

# NSW National Water Grid Fund Expression of Interest

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## Guidelines for Applicants

January 2025



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## Acknowledgement of Country

Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land and pays respect to Elders past, present and future.

We recognise Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to place and their rich contribution to society.

Artist and designer Nikita Ridgeway from Aboriginal design agency – Boss Lady Creative Designs, created the People and Community symbol.

NSW National Water Grid Fund Expression of Interest

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### More information

<https://water.dpie.nsw.gov.au/our-work/water-infrastructure-nsw/grants-and-funding/national-water-grid-authority>

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# Key information

|                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Opening date                 | Thursday 30 January 2025                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Closing date and time        | 11:00pm (AEDT) Thursday, 27 February 2025<br>Please take account of time zone differences when submitting your Expression of Interest (EOI)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| EOI type                     | Open and competitive round                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Lodging an EOI               | EOIs are to be submitted online via SmartyGrants                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| NSW EOI website              | <a href="https://water.dpie.nsw.gov.au/our-work/water-infrastructure-nsw/grants-and-funding/national-water-grid-fund/applications">https://water.dpie.nsw.gov.au/our-work/water-infrastructure-nsw/grants-and-funding/national-water-grid-fund/applications</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Key documents for proponents | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• NSW NWGF EOI Guidelines for Applicants (this document)</li><li>• <a href="#">National Water Grid Investment Framework</a> (Oct 2022)<sup>1</sup></li><li>• <a href="#">National Water Grid Program Administration Manual</a> (November 2024)<sup>2</sup></li><li>• <a href="#">National Water Grid Fund Ancillary Benefits Guide</a> (June 2024)<sup>3</sup></li><li>• <a href="#">National Water Grid Science Strategy</a> (Feb <sup>4</sup>2023) – for science projects</li></ul> |
| Enquiries                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Email <a href="mailto:nwgf-info@dpie.nsw.gov.au">nwgf-info@dpie.nsw.gov.au</a></li><li>• Call 1300 081 047</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nationalwatergrid.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/investment-framework-october-2022.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nationalwatergrid.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/nwgf-program-administration-manual-november-2024.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.nationalwatergrid.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/ancillary-benefits-guide-june-2024.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.nationalwatergrid.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/nwga-science-strategy-2023.pdf>

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# 1 Introduction

The NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Water (NSW DCCEEW) is inviting eligible entities to lodge an Expression of Interest (EOI) to apply for funding under the Australian Government's National Water Grid Fund (NWGF).

Administered by the Australian Government's National Water Grid Branch (NWGB), the NWGF provides funding to projects that help develop and build the National Water Grid (NWG) governments. The NWG is the Australian Government's plan for a secure water future which will help grow Australian agriculture, build resilience to drought, and support regional prosperity. The funding program is delivered in partnership with state and territory governments.

The NSW EOI process is an open and highly competitive process. All proponents must lodge their EOIs online via the SmartyGrants website.

An overview of the NWGF including all programs is available at <https://www.nationalwatergrid.gov.au/>.

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## 2 Purpose of this document

This document provides a guide for proponents on the process of preparing and submitting an EOI for the next round of the NWGF.

EOIs can be submitted before the closing time and date of **11:00pm (AEDT) on Thursday, 27 February 2025**. Please take account of time zone differences when submitting your application.

All EOIs will be subject to an eligibility check followed by an assessment against set criteria by the NSW Government.

Proponents should read and understand the following documents before submitting their expression of interest:

- NSW NWGF EOI Guidelines for Applicants (this document)
- [National Water Grid Investment Framework \(October 2022\)](#)
- [National Water Grid Program Administration Manual \(November 2024\)](#)
- [National Water Grid Fund Ancillary Benefits Guide \(June 2024\)](#)
- [National Water Grid Science Strategy \(February 2023\)](#) – if submitting a proposal for funding under the NWG Science Program.



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## 3 About the National Water Grid Fund

The NWGF is the Australian Government's multi-billion dollar, 10-year water infrastructure investment program. It has been developed to improve water access and security by delivering nationally important water infrastructure projects that unlock potential, build resilience, and promote growth and sustainability.

