

TECH CENTRAL RESEARCH AND
INNOVATION INFRASTRUCTURE FUND
GUIDELINES FOR APPLICANTS
2022

AUSTRALIA'S
INNOVATION
ENGINE

TECH CENTRAL



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1. INTRODUCTION

A strong research and development (R&D) capability is a critical driver for innovation in the state's economy. Underpinning the state's ability to turn R&D into new industries, technologies and services relies on research and innovation infrastructure including high-tech facilities, equipment and staff.

Access to the facilities, equipment and technical expertise was recognised as a key barrier across the innovation ecosystem in NSW, which led to the NSW Government announcing the Entrepreneurial and Innovation Ecosystems Action Plan in 2021, with a dedicated fund for Tech Central infrastructure.

The NSW Government is now investing \$8 million in that research and innovation infrastructure, which will bring the considerable innovation, R&D and industry talent to the heart of Sydney, Tech Central, and complement existing research, industry and university participants.

BACKGROUND

NSW has been investing in open access technology and research infrastructure for many decades across a range of different fields, including health, medical research, agriculture and primary industries, and for many purposes such as biological monitoring and chemical and mechanical testing.

More recently, NSW Government has supported critical research infrastructure across the state, leveraging Commonwealth investments made under the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy (NCRIS). NCRIS, which provides funding to nationally significant research infrastructure, allows multiple users to access key equipment, facilities and expertise and supports emerging high-tech industries and globally competitive business. The impact of the state's co-investment in these NCRIS facilities demonstrates the importance of infrastructure to NSW's innovation ecosystem and emerging priority sectors.

Using the experience of these previous co-investments, Investment NSW has developed a targeted investment round calling for critical infrastructure proposals that align to the industry, technology and innovation needs of Sydney's Tech Central precinct.

WHY TECH CENTRAL

Tech Central is the NSW Government's geographical headquarters for Sydney's innovation and technology community. The innovation powerhouse covers six central Sydney neighbourhoods from Surry Hills to Camperdown.

Tech Central will create a vibrant precinct in the heart of Sydney's CBD, with strong links to international markets, Greater Sydney, NSW and Australia. The Tech Central precinct is home to three world-class universities, a world-leading research hospital and over 100 research institutes and centres of excellence. More information on Tech Central can be found on the website tc.sydney



2. ABOUT THE PROGRAM

2.1 OBJECTIVE

Applicants will be applying to deliver significant research and innovation infrastructure located within or aligned to the Tech Central innovation precinct. This infrastructure must be open access to the Tech Central ecosystem and support collaborative R&D and innovation. A key outcome of the program will be to support the translation of world-class research into commercial outcomes, new technologies, services and globally competitive cutting-edge industries.

A total of \$8 million is available for proposals that meet the eligibility requirements and selection criteria.

2.2 ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA – WHO CAN APPLY?

- Universities
- Research organisations or institutions
- NSW-located NCRIS (National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy) facilities dese.gov.au/ncris
- Consortium-based applicants bringing together industry, university, specialist research organisations and/or publicly funded research organisations (PFROs)
- Organisations or industry applicants

Proposals for funding from organisations, facilities or programs that are already funded by the NSW Government will be considered so long as the proposal meets the selection criteria and supports a significant physical or digital infrastructure investment within, or strongly aligned with, Tech Central.

Applicants must be headquartered and/or have a major research/innovation presence located in NSW.

If a proposal is consortium-based, the proposal lead must be headquartered in NSW.

For the purposes of this grant, *headquarters* is defined as the main administrative office of the applicant or facility and location of the CEO.

Headquarters must remain in NSW for the period of the Agreement; and includes those with a major research or innovation presence in NSW, being those that retain approximately at least 40 per cent of their researchers, developers or other innovation staff (total staff and PhDs) in NSW for the period of the agreement.

Applications can include co-funding proposals and potential leveraging opportunities.

2.3 ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA – WHAT PROPOSALS WILL BE ACCEPTED FOR ASSESSMENT?

Infrastructure grants may be provided for any of the below which are directly targeted at driving innovation in Tech Central:

- major equipment
- laboratory facilities
- highly-skilled technical experts or facility managers
- specialised technologies and systems
- industry-focused collaborative programs driving access to infrastructure and commercialisation.

In select circumstances, infrastructure grants may be provided for other forms of infrastructure, R&D or innovation if there is a demonstrable need and if it satisfies the remaining criteria within these guidelines.

