Discovery Early Career Researcher Award (DECRA)

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Executive Director, Discovery

ANU 26 September
Projects Scheme
Overview

• ARC funding schemes
• Discovery Early Career Researcher Award
• Proposal assessment
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• Discovery Early Career Researcher Award
• Proposal assessment
National Competitive Grants Program

**Discovery Program**
- Laureate Fellowships
- DECRA
- Discovery Indigenous
- Future Fellowships
- Discovery Projects

**Linkage Program**
- Centres of Excellence
- Co-Funded & SRI
- ITRP
- Linkage Projects
- LIEF

Discovery Program Funding 2013-14 - $551.4 million

Linkage Program Funding 2013-14 - $332.4 million
Aims of the Discovery Program

• Fund excellent, internationally competitive research by individuals and teams that will produce high quality outcomes

• Build Australia’s research capacity through supporting and facilitating research training and career opportunities for excellent Australian and international researchers

• Support research in priority areas that will deliver national benefits

• Enhance research capacity and outcomes through support for international collaboration
Size of scheme and success rates (2)

*DECRA 2012-2014: Success Rates*

- **2012:**
  - Number of Proposals: 1882
  - Success Rate: 12.8%
  - Successful Proposals: 277

- **2013:**
  - Number of Proposals: 1081
  - Success Rate: 15.6%
  - Successful Proposals: 200

- **2014:**
  - Number of Proposals: 1268
  - Success Rate: 13.62%
  - Successful Proposals: 200
Size of scheme and success rates (5)

*Future Fellowships 2009-2013: Success Rates*

- **2009**: 775 proposals, 200 successful (20.5%), 559 unsuccessful (77.2%)
- **2010**: 559 proposals, 200 successful (36.2%), 359 unsuccessful (63.8%)
- **2011**: 30.7% success rate for 203 proposals
- **2012**: 34.7% success rate for 394 proposals
- **2013**: 16.29% success rate for 1033 proposals

Number of Proposals

- **2009**: 775
- **2010**: 559
- **2011**: 458
- **2012**: 394
- **2013**: 201

Success rates:

- **2009**: 20.5%
- **2010**: 26.4%
- **2011**: 30.7%
- **2012**: 34.7%
- **2013**: 16.29%

Graphical representation showing the number of proposals and success rates from 2009 to 2013.
Key funding features of schemes

• Discovery Projects and Discovery Indigenous primarily award project costs (travel, equipment, staff, HDR students)

• DECRA primarily awards a salary for the awardee, with an small additional allocation for project costs, including HDR students where appropriate
Discovery Early Career Researcher Award (DECRA)

- Support and advance promising early career researchers, and enable research and research training in high quality and supportive environments
- Highly competitive; 200 per round
- Eligibility: up to 5 years post-PhD (note ROPE- Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence)
- Selection criteria (in the Funding Rules):
  - Project Quality and Innovation (40%)
  - DECRA Candidate (35%)
  - Research Environment (15%)
  - Feasibility and Benefit (10%)
- Funding for up to three years
- DECRA salary plus up to $40,000 per year project costs
• “The ARC is committed to ensuring all eligible researchers have fair access to competitive funding through the National Competitive Grants Program (NCGP). To this end, we promote and encourage within NCGP those approaches that best recognise research excellence in the context of the diversity of career and life experiences. One key element is that the assessment process takes into account the quality rather than simply the volume or size of the research contribution.”
• ROPE provides a framework within which the quality and benefit of achievements is given more weight than the quantity or rate of particular achievements. It considers working arrangements, career histories and personal circumstances and provides an acknowledgement of research performance given the opportunities available.
DECRA Selection Criteria for DE15

Project Quality and Innovation 40%
- Does the research address a significant problem?
- Is the conceptual/theoretical framework innovative and original?
- Potential to contribute to the Strategic Research Priorities?
- Will the aims, concepts, methods and results advance knowledge?