Funding from the NWGF is guided by the [National Water Grid Investment Framework](#) which supports robust planning and responsible investment decisions that contribute to nature positive outcomes.

Proponents are encouraged to visit the [National Water Grid website](#) to:

- Develop an understanding of the NWGF eligibility criteria
- See examples of previously funded projects; and
- Download the following key National Water Grid documents listed in Section 2.

Further information on eligibility criteria and projects can be found at Section 6.

It is important to note that only state and territory governments can submit project proposals to the NWGB for funding assessment.

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### 3.1 National Water Grid Investment Framework

Developed in collaboration with state and territory governments, the NWG Investment Framework provides a long term, strategic approach to responsible and respectful investment in water infrastructure. The Investment Framework and supporting documents (including the Program Administration Manual) detail the Australian Government's policy and processes for water infrastructure investment across Australia.

The NWG Investment Framework sets out:

- How the NWGB will work in partnership with state and territory governments
- The eligibility criteria for funding under the NWGF as outlined in Section 4 and Section 6.6.1
- The strategic objectives and principles for investment through the NWGF
- The role science has to play in identifying opportunities and evaluating options (noting that there is a separate [NWG Science Strategy](#)).

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### 3.2 National Water Grid strategic objectives

Under the NWG Investment Framework, the Australian Government will identify and invest in projects that address the program's 3 key strategic objectives:

- **Provide safe and reliable water for regional and remote communities** - Increasing water access, quality, and security to better meet essential town water needs in regional and remote Australia.
- **Generate Public benefit through responsible investment in water infrastructure for productive use** - improving water access, quality and security for agricultural, primary industry and industrial use to support regional economic growth and development.
- **Build resilient water infrastructure that is environmentally and culturally responsive** - strengthening the National Water Grid so that water infrastructure investments will support

the protection of our cultural heritage and better meet future challenges from climate change, while managing environmental impacts.

### **Contributing to other Australian Government priorities**

In addition to the strategic objectives set out above, the Australian Government may choose to prioritise investment in projects that contribute to its broader priorities as well as enabling productive outcomes and meeting essential town water needs. This could include projects that contribute to the National Agreement on Closing the Gap targets or that involve water recovery for environmental outcomes.

### 3.3 National Water Grid investment principles

The NWG Investment Framework is underpinned by eight guiding principles that all project proposals must meet in order to be assessed as suitable for funding (see Table 1 below).

Table 1. National Water Grid Investment Principles (source: *National Water Grid Investment Framework*)

| Investment principle                                                          | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Public benefit and national interest                                       | Projects should be of demonstrable public benefit and have a national interest element, including through securing the nation's water security, building resilience to future drought, supporting primary industries, and promoting regional economic development, including through the creation of jobs. |
| 2. Strong state or territory government support                               | There must be strong state or territory government support, including funding contributions and involvement of the private sector and local government, where appropriate.                                                                                                                                 |
| 3. Highest net benefit                                                        | The investment should provide the highest net benefit of all options available to increase access to or security of water, taking into account economic, social, and environmental impacts.                                                                                                                |
| 4. Working together                                                           | Projects should look to address circumstances which cannot be effectively addressed by private proponents, the states, or other stakeholders alone.                                                                                                                                                        |
| 5. Alignment with National Water Initiative principles                        | Project should align with the <u>National Water Initiative</u> principles, including appropriate cost recovery, and where full cost recovery is not deemed feasible, any subsidies are fully transparent.                                                                                                  |
| 6. Project development must include engagement with First Nations communities | Stakeholder engagement for project development must include engagement with First Nations communities of potentially affected areas, to comprehensively identify and manage impacts on cultural heritage.                                                                                                  |
| 7. A consistent, robust analysis of costs and benefits is used                | If providing capital, a consistent, robust analysis of costs and benefits is used, and assessment of appropriate funding and financing arrangements is undertaken.                                                                                                                                         |
| 8. Projects should include early Australian Government involvement            | Early involvement in project identification and development including through the Authority's Science Program and support for business case development.                                                                                                                                                   |

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## 3.4 National Water Grid Program Administration Manual

The NWG Program Administration Manual (November 2024) provides practical detail to support the administration and management of projects under the NWGF.

