The Australian Research Council (ARC) does not respond to queries from individual Participants. Individual Participants should direct all queries regarding ARC funding schemes to their Administering Organisation’s Research Office or equivalent in the first instance either directly or through their academic chief investigator. If further ARC Centres of Excellence information is required, the Research Office or equivalent should contact centres@arc.gov.au.

All Participants should read the Funding Rules for schemes under the Linkage Program for the year 2017—ARC Centres of Excellence Funding Rules (Centres Funding Rules), the ARC Centres of Excellence Funding Agreement for funding commencing in 2017 and the ARC Centres of Excellence Instructions to Applicants. General information about the ARC Centres of Excellence scheme can also be found at the ARC website. The list of eligible organisations is included in the Funding Rules.

Information regarding the Research Management System (RMS) is available on the ARC website or by contacting rms@arc.gov.au for assistance.

As soon as information regarding important scheme dates becomes available, the ARC website will be updated at the Important Dates page. The ARC will also notify the Research Administrators’ Network of any updates via an email message.

This Frequently Asked Questions document will be updated as required. Details of any amendments will be appended to this document.

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1. General Queries

1.1 Can I submit a Centre Proposal if I have not submitted an Expression of Interest?
No. An Expression of Interest (EOI) must have been submitted and shortlisted before an ARC Centres of Excellence Proposal can be submitted. Please refer to sections B3.3 and B13.1.1 of the Funding Rules.

1.2 What is an Eligible Organisation?
An Eligible Organisation is an organisation which can apply for funding under the ARC Centres of Excellence scheme. Please refer to section A15 of the Funding Rules for a list of Eligible Organisations.

1.3 If my organisation is not an Eligible Organisation, can we still be involved?
Yes. Your organisation can be listed on a Centre Proposal as a Partner Organisation however the Eligible Organisation must lead and submit the bid. Please refer to sections A8.2 and B8.3 of the Funding Rules.

1.4 Where can I find the closing date for the Proposals for the ARC Centres of Excellence scheme?
Key dates relating to the Proposal can be found on the Important Dates page and the ARC Centres of Excellence page of the ARC website.

1.5 Will the ARC support a Centre of Excellence in the field of medical research?
The ARC does not fund projects in Medical Research, as defined on the ARC website. Information is provided on the ARC website to assist with clarifying the area of Medical Research, however please consult with your Research Office in the first instance to determine whether the research proposed in the Proposal constitutes Medical Research.

1.6 Do I have to address all five selection criteria in the Centre Proposal?
Yes. The Centre Proposal must address in full all five selection criteria (A, B, C, D and E). Please refer to section B5 of the Funding Rules.

1.7 Can I make changes to the Participants and/or the research programme previously outlined in the Expression of Interest in the current Centre Proposal?
Yes. You can make some changes, however, you should not include large numbers of additional or replacement Participants, nor should the research programme in the Centre Proposal differ significantly from that submitted in the shortlisted EOI. Changes must be justified in the full Proposal.

1.8 If I have to relinquish grants, when is the date of effect?
Grants are to be relinquished as at 1 January 2017, which is the official commencement date of the Centre.

1.9 If I will exceed the number of grants I can hold, can I choose to withdraw from grants rather than relinquishing them?
If there is no duplication or overlap of research with the new Centre, and the project can be continued with existing or replacement personnel, then you can choose to withdraw from grants rather than relinquishing them fully. This should be noted in Part I of the Centre Proposal form. You should consult with your Research Office as to the most appropriate option.

1.10 If I agree to relinquish or withdraw from one or more grants as part of the Proposal, can I change my mind when the Centre is awarded?
No. When agreeing to participate, you certify that all information contained in the Proposal is true and complete. The ARC will request grant relinquishments, personnel withdrawals or withdrawal of submitted applications as listed in Part I of the Proposal if the Centre is awarded without further negotiation.
1.11 I’m putting together my full Proposal but I’m not sure what the Centre, if successful, will be expected to report on. This would inform my Proposal. Is there any information available? Yes, the draft Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for ARC Centres of Excellence commencing in 2017 can be found in Schedule D of the Funding Agreement.

