



Australian Government
Australian Research Council

Establishment Toolkit

ARC Centres of Excellence

Last updated June 2021



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Introduction

This document provides helpful information to Applicants and grant awardees on best practice administration requirements of the *ARC Centres of Excellence (Centres)*.

This document supports the *ARC Centres of Excellence Grant Agreement for funding commencing in 2020 and 2023* (Grant Agreement). Applicants and grant awardees must use the relevant Grant Guidelines and Grant Agreements as the authoritative documents.

Please note, all terms and definitions in this document align with the Grant Agreement such as:

- **'Centre'** refers to the awarded *ARC Centre of Excellence*
- **'You/Your'** refers to the Administering Organisation
- **'We/Us'** refers to the Australian Research Council (ARC)

In addition, 'senior leadership' refers to the Centre Director, Chief Operating Officer, Deputy Directors, and node leaders.

Commencement timeline

Below is a timeline summary of the maximum establishment phases and requirements as outlined in CE23:

	Grants announced by Minister				Agreements executed = Start Date	
	Fourth Quarter 2022	By 30 June 2023	By 30 December 2023	Extension (on request)	Six months from Project Start Date	12 months from Project Start Date
Accept Grant Offer	(28 days)					
Commencement						
Extension (on request)						
Participating Agreements executed						
KPI development & submitted to ARC						
Plan development						
Launch date						

It's important to note that during the execution of the agreements (indicated in orange in the figure above) the investment should also be developing Key Performance Indicators in parallel.

The launch event is required to be held within 12 months of commencement (when the agreements have been executed) and not from the date the Grants were announced by Minister.

More information about each of these stages are detailed in the sections below.



Execution of the Grant Agreement

Grant Agreements and Grant Offers will be provided to your Research Office through the Research Management System (RMS) and accepted by a user with the role type 'Research Office Signatory'. The Grant Agreement and Grant Offer will then be counter-accepted by an ARC Delegate and the associated project will be created for payment of funding. After executing the Grant Agreement, You can commence third party agreements with the participating organisations.

For more information on accepting a Grant Agreement in RMS, please visit 'RMS: How to use Funding Agreement functionality' page on the [ARC website](#).

Your first ARC payment is made in the next monthly pay run in the first funded year. For more information regarding ARC payments, please visit the 'Grant Payments' page on the [ARC website](#).

Establishment Funds

Once the Grant Agreement has been executed and prior to commencement of the Centre, You can seek approval from the ARC to access up to \$100,000 of grant funds to support critical establishment costs.

A one-page request including a breakdown of proposed expenditure and rationale must be made via the Research Office to ARC-Postaward@arc.gov.au.

Example of an establishment fund request:

Request for Total \$X of ARC establishment funding to support the following activities:

- Salary for the Chief Operating Officer (COO) at HEW Level 10 and/or other senior administrative personnel to be employed by the Administering Organisation to directly assist in establishment activities \$X
- Recruitment costs including advertising: \$X (estimate only)
- Setting up of the website and KPI Reporting Tool plus logo, flyers, etc.: \$X
- Travel and/or meeting costs for the Centre Director and any other personnel to attend the meetings between universities and participating organisations: \$X
 - ❖ Air fares and taxis (\$X each), accommodation (\$X each), travel allowance (\$X each)
- Cost of workshop/s or meetings including travel costs for inter-state participants: \$X
 - ❖ Air fares and taxis (\$X each), accommodation (\$X each), venue hire and expenses \$X

In the unlikely event that the Centre does not commence and ceases as a grant, establishment funds will not be recovered by the ARC.

Please note that **You** hold the risk for incurring any costs above and beyond the establishment funds before the Centre has officially commenced.

Access to the remaining project funds for eligible budget items will only be available once the Centre has officially commenced, following the execution of agreements with Participating Organisations.

Noting the early commencement of the COO and other support staff, please ensure that you phase your budget so there is salary support for the COO through to the end of the Centre.



Administering Organisation - Taskforce support

The senior leadership of the Centre needs early support and advice from key university administration during the establishment process, especially to navigate complex operational, policy and third party agreement matters.

You are encouraged to establish a small temporary taskforce to support the Centre within the Administering Organisation, potentially including representatives from:

- Research Office
- Human Resources
- Finance
- Communications
- Information and Communications Technology
- Legal office
- Commercialisation and IP/Business Development.

This taskforce can provide guidance and support for establishment matters including:

- recruitment and appointments arrangements (for the Administering Organisation and other participating organisations)
- budget set up and management and clear financial delegation/s
- reporting requirements both to the ARC and with Centre participating organisations
- corporate identity and branding of the Centre
- establishing relevant key administration contacts for ongoing support
- assistance with legal agreements and negotiations with the Participating Organisations.

It may also be valuable to include a taskforce member with experience in best practice governance processes for research entities.

Setting out the terms of the taskforce (through the creation of a short document) may assist in ensuring everyone is working toward the same goals.

Some universities have taskforce structures already in place, or You can help the Centre to create a temporary one.

TIP: Document the operational guidance to allow You and the senior leadership to reference this material over the life of the Centre, regardless of any key university staff changes over time.

Participating Organisation Agreements

Building on the initial discussions and draft agreements developed during the Centre application phase, you can expect that negotiating and executing agreements with Participating Organisations may require significant coordinated effort.

You may choose to enter into a single agreement with multiple organisations or a single agreement per institution, as appropriate. Experience has shown that when varying agreements over time, it is easier to have separate agreements set up but with shared and consistent clauses.

You may also consider a simplified agreement in certain circumstances, i.e. with an overseas institution, or an organisation which is making a smaller or specialised contribution. Please note that all agreements must include certain standard provisions as required under the ARC Grant Agreement.



You must provide clear guidance in your agreements about Conflicts of Interest management arrangements. This should include the identification and ongoing management of current relationships within the Centre and how potential future conflicts will be identified and managed.

Previous experience has shown executing agreements with some organisations from overseas can be challenging and time consuming. Some countries need to ensure that any research agreement does not contradict their own legal framework. Note that multi-national organisations often need to seek legal advice in other countries.

TIP: It is important to set clear expectations of all parties (key personnel and organisations) prior to negotiating the agreement/s

TIP: You can, for example, use term sheets outlining high level requirements during the application stage or use a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to outline responsibilities and expectations on participation.

TIP: It may be useful to workshop Your draft Participating Organisation Agreement by running it through a variety of tests using hypothetical risk-based scenarios, particularly around IP ownership and other potential disputes.

