



NOVA

Professional development for
innovation program managers

Program
Guidelines

OVERVIEW

NOVA is LaunchVic's new peer-led professional development program, designed to lift the quality and consistency of entrepreneurship support across Victoria.

Following in-depth consultation with the Victorian Startup Ecosystem, we have uncovered common challenges facing teams running entrepreneurship programs:

1. Limited opportunities for tailored professional development
2. A fragmented peer community, with few opportunities to connect with the ecosystem and engage them in your program
3. Inconsistent funding and changing priorities make it difficult to launch or sustain programs over the long term

NOVA seeks to address some of the challenges faced and is targeted at Program Managers in Universities, Medical Research Institutes (MRIs), and Startup support organisations, including Pre-Accelerators and Accelerators.

NOVA helps you build more effective, impactful entrepreneurship programs through practical tools, expert guidance, and a peer network to embed best practice and build capability. It covers key elements of program delivery, including:

- Understanding of founder journey and experience
- Program vision and design principles
- Designing for inclusivity and founder support
- Measuring and communicating program outcomes
- Building a brand and recruitment
- Events and facilitation
- Partnerships and financial sustainability
- Stakeholder and mentor management
- Tools and streamlining operations
- Deep tech and spinout support

NOVA runs over seven months, beginning with a two-day offsite, followed by targeted masterclasses, workshops and coaching to support ongoing program development.

Valued at \$10,000 this fully-subsidised pilot cohort will have a up to 20 places for Program Managers from Universities, MRIs, and 'private' Pre-Accelerator and Accelerator programs.

If you are currently a Program Manager of a Victorian innovation program you are invited to submit your application to participate in NOVA.

About the name

The NOVA name comes from the Latin word for "new" and is also used in astronomy to describe a star that suddenly becomes extremely bright. It symbolises new beginnings, bursts of energy and rapid growth, a great metaphor for what the program is hoping to achieve.

WHAT TO EXPECT

The program has multiple streams of support to ensure that you are able to get access to all the knowledge and resources you need, while maintaining flexibility to launch or run your own program in parallel.

Program and coursework

1. **Onboarding** via a short video call to answer any questions you have and set expectations. There will also be light prep work and content you can access in advance.
2. **Intensive full-day workshops** to connect with the cohort, lay the foundations for quality program design, identify skillsets to focus on during NOVA, and set up / reflect on metrics for measuring program success (3 full days in the first month and 1 day to conclude NOVA)
3. **Masterclasses** to solidify and deepen expertise in specific content areas (running in months 2 through 7)
4. **Showcase event** to consolidate learnings from across the program, and build relationships with the broader ecosystem (peers, partners, founders)
5. **Coaching and peer group check ins** for accountability throughout the program. Participants will have access to 1:1 coaching each month, and a dedicated small peer group to test ideas and provide ongoing support.
6. **Asynchronous content and resources** including curated tools, case studies and readings you can access anytime to support learning between live sessions.

Promotion:

1. **Profiling:** At LaunchVic we believe we should celebrate our best programs to help them, and the founders they support, to thrive. We may leverage our own channels including media to profile participants and outcomes of the program.
2. **Networking:** Where possible LaunchVic will leverage its networks to support access to opportunities for your program, including those supported by the Government.

Qualification:

1. **Certification:** Upon completion, NOVA graduates will be recognised as LaunchVic endorsed Program Leaders, a trusted signal of quality across Victoria's Startup ecosystem, backed by a verified digital badge.

TIME COMMITMENT

The Participant is required to attend key sessions in person, throughout the program, which runs across 7 months (Oct 2025 to May 2026).

Over this time period, each Program Manager (Participant) is expected to commit a total of approximately 47 hours (or 6 days), to attend the NOVA program as detailed in Table 1 and the “Timeline” section.

Participants may also join 3 further masterclasses, along with engaging in coaching and asynchronous content/activities, however these are not required for graduation.

