



National Institute for Forest Products Innovation

Gippsland Centre

Call for Project Proposals Briefing Document

Research and Development Projects - Round 1

Program Objective

The Gippsland Centre of the National Institute for Forest Products Innovation (NIFPI Gippsland Centre) aims to grow Australia's forest and forest products industry by exploring and facilitating innovation in the plantation forest products sector in areas such as forest management, timber processing, wood fibre recovery, value adding, advanced manufacturing and the bio-economy.

Innovation is defined as an idea that translates to a solution that industry adopts.

Outcome Statement

“To position industry for the future by pursuing greater productivity through collaboration and innovation to allow the local plantation growing and processing sector to be internationally competitive”.

NB: The outcome statement for the NIFPI Gippsland Centre is consistent with the Vision and Growth Objectives outlined in Transforming Australia's Forest Products Industry (Recommendations from the Forest Industry Advisory Council).

Round 1 Priorities

The NIFPI Gippsland Centre is calling for project proposals to conduct research and development projects in (but not specifically limited to) the following priority areas relating to the Gippsland's forest resources:

- i. improved resilience, productivity and utilisation of the forest resource
- ii. new timber products development and improvements to existing products
- iii. non-timber forest products and services
- iv. improved supply chain safety and efficiency
- v. social engagement, awareness & responsibility

Note for applicants:

Projects need not be limited to these priority areas if they can demonstrate innovation and potential benefit across a wide cross-section of the Gippsland plantation and forest products industry. There is an expectation that outcomes of projects will have national applicability where practicable and relevant.

Eligibility

Applicant eligibility

To be eligible for funding from the NIFPI Gippsland Centre, the applicant must:

- have an Australian Business Number
- have (or be able to partner with and/or acquire) the demonstrated operational capability and expertise to successfully deliver and operate the project
- not be subject to any legal disability, including bankruptcy or liquidation
- identify governance arrangements for project delivery where more than one entity is involved in project delivery
- have documented evidence of support from Green Triangle industry partners attached to proposals.

Note for applicants:

- a) *To enhance broader industry reach of project outcomes, joint applications are encouraged and may include registered Research Service Providers as appropriate.*

Project eligibility

To be eligible under the NIFPI Gippsland Centre, a project must demonstrate innovation and that its outcome(s) will benefit the Gippsland forest industry. There is an expectation that funding support from industry will be obtained for the project. Projects that can demonstrate nationally significant outcomes and leverage industry funding are encouraged and will be considered favourably.

Applications

Round 1 application for funding proposals opened on 18 March 2021 and close on Friday 14 May 2021. Email applications to funding.vic@nifpi.org.au

Late project applications

A late application will not be accepted unless the Gippsland Centre of the National Institute for Forest Products Innovation otherwise determines, in its absolute discretion, that it is appropriate for the late application to be considered.

Evaluation Criteria

Projects will be judged on the quantum and value of deliverables within the NIFPI Gippsland Centre region. Applicants must be able to complete funded activities within the nominated timeframe for the project, and within less than three years from project commencement.

If there are opportunities for collaboration or joint funding with the NIFPI Launceston and Mount Gambier Centres, these should be identified as part of the proposal. Note that it is not the intention of the NIFPI Gippsland Centre to duplicate ongoing or existing projects that are already being funded through other sources.

Eligible projects will be evaluated against the following five evaluation criteria, which have equal weighting. However, projects must meet all criteria to a minimum sufficient standard to be considered for funding.

1. Level of Innovation

The NIFPI Gippsland Centre specifically aims to encourage innovations throughout the forestry and forest products sector.

2. Economic Benefits

The contribution of the project towards industry growth and employment levels including potential to lead to improved returns from the Gippsland forest resource. Applications should preferably contain a cost benefit analysis of the project outcomes.

Note for applicants: This criterion will be used to assess the importance of the project to the broader forest industry and the Gippsland community rather than the importance of the project to the applicant's business. Applicants are encouraged to provide evidence of the widest range of industry support possible.

3. Financial Capacity

The applicant's financial capacity (or a financial strategy) to cover project costs not proposed to be funded through the NIFPI Gippsland Centre.

Note for applicants: The applicant must clearly demonstrate the level of investment to be made by the applicant, partners and industry in the project and how that investment is to be supported by the applicant. The investment may include both cash and in-kind contributions, and may identify funds contributed, or leveraged, from other sources including other funding programs.

4. Project Feasibility

The feasibility of the project including aspects such as:

- a) The degree to which the applicants proposed methodology and rationale is feasible and will achieve the project outcomes;
- b) Quality of the proposed project;
- c) Capacity of the applicant to deliver the proposal including: key personnel and project team skills, the collective suitability of team members (including any partners if applicable), technical, management and professional capabilities; degree, appropriateness and currency of experience; team composition, size and appropriateness;
- d) Pathway to industry adoption including: economic benefits and timeline for impact.

Note for applicants:

- a) *In addressing this criterion applicants must include a statement detailing any issues that will be critical to the success of this project and indicate the proposed approach and methodology to be used. A project outcome delivery program should also be provided.*
- b) *All team members proposed to be engaged in the project must be detailed in the application.*

5. Value for Money

- a) Proportion of project costs required to be provided through the NIFPI Gippsland Centre.
- b) Timeframe to achieving stated project outcomes.

Note for applicants:

- a) *Projects that require a lower proportion of their total project costs to be provided by the NIFPI Gippsland Centre will be rated higher.*
- b) *Projects that have shorter timeframes to achieving tangible, beneficial outcomes for the forest industry will be rated higher.*

Intellectual property (IP)

The Institute recognises that, given the level of public funding being provided to the program, project IP can be held as commercial in confidence only for the minimum amount of time required for it to be appropriately protected and made accessible to third parties. Background IP and Third Party IP will remain the property of the party providing it to the research project, unless otherwise agreed.

In managing IP, researchers will need to demonstrate that they have IP policies and procedures in place that are understood by staff and contractors.

IP arrangements will be agreed and detailed in the project funding agreement.

Queries regarding IP can be directed to Chris Lafferty, Manager, Research Development and Extension, FWPA, ph. (03) 9927 3220 or Chris.Lafferty@fwpa.com.au

NIFPI Gippsland Centre Offer

It is expected that there will be at least two funding rounds under the NIFPI Gippsland Centre. Importantly, this round (Round 1) is the only one offering the opportunity for funded activities of up to three years duration.

To ensure the best projects are rewarded under the NIFPI Gippsland Centre, a flexible approach will be maintained (within the constraints imposed by NIFPI Gippsland Centre cash flows) in determining both the total \$ quantum allocated in this round and the \$ quantum awarded to individual projects.

There is a total of \$3.8 million available under the entire NIFPI Gippsland Centre. Indicatively, the grants are expected to range from \$50,000 to a maximum of \$500,000 for any one project. However, applicants with projects considered to rank strongly against the evaluation criteria that exceed this amount should not be discouraged from applying.