



Australian Government
Australian Research Council

ARC



Establishment Toolkit

ARC Centres of Excellence

Date Updated 24 November 2022

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1. Purpose

This toolkit supplements the CE23 Grant Agreement and aims to assist you in the establishment period and ongoing management of your ARC Centres of Excellence grant.

The **Project Start Date** is the date on which the project commences research and ARC Grant expenditure. This cannot occur until all Participating Organisation Agreements have been executed.

The **Establishment period** means the period before all written agreements with Participating Organisations are executed.

(Please also see [Establishment Funds](#) in this document)

The **Project End Date** means the date when the ARC funded project activity is completed, and all ARC Grant Funds are fully spent.

2. Commencement Timeline

	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	(30 days)					
Commencement						
Extension (on request)						
Participating Agreements executed						
KPI development & submitted to ARC						
Plan development						
Launch date						

Figure 1 ARC Centres of Excellence Commencement Timeline

3. Administering Organisation – Establishment Support

Early support from key University corporate administration is essential in the establishment period of a Major Investment.

The ARC encourages adoption of an administrative taskforce to assist you with navigating complex operational processes, policy, and legal negotiation with all Participants. This taskforce can include representatives from:

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

Some Universities have taskforce structures already in place, or you can request a temporary one.

This taskforce can support establishment by providing guidance on:

- recruitment and appointments arrangements for new personnel (for the Administering Organisation and other participating organisations)
- grant budget set up and management and clear financial delegation/s
- setting up reporting requirements both to the ARC and with participating organisations
- development of corporate identity and branding of the Major Investment
- establishing relevant key administration contacts for ongoing support
- assistance with legal agreements and negotiations with the Participating Organisations
- setting up best practice governance processes for Major Investments.

TIP: Document the operational guidance to create reference material over the life of the Centre of Excellence. This may assist to retain consistency in the event of staff changes over time.

4. ARC Grant Agreement Execution

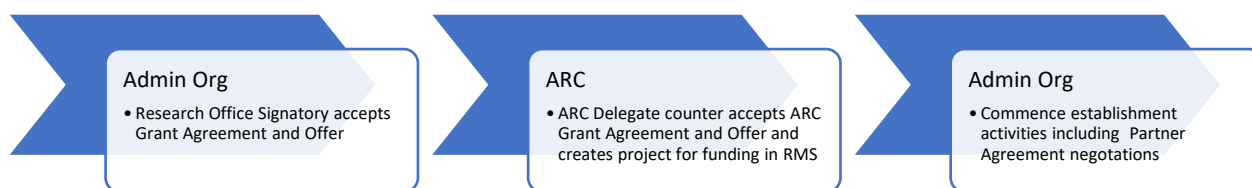


Figure 2 ARC Grant Agreement Execution

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

5. Participating Organisation Agreements

See Grant Agreement A2.2.4

Negotiating and executing agreements with Participating Organisations requires significant coordinated effort and good engagement with parties on expected outcomes.

See also Section [8.Detailed Project Plans/ Agreements](#)

INCLUSIONS IN PARTICIPATING ORGANISATION AGREEMENTS

See Grant Agreement A2.2.4

All Participating Organisation Agreements must have specific inclusions under the ARC Grant Agreement.

Of particular importance is specifying roles and responsibilities, and clear guidance in Conflict of Interest management arrangements. This should include the identification and ongoing management of current relationships within the Centre of Excellence and how potential future conflicts will be identified and managed.

FORMAT OF PARTICIPATING ORGANISATION AGREEMENTS

Building on the initial discussions and draft agreements developed during the Major Investment application phase, you may choose a format for Participating Organisation Agreements that is fit for purpose for the grant.

This may be a single agreement with multiple organisations or a single agreement per institution.

Negotiating Agreements with some overseas based Organisations can be particularly challenging and time consuming. You may also consider a simplified agreement in certain circumstances (for example if the organisation is making a smaller relative contribution).

Please consult with your taskforce team to decide which option is best for your purposes.

TIP: Feedback from current Investments indicates that separate Participating Organisation agreements with consistent shared clauses can be more effective for long term grant management. If you do choose to have a header agreement, consider keeping the agreement content high level and minimise detailed project level information.

MANAGING DELAYS TO EXECUTION OF PARTICIPATING ORGANISATION AGREEMENTS

If delays in executing any of the Participating Organisation agreements means that you are at risk of not starting your grant by the date specified in the Grant Agreement, please contact the ARC Major Investments Team ARC-Postaward@arc.gov.au for advice.

TIP: Set clear expectations of all parties (key personnel and organisations) prior to negotiating the agreement/s.

TIP: Use term sheets outlining high level requirements or use a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to outline roles, responsibilities, and expectations on participation.

TIP: Workshop Participating Organisation Agreement/s by running it through a variety of tests using hypothetical risk-based scenarios, particularly around IP ownership and other potential areas of dispute.

TIP: Develop an abridged version of the agreement which explains in clear language 'what this means for me'. This can be useful for organisations with limited experience in ARC grants.

TIP: Use consistent plain language in the agreements with all Participating Organisations to enable a shared understanding.

6. Funding

Your first ARC payment is made to the Administering Organisation 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

Grant Agreement B2.2.1

You may expend up to \$100,000 from the Grant in the first year of the Grant Period before all Participating Organisation agreements are executed. Allowable expenses are specified in the Grant Agreement.

A request to access the establishment funds (no more than one-page) including a breakdown of proposed expenditure and rationale must be made via the Research Office to ARC-Postaward@arc.gov.au for ARC delegate approval.

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

Please note that the Administering Organisation holds the risk for incurring any other costs above and beyond the establishment funds before the grant has officially commenced.

Access to the remaining project funds for eligible budget items will only be available once the Grant 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 Grant.

