APPLICATION OVERVIEW

Application Form

IMPORTANT: Please read information below to assist you in completing your application online.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN THE ONLINE APPLICATION

You can begin anywhere in this application form. Please ensure you save as you go.

For queries about the guidelines, deadlines, or questions in the form, please contact us on admin@nssn.org.au on and quote your submission number.

Before completing the application form, you should have read the NSSN Grand Challenge Fund program guidelines.

NAVIGATING THE APPLICATION FORM

On every screen (page of the form) you will find a Form Navigation contents box, this links directly to every page of the application. Click the link to jump directly to the page you want.

You can also click 'next page' or 'previous page' on the top or bottom of each page to move forward or backward through the application.

SAVING YOUR DRAFT APPLICATION

If you wish to leave a partially completed application, press 'save and close' and log out. When you log back in and click on the 'My Submissions' link at the top of the screen, you will find a list of any applications you have started or submitted. You can reopen your draft application and start where you left off.

You can also download any application, whether draft or completed, as a PDF. Click on the 'Download PDF' button located at the bottom of the last page of the application form.

SUBMITTING YOUR APPLICATION

You will find a **Review and Submit** button at the bottom of the Navigation Panel. You need to review your application before you can submit it.

Once you have reviewed your application you can submit it by clicking on 'Submit' at the top or bottom of the screen or on the navigation panel. You will not be able to submit your application until all the compulsory questions are completed and there are no validation errors.

Once you have submitted your application, no further editing or uploading of support materials is possible.

When you submit your application, you will receive a confirmation email with a copy of your submitted application attached. This will be sent to the email you used to register.

If you do not receive a confirmation of submission email then you should presume that your submission has NOT been submitted.

Hint: also check the email hasn't landed in your spam or junk email folder.

ATTACHMENTS AND SUPPORT DOCUMENTS

You will need to upload/submit attachments to support your application. This is very simple, but requires you to have the documents saved on your computer, or on a storage device.

You need to allow enough time for each file to upload before trying to attach another file. Files can be up to 25MB each; however, we do recommend trying to keep files to a maximum of 5MB – the larger the file, the longer the upload time.

COMPLETING AN APPLICATION IN A GROUP/TEAM

A number of people can work on an application using the same log in details as long as only one person is working at a time. Ensure you save as you go.

Looking for assistance in applying?

At NSW Smart Sensing Network, we are committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion. We encourage people with disability to apply. If you have a disability and require more information on adjustments and assistance to apply, please contact us at contact email Assistance in completing this application can be found at Communities and Justice, People with disability Australia or legal aide.

If you are an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, check out Aboriginal Affairs or your country's Aboriginal Corporation to get assistance in the preparations of applications and grant program processes.

PROGRAM GUIDELINES

NSSN Grand Challenge Fund 2027 - Round 7

The NSSN Grand Challenge Fund has been established to promote the development of innovative, collaborative research projects that respond to the NSSN Priority Themes.

These priority themes address complex challenges that are critical to our environment, health, economy and society and which demand innovative solutions that will impact future generations. They have been selected for the important role smart sensing can play in responding to the issue and where technological innovation holds the promise of creating significant change. They align well with state and federal priorities and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and have been selected based on the NSSN's unique ability to mobilise the world-class R&D capability across its member universities, in partnership with industry and government, for practical, impactful outcomes.

There are five NSSN priority themes in 2027:

- Environment & Agriculture
- Human Health
- Natural Hazards
- Net Zero
- Smart Places

Grants of up to $100,000 per project will support the development of projects that link with industry or government partners and devise a smart sensing solution that has a defined pathway to genuine impact, either through commercialisation or operationalisation.

