

Innovative Workforce Fund Funding Guidelines – Round 2 (Final Round)

Opening date: 9am (AEDT) on Thursday, 25 May 2017

Closing date: 5pm (AEDT) on Thursday, 15 June 2017

Project funding available: \$1 million

Maximum funding per project: \$200,000*

Length of project: Approximately 9 months (all project must be completed no later than 12 May 2018)

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Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and updates will be regularly uploaded to www.workforce.nds.org.au/innovation

**Given the limited funding available and short turnaround time, smaller projects are recommended.*

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About the Innovative Workforce Fund

National Disability Services (NDS) has been appointed to manage the Innovative Workforce Fund (the Fund), an initiative of the Department of Social Services with an allocation from the Sector Development Fund, National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). The Sector Development Fund has the broad objective of assisting individuals and organisations to transition to the NDIS operational environment.

The purpose of the Innovative Workforce Fund is to encourage the development and sharing of innovative approaches to workforce development, and to promote efficient use of people providing support in a paid capacity to meet the needs of NDIS participants through targeted funding of innovative workforce projects.

The Fund will trial new approaches that demonstrate the development or enhancement of leading practice in engaging, developing and utilising the workforce to meet the needs of NDIS participants. Approaches will address existing challenges and ensure sustainability of a supply of paid staff members into the future. The Fund will draw on projects and other relevant experience to build an evidence base to support learning on innovative workforce approaches and sharing of good practice.

The Fund is **not** designed for projects focusing on the employment of people with disability, unless this is at the same time a disability workforce initiative. Disability workforce refers to paid individuals who provide or enable support, capacity-building and/or community participation to NDIS participants.

The Meaning of Innovation under the Fund

Innovation comes in a variety of forms, from a big, new idea to small incremental changes over time. The word means different things to different people. For the purposes of the Fund, innovative projects must test an original and unprecedented approach, and not just repeat good practice.

Note that innovation can also be novel or new **to a context**. It can describe goods, services or practices that already exist but are new to a particular market or sector. Though not completely new, the application of existing ideas to new markets (such as the disability sector) can significantly shake up the way markets operate.

A third level of novelty describes business processes or technologies that are already occurring in disability but are new to a business or group of businesses. In this case, the project would only be considered innovative if the project proponent makes a **significant improvement** in implementing them.

Projects must produce a beneficial impact for NDIS participants while being mindful of any downsides of projects for other groups. Applicants will be judged on the net benefit of the innovation.

The scale and significance of the impact of the innovation is important to consider as well. An innovation may affect many people but its significance may be relatively trivial. Conversely, a small number of people may be impacted by an innovation initially but there may potential for long term, profound impact.

Funding streams

The Australian Government has identified the following funding streams;

Stream 1: Redesign support worker roles and test new work roles

Stream 2: Streamlined operational and administration practices

Stream 3: Role of technology in workforce practices

Stream 4: Workforce development in rural and remote areas

Funding priorities

Within the above streams, this round of the Fund will prioritise projects in three areas listed below.

Priority 1: The innovation process

Case studies of organisation-wide innovation processes that have been used to develop and implement workforce-related innovations. These should focus on the innovation process itself, including to what extent the workforce contributed to transformative changes either during the design or implementation phase, and how the workforce impacts of the changes were monitored and evaluated.

Priority 2: Workforce utilisation

Projects that focus on how to better utilise workers within or across services, so as to both improve efficiency and potentially create longer-hours and more interesting roles. These projects could be documenting a successful process that an organisation has undertaken, or experimenting with a new way to share workers, deploy a workforce differently, or increase utilisation of workers in response to recruitment difficulties or other NDIS-related challenges. Projects focused solely or mainly on information systems will not be funded.

Priority 3: Participant-led perspectives

The third priority in this round of funding are projects led by people with disability and/or their families with experience of either self-managing or of managing workforce-related aspects of service delivery to understand NDIS participants' priorities and preferences and how these are likely to change with experience. Projects would document existing ways that people with disability are addressing workforce issues such as recruitment, training, supervision, and job design and explore new solutions in the NDIS context.

Eligibility

Eligibility criteria for all projects are as follows:

- Applicants can be individuals and/or organisations (including partnerships and consortia)
- Applicants can be from any industry sector, and from any organisation type so long as the focus of the application is work that assists NDIS participants to live the lives they choose
- The subject of, and an intended primary beneficiary of, any proposal must be the existing or potential workforce for disability, defined as people in the paid workforce who provide ongoing and/or regular support capacity-building and/or community participation, to NDIS participants
- Projects must address the broad objective of the Innovative Workforce Fund which is to ensure the disability workforce is able to meet future requirements of NDIS participants
- Representatives of two groups must be involved in project governance: (i) people with disabilities who are recipients of the supports that are the focus of the project and (ii) existing or intended staff members as relevant to the project.
- Applicants must be prepared to share information about project activities and lessons from the project with the sector and broader community
- Applicants must adhere to all clauses in the Project Agreement (see www.workforce.nds.org.au/innovation for a sample of a Project Agreement).

The online application can be found at www.workforce.nds.org.au/innovation along with the following downloads and resources.

- Innovative Workforce Fund Funding Guidelines (Round 2)
- ABS Locality to Remoteness Area, 2011 correspondence table
- Application questions Round 2 (for information only)
- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and updates (Round 2)
- What is a Program Logic?
- Activity Plan Template

- Budget Template
- Sample Project Agreement

Where a project is dependent on the participation of partners to undertake the work, evidence of their support for the project must be indicated. Applicants can upload letters of support where appropriate.

Applicants must complete the online application form at the above web address and by 5pm (AEDT) Thursday, 15 June 2017, including all attachments.