Example of an establishment fund request:

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

Personnel	Salary for the Chief Operating Officer (COO) at HEW Level 10 Recruitment costs including advertising to be employed by the Administering Organisation to directly assist in establishment activities	\$X
Personnel	Support widespread recruitment campaign	\$X
Outreach Activities	Website, branding and promotional material, set up social media accounts and protocols and develop dissemination strategies	\$X
Travel	Initial meeting/ retreat to discuss and establish governance framework and guidelines, research project plans and confirm processes for reporting requirements and KPIs incl Air fares and taxis (\$X each), accommodation (\$X each), venue hire and expenses \$X	\$X
Travel	Workshops/ meetings/ visits to Participating Orgs to discuss facilities, research programs, student supervision etc	\$X
Other	Early costs for governance committees	\$X
TOTAL		\$X

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 [Grant Payments | Australian Research Council](#).

Indexation funds can be used flexibly, for example some funding could be used to top up strategic funds.

All scenarios should be agreed to between all parties.

See also [Strategic Funds](#)

7. Responsible Conduct of Research and Research Ethics

See Grant Agreement A2.1.2

The ARC requires compliance with several policies, codes, and principles relating to the conduct of research. This includes clearance of research ethics and relevant safety protocols by appropriate Institutional committees. These clearances as outlined must be obtained prior to the commencement of the research activities.

Consider flexibility, should changes to the project scope be necessary.

Carefully consider any other statutory or regulatory requirements relevant to the grant and ensure these are communicated to Participating Organisations.

Please refer to the Grant Agreement for specific requirements.

8. Detailed Project Plans/ Agreements

Once the ARC Centres of Excellence grant is established there will be a need to set up detailed project agreements/plans. This step requires further negotiations with Participating Organisations and personnel involved. While the activity occurs across the entire grant parties, the oversight of the process is driven centrally by the Major Investment executive leadership.

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

TIP: Consider outlining the key milestones, reporting requirements, and an escalation process for issues/risks and mitigations.

TIP: Consider how the projects will be managed through to translation of research outcomes including government engagement, avenues into influencing policy development, spin offs, and commercialisation. Have agreed tracking mechanisms for broad theme progress with partners and stakeholders (“stage gates”).

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

- Background IP
- Expected Project IP
- Process for managing new/emerging IP

Detailed project plans/agreements must be implemented in accordance with the ‘Project Description’ and within the broad structure of the proposed ‘Project Cost’ contained in the application, as well as any Special Conditions.

ARC Centres of Excellence grants may seek significant Research Program scope changes, at the program level, for approval by the ARC that can either emerge during the early negotiations or during the lifespan of the agreement. For further details please see [Variations to Grant Agreement](#).

9. Transitioning Arrangements

See Grant Agreement B2.4

In some cases, a new ARC Centres of Excellence grant is awarded before the end date of a previously funded ARC Centres of Excellence grant, and this will require a transition arrangement. To manage the transition arrangements the ARC requires you to submit a transition statement for our consideration.

The transition statement must be provided to the Major Investments team via ARC-Postaward@arc.gov.au **within three months** of the new 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: If the transition statement is unsatisfactory in outlining the transition arrangements, or if there is potential overlap of funding, and these matters are not addressed, the ARC may recover funds from either the new and/or old Major Investment.

Examples of transitioning arrangements for Major Investments

There are three general options for transition:

Example 1:

Allow the existing grant to conclude and then commence the new grant. Approval may be required from the ARC to delay the start of the new grant.

Example 2:

The existing grant continues with an acting Centre Director while the new grant commences with the original Centre Director. This arrangement must carefully describe the movement of all personnel from the old to the new, where relevant. You must seek approval from the ARC to appoint an acting Centre Director to manage the existing grant.

Example 3:

Seek approval from the ARC to conclude the existing grant early (with or without a partial relinquishment of funds) and then commence the new grant.

10. Additional interest to join the ARC Centres of Excellence grant

You may experience a surge of interest from other organisations that would like to be involved during the Establishment Period and beyond.

Ensure there is a clear strategy and criteria for managing requests for adding new organisations (Figure 3 Example of business decision for new partnerships..

