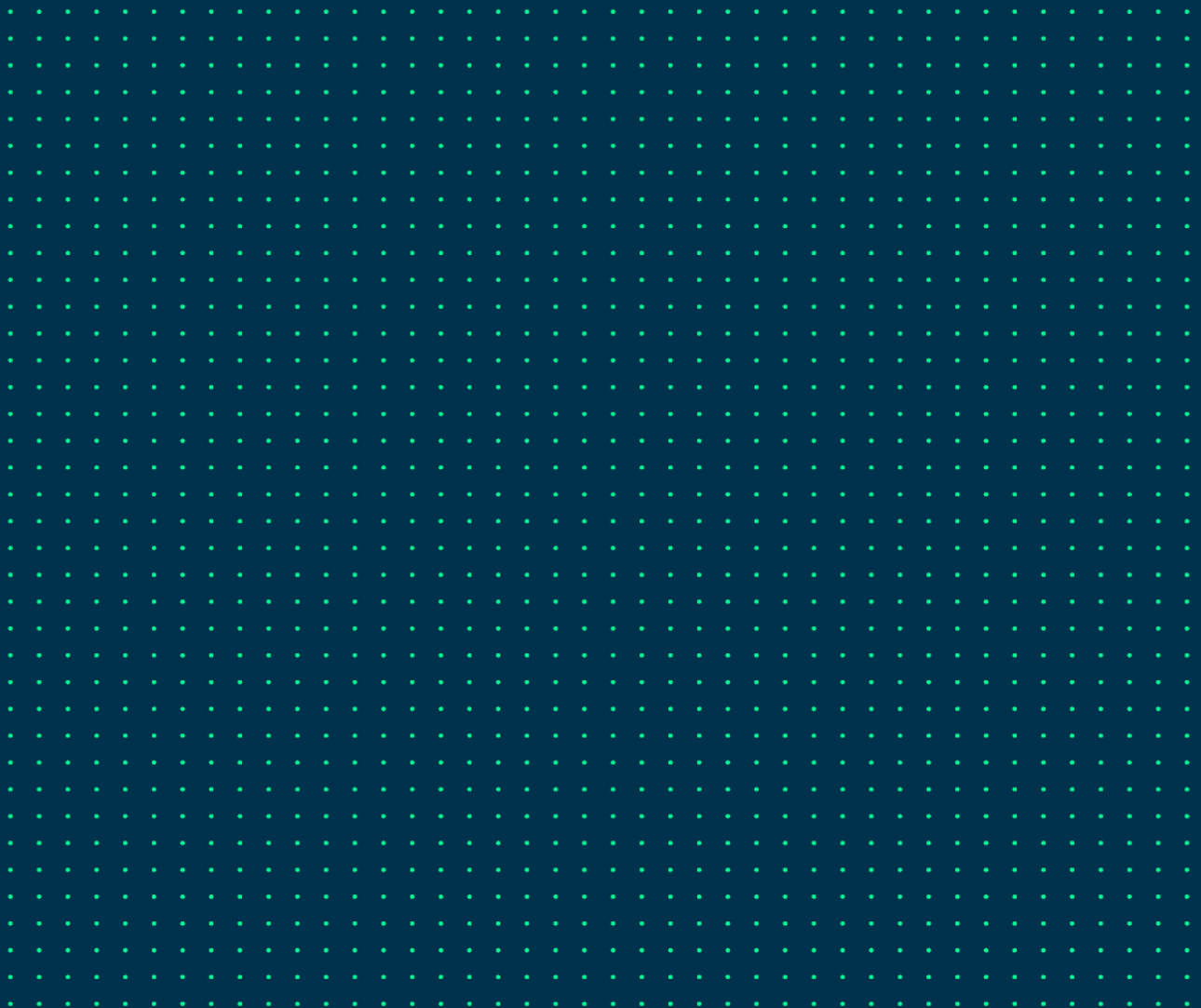




Environment Protection Authority

# Circular Materials Fund: Circular Plastics Program Round 1

Guidelines for applicants



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# Introduction

NSW generates approximately 800,000 tonnes of plastic waste every year, of which only around 10% is recycled. Investment is needed to overcome market barriers, reduce the use of virgin and hard-to-recycle plastics, and enable greater plastics circularity in NSW.

## Background

**The plastics recycling rate is low, and the NSW Government wants to triple it by 2030.**

NSW generates approximately 800,000 tonnes of plastic waste every year, of which only around 10% is recycled. The remaining 90% ends up in landfill or the natural environment, with a small proportion used as refuse-derived fuel. This represents a significant loss of materials from the productive economy.

