

COVID-19 TechVouchers Guidelines



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Overview

This document provides information on the requirements for submission to the NSW Government COVID-19 TechVoucher program.

The program provides support funding for technology-rich startups, scaleups or small to medium enterprises (SMEs) to collaborate with Publicly Funded Research Organisations (PFROs) to conduct R&D projects that accelerate the commercialisation of products and services that address the impact of COVID-19.

Application closing date

Applications will not be accepted after the closing date that is published at business.nsw.gov.au.

Funding will be provided for eligible and approved projects until the first of:

- available funding is exhausted, or
- final deadline for applications.

COVID-19 TechVouchers

The COVID-19 TechVoucher program is designed to enable more NSW businesses to accelerate the commercialisation of innovative R&D products and services that address the health and economic impacts of COVID-19. A TechVoucher can only be used to reimburse the business for paid PFRO invoices for delivered R&D contract services.

Examples of activities funded by TechVouchers include:

- access to research facilities and equipment such as electron microscopes, medical imaging, and other PFRO delivery partner facilities
- product or process design, such as engineering or technical design expertise to determine prototype structure, function or materials
- validating or demonstrating technical capabilities of a product, process or technology including clinical trials and in-market validation
- funding toxicology studies on materials that could be incorporated into a new product
- testing and certification for supply of products
- enhancing existing product capabilities or enabling entry to international markets
- production of laboratory prototypes
- PFRO overhead up to a maximum of 35 per cent of the identified PFRO staffing costs
- ancillary costs incurred in the conduct of the project, such as consumables.

The following are ineligible for TechVoucher funding:

- capital expenditure on equipment by the business or PFRO
- conference or workshop participation

- projects that do not address an impact of COVID-19 as assessed by an independent panel
- projects designed to improve internal business processes.

Non-compliance may result in the withdrawal of the TechVoucher funding.

Funding available

Two funding streams are available:

TechVoucher Streams	Total Project Budget	Intended Project duration	NSW Govt contribution (TechVoucher)
Stream 1: Smaller R&D projects	\$30,000 to \$50,000	up to 6 months	Maximum \$25,000 (remainder matched by the business)
Stream 2: Larger R&D projects	\$50,001 to \$100,000 or more	up to 12 months	Maximum \$50,000 (remainder matched by the business)

A TechVoucher will fund up to 50 per cent of all invoices issued by a PFRO partner to the maximum value of the voucher for each Stream.

The TechVoucher is the NSW Government contribution of up to 50 per cent of the cost of the R&D project. The business co-contribution is a minimum 50 per cent of the project budget. The business co-contribution may comprise up to 25 per cent in-kind contribution representing personnel costs, which is to be reported in a statutory declaration by the business.

Investment NSW is the lead agency for administering the program and is responsible for providing technical advice and support to the program.

Publicly Funded Research Organisations (PFROs)

To be eligible as an R&D partner for a business utilising a COVID-19 TechVoucher, the PFRO must receive public funds from Commonwealth or NSW Government for research and have operations in NSW.

Eligible PFROs include the 11 universities in NSW:

- Australian Catholic University
- Charles Sturt University
- Macquarie University
- Southern Cross University
- University of Newcastle
- University of New England
- University of New South Wales
- University of Sydney
- University of Technology Sydney
- University of Wollongong
- Western Sydney University

In addition, eligible PFROs include CSIRO, Australia's Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation, National Measurement Institute, Defence Science and Technology Group, and the NSW Institute of Sport.

Excluded PFROs

Commonwealth, NSW or other state or local government agencies or bodies including government business enterprises that do not use public funds for research are excluded.

Business eligibility criteria

To be eligible, a business must:

- Have an ABN registered in NSW and be based in NSW
- have fewer than 200 employees
- have operated for at least 12 months, based on date of ABN registration
- have at least \$150,000 in sales revenue or operating expenditure within the last 12 months or previous financial year
- have ownership that is at least 75 per cent Australian and is not more than 50 per cent owned by another business
- propose a technology-based product or service that addresses the impacts of COVID-19
- provide evidence of your ability to co-invest at least 50 per cent of eligible project budget
- demonstrate capability and capacity to complete the TechVoucher project within six months (Stream 1) or 12 months (Stream 2)
- be engaged with an eligible PFRO for R&D collaboration and have obtained a quote from the PFRO for the R&D project
- confirmation that the business holds the rights to commercialise the intellectual property arising from the project.

If the business does not have a committed PFRO, it can contact the [Global NSW Concierge](#) service for suggestions of PFROs with relevant expertise and contact points.