The manual applies to water infrastructure projects funded, or proposed to be funded, through the NWGF. This includes business case development projects and construction projects. It

The Program Administration Manual does not apply to projects seeking funding under the National Water Grid Science Program.

Proponents should read and understand the NWG Program Administration Manual and NWG Ancillary Benefit Guide in conjunction with the NWG Investment Framework and these guidelines before submitting an EOI.

Chapter 2 of the Program Administration Manual sets out the process for consideration of projects seeking approval of funding, including associated terms and conditions.

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## 4 NSW Considerations

The NSW Government continues to work with stakeholders across regional and remote NSW to identify priorities for improving water security and water quality for towns and communities.

All project applications must demonstrate that the proposal has state or territory support, and co-funding from the state or territory proponent, and/or beneficiaries. The NSW Government assesses projects and programs that may warrant NSW and Australian Government funding based on the criteria set out in the NWG Investment Framework, as well as the following NSW-specific considerations:

- Is the project or program identified as a priority action in a NSW Government strategy (e.g. Regional Water Strategy)?
- Is the project consistent with other NSW Government policy drivers (e.g. regional economic strategies)?
- Does the project address a critical town water security issue?
- Does the project or program already have co-funding secured?
- Does the project also improve environmental outcomes?
- Does the project also improve outcomes for First Nations communities?
- Does the project also improve economic outcomes for regional communities?
- Does the project also improve social outcomes for regional communities?

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## 5 Project proposals

The NWGF has 3 key funding streams which will be evaluated as per their stream. Please see below the funding streams available:

Table 1. NWGF Funding Streams

| Program                                           | Project Type                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|---------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Capital Program</b>                            | Water infrastructure to improve availability, reliability, efficiency, or quality of our water supply, for town water or productive use. Can be used for Preliminary Business Case, Detailed Business Case, Pre-construction, or Construction phase of a project.  |
| <b>First Nations Water Infrastructure Program</b> | Projects to address specific water challenges faced by First Nations communities. Projects may include, but are not limited to, replacing leaking pipes, drilling, and equipping bores, or installing water treatment systems.                                     |
| <b>Science Program</b>                            | Research to provide an evidence base to underpin water infrastructure planning and investment decisions. Three priority themes include water resource analysis, alternative and emerging options, and new information sources including communicating the science. |

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### 5.1 Capital and First Nations Water Infrastructure Programs

As part of the project identification process, proponents will be expected to demonstrate that alternative options, including non-infrastructure solutions, have been appropriately considered, prior

to entering discussions on a proposed infrastructure solution. Additionally, under the First Nations Water Infrastructure Program project is required to provide First Nation population that would benefit from the project.

A project proposal can be submitted for funding at any stage of the project's development, as illustrated in the table below.

Table 2. Project proposals

|                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Preliminary Business Case</b>      | <p><b>Status</b></p> <p>A problem or opportunity has been identified. An initial list of options has been developed through a feasibility study (or similar) and a business case is necessary to strengthen the case for change.</p> <p><b>Phase activity</b></p> <p>Preliminary assessment of options and shortlisting of preferred option(s). Refinement of project scope and rationale for intervention. Preliminary assessment of costs and benefits.</p> <p><b>Phase Output</b></p> <p>Completion of a Preliminary Business Case that can be used to assess the merits of proceeding further with project development. Information at this stage of project development is broad and indicative.</p>                                                                                     |
| <b>Detailed or Full Business Case</b> | <p><b>Status</b></p> <p>A Preliminary Business Case (or similar strategic assessment) has been completed, and a more detailed assessment of options is required.</p> <p><b>Phase activity</b></p> <p>Detailed evaluation of the preferred option(s) and comprehensive analysis of all aspects of the project. Includes progressing planning documents such as design, costings, procurement, and risk management strategies. Approvals processes underway.</p> <p><b>Phase Output</b></p> <p>Completion of a Detailed Business Case that provides clear, comprehensive evidence for decision makers and can be used as a basis for informing a construction decision. The Detailed Business Case should be developed in a manner that would allow assessment by Infrastructure Australia.</p> |
| <b>Pre-Construction (if required)</b> | <p><b>Status</b></p> <p>The Detailed Business Case has been completed. Additional pre-construction activities are required to provide greater cost and deliverability certainty (such as additional design, approvals, environmental activities (Environmental Impact Statement), geotechnical activities, acquisitions, etc).</p> <p><b>Phase activity</b></p> <p>Progress additional pre-construction activities.</p> <p><b>Phase Output</b></p> <p>Project is capital investment ready.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Construction</b>                   | <p><b>Status</b></p> <p>A Detailed Business Case or equivalent level of planning has been completed, including a comprehensive assessment of options and robust analysis of costs and benefits, and the project is investment ready.</p> <p>Major approvals identified and timing confirmed (approvals necessary to commence should be obtained or in process).</p> <p>Stakeholder and community support has been obtained.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |

