# NSW Tech Central Research Infrastructure Fund - Request for Proposal

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.

**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](https://www.tc.sydney/)

**Proposal submission**

The Office of the NSW Chief Scientist & Engineer (OCSE) are administering the RFP and evaluation process for the NSW Tech Central Research and Innovation Infrastructure Fund. OCSE is an agency within the Department of Enterprise, Investment and Trade (DEIT) with responsibility for R&D activities and investment. OCSE supports the broader DEIT mission to make NSW the most desirable place in the world to visit, invest and do business.

Thank you for expressing an interest in delivering critical research infrastructure within or aligned to Tech Central. This document:

* Seeks proposals from eligible organisations and consortia, and
* Outlines the eligibility and selection criteria and evaluation process.

Proposals will be accepted from any eligible university, research organisation or institution, industry organisation, NSW-located NCRIS (National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy) facility or consortium. Before submitting their proposal, applicants should familiarise themselves with the [**Guidelines for Applicants**](https://www.chiefscientist.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/512544/Tech-Central-Research-and-Innovation-Infrastructure-Fund-Guidelines.pdf) and ideally considered submitting an Expression of Interest (EOI) document for the NSW Tech Central Research Infrastructure Fund. However, applicants are not required to submit an EOI before submitting their proposal.

**Submit proposals by 29 July 2022 via email to:**

[grants@chiefscientist.nsw.gov.au](https://nswgov-my.sharepoint.com/personal/sarah_parker_chiefscientist_nsw_gov_au/Documents/Desktop/grants@chiefscientist.nsw.gov.au)

Proposals must:

* Address all questions in the specification of requirements (Appendix A),
* Include the proposal cover sheet (Appendix B),
* Be submitted in Microsoft Word (.docx) or Adobe Portable Document Format (.pdf), and
* Be received by the Office of the NSW Chief Scientist & Engineer by 5pm AEDT on **29 July 2022**.

Applicants will receive an email acknowledging receipt of their proposal.

If applicants experience any technical issues in submitting their proposal, they should contact the Office of the Chief Scientist & Engineer (OCSE):

Email: [grants@chiefscientist.nsw.gov.au](https://nswgov.sharepoint.com/sites/MST_OCSC_OfficeoftheChiefScientist/Shared%20Documents/RIPP%20Strategy/Subprogram%20guidelines/Infrastructure%20Buildout%20Guideline/grants@chiefscientist.nsw.gov.au)

Phone: (02) 8650 6033

**Funding and proposal delivery**

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.

Grant monies must be expended within two years of receiving the payment. Invoices for grant payments will be submitted and paid in a single tranche as dictated by the funding deed.

Delivery elements that proposals should consider include:

1. Timeframe
   1. grant monies must be spent within two years as a catalyst or boost to Tech Central’s research and innovation ecosystem
   2. consider how this investment will continue to serve the Tech Central and broader research and innovation ecosystem beyond the two-year funding window
2. Open access infrastructure
   1. what mechanisms/approach will be provided to ensure Tech Central and other research and innovation participants can suitably access this investment. Consider costing and models that drive collaboration, R&D and innovation as well as what possible fee structures/subsidies and time allotments you would make available to the community and how would you approve or disapprove requests for access.
   2. Other considerations regarding open access infrastructure will include how people will access the infrastructure, what relevant security and data protection measures will be needed. If you are leading a proposal with other partners or housing infrastructure within another organisation’s facilities what elements will need to be negotiated.
   3. How will you promote, engage and showcase this investment to drive collaboration as well as uptake of this infrastructure by the community.

**Evaluation**

Proposals will be evaluated by an independent expert panel appointed by the OCSE against the selection criteria. The panel will be responsible for assessing proposals, conducting interviews if required, and making grant recommendations to the Secretary of the Department of Enterprise, Investment and Trade (DEIT). The expert panel will confirm the eligibility of proposals against the NSW

Tech Central Research Infrastructure Fund eligibility criteria and assess proposals against the NSW Tech Central Research Infrastructure Fund selection criteria.

**Recommendation**

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

Upon advice from the independent expert panel OCSE will make recommendations to the Secretary regarding funding allocations to applicants. OCSE, in its discretion, may choose not to award or recommend funding under this program.

**Post-evaluation**

The OCSE will notify all applicants of the outcome by **October 2022\*** 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.

