

Applied Research and Innovation Project Prospectus

2025 - 2026



A multi-stakeholder approach to applied research for the care economy involving TAFE, government, industry, and community

Holmesglen's Centre for Applied Research and Innovation is proud to offer TAFEs, and industry partners, the opportunity to collaborate on research projects addressing challenges within the care economy.

Supported by funding from the Victorian Government, these collaborative projects aim to strengthen the research capability and capacity of the Victorian TAFE sector, foster meaningful industry-community partnerships, conduct applied research to address the needs, challenges, and opportunities within the care economy, and enhance education and training across the sector.





Vision

Our vision is to position TAFE as a cornerstone of the applied research and innovation ecosystem, driving impactful change and progress across the care economy. By fostering a supportive and collaborative research environment, we aim to:

- **Empower VET applied researchers to work in partnership with TAFE Network providers, educational institutions, industry, and community organisations.**
- **Enhance the quality and diversity of applied research, addressing real-world challenges and opportunities within the care economy.**
- **Deliver tangible innovations that advance industry practices, enrich community outcomes, and elevate teaching and learning programs across the VET sector.**

This vision underscores TAFE's pivotal role in shaping a dynamic, forward-thinking research landscape that meets the evolving needs of society.



Mission

Our mission is to provide the structural support and resources necessary to establish a robust applied research program that drives innovation within the care economy.

We will:

- **Develop and sustain an enabling research infrastructure that fosters collaboration across TAFE Network providers, industry, educational institutions, and community organisations.**
- **Build applied research capability within the TAFE sector, equipping researchers with the tools and skills needed to address emerging challenges and opportunities.**
- **Support the development of impactful, evidence-based solutions that strengthen industry practices, improve community outcomes, and enrich educational experiences.**
- **Promote a culture of innovation, ensuring that applied research becomes an integral component of the VET sector's contributions to the care economy and beyond.**

This mission reflects our commitment to facilitating meaningful, actionable research that addresses the critical needs of the care economy while positioning TAFE as a leader in applied research and innovation.

The care economy, its value to society, education and training

What is the Care Economy?

The ‘care economy’ represents all services that provide care and support services to people of all abilities and ages. Its sectors include aged care; allied health; community services; disability support; early childhood education and care; health care; and social housing; it is one of the fastest growing parts of the Australian economy and is a significant driver of employment demand across Australia.

The care economy is a key policy priority for governments, attracting substantial funding for the public health system and areas requiring social assistance.

A Growing Workforce

The care economy is the largest employer in Victoria, with 574,000 workers in 2024, and it is projected to experience the highest workforce growth of any sector in the coming decade. Between 2024 and 2027, the sector is expected to grow by 86,500 jobs, with a total increase of 335,000 jobs anticipated by 2034. This growth trend is likely to be mirrored across Australia, highlighting the care economy's vital and expanding role in the national workforce.

An Opportunity for Research

The increasing demand for employment in this sector, combined with the growing attention from policymakers, presents Victorian TAFEs with a unique opportunity to not only lead the training response, but to also engage in collaborative applied research with industry and community organisations.



The care economy is the largest employer in Victoria.

