

# Boosting Business Innovation Program

**INCLUDING TECHVOUCHERS**

Program Guidelines



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# Program description

## Background

The Boosting Business Innovation Program (including TechVouchers) is a program designed to build innovation partnerships between selected Publicly Funded Research Organisations (PFROs) and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) with improved access to researchers, training, and facilities.

Since BBIP was initiated in 2016, it has demonstrated the positive impact of focused collaboration between business and research in accelerating the rate of innovation.

There can be significant barriers for NSW SMEs to access the appropriate expertise, training, and facilities to translate research and innovation inputs towards new product developments, process improvements, or productivity gains.

The Program provides funding to public research organisations to reduce these barriers for SMEs and support the translation of research into business benefit through the TechVouchers.

## Objective and outcomes

The objective of the Program is to support productivity improvement and business growth through the translation of knowledge and inventions to new products and services.

The Program targets three main outcomes:

1. Increase collaboration between researchers in PFROs and SMEs through funding support for activities that build connections.
2. Develop innovation and entrepreneurship skills and capacity for knowledge translation for business-owners, SME employees, as well as researchers, university staff, and students.
3. Support commercialisation processes for university research and innovative SMEs.



## Program design

The Boosting Business Innovation Program (BBIP) is an indirect human intervention program. The Department of Enterprise, Industry and Trade (DEIT) administers grant funding to select PFROs with large-scale operations in NSW. These grant recipients are the Program's fourteen Delivery Partners.

The Boosting Business Innovation Program funds:

1. Boost Activities.
2. TechVouchers.

Through Boost Activities, Delivery Partners offer facilities and services such as co-working spaces, business incubators, accelerator programs, start-up hubs, conferences, training, and access to leading experts.

Boost Activities involve multiple projects in many locations across New South Wales to increase collaboration, upskilling, and ultimately commercialisation rates.

The Delivery Partners also deliver TechVouchers which fund collaborative research projects between SMEs and researchers.

TechVouchers leverage the ecosystem of innovation developed by PFROs with funding from the BBIP. DEIT promotes successful projects upon completion.

## Program end-beneficiaries

The end-beneficiaries of the Program's activities are:

- NSW-based SMEs working in industry sectors and technologies that align with the NSW Industry Development Framework. SMEs are defined cumulatively by the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Australian Taxation Office as organisations that employ fewer than 200 employees and with an accumulated annual turnover of less than A\$10 million
- staff and researchers of the Delivery Partners
- individual researchers and entrepreneurs based in NSW
- students and alumni of NSW Universities.