Program activities;

- Onboarding and post-program support can be completed in the participant’s own time and are designed to be low intensity, or optional
- There are 4 intensive days, each running from approximately 10am to 4:30pm
- Masterclasses will each be 2-4hrs long with a mix of online and in-person. In total, there are 7 masterclasses available, however participants are only required to attend 4 to graduate (participants may self-select the most relevant masterclasses)

Table 1: Required program elements

Event/ Session	Date	Number of Hours
Participant onboarding at mutually agreed time	1 st to 10 th October 2025	1
Intensive 1 & 2	13 th & 14 th October 2025	13
Kick-off Event	13 th October 2025, 5.00pm	2
Intensive 3	29 th October 2025	6.5
Masterclasses – minimum requirement of 4; ~4hrs each	Every 3-4wks; 18 th November 2025 to 28 th April 2026	16
Intensive 4	19 th May 2026	6.5
Showcase event	19 th May 2026, 5.00pm	2

Total required: 47 hours

Table 2: Optional program elements

Event/ Session	Date	Number of Hours (approx.)
Asynchronous content work throughout program	October 2025 to May 2026	16
Masterclasses – optional additional 3 above minimum requirement; ~4hrs each	Every 3-4wks; 18 th November 2025 to 28 th April 2026	12
Asynchronous coaching, mentoring and peer group check ins	October 2025 to May 2026	16

Total optional: 44 hours

DEFINITIONS

The below definitions apply to the application process:

- A **Program Manager** is a professional who designs and delivers programs that support Startups or the commercialisation of research. These programs can include Pre-Accelerator, Accelerator or other cohort-based programs. They may operate within universities, research organisations, corporates, VC firms, or as standalone private programs, and play a key role in enabling founders and researchers to navigate innovation pathways.
- A **Startup** is defined by LaunchVic as an innovative, technology-based business that can scale rapidly and capture mass markets. Examples of technology-based businesses include software and application development, Artificial Intelligence (AI), blockchain, big data analytics, e-commerce or marketplaces, augmented or virtual reality, Software as a Service (SaaS), hardware, advanced manufacturing, sensor technology, robotics, autonomous vehicles, quantum technology, deep tech, and genomics and life sciences (including biotech & MedTech).
- A **Scaleup** is a hyper-growth startup that has raised at least AUD\$5m in a single round and currently has at least 10 employees, no more than 20 years since founding and has a valuation of greater than AUD\$30m.
- A **Pre-Accelerator** is a program targeted at entrepreneurs who have a technology-based idea for a Startup, want to establish a business and develop a Minimum Viable Product (MVP). The program runs for a designated period (a minimum of 6-weeks), and participants 'graduate' from the program having followed a set methodology to establish a Startup. A Pre-Accelerator program can provide a pathway to an Accelerator program.
- An **Accelerator** is a program targeting established early-stage Startups who want to scale their business. They are typically a competitive program with entry by way of an application process. Successful Startups can expect to receive mentorship and/or education, and introductions to customers and early-stage investors including through a public pitch event or demo day. An Accelerator may be fixed-term and cohort-based, or a rolling entry program that offers the same support as a cohort-based Accelerator.
- The **Applicant** must be the Program Manager who will be attending the NOVA program.
- **Capacity** is a qualitative assessment of whether the applicant has the bandwidth to participate and implement ideas covered in the program. Over the program's duration, the Program Manager will need to attend events/sessions in person, based on the "Time Commitments" section mentioned above.
- **Victorian-based** means Victorian registered and headquartered companies, or the founder / CEO has a primary residence in Victoria.

ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible to participate in this program, a Program Manager must meet each of these criteria.

1. Victorian: Program Manager has a primary residence in Victoria;
2. Active program: Actively running, or in the process of designing (with a confirmed launch date and secured funding) a program for Startups, Scaleups or research commercialisation (which can include Pre-Accelerator, Accelerator or other cohort-based programs);
3. Victorian-program: Running or managing a program that is primarily for Victorian Startups/entrepreneurs, with >80% of accepted participants being Victorian-based;
4. Executive or leadership support: as NOVA requires both a commitment of time and focus during and post program to implement ideas, participants must be able to demonstrate that they have the endorsement from their supervisor to attend.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Eligible Program Managers will be assessed through a selection process based on the following factors.

Note: a small number of scholarship positions have been pre-allocated to recent grant recipients.

1. **Capacity to participate:** The Program Manager has the time and capacity to engage meaningfully with the program, by attending core activities and implementing ideas or activities between program days. Each Program Manager will provide written feedback in the application on their ability to commit to the program, including disclosing when their next cohort launch is, and other activities/programs they are responsible for. *This is a qualitative assessment based on written submission (weighted 15%);*
2. **Demonstrated need and LaunchVic assessment of support:** A qualitative assessment of whether the applicant is at a point in their program design and delivery where structured support, mentorship and collaboration with peers would be valuable. The applicant will be required to provide:
 - a. A description of their program and timings
 - b. Details on cohort mix of participants/Startups they support
 - c. The strategy for their program over next 2-5 years
 - d. The current challenges faced by their program; or challenges likely to face in achieving the strategy

