

# Regional New Industries Fund GroundSwell Expression of Interest

## 1. Introduction

The New Industries Fund (NIF) is a \$16.7 million State Government project designed to support venture creation and accelerate business growth to diversify the Western Australian economy and create new jobs. To optimise State-wide outcomes, \$4.5 million of the NIF has been allocated to support the State's nine regions as a sub-program, referred to as the Regional New Industries Fund (RNIF).

Additional information on the NIF is published on [www.newindustries.wa.gov.au](http://www.newindustries.wa.gov.au).

The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (the Department) is responsible for administering the RNIF on behalf of the State Government. Additional information on the RNIF, including program open dates and application link can be found on the Department's [website](#).

## 2. RNIF Objectives

### The RNIF aims to:

Catalyse Western Australia's competitiveness by building entrepreneurial, innovation and commercialisation capabilities in the regions. It will support and accelerate new and growth orientated businesses to create sustainable regional economies that generate new jobs and industries.

### The RNIF objectives are to:

- support business venture creation and SMEs to grow;
- support the transformation of mature industries and economic diversification;
- develop business venture opportunities in international markets;
- support Aboriginal business development; and
- promote co-investment opportunities between business, government and other organisations.

### The intended RNIF deliverables are:

- increased skilled job growth;
- increased venture creation and SME growth;
- increased R&D spending and commercialisation rates;
- increased private investment;
- contribution to increased gross regional product; and
- contribution to increase per capita income.

The GroundSwell is a sub-program of the RNIF and will deliver on the RNIF objectives.

### 3. Overview & Objective: GroundSwell Program

Regional Western Australia is fortunate to have talented people and many comparative advantages. However, regional economies and their businesses rely heavily on external markets and networks. With increasing globalisation and digitalisation, entrepreneurship and technology will play an important role in ensuring that there are diverse, connected and global competitive businesses in regional Western Australia.

The Western Australian Government is committed to supporting emerging regional entrepreneurs and start-ups, helping small to medium sized enterprises (SMEs) transform their business model and realise the benefits of technology. To support regions to create jobs and build globally competitive and diverse industries, there is a recognised need for:

- improved education, networks and opportunities for entrepreneurs; and
- support to assist regional businesses to take up new and emerging technologies and business models.

The GroundSwell Program enables the Department to identify and invest in organisations that deliver programs to assist entrepreneurs, start-ups and SMEs to establish and grow their businesses in regional Western Australia. The Program's funding recipients provide entrepreneurial training and development, and education in technology adoption.

### 4. GroundSwell Scope of Activities

The Program's funding recipients will be determined via Expressions of Interest (EOI) sought from organisations that run programs under each of the following two themes:

1. **Entrepreneurship programs** that deliver regional education, training, mentoring, and resources to students and business founders to test business ideas launch start-ups and grow businesses.
2. **Technology programs** that support regional SMEs to adopt technologies to streamline internal processes, cut costs and enhance their profitability and competitiveness. Technologies may include additive manufacturing, artificial intelligence, data and analytics and software as a service.

The State Government will invite EOI's from organisations, with a proven track record of success. Within the context of the above two themes, responses that also focus on the following will be viewed favourably:

- help businesses to start-up or recover from the impacts of COVID-19;
- equity and increasing diversity and inclusion (e.g. build the capability of Aboriginal and/or female entrepreneurs); and
- contribute towards the growth of regional innovation community capabilities and networks (eg. programs run in partnership with regional incubators or regional university campus).

Previously received regional funding from the State Government will be taken into consideration in the assessment of applications. All funding is subject to the assessment criteria described in Section 5 of these guidelines.

All funded programs must be delivered in regional Western Australia (See Section 8, *Regions Defined*).

## 5. Assessment Criteria

The RNIF GroundSwell Program supports activities that are consistent with one of the two themes detailed in Section 4, Scope of Activities and meet the Eligibility and Merit Criteria.

The RNIF GroundSwell Program will invest up to \$200,000 per successful application. Only applications up to a maximum of \$200,000 will be considered under this co-investment program.

In order to be considered eligible, and to be included in the evaluation process, an application must be received via the Smarty Grants, RNIF GroundSwell online platform by the due date and time, 5pm AWST 10 August 2020. Applications will not be accepted after this time and will not be accepted outside of the [Smarty Grants GroundSwell online platform](#).

### Eligibility Criteria

Applications must meet the following Eligibility Criteria:

- Have an Australian Business Number (ABN) and/or Australian Company Number (ACN);
- Be made by a valid legal entity that can enter into a funding agreement with the Western Australian Government (see Section 6);
- Aim to achieve a 1:1 ratio of matched funding that may include in-kind services;
- Include financial statements for the past two financial years that have been certified by the organisation's accountant; and
- Provide a project plan that includes a timeline, deliverables, a clear budget, resources, risks, IP management, stakeholder engagement/communications and how impact/success will be measured.

### Merit Criteria

All proposals will be scored against the following equally weighted merit criteria:

1. Put forward a program proposal that aligns with one or two of the RNIF GroundSwell themes as indicated within the Section 4, *Scope of Activities*;
2. Contribute to one or more of the RNIF deliverables;
3. Provide a solution to a proven/identified market need within the regional innovation ecosystem;

4. Build connectivity between regions, across the state and/or to international markets; and
5. Builds and utilises local capability to grow the regional innovation ecosystem.

