



DEFENCE
INNOVATION
PARTNERSHIP

COLLABORATOR FUND ROUND 1.1 GUIDELINES

Space-Based Advanced Threat Warning

Opening date:	7:00AM ACST on 30 September 2026
Closing date:	11:59PM ACDT on 13 November 2026
Administering entity:	Defence Innovation Partnership, Defence SA
Enquiries:	enquiries@defenceinnovationpartnership.com
Date guidelines updated:	September 2026
Type of grant opportunity:	Open competitive

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1. The Collaborator Fund Round 1.1 process

For Collaborator Fund Round 1.1, up to \$400,000 is available from the Fund, and an additional \$400,000 from the Australian Department of Defence, for one project. The Collaborator Fund process is illustrated below. View details of the [Collaborator Fund](#) here.



2. About the Defence Innovation Partnership

The Defence Innovation Partnership (DIP) is a collaborative initiative of the South Australian Government through Defence SA, the Defence Science and Technology Group (DSTG), Adelaide University and Flinders University.

DIP is hosted and administered by Defence SA.

WHO WE HELP

Researchers: DIP can open doors, find opportunities and create collaborations with Defence, other researchers and industry.

Industry: From large corporations, SMEs, startups, to emerging entrepreneurs, DIP can help you find the best team for your project. With connections locally and globally, DIP can provide an insight into Defence requirements and priorities, and introductions to relevant researchers.

Defence and Government: With our focus aligned directly with Defence's priorities, DIP is a catalyst for collaborations designed to meet Defence capability needs. DIP is here to help you tackle your research and development challenges by connecting you to the best researchers and industry partners.

HOW WE HELP

Building and supporting collaborations: DIP facilitates the creation of the best teams for research and development projects. The DIP team will work with you to determine where your project gaps are, and help you find the right people, infrastructure and programs to fill them from across government, industry and the research sector. DIP also supports collaborative research and development through the Collaborator Fund and Activator Fund.

Advice and advocacy: DIP can provide advice on Australian Department of Defence priorities, research capabilities and industry requirements, including recommendations for research and development pathways or funding opportunities. Through DIP's local, national and international networks, DIP is raising the profile of South Australia's research and development capabilities and attracting more opportunities to the state.

3. About the Collaborator Fund

DIP's Collaborator Fund supports genuine collaboration across government, universities and industry. DIP provides up to \$800,000 for two Challenges to assist South Australian based organisations undertake collaborative research and development activities with South Australian and national partners.

For Collaborator Fund Round 1.1, up to \$400,000 is available from the Fund, and an additional \$400,000 from the Australian Department of Defence, for one project (we are expecting to fund one project of \$800,000).

Funding applications are accepted in annual rounds, and are assessed against relevance to Defence, and the viability and feasibility of proposed activities. The level of collaboration in the proposal is a significant consideration in the assessment process.

Further information on how to apply, as well as FAQs and sample documents, are available on the DIP website, under the [Collaborator Fund](#).

4. About this Challenge (Collaborator Fund Round 1.1)

The National Defence Strategy 2026 highlights the need for space capabilities that strengthen situational awareness, the ability to project force and decision advantage. In addition, the Federal Government is investing \$21-30 billion over the next decade to deliver a layered, integrated air and missile defence capability to detect, track, counter, withstand and recover from missile attacks.

Australia's ability to respond to long range next-generation hypersonic missile threats is underpinned by wider-area infrared (IR) technologies such as Overhead Persistent InfraRed (OPIR) as part of a joint Missile Warning

(MW) enterprise. Improving sovereign MW capabilities is reliant on enhanced IR data processing and exploitation, through development of integrated capabilities that will provide timely and critical warning information to our battlespace awareness and management systems.

Access to operational MW data can often be limited due to export control and classification barriers, therefore significantly hampering progress in establishing a national ecosystem that understands how to exploit MW data and develop sovereign capabilities. To this end, DSTG has explored preliminary solutions to establish a MW emulation tool, designed to incorporate the high-fidelity physics-based modelling required to adequately describe the performance of Electro-optic Infrared (EOIR) sensing technologies against the modern missile threat.