TIP: Develop an abridged version of the agreement which explains in clear language “what this means for me” which may be a useful tool to provide to all parties, particularly for those organisations that may have limited experience in participating in an ARC Centre of Excellence.

TIP: Some Centres have found it beneficial to use consistent plain language in the agreements with all Participating Organisations to enable a shared community of understanding.

You can create additional Centre-based policy and procedure documents that underpin the terms of the agreement. This will allow You flexibility to make any procedural changes over time without varying the agreements. For example, the agreement states parties must comply with Conflicts of Interest but the detailed mechanisms can be outlined in a procedural document.

In extenuating circumstances, where all agreements have been completed with the exception of one which is seriously delaying the commencement of the Centre, You may submit a Variation to temporarily remove that organisation subject to ARC approval. This allows the Centre to commence and the organisation may be re-added once the agreement has been finalised. You must ensure the Participating Organisation agrees to this Variation and continue to manage their expectations when taking this course of action.

If You are experiencing difficulties in finalising any of the Participating Organisation agreements, please contact the ARC Major Investments Team for further advice.

Conduct of Research

An ethics plan must be in place prior to commencing the Centre. Consider the need for some flexibility should changes to the project scope be necessary.

TIP: Carefully consider any other statutory or regulatory requirements with which all the Centre participating organisations must comply with.



Detailed Project-level Plans and Agreements

Once the Centre is established, the nodes will begin setting up project-level agreements/plans. This step requires You to have more detailed negotiations with Participating Organisations and personnel involved. While this activity is Centre-wide, the oversight of the process is driven centrally by the Centre's executive leadership.

TIP: Make sure the agreements are integrated within the research program to avoid it becoming a loose network of individual projects.

TIP: Consider outlining the key milestones, reporting requirements and an escalation process for complex negotiation issues.

TIP: Document the Centre IP through an IP register: this can be a simple Excel document list or something more technical to suit the needs of the Centre. Include information on the:

- Background IP
- Expected Project IP, noting that there can be different arrangements for owning, licensing or use of IP
- Process for managing New/Emerging IP or steps to manage disputes

Further information regarding the development of a translation plan is provided below.

Please be aware that in negotiating project-level plans/agreements, it must be implemented in accordance with the Centre's 'Project Description' and within the broad structure of the proposed 'Project Cost' contained in the application, as well as any Special Conditions.

There are examples where Centres seek scope changes for approval by the ARC that can either emerge during the early negotiations or during the lifespan of the agreement.

Examples of scope changes that would be considered for approval by the ARC

Example 1

A Centre had three themes and six sub projects in the application. However, after accepting the funding offer there was a return rate of 90% of ARC funds. It was decided that the grant will scale back and remove one of the sub projects from the research program. There is no major impact to the overall outcomes.

Example 2

A Centre had a partner withdraw from the Centre and a new partner is interested in joining, however under a different/new research theme than the original partner was involved in. This new research direction is still within the intent of the Centre program and can be integrated easily into future research program activities. You request a variation to add a new organisation and scope change for approval by the ARC.

Examples of scope changes which would NOT be approved by the ARC

Example 1

A Centre wishes to change a research theme due to changes in their partner organisation/s priorities, which falls outside the objectives and aims of the research program or scheme objectives. In this case, a scope change variation would not be approved by the ARC.



Prior to formally submitting a scope change in RMS, please email the Major Investments team with the following details:

- A brief outline of the current scope of the Centre's research program
- A summary of proposed changes, including rationale, benefits and any risks
- A summary of any budget changes in response to the scope change

The ARC will review the request and if approved, a scope change variation can be submitted into RMS by the Research Office. In many cases, a meeting with the ARC and Centre Director, COO and Research Office staff are organised to discuss the scope changes as a first step.

Transitioning Arrangements for Centres

You may be awarded a new Centre before the end date of a previously funded Centre. To manage the transition arrangements, the ARC requires You and the senior leadership to submit a transition statement for consideration.

The transition statement must be provided to the ARC-Postaward@arc.gov.au **within three months** of the new Centre Grant Offer being executed by the ARC.

An example statement is included below. See the Grant Agreement for a list of the required information for this statement.

IMPORTANT: Should the transition statement be unsatisfactory in outlining the transition arrangements, or if there is potential overlap of funding, the ARC may recover funds from either the new and/or old Centre.

Examples of transitioning arrangements for Centres

There are three general options for transition:

Option 1:

The old Centre will conclude and then the new Centre will commence. This arrangement may include requesting approval from the ARC to delay the start of the new Centre.

Option 2:

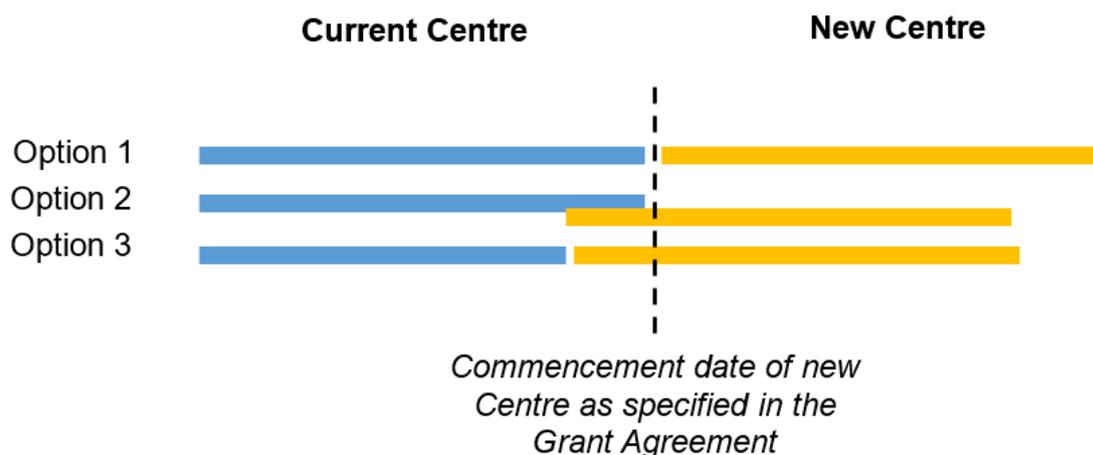
The old Centre will continue with an acting Director while the new Centre will commence with the Director. This arrangement will need to carefully detail the movement of all personnel from the old to the new, where appropriate. You must seek approval from the ARC to appoint an acting Director to manage the old Centre.

