Premier's Department

RNA Pipeline Grants

Program Guidelines

July 2025

NSW GOVERNMENT

Grant Program Details	
Opening date and time	22/07/2025 10:00 AM AEDT
Closing date and time	16/09/2025 01:00 PM AEDT
Application outcome date	November - December 2025
Project delivery timeframe (for successful applications)	July 2026 – June 2028
Evaluation timeframe (for successful applications)	July 2027 – June 2030
Decision-maker	Secretary, Premier's Department
NSW Government Agency	Office of the Chief Scientist & Engineer, Premier's Department
Type of grant opportunity	Open, competitive
Grant value (total available funding for the grant and the available individual grant amounts, excluding GST)	The RPG has $6 million in funding for projects ranging between $200,000 to $3 million (excl GST). Recommended funding levels will be at the discretion of the Expert Panel.
Enquiries	grants@chiefscientist.nsw.gov.au

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1

Overview of grant program

1 Overview and purpose of grant/grants program

The NSW Government is supporting the growth of NSW's RNA ecosystem, recognising the potential of ribonucleic acid (RNA) technology and building on NSW's world-class research and development (R&D). This initiative is part of NSW Government's broader commitment to advancing the health, medical, agricultural and biosecurity R&D and manufacturing sectors.

This includes supporting discovery, scale-up, commercialisation and workforce development to accelerate market entry and expansion and create new skilled jobs across the state.

In October 2021, the NSW Government announced a $96 million investment to establish a state-of-the-art RNA Research and Manufacturing Facility (the Facility) at Macquarie University. The Facility will be operated by Aurora Biosynthetics through a public-private partnership and will deliver Australia's first open-access GMP-grade RNA manufacturing capability at research and clinical scale.

To support and activate the broader ecosystem around the Facility, the Government committed an additional $119 million over 10 years to establish the RNA R&D Initiatives Fund, administered by the Office of the Chief Scientist & Engineer (OCSE) within the NSW Premier's Department (the Department). This funding supports a range of initiatives to foster investment in RNA research and development, accelerate commercialisation, build workforce capability across the RNA value chain, and improve access to research infrastructure. This combined investment in R&D capability and infrastructure will enable RNA innovations to be scaled, trialled, and commercialised in NSW.

The RNA Pipeline Grants (RPG) is a $6 million, single round, competitive technology development and commercialisation program as part of the RNA R&D Initiatives Fund.

The RPG supports the development and commercialisation of innovative RNA therapeutics, vaccines, and related technologies (such as RNA delivery technology) with a clear manufacturing pathway — spanning applications in health, biosecurity and agriculture. The RPG aims to build a robust pipeline of RNA-based products in NSW that could be manufactured at the Facility, helping bridge the gap between discovery and scalable production. By supporting projects that are progressing toward commercial readiness and manufacturing feasibility, the RPG aims to attract future investment, increase local manufacturing and grow a globally competitive RNA ecosystem that delivers long-term health, economic and scientific benefits for the people of NSW. NSW-based manufacturing capabilities, including the RNA Facility, are central to this vision. These facilities provide scalable production capacity for RNA-based products developed through the RPG and other initiatives. For an overview of available manufacturing infrastructure and capabilities in NSW, see Appendix A: Table 4.

The RPG has $6 million in funding for projects ranging between $200,000 to $3 million.

1.1 Objectives

The objectives of the RPG program are to:

- support a pipeline of products that could be manufactured at the NSW RNA Research and Manufacturing Facility
- progress the development and manufacture of innovative RNA therapeutics, vaccines and related technologies – including applications in health, biosecurity and agriculture – towards commercialisation in NSW
- improve commercialisation opportunities for NSW-based start-ups and businesses through targeted support for translation and scale-up

- contribute to a globally competitive RNA ecosystem that delivers long-term economic, scientific, and social/environmental benefits for NSW, including enhanced workforce capability and sovereign manufacturing capacity.

The intended outcomes of the RPG are to:

- support the advancement of RNA-related research, development and commercialisation
- enable funded projects to progress along the Technology Readiness Level (TRL) scale (**Figure 1**), moving closer to clinical and market readiness
- help grant recipients attract additional investment and expand their workforce, contributing to economic growth in NSW
- support the manufacturing and commercialisation of RNA therapeutics, vaccines and related technologies within NSW
- foster the development of a mature, sustainable RNA industry, positioning NSW as a key player in regional and global supply chains.

The RPG targets companies with innovative RNA therapeutics, vaccines and related technologies within the TRL range of 3 – 6 and aims to help them move along the TRL scale and commercialise their idea (**Figure 1**).

The Program will be administered in accordance with the *NSW Grants Administration Guide* and the *Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines* (CGRGs).

Figure 1 - TRL levels

Technology Readiness Levels (TRLs) are used to represent the development of an innovation. TRLs will be used to assess eligibility and help to define support under the RPG.

At the application stage, applicants will provide the current TRL for the project at the commencement date and the estimated TRL at the completion date.

Technology Readiness Levels (TRL)								
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Review scientific knowledge base	Development of product hypothesis	Identification and characterisation of product candidate	Optimisation and initial demonstration of safety and efficacy	Advanced characterisation of product and initiation of manufacturing	Regulated production and early clinical studies	Scale-up, initiation of GMP process validation and phase III clinical trials	GMP validation and consistency lot manufacturing, phase III clinical trials	Post-approval activities, reimbursement, clinical implementation
Discovery research and idea generation		Preclinical testing and feasibility			Early clinical studies and product development	Late clinical studies and evidence building		Market launch and exit
Not eligible		**Eligible**				**Not eligible**		

1.2 Grant value

The RPG will commence in 2025 with a total funding pool of $6 million comprising $3 million of allocated funding in FY 2025-26 and $3 million in FY 2026-27. Funding will be awarded through a single competitive round in 2025. Applications will be accepted from 22 July to 16 September 2025.