Proposals should be focused on one or more of the following areas, which correspond to industry and research strengths found in Tech Central:

- Quantum computing and devices
- Robotics and automation
- Artificial Intelligence and machine learning
- Advanced communications and smart devices
- Aerospace, defence and space technologies
- Energy generation and storage
- Biotechnology and medtech
- E-Health
- Fintech
- Bioinformatics, genetics and 'omics' technologies
- New materials and nanomaterials
- Cyber security, Cloud, embedded and blockchain systems
- Digital and Creative Industries technologies.

Critically, applications must have their infrastructure located within Tech Central or demonstrate a strong alignment with the Tech Central innovation precinct.

The grant monies must only be used on activities undertaken within NSW, and on staff, students or equipment to be located in NSW. Proposals that suggest spending grant funds on partners, activities or items located outside of NSW will not be eligible.

3. SELECTION CRITERIA

Applications will be ranked and given preference according to the selection criteria outlined below. The application form seeks responses to criteria, such as:

- proposed research, development or innovation to be undertaken and value added to the Tech Central ecosystem by the investment
- economic, environmental and social benefits of the program for NSW, alignment with the [NSW Government Premier's Priorities](#) and alignment with Tech Central priority sectors and technologies
- track record of current facilities, projects or similar work/collaborations
- explanation of how the applicant will support and/or grow the ecosystem to translate research and innovation into commercial outcomes and drive research and innovation excellence, industry access, collaboration and economic outcomes, increasing NSW's global competitiveness within the Tech Central corridor
- NSW industry, Government agency and end-user linkages
- impact on NSW skills, advanced education and training.

The responses to these criteria will be used by Investment NSW and the independent expert panel to determine whether to recommend funding to the applicant and how much funding to recommend.

Investment NSW will make recommendations regarding funding allocations to applicants. Investment NSW, in its discretion, may choose not to award or recommend funding under this program.

4. HOW TO APPLY

4.1 PROCESS AND TIMELINE

Applicants are encouraged to collaborate on proposals with university and/or industry partners, where appropriate and can apply as a consortium of organisations. For this reason, the process to apply for the Tech Central Research and Innovation Infrastructure Fund is a two-step process:

1. Expression of Interest (Eoi) - Opening Friday 20 May and closing COB Friday 17 June 2022
 - Eoi will require a brief overview of the proposal in development, the partners involved and the impact/rational for this infrastructure investment in Tech Central
 - The Eoi form will be emailed to grants@chiefscientist.nsw.gov.au
 - The Eoi timeframe is designed to support the ecosystem in developing proposals and building consortiums where appropriate
 - All applications that submit an Eoi will be provided with the Request for Proposal (RFP) documentation in advance of the RFP opening.
2. Request for Proposal (RFP) – Opening Friday 17 June, closing COB Friday 29 July 2022
 - The RFP process will require the applicant to submit a detailed application.

For the RFP, applicants need to make sure they have:

- Answered all questions. If they are not applicable, please indicate.
- Clearly identified in their application (including attachments) any information that the applicant requests be treated as confidential.
- Signed their application. If applying as a consortium, the lead applicant must sign and have at least one of the core participants sign (by the head of the organisation or their authorised delegate). If all core participants' representatives have not signed the application, the signatories must acknowledge that the application is made with the knowledge, and on behalf of, all core participants.

Your application for RFP must also address the General Criteria set out in section 2.3, as well as the Specific Criteria set out in section 3, as relevant to your proposal.

You must attach supporting documentation to the application form in line with instructions provided within the online form. You should only attach requested documents. We will not consider information in attachments that is not requested.

4.2 EXTENSIONS

Short extensions to the RFP deadlines may be given in extenuating circumstances only. A request for an extension, explaining the need for and length of the extension, should be submitted in writing **NO LATER THAN 5PM AEDT on 15 July 2022** to:

Kristen Mulligan
Manager –Policy, Science & Research
Office of the NSW Chief Scientist & Engineer
Investment NSW
grants@chiefscientist.nsw.gov.au

5. ASSESSMENT PROCESS

5.1 WHO WILL ASSESS APPLICATIONS?

Once the RFPs have closed, eligible applications will be assessed by an independent panel of experts. Judges are required to identify any conflicts of interest and sign a confidentiality agreement.

All eligible applicants will be assessed on merit against the selection criteria. The panel of judges will make recommendations on which applicants, if any, should receive grants and the amount of those grants.

5.2 WHO WILL APPROVE THE GRANTS?

The Panel will provide advice to the NSW Government on the suitability of each proposal for funding. The NSW Government will approve the proposal and funding amounts.

5.3 NOTIFICATION OF APPLICATION OUTCOMES

Investment NSW will advise you of the outcome of your application in writing. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified via email and/or letter of the outcome of their application and will be offered a feedback information session.