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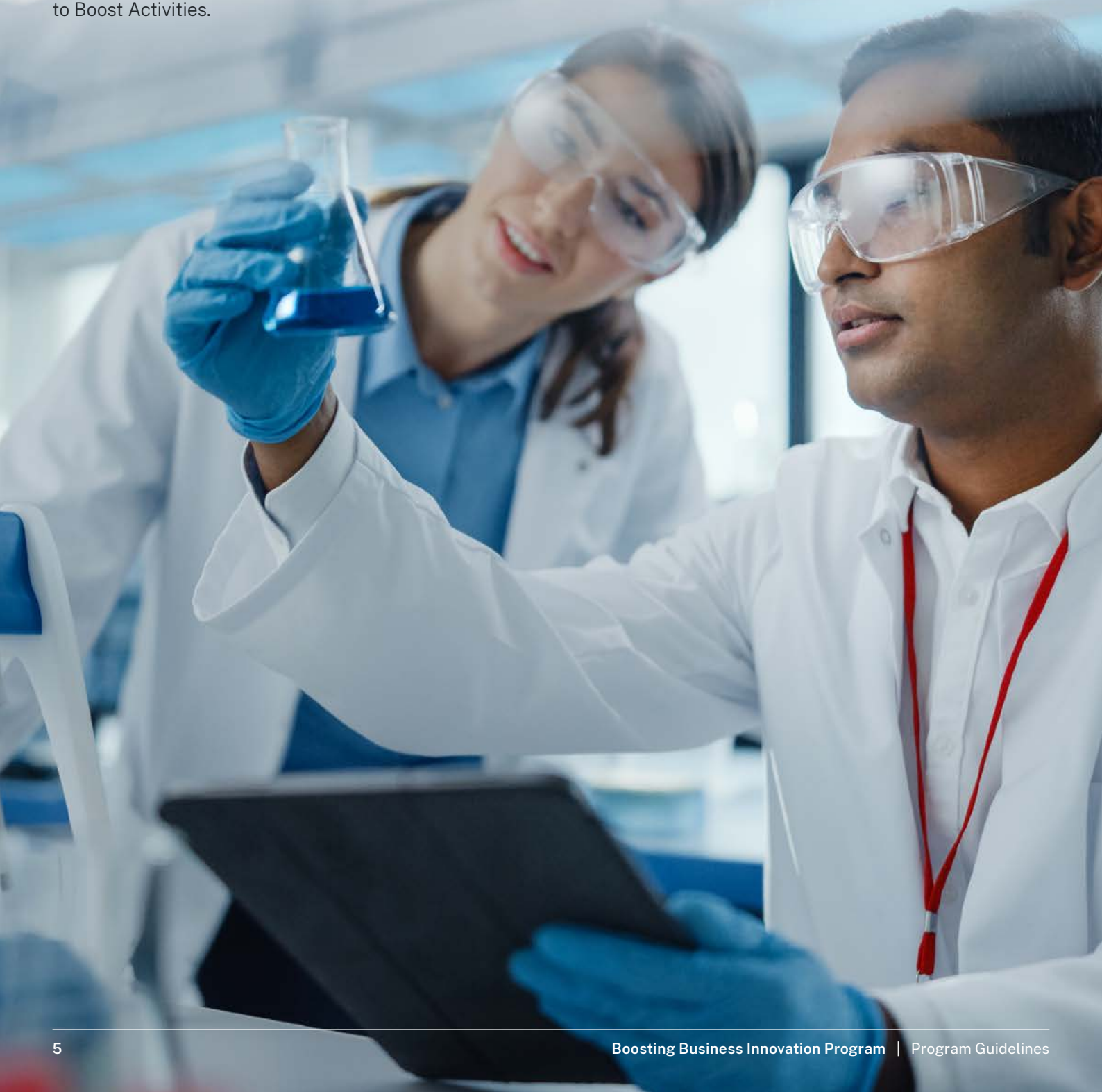
# Program funding

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A total of \$11 million has been allocated for BBIP over four years from FY2023-24. This consists of \$2 million allocated for FY2023-24 and \$3 million allocated per annum over the following three years.

The grant funding is split equally between all Delivery Partners, with each receiving a total of \$785,714 over the four years. Of this total amount, \$510,714 (excl. GST) is for Boost Activities and at least \$275,000 (excl. GST) is reserved for the delivery of TechVouchers.

Unspent TechVouchers funding cannot be transferred to Boost Activities.



# Program Delivery Partners

## Selection of the Delivery Partners

The Minister for Industry and Trade and Minister for Innovation, Science and Technology has selected Delivery Partners based on advice from DEIT that they have a unique capacity to achieve the Program's outcomes.

The Delivery Partners are PFROs:

- including the NSW Universities listed in the *Higher Education Support Act 2003*, statutory research agencies, and federal or NSW departments or agencies
- excluding medical research organisations.

The Delivery Partners have:

- offices and significant footprint in NSW
- research activities in NSW
- research activities with the potential to support the needs of SMEs in NSW
- a successful track-record of engaging with and supporting local innovating SMEs
- have the potential to gain expertise, develop processes and acquire knowledge from the delivery of the Program, which in turn will enable to further enhance support towards the business community of NSW (feedback loop).

