

## Fostering Innovation: Sponsorship Program Guidelines

Opening	25 January 2024
Closing date and time	15 February 2024
Enquiries	<a href="mailto:innovationsponsorship@investment.nsw.gov.au">innovationsponsorship@investment.nsw.gov.au</a>
Guidelines release date	25 January 2024
Type of opportunity	Competitive

### 1. About the Program

#### 1.1 Background

Fostering Innovation was set up by the NSW Government to support the growth of the innovation ecosystem across NSW. We foster a strong innovation sector, support the industries that will fuel the jobs of the future, and attract talent. We want to encourage and support ways of supporting the exchange of ideas, knowledge building and experiences to assist startups and scaleups in delivering economic and social benefits by growing our economy.

Fostering Innovation is a branch within Investment NSW, part of the Department of Enterprise, Investment and Trade (The Department). The NSW Government supports a strong innovation sector that delivers new, higher paid jobs in high growth industries to support the people in NSW.

Learn more about Investment NSW's vision and priorities here:

<https://www.investment.nsw.gov.au/invest/how-we-can-help/priority-industries/>

#### 1.2 Objective

The Fostering Innovation Sponsorship Program (the Program) is a bi-annual program to be activated in January and July 2024.

The Program has been designed to support the timely identification of activities which Investment NSW may support in line with the DEIT Sponsorship policy. The Program contributes to the value and sustainability of the innovation sector to the NSW economy and ensures NSW continues to be a world leader in innovation by leveraging our strengths as a state.

Areas of focus include:

- Innovation Ecosystem Development (increase visibility of, and participation in, the innovation precincts across NSW that are helping to enable this work.
- Development of stronger partnerships with organisations who advocate or represent industry and startups interests relating to the adoption of innovation, and assisting startups to start, translate and or grow their businesses.
- Priority Sectors
- Equitable participation - support for diversity and inclusion initiatives for the innovation sector

#### 1.3 Your responsibilities when applying

These Guidelines (the Guidelines) contain information about the Program, whether you are eligible to apply, and how you can make an application.

You must read these Guidelines before applying.

This document sets out:

- The purpose of the Program
- The eligibility criteria
- The assessment criteria
- How applications are assessed
- How recipients will be monitored and evaluated
- Responsibilities and expectations in relation to the Program.

These Guidelines may be updated by Investment NSW at any time. If this occurs, the revised guidelines or any addenda will be published on

<https://investment.nsw.gov.au/fostering-innovation-sponsorship-program>

## 1.4 Funding

The funding will take the form of cash contribution or in-kind contribution following the execution of a Sponsorship Agreement between the applicant and the Department.

Funding is provided on a bi-annual basis. For round 1, successful applicants will be awarded funds from a maximum available pool of \$400,000 (excluding GST) with the final amount decided at the discretion of Investment NSW. Round 2 funding will be announced in June 2024.

Proposals may be part-funded if there is insufficient funding available for the whole proposal or where only a component of the proposal is considered suitable/eligible.

Fostering Innovation may fund events and activities on an ad-hoc basis. These would also be evaluated via the assessment criteria in Section 3 and follow the same process. Funding for these activities would be separate from the allocation for the general sponsorship funding pool.

The applicant is required to provide a financial acquittal with a final report following the sponsorship activity, demonstrating that funds were used in accordance with Program guidelines.

## 2. Eligibility Criteria

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

### 2.1 Who is eligible to apply

To be eligible, applicants must:

- Be a legal entity
- Have an Australian Business Number (ABN) or be registered as a not-for-profit organisation or charity
- Have appropriate insurance cover for the proposed project activity
- Be registered for the purposes of GST
- Have an account with an Australian financial institution

### 2.2 Who is not eligible to apply

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

- Insolvent
- An individual
- A partnership

- An unincorporated association
- A Commonwealth, state, territory or local government agency or body excluding government corporate entities.

Fostering Innovation, 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.

