



Office of the
Chief Scientist
& Engineer

**NSW Bushfire Response R&D Mission
Bushfire STEM in Schools Program: Round 1
Guidelines for Applicants**

November 2022

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NSW Bushfire Response R&D Mission

Bushfire STEM: Round 1

Guidelines for Applicants

1 Overview

1.1 Introduction

The [NSW Bushfire Response Research & Development \(R&D\) Mission](#) (the Mission) is the first NSW R&D Mission recommended by the Turning ideas into jobs: Accelerating research & development in NSW Action Plan (the Action Plan).

The Action Plan recommends that the Mission should focus on improving planning, preparations for and responses to bushfires – aligning with recommendation five of the NSW Bushfire Inquiry.

The Mission provides \$28 million over four years to accelerate the development, commercialisation and adoption of bushfire technologies and services to better prepare the state for future bushfires.

The Mission has four programs:

- The Bushfire Commercialisation Fund to enable SMEs to develop and commercialise products related to bushfire technologies.
- The Bushfire Technology Pilots Program to enable both existing commercial and new technologies to be fielded and evaluated by frontline bushfire services.
- A STEM Outreach and Engagement Program to provide education and skills training for school children focused on technologies of immediate relevance to bushfire response, to inspire and enable a new generation of technologists.
- Support the development of a Bushfire Technology Ecosystem

The Bushfire STEM in Schools Program is a competitive grant funded by the NSW Government through the Mission, administered by the Office of the NSW Chief Scientist & Engineer (OCSE) within the NSW Department of Enterprise, Investment and Trade (NSW DEIT).

1.2 Program Purpose

The NSW Government recognises the importance of STEM focused, child-centred bushfire education programs to improve student learning outcomes, increase understanding of Indigenous ecological knowledge in bushfire management, and build resilience in communities.

The aim of the Bushfire STEM in Schools Program is to support education and skills training for NSW school children (K-12) with a focus on technologies relevant to bushfire response, to inspire and enable a new generation of technologists. A program can be either an established program or a pilot program.

Eligible organisations will be required to deliver STEM focused, child-centred bushfire technology education programs directly to the school children and/or provide the training required for school staff and teachers to deliver the programs themselves.

Up to \$400,000 is available in this round, which is to be delivered in 2023. A further \$200,000 is available for both rounds two and three.

2 Timing

Assessment and notification timelines	Applications open Monday 21 November 2022
	Applications close 5pm Wednesday 11 January 2023
	Applicants informed of the outcome Early March 2023

Note: dates may be subject to change.

3 Eligibility

3.1 Eligible Applicants

To be eligible, the organisation/s applying must:

- Have an Australian Business Number (ABN).
- Be financially viable and able to demonstrate they are likely to remain so over the duration of the project.
- Be one of the following entities:
 - A company, or
 - An individual or partnership, provided you agree to form a company incorporated in Australia to enter into a legally binding grant agreement, or
 - University, publicly funded research organisation (PFRO), or their collaborative entities, or
 - School, public-sector organisation or other organisation, such as not-for-profit organisations.
- All single-entity applicants must be headquartered in NSW. Joint (consortia) proposals will be highly regarded. If a proposal is consortium-based, the proposal lead must be headquartered in NSW.
- Ineligible applicants include consortia or partnerships with businesses that are insolvent.

NSW DEIT, at its sole discretion, can take publicly available information about an applicant into account that may cause a business to be ineligible for support, such as any personnel or business activities that could cause reputational damage or other risk to the NSW Government. NSW DEIT may seek clarification from applicants in relation to its application, including seeking further information on the eligibility or assessment criteria.

3.2 Eligible Projects

The project must align to content descriptions and student learning outcomes in relevant fields, including for secondary students the STEM, Geography and/or [iSTEM](#) curricula, or for primary the Science and Technology curriculum, or suitable alternative curriculum alignment. Note: Only proposals that align to NSW curriculum will be eligible.

The project must ensure all grant monies are used on activities undertaken to deliver the program in NSW schools. Proposals that propose spending grant funding on partners, research activity, capital, or asset purchase over \$10,000, or activities outside of NSW will not be eligible (other than the use of specific bushfire-related expertise not available in NSW).