DECRA Candidate 35%
- research opportunity and performance evidence (ROPE); and
- time and capacity to undertake the proposed research.

Research Environment 15%
- Is there a supportive and collaborative research environment for the project?
- Opportunity to develop an independent record?
- Are the necessary facilities available to complete the Project?
- Are there adequate strategies to encourage dissemination, commercialisation, if appropriate, and promotion of research outcomes?

Feasibility and Benefit 10%
DECRA Selection Criteria for DE15 (cont.)

Feasibility and Benefit 10%

• Are the design of the project and the expertise of the participants sufficient to ensure the Project can be completed with the proposed budget and timeframe?
• Will the completed Project produce innovative economic, environmental, social and/or cultural benefit to the Australian and international community?
• Will the proposed research be cost-effective and value for money?
A DECRA16 Candidate must at the closing time of submission of Proposals:

- have been awarded a PhD on or after 1 March 2010;
- or commensurate with a period of significant career interruption have been awarded a PhD awarded on or after 1 March 2006.
- The following types of interruption will be considered:
  - carer’s responsibility;
  - international relocation for international post-doctoral studies (no more than 3 months per relocation);
  - illness;
  - maternity or parental leave;
  - unemployment or non-research employment
DECRA: Part-time Teaching

- The DECRA Recipient may spend up to 0.20 FTE of her/his time annually on teaching activities. The DECRA will not be extended to accommodate any periods of teaching. Supervision of honours or postgraduate students is not included in this limit.
DECRA: Maternity and Parental Leave

• Maternity leave – up to 14 weeks paid by ARC, extension of DECRA for this period.

• The Administering Organisation must ensure that a DECRA Recipient is entitled to take up to two weeks paid partner/parental leave at the time of birth or adoption to the partner/parent who is not identified as the primary caregiver during the course of the DECRA. The ARC will provide up to two weeks funding for this purpose and the DECRA period will be extended for a period equivalent to the duration of the paid partner/parental leave. The funding for this purpose is to be claimed by the Administering Organisation through submission of a Variation of Funding Agreement.
Key changes to rules (1)

• New format: one set covering all schemes in the Program
• One section dedicated to the Discovery Program covering:
  ✓ Level and Period of Funding
  ✓ Budget Items Supported and Not Supported
  ✓ Eligible Organisations
  ✓ Limits on Projects and Proposals
  ✓ Submission of proposals
  ✓ Selection and approval process
  ✓ Reporting requirements
  ✓ Fundamental principles of conducting research
Key changes to rules (2)

- Removal of restrictions on a number of budget items for all schemes (publication costs, web hosting, mobile phones, workshops)
- Extension of career interruption time available in DECRA; can claim up to four (4) years interruption
- Harmonisation of cross-scheme eligibility rules for clarity and consistency
Key changes to rules (3)

• Limit of one DP + Award (Laureate Fellow, Future Fellow, DECRA)
• A question about Research Impact
• A question about Medical Research
• A question about Data Management
• ROPE (Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence) – policy on ARC website
Number of ECR applicants (< 5 years after PhD) in DP and DECRA

* an applicant could be counted more than once each year
Proportion of ECR applicants (< 5 years after PhD) in DP and DECRA

* an applicant could be counted more than once each year
## Time since PhD – DE14

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years since award of PhD</th>
<th>No. of considered proposals</th>
<th>% of considered proposals</th>
<th>No. of approved proposals</th>
<th>% of approved proposals</th>
<th>% success</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-1</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4</td>
<td>336</td>
<td>22.9%</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-5</td>
<td>394</td>
<td>26.8%</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>28.5%</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-6</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-7</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-8</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1468</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>200</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>13.6%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DECRA – success rates

