Premier's Department

NSW Research Attraction and Acceleration Program: STEM Equity and Access Program

Program Guidelines 2027

November 2026

NSW GOVERNMENT

Grant Program Details	
Opening date and time	18/11/2026 2:00 PM
Closing date and time	1/03/2027 10:00 AM
Application outcome date	April 2027
Activity delivery timeframe (for successful applications)	April 2027 – December 2027
Decision-maker	The Chief Scientist & Engineer
NSW Government Agency	Premier's Department
Type of grant opportunity	Open, 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 $100,000 (excluding GST). Individual grant amounts • Maximum of $2,500 for domestic activities to $5,000 for international activities Group grant amounts • Maximum of $10,000
Enquiries	raap.grants@chiefscientist.nsw.gov.au

Contents

Overview of the grant program 1
1 Overview of the grant program 2
1.1 Purpose and objectives 2
1.2 Grant value 3
Selection criteria 4
2 Selection criteria 5
2.1 Eligibility criteria 5
Who is eligible to apply? 5
Who is not eligible to apply? 5
Eligible grant activities 6
Eligible locations 6
Eligible costs 6
Ineligible costs 6
2.2 Assessment criteria 7
Application process 8
3 Application process 9
3.1 How to apply 9
3.2 Support available to applicants 10
Assessment process 11
4 Assessment process 12
4.1 Assessment of grant applications 12
4.2 Notification of application outcome 13
4.2.1 Feedback on applications 13
4.3 Publication of grants information 13
Successful grant applications 14
5 Successful grant applications 15
5.1 Grant agreement 15
5.2 Grant payment 15
5.3 Unspent funds 15
5.4 Indicative reporting and acquittal requirements 16
5.5 Evaluation 16
Additional information and resources 17
6 Additional information and resources 18
6.1 Complaint handling 18
6.2 Access to information 18

6.3 Ethical conduct 18
Probity 18
Privacy 18
6.3.1 Conflict of interest management 19
6.3.2 Confidentiality 19

1

Overview of the grant program

1 Overview of the grant program

The NSW Government established the annual Research Attraction and Acceleration Program (RAAP) in 2012 to support innovation and continued investment in NSW research and development. The RAAP is administered by the Office of the Chief Scientist & Engineer (OCSE) within the NSW Premier's Department (the Department). The RAAP's objective is to improve and accelerate NSW economic, societal and environmental outcomes by attracting and retaining talent, building capability, attracting external investment and sustaining the NSW science and technology ecosystem.

One of OCSE's core functions is STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) outreach. Through STEM outreach and engagement, OCSE aims to strengthen the NSW STEM talent pipeline by increasing students' awareness of, access to, and progression through STEM pathways.

The STEM Equity and Access Program ('Program', 'SEAP'), is funded through the RAAP and supports NSW high school students wishing to further their education in STEM through participation in STEM-related activities, held either domestically or internationally, including:

- STEM competitions
- STEM courses or workshops
- STEM incursions or excursions.

Specifically, the Program is a response to sector-wide calls for initiatives that will help achieve equity in STEM education and consequent careers, leading to long-term cultural change. It provides benefits to NSW's future in added educational opportunities, network-building and professional experience for high school students, while also increasing the visibility of NSW research and its value both within Australia and internationally.

Funding is provided on an open competitive basis. Applicants will have approximately 14 weeks to complete and submit their application. The Assessment Panel will have approximately two weeks to assess applications.

The Program offers grant funding for eligible activities held between April 2027 and December 2027.

The Program is administered according to the *NSW Grants Administration Guide* and the *Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines (CGRGs).*

1.1 Purpose and objectives

The Program aims to maximise STEM education opportunities for NSW high school students who are:

- experiencing financial hardship
- from a low socio-economic background
- from regional or remote locations
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
- living with a disability and/or disorder, or
- from any other backgrounds that might need support.

