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Wine Australia Opens A$35 Million Research Funding Round for Vineyards and Wineries

The co-investment program seeks proposals before Dec. 23 for projects on sustainability, efficiency and product innovation

Wednesday, November 18, 2026



Wine Australia opened a new competitive funding round on Wednesday, November 18, seeking research and innovation projects for the country’s wine and grape sector as part of a five-year effort to expand industry investment beyond traditional levy funding.

The call covers the Research & Innovation Fund, or RIF, one of two streams inside the Australian Wine Future Fund. Wine Australia said the broader program is targeting A$50 million over five years through a mix of Commonwealth support, state government grants, partner contributions and private investment. Of that total, the RIF is aiming to mobilize A$35 million for co-designed projects that can deliver practical results in vineyard performance, product innovation, sustainability and production efficiency.

Wine Australia said the fund is meant to speed up projects that address some of the industry’s main pressures. According to the agency, the Australian Wine Future Fund was created earlier in 2026 in response to declining levies, with the goal of bringing in more money for technologies and projects that can strengthen long-term productivity, resilience and environmental performance for grape growers and winemakers.

Chief Executive Martin Cole said the new round is intended to identify projects with direct value for the sector. In comments released by Wine Australia, Cole said the organization was launching an expression of interest process to “find and fund projects that will make a difference to our sector” and urged eligible applicants to review the criteria on the agency’s website.

The structure of the Research & Innovation Fund is based on co-investment. Wine Australia said Commonwealth funding will be used to leverage additional money for each approved project, alongside contributions from research organizations, private companies, state governments and industry representative groups. The agency said this model is designed to stretch public funding further while supporting work that can be adopted in commercial vineyards and wineries.

The second stream in the Australian Wine Future Fund is the Venture Investments Portfolio, which has a five-year target of A$15 million. Wine Australia said that portfolio is intended to attract private capital and address innovation gaps through a partnership with Tenacious Ventures. Under that arrangement, Wine Australia plans to commit A$2.5 million in non-levy funding alongside existing funds and other investors.

Projects seeking support under the future fund must align with Wine Australia’s Strategic Plan for 2025–30 and the One Grape & Wine Sector Plan. The agency said those plans identify innovation, sustainability and the adoption of new technology as

central to future growth, profitability and global competitiveness for the sector.

Wine Australia also pointed to several projects that have already received support through the Research & Innovation Fund. They include a partnership with Wine Victoria to support growers and winemakers; a collaboration among Wines of Western Australia, the Western Australian Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, and Wine Australia to improve sustainability, profitability and competitiveness in that state; a co-investment with Vinehealth Australia to modernize South Australia's Vinehealth Vineyard Register and align it with the National Vineyard Register; a strategic research agreement with the Australian Wine Research Institute; and work with Agriculture Victoria on new tools for surveillance and management of grapevine phylloxera.

The current expression of interest round will remain open until December 23. Wine Australia said applications from this round are expected to be assessed in early 2027. After that, the agency plans to accept expressions of interest throughout the year, with assessment rounds held every quarter.

The move could matter beyond research institutions and vineyard operators. Australia is one of the world's major wine-producing and exporting countries, and stronger funding for vineyard health, production efficiency and sustainability may help support grape supply, lower operating pressure for wineries and improve the sector's ability to adapt to changing market and environmental conditions. For the broader beverage business, that could eventually influence how wine producers invest in new products, farming practices and processing technology.

The latest funding push also shows how Australian wine authorities are trying to replace part of the investment once supplied through industry levies with a broader mix of public and private capital. By tying support to co-investment and practical outcomes, Wine Australia is signaling that future research spending will be judged not only on scientific merit but also on whether it can be adopted across vineyards and wineries.

Applicants will need to show that their proposals fit the strategic priorities set by the national industry plans and that they can bring in partners under the co-funding structure. Wine Australia said details on eligibility and the application process are

available through its website.