Option 3:

You can seek approval from the ARC to conclude the old Centre earlier (with or without a partial relinquishment of funds) and then commence the new Centre



Figure 1: Transitioning arrangement examples



Additional interest to join the Centre

As a newly established Centre, you may experience a surge of interest from other organisations that would like to be involved in the Centre. Ensure there is a clear strategy and criteria for managing such requests for adding new organisations, including a framework to consider the merits and risks of the collaboration.

When obtaining cash from participating organisations, there must be ongoing engagement and monitoring of cash flow, particularly for investments over multiple years.

Example criteria for considering new Participating Organisations

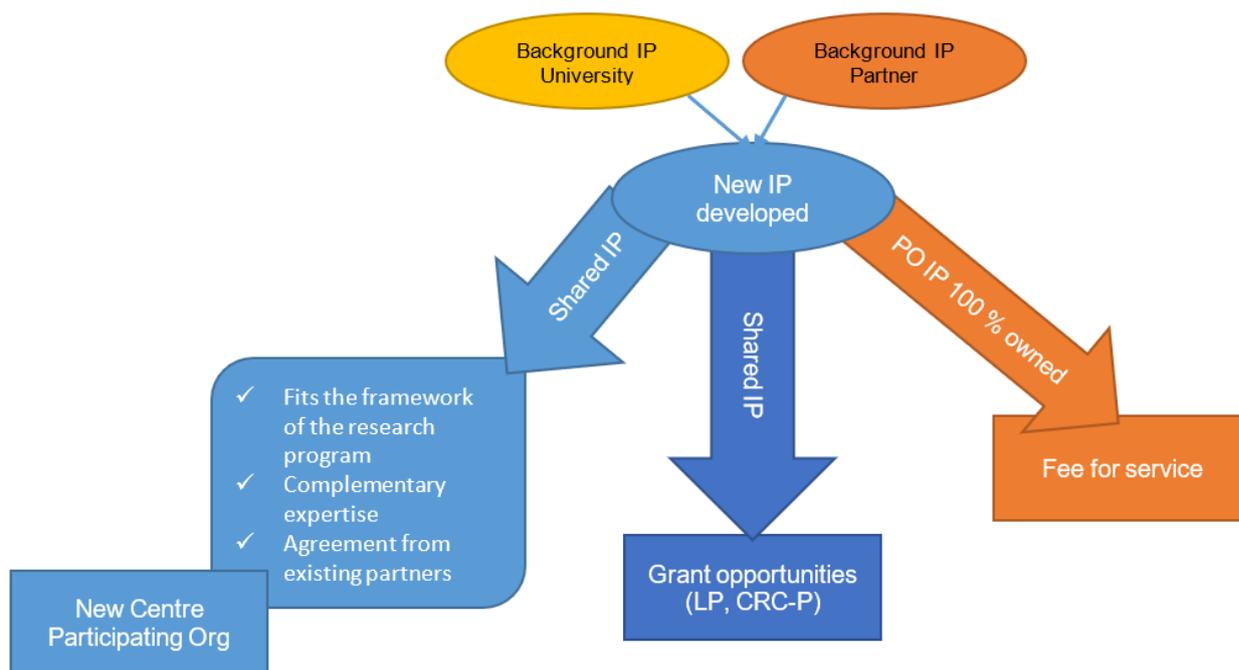
Have criteria to identify if the new partnership is more appropriate for:

- A Fee for Service contract or consultancy arrangement direct with a university (for example when the partners are seeking 100% IP ownership)
- A separate grant opportunity (e.g. ARC Linkage Projects, ARC Discovery Projects or Cooperative Research Centres Projects [CRC-P]) (for example, shared IP and outside of the Centre's Research Program of activities)
- Being added as a New Partner Organisation within the Centre, but ensuring it fits in the research program and collaboration framework of other organisations.

Appropriateness to add a new Participating Organisation.

- Consider its involvement in the overall framework of the research program
- Consider the merits for adding a partner—does the new Participating Organisation enhance the capability and direction of the research program?
- Is this organisation replacing a Participating Organisation that has been removed from the grant? Is this 'like for like', or not?
- What is the impact on the existing shared IP arrangements?
- Is there clear support from the current Participating Organisations to add the new organisation?

Figure 2: Example of business process flow for considering new partners



Governance

The ARC Centres of Excellence scheme is a large Commonwealth investment with multiple organisations involved and is considered to be a national research entity. As such, governance is an important consideration. Clear governance arrangements facilitate better program management and delivery of translation of outcomes.

Advisory Committees

It is recommended that an **Advisory Committee** is established as early as possible. Membership of this committee will particularly help with strategic and translational planning and thinking ahead.

The purpose of the Advisory Committee is to assist Centre leadership by contributing to the development of strategies and vision for the future relative to the proposed goals and objectives of the Centre, and by serving as a source of ideas for creating better linkages between academia, industry, government and other sectors. The Advisory Committee offers advice to the Centre Director, senior leadership of the Centre, and You regarding the strategic focus of the Centre, the structure and general operating principles of the Centre, and leveraging potential national benefits including but not limited to opportunities for new intellectual property, commercialisation and other important outcomes.

Membership

Membership should include people with critical strategic skills to advise You on opportunities and challenges that could lie ahead, not only addressing current issues for the Centre. The committee can have national and international membership and can play an ambassadorial role for the Centre. Scientific, governance or operational expertise can be sought from members—whatever is needed to support the Centre’s directions.

The Advisory Committee must consist of members with significant reputations and expertise and provide broad representation of the research excellence and end-user communities. An Advisory Committee may comprise some of the following: senior international researchers, industry or

end-user representatives, government and policy decision makers, community groups, academic expertise from other higher education institutions, or may some senior university staff such as the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research).

The membership of the Advisory Committee must take into consideration strategic directions, risks and opportunities and seek the relevant expertise required to address the future challenges and opportunities for the Centre as it develops and matures. Advisory Committee membership must be reviewed at least every two years.

Note that the ARC does not stipulate the number of members for committees, only that it should have the right mix of expertise.

TIP: The Advisory Committee(s) should be independent of the members of the Centre to enable them to consider strategic issues and provide appropriate advice to leadership.