Ineligible business structures are:

- an individual
- a partnership
- an unincorporated association
- a trust
- a Commonwealth, State, Territory or local government body (including government business enterprises).

Businesses that have been granted a TechVoucher in the past are eligible to apply for the COVID-19 TechVoucher program. Only one COVID-19 TechVoucher per business will be granted.

How to apply

An application must be submitted through the COVID-19 TechVoucher online portal before the published due date.

For an application to be considered, it must meet the minimum business eligibility criteria listed above.

In addition, the following information must be provided as part of the application:

- business contact and business details
- brief profiles of key personnel (such as CV or LinkedIn accounts)
- operating profit and loss statement for the last 12 months or previous financial year
- description of the project through a series of questions that reflect the Assessment Criteria
- a statement of commercialisation outcomes
- an official quote from an eligible PFRO stating:
 - a) project description
 - b) budget – indicating whether it is Stream 1 or Stream 2 project. The budget must include the resources committed to the project by the business and the PFRO.
 - c) timeline and a milestone schedule that reflects as a minimum, six monthly joint achievements, aligned with Stream 1 or Stream 2 of the TechVoucher.

Application process

The Assessment Panel is responsible for assessing applications. The Assessment Panel will be comprised of representatives of NSW Government.

In the application form, applicants must provide:

- R&D project title and brief description (maximum 50 words)
- Description of how the product or service addresses the impact of COVID-19 (maximum 200 words)

Applicants must also indicate the current development stage and the expected development stage if a TechVoucher is granted using a Technology Readiness Level (TRL) scale. The TRL scale is at Appendix A.

The questions in the application form are listed below. Members of the panel will score each application independently using the Assessment Criteria.

Table of Assessment Criteria

Criteria		Weight	Targeted questions
1	Impact Maximum word count: 150 words for each question	33%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) What is the problem being addressed? b) What is the solution and how is it unique and innovative? c) Who is the market user and how large is the opportunity? d) How are you going to collaborate to accelerate commercialisation?
2	Effectiveness Maximum word count: 150 words for each question	33%	<p>Track record of business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Please provide an example of how your organisation or project team have delivered real world solutions <p>Feasibility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) What is the research basis of your product and the evidence that you can provide to show the effectiveness of your product? b) How close are you to the commercialisation of your product? c) What if any are the key uncertainties remaining about the effectiveness of your product, and how and when you will resolve these? <p>Viability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) How do you propose to reach your users? b) Who are your closest competitors and how is your product different?
3	Delivery Maximum word count: 150 words for each question	34%	<p>Resourcing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Who are the team members working on this project and what are their capabilities? b) What are the resources your organisation is making available for this project? c) What additional resources are you seeking for this project (aside from this funding application)? d) How will your product be deployed into the operational environment rapidly and at scale? <p>Timing and staging</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) What capabilities does the business have that enable implementation of the commercialisation of the product? b) Outline the milestones and stage-gates that are present in the project plan <p>Coordination and alignment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) How does this project fit with your organisation's strategic goals?

The assessment panel will score applications using the guide tabled below, with each criterion being assessed on a scale from 0 to 5. This will result in a score of up to a maximum 15.

Projects require a minimum score of 3 out of 5 from each criteria group, to a total minimum of 9 out of 15, to be offered a TechVoucher.

While the Assessment Panel will make recommendations to Investment NSW, and Investment NSW will be guided by those recommendations, any funding decisions will be made by Investment NSW in its sole discretion and are final.

The Assessment Panel will use the table below to assess the quality and suitability of an application.

Score	Rating	Requirement
5	Excellent	Meets and exceeds all requirements. Solutions proposed are highly innovative and readily deliverable with no discernable risks.
4	Very good	Fully meets all requirements and exceeds some. Solutions proposed are innovative and deliverable with limited problem solving and risk management.
3	Good	Meets requirements in all areas. Solutions are innovative and deliverable with some problem solving or risk management clearly evident.
2	Satisfactory	Almost meets requirements. Solutions are novel, or may be genuinely innovative, but substantial development or risk areas need to be resolved.
1	Poor	Minimal compliance with the requirements. Solutions lack innovative quality and/or present substantial risk or deliverability challenges.
0	Non-compliant	Does not meet requirements. Solutions presented do not address the selection criteria in an assessable manner.

Notification

Investment NSW will advise successful and unsuccessful applicants of an offer of a TechVoucher within four weeks of receipt of a complete application (subject to demand).

Successful applicants may be required to keep the funding confidential for a period of time if an announcement will be made by the NSW Government.

Projects may be referred to other funding programs in NSW Government for consideration.

