

Australian-Grown Innovation

Q&A

What is the Australian-Grown Innovation program?

The Australian-Grown Innovation program, run by Startupbootcamp and the Australian Food Cluster Alliance (Cluster Connect) in partnership with Hort Innovation, has been designed to nurture grassroots ingenuity. Over a five-year period, it will support growers, producers, and innovators in the horticulture industry to turn great ideas into practical, commercially viable products and services.

What does the Australian-Grown Innovation program involve?

The program provides the tools, expertise, and connections needed to help bring ideas to life, making innovation more accessible across the horticulture supply chain.

There are three stages to the program:

Engage: Local workshops for growers and supply chain participants where they will learn about innovation in horticulture, gain insights and a practical toolkit from real people in the industry with lived experience of innovating. This is open to all growers in the horticulture sector.

Incubate: Following the engagement session, a cohort of 10 are selected based on an expression of interest. This cohort will participate in a six-week incubation program which offers hands-on support via workshops and mentoring to refine, test and create market viable opportunities. Participants will also learn about global best practice in their areas of innovation.

Build: A 12-week program offering participants an opportunity to develop a test version of their idea and trial it in a real-world market environment. Selected participants may also take part in a global immersion experience, where they explore partnership opportunities, participate in site visits, learn international best practices, connect with global experts, and learn from leading innovators to help scale their idea.

From 2026 these stages will run twice yearly.

Who can apply?

Australian-Grown Innovation is for all growers, producers, entrepreneurs, and businesses – large and small – across the horticulture supply chain who want to develop or refine problem solving ideas and turn them into real-world products or services.

What types of ideas will qualify?

All ideas submitted to the program will need to fall under at least one of the five Frontiers investment themes: :

- Healthy living
- Adaptation and resilience
- Market growth
- Disruptive technologies
- Capability building.

In particular, Australian-Grown Innovation will be focused on ideas that align with industry challenges, such as:

- Intergenerational farm transfer solutions to engage younger generations.
- Climate resilience strategies
- Value-added product innovation, like new varieties or alternative uses for produce or co-products.
- Technology-driven solutions harnessing AI
- Supply chain improvements, including traceability and packaging innovations.

Why should growers apply?

Innovation is often seen as discretionary. This program will help growers, and the supply chain, learn how to bring innovation into their day-to-day businesses and de-risk the associated investment. .

What is the application process?

Come along to one of our engagement sessions to learn more about how easy it is to apply and what's on offer. Register your interest at the Frontiers website: www.frontiers.au/agj

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Application timings:

Engage: Commences after Easter and will be run in regional areas in NSW, VIC, WA, QLD and TAS, with some availability for online sessions for remote participants

Incubate: The first six-week incubation program cohort will be announced at Hort Connections and will begin in mid-June 2025

Build: The first build program will start in September

Who are the mentors that will be involved in the program?

The program mentors include experienced growers, industry experts, and business leaders from the horticulture sector and beyond who will provide practical advice, guidance, and connections.

What tools will participants get access to?

Participants will gain access to practical tools, including hands-on workshops, digital learning resources, expert mentoring, and industry connections, all designed to help turn their ideas into successful, market-ready products.

What are the expectations of program participants?

Participants must actively engage in workshops, customer validation, and product testing. They should be prepared to develop and refine their ideas with structured support. The time commitment at each stage will be approximately:

Engage: One-day bootcamp (six-hour event)

Incubate: Weekly sessions over six weeks (~four hours per week – two hours at a fixed time, two flexible hours)

Build: 12-week structured mentoring (~four hours per fortnight plus time to develop a test version of their idea and trial it in a real-world market environment – two hours fixed times per fortnight, two flexible hours)

This program is co-funded by Frontiers, so participation in the engagement and incubation stages is free.

Build participants will need to co-fund travel for global immersion activities and their own expenses for building test products/services. If needed, there are many partnership opportunities available from program partners that can help reduce this cost.

Participants may also be asked to participate in creating promotional materials for the Australian-Grown Innovation program.

What happens after the program finishes?

Participants who complete the program will be able to apply for grants, investments, and co-funding opportunities through Hort Innovation. They may also be eligible for the Industry Growth Program which Startupbootcamp and Cluster Connect can provide further details about for relevant opportunities.

AGI will also support participants to identify development pathways or connect with industry partners.

Participants of the program will retain all intellectual property rights over their innovations.

Where can growers go if they don't think they fit the criteria?

We recommend that growers don't assume that they will or won't meet the program criteria. We encourage all growers with an idea come along to their local engagement session to find out more, submit an application, and our team can help navigate the rest.

Who should growers contact if they have questions?

You can contact us by email:
AustralianGrown@startupbootcamp.com.au