

NIIN

National Industry Innovation Network

Strategic Partner Overview

Enabling an Ambitious Australia



Innovation
Central Network



Research Development
+ Innovation Program



Skills + Talent
Development



Cyber + Health
Alliances

About the NIIN

Purpose of this document

To demonstrate to industry partners that there is a proven, scalable and cost effective vehicle to innovate at scale and contribute to Australia's global competitiveness. That vehicle - the NIIN - has been operating for five years and has a national footprint, deep partnerships with universities and a strong connection to government. The NIIN is not a funding vehicle or a peak body; it is a mechanism for industry to take action in ways that are practical and low-risk.

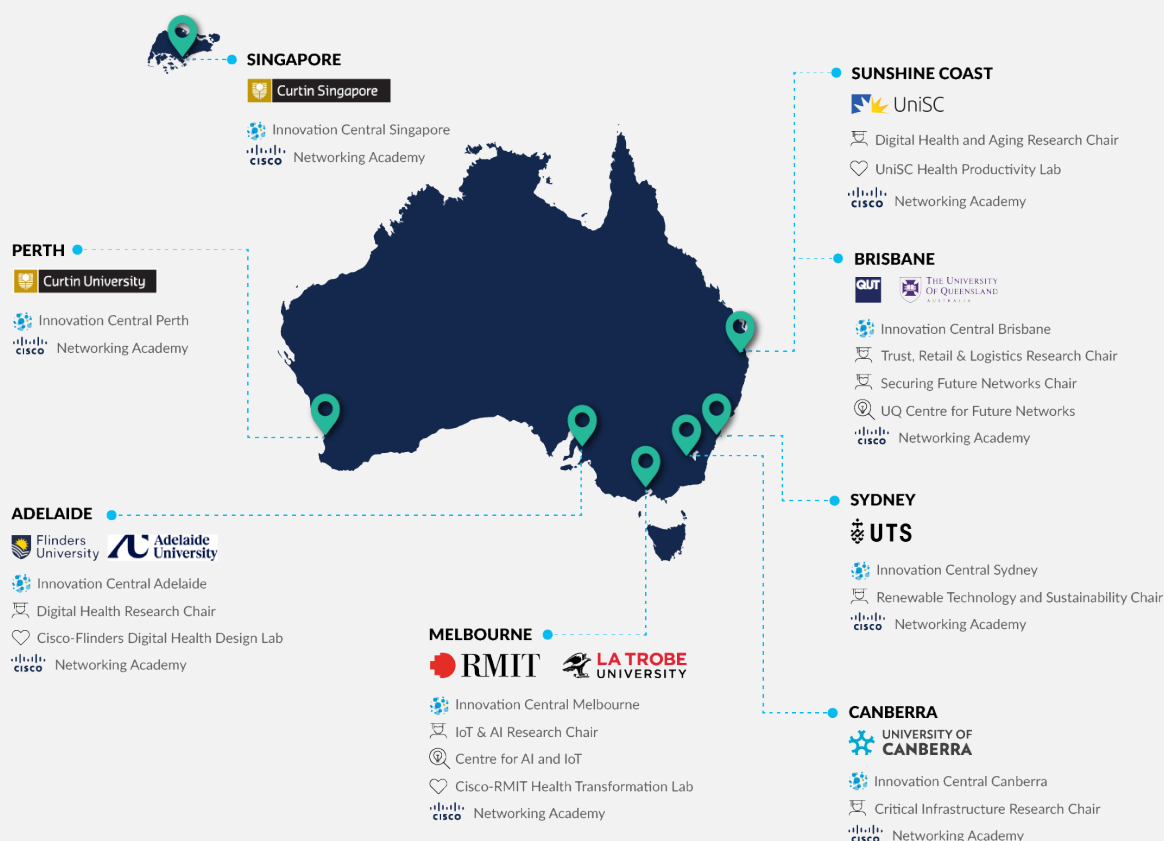
The NIIN's Role in Contributing to 'Ambitious Australia'

The NIIN is an industry-driven network focused on accelerating the pace of digital innovation and adoption at scale. The NIIN was started by Cisco

as a response to stagnating productivity, lagging digital adoption and low rates of industry-university collaboration.

The NIIN has evolved to become the largest industry-university innovation network in Australia, with a well-structured operating model anchored by a national network of 10 universities. We have also begun building ties with regional and global partners that can supply ideas, talent and access to networks that help us lift Australia's innovation performance while simultaneously supporting the broader region we live in.

The NIIN is focused on strengthening the national economy by giving 'Ambitious Australia' access to scalable innovation capability, skills and infrastructure required to succeed in the AI era. The NIIN vehicle prioritises funding into innovation projects and strategic initiatives.



How the NIIN helps fuel RD&I in Australia

The Australian Government’s recent government *Strategic Examination of R&D (SERD)* aligns almost perfectly with the NIIN vision (shown in the graphic below).