Funding Agreement

Successful applicants will be required to enter a Funding Agreement with Investment NSW, which must be accepted and signed within ten business days from the date of notification. Failure to meet the deadline may result in the offer being withdrawn.

TechVouchers will be paid by Investment NSW to the applicant in two separate milestones:

Milestone 1 Release first tranche of funding on receipt of R&D contract between the business and the PFRO, and evidence that the business has paid the PFRO invoice for agreed services, with the TechVoucher funding amount not to exceed 50 per cent of the paid invoice

Milestone 2 Release second tranche of remaining TechVoucher funding amount on receipt of end-of-project report and evidence that the business has paid the PFRO invoice for agreed services.

As part of their obligations under the Funding Agreement, successful applicants must:

- submit reports (mid-term, end of project and 6-month post-project), which will include progress against the intended use of funds, following receipt of the funding to Investment NSW as outlined in the Funding Agreement. The end of project report must also include a Financial Acquittal Report containing the detailed financial statement of the application of the TechVoucher; a definitive statement as to completeness and accuracy of financial accounts; and the balance of any unspent TechVoucher.
- pay back unspent funds delivered, or funds which have not been spent in accordance with the Funding Agreement
- comply with a requirement that the applicant has and can provide a copy of all relevant insurances, such as public liability insurance or other insurance depending on the application
- participate in a program evaluation after the project has concluded to determine the extent to which their projects have contributed to the objectives of the program. The evaluation will require applicants to provide evidence of how projects have resulted in measurable benefits that are consistent with the objectives of the program.
- agree that any information submitted by recipients may be used for material prepared by the NSW Government.

Requests for variations or changes to the TechVoucher will be considered in limited circumstances and when Investment NSW is satisfied that the circumstances present no probity concerns that invalidate the assumptions that underpinned the application and its assessment. Changes or variations may be rejected or accepted at Investment NSW's sole discretion and may be subject to certain conditions.

Failure to meet the above conditions and obligations may result in funding withdrawal, suspension or demand for funds to be paid back to Investment NSW.

Probity Advice

Independent probity advisers will review guidelines and provide guidance, if necessary, on issues concerning integrity, fairness and accountability that may arise throughout the application, assessment and decision-making process. This will help ensure decisions are made in a fair and ethical way while delivering value for money for NSW.

For further information, contact O'Connor Marsden and Associates' Richard O'Neill at oneill@ocm.net.au.

Government Information (Public Access) Act

Investment NSW may be required to disclose certain information by law. For example, Investment NSW is subject to the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* (NSW) (**GIPA Act**), which means the information you provide may be required to be released in response to a request under the GIPA Act. Investment NSW may also be required to disclose information to oversight and investigative bodies and to the NSW Parliament.

Responsibilities

Investment NSW is the lead agency for administering the program and is responsible for providing technical advice and support to the program.

Applicants will be responsible for the preparation and submission of applications, compliance with any funding deed agreements and compliance with progress reporting.

Questions and further information

Further information is available at business.nsw.gov.au. Contact the Global NSW Concierge at global.nsw.gov.au or call 02 4908 4800.

Appendix A

Technology Readiness Level (TRL) scale

TRL	TRL description	Evidence of achievement
1	Basic principles observed and reported	Published research that identifies the principles that underlie this technology.
2	Technical Device/System concept formulated	Practical applications of the basic principles of the invention.
3	Technical proof of concept demonstration	The basic performance of the invention is demonstrated in a laboratory setting.
4	Alpha prototype validation in laboratory environment	A simple prototype is developed and its performance is demonstrated in a laboratory environment. The performance indicates its potential for solving a community need.
5	Beta prototype validation in clinical environment	A more advanced prototype is developed, its performance is demonstrated in the relevant environment, and further end-user feedback is gained for the final design phase.
6	Final Device/System design validation with clinical pilot study	The device or system is designed, a small number of devices/systems are manufactured, and a pilot study is conducted. A pilot study report is prepared showing the results of the study.
7	Device/System from pilot manufacturing line is being trialled in operational environment.	A larger sample of devices/systems are manufactured and trialled in operational environments. The reports from these trials will be used for submissions to regulatory authorities, if required.
8	Device/System is partially approved and in commercial use	The device/system has been approved in limited geographical regions and is in commercial use in those regions.
9	Device/System is fully approved and in commercial use worldwide	The device/system is approved for use worldwide and is in commercial use worldwide.

(Original source: NASA <https://www.nasa.gov/sites/default/files/trl.png>) and adapted from the NSW Physical Sciences Fund.