|  |                                                                                                                                                            |
|--|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  | <p><b>Phase activity</b></p> <p>Construction of the full scope of the project.</p> <p><b>Phase Output</b></p> <p>Project is completed and operational.</p> |
|--|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

## 5.2 Science Projects

The NWG Science Program provides a collaborative national research portfolio which may inform decisions on where and how sustainable water infrastructure is built for a water-secure future. The Science Program responsibly invests in research projects that can:

- accelerate uptake of new and emerging water security technologies
- increase the use of climate resilient water sources
- underpin sustainable, nature-positive development of water resources.

The [NWG Science Strategy](#) closely aligns with the NWG Investment Framework and sets the strategic objectives for the Science Program, which include:

- **Provide safe and reliable water for regional and remote communities:** for example, analysis of currently unused groundwater resources near a community, or investigating suitable technologies to improve water quality for First Nations remote communities.
- **Generate public benefit through responsible investment in water infrastructure for productive use:** for example, identifying opportunities for sustainable development of water resources, including through comprehensive multi-disciplinary water resource assessments in northern Australia.
- **Build resilient water infrastructure that is environmentally sustainable and culturally responsive:** for example, progressing technologies to make water supplies more resilient to climate change and variability. Promising technologies include Managed Aquifer Recharge (MAR), desalination of brackish groundwater and increased use of recycled wastewater.

Projects seeking funding from the NWG Science Program will need to address at least one of the following as part of the research:

- analyse water resources, to understand future sustainability and nature positive development options
- identify and progress alternative and emerging opportunities to increase water security and climate change resilience
- develop new information resources to support decision-making, including decision support tools and science communication.

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## 6 Eligibility criteria

NSW DCCEEW cannot consider an Expression of Interest (EOI) if the eligibility criteria are not satisfied.

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### 6.1 Who is eligible to apply?

To be eligible, the proponent must be a registered business and be one of the following entities:

- local council / authority (including County Councils and Joint Organisations)
- water utility
- irrigation water supply corporation or trust
- First Nations organisation
- science agency
- NSW Government Department; or
- private corporations, where the project has multiple beneficiaries.

Any private entity can put forward an application, however the proposal must have a public benefit.

**Note:** NSW Government agencies may also apply for funding through the EOI process and will be subject to the same assessment process as other proponents.

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### 6.2 Who is not eligible to apply?

- Organisations or entities without an ABN, CAN, ICN or ACNC
- Private individuals
- Proponents who put forward projects that only have one beneficiary
- Proponents whose project is not based in regional or remote NSW.

For the purposes of this application process, regional and remote NSW is defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics Remoteness Areas Edition 3 (2021). You can confirm if an area is classified as regional or remote here: <https://maps.abs.gov.au/index.html>

If you require further clarification on what constitutes regional NSW, please contact us by emailing us at: [nwgf-info@dpie.nsw.gov.au](mailto:nwgf-info@dpie.nsw.gov.au)

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### 6.3 Joint applications

Joint applications are acceptable, provided a lead organisation is appointed who is the main driver of the project and is eligible to apply. Only the lead organisation can submit the NSW EOI form online via SmartyGrants.

The EOI should identify all members of the proposed group, and letters of support from project partners should accompany the EOI.

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### 6.4 Eligible projects under the NWGF

The Australian Government determines the type of projects that are eligible for funding through the NWG, and this may change from time to time.



