

Facilitating timely connection of critical customer projects

Guideline

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1. Overview of the critical projects framework

1.1 Purpose of this document

This guideline sets out Western Power’s approach to ensuring that critical projects are connected in a timely matter.

This guideline also supports applicants to Western Power’s major customer connection process in understanding their eligibility and requirements to be considered a critical project by:

- articulating the scope and objectives of the critical projects framework applying to major customer connections to the South West Interconnected System (SWIS)
- defining the criteria, Western Power assessment process, customer requirements, and
- communicating roles and responsibilities of both customers and Western Power for critical projects throughout the major customer connection process.

The critical projects framework ensures that Western Australia’s critical projects can proceed, in line with the State’s commitment to achieving net zero emissions and keeping pace with the unprecedented uplift in demand for major customer network connections.

1.2 Context to this approach

The intent of the critical project criteria is to select out projects which are not demonstrating sufficient probability to progress, ensuring that the ‘critical project’ list does not become clogged with inactive or delayed projects.

Western Australia’s pathway to achieving net zero emissions is well underway. Commitments from the Government to close coal-fired power generation, industry rapidly pushing ahead with decarbonisation, and the renewable energy market responding – are driving an uplift in demand for major customer connections alongside extensive planning to invest in and expand the SWIS’s transmission network. The State Government’s [SWIS Demand Assessment](#) forecasts that the SWIS may require almost ten times the current amount of generation and storage capacity and over 4,000 km of new transmission lines by 2042.

Since 2020, Western Power has experienced a near three-fold uplift in the volume of enquiries for major customer connections – with now more than 228 active projects, and 110 of those being in the post-enquiry stage, currently in the pipeline. In FY23, Western Power received over 95 enquiries. This upward trend is forecast to continue over the coming years.

To accommodate this uplift in demand and ensure that major customers can access the network in a timely and efficient manner, Western Power is shifting from the current business-as-usual approach and improving its major customer connection process. One component within the suite of improvements is to ensure that projects which are both *critical to the State* achieving its net zero commitments and keeping the grid secure, as well as *highly probable to proceed*, can be given the right of way through the major customer connection process.

To facilitate this change, Western Power has developed the critical projects framework. This approach is in line with what other jurisdictions are doing globally, to ensure that the pathway to net zero can be met.

1.3 Objectives

The objectives of the critical projects framework are as follows:

Objective	Definition
1. <i>Equitable</i>	Framework assesses each customer on their respective merits – enabling clear and repeatable outcomes and experiences, whilst balancing state interests.
2. <i>Transparent</i>	Framework design that maximises objectivity in criteria, weightings, and processes in so far as reasonable and ensures transparent rationale and outcomes for customers, industry, and regulators.
3. <i>Efficient</i>	Framework must maximise customer, industry & Western Power efficiency – considering time and effort, while emphasising simplicity and allowing the flexibility required to deal with future changes.
4. <i>Maximises benefit</i>	Framework focuses on maximising benefit to the community, economy, and grid, and delivering and optimising benefits to the grid and strategic importance and systemic impact.

1.4 What the framework is

The critical projects framework defines what to consider, when to utilise and how to categorise major customer projects as ‘critical’ or ‘non-critical’ based on how critical a project is to strategic importance and systemic impact, the readiness of the project to proceed, and the customer project evidence provided. The categorisation of a project then determines how a project is treated through the major customer connection process.

Importantly, ‘critical’ status is applied to a customer project, and not a customer. Customers cannot be categorised, meaning one customer may have multiple projects, with one assessed as critical and others not.

1.5 Who the framework applies to

The critical projects framework applies to prospective and current customer projects within the SWIS, that are seeking to connect to Western Power’s network in the following scenarios:

- generator projects, which apply for connections in excess of 10 MVA
- all transmission load connections and
- any complex distribution projects with significant transmission overlap.

Western Power considers these to be ‘major customer projects’.

The critical projects framework does not apply to any customers or projects seeking to connect to Western Power’s network which fall outside these parameters.

The framework applies to the major customer connection process. More information on the overall connection process can be found online under [Transmission Loads and Large Generators](#).

1.6 Key definitions

Connection process	The major customer connection process. The process by which major customer projects are connected to the SWIS. The process spans from initial enquiry to execution and operations.
Critical project	A customer project that meets the critical project criteria, particularly requirements of critical need for strategic importance and systemic impact and is highly probable to proceed.
Right of way	The treatment that customer projects classified as a ‘critical project’ will receive through the major customer connection process – meaning that Western Power will allocate resources to critical projects first, which is expected to result in faster connection times. It is noted that this may mean that critical projects are connected before other projects that entered the queue at an earlier point in time.
Framework	Refers to the overall approach to identifying and providing right of way for critical projects, including the external guidelines and internal work procedures.
Major customer projects	Generator projects that apply for connections in excess of 10 MVA; all transmission load connections; and any complex distribution projects with significant transmission overlap.

1.7 Biennial review and evaluation

Western Power welcomes your feedback on the approach to categorising critical projects. Please issue any feedback in writing to the email listed below under key contacts.

Western Power will review and evaluate this guideline biennially and publish updates accordingly. If updates are required, this will include a summary of any written feedback provided throughout the year. We will consult our key stakeholders for feedback if substantive changes are required.

1.8 Relevant legislation, policy and other documents

Western Power manages its connection application process in accordance with the relevant regulatory instruments and policy – including the [Electricity Networks Access Code 2004](#) and the [Applications and Queuing Policy 2023](#).

1.9 Key contacts

For any queries related to the critical project framework, please contact Western Power at critical.projects@westernpower.com.au.

2. The critical projects framework summary

What it is The critical projects framework defines how a major customer project may be assessed and considered as a 'critical project'. The framework includes what to consider, when it applies, and the assessment's details, including the critical project criteria (strategic importance, systemic impact, and probability), and customer evidence. The categorisation of a project then determines how a project is treated through the major customer connection process.

Critical project status only applies to major customer projects – not customers. It does not apply to Western Power network projects.