This issue isn't unique to NSW. CSIRO's National Circular Economy Roadmap identified a lack of market demand for products made from recycled materials as a key challenge in the transition to a circular economy for plastics.

In March 2020 the NSW Government released *Cleaning Up Our Act: Redirecting the Future of Plastic in NSW* to seek feedback from the community on developing a new approach to managing plastic waste. Stakeholders noted that:

- the limited availability of quality recycled plastics was a key reason for not incorporating recycled content in their products
- additional government funding was needed to increase industry's capacity to improve the circularity of plastics
- an implementation plan and targeted programs for problematic plastics were needed.

Guided by stakeholder feedback, the NSW Government released the NSW Plastics Action Plan in June 2021. The plan outlines a suite of actions to address plastic at all stages of its life cycle. A key action under the plan is to accelerate the transition to better plastic products through the \$10 million Circular Materials Fund (CMF), which is funded as part of the \$356 million Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy (WaSM).

The CMF will be delivered through the \$9 million Circular Plastics Program (CPP) which aims to reduce barriers and maximise opportunities for improved circularity at the 'make' phase of the plastic product life cycle.

The remaining \$1 million will be used to build on learnings and successes of the CPP with a focus on enabling activities that support improved plastics market circularity.

## Circular Plastics Program Objectives

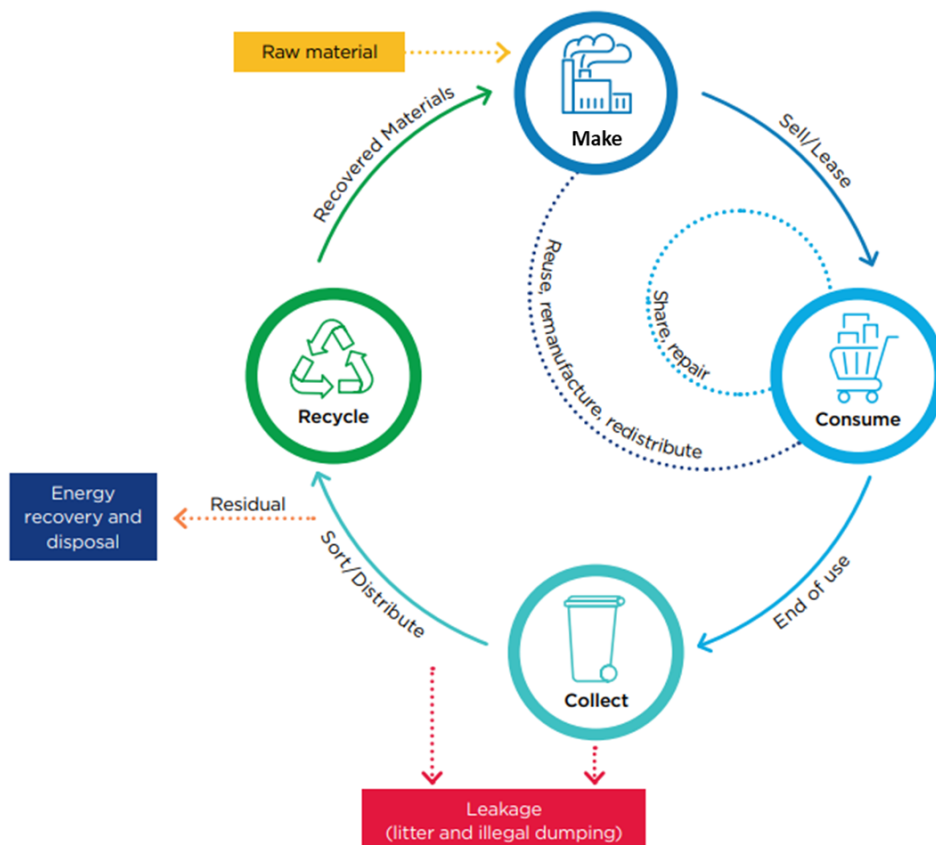
The key objective of the CPP is to reduce barriers and maximise opportunities for improved circularity at the 'make' phase of the plastic product life cycle (see Figure 2). To achieve this, funded projects must undertake at least one of the following:

- reduce the amount of virgin plastic used
- increase the amount of recycled plastic in products
- reduce the amount of hard-to-recycle plastics used
- catalyse partnerships between producers, end users and the resource recovery sector.

