



Department of
Energy and Economic
Diversification

Western Australia's Innovators of the Year Awards 2026 Applicant Guidelines



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1. Introduction

The Western Australian Government has committed \$40 million to the [New Industries and Innovation Fund \(NIIF\)](#), over four years (2025-29), to boost the development and acceleration of innovation-based technologies to leverage opportunities in local, national and international value chains.

Building jobs and new industries requires an industry-led approach to innovation and business competitiveness. The NIIF predecessor, the New Industries Fund, was initially established in 2017 to support a self-sustaining innovation environment that encourages collaboration, cross-sectoral capacity building and investment attraction. The focus being to optimise the State’s competitive advantages and ensure the growth of skills required for the jobs of the future.

The NIIF is administered by the Western Australian Department of Energy and Economic Diversification (the Department) and provides funding for initiatives, including the WA Innovators of the Year Awards, that foster an innovative and diversified Western Australia that is competitive, sustainable, and attractive to investors, industry and entrepreneurs.

The NIIF is the primary tool for the State to deliver against [WA Innovation Strategy: the place to innovate](#), is a key enabler of the State’s economic development framework [Diversify WA](#), and is delivered through the State’s [Made in WA Plan](#).

2. Western Australia’s Innovation Strategy

The goal of *Western Australia’s Innovation Strategy* is to inspire a new generation of talented innovators to solve challenges and encourage economic diversification. The mission is to elevate Western Australian innovation onto the global radar and propel the local ecosystem into a new phase of growth. The Strategy sets itself the following five 10-year goals to realise this vision, along with the associated *Innovation Action Plan*, for Western Australia to become a:

- World leader in research and inventiveness
- Location of choice for product and technology development, translation and testing
- Home to globally-focussed organisations that scale, creating new jobs
- Adopter of new technologies and a tech transfer haven, and
- Place where innovation is inclusive and purposeful, rewarded and respected.

To achieve these five (5) goals, the Government is taking action in seven (7) priority areas:

- **Skills, people and culture:** The Western Australian Government will invest in building additional talent across the State and attracting talent globally.
- **Research and tech transfer:** The Western Australian Government will set out a bold new science and research agenda, fit for the decade ahead, and seek to maximise technology transfer opportunities across the State’s growing economy.
- **Networks, precincts and shared facilities:** The Western Australian Government will accelerate efforts to enable innovation hubs, precincts and shared facilities to strengthen the innovation ecosystem across the State.
- **Access to capital:** The Western Australian Government will encourage the growth of an active local venture capital market for WA innovators and investigate other ways to ensure there is access to sufficient capital.
- **Procurement and supply chains:** The Western Australian Government is making procurement easier for WA startups and small businesses to provide access to major industry and Government contracts and will work with partners to open market access to global supply chains.
- **Diversity and inclusion:** The Western Australian Government will grow and foster the diversity and inclusiveness of the Western Australian economy, providing opportunities for greater participation in new and innovative economic activity by underrepresented groups.
- **Promotion and adoption:** The Western Australian Government will elevate efforts to promote and celebrate the outstanding scientific, technological and innovative capability of WA internationally and at home, supporting the adoption of new technologies and innovations across businesses and communities.

3. About the Awards

3.1. Overview

The aim of the Western Australia’s Innovators of the Year Awards (WAIOTY) is to acknowledge and reward exceptional innovators in Western Australia who have developed an outstanding innovative product, technology, or service, which is at the emerging innovation or growth phase of development. The innovation must demonstrate an economic, social, and/or environmental benefit to Western Australia.

Applications funded under WAIOTY will target market problems and create opportunities of importance to Western Australia. It is intended that any financial support awarded through the program will assist successful applicants to take their product, technology or service

from its emerging innovation or growth phase of development to commercialisation or scale up.

The WAIOTY program raises awareness of State-wide innovation as a driver of economic and technological advancement in Western Australia. It presents an opportunity for Award winners to maximise the commercialisation of their innovations by building links with investors, industry and researchers, and in doing so generate employment and expand the income and export potential of the State.

Celebration of finalists and winners presents the State Government with the opportunity to showcase Western Australia’s innovation at its best and inspire others to do likewise.