Terms of Reference

Develop clear Terms of Reference including:

- quorum requirements
- scope of work and advice
- gender equality and diversity
- Early Career Researcher (ECR) participation (as a part of professional development and mentoring)
- equitable organisational representation
- ensuring the membership gives advice, not directives (like a board)
- clear requirements for refreshing membership every couple of years to continue developing and meeting new strategic directions
- The Director and COO are observers not members.

The Advisory Committee must meet at least twice a year.

Talk to other Centre Directors and look at other Centre annual reports—while the ARC does not give specific recommendations on governance structure, there are many examples that are available for you to consider.

International Research Advisory Committee

The Centre may choose to establish and maintain a separate International Research Advisory Committee or International Scientific Advisory Committee in addition to the Advisory Committee.

The purpose of the International Advisory Committee is to provide an international perspective on the Centre's research field, to undertake benchmarking of the Centre's Research Program, and to assist Centre management and the Advisory Committee in developing the strategic research direction of the Centre. The International Research Advisory Committee must provide reports and advice to the Centre Director and Advisory Committee regarding the international standing of the Centre's Research Program.

While the final composition of the International Research Advisory Committee is a matter for the Administering Organisation and the Centre, it must consist of members with significant reputations and include senior international researchers who are experts in the field and who are not Partner Investigators in the Centre.

The International Research Advisory Committee must meet at least once a year. International benchmarking of the Research Program undertaken by the International Advisory Committee should take place regularly, at least once every two years.



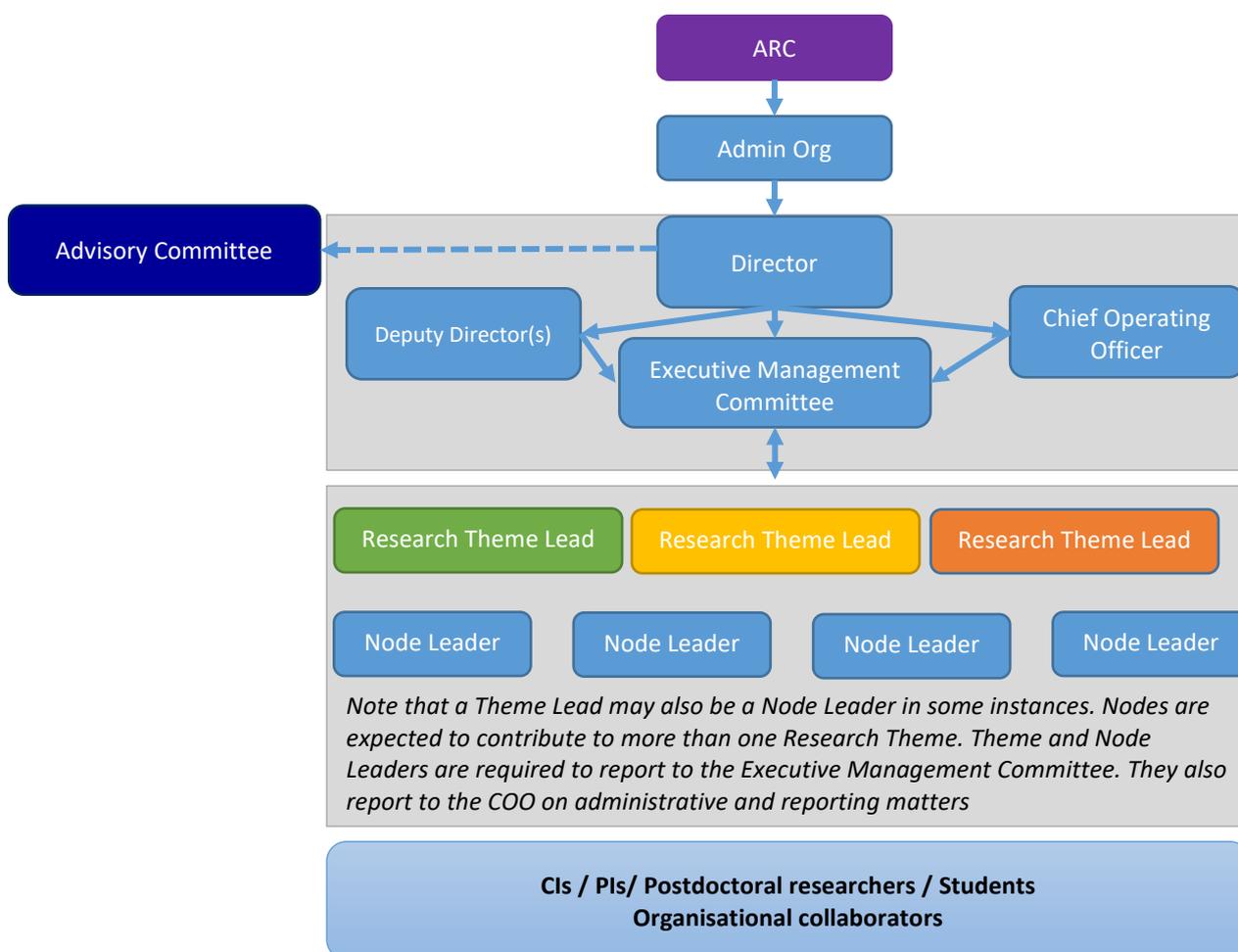
An Advisory Committee may additionally take on some of the responsibilities of an International Advisory Committee, but in this case the membership of the Advisory Committee must have equivalent expertise.

Executive Management Committee

To operate as an entity in its own right, there must be adequate representation of senior leadership to manage the Centre. This can include Centre Director, Chief Operating Officer (COO), Deputy Director/s, node/theme leaders, and on occasions, where appropriate, participating university senior executive. Also consider how best to include and engage with participating organisation representatives.

The COO is important to be included in this membership to ensure operational aspects of the Centre are present in discussions as context for the decision-making structure. Additionally, the COO is an important role, ensuring operational aspects of the Centre are represented in discussions which is important context for decision making. Remember that members of the Executive Management Committee should be working together for the Centre’s best interests (and not individual institutions).

Figure 3: Example of key elements of a governance framework



The Centre needs to develop clear roles and responsibilities for the Executive Management Committee to delineate between delegation/decision responsibilities and when the committee provides advice.



Examples roles and responsibilities for the Centre to consider in their development of the Executive Management Committee.