574,000
workers



2024

86,500
increase



2024 > 2027

335,000
workers

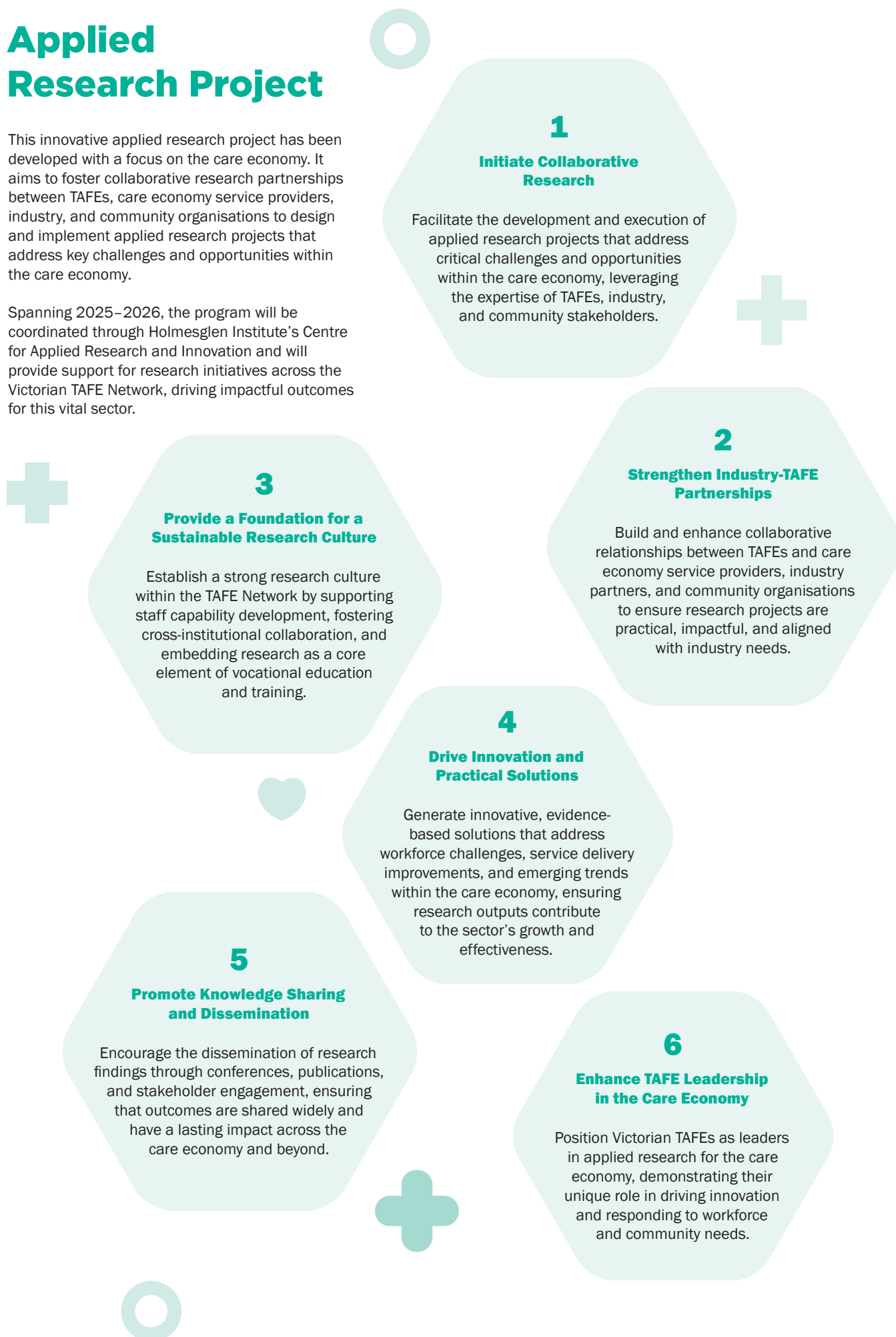


2034

Applied Research Project

This innovative applied research project has been developed with a focus on the care economy. It aims to foster collaborative research partnerships between TAFEs, care economy service providers, industry, and community organisations to design and implement applied research projects that address key challenges and opportunities within the care economy.

Spanning 2025–2026, the program will be coordinated through Holmesglen Institute's Centre for Applied Research and Innovation and will provide support for research initiatives across the Victorian TAFE Network, driving impactful outcomes for this vital sector.



Why become a research partner?

Access to Unique Opportunities:

Engage in a diverse range of applied research projects, offering researchers and partner organisations the chance to explore innovative solutions and address real-world challenges

Build Research Capacity:

Leverage the linkages created through partnerships to access professional development opportunities, fostering the growth of research skills and expertise.

Support Vocational Education and Training:

Strengthen the role of vocational education and training by aligning research initiatives with industry needs and enhancing the impact of TAFE programs.

Enrich Student Learning:

Contribute to meaningful learning experiences by involving students in research activities that develop their analytical and critical thinking skills, preparing them for future workforce challenges.



Research programs

Researchers are encouraged to adopt a flexible and innovative approach when identifying suitable applied research projects, with a focus on partnering with Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs) wherever possible and maintaining an outcomes-driven perspective.

Support will be provided throughout the design and implementation of research projects, including:

- **Consultation:** Assistance with developing relevant and impactful research questions.
- **Specialised Expertise:** Access to expert advice and guidance tailored to project needs.
- **Industry Contributions:** Guidance on sourcing in-kind contributions from industry partners.

Potential research areas include specific sectors within the care economy, such as:

- Aged care
- Allied health
- Community services
- Disability support
- Early childhood education and care
- Health care
- Social housing

Additional project areas may focus on workforce innovation, qualifications, digital transformation, technological advancements, and service delivery improvements within the care economy.

Research may also focus on care economy related education and training, particularly exploring the changes required to modernise current courses and qualifications, ensuring the workforce is equipped for the future.

How will research projects be formed?

The formation of research projects will follow a structured, collaborative approach to ensure alignment with the needs of the care economy, industry, and the TAFE network.