1.12 I note that the Proposal form requires me to outline the intended impact of the Centre’s work. I’ve looked at the Instructions to Applicants and the research impact pathway table on the ARC website but I’m still uncertain as to how to construct a Research Impact Statement for the Centre. While an impact statement may be quite different for research areas in STEM or HASS disciplines the principles are the same and the message should be simple, clear and concise. Even if there is no intent to make money or commercialise outcomes there will always be an intended benefit to the research. Address who is the target beneficiary of the research and what is to be improved or changed. Refer to the Research Impact Pathway table for examples of what the ultimate outcome and impact will look like. You might include what the new technology, solution or service might be and what is your target in terms of end dates and value. Finally you might also include why this makes a cohesive and compelling case for research investment.

1.13 There are additional projects appearing in the Currently Held ARC Projects section in my Centre Proposal that weren’t there before, why are they appearing now? As all the Post-award functionality has now been migrated into RMS, all projects that are considered ‘active’ by the ARC will now appear.

1.14 What does the ARC consider to be an ‘active’ project? The ARC considers all projects to be active as soon as the Funding Agreement has been executed by the ARC and until they have been completely finalised, including both the acquittal of ARC funds and the approval of the Final Report. Projects with the state of Funded, Funds Complete and Project Closed are all considered to be the ‘active’ projects.

1.15 When will my recently announced projects appear in the Currently Held ARC Projects section of my Centre Proposal? A project will only appear on a proposal once it is active. Projects are only ‘active’ once the Funding Agreement has been accepted by the Administering Organisation and executed by the ARC in RMS. For any recently announced projects which are not yet active, and therefore are not yet appearing in the Currently Held ARC Projects section of the proposal, please include details of these projects in Part H1 – Research Support for all Participants.

1.16 When will my Project be ‘closed’? Once all reporting and financial requirements have been met, the ARC will close the project.

1.17 Can I make changes to the Other Eligible or Partner Organisations previously outlined in the Expression of Interest in the current Centre Proposal? Yes. You can make some changes, however, you should not include large numbers of additional or replacement Organisations from those submitted in the shortlisted EOI. Changes must be justified in the full Proposal.
2. Investigators

2.1 Can I be listed as Centre Director on more than one Centre Proposal?
No. A Centre Director can only be nominated for this particular role on one Centre Proposal. Please refer to section B9.2.4 of the Funding Rules.

2.2 If I am nominated as a Centre Director, can I be a Chief Investigator on other Centre Proposals?
Yes. A researcher nominated as a Centre Director can be nominated as a Chief Investigator (CI) on one other Centre Proposal. Please refer to section B9.2.4 of the Funding Rules.

2.3 If I cannot commit 70 per cent (0.7 FTE) of my time to the Centre, can I still be nominated as a Centre Director?
No. It is expected that a Centre Director will have a time commitment of no less than 70 per cent (0.7 FTE) to the Centre due to the responsibilities of the role. The ARC may choose to not recommend a Proposal for funding if a Centre Director is not able to commit at least 0.7 FTE. Please refer to section B9.2.3 of the Funding Rules.

2.4 As the holder of a Laureate Fellowship/Future Fellowship/Discovery Outstanding Researcher Award, am I eligible to apply as Centre Director?
Yes. Before applying, you should consider several things. Firstly, think about your capacity to undertake both roles. Some requirements (such as mentoring and leadership) are relevant to both roles. Secondly, think about the proposed research programme and management structure of the Centre. An appropriate structure to support you as Director in undertaking both roles should be clearly developed and explained. Finally, think about overlap or duplication of research. Your research project as a Fellow/DORA should not be duplicated within the Centre’s research programme.

2.5 I have submitted Proposals for other ARC funding schemes for funding commencing in 2016 or plan to do so for schemes for funding commencing in 2017. Am I eligible to apply as a Centre Director or Chief Investigator on a Centre Proposal?
Yes. All Proposals submitted for other ARC funding schemes can remain until the outcome of the ARC Centres of Excellence selection round is known. Proposals and Grants/Fellowships/Awards held that exceed the limits stated in scheme funding rules would be withdrawn or relinquished only if a Centre Proposal is successful. Please refer to section B10.2 of the Funding Rules.

