

Premier's Department

# Research Attraction and Acceleration Program: NSW Centres of Excellence Co- Investment Research Program

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Program Guidelines

February 2026



Grant Program Details	
Opening date and time	23/02/2026 2:00 PM
Closing date and time	16/03/2026 2:00 PM
Application outcome date	30/04/2026
Decision-maker	The Minister for Innovation, Science and Technology or delegate will consider recommendations from the Assessment Panel and make final decisions on whether to support the application.
NSW Government Agency	NSW Office of the Chief Scientist & Engineer
Type of grant opportunity	Targeted, competitive
Grant value (total available funding for the grant and the available individual grant amounts, excluding GST)	Successful applicants will be awarded funds from a maximum available pool of \$1,200,000 (excluding GST). Recommended funding levels will be at the discretion of the Assessment Panel. No single applicant is eligible to receive the full amount.
Enquiries	raap.grants@chiefscientist.nsw.gov.au

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# 1

Overview of program

# 1 Overview of grant/grants program

The NSW Government, through its Research Attraction & Acceleration Program (RAAP), supports investment in the state's research and development capability. A strong research and development (R&D) capability is a critical driver for innovation in the State's economy.

Research collaborations and high-level support areas of global technological, industrial or research strength is key to developing a deep-tech, highly skilled and globally competitive economy in NSW. Focusing innovation, R&D and partnerships in defined areas of global significance underpins the state's innovation capacity and international competitiveness.

The Commonwealth's Centres of Excellence (CoE), delivered by the Australian Research Council (ARC), provides funding to deliver focal points of expertise through which high-quality researchers maintain and develop Australia's international standing in research areas of national priority.

The benefits of investment in emerging research capabilities and fostering research collaborations across the innovation ecosystem are highlighted in several NSW Government strategic documents such as the NSW 20-Year R&D Roadmap, NSW Innovation Blueprint and NSW Industry Policy. These documents outline priority sectors, industries, technologies and applications of the NSW Government.

Funding is provided on a targeted competitive basis.

The NSW Centres of Excellence (CoE) Co-Investment Program (Program) will be administered in accordance with the [NSW Grants Administration Guide](#).

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## 1.1 Purpose and objectives

Research collaborations that address critical challenges and opportunities for industry are key to developing a deep-tech, highly skilled and globally competitive economy in NSW. Fostering innovation between academia and industry underpins the state's innovation capacity and its ability to turn emerging research into new industries, technologies and services.

In this RAAP funding round the NSW Government will provide co-investment support for NSW applicants who were successful in the Commonwealth's Centres of Excellence (CoE) 2026 Selection Round and that have a clear alignment with NSW government priorities (as outlined in the Industry Policy, the Innovation Blueprint and the 20-year R&D Roadmap).

The objectives of the Program are to:

- leverage Commonwealth funding to improve outcomes for NSW
- focus innovative and potentially transformational research towards addressing challenges in NSW's Innovation ecosystem
- develop relationships and build new networks with major national and international centres and research programs
- build NSW's human capacity in priority research areas and industries
- provide high-quality postgraduate and postdoctoral training environments within NSW to retain talent
- strengthen NSW-based Centres that have an impact on the wider community through interaction with higher education institutions, governments, industry and the private and non-profit sectors.

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## 1.2 Grant value

Funding will take the form of a cash contribution following the establishment of the Centre of Excellence and following the execution of a Funding Agreement between the applicant and the Department.

The grant must only be used on activities undertaken within NSW, and on staff, students or equipment located in NSW.

Successful applicants will be awarded funds from a maximum available pool of \$1,200,000 (excluding GST) with the final amount decided at the Department's discretion. The funding pool is open for eligible applicants however the amount recommended to the Department is at the discretion of the Assessment Panel. The quantum of funding awarded to successful applicants will depend on the overall quantity and quality of applications received. Note that no single application will receive the maximum allotted funding.

# 2

Selection criteria

## 2 Selection criteria

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### 2.1 Eligibility criteria

OCSE cannot consider your application if it does not satisfy all the eligibility criteria.

#### 2.1.1 Who is eligible to apply for the grant?

To be eligible to apply for the Program applicants must:

- be a NSW led bid awarded funding from the Commonwealth's Australian Research Council (ARC) Centres of Excellence 2025 Selection Round.
- be headquartered in NSW. For the purposes of this grant, headquarters is defined as the main administrative office of the Centre; and location of the CEO. Headquarters must remain in NSW for the period of the RAAP Agreement.
- Be undertaking at least 40 per cent of overall CoE operational spend in NSW.

#### 2.1.2 Who is not eligible to apply for the grant?

You are not eligible to apply for the Program if you are:

- an unsuccessful applicant under the Australian Research Council (ARC) Centres of Excellence 2025 Selection Round.

