



Government  
of South Australia

Department of  
State Development

# **2026 South Australian NCRIS Step Change Co-Investment Grant (Stage 3) Program Guidelines for new funding 2026-27 to 2028-29**

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## Introduction

Nationally significant, accessible, and shared research infrastructure is essential for developing and commercialising research into new products, processes and services and is a key driver of business productivity and economic growth. Cutting edge research infrastructure assists in attracting and retaining world-class research talent and highly skilled technical personnel. It underpins long term industry-research collaboration and is critical in supporting innovative technology businesses both nationally and in South Australia.

The **National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy** (NCRIS) was established by the Australian Government in 2004 to help maintain Australia as a global leader in world-class research. NCRIS achieves this by ensuring that researchers have access to cutting edge national research infrastructure (NRI) which includes facilities, equipment, and highly skilled technical personnel.

On 29 May 2026, The Australian Government Department of Education announced a funding commitment of \$323.7 million through two National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy (NCRIS) funding rounds, targeting priority research infrastructure areas while also strengthening and securing existing capabilities.

The Australian Government's **NCRIS 2025 Step Change Round** supports new capability in Step Change and Priority Areas including:

- National Digital Research Infrastructure (NDRI)
- Translation Research Infrastructure (TRI)
- Environment & Climate Research Infrastructure (ECRI)
- the National Research Infrastructure (NRI) workforce.

The Australian Government's **NCRIS 2026 Capability Gap Round** provides additional funding that is necessary to meet the objectives of an established NCRIS project. These are typically in response to unexpected circumstances, changes in researcher needs, and new technologies.

Between 2007 and 2028, the Government of South Australia through the Department of State Development (DSD) has committed co-investment of \$73.1 million in South Australian-based NCRIS facilities. This includes co-investment through the 2023 NCRIS Co-Investment Grants (Stage 1), the 2024 Step Change Co-Investment Grants (Stage 2, Round 1), and the 2025 Step Change Co-Investment Grants (Stage 2, Round 2).

The **2026 South Australian NCRIS Step Change Co-Investment Grant (Stage 3) Program** (the Program) intends to continue to co-invest into existing South Australian-based NCRIS facilities funded through the Australian Government's NCRIS 2025 and 2026 funding rounds, to build capabilities in Step Change and Priority Areas.

The Program aims to uplift South Australian research infrastructure to develop sovereign translation capabilities, and to develop new industries, products and services.

## Program Purpose

The Program is intended to build South Australia's capability in the priority areas funded in the Australian Government's NCRIS 2025 and NCRIS 2026 funding rounds.

The funding aims to make a tangible difference to South Australian researchers and industry to uplift access to critical research and innovation infrastructure, to drive industry investment, develop sovereign capabilities and deliver significant value and impact including:

- Continue to attract and retain world-class established and emerging research talent in South Australia and give certainty to South Australian researchers, that their research will continue to be supported.
- Bolster the international ranking of the State's universities thereby securing South Australia as a desirable destination for global research talent and driving the state's reputation for scientific and research excellence.
- Increase the concentration of highly-skilled technical staff – NCRIS facilities bring a mix of knowledge and skills that can create a collaborative environment for breakthrough research discoveries and translation and adoption into industry.
- Continue to foster long-term industry and research partnerships both domestically and internationally, which provides a conduit for knowledge to support industry to deliver future jobs and economic growth in South Australia.
- Continue to provide access to State Government agencies, assisting in policy development informing critical areas of the economy such as health care, environmental sustainability, and energy security.
- Continue to provide continued access for South Australian businesses to cutting-edge equipment which de-risks the commercial development of new products and services.
- Increase South Australia's research capabilities and expertise in the next generation of research infrastructure.
- Improve the State's competitiveness in attracting additional funding from the Commonwealth Government's major research and innovation funding programs.

## Timing

### Key dates

- Opening: Tuesday 18 August 2026
- Closing: Monday 14 September 2026 (11:59 PM ACST)

Applications must be lodged through an online form provided by DSD. Upon submission, you will receive a receipt of your application along with a copy of your submission.

### Grant period

The maximum grant period is three years (i.e., 1 July 2026 to 30 June 2029). Projects must be completed by 30 June 2029.

