The Discovery Program

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Overview

• The National Competitive Grants Program

• The Discovery Program, including new rules:
  – Discovery Projects
  – Discovery Indigenous
  – DECRA
  – Australian Laureate Fellowships

• Assessment process

• Questions and discussion
Commonwealth Investment in R&D 2013-14

- ARC: 10.2%
- NHMRC: 9.9%
- Other Health: 1.0%
- Block Funding to Higher Ed: 21.9%
- Other Higher Ed R&D Support: 0.9%
- CRCs: 1.7%
- Rural: 3.9%
- Energy and the Environment: 2.4%
- Multisector Science: Support: 2.4%
- Other Govt R&D: 7.4%
- DSTO: 4.9%
- CSIRO: 8.8%
- Industry R&D Tax Measures: 19.4%
- Other Industry R&D Support: 0.1%
- Other Innovation Support: 5.0%

Source: Budget 2013-2014 Industry and Innovation tables
Trends in Government Investment in R&D $M 2004-14
(source: 2013-14 budget tables)
National Competitive Grants Program

**Discovery Program**

- Laureate Fellowships
- DECRA
- Discovery Indigenous
- Discovery Projects

**Future Fellowships**

**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
ARC funding awarded by program – last 5 years

- Discovery Projects: 40.3%
- Future Fellowships: 17.3%
- Linkage Projects: 17.1%
- Centres of Excellence: 6.0%
- Australian Laureate Fellowships: 5.1%
- LIEF: 4.3%
- DECRA: 4.1%
- Special Research Initiatives: 2.9%
- Other: 2.7%
- Discovery Indigenous: 0.2%
- Other: 2.7%
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 (1)

*Discovery Projects 2008-2014: Success and Return Rates*

- **Unsuccessful**
- **Successful**
- **Return rate**
- **Success rate**
Participation and success of CIs in DP13 and DP14 by gender and career age
Size of scheme and success rates (2)

**DECRA 2012-2014: Success Rates**

- **2012**: 1882 proposals, 12.8% successful, 12.8% unsuccessful
- **2013**: 1081 proposals, 15.6% successful, 15.6% unsuccessful
- **2014**: 1268 proposals, 13.62% successful, 13.62% unsuccessful

The graph shows the number of proposals and the success rates for each year from 2012 to 2014.
First-time awardees (DP and DECRA) 2008-14
Size of scheme and success rates (3)

*Discovery Indigenous 2012-2014: Success Rates*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Proposals</th>
<th>Success Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>34.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>31.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>38.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- [Unsuccessful](#)
- [Successful](#)
- [Success rate](#)
Size of scheme and success rates (4)

Australian Laureate Fellowships 2009-2013: Success Rates

Number of Proposals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Unsuccessful</th>
<th>Successful</th>
<th>Success Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Size of scheme and success rates (5)

*Future Fellowships 2009-2013: Success Rates*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Proposals</th>
<th>Successful</th>
<th>Unsuccessful</th>
<th>Success Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>775</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>575</td>
<td>20.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>559</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>359</td>
<td>26.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>458</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>30.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>394</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>34.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>1033</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>832</td>
<td>16.29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Key funding features of schemes

- Discovery Project and Discovery Indigenous schemes award project costs (travel, equipment, support staff, etc.)
- Discovery Indigenous scheme also provides opportunities for Indigenous researchers to apply for a Discovery Indigenous Award (DIA).
- DECRA primarily awards a salary for the awardee, with a small allocation of project costs
- Laureate Fellowships awards a salary top-up plus funding for a team of postdoctoral and postgraduate researchers
- Each scheme has different selection criteria, rules and funding limits, as each serves a different purpose
General budget items

• access to national and international research and infrastructure facilities
• access to Workshop Services
• expenditure on Field Research
• expert services of a third party
• equipment (and its maintenance) and consumables
• personnel and higher degree by research stipends
• publication and dissemination of Project outputs & outreach activity costs
• specialised computer equipment and software
• teaching relief for CIs (not for recipients of ARC Awards or Fellowships)
• travel costs essential to the Project
• web hosting and web development specific to the Project
• workshops and conferences
**Discovery Projects**

- DP is the largest scheme, supporting excellent basic and applied research by individuals and teams
- Success rate typically 20% to 22% in recent years
- Selection criteria (more detail on each in Funding Rules):
  - Investigator (40%)
  - Project Quality and Innovation (25%)
  - Feasibility and Benefit (20%)
  - Research Environment (15%)
- Funding up to five years, up to $500,000 per year
- No salaries for CIs/PIs
**Discovery Indigenous**

- Supports fundamental research and research training by Indigenous Australian researchers as individuals and as teams.

- Selection criteria (more detail on each in Funding Rules):
  - Investigator (35%)
  - Project Quality and Innovation (40%)
  - Research Environment (15%)
  - Feasibility and Benefit (10%)

- Funding up to three years, up to $500,000 per year

- No salaries for CIs/PIs (though note DIAs)
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)
- Selection criteria (more detail on each in 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
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)

- Discovery Projects now available for 5 years – though note criteria about cost-effectiveness and value for money;
- No DORAs in DP15
- Removal of restrictions on a number of budget items for all schemes (publication costs, web hosting, mobile phones, workshops)
- Increase in ICA $$ within DP to promote internationalisation
- Extension of career interruption time available in DECRA
- Harmonisation of cross-scheme eligibility rules for clarity and consistency
NCGP Lifecycle

**Funding Rules**
- Approved by Minister
- Published on the ARC website
- Sector advised of availability

**Proposals**
- Applications submitted via RMS by Eligible Organisations by the relevant scheme closing date
- Instructions to applicants, sample application form and FAQs published on ARC website

**Assessment**
- Proposals are considered against eligibility criteria and compliance with the Funding Rules.
- Proposals are assessed by independent assessors
- Applicants may be given the opportunity for a rejoinder to assessors’ written comments
- Proposals are assessed by the ARC College of Experts or a Selection Advisory Committee

**Selection meeting**
- The ARC College of Experts or a Selection Advisory Committee consider all proposals, rank each proposal relative to other proposals in the same discipline cluster and recommend budgets for the highly ranked proposals

**Approval of funding**
- ARC CEO provides recommendations to the Minister in relation to which Proposals should be approved for funding, which Proposals should not be approved for funding, and the level of funding and duration of Projects.
- Minister considers recommendations and approves and announces funding outcomes
- Postaward and reporting
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
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 is the essential first stop for information
- ARC staff are available to assist 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