3.3 Eligible Support

The support considered for successful projects under the program will be in the form of a grant to be provided in accordance with a Deed of Agreement entered into with DEIT.

Up to \$400,000 is available to the successful applicant(s) in this round, which is to be delivered in 2023, with a further \$200,000 available for both rounds two and three. An applicant can apply for a maximum of \$400,000 in this round one.

Applications can include co-funding proposals and potential leveraging opportunities. If other in-kind assistance is sought, these should be included in proposals where feasible, and will be considered during the assessment process.

NSW DEIT may choose not to award or recommend funding under this program.

4 Assessment Criteria

The application form seeks responses to the following criteria (Table 1). Applications must outline answers to the questions related to these criteria to enable your application to be assessed (unless indicated not applicable) and include information listed in Section 3.2. As this is a competitive grants process, the assessment will be a comparative assessment of your application against all other eligible applications.

The application will be submitted via SmartyGrants and assessed against the criteria below.

Table 2. Assessment Criteria

Criteria	Description
Applications will be assessed according to the criteria outlined below:	
Project impact and scope in inspiring and enabling student participation and understanding of STEM in relation to bushfire detection, response, and management. (25%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Projects must demonstrate that the impact will be broader than an individual school. <i>(Question B.1)</i> How will the project support increase school student interest, participation, and understanding of STEM in relation to bushfire detection, response, and management? Include which school years(s) the project is targeting <i>(Question B.2)</i> How will the project encourage student entrepreneurship and career opportunities in STEM? <i>(Question B.3)</i> How will the project build partnerships with local communities and organisations to increase knowledge on bushfire preparedness and build resilience in communities to deliver broader benefits. <i>(Question B.4)</i> Where possible, how will the project incorporate traditional ecological knowledge in bushfire management. <i>(Question B.5)</i>
Understanding of best practice student learning outcomes. (25%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does the project align with best practice learning approaches in STEM and/or cross-curricular learning, including alignment with relevant curriculum and NSW Department of Education approved elective courses? <i>(Question B.6)</i> How will the project support and align with the STEM education strategy and assist in sustainable improvements to teachers' confidence and competence in <u>STEM education for NSW</u>. <i>(Question B.7)</i>

Criteria	Description
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does the project align with and incorporates the Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience's (AIDR) <u>seven principles of Disaster Resilience Education for young people</u> (<i>Question B.8</i>). The principles are: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> places the learner at the centre reflects the local context be inclusive establish and strengthen partnerships engage and challenge learners focus on action build capability.
Track record of relevant delivery, experience, or expertise in delivering STEM programs in schools (25%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Please describe the track record of relevant delivery, experience, or expertise in delivering STEM programs in schools. Including, but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> key project personnel capabilities and experience in delivering STEM programs. Please also provide CVs, and/or LinkedIn profile links expertise or knowledge that makes your organisation/s uniquely qualified to deliver this STEM program. (<i>Question B.9</i>) Outline your track record of current projects or similar work/collaborations, including with schools and other education providers, community organisations, and/or disaster agencies. (<i>Question B.10</i>) Please describe the appropriate trauma informed safeguards to address responses that may arise from the content. (<i>Question B.11</i>)
Project delivery plan (25%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outline your delivery plan and risk management to deliver inclusive and respectful training that meets all legislative requirements. (<i>Question B.12</i>) Outline your proposed project governance. (<i>Question B.13</i>) Outline your demonstrated approach to effectively partner with NSW primary and/or secondary schools to deliver the program. (<i>Question B.14</i>)

NSW DEIT may seek clarification from any applicant in relation to its application, including seeking further information on the eligibility or assessment criteria.

Important information when submitting:

Applicants need to:

- submit the online application form through Smarty Grants, ensuring all questions are answered or indicated not applicable.
- clearly identify in their application (including attachments) any information that the applicant requests be treated as confidential.
- authorise their application. The application must be authorised by at least one of the core participants (i.e. by the head of the organisation or their authorised delegate).