Examples of hard-to-recycle plastics include:

- plastics that are not easy to recycle for technical reasons e.g. colour, melting point, addition of chemical additives to give the plastic specific characteristics, contamination levels, other physical/chemical properties of the plastic
- multi-layered plastics i.e. plastics that have more than one plastic layer with different polymer types, such as plastic bottles consisting of PET/PP lined with ethylene-vinyl alcohol copolymer (EVOH)
- multi-material plastic packaging e.g. liquid paperboard, which include a plastic layer mixed with a layer of aluminium foil or paper, or plastic with an aluminium lining which is common in food packaging
- composite products, such as plastic-based materials strengthened with glass or carbon fibres, used in various interior and exterior car parts (e.g. bumper bars). Other examples are particleboard (chipboard) and fibreglass (e.g. boats, surfboards)
- plastics which don't have readily available markets i.e. they may not be hard to recycle (from technical point of view) but there are currently not the end-markets to justify investing in recycling infrastructure.

Figure 1 Circular economy



## Aims

The CPP is intended to support businesses at the 'make' phase, such as manufacturers, to overcome market barriers and improve plastics circularity. Barriers could include, but are not limited to:

- lack of initial capital to pay for production refit
- industry uncertainty on the use of recycled plastic content or sustainable alternative materials

- lack of consistency with collection and processing e.g. inconsistency across the State, and nationally, on how collection and processing is done, leading to a lack of consistent, high quality feedstock
- challenges with transitioning from specific plastics, including hard-to-recycle plastics.
- challenges with reducing plastic use.

A total of \$5 million is available in CPP Round 1 to eligible applicants. Applications from both stream 1 and 2 will be competitively assessed for a share of the same \$5 million funding pool. The total funding amount for both streams is combined.

Proposals should be submitted under one of the two streams outlined in the table below.

**Table 1 Snapshot of the Circular Plastics Program**

| Program element         | Stream 1   | Stream 2  |
|-------------------------|--|---|
| Priority polymers       | All plastic polymers, including, but not limited to PET, HDPE, LDPE, LLDPE, PP, PVC, PS, ABS/SAN/ASA, PUR  |   |
| Application type        | Sole applicants  | Collaborative partnerships  |
| Funding limits          | \$100,000–\$500,000  | \$250,000–\$750,000   |
| Target organisations    | Small to medium businesses (SMBs) with fewer than 200 full-time equivalent staff (FTE) that are involved in the ‘make’ phase of a plastic product.   | Partnerships of three or more organisations that interact across the life cycle of a plastic product.<br>The lead applicant must be at the make phase and be a small to medium business (SMB) with fewer than 200 full-time equivalent staff (FTE)<br>Supporting partners may include large businesses (>200 FTE).  |
| Project focus           | New product design and/or new processes in the manufacturing of plastic products   | Partnerships of three or more organisations that interact across the life cycle of plastic products that will support the improved delivery of the ‘make’ phase by the lead applicant.<br>Collection, recycling, processing and other activities may be eligible for funding if they contribute towards the lead applicant meeting the objectives of the program. |
| Minimum co-contribution | 1:1 matched funding, where applicants must contribute the same amount of funding as the EPA.<br>50% of the applicant’s contribution must be cash, the rest can be in-kind funding (e.g. staff time to manage project implementation, use of equipment or machinery owned by the applicant or partner organisations).<br>Matched funding can be contributed by any project partner. |   |

# Application Process

Applications will go through a two-stage process:

- Stage 1: Expressions of Interest (EOI)
- Stage 2: Detailed application

The purpose of each stage is described in the table below.

**Table 2** Program stages

| Stage                           | Aims  |
|---------------------------------|---|
| 1. Expression of Interest (EOI) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• receive high-level project overviews that clearly show applicants have the capacity and capability to address the program priorities</li><li>• shortlist applications that have met the program priorities and eligibility requirements to participate in Stage 2</li></ul>   |
| 2. Detailed application         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• provide shortlisted applicants the opportunity to demonstrate the merits of their proposal in more detail, including how the project will address key program objectives. This stage will require a detailed budget and cost-benefit and financial analysis</li><li>• provide additional time for all shortlisted applicants to refine their project design</li><li>• provide optional free advisory assistance to improve the quality of applications</li><li>• determine the projects to be funded under the Circular Materials Fund: Circular Plastics Program Round 1</li></ul> |

## Stage 1 – Expressions of Interest

Applicants will have eight weeks to develop and submit their responses to the EOI. Responses should include:

- specifying which funding category their project proposal falls under (Stream 1 ‘Sole applicant’ or Stream 2 ‘Collaborative partnership’)
- giving an overview of their project and activities
- identifying project partners and their specific roles
- outlining the commercial viability of the project
- providing information on end-markets for recovered materials
- providing information about how the project addresses the program priorities.

EOI responses must meet the eligibility criteria described in the *Conditions of eligibility* section below.

