



# Queensland Circular Economy (Industry-Research) Innovation Grant

Program guidelines

23 October 2023

Last update: 29 January 2024

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY**

In the spirit of reconciliation, Smart Precinct NQ acknowledges the Wulgurukaba peoples of Gurambilbarra and Bindle peoples of Thul Garrie Waja and their connection to land, sea and community.

First Nations peoples carry a rich history of innovation, solving challenges and adapting to changes in the environment.

These custodians make a strong contribution to Queensland's innovation economy.

We recognise it is our collective efforts, and responsibility as individuals, communities, and leaders, to ensure equality, recognition, and inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders and their collective contribution across all aspects of society.

We pay respect to all elders past, present and emerging and extend that respect to all First Nations peoples.

# 1. Funding overview

The Queensland Circular Economy (Industry-Research) program is designed to support industry driven research and innovation, for the purpose of assisting industry transition away from the mainstream linear take-make-waste business model to a less wasteful circular economy model, which is based on three principles, driven by design(the Ellen MacArthur Foundation):

- o eliminate waste and pollution
- o circulate products and materials (at their highest value)
- o regenerate nature

Grants are available:

- For applicants headquartered in \*North Queensland, up to \$50,000 (excluding GST) for projects of up to 12 months duration with a co-contribution of at least 20%.

Applications must be submitted in the required format by **3:00 pm on 7 February 2024**. Late applications will not be accepted unless extenuating circumstances apply. Applications will be assessed on their merits via a competitive assessment process.

## 2. Why is Smart Precinct NQ providing this funding?

Thanks to the Queensland Government, this grant aims to help Queensland transition to a zero-waste society (the Queensland Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy)

This opportunity will make a significant impact in fostering sustainability, innovation, and prosperity in Queensland.

The Smart Precinct NQ Queensland Circular Economy (Industry-Research)

Innovation Grant Overview:

The Queensland Circular Economy (Industry-Research) Innovation Grant presents an incredible opportunity to receive support for an industry-driven research and innovation project. This grant is specifically designed to take your project to real practice to achieve a more sustainable and less wasteful circular economy model.

It is a competitive, application-based funding program.

Through this initiative, we aim to foster the development of innovative ideas, technologies, and prototypes that embrace the principles of the circular economy. Selected applicants will advance their project to the prototype, pilot, or commercialisation stage within a timeframe of 12 months. By doing so, they will drive tangible impact and promote circular practices across various sectors. By the end of 12 months, projects will participate in a pitch event where they will present their innovations to the community.

## **2.1 Fund objectives**

The objectives of the Queensland Circular Economy (Industry-Research) Innovation Grants are to:

Support industry to address significant challenges in North Queensland by identifying ways to eliminate waste and pollution and/or circulate products and materials (at their highest ecological and or financial value).

- Facilitate collaboration between industry, research institutions, relevant stakeholders, and community to develop practical solutions for the region
- Support the development of innovative circular economy ideas, technologies, and/or prototypes.
- Accelerate the development of circular economy initiatives from the research stage to the prototype, pilot, or commercialisation stage.
- Contribute towards regional Queensland's economic, environmental, and social objectives.
  - Build frameworks and relationships to nurture and support circular economy-based innovation in regional Queensland.
  - Enable pathways that facilitate meaningful and mutually beneficial collaboration across research and the developing circular economy industry.

## **3. About the Queensland Circular Economy (Industry-Research) Innovation Grant**

### **3.1 Who can apply?**

- You are an innovator, inventor, or change-maker whether an existing business, start-up, or university researcher
- Have identified a waste challenge that become a regional opportunity;

- Have a circular economy concept or idea that you would like to develop, test, and/or validate with collaborators;
- Are based in North Queensland; and
- Have an ABN

Organisations and their related entities are limited to one application per funding round.

## 3.2 Partnerships and collaborations

Applicants need to establish collaborative relationships with other organisations as required to support project delivery and maximise the project's impact. This might include relationships with industry, research institutes, government, commercial businesses, Aboriginal corporations, charities, community groups or social enterprises (for example, relevant local governments, universities, entrepreneurs, etc.) Applicants will need to clarify the nature of its relationships with other organisations and demonstrate their commitments to the project. If you are collaborating with another organisation in a partnership or formal collaboration, this Guideline and Application Form refers to such project participants as **Project Partners**. Any other major project participant, such as a supplier or subcontractor or any other contributor to your project, is referred to as a **Project Participant** (see Definitions in section 9).