The intended outcomes of the Program are to:

- provide opportunities for students to develop essential skills such as teamwork, collaboration, creativity, communication, and technical science and engineering knowledge
- help students to explore their potential, expand their perspectives and future ambitions

- build participation from students under-represented in STEM education and related industries.

The program aligns with NSW Government priorities, including goals and actions under the *NSW Innovation Blueprint* (2025) to strengthen a diverse, skilled and resilient STEM workforce in NSW that supports research and development, drives innovation and commercialisation, and meets the evolving needs of priority industries and emerging technologies.

1.2 Grant value

The NSW Government, through OCSE, has announced a total of $100,000 (excluding GST) for the Program, with the final amount decided at the Department's discretion.

Successful applicants will be awarded funds from the $100,000 available pool with the final amount per grant decided at the discretion of OCSE.

Funding will take the form of a cash contribution following the execution of an agreement between the successful applicant and the Department.

The maximum funding will be capped at $2,500 (excluding GST) per student for domestic activities and $5,000 (excluding GST) per student for international activities.

The maximum funding available to a group will be capped at $10,000 (excluding GST).

The quantum of funding awarded to successful applicants will depend on the overall quantity and quality of applications received. You may be part-funded if there is insufficient funding available for the application or where only a component of the application budget is considered suitable.

You are required to provide a financial acquittal with a final report following the activity, demonstrating that grant funds were used in accordance with program guidelines.

In exceptional circumstances, OCSE reserves the right to support applications made outside of this competitive grant round application period. These would be evaluated via the assessment criteria in Section 4 on an ad-hoc basis and follow the same process.

2

Selection criteria

2 Selection criteria

2.1 Eligibility criteria

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

Who is eligible to apply?

To be eligible you must:

1. Be one of the following:
    a. A relevant teacher or Principal at a NSW high school applying on behalf of a secondary school student or group of secondary school students

    or

    b. A relevant teacher, Principal or agent of a NSW high school or other NSW educational institution or association, in their capacity as organiser of a student group, which involves secondary school student entries from more than one NSW high school
2. Be applying on behalf of a school or organisation that has an Australian Business Number (ABN) and is one of the following entities:
    a. a secondary school that is registered with the relevant authority
    b. a registered charity or incorporated not-for-profit organisation
    c. an entity incorporated in Australia
    d. be able to enter into a grant agreement in your own right or through an affiliated entity.
3. Apply for funding to support high school students who identify with at least one of the following groups. For student groups, composition must reflect diversity, equity and inclusion, and include participants who identify with at least one of the following criteria:
    a. Experiencing financial hardship
    b. From remote or regional areas
    c. From a low socio-economic background
    d. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
    e. Living with a disability and/or disorder
    f. From any other background that might need support.
4. Ensure that each student is included in only one application per funding round.

Who is not eligible to apply?

1. You are not eligible to apply for the Program if you are any of the following:
    - insolvent
    - an individual
    - a partnership
    - an unincorporated association
    - a trust (however, an unincorporated trustee may apply on behalf of a trust).
    - coordinating the activity for which you are applying, except when it is for a school excursion where the school itself is the applicant.

OCSE, at its sole discretion, may decide that an application is ineligible for funding. This may include any person or business activity that could cause reputational and/or other risks to the NSW Government.

Eligible grant activities

1. For a grant activity to be eligible it must be one of the following:
    - STEM-related competition
    - STEM-related course or workshop
    - STEM-related incursion or excursion
2. The intended eligible activity must fall into at least one of the following STEM-related areas:
    - Mathematical, information and computing sciences
    - Physical, chemical and earth sciences
    - Engineering, environmental sciences and energy innovation
    - Biological and biotechnological sciences
3. Grants will be available to NSW high school students undertaking STEM-related activities between April 2027 and December 2027.
4. The grant applicant(s) must provide written confirmation from an appropriate school representative (e.g. the Principal) of the school's intention to participate in the planned activity, subject to funding approval.

Eligible locations

The activity may take place in Australia or overseas.