2.6 I currently hold the maximum number of Discovery Projects grants allowed. Am I eligible to apply as a Centre Director or Chief Investigator on a Centre Proposal?
Yes. All grants, Fellowships and Awards currently held may be retained until the outcome of the ARC Centres of Excellence selection round is known. Grants/Fellowships/Awards held that exceed the limits stated in scheme funding rules would be relinquished only if a Centre Proposal is successful. Please refer to section B10.2 of the Funding Rules.

2.7 Can I be nominated as a Chief Investigator on more than one Centre Proposal?
If you are not nominated as a Centre Director, you may be a CI on no more than two Centre Proposals. Please refer to section B9.3.4 of the Funding Rules.

2.8 I am a part-time researcher at an Eligible Organisation. Can I be a Chief Investigator?
A researcher must be employed at least 20 per cent (0.2 FTE) at an Eligible Organisation, or be a holder of an Emeritus appointment, to be eligible to be a CI. Please refer to section B9.3 of the Funding Rules.
2.9 How important is Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence (ROPE)?
Investigators participating in an ARC Centre of Excellence are expected to be of high quality and standing. ROPE will be a key consideration and should be seen as an opportunity to promote a variety of career skills in addition to career interruptions but is not the only investigator measure in the selection criteria.

2.10 I have had maternity leave twice in the past five years. Will this disadvantage my application, or should I mention this under Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence (ROPE)?
In order for Assessors to gauge your opportunity for research, it is important to mention any periods of extended leave for child-bearing, or other matters including illness or carer duties that may have affected your capacity for research and publishing. The ARC does not prescribe how this should be explained.

2.11 I hold an Emeritus position at an Eligible Organisation. Am I eligible to apply as a Chief Investigator?
Yes. Please refer to section B9.3.1 of the Funding Rules.

2.12 I hold a position at an Eligible Organisation, but will not be resident in Australia for much of the duration of the Centre. Am I still eligible to be a Chief Investigator?
No. You must reside predominantly in Australia for the duration of the Centre. Please refer to section B9.3.2 of the Funding Rules.

2.13 I am a Partner Investigator on several ARC grants. Can I be listed as a Partner Investigator on a Centre Proposal?
Yes, but as a Partner Investigator (PI), you must consider the commitment you have made to the other grants and determine whether you have the capacity to participate effectively in an ARC Centre of Excellence. Please refer to section B9.4 of the Funding Rules.

2.14 Can Australian-based Partner Investigators receive ARC funding to support their research?
No. Please refer to sections B6.2 and B6.3 of the Funding Rules.

2.15 How many investigators can be listed on a Centre Proposal?
The list of investigators must include a Centre Director and at least one CI and one PI. The total number of investigators able to be listed is not set, but you must take into consideration the role each will play in the Centre’s research programme and the expertise and skills each will bring. Ensure that those listed are necessary to the Centre. Note that each named investigator will have a separate Part F generated in the Proposal form.

2.16 I want my Centre Proposal to have different investigators to those listed on the Expression of Interest. Can I do this?
Yes. You may make some changes to the investigators listed, but ideally these changes should only be minor. The removal and/or replacement of significant numbers of investigators will require justification and may be viewed unfavourably by the Selection Advisory Committee.

2.17 Does each named investigator need to be listed against an organisation?
Yes. When a CI is named on the Centre Proposal, he/she must be listed against a named Eligible Organisation (the Administering Organisation or an Other Eligible Organisation). A PI must be listed against a named Partner Organisation. That is, a person named on the Centre Proposal must be associated with an organisation.

2.18 Can Associate Investigators be listed on Centre Proposal?
Yes. Associate Investigators can be listed in Part G of the Proposal form.
2.19 Can a Partner Investigator from overseas be a Node Leader?
No. A Centre Node usually has a major structural role within the Centre’s research programme and is expected to make a significant contribution to the Centre. Please refer to section B6.3.1 of the Funding Rules.

2.20 Can a Centre have two Directors (co-Directors)?
No. A Centre can have only one Director. Please refer to sections B9.1 and B9.2 of the Funding Rules. A Deputy Director is allowable.