The government-endorsed SERD action plan focuses on the following as areas of investment:

- 1. **Greater focus and scale for research, develop and innovation (RD&I) impact:** the NIIN has already made progress in this area by attracting new investment from industry to solve national challenges
- 2. **A world class foundational research system creating knowledge and expertise:** this includes investment in sovereign AI infrastructure which the NIIN is planning to prototype in coming months
- 3. **Incentives to build the RD&I businesses and industries of the future:** one of the challenges the NIIN addresses is lack of access to expertise skills and technology for businesses trying to scale
- 4. **Investment and capital to fuel the innovation cycle:** the co-investment model in the NIIN creates funding leverage for industry
- 5. **Building workforce capability to power RD&I activities:** the NIIN recognised that doing RD&I at scale requires skills ranging from deep technical to basic digital literacies. At its core the NIIN is trying to ensure that Australia has the skills it needs and that learners are trained in domains that will lead to lucrative, sustainable jobs.

Aside from the functional alignment, the NIIN is also focused on many of the same industry domains as the Australian Government. Of the six national innovation pillars identified by government for targeted focus and potential investment, five are directly aligned to NIIN priorities (agriculture and food being the anomaly).

National Innovation Pillars

Health & Medical

Agriculture & Food

Defence

Energy & Environment

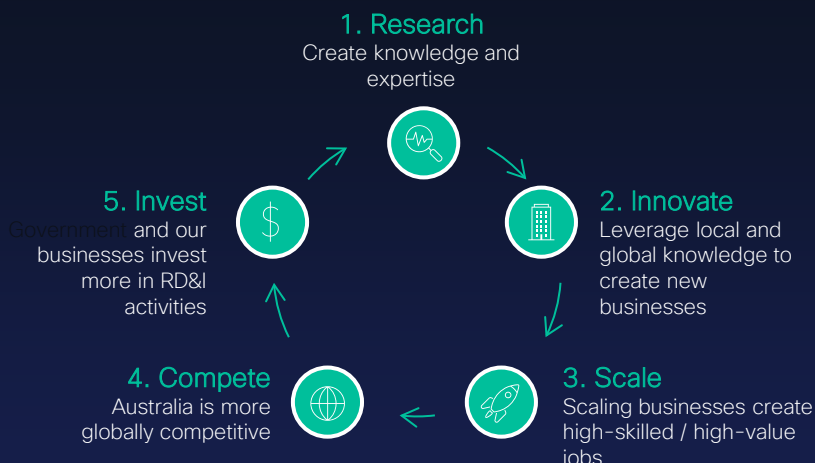
Resources

Technology

The NIIN is working with government to identify its part on delivering on the above reforms, and is aligning with Australian companies that are also committed to the national interest and Ambitious Australia. This includes helping industry capitalise on new opportunities but also manage key risks including to its own sovereign capability. The transformative potential of AI is now clear and the NIIN has a clear role to play in helping industry innovate at scale and capture benefits.

The Australian Government’s SERD action plan aligns almost perfectly with the NIIN vision. Backed by Minister Tim Ayres, it highlights the importance of a high-functioning research, development and innovation system that places a premium on collaborative action.

The NIIN was set up to promote and accelerate all five of the SERD priority elements (shown here) and has established a track record of success demonstrated in the impact section of this document.



Accelerated by NIIN's
RD&I Program:



Specialised
Centres



Research
Chair Program



Industry
Alumni Program

How the NIIN creates Impact

NIIN's Point of Difference



Strategic Partnerships

Strategic partnerships sit at the core of the NIIN – bringing together industry, universities and government to deliver meaningful, large-scale outcomes. By aligning capability, investment and expertise, these partnerships enable the NIIN to move faster, turning ideas into real-world solutions that address complex national challenges.

Collaboration Designed for Impact

The NIIN is built on a model of deep, outcome-focused collaboration. Strategic partnerships connect industry challenges with research capability, creating a practical pathway from discovery to deployment. These are long-term, embedded relationships – not transactional engagements – designed to deliver measurable impact across the organisations and communities involved.

Aligned to Real-World Challenges

NIIN partnerships are shaped around real industry needs, from digital transformation and cyber resilience to health innovation and critical infrastructure. Partners work together to define problems, co-design solutions and deliver outcomes that are scalable, relevant and impactful. The result is work that matters beyond any single project or organisation.

More Than Collaboration

Strategic partnerships within the NIIN are underpinned by shared investment, of time, expertise, infrastructure and funding. This ensures alignment, accountability and a collective focus on delivering outcomes, not just activity. Partners contribute meaningfully and benefit accordingly, with access to the full depth of the NIIN ecosystem.

Access to the NIIN Ecosystem

Through strategic partnerships, organisations gain access to a nationally connected network of capability, including Innovation Centrals across Australia and the region, university research capability and student talent, industry and technology partners, and specialised centres and alliance initiatives. This connected model enables faster experimentation, prototyping and deployment, reducing the cost and risk of innovation for every partner involved.