Late proposals will not be considered except where NSW DEIT is satisfied that the integrity and competitiveness of the program has not been compromised.

5 Assessment Process

The assessment of applications will be led by the independent Expert Panel, supported by the OCSE as Secretariat to the *Bushfire STEM in Schools Program*.

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Once the applications have closed, OCSE will review the applications for eligibility and provide a report to the Expert Panel on the eligible and ineligible applications. The OCSE, on behalf of the Expert Panel, may seek further information on individual EOIs in relation to eligibility.

The Expert Panel will:

- identify any conflicts of interest in relation to any eligible applications and sign a confidentiality agreement;
- assess and rank grant applications according to the assessment criteria;
- engage with applicants through the OCSE Secretariat, where appropriate, to clarify questions or explore opportunities to collaborate between applicants; and
- make recommendations on which applicants, if any, should receive grants and the amount of those grants.

The Expert Panel will assess each application on a competitive basis relative to the criteria and other applications.

The Expert Panel has the discretion to ask one or more applicants to attend an interview to discuss aspects of the proposal or presentation of their proposed program with the Expert Panel.

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

- The total funding available
- The assessment criteria outlined above
- Any information received during any interview or presentation
- The requested amount against the scope of the project i.e. could the applicant effectively deliver the proposed project with less funding
- Whether the requested funding amount is too large compared to the project as a whole.
- Whether applicants have sufficient or additional resources or avenues available to raise capital other than this grant that could assist with the success of their project.
- Whether a decrease of funding will impact achieving the overall aim of the Bushfire STEM in Schools Program.

The Expert Panel has discretion to recommend that an applicant receive a smaller amount of funding than they originally applied for.

The Expert Panel will provide advice on the most appropriate portion of the funding to be allocated to best deliver the objectives of the program.

Expert Panel

The Expert Panel will:

- be chaired by an independent person with experience in bushfire education for school students,
- comprise members with expertise in bushfire, STEM, and education fields, and
- draw on advice or expertise as required. Expertise could include individuals with significant subject-matter expertise specific to the opportunities identified by applicants, but who are not conflicted.

An independent probity advisor will be present to provide guidance to NSW DEIT and the Expert Panel on integrity, fairness, and accountability, and ensure transparency of the Program's administration. Further information about probity controls is at Section 9.

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During the assessment process, the OCSE may ask applicants to provide additional information to assist in the assessment process. Advice may be sought from other NSW Government agencies or other sources to assist in the assessment of projects as required. The OCSE may seek to negotiate amendments to the application to maximise the public benefits from the project.

5.1 Decision Making

The Expert Panel will provide its recommendations to the NSW Chief Scientist & Engineer. The NSW Chief Scientist & Engineer, or their delegate will consider recommendations from the Expert Panel. The NSW Chief Scientist & Engineer or their delegate makes final decisions on whether to fund projects.

The final decision by the NSW Chief Scientist & Engineer, or their delegate, will be recorded in writing and any departure from the Expert Panel's recommendation will be documented with reasons for the variation and published. Records relating to the decision will be managed in accordance with the requirements of the *State Records Act 1998*.

The Expert Panel recommendations will include what applications to fund, the amount and type of funding, and any specific funding conditions. Assessment will be merit based against the assessment criteria and competitive, and the NSW Government may choose not to award or recommend funding under this program.

The Expert Panel will provide advice on the most appropriate portion of the *Bushfire STEM in Schools Program* funding to be allocated to best deliver the objective of the program.

6 Reporting and Data

6.1 Monitoring

Reporting of successful projects will be outlined in the Deed of Agreement and will involve 6-monthly and/or annual reporting, dependent on the size of the grant and the nature of the proposed activity. Templates will be provided for these reports and will require information such as:

- progress against agreed project milestones and outcomes
- project costs
- contributions of participants directly related to the grant.

6.2 Evaluation

NSW DEIT will evaluate *Bushfire STEM in Schools Program* to measure the extent to which the Program's outcomes and objectives have been achieved and may use information from applications and reports for this purpose.

