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NSW Health Sustainable Futures Innovation Fund

Guidelines for Applicants

March 2024



NSW Ministry of Health
1 Reserve Road
St Leonards NSW 2065
www.health.nsw.gov.au

moh-netzero@health.nsw.gov.au

Produced by NSW Ministry of Health

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Sustainable Futures Innovation Fund

Call for Applications

NSW Ministry of Health invites local health districts (LHDs), specialty health networks (SHNs), pillars and support organisations to apply for innovation funding under the Sustainable Futures Innovation Fund (the Fund). These guidelines outline the Fund's application process, selection criteria and reporting requirements.

Program Outline

NSW Health recognises it must respond to climate risk to ensure a healthy, sustainable future for our patients and communities. Consequentially, NSW Health committed to an environmentally sustainable footprint In the [Future Health Strategic Framework 2022-2032](#).

Evidence suggests that NSW Health contributes to around 6.6% of the total greenhouse gas emissions ([Malik et al., 2021](#)). NSW Health is also aligning with the [NSW Government net zero targets](#), including halving emissions by 2030 and achieving net zero emissions by 2050.

Our 175,000 staff have a plethora of ideas that improve care while reducing waste and carbon emissions; often, these ideas cannot be implemented without initial 'start-up' funding. Innovation has a crucial role to play in supporting NSW Health to achieve net zero emissions. Therefore, NSW Health is offering innovation funding for staff to "kick start" high impact innovation projects that will improve patient care, reduce our environmental footprint (either in emissions or waste) and improve climate resilience.

Priority areas for the Fund

NSW Ministry of Health seeks applications for innovative sustainability programs or initiatives across six categories.

Applicants must demonstrate that the initiative aligns to at least one of the following priority areas:

1. Low carbon models of care in carbon hotspots:

In 2023, NSW Ministry of Health estimated the carbon footprint of a metropolitan and regional hospital. Innovations or initiatives are required to reduce the resource intensity of these areas

while maintaining or improving patient outcomes and human experience.

Applicants must also demonstrate how their innovation aligns with the three principles of sustainable healthcare:

1. Keep people healthy, well and independent
2. Minimise low-value and harmful care
3. Decarbonise high-value care.

Other clinical services/specialties may be considered if applicants demonstrate a strong case, need or evidence gap.

2. Net zero supply chain:

Evidence suggests that over half of a health system's footprint is from Scope 3 emissions, including the supply chain of the products used to deliver patient care. Innovations are required that support the delivery of a net zero supply chain through product stewardship mechanisms, efficient and sustainable product use, low carbon substitutions, and initiatives that will support supply chain decarbonisation. For example, innovations that increase diversion of waste from landfill; methods to increase the life span and usage of medical equipment; adoption of remote fixing for medical equipment; adoption of a circular renting model for medical equipment or switching from single-use to reusable containers, packaging and consumables.

3. Pharmaceuticals and medicines:

Pharmaceuticals make up approximately 20% of the Australian health system's carbon footprint ([Malik et al., 2018](#)). Safety and quality in medicines use is strongly aligned with reducing waste and emissions in pharmaceuticals. Consider innovations or initiatives that optimise pharmaceutical prescribing and use; improve stock management; prevent product leaks; and ensure clinically effective and cost-effective medicine usage (e.g., reducing overprescribing and polypharmacy). Innovations could also support the delivery of the *Sustainability Towards 2030* Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) including reduction of desflurane use and preventing nitrous oxide leaks.

4. Staff education and engagement:

Results from the 2023 People Employee Matters Survey demonstrate that 8 out of 10 staff across NSW Health support

taking action to improve environmental sustainability. To build on this, innovations or initiatives are required to invest in our workforce and strengthen the resilience of our system and services. Applicants should consider how initiatives might develop staff capacity, knowledge and skills whilst improving the evidence base of the health impacts of climate change. Staff education examples may include carbon literacy, bespoke net zero service education, sustainable quality improvement training, climate risk and sustainability leadership offerings. Staff engagement examples may include green ward or theatre challenges, staff travel surveys, sustainability in the arts competitions, staff awards or recognition initiatives, or sustainable mentoring programs.

5. **Climate resilience (Adaptation):**

NSW has [already warmed 1.5 degrees](#) from pre-industrial levels and climate change is impacting community health and the health system. Innovations that help us understand and address climate risk are required. These could include improving the daily operation of our assets and ensuring they continue to function during crises; staff education and capacity building programs; or increasing our understanding of the health needs and climate risk exposure of our vulnerable communities. Climate resilience is fundamentally collaborative, so seek opportunities for partnerships. Finally, innovations that address equity by providing targeted benefits for vulnerable groups, as well as those that deliver broader community and health system benefits, are encouraged.

6. **Energy, assets and travel:** A carbon footprint assessment of a metropolitan and regional NSW Health hospital suggest electricity, natural gas and staff commuting are some of the greatest sources of emissions at the local level. Innovations to reduce emissions from energy,

assets and transport are required, including but not limited to:

- a. Preventing unnecessary staff and business transport
- b. Improving energy efficiency, resource (including natural gas) emissions reduction and water reduction.

