National Competitive Grants Program

**Discovery Projects**

- Laureate Fellowships: 5%
- Future Fellowships: 16%
- DECRA: 3%
- Discovery Indigenous

**Linkage Projects**

- Centres of Excellence: 7%
- Co-Funded & SRI
- ITRP
- Linkage Projects: 18%

Five (5) year averages
The Australian Research Council

• The Australian Research Council (ARC) is a Commonwealth entity within The Department of Education and Training.

• The ARC’s main responsibilities are:
  – providing funding for research through the National Competitive Grants Program (NCGP)
  – providing policy advice on research matters to Government
  – evaluating research quality in Australia through Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA)
  – and, together with the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), administer the Australian Research Integrity Committee (ARIC).
2014–15 Federal Budget (Approx. AU$415 billion)
Australian Government support for science, research and innovation 2014–15 ($9.2 b)

- **CSIRO**: 8.11%
- **DSTO**: 4.44%
- **ARC**: 9.53%
- **NHMRC**: 10.12%
- **Australian Government R&D**: 7.50%
- **Industry R&D Tax Measures**: 26.44%
- **Block Funding**: 21.19%
- **Higher Education R&D**: 0.47%
- **Other Health**: 0.63%
- **Energy and the Environment**: 1.37%
- **Rural**: 3.30%
- **CRCs**: 1.63%
- **Other R&D**: 1.95%
- **Business Innovation**: 3.30%
- **Business R&D**: 0.02%
ARC funding by institute 2010–2014
ARC NCGP funding by 2-Digit FoR (%) 2006–2014

- Mathematical Sciences
- Physical Sciences
- Chemical Sciences
- Earth Sciences
- Environmental Sciences
- Biological Sciences
- Information and Computing Sciences
- Agricultural and Veterinary Sciences
- Engineering
- Technology
- Medical and Health Sciences
- Built Environment and Design
- Education
- Economics
- Commerce, Management, Tourism and Services
- Studies in Human Society
- Psychology and Cognitive Sciences
- Law and Legal Studies
- Studies in Creative Arts and Writing
- Language, Communication and Culture
- History and Archaeology
- Philosophy and Religious Studies
NCGP and Peer Review

- Under larger schemes, such as *Discovery Projects (DP)* and the *Discovery Early Career Researcher Award (DECRA)*, all five panels of the ARC College of Experts convene for selection meetings. In other schemes, such as *Australian Laureate Fellowships* and *Linkage Infrastructure, Equipment and Facilities* schemes, a single interdisciplinary Selection Advisory Committee (SAC) may be utilised. SAC members may be ARC College members and/or other eminent researchers.

- The five panels are: Biological Sciences and Biotechnology (BSB), Engineering, Mathematics and Informatics (EMI), Humanities and Creative Arts (HCA), Physics, Chemistry and Earth Sciences (PCE), and Social Behavioural and Economic Sciences (SBE).
Rejoinders

- 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
NCGP Lifecycle

- Development of Funding Rules
- Eligibility Exemption Request
- Proposal Submission
- Request Not to Assess
- Assessment Process
- Rejoiner
- Selection Meeting
- Approval of Outcomes
- Funding Agreements and Appeals
- Post Award

- Development of RMS
- Recruitment of College of Experts or Selection Advisory Committee
- Eligibility
- Announcement
- End of Year and Progress Reports
- Final Report
Eligibility

• ARC staff and Executive Directors assess *eligibility* etc., but do not decide whether 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
ARC Assignment Information

• The ARC has completely redesigned the way that potential assessors are matched to a proposal for assessment purposes

• Multiple areas of the proposal are mined for a set of keywords and presented to the person completing the assignments as a word cloud
ARC Assignment Information (2)

- This information is then matched to information stored against a potential assessor’s profile and presented in a similar word cloud

- The most appropriate person is then selected and assigned to the proposal to assess
Research Opportunity

• The ARC is committed to ensuring all eligible researchers have fair access to competitive funding through the National Competitive Grants Program.

• The ARC considers that Research Opportunity comprises two separate elements:
  – Career experiences (relative to opportunity)
  – Career interruptions

• The ARC ROPE Statement (released Feb 2014) is online at: http://www.arc.gov.au/applicants/rope_statement.htm
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
DP—Success and return rates

![Graph showing success and return rates from 2008 to 2015. The green bars represent ineligible, the red bars represent unsuccessful, the blue bars represent successful, and the blue line represents return rate. The success rate and return rate percentages are shown on the y-axis. The x-axis represents the years from 2008 to 2015.]

- Ineligible
- Unsuccessful
- Successful
- Success rate %
- Return rate %
DECRA—Success rate

![DECRA Success Rate Chart]

- Proposals not funded
- Proposals funded
- Success rate %
Future Fellowships—Success rate
Discovery Indigenous—Success rate

- 2012: 19 proposals, success rate 34.5%
- 2013: 22 proposals, success rate 31.3%
- 2014: 16 proposals, success rate 38.5%
- 2015: 22 proposals, success rate 31.3%
Laureate Fellowship—Success rate

Number of Proposals

- 2009: 133 unsuccessful, 15 successful, 10.1% success rate
- 2010: 82 unsuccessful, 15 successful, 15.5% success rate
- 2011: 122 unsuccessful, 17 successful, 12.2% success rate
- 2012: 91 unsuccessful, 17 successful, 15.7% success rate
- 2013: 95 unsuccessful, 17 successful, 15.2% success rate
- 2014: 74 unsuccessful, 16 successful, 17.8% success rate
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 DAATSIA, 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
The ARC’s Linkage funding schemes aim to encourage and extend cooperative approaches to research and improve the use of research outcomes by strengthening links within Australia’s innovation system and with innovation systems internationally.

Linkage promotes national and international research partnerships between researchers and business, industry, community organisations and other publicly funded research agencies.

By supporting the development of partnerships, the ARC encourages the transfer of skills, knowledge and ideas as a basis for securing commercial and other benefits of research.

The main Linkage Program schemes are: Linkage Projects; Linkage Infrastructure, Equipment and Facilities (LIEF); ARC Centres of Excellence; and Special Research Initiatives.
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, 18% for DP15

• 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
- Lead CI must be Indigenous
- Selection criteria (more detail on each in Funding Rules):
  - Investigator (40%)
  - Project Quality and Innovation (35%)
  - 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 DATSIAs)
**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 five (5) years—though note criteria about cost-effectiveness and value for money
- No DORAs in DP15/DP16
- Removal of restrictions on a number of budget items for all schemes (publication costs, web hosting, mobile phones, workshops)
- Increase in DIA $$ within DP to promote internationalisation
- Extension of career interruption time available in DECRA
- Harmonisation of cross-scheme eligibility rules for clarity and consistency
More 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)
Discussions / Questions