Where an application is identified as not meeting the above eligibility criteria, the application may be set aside from further consideration at the absolute discretion of the Department. The Department may also seek clarification from any applicant in relation to its application, including seeking further information on the eligibility or assessment criteria.

### **2.3 Eligible locations**

The activity for sponsorship must take place in NSW.

### **2.4 Eligible activities**

For an activity to be eligible it must focus on benefitting the NSW innovation ecosystem. Some examples include:

- Activities to support the development and growth of the innovation ecosystem in NSW
- Events to activate, promote and accelerate innovation in priority precincts in NSW
- Series of activities focused on promoting diversity and inclusion across the innovation ecosystem

### **2.5 Eligible costs**

Funding may only be incurred on eligible activities or agreed activities. To be eligible, costs must:

- Be a direct cost related to activity
- Be incurred within the financial year in which the sponsorship activity is delivered
- Reflect competitive market rates
- Be a true and accurate reflection of costs required to deliver the activity.

Eligible costs include, but are not limited to:

- Speaker costs airfares and accommodation
- Venue hire
- Catering
- Promotion
- Marketing/advertising
- Audio visual services
- Event management fees
- Transportation utilities

If your application is successful, we may ask you to verify the activity costs 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 project 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.

### **2.6 Ineligible costs**

The funding cannot be used for the following activities:

- The purchase of land or property
- Costs incurred in the preparation of this application or related documentation
- The covering of retrospective costs
- Wages (although funding is available for fixed term administration and staff appointed for the duration of the project)
- Projects requiring ongoing funding from the NSW Government
- Projects that constitute the normal course of business
- Activities that will not be delivered prior to the end of the funding period.

## **3. Assessment Criteria**

The Assessment Panel will make recommendations for funding against the assessment criteria:

### **3.1 Role of NSW Government**

Demonstrates contribution to one or more of the following:

- The need for and impact the activity will have on the NSW innovation ecosystem.
- How the opportunity/event will help grow and develop the NSW innovation ecosystem.

### **3.2 Enablers of Innovation**

Demonstrates link to key enablers of innovation such as:

- Entrepreneurship education
- Capital and investment
- Talent pipeline
- Global expansion
- R&D commercialisation

### **3.3 Priority Sectors**

Be aligned to one of the following NSW Government Industry Development Framework priority industries:

- Agriculture and agrifood
- Clean energy and waste
- Medical and life sciences
- Digital systems and software
- Advanced manufacturing
- Biotechnologies
- Digital technologies

### **3.4 Innovation Precincts**

If applicable, demonstrates connection to Investment NSW priority precinct(s):

- Tech Central
- Westmead Health and Innovation District
- Randwick Health and Innovation Precinct
- Macquarie Park Innovation District

- Western Sydney Aerotropolis
- Liverpool Innovation District
- ANSTO's Lucas Heights Campus
- Central Coast Innovation District
- Newcastle Innovation District
- Wollongong Innovation District
- Special Activation Precincts (regional NSW)

### 3.5 Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Demonstration of how diversity, equity and inclusion will be considered and implemented in the planning and delivery of the activities.

**Note:** Diversity metrics may include gender, age, cultural and linguistic background, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, neurodiversity, LGBTIQ+, non-binary or gender diverse, disability/chronic illness, and regional/remote location.

### 3.6 Value for Money

Demonstrates value for money through:

- Outlining how return on investment is achieved through sponsorship benefits
- Outlining the other opportunities available as part of participating in the event/opportunity e.g., building networks, connection to industry etc.
- Demonstrate need for funding through a budget breakdown, including co-sponsorship and other financial contributors.

**The assessment panel will assess your application based on equal weighting given to each criterion above.**

## 4. How to apply

### 4.1

Before applying, you must read and understand these Guidelines.

Sponsorship application form and these guidelines may be found at <https://investment.nsw.gov.au/fostering-innovation-sponsorship-program>. Any alterations and addenda will also be published here.