Strategic Leadership

Delegation elements

- Develop, approve and manage Centre Program/projects and associated activities
- Approve budget and scope variations of the Research Program
- Develop, approve and manage research training and professional development
- Oversight of and approve strategic funds
- Oversight and manage risk management and mitigation
- Consider Advisory Committee advice in strategic directions

Advisory

- Advise on scope of new research opportunities and work
- Advise on future proofing against risks
- Advise on new potential partnerships and collaborations

Management

Delegated elements

- Approve projects and manage progress of research (successful and performance management of research work)
- Approve monitoring mechanisms and report on risks and mitigation
- Approve postdoctoral researchers and student programs of work and their training
- manage and report on of personnel and organisational variations to grant agreement
- Approve and implement new personnel and organisations

Advisory

- advice on new operational needs and opportunities
- consider best practice advice on research and implementation needs

Governance

- Oversight and management of proper disbursement and expenditure of grant funds
- Oversight and manage accurate and timely Executive Committee and ARC reporting
- Oversight of approved scope of work and notifying of potential issues and variations
- Oversight of risks and mitigations that may breach the ARC Agreement
- Consider advice from Advisory Committee and implement as appropriate
- Coordination and approval of communication strategy
- Coordination and approval of policy implementation (list of examples)

Centre Director and Deputy Director/s

It is also recommended that any delegate responsibilities of the Director as part of the Executive Management Committee is clearly outlined in the terms of reference. The Director is expected to have oversight of budget/expenditure, human resources matters, reporting and other management matters.

The role of Deputy Director/s aim to support the Director in strategic areas as required. It is also important for succession planning purposes. Some Centres have more than one Deputy Director while other Centres have one Deputy Director with Node Leaders from each node.

The responsibility of node/theme leaders needs to be clearly defined includes responsibility for management and administrative delegations at their individual institutions. Node Leaders are expected to ensure the node is well integrated within the research program both within the node and across the Centre and are responsible for the management and administration of research activities within their node. Theme Leaders have oversight of the research directions and outcomes as specified in the Research Theme. Some Centres have the appointed the same person as the Node Leader and Theme Leader, however this is not an ARC requirement and the



two roles can be separate as appropriate. They assist in building integrated Centre culture and delivering on the research program.

The role and responsibilities of these leadership positions must be documented and clear.

Governance Processes

It is very important to document the governance of the Centre including how changes will be managed.

In situations where major decisions need to be made in regard to changes with Investigators, the directions and performance of the Research Program, and budget variations, clear operational processes should be developed, documented and understood by the senior leadership. Have clear ground rules of who to consult for key decisions and in what instances.

For example, the additional stipulation that the senior leadership will take on advice from the majority of Chief Investigators as a recommendation for change. Then each decision will be made on a consensus basis by the Executive Management Committee and failing consensus the Centre Director may call for a vote of Executive Management Committee members, who may pass resolutions on a simple majority basis.

If the Executive Management Committee cannot reach agreement after discussing a matter at two consecutive meetings, the resolution shall be decided by the Centre Director at their sole discretion. This can help to generate a sense of inclusion and ownership over decisions for the wider Chief Investigator community and can help to dispel impressions of top down governance. At the same time, it does not create significant issues through 'decision by committee' scenarios.

Reporting lines

Establish clear management reporting lines for the Centre to ensure there is smooth and regular communication with the relevant parties. This is both reporting to participating organisations as well as reporting back to the Administering Organisation to comply with ARC reporting purposes.

You will need to consider reporting lines within the context of the governance structure of the Centre, including across the nodes. Note that administration staff within other nodes will often report to the lead Chief Investigator within that node rather than the central administration team. This needs to be managed carefully as administrative staff are contributing to the Centre as a whole, not appointed as executive assistants for researchers.

In terms of the Centre Director as a Delegate for the ARC grant, it is common for the Director to report to a Head of School, Dean, or in some instances directly to Deputy Vice Chancellor Research (DVC-R).

Financial delegations

You need to clearly determine the Centre delegations early for Finance and Human Resources related activities to allow for operational autonomy for the Director and COO, particularly for the ARC funds.

Should a change to the structure of delegations inside the university be required, re-negotiate and allow for lead time to complete this negotiation process.

Senior leadership should clearly support the efforts of the COO and administrative team in managing operational requirements, and also intervene when necessary to ensure compliance by all Centre participants, people and organisations in managing expenditure and other reporting requirements.

TIP: To obtain more ideas and to assist in engaging with other university's structures, contact the Research Office staff, and Chief Operating Officers from ARC Centres of Excellence from other nodes to understand administrative structures, identify key contacts and understand their financial and other delegations.



Personnel

Given the grant is seven years in duration, the ARC expects that there will be changes to named personnel.

Change of Centre Director

You will need to work closely with the ARC to manage a request for a new Centre Director.

For a change of Centre Director these additional steps need to occur:

- You must **notify the ARC** via email to advise that a leadership change will take place including the rationale for this change.
- A competitive **recruitment process** should be undertaken by the Administering Organisation for an appropriately qualified person to lead the Centre.
- You must **advise the ARC** via email that a candidate has been selected and that the necessary preliminary approvals have been given by other Participating Organisations. The ARC should also be supplied with a copy of the CV for the proposed Centre Director (no more than two pages).
- A **meeting/interview is organised** with the ARC with the proposed Centre Director, the DVC-R or equivalent delegate from the Administering Organisation, the COO and the Director of the Research Office from the Administering Organisation.
- In some cases, the interview may involve a site visit to the Administering Organisation and a performance review.
- You can appoint an interim Director for up to 12 months while you are finalising the recruitment process, however this will require ARC notification and approval

At the meeting with the ARC, a **short presentation** must be given by the proposed Centre Director outlining:

- the expertise and skills the Director can bring to the Centre
- a summary of progress of the Centre to date
- potential opportunities and challenges which lie ahead
- activities in the next 12 months—including strategic funding options and wind down plans (if applicable).

Subject to the ARC assessment of the paperwork and meeting, the ARC will provide advice on whether the appointment of the new Director may progress, which may include follow up conditions required to support the new Centre Director taking on the role. If the appointment may proceed, You will submit a formal request into **RMS as a Variation** for final ARC approval of the Centre Director change.

Appointment of Chief Operating Officer

ARC funds are allocated to appoint a highly qualified COO for the Centre. You and the senior leadership should follow an appropriate competitive recruitment process. The COO is a vital participant who leads the business and operational management of Centre administration and is expected to be appointed at a HEW level 10.

As one of the first Centre-funded appointees, the COO will also play an important role in coordinating the negotiation and execution of the participating organisation agreements in collaboration with other participating organisations.