The following are examples of projects that may receive NWG funding, for either business case development or construction:

- water treatment plants, water recycling plants and desalination plants
- groundwater storage
- managed aquifer recharge
- surface water storage, such as dams and weirs
- irrigation district modernisation or expansion
- pipelines and other projects that facilitate the movement of water.

The First Nations Infrastructure Program's eligible projects also include:

- upgrading networks
- fixing leaking pipes
- Building and equipping bores
- installation of water treatment systems.

Projects may include supporting infrastructure, be either new construction projects or modifications to existing projects (such as the raising of a weir wall) and be either stand-alone or consist of several smaller projects with a common theme or goal.

Consideration may also be given to projects that undertake regional pilots to assess the merits of specific water infrastructure.

The key eligibility criteria are that a project must support the development of the NWG.

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## 6.5 Ineligible projects under the NWGF

The following types of projects are out of scope and are not eligible for funding under the Program:

- **Urban water infrastructure for the sole benefit of residents in major cities** which should be funded by utilities and rate payers
- **Projects that supply water for the exclusive use of a single entity** or that primarily benefit one major customer
- **Waste and stormwater projects**, except to the extent they include a productive economic element such as recycled water schemes
- **Disaster resilience or environmental water recovery projects**
- **Projects for routine maintenance or refurbishment** without betterment.

Significant works required on existing nationally important water infrastructure, such as major safety upgrades, may be considered for funding at the discretion of the Australian Government.

**Please note:** payment for works that have already been completed will not be reimbursed by the NSW Government nor the NWGB and those expenditures should be excluded from the funding contribution being requested.

---

## 6.6 What eligibility and assessment criteria does my proposed project need to meet?

To be considered as eligible for assessment, a project must meet all the eligibility criteria as listed below:

- Be submitted by an eligible entity – refer section 6.1 and 6.2 of this document

- Be in a regional or remote area of NSW as defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics Remoteness Areas Edition 3 (2021) using link: <https://maps.abs.gov.au/index.html>
- Align with the National Water Grid Criteria – refer to section 6.6.1 in this document
- Align with NSW considerations – refer to section 6.6.2 of this document.

### 6.6.1 National Water Grid criteria

Projects must meet mandatory criteria which typically elicit a yes/no response, and include:

- Be planning for, or delivering, new water infrastructure
- Increase the availability, reliability, efficiency, or quality of water supply
- Support water security for regional and remote communities and/or promote the growth and sustainability of regional economies
- Demonstrable public benefit
- Have a national interest element - directly advance or be an essential enabler of national priorities or commitments
- Demonstrable engagement with affected stakeholders, including First Nations communities
- Have secured minimum 50% co-funding from non- Australian Government sources
- Requires an Australian Government contribution (i.e., cannot be effectively addressed by non-Commonwealth stakeholders alone).
- Strongly supported by the NSW Government

In addition, for the First Nations Infrastructure Program and the Science Program, the following criteria also apply:

Table 3. Additional criteria for the First Nations Infrastructure Program and the Science Program

| First Nations Infrastructure Program                                                                                               | Science Program                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Projects that benefit Aboriginal communities through addressing water challenges, in addition to meeting NWG Investment Framework. | <p>Research project that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• analyses water resources, to understand future sustainability and nature positive development options,</li> <li>• identifies and progresses alternative and emerging opportunities to increase water security and climate change resilience,</li> <li>• develops new information resources to support decision-making, including decision support tools and science communication.</li> </ul> |

### 6.6.2 NSW Government considerations

Applications that meet the NWGF eligibility criteria are then assessed against the NSW considerations detailed in Section 4.

### 6.6.3 NSW assesses EOI applications

The NSW Government assesses project EOIs against the NWG criteria, eligible project(s) are then further assessed by an Evaluation Panel prior to approval by the NSW Minister for Water (or delegate). Once approved, the NSW Government works with successful proponents to develop and submit funding proposal to the NWGB. During the assessment process the NSW Government may seek independent and probity advice.

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## 7 How do I submit an Expression of Interest?

The NSW Expression of Interest (EOI) for project proposals to the NWGF is an open and highly competitive process.

The NSW EOI process is the first stage in identifying key information such as the project's objective and scope, environmental, social, cultural, and economic costs and benefits, and alignment with key national, state, and regional strategic plans and strategies such as the National Water Initiative and NSW Regional Water Strategies.