## List of Delivery Partners

There are 14 Delivery Partners. They are:

### NSW-based universities

- Australian Catholic University (ACU)
- Charles Sturt University (CSU)
- Macquarie University (MQ)
- Southern Cross University (SCU)
- University of New England (UNE)
- University of New South Wales (UNSW)
- University of Newcastle (UoN)
- University of Sydney (USyd)
- University of Technology Sydney (UTS)
- University of Wollongong (UoW)
- Western Sydney University (WSU)

### Public Australian research institutions

- Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO)
- National Measurement Institute (NMI)
- Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation (ANSTO)



# Boost activities

## Eligible Boost delivery outputs

Outputs delivered by Delivery Partners must:

- contribute towards the Program’s objectives (page 3) and enhance one or more of the three pillars of:
  - Collaboration and networks
  - Commercialisation
  - Skills development
- support the Program’s end-beneficiaries
- fill an identified gap or direct need in the support provided to local SMEs
- be aligned with industry sectors or technologies identified in the NSW Industry Development Framework. They are:

Emerging industries	
	Clean energy and waste
	Medical and life sciences
	Digital systems and software
	Defence and aerospace
Existing industries	
	International education
	Visitor economy
	Agriculture and agrifood
	Resources
Core enabling technologies	
	Digital technologies
	Advanced manufacturing
	Biotechnology

Outputs delivered by Delivery Partners must not:

- be used to gain a direct and foreseeable competitive advantage over another Delivery Partner
- duplicate a service already provided by another Delivery Partner to the same end-beneficiaries.

## Eligible Boost expenditure

Delivery Partners must ensure that Program funding is directed solely and exclusively towards the delivery of eligible outputs.

DEIT will not pay for expenditure higher than the agreed upon grant amount outlined in the funding agreement.

Eligible expenditures are listed below. For other expenditures not listed in these guidelines, Delivery Partners will need to seek approval from DEIT, justifying the link between the expenditure and its contribution to the activity’s intended outcome.

### Labour costs

Salaries, or parts of salaries, of staff assigned specifically and directly to the delivery of the Program, part of the Program, outputs, or part of the outputs.

Salaries, or parts of salaries, of staff assigned specifically and directly to the uptake, administration, delivery, and reporting of TechVouchers.

If travel costs are incurred, they must be domestic, reasonable and proportionate to the overall cost of the service. As an example, air and rail tickets are expected to be economy class, and car rentals at the lowest available rate at time of booking.

Travels should be domestic, and travel tickets must be economy class, or at the lowest available cost at time of booking. Car rental should be at the lowest available cost at time of booking.

### Equipment and material costs

Spaces and offices refurbishing, furnishing, equipment, including presentations, teaching, communication, and collaboration tools as well as Internet subscription, office supplies and other consumables used for the delivery of the Program, part of the Program, outputs, or part of the outputs.

Research and development equipment such as workstations and benches, specialised equipment, safety equipment, and other consumables used for the delivery of the Program, part of the Program, outputs, or part of the outputs.

All other equipment used for the delivery of the Program, part of the Program, outputs, or part of the outputs.

## Third party costs

Cost of external staff, researchers, consultants, or services hired directly for the purpose of delivering parts of the Program or part of the outputs, if these costs would not have been incurred by the Delivery Partner outside of the Program.

Marketing and promotional costs incurred directly by the Program, part of the Program, outputs, or part of the outputs.

Marketing and promotional costs incurred by the uptake and delivery of TechVouchers or a combination of Boost Activities and TechVouchers.

Events, including catering, that are organised as part of the delivery of the Program. These costs must demonstrate value for money against their intended outcome, be reasonable and proportionate to the overall cost of the activity or project. Purchase of alcohol is not eligible.

## Delivery Partners employees training costs

Workshops, courses, sessions, both presential or e-learning, undertaken by staff assigned specifically and directly to the delivery of the Program. The training must be related to enhancing skills and knowledge for better Program delivery.

## Grants, sponsorships, and prizes costs

Sums allocated to eligible end-beneficiaries following an open, competitive selection process for the purpose of encouraging collaboration, upskilling or research commercialisation.

## Ineligible Boost expenditures

The following expenditures will not be considered eligible for Boost funding:

- travel and accommodation costs for conferences, workshops, training sessions or all other events not directly an output by a Delivery Partner and/or located outside of NSW
- all costs not directly and specifically incurred by the delivery of the Program, part of the Program, outputs, or part of the outputs; or to the uptake, administration or delivery of TechVouchers, or a combination of Boost Activities and TechVouchers.

## Boost reporting

Reporting requirements are specified in the funding agreement, which details the metrics, data, level of detail, and financial information that must be provided by the delivery partners.