2.21 Can I include details of my career and research opportunities that occurred more than five years ago?
The primary focus of the response to this question should be “career and opportunities for research” over the past five years. References to career and research opportunities prior to this should be included only if they are explicitly relevant to the Centre’s research programme or operations, and should be indicated as such in the text.

2.22 Do I have to include a Partner Investigator in my Centre Proposal?
The Funding Rules and Instructions to Applicants do not mandate that a Centre Proposal must include a PI. In the assessment process however, the commitment of a named PI may be seen as beneficial to the bid in supporting linkages and networks which are a critical part of an ARC Centre of Excellence. This is reflected in section B4.1, and Objective C in the Funding Rules.

2.23 If a researcher holds a position at an Eligible Organisation but will not live in Australia for the duration of the Centre, is he/she eligible to be a Partner Investigator?
No. If a researcher holds a position at an Eligible Organisation but does not live in Australia for the duration of the Centre, it may be more appropriate for the researcher to be listed as an Associate Investigator. To be listed as a PI the researcher needs to satisfy the following eligibility requirements as stated in sections B9.1.3 and B9.4.2 of the Funding Rules.

2.24 Should other grants held by Partner Investigators be included in Part H1 of the full Proposal form?
Yes. Other grants held by PIs should be listed in Part H1, as this section should be completed for all named participants.

2.25 I would like to put my FTE as 0.25 but that question in the Proposal form will only allow one decimal place – what should I do?
You should put your FTE as 0.2 or 0.3 FTE, and in F2. ‘Role within the Centre’ explain that you will be spending 0.25 FTE on the activities of the Centre.

3. Organisations

3.1 In the ARC Centres of Excellence scheme, are Partner Organisations required to have an associated Partner Investigator?
No. While a Partner Organisation linked to one or more PIs is preferred, a Partner Organisation can be listed without an associated PI. Note that the Partner Organisation is still required to contribute cash, in-kind and/or other material contributions. Please refer to sections B8.3 and B8.4 of the Funding Rules.

3.2 How many organisations can be listed on a Centre Proposal?
You must list one Eligible Organisation as the Administering Organisation. You must also list at least one Other Eligible Organisation and at least one Partner Organisation. The total number of organisations able to be listed is not set, but you must take into consideration the role each will play.
in the Centre’s research program and the resources each will bring. Ensure that those listed are necessary to the Centre.

3.3 I want to include in my Centre Proposal a Partner Organisation which is not listed in RMS. How do I add a new Partner Organisation?
You will need to contact the ARC though the RMS help desk at rms@arc.gov.au.

3.4 Can Partner Organisations receive ARC funding?
No. Please refer to sections B6.2 and B6.3 of the Funding Rules.

4. Completing the Centre Proposal Form

The Centre Proposal form must be completed and submitted through the ARC’s Research Management System (RMS).

Please read the ARC Centres of Excellence for funding commencing in 2017 Instructions to Applicants for information relating to completing the Centre Proposal form.

4.1 Do I need to list people in a specific order?
Yes. The Centre Director must be listed first. All CIs should be listed next, then all PIs.

4.2 Can the salary of an ARC-funded Fellow or Award recipient be included as an institutional in-kind contribution?
No. A Fellow’s salary (or part thereof) paid by the ARC must not be included as part of an institutional in-kind contribution to a Centre.

4.3 If ARC funding cannot be used for certain items (such as business class airfares), how can these items be covered?
ARC funding can be used for items as specified in section B6.2 of the Funding Rules. However, funding provided to the Centre from other sources, including Partner Organisations, may be used to support items which cannot be covered from ARC funds.

4.4 Can Other Eligible Organisations contribute the time of unnamed participants as an in-kind contribution to the Centre?
Yes. In addition to CIs, Other Eligible Organisations may also have research assistants/associates, students, administrative or technical staff who may be participating in the Centre and its research program, but are not named on the Proposal. The Other Eligible Organisation can include their time as an in-kind contribution to the Centre.