These emulation tools seek to reduce the barrier-to-entry for algorithm developers enabling better engagement across industry and academia to develop best-of-breed exploitation tools for sovereign operational MW. With suitable refinement, these emulation tools will also contribute to the development of standards traceable MW sensing requirements and may lead to payload development opportunities to address MW mission gaps.

“How might Australia develop a high-fidelity space-based infrared (IR) emulation environment that accurately represents operational systems and conditions, to overcome current testing limitations and enable industry and academia to reliably develop, validate, and mature both sovereign defence capabilities and civilian applications, including algorithms, sensors, and integrated systems?”

DSTG is seeking to partner with academia and industry to establish wide-area EOIR Emulation capabilities as applied to a range of platforms including high altitude balloons, stratospheric aircraft, and space-based platforms with viewing geometries considering large scale earth and limb-views. These scenarios are required to span regions as small as 500km x 500km through to whole-of-Earth scene generation with representative background, clutter, atmospheres, and range of generic kinematic threat models including hypersonic.

Project participants can consider a range of implementation options including but not limited to traditional ray-tracing techniques, through to generative AI to assist in scaling to large and whole-of-Earth scenarios, training and validated by real-world geospatial imagery. An ideal emulation would incorporate real-world spherical earth geometry considerations, effects of clouds across multiple layers, variations in illumination from the sun (or other emitters), and other atmospheric contributions such as absorption, refraction and scattering.

Proposal submissions are sought from industry and academia for a technology solution that could be demonstrated within 24 months. The successful project team will be expected to work closely with DSTG and Defence to ensure alignment with Defence’s needs. **Desirable skills include development of models and interfaces (i.e. Python), CAD modelling and rendering engines, sensor characterisation and modelling, and algorithm development (Python, AIML) to support model validation. The work can be conducted at the OFFICIAL/UNCLASSIFIED level.**

5. Grant amount and grant period for Collaborator Fund Round 1.1

5.1 Grant amount and co-contributions

For Collaborator Fund Round 1.1 titled Space-Based Advanced Threat Warning, \$400,000 is available from the Collaborator Fund, and an additional \$400,000 from the Australian Department of Defence, for one project (we are expecting to fund one project of \$800,000).

Project participant’s co-contributions (1:1 cash and/or in-kind) will be considered to determine if the co-contribution represents a relevant and meaningful contribution to the activity.

5.2 Project period

Projects begin as soon as the Funding Agreement has been signed by all parties. The expected timeframe for the project is two (2) years.

6. Eligibility criteria

6.1 Minimum requirements for collaboration

Minimum requirements for collaboration:

- Eligible proposals must have a minimum of one South Australian university Partner Organisation, one South Australia-based industry Partner Organisation and Australian Department of Defence involvement, ideally as a Partner Organisation.
- Work funded by the Collaborator Fund must be undertaken in South Australia.

6.2 Who is eligible to participate?

The Lead Organisation for a Collaborator Fund proposal is the entity with which the Minister for Defence and Space Industries will enter into a Funding Agreement. The Lead Organisation for a Collaborator Fund proposal can be:

- a South Australian public university
- a South Australian-based business, Small to Medium Enterprise (SME) or startup.

Partner Organisations for a Collaborator Fund proposal can be:

- Australian Government agencies, including Department of Defence.
- South Australian Government agencies.
- Australian universities.
- Publicly Funded Research Organisations.
- Australian industry – startups, SMEs and large companies.

7. What the Collaborator Fund money can be used for

7.1 Eligible activities and expenditure

Eligible activities may include:

- employing and/or providing stipends to research staff to work on the Collaborator Fund project
- purchasing hardware and software
- costs to access research infrastructure
- travel costs directly related to the Collaborator Fund project

We may also approve other activities.

If your application is successful, we may ask you to verify project costs that you provided in your application. You may need to provide evidence such as quotes for major costs.

To be eligible, expenditure must be a direct cost of the project.

You must incur the project expenditure between the project's start and end dates for it to be eligible.