3.2. Objectives and Outcomes

In accordance with the NIIF, the objectives of WAIOTY program are to:

- Celebrate, promote and acknowledge the success of Western Australian innovators
- Encourage co-support from industry for promotional activities
- Activate and strengthen industry-government-research collaborations
- Engage communities throughout Western Australia’s regions to develop and commercialise innovations, and
- Promote job creation and economic diversification in Western Australia.

3.3. Purpose of this Guidelines

The Guidelines are to be used as a reference guide when applying for the program. Applicants should read these Guidelines before completing their WAIOTY Application.

4. Categories

4.1. Award Categories

The WAIOTY comprises of two categories – while more than one project can be submitted by an applicant, each project must be submitted for only one out of the two following categories:

1. Emerging Innovation Category
2. Growth Innovation Category

<p>EMERGING INNOVATION AWARD</p> <p>Winner receives \$60,000 (GST exempt) and the benefits of a PhD student</p> <p>Runner-up receives \$15,000 (GST exempt)</p>	<p>Awarded to a WA applicant who has developed an outstanding innovative product, technology, process or service that has not yet generated material commercial revenue from the innovation at the time of application submission; where material commercial revenue is defined as less than \$200,000 cumulative revenue* generated directly from the innovation.</p> <p>The applicant must also clearly demonstrate an economic, social and/or environmental benefit to Western Australia.</p>
<p>GROWTH INNOVATION AWARD</p> <p>Winner receives \$60,000 (GST exempt) and the benefits of a PhD student</p> <p>Runner-up receives \$15,000 (GST exempt)</p>	<p>Awarded to a WA applicant who has developed an outstanding innovative product, technology, process, or service that has generated material commercial revenue from the innovation at the time of application submission; defined as \$200,000 cumulative revenue* or more generated directly from the innovation.</p> <p>The applicant must also clearly demonstrate an economic, social and/or environmental benefit to Western Australia.</p>

Revenue' clarified:

“Revenue... generated from the innovation” means customer-paid revenue attributable to the innovation – for example sales/invoices/contracts/recurring subscriptions.

It excludes non-commercial funding such as grants or prizes unless it is directly tied to customer adoption/purchase of the innovation (i.e. market-based revenue).

4.2. Platinum Award Categories

In addition to entering a submission for *either* the above Emerging *OR* Growth category, applicants can also enter only one of the following Platinum Award categories:

To be considered for an award in this category you must clearly indicate, via a tick box on the online application form, which of the categories your submission applies to.

<p style="text-align: center;">Advanced Manufacturing Award</p> <p>Winner receives \$30,000 (GST exempt)</p>	<p>Awarded to a WA applicant who uses advanced technology and knowledge inputs as an integral part of their manufacturing process. This includes using research, knowledge, advanced processes and/or business models including additive manufacturing, automation, Industry 4.0 and/or 5.0 digital technologies and/or robotics to create efficient, higher value-add and more complex manufacturing goods across the manufacturing value chain.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Community Benefit and Wellbeing Award</p> <p>Winner receives \$30,000 (GST exempt)</p>	<p>Awarded to a WA applicant who has developed an outstanding innovative product, technology, process and/ or service that advances social and/or medical wellbeing in the community.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Energy Innovation Award</p> <p>Winner receives \$30,000 (GST exempt)</p>	<p>Awarded to a WA applicant who has developed an innovation that inspires and informs the future direction of oil, gas, and new energy production in WA, for export and for WA customers, with new technology and new business models.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Great for the State Award</p> <p>Winner receives an advertising, subscription and sponsorship pack to the value of \$15,000 plus \$15,000 (GST exempt)</p>	<p>Awarded to a WA innovator whose bold innovation showcases the State’s creativity and ingenuity, and offers clear benefits for WA’s economy, community and/or environment. The winning innovation will resonate with a broad audience, address state-specific challenges or leverage WA’s unique strengths and reinforce WA’s reputation as an innovative state.</p>

5. Eligibility

5.1. Applicant Eligibility

To be considered eligible any of the award categories, and to be included in the evaluation process, applicants must meet all the following criteria:

