



INVITATION TO COLLABORATE ON RESEARCH INFORMATION FOR PROSPECTIVE PARTNERS

The Australian Business Foundation invites partners to collaborate with us in undertaking research projects that provide fresh intelligence to shape the future competitiveness of Australian business, especially the ability to respond with agility to opportunities or threats in turbulent times and to generate new sources of lasting competitive advantage for Australia.

Prospective research partners will share the Foundation's commitment to research that looks beyond mainstream thinking and easy answers. They will be able to demonstrate exceptional vision and research capability, proficiency in productive research collaborations and enthusiasm and skill in sharing and applying research knowledge and insights both to shape public debate and to incite practical action.

This paper provides information to those interested in collaborating with the Foundation on research projects, including guidance for submitting research proposals by 14 August 2009.

About the Australian Business Foundation

The Australian Business Foundation is an independent organisation undertaking evidence-based research to deliver fresh insights and practical intelligence to boost Australia's capabilities and global competitiveness.

The Foundation operates as an active and informed community of common interest, bringing together forward-looking business executives, policymakers, academics and opinion leaders. The Foundation provides a valued connection to leading edge ideas and forward-thinking people. The Foundation undertakes its research in partnership with expert scholars and practitioners both nationally and internationally. This has established the Foundation as a leader in bridging academic scholarship with the realities and challenges of everyday business experience.

The Australian Business Foundation summarises the roles it has been performing for more than a decade in terms of the five concepts in its strapline: *researcher, futurist, activist, thought leader and intelligence source*.

The Australian Business Foundation's research is an antennae for the 'soft signals', detecting the emerging issues likely to be impactful on Australia's business competitiveness into the future. The Foundation's research has focused on business innovation and sustainability, new models of competitiveness and opportunities arising from a knowledge-based economy. Its research priorities seek to investigate those issues that set a new agenda for business and the community at large.

The end game is how to ensure Australia recognises and prepares itself for the new patterns of competitiveness and prosperity to be had in modern highly interconnected, globalised, knowledge-based economies.

A complete list of the Foundation's published and forthcoming research is available online on the website at www.abfoundation.com.au, together with details of other Foundation operations, presentations, public statements and events.

Inviting Research Collaborations

The Australian Business Foundation is *not* simply a research donor or funder. Rather, the Foundation undertakes high calibre research by collaborating with other authoritative and credible researchers and practitioners on shared and mutually agreed investigations that have substance and impact.

In undertaking research, the Foundation seeks to be at the forefront of anticipating emerging issues and pioneering insightful analyses, debate and action on research findings by both business leaders and public policymakers.

The Foundation seeks to distinguish itself from others in framing its research questions in more cogent ways that make connections between disparate but relevant subjects, and by avoiding issues already well-traversed by others. The Foundation's research typically seeks to explore new angles, probe beyond the obvious and provide a business reality check on the issues being investigated.

The Foundation aims to capitalise on the knowledge generated by its existing body of research work, and to extend and add value to this work.

Different modes of research are invited from prospective research partners beyond a single line of research in an individual project proposal. For example, joint ventures, action research projects, multidisciplinary collaborations, research aggregation, synthesis and commentary on the research of others, large scale landmark research, or sponsored research partnerships.

However, the Foundation's invitation to collaborate in research projects will generally **exclude**:

- research leading to a PhD thesis or the awarding of an academic qualification;
- research that simply generates a database for later mining;
- basic or exploratory research primarily of an academic nature; and
- research resulting in copyright material or intellectual property that cannot be shared extensively in public discourse.

The annual budget for the Australian Business Foundation provides limits for the allocation of resources in any year to particular research projects. The Foundation seeks to leverage its available research funds and typically undertakes three or four research projects at any one time. Generally, the financial contribution to individual research projects has been in the order of \$50,000 to \$100,000, but depending on the nature of the project, lesser or greater contributions are considered on the merits of the proposal.

Strategic Research Priorities

The Australian Business Foundation in 2009/10 through its Board and expert Research Advisory Committee has set the following research priorities.

All priority research topics are to be considered in terms of their contribution of insights to three overarching questions. These are:

- How can Australia turn its big problems (e.g. climate change, health, ageing population, skills and education, carbon-constrained and energy-efficient production, sustainability, social inclusion etc.) into opportunities delivering both social and economic benefits?
- How can responses to these problems be turned into capability-building projects for Australia and its businesses?
- How can Australian businesses thrive in turbulent times and respond with agility and skill to opportunities or threats?

Given this, the following subjects represent the priority research topics for 2009/10.

Responding to Globalisation

- What does it mean to 'make things' in globalised, services-dominated modern economies.
- Taking advantage of niche opportunities and linkages for Australian firms to integrate into global value chains and virtual webs of enterprise.
- Fostering new growth industries and capabilities from Australia.
- Capitalising on 'born global' firms and Australian export successes.
- New business models and global reach using transformational and enabling technologies.

New Models of Innovation and Sustainability

- Dynamics, drivers and realities of market-led and customer-driven business innovation, including services innovation and user-centred innovation.
- Management of innovation and innovation skills.
- Innovation in workplaces of the future.
- Understanding the relationships between innovation and productivity.
- Innovation, human capital and business performance.
- Emerging concepts of social innovation.

The Geography of Competitiveness and Economic Development

- Spatial issues of innovation and economic development.
- Clustering, networking and strategic collaboration.
- Local and regional economic development models.
- Cross-overs between urban geography, physical and land use planning and innovation studies.
- Cultural precincts, revitalised regions and global cities.

Learning from the Future

- Foresighting, scenario planning and futures studies.
- 'Wild Card' issues with impact for Australia.

Submitting Research Proposals

To respond to the invitation from the Australian Business Foundation to collaborate on research projects, you are asked to submit in writing an outline of your research proposal(s) as follows:

Each research proposal should be of no more than four A4 pages and must include:

- The title and a specific description of the research project being proposed, detailing project methodology, deliverables, timing, the qualifications and expertise of the researchers, the cost of the project and the financial contribution sought from the Australian Business Foundation.
- Details of how the research findings will be communicated and knowledge transferred to appropriate users.

- How the research proposal will materially advance knowledge on the Foundation's strategic research priorities set out earlier in this information paper.
- How the research proposal accords with the distinctive character of the Foundation and its approach to research described in this information paper, particularly how it satisfies the following criteria:
 - congruence with the Foundation's values and objectives, particularly for research that anticipates key emerging issues, explores new angles, takes a probing and questioning stance and provides a business reality check on the issues being investigated;
 - ability to distil fresh insights that effect change and help shape the debate, not merely respond to it;
 - ability to collaborate in a mutually beneficial way with the Australian Business Foundation, including the Foundation's entitlement to use intellectual property created in the project for public awareness and debate; and
 - offers a feasible research project in terms of scope, cost, methodology, research expertise and relevance.
- The names and contact details of two referees with whom you have collaborated on research proposals.

The Australian Business Foundation will treat all proposals in confidence. The decision of whether or not to support any research proposal is made entirely at the discretion of the Board of the Australian Business Foundation.

The deadline for submissions has been extended, and research proposals in response to this invitation to collaborate should be submitted no later than close of business on **30 September 2009** to:

Attention: Phillip Allen
Research Invitation 2009
Australian Business Foundation
Email: phillip.allen@abfoundation.com.au
Mail: 140 Arthur Street, North Sydney, NSW 2060
Web: www.abfoundation.com.au

Enquiries about this invitation may be directed to Phillip Allen, the Foundation's Research Manager on (02) 9458 7342.

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