## 3.3 Co-contributions

Co-contributions are required in addition to this grant at a ratio of \$5:\$1. Therefore, for every \$5 this grant contributes to the project, \$1 must be contributed by the Applicant or other parties (Project Partners or other Project Participants).

Lead Applicants will need to specify the nature and value of any financial or in-kind contributions it or its partners or other participants will be making to the project. In-kind support can comprise up to 100% of the co-contribution to the project, and can include:

- staff time to manage project implementation (e.g. project management and delivery costs that utilise existing internal resources)
- time spent on project activities by volunteers (not paid employees of the organisation seeking funding)
- donated, subsidised or discounted goods or services related to the project.

In-kind contributions cannot include operating expenses that are not directly associated with delivering/implementing the project, or opportunity costs such as staff 'downtime' during prototype development or implementation of activities.

While financial co-contributions are not mandatory, Applicants are encouraged to seek additional sources of funding to strengthen and extend their projects. Applicants are also encouraged to find ways to fund the ongoing operation of the project so that it can continue to operate and deliver outcomes beyond the term of the funding agreement. This might include leveraging contributions from Project Partners or other sponsoring organisations or generating income from project activities.

## **3.4 What will be funded?**

Funding can be used to cover costs directly related to the project including:

- Developing proof of concept, prototyping and/or trialling activities
- Pre-commercialisation and commercialisation of project outputs
- Information sharing and communications related to the project.
- This is not a complete list and other costs may also be eligible on a case-by-case basis and the discretion of the panel assessing applications.

## 3.5 What will not be funded?

Activities that cannot be funded by the Smart Precinct NQ Queensland Circular Economy (Industry-Research) Innovation Grants Program include:

- Flights, accommodation and other travel expenses
- FDA/TGA or other regulatory approval costs
- Capital works and/or physical infrastructure including any buildings, telecommunications, and IT networks
- Costs associated with employee allowances, bonuses and fringe benefits
- Entertainment costs
- Ongoing compliance fees and licenses
- Inventory and warehousing costs
- Costs associated with securing and/or managing the grant funding (e.g. grant writers and bookkeeping costs)
- General business operating costs including but not limited to rent, rates, electricity, water, internet, insurance, software and accounting fees
- wages or salaries for existing staff (although these can be in-kind contributions to the project)
- project outcomes that are not directly attributable to this grant funding
- requests for retrospective funding, where projects are completed or have commenced prior to signing a funding agreement with Smart Precinct NQ
- purchase of vehicles (e.g. front-end loaders, fork lifts)
- pre-construction (site preparation) such as site clearing, earthworks or site accessibility works.
- litter or illegal dumping projects that solely focus on clean up and/or enforcement activities. It is expected that the focus of litter/illegal dumping projects is on litter prevention



- infrastructure or assets owned and serviced by any entity that manages public land (e.g. local government, government organisation or business)
- projects that are being undertaken in order to comply with regulation or a regulatory notice or order
- projects that don't meet regulatory or planning requirements
- projects that do not clearly demonstrate a need for government support
- projects that do not demonstrate good value for money
- purchase of land
- routine or cyclical maintenance works
- repair of facilities damaged by vandalism, fire or other natural disasters where the damage should be covered by insurance
- business case development or feasibility studies
- conference expenses.

## 4. Assessment process

### 4.1 Compliance criteria

Applicants must meet all the following compliance criteria to be considered for progression to eligibility. These will be assessed on a pass/fail basis. These criteria are mandatory.

Applicants must:

- lodge their application in the required format by the closing date – **3:00 pm, 7 February 2024.**

## 4.2 Eligibility criteria

To be eligible for funding, Applicants must:

- agree to comply with Smart Precinct NQ's Funding Agreement Conditions and Terms of Participation
- have a current Australian Business Number (ABN) or and appropriate business structure (such as sole trader, company, incorporated association or registered cooperative)
- implement and service the project in North Queensland
- meet the minimum co-contribution requirement for funding (\$5:\$1)
- complete the project within this required timeframe:
  - projects will need to be completed within 12 months of signing the funding agreement
- not commence the project before signing the funding agreement with Smart Precinct NQ
- ensure that the project delivers at least one of the following outcomes in the community:
  - have identified a waste challenge.
  - have a circular economy concept or idea that you would like to develop, test, and/or validate with collaborators.

