

Regional Job Creation Fund

Program Guidelines

Round 3

nsw.gov.au/RJCF



Contents

Message from the Deputy Premier	3	Assessment Criteria	14
Overview	4	Application Process	16
Objectives	5	Stage 1: Expression of Interest (EOI)	17
Targets	5	Stage 2: Detailed Application (by invitation only)	18
Key Dates and Timelines	6	Assessment Process	19
Eligibility Criteria	7	Stage 1: Expression of Interest	21
Eligible Applicants	7	Stage 2: Detailed Application	22
Ineligible Applicants	8	Successful Applicants	23
Eligible Projects	9	Funding Deed	23
Eligible Grant Amounts	9	Important Terms and Conditions	24
Eligible Costs	9	Unsuccessful Applicants	24
Co-contributions	9	Getting Support	24
Ineligible Projects	10	Complaints	25
Competitive Impacts	10	Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (NSW)	25
Ineligible Costs	10	Copyright	25
Example of Eligible Projects	11	Disclaimer	25

Message from the Deputy Premier



Regional businesses are at the heart of regional NSW. They're the producers, the innovators, the providers, and the driving force behind our unique attractions. As we celebrate five years of the Regional Growth Fund, the NSW Government is committed to continuing to provide opportunities to live, work, play and do business in our regions.

I'm thrilled to bring you Round Three of the Regional Job Creation Fund, providing \$100 million to support existing businesses or those interested in relocating to regional NSW to drive regional economic investment.

Rounds One and Two provided a combined \$140 million to support regional business to grow, attract new investment and relocate to the regions. In these two rounds the NSW Government funding has allowed new or continuing initiatives to be supported, which are helping regional businesses be bigger, better, smarter and stronger.

The Regional Job Creation Fund has enabled the creation of more than 6,500 jobs and continues to provide real opportunities for growth and business sustainability, which is pivotal to the prosperity of regional areas.

Under Round Three, grants will range from \$100,000 to \$10,000,000 to help businesses grow, increase productivity, and create and retain jobs, provide skills and training opportunities, including for young people and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals and people with disability to support ongoing economic growth.

The regions have continued to demonstrate their resilience through drought, flood and a global pandemic. I am encouraged and full of admiration when I see regional communities coming together and forging ahead beyond these challenges with their vision to drive economic investment, visitation, public amenity and education.

I look forward to seeing what opportunities Round Three of the Regional Job Creation Fund creates, and to seeing our regional towns and cities thrive in new and exciting ways.



The Hon. Paul Toole MP
Deputy Premier

*Minister for Regional NSW,
and Minister for Police*

Overview

The Department of Regional NSW (DRNSW) is responsible for driving regional investment and economic development in regional NSW, through growing industries, modern manufacturing, and creating jobs, skills and training opportunities. Regional NSW is Australia's largest and most diverse regional economy, and a great place to live, work, and do business.

The \$100 million Regional Job Creation Fund (RJCF) Round Three will support existing regional NSW businesses, or those seeking to relocate to regional NSW as they adapt to technological change, meet evolving supply chain distribution demands and leverage their strengths to drive ongoing productivity and regional economic development.

Regional Job Creation Round Three will co-invest in projects that align to the 20-Year Economic Vision for Regional NSW, Regional Economic Development Strategies (REDS) and other NSW Government strategies.

Funded projects will create and maintain regional jobs, diversify regional economies, and provide skills and training opportunities, including for young people, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander individuals and people with disability. This investment will lead to more sustainable employment and stronger and more resilient regional economies.

These guidelines provide an overview of the:

- key dates and timeframes for the grant opportunity
- eligibility and assessment criteria
- application process
- assessment process
- funding deed and terms and conditions during the grant life cycle
- mechanisms for accessing support and further information.

This is a competitive process. Applicants should read this document carefully to understand all eligibility and application requirements before filling out an application.

DRNSW is responsible for administering RJCF on behalf of the NSW Government.

Objectives

RJCF Round Three aims to support businesses in regional NSW to grow, increase productivity, and to create and/or retain jobs, leading to a more productive, diverse and resilient regional economy.

Targets

RJCF Round Three aims to deliver \$200 million of combined private and government investment into businesses operating in, or relocating to regional NSW.



Key Dates and Timelines



Table 1 identifies the indicative timeframes for the RJCF Round Three grant process. These are subject to change at the discretion of DRNSW.

Funding assistance provided through the RJCF is subject to funds being available and is conditional on the decision of an incoming government. The RJCF Round Three application and assessment process may be cancelled at any time. The NSW Government makes no binding funding commitment to an applicant until both parties sign a funding deed.

Stage	Timeframe
Expression of Interest Applications Open	13 January 2023
Expression of Interest Applications Close	5pm (AEDT) 6 March 2023
Notification of EOI Outcome and Invitation to Submit Detailed Application (if applicable)	8 May 2023 Subject to change-dependant on incoming government.
Detailed Applications Close	5pm (AEDT) 26 June 2023
Notification of Assessment Outcome	9 October 2023 Or as soon as possible after a decision has been made at the NSW Government's discretion. Successful applicants will be advised by a Letter of Offer and be required to sign a Confidentiality Agreement.
Project Announcement	A public announcement by the NSW Government may occur within 45 days after an applicant has been notified of a successful outcome.
Contracting and Project Commencement	The contracting process will commence once an applicant has signed and returned their Letter of Offer and Confidentiality Agreement to DRNSW. The project will commence once both parties have signed the Funding Deed.
Project Completion	Capital works must be able to be completed and have committed full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs in place for at least 3 months by May 2025.
Project Evaluation	Successful applicants will be required to collect data and supporting evidence to demonstrate the scale and impact of the project and participate in evaluation activities undertaken by the Department relating to the program.