Eligibility

To be eligible, projects must meet the following eligibility criteria:

- **Leadership:** be led by an NSSN member university (the CI must be a salaried researcher at an NSSN member university. ECRs/MCRs are strongly encouraged to apply)
- **Collaboration:** involve a minimum of two NSSN member universities (incl. the lead)
- **Partnership:** partner with at least one industry or government partner
- **Co-investment:** attract cash co-investment from industry/government partners at least equal to the requested amount

Projects that do not meet these criteria will not be assessed.

Assessment criteria

Projects will be assessed on the following criteria:

- **Significance** – description of the project, what it aims to achieve and how it contributes to addressing the priority theme. 30%
- **Collaboration** – how the project integrates and fosters genuine collaboration between NSSN member universities. 15%
- **Partnership** – how the project integrates genuine partnership with industry and government partners and responds to a defined industry or government need. 15%
- **Governance & Feasibility** – how the project defines a realistic research plan and the measures that will ensure delivery on milestones. 15%
- **Impact pathway** – how the project advances the science towards a realistic pathway to commercialisation. 15%
- **Diversity** – how the project represents diversity of gender and under-represented cohorts in the team. 10%

Advice & Support

Applicants are encouraged to speak with their local NSSN Engagement Lead and the relevant NSSN Theme Leader as early as possible in the application process. This will help to ensure alignment with the NSSN Priority Themes and provide applications with the greatest chance of success. The NSSN can provide assistance in connecting with relevant industry and government partners.

NSSN Theme Leaders

- Environment & Agriculture: Tomonori Hu
- Human Health: Catherine Oates Smith
- Natural Hazards: Peter Runcie
- Net Zero: Thor Slater
- Smart Places: Peter Runcie

NSSN Coordinators

- ANU: Nishank Shah
- Macquarie University: Matt Bevin
- UNSW: Emily Zeng
- University of Sydney: Andrew Kemp
- UTS: research.engagement@uts.edu.au
- Western Sydney University: Navin Chandrasekaran
- University of Wollongong: Ryah Perkiss

Webinars

Two informational webinars will be offered to provide information on the fund, tips on submitting a successful application and an opportunity to ask questions.

- Webinar I – Tuesday 24 November 2026 – 1-2pm
- Webinar II – Tuesday 2 February 2027 – 1-2pm

Application process

Applications open

2 November 2026

Internal university deadlines

10 February 2027

Applications close

22 February 2027 (5pm)

Eligibility review

23 February 2027

Selection Committee Review

Early March 2027

Shortlist Interviews

Late March 2027

Grants announced

April 2027

Contracting & funding

May 2027

Funding conditions

Funding can be used for the following:

- Direct salary costs for investigators/staff of NSSN member universities.
- On-costs consistent with NSSN member university policies.
- Equipment, software, materials and consumables specifically related to the project.
- Domestic travel costs that are specifically related to the project.
- Stipends for HDR students working on the project.

Funding can not be used for the following purposes:

- Salaries of industry partners.
- Costs not directly related to the project.

Matched funding must be:

- in cash and transferable to the NSSN university project partners (in-kind support will be considered in addition to the matching cash contribution).
- from the government or industry partner (University cash contributions will not be considered)
- new funding, specific to the proposed project.

Projects are expected to commence within 30 days of the signing of contracts and conclude within 12 months of signing.

Funding will be paid to the lead organisation in a single tranche at the start of the project. The lead university is responsible for distributing funds to collaborating universities.

The NSSN will remain actively engaged in the projects, supporting their development, identifying additional funding and partners, and providing advice.

Contracts will include agreed quarterly milestones, monitored by the NSSN through quarterly check-in meetings.

A final report will be required at the 12-month mark. A template for which will be provided by the NSSN.

The NSSN reserves the right to publicise funded projects for marketing and communication purposes. All proprietary information will remain confidential.

The Network must be acknowledged as a funder in any publications or reports resulting from the project.

Intellectual Property

The IP relating to each project will be negotiated on a project-by-project basis at the time of contract negotiation. However, the NSSN encourages discussion of IP expectations between partners as soon as practicable in the project planning process.