It is also important that the COO liaises with You and other administrative support personnel at the nodes from the early stages of the Centre to build an operational network to support effective administration.



Following recruitment, once the COO is appointed, please notify the ARC Major Investments Team, who will organise a videoconference or face-to-face meeting as a means for introduction and to facilitate an ongoing and productive working relationship.

We encourage new COOs to reach out to the regional COO network in their state (NSW, VIC and QLD only). If a network does not exist within your university contact the Major Investments team who can provide some other useful contacts.

Change of Chief Operating Officer

At any point during the life of the Centre, You must notify the ARC if the COO has resigned and when a replacement has been appointed following a recruitment process. The Major Investments team will organise a videoconference or face-to-face meeting with the new COO as a way of introduction to the ARC.

Recruitment of Personnel

Best practice university recruitment processes should be followed for the recruitment of staff to the Centre. We also encourage Centres to be innovative in their recruitment processes to attract the best candidates.

Some ARC Centres of Excellence have advertised female-only postdoctoral positions to meet their gender equality and diversity policy targets. There are also a number of gender equality and diversity toolkits which have been developed by ARC Centres of Excellence are available on their respective websites. For more information please contact the ARC Major Investments team.

Consider the timing of appointments for staff and students across the life of the Centre to ensure appropriate balance of resources and supervision of staff. Also plan for the final years of the Centre to ensure students are not left unsupported or unsupervised or have research activities that extend beyond the project end date.

It is important to achieve a balance of senior positions and post-doctoral researchers (at levels A, B and C). This will create a strong foundation for effective succession planning in the Centre.

Following the recruitment of personnel, all staff should undergo an induction process. A plan for their ongoing professional development and mentoring should also be put in place. Be innovative in ideas for mentoring, supervision—the Centre is building the future research workforce which are able to work across organisations or sectors.

Associate Investigators (AIs)

Associate Investigators (AI) are researchers listed in the Centre Application who were not Chief Investigators or Partner Investigators but who will participate in the Centre's Research Program. They may have specific expertise relevant to an aspect of the Centre's Research Program, or may not be able to or wish to commit to the responsibilities of a Chief Investigator or Partner Investigator. Associate Investigators may be located in Australia or overseas.

In many cases, an AI's contribution is to provide mentorship or guidance to students, or have a small role within one of the projects of the Centre's research program.

The ARC does not formally recognise Associate Investigators as a participant on the Centre so they are not named in the Centre's details in RMS. As such, AIs cannot manage ARC funds or participate in the Centre as a project lead. Additionally, AI's contributions to the Centre are not counted towards any eligibility limits to apply for future grants.

The Centre may acknowledge the AI's contributions within the Annual Reports and on their websites.



Initial Centre Meeting

It is recommended that an initial meeting or strategic planning day is held with the Centre team within the first few months of establishment. Include as many participants as possible, noting you can use the \$100,000 establishment funds to support this inaugural activity.

Some suggested topics to discuss at this meeting can include:

- development of a framework for implementing critical operational requirements
- establishment of a communications strategy, which should address:
 - team cohesion
 - processes for management of participant expectations
 - performance reporting coordination of variations to the Grant Agreement
 - communicating with key external stakeholders
- revised budget plan (if required)
- planned use of strategic funds
- development of detailed project plans
- establishment of good governance framework and reporting processes, and consider risk mitigation strategies
- clear regular reporting requirements for participating organisations and to the ARC

Also consider discussing and setting the Centre's Key Performance Indicator (KPI) targets.

Operational Plans

You must put in place a number of plans during the establishment phase of the Centre. Included below are some of the essential plans every Centre should have in place.

Strategic Plan

You should put in place a strategic plan within six months of the Project Start Date.

Senior Centre management, Chief Investigators and the Advisory Committee must participate in the development and maintenance of the strategic plan, with all Centre Staff given the opportunity to provide input. The strategic plan should incorporate, as appropriate:

- a) a clear plain language statement of the Centre's purpose and vision
- b) the expected outcomes of the Centre's research through its period of ARC Grant funding and at its conclusion, and indicators of success in achieving these
- c) detailed research translation and/or Intellectual Property strategies
- d) identified and/or potential opportunities for end-user and industry collaborations and management strategies to take advantage of these opportunities
- e) detailed succession plans for critical positions, including that of Centre Director, as well as provisions for professional development, coaching and mentoring where needed
- f) opportunities for Centre involvement in emerging research areas;
- g) identified and/or potential sources of funding to support projects both during the Centre Activity Period and once the Grant has ceased, in particular to ensure continued support for students



- h) a Centre-specific plan for the management of performance issues across the Research Program including provisions which allow projects which have reached their natural end to be closed down; underperforming or non-performing projects to be closed down; funding from the Grant and from other funding sources allocated to such projects to be redistributed elsewhere within the Centre; and appropriate consultation and discussion with relevant organisations and personnel in relation to such projects.

TIP: consider setting the KPIs prior to finalising the Strategic Plan. Circulate and consult in the development of the Strategic Plan and provide copies of it to all Centre participants when they are appointed as part of their induction to the Centre. The ARC may ask questions relating to this at the mid-term review.

Gender Equality and Diversity Plan

You must put in place a Gender Equality and Diversity Plan within six months of the Project Start Date. This plan should:

- consider strategies to position the Centre as a **flexible and work/life balance-friendly environment**
- **support innovative recruitment processes and employment conditions** of post-doctoral researchers, students and other staff including committees
- encourage the **recruitment of and flexible employment** arrangements for research personnel and other staff with family or carer responsibilities
- be developed in conjunction with the **human resources areas** of the Participating Organisations.

Governance Plan

A robust governance framework for the Centre should include:

- key expert advice needed and structure of the committee with Terms of Reference, including reviewing membership regularly
- reporting requirements
- ongoing management of risks and mitigation strategies
- identification of University/ies regulatory frameworks and critical legislation requirements
- Communication strategy and how it should operate and be clearly managed

Budget Plan

During the establishment phase of the Centre, it may be necessary to revisit the budget costings to the ARC-funded research program. If the Centre needs to make revisions to the budget make sure it is clearly documented. Also include details on other changes in research direction or issues with equipment purchase or infrastructure access.

If there are major changes to the budget, which include funding being moved across line items, e.g. personnel, equipment or travel, then a budget Variation will need to be completed to obtain ARC approval. For more information, please see the Variations Guidelines on the [ARC Website](#).