Eligibility Criteria



Eligible Applicants

To be eligible to apply for funding, applicants must:

- have an Australian Business Number (ABN)
- be one of the following:
 - a company incorporated in Australia
 - a company incorporated by guarantee
 - an incorporated trustee on behalf of a trust
 - an incorporated association or co-operative
 - a partnership
 - a sole trader
 - an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Corporation registered under the Corporations (Aboriginal and /or Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006.
- be registered for GST
- be financially viable and able to demonstrate that they are likely to remain so over the duration of the project
- have at least \$20 million public liability insurance or be able to secure before entering into a Funding Deed if successful.

Applicants can be based internationally, interstate or in metropolitan or regional NSW. International businesses will need to have an ABN, be registered for GST, have at least \$20 million in public liability insurance and be an eligible entity (as listed above), to enter into a funding deed if they are successful.

Applicants should ensure they use the correct organisation name and details when applying, as this generally cannot be changed once the project has been assessed.

Joint Applicants

Applicants can submit a joint application, but a lead applicant will need to be nominated. If the application is successful, the lead applicant will enter into the funding deed and be ultimately responsible for delivering the project. The lead applicant must complete the Expression of Interest (EOI) application form and identify all other joint applicants in the application. If invited to submit a Detailed Application, the application must include a letter of support from each organisation listed in the grant application.

Each letter of support should include:

- details of the joint applicant
- an overview of how the joint applicant will work with the lead applicant and any other joint applicants (if applicable) to successfully complete the project
- an outline of the relevant experience and/or expertise the partner organisation will bring to the application
- the roles/responsibilities of the joint applicant and the resources they will contribute (if applicable)
- the amount and source of any co-contribution to the project (if applicable)
- details of a nominated contact for the joint applicant (at the management level)

Ineligible Applicants

Ineligible applicants include:

- Australian or NSW Government agencies, State Owned Corporations or statutory authorities
- Local Government Authorities or their Section 355 Committees
- organisations that do not have an ABN or are unable to obtain an ABN to enter into a Funding Deed
- unincorporated associations
- other unincorporated organisations
- businesses that are insolvent.

Ineligible entities (except for insolvent companies) can be part of a joint application, but not the lead applicant.

Businesses whose primary operation and project is in the following industries are not eligible for funding:

- hospitality, except where a proposal is unique to the existing market and considered regionally significant and/or iconic (for example, brewery expansion focussed on production enabling out of state sales, with a small hospitality element such as a kitchen/bar)
- retail
- localised trades
- healthcare, childcare and social services
- residential housing construction that only serves the immediate local or regional community of the applicant
- waste services, except where a proposal is providing unique services, such as un-serviced or under-serviced waste stream in the state, and where the project provides services beyond the local or regional area
- abattoirs, except where the project is to increase value-adding or diversification of product ranges, or to process unique livestock types and is not expected to have a significant impact on the livestock supply chain of other NSW businesses
- administrative services that serve only the local or regional community.

DRNSW, at its sole discretion, may take any other factors into account to determine that a business is ineligible for funding. These factors include but are not limited to: personal or business issues that could cause reputational or other risk to the NSW Government, and poor past performance of the applicant or key project personnel.

Ineligible Projects

The following projects are ineligible for funding under RJCF:

- projects located in Greater Sydney (including the Blue Mountains, Hawkesbury and Wollondilly), and Newcastle or Wollongong LGAs
- projects funding the day-to-day operations of business or focusing primarily on marketing and promotion
- projects requiring ongoing funding from the NSW Government
- projects not aligned to the objectives of the RJCF
- projects that would proceed and be delivered on the same timeline without government investment support
- projects that have already commenced prior to an offer of grant funding being made for the scope requested in the application
- projects that will have significant negative competitive impacts on other NSW businesses legitimately competing in the same market and/or competing for resources in the NSW supply chains
- projects that have already received NSW Government or other funding for the same outputs and outcomes. However, a project is eligible if funding from both sources is required to enable the project to proceed. For example, if both Australian Government assistance and assistance from RJCF is required to realise the total project outcomes). If the project can achieve the same outcomes through assistance already provided, then the project would not be eligible for RJCF funding.

Competitive Impacts

The provision of financial assistance to businesses will require consideration of the impact on NSW competitors and NSW supply chains. Competition issues will be reviewed as part of the assessment process to avoid advantaging or disadvantaging businesses legitimately competing in the same market.

The Assessment Panel, at its sole discretion, may determine that a business is ineligible for funding if the provision of government financial assistance will have a significant negative impact on NSW competition and NSW supply chains.

Eligible Projects



Eligible Projects

Eligible projects must:

- be located in one of the 93 regional NSW Local Government Areas (LGAs), the Unincorporated Far West or Lord Howe Island
- create or retain direct Full Time Equivalent (FTE) jobs* in regional NSW that are sustainable without additional NSW Government investment beyond the grant
- demonstrate the project would not occur in regional NSW at all, or in the same timeframe, without government investment
- be completed by 30 May 2025. It is recommended applicants have a COVID plan in place to mitigate any potential delays due to COVID
- provide proof of \$20 million of public liability insurance at time of contracting
- secure approvals to meet project timeframes
- confirm secured cash co-contribution.

*Note: Jobs must be directly employed by the applicant/ joint applicants and not through labour hire firms. One FTE position is equal to a 'standard working week' of 35 hours.