The initial steps will include:

- **Identification of Existing and Emerging Expertise:**
Each TAFE institute's areas of strength and emerging capabilities will be mapped to identify specialised expertise that can be leveraged for applied research projects. This process will involve consultations with TAFE educators, researchers, and industry engagement teams to align institutional strengths with sector-specific needs.
- **Engagement with Potential and Current Partners:**
Partnerships will play a pivotal role in shaping impactful research projects. The program will actively identify potential collaborators, including industry stakeholders, care economy service providers, government agencies, and community organisations. Current partners will also be re-engaged to expand existing relationships and identify new areas of collaboration. Networking events, industry forums, and direct outreach will be used to facilitate these connections.
- **Formulation of Project Proposals:**
Research proposals will be developed collaboratively, incorporating insights from TAFE experts, partners, and other stakeholders. Proposals will be designed to address pressing issues within the care economy, focus on outcomes with practical applications, and align with both partner needs and the overarching goals of the program.

The research formation process will emphasise co-design principles, ensuring that all stakeholders, including researchers, learners, industry partners, and community representatives, have a voice in shaping project objectives. This collaborative approach will help to ensure projects are relevant, feasible, and capable of delivering meaningful impact.

Additionally, the process will include ongoing consultation and refinement to ensure that research projects remain adaptable to emerging trends and challenges in the care economy. This iterative approach will allow for the incorporation of feedback from both academic and industry partners, further enhancing the value and applicability of the research.

The Research Projects Advisory Committee

A Research Projects Advisory Committee (RPAC) will be established, coordinated by Holmesglen, with balanced representation from TAFE Institutes and industry stakeholders. The RPAC will play a pivotal role in reviewing research project proposals and providing recommendations to ensure alignment with program objectives.

To ensure efficiency and fairness, the following principles will guide project development and approvals:

- **Streamlined Process:** A clear and straightforward step-by-step process will govern project development and approvals, minimizing complexity.
- **Transparency and Timeliness:** The approval process will prioritise fairness and avoid unnecessary delays by providing comprehensive "Project Formation Guidelines."
- **Collaborative Agreements:** All projects will be developed collaboratively between partners to ensure mutual agreement on objectives and deliverables.
- **Clear Governance:** Each project will begin with a detailed Research Project Application that outlines funding arrangements, intellectual property (IP) ownership, and key deliverables.

Steps in the Research Project Lifecycle:

- 1 **Project Proposal Submission:** Partners submit a preliminary proposal through a Research Project Grant Application Form.
- 2 **RPAC Review:** The RPAC evaluates proposals, ensuring they align with program goals and demonstrate feasibility and impact.
- 3 **Approval:** Approved projects receive formal confirmation and funding allocation.
- 4 **Project Commencement:** Projects are initiated, guided by the agreed-upon application and objectives.
- 5 **Progress Monitoring:** Regular reporting (e.g., quarterly) ensures projects remain on track, with milestones clearly outlined and assessed.
- 6 **Project Completion:** A final report and milestone deliverable are submitted upon project conclusion to document outcomes and impact.

\$250,000



Funding and Support

The scheme will offer four grants of \$250,000 each.

Commencement date: Within two weeks of the execution of the project agreement

Completion date: 18 months following the commencement of the project

Successful proposals are expected to be supported by in-kind contributions, wherever possible, from research partners, including industry and community organisations.

For more details, refer to the grant application form.

This structured approach ensures a transparent and collaborative framework for initiating, monitoring, and completing research projects, fostering impactful partnerships and meaningful outcomes.



Guiding Principles for Approval are:

Project approval will be guided by the following core principles to ensure high-impact, quality research outcomes:

1. Project Impact

- **Contribution to the Care Economy:** The project must clearly demonstrate how it will address challenges or opportunities within the care economy and provide tangible benefits to the sector.
- **Implementation Pathways:** Proposals should outline credible pathways for implementing project outcomes, supported by strong relationships with relevant end-users, beneficiaries, and/or stakeholders.

2. Research Quality

- **Rigour and Credibility:** The research plan must reflect a rigorous and well-defined methodology, with clear and measurable milestones aimed at addressing the identified industry problem and achieving impact.
- **Education and Training Opportunities:** Proposals should include opportunities to enhance education and training outcomes, such as upskilling students, workforce development, or curriculum innovation.

3. Capacity, Capability, and Resources

- **Team Expertise:** The project team must demonstrate a complementary mix of skills, knowledge, and resources required to successfully deliver large-scale research projects. Research teams should include a mix of senior researchers and early career researchers and, wherever possible, be interdisciplinary and drawn from different TAFEs.
- **Risk Management:** Proposals must outline how risks will be effectively managed, including potential project delays, reliance on key personnel, financial risks, workplace health and safety, and dispute resolution mechanisms.