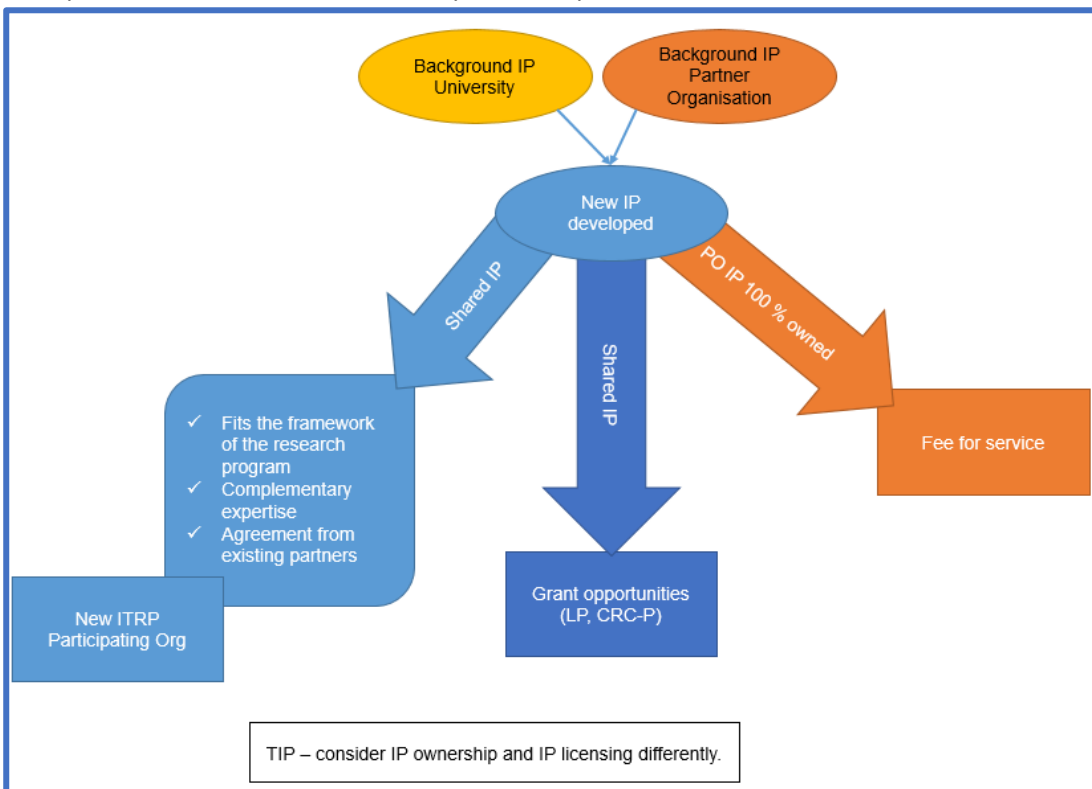


Figure 3 Example of business decision for new partnerships.

TIP: Consider a stakeholder strategy or a framework to evaluate the merits, risks, and strategic value of the prospective collaboration.

Example Framework for considering new Participating Organisations

- How does the Participating Organisation align in the research program and collaboration framework of other organisations?
- 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?
- Is the new partnership 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).

11. Governance

ARC Centres of Excellence grants are large Commonwealth investments with multiple organisations involved and are considered by the ARC to be independent national research entities. As such, good governance practices are critical. Clear governance arrangements facilitate successful program management, increased participation, good risk mitigation, and effective translation of outcomes.

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

The ARC does not give specific recommendations on governance structure. Talk to other existing Centres of Excellence Directors and COOs for examples of best practice.

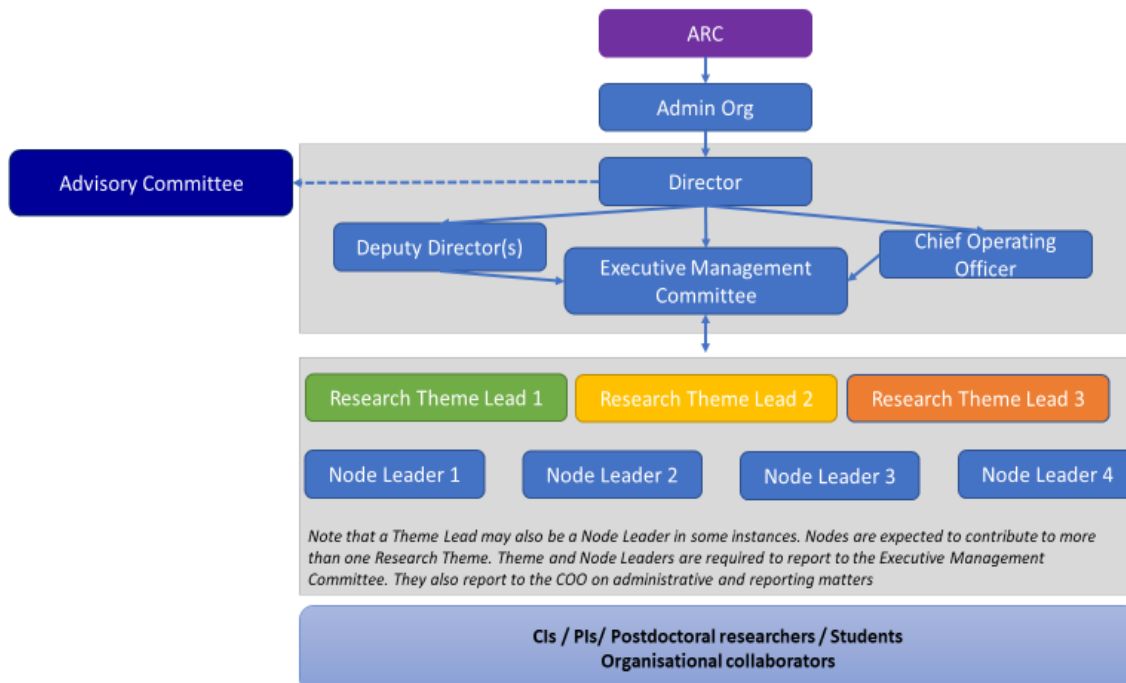


Figure 4 Example on an ARC Centres of Excellence governance structure

GOVERNANCE PROCESSES

It is very important to document the governance of the ARC Centres of Excellence grant including how changes and issues will be managed. All committees require terms of reference which clearly outline the role of each committee, quorum requirements, and provide guidance on any recommendation or decision-making processes.

Clear operational processes should be developed, documented, and understood by the senior leadership. These should set out clear ground rules about who to consult for key decisions and in what instances. For example, you may wish to document how you will manage Code of Conduct, Equity & Diversity, Communications, Complaints, Conflict of Interest, Risk Management etc.

This can become useful in situations where major decisions need to be made (e.g., changes with Investigators, the directions and performance of the Project, and budget/ scope Variations).

Example of decision making using a Governance Process

- 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.
- 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 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 ARC Centres of Excellence grant 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 ARC Centres of Excellence grant including across the nodes. Note that administration staff within other nodes may report to the Node Leader Chief Investigator rather than the central administration team. This needs to be managed carefully as administrative staff are contributing to the ARC Centres of Excellence grant as a whole, not appointed as executive or research assistants for researchers.

It is common for the Centre Director to report to a Head of School, Dean, or in some instances directly to Deputy Vice Chancellor Research (DVC-R). The Administering Organisation should help inform Heads of School or Deans of their responsibilities in having a Centre Director of a national research entity funded by the ARC reporting to them.