All applications must be submitted electronically via the website at <https://investment.nsw.gov.au/fostering-innovation-sponsorship-program>.

To apply you must:

- Complete the Application Form in its entirety to be eligible for consideration
- Provide a proposal addressing:
  - o All the eligibility criteria
  - o All the relevant assessment criteria
  - o An indicative budget for the sponsorship funding provided
- Clearly mark any information that should be treated confidentially.
- Submit your application by the timelines outlined in Section 4.2 Key dates.

All eligible applicants will be assessed on merit against the assessment criteria. However, the Department, in its discretion, may choose not to award or recommend funding to applicants under the Program.

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.

If you find an error in your application after submitting it, you should contact us immediately at [innovationsponsorship@investment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:innovationsponsorship@investment.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.

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 webpage.

## 4.2 Key dates

You must submit your application between the published opening and closing dates. Applications received after the closing date and time will be deemed to be a late application. At the discretion of the Director Programs, Partners and Precincts the Department reserves the right to accept a late application where it is satisfied that its acceptance will not compromise the integrity and competitiveness of the Program.

Table 1: Expected timing for this Program

Activity	Timeframe
Applications open	25 January 2024
Applications close	15 February 2024 10:00 AEST
Notification of outcome	March 2024
Earliest start date of the sponsorship activity	March 2024
End date of the sponsorship activity	31 December 2024

## 4.3 Queries during the application process

If you have any questions during the application period, please contact us at [innovationsponsorship@investment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:innovationsponsorship@investment.nsw.gov.au). The Fostering Innovation Team will endeavour to respond to questions within five business days.

If you find an error in your application after submitting it, you should contact us immediately at [innovationsponsorship@investment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:innovationsponsorship@investment.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.

Any enquiry you have about the assessment process or the outcome of your application for this Program should be sent to [innovationsponsorship@investment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:innovationsponsorship@investment.nsw.gov.au).

## 5. Assessment process

The eligibility assessment of applications will be led by the Fostering Innovation Team. Your application will be considered based on a two-stage process. Where the Fostering Innovation Team 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 process, assessed by the Assessment Panel.

### **5.1 Stage 1: Eligibility Assessment**

The Fostering Innovation Branch will conduct an initial eligibility screening for all applications according to the published eligibility criteria in these Program Guidelines that are set out above in Section 2: Eligibility Criteria. Only applications which meet all eligibility criteria will progress to assessment against the assessment criteria.

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

The membership of the Assessment Panel (Panel) will be determined by the Department in its sole discretion and may include independent assessors from the broader NSW public sector.

The Panel will assess each application against the assessment criteria and compare it to other eligible applications before recommending which applications should be awarded sponsorship.

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 *Section 3: Assessment Criteria*. All criteria have equal weighting.

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

- The total funding available for the Sponsorship Program 2024 round.
- The assessment criteria outlined in these Guidelines.
- The requested amount against the scope of the project i.e., could the applicant effectively deliver the sponsorship activity with less funding.
- Whether a reduction could pose significant risks to the success of a sponsorship activity.
- Whether applicants have sufficient or additional resources or avenues available to raise capital other than this sponsorship that could assist with the success of their sponsorship activity.
- Whether a decrease of funding will impact achieving the overall aim of the Sponsorship Program.

#### **Who will assess and approve applications?**

The Panel will provide advice to the Executive Director, Fostering Innovation on the suitability of each proposal for funding. The Executive Director Fostering Innovation will consider recommendations from the Assessment Panel and make final decisions on whether to recommend activities.

### 5.3 Notification of application outcomes

We will advise the outcome of your application via email and/or letter. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified via email and/or letter of the outcome of their application within 10 business days from the assessment panel meeting and will be offered feedback if requested.

If unsuccessful you can submit a new application for a future sponsorship opportunity. Your submission must meet the eligibility criteria and should include new or additional information to address any feedback from your previous application.