By applying these guiding principles, the approval process ensures projects are impactful, methodologically sound, and supported by capable teams, ultimately driving meaningful contributions to the care economy and strengthening the role of applied research in addressing industry challenges.



Indicative Project Timeline

The research program operates on a structured timeline to ensure efficiency and clarity for participants:

1. Project Proposal Submission

Researchers and industry partners are invited to submit a Research Project Grant Application.

2. Application Deadlines

Applications will close 13 June 2025 and projects must conclude no later than 31 December 2026.

3. Approval Process

Proposals will be reviewed by the Research Projects Advisory Committee (RPAC), with outcomes communicated within two weeks of the application closing date.

4. Intellectual Property Ownership

Intellectual property (IP) ownership will be negotiated on a project-by-project basis. All project participants must reach an agreement on an IP management strategy before project commencement.

5. Ethics Approval

Projects approved by RPAC, will require ethics clearance from a reputable external ethics committee, such as Bellberry Ltd. Funding to support these applications need to be factored into the project budget.

By adhering to these guidelines, the program ensures a fair, transparent, and ethical framework for supporting impactful applied research projects.



Capability Building



Governance and Management

The Applied Research and Innovation Project will be overseen by a governance structure designed to ensure alignment with its strategic objectives and long-term impact. This governance framework will provide clear oversight, accountability, and guidance to support effective decision-making, resource allocation, and stakeholder engagement.

The governance structure will:

- Establish a robust management framework to oversee project activities and ensure alignment with the program's vision and mission.
- Facilitate collaboration between TAFE providers, industry partners, government agencies, and community organisations.
- Ensure transparent and equitable processes for funding allocation and project selection.
- Monitor and evaluate project outcomes to assess effectiveness and drive continuous improvement.

Governance Framework

Holmesglen: Executive Director, Education and Applied Research

Steering Committee: Executive Director, Education and Applied Research; Dean Higher Education and Applied Research; Dean Faculty of Health Sciences and Community Studies; Director, Centre for Applied Research and Innovation; and Project Manager, Applied Research and Innovation

Research Project Advisory Committee (RPAC): Representatives from the OTCD, VSA, Victorian TAFE institutes, and care economy industry and community organisations.

Management Team: Responsible for operations, project management, and research direction.

Profiling Research Activity and Capability Development Needs

The Centre for Applied Research and Innovation will collaborate with TAFE Institutes to map existing research activity within their organisations, identify gaps in research capability, and propose strategies for development. The recommendations will serve as a foundation for a targeted roadmap for future action, ensuring the alignment of research capability with industry and community needs.

Survey of Research Capability and Training Requirements

A comprehensive survey will be conducted to profile the research activity of professionals engaged in delivering programs related to the care economy. The survey will assess their current research skills and identify areas for capability development. This feedback will guide the design of targeted training programs to meet the needs of participants and strengthen the research culture across the TAFE Network.

Themes for Training Workshops

The program will include a series of workshop-based training initiatives designed to address key aspects of applied research. Proposed themes include:

Developing Research Capability

- Generating a research idea
- Developing a research proposal
- Working with industry or community partners on a research project
- Applying for funding
- Conducting research as part of professional roles

Research Process and Skills

- Literature search and writing a literature review
- Designing education evaluation surveys
- Applying for ethics approval
- Collecting data and negotiating access to participants
- Quantitative and qualitative data analysis
- Writing up results and publishing research

Practical Tools and Dissemination

- Using research software (e.g., SPSS, NVivo, EndNote)
- Orally presenting research findings

Publicising Applied Research and Innovation

To ensure visibility and engagement, the program will employ multiple channels to showcase applied research and innovation, including:

- Regular seminars and workshops to highlight progress and share outcomes.
- Presentations at conferences
- A dedicated webpage offering resources, updates, and success stories.
- An e-newsletter to disseminate findings, opportunities, and upcoming events.

This strategic focus on capability building and knowledge dissemination will enhance the research capabilities of TAFE Institutes, promote collaboration, and increase the sector's contribution to the care economy.



For Further Enquiries:

The Holmesglen Centre for Applied Research and Innovation is available to assist your organisation in preparing a research application for this project.

If you would like to know more, please contact:
The Holmesglen Centre for Applied Research and Innovation.

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T: + 61 3 9564 1886



In the spirit of reconciliation, Holmesglen recognises and celebrates the Traditional Owners of the lands throughout Victoria and beyond on which we educate and train. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and acknowledge our emerging leaders.



Holmesglen Institute

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