See also: [Personnel](#)

Financial Delegations

Delegations must be determined early for expenditure of Financial and Human Resources activities to allow for smooth operational autonomy for the Centre Director, other Major Investment executives and COO.

If a change to the structure of delegations inside a university is 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 intervene when necessary to ensure compliance by all participants, people, and organisations in managing expenditure and other reporting requirements.

TIP: For more ideas and to assist in engaging with other universities, contact Research Office staff, and COOs from other ARC Centres of Excellence to learn about administrative structures, identify key contacts and understand their financial and other delegations.

GOVERNANCE PLAN

A robust governance framework for the ARC Centre of Excellence should identify:

- key expert advice needed
- structure of the committees with Terms of Reference, including reviewing membership regularly
- ARC policy frameworks for managing conflicts of interest and confidentiality clauses
- reporting requirements
- ongoing management of risks and mitigation strategies
- identify regulatory frameworks, university policy, and critical legislation requirements.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Centre Director and Deputy Director/s

The Centre Director is responsible for developing and implementing the strategies and managing the research project. The Centre Director must coordinate the research effort and reporting structures across the Other Eligible Organisation(s) and Partner Organisation(s).

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

The Deputy Director/s supports the Centre Director in all management activities and may be important for succession planning. Some ARC Centres of Excellence have more than one Deputy Director while other ARC Centres of Excellence have one Deputy Director with Node Leaders from each node.

Node/ Theme Leaders

See Grant Agreement B2.3.2

The responsibility of theme/node leaders should be clearly defined. Responsibilities include:

- management and administrative delegations at their individual institutions
- ensuring the node is well integrated within the research program both within the node and across the ARC Centre of Excellence
- management and administration of research activities within their node
- oversight of the research directions and outcomes as specified in the Research Theme
- assist in building integrated ARC Centres of Excellence culture and delivering on the research program.

Associate Investigators (AIs)

Associate Investigators (AI) are researchers listed in the ARC Centres of Excellence Application who were not Chief Investigators or Partner Investigators but who will participate in the ARC Centres of Excellence Research

Program. They may have specific expertise relevant to an aspect of the ARC Centres of Excellence 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 ARC Centres of Excellence's research program.

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

The ARC Centres of Excellence may acknowledge the AI's contributions within the Annual Reports and on their websites.

COMMITTEES

Executive Management Committee

The Executive Management Committee is responsible for providing leadership and decision making and thus requires organisational representation of senior leadership to ensure good management and research outcomes.

Clear roles and responsibilities should be documented for the Executive Management Committee to delineate between delegation/decision making responsibilities and when the committee provides advice.

The COO is an important member of the Executive Management Committee to ensure operational aspects of the ARC Centres of Excellence are present in discussions, as context for the decision-making.

Members of the Executive Management Committee should be working together for the best interests of the ARC Centre of Excellence (and not individual institutions).

Advisory Committee

See Grant Agreement B2.2.5

The ARC recommends that an **Advisory Committee** is established as early as possible.

The purpose of the Advisory Committee is to assist the Major Investment leadership by contributing to the development of strategies and vision for the future, relative to the proposed goals and objectives of the Major Investment.

The Advisory Committee can be an invaluable source of strategic advice to the Centre Director and senior leadership for developing and maintaining the strategic focus, the structure and general operating principles, and leveraging potential national benefits such as opportunities for new intellectual property, commercialisation and other important translation outcomes.

The Advisory Committee should be designed as a source of ideas for creating better linkages between academia, industry, government, and other sectors.

Membership

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

The Centre Director, relevant executive and COO may be observers but not members.

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

The ARC expects the Advisory Committee members to have significant reputations and expertise and provide broad representation of the research excellence and end-user communities. An Advisory Committee could include 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 senior university staff such as the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research) if they bring important expertise or skills to the Committee.

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 ARC Centre of Excellence as it develops and matures. Advisory Committee membership must be reviewed at least every two years.

Advisory Committee Terms of Reference

Develop clear Terms of Reference including:

- objectives and role
- scope of work and advice
- gender equality and diversity
- quorum requirements
- Early Career Researcher (ECR) participation (as a part of professional development and mentoring)
- equitable organisational representation
- refreshing membership regularly to continue developing and meeting new strategic directions.

International Research Advisory Committee (optional)

- The ARC Centre of Excellence may choose to establish and maintain a separate International Research Advisory Committee in addition to the Advisory Committee.
- The purpose of the International Advisory Committee is to provide an international perspective on the ARC Centre of Excellence's research field, to undertake benchmarking of the ARC Centre of Excellence's Research Program, and to assist ARC Centre of Excellence management and the Advisory Committee in developing the strategic research direction of the ARC Centre of Excellence. The International Research Advisory Committee must provide reports and advice to the Centre Director and Advisory Committee regarding the international standing of the ARC Centre of Excellence's Research Program.
- While the final composition of the International Research Advisory Committee is a matter for the Administering Organisation and the ARC Centre of Excellence, 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 ARC Centre of Excellence.
- 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.

- The 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.

12. Strategic and Operational Plans

See Grant Agreement B2.2.7

You must put in place a number of plans during the establishment phase as noted in the Grant Agreement. Further advice is highlighted below as well as some considerations for other policies and procedures.

INITIAL MEETING

An initial meeting or strategic planning day should be held with the team within the first few months of establishment. Include as many participants as possible, noting you can use the establishment funds to support this activity. Some topics for this meeting might include:

- [strategic plan](#) components
- development of a framework for implementing critical operational requirements
- processes for reporting and Variations to Grant Agreement
- [revisiting the budget if necessary](#)
- framework for use of strategic funds
- detailed project plans with partners
- development of operational procedures
- developing KPIs
- recruitment plan.