This is evaluated based on the written submission and consideration of how well the NOVA program can support the program's current and future challenges. Priority will be given to individuals/programs that LaunchVic is confident it can add value to within the next 12 months (weighted 30%);

3. **Professional goals:** The NOVA program aligns with the applicant's past experience and future professional goals beyond the program they are running, including their responsibilities and longer-term aspirations in innovation, research commercialisation or Startup support. *This is a qualitative assessment based on written submission (weighted 20%);*

4. **Commitment to peer learning:** The applicant is able to demonstrate a willingness to contribute to a peer-based learning environment and apply those insights in their own work or program. *This is a qualitative assessment based on written submission (weighted 20%);*
5. **Cohort mix:** The applicant brings a perspective, experience or context that will enrich group learning. *This is a qualitative assessment based on written submission and preference may be given to Program Managers from a University/research or 'private' organisation to support overall cohort mix where required (weighted 15%).*

TIMELINE (COHORT #1)

Unless otherwise stated, Program Managers are required for all Events and Program Days detailed below.

Application Process Timeline

Date	Process
12 th August 2025, 5pm	Applications open
19 th August 2025, 11am	Information session
1 st September 2025, 1pm	Applications close
5 th September 2025	Shortlisted Applicants invited for an interview
8 th to 9 th September 2025	Shortlisted Applicants 15-minute interview
15 th to 24 th September 2025	Successful applicants notified and contracted

Program Timeline

Date	Event / Program Day	Format
1 st to 10 th October 2025 Asynchronous	Participant onboarding, - 1 hour, at a mutually agreed time online (video conference). - Up to 2 hours of asynchronous preparation work	Asynchronous; required
Monday 13 th October 2025, 10:00 am to 4:30 pm	Program Day 1: Setting the foundations • Vision for world class programs • Defining personal program commitments • Measuring and communicating program outcomes	In-person; required
Monday 13 th October 2025, 5:00 pm to 7:30pm	Kick-off Event for cohort participants • Opportunity to connect with fellow participants and reflect on day 1 learnings	In-person; required
Tuesday 14 th October 2025, 10:00 am to 4:30 pm	Program Day 2: Setting the foundations • Deep dive on founder toolkits	In-person; required
Wednesday 29 th October 2025 10:00 am to 4:30 pm	Program Day 3: Putting programs in context of the broader ecosystem	In-person; required
Tuesday 18 th November 2025	Masterclass 1: Program vision and design principles	Alternating in-person and

Wednesday 10 th December 2025	Masterclass 2: Tools and streamlining operations	online; Participants are required to attend a minimum of 4 masterclasses to graduate (self-selected) however are welcome to attend more if desired
Thursday 5 th February 2026	Masterclass 3: Building a brand and recruitment	
Tuesday 24 th February 2026	Masterclass 4: Designing for inclusivity and founder support	
Wednesday 18 th March 2026	Masterclass 5: Events and facilitation	
Wednesday 1 st April 2026	Masterclass 6: Supporting deep tech and spinouts	
Tuesday 28 th April 2026	Masterclass 7: Partnerships and financial sustainability	
Tuesday 19 th May 2026	Program Day 4: Reflect, integrate learning and plan for program iteration	In-person; required
Tuesday 19 th May 2026, 5:00 pm to 7:30pm	Showcase event & celebration - Public event, participants may invite their teams along if they wish	In-person; required
Post-program 20 th May 2026 onwards	Ongoing support including cohort check-ins and post-program coaching call/s	Asynchronous; optional

Note: applicants who are not accepted into Cohort 1 will be notified and may still be entitled to apply for any subsequent Cohorts, should they run.

APPLICATIONS

To apply to participate in the NOVA program, please visit <https://launchvic.org/nova> from 12th August to 1st September 2025.

QUESTIONS?

If you have a question regarding the application form, eligibility, or anything to do with the NOVA program, please email programs@launchvic.org. Relevant questions and answers will be posted on the LaunchVic website via the Frequently Asked Questions.

CHANGE REGISTER

Number	Section	Change description summary	Date change issued
1	Definitions	Updated definition of Program Manager to note that eligible programs “can include Pre-Accelerator, Accelerator or other cohort-based programs” Added definition for “Scaleups”	21 Aug 2025
2	Eligibility	Updated ‘Active Program’ criteria to note that eligible programs “can include Pre-Accelerator, Accelerator or other cohort-based programs”	21 Aug 2025