

DIN SEED PROJECTS GRANT PROCEDURES

This document sets out the DIN grant processes for Seed Project grants.

The DIN invests in high quality research that will deliver outcomes for the Australian defence sector. The DIN will fund Seed Projects that are based on excellent research. Seed Projects should demonstrate clear impact to satisfy an existing or emerging need in a defence SME. Seed Projects must be led by the Defence SME. While funding proposals should be co-developed between industry and DIN university members, Defence or industry should be the applicant.

The DIN has a Steering Committee the membership of which comprises an independent chair and representatives from NSW Department of Industry, independent industry members and Member Universities. The Steering Committee (or a sub-committee) makes final decisions relating to funding of Projects, as recommended by the Technical Review Panel.

The Technical Review Panel comprises the DIN Directorate (Director and Associate Director), one co-opted expert from within the DIN member universities and/or one from DST Group.¹ The Technical Review Panel will be chaired by the DST Group Associate Director of the DIN.

- **ANNEXURE A** sets reviewer guidelines and time schedule.
- **ANNEXURE B** provides a set of criteria for assessing applications.
- **ANNEXURE C** is the reviewer template.
- **ANNEXURE D** contains instructions to Member Institutions for selecting reviewers.

SEED PROJECT GRANTS

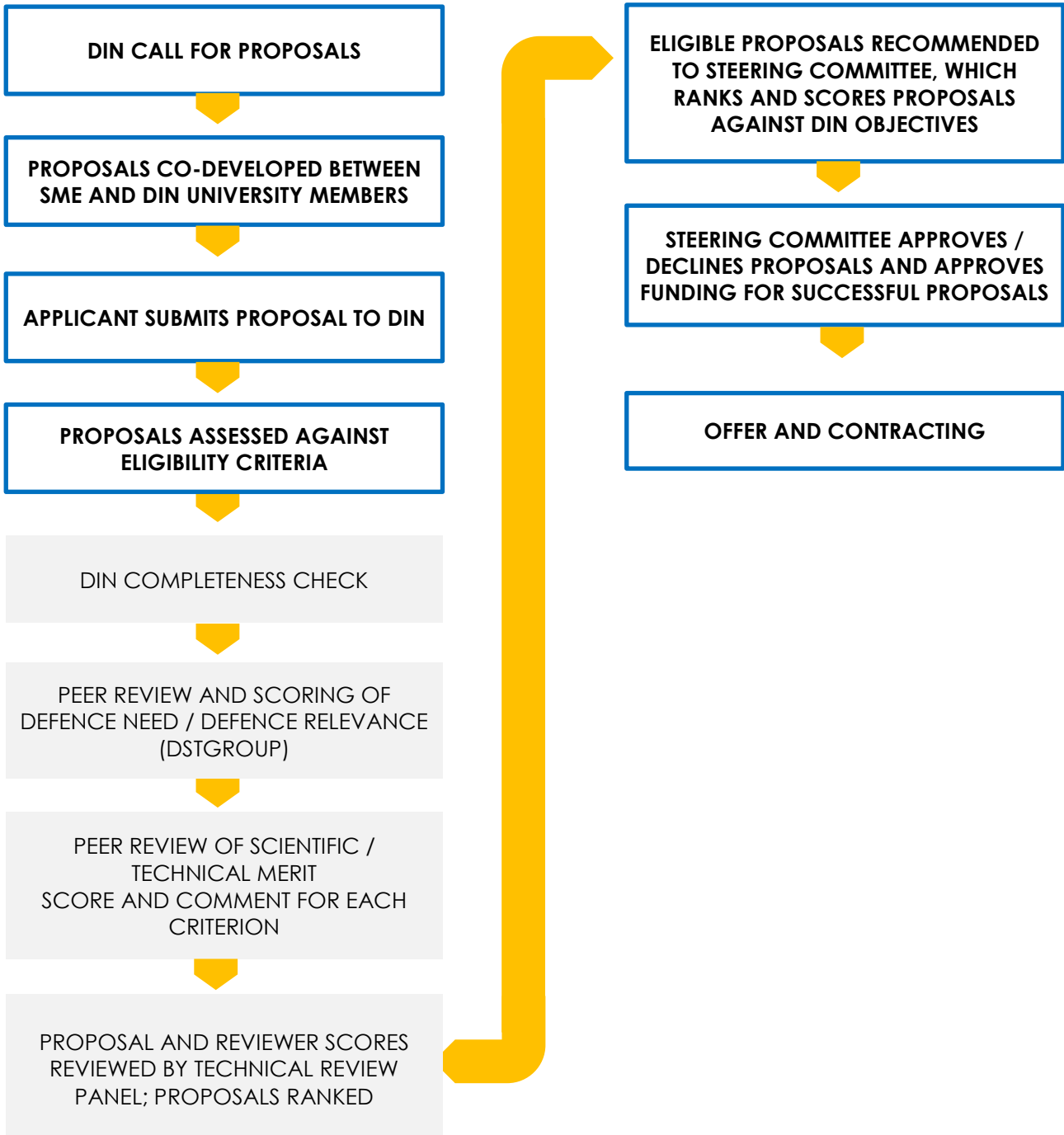
Seed projects will be subjected to the following process.