- a. Your business is registered in Western Australia and possesses a current Australian Business Number (ABN) and/or Australian Company Number (ACN)
- b. You are developing an innovative project in Western Australia
- c. Your business will continue to be based in Western Australia for the next three years
- d. Your business is an industry organisation, private sector firm, public sector agency, university, research institute, partnership, other organisation or a sole trader
- e. You have developed a product or service from original concept, can clearly define the market need or problem it solves and have some form of IP protection and/or rapid route to market
- f. You are the legal or authorised owner of the innovation
- g. You/your business have/has not previously received an award under the WAIOTY program for the same innovation
- h. You commit to attending as many WAIOTY Accelerator Workshops in August 2026 as possible (outlined in Section 7), and
- i. Your application is submitted via the Good Grants platform by the application closing time and date as outlined in Section 7 Key Dates.

To be eligible for the **Emerging Innovation Category**, the applicant must:

- j. Not yet have generated material commercial revenue from the innovation at the time of application submission; where material commercial revenue is defined as less than \$200,000 cumulative revenue generated directly from the innovation. (See 4.1 Program Categories, above)

To be eligible for the **Growth Innovation Category**, the applicant must:

- k. Have generated material commercial revenue from the innovation at the time of application submission; defined as \$200,000 cumulative revenue or more generated directly from the innovation. (See 4.1 Program Categories, above)

6. Evaluation Criteria

All eligible applicants will be assessed against the following criteria to determine the extent to which the application demonstrates innovation and impact in Western Australia.

For a competitive application, please address these four criteria as clearly as possible and use concrete evidence where possible. The amount of detail and supporting evidence you provide should allow assessors to understand the significance of the innovation and its outcomes. Each criterion is assessed out of 10, with the maximum score being 40.

1. Description of the Innovation

The applicant demonstrates how the innovation is novel, unique and innovative, and provides a competitive solution to a market need in Western Australia.

2. Commercial Potential

The innovation has commercial potential, and the applicant has a suitable business plan and marketing strategy. This includes whether the business model is self-sustaining and whether commercial growth directly advances a social or environmental purpose and delivers measurable benefit to people and planet.

3. Capability and Capacity

The applicant demonstrates they have the necessary business experience, resources, and expertise (e.g., technical, managerial), either internally or externally, to advance the innovation.

4. Level of Impact/Change

The impact that the State Government funds will have on:

- a. Advancing the innovation
- b. Generating job creation and economic diversification benefits for Western Australia
- c. Delivering tangible benefits for industry and end-users. This may include the potential to leverage additional investment into Western Australia
- d. Innovation has considered the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#) and if so, which ones.

6.1. Assessment Scoring

The independent Evaluation Panels will assess the above criteria from 1-10 as follows:

Score	Descriptor	Additional explanatory guidance
0-2	Poor	A few strengths but with major weaknesses
3-5	OK	OK overall, but with at least one moderate weakness
6-7	Good	Strong overall, but with a few relatively minor weaknesses
8-10	Outstanding	Extremely strong with negligible or no weaknesses of note

6.2. Evaluation Panels

The Department appoints independent Evaluation Panels to review applications and provide recommendations. One panel assesses the Emerging Innovation Category, another panel evaluates the Growth Innovation Category, and separate panels reviews the finalists’ presentations.

Each Platinum Award category will have a separate independent Evaluation Panel. To assist with their decision making, the panel may seek advice from individuals with expertise in the area/s under consideration. They may also request additional evidence from the applicant to support claims against the evaluation criteria.

The deliberations of the Evaluation Panel and all related information and material are strictly confidential, and subject to the requirements of the *Freedom of Information Act 1992* (‘FOI Act’).

The Evaluation Panels’ recommendations will be submitted to the Minister for Science and Innovation for approval. The Minister’s decisions are final.

7. Application Process

7.1. Key Dates

Item	Key Dates
Program OPENS for applications	Wednesday 22 April 2026 11.00am (AWST)
Program CLOSES for applications	Wednesday 27 May 2026 11.00am (AWST)
	(NOTE: Applications received after this time/date will not be considered)

Finalists Accelerator Program	August 2026 – details to be provided
Awards Ceremony	Monday 2 November 2026

7.2. Assessment Stages

WAIOTY application is a two-stage competitive process.