### Funding Details

Funding amounts under the Program will not exceed 25% of the total cash contribution for the project with cash contributions from the Department, the NCRIS Project through the Australian Government NCRIS funding round starting in 2025-26 or later, the host institution and/or industry. Proposals for funding exceeding the 25% contribution may be considered in exceptional circumstances. All cash contributions are GST exclusive.

Maximum funding amounts, percent contribution, and funding periods may vary at the discretion of the Minister for State Development (Minister).

## Eligibility

### Eligible Applicants

Subject to funding availability, this grant opportunity is a closed, merit-based selection process open for invited facilities.

To be eligible, organisations must meet all of the following criteria:

- must be the headquarters or a node of an NCRIS Project working within and for the benefit of South Australia;
- hold an active Australian Business Number (ABN);
- be a University; and/or
- be an Approved Research Institute (ARI) as defined by the Australian Taxation Office; and/or
- be a not-for-profit entity;
- must be receiving funding through the Australian Government's NCRIS 2025 and/or NCRIS 2026 funding round(s);
- must provide a letter from the host institution confirming support for the project, including a cash contribution that matches or exceeds the funding requested from the Department of State Development.

### Eligible Expenditure

The grant must only be used for eligible expenditure by South Australian-based NCRIS Facilities on activities as agreed with the South Australian Government which must align with the Australian Government NCRIS 2025 Guidelines (for the co-investment into NCRIS 2025 Step Change Round) or the requirements of the Australian Government NCRIS 2026 Capability Gap Round.

### Project Contributions

Applications must have co-contribution funding secured from the NCRIS Project and host institution and/or industry.

Applications must:

- list all cash contributions to the project including the source of contribution, which constitute the required matched funding;
- identify if the matched funding is confirmed or tentative and state any conditions upon which the matched funding is dependent; and
- provide evidence for the matched funding amount, such as approval letters and/or letters of support.

### NFP Sector Indexation

Applicants who qualify as a 'not-for-profit entity' (as set out in the Premier and Cabinet Circular PC 044 - [South Australia Funding Policy for not for profit sector](#)) must ensure their request for funding in their application is inclusive of indexation as required by the Department of Treasury and Finance.

## Assessment Criteria

Subject to funding availability, an Assessment Panel will assess all eligible applications against the assessment criteria as outlined in the application form:

### 1. Alignment with the South Australian Economic Statement and DSD's Strategic Directions

Describe how the project aligns the relevant strategic economic objectives outlined in:

- 1.1. the [South Australian Economic Statement](#)
- 1.2. Department of State Development [Strategic Directions 2025 – 2030](#); and

### 2. Performance and track record

- 2.1. Provide a summary of the South Australian-based NCRIS Facility's key achievements and notable benefits to South Australia since 2019.
- 2.2. Provide information on previous collaborations and partnerships, relevant to the project.
- 2.3. Provide a summary of key staff members, including position description and roles within the project.
- 2.4. Describe the governance arrangements in place (or that will be in place) to manage operations of the project and NCRIS Facility.

### 3. Strategy and expected outcomes for performance using new funding

- 3.1. Detail your approach to increasing industry investment and sovereign research capability through:
  - service and delivery excellence;
  - collaborative R&D and innovation with:
    - the South Australian research community;
    - South Australian businesses, industry, and government; and
    - other South Australian NCRIS Facilities and other major research infrastructure and innovation precincts in South Australia; and
  - translation and commercial outcomes in partnership with South Australian researchers and industry.

Provide examples where applicable and list your main collaborators.

- 3.2. Describe how you will measure and report on:
  - increased research capability and industry investment in R&D;
  - increased collaboration partnerships with businesses, government and research groups; and
  - the translation and commercial outcomes of research undertaken through these partnerships.
- 3.3. Detail your strategy for maintaining and attracting research talent to South Australia.

### 4. Project budget and milestones

- 4.1. Provide detailed annual revenue forecasts for the project for the period 2026-27 to 2028-29.
- 4.2. Provide detailed annual operating expenses forecasts for the project that the NCRIS Facility will incur for the period 2026-27 to 2028-29.
- 4.3. Outline the key milestones over the grant period. Each milestone should include:
  - description;
  - timeline;
  - deliverable;
  - resources;
  - dependencies; and
  - risks and mitigation.

