The Australian Research Council

The ARC is a statutory agency within the Australian Government’s Education portfolio under Minister the Hon. Christopher Pyne MP. The ARC’s main responsibilities are:

- providing funding for research through the competitive funding schemes of the **National Competitive Grants Program** (NCGP);
- evaluating the quality of research in universities under **Excellence in Research for Australia** (ERA);
- providing **policy advice** on research matters to Government; and
- together with the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), administering the **Australian Research Integrity Committee** (ARIC).
The ARC Structure
National Competitive Grants Program

The National Competitive Grants Program (NCGP) is comprised of a number of schemes organised under two Programs.

*Discovery Program*
• supports fundamental research by teams and individuals

*Linkage Program*
• facilitates the development of partnerships between research teams and between higher education organisations and other parts of the national and international innovation systems.

Funding under both programs is awarded on the basis of a competitive peer review process.
National Competitive Grants Program (NCGP)

**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
### NCGP Proposal Numbers and Success Rates for 2013-14

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scheme Round</th>
<th>Proposals Considered</th>
<th>Proposals Approved</th>
<th>Success Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discovery Projects – 2014</td>
<td>3534</td>
<td>703</td>
<td>19.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Laureate Fellowships – 2013</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Fellowships – 2013</td>
<td>1234</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DECRA – 2014</td>
<td>1468</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Linkage Projects – 2013</td>
<td>785</td>
<td>306</td>
<td>39.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIEF – 2014</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>42.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discovery Indigenous – 2014</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>38.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discovery Program

• **Australian Laureate Fellowships** - aimed at attracting and retaining outstanding researchers in Australia. The scheme provides fellows with project funding in addition to a salary supplement and salary-related (on-cost) support.

• **Discovery Early Career Researcher Award (DECRA)** - aimed at supporting early-career researchers 0-5 years post PhD (up to 8 years depending on career interruptions)

• **Discovery Indigenous** - supports the development of Indigenous researchers’ skills and expertise.

• **Discovery Projects** - provides funding for research projects undertaken by excellent individual researchers and research teams.

• **Future Fellowships** - aimed at attracting and retaining the best and brightest mid-career researchers.
Linkage Program

- **ARC Centres of Excellence** - aimed at building critical mass in areas of research priority.
- **Industrial Transformation Research Program** - funds research hubs and training centres. Focuses on industries vital to Australia’s future. Supports Higher Degree by Research students and postdoctoral researchers in gaining real-world practical skills and experience through placement in industry.
- **Linkage Infrastructure, Equipment and Facilities** - encourages institutions to develop collaborative organisational arrangements to develop research infrastructure.
- **Linkage Projects** - supports collaborative research and research training between universities and partner organisations.
- **Special Research Initiatives & Co-funded Centres** - the ARC identifies new or emerging areas of research for funding. Applications for funding may be submitted only when invited by the ARC by means of a call for proposal(s).
NCGP Proposal Lifecycle
Development of Funding Rules

*Update of Funding Rules for existing scheme*

- Feedback from sector, Government and within the ARC
- Strategy developed to implement suggestions and improvements
- Analysis of feasibility to implement changes
- Team drafts Funding Rules
- ARC Executive, Strategy Branch and ARC Finance check for compliance and ensure that the latest policies are being implemented and any recommendations from consultations, audits etc. are taken into consideration
- Rules sent to central agencies to assess risk
- Sent to Minister for Education for approval, and Finance Minister is notified
- Rules can be published only once approved by Minister
Development of Funding Rules

Update of Funding Rules for existing scheme

Feedback → Central agencies → Minister for Education

Strategy

Feasibility → Compliance → Team Drafts Funding Rules

Finance Minister

ARC Publishes Rules and documents
NCGP Proposal Lifecycle

- Development of RMS
- Eligibility Exemption Request
Development of RMS

• At the start of each scheme round, each team works with the RMS developers to create a new proposal form that aligns with any changes made to the Funding Rules.

• This process takes approximately two months to complete.

Eligibility Exemption Request

• Some scheme rounds (currently only Future Fellowships) allow applicants to submit a request to the ARC to make them exempt from certain pieces of the eligibility criteria outlined in the scheme’s Funding Rules.
NCGP Proposal Lifecycle
Eligibility

• Whilst there is definitely commonality, eligibility is scheme specific

• Continuous from beginning to end of proposal lifecycle

• Research offices may receive correspondence seeking clarification up until outcomes are announced

• ARC staff and assessors check eligibility

• Administering Organisations are responsible for certifying that the participants meet the eligibility criteria

• The ARC CEO cannot recommend, and the Minister cannot approve, funding for any proposal that does not meet the eligibility requirements
NCGP Proposal Lifecycle
Recruitment of the College of Experts or Selection Advisory Committee

• The ARC calls for nomination of suitable candidates to join the ARC College of Experts or Selection Advisory Committee through our website, network message to research offices, advertisements, etc.