4.5 If a Partner Organisation is providing salaries/support for new personnel to be employed or for purchasing new equipment specifically for the Centre research programme, is this considered cash or in-kind?
Where a Partner Organisation intends to provide salaries/support for new personnel specifically to work on the Centre research programme, this can be considered as cash, but this intention must be stated and explained as part of the budget justification and Partner Organisation letter of support. The intention to purchase new equipment can be considered in-kind as the equipment would remain the asset of the Partner Organisation not the Centre. If the Partner Organisation intends to purchase equipment and gift it to the Eligible Organisation, this could be considered a cash contribution.

4.6 Can salary increments be included in the budget?
You may include salary/performance increments which are routinely applied within your institution, such as those within salary bands. These increments should be noted as part of the budget.
justification. You must not include indexation or annual pay rises associated with enterprise bargaining agreements or other similar agreements.

4.7 In Part G, what is the role of Other Personnel associated with the Centre and what, if any, are the eligibility requirements?

Part G - Other Personnel associated with the Centre provides for additional researchers who, although not named in Schedule A of the Funding Agreement, will be associated with the Centre and will provide valuable expertise or contributions to the Centre. Other Personnel, for example Associate Investigators, may not be able to offer the significant commitment to the Centre required of a CI or PI, but could have a specific area of expertise that will be valuable to the Centre’s research programme at some time during the Centre’s operation.

Other Personnel, or an Associate Investigator, could be a full-time continuing employee at an Eligible Organisation but may not meet other eligibility requirements for a CI or PI, for example they may not be able to commit to taking significant intellectual responsibility for the proposed Centre, or may not reside predominantly in Australia for the full term of their participation in the project.

Part G should not be used to list Centre personnel such as postdoctoral researchers, research assistants, technicians, etc. As the researchers listed in Part G may be eligible to be CIs or PIs but choose not to be named as such, you may not request a salary (or part thereof) for these researchers.

4.8 What outputs are expected to be listed for ‘Other Personnel’ in Part G?

The output list for ‘Other Personnel’ should include the researcher’s most significant research outputs, such as journal articles and refereed conference papers, books, book chapters and other research outputs, including non-traditional research outputs from 2010 onwards, with the five best research outputs on this list highlighted in some way. “Other Personnel” who are not academic researchers should list other significant research outputs, experience or qualifications.

4.9 Am I limited to 15 people in Part G?

No. The Centres form will enforce a maximum of 30 pages for Part G. You may include more than 15 people if you are able to include all the required information for each person in less than two pages.

4.10 Can ARC funds be used to pay salaries for the personnel listed in Part G?

No.

4.11 In Part I, do I need to include grants which have not yet been awarded; that is; grants that are still under consideration?

Yes. If grants currently under consideration for funding will meet either of the two requirements for relinquishment (exceeding grant limits or duplication/overlap of research), then they should be included in the list in Part I – Grants for possible relinquishment. No action to relinquish or withdraw is required until the outcome of the Centres selection round is known.

4.12 Which grants do I need to include in Part I?

ARC grants/Fellowships should be included in Part I, although please be aware that (as stated in section A5.1.4 of the Funding Rules) the ARC will not duplicate funding for research funded by the Commonwealth. Therefore grants from other agencies/departments should be considered in light of the Centre’s research programme; researchers and the Research Office will need to be aware that non-ARC grants may also need to be relinquished if the Centre Proposal is successful, and will need to take appropriate action with the relevant agency/department.
4.13 I am a Partner Investigator on several other ARC grants. Do I need to include these in Part I?
No. Where a Centre PI is listed on another ARC grant as a PI, they do not need to offer up the other grant for relinquishment. However, if that other grant is also a grant held by a Centre CI, then it will need to be listed as a potential relinquishment if it exceeds grant limits for that CI or duplicates/overlaps with the Centre research programme.

4.14 Are formal letters of support required from Other Eligible Organisations or Partner Organisations?
Yes. Both Other Eligible and Partner Organisations must provide letters of support. These letters should be on organisation letterhead and signed by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) or equivalent (or appropriate delegate).

4.15 How should the letters of support from Other Eligible Organisations or Partner Organisations address Selection Criterion C?
The letters of support from Collaborating and Partner Organisations should include information as to the proposed Centre’s alignment with their own research priorities or strategic directions. Letters do not need to indicate total support from all participating organisations, but must include the financial support to be provided by the organisation that is writing and signing that letter.