Who it applies to The critical projects framework applies to prospective and current customers, within the SWIS, who are seeking to connect to Western Power's network, in the following scenarios:

- generator projects which apply for connections in excess of 10 MVA;
- all transmission load connections; and
- any complex distribution projects with significant transmission overlap.

Western Power considers these customers to be 'major customer project'.

What categorisation considers To categorise whether a major customer project is critical or not, Western Power assesses the customer projects at each stage (1. Enquiry to 4. Planning) of the major customer connection process for how critical the project is to strategic importance and systemic impact, the readiness of the project to proceed, and the customer project evidence provided.

For further details on what the criteria are for 'strategic importance and systemic impact' and 'project probability' see section 3.1.

How categorisation is conducted Customers are advised of what information is required from them at each stage. The customer then demonstrates strategic importance and systemic impact and probability by providing the required information to Western Power. Western Power then assesses the customer's project against each criterion and advises the customer of the outcome.

For more information on the stages and requirements, see section 4. The critical projects categorisation process.

What customers need to do Western Power assesses each major customer project and informs the customer of outcomes, at each stage of the major customer connection process. Customers will not be required to self- or pre-assess their expected project criticality status.

It is helpful for customers to understand what is expected of them, particularly in terms of project probability and the associated documents they are required to provide as evidence.

For more information on customer requirements, see section 4.3 What Western Power and the customer have to do during the process.

When categorisation occurs Critical projects are assessed at each stage within the connection process, up to access offer.

Projects are categorised during each of the first four stages in the connection process: 1. Enquiry, 2. Initiation, 3. Scoping and 4. Planning. Specific triggers for categorisation are defined in section 4. Overview of the process.

The critical projects framework does not apply to the connection process stages 5. Execution and 6. Operations.

Critical status at one stage, does not guarantee critical status for future stages, largely because project probability can change overtime.

How critical projects are treated

Projects classified as critical are given right of way through the connection process with access to a pool of Western Power resources, to progress activities and steps quicker.

On the customer side, critical projects must remain active to ensure that critical status is maintained.

For information on what critical project status means, see Section 5. What categorisation assessment means for projects.

What does it mean for projects not assessed as critical

If a project is not classified as critical, it will continue to move through the connection process in line with the customer's progress against milestones, and Western Power's Applications and Queuing Policy. However, the project will not receive right of way treatment.

3. The critical projects categorisation criteria

3.1 The criteria that projects need to meet

Projects must meet both criticality and strategic importance to the state – referred to as ‘strategic importance and systemic impact,’ and probability to connect – referred to as ‘project probability’ to be considered a critical project.

Strategic importance and systemic impact criteria

‘Strategic importance and systemic impact’ criteria include:

1.1 Impact on network stability, reliability and system security – such as alignment with essential system stability requirements, as published in system planning studies and the Australian Energy Market Operator’s electricity statement of opportunities for the wholesale electricity market.

1.2 Alignment to State-wide strategic plans and policy – such as Western Power’s network opportunities map, the transmission system plan, the whole of system plan and SWIS Demand Assessment.

1.3 Alignment to other key related stakeholder policies and directives – such as projects of state significance (as per the Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science & Industry (JTSI) requirements).

The intent of the ‘strategic importance and systemic impact’ criteria is to identify and elevate projects which most contribute positively to the SWIS and align best with governmental and external stakeholder policy and directives.

For further details on ‘strategic importance and systemic impact’ criteria – including detailed definitions and key documents to consider, see below Appendix. This set list is available to support customers in understanding what is strategically critical to the strategic importance and systemic impact in relation to the critical projects framework.

Table 1. Detailed description - Strategic importance and systemic impact criteria

Criteria	Criteria description	Key project considerations in assessment	Key documents to consider during assessment	Customer information requirements
1.1 Network stability, reliability & system security	<i>Project's expected impact on immediate-term and medium- to long-term network stability, reliability and system security</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Size of asset • Location of asset • Type of asset (e.g., load, generation, storage) • Required in Service (RIS) date • Existing network challenges (e.g., SAIDI / SAIFI) • Other in train / progress projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Western Power Transmission System Plan (TSP)/ Network Opportunity Map (NOM) • Focusing on elements that refer to stability, reliability and security • Western Power transmission network reliability / stability standards / plans • AEMO NCESS / Reserve Capacity / Supplementary Reserve Capacity • AEMO Electricity Statement of Opportunities (ESOO) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location (geographic position) • Size of asset (MW) • Type of asset • RIS date

Criteria	Criteria description	Key project considerations in assessment	Key documents to consider during assessment	Customer information requirements
1.2 Plans / strategy / policy alignment	<i>Project's alignment to Western Power and external stakeholder plans / strategies / policies</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Size of asset • Location of asset • Type of asset (e.g., load, generation, storage) • Required in Service (RIS) date • Clear alignment state policies / strategies. 	<p>Internal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Western Power corporate strategy • Western Power Transmission System Plan (TSP)/ Network Opportunity Map (NOM) <p>External</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SWISDA / Whole of System Plan (WoSP) • WA Renewable Hydrogen Strategy & Roadmap • Sectoral Emissions Reduction Strategies (estimate completion end of 2023) • Western Australian Climate Policy • Strategies of other relevant departments / organisations - DevWA, JTSI, Treasury, Water and Environment, Planning, Land and Heritage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location (geographic position) • Size of asset (MW) • Type of asset • RIS date
1.3 Key external stakeholder directive alignment	<i>Project's alignment to external stakeholder directives and direction</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Size of asset • Location of asset • Type of asset (e.g., load, generation, storage) • Required in Service (RIS) date • Clear alignment to directives (both of other departments and to Western Power directly) / other State categorisation frameworks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal announcements on Government websites / Documented Ministerial directive / position statements • Formal position / directive from EPWA / ERA / AEMO • External prioritisation frameworks (JTSI state significance framework, DWER Green Energy Approvals Initiative) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location (geographic position) • Size of asset (MW) • Type of asset • RIS date

Project probability criteria

'Project probability' will be assessed against the following:

2.1 Customer readiness – considering the customer's established procurement commitments, organisational commitment and readiness, connection application is continually active and moving forward, access to financial resources, and access to technical and specialist resources.