You must not commence your project until the Funding Agreement with the Minister for Defence and Space Industries has been executed.

8. Assessment Criteria

The Collaborator Fund Application Form asks questions that relate to the Assessment Criteria listed below.

It is recommended you become familiar with the Assessment Criteria before completing your application.

8.1 Assessment Criterion 1 – Project Description and Technical Innovation

Proposals should clearly describe how the challenge will be solved and what makes it innovative. On this criterion, applications will be assessed against the following questions and rating scale.

1. How well does the proposal describe the problem to be solved and the proposed solution?
2. How well does the proposal describe the project aims, technical approach and outcomes that will be delivered? Does the proposal align with the purpose and objectives of the Collaborator Fund?
3. Does the proposal describe a novel or innovative approach? Are there alternative approaches that could achieve better outcomes?

Score	Rating	Definition
2	Well described and a step change technology	The proposal describes a well thought out program of work and the proposed solution is to the challenge. The proposal clearly outlines the purpose and outcomes, which support the purpose and objectives of the Collaborator Fund. The proposal clearly describes the limits of current practice and the novelty/innovation of the proposed approach.
1	Adequately described and an evolutionary technology	The proposal presents a program of work but is not well articulated. The proposal outlines the purpose and outcomes and is aligned with the objectives of the Collaborator Fund. The proposal describes the limits of current practice and there is some novelty/innovation in the proposed approach.
0	Poorly described and an incremental technology	Proposal is poorly described; it is unclear what it will achieve. The proposal does not fully support the purpose and objectives of the Collaborator Fund. The proposal describes an incremental innovation from existing approaches (i.e. a limited innovation).

8.2 Assessment Criterion 2 – Defence Relevance

1. How relevant is the proposal to the Defence challenge statement outlined in the Guidelines document?
2. What is the potential of the proposal to enhance Defence's current capability?
3. How desirable is the proposed solution for Defence relative to existing or other potential solutions?

Defence relevance will be assessed on the following scale:

Score	Rating	Definition
2	Excellent	The proposal includes Defence and/or another relevant Government organisation as a participant and the outcome of the proposal would be desirable to the Australian Department of Defence.

1	Good	Feedback from a relevant Defence and/or another relevant Government organisation confirms that the outcome of the proposal aligns with a recognised need, capability gap, opportunity or priority within Defence and would be desirable to the Australian Department of Defence.
0	Poor	Feedback from a relevant DSTG or Defence representative confirms that the outcome of the proposal would be of minimal, or no interest, to the Australian Department of Defence.

8.3 Assessment Criterion 3 – Viability and Feasibility

Proposals should demonstrate that they are feasible to achieve within the available resources (time, cost, skillsets and budget). Proposals should also clearly describe a viable program of work with technical risks mitigated and logical milestones and deliverables outlined.

1. How feasible is the technical approach described in the proposal? Is it likely to be achieved within the timeframe, budget and resources available?
2. How well have technical issues or risks and mitigation strategies been described in the proposal?
3. Have milestones and deliverables been adequately described? Are they logical and reasonable?

This criterion will be assessed on the following rating scale.

Score	Rating	Definition
2	Excellent	Sound proposal with a feasible program of work, schedule and budget. Acceptable technical risks and mitigation strategies. Milestones and deliverables are logical and well described.
1	Good	Generally sound program of work described, but there are some risks against the basis of estimate or feasibility to deliver. Moderate technical risk with some mitigations in place. Milestones and deliverables have been adequately described.
0	Low	The proposal has significant weaknesses such as a poorly developed program of work, unrealistic schedule or insufficient resources. Technical risks are poorly described and milestones/deliverables are not well articulated.

8.4 Assessment Criterion 4 – Collaboration

Ideally applications will include participants from Defence, more than one South Australian university and an industry or translation partner. The contribution (cash and/or in-kind) from participants will be considered to determine if it represents a relevant contribution to the activity.

1. Does the proposal meet the minimum eligibility requirements for collaboration?
2. Are the contributions of all partners (eg cash, in-kind, skillsets) meaningful and relevant?
3. What is the level of Defence / DSTG involvement?