Please note that if you “Save and Continue Later” on the online application, you will receive an email with the link to return to. It is recommended that, as a backup, you copy that link before when saving. In some cases, the email may go to your Spam folder or may be blocked by your IT settings.

It is recommended that you complete and save your application in Word before uploading to the online application. NDS is not able to retrieve your unfinished application.

An accessible Word version of the application questions is available on the website. If you experience any accessibility issues or issues with the online application form, please email innovativeworkforce@nds.org.au

Authorised representative

All applications must be signed by an authorised representative. This may be the Chief Executive Officer or Chair of the organisation’s Board, or the principal of a business (eg sole trader or Chief Executive). Individuals applying for funding must have an Australian Business Number (ABN).

Governance

Applicants need to detail the governance arrangements for their project, including the involvement of their CEO and Board (where relevant), partners, consortium members. Any agreements in place should be described and, where possible, evidence provided.

Referees

All applicants are required to provide the details of two relevant, **external** referees. These should be individuals who can verify your capacity to undertake the proposed project and who have direct experience of your professional achievements and/or experience in innovation, project management, workforce, and other relevant areas.

Facilitation

In the event that similar projects are proposed by different applicants, NDS may facilitate connection between appropriate applicants to see if collaboration would be useful.

Once a project has been funded, NDS may offer successful project proponents the opportunity for project coaching by expert coaches who have experience in facilitating innovative projects in the disability sector. This is not a condition of funding, but may be useful as a way to increase the likelihood that projects will meet their objectives within the timeframes of the Innovative Workforce Fund.

What the funding can be used for

Funding can be used for staff time, including staff backfill paid at award rates, office and other equipment, travel costs and consumables. Reasonable project management and consultant fees will be considered.

In addition, applicants can leverage funding from other sources to support their projects but must declare funding for preparatory work or any aspect of the proposed work from any other source on their budget. Applicants should indicate on their budget any cash or in-kind contributions they have the capacity to make.

What the funding cannot be used for

Applicants cannot use the Fund for any of the following purposes:

- to make a loan or gift
- to pay sitting fees to Directors or members of your organisation
- for overseas travel
- to relieve cash flow problems in other activities
- to settle or agree to consent orders in relation to, or otherwise resolve, any proceeding or application for reinstatement and/or wrongful dismissal by a current or former employee

- to pay commissions, success bonuses or similar benefits to Directors, staff, members or consultants as payment for work undertaken.

In addition, funding cannot be used for a proprietary initiative that will benefit only the applicant. The application must explain how an innovation will be accessible to others and genuinely of broad benefit.

Assessment criteria

The assessment criteria for projects to be funded are set out below.

Criteria	Explanation
Innovation	Novelty is an essential characteristic of innovation. How innovative and novel the proposed project is in the context of disability support provision will be assessed, with reference to the discussion on page 3.
Impact	Impact will be assessed in terms of whether an intervention is scalable (can be implemented on a larger scale) and/or whether it can be replicated (repeated in different contexts). Impact is understood in terms of the sector as a whole; that is on NDIS participants, on people providing support in a paid capacity and on business sustainability. Assessment of impact will also consider to what extent the project provides insights and lessons likely to stimulate others providing disability supports to change, or new providers to enter the disability market.
Project design	The assessment of design will consider to what extent the project has a clear and convincing program logic. Are the proposed activities likely to lead to the project’s intended outcomes, and has the applicant demonstrated that the project is likely to deliver on its objectives within the Fund timeframes? Are NDIS participants and people providing support involved in a meaningful way that is relevant to the project?
Value for money	Applicants will need to demonstrate why their proposal is good value for money. Applicants should provide details of any work already undertaken and in-kind and/or financial co-contributions. Consideration will be given to whether or not funding is being used to support efforts or initiatives that would have otherwise occurred without funding.

The assessment and approval process

Applications for the Innovative Workforce Fund will be first checked for eligibility and completeness, and then ranked against assessment criteria (see table above).

Assessors with specialist knowledge and expertise will participate in the assessment process as well as assessors who will see a broader selection of projects and are in a position to ensure well-moderated rankings.

An Independent Advisory Group (IAG) to the Innovative Workforce Fund will be responsible for making recommendations to the Minister of Social Services on project funding. It will have oversight of all applications and will be able to request further information about any applicant that they believe to have merit, in addition to those short-listed by the assessment panels.

The Minister for Social Services makes the final funding decisions. It is expected that applicants will be notified of the outcome by August 2017.

Intellectual property

The intellectual property arrangements are a key component of the Project Agreement. A sample of this agreement is included on the application web site for information purposes.

Applicants should understand that:

- The project proponent owns the intellectual property rights in all of the project material it creates under the project
- The project proponent further grants to NDS a permanent, irrevocable, free worldwide, non-exclusive licence, including right of sublicense, to use, communicate, reproduce, publish (including under an Open Access Licence) and adapt the project reports, including any existing material incorporated in the Project Reports for any non-commercial purpose
- The project proponent acknowledges that the purpose of the project is for NDS to share the project report and project findings, including with the Commonwealth.

Reporting requirements and evaluation

NDS will collate and evaluate outcomes from all of the funded projects with the aim of creating an evidence-base for innovative workforce initiatives in Australia.

Successful projects funded under the Innovative Workforce Fund will be expected to communicate with NDS for evaluation purposes, share learnings and participate in cross-project forums and submit detailed reports as required using project templates.

You will be required to keep records regarding the performance of your project and the expenditure of project funds. You will be bound by the terms of the Project Agreement you sign with NDS.

NDS will provide reporting templates to successful projects. Reports include, but may not be limited to:-

- Project performance report including achievements and impacts
- final project report
- financial acquittal report

Project completion

Projects must be completed on later than 12 May 2018 and reported on and fully acquitted by 31 May 2018.