Eligible Grant Amounts

The minimum grant amount per application is \$100,000. The maximum grant amount per application is \$10,000,000. All grants are GST exclusive. GST will be applied on top of the agreed grant value when payment is made.

Co-contributions

All applicants must provide a co-contribution.

Co-contributions must be cash and at least 50 per cent of the total project cost unless there are extenuating circumstances. In this case, applicants are required to provide supporting evidence for being unable to meet this requirement.

Eligible Costs

Grants may be used for capital and other expenses directly related to the delivery of eligible projects that support job creation and/or retention. This may include:

- purchasing, constructing, installing and/or commissioning new plant, equipment and/or machinery
- purchasing, constructing, establishing and/or fitting out new facilities, buildings or hubs
- purchasing technology and/or intellectual property (IP) required to undertake the project
- purchase of land (if necessary for the project and suitable alternatives to rent do not exist)
- upgrading existing facilities, buildings, plant, equipment, machinery and/or technology where necessary to deliver the project and achieve its outcomes
- cost of contractors to construct new buildings and facilities
- costs relating to activities that directly contribute to, or enable knowledge sharing (i.e. reports, database development)
- project management and administration costs up to 10 per cent of project cost
- contingency costs up to 25 per cent of project cost

All applicants should consider how they can support accessibility for people with disability above the Australian Standards (AS)1428.1-2009, and they should adhere to universal design principles when undertaking new or upgraded site works and fit out.

Ineligible Costs

The following costs are ineligible unless otherwise agreed by DRNSW:

- contributions made 'in-kind'
- repayment of existing debts or budget deficits
- administrative, operational and maintenance costs not related to the project
- ongoing staff wages and salaries
- ongoing rental expenses, unless they form a small part of a larger project that anchors the applicant to the location
- non-fixed equipment, unless it forms a small part of a larger project that anchors the applicant to the location
- costs already funded by insurance or other NSW or Australian Government programs
- costs that have been incurred prior to the applicant receiving a Letter of Offer of grant funding
- costs incurred in the preparation of a grant application or related documentation
- costs that require recurrent or ongoing funding from the NSW Government
- costs relating solely to marketing, advertising or product promotion, including education and information campaigns.



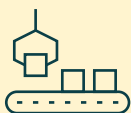
Example of Eligible Projects



Examples of eligible projects under RJCF Round Three include:



replacement, upgrade or adaptation of existing plant and equipment including technology or energy efficiency upgrades



establishment of an additional production line for an existing regional NSW business



onshoring in a regional NSW location of activity currently done overseas



development of new regionally significant and /or iconic tourism experiences and visitor attractions creating new inter-state or international demand in the region (without impacting other NSW tourism businesses)



relocating or expanding a business operation from out-of-state or internationally to regional NSW.



Table 2 provides examples of specific projects that are eligible for funding under RJCF.

This is not an exhaustive list of projects. It is designed to give applicants an idea of the type of projects and costs that are eligible and the supporting documentation that might be required for their category of project. Section 5 (below) outlines the required documentation for individual applications in further detail.

Project	Eligible Costs can include:	Project-specific documentation might include:
<p>Expansion of existing factory to enable further commercialisation and scaling-up of current product range.</p> <p>The project will increase production and create 20 new sustainable jobs for the business.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchase of equipment for new production line to be installed at an existing factory • Costs incurred in installation/ commission of new equipment • Training and development costs directly related to the project, within the project period 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Status of any permissions or approvals applicable to the project and their status, for example, development approval, landowner's consent (where applicable), other regulatory bodies such as Therapeutics Goods Administration 2. Project plan which includes a detailed scope (including diagrams/drawings/ plans and timeframes), program detailing key project milestones, statement on project governance 3. A detailed budget breakdown of all project capital works including fit-out and equipment and installation (including quotes), contingencies, site preparation, training 4. Quotes for construction/fit-out of factory, equipment and other items required to implement scope
<p>Upgrades to equipment, including the purchase of advanced machinery to increase production capacity and capitalise on export market opportunities.</p> <p>The project will increase production, and open international market opportunities, enabling the retention of 15 jobs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchase of equipment to be installed at an existing factory • Costs incurred in installation/ commission of new equipment 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Status covering any permissions or approvals relevant to the project (outlined above) 2. Project plan in detail (outlined above) 3. Detailed budget breakdown (outlined above) 4. Quotes for purchase and installation of equipment and other items required to implement scope
<p>Scaling up an existing software prototype to commercialise at industrial scale and take to market.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capitalised labour, technology, marketing and administration required to upscale and market the software for the period of the project only • Cost of any equipment or capital required as part of the project 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Project plan which includes a clear project scope, software description, and methodology, and all phases of the delivery from development to implementation 2. Research documentation that describes the need for the project in the market, with supporting evidence from actual or potential investors/buyers 3. A detailed 'Go to Market/Go Live' strategy if not already in market

