

NCRIS Synthetic Biology Voucher Scheme 2025-26 (Round 1)

Key Points

1. The aim of this Voucher Scheme is to enable projects addressing significant scientific challenges using synthetic biology capabilities at NCRIS SynBio and NCRIS Partner facilities.
2. Applications for a Primary Voucher will include a Lead Provider from one of the NCRIS SynBio facilities and a Partner facility. Primary Vouchers will be awarded to a maximum of \$50,000 and will match the contribution of the applicant.
3. Applicants may also apply for a Secondary Voucher to incorporate another Partner facility which will bring an added capability to the proposed project. Secondary Vouchers will be awarded to a maximum of \$25,000 and will match the contribution of the applicant.

Background and Aims

Through the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy (NCRIS) program, the Commonwealth committed \$55M to [Bioplatforms Australia](#) in 2023 for a four-year program to provide a step change investment that would address critical gaps between Synthetic Biology research and its impact through economic and societal benefit. Approximately \$20M of this investment has been invested to establish synthetic biology facilities at Macquarie University (Australian Genome Foundry) and the University of Queensland (IDEA Bio) who are focussed on providing synthetic biology infrastructure and expertise to the industrial fermentation sector of the Australian bioeconomy. A further \$20M of this investment has been committed to establish facilities to enable plant synthetic biology and accelerate plant and agricultural R&D and industrial outcomes. Plant SynBio Australia nodes have been established at Adelaide University, Australian National University, La Trobe University and the University of Western Australia. Development of these facilities represents a first for global plant synthetic biology and provides an opportunity for Australia to capture a segment of the predicted \$30T bioeconomy. This national network of facilities provides fee-for-service, research incubator and collaborative engagement for research providers, startups and industry users. The facilities will also play a pivotal role in supporting and further developing the Australian synthetic biology community, and training the next-generation of scientists who will go on to grow and staff the sector.

In order to deliver sovereign value for the Australian agricultural, industrial fermentation and biomedical sectors, Bioplatforms is partnering with multiple providers across the NCRIS system for seamless access to synthetic biology capabilities:



The aims of the scheme are to:

- provide a financial mechanism to enable experimental development activities that are typically difficult to fund through traditional national competitive grant schemes
- increase external business for NCRIS facilities from publicly funded research groups and SMEs by lowering the financial barrier to access expert services
- raise the profile of NCRIS facilities and their range of accessible services
- identify multi-disciplinary projects that require access to more than one NCRIS facility for support
- provide opportunities for early-mid career researchers to develop a track record in translational research for product discovery and development

NCRIS SynBio Voucher Scheme

The primary voucher scheme is operated by Bioplatforms Australia and is detailed in this section.

For more information on accessing secondary vouchers, please see the Secondary Voucher section. All voucher funding is provided via the NCRIS 'Step change' SynBio investment managed by Bioplatforms Australia.

Eligibility of Applicants

The NCRIS Synthetic Biology Voucher Scheme is intended to enable access by external users (public-funded and private enterprise) from organisations including the following:

- University-based researchers and research groups
- Research groups within Publicly Funded Research Organisations, including Medical Research Institutes and Hospitals
- University or Medical Research Institute's technology transfer offices or organisations, and university/MRI spin-outs
- Commercial entities
- Applications from international organisations may be eligible. Contact Bioplatforms Australia to the discuss the project before making an application.

What We Are Looking For

- New projects to the Provider
- Applications that seek to access some combination of Bioplatforms Australia SynBio and NCRIS partner facilities to support the same project are strongly encouraged
- Applications from academic researchers that seek to access facilities outside their own academic unit or host entity may be given greater consideration than applications seeking to access to facilities within their own host. This aligns with the aim of enabling greater collaboration between research entities. Applicants seeking to access facilities within their own academic units or host entities will be required to justify why voucher funding is necessary to access an internal Provider.
- Bioplatforms Australia is looking for synthetic biology projects across three broad domains:
 - o Agricultural production
 - o Industrial biotechnology and precision fermentation
 - o Medical research and biosecurity

Eligibility of Applications

To be eligible for the voucher, the project application **MUST**:

- indicate which Bioplatforms SynBio Provider(s) will be Lead Provider:
 - [Australian Genome Foundry](#) (Macquarie University)
 - [IDEA Bio](#) (University of Queensland)
 - [Plant SynBio Australia](#) (Australia National University)
 - [Plant SynBio Australia](#) (Adelaide University)
 - [Plant SynBio Australia](#) (La Trobe University)
 - [Plant SynBio Australia](#) (University of Western Australia)