Each grant awarded will be:

- Not less than $200,000 excl. GST
- Not more than $3,000,000 excl. GST.

2

Selection criteria

2 Selection criteria

To be considered for funding, applications must first satisfy all eligibility requirements set out in **Eligibility criteria** (**Section 2.1**). Applications that do not meet the eligibility criteria will not be assessed further.

Eligible applications will then be assessed against the criteria set out in **Assessment criteria** (**Section 2.2**). The assessment will be led by an independent Expert Panel, supported by the OCSE. Eligible applications must address all criteria to enable assessment against the RPG objectives, and each criterion will be weighted accordingly.

During the assessment process, the OCSE may request additional information to support assessment. Advice may also be sought from other NSW Government agencies or external experts. The OCSE may seek to negotiate amendments to applications to maximise public benefit.

2.1 Eligibility criteria

The eligibility criteria comprise:

1. eligible applicants
2. eligible activities
3. eligible costs.

Your application must satisfy all of these to be eligible for funding through the RPG.

2.1.1 Eligible applicants

The first step in assessing your eligibility for the RPG is determining whether you, as the applicant, meet the requirements. To be eligible for the RPG, you must satisfy all the applicant eligibility requirements outlined in **Table 1**. **Table 2** provides a non-exhaustive list of ineligible applicants.

Table 1 – Eligible RPG applicants

Eligible Applicants
Have an Australian Business Number (ABN)
Be registered for the purposes of GST
Be headquartered in NSW
Be one of the following: • a company incorporated under the *Corporations Act 2001* (Cth) (including a company limited by guarantee) • an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Corporation registered under the *Corporations (Aboriginal and /or Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006* (Cth) • an individual or partnership who agrees to form a company under the *Corporations Act 2001* (Cth) so that the Department can enter into a legally binding funding agreement • a NSW public research organisation or medical research institute applying through its appropriate technology transfer office or the Chief Executive Officer (or equivalent) of the research organisation that will become a separate entity before entering into a legally binding funding agreement with the Department
Hold the IP or have the rights to commercialise the technology/innovation in Australia and major international markets (e.g. the United States and Europe)

Table 2 – Ineligible RPG applicants (non-exhaustive)

Non-Exhaustive List of Ineligible Applicants
Individuals
Commonwealth, state, territory or local government agency
State Owned Corporation or statutory authority
Australian subsidiary of international companies
A business that is insolvent
Individual, unincorporated association, public research organisation, medical research institute or partnership that will not form a company under the *Corporations Act 2001* (Cth)

Joint applications between a business entity and research-based organisations (including universities) are encouraged. However, the business entity must lead the project, be eligible to apply and submit the grant application. The lead application (the business) must outline clearly in their application who the project partners are and how each partner will contribute to achieving the objectives of the project proposal. If a joint application is successful, the funding agreement will be between the lead applicant and the NSW Government.

The Department, at its sole discretion, may deem an applicant ineligible for the RPG on the basis of publicly available or confidential information about an applicant, such as any personnel or business activities that could cause reputational damage or other unacceptable risk to the NSW Government.

The Department may seek clarification from applicants in relation to their application, including seeking further information to assist consideration of the application against the eligibility or assessment criteria.

The Department reserves the right to assess the applicant's management, its Directors, Officers and entities or individuals that exercise control over an applicant against a fit and proper persons eligibility criterion.

2.1.2 Eligible grant activities

The second step in assessing your eligibility for the RPG is to determine whether your proposed activities meet the requirements. To be eligible, your grant activities must meet the criteria outlined in **Table 3**. **Table 4** provides a non-exhaustive list of ineligible activities.

Table 3 – Eligible RPG grant activities

Eligible Grant Activities
Projects should be completed within two years (unless there are exceptional circumstances). Projects will require clear and achievable milestones (e.g. moving from TRL 4 to TRL 5, developing and testing components within a TRL) to support appropriate staging and monitoring
Progress an innovation along the commercialisation pathway
Have an existing proof-of-concept (demonstrated *in vitro*)
Be TRL 3-6 on the TRL Scale at the time of applying for the RPG (**Figure 1**)
Demonstrate why sufficient funding for the entire project cannot be accessed from alternative sources and that the project would not proceed at the proposed scale in NSW without government support

Eligible Grant Activities
The majority of project activities should be based in NSW. If project partners or locations are outside NSW, the application must explain why (e.g. to access specific capabilities, expertise or technologies not available within NSW)
Be a product that could be produced at the RNA Research and Manufacturing Facility, for example: • RNA vaccines – for infectious diseases including influenza, COVID-19 and other emerging health threats • RNA therapeutics – including mRNA-based treatments for cancers, genetic disorders and autoimmune conditions • plasmid DNA and gene therapy components – used as templates or vectors in cell and gene therapies • veterinary and agricultural RNA products – such as RNA-based vaccines or therapeutics for livestock, companion animal diseases and biosecurity • RNA delivery systems – including lipid nanoparticle (LNP) formulations to support targeted delivery and stability

Table 4 – Examples of Ineligible RPG grant activities (non-exhaustive)

Non-exhaustive list on Ineligible Grant Activities
Activities that are either at the very beginning of a project — where only basic ideas have been explored (Technology Readiness Level 1–2) — or at the very end, when the technology is almost ready for full use (TRL 7 and above)
Activities where the basic performance of the innovation hasn't yet been demonstrated in a laboratory setting or equivalent testing
Be a product that can't be produced at the RNA Research and Manufacturing Facility, such as small interfering RNA (siRNA), self-amplifying RNA (saRNA) and long non-coding (lncRNA)
Projects that do not include a clear pathway to manufacturing in Australia, or that are solely focused on enabling or digital technologies (e.g. platforms, software, data tools) without a direct link to the development of a manufacturable RNA-based product

The Department may seek clarification from any applicant in relation to its application, including seeking further information on the eligibility or assessment criteria.

