BACKGROUND

Announced in the opening for the Cooperative Research Centres Projects (CRC-P) Round 7, the Australian Government committed $20 million in priority funding to support CRC Projects with a specific focus on critical minerals.

The priority funding will help strengthen the link between industries related to the extraction, processing and refining of critical minerals and research organisations engaged in critical mineral research. The aim is to develop technologies and processes that increase Australia’s production of critical minerals and/or the value that Australia captures from this production.

Developing Australia’s critical minerals capability through CRC-Ps will support the Australian Government’s national critical minerals strategy by enabling SMEs to develop and leverage new technologies, products, processes and services, ensuring that Australia is well positioned to take advantage of new market opportunities.

WHAT IS A CRC PROJECT (CRC-P)?

CRC-Ps are short-term, industry-identified and industry-led collaborative research projects to develop a product, service or process that will solve problems for industry and deliver tangible outcomes.

CRC-P funding is available for a duration of up to three years and CRC-Ps may request a maximum of $3 million of Commonwealth funding. The minimum grant amount is $100,000.

Each CRC-P must include and maintain amongst its project partners at least:

- two industry entities including at least one SME; and
- one research organisation.

All partners must contribute resources to the CRC-P. The total of these resources, including cash and in-kind, must at least match the amount of funding sought from the Commonwealth over the funding period.

CRITICAL MINERALS CRC PROJECTS

Critical minerals are a group of minerals considered essential for a nation’s economic and strategic security and which are vulnerable to disruptions in supply. They are necessary in manufacturing high-tech and high-value products including electric vehicles, battery storage, electronics, mobile devices, defence technologies and other industrial applications. Australia has a wealth of critical minerals, opening up an exciting new future for our resources sector.
Proposals that focus specifically on critical minerals are encouraged. Proposals that include broader research will require a strong case that the research is important to improve Australia's critical mineral capabilities.

Applicants should describe how the proposal will help the Australian resources sector to increase Australia's critical mineral capabilities. Proposals for research should demonstrate how they improve the understanding of critical mineral deposits, processing techniques and production costs.

Proposals should include identification of the mineral(s) that the project will address and why the mineral(s) are considered critical. Consideration will be given to a number of factors including economic importance, supply risks and market dynamics (e.g. inclusion on a particular national list).

Applicants should describe how their critical mineral project will be utilised taking into account demand from industry, government and researchers.

Applicants should also identify how the project will build human capability in critical mineral research and the resources industry.

**HOW WILL THE CRITICAL MINERALS FUNDING BE ALLOCATED?**

Applications for critical minerals focussed projects may be submitted in any CRC-P selection round but the priority funding is expected to be fully allocated as part of the expected CRC-P selection rounds in 2019.

Applications must address the same merit criteria and are subject to the same eligibility and compliance requirements as all other CRC-Ps, as specified in the relevant CRC Projects Grant Opportunity Guidelines. All applications will be assessed in a competitive, merit based selection process against all other applications in the selection round.

Applicants must clearly demonstrate their alignment with the critical minerals priority and should clearly describe the project in the context of improving Australia's critical minerals capability to support business and industry.

The number of applications supported will depend on the number of applications received, the relative merits of the applications, the amount of funding requested and available funding.

Funding for critical minerals focused projects is not restricted to the priority funding and applications may also be supported through existing CRC Program funds.