NIIN Programs and Initiatives



Innovation Centrals

An Australia-wide network of Innovation Central facilities co-located on university campuses that focus on creating new models for universities and industry to collaborate on digital innovation at scale. Industry get to build prototypes and solutions, not just hear about what's possible, using a bank of talented staff, students and industry collaborators. Innovation Centrals are staffed by Alliance Managers that ensure dedicated project management and coordination.



Research, Development and Innovation (RD&I)

A program connecting industry needs directly with university research expertise to rapidly translate innovations into practical applications. The program consists of:

- **Research Chairs** – leading high-impact projects in areas of national significance. The model ensures research is closely aligned with real-world industry challenges.
- **Industry Alumni** – experienced former industry engineers / business leaders in universities to be translators, mentors and advisors. Alumni help shape research with a clearer line of sight to industry application, mentor staff and students, and accelerate collaboration and commercialisation.
- **Specialised Centres** – labs and research facilities that serve as an innovation sandpit for the NIIN network. To date multiple specialised centres have been established in health, AI & IoT and networking.



Skills and Talent Development

Training hubs that complement the more than 100 Cisco Networking Academy sites already operating across Australia / New Zealand and provide opportunities for students to gain practical experience through dedicated projects and events.



Cyber and Health Alliances

The NIIN is accelerating progress in health and cyber security domains, priority areas for Australia. Two alliances have been formed to create natural coalitions around strategically important topics: The NIIN Health Alliance and the NIIN Cyber Security Alliance

Impact at national scale

Six years of NIIN action – in numbers and in practice

350+

Industry projects

\$550M

Funding attracted

200+

Collaborators

190+

Industry events

150+

Workshops

3,000+

Engaged students

Case studies in action

HEALTH

Victorian Virtual ED

La Trobe University; Northern Health; Victorian Government

A 24/7 telehealth ED, born of a partnership through Innovation Central Melbourne. Vic Gov has invested \$256M since 2022 to scale it.

- ▶ 1,000 patients/day; 86% avoid a physical ED
- ▶ AFR Higher Education Award for Industry Engagement, 2024

TALENT & WORKFORCE

MasterTech

Coles; Cisco; seven Innovation Centrals (AU + Singapore)

In Nov 2025, students from seven Innovation Centrals tackled a live retail provocation from Coles – ten days of prototyping with industry mentors.

- ▶ Cross-border student teams on a real industry problem
- ▶ Pitched on the Cisco Live main stage to thousands

CYBER RESILIENCE

Cyber Essentials for Parliamentarians

University of Canberra; Cisco; NIIN Cyber Security Alliance

Launched on Safer Internet Day 2026. Practical cyber guidance for Australia's elected representatives and their staff.

- ▶ Bipartisan launch with parliamentary leaders
- ▶ Backed by UC VC Prof. Bill Shorten; national rollout planned

WORKFORCE SKILLING

Digital Skills for Health

RMIT; Grampians Health; Cisco; Victorian Government

Through the RMIT-Cisco Health Transformation Lab, NIIN and Grampians Health delivered five co-designed micro-credentials to the front line.

- ▶ 365 learners; 15–60 min/week productivity uplift
- ▶ Featured by Austrade for Asia-Pacific skilling capability

Opportunity for Strategic Partners

What the NIIN offers Strategic Industry Partners

1 Purpose

- ✓ Supporting the Ambitious Australia agenda
- ✓ Aligning to national priorities
- ✓ Accelerating adoption of digital technology to advance the nation
- ✓ Unlocking the commercial value of university RD&I
- ✓ Responsible use of AI
- ✓ Enabling future workforce skills and talent
- ✓ Building Australia's sovereign capability

2 Access to RD&I capability

- ✓ 10 university research partners
- ✓ A national network of innovation centres
- ✓ Collaborate with leading researchers & industry alumni
- ✓ Access to sovereign AI infrastructure and cutting-edge technology
- ✓ A unique network bringing together research, expertise and emerging talent

3 Service Offering

- ✓ Collaborative Innovation Projects that scale
- ✓ Applied Research Projects
- ✓ Hackathons / Events
- ✓ Thought leadership whitepapers
- ✓ Workforce and Talent programs
- ✓ Technology trials and early mover advantage

4 Value

- ✓ Capacity to solve complex industry problems with technology innovation
- ✓ Exclusive industry partner category access (one per category)
- ✓ National convening power
- ✓ Access to thought leadership, data and knowledge
- ✓ Leverage to shape national policy
- ✓ Asia-Pacific reach

What We Ask of Partners

We ask each strategic industry partner to commit to:



Governance Structure of the NIIN

The NIIN has been set up to minimise bureaucracy and maximise impact. Started by Cisco – who will continue to be the founding partner – the NIIN is looking to add a maximum of five additional ‘strategic’ partners so it can scale and contribute to the government’s strategy outlined in the SERD response. The NIIN will not approve partners that compete in the same industry (i.e. a guarantee of exclusivity). To ensure accountability, coordination and collaboration across the network, the NIIN operates through the following governance structure:



Find out more

To learn more about becoming a strategic industry partner and joining the largest industry–university innovation network in Australia, please get in touch.

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