what is the science/evidence-based data behind the project enable?
- **Highly differentiated** – how is this approach distinguished from existing solutions?
- **Clear achievable project plan** – a credible plan towards generating commercial outcomes including partnerships, commercial licensing, revenue, as appropriate.
- **Strong team** – diverse team with ability to deliver on the project.

Confidentiality

All application information is treated as commercial in confidence. All members of the Innovation Prize Judging Panel operate under confidentiality agreements. If confidential information is provided, please preface this with **[Confidential]**. It is not expected that applicants will disclose confidential information in the application to submit a successful EOI application. However, it is imperative that applicants share enough technical information to demonstrate differentiation and novelty in the EOI, but it may not be necessary to disclose confidential information in order to do so.

Applications will be reviewed by the Judging Panel, consisting of clinicians (e.g., endocrinologists, diabetes educators, or primary care physicians), technologists (e.g., Medtech engineers, digital health experts), people living with diabetes (to ensure patient voice and lived experience) and investors or commercialisation experts.

Reviewers and panel members must declare any conflict of interest and conflicted members will be recused. DA enforces a no-contact policy between applicants and reviewers outside formal processes. Non-public information may not be used for competitive or personal advantage.

Decisions of the Judging Panel are final. Applicants may request general feedback; however, detailed reviewer comments will not be provided.

SUCCESSFUL APPLICATIONS

Privacy and data:

Diabetes Australia collects personal and project information to assess applications, administer awards, and evaluate program impact. Information is handled in accordance with our [Privacy Policy](#), stored on DA systems, and disclosed only to reviewers and partners under confidentiality for defined purposes. Applicants may request access to their information by contacting privacy@diabetesaustralia.com.au.

Certification Form

A Certification Form signed by the applicant and the organisation will need to be completed prior to payment of any funds. The Certification Form and these Guidelines together form the basis of the terms and conditions of funding for the identified project.

Payment Schedule

Upon receipt of the Certification form, the full amount of funding corresponding to the prize awarded by the Innovation Prize Judging Panel will be provided.

Reporting Requirements

At the 6-, 12- and 24-month anniversary of the funding being provided a report must be forwarded to the Diabetes Australia using the Diabetes Australia templates describing the progress made against the activities prescribed in the final application. This will include information on how the funding has been used to support translation of the technology into market to improve the lives of people living with and at risk of diabetes and key related activities and milestones achieved.

Financial Acquittal

At the 6-, 12- and 24-month anniversary of the funding being provided, the organisation responsible for the funding must provide a financial acquittal of the funds received to Diabetes Australia.

The report should include the amount of funding received; expenditure across the categories identified in the application; and should be signed by the finance officer.

All funds which are misappropriated or unexpended and uncommitted at the end of the award period (24 months) are to be returned to the Diabetes Australia.

Diabetes Australia may request reasonable access to financial records to verify acquittals. Where a compliance issue is identified, Recipients will have 30 days to remedy before repayment is sought.

Intellectual Property

The applicant retains all right, title and interest in and to its Background Intellectual Property and any Intellectual Property created in connection with the Project (**Project IP**).

The applicant grants Diabetes Australia a limited, non-exclusive, royalty-free, worldwide, non-transferable and revocable licence for a period of five (5) years from the date of award to use the applicant's name, logos and trademarks, and any non-confidential project descriptions or materials approved by the applicant for disclosure, solely for the purposes of administering, promoting and reporting on the program and its outcomes.

All Intellectual Property rights in the applicant's materials remain vested in the applicant. The applicant may withdraw consent to use its name, logos or materials on reasonable written notice where such use would reasonably be considered misleading, inappropriate or reputationally damaging.

For the avoidance of doubt, no licence is granted to Diabetes Australia to use, exploit, practise or commercialise any Project IP.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Any publications, outcomes or products arising from the work funded this funding grant must acknowledge the support of Diabetes Australia and specific sponsors where relevant in accordance with the [Diabetes Australia Research Funding Acknowledgement Policy](#).

FURTHER INFORMATION

To obtain forms, guidelines and information, please visit the Diabetes Australia website <http://www.diabetesaustralia.com.au/research>

For further information, please arrange a booking to meet with the Challenge team. To request a meeting with the team, email: warren@medtechinternational.com.au

Please note discussions will be centred around assisting applicants position their proposal towards commercially orientated outcomes or to seek additional clarity related to funding requirements. The Challenge team will not be able to give project specific advice, and all advice will be general in nature. We recommend you review the application form before your meeting.