The successful applicants will need to agree to standard funding conditions. The standard conditions of the funding agreement will not be changed at the request of the grantee. Some key obligations are outlined below (this list is not exhaustive):

* Provide evidence of appropriate insurance coverage. Minimum insurance levels will apply (professional indemnity, public and product liability, workers compensation as required by law).
* Complete conflict of interest declarations and manage conflicts of interest throughout the funding term.
* Commence implementation within two months of executing funding agreement.
* Seek prior approval for budget changes greater than 10%.
* Seek prior approval to alter proposed outputs or timeframes.
* Monitor and report on outcomes. Provide progress and final reports in accordance with reporting requirements and timeframes.
* Include financial reports/funding acquittals with all progress and/or final reports.
* Acknowledge NSW Government funding in the form approved by the Government.

**Timeline**

* Request for Proposal – Proposals must be received by **5pm on 29 July 2022**
* Proposal evaluation – September 2022\*
* Funding recommendation and contract issued – October-December 2022\*

**\***Note that the timings are indicative and subject to change.

**Further information**

If you have any questions regarding the NSW Tech Central Research Infrastructure Fund, please contact:

Kristen Mulligan

Manager – Strategy and Programs

Office of the Chief Scientist & Engineer

Email: [grants@chiefscientist.nsw.gov.au](mailto:grants@chiefscientist.nsw.gov.au)

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 **Kristin Mulligan** (details above).

**Privacy**

The information you provide in response to this Request for Proposal will only be used for the purpose for which it was collected. By submitting a proposal, you consent to storage, use and disclosure of your personal information in accordance with the Office of the NSW Chief Scientist & Engineer’s privacy policy.

While we will keep your proposal confidential as a matter of policy to the extent consistent with our legal obligations, we may be required to release it under the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* (NSW) or other lawful requirement.

**NSW Tech Central Research Infrastructure Fund Eligibility Criteria**

1. **Who can apply?**
2. Universities
3. Research organisations or institutions
4. NSW-located NCRIS (National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy) facilities dese.gov.au/ncris
5. Consortium-based applicants bringing together industry, university, specialist research organisations and/or publicly funded research organisations (PFROs)
6. 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, or regional, administrative office of the applicant or facility, and location of the CEO or regional lead (i.e., the Asia-Pacific headquarters of organisations or institutions). 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.

1. **What can the funding be used for?**

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

1. major equipment
2. laboratory facilities
3. highly skilled technical experts or facility managers
4. specialised technologies and systems
5. 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 outlined below.

1. **Focus area**

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

1. Quantum computing and devices
2. Robotics and automation
3. Artificial Intelligence and machine learning
4. Advanced communications and smart devices
5. Aerospace, defence and space technologies
6. Energy generation and storage
7. Biotechnology and medtech
8. E-Health
9. Fintech
10. Bioinformatics, genetics and ‘omics’ technologies
11. New materials and nanomaterials
12. Cyber security, Cloud, embedded and blockchain systems
13. Digital and Creative Industries technologies.
14. **Location**

Applications must have their infrastructure located within Tech Central or demonstrate a strong alignment with the Tech Central innovation district.

**NSW Tech Central Research Infrastructure Fund Selection Criteria**

Applications will be evaluated against information and evidence provided in relation to the following selection criteria, further described in Appendix A:

1. proposed infrastructure investment and its impact in driving research, development, industry outcomes or innovation for the Tech Central ecosystem
2. alignment to Tech Central, demonstrating its focus on Tech Central via direct placement of the infrastructure within the district or its strong alignment to Tech Central
3. economic, environmental and social benefits of the program for NSW, alignment with the NSW Government Premier’s Priorities and alignment with Tech Central industry and research strengths
4. track record of current facilities, projects or similar work/collaborations or for industry delivered proposals, the expertise or industry knowledge that makes your organisation uniquely qualified to deliver this public infrastructure investment
5. 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
6. approach for ensuring open access to the infrastructure for researchers, innovators and industry
7. proposals should demonstrate strong collaboration across the ecosystem
8. ability to leverage funding, expertise and other resources
9. vision for this infrastructure investment beyond the two-year funding timeframe,
10. NSW industry, Government agency and end-user linkages impact on NSW skills, advanced education and training

# Appendix A – Tech Central Research and Innovation Infrastructure Fund Selection Criteria Responses

Your proposal must respond to the following eight questions.