EOI responses will be assessed by an independent technical review committee (TRC) against the **Assessment criteria**. The TRC will then recommend projects to progress to Stage 2.

## Stage 2 – Detailed Application

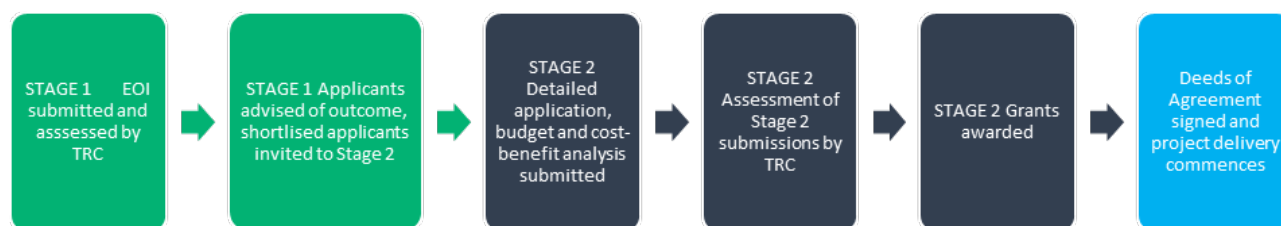
Applications shortlisted in Stage 1 will be invited to participate in Stage 2 – making a detailed application. Organisations that have not gone through the EOI process are not eligible to apply to stage 2.

Proponents will receive an invitation from the EPA to submit a final detailed application. Stage 2 participants will have eight weeks to:

- develop their final application
- formalise partnerships
- complete a detailed budget using the EPA template that will be provided
- conduct a financial and economic analysis.

A free Application advisory service (AAS), provided by an independent contractor, is available to all Stage 2 applicants and is accessed via a separate, short application form through the EPA. The advisory service can assist with a range of application requirements, including the economic analysis.

**Figure 2 Circular Plastics Program Round 1: grant program stages**



## How to apply

Use [SmartyGrants](#) to apply for funding under the Circular Plastics Program.

If you have any issues accessing the platform or completing any questions, please email [infrastructure.grants@epa.nsw.gov.au](mailto:infrastructure.grants@epa.nsw.gov.au).

**Table 3 Indicative timeline**

| EOI application process                                       | Estimated Date         |
|---|------------------------|
| EOI stage opens   | Friday 23 September    |
| EOI stage closing date and time                               | 11:59pm on 17 November |
| Stage 1 applications assessed by TRC                          | Late November          |
| EOI applicants shortlisted to participate in Stage 2 notified | 1 December             |
| Stage 2 detailed application opens                            | 8 December             |
| Stage 2 detailed application closes                           | 16 February 2023       |
| Stage 2 TRC assessment  | 28 March 2023          |
| Announcement of successful projects                           | To be determined       |

**Note:** Applicants will be informed of any changes to key dates via the CPP website or by email



# Applicants eligible for funding

The lead applicant must hold an Australian Business Number (ABN) and be either:

- an Australian entity or partnership incorporated under the *Corporations Act 2001 (Cth)*, or
- a non-government/not-for-profit organisation (complying with the ATO's definition) with an established legal status, or without a legal status but able to have grant funds administered by another organisation with legal status.

The applicant must also:

- have fewer than 200 full-time equivalent (FTE) employees at time of submitting the EOI
- operate at the 'make' phase of a product life cycle (e.g. product manufacturing and design)
- hold the required insurance and public liability coverage, including:
  - public liability insurance to the value of at least \$20 million
  - workers compensation insurance as required by all relevant laws.

## Stream 1: Sole applicant projects

Stream 1 provides funding for sole applicants to target the 'make' phase of the product life cycle. This may include projects which:

- alter or adopt innovative product design (e.g. new designs, moulds, forms, products)
- improve manufacturing processes (e.g. through new equipment, material inputs)
- increase recycled content manufacturing capacity
- generate additional demand for recycled content
- reduce the use/manufacture of virgin or hard-to-recycle plastics
- reduce the generation of plastic waste.

Projects must, as far as practicable, demonstrate viable end-markets for project outputs and benefits to NSW, including employment, infrastructure investment, environmental and social benefits.

## Stream 2: Collaborative partnership projects

The objective of Stream 2 is to catalyse partnerships between producers, end users and the resource recovery sector that will lead to improved plastics circularity in NSW.

In addition to the conditions for Stream 1, the EPA expects all Stream 2 project proposals to involve strong and collaborative partnerships. Applicants are encouraged to develop partnership projects with an emphasis on end-to-end supply chain collaboration. Proposals should aim to show enduring partnerships across the supply chain.