At any time during the assessment process, if falsified or incorrect declarations are identified, the application will be deemed ineligible by the Department and rejected.

Applicants eligible for funding from the NSW Medical Devices Fund, Physical Sciences Fund or any other government funding program for the same outputs and/or outcomes (excluding the Biosciences Fund) are not eligible for the RPG, as it targets a different segment of the biological sciences market.

While applicants who are eligible for the Biosciences Fund may apply to this RPG, they must not receive funding from both programs for the same project, outputs or deliverables. To ensure responsible use of public funds, applicants must not receive funding for the same activities from other state or national governments.

Should the OCSE find evidence that an applicant is receiving, or has received, funding from more than one government source for the same activities, the project will be deemed ineligible for the grant.

2.1.3 Eligible costs

The third step in assessing your eligibility for the RPG is to confirm that your proposed costs are appropriate and allowable under the RPG. Table below outlines eligible costs. Table 6 provides a non-exhaustive list of ineligible costs. Only the costs classified as eligible will be considered for funding under the RPG.

Table 5 - Eligible costs for the RPG

Eligible costs
Preclinical and validation studies, including proof-of-concept, safety, efficacy and stability assessments
Development and optimisation of RNA constructs, delivery systems, or manufacturing or formulation processes
Production of prototype or pilot batches and preparation for GMP manufacturing
Application of enabling technologies to improve product performance, manufacturability or cost-efficiency
Activities supporting regulatory readiness, such as pathway planning, certification or approvals
Commercialisation planning, including reimbursement strategy, market testing and feasibility studies
Engagement preparation with potential manufacturing partners
Development and protection of IP, including patent filings or advice
Access to specialist equipment, infrastructure or external expertise essential to project delivery
Salaries and project consumables directly related to the delivery of project outcomes.

Table 6 – Ineligible costs for the RPG

Ineligible Costs
The purchase of land or property
Costs incurred in the preparation of a grant application or related documentation
Project costs incurred prior to an offer of funding made to successful applications (no retrospective funding will be awarded)
Project costs that are already the subject of another government grant, subsidy or financial assistance
General business costs including sales, marketing, rent and travel
Solutions designed to improve internal business processes
Activities that will not be delivered prior to the end of the grant funding period

The Department, at its absolute discretion, may deem other costs to be eligible upon request of the applicant.

If your application is successful, we may ask you to verify the project cost and request evidence of costs such as supplier contracts, quotes and invoices. You must demonstrate value for money by

ensuring project costs are reasonable and reflective of actual costs incurred and reasonable market rates. We may use industry cost benchmarks to assess whether costs are reasonable. The Department will make the final decision on whether a claimed cost is eligible or reasonable (and only pay the reasonable amount). For more information, refer to **Indicative reporting and acquittal requirements** (**Section 5.4**).

2.2 Assessment criteria

To allow us to assess your application against RPG objectives, your application must address all the criteria set out in **Table 7** below. We will assess your eligible application based on the weighting given to each criterion and whether it provides value for money.

Table 7 – RPG assessment criteria

Criteria	Description	Weighting
Criterion 1: Strategic Alignment and Impact	a. Alignment of the proposed project with the objectives of the RPG b. Contribution to the development of RNA-based therapeutics, vaccines or related technologies for application in health, biosecurity or agriculture c. Potential for the product to advance to manufacturing at the NSW RNA Research and Manufacturing Facility d. Expected economic, scientific or social/environmental benefit to NSW, including job creation, sovereign capability or enhanced innovation capacity e. Innovation and uniqueness of the proposed solution, and the demonstrated need for the it in addressing specific challenges	30%
Criterion 2: Commercial Potential	a. Strength of the commercialisation strategy, including pathway to market, IP position and plans for regulatory engagement b. Evidence of market need, competitive advantage and scalability of the proposed solution c. Potential to attract future investment, partnerships or commercial interest	25%
Criterion 3: Technical Merit and Feasibility	a. Scientific and technical quality of the proposed project b. Clear and achievable project plan with defined milestones, timelines and deliverables c. Access to necessary expertise, facilities/infrastructure and resources to deliver the project	25%
Criterion 4: Capability and Track Record	a. Experience and qualifications of the project team b. Demonstrated ability to deliver similar R&D or commercialisation activities c. Strength of any collaborations or partnerships (e.g. between research organisations and industry)	10%
Criterion 5: Budget and Value for Money	a. Appropriateness and justification of the proposed budget b. Any access to investment or funding sources to support project delivery and further commercialisation, such as co-investment from the applicant or partners c. Demonstrated need for public funding from the NSW Government, for example evidence that the project cannot be fully funded through alternative sources and would not proceed at the proposed scale in NSW without this funding	10%

In addition to the Assessment Criteria, the following will also be taken into consideration:

- whether applicants have sufficient or additional resources or avenues available to raise additional capital other than the RPG funding that could assist with the success of their project and/or the commercialisation of the solution.