Access to background IP necessary to implement project IP will be negotiated between the owner of the project IP and the owner of the background IP on a project-by-project basis. Generally, it is agreed that owners of background IP will provide access to such background IP, subject only to the terms of access negotiated in good faith.

IP relating to the project will be owned, as negotiated, by the university/ies and industry partner/s named as partners to the project.

As with all NSSN-supported projects, the Network will not hold any rights to IP, royalties or financial returns resulting from the project.

IDENTIFICATION

* indicates a required field

Chief Investigator

Chief Investigator contact details *

Title | First Name | Last Name

Position *

Faculty/Department *

I am a NSSN member of the following university *

○ Australian National University ○ Macquarie University ○ UNSW ○ University of Sydney ○ UTS ○ University of Wollongong ○ Western Sydney University

Phone Number *

Must be an Australian phone number.

Email *

Must be an email address.

Website *

Must be a URL.

Gender *

Co-Investigator/s

Co-Investigator contact person *

Title | First Name | Last Name

Position *

Faculty/Department *

I am a NSSN member of the following university *

○ Australian National University ○ Macquarie University ○ UNSW ○ University of Sydney ○ UTS ○ University of Wollongong ○ Western Sydney University

Phone Number *

Must be an Australian phone number.

Email *

Must be an email address.

Website *

Must be a URL.

Gender *

Industry Partner/s

If this project is partnering with a government partner only, skip this section and proceed to the Government Partner/s section.

Company ABN

The ABN provided will be used to look up the following information. Click Lookup above to check that you have entered the ABN correctly.

Information from the Australian Business Register	
ABN	
Entity Name	
ABN Status	
Entity Type	
Goods & Services Tax (GST)	
DGR Endorsed	
ATO Charity Type	More information
ACNC Registration	
Tax Concessions	
Main Business Location	

Must be an ABN.

Contact Name
Organisation Name

Position

Contact Phone Number

Must be an Australian phone number.

Contact Email

Must be an email address.

Website

Must be a URL.

Government Partner/s

If this project is partnering with an industry partner only, skip this section.

Government Agency Name
Organisation Name

Contact Name

Position

Contact Phone Number

Must be an Australian phone number.

Contact Email

Must be an email address.

Website

Must be a URL.

THE PROJECT

* indicates a required field

Project Details

Project Title *

Word count:
Must be no more than 12 words.

Short Project Description *

Word count:
Must be no more than 150 words.
This is your elevator pitch. Speaking to an educated lay audience, how would you describe this project?

NSSN Priority Theme *

○ Environment & Agriculture ○ Human Health ○ Natural Hazards ○ Net Zero ○ Smart Places

Project Significance (Weight: 30%)

How does the project meaningfully advance current approaches to addressing the chosen priority theme?

1. Tell us about this project and what it aims to achieve.

Word count:
Must be no more than 200 words

2. How is the problem already being addressed?

Word count:
Must be no more than 150 words

3. How is the solution you are proposing better?

Word count:
Must be no more than 150 words

Project Collaboration (Weight: 15%)

How does the project integrate and foster genuine collaboration between NSSN member universities? *

Word count:
Must be no more than 200 words.
Specify what each university brings to the project and why they are well-placed to do so.

Project Partnership (Weight: 15%)

How does the project integrate genuine partnership with industry and government partners and respond to a defined industry or government need?

1. What competitive advantage or service improvement does this project deliver to the partner?

Word count:
100 words

2. How will the partners on this project work together to ensure successful delivery?

Word count:
Must be no more than 100 words

Project Governance & Feasibility (Weight: 15%)

Provide a summary of the research plan and what measures are in place to ensure delivery on milestones? *

Word count:
Must be no more than 200 words.

Project Impact Pathway (Weight: 15%)

How does the project advance the science towards a realistic pathway to commercialisation (in the case of industry partner) and/or operationalisation (in the case of government partner)?

