

September 2022

# Frequently Asked Questions

## Critical Minerals and High-Tech Metals Activation Fund Round 1: Stream 2 – Enabling Project Infrastructure

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### 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 five 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.

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### 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 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 (this grant opportunity) 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.

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### 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.

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### Who can apply for funding under Stream 2?

Applicants must hold an Australian Business Number (ABN) and must operate, or be developing a mineral project in 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 2?

Ineligible applicants include:

- local councils or their Section 355 Committees
  - Joint Organisations of Councils
  - Australian or NSW Government departments
  - 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 participating in the application.

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## Do I need to apply for Stream 1 to be eligible to apply to 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.

Lodging an application to Round 1 will not prevent you from applying to future rounds of the fund.

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## How can I register for a Readiness Check? Are they mandatory?

Applicants are strongly encouraged to undertake a Readiness Check with a Department representative prior to finalising their application.

A Readiness Check is a virtual meeting or phone call with the Department representative and is designed to clarify eligibility requirements of the fund and provide support to the applicant in lodging their application.

Readiness checks must be completed by 13 October 2022 and can be arranged by emailing: [industry.engagement@regional.nsw.gov.au](mailto:industry.engagement@regional.nsw.gov.au).

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## Can international or out of state companies apply for funding?

Yes, applicants can be based internationally, interstate or in either metropolitan or regional NSW provided they satisfy the eligibility criteria.

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## When does the infrastructure need to be completed?

All infrastructure funded will need to be completed by 31 December 2026.

All invoices for the project need to be provided to the Department by 31 March 2027.

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## I have not secured the approvals needed for my project, am I eligible to apply?

All applications must begin construction within 18 months of executing the funding deed, and already have, or be able to secure any necessary planning approvals to align with this timeframe.

A second round of the Fund will be launched in 2023 to provide another opportunity for funding of infrastructure projects.

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## Can companies apply for more than one application?

Each organisation is permitted to submit one application for funding under Stream 2.

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## Is there a maximum or minimum grant amount (the amount the NSW Government will fund)?

The minimum grant amount is \$2 million and the maximum grant amount is \$10 million, excluding GST. This is the amount of funding that the NSW Government will contribute, please note that a 50% cash co-contribution is required.

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## Is co-contribution required?

Yes, a cash co-contribution of at least 50% of the total project cost is required. The co-contribution must be in cash.

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## 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 the grant guidelines.

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## Are studies eligible for funding under Stream 2?

No. Funding for studies that relate to the development of critical minerals and high-tech metals sector in NSW including pre-feasibility studies, feasibility studies, infrastructure studies, research and development studies, and environmental studies are not eligible for funding under Stream 2. These studies may be eligible for funding under Stream 1 of the Fund.

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## How will the applications be assessed?

The Department of Regional NSW will review applications against program eligibility criteria and the weighted 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 Secretary, Department of Regional NSW.

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## Does my project need to be based in NSW?

Only infrastructure physically located in NSW will be funded under this Stream.

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

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## Is exploration work covered under Stream 2?

Exploration work is not eligible for funding under Stream 2.

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>

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## Is Silver included? What commodities are included?

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

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## Is infrastructure that contributes to multi-element projects eligible for funding under Stream 2?

Studies involving multi-element projects are eligible for funding under Stream 2 of the Fund, as long as one of the identified commodities is included in the list of Critical Minerals and High-Tech Metals. The list of eligible Critical Minerals and High-Tech metals can be found in the guidelines.

Please note, that during the assessment of a multi-element project, the Assessment Panel will only consider benefits and expected impact of the project which relate to the critical mineral or high-tech metal production. Any benefit or impact relating to a non-eligible commodity will not be considered.

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## Who can I contact with questions?

Contact the Department of Regional NSW if you need any additional support at:

**Email:** [industry.engagement@regional.nsw.gov.au](mailto:industry.engagement@regional.nsw.gov.au)