2.2 Customer ability – considering the customer's previous experience in delivering similar projects, land rights secured for customer facility and connection line route, key environmental and planning approvals obtained or evidence of realistic pathway to obtain them and demonstrated social performance activities and community acceptance.

2.3 *Connection ability* – considering the customer project’s alignment to standardised Western Power designs, complexity of connection request and links to future plans which have not yet been developed / implemented i.e., SWISDA build

The intent of the ‘project probability’ criteria is to select out projects which are not demonstrating sufficient probability to progress, ensuring that the ‘critical project’ list does not become clogged with inactive or delayed projects.

Assessment of the ‘project probability’ criteria is largely driven by the evidence a customer can provide to Western Power. Where the customer does not or is unable to provide evidence of ‘project probability’ within the agreed timeframe at the time of assessment, the project will continue through the relevant connection process stage. However, the project is unable to receive ‘critical’ status at that time.

For further details on ‘project probability’ criteria – including detailed definitions and key documents to consider, see below.

Table 2. Detailed description - project probability criteria

Criteria	Sub-criteria	Criteria description
2.1 Customer readiness	2.1.1 Procurement	<i>Ability to access materials and contracts towards facility / asset construction</i>
	2.1.2 Organisational readiness & financial resources	<i>Demonstration of organisational acceptance and desire to progress project through Board endorsement, and access to financial resources for construction</i>
	2.1.3 Technical & specialist resources	<i>Ability to access to technical resources to progress project through major customer connection process (e.g., engineering / design capability)</i>
2.2 Customer ability	2.2.1 Land access: customer facility	<i>Ability to demonstrate land rights secured for customer facility and key environmental and planning approvals obtained, or evidence of realistic pathway to obtain them</i>
	2.2.2 Land Access: line route	<i>Ability to demonstrate land rights secured for line route and key environmental and planning approvals obtained, or evidence of realistic pathway to obtain them</i>
	2.2.3 Social performance	<i>Ability to demonstrate community social acceptance / endorsement for project</i>
	2.2.4 Previous relevant experience	<i>Demonstrable experience in delivering similar projects</i>
2.3 Connection ability	2.3.1 WP standards alignment	<i>Alignment of project design to Western Power standardised designs</i>
	2.3.2 Connection complexity	<i>Complexity of customer proposed connection - including the requirement to augment network to connect</i>
	2.3.3 Reliance on existing / current vs future network	<i>Links / alignment of project to SWISDA or other plans not ready to connect</i>

3.2 How projects are scored against criteria

When a project is to be categorised, Western Power assesses the project against each criterion on a scale of 1-5, where broadly:

- 1 represents no information was provided, insufficient proof provided, or project does not contribute at all / contributes negatively to critical projects criteria
- 2 represents insufficient, limited information or very limited contribution to critical projects criteria
- 3 represents moderate information provided and moderate contribution to critical projects criteria
- 4 represents substantial information provided and is mostly aligned with critical projects criteria
- 5 represents significant information provided, or project completely aligns and substantially contributes to critical projects criteria.

The scores are compiled and considered holistically by Western Power to determine if a project has attained 'critical' status or not. Western Power reviews and validates categorisation assessments, before the outcome is communicated with customers.

A note on project scoring:

- A project must score above a threshold across both strategic importance and systemic impact and probability to be considered a critical project.
- All projects that score above a threshold score in both strategic importance and systemic impact and probability will be categorised as 'critical' – that is, there is no cap on the number of projects that can be classified as 'critical'.
- For the purpose of assessment, specific criteria are not weighted as more important than others. 'Strategic importance and systemic impact' and 'project probability' are considered equally important.
- Reflecting the variance in the type of suitable materials a company may have available (and different pathways that projects can take to successful completion), the information requirements are not a specified checklist.
- Western Power strongly encourages customers to consider the information requirements carefully, along with the maturity of their project, to understand what is required for a project to achieve critical project status.

4. The critical projects categorisation process

4.1 Overview of the process

The major customer connection process stems from the initial customer enquiry through to operations of the facility.

The critical projects framework will be applied to the customer's project from the start of stage 1. Enquiry, through to the end of stage 4. Planning. Within each of these stages, a project will be assessed and categorised.

Project categorisation occurs when a project enters the connection process at 1. Enquiry or passes through a relevant stage gate. Categorisation is conducted at the start of each stage, determining the status of the project as critical or non-critical, for that stage.

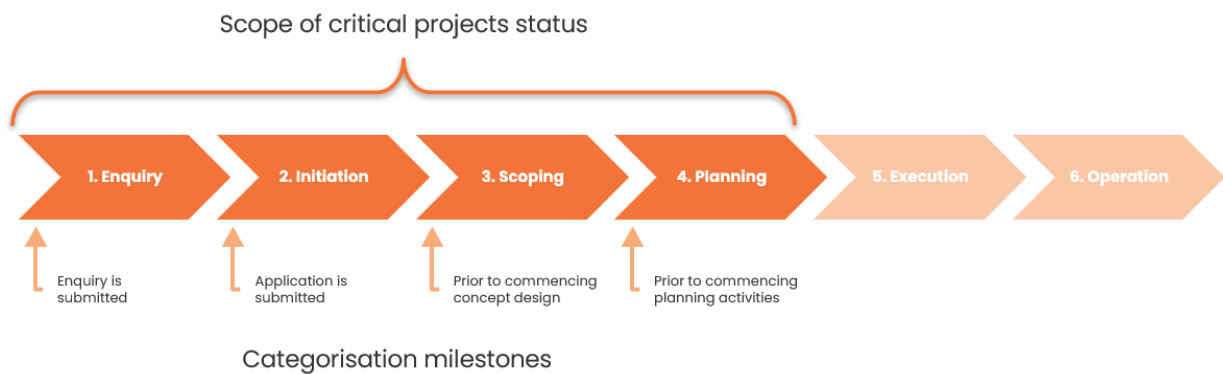


Figure 1. Western Power's major customer connection process and the critical projects framework

A project must demonstrate criticality at each stage, this means that:

- It may be assessed as critical at 1. Enquiry and meet the criteria for each subsequent stage
- It may not be critical at 1. Enquiry, but then meet the probability criteria at future stages
- It may meet the criteria at 1. Enquiry, then drop back in probability, should the project's progress slow down (and the customer does not have the required information available)
- It may not meet the criteria at any stage.