The funding agreement includes details of the evidence that needs to be provided as part of the reporting process. This may include evidence related to eligible expenditure.

Delivery Partners must keep payment records of all eligible expenditure and be able to explain how the costs relate to the activities and intended Program outcomes. At any time, DEIT may ask for records of expenditures paid. If these records are not provided upon request, the expense may not qualify as eligible expenditure.

Reporting enables DEIT to measure the outcomes of the delivery outputs and clearly identify their link to the objectives and three outcomes of the program.

Reporting is aimed at providing transparency, accountability, and contributing to program outcomes evaluation at the end of the funding cycle.

Delivery Partners must provide progress reports every six months on their outputs. The report must be submitted in the format provided by DEIT.

Delivery partners must ensure, prior to the start of the program, that they have the capacity to provide the required items and data for evaluation.

Not all outputs can be measured. For these, Delivery Partners must notify DEIT, and a set of assumptions and/or different metrics can be agreed upon for reporting.

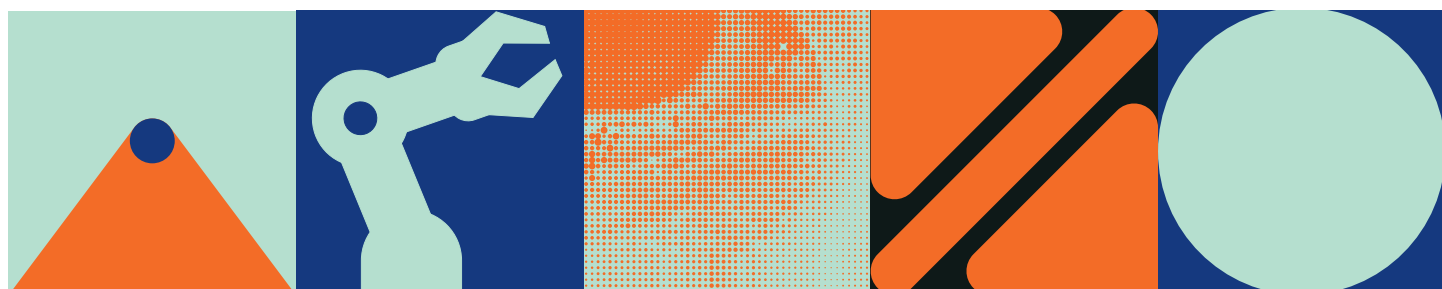
## Payment of Boost activities

Delivery Partners will be required to enter into funding agreements with DEIT.

The funding agreements:

- detail the respective obligations of both parties
- specify the reporting requirements
- includes the evidence that need to be provided for the acquittal process
- set out the reporting, acquittal, and payment dates.

Delivery Partners will receive two Boost payments per year upon satisfactory reporting.





# TechVouchers

All Delivery Partners have reserved TechVouchers funding to use towards eligible collaborative R&D projects that accelerate commercialisation.

This reserved funding ensures that all PFROs have the opportunity to develop collaborative projects with their local ecosystem of innovative SMEs.

Approved TechVouchers projects are awarded 50% of the total eligible project costs in match-funding, up to a maximum of \$50,000.

Unspent TechVouchers funding cannot be transferred to Boost Activities.

Delivery Partners that have not been able to deliver TechVoucher projects to the full amount reserved for the financial year can submit a request to DEIT to transfer their unspent funding to the following financial year TechVouchers budget. The request must detail:

- the reasons why funding was not spent
- the planned projects for the coming year.

DEIT makes the decision to grant or refuse transfer of funding to the following year.

Only one transfer can be granted for the total duration of the program.