TIP: Invite the ARC to present key messaging about ARC expectations to CIs.

Table 1 ARC CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE PLANS

Plan	Grant Agreement	Timeline
Strategic Plan	B2.2.7	Within six months of the project start date
Gender Equality and Diversity Plan		
Mentoring and Professional Development Program		
Communication, Education and Outreach Plan		
KPI targets	B2.2.3	Submit to ARC by 30 June 2023*
Transition Plan (if required)	B2.4	No later than three months after the date of execution of a new ARC Centres of Excellence Agreement.

*Due to COVID disruptions, the ARC has extended this deadline to 31 December 2023.

STRATEGIC PLAN

See Grant Agreement B2.2.7

The Leadership team, Chief Investigators and the Advisory Committee must participate in the development and maintenance of the Strategic Plan, with all ARC Centres of Excellence staff given the opportunity to provide input.

The Strategic Plan should incorporate:

- clear purpose and vision statement
- expected outcomes of the research and indicators of success
- detailed research translation and/or Intellectual Property strategies
- risk and mitigation plans
- succession plans for critical positions and how to have continuous development of staff as future leaders
- identified and/or potential opportunities for more end-user and industry collaborations, including management strategies to action these
- managing opportunities for exploring emerging research areas
- additional funding sources to support projects both during the Project Activity Period and once the Grant has ceased, to ensure continued support for key talent - students and postdocs
- approach for management of performance issues across the Research Program including:
 - provisions to allow projects which have reached their natural end to be closed down
 - discontinuing underperforming projects
 - redistribution of funding across the ARC Centre of Excellence and appropriate consultation and discussion with relevant organisations and personnel in relation to such projects.

Revise the Strategic Plan annually and update over the project activity period, ideally with input from a broad range of members.

TIP: Circulate and consult in the development of the Strategic Plan and provide copies of it to all ARC Centre of Excellence participants when they are appointed as part of their induction to the ARC Centre of Excellence. The ARC may ask questions relating to this at the Mid-term Review.

TIP: Seek feedback from Partner Organisations and end-users to define what success looks like to them which will help refine the future outcomes mentioned in the Strategic Plan.

TIP: Consider setting the KPIs prior to finalising the Strategic Plan.

GENDER EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY PLAN

See Grant Agreement B2.2.7 (b)

You must put in place a Gender Equality and Diversity Plan which will support recruitment and employment of postdoctoral researchers, students and other staff including committees within six months of the Project Start Date. This plan should:

- Consider innovative strategies to position the ARC Centre of Excellence as a flexible, inclusive, and an environment that enables a good work life balance.
- Support innovative recruitment processes and employment conditions of postdoctoral researchers, students and other staff including committees.

- Encourage the recruitment of and flexible employment arrangements for research personnel and other staff including committees.
- Be developed in conjunction with the human resources areas of the Participating Organisations.

MENTORING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

See Grant Agreement B2.2.7 (c)

You must put in place a Mentoring and Professional Development Plan within six months of the Project start date.

An ARC Centre of Excellence 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 ARC Centre of Excellence must establish and implement a high-quality mentoring and professional development program, encompassing students, postdoctoral researchers, and mid-career researchers. The ARC Centre of Excellence 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.

This plan should:

- Outline the implementation of a high-quality supervision, mentoring and professional development program which encompasses all students, postdoctoral researchers, and mid-career researchers.
 - Outline mechanisms for student supervision, 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.
- **TIP:** Consider what professional development courses can be leveraged from what is offered by the Administering Organisation, but also build into the budget funding for specialised training.
 - **TIP:** Consider having an ECR committee as an avenue for students and post docs to provide feedback to management.
 - **TIP:** Consider including a training plan

COMMUNICATION, OUTREACH, AND EDUCATION PLAN

Also see [‘creating entity’](#).

See Grant Agreement B2.2.7 (d)

The ARC Centre of Excellence must develop, implement, and maintain a Communication, Education and Outreach Plan. The plan should outline the ARC Centre of Excellence’s public awareness, education and outreach programs which must be relevant and appropriate to the ARC Centre of Excellence and its research area. Joint programs or events with ARC Centre of Excellence in similar or related fields can be established as appropriate.

All ARC Centre of Excellence researchers should receive some media communications training and should be encouraged to participate in the public awareness, education, and outreach programs. The ARC Centre of Excellence and its research program must clearly articulate and promote the potential research impact to a wide range of audiences, as far as practicable.

RECRUITMENT PLAN

See Grant Agreement B2.3.3

Adopt innovative and best practice university recruitment processes for the recruitment of staff to the ARC Centre of Excellence, the investment should attract the best candidates.

For example, some ARC Centres of Excellence have advertised female-only postdoctoral positions to meet their gender equality and diversity policy targets. Or they have highly specified recruitment procedures to enable gender equality and diversity outcomes.

A number of recruitment toolkits or manuals have also been developed by ARC Centres of Excellence, Research Hubs and Training Centres and are available on their respective websites. For more information, contact the ARC Major Investments team via ARC-Postaward@arc.gov.au.

Consider the timing of appointments for staff and students across the life of the ARC Centres of Excellence to ensure an appropriate balance of resources and supervision of staff. Also plan for the final years of the ARC Centre of Excellence 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 postdoctoral researchers across all academic levels. This will create a strong foundation for effective succession planning in the ARC Centre of Excellence.

Following recruitment, all staff should undergo an induction process and a plan for their ongoing [professional development and mentoring](#) should be put into place.

Be innovative in ideas for mentoring and supervision—the ARC Centre of Excellence is building a future research workforce.

See also [Personnel](#)

DATA MANAGEMENT PLAN

See Grant Agreement A2.1.2 (c) and A2.2.5

A data management plan must be developed prior to commencement.