- NOTE: An applicant may apply to multiple Bioplatforms SynBio Providers to support different aspects of the same project (e.g. Australian Genome Foundry for Build phase and IDEA Bio for Test phase)
- indicate which of the NCRIS partner facilities will be the Primary Voucher Partner (i.e. recipient of the voucher funds):
 - Australia Plant Phenomics Network ([APPN](#))
 - Therapeutics Innovation Australia ([TIA](#))
 - Phenomics Australia ([PA](#))
 - Microscopy Australia ([MA](#))
 - National Imaging Facility ([NIF](#))
 - Heavy Ion Accelerators ([HIA](#))
 - National Deuteration Facility ([NDF](#))
 - Bioplatforms Australia (synthetic biology, genomics, proteomics, metabolomics, bioinformatics)
- have obtained appropriate service quotes from the Lead Provider and Primary Voucher Partner
- provide a letter of support from the Lead Provider stating that the project can commence within 6 months of award
- demonstrate an awareness of the current state of research and development in the relevant area
- demonstrate an understanding of the unmet need and/or potential impact on agriculture, biomanufacturing or human health
- articulate a plan for the next steps in the development of the project or outcomes of the project.
- define an indicative desired timescale for the project
 - The timescale should align with the award and should not exceed 18 months from commencement. Note: this timescale applies to the supported activities only, and not the full completion of the project or development of a potential agricultural, biomanufacturing or biomedical outcome.
- define success criteria for the supported Project (as noted above, not necessarily for the entire development project).
- complete the application form with associated supporting documents (refer to Supporting documents for details)

Choosing and Contacting a Provider and Partner

- The scheme includes six Bioplatforms Lead Providers with accessible research infrastructure facilities associated with Bioplatforms Australia.
- The scheme includes seven NCRIS Partners generally with multiple accessible research infrastructure facilities associated with each. NOTE: Bioplatforms capabilities may also be the Partner with Bioplatforms SynBio Lead Providers.
- Check the websites of NCRIS Partners (see links provided above) for a list of facilities that are eligible for primary voucher support. Multiple Partners may be named on a single application if the project makes use of capabilities at several different Providers. NOTE: The second NCRIS partner will be considered under the Secondary Voucher guidelines (see below).
- Applicants must approach Providers and Partners with a project (i.e., request to access a specific translational research service) and request a quote for services. The level of detail of the quotes will vary between Providers and Partners.
- Applications proposing to access multiple Partners should request separate quotes from each service Partner.

Prepare an Application

- A call for applications will be published through a variety of channels. Submissions are made via an online form.
- IMPORTANT: It is strongly encouraged that Providers work closely with Applicants on the application and provide necessary advice and guidance to maximise the chance of project success.
- You can access the application form template on the Bioplatforms Australia website at the following URL: <https://bioplatforms.com/ncris-synthetic-biology-voucher-scheme/>
- The online application form cannot be saved. We advise you to develop your application on the template provided and transfer it to the online form prior to submission. Detailed instructions are included on the application form template.

Supporting Documents

- Upload a single A4 page of diagrams in JPG, PNG or PDF format
- Upload as a single PDF the following supporting documents:
 - Evidence of the source of matched funding must be provided. This could be a funding body grant reference number or a letter from your host organisation
 - Original quote (an email is acceptable) or terms sheet for services. Multiple quotes can be submitted if multiple facilities are being accessed
 - The quote amount must not take into account the requested voucher value but should align with any relevant NCRIS Access and Pricing policy
 - The quote must specify the appropriate level of GST to be applied
 - A brief indication of Provider support for the application (an email is acceptable) stating that:
 - The quote provided is priced in accordance with NCRIS Partner's Access and Pricing policy
 - The quote is valid for at least 3 months
 - The Provider consents to being named in the Application

- The Project will be able to commence within 6 months of award

Funding Level and Matching Funds

- The voucher awarded will be 50% of the total cost (ex-GST) of the project up to a maximum award of \$50,000 and will be provided directly to the service Provider and Partner at project commencement, allowing this cost saving to be passed to the Applicant.
- The voucher may contribute to the cost of access but cannot cover or exceed the entire cost. Applicants are responsible for the remaining cost.
- Co-investment from the applicant in the form of matching cash is an important aspect of this scheme, as applicants must have some “skin in the game” and must have access to sufficient resources to complete the proposed work.
- Applications must therefore demonstrate significant matching cash co-investment to confirm that, should the voucher be awarded, the proposed work is fully supported.
- The source of cash matching fund must be provided. If the matching fund is from a grant, the grant provider and identifier must be provided. If it is not linked to a funded grant, evidence of funding source must be attached to your application (e.g. a letter from your host organisation).
- Note: Secondary vouchers have different co-investment expectations. Please refer to Secondary vouchers for details.