## Eligible TechVoucher businesses

To be eligible for the TechVouchers, businesses must:

- have an ABN registered in NSW and be based in NSW
- employ fewer than 200 employees, as defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, at the time of application
- not be a subsidiary of a revenue generating business locally or overseas. If part of a group, the parent company or entity must apply on behalf of the consolidated entity and meet all eligibility requirements
- not be owned, employ, or have any financial ties of any kind with any of the proposed researchers for the project
- the rights to commercialise their products or services and/or do not infringe on existing protected IP
- demonstrate adequate matched funding (no in-kind) has been secured for the project
- is not, and will not be receiving any other grant or subsidy for the same project from a State Government or Commonwealth agency or department
- work in industry sectors or technologies identified in the NSW Industry Development Framework. They are:
  - Clean energy and waste
  - Medical and life sciences
  - Digital systems and software
  - Defence and aerospace
  - International education
  - Visitor economy
  - Agriculture and agrifood
  - Resources
  - Digital technologies
  - Advanced manufacturing
  - Biotechnology



## Eligible TechVoucher projects

To be eligible for TechVouchers funding, projects must:

- start within three months of submission for validation and approval to DEIT and completed within twelve months from the start
- incur active collaboration between an eligible business and one of the PFROs delivering TechVouchers
- have a defined commercialisation outcome.

### Three-months start date

A project's start date is the day when the first invoiceable expenditure is incurred for the project.

A start date will typically be specified in the project plan and include a range of activities such as for example:

- a kick-off meeting between projects' participants
- the first day or half-day of desk-based research work
- the purchase of equipment or consumables to be used in the project
- a booking for a research facility
- a travel expense related to the project.

### Active collaboration

Collaboration can occur at various stages of the project or be continuous through the R&D process. Different types of collaborative projects are eligible. They are:

- **Contract research.** The business has a particular commercialisation problem that needs to be solved. Once the project has been precisely defined, scoped, and budgeted by both applicant and delivery partner, the university or research organisation conducts the research. This gives the business access to leading expertise, often while retaining the intellectual property rights.
- **Collaborative research.** The business undertakes research together with a Delivery Partner. Intellectual property is usually shared between the business and the PFRO.

- **Use of research equipment, facilities, and co-location.** The business locates its activities, part of its activities, or some of its employees on campus, alongside researchers, uses existing research infrastructures such as labs, and actively engages with the academic community to foster ideas and overcome commercialisation difficulties. This can be for a predefined amount of time, or as a permanent on-going collaboration with initial set-up costs.
- **Faculty secondment.** A researcher goes on secondment to the business for a set amount of time to gain insights, bring technical expertise and an innovative approach, to solve real-world commercialisation problem.

### Defined commercialisation outcome

Commercialisation outcomes are specific to each businesses' needs. They must be specified in the project documentation before the start of each project and include the quantifiable/measurable expected innovation resulting from the project.

Commercialisation outcomes include:

- development of an innovative product or service, or part of an innovative product or service, with progression on the Technological Readiness Level Scale (TRL)
- solving a technical or technological problem that hinders development of a product or service and progression on the TRL scale
- improve a business' internal R&D capacities
- improvement of the business model, commercial processes, or parts of the commercial processes
- improved understanding of a complex market, for strategic fit.



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## TechVoucher projects selection process

### First point of contact

Delivery Partners are responsible for promoting TechVouchers to prospective businesses.

In addition to that, businesses interested in TechVouchers are encouraged to contact the eligible Delivery Partner of their choice to check their eligibility, discuss their needs, identify how R&D could help them overcome commercialisation hurdles, and build a project to support their development.

If a business interested in TechVouchers contacts DEIT for information on the program, DEIT will qualify the interest and needs of the business, contact the Delivery Partners with the information, and ensure that at least one Delivery partner contacts the business to discuss their project.

All Delivery Partners are part of the BBIP network and can refer businesses to the most appropriate research organisation based on needs, expertise, capacities, and availabilities. A list of contacts can be found at the end of this document.

### Projects development

Delivery Partners and interested businesses need to co-develop their collaborative R&D project with a commercialisation outcome. Together they determine all aspects of the project including but not limited to, goals, R&D tasks to be undertaken, personnel involved in the project, milestones and timeframes, key performance indicators, financial terms, overheads and intellectual property rights arrangements.

### Proposals Eligibility and Assessment Form

Once a project has been planned, the delivery partner and the business must complete and submit the project Eligibility and Assessment Form (the Form) to DEIT.

The Form comprises an eligibility section and a project assessment section.

Delivery partners certify in the Form that they have conducted the assessment process in a fair and impartial manner following their respective institutions' policies and procedures on governance, transparency, and accountability. They also certify that no member of the assessment panel had any conflict of interest in evaluating projects.