Project	Eligible Costs can include:	Project-specific documentation might include:
<p>Relocation and expansion of existing branch into regional NSW, includes the construction and fit-out of a new factory/warehouse.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchase of land (if necessary for the project and suitable alternatives to rent do not exist) • Infrastructure and site preparation costs • Purchase of materials required to construct and fit-out factory/warehouse • Cost of contractors to construct the new factory • Electrical and plumbing fit-out of factory/warehouse • External project management costs 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Status covering any permissions or approvals relevant to the project (outlined above) 2. Project plan in detail (outlined above) 3. Detailed budget breakdown (outlined above) 4. Quotes for purchase and installation of equipment and other items required to implement scope 5. Cost of land purchase and relevant documentation to support land purchase instead of rental costs. 6. Quotes for construction/fit-out of factory and other items required to implement scope
<p>Onshoring the manufacturing and assembly of traditionally imported products.</p> <p>The project will increase Australia's sovereign capability and create 100 sustainable jobs for the business.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site development and establishment costs • Purchase of materials and equipment required to construct and fit-out the manufacturing facility • Costs associated with installation and delivery of machinery 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Status covering any permissions or approvals relevant to the project (outlined above) 2. Project plan in detail (outlined above) 3. Detailed budget breakdown (outlined above) 4. Quotes for purchase, delivery and installation of equipment 5. Quotes for construction/fit-out of factory and other items required to implement scope
<p>Expansion of a tourist attraction park, including the installation of new one-of-a kind experiences that will grow interstate and international visitation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscaping costs and site preparation costs associated with the project • Infrastructure and site preparation costs • Purchase of materials and equipment required to construct and operate the visitor experience • Cost of external contractors to construct specialised equipment • External project management costs 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Research documentation that supports the uniqueness of project in the region and outlines the potential increase of overnight visitation through comparative data 2. Status covering any permissions or approvals relevant to the project (outlined above) 3. Project plan in detail (outlined above) 4. Detailed budget breakdown (outlined above) 5. Quotes for purchase, delivery and installation of equipment

Assessment Criteria

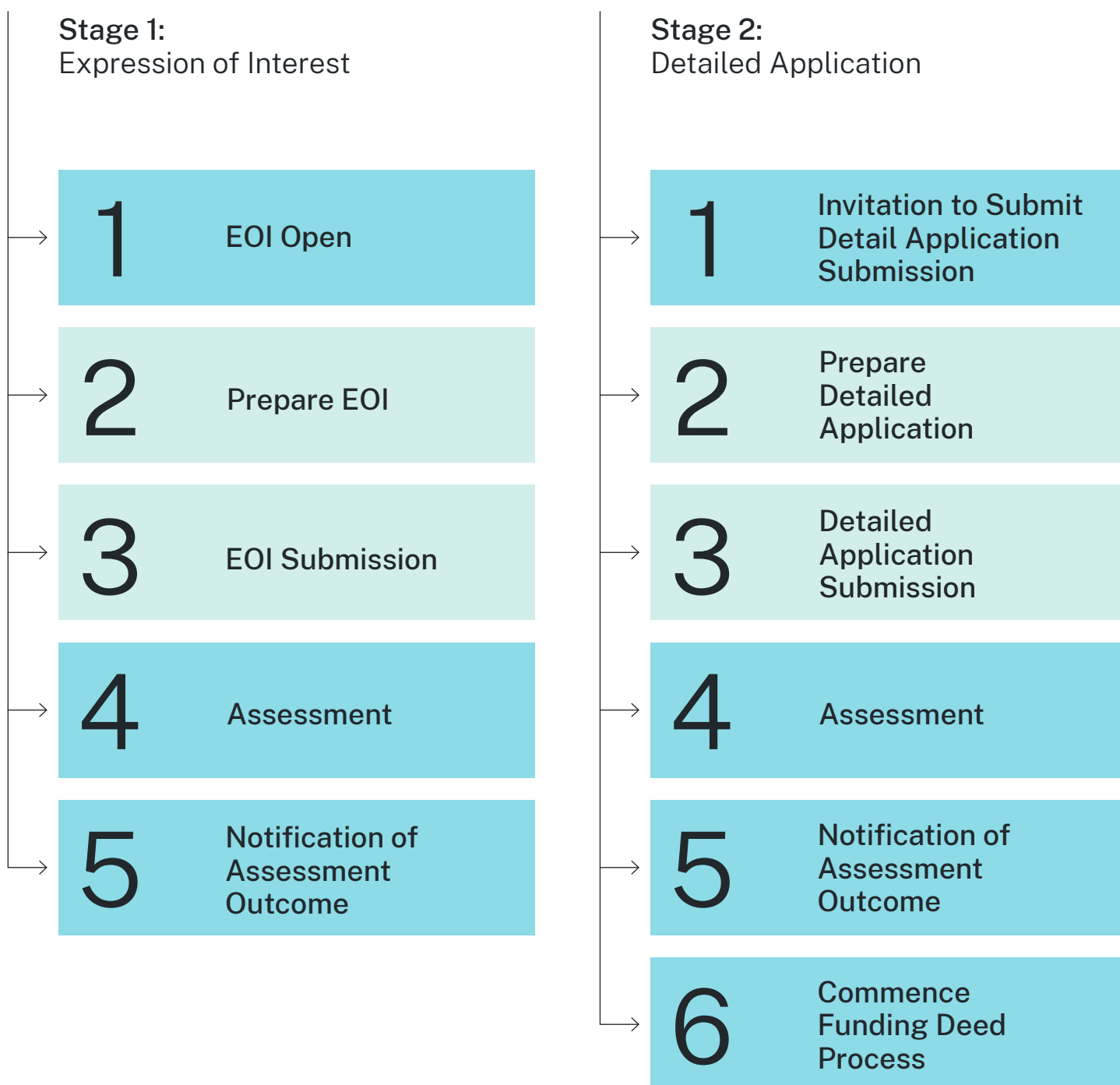
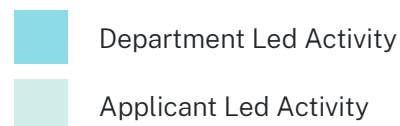
Applications for RJCF Round Three will be assessed against the following criteria.