Application is via the WAIOTY grant platform Good Grants. Applications will be sought by public advertisement from **11:00am AWST on Wednesday 22 April 2026**.

The online application form must be received through the online WAIOTY Awards platform by the closing date and time of **11:00am AWST on Wednesday 27 May 2026**.

Although you are unable to add pictures or diagrams to the online application form, you are permitted to attach up to two images or diagrams (to a maximum of two single-sided pages each) to support your application as a separate attachment to the email. All descriptions pertaining to the pictures or diagrams must be included within the allowed text on the online application form.

Applications lodged after the due date and time will not be accepted under any circumstances. Please ensure that you allow adequate time to submit your application as the Department takes no responsibility for late submission of applications.

Applicants are to submit only the completed application form and permitted supporting documents. Do not submit any other supporting documentation as it will not be used in the evaluation of the application.

All applicants will be notified via email as to the outcome of their application.

Stage 1 – Written Applications

Following the submission of applications, Evaluation Panels for each category will evaluate eligible applications against the criteria and develop a shortlist of applications per category.

The leading applications will be announced as “Finalists” in August. The Department will notify all applicants by email (sent to the address provided on the Application Form).

Successful finalists are publicly announced by the Minister for Science and Innovation. As part of this and other media, the Department may disclose selected high-level details to the public, such as business suburb and postcode. In applying to the program, you agree to this promotion.

Stage 2 – Presentation to the Evaluation Panel

The finalists will be notified of their allocated presentation time and must ensure that they arrive on time as they will not be permitted extra time due to lateness or unpreparedness.

Finalists will be required to give a strictly timed 15-minute presentation to the second Evaluation Panel. The presentation will be followed by a 10-minute question and answer session.

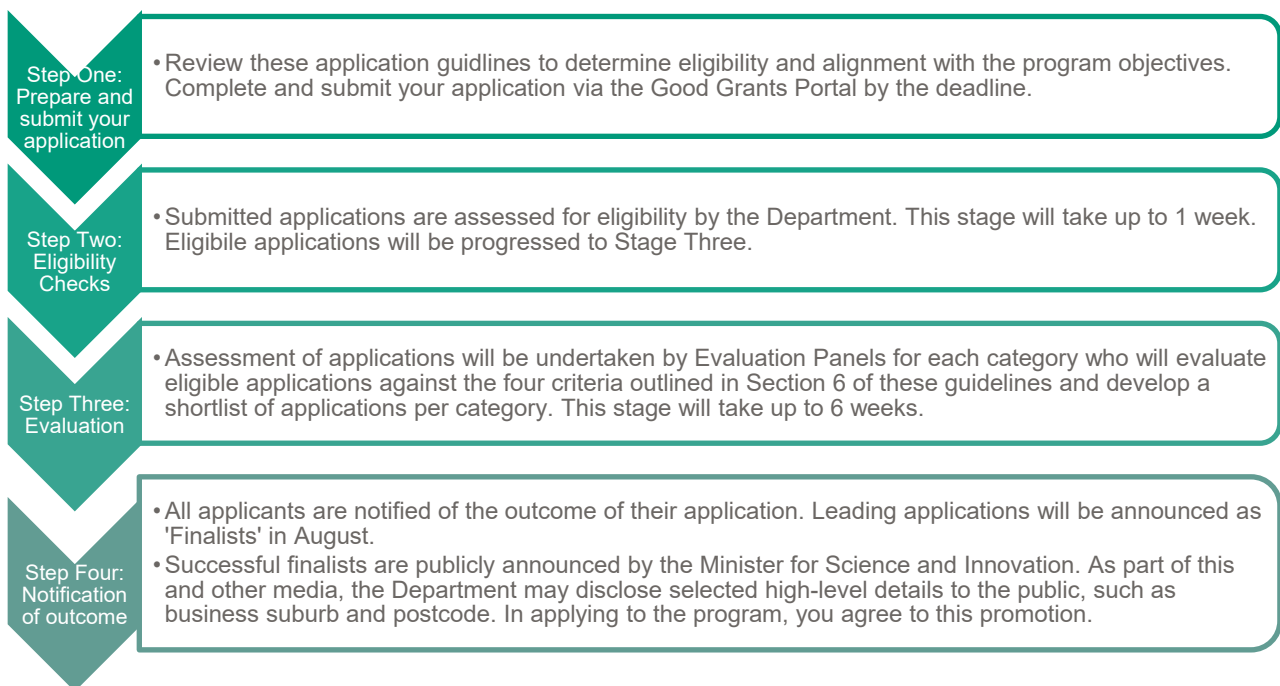
During this presentation, finalists will be required to elaborate on their innovation, its stage of development, its potential and the resources required for further development and commercialisation. Emphasis should be placed on presenting a realistic and engaging summary of the innovation and business opportunity.