## **6. Who is Eligible to Apply?**

### **Eligible organisations**

An organisation must:

- have an Australian Business Number (ABN);
- demonstrate collaboration with other organisations in the region/s where the project will be delivered;
- be able to provide programs and services to multiple locations;
- demonstrate they have the management, financial and technical capability and professional networks to deliver activities outlined in the regional proposal; and

### **Who is not eligible to apply?**

- An individual, partnership or trust (however, an incorporated trustee may apply on behalf of a trust), as defined by the Australian Tax Office.
- A government agency or body (including government trading enterprises).

## **7. EOI Process**

An EOI is an invitation to the marketplace, to describe their proven ability to meet specific requirements, in this case providing services in regional Western Australia.

The Department will convene a panel to score applications. The panel will assess applications against the Assessment Criteria to determine the extent to which the application meets the investment requirements of the State Government and whether they offer value for money as an investment when compared to other submitted EOIs.

The scoring will then be provided to the Minister for Regional Development and the Minister for Innovation, along with advice on the strengths and weaknesses of each application for final decision on awarding funding. The Ministers' reserve the right to negotiate application scope, funding requested and outcomes as part of the EOI process.

The Program will invest up to \$200,000 per successful EOI. Only EOIs up to a maximum of \$200,000 will be considered under this co-investment program.

<b>Timeline for Round 1 Funding</b>	
Closing date	Applications lodged no later than 5:00PM (AWST) Monday 10 August 2020
Eligibility checks	August 2020
Evaluation	August 2020
Funding offers	November 2020
Funding agreements in place	November 2020
Programs funded completed	June 2021

To be considered for funding from the RNIF GroundSwell Program, applications must be received by 5:00PM (AWST) 10 August 2020. Successful applicants will be required to be available to sign documentation prior to the end of November 2020.

## **Application Process**

The process that the Department will run to decide on the applications has five stages and each stage is explained in this section:

<b>Stage 1: Develop and submit application</b>
<b>1.1</b> Complete and submit application form to the Department via advertised SmartyGrants system.
<b>Stage 2: Eligibility checks</b>
<b>2.1</b> The Department will undertake eligibility checks to ensure EOIs qualifies for consideration of funding.
<b>2.2</b> Applications deemed eligible will continue to stage 3. Ineligible applications will not be progressed and the nominated contact will be notified by email.
<b>Stage 3: Evaluating merit</b>
<b>3.1</b> Eligible EOIs will be scored by the Department against the merit criteria, to determine whether they offer value for money as an investment.
<b>Stage 4: Approvals</b>
<b>4.1</b> The Department will refer EOIs that meet eligibility and merit criteria requirements to the Minister for Regional Development and the Minister for Innovation for consideration and approval. The Minister for Regional Development and Minister for Innovation may seek to negotiate the scope, funding request and deliverables.
<b>Stage 5: Notification of outcome</b>
<b>5.1</b> Successful applicants sign a Financial Assistance Agreement with the Department and submit an invoice to the Department for payment.

## Regions Defined

The RNIF will support the nine regions defined in the *Regional Development Commissions Act 1993*, namely:

- Gascoyne
- Great Southern
- Goldfields - Esperance
- Kimberley
- Mid-West
- Peel
- Pilbara
- South West
- Wheatbelt.

## 8. Conditions of Funding

- Successful applicants will be required to enter into a legally binding Financial Assistance Agreement (FAA) with the Western Australian Government.
- The terms and conditions of the FAA will not be negotiable at the time a funding offer is made. A template is available in advance, on request.
- The funded project must commence within 90 days after the Western Australian Government signs the FAA and be completed within the agreed timeframe.
- Only eligible expenditure incurred on or after the project's start date can be claimed by successful applicants.
- Any project expenditure made prior to notification of outcomes for the RNIF GroundSwell Program, is made at the project partners own risk—there is no guarantee of funding approval at any stage of the application process.
- Funding recipients must be willing to provide information as and when required and be open to attend media/promotion events if requested.
- The successful applicant partners must acknowledge the Western Australian Government's funding, and where applicable relevant the Minister for Regional Development and the Minister for Innovation, in all relevant published material, media releases and public statements.
- You must advise the Department of changes which are likely to impact on your eligibility for funding.
- The Department may consult with other Western Australian Government agencies, local governments and the Australian Government to confirm accuracy of information provided in the application.
- Monitoring and evaluation plans and reporting will be required.
- Project funding will be subject to the proponent demonstrating they have achieved the project milestones as outlined in the FAA.
- No contractual or other legal relations shall exist between any applicant for funding on the one hand and the State of Western Australia (including any agent, agency, instrumentality or emanation of that State) on the other hand

unless and until a formal legally binding Financial Assistance Agreement is entered into by and between them. Neither this document nor anything else shall be creative of or give rise to legal or equitable rights or obligations; such rights or obligations shall only come into being if and when a formal legally binding financial assistance agreement, referred to in the previous sentence, comes into existence.

## 9. Privacy

The Western Australian Government collects and collates information from the application form to evaluate applications for the RNIF. Only authorised State Government officers and approved grant assessors have access to this information.

Applicants' personal information will not be disclosed to any other third party without consent, unless required by law or for the purposes of agreement.

Applicants should note that broad details of successful proposals, agreed outcomes, progress and the level of funding awarded may be published by the Western Australian State Government. Some information may be used to promote funded projects.

For audit purposes, the Western Australian Government is required to retain the applications and other supplied supporting material.

You need to be aware that the Department is subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1992*, which provides a general right of access to records held by the Western Australian and Local Government agencies.

Information that relates to the receipt of State Government financial support may be tabled in the Western Australian Parliament. This information could include names of recipients, the amounts of financial support, the name of the project/activity and, possibly, a brief description of the project/s funded. This could result in requests for more detail to be released publicly.