

HEPPP National Priorities Pool

2018 Investment Plan

This investment plan is made pursuant to the *Other Grants Guidelines (Education) 2012* under the *Higher Education Support Act 2003*.

1. OVERVIEW

The National Priorities Pool is a component of the Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP). The HEPPP provides funding to providers to undertake activities and implement strategies that improve access to undergraduate courses for people from low socio-economic status (SES) backgrounds and improve their retention and completion rates.

This program supports activities that foster opportunity and support success in higher education by people from low SES backgrounds, including people from low SES backgrounds who are also Indigenous peoples, people with disability, people from non-English speaking backgrounds, women in non-traditional areas, or people from rural and remote Australia.

As outlined in the *Other Grants Guidelines (Education) 2012* (1.75.1 (b)), projects funded through the National Priorities Pool have the objective of supporting more effective implementation of HEPPP nationally and at an institutional level. In practical terms, this includes updating the evidence and policy basis for the program, and enhancing on-ground delivery at both the national level and within individual institutions. The National Priorities Pool supports projects that align with the overarching program goals of improving higher education outcomes (including access, participation, retention, success, and completion rates) for people from low SES backgrounds. The National Priorities Pool supports projects that develop evidence, trial innovative ideas, build capacity, and reform systems to maximise opportunity and outcomes for people from low SES backgrounds in higher education.

2. PRIORITY FUNDING AREAS

For 2018 the National Priorities Pool will fund projects that address the following three priority areas of funding:

Building the evidence base:

The purpose of this priority area is to gather and analyse robust evidence which will inform future equity policy development and practice. Projects addressing this priority funding area will explore opportunities for improvement in current practice and achievement, and investigate new developments in approaches to increasing access, participation, retention, and success in higher education at any university. The focus of this priority is rigorous evidence-based and evaluative research, although robust evidence-based projects drawn from practice, that allow for stronger conclusions about the impacts of equity interventions, may also be considered. Well-constructed quasi-experimental, experimental or longitudinal studies are welcomed. Projects that draw on cross-disciplinary methodologies and expertise, such as economics, econometrics, demography, and statistics, will also be well regarded.

Fostering innovation:

The purpose of this priority area is to foster and test new equity interventions at both an institutional and a national level. Projects commissioned from this priority area will promote innovative solutions in response to a well evidenced problem by developing and trialling new ideas and practices to assist low SES groups to access and succeed in higher education. Projects addressing this priority area are expected to demonstrate potential outcomes relevant to the HEPPP objectives and to include well integrated evaluative strategies. This priority area will also target unreasonable barriers to higher education, address current gaps in program delivery, and assist universities to expand their equity activities to new areas.

Improving the effectiveness and efficiency of program delivery:

The purpose of this priority area is to demonstrably improve current practice in HEPPP delivery across the higher education sector at both an institutional and a national level.

Projects commissioned from this priority area will explore more effective and efficient ways to implement and deliver programs, address identified issues, and draw on a meaningful evidence base. Projects addressing this priority area are expected to demonstrate the potential to improve program outcomes and to include well integrated evaluative strategies.

Projects that feature collaboration between universities or between universities and other stakeholders are strongly encouraged. Projects that establish meaningful information-sharing and collaboration among equity practitioners with a view to furthering the objectives of the HEPPP, and promote cooperation between policy-makers and the higher education sector, are welcomed.

3. FUNDING

The Australian Government, through the Department of Education and Training, will commission universities to conduct projects that are approved by the Minister for Education and Training and that address the priority funding areas in this Investment Plan.

All projects must produce outcomes that can be applied nationally and/or be adopted by other universities. All projects must have the potential to produce publications that are of sufficient quality to be accepted by a peer-reviewed journal, and/or where applicable, to produce Government commissioned reports that are robust and fit for purpose.

The National Priorities Pool will not fund any project that duplicates existing activities or research funded by the Australian Government. University-proposed projects that require recurring Government funding will not be considered. Where the proposed project complements or builds upon a separately funded project, this must be clearly identified.