If appropriate, finalists are permitted to bring a prototype of the innovation or visual aids to demonstrate the innovation to the evaluation panel. Following the presentations, the Evaluation Panel will reach consensus on the winners and runners-up of the two categories:

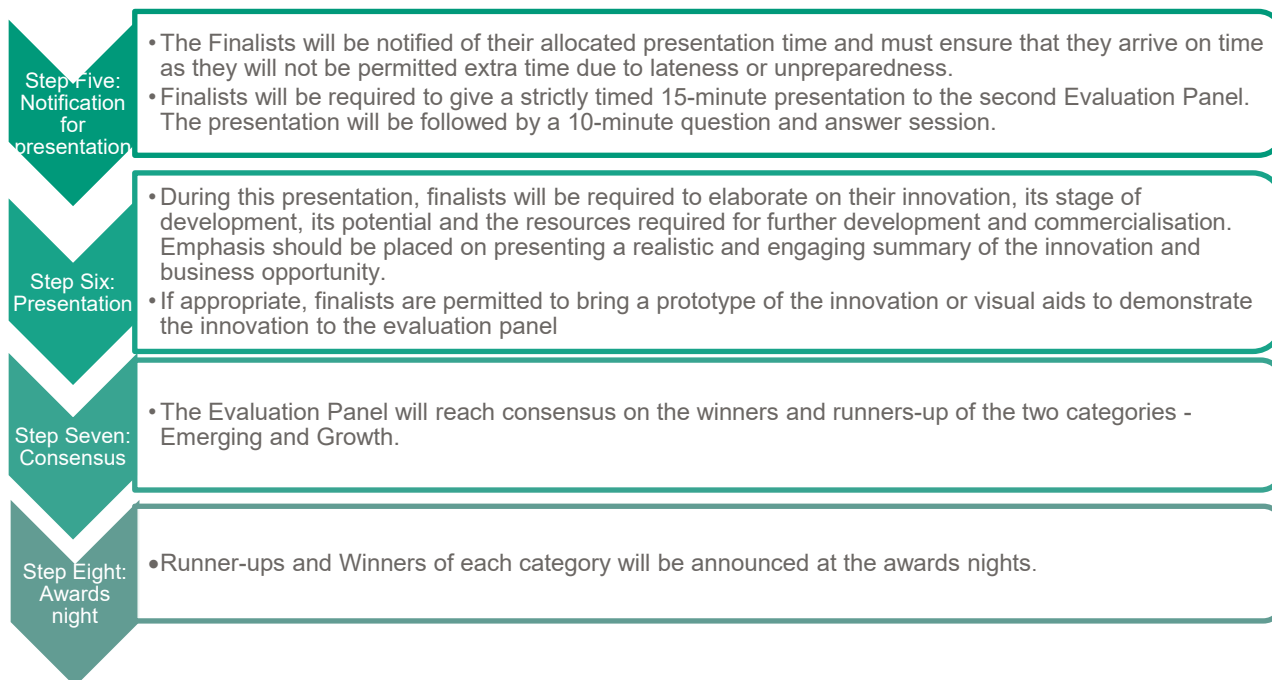
- Emerging Innovation Award winner
- Emerging Innovation Award runner-up
- Growth Innovation Award winner
- Growth Innovation Award runner-up

Visual Assessment Stages:

Stage One – Written Application



Stage Two – Presentation to the Evaluation Panel



7.3. Notification of Outcomes

Notification of outcomes throughout the Evaluation Process will be sent to the email address provided in the online application submission.