Secondary Vouchers

Secondary vouchers aim to enhance or extend the core activities undertaken in the project. These vouchers support further validation or deeper analysis of your research. They are intended as an add-on and should not constitute the main focus of your project. To be eligible for a secondary voucher, you must meet all eligibility requirements of the Primary Voucher Scheme. NOTE: You do not have to apply for a Secondary Voucher.

Choosing a Secondary Partner

- The same list of Partners is eligible for secondary voucher support. Multiple Partners may be named on a single application if the project makes use of capabilities at several different Providers.
 - Australian Plant Phenomics Network ([APPN](#))
 - Therapeutics Innovation Australia ([TIA](#))
 - Phenomics Australia ([PA](#))
 - Microscopy Australia ([MA](#))
 - National Imaging Facility ([NIF](#))
 - Heavy Ion Accelerators ([HIA](#))
 - National Deuteration Facility ([NDF](#))
 - Bioplatforms Australia (synthetic biology, genomics, proteomics, metabolomics, bioinformatics)
- The Secondary Voucher will be 50% of the total cost (ex-GST) of the secondary project up to a maximum award of \$25,000. Applicants are responsible for the matching funds and the source of cash matching funds must be provided.
- Process to apply:
 - Please contact the listed NCRIS Partner facility to discuss your project and request an estimate/quote for the required services.

- Fill in the required details in the application form and attach your estimate/quote when prompted.
- Note: Applications to access NCRIS Partner services only (i.e. with no requested primary voucher to Bioplatforms Australia SynBio Providers) will not be accepted in this call.

Assessment Process

- A panel, including independent external experts, assesses applications and decides on awards. The assessment process may be staged, depending on the number of applications received.
- All outcomes will be notified via email, including unsuccessful applications. For successful applications, a Letter of Offer will be sent to the Applicants, cc: the specified Provider(s).

Project Commencement

- The Applicant must:
 - For Bioplatforms Australia facilities: a) enter into an agreement with the Provider (NOT with Bioplatforms Australia) to provide payment for access to capabilities specified in the Application; b) co-sign a Letter of Commencement with the Provider(s).
 - For NCRIS Partners: Any details on formal agreement requirements will be provided when a quotation is received from the Partner
- Note:
 - We expect the project to commence within 6 months of the award of the voucher. Because of the nature of this scheme, offers may be withdrawn if projects do not commence within six months of award without a reasonable explanation.
 - The voucher awarded is not transferable to another project.
 - Bioplatforms Australia does not require sight of the contract but requires written confirmation that such a contract exists in the Letter of Commencement. NCRIS Partners will provide their requirements in this regard to successful Applicants.
 - The NCRIS Lead Providers do not seek any ownership or beneficial interest in supported projects but reserve the right to receive brief project updates (~1/2 page) on request and acknowledgment of support (see below).
 - In the event of early termination, the Partner must notify the relevant NCRIS Lead Provider in writing at the earliest possible opportunity. Depending on the scenario, the relevant NCRIS Lead Provider will advise the Partner on the next steps.

Project Completion

Once the work is complete, Provider and Applicant must provide written proof that the services have been completed, using the provided template Letter of Completion from the Applicant (co-signed by the Provider) briefly describing the service provided. This template includes instructions for a brief completion report, which must also be completed.

Acknowledgement of NCRIS Facilities and NCRIS Support

Applicants and/or Providers are expected to acknowledge Bioplatforms Australia and NCRIS Partners in all publications associated with these supported projects and send publication details to Bioplatforms Australia: comms@bioplatforms.com.

Scheme Timelines

Approximate timeline (subject to change)	Timeframe
Scheme opens for applications	4 July 2025
Scheme closes for applications	12 September 2025, 5pm (AEST)
Applications assessed	September – October 2025
Awards made	October/November 2025
Projects commence	Strictly within 6 months of award ¹
Projects complete	Within 18 months of commencement

¹Offers may be withdrawn if projects have not commenced within six months without an explanation satisfactory to Bioplatforms Australia.