This criterion will be assessed on the following rating scale.

Score	Rating	Definition
2	Excellent	Partners include Defence/DSTG organisation, at least one South Australian university and an industry partner. Significant cash and/or in-kind contributions from the participants.
1	Good	Partners include Defence/DSTG, at least one South Australian university and an industry partner. Relevant cash and/or in-kind contributions from the participants.
0	Poor	Partners include at least two participants from Defence/Government and South Australian universities. Minimal cash and/or in-kind contribution from the participants.

8.5 Assessment Criterion 5 – Realisation and Impact

Proposals should describe a realisation pathway for how the outcomes could potentially be translated into Defence and other adjacent sectors.

1. How well does the proposal describe a realisation pathway or future development opportunities for the project outcomes to transition into Defence? (Consideration includes outcomes that may result in changes to policy or procedures and not just technology or solution-based IP).
2. How well does the proposal describe the impact of the project outcomes to Defence (and other sectors)?

This criterion will be assessed on the following rating scale.

Score	Rating	Definition
2	Excellent	A realisation pathway to further mature, develop or commercialise a solution or product, or introduce a policy, procedure, solution or technology into service within Defence is evident and is supported by key stakeholders. Outcome will be at the forefront of the field or discipline.
1	Good	A realisation pathway is proposed with the potential to further mature, develop or commercialise a solution or product, or introduce a policy, procedure, solution or technology into service within Defence.
0	Low	No realisation pathway evident to mature, develop or commercialise a solution or product, or introduce a policy, procedure, solution or technology into service within Defence.

9. How to apply

You can submit an application any time between 7am on 30 September 2026 until 11:59pm on 13 November 2026. Late applications will not be accepted.

Before applying for the Collaborator Fund, it is recommended you read and understand these guidelines, and the sample [South Australian Government Funding Agreement](#) published on the [Defence Innovation Partnership website](#).

To apply, you must complete and submit your application through the SmartyGrants online portal, including all requested information as attachments/uploads, eg Participant Declarations, Letters of Support.

You can view and print a copy of your submitted application on the portal for your own records.

If you need further guidance around the application process, or if you have any issues with the portal, contact us at enquiries@defenceinnovationpartnership.com.

10. The Collaborator Fund selection process

10.1 Assessment process

The Defence Innovation Partnership will first assess applications against the Eligibility Criteria. If eligible, applications will proceed to the assessment stage.

Applications will be assessed against the Assessment Criteria, with consideration of:

- how well the application meets the criteria
- how the application compares to other applications.

The Assessment Committee will include representatives from the Australian Department of Defence (including subject matter experts) and the South Australian Government. The Assessment Committee may also seek additional advice from independent technical experts.

The Assessment Committee will assess applications against the assessment criteria and compare it to other eligible applications before recommending which projects to fund.

If the selection process identifies unintentional errors in your application, we may contact you to correct or clarify the errors, but you cannot make any material alterations or additions.

Any conflicts of interest for the Assessment Committee will be declared and managed during the assessment process, which might include members of the Assessment Committee abstaining from assessing some proposals.

10.2 Approvals process

The Assessment Committee will present funding recommendations to the Defence Innovation Partnership Advisory Board for endorsement. If recommendations are endorsed, the Acting Chief Executive of Defence SA will approve the grant(s).

11. Notification of application outcomes

We will advise you of the outcome of your application in writing.

If you are successful, you will be advised about the next steps to execute the Funding Agreement.

If you are unsuccessful, you will receive the outcome in writing, and we will give you an opportunity to discuss the outcome with us.

12. Successful Collaborator Fund applications

12.1 Funding Agreement

You must enter into a legally binding [Funding Agreement](#) with the South Australian Government.

We will manage the South Australian Government Funding Agreement, which includes issuing and executing the Funding Agreement (execute means both you and the South Australian Government have accepted the agreement). You must not start the Collaborator Fund project activities until a Funding Agreement is executed. We are not responsible for any expenditure incurred prior to the Funding Agreement being executed and cannot make any payments until a Funding Agreement is executed.