The process milestones at which categorisation assessment occurs are:

1. Enquiry – submission of enquiry
2. Initiation – submission of application
3. Scoping – prior to commencing concept design
4. Planning – completion of scoping phase, prior to commencement of planning activities

Assessment at each stage through the major customer connection process is in recognition that a project's probability can change as it moves through the connection process.

A note on assessment:

- Where a customer does not submit an enquiry, and instead skips immediately to application – as is allowed under the connection process – the first categorisation assessment will occur at stage 2. Initiation.
- Projects will not be reassessed at any other time apart from the scenarios identified above – such as in the middle of a stage. This is to minimise disruption to both customer and Western Power.
- A customer project cannot lose its critical status due to the progress of other projects. There is no cap on the number of projects that can be assessed as critical, however there is naturally a limitation on the number of projects likely to be assessed as critical to strategic importance and systemic impact.

4.2 Critical projects assessment process summary

At each stage, the customer and Western Power will engage to determine a project’s status.

Table 3. Critical project assessment process

	Steps	Owner	Activities	Evidence for categorisation*
Enquiry stage	1.1 Supply evidence for categorisation	Customer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer provides all relevant documentation necessary for current stage of assessment (see evidence required for categorisation column) – with Access Solutions consultants supporting when necessary • All information submitted, with enquiry submission • Note: for new projects where the customer opts to bypass enquiry and <u>submit an application</u> directly to Western Power, proceed to step 2 	E1 to E5 to be supplied at this stage
	1.2 Conduct internal categorisation assessment	Western Power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enquiry stage project categorisation now conducted with supplied information • Notify customer of project categorisation outcome and requirements of customer to retain status / not go dormant • Inform customer of categorisation requirements for initiation next stage – including customer evidence and deadline • Established dedicated critical customer project team and Access Consultant 	N/A
Initiation stage	2.1 Supply evidence for categorisation	Customer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer provides all relevant documentation necessary for current stage of assessment (see evidence required for categorisation column) – with Access Solutions consultants supporting when necessary • All information submitted, with application submission 	I1 to I7 to be provided at this stage, and E5 if not previously provided
	2.2 Conduct internal categorisation assessment	Western Power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiation stage project categorisation conducted with supplied information • Customer notified of project categorisation outcome and requirements of customer to retain status / not go dormant • Customer informed of categorisation requirements for scoping stage – including customer evidence and deadline • Established dedicated critical customer project team and Access Consultant 	N/A
Scoping phase	3.1 Supply evidence for categorisation	Customer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer provides all relevant documentation necessary for current stage of assessment (see evidence required for categorisation column) – with Access Solutions consultants supporting when necessary • All information submitted, within 10 business days of request, prior to commencing concept design activities 	S1 to S7 to be provided at this stage, and E5, I6 and I7 if not previously provided
	3.2 Conduct internal categorisation assessment	Western Power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scoping stage project categorisation now conducted with supplied information • Customer notified of project categorisation outcome and requirements of customer to retain status / not go dormant • Customer informed of categorisation requirements for planning stage – including customer evidence and deadline • Established dedicated critical customer project team and Access Consultant 	N/A
Planning phase	4.1 Supply evidence for categorisation	Customer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer provides all relevant documentation necessary for current stage of assessment (see evidence required for categorisation column) – with Access Solutions consultants supporting when necessary • All information submitted, within 10 business days of request, following completion of the scoping phase 	P1 to P5 to be provided at this stage, and E5, I6, I7 and S7 if not previously provided
	4.2 Conduct internal categorisation assessment	Western Power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning stage project categorisation now conducted with supplied information • Customer notified of project categorisation outcome and requirements of customer to retain status / not go dormant • Established dedicated critical customer project team and Access Consultant 	N/A

4.3 What Western Power and the customer have to do during the process

Western Power requirements

Western Power’s role in managing the critical projects framework is fourfold:

- (i) To publish and maintain a current guideline to support customers in understanding the information required for their project to be eligible for ‘critical’ status.
- (ii) To assess projects for critical project status at each relevant customer connection process stage, starting from 1. Enquiry, 2. Initiation, 3. Scoping, through to 4. Planning.

- (iii) To commit to and deliver 'critical' projects, along with removing any projects from the right of way that cease to meet the criteria (see section 4.5).
- (iv) To provide transparent and timely communications and reporting to customers, industry and government, as and when required, whilst maintaining required customer confidentiality (see section 5.4 Working together).

Customer requirements

The customer's role in the context of the critical projects framework is:

- (i) To consider the guideline, the information requirements, and the maturity of the customer project
- (ii) To provide information as evidence to satisfy the criteria at each stage, to demonstrate the project's probability of proceeding (see Table 1. Summary of customer information requirements).
- (iii) To meet all other usual connection process requirements, remain active throughout the process, such as payment at key stage gates and timely communications with Western Power.

A note on customer requirements:

- Customers are not required to fulfil a separate application for 'critical project' status. Customers are also not required to self-assess whether or not a project will be categorised as 'critical'.
- Western Power will request that the customer provide relevant information within 10 business days of it being requested, which enables Western Power to conduct the assessment.
- If a customer cannot provide key information, the project will be considered as non-critical. No progress on the customer side may also trigger the dormancy provisions set out in the Applications and Queuing Policy.
- Customers are strongly urged to understand the framework and the documents it will need to provide as evidence for critical project status on the customer project.

4.4 Customer project 'project probability' requirements

Whilst 'strategic importance and systemic impact' criteria are much less likely to change depending on the stage of categorisation (re)assessment, 'project probability' criteria do.