Innovations excluded from this Fund

Innovations or initiatives that are business as usual (for example LED energy efficiency projects) are out of scope and funding should be sought through regular channels.

Program Objectives

The objectives of the Fund are to support projects that:

1. Support [NSW Government's commitment](#) to achieve net zero emissions by 2050.
2. Reduce health inequalities and enhance equity of access to care and ensure that all innovations/initiatives do not perpetuate existing inequities.

Timelines

The timeline for the Fund is below.

Dates are subject to change.

Dates	Stage
4 March 2024	Applications open
29 April 2024	Submission deadline
July 2024	Application review period by Review Panel
July 2024	Application outcomes confirmed, feedback provided, and successful applications announced
July 2024	Funding awarded – timing will be discussed with successful applicants

All applications must be submitted via email to the Climate Risk and Net Zero (CRNZ) Unit at the NSW Ministry of Health at:

MOH-NetZero@health.nsw.gov.au.

Queries regarding the Fund should be directed through the [CRNZ Unit](#). The Unit contacts are:

- Julia Farrington, Principal Policy Officer
- Erynn Johnson, Senior Policy Officer

Eligibility Criteria

1. The application must be led by a NSW Health staff member. Individuals or groups may apply.
2. The initiative or project must be hosted by and conducted within a NSW Health LHD, SHN, pillar or support organisation.
3. The Chief Executive of the Host Organisation must endorse the Application submission and certify that the initiative or project will be supported.

4. To ensure a fair distribution across NSW Health, there is a maximum of 5 applications per organisation.
5. The Host Organisation agrees to evaluate the effectiveness of the initiative and share information with the Ministry of Health for distribution.

Joint applications

If an innovation or initiative is being conducted in more than one site, the lead host organisation and partner organisation/s should be identified. The lead host organisation should be the LHD, SHN, pillar or support organisation that is driving the innovation project. Partner organisations are those that are enabling the project.

Details of funding

Innovation funding ranging from \$5,000 up to \$25,000 will be provided to successful Host Organisations for initiatives. The Host Organisation must spend all funds and deliver the project by 30 June 2025.

Funding conditions and exclusions

Innovation funding may be used for costs associated with the initiative and/or project and implementation activities. Should the initiative or project cease for any reason, or reporting requirements are not met, remaining funds are required to be returned to the NSW Ministry of Health.

Selection Criteria

NSW Health staff may submit an application which will be assessed against the following criteria:

1. Demonstrates that the innovation will:
 - i) Improve patient outcomes
 - ii) Reduce carbon emissions and/or waste
 - iii) Be climate-resilient
 - iv) Elevate the human experience
 - v) Improve health inequalities
 - vi) Be cost effective
2. The project/initiative has a clear approach to measurement of anticipated outcomes.
3. The project/ initiative has the potential to be translated into policy, practice and/or be scaled across other LHDs/SHNs across the state.

All criteria are of equal weighting. The Chief Executive of the Host Organisation must endorse all applications. Applicants are encouraged to consult with the Sustainability Manager/Officer/Lead and Chief Executive of the Host Organisation well in advance of drafting an Expression of Interest.

The application should clearly justify how the project under investigation is a key priority for the Host Organisation. The proposed project should also be able to provide evidence of effectiveness, and/or be translated into policy and practice. The application should be succinct and written in plain English.

Review Process

Applications will be reviewed against the selection criteria by the Review Panel comprising experts from all priority areas with representation from the Agency for Clinical Innovation, Health Infrastructure, HealthShare NSW, NSW Health Pathology, eHealth, the Ministry of Health Population and Public Health Division, Financial Services & Asset Management Division and the Climate Risk & Net Zero Unit. The panel may contact applicants to clarify or confirm information in the application.

Applicants must meet all eligibility criteria. All applicants and their host organisations will be informed as to whether they have been awarded funding. The Review Panel decision is final and may not be appealed. General feedback on applications will be made available upon request.

The NSW Ministry of Health will contact the Host Organisation (LHD, SHN, pillar or support organisation or Ministry branch) for each successful applicant to establish budget supplementation between the Host Organisation and NSW Ministry of Health.

Upon announcement of successful applicants, it is expected that the Host Organisation Chief Executive be responsible for reviewing and certifying the budget supplementation and supporting fund dissemination to the administering department.

Reporting Requirements

Fund recipients must submit a report on their interim innovation/initiative outcomes by end of 2024 and final innovation/initiative outcomes by June 2025. Fund recipients may be required to present to the NSW Health Environmental Sustainability Steering Committee, NSW Health Sustainability Network, other Ministry and/or state-wide agency forums at the conclusion of their innovation or initiative.

Submitting your Application

Please return the Application form to the NSW Ministry of Health [Climate Risk and Net Zero Unit](#).

If you have any questions, please direct them to: moh-netzero@health.nsw.gov.au

Please submit your approved Application by **COB Friday, 29 April 2024**