Applications can include co-funding proposals and potential leveraging opportunities. If other cash or in-kind assistance is available or being sought, these amounts and the level of confidence in securing them should be included in proposals where feasible and will be considered during the assessment process.

2.2.1 Attachments to the application

You must attach the requested supporting information as part of the online application form. You should only attach requested documents. We will only consider information that we have requested in the application form or in a subsequent request for additional information.

To assess your application, we require you to provide the following attachments with your application:

- **A video (no longer than 5 minutes)** – providing an explanation and/or demonstration of the scientific and technological basis for the solution, how it works, its intended outcome/benefit and how the grant funding will be used to commercialise it
- **A Project Plan and Budget (no longer than 2 pages) –** preferably in a Gantt chart format, with the project timeline with project activities, tasks/milestones and their respective TRL, project costs that relate to expected outcomes
- **2024/25 year audited or certified financial accounts** - include Profit & Loss Statement and Balance Sheet. For applicants intending to establish a company or new companies that do not have 2024/25 management accounts, please upload the following instead: information about your new company formation process, how you are currently funding your project, including details on project and business expenses (wages, rent etc.).

3

Application process

3 Application process

3.1 How to apply

Before applying, you must read and understand these Program Guidelines.

These documents may be downloaded from: https://www.chiefscientist.nsw.gov.au/rna-pipeline-grants. Any alterations and addenda will also be published on this page.

Further information is provided in **Assessment criteria** (**Section 2.2**) and **Assessment process** (**Section 4**).

To apply you must:

1. complete the application form which can be found at https://www.chiefscientist.nsw.gov.au/rna-pipeline-grants
2. answer all the questions in the application form
3. include all necessary attachments
4. submit your application by the timelines outlined in **Key dates** (**Section 3.1.2**).

You are responsible for ensuring your application is complete and accurate. Giving false or misleading information is an offence under the *Crimes Act 1900 No 40 (NSW)*. We will investigate any false or misleading information and may reject your application.

Applicants must not lobby the NSW Government on an issue related or seen to be related to the RPG that may be perceived to give an unfair advantage to the applicant. Applicants are required to comply with all applicable laws including the *NSW Lobbyists Code of Conduct*.

If you find an error in your application after submitting it, you should contact us immediately at grants@chiefscientist.nsw.gov.au. If we find an error or information that is missing, we may ask for clarification or additional information from you that will not change the nature of your application. Corrections to errors in applications will not be accepted except where the Department is satisfied there are exceptional circumstances that justify the correction and that the integrity, fairness and competitiveness of the RPG would not be compromised.

You should keep a copy of your application and any supporting documents. The SmartyGrants system will send you a confirmation that your application has been submitted.

3.1.1 Your responsibilities when applying for the grant

The Program Guidelines (the Guidelines) contain information about the RPG, whether you are eligible to apply, and how you can make an application.

You must read these Guidelines before applying for the grant.

This document sets out:

- the objectives of the RPG
- selection criteria and assessment process
- key dates
- grant value
- administering agency
- the final decision maker.

The Guidelines may be updated by the OCSE at any time. If this occurs, the revised Guidelines or any addenda will be published on https://www.chiefscientist.nsw.gov.au/rna-pipeline-grants.

Details about the assessment process are in Assessment process (Section 4).

For the application, applicants need to:

- submit the online application form via the SmartyGrants system, ensuring all questions are answered, and requested attachments are uploaded
- clearly identify in their application (including attachments) any information that the applicant requests be treated as confidential
- authorise their application. The application must be authorised by at least one of the core participants (i.e. by the head of the organisation or their authorised delegate). If applying as a consortium, the lead applicant must authorise the application.

An independent probity advisor will be present to provide guidance to the Department and the Expert Panel on integrity, fairness and accountability, and ensure transparency of the Program's administration. Further information about probity controls is at Conflict of interest management (Section 6.3.1).

Applications will only be accepted via the official NSW Government Online Grants Management System, SmartyGrants. Applications will not be accepted via other channels.

Late submissions will not be considered except where the Department is satisfied there are exceptional circumstances that justify the late submission and that the integrity, fairness and competitiveness of the RPG would not be compromised. Acceptance of late submissions is at the sole discretion of the Department.

3.1.2 Key dates

You must apply between the published opening and closing dates (Table 8). Applications in progress must be completed and submitted before the closing date. We encourage applicants to allow ample time for any technical or connectivity issues to be resolved before the deadlines. The NSW Government, at its absolute discretion, may extend the application closing date.

Table 8 - Expected timeline of the RPG program

Activity	Timeframe
Applications open	10:00 am AEST 22 July 2025
Applications close	1:00 pm AEDT 16 September 2025
Interviews of shortlisted applications (if required)	November 2025
Notification of outcomes	November - December 2025
Announcement	December 2025/January 2026

3.2 Support available to applicants

If you have any questions during the application period, please contact the OCSE at grants@chiefscientist.nsw.gov.au.

This OCSE mailbox is monitored during business hours to ensure any application enquiries are resolved. The OCSE will aim to respond to all enquiries within 3 business days.

To ensure equal access to information, the OCSE may disclose questions asked by potential applicants and their answers on the frequently asked questions (FAQ) page which can be found at https://www.chiefscientist.nsw.gov.au/rna-pipeline-grants. If your question includes confidential

information, you must expressly indicate that when you contact the OCSE. The OCSE accepts no responsibility for the disclosure of information it receives outside of the application process except where the party has expressly indicated that it should be treated as confidential.

The OCSE will not identify the organisation that has asked the question.