### Projects assessment

Delivery Partners must assess projects according to the following criteria:

- **Deliverability:** how strongly the project team can demonstrate that the project will commence within three months and be completed within 12 months.
- **Active collaboration:** the degree to which this project will generate collaboration-related benefits.
- **Commercialisation:** The extent to which the project will achieve one or more of the commercialisation aims of TechVouchers.

Projects must be assessed by a panel of independent assessors. The Delivery Partners are responsible for assembling the assessment panel. Assessors can be employed by the Delivery Partner or be external. Assessors can be chosen for their business, scientific, engagement expertise, or involvement in Boost Activities, for example.

Assessors cannot be involved in the project or have any financial or other interest in the project.

Written records of assessment panel membership, conflicts of interest, discussions and decisions must be maintained by the Delivery Partners and provided to DEIT upon request.

For detailed guidance on assessment criteria and process, please refer to the Form, available from DEIT or each of the Fourteen Delivery Partners.

### Validation and approval of proposals

Delivery Partners must submit their Project Eligibility and Assessment Forms to DEIT for validation and approval.

- **Validation.** DEIT will check each Form to ensure that participating business and project meets eligibility criteria and assessment process requirements for TechVouchers funding. DEIT may seek probity advice, carry out further enquiries or require additional documentation before validation.
- **Approval.** Validated proposals are submitted to the DEIT decision-maker for approval, currently, the Director for Innovation and Entrepreneurship. DEIT will notify Delivery Partners of the decision.
- **Publication of successful projects.** DEIT will maintain a public list of all awarded TechVoucher projects, with the names of recipient businesses, collaborating Delivery Partners, money awarded for the project, and a brief description of the project. The list will be published on the NSW Government Grant Finder Website ([www.nsw.gov.au/grants-and-funding](http://www.nsw.gov.au/grants-and-funding)).

## TechVoucher projects execution

Delivery partners are responsible, with the participating business, for the timely conduct of the projects approved for funding.

### Variations

If there is a substantial variation to the project, such as changes in start dates, expected delays, changes of outcomes or type of collaboration, the Delivery Partner must inform DEIT as soon as the variation is known or deemed probable to occur.

The DEIT decision-maker for TechVoucher variations, currently, the Director for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, upon recommendation from the Program Lead, will either accept the variation or decide to withdraw the TechVoucher, after a thorough review of the circumstances affecting the project, taking into account the importance of the variation and its consequences on the intended outcomes of the project and the program as a whole.

### Project start date

Projects must start within three months of submission of the proposal to DEIT.

If a project is initially planned to start within three months of submission but is delayed, Delivery Partners must submit the reasons for the delay to DEIT as soon as delay is known.

DEIT can accept the delay as a variation or can decide to withdraw the TechVoucher and after a thorough review of the circumstances affecting the project, taking into account the importance of the delay, its consequences on the intended outcomes of the project and the new timeline for project completion.

### Project end date

Projects must be completed within twelve months of Approval of the proposal by DEIT.

If a project is delayed, or is cut short, Delivery Partners must submit the reasons for the delay or early end to DEIT as soon as circumstances are known.

DEIT can accept the delay or early end as a variation or can decide to withdraw the TechVoucher, in accordance with the Governance Plan, and after a thorough review of the circumstances affecting the project, taking into account the importance of the delay and monies and time already expanded on the project.

### Projects promotion by DEIT

DEIT will promote and reward completed projects through:

- a dedicated annual showcase event involving SME and Delivery Partner staff
- publication of success stories through DEIT's digital channels
- tailored advice on accessing local and international markets.

## Reporting

Reporting enables DEIT to measure the outcomes of each project and clearly identify their link to the objectives intended outcomes of the TechVouchers.

Reporting is aimed at providing transparency, accountability, and contributing to program outcomes evaluation at the end of the funding cycle.

Delivery Partners are responsible for reporting. Reporting requirements are specified in the funding agreement, with number of reports to be provided and detailed financial information on money spent to date on the project.