The approval of your Collaborator Fund project may have specific conditions determined by the assessment process which will be identified in the offer of the Funding Agreement.

The South Australian Government may recover funds if there is a breach of the Funding Agreement.

12.2 Intellectual Property

Ownership of intellectual property (IP) developed using the funds will be retained by the successful applicants. Project Teams are encouraged to discuss background and foreground IP arrangements early in the proposal development process.

Defence SA makes no claim to ownership of either background or foreground IP arising from Collaborator Fund projects funded under this theme.

Please refer to the SAMPLE [Funding Agreement](#) for more details.

Where there is an Australian Department of Defence contribution to a project, applicants may be required to grant a licence to the Commonwealth to use project intellectual property for Commonwealth purposes.

12.3 How we pay the grant

The Funding Agreement will include:

- the term of the Funding Agreement
- the total amount of funding for the Collaborator Fund project
- details of how instalments will be paid
- all reporting requirements.

Payment of the grant will be linked to Key Milestones identified in the application process.

We will make payments according to the agreed schedule set out in the Funding Agreement. Payments are subject to satisfactory progress of the project.

13. Announcement of grants

Outcomes of the Collaborator Fund will be embargoed and must not be shared publicly or announced until the Defence Innovation Partnership notifies that the embargo has been lifted, or the South Australian Government makes a public announcement.

The Defence Innovation Partnership and Defence SA will liaise with the Lead Organisation of successful proposals, and other relevant parties as necessary, to finalise media releases, articles and social posts about the Collaborator Fund outcomes.

A non-sensitive description of successful projects will be published on the Defence Innovation Partnership website, through social media and other media channels, including details such as:

- name of the Lead Organisation and Partner Organisations
- title of the project
- brief description of the project and its aims
- amount of Collaborator Fund funding awarded, and total value of the project.

14. How we monitor your grant activity

14.1 Reporting

The Lead Organisation must provide the Defence Innovation Partnership (Defence SA) with:

- the Reports specified in the Schedule
- appropriate and regular information, records and any other reports requested by the Defence Innovation Partnership (Defence SA) from time to time, including information about:
 - the application of the grant funds by the Lead Organisation (with appropriate evidence in support)
 - the progress of and material changes to the nature and scope of the Project
 - any significant changes to the nature and/or scope of the activities conducted by the Lead Organisation with respect to the Project
 - any other funding or financial assistance promised or received for the Project from sources other than the Defence Innovation Partnership (Defence SA)

- the performance of the Lead Organisation's undertakings and obligations under the Funding Agreement
- the Lead Organisation's management of the grant funds, including but not limited to the economic and efficient use of resources to achieve the Purpose
- any other matters relevant to the Project, as reasonably required by the Defence Innovation Partnership (Defence SA).

The Lead Organisation must, upon reasonable notice, permit any officer authorised by Defence Innovation Partnership (Defence SA) to:

- have access to all accounting records, equipment, documents and information in relation to the Project and the grant funds, if required
- discuss matters pertaining to the Project and the grant funds with employees of the Lead Organisation who are engaged in the conduct of the Project or the management of the grant funds.

14.1.1 Milestone reporting

Milestone reports are to be provided within two weeks of either of the following events:

- a project milestone as detailed within the Funding Agreement is achieved
- it is realised that a project milestone as detailed within the Funding Agreement cannot be met.

A template for milestone reporting will be provided to the Lead Organisation and will include (at least) the following information:

- project name
- lead participant details
- title of milestone
- statement of key activities and/or outcomes achieved
- in the case where a project milestone cannot be met, include details of the reason why the milestone cannot be met and details of proposed changes to scope, schedule or budget
- indication of any additional risks identified
- confirm scope and schedule for the next phase of the project.

The Lead Organisation must give notification of any milestone reporting delays as soon as they become aware of them.