NSW EOI will only be accepted via the online EOI form accessed through SmartyGrants.

It is important to know that due to probity reasons, we are unable to assist you to develop your NSW NWGF EOI. Proponents can discuss proposals with the Department at any time of the year except for during the NSW EOI open period. The department's Program Development and Management branch can only respond to questions that are general in nature during the EOI open period otherwise there is a risk of application forfeiture with proponents.

If you have general questions about eligibility or your project proposal, please email us at: [nwgf-info@dpie.nsw.gov.au](mailto:nwgf-info@dpie.nsw.gov.au)

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### 7.1 Accessing the SmartyGrants online portal

The NSW Government uses SmartyGrants to submit a NSW EOI. The portal allows you to lodge your EOI in a secure online environment.

Links to the SmartyGrants portal to submit your NSW EOI for can be found at:

<https://water.dpie.nsw.gov.au/our-work/water-infrastructure-nsw/grants-and-funding/national-water-grid-fund/applications>

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### 7.2 Completing the NSW EOI form

You must address all eligibility and assessment criteria in your NSW EOI.

The EOI form asks questions that relate to the assessment criteria, and you should provide evidence to support your answers.

Responses of each EOI will be assessed against Australian Government eligibility criteria and NSW Government considerations.

To have your NSW EOI assessed you must:

- Provide all the information requested
- Demonstrate how your project proposal meets all eligibility and assessment criteria
- Upload all required supporting documents
- Submit the online EOI form.

You are responsible for making sure your application is complete and accurate.

The EOI form displays size limits for answers and a number of the questions are mandatory.

Successfully lodged NSW EOIs will receive a confirmation email with a PDF copy of the EOI attached.

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## 7.3 Supporting documentation

You must provide the required supporting documents with your NSW EOI. The documents you attach should be the final/complete version of the document.

The required documentation is dependent on the phase of your proposed project, for example, applications for construction funding must be supported by a completed Final (Detailed) Business Case and other key project management documentation.

You must attach supporting mandatory documentation in line with the directions provided in the EOI form, these guidelines and related NWG documents, such as:

- Reports and/or Business Cases
- Feasibility Study
- Planning Study
- Cost Estimates.

You should only attach required documents; we will not consider information in attachments that do not address NWG requirements.

The maximum file size per attachment is 25MB.

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## 7.4 Timing of Expressions of Interest

You can only submit an EOI between the published opening and closing dates, that are invited **from 30 January 2025 until 11:00pm (AEDT) on 27 February 2025**.

### Late Applications

To ensure fairness for all proponents, EOI for projects in NSW must be submitted within the defined application period.

A request to submit an EOI after the closing date and time will only be considered if the proponents can demonstrate they have experienced exceptional circumstances. Requests for consideration of a late application to be sent by email to: [nwgf-info@dpie.nsw.gov.au](mailto:nwgf-info@dpie.nsw.gov.au) and the NSW DCCEEW will assess if a late application can be supported.

The NSW NWGF Evaluation Panel will not accept changes, modifications, or adjustments to applications after the closing date unless, specific changes relate to the NWGF Investment Framework criteria, are deemed not to provide any proponents with an unfair advantage and are allowed at the Chair of the Evaluation Panel's absolute discretion.

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## 7.5 Seeking assistance

For general questions about eligibility or a project proposal, please email: [nwgf-info@dpie.nsw.gov.au](mailto:nwgf-info@dpie.nsw.gov.au)

Further information about the application process is available on the [department's website](#) to assist proponents in the NSW EOI process.

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## 8 How are NSW project proposals assessed?

It is important to address all relevant criteria in your NSW EOI to have it considered.

All NWG funding applications are subject to a highly competitive evaluation processes at both the State and Federal government level.

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### 8.1 NSW evaluation and assessment

EOIs will undergo a competitive merit-based assessment against the eligibility and assessment criteria.

The assessment of eligible expressions of interest is undertaken by an Evaluation Panel (the Panel), with members endorsed by the DCCEEW Water Group Executive. The Panel may also seek additional advice from independent technical experts.