As a project matures and progresses through the connection process, the requirement of customer evidence and documentation to support 'project probability' assessment changes to reflect actual progress.

However, Western Power notes that there is no 'one size fits all' for a project and that projects can have different pathways to success. The information requested from customers at each categorisation assessment point, and considered in assessing 'project probability', is described, recognising that different customers and projects may have different types of evidence.

Please see the insert below for a summary of customer information requirements to demonstrate project probability at the stage gate assessment points.

Table 4. Summary of customer information requirements

Stage	Categorisation assessment trigger	Customer information request by connection process stage
1. Enquiry	Submission of enquiry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E1: Organisational readiness & financial resources - Clear financing strategy for project construction. • E2: Technical and specialist resources - Emails / letter of appointment for engagement with specialist capability firm or documentation demonstrating sufficient internal capability / capacity to deliver. • E3: Land access: Customer facility - Planning documents indicating potential locations for customer facility have been identified. Progress towards and plan to secure approval under EPBC Act and either EP Act Part 4 & 5, or an EP Act native vegetation clearing permit for the project facility. • E4: Social performance - Social performance plan / strategy for obtaining land access & carrying out community engagements, and evidence of related corporate policies, including community engagement, grievance management / escalation, and land access negotiation framework. • E5: Previous relevant experience – Demonstration of previous experience delivering similar projects.
2. Initiation	Submission of application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I1: Procurement - Evidence of executed FEED agreement or similar agreement. • I2: Organisational readiness & financial resources - Letter of comfort from board/directors demonstrating internal project support and financial capacity (i.e., audited financial statements), or evidence of genuine engagement with financier. • I3: Technical and specialist resources - Letter / contract confirming appointment for duration of connection process (until construction), or documentation demonstrating sufficient internal capability / capacity to deliver. • I4: Land access: Customer facility - Lease agreement, title certificate, licence agreement or documentation evidencing progress in obtaining preferred location and access to land since enquiry phase (e.g., papers, emails). Continued progress towards and plan to secure approval under EPBC Act and either EP Act Part 4 & 5 or obtain EP Act native vegetation clearing permit for the project facility. • I5: Land access: Line route - Progress towards and plan to secure approval under EPBC Act and either EP Act Part 4 & 5 or obtain EP Act native vegetation clearing permit for the project line route. • I6: Social performance - Stakeholder emails/ letters/ minutes detailing progress made towards social performance activities. • E5: Previous relevant experience – As per enquiry phase. Only requested where not provided previously. • I7: Connection complexity – Completed Single Line Diagram (SLD) drawings. • I8: Reliance on existing / current vs future network– Details of proposed project location, & project substation location and connection voltage requirements.
3. Scoping	Prior to commencing concept design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S1: Procurement - Documentation evidencing serious progress towards engaging construction / contracting partner. • S2: Organisational readiness & financial resources – Continued letter of comfort from board/directors demonstrating internal project support and financial capacity (i.e., audited financial statements), or evidence of genuine engagement with financier. • S3: Technical and specialist resources – Letter / contract confirming appointment for duration of connection process (until construction), or documentation demonstrating sufficient internal capability / capacity to deliver. • S4: Land access: Customer facility - Lease agreement, title certificate, licence agreement or documentation evidencing progress in obtaining preferred location and access to land since initiation phase (e.g., papers, emails). Advanced progress towards and plan to secure approval under EPBC Act and either EP Act Part 4 & 5 or obtain EP Act native vegetation clearing permit for the project facility. • S5: Land access: Line route - Documentation evidencing progress in obtaining access to indicative line route (e.g., papers, emails etc.). Continued progress towards and plan to secure approval under EPBC Act and either EP Act Part 4 & 5 or obtain EP Act native vegetation clearing permit for the project line route. • S6: Social performance - Stakeholder emails/ letters/ minutes detailing progress made towards social performance activities since initiation stage. • E5: Previous relevant experience – As per enquiry phase. Only requested where not provided previously. • S7: WP standards alignment - Detailed designs, drawings, data sheets

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I6: Connection complexity – As per initiation phase. Only requested where not provided previously. • I7: Reliance on existing / current vs future network – As per initiation phase. Only requested where not provided previously.
4. Planning	Completion of scoping phase, prior to commencement of planning activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • P1: Procurement -Executed EPC/M contracts. • P2: Organisational readiness & financial resources – Continued letter of comfort from board/directors demonstrating internal project support and financial capacity (i.e., audited financial statements), or evidence of genuine engagement with financier. • P3: Technical and specialist resources - Continued evidence of binding contract for duration of connection process until construction, or documentation demonstrating sufficient internal capability / capacity to deliver. • P4: Land access: Customer facility and line route – Lease agreement, title cert, licence agreement. Approval under EPBC Act and either EP Act Part 4 & 5 or obtain EP Act native vegetation clearing permit for both the project facility and the line route. • P5: Social performance - Documentation indicating completion of all required elements of social performance strategy, and evidence of community acceptance. • E5: Previous relevant experience – As per enquiry phase. Only requested where not provided previously. • S7: WP standards alignment - As per scoping phase. Only requested where not provided previously. • I6: Connection complexity – As per initiation phase. Only requested where not provided previously. • I7: Reliance on existing / current vs future network – As per initiation phase. Only requested where not provided previously.

Further details on ‘project probability’ criteria and assessment are defined in the appendices.

4.5 When a customer project becomes inactive

Where a customer fails to demonstrate continual and sufficient progress on its project, the project will no longer be considered to meet the critical project criteria.

Where a project or connection application is inactive, the dormancy provisions in the *Applications and Queuing Policy* may apply.

5. What categorisation assessment means for projects

A project may be classified as 'critical' – where a project meets both 'strategic importance and systemic impact' and 'project probability' thresholds. Where a project does not meet one or both of 'strategic importance and systemic impact' and 'project probability,' thresholds, it will progress under the standard approach.