Investment NSW will notify applicants of the outcome of their applications by 31 July 2022.

Proposed Atlassian headquarters



6. SUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS

6.1 NOTIFICATION

Successful applicants will be notified via email and/or letter. If you are successful, we will advise you of any specific conditions attached to the grant, including a request to keep the grant confidential for a period of time, if an announcement is likely to be made by the NSW Government.

6.2 FUNDING DEED

All applicants who are successful and who accept the offer of a grant will be required to enter into a formal Funding Deed with Investment NSW relating to the grant. The Deed will specify obligations that relate primarily to the recipient's accountability for the grant, including using the grant for activities occurring in NSW, the return of unspent grant funds and reporting on the use of the grant for the duration of the term.

The Funding Deed must be signed by at least one core participant in the facility or the CEO of the facility.

6.3 SPECIFIC LEGISLATION, POLICIES, AND INDUSTRY STANDARDS

While you are required to be compliant with all relevant laws and regulations, you will be requested to comply with the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (NSW).

6.4 HOW WE PAY THE GRANT

The grant will be payable upon the execution of the funding deed.

Invoices for grant payments will be submitted and paid in a single tranche as dictated by the funding deed. Grants are assessable income for taxation purposes, unless exempted by a taxation law. We recommend you seek independent professional advice on your taxation obligations. We do not provide advice on your particular taxation circumstances.

6.5 HOW WE MONITOR YOUR GRANT ACTIVITY

You must submit reports in line with the timeframes in the funding agreement. We may provide sample templates for these reports in the funding agreement. We will expect you to report on:

- progress against agreed project milestones and outcomes;
- contributions of participants directly related to the grant.

6.6 EVALUATION

Investment NSW will evaluate the Program to measure how well the outcomes and objectives have been achieved. We may use information from your application and reports for this purpose. We may also interview you or ask you for more information to help us understand how the program impacted you and to evaluate how effective the program was in achieving its outcomes. We may contact you up to three years after you receive your final grant payment associated with the Program for more information to assist with this evaluation.

6.7 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

All recipients of NSW Government funding should acknowledge this financial support in accordance with the Funding Acknowledgement Guidelines for Recipients of NSW Government Rebates available at nsw.gov.au/branding/sponsorship-and-funding-acknowledgment-guidelines

You must seek our written consent prior to any significant public announcement, marketing, press announcements, or official launch in relation to the Program.

7. PROBITY

Investment NSW will make sure that the grant opportunity process is fair according to the published guidelines, incorporates appropriate safeguards against fraud, unlawful activities, and other inappropriate conduct.

An independent probity advisor will be engaged as part of this Program to provide guidance to Investment NSW on any issues concerning integrity, fairness and accountability that may arise throughout the application, assessment, and decision-making process. This will ensure decisions are made with integrity, fairness, and accountability, while delivering value for money for NSW.

Conflicts of interest

Conflicts of interest for Investment NSW will be handled as set out in the Investment NSW Code of Ethics and Conduct.

8. ENQUIRIES AND FEEDBACK

Any enquiry you have about the assessment process or the outcome of your application for this Program should be sent to:

Kristen Mulligan
Manager – Policy, Science & Research
Office of the NSW Chief Scientist & Engineer
Investment NSW
grants@chiefscientist.nsw.gov.au

If you do not agree with the way Investment NSW has handled your enquiry or complaint, you may wish to contact the NSW Ombudsman. The NSW Ombudsman will not usually look into a complaint unless the matter has been first raised directly with Investment NSW.

NSW Ombudsman
Level 24
580 George Street
Sydney NSW 2000

9. PRIVACY

We treat your personal information according to the Investment NSW Privacy Management Plan available at investment.nsw.gov.au/privacy and the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998* (NSW).

This includes letting you know:

- what personal information we collect
- why we collect your personal information
- who we give your personal information to.

Your personal information can only be disclosed to someone for the primary purpose for which it was collected unless an exemption applies. Investment NSW may also use or disclose information about rebate applicants and rebate recipients under this rebate opportunity for reporting purposes.

10. GOVERNMENT INFORMATION (PUBLIC ACCESS) ACT 2009

Applicants should be aware that information in applications and all related correspondence, attachments and other documents may be made publicly available under the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009*. Information that is deemed to be commercially sensitive will be withheld.

The *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* makes government information accessible to the public by:

- requiring government agencies to make certain types of information freely available
- encouraging government agencies to release as much information as possible
- giving the public an enforceable right to make access applications for government information
- restricting access to information only when there is an overriding public interest against disclosure.

More information

 investment.nsw.gov.au

Contact us

 investment.nsw.gov.au/contact-us

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