#### 2.1.3 Eligible costs

- fund employment of technical staff at the NSW nodes
- support or top-up scholarships or fellowships of students or post-doctoral researchers to be located within NSW
- support the Centre-related travel or exchanges of researchers who are based in NSW, or to support visits or exchanges of people to NSW
- support commercialisation or research translation support programs in NSW
- cover expenses related to rent or fit out of offices and laboratories located in NSW
- purchase or lease instrumentation or plant equipment located in NSW

You must demonstrate value for money by ensuring project costs are reasonable and reflective of market rates. We may use industry cost benchmarks to assess whether costs are reasonable.

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## 2.2 Assessment criteria

The Assessment Panel (Panel) will make recommendations for funding against the assessment criteria in Table 1. The criteria outlined will give the Panel insights into the CoE's overall 'mission', its alignment with NSW Government priorities, as well as the specific value of the requested RAAP funding.

It is important to note that the Panel is not likely to have specific technical or industry expertise relevant to your CoE so using plain English is important in developing an application.

Panel members will individually assess all eligible applications against each criterion set out below.

Table 1: Assessment Criteria

Criteria	Description	Weighting
Alignment of proposed activities with NSW Government priorities	Alignment of the proposed RAAP-funded activities with the NSW Industry Policy, NSW Innovation Blueprint and 20-year R&D Roadmap	25%
Value of the CoE's mission to NSW	Value of the CoE's proposed research or training in terms of the problem it will address and market/industry it will impact, including how it will strengthen the NSW research and innovation eco-system	25%
Value-add of RAAP funding to the overall CoE	Use and value-add of RAAP funding to the CoE, beyond the ARC-funded activities, and its clear expenditure within and benefits to NSW	25%
Contribution to skills and/or commercial capacity	How the CoE will contribute to skills, advanced education, training and workforce development, including commercialisation skills, in NSW priority industries	15%
Engagement and Collaboration	Demonstrated collaborative partnerships and engagement in NSW, nationally and internationally. Articulation of meaningful collaborations that will contribute to the innovation ecosystem in NSW	10%

# 3

Application process

## 3 Application process

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### 3.1 How to apply

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

Applications are due by **16 March 2026 14:00 AEST**.

To apply you must:

- complete the SmartyGrants online application
- provide all the information requested
- address all the eligibility criteria
- address all the assessment criteria
- include all necessary attachments
- submit your application by the timelines outlined in Section 3.2

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

Applicants must not lobby the NSW Government on an issue related or seen to be related to the Program 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 [raap.grants@chiefscientist.nsw.gov.au](mailto:raap.grants@chiefscientist.nsw.gov.au). We do not have to accept any additional information, nor requests from you to correct your application after the closing time. You cannot change your application after you have submitted your application.

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.

You should keep a copy of your application and any supporting documents.

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### 3.2 Key dates

You must submit an application between the published opening and closing dates.

**Table 2: Expected timing for this grant opportunity**

Activity	Timeframe
Applications open	23 February 2026
Applications close	16 March 2026
Notification of outcome and standard funding agreement	30 April 2026

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### 3.3 Queries during the application process

If you have any questions during the application period, please contact us at [raap.grants@chiefscientist.nsw.gov.au](mailto:raap.grants@chiefscientist.nsw.gov.au).

OCSE will endeavour to respond to questions within three working days.

# 4

Assessment process

## 4 Assessment process

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### 4.1 Assessment of grant applications

The assessment of applications will be led by the Department. Your application will be considered based on a two-stage process, as outlined below. Only eligible applications will move to the next stage. We consider eligible applications through a targeted competitive grant process.

Applicants' suitability for RAAP co-investment funding will be based on the proposed research to be undertaken, the benefits to NSW, and proportion of expenditure/activities to occur in NSW, as reflected in their application form.

#### Stage 1: Eligibility Assessment

OCSE Secretariat will conduct an initial eligibility screening for all applications according to the published eligibility criteria in these Program Guidelines that are set out Section 2.1: Eligibility Criteria.

Only applications that meet all eligibility criteria will progress to assessment against the assessment criteria.

#### Stage 2: Assessment by the Assessment Panel

The Panel will assess each application on its merits and compare it to other eligible applications before recommending which applications are to be awarded a grant.

On behalf of the Panel, the Department may seek additional information about you or your application.

The Panel has the discretion to recommend that an applicant receive a smaller amount of funding than indicated in their application.

The Panel members are expected to assess all eligible applications unless they have a declared conflict of interest for a certain application(s).

Panel members will individually assess all eligible applications against each criterion set out in Tabel 1.

#### 4.1.1 Alignment with NSW Government priorities and precincts

The Panel will consider the alignment of the application with each of the following NSW Government priorities and policies:

- [NSW Innovation Blueprint](#)
- [NSW Industry Policy](#)
- [NSW 20-Year R&D Roadmap](#)

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### 4.2 Who will assess applications?

An Assessment Panel formed by the Department will assess each application on its merits and compare it to other eligible applications before recommending which applications should be awarded a grant. The membership of the Panel will be determined by the Department in its sole discretion and can include NSW Government representatives as well as external assessors.