4

Assessment process

4 Assessment process

4.1 Assessment of grant applications

The assessment of applications will be administered by the OCSE, and where the OCSE considers an application unsuitable or unsatisfactory against any eligibility criteria, we may exclude that application from further evaluation. Only eligible applications will move to the next stage. We consider eligible applications through an open competitive grant process.

An independent probity advisor will be present to provide guidance to the Department and Expert Panel on integrity, fairness and accountability, and ensure transparency of the Program's administration. Further information about probity controls is at Confidentiality (Section 6.3.2).

During the assessment process, the OCSE may ask applicants to provide additional information to assist in the assessment process. Advice may be sought from other NSW Government agencies or other sources to assist in the assessment of projects as required. The OCSE may request amendments to the application to maximise the public benefits from the project. Applicants may withdraw their application at any time.

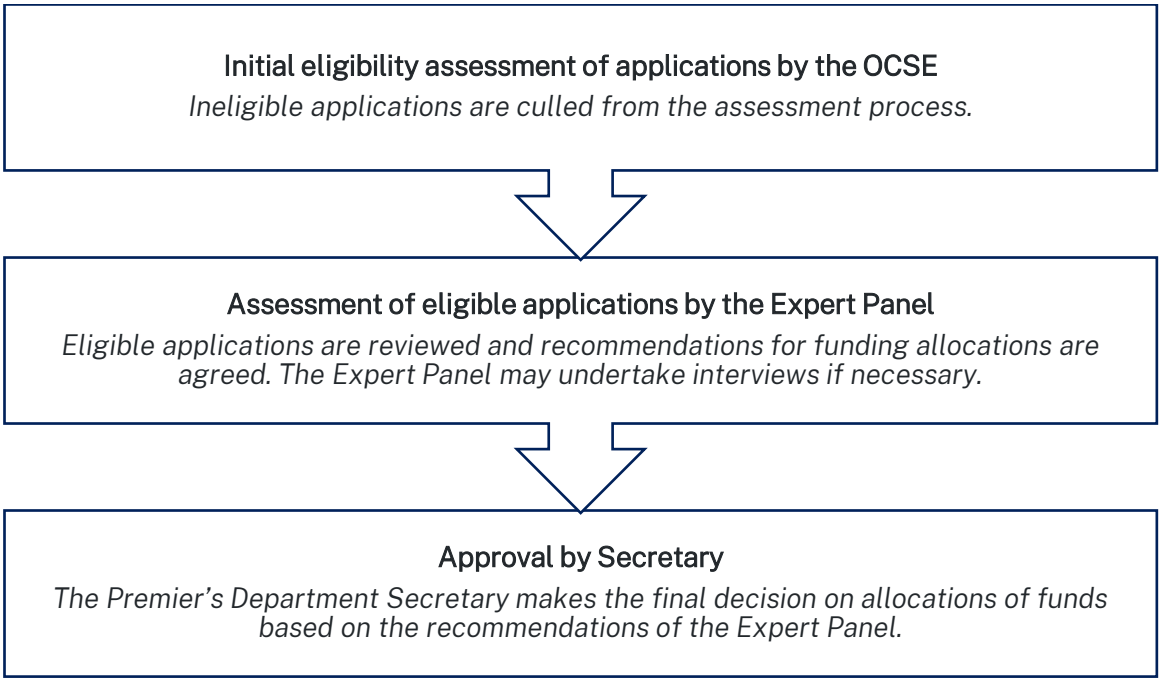
4.1.1 Assessment process

The RPG assessment process is outlined in Figure 2 below.

Once the Application stage has closed, the OCSE will review applications for eligibility and provide a report to an independent Expert Panel on the eligible and ineligible applications.

The Expert Panel will undertake an initial assessment of eligible applications against the assessment criteria and shortlist the highest ranked applicant(s).

Figure 2 – RPG assessment process



As part of the assessment process, shortlisted applicants may be invited to an interview. The interview will focus on clarifying key aspects of the application, including:

- the technical feasibility of the project
- its commercial potential

- alignment with the capabilities of the RNA Research and Manufacturing Facility
- contribution to the broader NSW RNA ecosystem.

Applicants may also be asked to provide further information on:

- budget and use of funds
- project milestones
- team capability
- governance arrangements
- strategies for managing risk
- intellectual property
- regulatory or clinical considerations.

The interview provides an opportunity for the Expert Panel to confirm the project's strategic fit and ensure the responsible investment of public funds.

4.1.2 Who will assess applications?

The Expert Panel will:

- be chaired by an independent person with experience in research commercialisation and expertise in the RNA therapeutics, vaccines, and related technologies sector and grant programs
- comprise members with research, industry, entrepreneurial and venture capital expertise relevant to delivering the RPG Program purpose
- identify any conflicts of interest in relation to any eligible applications and sign a confidentiality agreement
- draw on advice or expertise as required. Experts could include individuals with significant subject-matter expertise specific to the nature of shortlisted projects, but who are not conflicted. These experts will provide advice only and will not participate in the assessment of applications.

4.1.3 Financial Assessment

As part of the application process, you may be required to submit further financial information and other relevant documentation. This information will be reviewed by an independent financial advisor, contracted to the Department, who will provide expert advice to the Expert Panel.

4.1.4 Who will approve the grant?

The Expert Panel will provide its recommendations to the Secretary of the Premier's Department. The Secretary is the final decision-maker on funding decisions for the RPG.

4.2 Notification of application outcome

All applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application in writing via email. Successful applicants will be notified via email within 30 days of the final determination. If you are successful, we will advise you of any specific conditions attached to the grant. This could include a request to keep the grant confidential for a specified period due to an announcement being made by the NSW Government in relation to this Program and your award.