Partnerships must include a lead applicant at the 'make' phase that has fewer than 200 FTEs and a minimum of two other organisations.

Project partners may be of businesses of any size, including large businesses (>200 FTE). Partners may include, but are not limited to, product designers, recyclers/re-use facilities, waste collectors, end users, and tertiary/research organisations. For example, entities currently manufacturing plastic products may partner with those that design, collect, reprocess and/or re-use the material.

Partnership agreements may be demonstrated through a letter of support from the partnership organisation specifying the nature of support and their role in the project. Project management roles, responsibilities, funding contributions (in-kind and cash) and reporting requirements must be clearly defined in the letter.

The lead applicant will be responsible for the overall delivery of the project, including performance of the partner organisations participating in the project. The lead applicant will receive the grant funding from the EPA and it will be the responsibility of the lead applicant to use or distribute the grant funding as detailed in the Deed of Agreement.

## Conditions of eligibility: EOI

The following conditions will be considered by the TRC during the assessment of EOI responses. In responding to this EOI, you as an applicant must:

- Complete the EOI form.
- Show that the project is primarily focused on meeting at least one of the three key program objectives
  - reduce the amount of virgin plastic used
  - reduce the amount of hard-to-recycle plastics used/produced
  - increase the amount of recycled plastic in products.
- Have your application signed and endorsed by a senior office bearer from the lead organisation.
- Ensure your application is received by the closing date and time. Late applications will not be accepted.
- Show that the time required for all necessary activities, including planning, regulatory or other approvals has been considered.
- Submit projects that will start by May 2023 and finish – including submitting the final report – by 30 June 2026.
- Show you have the means or support to complete the project and related administrative work by the required date. This should include support from project partners.
- Show that you, your related entities and your project partners have a satisfactory compliance history under NSW environment protection laws.

## Assessment and notification

After the closing date the EPA will check whether your application is eligible and all fields are complete. The EPA establishes an independent TRC for each grant program. The TRC is made up of people with knowledge and experience relevant to the grant program, including industry representatives. TRC members agree to undertake their duties within the principles of ethical conduct, integrity, objectivity and independence.

TRC members are also required to keep all matters concerning applications confidential and to declare any potential conflict of interest. Please note, the TRC membership is confidential to avoid opportunity for influence.

The TRC will assess the merit of your application against the criteria outlined in these guidelines. This will be done for all EOI and Stage 2 applications. You should refer to the assessment criteria below when responding to the application questions to make sure you are explaining how your proposed project aligns to these priorities. The application form is designed to help you provide the type of information the TRC needs to determine whether the project meets the assessment criteria.

The assessment process is overseen by an independent probity auditor. The Stage 2 assessment will also include advice from an independent financial services consultant's review of each projects cost-benefit and financial analyses. The TRC will make recommendations to the EPA CEO, who will ultimately approve the outcome of the assessment process and award of funding.

Successful applicants may not receive the full amount requested and may be subject to special, as well as general, conditions of funding. Decisions by the EPA are final. There is no appeal process.

## Assessment criteria

### Criterion 1 (25%): The project will improve plastics circularity in NSW by overcoming market and other barriers

- The project must contribute to at least one of the following objectives:
  - reduce the amount of virgin plastic used
  - increase the amount of recycled plastic in products
  - reduce the amount of hard-to-recycle plastics used.
- The project clearly demonstrates how it will lead to improved plastics circularity in NSW.
- The application clearly describes how project activities will help overcome identified market barriers and/or gaps.
- Project outputs (e.g. products) have clearly identified pathways for recyclability or re-use, where feasible.

### Criterion 2 (20%): The lead organisation and any project partners have shown an ability to deliver the project to a high standard

- Project team has the capacity and capability to deliver the project (for instance, relevant experience delivering a similar project).
- The required financial co-contribution has been committed by each party and the role and responsibilities of each partner in the project are clearly articulated.
- Risks, barriers and proposed mitigation strategies are clearly identified.
- The project includes a robust process for monitoring, evaluating and reporting on the success or failure of the project and has appropriate evaluation measures in place.
- The application shows sound project planning and methodology.

### Criterion 3 (20%): The project proposes suitable suppliers, technologies and end-markets

- The technology and processes used are suitable to achieve the identified program objective.
- Supply and demand of the project materials and products are well understood.
- The project demonstrates access to end-markets including that outputs meet relevant and required product/industry standards.
- A viable supply of project materials has been demonstrated and logistics have been considered.
- Proposed activities show compliance with environmental laws.
- Project pricing and service offering are viable and credible.
- For projects under Stream 2, the following additional measures apply:
  - the project catalyses partnerships across different stages of the product life cycle
  - enduring partnerships will lead to improved plastics circularity in NSW.