## Application Process

Applicants must submit the online application form via the link provided by DSD by the due date, ensuring all questions are answered.

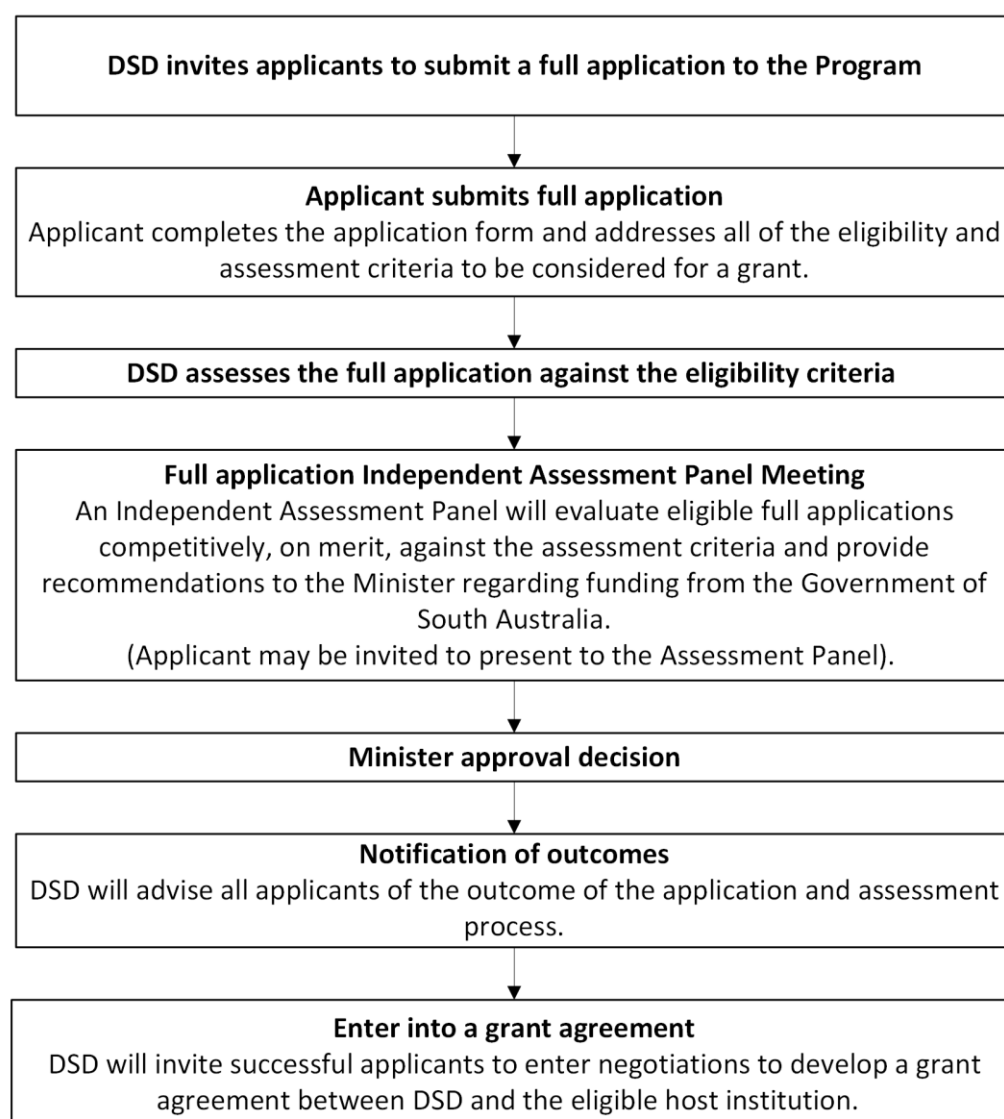
Where an application is not lodged through the online form, DSD reserves the right to deem the application as non-conforming but may consider it at its absolute discretion.

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

### Supporting Documentation

Please attach any supporting information, for example, letters of support from the NCRIS Project and the host institution.

Applicants are invited to submit a full application to the Program as detailed in the flowchart below.