1. Call for applications: Target industry networks
2. Grant applications received
3. Collate and review received grant applications
 - a. Assess against DIN criteria, completeness check
 - b. Allocate DIN approved applications to Member Institutions with assessment guidelines
 - i. Member institution nominates reviewers technical review, after obtaining their agreement to review.
 - ii. DIN distributes proposals to reviewer
 - iii. Reviewers complete Review Form and return within designated period

¹ The co-opted experts will be selected from nominations put forward by Member Universities. Two will be chosen, with the view to managing conflicts of interest. Where conflicts of interest exist, the conflicted expert will be excused from the deliberations.

² Participants will not be asked to review applications listing investigators from their institutions. Applications may suggest potential reviewers. The Technical Review Panel will consider the nominations and may exercise its discretion to appoint the nominated reviewer or another qualified reviewer.

4. Rank reviewed applications
 - a. DIN Steering Committee feedback against assessment criteria
 - b. Final funding offer
 - c. Acceptance
 - d. Contracts with CI Member Institution
5. Member institution contracts with SME for their portion of the funding
6. Progress and reporting



ANNEXURE A: GUIDELINES FOR REVIEWERS

It is the responsibility of the Member University to ensure that grants for review are allocated to appropriate reviewers in a timely manner. Reviews are to be returned within two weeks of receipt by the reviewer to the Defence Innovation Network via email.

Reviewers will be asked to agree to confidentiality terms before proposals will be released to them. Reviewers must not correspond with applicants or interested parties relating to the proposal during or after the review process.

DIN attempts to select reviewers with no conflict of interest. Where a reviewer believes he/she has a conflict of interest, no review is required but an explanation of the conflict of interest is requested. An alternate reviewer will be sourced by the DIN. Conflicts of interest may be

- Direct; i.e. you are an interested party in a proposal;
- Indirect; i.e. you have an association with one or more of the institutions involved in the proposal;
- Involvement in a competing proposal or business; i.e. you have an involvement that is direct or indirect with a competing proposal or business activity.

You are asked to apply judgement when assessing science excellence and impact, relative to the stage of research and the area of impact. In principle, the DIN will co-fund research at any Technical Readiness Level (TRL)³, which can be thought of as generating new ideas, developing emerging ideas, and leveraging proven ideas. You should judge the proposal accordingly.

Reviewers should assess the proposal against the supplied criteria, and are expected to provide an objective appraisal of the proposal against these criteria, i.e. undertake your assessments in accordance with the guidance in these guidelines. An assessment template is provided and reviewers are asked to assess only against the specific criteria identified for their institutional type (DIN, DST Group or University). You should use information contained in the application and the supplied supporting documentation, and may in addition employ any other information of relevance to make the assessment. Your role as a reviewer ends once you have passed comments to the DIN.