• Nominations must be submitted by approved nominators or delegate by the due date. Following a competitive selection process, both successful and unsuccessful candidates will be advised of the outcome.

• There are presently 160 members of the College of Experts (including new members appointed for 2014)
NCGP Proposal Lifecycle
Proposal Submission

• Proposals are created and submitted in the ARC’s Research Management System (RMS) by the closing date and time listed on the ARC’s website. Late proposals are not accepted.

• The Proposal must be submitted as a mature research plan presenting the proposed research ready for implementation.

• All Proposals must meet the format, content and eligibility requirements as set out in the Funding Rules, the RMS form and the Instructions to Applicants.
NCGP Proposal Lifecycle
Request not to Assess

• Administering Organisations may name any person or persons whom they do not wish to assess a Proposal by submitting a ‘Request Not to Assess’ form available on the ARC website.

• The form has recently been updated to simplify the process for applicants, research offices and the ARC. Any request containing more than three individual non-assessors for a Proposal must be directly supported in writing by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) or equivalent.

• These requests are dealt with alongside extensive conflict of interest processes which exclude assessors from being involved in any proposals for which they have a potential conflict.
Assessment Process

• The peer review process assists the ARC in ensuring that grant proposals are assessed in a fair, thorough and transparent manner. For this process to be possible, the ARC relies on two types of assessors - Detailed and General.

• Detailed assessors are experts drawn from the Australian and international research community who are highly qualified and respected experts within their respective fields of research.

• Detailed assessors complete in-depth assessments of ARC proposals, by providing scores and comments against scheme specific selection criteria. These assessments are then taken into consideration by General assessors, in the final stages of the peer review process.
Assessment Process (cont.)

• 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 via the RMS, Detailed assessments along with those of the General Assessors are combined and 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 purpose of the Rejoinder process is to allow 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.

• Detailed instructions for Rejoinders are available on the ARC website under Information for Applicants. Research offices are alerted when the Rejoinder process is open. Timeframes are typically up to ten working days.
NCGP Proposal Lifecycle
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 from the meeting 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 Proposal Lifecycle
Announcement of outcomes

• Once an announcement date is set, the ARC may update the dates on the Important Dates page on our website to advise the research sector. However it is often not possible to advise the sector in advance.

• Announcements are made via the ARC website and by email to Research Offices.

• The ARC publicises information about successful proposals, but does not make public detailed information about unsuccessful proposals.
NCGP Proposal Lifecycle
Funding Agreements

• A Funding Agreement along with associated Schedule A will be sent to the Administering Organisation of successful projects by email. Once received and executed by the ARC, payments can begin to be processed for funded Projects.

Appeals

• Appeals must be submitted within 28 days from the date of announcement, authorised by a DVCR, CEO or equivalent.

• Appeals will be considered only against administrative process issues and not against committee decisions, assessor ratings and comments or the assessment outcomes.
NCGP Proposal Lifecycle
Post Award

• After ARC announces successful grants, post-award activities begin.

• Each scheme has its own Funding Agreement which outline the post-award requirements. Once a Funding Agreement is signed and completed, the ARC approves commencement of payment to your institution as the Administering Organisation.

• All requests for changes to a project must be sent to the ARC post-award team and not the pre-award teams.

• All projects must abide by the post-award requirements and be in accordance with the Funding Rules and Funding Agreement for that particular scheme rounds and year. E.g. a DP10 project must only refer to the DP10 Funding Rules and Funding Agreement for information. Do not use other scheme/rounds Funding Rules and Funding Agreement as an information source.
Post-award requirements include

- **Variations to Funding Agreements**
  
e.g. delayed starts, suspensions, transfers, significant changes to budget, investigators or the research program.

- **Progress Reports by Exception**
  
This annual requirement occurs when significant issues are affecting the progress of the project

- **Final Reports**
  
This is usually completed within 6-12 months after the ARC payments cease (after an approved carry forward).
• **End of Year Reporting**
  This is an annual reporting requirement on expenditure for each ARC project, and includes requests and justification for carry forward of unspent funds into the next calendar year.

• **Contacts**
  The ARC has a *dedicated post-award team* which answers questions from research office staff.

  Email [ARC-Post-award@arc.gov.au](mailto:ARC-Post-award@arc.gov.au)

  Web page for Post-award updates, requirements, FAQs and forms: [http://www.arc.gov.au/applicants/reported_requirements.htm](http://www.arc.gov.au/applicants/reported_requirements.htm)
For further information...

The ARC website – www.arc.gov.au

• Information for Applicants
• Funding Rules for each scheme
• The Important Dates page for all current schemes
• Contact details for each scheme
• Instructions to Applicants
• Frequently Asked Questions
• Scheme outcomes
Questions?