4.16 If no cash contribution is being provided by a Partner Organisation, does the letter of support need to include the cash contribution certification statement?
No. If no cash contribution is being provided, then the statement “certify that no part of the cash contribution is drawn from funds previously appropriated or awarded from Commonwealth or Australian State or Territory sources for the purposes of research” may be omitted from the letter of support.

4.17 Are digital signatures acceptable on letters of support from Partner Organisations?
Yes.

4.18 Does the ARC permit institutions to use multipliers on in-kind contributions to represent the value of indirect costs contributed to Centre Proposals?
Yes. Where an institution wishes to apply an indirect cost multiplier, the total contribution, including any multiplier amount, can be listed in the budget (Part D) as part of the institutional contribution. The multiplier must be referenced in the non-ARC budget justification (Part E2).

4.19 Does ARC have a view on the amount that a Centre may wish to allocate as a discretionary fund, as outlined in the draft Funding Agreement?
The ARC has no view on the amount that a Centre may wish to allocate as a discretionary fund as this will be a matter for each Centre, and will vary according to the discipline and research programme of the Centre. As noted in the draft Funding Agreement, there are a number of avenues that a discretionary fund could be used to support, and having such a fund will allow the Centre and its researchers some flexibility in pursuing related research which may not be part of the approved research programme, particularly where a commercial outcome is a possibility. It can also be an incentive, in the form of additional travel or project support for students or associated researchers who may not receive direct ARC Centre funding.
4.20 Is it acceptable for letters of support to not include the financial dollar value of cash and/or in-kind contributions?
The letters of support must include details of the amount of cash and/or in-kind contributions that will be provided. If the Organisation does not want to disclose figures such as specific salary rates for individuals, they could include details of the total cash and/or in-kind amount that will be provided for salaries per annum and list the Investigators involved.

4.21 Is the FTE of Investigators required in the letter of support?
No. The FTE of Investigators is not required in the letter of support.

4.22 An Australian Partner Organisation receives an annual appropriation from Government to fund research. Can some of the appropriation be listed as a cash contribution in the Proposal?
No. Funding allocated to an organisation for the purposes of research by the Commonwealth, State or Territory governments cannot be used as a cash contribution towards an ARC Centre of Excellence. This includes funding allocated through an appropriation for either specified research projects or a general pool of research funds. Any cash contribution to an ARC Centre of Excellence must be provided from the organisation’s income sources which are outside the government allocation for research.

5. Submission Requirements

Please read the ARC Centres of Excellence for funding commencing in 2017 Instructions to Applicants for information relating to submission requirements.

5.1 Can I submit a Centre Proposal on my own behalf?
No. Centre Proposals must be submitted through an Eligible Organisation. Eligible Organisations are listed in section A15 of the Funding Rules.

5.2 Do I need to have an RMS profile in order to lodge a Centre Proposal?
Yes. Both researchers (Person Participants) and organisations (Organisation Participants) must be listed in RMS to allow them to be added to the Centre Proposal form.

5.3 Can I use a smaller font size to meet the page limits?
No. With the exception of references in Part C, 12 point font size, preferably Times New Roman (or an equivalent sized font), should be used. Failure to comply with the required format may result in the Proposal not being recommended for approval. Please refer to Appendix A of the ARC Centres of Excellence Instructions to Applicants for format requirements.

5.4 Can I make changes to my Centre Proposal after it has been submitted?
No. Centre Proposals may be withdrawn but additions, deletions and modifications will not be accepted after submission, unless invited by the ARC.
6. Changes to document

1.12  Inserted new question (5 November 2015)
2.22  Inserted new question (5 November 2015)
2.23  Inserted new question (5 November 2015)
2.24  Inserted new question (5 November 2015)
4.18  Inserted new question (5 November 2015)
4.19  Inserted new question (5 November 2015)
1.13 – 1.16 Inserted new questions (3 December 2015)
1.17  Inserted new question (3 December 2015)
2.25  Inserted new question (3 December 2015)
4.20 – 4.22 Inserted new questions (3 December 2015)