## 4.3 Assessment criteria

### Criteria: What

Weighting: 30%

Description: Describe what you are going to do, and how the project aligns with the objectives of the fund:

- Support industry to keep products and materials circulating within the economy at their highest value for as long as possible, through redesign, reuse, remanufacturing, recycling, delivering products as services, and sharing; and reduce waste to landfill. Facilitate collaboration between industry, research institutions, relevant stakeholders, and community to develop practical solutions.
- Support the development of innovative circular economy ideas, technologies, and/or prototypes.
- Accelerate the development of circular economy initiatives from the research stage to the prototype, pilot, or commercialisation stage.
- Contribute towards regional Queensland's economic, environmental, and social objectives.

| Criteria                     | Questions  |
|------------------------------|--|
| <b>1. Innovation</b>         | 1. Describe the innovative aspects of your proposed research, product, service, or process. How does it incorporate circular economy principles?   |
| <b>2. Market Need</b>        | 2.1. Provide evidence to demonstrate the significant market demand or the substantial challenge that your project addresses. How have you identified this demand or challenge?<br>2.2. Explain how your project is scalable or replicable. What strategies or plans do you have in place to expand its impact beyond the initial implementation?   |
| <b>3. Collaboration</b>      | 3.1. Detail how your project will activate collaboration between industry and research institutions. Are there specific partnerships or collaborations already established or in progress?<br>3.2. Describe the involvement of other relevant stakeholders in your project. How do you plan to engage and work with them to achieve your project's objectives?   |
| <b>4. Regional Relevance</b> | 4.1. Explain how your project will contribute to the development of economic, environmental, and social benefits for regional North Queenslanders and communities.<br>4.2. Provide insights into the scalability of your project. How can it be adapted or expanded to benefit other regions or communities beyond the initial target area?<br>4.3. Highlight any specific regional challenges or opportunities that your project aims to address or leverage in the context of regional Queensland. |

## **Criteria: Who**

Weighting: 30%

Description: The Applicant and its Project Partner(s) and other Project Participants can deliver the project including capability (skills and experience) and capacity (resources).

## **Criteria: Why**

Weighting: 10%

Description:

Describe why the project is needed, including how it will provide value for money for North Queensland.

## **Criteria: How**

Weighting: 30%

Description: Demonstrate how the project has the potential to be commercial, feasible and capable of being delivered.

In summary, The Queensland Circular Economy (Industry-Research) Innovation Grant will be awarded to initiatives that best meet the following criteria:

1. Innovation: Redesign of an existing product, service or process, or develop a new product, service, or process, that applies circular economy principles; and show that the innovation could be scalable.
2. Market need: Indicate what the problem or challenge is that your proposal will address; and demonstrate there is significant market demand or solves a significant waste challenge.
3. Collaboration: Show how the project will activate collaboration between industry, research institutions, and/or other relevant stakeholders to find and develop the solution; the support from each party collaborating; and what each party is contributing to the project.
4. Regional relevance: Support the development of economic, environmental, and social benefits for regional Queensland but can be scaled.

## 4.4 Due diligence

A risk-based approach will be used to assess the applicant's social, economic and environmental risks in relation to the project. This assessment will include the applicant's Related Entities and may include the Project Partners other Project Participants. (See section 9 for definition of Related Entities.)

Applicants (and their Related Entities and, if applicable, their Project Partners and Project Participants) should:

- have had no environmental, safety or workplace breaches in the last five years, or if there was a breach, Smart Precinct NQ's can assess a satisfactory level of risk the applicant's breach poses
- have not been the subject of an Enforceable Undertaking or successful litigation by the Fair Work Ombudsman for a breach of the *Fair Work Act 2009* or a fair work instrument within the last five years
- demonstrate financial capability to undertake the project
- have, or will purchase, adequate insurance before the start of the project as outlined in the funding agreement and below:
  - Public Liability \$5M minimum
  - Professional Indemnity \$250,000 minimum
  - WorkCover
- have not failed to satisfactorily progress or complete previous projects funded by the Queensland Government within funding program timelines and without sufficient reason
- manage any conflicts of interest adequately.

Assessment of satisfactory level of risk will include but not be limited to Smart Precinct NQ's consideration of:

- the seriousness of any finding/s

- whether the finding/s has been resolved to the satisfaction of the relevant enforcement agency, or the applicant can demonstrate it is working effectively to resolve the finding
- the efforts made by the applicant including implementation of management systems, to ensure no further finding/s occur
- whether, since the finding, the applicant has had a satisfactory level of compliance with relevant environmental, safety or workplace laws.

Smart Precinct NQ may conduct due diligence checks on the Project Partners and Project Participants involved in the delivery of the project. The applicant must ensure that any Project Partners and Project Participant(s) agree to cooperate with this requirement and will provide information at Smart Precinct NQ's request.