Have clear arrangements on the distribution and in some cases recovery of funds across nodes. You, should administer the strategic funds with its distribution based on performance management of the research projects.

It is important to ensure that sufficient funds are allocated for administrative costs right to the end date of the Centre as a project, or even beyond with approved use of Administering Organisation funds, to ensure all final reporting requirements are met.



Carefully consider the eligible budget items which the ARC funds can support, and which items will need to be supported through other funding sources. See the Grant Guidelines for more information.

TIP: Items which are not eligible for ARC funding can be supported from University or partner funds.

It is important to have clearly documented rules within the plan for how the funds will be distributed across the Centre so there is transparency in the process, including strategic funds.

It is also advisable to have a mechanism in place to report costs associate with ARC funds separate to other funds.

Mentoring and Professional Development Plan

A Centre is expected to build human capacity and provide high-quality training for the next generation of researchers and research leaders, above and beyond the opportunities offered at the employing universities. To facilitate these responsibilities, the Centre must establish and implement a high-quality mentoring and professional development program, encompassing students, postdoctoral researchers and mid-career researchers. The Centre should establish flexible supervision arrangements for students through which supervision can be arranged with researchers at Centre Nodes other than that at which the student is located or with Partner Investigators or Associate Investigators as appropriate.

You should implement a Mentoring and Professional Development Plan within six months of the Project Start Date. This plan should:

- outline the implementation of a high-quality supervision, mentoring and professional development program, and encompass all students, post-doctoral researchers and mid-career researchers
- outline mechanisms through which students can be supervised including co-supervision by researchers both across nodes and across academic disciplines or even across participating organisations
- where appropriate, confirm that the Centre Director, CIs and PIs must act as supervisors and mentors to assist less experienced personnel in developing research management and leadership skills and outline mechanisms through which this can occur. AIs may also undertake a mentoring role.

Communication, Education and Outreach Plan

The Centre must develop, implement and maintain a communication, education and outreach plan. The plan should outline the Centre's public awareness, education and outreach programs which must be relevant and appropriate to the Centre and its research area. Joint programs or events with Centres in similar or related fields can be established as appropriate. All Centre researchers should receive some media communications training and should be encouraged to participate in the public awareness, education and outreach programs. The Centre and its Research Program must clearly articulate and promote the Research Impact or potential Research Impact to a wide range of audiences, as far as practicable

Translation Plan

You should implement a Translation Plan within six months of the Project Start Date. This plan should include:

- identification of actual and potential end users and industry and other sectors
- a map of a clear pathway to research impact and how progress can be monitored and measured in terms of success



- how the data will be effectively collected to undertake impact monitoring and evaluation
- an outline of the IP arrangements, commercialisation pathways and other outcomes.

Consider planning and mapping your translation of research outcomes early and consider what impact and engagement measures can be used. Consider what does the key successes of the Centre look like to end users, what is the measure for these successes, and have a strategic plan for capitalising on those opportunities.

Consult with your stakeholders and end-users of the research to ensure the impact measures are fit for purpose. See the [ARC Website](#) for more information on developing research impact.

Creating a Centre as an entity

A Centre is considered to be a national research enterprise and its own entity.

Website and social media

Establishing an online presence is important as part of the strategy to appear as an national entity. Websites and social media platforms facilitate greater engagement with the public and have been used to great effect by existing Centres.

TIP: Centre Directors can acknowledge their title in their signature block prior to the Centre commencing but after the Grant Offer has been executed.

TIP: Share your Twitter handle with ARC-Communications@arc.gov.au and tag ARC in your posts (@arc_gov_au).

Notwithstanding this requirement of independent branding, the senior leadership can still reach out to the universities marketing/Public Relations staff who are experienced in setting up websites and seek assistance where possible. Some Centres, however, pay for external consultants to assist with web design and branding.

It may be beneficial to have a placeholder website to ensure that there is a domain name and URL available. There is currently no specific guidance from the ARC around domain names and Centres have used .com, .org, and .edu.

TIP: Centres are multi-organisational grants and it may be beneficial to have a website and social media presence that distinguishes the Centre as its own entity and not a sub-department of a university

Centre Logo

The ARC does not state any specific requirements in the development of a Centre logo, however you must ensure that your name on branding material, such as banners and signs acknowledges the ARC.

Some Centres develop the logo as part of a team building exercise or as an internal competition. Other Centres have sought the public or school groups to enter their designs for a logo.

Signage

It is expected that the Centre is acknowledged in a prominent place within the Administering Organisation and nodes. Signage must include the ARC logo and full title of the Centre.

Launch Event

Due to impacts of COVID-19, the ARC has extended the requirement for a Centre to hold a launch event from 12 to 18 months from commencement. The Federal Minister for Education and



the ARC CEO must be invited. Launches are generally a face-to-face event, however the ARC will accept virtual or hybrid launch events.

Launches should be organised in consultation with the ARC, following protocols set out in the ARC's event advice documentation (available from ARC Stakeholder Relations).

The format of the event will be managed in conjunction with You and the senior leadership of the Centre.

TIP: Read the ARC event advice before you commence planning your launch event.

TIP: The timing of the event should be chosen so that initial achievements of the Centre can be showcased, and attendance by Partner Organisation representatives is desirable.

Some example formats are provided below:

- New building opened for the Centre
- New equipment and lab tours
- Unveiling of signage
- The functions can be held in or around lab facilities or within a general function area within the university or some are held at Parliament House.

In many cases, where interstate or international participants of the Centre are attending the launch, it is usually paired with a workshop, summer/winter school, or annual meeting to take advantage of their travel to the Administering Organisation.

TIP: ARC Stakeholder Relations can assist with contact with the Federal Minister for Education. It may also be appropriate to consider inviting other Federal or State Parliamentarians.

Acknowledging the Centre research

As per the Grant Agreement, the Centre's publications and research outputs need to acknowledge the Centre and the ARC. The Centre will need to develop clear strategies around which research activities are appropriate to be acknowledged under the Centre.

Setting Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Prior to commencement of the project, all Centres must set performance targets across a range of categories for each year of funding. These performance targets or Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), are reported annually through the Annual Report.

Note that KPIs are only one measurement of the overall performance of the Centre. It is important that adequate time and consideration is given to setting up KPI data collection processes. Please refer to the KPI Guidance document which has been circulated to You and the Centre Director.