### Criterion 4 (20%): The project has potential to become business as usual for the applicant/participating organisations

- The project has a credible business case with clear potential to deliver ongoing, commercially viable outcomes.
- The project demonstrates how it will overcome cost barriers associated with transitioning to better plastic products.
- The project will have long-term viability beyond the grant funding.

**Note:** Applicants that progress to a Stage 2 detailed application will be required to submit a financial analysis to demonstrate the long-term financial viability of the project activities.

### **Criterion 5 (15%): The project provides economic, environmental and/or social benefits for the community of NSW, including job creation and economic value**

The project has other benefits to the community of NSW, including one or more of the following:

- economic value
- environmental benefits, including non-market benefits
- social benefits, including job creation and/or job creation and vocational training for disadvantaged or marginalised communities in NSW
- alignment with relevant sustainability policies and strategies, including the NSW Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy, NSW Plastics Action Plan, National Waste Policy Action Plan, and NSW Net Zero Plan.

## Funding

A total of \$5 million is available under Round 1 of the Circular Plastics Program. By submitting a response to this EOI, applicants acknowledge that the EPA does not guarantee either any funding or the amount of the funding requested. The EPA may, at its discretion, offer partial funding to projects.

Funding is provided at the absolute discretion of the EPA and the EPA's decisions regarding funding are final.

Organisations must apply under either Stream 1 (Sole applicants) or Stream 2 (Collaborative partnerships) with their associated funding caps: see Table 1 Snapshot of the Circular Plastics Program above.

**Table 4 Funding caps**

| <b>Funding category</b>   | <b>Funding cap per project</b> |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Sole applicant            | \$100,000–\$500,000            |
| Collaborative partnership | \$250,000–\$750,000            |

### **Applicant co-contribution**

Projects require a matched co-contribution from applicants. Co-contributions can be financial (cash) or in-kind. At least 50% of the co-contribution must be cash contribution. For example, government contribution of \$100,000 needs to be matched with a minimum \$50,000 cash investment from applicant; the rest can be in-kind contribution.

The co-contribution must be itemised in the application budget (required in the Stage 2 detailed application).

Applicants can (and are encouraged to) contribute more than the minimum 50% cash contribution as part of their commitment towards the project costs.

Funding received from other government grants (such as Remanufacture NSW or other recycling infrastructure grants) cannot be included as the co-contribution.

For Stream 2 (Collaborative partnership) projects, co-contributions (cash and in-kind) can come from all project partners and must be identified in the application budget.

## Applicant in-kind contribution

Applicants should list any in-kind contributions in their application budget. In-kind contributions do not form part of your cash co-contribution but will demonstrate additional commitment to the project.

In-kind activities include contributions to a project other than money. Examples include:

- staff time to manage a project
- voluntary labour
- installation costs that use existing internal resources
- use of equipment or machinery that is already owned and used at no cost
- professional services e.g. a design firm providing X hours' worth of product design at no cost
- donations of goods or services such as computers or software.

In-kind contributions must be accounted for as part of project reporting.

## Funding from multiple sources

Activities or equipment for which applicants have received funding or support from other funding sources (e.g. other grant programs) will not be funded. If you have or intend to apply for funding from multiple government sources, you must advise if you:

- have secured funding from another government agency for the same or related activities to those you are seeking funds for from the EPA
- have current applications lodged with other government agencies for the same project or project activities
- receive funding from other government agencies while your project is under way.

## Projects and items that will be grant funded

Funding under both Stream 1 and Stream 2 of the CPP could be used for project items including, but not limited to:

- purchasing of new or modified equipment (e.g. processing lines, moulds, blending machines etc.) to increase the use of recycled plastic in the manufacture of products or sustainable alternatives
- redesign of products, services or systems to use less plastic or eliminate waste
- redesign of plastic products to be more recyclable
- creating products that are durable, and can be more easily repaired or re-used
- adopting a re-use model to replace single-use packaging
- commercialisation of new technologies
- replacing hard-to-recycle plastics, such as soft plastics or multi-layer products, with sustainable alternatives
- implementing innovative circular-economy business models and practices to develop or expand end-markets for recycled plastics.

Under Stream 2, funding could also be used to fund eligible partnership projects including (but not limited to) any of the options above, and:

- product design, recycling, reprocessing, collection and other activities directly related to the manufacturing activities (up to 50% of funding)
- coordinating the delivery of the project across project partners (up to 15% of grant funding).

If your proposed project is not included in the list above, please contact the EPA to discuss your project and eligible items for funding.