The Panel will assess your application against the assessment criteria and will make recommendations to the NSW Minister for Water (or their delegate) which projects to submit to the Australian Government for NWG funding.

If the selection process identifies unintentional errors in your application, we may contact you to correct or clarify the errors, but you cannot make any material alterations or additions.

#### 8.1.1 NSW evaluation and assessment process

The NSW evaluation and assessment process is undertaken in two parts. A probity advisor oversees the process.

##### **Part A: Eligibility review**

The NSW DCCEEW Water Group (the department) will review EOIs to ensure they meet the eligibility requirements of the NWG Investment Framework set in Section 6.6.1 to proceed. Where the information has not been provided to support compliance with the eligibility requirements, the department reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to set the application aside from further consideration. The department may also provide the proponents with an opportunity to provide further information to clarify compliance with the eligibility requirements.

After submitting your application, we may contact you for clarification if we find an error or any missing information, including evidence that supports the eligibility and/or merit of your application. However, we can refuse to accept any additional information from you that would materially change your submission after the application closing time.

If the project is deemed ineligible, the department will not progress the EOI for further evaluation.

##### **Part B: Evaluation of EOIs**

Eligible EOIs will be assessed by an NSW NWGF Evaluation Panel that will consider the alignment of the EOI to the NSW Government considerations (Section 4).

EOIs will be scored by the Panel and the highest scoring projects generally being recommended to the NSW Minister for Water (or their delegate). The Minister has absolute discretion in determining the number of projects selected to progress to full application.

Once approved by the Minister for Water, the recommended projects will be invited to complete a full NWGF application.

NSW DCCEEW Water Group will advise proponents of the outcome of their NWG EOI in writing, whether you are successful or unsuccessful.

The NSW Government assessment and evaluation process concludes at this point.

### 8.1.2 Development of NWGF funding applications

The projects with successful EOIs will be invited to complete a full NWGF application.

Using the template provided by the Australian Government DCCEEW and working alongside the department's PDM branch, the proponent will have the opportunity to complete a funding application. The department will submit completed application templates to the Australian Government.

Notwithstanding this support, proponents remain solely responsible for completing their proposal. The department reserves the right to not progress applications if the Australian Government application template has not been completed in sufficient detail to satisfy the NWGF requirements.

#### Application evidence requirements

Evidence and supporting documentation requirements for funding applications are set by the NWGB. The evidence requirements are dependent on the stage of your project for which you are seeking funding. The evidence you submit to support your funding application, may be subject to review by the department's technical staff.

Evidence required to support your project proposal, includes but is not limited to:

- **Options assessment report, feasibility study and/or business cases** that presents the benefits of the project or program. If a benefit cost ratio is available, the department's technical staff may conduct an independent review of the analysis undertaken and provide advice on the appropriateness and rigour of the estimates,
- **Cost estimates (P50/P90)**, which must use a recognised cost forecasting approach and may be subject to review by the department's technical staff. The final costing must include the department's labour expense cap (LEC) and overhead costs (on-costs/corporate) to cover the costs of program administration
- **Risk Register**, which may be independently reviewed by the department's Risk and Assurance team and any gaps or issues addressed by the proponent prior to submission,
- **The Planning Approval pathway (and status)**, which may be reviewed by the department's technical staff and any gaps or issues addressed by the proponent prior to submission.

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## 9 Role of the Australian Government

The Australian Government, via its NWGB, will assess the final funding proposals. The Australian Government is the sole and final authorising body that decides which projects will receive funding through the NWGF.

The NWGB provides advice to the Australian Government on project selection decisions based on their assessment. The NWGB will provide feedback, where possible, when a project is not successful in receiving Australian Government funding.

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## 9.1 Notification of funding application outcomes

NSW DCCEEW will advise shortlisted proponents of the outcome of their NWG funding application in writing, whether successful or unsuccessful. The NWGB typically advises NSW whether projects have been successful in obtaining funding around the time of the Federal Budget and Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook (MYEFO). The timing from which a decision is made is 6 months from submitting application to the NWG or 10 months from EOI.

The NWGB will provide feedback, where possible, when a project is not successful in obtaining funding. If you are unsuccessful, we will give you an opportunity to discuss any feedback received from the NWGB with DCCEEW.