The NSW Government will publicly announce funding for individual applications and provide information on the NSW Government Grants and Funding Finder. It may also use information provided to create case studies.

4.2.1 Feedback on applications and appeal process

Unsuccessful applicants will be offered the opportunity to receive feedback on their application.

Any enquiries regarding the assessment process or the outcome of an application should be directed to the OCSE Grants Delivery Team at: grants@chiefscientist.nsw.gov.au.

There is no formal appeals process for RPG. All assessment decisions are final and at the discretion of the Department. However, applicants are encouraged to seek feedback to support future applications and engagement with other programs.

4.3 Publication of grants information

The Grants Administration Guide (Guide) requires that certain information is published in relation to grants awarded no later than 45 calendar days after the grant agreement takes effect (see section 6.5 of the Guide and Appendix A to the Guide). This information is also open access information under the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (NSW) (GIPA Act)*, which must be made publicly available unless there is an overriding public interest against disclosure of the information.

In accordance with these requirements, relevant information about the grants awarded will be made available on the NSW Government Grants and Funding Finder as soon as possible after the grant funding is approved or declined.

All records in relation to this decision will be managed in accordance with the requirements of the *State Records Act 1998 (NSW)*.

5

Successful grant applications

5 Successful grant applications

5.1 Grant agreement

Successful applicants who accept the offer of a grant will be required to enter into a formal funding agreement with the NSW Government relating to the grant. A draft copy of the funding agreement can be located at https://www.chiefscientist.nsw.gov.au/rna-pipeline-grants. Note that this draft is subject to change and may be amended by the Department at any time prior to it being executed. The funding agreement 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 NSW Government makes no binding funding or support commitment to an applicant until both parties sign the funding agreement, including the lead applicant identified in the proposal. Requests for variations or changes to the project may be considered in exceptional cases with regard to probity principles and the RPG objectives being upheld and where they meet with the terms and conditions of the funding agreement.

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

All recipients of NSW Government funding must 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.

The NSW Government logo must be displayed on all public materials related to the grant awarded to the applicant for the project. Whenever the logo is used, the publication must also include an acknowledgement of the NSW Government.

5.2 Grant payment

The grant will be payable upon the execution of the funding agreement. Invoices for grant instalment payments will be submitted and paid as indicated in the funding agreement.

Applicants must be registered under the GST Law at the time of making any supply under the funding agreement on which GST is imposed. 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 taxation advice.

Each grant will be paid in two equal instalments: 50% of the total grant amount will be paid in FY 2025-26 and 50% in FY 2026-27. The first instalment will be paid upon invoicing the Department after the funding recipient has entered into a funding agreement with the NSW Government. The second instalment will be paid upon invoicing the Department following the satisfactory completion of the relevant milestones indicated in the funding agreement.

Successful applicants will be required to repay grant funds where the funds are not spent in accordance with the funding agreement or the applicant breaches the funding agreement.

5.3 Unspent funds

You must obtain the Department's prior written consent before any expenditure of the grant funding other than expenditure which has previously been approved by the Department in the funding agreement. Any funds spent in breach of the funding agreement, or any unspent fund remaining upon the completion of the RPG project must be returned to the Department.

5.4 Indicative reporting and acquittal requirements

Reporting requirements for successful projects will be detailed in the funding agreement. These will include annual reporting and may also include requests for ad hoc reports as needed. Reporting. Templates will be provided for these reports and will require information such as:

- progress against agreed project milestones and outcomes
- project costs
- contributions of participants directly related to the grant
- performance measures, including, but not limited to:
  - income from sales, other grants or capital raises
  - number of jobs established or supported by the grant
  - research, industry or government engagement
  - IP and regulatory progress.

The Department reserves the right to undertake an audit of RPG funding and support within seven years from date of the funding agreement. Tracking and reporting will be a requirement of the funding agreement, which will include regular performance reporting.

You should let us know if anything is likely to affect your grant activity or organisation.

We need to know of any key changes to your organisation or its business activities, particularly if they affect your ability to complete your grant, carry on business and pay debts due.

You must also inform us of any changes to your:

- name
- addresses
- nominated contact details
- bank account details.

If you become aware of a breach of terms and conditions under the funding agreement, you must contact us immediately.

5.5 Evaluation

The Department will evaluate the RPG to measure the extent to which the Program's objectives have been achieved and may use information from applications and reports for this purpose. The Department may also interview applicants or related partners and ask for more information to understand how the Program has impacted projects and to evaluate how effective the Program was in achieving its outcomes. This could include information about revenues, costs, employment, and other matters. The Department may contact applicants up to three years after receipt of final grant payments associated with the Program for more information to assist with this evaluation.

Successful applicants will be required to participate in program evaluation after the project has commenced and for up to three years following the final grant payment.

In accordance with the funding agreement, the successful applicant will be required to provide evidence of how projects have resulted in measurable benefits consistent with the Program's objectives and outcomes, particularly on research and development outcomes.

6

Additional information and resources

6 Additional information and resources

6.1 Complaint handling

Any enquiry you have about the assessment process or the outcome of your application for this Program should be sent to grants@chiefscientist.nsw.gov.au.

Complaints will, in the first instance, be reviewed by the OCSE. If we cannot resolve the complaint within 30 business days of receipt, we will provide details of a nominated complaints and review officer from the Complaints Team who will advise the next steps.

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

NSW Ombudsman
Level 24
580 George Street
Sydney NSW 2000

The applicant must lodge a complaint with the OCSE in writing and submit it to grants@chiefscientist.nsw.gov.au.