5.1 'Critical' customer projects

Projects classified as 'critical' are progressed through the connection process more rapidly than 'non-critical' projects. This is to be referred to as 'right of way'. To enable this, 'critical' projects will have access to a dedicated pool of Western Power resources to give 'right of way' to major customer connection activities / steps quicker.

For a project to progress – Western Power has activities to undertake as does the customer. A project may be held up or lose critical status if a customer is not progressing and providing information as required. Within its reasonable control, Western Power commits to ensuring all 'critical' projects will continually progress through the connection process at all times.

5.2 'Non-critical' customer projects

Projects classified as 'non-critical' are progressed through the connection process at standard timeframes. Specifically, this means existing structures and frameworks are utilised to progress a project through the major customer connection process. 'Non-critical' projects will be progressed through the connection process in line with the existing practices defined under the Applications and Queuing Policy.

5.3 What 'critical' status does not mean

A project's criticality status does not impact the connection process / activities the project is subject to – as in there will not be skipped steps or stages for 'critical' projects.

Where not all projects can be progressed at a given time, categorisation into 'critical' or 'non-critical' status does not determine the priority order of the projects within their respective swim lane.

5.4 Working together

Working together is essential to ensure that critical projects can be connected in a timely manner. We recognise the role that both Western Power and the customer play in achieving our state's decarbonisation targets.

To ensure that the critical projects framework can be effectively applied to the SWIS, Western Power will provide:

- Timely communications in line with the milestone stages within the connection process, including: pre- and post-categorisation assessment, when a project is risking loss of status, and at other times as agreed to between Western Power and customer.
- Communication with customers on project categorisation outcomes and rationale, as requested by the customer.

- Release of relevant reporting requirements to the broader external market in line with ministerial and regulatory guidance and good industry practice.

5.5 Customer query and dispute process

For any queries related to the critical project framework, please contact Western Power at critical.projects@westernpower.com.au.

For any queries related to project categorisation assessment outcomes, please contact Western Power at critical.projects@westernpower.com.au or engage directly with your access consultant.

The *Electricity Networks Access Code 2004* applies for any access disputes.

Appendix

A. Categorisation assessment considerations – Stage 1. Enquiry

Criteria	Sub-criteria	Criteria description	Key considerations in assessment	Key documents to consider during assessment
2.1 Customer Ready	2.1.1 Procurement	<i>Ability to access materials and contracts towards facility / asset construction</i>	Not assessed at this stage	
	2.1.2 Organisational readiness & financial resources	<i>Demonstration of organisational acceptance and desire to progress project through Board endorsement, and access to financial resources for construction</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate clear financial pathway / strategy to project completion for proposed project • This evidence should clearly define by what means the customer intends to finance this project through the connection process 	Customer supplied: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear financing strategy up to the point of project completion
	2.1.3 Technical & specialist resources	<i>Ability to access to technical resources to progress project through major customer connection process (e.g., engineering / design capability)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate willingness to access / existing access to required technical capability to deliver project (e.g., engineering, design, financial modelling, social licence etc) 	Customer supplied: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emails / letter of appointment for engagement with specialist capability firm or documentation demonstrating sufficient internal capability / capacity to deliver
2.2 Customer Ability	2.2.1 Land access: customer facility	<i>Ability to demonstrate land rights and key environmental and planning approvals for customer project facility</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstration of progression to achieving land rights for customer facility • Demonstration of early progress made towards securing key environmental and planning approvals for customer facility, and evidence of realistic pathway to obtaining them 	Customer supplied: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning documents indicating potential locations for customer facility have been identified • Evidence of plan for obtaining, and early progress made towards, Environmental Protection Act Part 4 Ministerial statement, (incl. Part 5 approval for fossil fuel power stations), or Environmental Protection Act native vegetation clearing permit for customer facility site • Evidence of plan for obtaining, and early progress made towards, Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act approval for customer facility
	2.2.2 Land Access: line route	<i>Ability to demonstrate access to land and approvals for customer</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not assessed at this stage 	

Criteria	Sub-criteria	Criteria description	Key considerations in assessment	Key documents to consider during assessment
		<i>connection line route</i>		
	2.2.3 Social performance	<i>Ability to demonstrate community social acceptance / endorsement for project</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstration of defined approach and policies / procedures towards gaining / managing social performance 	<p>Customer supplied:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social performance plan / strategy incl for land access + other community requirements Evidence of related corporate policies, including community engagement, grievance management / escalation, and land access negotiation framework
	2.2.4 Previous relevant experience	<i>Demonstrable experience in delivering similar projects</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrated examples of delivering similar projects on time and on budget 	<p>Customer supplied:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paper presenting case studies of previous experience incl. # of similar projects, nature / similarities, status, key challenges / risks, how issues were resolved, model delivered (in-house, with consultants, funding model selected), demonstration of management of social performance, land access negotiation
2.3 Connection Ability	2.3.1 WP standards alignment	<i>Alignment of project design to Western Power standardised designs</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not assessed at this stage 	
	2.3.2 Connection Complexity	<i>Complexity of customer proposed connection - including the requirement to augment network to connect</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not assessed at this stage 	
	2.3.3 Reliance on existing / current vs future network	<i>Links / alignment of project to SWISDA or other plans not ready to connect</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not assessed at this stage 	