14.1.2 Completion reporting

At the end of the project period, you must submit a project completion report. The report is to be provided within one month of completing the project. The Lead Organisation must:

- submit a Completion Report
- support the preparation of a short case study and presentation to highlight the project methodology, outcomes, and potential benefits for key stakeholders.

A template for the Completion Report will be provided to the Lead Organisation and will contain (at least) the following information:

- project name
- lead participant details

- title of milestone
- statement of outcomes
- details of benefits or opportunities identified, either potential or realised, including opportunities for additional collaboration, further development or alternate funding
- details of any recommendations resulting from the project
- signed copy of the Income and Expenditure Statement as per the Funding Agreement.

14.2 Audit

The Defence Innovation Partnership (Defence SA) may direct the Lead Organisation to arrange for the financial accounts relating to the grant funds to be audited at the Lead Organisation's expense. The Defence Innovation Partnership (Defence SA) may specify the minimum qualifications to be held by a person appointed conduct the audit.

14.3 Funding Agreement variations

We recognise that unexpected events may affect project progress. In these circumstances, you can request a variation to your Funding Agreement, including:

- changing project milestones
- extending the timeframe for completing the project but within the maximum grant period
- changing project activities.

The program does not allow for:

- an increase of grant funds.

If you want to propose changes to the Funding Agreement, you must put them in writing before the project milestone end date. You can submit a variation request to enquiries@defenceinnovationpartnership.com.

You should not assume that a variation request will be successful. We will consider your request based on factors such as:

- how it affects the project outcome
- consistency with the Collaborator Fund objectives, guidelines and any relevant policies of the South Australian Government
- changes to the timing of grant payments
- availability of program funds.

14.4 Grant acknowledgement

The Lead Organisation must not make or permit a public announcement or media release to be made about any aspect of the Funding Agreement without first obtaining consent from the Defence Innovation Partnership (Defence SA), which may not be unreasonably withheld, and which will not be required if the public announcement is required by law.

15. Security and export controls

15.1 Security

Eligible activities under this grant may have national security implications. Project Teams should consider implications of the proposed project and identify and manage any risks, particularly relating to export controls, foreign interference and technology transfer.

If the outcome of the Collaborator Fund activity has the potential to be classified, or if classified inputs or discussions are needed to complete the work, then all team members undertaking the Collaborator Fund activity must be willing to undergo a security assessment if requested and, at a minimum, obtain a Baseline security clearance; noting that some projects may require higher level clearances, depending on the scope. Unless involved in unclassified aspects of a potential project, personnel involved must hold (or be able to obtain) an appropriate security clearance commensurate with the nature of the proposed project.

Citizenship status may impact ability to obtain appropriate security clearances. Potential overseas collaborators may need to get their clearances recognised if they plan to work on parts of the projects above unclassified level.

Proof of citizenship or permanent residency status may be requested.

Residents in Australia on a Temporary Work Visa may be approved for participation in the project in exceptional circumstances.

Project Team members and the Lead Organisation should undertake appropriate due diligence, proportionate to the risk and subject to available information, on all partners and personnel participating in the project. This should take into account any potential intellectual property, security, ethical, legal and reputational risks, and, where necessary, you should be prepared to demonstrate how you will manage and mitigate any identified risks.

15.2 Export Controls

Lead Organisation and Project Teams undertaking Collaborator Fund projects which involve collaboration with foreign entities should be familiar with Australia's export controls requirements. It is your responsibility to consider the implications of the relevant legislation on the proposed project before submitting your application, and to comply with any applicable requirements if it is successful.

16. Contact details

All enquiries about the Collaborator Fund, including requests for assistance in the proposal development/co-design phase, should be sent to enquiries@defenceinnovationpartnership.com with '**Collaborator Fund R1.1 – Funding Question**' in the Subject line. Enquiries will be responded to within one business day.

Key contacts for Collaborator Fund are:

- Co-design / consultation activity: Parth Gohil, Program Coordination Officer, Defence Innovation Partnership and Dr Erin McGillick, Defence Science and Technology Group
- DIP Collaborator Fund process / grant administration: Merril Kirk, Program Operations Manager, Defence Innovation Partnership.