Australian Government
Australian Research Council

ARC

Corporate Plan

2025–26

Contents

Acknowledgement of Country

Artist: Mr Greg Joseph of the Yidinji people.

The Australian Research Council acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to lands, seas, skies and waterways. The ARC acknowledges the important contribution that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research, researchers and the communities they work with make to our collective knowledge, culture, society, economy and environment. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and to Elders past and present.

Message from the Chair of the ARC Board

On behalf of the ARC Board, it is my pleasure to present the *ARC Corporate Plan 2025–26* (Corporate Plan). This is the second corporate plan published since the ARC Board commenced, and we have engaged with the work of the ARC with passion and vigour – as the Chair I can vouch for that. The Board has a bold, once-in-a-generation ambition: to revitalise the way in which the ARC supports research excellence; to strengthen Australia's capacity to respond to national challenges; and to nurture the next generation of researchers. This will be a crucial focus for us.

The ARC has done considerable work to get us to this point. Consultations undertaken during 2024–25 on the National Competitive Grants Program (NCGP) Policy Review culminated in a proposal to re-design how the ARC funds research. In 2025–26, we will provide government with recommendations for a revitalised NCGP that has a simpler structure, greater emphasis on helping research scholars early in their careers, promotes emerging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers, and provides opportunities to explore big ideas that challenge existing paradigms.

As we work towards implementing this bold vision, we will develop a 10-year ARC Strategy to guide the significant $1 billion annual investment made in early stage research through the NCGP, and to ensure that we fulfil the broader purpose given to us under the revised *Australian Research Council Act 2001* (ARC Act). The strategy will seek to maximise the contribution of ARC-funded research, aligning with national priorities and creating synergies across government and internationally. We will provide stewardship by setting clear goals for growing a diverse, impactful and thriving research sector. To accomplish this, we will engage with universities, research end-users, industry, civil society, researchers and all levels of government to develop a plan that supports the very best and most creative research.

Continuing to strengthen the ARC's engagement with stakeholders is another priority for 2025–26. Building on our 2024 engagements, we will continue to foster strong, strategic relationships across local and global networks – spanning universities, government, research funders and research end-users – to identify opportunities for change, improvement and increased impact. Through active engagement with the international research community, including the Global Research Council and the Research on Research Institute, we will continue to adopt, understand and shape best practice grants administration and research policy.

Professor Peter Shergold AC, Chair of the ARC Board

I am also excited to continue the engagement that we have started with the ARC Indigenous Forum, whose advice has been clear: we need to do far more to support emerging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers. And that's exactly what we will do through a renewed NCGP. The coming year will also bring the opportunity to engage with the new ARC Advisory Committee. The Board is looking forward to hearing the feedback and insights that they will bring to the conversation.

The ARC plays an important role in shaping and fostering Australia's research landscape through the policy advice it provides to government. Fundamental to our ability to provide sound advice and demonstrate the value of Australian research will be further development of a National Research Evaluation and Impact Framework to assess the excellence, impact and depth of university research. The new framework will take account of the government's response to the Australian Universities Accord Final Report, which recommended that the ARC adopt a data-driven approach to evaluation that utilises intelligent technologies. In 2025–26, we look forward to consulting with universities and their researchers to develop a framework that creates value and delivers against the requirements of the government.
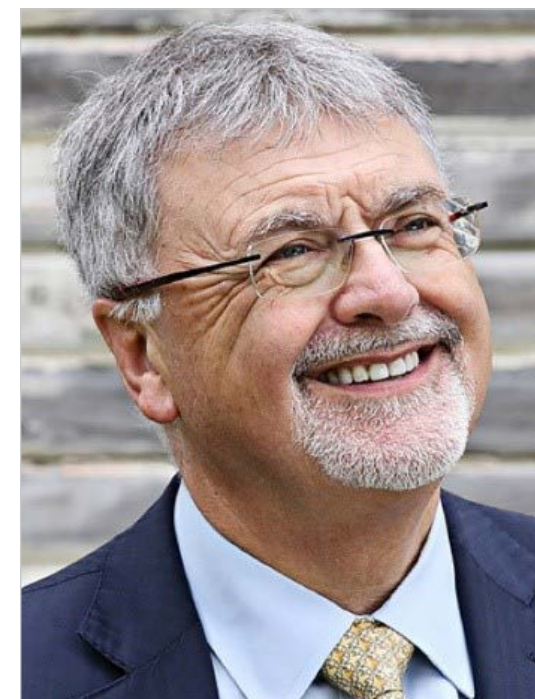
The year ahead will be one for bold proposals to better support a dynamic research sector. It will also be a time of careful consideration, consultation and being mindful of our strong reputation for supporting world-class Australian research. The research we fund generates $3.32 in economic benefits for every $1 invested; contributes significantly to resource management and reducing environmental damage; and has many positive social and cultural impacts. It is good for Australia and a proud legacy to build on.