Final reporting is done upon completion of the project, through a reporting template provided by DEIT, and must include:

- a brief description of the collaboration undertaken during the project
- a summary of the innovation and commercialisation progression achieved, with quantifiable/measurable data
- a brief statement of the project's value towards the program's intended outcomes
- evidence of invoicing and payments effectively incurred by the participating business to the Delivery Partner.



## TechVouchers payment

### TechVoucher value

Approved TechVoucher projects are awarded 50% of the total eligible project costs in matched-funding, up to a maximum of \$50,000.

This is specified in a funding agreement with a Delivery Partner for each TechVoucher project.

Delivery Partners must invoice the collaborating SME for the full cost of the project minus the value of the associated TechVoucher.

### TechVouchers payment to Delivery Partners

The value of each TechVoucher is then refunded by DEIT to Delivery Partners in one instalment, upon:

- proof of project completion
- satisfactory final reporting
- proof of SME payment to the Delivery Partner for the project
- correctly rendered invoicing from the Delivery Partner to DEIT.

The amount effectively paid by DEIT is:

- up to the agreed value specified in the funding agreement
- no more than 50% of the total eligible costs effectively incurred.

### Non-completed TechVoucher projects

If a project could not be completed as initially intended, the Delivery Partner must provide final reporting through the reporting template, detailing the reasons for ending the project before its initial term. Evidence of invoicing and payments must be included. Unless otherwise notified, DEIT refunds the total effectively spent on the project, up to the initial value of the TechVouchers funding.



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# Important information

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## Program evaluation

The Boosting Business Innovation Program (including TechVouchers) is subject to outcomes evaluations at the end of each funding cycle. Outcomes evaluation is conducted by DEIT. It relies on accurate reporting from the Delivery Partners, as well as complementary data collection from Delivery Partners, participating businesses and the wider innovation community of NSW. Data collection can take the form of surveys, questionnaires, workshops, structured or unstructured interviews or fieldwork.

All stakeholders taking part in data collection are informed and give consent prior to collection. All data collected is submitted to the participants and respondents for correction and comments.

DEIT is committed to reviewing the program in a fair and unbiased way, so as to maximise value for money and positive impact for end-beneficiaries and NSW. Delivery Partners, participants, and respondents will be invited to make comment during the evaluation process.

## Decision-making

The Minister for Industry and Trade and Minister for Innovation, Science and Technology is the decision-maker for overall BBIP funding including TechVouchers budget, to Delivery Partners.

The Chief Executive Officer of Investment NSW is the decision-maker for the awarding of the TechVouchers.

Decisions can be challenged by the Delivery Partners and interested businesses. All challenges will be reviewed in an open manner and all parties will be heard by an independent party from the original assessment team.

If any disagreement remains after the full conduct of the internal process, or if there is a complaint about the way the internal process has been conducted, the next resort is to contact the NSW Ombudsman.

NSW Ombudsman  
Level 24  
580 George Street  
Sydney NSW 2000

## Probity

DEIT will make sure that the Program is administered according to the Guidelines and incorporates appropriate safeguards against fraud, unlawful activities, and other inappropriate conduct. A probity advisor will be engaged to oversee the program.

## Conflicts of interest

Any conflicts of interest could affect the performance of the Program. There may be a conflict of interest, or perceived conflict of interest, if DEIT staff, any member of a committee or advisor and/or you or any of your personnel:

- has a professional, commercial or personal relationship with a party who are able to influence the application selection process
- has a relationship with or interest in, an organisation, which is likely to interfere with or restrict the applicants from carrying out the proposed activities fairly and independently
- has a relationship with, or interest in, an organisation from which they will receive personal gain because the organisation received a rebate under the Program.

You will be asked to declare, as part of your application, any perceived or existing conflicts of interests or that, to the best of your knowledge, there is no conflict of interest.

If you later identify an actual, apparent, or perceived conflict of interest, you must inform DEIT immediately.

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

## Privacy

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

This includes letting you know:

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

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

DEIT may also use or disclose information about Delivery Partners and end-beneficiaries under this Program for reporting purposes.

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- encouraging government agencies to release as much information as possible
- giving the public an enforceable right to make access applications for government information
- restricting access to information only when there is an overriding public interest against disclosure.

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## Contact us

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