B. Categorisation assessment considerations – Stage 2. Initiation

Criteria	Sub-criteria	Criteria description	Key considerations in assessment	Key documents to consider during assessment
2.1 Customer Ready	2.1.1 Procurement	<i>Ability to access to materials and contracts towards facility / asset construction</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence that a front-end engineering and design (FEED) has been executed 	<p>Customer supplied:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Executed FEED agreement or similar
	2.1.2 Organisational readiness & financial resources	<i>Demonstration of organisational acceptance and desire to progress project through Board endorsement, and access to financial resources for construction</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstration of support from customer's governing body of support for project, and evidence of existing access to funding for construction and / or demonstration of engagement with prospective financier 	<p>Customer supplied:</p> <p>For organisations able to fully / partly self-fund:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Letter of commitment from Board which includes director representation of likelihood of project progressing, demonstrable financial capacity (such as audited financial statements) and surety of funding use on the project into construction / competing priorities; and/or Evidence of engagement with financier, with financier demonstrating genuine intention to proceed with customer / project up to construction completion - where unable to be funded fully by balance sheet <p>For organisations requiring full external funding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Letter of commitment from Board which includes director representation of likelihood of project progressing; and Evidence of engagement with financier, with financier demonstrating genuine intention to proceed with customer / project up to project construction completion
	2.1.3 Technical & specialist resources	<i>Ability to access to technical resources to progress project through major customer connection process (e.g., engineering / design capability)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence confirming consultant / dedicated internal resources for financial, engineering, design and social performance purposes 	<p>Customer supplied:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Letter / contract confirming appointment of consultant, or documentation demonstrating sufficient internal capability / capacity to deliver
2.2 Customer Ability	2.2.1 Land access: customer facility	<i>Ability to demonstrate access to land and approvals for customer project facility</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstration of progression to achieving land rights for customer facility Demonstration of continued progress made towards securing key environmental and planning approvals for customer facility, 	<p>Customer supplied:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning documents indicating potential locations for customer facility have been identified Evidence of plan for obtaining and progress made towards obtaining Environmental Protection Act Part 4

Criteria	Sub-criteria	Criteria description	Key considerations in assessment	Key documents to consider during assessment
			and evidence of realistic pathway to obtaining them	<p>Ministerial statement, (incl. Part 5 approval for fossil fuel power stations), or Environmental Protection Act native vegetation clearing permit for customer project facility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of plan for obtaining and progress made towards obtaining Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act approval for customer project facility
	2.2.2 Land Access: line route	<i>Ability to demonstrate access to land and approvals for customer connection line route</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstration of progression to achieving land rights for customer line route Demonstration of early progress made towards securing key environmental and planning approvals for customer facility, and evidence of realistic pathway to obtaining them 	<p>Customer supplied:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning documents indicating preferred line route has been identified Evidence of plan for obtaining, and evidence of early progress made towards, Environmental Protection Act Part 4 Ministerial statement, (incl. Part 5 approval for fossil fuel power stations), or Environmental Protection Act native vegetation clearing permit for customer line route <p>Evidence of plan for obtaining, and evidence of early progress made towards, Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act approval for customer line route</p>
	2.2.3 Social performance	<i>Ability to demonstrate community social acceptance / endorsement for project</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstration of conducting social performance activities resulting in general community awareness/support for their facility other relevant construction 	<p>Customer supplied:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paper / letters / stakeholder meeting minutes / email chains highlighting that progress made in social performance activities and outcomes to date (incl level of community support and key risks)
	2.2.4 Previous relevant experience	<i>Demonstrable experience in delivering similar projects</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See requirements in enquiry stage - same evidence required. If provided in previous stage(s), not required to be provided again 	
2.3 Connection Ability	2.3.1 WP standards alignment	<i>Alignment of project design to Western Power standardised designs</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not assessed at this stage 	
	2.3.2 Connection Complexity	<i>Complexity of customer proposed connection - including the requirement to augment network to connect</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstration of connection point complexity drawings / assessment 	<p>Customer supplied:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed single line diagram (SLD) document

Criteria	Sub-criteria	Criteria description	Key considerations in assessment	Key documents to consider during assessment
	2.3.3 Reliance on existing / current vs future network	<i>Links / alignment of project to SWISDA or other plans not ready to connect</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication of proposed location of facility and connection point 	<p>Customer supplied:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Details of proposed project location, & project substation location and connection voltage of 330kV or 500kV <p>Western Power documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Future network plans

C. Categorisation assessment considerations – Stage 3. Scoping

Criteria	Sub-criteria	Criteria description	Key considerations in assessment	Key documents to consider during assessment
2.1 Customer Ready	2.1.1 Procurement	<i>Ability to access to materials and contracts towards facility / asset construction</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of progress toward construction agreements / head contractor appointment 	<p>Customer supplied:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documentation evidencing serious progress towards engaging construction / contracting partner
	2.1.2 Organisational readiness & financial resources	<i>Demonstration of organisational acceptance and desire to progress project through Board endorsement, and access to financial resources for construction</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued demonstration of support customer's governing body of support for project, and continued evidence of existing access to funding for construction and / or continued demonstration of engagement with prospective financier 	<p>Customer supplied:</p> <p>For organisations able to fully / partly self-fund:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued letter of commitment from Board which includes director representation of likelihood of project progressing, demonstrable financial capacity (such as audited financial statements) and surety of funding use on the project up to construction completion/ competing priorities; and / or Continued evidence of engagement with financier, with financier demonstrating genuine intention to proceed with customer / project into construction - where unable to be funded fully by balance sheet. <p>For organisations requiring full external funding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued letter of commitment from Board which includes director representation of likelihood of project progressing; and Continued evidence of engagement with financier, with financier demonstrating genuine intention to proceed with customer / project up to construction completion
	2.1.3 Technical & specialist resources	<i>Evidence of full-term contract in place for relevant external services or proof for ongoing access to internal capability / capacity up to point of construction for financial, engineering, design and social performance purposes</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of full-term contract in place for relevant external services or proof for ongoing access to internal capability / capacity up to point of construction for financial, engineering, design and social performance purposes 	<p>Customer supplied:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Letter / contract confirming appointment for duration of connection process (until construction), or documentation demonstrating sufficient internal capability / capacity to deliver