All decisions are final and made at the State’s absolute discretion.

7.4. Feedback for Unsuccessful Applicants

Unsuccessful applicants may request feedback via innovation@deed.wa.gov.au within two weeks from the date the Department sent the outcome notification. Due to the high volume of applications, individual meetings will not be held to discuss feedback.

7.5. Finalists Accelerator Program Sessions

The Finalists Accelerator Program will be administered through the Department. All sessions will be held throughout August 2026, and attendance is strongly recommended for all finalists. The sessions will be held at a variety of Perth locations, with alternative arrangements being made for regional finalists who cannot attend Perth venues.

Note: Seminars, dates and venues will be confirmed in the lead up to commencement of the accelerator sessions.

While attending these sessions is not obligatory, they do not form part of the assessment for the Awards program proper. The sessions are deemed as major benefits that support finalists reaching the highly competitive final stage and are provided at no cost.

The Finalists Accelerator Program includes:

- A full day workshop run by a qualified and experienced industry facilitator to provide finalists with the skills and techniques required for a compelling and professional pitch presentation
- A half-day wellness check workshop
- A workshop focussing on optimising social media and developing a digital strategy
- A seminar focussing on board governance models for entrepreneurs
- A one-hour specialised appointment on protecting your IP rights
- A half-day workshop on maximising impact through R&D sector collaboration
- Numerous networking events with industry experts

Finalists that attend at least 75% of the program will be provided with a Certificate of Completion.

7.6. Professional Photography and Video production

Finalists are required to be available for professional photography with their innovation, which will be used for promotion of the program and will take place during August and September.

Finalists will also receive, at no cost, a professionally produced and edited video of their innovation which will be filmed during August and September. Filming takes approximately three hours and times will be confirmed with each finalist.

The finished short videos will be screened at the Awards Ceremony and gifted to the finalists at the completion of the program. They will also be used to promote the WAIOTY program by the Department on its promotional platforms. Finalists will be able to use the video for the promotion and marketing of their innovation.

Note: Alternative arrangements can be made for regional finalists.

8. Conditions and Obligations

8.1. For successful Award Recipients:

1. Conditions of entry

The State Government requires that winners and finalists will, from time to time, assist in publicly promoting innovation as important contributors to Western Australia’s economic, social and environmental wellbeing. For this reason, winners and finalists will be required to:

- Participate in post-award programs and activities
- Provide post-event information pertaining to how program monies have been utilised
- Provide information against performance measures (including financial information) as provided to the participant by the Department.

It is expected that all recipients of NIIF funding will add their organisation to [Dealroom](#), under the ‘Startups & Scaleups’ or as appropriate. On the site you can add your organisation and funding information, which then becomes visible to the WA, and broader, innovation ecosystems.

2. Cyber safety responsibility

Recipients of funding are expected to keep their funded projects ‘cyber-safe’. The onus is on the recipient to ensure all customer and other data is kept secure. The Department will not be held responsible for the cyber security, or otherwise, of funded projects.

3. Evaluation, and reporting

Successful applicants will be required to cooperate with an evaluation of the WAIOTY-funded product, technology or service that is undertaken during and/or after completion of the investment.

After completion, recipients are required to participate in surveys conducted up to three years after the funding ceases. Surveys generally take 10 minutes to complete and seek feedback on inputs, activities, results, usage and impacts related to the WAIOTY.

Participants in the WAIOTY program agree to provide to the Department information regarding their WAIOTY project, technology or service as reasonably requested. This information may be used for reporting and accountability purposes and may also be used to inform policy development, investment decisions and design and delivery of future initiatives.

4. Funding availability

The provision of financial support under this WAIOTY Award is at the absolute discretion of the State Government and is subject to the availability of funds.

Funding is available to successful applicants for up to 12 months after receiving the Award letter of congratulations.