On behalf of the Panel, the Department may seek additional information about you or your application.

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## 4.3 Who will approve the grant?

The Panel will provide recommendations to the Minister for Innovation, Science and Technology or their delegate on the suitability of each proposal for funding.

The Minister for Innovation, Science and Technology's decision (or their delegate's) is final in all matters, including:

- the approval of the grant
- the grant funding amount to be awarded
- the terms and conditions of the grant.

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## 4.4 Notification of application outcome

Successful applicants will be notified via email. 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 aim to notify successful applicants in April 2026.

Unsuccessful applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application within 30 business days of the final decision maker's approval of the recommended applicants and will be offered feedback if requested.

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## 4.5 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

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### 5.1 Grant agreement

All successful applicants under this RAAP co-investment support round, and who accept the offer of a grant will be required to enter into a formal Funding Agreement relating to the grant.

The 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.

The Agreement must be signed by at least one core participant, or the CEO of the centre.

The NSW Government makes no binding funding or other commitment to the applicant unless and until both parties have signed a Funding Agreement. The Agreement will require the successful applicant to provide a copy of all relevant insurances and any other relevant supporting documentation as requested by the Department.

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### 5.2 Grant payment

The grant will be paid and distributed directly in a single tranche to each successful applicant.

Invoices for grant payments will be submitted and paid within 2 months of agreement execution.

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 advice on your particular taxation circumstances.

All payments are inclusive of GST.

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### 5.3 Indicative reporting and acquittal requirements

You must submit reports in line with the timeframes in the Funding Agreement.

The 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.

We will expect you to report on a range of metrics which include:

- progress against agreed project milestones and outcomes via an annual report over the life of the CoE
- reporting on both the CoE's milestones and the RAAP funded components and their impact to NSW wherever possible as they relate to the Program objectives and outcomes
- contributions of participants directly related to the grant
- expenditure of the grant.

Reporting is used to help inform NSW Government policy and funding decisions. The insights and impacts captured in reporting of CoEs, and NSW co-investment is important for the future of the RAAP program and the broader NSW science and innovation agenda.

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## 5.4 Evaluation

The Department will evaluate the Program to measure how well the outcomes and objectives have been achieved. We may use information from your application and reports for this purpose. We may also interview you or ask you for more information to help us understand how the Program impacted you, and to evaluate how effective the Program was in achieving its outcomes.

We may contact you up to three years after the closure of the CoE for more information to assist with a long-term evaluation of the program.

The Department and the NSW Audit Office reserve the right to undertake an audit of Program funding and support within seven years. Tracking and reporting will be a requirement of the Funding Agreement.

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## 5.5 Acknowledgement

All recipients of NSW Government funding should 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](https://nsw.gov.au/branding/sponsorship-and-funding-acknowledgment-guidelines).

We expect to be informed of any significant public announcement, marketing, press announcements, or official launch in relation to the CoE.

The NSW Government logo should be used on all materials related to grants provided. Whenever the logo is used, the publication must also acknowledge the NSW Government.

# 6

**Additional information and  
resources**

## 6 Additional information and resources

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### 6.1 Complaint handling

If you do not agree with the way the Department 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 Department.

The applicant must lodge a complaint with the Department in writing and submit it to [raap.grants@chiefscientist.nsw.gov.au](mailto:raap.grants@chiefscientist.nsw.gov.au).

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### 6.2 Access to information

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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### 6.3 Ethical conduct

The Department will administer the grant in accordance with the published Grant Guidelines and the principles and processes set out in the NSW Grants and Administration Guide.

The Department will implement measures and controls to enable a fair and transparent process and incorporate appropriate safeguards against fraud, unlawful activities, and other inappropriate conduct.

#### 6.3.1 Conflict of interest management

Where a conflict of interest is identified, the Program Manager will be responsible for following the procedures set out in the Project probity, risk and assessment plan and implementing appropriate management actions.

#### 6.3.2 Confidentiality

Other than information available in the public domain, you agree not to disclose to any person, other than us, any confidential information relating to the grant application and/or agreement, without our prior written approval. The 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 may at any time, require you to arrange for you, your employees, agents or subcontractors to give a written undertaking relating to non-disclosure of our confidential information in a form we consider acceptable.

We will keep any information in connection with the funding agreement confidential to the extent

that it meets all of the three 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 any confidentiality agreement if the information is disclosed to:

- the Assessment Panel and other NSW Government employees and contractors to help us manage the program effectively
- employees and contractors of the Department so we can 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
- other Commonwealth, State, Territory or local government agencies in program reports and consultations
- the Auditor-General, Ombudsman or Privacy Commissioner
- the responsible Minister or Secretary
- a House or a Committee of the NSW Parliament

The Funding Agreement may also include any specific requirements about special categories of information collected, created or held under the funding agreement.