The plan needs to describe how the ARC Centre of Excellence will manage the long-term preservation of data and metadata arising from the grant. Some considerations include storage, access and reuse arrangements of the data emerging from the ARC Centre of Excellence.

This plan should be reviewed and updated regularly.

TRANSLATION PLAN

This plan should:

- identify actual and potential end users including industry sectors and what success looks like to them
- map a clear pathway to research impact
- describe how progress can be monitored and measured
- show how data will be collected to undertake impact monitoring and evaluation
- outline of the benefits including IP arrangements and commercialisation pathways.

Consider mapping your translation of research outcomes early and plan for what impact and engagement measures can be used. What do the key successes look like to the end users? What is the measure for these successes? 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 research impact.

SETTING KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPIs)

See Grant Agreement B2.2.3

You must submit Key Performance Indicator (KPI) targets, also referred to as Schedule D for the ARC Centre of Excellence for ARC approval before 30 June 2023.

Prior to commencement of the project, all ARC Centres of Excellence must set performance targets across a range of categories for each year of funding. These performance targets or KPIs, are reported annually through the Annual Report using Schedule D.

KPIs are only one measurement of the overall performance of the ARC Centre of Excellence. It is important that adequate time and consideration is given to setting up KPI data collection processes.

Consider KPIs early and as one important mechanism for monitoring progress. KPIs targets must have aspirational targets to stretch performance. Excluding Year 1 performance where the ARC Centre of Excellence 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: The Centre 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.

BUDGET PLAN

During the establishment phase, it may be necessary to revisit the original budget costings to the research program. If revisions are needed, make sure it is clearly documented. Include details on other changes in research direction or issues with equipment purchases or infrastructure access.

If there are significant changes to the budget, which include large chunks of funding being moved across line items, for example personnel, equipment, or travel, then a Budget Variation approval is required to be obtained from the ARC. For more information, please see the Variation to a Grant Agreement information on the [ARC Website](#), and [Variations to a Grant Agreement](#) in this document.

Have clear arrangements on the distribution, and in some cases recovery of funds, across nodes in response to managing the performance of the research program.

It is important to ensure that sufficient funds are allocated for administrative costs right to the end date of the ARC Centre of Excellence grant, or 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 5.1-5.11 for more information on eligible and non-eligible budget items.

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

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

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

In-kind contributions should be documented and reported annually alongside the [annual report](#). This ensures that the funding information provided to the ARC accurately reflects the contributions of partner organisations. The amounts must reflect what has been reported in the Partner Organisation Contribution Report (POACR). Detailed information is not required, but it should be reflective of the level of support provided by Participating Organisations.

Strategic Funds

Consider setting aside a pool of funds for strategic purposes. Agreement on the use and distribution of these funds should be established early and should be tied to rigorous performance management of the research projects.

The Administering Organisation should centrally administer strategic funds and its distribution with oversight by the [Executive Management Committee](#).

Previous Administering Organisations have set aside extra income from ARC indexation or bank interest to supplement strategic funds. See also [Indexation](#)

These funds can support new or serendipitous opportunities that may emerge. For example, an 'Innovation Award' that drives new directions, ideas, or applications. You must ensure these emerging investments 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.

Some examples to use strategic funds include:

- Supporting unexpected gaps in the research program (such as technology, equipment or bringing in additional expertise).
- Responding to serendipitous opportunities which will enhance the existing research program. These emerging opportunities are often time sensitive with a high risk, but high return.
- Use funds as part of the ARC Centre of Excellence's risk management for when a research project is not performing as expected. The ARC Centre of Excellence 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).

Cash Contributions

Consider and document a model for managing and distributing cash contributions from Participating Organisations. For example, some ARC Centres of Excellence receive all cash contributions from Partner Organisation through the Administering Organisation, which then distributes the funding across the nodes.

CREATING AN ARC CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE AS AN ENTITY

See Grant Agreement B2.2.6 and B2.3.1

An ARC Centre of Excellence is considered a national research enterprise that operates as an entity within the Administering Organisation.

You can engage external consultants to assist with web design and branding or reach out to the University's marketing/public relations staff for assistance.

Website and Social-Media

See Grant Agreement B2.2.6

Establishing a website and social media presence is necessary to distinguish the Major Investment as its own entity and not a sub-department of a university.

Websites and social media platforms facilitate greater engagement with the public and have been used to great effect to communicate activities and outcomes by previous grants.

It may be beneficial to establish 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 previous entities have used .com, .org, and .edu.

TIP: Centre Directors can acknowledge their title in their signature block prior to the ARC Centre of Excellence commencing but only 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).

Logo

The ARC does not have any specific requirements in the development of a logo; however, you must ensure that branding material such as banners and signs acknowledge the ARC.

You could develop the logo as part of a team building exercise, the result of an internal competition, or seek professional expertise. Other ARC Centres of Excellence have requested the public or school groups enter their designs for a logo.

Further information on usage of the ARC logo can be sought from the ARC communications team via Communications@arc.gov.au.

Signage

Signage for the ARC Centre of Excellence should be in a prominent place within the Administering Organisation and nodes. Signage must include the ARC logo and full title of the ARC Centre of Excellence.

Launch Event

All ARC Centres of Excellence grants are required to hold a launch event within 12 months of commencing; however, this may be extended to 18 months in the event of ongoing disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Please consult with the ARC Major Investments team via ARC-Postaward@arc.gov.au if you have questions or issues.

The Federal Minister for Education and the ARC CEO must be invited to the launch. Please refer to the ARC event advice for protocol if The Minister and/ or the ARC CEO cannot attend.

Launches should be organised in consultation with the ARC, following protocols set out in the ARC's event advice documentation which is available from the ARC Stakeholder Relations team via arc-parliamentary@arc.gov.au.