5. Claiming prize money

Prize payments to successful applicants are via electronic funds transfer (EFT). Prize winners will be required to submit, as soon as practicable after receiving the award, a detailed plan of the proposed expenditure of their prize monies to demonstrate the progress of their innovation. The Department will assess and provide approval for the proposed expenditure.

6. Eligible Expenditure

Prize money is to be used, in an appropriate and Department-approved manner, to advance the innovation for which the applicant won an award.

Prize money cannot be spent on general business/operational/business-planning activities that are usual requirements of a business. This includes, but is not limited to, training courses, payment of existing salaries, hardware or software purchases, planning, marketing or website development.

7. GST excluded

The Department does not regard the prize as payment for a supply. Thus, the Department does not increase the Award amount to include GST.

8. Tax information for Applicants

In some instances, the Australian Taxation Office views prize money as assessable income. In the event of receiving prize money discuss any potential taxation implications with a financial advisor, or the Australian Taxation Office (13 28 61).

9. Freedom of Information, Confidentiality and Disclosure of Information

Applicants must keep confidential any dealings with the Department about their application, including any financial assistance offered, but may make disclosures to advisors who are under an obligation of confidence or if required by law.

The State, and the Department, reserve the right to publicly disclose the names of applicants, general information about funding and assistance provided, and details about the anticipated economic outcomes and benefits to the State. The State and the Department may also disclose confidential information of, or provided by, the applicant:

- a. If required to be disclosed by law
- b. To its advisors, consultants and contractors, and/or
- c. To any government agency.

Applicants are informed that the Department is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 1992 (WA) (‘FOI Act’), which provides a general right of access to records held by State agencies and local governments. Under the FOI Act, applicants should be aware that information pertaining to the receipt of State Government funding may be tabled in the Western Australian Parliament. This information could include the names of recipients, the amount of funding the name of the project/activity and, possibly, a brief description thereof. This could result in requests for more detail to be released publicly.

Applicants should clearly identify all commercial-in-confidence material, noting that recipient name, funding amount, total cost, and a brief recipient project description may be published for all successful applicants.

Successful applicants should be aware that their organisation’s name, investment name and amount of funding approved will appear on the Department’s website and potentially in media releases.

The Department reserves the right to discuss an application with a third party if it is deemed necessary to assist in assessing the application.

State agencies are subject to the legislative and administrative accountability and transparency requirements of the State, including disclosures to the Western Australian Parliament and its Committees. As such, applicants should be aware that disclosure of information outside of State agencies may occur if the information is required or is authorised to be disclosed by law.

10. Conflict of Interest

Applicants and evaluation panel members are required to disclose any information that might be relevant to an actual or potential conflict of interest. This will exclude them from judging that application as well as providing input into the judging process.

11. Media and promotions

All media enquiries or public announcements relating to the Award are coordinated and managed by the Department’s media team. Where possible, all media and communications about investments will be undertaken jointly with successful applicants. Recipients must:

- Seek and obtain the Department's approval before making public statements, or contacting or responding to the media, regarding successful or unsuccessful WAIOTY applications;
- Provide the Department with at least 10 business days’ notice of any proposed media event; and

- Provide any proposed media or public statement to the Department for approval prior to its release.

12. Code of Conduct

Successful applicants for the Award will comply with all relevant laws and ensure the services they provide and/or participate in proactively address, manage and where possible avoid any unwelcome behaviours that offends, humiliates or intimidates a person. Unwelcome behaviour can include physical, verbal or visual conduct (e.g. in the form of posters, email or SMS messages). Successful applicants are expected to treat all people with respect and courtesy. The Department reserves the right, in its absolute discretion, to discontinue the provision funding or not provide funding to any successful applicant that acts contrary to the code of conduct.

9. Disclaimers

The provision of financial assistance under the Western Australian Government’s New Industries and Innovation Fund is at the absolute discretion of the Department. Nothing in the application process, the selection process or any associated documentation shall give rise to any:

- a. Legal relations or any process or other contract between the Minister or the Western Australian government on the one hand and the applicant on the other;
or
- b. Legitimate expectations on the part of the applicant.