- Success rate is greater for people with 3-5 years experience.
- We have also looked at career interruption data:
  - Overall success rate for people with career interruptions is no different to those without career interruptions.
  - Trend in success rate follows same pattern as overall (i.e. a greater success rate with equivalent of 3-5 years experience).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Citizenship/residency status</th>
<th>Proposals considered</th>
<th>% of proposals considered</th>
<th>Proposals approved</th>
<th>Success rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Nationals</td>
<td>511</td>
<td>34.8%</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Australians</td>
<td>901</td>
<td>61.4%</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Returning Australians</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1468</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
<td><strong>200</strong></td>
<td><strong>13.6%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Gender of candidates – DE14

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Panel</th>
<th>Number of female candidates</th>
<th>Number of approved female candidates</th>
<th>Female success rate</th>
<th>Number of male candidates</th>
<th>Number of approved male candidates</th>
<th>Male success rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BSB</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMI</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>338</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCA</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCE</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBE</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>553</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>909</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overview

• ARC funding schemes
• Discovery Early Career Researcher Award
• Proposal assessment
Important Information when writing application

- Funding Rules
- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
- Instructions to Applicants (ITAs)
General tips

• Keywords and Field of Research codes
• Summary and first page of project – able to be understood by intelligent non-expert
• Budget justification is also increasingly important!
Proposal assessment – overview

• ARC staff and Executive Directors assess eligibility etc., but do not decide which proposals should be funded
• All proposals are assessed against the selection criteria, and in accordance with the weightings for that scheme
• Proposals are generally assigned to two College of Experts members and at least two external assessors
• College of Experts meets to moderate judgments and to make final recommendations about fundable proposals and budgets
• Under the ARC Act all recommendations are just that, and must be approved by the Minister
The ARC College of Experts

• play a key role in identifying research excellence, moderating external assessments and recommending fundable proposals.

• assists the ARC in recruiting and assigning assessors and in implementing peer review reforms in established and emerging disciplines as well as interdisciplinary areas.

• experts of international standing drawn from the Australian research community: from higher education, industry and public sector research organisations

• ARC College nominations are approved by the ARC CEO for appointments of one to three years.
Assessment Process (1)

• The peer review process designed to be fair, thorough and transparent
• The ARC relies on two types of assessors - **Detailed** and **General**
• Detailed assessors drawn from the Australian and international research community
• Detailed assessors complete in-depth assessments of proposals by providing scores and comments against the scheme specific selection criteria
• These assessments are then taken into consideration by General assessors in the later stages of the peer review process
Assessment Process (2)

• General assessors are members of the College of Experts or a Selection Advisory Committee

• General assessors take into consideration the ratings and comments provided by Detailed assessors and the applicant’s rejoinder, and assign their own ratings to the relevant scheme selection criteria

• Once all assessments have been finalised and submitted to the ARC, Detailed and General assessments and Rejoinders are considered by the panels at the final selection meeting
Rejoinder

• Where the ARC seeks external assessments, applicants are often given the opportunity to submit a Rejoinder

• The Rejoinder process allows applicants to respond to assessment comments made by external assessors

• Rejoinders are not viewed by external assessors but are considered by an ARC College of Experts Panel or SAC when deciding on the final recommendation for a Proposal

• Timeframes for applicants are typically up to ten working days
Selection Meeting

- The Selection Meeting is the final face-to-face meeting of the panel of General Assessors and is the conclusion of the peer review process.

- The panels meet to consider which proposals to recommend to the ARC for funding, and recommended budgets for those proposals.

- All recommendations are given to the ARC CEO, who then makes recommendations to the Minister.

- All funding decisions are made by the Minister under the ARC Act.
More information

• Your university Research Office (RO) is the essential first stop for information

• ARC staff are available to assist RO via email and phone

• Huge amount of valuable information on the ARC website
  – Funding rules and Instructions to Applicants
  – FAQs
  – Additional pages on various policies
  – Detailed outcomes for all schemes for recent years, arranged by institution and by discipline (FoR code)
Discussion/questions