Smart Precinct NQ reserves the right not to award funding to applicants where the due diligence risk (including that of Project Partners and Project Participants) is unsatisfactory or not able to be managed.

## **5. Funding conditions**

### **5.1 What is required of successful applicants?**

Successful applicants approved for funding must:

- agree to realistic evidence-based and performance-based milestone payments
- provide insurance certificates of currency to Smart Precinct NQ prior to commencement of the project
- sign the Smart Precinct NQ funding agreement within 30 days of approval
- provide a project plan and deliver the project as outlined in the application and comply with the funding agreement
- notify Smart Precinct NQ immediately of any delays or change to project scope

- provide update reports to Smart Precinct NQ at agreed milestones with evidence of expenditure, progress and performance
- provide adequate monitoring and evaluation of the project in accordance with the funding agreement as required by Smart Precinct NQ
- collect and release data to Smart Precinct NQ during and post project completion, noting that data may be shared and reported to local and state Government and for national purposes
- contribute to promotional activities such as video or publishable case studies and share learnings that may be published about the project
- participate in and contribute to activities with Smart Precinct NQ to distribute the findings to broader stakeholders (e.g. government and industry) during and after the Smart Precinct NQ funding agreement period.

## 6. Key dates

Please note: these timelines are indicative only and may change.

**Applications open:** 3:00 pm, 15 November 2023

**Applications close:** 3:00 pm, 7 February 2024

**Notification of outcome:** February- March 2024 (Smart Precinct NQ will provide applicants with updates about the progress of their applications as much as possible but cannot provide a definite approval /announcement date.)

**Funding agreements established:** March-June 2024

**Projects commenced:** Within 2 weeks of signing the funding agreement with Smart Precinct NQ

**Project completed:**

- Within 12 months of signing the funding agreement with Smart Precinct NQ

# 7. How to apply

Applicants should review and follow these steps:

1. Ensure your organisation is eligible to apply (see Section 4.2: Eligibility Criteria)
2. Ensure your project meets the assessment criteria (see Section 4.3 Assessment Criteria)
3. Complete and Submit the **Industry-Research Innovation grant** application available at <https://share.hsforms.com/11tUCBd2BTWi4JDZFvgxZagbntxg>

Submitting your application:

- Applications can only be submitted online
- Applications must be submitted by **3:00 pm on the closing date (7 February 2024)**. Smart Precinct NQ's online grant portal will not accept late applications, except under exceptional circumstances;
- Applications can't be saved. We encourage you to copy and paste the questions into a separate document. Afterward, paste your answers back into the form to avoid losing information.
- If you are attaching files, allow sufficient time for the file to be uploaded to the page. You should not navigate to another page until the document has been successfully attached, otherwise the file upload will be cancelled.
- You cannot make any changes to your application after it has been submitted.
- You will receive a confirmation message when the application is submitted.
- If you experience difficulties submitting your online application, contact Smart Precinct NQ's on 1300 467 119 and ask to speak to a grant support representative or email [info@spnq.org](mailto:info@spnq.org)
- Smart Precinct NQ will update applicants on the progress of their applications as much as possible but cannot give a definite approval/announcement date.
- We will endeavour to advise you if we experience any unforeseen delays.



# 8. Further information

## 8.1 Information session

An online information session is available for interested parties.

The link to register for this session is available on the Smart Precinct NQ's website.

- Date: 2 November 2023
- Time: 2:00 pm
- Register to attend [via Humanitix](#)

If you are unable to attend, a recording will be available after the session.

## 8.2 Questions?

Email [info@spnq.org](mailto:info@spnq.org) with **Industry-Research Innovation Grant** in the subject line.

### **Further information and Key Contacts:**

Circular Economy Lead: Jason Lange [jason@spnq.org](mailto:jason@spnq.org)

Smart Precinct NQ Project Lead: Dr Lydia Canovas Saiz [lydia@spnq.org](mailto:lydia@spnq.org)

### **Smart Precinct NQ contact information:**

Web: [www.spnq.org](http://www.spnq.org)

Email: [info@spnq.org](mailto:info@spnq.org)