Criteria	Sub-criteria	Criteria description	Key considerations in assessment	Key documents to consider during assessment
2.2 Customer Ability	2.2.1 Land access: customer facility	<i>Ability to demonstrate access to land and approvals for customer project facility</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstration of land use rights for facility, or progression towards achieving access to land since application phase Demonstration of advanced progress made towards securing key environmental and planning approvals for customer facility 	<p>Customer supplied:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lease agreement, title certificate, licence agreement Planning documents indicating potential locations for customer facility have been identified Evidence of advanced progress made towards obtaining Environmental Protection Act Part 4 Ministerial statement, (incl. Part 5 approval for fossil fuel power stations), or Environmental Protection Act native vegetation clearing permit for customer facility site
	2.2.2 Land Access: line route	<i>Ability to demonstrate access to land and approvals for customer connection line route</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of land use rights for indicative line route, or progression towards achieving access to land Demonstration of continued progress made towards securing key environmental and planning approvals for customer line route, and evidence of realistic pathway to obtaining them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documentation evidencing progress in obtaining preferred location and access to land, since application phase (e.g., papers, emails) Evidence of plan for obtaining and continued progress made towards obtaining Environmental Protection Act Part 4 Ministerial statement, (incl. Part 5 approval for fossil fuel power stations), or Environmental Protection Act native vegetation clearing permit for customer line route
	2.2.3 Social performance	<i>Ability to demonstrate community social acceptance / endorsement for project</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstration of conducting social performance activities resulting in general community awareness/support for their facility other relevant construction (more progressed than application phase) 	<p>Customer supplied:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paper / letters / stakeholder meeting minutes / email chains highlighting that progress made in social performance activities and outcomes to date (incl level of community support and key risks). note must be more progressed than evidence provided in initiation phase
	2.2.4 Previous relevant experience	<i>Demonstrable experience in delivering similar projects</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See requirements in initiation stage - same evidence required. If provided in previous stage(s), not required to be provided again 	
2.3 Connection Ability	2.3.1 WP standards alignment	<i>Alignment of project design to Western Power standardised designs</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See requirements in initiation stage - same evidence required. If provided in previous stage(s), not required to be provided again 	
	2.3.2 Connection Complexity	<i>Complexity of customer proposed connection - including the requirement to</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See requirements in initiation stage - same evidence required. If provided in previous stage(s), not required to be provided again 	

Criteria	Sub-criteria	Criteria description	Key considerations in assessment	Key documents to consider during assessment
		<i>augment network to connect</i>		
	2.3.3 Reliance on existing / current vs future network	<i>Links / alignment of project to SWISDA or other plans not ready to connect</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See requirements in initiation stage - same evidence required. If provided in previous stage(s), not required to be provided again 	

D. Categorisation assessment considerations – Stage 4. Planning

Criteria	Sub-criteria	Criteria description	Key considerations in assessment	Key documents to consider during assessment
2.1 Customer Ready	2.1.1 Procurement	<i>Ability to access to materials and contracts towards facility / asset construction</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of construction agreements / head contractor appointed 	Customer supplied: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Executed EPC/M contracts
	2.1.2 Organisational readiness & financial resources	<i>Demonstration of organisational acceptance and desire to progress project through Board endorsement, and access to financial resources for construction</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued demonstration of support customer's governing body of support for project, and continued evidence of existing access to funding for construction and / or evidence of financing agreement secured 	Customer supplied: For organisations able to fully / partly self-fund: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued letter of commitment from Board which includes director representation of likelihood of project progressing, demonstrable financial capacity (such as audited financial statements) and surety of funding use on the project up to construction completion / competing priorities; and / or Evidence of secured funding to construction - where unable to be funded fully by balance sheet For organisations requiring full external funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued letter of commitment from Board which includes director representation of likelihood of project progressing; and Evidence of secured funding to project construction completion
	2.1.3 Technical & specialist resources	<i>Evidence of full-term contract in place for relevant external services or proof for ongoing access to internal capability / capacity up to point of construction for financial, engineering, design and social performance purposes</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued evidence of full-term contract in place for relevant external services or proof for ongoing access to internal capability / capacity up to point of construction for financial, engineering, design and social performance purposes 	Customer supplied: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued evidence of binding contract for duration of connection process (until construction completion, or documentation demonstrating sufficient internal capability / capacity to deliver
2.2 Customer Ability	2.2.1 Land access: customer facility	<i>Ability to demonstrate access to land and approvals for customer project facility</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstration of land use rights for facility Demonstration of key environmental and planning approvals obtained or evidence of realistic pathway to obtain them 	Customer supplied: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lease agreement, title certificate, licence agreement Approvals for Environmental Protection Act Part 4 Ministerial statement, (incl. Part 5 approval for fossil fuel power stations), or Environmental Protection Act

Criteria	Sub-criteria	Criteria description	Key considerations in assessment	Key documents to consider during assessment
				native vegetation clearing permit for customer line route
	2.2.2 Land Access: line route	<i>Ability to demonstrate access to land and approvals for customer connection line route and approvals</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of land use rights for preferred line route Demonstration of key environmental and planning approvals obtained or evidence of realistic pathway to obtain them 	Customer supplied: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lease agreement, title certificate, licence agreement Approvals for Environmental Protection Act Part 4 Ministerial statement, (incl. Part 5 approval for fossil fuel power stations), or Environmental Protection Act native vegetation clearing permit for customer
	2.2.3 Social performance	<i>Ability to demonstrate community social acceptance / endorsement for project</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrated completion of required elements of social performance strategy, with demonstration of overall community acceptance 	Customer supplied: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documentation indicating that required elements of social performance strategy is complete Demonstration that there is overall community acceptance of the project / customer facility / line routes (letters, stakeholder meeting minutes, email chains etc.,)
	2.2.4 Previous relevant experience	<i>Demonstrable experience in delivering similar projects</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See requirements in scoping stage - same evidence required. If provided in previous stage(s), not required to be provided again 	
2.3 Connection Ability	2.3.1 WP standards alignment	<i>Alignment of project design to Western Power standardised designs</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See requirements in scoping stage - same evidence required. If provided in previous stage(s), not required to be provided again 	
	2.3.2 Connection Complexity	<i>Complexity of customer proposed connection - including the requirement to augment network to connect</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See requirements in scoping stage - same evidence required. If provided in previous stage(s), not required to be provided again 	
	2.3.3 Reliance on existing / current vs future network	<i>Links / alignment of project to SWISDA or other plans not ready to connect</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See requirements in scoping stage - same evidence required. If provided in previous stage(s), not required to be provided again 	