## 6. Successful Applicants

### 6.1 Notification

Successful applicants will be notified via email. If you are successful, we will advise you of any specific conditions attached to the sponsorship. This could include a request to keep the sponsorship 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 notify successful applicants in March 2024.

### 6.2 Sponsorship Agreement

Successful applicants will be required to enter into a sponsorship agreement with the Department. The agreement will specify obligations, including use of the sponsorship for activities occurring in NSW, return of any unspent sponsorship funds and reporting requirements.

[Download a template of the Sponsorship Agreement here](#)

The agreement must be signed in accordance with relevant legal requirements by the entity responsible for organising the activity.

The applicant is required to provide a financial acquittal with a final report following the sponsorship activity, demonstrating that sponsorship funds were used in accordance with sponsorship guidelines and the approved activity.

### 6.3 Payment

The funding will be payable after signature of the sponsorship agreement and may be paid as a lump sum or in instalments depending on the sponsored activity. All payments are exclusive of GST.

### 6.4 How we monitor your sponsorship activity

We will expect you to keep Fostering Innovation up to date on progress of the agreed activities.

When you complete the activity, you must submit a final report with detailed financial information.

We will expect you to report on:

- Activity Summary
  - o Main outcomes of the Activity
  - o Number of participants



- Benefits to NSW
- Financial Acquittal Report
  - Expenditure of the sponsorship funding
- Media Profile
  - Activity overview
  - Activity highlights
  - Testimonial
  - Photographs

Final reports must be submitted within 30 business days of completion of the sponsorship activity.

### **6.5 Evaluation**

Fostering Innovation 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 payment associated with the Program for more information to assist with this evaluation.

Fostering Innovation 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.

### **6.6. Acknowledgement**

All recipients of NSW Government funding should acknowledge this financial support in accordance with the Funding Acknowledgement Guidelines available at [nsw.gov.au/branding/sponsorship-and-funding-acknowledgment-guidelines](https://www.nsw.gov.au/branding/sponsorship-and-funding-acknowledgment-guidelines).

You must seek our written consent prior to any significant public announcement, marketing, press announcements, or official launch in relation to the Program.

The Investment NSW and NSW Government logos should be used on all materials as outlined in the sponsorship benefits. Whenever the logos are used, the publication must follow the NSW Government Brand Framework requirements. Please see the NSW Government Brand Framework here for guidance:

<https://www.nsw.gov.au/branding/nsw-government-brand-framework>

The applicant must agree to provide the following benefits to the Department, if requested by the Department:

- Acknowledgement of the Funding at the opening and closing ceremonies of the Activity
- Acknowledgement with the NSW Government logo and preferred URL link on the Activity website
- Acknowledgement with NSW Government logo in all printed delegate material
- A minimum of two complimentary passes to the Sponsorship Activity (if relevant).

### **7. Feedback**

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 usually look into a complaint unless the matter has been first raised directly with Investment NSW.

NSW Ombudsman

Level 24

580 George Street

Sydney NSW 2000

## **8. Probity**

Fostering Innovation will make sure that the funding opportunity process is fair, according to these published guidelines and incorporates appropriate safeguards against fraud, unlawful activities, and other inappropriate conduct.

## **9. Privacy**

We treat your personal information according to the Department's Privacy Management Plan.

### **This includes letting you know:**

- What personal information we collect
- Why we collect your personal information
- Who we give your personal information to.

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.

### **9.1 Confidential Information**

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 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 Selection 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 Program 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 Sponsorship agreement may also include any specific requirements about special categories of information collected, created, or held under the funding agreement.

## **9.2 Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009**

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 Investment NSW.

## Other information

### Previous Funding

In previous years the Fostering Innovation Team have provided support to the following ecosystem building activities held in NSW:

### Startup Festivals/Conference Events

- Spark Festival
- Quantum Australia 2023 Conference
- UTS Startup Summit
- Climate Salad Conference
- Catalyst West
- Innovate Western Sydney

### Award Ceremonies

- InnovationAus Awards for Excellence
- Startup Daily Awards