Eligible costs

Funds must be spent in the following ways:

- Research or construction components
- Reasonable travel and accommodation expenses
- Participation fees

If your application is successful, we may ask you to verify the activity cost and request evidence of costs such as supplier contracts, quotes and invoices. We may request financial reports and credit checks from independent third-party service providers.

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

The Department will make the final decision on whether a claimed cost is eligible or reasonable (and only pay the reasonable amount).

All eligible costs will be paid inclusive of GST.

Ineligible costs

The grant cannot be used for the following activities:

- Costs incurred in the preparation of a grant application or related documentation
- Wages
- Activities that are permanent in nature
- Activities requiring ongoing funding from the NSW Government
- Infrastructure, capital or the purchase of significant assets (including the creation of digital assets or software)
- Activities that will not be delivered prior to the end of the grant funding period.

2.2 Assessment criteria

Assessments will be conducted by an assessment panel comprising representatives selected based on their relevant expertise and knowledge. If you proceed to assessments, your application will be assessed by the assessment panel for funding against the assessment criteria in the table below.

Criteria	Specific information and evidence required	Weighting
Criterion 1: Equity and Access	Demonstrate how the funding will address equity and/or access barriers for student/s and support their equitable participation in STEM activities.	30%
Criterion 2: Value and Benefits	Demonstrate the value of the activity in developing students' STEM skills, knowledge and understanding beyond the school curriculum (e.g. engaging in practical, hands-on STEM experiences; accessing specialist facilities, equipment or resources; learning from STEM professionals, universities or industry experts; exploring STEM research, study and career pathways). Demonstrate how the activity is anticipated to generate benefits for participating students and, where applicable, the broader community (e.g. increasing student interest in STEM; building connections with STEM peers, institutions and industry; creating opportunities for broader student, teacher or industry engagement).	30%
Criterion 3: Need for Funding	Demonstrate the need for funding through: 1) Explanation of need – why funding is required for the student/s to attend the activity including any financial barriers preventing the school from covering the costs through existing budgets or other available funding sources. 2) Budget breakdown including matched or co-funding contributions/support (e.g. from the applicant's high school, parents, philanthropists or industry partners, or other grant programs) that will leverage the Department's investment. The budget breakdown should include your cash and in-kind contributions to the activity. *Note: Check examples and how to calculate in-kind contributions on this website: Tips for valuing 'in-kind' contributions in grant applications - Next Dimension Accounting"* This assessment criterion consists of two questions in the application form. The scores for both questions will be combined to determine the overall result for this criterion, which contributes 30% to the total assessment score.	30%
Criterion 4: Activity Plan	Demonstrate the school's/provider's ability to successfully deliver the proposed activity through a clear, practical and achievable activity plan such as key activities, proposed timeline, roles and responsibilities.	10%

3

Application process

3 Application process

3.1 How to apply

Before applying, you must read and understand these Guidelines.

These documents may be found at https://www.chiefscientist.nsw.gov.au/stem-outreach/stem-grants/stem-equity-and-access-program. Any alterations and addenda[1] will be published on https://www.chiefscientist.nsw.gov.au/stem-outreach/stem-grants/stem-equity-and-access-program. The Grants Administration Guide https://www.nsw.gov.au/grants-and-funding/grants-administration-guide is the authoritative source of grants information for the NSW Government.

To apply you must:

1. complete the online application form available at https://www.chiefscientist.nsw.gov.au/stem-outreach/stem-grants/stem-equity-and-access-program
2. provide all the information requested
3. address all the eligibility criteria
4. address the assessment criteria set out in Section 2.2 (Assessment criteria)
4. include all necessary attachments
5. submit your application before the closing date and time.

Note:

- The application must be completed in its entirety to be eligible for consideration.
- You must clearly mark any information that should be treated confidentially.
- The application must be authorised and submitted by the relevant teacher or Principal for an individual student, or group of students, enrolled at that school **or** by the agent representing a group of secondary school student entries from more than one NSW high school.
- All eligible applicants will be assessed on merit against the selection criteria. However, the Department, at its discretion, may choose not to award or recommend funding to applicants under the Program.
- You should keep a copy of your application and any supporting documents.