6.2 Access to information

The GIPA Act provides for the proactive release of government information by agencies and gives members of the public an enforceable right to access government information held by an agency (which includes Ministerial offices). Access to government information is only to be restricted if there is an overriding public interest against disclosure.

The NSW Legislative Council has the power to order the production of State papers by the Executive Government. Standing Order 52 provides that the House may order documents to be tabled by the Government in the House. The Cabinet Office coordinates the preparation of the papers – that is, the return to order. The return to order may contain privileged and public documents. Privileged documents are available only to members of the Legislative Council.

Note that documents submitted as part of a grant application may be subject to an application under the GIPA Act or an order for papers under Standing Order 52.

6.3 Ethical conduct

6.3.1 Conflict of interest management

The Office of the Chief Scientist & Engineer (OCSE) is committed to ensuring the grant opportunity process is conducted fairly, transparently, and in accordance with the published guidelines. Appropriate safeguards will be in place to prevent fraud, unlawful activity, and other inappropriate conduct throughout all stages of the Program.

An independent probity advisor will be engaged to support the integrity, fairness and accountability of the Program. The Probity Advisor will provide expert guidance to the OCSE on any issues that may arise during the application, assessment and decision-making process. They will also review program documentation, observe assessment panel meetings (with a focus on conflict of interest management), review funding recommendations, and provide a final probity report outlining their observations.

All individuals involved in the assessment of applications — whether internal or external to the Department — must complete a Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Declaration prior to accessing confidential material or participating in the assessment process. All declared conflicts — whether actual, potential or perceived — will be recorded in the Program's Conflict-of-Interest Register and reviewed by the Program Probity Advisor.

Should a conflict be identified, the Program Manager will determine, in consultation with the Probity Advisor, the appropriate management action. All assessors are required to actively monitor their participation throughout the process and notify the Program Manager if circumstances change.

This comprehensive approach to conflict of interest and probity management ensures that assessment and funding decisions are made with transparency, rigour and in the public interest.

6.3.2 Confidentiality and Privacy

We are committed to protecting your confidential and personal information in accordance with the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 (NSW)* (the Act) and the Premier's Department Privacy Management Plan, available at https://www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/premiers-department/contact-us/privacy.

As part of your application, you declare your ability to comply with the Act and agree to impose the same privacy obligations on any officers, employees, agents or subcontractors engaged to assist with the funded activity. You must not do anything that would cause us to be in breach of the Act.

We will collect personal information to assess your application and manage the grant if you are awarded funding.

Your personal information will only be used or disclosed for the purpose for which it was collected, unless an exemption applies. The OCSE may also use or disclose information about applicants and recipients for program reporting purposes. We may share your information with other NSW Government entities or external reviewers to support government administration, research, assessment, and service delivery, in line with relevant Australian and NSW legislation.

Relevant information about grants awarded will also be published on the NSW Government Grants and Funding Finder as outlined in **Publication of grants information** (**Section 4.3**).

Providing your personal information is voluntary, although we will not be able to assess your application if you do not provide this information.

You agree not to disclose to any person (other than us) any confidential information relating to the grant application and/or funding agreement, without our prior written consent. This obligation will not be breached where you are required by law, Parliament or a stock exchange to disclose the relevant information or where the relevant information is publicly available (other than through breach of a confidentiality or non-disclosure obligation).

We will keep any information in connection with the funding agreement confidential to the extent that it meets all the conditions below:

1. you clearly identify the information as confidential and explain why we should treat it as confidential
2. the information is commercially sensitive
3. revealing the information would cause unreasonable harm to you or someone else.

We will not be in breach of this obligation if information is required or authorised to be disclosed by law or is disclosed to:

- members of the Expert Panel and other NSW Government employees and contractors engaged to manage or evaluate the Program
- our employees, contractors and professional advisers to research, assess, monitor and analyse our programs and activities
- employees and contractors of other NSW Government departments or agencies for any purposes, including government administration, research or service delivery purposes

- Commonwealth, State, Territory or local government agencies in program reports or consultations
- the Auditor-General, Ombudsman or Privacy Commissioner
- the responsible Minister or Secretary
- a House or a Committee of the NSW Parliament.

You may also be required to sign a non-disclosure agreement, or ensure that your employees, agents or subcontractors do so, if we request it.

The funding agreement may outline any additional confidentiality or privacy requirements, including for special categories of information collected, created or held under the agreement.

You have the right to access your personal information held by us without excessive delay or expense. You also have the right to request that the information we hold about you is amended, for example, if it is incorrect.

If you have any questions about the application of our privacy policy, would like to request access to the information we hold about you, request a correction or make a privacy complaint, please contact:

Information and Privacy Unit

The Cabinet Office

52 Martin Place Sydney NSW 2000

Email: infoandprivacy@tco.nsw.gov.au.

6.4 Equity, Diversity & Inclusion

The OCSE is committed to advancing equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) across all our initiatives. We recognise that diverse perspectives are crucial to fostering innovation and achieving excellence in scientific research and development.

To actualise this vision, we encourage participants from all backgrounds to apply, particularly those who are historically underrepresented in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM), such as women, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people, persons with disabilities, individuals from diverse gender and sexual identities, and people from rural or regional backgrounds.