You should provide explanatory text to support your assessment, which can include reference to supporting key evidence, such as scientific publications, strategic guidance documentation, patent information, etc. It is important that your comments support your score and fairly reflects the assessment, and is accurate, professional, and honest.

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Technology_readiness_level

ANNEXURE B: ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

The following defines the criteria used for assessment of Projects. Reviewers will assess only those criteria allocated to them. If any clarification is required on criteria, please contact the Defence Innovation Network. There will be a strong preference for collaborative projects where at least two universities are involved in the project.

FOR SEED PROJECTS, THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA WILL APPLY:

- Identified need in Defence (technology or capability)
- Novelty and potential to become world leading
- Technical / Scientific Merits, Scientific and Technical Risk, Best Collaborative Team
- Potential for impact and implementation pathway
- Capacity and capability of the SME to commercialise project IP
- Additional ranking score will be applied to proposals that involve more than one Member University.

NOVELTY AND POTENTIAL TO BECOME WORLD LEADING

What is the quality of the proposed research, science, or technology, or related activities?

You may wish to particularly consider:

- a. The novelty and originality of the proposal. The idea itself does not have to be novel, but the sum of the idea and the application must be distinctive. We are looking for 'fresh thinking' rather than an obvious extension of existing research. If you are aware of similar work please provide a reference. Similar work will not necessarily disqualify a proposal.
- b. The scientific credibility of the idea and its logic. Is the scientific basis for the idea established well in the proposal?
- c. The quality of the science, description of critical steps (including go/no-go steps), and methodology. Is the proposed research fit for purpose for the proposed outcome and impact sought?
- d. The degree of scientific rigour, e.g., the accuracy of the approach and hypothesis. Please provide advice on how either might be improved.
- e. The scientific risks and uncertainties identified in the proposal. Any omissions and how they are managed. Are the timescales realistic? Is the size of risk, and plans to mitigate that risk, consistent with the stage of research?

TECHNICAL FEASIBILITY AND RISK

When reviewing the proposal, it would be valuable if you can consider and comment on the following questions in your scoring and commentary:

- What are the strengths and highlights of the proposed research?
- What are the deficiencies or weaknesses of the proposed research?
- What are the concerns or issues around the proposed research?

BEST COLLABORATIVE TEAM (EXPERT REVIEWERS)

Do the team members possess the necessary expertise consistent with the needs of the project?
Does the team represent a collaborative effort between DIN member universities?

POTENTIAL FOR IMPACT AND IMPLEMENTATION PATHWAY (STEERING COMMITTEE)

You may wish to consider:

- Has the applicant clearly articulated how this opportunity can be transformative for Defence or the defence industry / company in the future?
- Is the proposed implementation pathway credible relative to the proposed stage of research, bearing in mind the TRL or the research?
- Are the scale and breadth of proposed benefits credible given the area of impact and are these consistent with the outcomes of the proposal?

RANKING SYSTEM

1. Identified Need in Defence⁴

- **None [0]:** No obvious relationship to Defence S&T priorities
- **Low [1]:** Peripheral relationship to Defence S&T priorities (substantial modification would be required to apply the outputs to a Defence problem)
- **Medium [2]:** Research is closely related to a Defence problem or that is developing a technology of direct relevance to a Defence application. One industry partner is involved.
- **High [3]:** Working directly on a Defence problem in partnership with Defence. Two or more industry partners are involved.

2. Novelty and potential to become world leading^{4,5}

- **None [0]:** Is routine and presents little or no novelty.
- **Low [1]:** Displays some novelty but the outcomes are likely to be incremental.
- **Medium [2]:** Is differentiated, will lead to notably improved technology.
- **High [3]:** Distinctive approach that is highly likely to produce leading innovations or capability.