## **Projects and items that will not be grant funded**

Projects or items that will not be funded under the CPP include:

- any activities not directly contributing to the 'make' phase (except when included in a partnership project)
- products covered by the NSW single-use plastics bans
- projects that only produce documents (e.g. feasibility studies, scoping or product design documentation)
- research and development. If a project involves a small R&D component this will need to be clearly articulated and justified by the applicant
- projects targeting materials other than plastic
- projects not sufficiently benefitting NSW
- projects and budget items that do not align with the objectives of the grant program
- transporting components offshore for processing
- facilities that produce fuels from waste (e.g. PEF/RDF) or use waste material as an energy source
- projects that would proceed without grant funding
- requests for retrospective funding
- costs of obtaining any required planning approvals or environment protection licences
- purchase of plant or equipment that has been previously owned by the applicant, any project partner or any associated entity
- land acquisition
- venture capital
- project proposals submitted by applicants who are unable to show the financial capability to complete the project
- installation activities completed using internal staff resources (as this is considered as an in-kind contribution)
- ongoing operational costs such as, but not limited to, rent, insurance, salaries, electricity, water and other utilities
- project activities or equipment that applicants have received via funding or support from other funding sources (e.g. other grant programs)
- costs associated with the application or gaining of funding
- costs associated with internal administration, travel, office support and communications (considered in-kind contribution)
- process or logistic vehicles e.g. forklifts, prime movers, front-end loaders
- project contingency funds
- costs relating to site preparations and clean-up e.g. fencing, painting of facilities, signage, WHS activities, training and skip bins.

The EPA may, at its absolute discretion, update or add to the items and projects that will not be funded at any time.

## Details of funding instalments

It is proposed that successful projects following the Stage 2 assessment will be allocated funds as follows:

- 10% of approved funding on signing the grant agreement
- 70% of approved funding over multiple payments upon achievement of key milestones (to be defined in the funding agreement)
- 20% of approved funding after delivery of the final report.

## Budget

Applicants shortlisted to participate in Stage 2 must provide a detailed budget using the template to be provided by the EPA.

Goods and services tax (GST) should not be included in the application budget.

## Cost-benefit (economic) and financial analysis

Applicants who are shortlisted to participate in Stage 2 must undertake a cost-benefit and financial analysis. This analysis ensures that approved projects:

- will provide value for money
- are financially viable
- will deliver a net public benefit
- help to improve plastics circularity in NSW.

For further guidance on completing a cost-benefit analysis, applicants should refer to NSW Treasury's *NSW Government Guide to Cost-benefit Analysis* and consider applying to the EPA application advisory service (AAS). See below for details of how to apply.

Stage 2 applicants will be provided with the cost-benefit and financial analysis template. Other formats will not be accepted.

As part of the cost-benefit and financial analysis, applicants should address the following criteria to support their final application:

- all costs are identified (e.g. capital, operating, maintenance and provision for contingencies).
- all benefits are identified (e.g. avoided costs, savings and revenue from sale of recovered materials).
- all non-market values are identified and quantified.
- sensitivity testing (analyse options using different scenarios and discount rates)
- all references, including the data sources and assumptions, are documented.

The outcomes of the modelling include the following:

- net benefits, assessed using the discounted stream of costs and benefits, with the option case assessed incremental to the base case
- net financial outcome, assessed using the discounted stream of financial costs and revenues
- cost-benefit ratio
- internal rate of return
- dollars of grant funding per tonne of additional material recycled.

The EPA will engage an independent financial services consultant to undertake a review of cost-benefit and financial analyses.

# Application advisory service

The EPA provides a free application advisory service (AAS) to support eligible applicants to prepare their Stage 2 grant applications. This service is provided by an independent contractor. Only applicants who are shortlisted to participate in Stage 2 are eligible for AAS support.

Under the AAS the EPA provides up to 10 hours of support to eligible Stage 2 applicants.

The role of the application advisors will be to:

- provide specialist advice to the applicant as it prepares its grant application
- advise on appropriate analysis, content and presentation of information
- provide comment and critical feedback on the quality of the business case presented.

The application advisors may cover the following areas:

- market analysis, including demand for product
- technical analysis, including selection, integration and optimisation of plant and equipment
- cost-benefit and financial analysis support
- planning approval and licensing analysis
- project planning.

EPA-funded application advisors will not:

- gather background information, although they can advise on where to access the necessary information. (It is expected that the applicant will have already developed or have this ready.)
- prepare a complete business case on behalf of the applicant
- prepare a complete grant application on behalf of the applicant.

The support is at the discretion of the EPA and not all applicants will necessarily receive support. A decision by the EPA not to provide application support does not imply that the project is ineligible for funding. Conversely, receiving AAS assistance does not guarantee application success.

