

# Summary of recommendations

**TABLE 1:**  
Summary of the EMDG Independent Review recommendations

| Refinements for EMDG          |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Introducing merit             | <p><b>Recommendation 1:</b> Adopt a merit-based application process aligned to the EMDG program's objectives and trade priorities.</p> <p><b>Recommendation 2:</b> Base the selection process on eligibility and merit criteria, with criteria tied to the quality of the application, business capabilities and the anticipated grant impact.</p>   |
| Program structure             | <p><b>Recommendation 3:</b> Move to a 2-tiered structure for businesses: one focused on businesses that are ready to export; a second on established exporters.</p>  |
| Assessment and review process | <p><b>Recommendation 4:</b> In moving to a merit-based system, streamline assessment processes and minimise complexity to the extent possible.</p> <p><b>Recommendation 5:</b> Improve the internal review (appeal) process focusing on business facilitation, efficiency, and improvements in timing and transparency, so it is fit-for-purpose in a merit-based approach.</p>  |
| Improved access               | <p><b>Recommendation 6:</b> Adopt annual grant rounds, with annual grant agreements, to improve business planning.</p> <p><b>Recommendation 7:</b> Revisit the requirement for a detailed plan to market.</p> <p><b>Recommendation 8:</b> Review the milestone process, including changing the 15 June deadline to ensure grantees have sufficient time to plan and have a full 12 months of eligible expenditure.</p> <p><b>Recommendation 9:</b> Improve explanations and communications about eligible expenditure.</p> <p><b>Recommendation 10:</b> A capped price limit for international air travel should be determined and the per diem travel rates should be reviewed.</p> |
| Representative Bodies         |  |
| Role of representative bodies | <p><b>Recommendation 11:</b> Representative bodies that undertake eligible activities focused on diversification markets should be offered higher matched grant amounts.</p> <p><b>Recommendation 12:</b> Austrade should increase its engagement with representative bodies to better utilise the EMDG program to support strategic trade priorities.</p>   |
| Eligibility and expenses      | <p><b>Recommendation 13:</b> The specific requirement for 'new' marketing and promotional activities for representative bodies can be removed.</p> <p><b>Recommendation 14:</b> The requirement for a turnover limit related to membership of representative bodies should be removed.</p> <p><b>Recommendation 15:</b> Examine how industry contributions are assessed for eligible expenses.</p>   |

| Online application portal   |  |
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| Improving accessibility   | <p><b>Recommendation 16:</b> Austrade should implement the practical improvements to the online portal identified by Chalfont Consulting.</p> <p><b>Recommendation 17:</b> Austrade should consider options to utilise AI, subject to risk assessment, feasibility and cost analysis.</p>  |
| Targeted communications and engagement  |  |
| Provide targeted communications   | <p><b>Recommendation 18:</b> Austrade should improve its regular communications, including providing notification when changes are made to the website.</p> <p><b>Recommendation 19:</b> Austrade should directly communicate to applicants about the status of their application during the assessment process.</p>   |
| Engage with stakeholders about the program  | <p><b>Recommendation 20:</b> Austrade should undertake targeted engagement to communicate EMDG opportunities. The audience should include representative bodies, and states and territories.</p> <p><b>Recommendation 21:</b> Austrade should engage with First Nations business chambers and other partners who could benefit from increased awareness of, and participation in, the EMDG program.</p>  |
| Support clients to apply for EMDG   | <p><b>Recommendation 22:</b> Austrade communications should focus on the range of complementary support available.</p> <p><b>Recommendation 23:</b> Austrade can promote the benefits of applying for the program directly, in combination with making the assessment process more accessible.</p>   |
| Whole-of-government alignment   |  |
| Export support and opportunities within Austrade, across the Australian Government, and with states and territories | <p><b>Recommendation 24:</b> Austrade should identify clearer connections between Austrade advisory services, digital tools (Go Global Toolkit) and in-market support to help firms progress their export capability and make more effective use of the EMDG program.</p> <p><b>Recommendation 25:</b> Austrade and states and territories should consider how EMDG activities could be better integrated with co-investment trade services like TradeStart.</p> <p><b>Recommendation 26:</b> Austrade should formalise a pilot partnership with EFA to provide an enhanced suite of export and loan services to SMEs.</p> |
| Resourcing  | <p><b>Recommendation 27:</b> The government should ensure continued sufficient resourcing for the EMDG program to implement these recommendations.</p>   |
| Looking further ahead   |  |
| Evaluation, trade services and legislation  | <p><b>Recommendation 28:</b> Austrade should strengthen the evaluation and monitoring arrangements for EMDG program performance.</p> <p><b>Recommendation 29:</b> Austrade should assess the legislative framework for the EMDG program to determine its impact, effectiveness and practicality.</p>   |