

September 2022

Frequently Asked Questions

Critical Minerals and High-Tech Metals Activation Fund Round 1: Stream 1 – Project Activation Studies

What is the Critical Minerals and High-Tech Metal Activation Fund?

The Critical Minerals and High-Tech Metals Activation Fund (the Fund) is a \$130 million investment by the NSW Government over 5 years to support the acceleration and development of the critical minerals and high-tech metals industry in NSW.

The Fund will support the critical minerals and high-tech metals industry across the supply chain, including supporting commercialisation and scale up of the industry, strategic infrastructure investment to address project blockages, attract investment, and support for skills and workforce development.

How is the grants program being delivered?

The grants program is being delivered across multiple rounds.

Round One has been designed to accelerate the activation of critical minerals and high-tech metals through two funding streams:

- Stream 1 – Project Activation Studies (this grant opportunity) is designed to support studies which are necessary to activate or scale-up projects in the critical minerals and high-tech metals sector.
- Stream 2 – Enabling Project Infrastructure is designed to provide funding for key infrastructure needed to develop investment-ready projects nearing construction and operation and to support downstream mineral processing.

The Streams will run independently of each other and are not sequential.

How many rounds will there be?

There will be a minimum of two rounds. The guidelines and eligibility for future rounds may vary based on the outcomes of round one.

Who can apply for funding under Stream 1?

Applicants must hold an Australian Business Number (ABN) and must operate, or be developing a mineral project, or conducting research within the critical minerals and high-tech metals industry, or as part of the critical minerals/high-tech metals supply chain, and be one of the following:

- a company incorporated in Australia
- a company limited by guarantee
- an incorporated trustee on behalf of a corporate trust

- an incorporated association or co-operative
 - a Publicly Funded Research Organisation
 - a registered Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Corporation
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Who is not eligible for funding under Stream 1?

Ineligible applicants include:

- local councils or their Section 355 Committees
 - Joint Organisations of Councils
 - Australian or NSW Government agencies
 - sole traders or individuals
 - unincorporated associations
 - businesses that are insolvent
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Are joint applications, or applications from consortiums allowed?

Applications from consortium are encouraged. A lead applicant must be nominated and must satisfy the eligibility criteria. A letter of support is required from each organisation involved in the application.

Do I need to apply for Stream 1 to be eligible for Stream 2 or future rounds?

The streams will be delivered independently of each other and are not sequential – applicants to Stream 2 are not required to have submitted an application for Stream 1.

Can companies apply for more than one grant?

Each organisation is permitted to submit one application for funding under Stream 1.

Is there a maximum or minimum grant amount?

Yes, the minimum amount is \$300,000 and the maximum grant amount is \$500,000, excluding GST.

Is co-contribution required?

Yes, a cash co-contribution of at least 50% of the total studies cost is required.

If the lead applicant is a Publicly Funded Research Organisation, the co-contribution can be provided as up to 25% in-kind, and 25% in cash.

What commodities are covered? How are 'critical minerals' and 'high-tech metals' defined?

Critical minerals are metallic or non-metallic element that are essential for the functioning of our modern technologies, economies or national security and there is a risk that its supply chains could be disrupted.

High-tech metals are those metals that support the rapidly growing high-technology industries, which are fuelled by consumer demand for a high-tech, connected and environmentally sustainable future.

Projects that support development and use of minerals that occur in NSW will be given preference.

To see a list of all eligible commodities, please see Attachment A in the grant guidelines.

What type of studies will be eligible for funding under Stream One?

Studies that progress the feasibility and development of critical minerals and high-tech metals extraction in NSW including pre-feasibility studies, feasibility studies, mine waste processing studies, metallurgical studies, infrastructure studies, water, and environmental studies.

R&D studies focusing on minerals processing, downstream applications of NSW critical minerals, product value-adding and new technology development to support activation of the value chain.

Please refer to the program guidelines for a list of examples of eligible studies. \

Can staff salaries be funded?

Staff salaries are not eligible for funding under Stream One grants. It is the intent that funded studies are delivered by external technical experts/consultants engaged by the applicant. Supporting cost evidence in the form of a proposal or quote is required as part of the grant application.

However, if the lead applicant is a Publicly Funded Research Organisation, staff salaries can be included as part of the in-kind co-contribution (up to 25% of the study costs).

How will the applications be assessed?

The Department of Regional NSW will review applications against program eligibility and the assessment criteria outlined in the guidelines.

An Assessment Panel will review project eligibility and assessment outcomes and shortlist applications that are deemed suitable/not suitable for funding. Factors considered include the total amount of funding available, along with the geographical distribution of applications across regional NSW and the diversity of funded activities and commodities.

An independent probity advisor will be present during Assessment Panel meetings. Funding recommendations made by the Assessment Panel will be considered and approved by the Department of Regional NSW.

Does my project need to be based in NSW?

All applications must deliver, or have the potential to deliver, significant benefits to the critical minerals and high-tech metals sector in NSW.

If the application relates to a specific mineral resource, the specific resource must be located in NSW.

Is exploration work covered under Stream One?

Exploration work will not be funded under Stream One.

A separate program being delivered by NSW Mining, Exploration and Geoscience is the New Frontiers Exploration Program which is providing \$1.5 million in funding for exploration drilling and geophysical programs in Round 5.

More details on the New Frontiers Program can be found here:

<https://www.regional.nsw.gov.au/meg/geoscience/new-frontiers-exploration-program>

Is Sliver included? What commodities are included?

Yes, silver is included as a high-tech metal. A list of all eligible commodities can be found in Attachment A of the guidelines.

Who can I contact with questions?

Contact the Department of Regional NSW you need more information on eligibility, time frames or if you have questions about the application form on the portal.

Phone: [02 4063 6860](tel:0240636860)

Email: MEGindustry.development@regional.nsw.gov.au