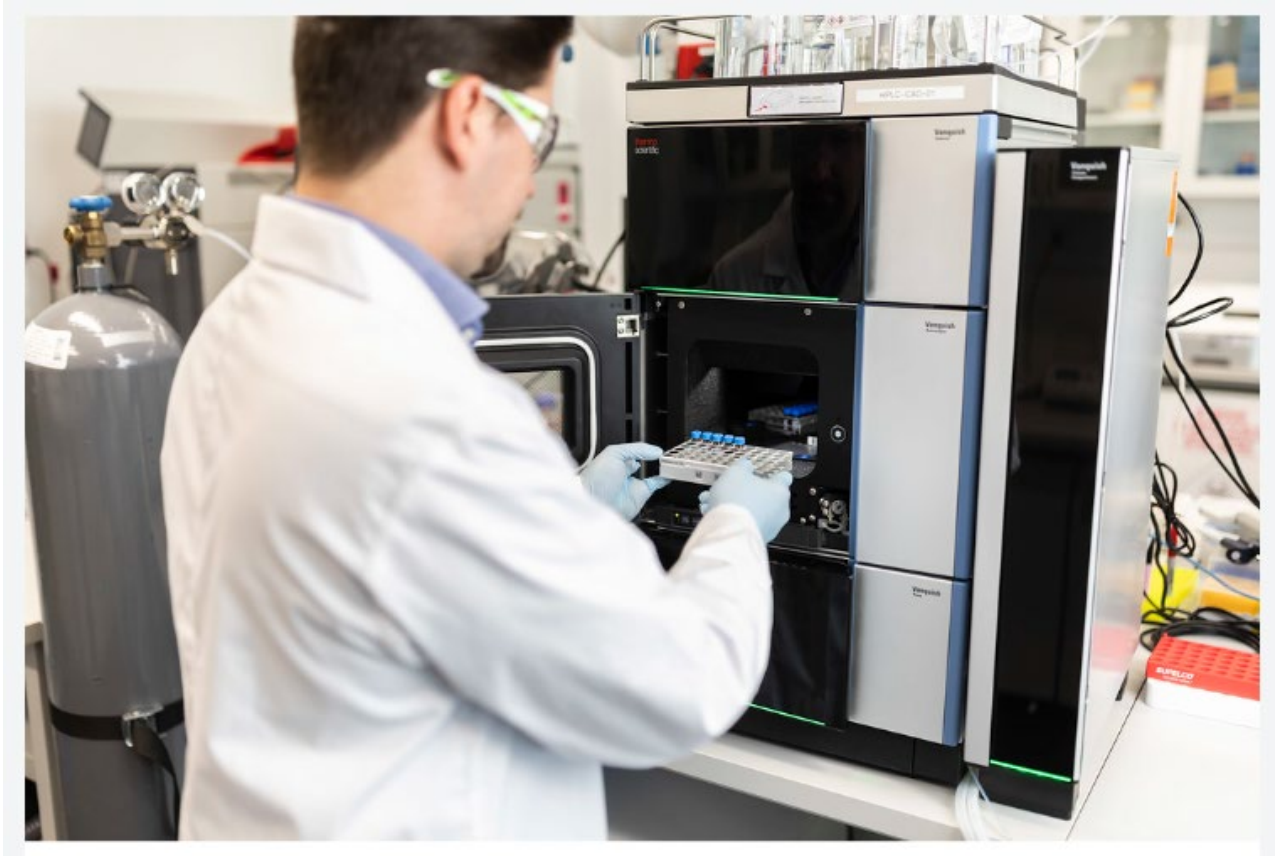
We encourage applicants to consider how integrating diverse teams and inclusive practices can enhance the creativity, impact and relevance of their projects. The integration of EDI principles strengthens project design and potential for success by ensuring a variety of perspectives that mirror the richness of our society.

In fostering an inclusive research environment, the OCSE aims to:

- encourage innovative problem-solving through diverse teams
- equip projects with a broader range of cultural insights and experiences, enhancing the applicability and impact of research outcomes
- build a more resilient and inclusive scientific community.

We encourage all founders and startups to consider these EDI initiatives to enhance their business's growth and sustainability. Under the *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012*, Australian employers with 100 or more employees must annually report their gender equality data to the Workplace Gender Equality Agency Australia | WGEA. By integrating EDI principles early on, startups can better prepare for these requirements and foster a more inclusive and equitable workplace from the outset.

6.5 Copyright



Appendix A:

Table 9 - Summary of manufacturing capabilities at NSW-based RNA facilities

Facility	UNSW RNA Institute	UTS Biologics Innovation Facility	RNA Research and Manufacturing Facility/ Aurora Biosynthetics
Manufacturing Scale	R&D Scale	Pilot Scale (in a GMP-like environment)	Clinical Scale
Certification	ISO 9001	ISO 9001	GMP
TRL	TRL 1-5 (pre-clinical/pre-GMP)	TRL 5-6 (pre-GMP, Phase I enabling/CTN)	TRL 5-8 (pre-clinical, GMP, Phase I-III)
Ecosystem Entry Point for...	• Researchers starting in RNA therapeutics • Materials for *in vitro* and *in vivo* studies • Product development • Process and analytical method development	• Academic researchers, start-ups, SMEs and industry partners • Pilot scale manufacturing development • Engineering runs • Large pre-clinical studies	• Established and emerging biotech companies needing agile, cost-effective CDMO partners • Academic researchers translating discovery into clinical proof-of-concept • International biopharma seeking APAC-based manufacturing and regulatory capabilities • GMP clinical manufacturing with established processes/analytical methods
Contact	Email: rna@unsw.edu.au Website: https://www.unsw.edu.au/institutes/rna	Email: bif@uts.edu.au Website: https://www.uts.edu.au/about/locations-facilities/biologics-innovation-facility	Contact: https://aurorabiosynthetics.com/#contact Website: https://aurorabiosynthetics.com/