3. Technical/Scientific Merits; Scientific and technical risk (science component)^{4,5}

- **Low [0]:** The Proposal is uncompetitive and has significant weaknesses or flaws, such as a poorly developed or costed plan, no demonstrated ability that the investigators can deliver on the proposed research, or a lack of novelty or value. Risks are poorly articulated or are unmitigated.
- **Good [1]:** An interesting proposal. Developing expertise amongst investigators. Some concerns about either the resource estimate or the ability of the researchers to deliver based on their understanding of the state of the art or their track record. The proposal may lack a compelling element. Risks are partly identified or inadequately mitigated. Risks outweigh benefits.

⁴ Assessed by DST Group reviewer

⁵ Assessed by expert reviewer

- **Excellent [2]:** High quality research and a strongly competitive proposal. Investigators have provided evidence of previous ability to deliver. Risks have been well articulated and mitigated although some residual risks might remain. The potential benefits outweigh potential risks.
- **Outstanding [3]:** Of the highest quality and at the forefront of research in the field. Well budgeted for the proposed statement of work. Sound track record of investigators. Risks have been adequately identified and mitigated.

4. Technical/Scientific Merits; Scientific and technical risk (collaboration/team component)^{4,5}

- **None [0]:** The team consists of an individual lead researcher (with or without students, research associates) or has inadequate expertise to lead to a successful outcome.
- **Low [1]:** The team consists of two lead researchers from the same institution (with or without students, research associates)
- **Medium [2]:** The team consists of two lead researchers from different institutions (with or without students, research associates) with fit for purpose expertise.
- **High [3]:** The team clearly has been assembled to encapsulate the best expertise from across the DIN.

5. Potential for impact and implementation pathway⁶

- **Low [0]:** The proposal demonstrates low impact and/or a poorly articulated implementation pathway.
- **Good [1]:** The proposal shows some impact and/or a reasonably well-developed implementation plan.
- **Excellent [2]:** The impact is likely to be significant and the implementation plan credible.
- **Outstanding [3]:** There is likely to be high impact if successful and the implementation plan is clear, credible and contains specific and detailed end use information.

6. Capacity and capability of the SME to commercialise project IP⁶

- **None [0]:** The applicant is an early stage start-up with little or no demonstrated ability to commercialise the IP.
- **Low [1]:** The SME has some presence as a supplier of products and/or services relevant to defence needs.
- **Medium [2]:** The SME has been operating successfully, has demonstrated market channels and products that deliver technology and/or services to other high technology companies in the defence sector and/or defence.
- **High [3]:** The SME has well-developed channels and routes to market, with existing products or services that deliver directly with innovation and capability needs in defence.

⁶ Assessed by DIN Steering Committee

ANNEXURE C: PROJECT ASSESSMENT

Grant Application:

Reviewer Name: _____

Reviewer's Institution: _____

CRITERION 1 – IDENTIFIED NEED IN DEFENCE *(for assessment by Defence Stakeholder or DST reviewer)*

Ranking (circle one): 0 1 2 3

Comments:

CRITERION 2 - NOVELTY AND POTENTIAL TO BECOME WORLD LEADING (ALL REVIEWERS)

Ranking (circle one): 0 1 2 3

Comments:

CRITERION 3 – SCIENTIFIC & TECHNICAL MERITS AND TECHNICAL RISK (PROJECT COMPONENT, ALL REVIEWERS)

Ranking (circle one): 0 1 2 3

Comments:

CRITERION 4 – SCIENTIFIC & TECHNICAL MERITS AND TECHNICAL RISK (TEAM COMPONENT, ALL REVIEWERS)

Ranking (circle one): 0 1 2 3

Comments:

ANNEXURE D: GUIDELINES TO MEMBER INSTITUTIONS FOR SELECTING REVIEWERS

Member Institutions should adhere to the following principles when nominating reviewers:

- Reviewers judge the technical merits of a proposal and should have the technical background and credentials to do so
- Reviewers should be committed to the review process within the schedule
- No individual should be asked to review an application to which they are a party
- No reviewer should be asked to review more than 2 applications in a given year
- Where an institution is unable to identify a suitable reviewer, the DIN should be notified to source an alternative
- DST Group reviewers should have the authority within DST Group to provide an informed opinion on Defence Relevance.