Criteria	Requirement
1 Strategic alignment	<p>How strongly the project aligns to relevant NSW Government policies or strategies, including the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 20-Year Economic Vision for Regional NSW nsw.gov.au/a-20-year-economic-vision-for-regional-nsw-refresh• 2040 Economic Blueprint treasury.nsw.gov.au/nsw-economy/nsw-2040-economic-blueprint• relevant Regional Economic Development Strategy nsw.gov.au/regional-nsw/regional-economic-development-strategies <p>How strongly the project aligns to the objectives of the RJCF. Considerations include the potential impact on NSW competitors or supply chains.</p>
2 Job creation and retention	<p>The number and cost-effectiveness of jobs (FTE) created or retained directly within the organisation based in regional NSW for a specified period. Cost-effectiveness will be measured by the grant contribution request per job created or retained, directly employed with the applicant or joint applicants.</p>
3 Expected return on government investment and economic benefits	<p>The value of the contribution of the project to the NSW economy as determined through a Cost-Benefit Analysis producing a Net Present Value / Investment (NPV/I) and Benefit-to-Cost Ratio (BCR). The calculation will be conducted or coordinated by the Department of Regional NSW based on the information provided by the applicant.</p> <p>Projects will generally be required to produce a positive NPV/I. Projects that do not achieve a positive NPV/I may still be considered if unquantifiable benefits are expected to be significant, including if the project:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• is expected to produce agglomeration, spillover, or “wider economic benefits” through developing of industry clusters, precincts, or the development of new industries being a benefit that while not quantifiable is expected to be significant• provides a clear improvement in productivity that is not able to be quantified as part of the analysis but is expected to be significant• mitigates a clear and significant issue relating to the supply chain or sovereign risk has a level of importance to the maintenance of an industry sector, local economy or local community and there is a risk of clear and serious impacts (for example, structural dislocation) if the project is not approved.

Criteria	Requirement
4 Deliverability	<p>How strongly an applicant can demonstrate the project will be able to be delivered by May 2025. Key considerations include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the applicant has demonstrated skills and capacity to deliver the project, as demonstrated through past performance in delivering similar projects, or appropriate expertise available (i.e. external project management service provider)• suitability and experience of the staff or arrangements to deliver the project including consideration of procurement of services from Aboriginal businesses• readiness to commence the project, including status of required regulatory and/or development approvals• the project budget represents value for money for the scope being delivered• suitability of the detailed business plan, business case (if required) feasibility plan, budget, technical plans and/or cost estimates supporting the project• the applicant has assessed delivery risks and included controls for these risks• the applicant has demonstrated they are financially viable and are likely to remain so over the duration of the project.
5 Affordability	<p>The secured cash co-contribution to the project as a percentage of the total project cost. Co-contributions must be evidenced as committed cash from the applicant, partners, and other non-NSW Government sources.</p> <p>Co-contributions should be at least 50 per cent of the total project cost. Applicants are required to provide supporting evidence for being unable to meet this requirement.</p>
6 Outcomes for young people, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander individuals and people with disability	<p>How strongly the project will demonstrably increase employment or business outcomes, and skills and training outcomes for identified priority groups including Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander individuals and communities, young people and people with a disability.</p>

Application Process

The application process for RJCF Round 3 has two stages:



Stage 1: Expression of Interest

The EOI stage provides an initial entry point for organisations seeking funding under RJCF. Applicants may submit more than one EOI for eligible projects.

Each EOI application must include:

- organisation eligibility details as listed on page 7, primary activities of the organisation, industry sector, business ownership structure and project contact details
- financial statements (trading, profit and loss statements, and balance sheets) for three continuous years starting from the latest available year or other evidence of financial viability if statements are not available (for example a signed statement from an external accountant and shareholder financial statements where available).
- a short description of:
 - project scope and proposed use of the grant, including the aim, objectives, deliverables/outputs, timeframes for delivery, and location
 - proposed governance arrangements to manage the project
 - organisation's experience in delivering projects similar in scope and scale to the proposed project
 - (if applicable) status of any permissions or approvals relevant to the project or pathway to achieve all relevant permissions and approvals within the proposed project timeframe, for example, development approval, landowner's consent, other regulatory approvals such as Therapeutics Goods Administration approvals
 - key competitors in the industry, including whether the project will be competing against out-of-state goods and services, or substituting out of state inputs in the production process or supply chain, or primarily competing against other NSW businesses for markets or supplies.
- a short description of the project's expected benefits, including:
 - expected share of project revenue from interstate or international sales at full capacity
 - how the project will contribute to employment and training outcomes for young people, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander individuals and people with disability
 - other expected benefits.
- project budget including:
 - estimated total cost of the project
 - grant amount requested
 - cash co-contribution amount and source.
- estimate of the number of new and retained FTE jobs created by the project

All EOIs must be submitted online via the EOI Application Form in the SmartyGrants portal available at nsw.gov.au/RJCF. EOIs must be submitted with all required documentation prior to the closing date and time specified in these guidelines to be eligible for further assessment. Acceptance of late submissions will be at the sole discretion of DRNSW.

EOIs must meet the Eligibility Criteria and demonstrate compliance with the Assessment Criteria outlined in these guidelines to be considered suitable for progression to the Detailed Application stage.

An EOI that is unable to meet all Eligibility Criteria at the time of application may be considered suitable for progression to the Detailed Application stage at the sole discretion of DRNSW. To be considered, the applicant must be able to provide supporting evidence for why their EOI application should be considered despite being unable to meet the requirements.

Applications for Stage 2, Detailed Application, are by invitation only and will not be accepted if an EOI has not been submitted.

