**Strategic Research Fund – Building the Evidence Base**

**Guidelines for Applicants**

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| 1.0 Program purpose | 1.1 The NSW Department of Education has established a Strategic Research Fund (“Research Fund”) to enhance research collaboration, and outcomes for NSW education priorities. The Research Fund forms part of the Waratah Research initiative, which aims to enhance research collaboration between NSW public universities and the NSW Government for improved social, economic and environmental outcomes. | |
|  | 1.2 The Research Fund is Administered by Higher Education and Tertiary Policy (“HETP”) within the NSW Department of Education (“the Department”). | |
|  | 1.3 The Research Fund is made up of four streams:  a) Leveraging Grants  b) NSW Priority Projects  c) **Building the Evidence Base**  d) Scholarships | |
|  | 1.4 Building the Evidence Basestream supports projects that identify innovative ways to link existing data sets or create new data sets to provide policy and reform insights. | |
|  | 1.5 *Building the Evidence Base* stream aims to:   * Strengthen the evidence base for education policy development and reform * Enable the effective use of data to improve educational outcomes * Establish stronger links with NSW universities and better utilise expertise in the university sector | |
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| 2.0 Support Available | 2.1 Up to $175,000 a year (for up to two years), per project. | |
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| 3.0 Use of grant funds | 3.1 Funding for Stream 3 – Building the Evidence Base will take the form of a cash contribution following the execution of a funding deed between the administering organisation and the Department. | |
|  | 3.2 The grant monies must be used primarily on resources and activities within NSW. If part of the research is occurring outside NSW, details must be included in the application. | |
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| 4.0 Eligibility criteria | 4.1 Applications must address one of the following ‘Statements of Opportunity’:   1. Curriculum differentiation for students with different learning needs 2. Building the evidence relating to the connection between physical and digital learning environments and student outcomes and wellbeing 3. The factors that impact on mathematics subject selection in stage 5 and how it impacts on a student's ability to study stage 6 mathematics   Applications must also demonstrate how the proposed research will address data gaps. | |
|  | 4.2 Applications are only open to lead researchers employed at a NSW public university (“the administering organisation”). | |
|  | 4.3 Proposed research must have ethics approval or be likely to receive ethics approval from the relevant ethics committee at the university. | |
|  | 4.4.1 If the proposed research projects involves schools, the lead researcher must apply through the NSW State Education Research Applications Process (SERAP), or have evidence of SERAP approval to be submitted with their application.  4.4.2 If a SERAP is unsuccessful, the proposed research will not be funded. | |
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| 5.0 Selection Criteria | 5.1 Applications will be ranked and preference given according to the criteria outlined below.  a) Researcher(s) capability (35%)   * Time and capacity to undertake the research * Evidence of experience in research training, mentoring and supervision (where appropriate) * The capability of the investigator or team to build collaborations both within NSW and nationally (including access to data)   b) Project quality and innovation (40%)   * Contribution to an important gap in knowledge or significant problem * Novelty/originality and innovation of the proposed research (including any new methods, data linkages, theories or ideas that will be developed) * Clarity of the hypothesis, theories and research questions * Cohesiveness of the project design and implementation plan (including the appropriateness of the aim, conceptual framework, method, data and/or analyses) * Research that demonstrates benefits to more than one NSW government department   c) Benefit (15%)   * New or advanced knowledge resulting from outcomes of the research * Social and/or cultural benefits against economic, state and national priorities * Potential for translation into priority policy settings including NSW Education, Premier’s and state priorities, for example as articulated in NSW Education’s Strategic Plan * Suitability of proposed project and research translation into NSW context * Research impact and engagement, and anticipated outputs (summary)   d) Feasibility (10%)   * Cost-effectiveness of the research and its value for money * Availability of the necessary facilities to complete the project * Extent to which the project’s design, participants and budget create confidence in the timely and successful completion of the project. | |
|  | 5.2 The application will be assessed against the criteria by a selection panel to determine whether to award funding to the applicant, and how much funding to award. | |
|  | 5.3 The Department reserves the right, at its absolute discretion, to adopt any strategy in assessing applications received. | |
|  | 5.4 The Department may choose not to award funding under this program. | |
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| 6.0 Application process | 6.1 **Applications for this round of *Building the Evidence Base* grantsclose at 6PM AEST on Monday 11 October 2021.** | |
|  | 6.2 Applicants are required to submit an electronic copy of the completed application form to: [higher.education@det.nsw.edu.au](mailto:higher.education@det.nsw.edu.au) with the subject line “**Strategic Research Fund Application**”. | |
|  | 6.3 Applications must be signed by the lead researcher and endorsed by the Research Office at the Administering Organisation. | |
|  | 6.4 The Research Office of the Administering Organisation should be copied on the application email. | |
|  | 6.5 Late applications will not be accepted. | |
|  | 6.6 Unsuccessful applicants may reapply in future funding rounds. | |
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| 7.0 Selection process | * 1. A selection panel will:  1. Assess and rank grant applications according to the NSW Priority Project’s eligibility and selection criteria; and 2. Determine which applicants, if any, should receive grants, and the amount of those grants. | |
|  | 7.2 The panel will assess each application on a competitive basis relative to the criteria and other applications | |
|  | 7.3 An applicant may be contacted to clarify their application. | |
|  | 7.4 All applicants will be informed of the outcome of the decision on their applications. | |
|  | 7.5 The timetable for the selection process is as follows: | |
|  | **September 2021** | Applications open for *Building the Evidence Base* |
|  | **6 PM Monday 11 October 2021** | Applications close for *Building the Evidence Base* |
|  | **We anticipate by December 2021** | Successful applicants notified |
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| 8. Funding agreements and reporting requirements | 8.1 All successful applicants who accept the offer of a *Building the Evidence Base* grant will be required to enter into a formal Funding Deed (“the Deed”) with the Department. The Deed will specify obligations that relate primarily to the recipient’s accountability for the grant, including using the grant for activities occurring in NSW, the return of unspent grant monies and reporting on the use of the grant. | |
|  | 8.2 Payments to successful applicants will be triggered agreed milestones including   1. The signing of the Funding Deed, which requires an agreed project plan with milestones; 2. The interim report, and; 3. The final report, as agreed. | |
|  | 8.3 The Funding Deed must be signed by an authorised signatory of the administering organisation. | |