## Assessment Process

Based on the application and subject to funding availability, the Independent Assessment Panel will provide advice to the Minister on which application(s) the South Australian Government should support. A final decision to support an application, if any, will be made by the Minister. In exceptional circumstances, the Minister may consider or accept (at their sole discretion) any application, including without limitation an application that is not in accordance with these guidelines.

## Notification of Outcome

All applicants and their host institutions will be notified in writing of the outcome of their applications. Applicants will be required to keep the outcome of the decision confidential until an announcement is made by the South Australian Government.

## Funding Agreements and Reporting

The host institution(s) of each successful applicant will be required to execute a grant agreement as determined by the South Australian Government. The agreement will include conditions relating to (but not limited to) the following:

- Funding being conditional on co-investment from the NCRIS Project (Australian Government contribution and the host institution);
- Reporting on the performance and impact of the NCRIS Facility and how the funding has been spent, including provision of data in order for DSD to evaluate the success of the Program;
- Requirement for the recipient and related consortia to be interviewed and to provide relevant information (including but not limited to data on revenue, cost, employment); and
- Appropriate acknowledgement of DSD (including the Minister).

If any information in an application form or report is found to be false or misleading, the funding provided through the Program may be repayable on demand.

## Additional Information

### Freedom of information

Applicants should be aware that all documents in the possession of the Government of South Australia, including those about this grant opportunity, are subject to the [Freedom of Information Act 1991 \(SA\)](#) (FOI Act). Information submitted in applications and all related correspondence, attachments and other documents may be made publicly available under the FOI Act.

The FOI Act gives members of the public a legally enforceable right to access documents – subject to certain exemptions – held by South Australian Government Agencies, local government authorities, statutory and regulatory bodies and South Australian Universities.

### Privacy and Information Policy

DSD complies with the South Australian Government's Information Privacy Principles Instruction ([Department of the Premier and Cabinet Circular PC 012](#)). DSD collects information (including personal information) as reasonably necessary for the purposes and functions of:

- Administering our grants and funding programs;

- Keeping you informed about the Program, relevant upcoming events, grant funding initiatives and outcomes, our services, special events or client feedback surveys, as well as our activities in general; and
- Improving our websites and other services.

The collection and use of information extends to use of such information by the Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science for the purposes as outlined above.

Any information contained in or relating to an application, including information identified by an applicant as confidential information for the purposes of applying for funding under this Program, may be disclosed by DSD to, or used by DSD:

- To its employees, advisers or third parties in order to manage the Program (including but not limited to, for the purposes of evaluating and assessing the application;
- For the purpose of verifying other funding income for your project – DSD may provide information to other agencies nominated in your application;
- For due diligence, monitoring, reporting and audit purposes.
- Within the government of South Australia where this serves the legitimate interest of DSD;
- In response to a request by a House or Committee of the Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia or South Australia;
- For training, systems testing and process improvement, including compiling statistics and reports;
- If an application is successful, for promotion of project activities and outcomes;
- Where information is authorised or required by law to be disclosed; and
- Where the information is already in the public domain.

It is the intent of the South Australian Government to be transparent with regards to financial assistance provided to industry. The South Australian Government intends to publicly disclose details of all financial assistance provided for this Program (which will include, but is not limited to, the name of the successful applicant, details of the NCRIS Facility and amount of grant funding).

### **Feedback and Complaints**

DSD values your feedback and complaints and aims to provide the best possible service. Your contributions will help us to improve our services. Feedback and complaints can be raised with DSD via any of the following avenues:

- Online feedback form at <https://statedevelopment.sa.gov.au/departments/contact-the-department/feedback>
- Email: [DSD.Feedback@sa.gov.au](mailto:DSD.Feedback@sa.gov.au)
- Post: Customer Engagement Team, GPO Box 320, Adelaide, South Australia 5001

### **Disclaimer**

No responsibility for any loss or damage caused by reliance on any of the information or advice provided by or on behalf of the state of South Australia, or for any loss or damage arising from acts or omissions made, is accepted by the state of South Australia, their officers, servants or agents. Produced by the Government of South Australia © 2026. Content correct at time of production July 2026.

### **Variation**

DSD reserves the right to amend these Guidelines and application terms as required.

## Enquiries

For further information about this opportunity, please contact [dsd.researchinnovationprograms@sa.gov.au](mailto:dsd.researchinnovationprograms@sa.gov.au)

July 2026