Stage 2: Detailed Application (by invitation only)

DRNSW will contact successful applicants from the EOI process to discuss the Detailed Application process including confirming the applicant's capacity and willingness to participate. DRNSW will provide a link to an online Detailed Application form, Data Sheet (for project financials) and other templates for applicants to complete. DRNSW will be available to support applicants with their preparation of applications and supporting documents.

Detailed Applications will be considered through a competitive grants assessment process whereby each application will be assessed on its comparative merits.

Each Detailed Application must include:

- any updates to the information provided in the EOI such as organisation details, project scope, proposed use of the grant, governance arrangements, financial statements, etc
- detailed Project Plan which includes a detailed scope and identifies all elements of the project (template provided)
- completed data sheet (template provided) which includes:
 - a detailed budget identifying all project costs including contingency
 - information required for calculation of quantifiable benefits including incremental business revenue and costs from the project, incremental wages, intermediate input costs, profit margin, incremental employment from the project, and share of employment from unemployed or disadvantaged groups.
- business plan or other supporting documents explaining the underlying assumptions across the project's lifecycle (demand, sales channels, value proposition and risks), for example:
 - justification for undertaking the project
 - evaluation of the costs, benefits, risks and assumptions of alternative options to deliver the project
 - financial analysis to demonstrate the project is financially feasible and supports the information provided in the Data Sheet
 - commercial analysis to identify the preferred procurement and delivery strategy
 - management analysis to demonstrate the preferred option can be successfully delivered (governance, resourcing, schedule, risk, benefits, change etc).
- cost estimates and/or quotes (dated in the previous six months) and technical documents supporting the detailed budget and project plan
- evidence of at least \$20 million in public liability insurance or be able to secure it before entering into a Funding Deed if successful
- signed Probity Declaration Form
- experience in delivering projects similar in scope and scale to the project or otherwise demonstrates capability and capacity to deliver the project
- evidence of project readiness, including status of development applications, landowner's consent and/or regulatory approvals where required or applicable
- confirmation of co-contribution to the project, including from the applicant, partners and other sources, that demonstrates to DRNSW that the applicant has sufficient funds available for the required co-contribution amount (for example, bank statements, shareholders financial statements, loan documentation or financial approvals)
- details of other expected benefits of the project and how they will be measured, including how the project aligns with NSW Government strategic priorities.

The level of information provided should be proportional to the scale and complexity of the project. Applications with insufficient evidence or detail will be disadvantaged in the assessment process.

All Detailed Applications must be submitted online via the Detailed Application form in the SmartyGrants portal available at nsw.gov.au/RJCF. Detailed Applications, with all required supporting documentation, must be submitted prior to the specified closing date and time to be eligible for further assessment. Acceptance of late submissions will be at the discretion of DRNSW.

Assessment process



Overview

The assessment process will be coordinated by DRNSW and has two stages:

Stage 1 – Expression of Interest (EOI)

The purpose of the EOI assessment is to identify eligible projects that are considered of sufficient interest to the NSW Government to warrant further development and progression to a more defined project through the preparation of a Detailed Application. Final approval to progress to the Detailed Application stage will be made by an executive from DRNSW.

Stage 2 – Detailed Application (by invitation only)

The purpose of the Detailed Application assessment is to develop a shortlist of eligible projects to be recommended to the NSW Government for funding consideration.

DRNSW will assess applications against the eligibility and assessment criteria outlined in these Guidelines and recommend suitable projects to the Assessment Panel for review.

An assessment panel will be convened to review the outcomes of the assessment process, and provide objective, independent recommendations of projects that are considered suitable for funding under RJCF.

The Assessment Panel will consist of:

- two representatives from the Department of Regional NSW, including one as chair
- one representative from Investment NSW
- one representative from Training Services NSW.

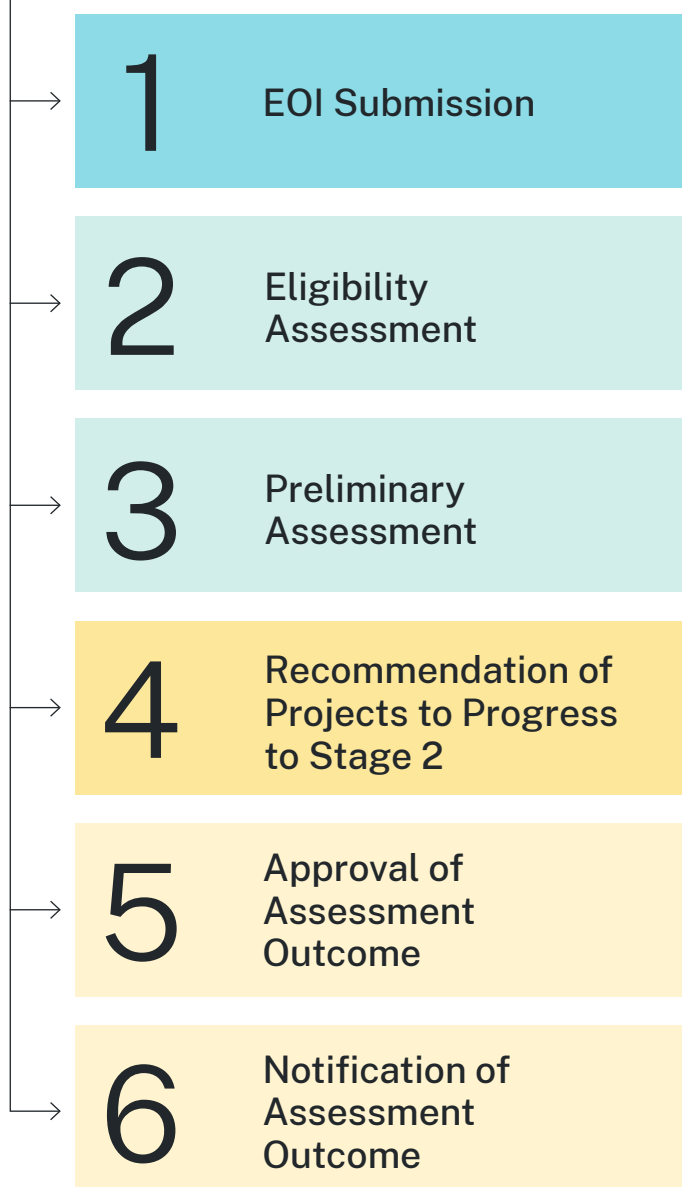
An independent probity advisor will be present during the Assessment Panel meetings.