Please note that proponents may put forward projects for future application rounds (where available) regardless of the outcome of their existing application.

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## 9.2 Successful funding applications

If a proponent is successful in obtaining Australian Government funding through the NWGF, the NSW Government will work with the proponent to develop the proposed funding milestones to be included in the Schedule to the Federation Funding Agreement. These agreements are between the Australian and state and territory governments.

**Note:** Negotiating and executing a new schedule can take several months.

- Once the Funding Schedule is executed by the state and federal governments, the Department will work with proponents to develop a Funding Deed (between NSW and project proponent). This process will be managed by DCCEEW Water Group's Grants Management Office.
- The NSW Government makes no binding funding commitment to a proponent unless and until both parties sign a funding deed.
- Successful proponents must not make financial commitments for funded activities until funding deeds have been executed by both parties.
- Grants will be paid via milestone payments set out in the funding deed.
- Project level governance arrangements will also be set up by the Department to ensure projects are progressing appropriately.
- Successful proponents will be required to submit progress reports to the NSW Government as outlined in the funding deed and assist the NSW Government in submitting monthly progress reports to the NWGB.
- The funding amounts are Goods and Services Tax (GST) exclusive. Note: all awarded grants are GST exclusive. Grants are assessable income for taxation purposes, unless exempted by taxation law. It is recommended grantees seek independent professional advice about taxation obligations or seek assistance from the Australian Taxation Office. The NSW Government does not provide advice on individual taxation circumstances.

### Important terms and conditions

- Proponents must hold all relevant insurances.
- Requests for variations or changes to the project will only be considered in limited circumstances and needs to be justified.
- Successful proponents will be required to pay back unspent funds or those funds which have not been spent in accordance with the funding deed.



- All recipients of funding should acknowledge this financial support as per the Funding Acknowledgement Guidelines.
  - The department reserves the right to undertake an audit of grant funding within a period seven years from the signing of the funding deed.
  - Proponents must advise the Department of any changes to their legal status or of changes or delays to their project.
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## 10 Ethical conduct

NSW DCCEEW will use an independent probity advisor, a probity plan, and existing governance structures to identify projects and develop and assess proposals to ensure there are appropriate levels of probity, governance, and transparency.

The NSW NWGF Probity Plan:

- Ensures that decisions relating to funding opportunities are impartial, appropriately documented and reported, publicly defensible and lawful.
  - Details roles and responsibilities of persons involved in the program as they relate to probity.
  - Identifies probity related processes that apply to the program to support high standards of probity to be achieved.
  - Ensures consistency with NSW Premier's Memorandum - Grant Administration Guide (M2024-03).
  - Ensures consistency of the program with most recent Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) guidance on managing grants initiatives (November 2018).
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## 11 Disclaimers and Terms and Conditions

Independent probity advisors provide guidance on any issues concerning integrity, fairness and accountability that might arise from assessing risks and issues, evaluating submissions, awarding grants, and administering funding agreements.

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### 11.1 Marketing and communications

The NSW Minister for Water and the Federal Minister for the Environment and Water, or their nominated representatives, may publicly announce the outcome of the grant application program. Following execution of the funding agreement, the department will publicly disclose details of the grant on the NSW Government grants and funding finder website. Proponents must acknowledge when they have received funding under the program. Funding acknowledgement requirements are detailed on the NSW Government website.

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### 11.2 Complaints

The NSW Government is committed to ensuring the process for providing funding under the program is transparent and in accordance with published guidelines, the NSW Grants Administration Guide (2024), and relevant NSW legislation. Concerns about the program or individual applications should be submitted in writing to [nwgf-info@dpie.nsw.gov.au](mailto:nwgf-info@dpie.nsw.gov.au)

Concerns will be managed in accordance with the department's complaints handling policy, which may include an independent review if required. If proponents do not agree with the way the



department has handled the issue, they may wish to contact the NSW Ombudsman via the online complaint form at <https://www.ombo.nsw.gov.au/Making-a-complaint/how-to-make-a-complaint>

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## 11.3 Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009

Proponents should be aware information submitted in applications and all related correspondence, attachments and other documents may be made publicly available if required to do so under the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* (NSW). Information 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.