Consider KPIs early and one important mechanism for monitoring progress. KPIs targets must have aspirational targets to stretch Centre participants' performance. Excluding Year 1 performance where the Centre is still establishing, consider reviewing KPI targets each year to ensure they are fit for purpose, as the targets may be revised with ARC approval.

TIP: You can amend the KPI targets for the forward years at any time. You will need to seek approval from the ARC by emailing ARC-Postaward@arc.gov.au and provide a short rationale for the changes. If approved by the ARC, the updated targets can be reported on in forward years.



Strategic Funds

Consider setting aside a pool of funds for strategic purposes throughout the operation of the Centre. These funds can support opportunities as an incentive which can emerge (brand new or serendipitous). For example, an 'Innovation Award' that drives new directions, ideas or applications. You must ensure these emerging investments continue align with the research program in the application or subsequent approved project scope change. These strategic funds can also be used for management of risk by funding mitigation plans if risks are realised.

Agreement on the use and distribution of these funds should be established early and the Executive Management Committee has oversight on the distribution of this initiative and performance of the research outcomes.

Some Administering Organisations set aside extra income from ARC indexation or bank interest to supplement strategic funds.

There are three main strategies in managing strategic funds:

- 1) To support unexpected gaps in the research program (such as technology, equipment or bringing in additional expertise).
- 2) In response to serendipitous opportunities which will enhance the existing research program. These emerging opportunities are often time sensitive with a high risk, but high return.
- 3) As part of the Centre's risk management for when a research project is not performing as expected. The Centre leadership should consider a risk assessment of each project which can then identify areas of high return or potential new opportunities, as well as any areas which could potentially have issues (such as equipment failing or loss of expertise).

Indexation

The indexation applied to ARC grant payments is intended to cover the increase in salary and other costs from year to year following the grant being awarded. The indexation factors for each year can be found on the ARC website.

For some Centres, the extra funds from indexation is shared across the nodes relative to the ARC funding allocated to them. However, there have been other cases where a smaller portion is sent to the nodes and the remaining funds are kept centrally for strategic funds, or all the indexation funds are managed centrally.

All scenarios should be agreed to between all Centre parties.

Reporting Tools

There are a number of reporting requirements as outlined in the Grant Agreement, which will require data collection within the Centre. When implementing the use of internal reporting tools, consider how data is requested, collected and presented and how it will be used over the forward years. The senior leadership will need to ensure that there is a robust and accurate mechanism to report and track against KPIs for their own purposes as well as reporting to the ARC.

TIP: Report against KPIs monthly or quarterly over the life of the Centre. This information can be sent out for communications across the nodes and will be easier to collate data for the Annual Reports each year.

TIP: There is more than Excel in terms of available tools —speak to existing COOs of Centres about the different systems that are being used. A number have either in-house custom built or externally commissioned online reporting databases.



Annual Report

You must submit an electronic Annual Report covering both financial operations and research performance for Your Centre by 31 March in the year following each calendar year for which the grant was awarded. There is no set template, however the Annual Report must include details as specified in the relevant Grant Agreement.

Variations to the Grant Agreement

For all Variations, please refer to the Research Office Instructions for completing and submitting a Variation and/or POACR available on the ARC website. You will find detailed instructions for each Variation type with the relevant supporting documentation requirements. Included below are instructions specific to ARC Centres of Excellence.

Adding New Participating Organisations

Within the variation to add a new Participating Organisation to the Project, ensure the following information is provided:

- Clarity if the new organisations are a replacement or addition to the investment
- A rationale of what benefits the organisation brings to the investment (subject matter expertise, personnel, etc).
- If the organisation is a replacement, identify if there is a shortfall on contributions and if it affects the research program.

Adding a New Node

Before a Variation is submitted in RMS, contact the Major Investments team and provide the following information:

- A summary of the current structure of the Centre, outlining the current nodes
- A short rationale as to what the new node will bring to the Centre (stating any particular expertise, cash and in-kind commitments, key people including short CVs – no more than one page each)
- An explanation as to how the new node will fit in with governance and encompassed into advisory bodies, if applicable
- An explanation of how the Centre budget will be re-directed to support the new node, and an explanation for the use of those funds

Once the information has been provided to the ARC, and if approved, the Research Office can follow up with a Variation.



Reviews

Performance Review

In its fourth year of operation, a Centre must undergo a rigorous and comprehensive external performance review undertaken by the ARC. Performance reviews, otherwise known as Mid-Term reviews, involve the consideration of documentation submitted to the ARC and a site visit or interview.

You, the Director, and COO will be provided with guidance material seeking information against specific Terms of Reference. The Review Panel, which may include members external to the ARC with relevant expertise, will review the submission material and attend the site visit or interview (face to face or virtual meeting format).

You and the senior leadership will be provided with a Terms of Reference which outlines the criteria for the review.

You must provide any reasonable assistance requested by the ARC to undertake the review

The Performance Review will assess the satisfactory progress or otherwise of the Centre, which affects the continued provision of Grant funding as per the Grant Guidelines.

A Review Report including recommendations from the Review Panel will be provided to the Centre for response. Progress against implementing the recommendations will be monitored through the Progress Report and ongoing consultation with the Centre.

TIP: You can nominate a preferred month for the Performance Review during the fourth year of operation. Consider that the Review Report will take approximately three months after the site visit to be sent to the Centre.

TIP: Consider your preparations, including discussing the Performance Review at annual meetings, mock meetings, and reaching out to previous cohorts.

TIP: The ARC can attend a Centre event such as a seminar or workshop to provide an overview of the expectations of the Performance Review to Centre personnel.

Final Report

The Final Report will be made available by the ARC in RMS well before the end date of the Centre to allow sufficient time to complete the report.

Guidelines for completing the Final Report for all ARC schemes including Centres is available on the 'Grants Administration' page on the [ARC website](#).

TIP: Final Reports can take significant time to complete for Centres and it is recommended that You consider populating the form well before the end date, particularly with regards to Research Outputs.

The ARC may also seek additional information about subsequent outputs and outcomes up to five years after submission of the Final Report.

If a Final Report is considered by the ARC to be inadequate, unsatisfactory or is not submitted on time, You will be contacted for further information.

TIP: You will need to consider administrative staff support after the end date to complete and submit the Final Report. This may include continuing the COO or providing part-time resources from the Administering Organisation.

IMPORTANT: Overdue Final Reports will impact eligibility for the Director and all named Chief Investigators for future applications for ARC funding.