DRNSW may request additional information or clarification from the applicant during the assessment process. Advice may also be sought from other NSW Government agencies or other sources to assist in the assessment of projects. Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the process.

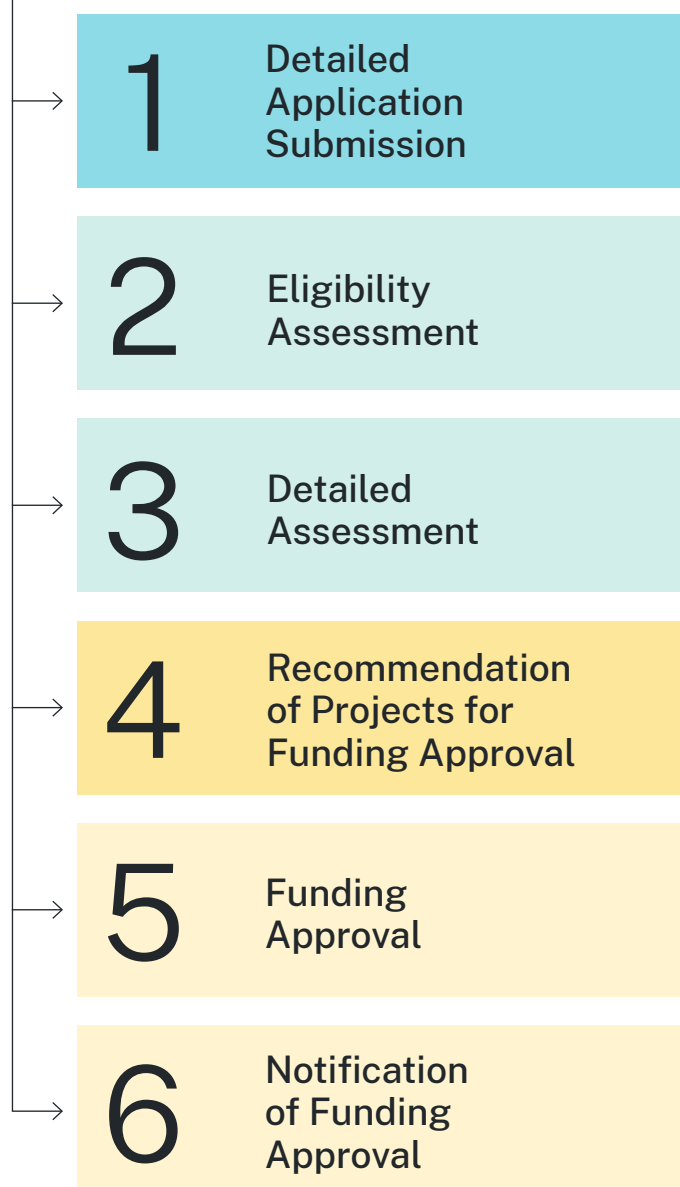
Assessment Process



Stage 1: Expression of Interest



Stage 2: Detailed Application



Stage 1: Expression of Interest

Eligibility Assessment

DRNSW will assess all EOI applications against the Eligibility Criteria identified in these guidelines. Where there is uncertainty or unintended outcomes arising from the eligibility requirements, DRNSW will take a discretionary approach that, in its opinion, best achieves the objectives of RJCF. DRNSW will recommend eligible projects be assessed by the Assessment Panel.

Final eligibility determinations will be made at the discretion of the Assessment Panel, based on advice and recommendations from DRNSW. Any ineligible applications received will not be considered for further assessment.

Project Assessment Criteria

DRNSW will undertake a preliminary assessment of all eligible EOIs against the Assessment Criteria identified in these guidelines. DRNSW may choose to not assess EOIs against the Expected Return On Government Investment and Economic Benefits Criteria at the EOI stage due to insufficient information available.

An application must demonstrate compliance with the Assessment Criteria to be considered suitable for progression to the Detailed Application stage.

Due diligence of the applicant, including review of financial statements (or other evidence of financial viability if statements are not available) will also be undertaken at this stage to determine the financial strength or risks of the applicant.

Assessment Panel Review and Recommendation

The Assessment Panel will review the outcomes of this process and determine whether each EOI should be recommended for approval to progress to the Detailed Application stage. When making a recommendation, the Assessment Panel will consider the relative merits of each project against the Eligibility and Assessment Criteria, as well as the advice and recommendations from DRNSW. The Assessment Panel may also recommend specific areas for an applicant to address when submitting a Detailed Application.

Final approval to progress to the Detailed Application stage will be made by an executive from DRNSW, as the Decision Maker.



Stage 2: Detailed Application

Eligibility Assessment

DRNSW will confirm that all Detailed Applications continue to meet the Eligibility Criteria identified in these guidelines. Final eligibility determinations will be made at the discretion of the Assessment Panel, with advice and recommendations from DRNSW. Ineligible applications will not be considered for further assessment.