If successful in applying for support, the EPA program manager will contact applicants to arrange a meeting time with the advisor. Advisors are contracted by the EPA and are bound to keep information provided by applicants confidential.

Applicants shortlisted to Stage 2 will be given information on how to apply to the application advisory service.

## Grant conditions

Applicants that proceed to Stage 2 will be provided with:

- a letter from the EPA outlining the conditions of Stage 2 for completing the application form, a detailed budget template and a cost-benefit and financial analysis template
- if applicable, the application advisory service application form.

Applicants who progress through Stage 2 and are awarded project funding will be required to:

- sign the funding agreement. Grantees have up to 30 days from the date of formal notification of the offer of funding to do this. If the agreement is not signed within the specified period, the offer of funding may lapse
- confirm a final schedule of payment and reporting dates for all project activities



- provide milestone and final reports in accordance with the reporting requirements outlined in the funding agreement, including an independently certified final statement of expenditure
- provide all related invoice and receipts to the EPA for project expenditure
- provide a tax invoice to the EPA for each grant instalment
- hold appropriate insurance and public liability coverage
- regularly engage (i.e. at least every quarter by phone) with the EPA's Waste and Recycling Infrastructure Unit
- acknowledge the Circular Materials Fund and the support of the EPA on all publications, externally distributed reports, websites, and publicity materials
- invite a NSW Government representative to any launch or public event associated with this funding
- use and comply with EPA or NSW Government branding requirements
- comply with any other conditions that may be outlined in the Stage 2 suite of documents
- hold grant funds in a separate, interest-bearing account until expended. Grantees may apply to the EPA to spend interest accrued on eligible project costs that will enhance the outcomes of the project.

## Reporting

Project proposals must include a robust process for monitoring, evaluating, and reporting about the success or failure of the project, including gathering supporting evidence. This includes the assessment of any future activities enabled by the funded project.

Projects that receive funding will be required to provide progress reports at each milestone, including details on all the activities completed, photos and videos of progress, outcomes, and next steps. Grant recipients must also provide an evaluation report at project completion, including the development of a project case study.

## Project duration

There is limited capacity to carry over unspent program funds to future financial years. Consequently, projects must be completed by 30 June 2026.

For projects that are not completed by 30 June 2026, a formal variation must be submitted to the EPA justifying why the grant should be extended. Requests for variations to projects must be submitted in writing to the EPA as soon as possible. Extensions of time will only be approved under exceptional circumstances.

Successful applicants will be required to commence their project within one month of signing the grant agreement. If a project is not commenced within this period without sufficient justification and EPA approval the grant may be revoked.

Final payments will not be made until the final evaluation report has been assessed by the EPA as satisfactory.

## Conflict of interest

Applicants are required to declare any real, potential or perceived conflict of interest that they may be aware of in relation to being awarded a grant, particularly where:

- the project that you are proposing will be undertaken on private land and that land is owned by a member or members (or relatives) of the organisation applying for a grant

- members, or relatives of members, of the organisation applying for a grant are being paid as project managers (or similar) with EPA funds
- members, or relatives of members, of the organisation applying for a grant are being paid as contractors with EPA funds
- works carried out by the project could create current or future financial or other benefit for members of the organisation applying for the grant, or their relatives
- third parties used to assist in the preparation of the grant application will potentially be engaged to carry out work on the project.

Such circumstances do not exclude the project from being funded; however, they must be acknowledged as a potential conflict of interest. The TRC will assess each situation on its merits.

## Confidentiality

The EPA will use the information you supply to assess your project for funding. The EPA may share this information with other EPA agencies. Information on funded projects may be used for promotional purposes. Information that you provide to us may be shared with other NSW Government and Australian Government agencies and consultants, on a confidential basis, to better understand the status of the relevant waste markets or infrastructure.

Otherwise, subject to legal requirements of disclosure, we will treat your application confidentially. We will endeavour to treat sensitive personal and confidential information that you provide to us confidentially. If you require strict commercial confidentiality, you should request this in your application. However, all documents held by the EPA are subject to the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009*.

## Misleading or false information

Applications that include misleading or false information will not be considered for funding. If the EPA is made aware of any issues relating to misleading or false information after a grant has been awarded, it can withdraw funding from the grantee. Any EPA funds spent on the project may need to be repaid.

## Notification of grant decisions

The Minister for Environment and Heritage may publicly announce the successful applications. Applicants will also be notified in writing. Applicants must not promote their participation in the Circular Plastics Program, or their funding if any is ultimately awarded, until the project has been formally announced.