Facebook: Smart Precinct NQ

Phone: 1300 467 119

## 9. Definitions

- **Circular Economy:** For the purpose of the Queensland Circular Economy (Industry-Research) program, initiatives supported should fit within the Queensland Waste Management and Resource Recovery Strategy's definition of the circular economy where: products and materials keep circulating within the economy at their highest value for as long as possible, through reuse, recycling, remanufacturing, delivering products as services, and sharing. Also for inclusion are initiatives which address avoiding the waste of products and materials. In a practical sense that means the principal aim of initiatives or proposals will be around addressing waste and retaining value of materials and products; and any water and energy efficiency benefits will be seen as a bonus. We are looking for those initiatives that will contribute to Queensland being a zero-waste society by reducing material and products going to landfill.
- **Co-contribution:** The applicant's required cash or in-kind contribution to the total project income.
- **Collaborative partnership:** A relationship established between an Applicant and Project Partner for the purposes of meeting common project objectives and outcomes. Collaborative Partnerships will need to be demonstrated by a formal agreement between the partners that outlines the governance, financial and intellectual property arrangements and roles and responsibilities of each party. A formal agreement must either be in place or be finalised before commencement of the project.
- **Environmental, safety or workplace breach:** An environmental or safety breach is any past or current prosecution, reportable incident, investigation, notice, penalty, warning, regulatory intervention, or enforcement action from the Environment Protection Authority (EPA), Queensland WorkCover Authority (WorkSafe) or Fair Work or failure to comply with any environmental, safety and workplace laws.
- **Environmental and safety laws:** Environmental and safety laws are the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004, Environment Protection Act 1970

or any other legislation, regulation, order, statute, by-law, ordinance or any other legislative or regulatory measure, code, standard or requirement relating to the protection and safety of persons or property or which regulate the environment including laws relating to land use planning, pollution of air or water, soil or groundwater contamination, chemicals, waste, the use, handling, storage or transport of dangerous goods or substances, greenhouse gas emissions, carbon trading, or any other aspect of protection of the environment.

- **Full-time equivalent employees (FTE):** The hours worked by one employee on a full-time basis.

*Calculating FTE:* The calculation is used to convert the hours worked by several part-time employees into the hours worked by full-time employees. For example, you have three employees working the following – 40, 40 and 20 hours per week, giving you 100 hours per week in total. Assuming full-time hours are 40 hours per week, your full-time equivalent calculation is 100 hours divided by 40 hours which equals 2.5 FTE.

- **Indirect jobs:** Jobs created by other businesses that come into existence due to the economic growth of your business.
- **In-kind contribution:** An in-kind contribution is a contribution of a good or a service other than money.

In-kind contributions may include, but is not limited to:

- *time spent on project activities by volunteers (not paid employees of the organisation seeking funding)*
- *donated goods or services related to the project*
- *staff time to manage or deliver the project (project management and implementation costs that utilise existing internal resources).*

The following activities cannot be considered in-kind contributions:

- *operating expenses that are not directly associated with delivering the project*

- *opportunity costs such as staff 'downtime' during the prototype development or implementation of activities.*
  
- **Project participants:** Project Participant” means any organisation engaged or used by the applicant to assist in the delivery of the project. This might include product or equipment suppliers, service providers or other community-based organisations or networks you will be using to promote your project.
  
- **Project partner:** Project Partners are organisations in a Collaborative Partnership with the Applicant and have a critical role in the project and a formal commitment to delivering the support required to ensure the project’s success. This role might include the provision of venues, equipment, access to land, access to community networks or digital platforms, specialist expertise, strategic partnerships, dissemination of information or promotion of events or services. The role of Project Partners will need to be demonstrated by a formal agreement between relevant parties and will outline the roles and responsibilities of each party, such as governance, financial or intellectual property arrangements. A formal agreement must either be in place or be finalised before commencement of the project.
  
- **Related entities:** Entities which are related to the applicant and includes:
  - *holding companies of the applicant*
  - *subsidiaries of the applicant*
  - *subsidiaries of holding companies of the applicant*
  - *companies with common directors or shareholders as the applicant*
  - *companies that are a beneficiary under a trust of which the applicant is a trustee*
  - *trustees of a trust under which the applicant is a beneficiary*
  - *companies that conduct business at the same address as the applicant, or the same address as the location of the activity for which the funding is sought.*

- **Related persons:** Related Person means a director, officer, employee, agent, board member or contractor of the applicant or a Related Entity.
- **Social enterprises:** A social enterprise is an organisation that is driven by a public or community cause, be it social, environmental, cultural or economic. A social enterprise derives most of their income from trade, not donations or grants, and uses the majority (at least 50%) of their profits to work towards their social mission.
- **Workplace laws:** Workplace laws are the *Fair Work Act 2009* (Cth), or any other legislation, regulation order, statute, by- law, ordinance or any other legislative or regulatory measure, code, standard or requirement relating to the provision of fair, relevant and enforceable minimum terms and conditions for all persons and to prevent discrimination against employees.