We will acknowledge that we have received your application after you submit through the online portal.

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 or 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*.

[1] Alterations and addenda include but are not limited to: corrections to currently published documents, changes to closing times for applications, Questions and Answers (Q&A) documents, and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) documents.

Use of AI

Artificial Intelligence (AI) can assist in many aspects of the grant application process. However, it should be used to complement, not replace human expertise and judgment. While the use of AI is not prohibited, applicants are advised to use it appropriately. Keep in mind that assessors are seeking authentic responses to the assessment criteria and often recognise when AI tools have been used.

Corrections

If you find an error in your application after submitting it, you should contact us immediately at 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 the closing date and time.

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.

3.2 Support available to applicants

If you have any questions during the application period, please contact us at raap.grants@chiefscientist.nsw.gov.au. OCSE will endeavour to respond to questions within three working days.

4

Assessment process

4 Assessment process

4.1 Assessment of grant applications

The assessment of applications will be led by the Department. Your application will be considered based on a three-stage process. Where the Department considers an application unsuitable or unsatisfactory against any eligibility criteria, we may exclude that application from further evaluation. Only eligible applications will move to the next stage. We consider eligible applications through an open competitive grant process.

Stage 1: Eligibility Assessment

The OCSE Secretariat will conduct an initial eligibility screening for all applications according to the published eligibility criteria in these Program Guidelines, as set out in **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 membership of the Assessment Panel (Panel) will be determined by the Department in its sole discretion and may include assessors from government and/or the STEM sector.

The Panel will assess each application on its merits against the assessment criteria and compare it to other eligible applications before recommending applications for the award of 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 **Section 2.2 Assessment Criteria**.

When making their recommendations, the Panel may take the following into consideration:

- The total funding available for the SEAP 2027 round.
- The assessment criteria outlined in the *STEM Equity and Access Program Guidelines for Applicants*.
- The requested amount against the scope of the activity, i.e. could the applicant effectively deliver the activity with less funding? Advice may be sought from applicants to understand the potential impact if a decision was made to award less funding than requested.
- Whether the applicant has sufficient or additional resources or avenues available to raise capital other than this grant that could assist with the success of their activity.

The Panel may seek advice from an external probity advisor if required.

Stage 3: Decision making

The Panel will provide advice to the NSW Government on the suitability of each proposal for funding.

The Chief Scientist & Engineer, or their delegate, will consider recommendations from the Panel and determine final grant funding approvals.

The Chief Scientist & Engineer's or their delegate's decision 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.

4.2 Notification of application outcome

We will advise the outcome of your application via email and/or through the SmartyGrants portal.

Unsuccessful applicants will be notified via email of the outcome of their application within 20 business days from the date of the Chief Scientist & Engineer's final decision being received.

4.2.1 Feedback on applications

Unsuccessful applicants will be given the opportunity to receive feedback upon request via email by contacting raap.grants@chiefscientist.nsw.gov.au. This feedback will be limited to the comments provided on their application by the Panel.

4.3 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 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.

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

Successful applicants will be notified via email and/or through the SmartyGrants portal. 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.

5.1 Grant agreement

Successful applicants who accept the offer of a grant will be required to enter into an agreement with the NSW Government.

The NSW Government (including the Department) makes no binding funding or other commitment to the applicant unless and until both parties have signed a funding agreement. The funding 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. You should not make financial commitments reliant on this Program until the Department has formally advised that you are successful, and a funding agreement is signed and executed.

The agreement will specify obligations that relate primarily to the recipient's accountability for the grant, including use of the grant, return of any unspent grant funds and reporting requirements.

A template of the Funding Agreement can be found here: https://www.chiefscientist.nsw.gov.au/stem-outreach/stem-grants/stem-equity-and-access-program

The agreement must be signed by an authorised teacher, Principal or agent representing the participating school(s).