Detailed Assessment

The Assessment Team will assess eligible applications against the six Assessment Criteria outlined in these guidelines. DRNSW may ask applicants to provide additional information to assist in the assessment process. Subject matter experts and/or technical advisors may be consulted to assist in the assessment of projects.

Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the process.

Assessment Panel Review and Recommendation

The Assessment Panel will determine the suitability of each application for funding under RJCF. The Assessment Panel will consider the relative merits of each application against the:

- outcomes of the Detailed Assessment
- economic benefits of the project as measured by net benefit per dollar of government grant
- financial strength and viability of the applicant
- any personal, businesses and/or probity issues and risks that could cause reputational or other risk to the NSW Government.

The Assessment Panel may also consider the following factors when assessing the suitability of a project for funding:

- geographical and industry spread of projects across regional NSW
- the amount of funding available
- suitability of projects for other government funding opportunities
- whether applications that have requested consideration for extenuating circumstances (for example, less than the minimum required co-contribution, late submissions) and have provided supporting evidence for being unable to meet a particular requirement
- whether further information is required to make an informed decision and delay the status of an application.

An independent Probity Advisor will be present during the Assessment Panel meetings. Industry experts, either internal or external to the NSW Government, may advise the Assessment Panel during the assessment.

Decision-making

The Assessment Panel will provide advice to DRNSW on the suitability of each project for funding.

The Assessment Panel may recommend part-funding of projects if there is insufficient funding available for the whole project or where only a component of the project is considered suitable/eligible. Where possible, applicants should use a staged approach to project planning to facilitate this option.

Projects may be referred to other NSW or Australian Government funding programs for consideration.

The Decision Maker approving projects and funding amounts is the relevant executive from DRNSW.

Probity Advice

An independent Probity Advisor will provide guidance throughout the decision-making process on any matters 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.

Successful Applicants



Notification

Successful applicants will be notified via a Letter of Offer and receive a Confidentiality Agreement. Applicants may be requested to keep the grant confidential for a period of time if an announcement is likely to be made by the NSW Government. The contracting process will commence from the time the signed Letter of Offer is returned to DRNSW.



Photo credit: Sol Images

Funding Deed

Successful applicants will be required to enter into a Funding Deed with the NSW Government. A sample Funding Deed template will be made available on the DRNSW website, to show successful applicants the terms and conditions it may include. All successful applicants will be paid the approved grant amount plus 10 per cent GST.

The NSW Government makes no binding funding commitment to an applicant unless and until both parties sign a Funding Deed.

To enter a Funding Deed, applicants are required to confirm project information and provide a copy of all relevant and applicable insurances, project approvals (e.g. development approvals, landowner's consent) and other supporting documentation relevant to the project or as requested by DRNSW as part of the contracting process. The first grant payment will be made once any and all required documentation has been provided to, and approved by DRNSW through forms provided in the online portal and the Funding Deed has been signed by both parties.

Grants will be paid as per the instalment structure within the agreed Funding Deed. Timing and requirements will vary at NSW Government's discretion, depending on the scope and risk of the project. Evidence of expenditure will be required to claim instalments and acquit eligible costs.

Successful applicants may be required to submit project progress reports (template will be provided) to the NSW Government as outlined in the Funding Deed. Examples of measures to be included in the report are:

- completion of project activities
- number of FTE positions created as a result of the project
- construction jobs created through the delivery of the project
- employment outcomes for young people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and people with disability.

Important terms and conditions

Applicants should note the following:

- The NSW Government may choose to publicly announce funding for individual applications, including the amount of funding and the expected economic benefits created by the funding. It may also use information provided in the application to develop case studies for departmental use.
- Requests for variations or changes to the project will only be considered in limited circumstances.
- Successful applicants will be required to pay back unspent funds, or any funds not spent in accordance with the Funding Deed.
- Successful applicants will be required to participate in a program evaluation after the project has commenced. The evaluation will require applicants to provide evidence of how projects have resulted in measurable benefits consistent with the objectives of the RJCF.
- All recipients of NSW Government funding must acknowledge this financial support as per the [Sponsorship and Funding Acknowledgement website](#)
- All awarded grants will be GST exclusive. GST will be applied on top of the agreed grant value when payment is made. Grants are assessable income for taxation purposes, unless exempted by taxation law. It is recommended applicants seek independent professional advice about taxation obligations or seek assistance from the Australian Taxation Office. The NSW Government does not provide advice on individual taxation circumstances.
- DRNSW reserves the right to undertake an audit of grant funding within a seven-year period of signing the funding deed.

Unsuccessful Applicants

Unsuccessful applicants will be notified in writing of the outcome of their application and will be offered a feedback information session.

Getting Support

Frequently Asked Questions and other resources to assist with applications may be updated regularly at nsw.gov.au/grants-and-funding. The Grants and Funding Finder should be considered the authoritative source of all Grant information.

DRNSW staff are available to support applicants with their applications, at all application stages. Email regionalsw.business@regional.nsw.gov.au or call 1300 679 673 to connect with staff.

Applicants should seek advice from their legal, business and financial advisers to determine the suitability of the funding before applying.

Complaints

Any concerns about the program or individual applications should be submitted in writing to business@regional.nsw.gov.au. If you do not agree with the way DRNSW has handled the issue, you may wish to contact the NSW Ombudsman via ombo.nsw.gov.au.

Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (NSW)

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

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

- requiring government agencies to make certain sorts of information freely available
- encouraging government agencies to release as much other 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.

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The guidelines are subject to change at any time at the sole discretion of DRNSW.

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