1. At the end of the grant period, what future funding will you pursue and what are the next steps?

Word count:
100 words

2. What will the industry/government partner do to take this to market or operationalisation?

Word count:
Must be no more than 100 words

Diversity (Weight: 10%)

How does the project team represent diversity of gender and under-represented groups?

1. Describe the gender diversity of the project team.

Word count:
Must be no more than 100 words. Diversity is a core value of the NSSN and we are committed to increasing the leadership and meaningful participation of women and under-represented groups in our funded projects.

2. How does the project team incorporate other under-represented groups such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?

Word count:
Must be no more than 100 words. Diversity is a core value of the NSSN and we are committed to increasing the leadership and meaningful participation of women and under-represented groups in our funded projects.

Deliverables

At the end of the grant period, what are the specific deliverables this project will deliver? *

Word count:
Must be no more than 150 words.
List deliverables succinctly and preferably in bullet form.

Technology Readiness Level (TRL)

What TRL Level is your solution/technology currently at? *

Refer to the TRL scale below

What TRL Level is your solution/technology expected to be at the end of the grant period? *

Refer to the TRL scale below

Technical Readiness Level (TRL)

TRL

Description

Evidence of achievement

1

Basic principles observed and reported

Published research that identifies the principles that underlie this technology

2

Technical Device/System concept formulated

Practical applications (e.g., devices) of the basic principles of the invention

3

Technical proof of concept demonstration

The basic performance of the invention is demonstrated in a laboratory setting

4

Alpha prototype: Component and/or process validation in laboratory environment

Design, development, and lab testing of components/ processes. Results provide evidence that performance targets may be attainable based on projected or modelled systems

5

Laboratory-scale (or similar) system validation in relevant environment

Basic technological components and/or process validation is achieved in a relevant environment

6

Beta prototype: System/sub-system model or prototype demonstration in operational environment

Engineering-scale models or prototypes are tested in relevant environment

7

System prototype demonstration in operational environment

Actual system prototype demonstrated in an operational environment

8

Actual system completed and qualified through test and demonstration

Actual system/process completed and qualified through test and demonstration (pre-commercial demonstration)

9

System proven and ready for commercial deployment

The technology is in its final form and proven through successful operations in operating environment, and ready for full commercial deployment

Ethics Approvals

Does the project involve human or animals trials that will require University ethics approvals? *
○ YES ○ NO

If yes, have you started the ethics approvals process?

If yes, what is the expected date on obtaining ethics approvals?

Must be a date.

BUDGET

* indicates a required field

Budget Totals

Enter the figures from the budget coversheet in the section below.

Total requested from NSSN *
$
Must be a dollar amount. What is the total financial support you are requesting in this application?

Total matched funding (cash) *
$
Must be a dollar amount.

Total matched funding (in-kind) *
Must be a dollar amount.

Budget Template

Please download the NSSN Grand Challenge Fund 2027 Budget Template and upload your completed budget template

Please upload your completed budget template *
Attach a file:

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

* indicates a required field

Letter/s of support from government/industry partner/s *
Attach a file:

Signed and on official letterhead

Letter of endorsement from NSSN Coordinator (or other authorised officer) at lead university *
Attach a file:

Signed and on official letterhead

Letter of endorsement from NSSN Coordinator (or other authorised officer) at collaborating university *
Attach a file:

Signed and on official letterhead

DECLARATION

* indicates a required field

Project Lead

I declare and agree that: 1. I have read and understood the funding guidelines with respect to assistance under this program. 2. All details in this application are true and complete. 3. All named participants in the application have agreed that this application is an accurate representation. 4. I understand that submitting incorrect information may result in my application being removed from the assessment process. 5. I understand that this application and supporting documentation may be circulated to third parties as required by the Secretariat. *

○ Yes
○ No

Name *
○ Individual ○ Organisation
Organisation Name

Title | First Name | Last Name

Position *

Date of declaration: *

Must be a date.