#### Question 1.

**Describe the proposed infrastructure to be delivered and the gap, barrier or opportunity it will address for the Tech Central ecosystem.**

**Clearly state how much funding you are seeking and how it will be used to deliver the proposed infrastructure.**

This question will be assessed against the selection criterion 1

#### Question 2.

**Outline how the proposal will be integrated into Tech Central or align with the district.**

This question will be assessed against the selection criteria 1 and 2, note alignment can be demonstrated in a number or ways including but not limited to: connections to Tech Central, targeted services to Tech Central communities, partnerships within Tech Central organisations and/or partial delivery of the investment within Tech Central.

#### Question 3.

**Describe the benefits of the proposed investment for NSW. Are there environmental, social or other economic benefits to this investment that align with the NSW Government Premier’s Priorities?**

**Note** that in response to this question you should reference [NSW Government Premier’s Priorities](https://www.nsw.gov.au/premiers-priorities) and Tech Central industry and research strengths (see Eligibility Criteria).

This question will be assessed against the selection criterion 3

#### Question 4.

**Describe your track record of current facilities, projects or similar work/collaborations AND/OR your specific expertise or industry experience that makes you uniquely qualified to lead this public infrastructure investment for the Tech Central ecosystem.**

This question will be assessed against the selection criterion 4

#### Question 5.

**Explain how you 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. Outline your approach to supporting open access to your proposed infrastructure including any service offering models and equitable access considerations.**

This question will be assessed against the selection criteria 5 and 6, you may also refer to open access considerations listed under “Funding and Proposal Delivery” of this document for guidance.

#### Question 6.

**Please list all partners to the proposal and include their funding and/or in-kind contributions. Please describe what functions and/or role they will have.**

This question will be assessed against the section criterion 7

#### Question 7.

**Describe your linkages with industry, research and governments sectors, Tech Central ecosystem and end-users.**

Applicants should demonstrate that they:

* have meaningful relationships with NSW Government agencies, universities, research organisations, companies and other infrastructure in NSW
* contribute to NSW skills, advanced education and training.
* can leverage these relationships to support research development and translation in NSW, Australia and internationally

This question will be assessed against the selection criteria 4 and 9

#### Question 8.

**Describe your vision for this infrastructure investment post the two-year funding window. How will this investment be sustained into the future and how might your offerings change to accommodate this investment?**

This question will be assessed against the section criterion 8

# Appendix B – Tech Central Research and Innovation Infrastructure Fund Proposal cover sheet

Please submit this cover sheet with your proposal.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **1. Applicant type** | |
|  | (a) NSW university, |
|  | (b) Research organisation or institution |
|  | (c) NSW-located NCRIS (National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy) facility |
|  | (d) Consortium-based applicant bringing together industry, university, specialist research organisations and/or publicly funded research organisations (PFROs) |
|  | (e) Organisation or industry applicant |
| **If (d), indicate the partner organisations in your consortium:** | |
|  | |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **2. Provide evidence of your organisation’s presence in NSW**  *Mark the checkboxes below for your organisation and provide information.*  *Consortia should provide evidence of a presence in NSW for their lead organisation.* | | |
|  | (a) Registered address of the organisation is in NSW | |
|  | (b) Office location(s) of the organisation is in NSW | |
|  | (c) Employees of the organisation are based in NSW | |
|  | (d) Other | |
| **If (a), provide registered business address:** | |  |
| **If (b), provide office address(es):** | |  |
| **If (c), provide an approximate number of FTEs in NSW:** | |  |
| **If (c), provide an approximate number of FTEs in all geographies:** | |  |
| **If (d), provide detail on your organisation’s presence in NSW:** | |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **3. Contact details**  *Consortia should provide contact details for their lead organisation. This is the legal entity who will enter into the funding agreement with the NSW Government (if the application is successful).*  *Any enquiries relating to this proposal will be addressed to this contact.* | |
| **Organisation name:** |  |
| **Organisation ABN:** |  |
| **Organisation postal address:** |  |
| **Contact name:** |  |
| **Contact position:** |  |
| **Contact phone:** |  |
| **Contact email:** |  |
| **Authorisation** | I am authorised to submit this proposal. To my knowledge, the information provided in this form is accurate and true at the time of submission.  Name:  Date:  Signed: |