You are required to provide a financial acquittal with a final report following the activity, demonstrating that grant funds were used in accordance with Program guidelines.

While the activity must take place from April 2027 through to December 2027, funds will be allocated to the Grantee by 30 June 2027.

5.2 Grant payment

The grant will be paid and distributed directly in a single tranche to each successful applicant following execution of the funding agreement.

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.

5.3 Unspent funds

Organisations must not use the money provided for the activity, nor any interest earned on the money, for any other purpose beyond what is specified in the approved submitted application and grant agreement. Organisations must not carry over funds provided for the approved activity to other programs, events or organisational operating budgets.

In extenuating circumstances, the Program may allow for you to request to use the funds to extend the scope of the activity if it continues to align with the objectives of the Program.

You will need to provide supporting information with your request, which will be assessed by the secretariat. The Director, Programs and Outreach, Office of the Chief Scientist & Engineer, or delegate will decide on whether to approve your request.

If the proposed activity does not proceed, any funds provided must be reimbursed to OCSE.

5.4 Indicative reporting and acquittal requirements

All recipients will be required to comply with the Department's acquittal and reporting requirements.

Within 30 days after you complete the activity, you must submit a final report. You will be provided with a report template by the Department, which is to be completed by your authorised officer.

You are expected to report on:

- Activity Summary
  - Main outcomes of the activity
  - Number of attendees
  - Student equity and access summary
  - Benefits provided to the community
- Financial Acquittal Report
  - Expenditure of the grant and copies of relevant receipts
- Media Profile (optional)
  - Activity overview
  - Activity highlights
  - Testimonials
  - Photographs

5.5 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 you receive your final grant payment associated with the Program for more information to assist with this evaluation.

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.

6

Additional information and resources

6 Additional information and resources

6.1 Complaint handling

Complaints must be lodged with the Department in writing and submitted to raap.grants@chiefscientist.nsw.gov.au.

Complaints must first be lodged in writing to the Department. 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 first been raised directly with the Department.

6.2 Access to information

The GIPA Act provides for the proactive release of government information by agencies and gives members of the public an enforceable right to access government information held by an agency (which includes Ministerial offices). Access to government information is only to be restricted if there is an overriding public interest against disclosure.

The NSW Legislative Council has the power to order the production of State papers by the Executive Government. Standing Order 52 provides that the House may order documents to be tabled by the Government in the House. The Cabinet Office coordinates the preparation of the papers – that is, the return to order. The return to order may contain privileged and public documents. Privileged documents are available only to members of the Legislative Council.

Note that documents submitted as part of a grant application may be subject to an application under the GIPA Act or an order for papers under Standing Order 52.

6.3 Ethical conduct

Probity

The Department will make sure that the grant opportunity process is fair, according to the published guidelines and incorporates appropriate safeguards against fraud, unlawful activities and other inappropriate conduct.

Privacy

We treat your personal information according to the Department's Privacy Management Plan available at https://www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/premiers-department/contact-us/privacy and the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 (NSW). This includes letting you know:

- what personal information we collect
- why we collect your personal information
- to whom we give your personal information.

Your personal information can only be disclosed to someone for the primary purpose for which it was collected unless an exemption applies.

The Department may also use or disclose information about applicants and recipients under this Program for reporting purposes.

We may share the information you give us with other NSW Government entities for purposes including government administration, research or service delivery, according to Australian and NSW laws.

As part of your application, you declare your ability to comply with the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 (NSW) and impose the same privacy obligations on officers, employees, agents and subcontractors that you engage to assist with the activity, in respect of personal information you collect, use, store, or disclose in connection with the activity. Accordingly, you must not do anything that would breach your obligations under the Act.

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 and risk assessment plan 2027* 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:

- You clearly identify the information as confidential and explain why we should treat it as confidential
- The information is commercially sensitive
- 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, or
- 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.