7 Important Terms and Conditions

Applicants should note:

- The NSW Government will publicly announce funding for individual applications. It may also use information provided to create case studies.
- Requests for variations or changes to the project may be considered with regard to probity principles being upheld.

- Successful applicants will be required to pay back unspent grant funds or where the corresponding spending was not accordance with the Deed of Agreement.
- Successful applicants may be required to participate in program evaluation after the project has commenced.
- In accordance with the Deed of Agreement, the successful applicant will be required to provide evidence of how projects have resulted in measurable benefits consistent with the Program's objectives and outcomes.
- All recipients of NSW Government funding should acknowledge this financial support in accordance with the Funding Acknowledgement Guidelines for Recipients of NSW Government Grants available at 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 grant will be payable upon the execution of the Deed of Agreement. Invoices for grant payments will be submitted and paid in a single tranche, or as dictated by the Deed of Agreement.
- Payments will be GST inclusive. Grants are assessable income for taxation purposes, unless exempted by a taxation law. It is recommended applicants 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.
- NSW DEIT reserves the right to undertake an audit of funding and support within seven years from date of the Deed of agreement. Tracking and reporting will be a requirement of the deed of agreement, which will include regular performance reporting.

8 Communication

8.1 Successful Applicants

Successful applicants will be notified via email and/or letter within 30 days of the final determination. If you are successful, we will advise you of any specific conditions attached to the grant including a request to keep the grant confidential for a period of time, if an announcement is likely to be made by the NSW Government.

Unsuccessful applicants will be notified via email and/or letter of the outcome of their application and will be offered a feedback information session within 30 days of the final determination.

8.2 Deed of Agreement

Successful applicants who accept the offer of a grant will be required to enter into a formal Deed of Agreement with the NSW Government relating to the grant. The Deed of Agreement will specify obligations that relate primarily to the recipient's accountability for the grant, including using the grant for activities occurring in NSW, the return of unspent grant funds and reporting on the use of the grant for the duration of the term. The NSW Government makes no binding funding or support commitment to an applicant unless and until both parties sign the Deed of Agreement, including the lead applicant identified in the proposal.

While successful applicants are required to be compliant with all relevant laws and regulations, they will be specifically requested to comply with the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (NSW)*.

8.3 Complaints

If an applicant has a complaint, this should be raised with NSW DEIT by emailing communications@enterprise.nsw.gov.au or via the website <https://www.investment.nsw.gov.au/contact-us/>. NSW DEIT will handle all complaints in line with its Complaints Handling Policy or the Terms and Conditions of the Program.

9 Controls

9.1 Probity Advice

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

An independent probity advisor will be engaged as part of this Program to provide guidance to the OCSE on any issues concerning integrity, fairness and accountability that may arise throughout the application, assessment, and decision-making process. This will ensure decisions are made with integrity, fairness, and accountability, while delivering value for money for NSW.

9.2 Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (NSW)

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 may 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.

9.3 Conflicts of Interest

Conflicts of interest for NSW DEIT will be handled as set out in the NSW DEIT NSW Code of Ethics and Conduct.

9.4 Privacy

We treat applicants' personal information according to the NSW DEIT Privacy Management Plan available at investment.nsw.gov.au/privacy and the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998* (NSW).

This includes letting applicants know:

- what personal information we collect
- why we collect your personal information
- who we give your personal information to

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

9.5 Disclaimer

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NSW DEIT does not guarantee or warrant and accepts no legal liability whatsoever arising from or connected to, the accuracy, reliability, currency or completeness of any material contained in this publication. Information in this publication is provided as general information only and is not intended as a substitute for advice from a qualified professional.

NSW DEIT recommends that users exercise care and use their own skill and judgment in using information from this publication and that users carefully evaluate the accuracy, currency, completeness, and relevance of such information. Users should take steps to independently verify the information in this publication and, where appropriate, seek professional advice.

The Guidelines are subject to change at any time at the sole discretion of NSW DEIT.

10 Contact Details

Any enquiry about the assessment process or the outcome of an application should be sent to bushfiremission@chiefscientist.nsw.gov.au