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# Wine Australia opened a call for proposals for a 35 million Australian dollar research fund

Expressions of interest are due Dec. 23 after a 19% drop in the grape crush cut levy income to its lowest since 2000

Monday, November 23, 2026



Wine Australia opened a new call for research proposals on Monday, November 23, seeking projects for a fund that aims to bring 35 million Australian dollars into wine research and innovation over five years.

The call covers the Research and Innovation Fund, the larger of the two streams in the Australian Wine Future Fund. Expressions of interest are due by December 23, and applications from that round will be assessed in early 2027. After that, Wine Australia said it plans to accept expressions of interest throughout the year and assess them every quarter.

The fund was established in February to bring in research money from outside the industry’s levy system. Wine Australia said the broader Australian Wine Future Fund has a five-year target of 50 million Australian dollars, to be assembled through Commonwealth funding, state government grants, partner contributions and private investment, on top of existing levy-funded research.

Under that structure, the Research and Innovation Fund carries a 35 million Australian dollar target. The second stream, a Venture Investments Portfolio, has a 15 million Australian dollar target and is designed to attract private capital in partnership with Tenacious Ventures. Wine Australia has committed 2.5 million Australian dollars in non-levy funds to the overall effort.

The funding push comes as the Australian wine industry faces a shrinking grape crush, which has reduced the levy income that normally helps support research. In its National Vintage Report 2026, Wine Australia said the national crush fell to 1.27 million tonnes, the smallest since 2000 and down 19% from the previous year. The average value of purchased grapes also fell 6% to 570 Australian dollars a tonne, meaning the smaller crop did not produce higher prices.

That decline matters because research levies are tied to the size of the crush. When the harvest shrinks, so does the pool of levy funding. Wine Australia has previously said it cut staff and used reserves as levy income and matching Commonwealth income declined. It said legislative changes now allow it to pursue non-levy funding that can still attract Commonwealth matching support, which is the mechanism behind the future fund.

Wine Australia chief executive Martin Cole said the new round was intended to find projects that could make a practical difference for the sector. In a statement, he urged applicants to review eligibility on the agency’s website and submit proposals.

The organization has already backed several projects through the Research and Innovation Fund, offering a clearer picture of the kind of work it wants to support. Those projects include a partnership with Wine Victoria that combines 540,000 Australian dollars from the Victorian government with 346,667 Australian dollars from the fund. The fund has also co-invested with Vinehealth Australia to modernize South Australia’s vineyard register and bring it into line with the National Vineyard Register.

Other supported work includes a collaboration involving Wines of Western Australia, the state Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, and Wine Australia; a strategic research agreement with the Australian Wine Research Institute; and work with Agriculture Victoria on phylloxera surveillance and management.

The mix of projects shows that the program is aimed at applied problems in vineyards and wineries, not only basic science. That could be important for the drinks sector because research on plant health, data systems, production efficiency and climate adaptation can affect grape supply, operating costs and how quickly wine producers adopt new practices.

Wine Australia said projects submitted under the new call must align with its Strategic Plan 2025-30 and the One Grape & Wine Sector Plan, linking the funding round to the industry’s broader effort to stabilize research support as traditional levy income comes under pressure.