The ARC acknowledges that during the COVID-19 pandemic, travel restrictions may be in place or may change, and the ability to hold face-to-face events may be challenging. Alternative plans, such as virtual or hybrid events for the launch are becoming commonplace to allow invited interstate participants to take part in a remote capacity.

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 ARC Centre of Excellence can be showcased. Attendance by Partner Organisation representatives is desirable.

Some example formats for launches:

- Opening of a new building
- New equipment and laboratory tours
- Unveiling of signage

Launch functions are often held near laboratory facilities or within a general function area in the University. External venues could include Parliament House in Canberra or the Shine Dome.

In some cases, the launch is held in conjunction with another event such as a workshop, summer/winter school, or annual meeting to maximise attendance. Inviting the Minister and ARC CEO is not a requirement for satellite events or general non-launch events.

TIP: The ARC Stakeholder Relations team (arc-parliamentary@arc.gov.au) can assist with contacts for the Federal Minister for Education. It may also be appropriate to consider inviting other Federal or State Parliamentarians. Ensure you advise the ARC that you are doing that.

Acknowledging the ARC

See Grant Agreement section 7.

ARC Centres of Excellence will need to develop clear strategies around which research outputs and outcomes are appropriate to be acknowledged under the Major Investment.

13. Reporting and Monitoring

See Grant Agreement A5 and section 16

Reporting requirements are outlined in the Grant Agreement. These will require data collection and use of reporting tools. Consider how data is requested, collected, and presented and how it will be used over the years. The leadership will need to ensure 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 ARC Centre of Excellence. This information can be sent out for communications across the nodes and will be easier to collate data for the Annual or Progress Reports.

TIP: There are many tools available beyond Excel—speak to existing COOs about the different systems they use. Some have an in-house custom-built tool, while others use externally commissioned online reporting databases.

VARIATIONS TO A GRANT AGREEMENT

See Grant Agreement A2.3 and B2.6

Your Research Office will provide guidance on Variations to the Grant Agreement. More information can be found on the ARC website [Manage your grant | Australian Research Council](#).

Also refer to the 'Research Office Instructions for completing and submitting a Variation and/or POACR' ([PDF](#) / [Word](#)) available on the ARC website.

Adding a New Node

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

- A summary of the current structure of the ARC Centre of Excellence, outlining all the current nodes.
- A short rationale as to what the new node will bring to the ARC Centre of Excellence (stating any particular expertise, cash and in-kind commitments and key people including short CVs – no more than one page each).
- An explanation as to how the new node will fit in with the ARC Centre of Excellence’s governance and encompassed into any advisory bodies, if applicable.
- An explanation of how the ARC Centre of Excellence 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.

Participating Organisations - Change, Removal, or Default

See Grant Agreement A2.3.5 (c)

A Variation is required when a change to current Participating Organisations is sought. You must provide the [Participating Organisation Agreed Contribution Report](#) in RMS for any revisions.

When considering Participating Organisation changes, consider alignment with the budget, aims and research program as outlined in the application or as approved by the ARC in a [Scope Change Variation](#).

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

- clarify if the new organisation is 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 or Changing Chief Operating Officer in RMS

See Grant Agreement B2.6.3

Also see [Personnel](#) for ARC approval requirements prior to adding a Chief Operating Officer to RMS.

Changing the Chief Operating Officer requires a Variation to Funding Agreement.

Process:

- Chief Operating Officer
 - Request an RMS account (*if not already completed*).
 - When the account is approved by the Research Office - complete all questions under personal profile (*if not already completed*). **Conflicts of Interest, employment history, and qualifications are mandatory fields. These fields must be completed before the ARC can process the Variation.** *Note: availability, current ARC projects, and Research Outputs are not required for administrative roles.*
- Research Office
 - Approve new user (*if not already completed*).
 - Check personal profile. Ensure all questions are complete, including foreign interference and conflicts of interest questions appearing under Personal Details.

- Submit a Variation for Person add/ update to corresponding project (include approved CV and approved supporting documentation).
- See Grant Agreement B2.3.3 (g) for required supporting documentation.
- ARC Major Investments team:
 - Assess and approve the Variation.
 - Arrange meeting with new COO to make introductions and discuss role.

Change to Centre Director

See Grant Agreement B2.6.2

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 reason for this change.
- A competitive recruitment process should be undertaken by the Administering Organisation for an appropriately qualified person to lead the ARC Centre of Excellence.
- You must advise the ARC via email that a candidate has been selected and that the necessary preliminary approvals have been given by the other Participating Organisations.
- Provide the ARC with a copy of a 2-page CV for the proposed Centre Director.
- ARC will arrange a meeting/ interview with the 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 Centre 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 presentation must be given by the proposed Centre Director outlining:

- The expertise and skills the Centre Director can bring to the ARC Centre of Excellence.
- A summary of progress of the ARC Centre of Excellence 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).

The ARC will advise the Administering Organisation whether the appointment of the new Centre Director may progress. This may include follow up conditions required to support the new Centre Director taking on the role.

If the ARC advises that the appointment may proceed, a Variation to the Grant Agreement must be submitted through RMS for final ARC approval of the Centre Director change.

For interim Centre Director arrangements for more than two months, the process noted above may apply. Please contact the Major Investments team at ARC-Postaward@arc.gov.au for advice. For shorter periods to manage leave arrangements of less than one month please notify the ARC.

Other Personnel Changes (including add/update CIs)

See Grant Agreement A2.3.5 (b)

- All replacement Chief Investigators (CIs) or Partner Investigators (PIs) must meet the **eligibility criteria** specified in the Grant Guidelines.
- All replacement CIs and PIs must have the **relevant expertise** which is commensurate with or equivalent to the standard of the original team which was awarded the ARC Centre of Excellence.
- All replacement PIs must have **research and/or supervision/mentoring and/or management expertise** which is commensurate with or equivalent to the standard of the original team which was awarded the ARC Centre of Excellence.

Approval must be sought from the ARC for the change in specified personnel by submitting a Variation request to the ARC in RMS. See Variation to a Funding Agreement information on the 'Manage your grant' page on the [ARC Website](#).

Scope Changes

See Grant Agreement A2.3.5 (a)

A need for a change in scope can either emerge during the early negotiations or during the lifespan of the agreement. Scope changes must be approved by the ARC through a Variation request in RMS.

Prior to submitting a scope change Variation in RMS, please email the Major Investments team at ARC-Postaward@arc.gov.au with the following details:

- A brief outline of the current scope of the ARC Centre of Excellence'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 through RMS by the Research Office. In many cases, a meeting with the ARC and the Centre Director, COO and Research Office staff are organised to discuss the scope changes as a first step.

If you're unsure if your change requires a scope change Variation, please contact the ARC Major Investments team to discuss it.

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

Example 1

Three themes and six sub projects were described in the proposal. However, after accepting the funding offer there was a return rate of 90% of ARC funds and it was decided that the grant would scale back and remove two of the sub projects from the research program. There is no major impact to the overall outcomes.

Example 2

A Partner Organisation withdraws from the Project and a new Partner Organisation is interested in joining the grant under a different/new research theme than the original Partner Organisation was involved in. This new research direction is still within the intent of the Research Program and can be integrated easily into future research program activities. The Administering Organisation requests a new organisation and scope change Variation to seek permission from the ARC.

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

Example 1

A Partner Organisation has changed priorities and wishes to make changes to a research theme which fall outside the objectives of the Research Program or scheme objectives.

PARTNER ORGANISATION AGREED CONTRIBUTION REPORT (POACR)

See Grant Agreement A2.3.5 (c)

Your Research Office is required to submit a new Participating Organisation Agreed Contribution Report in RMS for any revisions to Participating Organisations. Please ensure you notify the Research Office of all changes relating to cash and in-kind contributions.

ANNUAL REPORT

See Grant Agreement B5.

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

Please note the accompanying documents required under B5.1.2.

Broad in-kind values should be reported with data on specific ARC Centre of Excellence income and expenditure (Grant Agreement B5.1.3 d)

END OF YEAR REPORTING (EOYR)

See Grant Agreement A5.2

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPIs)

See Grant Agreement B5.1.2.

Annual Reports must include updates on KPIs. See also [Setting Key Performance Indicators \(KPIs\)](#).

REVIEWS

See Grant Agreement B2.5

In its fourth year of operation, an ARC Centre of Excellence must undergo a rigorous and comprehensive external performance review undertaken by the ARC. Performance reviews are otherwise known as Mid-term Reviews. Continuation of a Grant for the remaining years of the Grant Period will be dependent on the outcome of the review.

The RO, Centre Director, and COO will be provided with guidance material and the Terms of Reference which outline the criteria for the Mid-term Review.

Mid-term Reviews involve the consideration of documentation submitted to the ARC and a comprehensive site visit and/or interview. The Review Panel, which will include members external to the ARC with relevant expertise, will review the submission material and attend the site visit or interview.

Examples of reasonable assistance requested by the ARC to undertake the review may include assistance with the preparation of the agenda, preparations for the site visit (face to face venue or virtual technology arrangements), and catering for the Review Panel.

The Mid-term Review will produce a Review Report which will include recommendations from the Review Panel for response. Progress against implementing the recommendations will be monitored through the Annual Report and ongoing consultation with the ARC Centre of Excellence.

TIP: You can nominate a preferred month for the Mid-term 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 ARC Centre of Excellence.

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

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

Ad hoc Performance Reviews

See Grant Agreement B2.5.7

Ad hoc performance reviews may be undertaken at any time.

The ARC will notify the Org, the Centre Director, and the COO if the investment has been identified for an Ad hoc Performance Review. This review may include a site visit and may follow the same format as outlined in the Performance Reviews. The ARC will provide further information at the time of notification.

FINAL REPORT

See Funding Agreement A5.4

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

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

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: Final Reports can take significant time to complete. We recommend populating the form well before the end date, particularly with regards to Research Outputs.

TIP: It is important 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 Centre Director, and all named Chief Investigators for future applications for ARC funding.

14. Personnel

See also [Recruitment Plan](#)

ROLES AND RECRUITMENT

Appointment of Chief Operating Officer

See Grant Agreement B2.3.3 (g)

ARC funds are allocated to appoint a highly qualified COO for the ARC Centre of Excellence at the HEW 10 level

The appointment must first be approved by the ARC Delegate. Following the recruitment process, an offer of employment can be made, which is conditional to ARC approval.

The request for approval must include:

- A short curriculum vitae of the proposed COO.
- A statement outlining the suitability of the proposed COO for the role and the functions they will undertake.

An appropriate competitive recruitment process should be followed. The COO is a vital participant and is expected to lead the business and operational management. As such, the COO is expected to be appointed at a HEW level 10.

As one of the first appointees, the COO will 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 the Administrating Organisation and other administrative support personnel at the nodes from the early stages to build an operational network to support effective governance and administration.

Following formal appointment please notify the ARC Major Investments Team via ARC-Postaward@arc.gov.au, who will organise a videoconference or face-to-face meeting for introductions and to facilitate an ongoing and productive working relationship.

We encourage new COOs to reach out to the regional network in their state (NSW, VIC and QLD only). If a network does not exist within your university, reach out to the Major Investments team via ARC-Postaward@arc.gov.au who can provide some other contacts.

See also [Adding a new Business Managers/ Chief Operating Officer](#)

CHANGES TO PERSONNEL

See [Variations to Grant Agreement](#) for changes to:

- Change to COO
- Change to Centre Director
- Changes to other Personnel including CIs and AIs