Statement of preparation

I, as Chair of the accountable authority (ARC Board) of the ARC, present the *ARC Corporate Plan 2025–26*, which covers the period 2025–26 to 2028–29, as required under paragraph 35(1)(b) of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (PGPA Act), and subsection 16E(2) of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Rule 2014* (PGPA Rule).

Professor Peter Shergold AC
Chair of the ARC Board
Australian Research Council

Chief Executive Officer's foreword

I am very pleased to join the Chair of the ARC Board, Professor Peter Shergold AC, in presenting the *ARC Corporate Plan 2025–26*. This is my first corporate plan since commencing my role as the ARC Chief Executive Officer (CEO) in March 2025.

1 July 2025 marked the first full year of the ARC Board and on the strength of the ARC's achievements during the last 12 months, I have no doubt that the Board's stewardship and vision will continue to be a great benefit to the ARC and have a positive, productive impact on the Australian research landscape.

Over 2025–26, our central focus will be on revitalising the NCGP and developing a new ARC Strategy that will guide us through the next 10 years. The bold reforms will require rethinking all stages of the funding cycle including the assessment model, post-award grant management and evaluation. This is a significant body of work that will set the ARC and the broader research funding system up for success for decades to come.

We will build on the work the ARC has undertaken since 2022 to reduce the administrative burden for both research applicants and universities. As a former researcher, I will be an enthusiastic champion for our ongoing initiatives to reduce red tape for the research sector and improve transparency for researchers. I look forward to working with the ARC Board, Indigenous Forum, Advisory Committee and College of Experts as we redesign processes to support the achievement of our vision for the revitalised NCGP.

As the government considers how best to conduct research evaluation in the context of the *Australian Universities Accord Final Report*, the ARC is working to move to a modern, data-driven National Research Evaluation and Impact Framework. This Framework will be underpinned by a strengthened, systematic approach to assessing the performance of the NCGP against the evolving context in which the research system operates. This will help us to identify and act on strategic priorities as they emerge and determine how well the NCGP is meeting its objectives.

Professor Ute Roessner AM FAA, Chief Executive Officer

To achieve all of this we must also continue to invest in our greatest resource, our people. During 2025–26, we will continue supporting our diverse and empowered workforce, provide further career development opportunities and build structures that enable our people, processes and infrastructure to deliver high-quality outcomes.

I would like to thank staff, stakeholders and colleagues across government for their support and commitment to ensuring the ARC continues to fund world-class research and innovation for the advancement of Australian society. I also want to thank the ARC Board for their vision and drive in renewing and reviewing the NCGP. Exciting times lie ahead, and I am thrilled to be a part of them.

Professor Ute Roessner AM FAA
Chief Executive Officer
Australian Research Council

Purpose

The ARC is a non-corporate Commonwealth entity established under the *Australian Research Council Act 2001* (ARC Act), located within the Australian Government's Education portfolio and reporting to the Minister for Education (Minister).

The ARC is a vital component of Australia's innovation and research system. We play an integral role in supporting the research sector to produce excellent and impactful research for Australia's economic, social, environmental and cultural benefit through the delivery of the NCGP. The NCGP funds excellent early-stage research in all disciplines except medical research.

The ARC's broader remit includes the provision of high-quality research policy advice to the Australian Government; supporting research integrity and promoting ethical research; evaluating the excellence, impact and depth of Australian research; and expanding Indigenous Australian knowledge systems. It also facilitates partnerships between researchers and industry, government, community organisations and the international community (see **Table 1**).

Table 1: Our purpose

Our purpose	To help shape Australian research for the nation's economic, social, environmental and cultural benefit by enabling excellent research; evaluating the excellence, impact and depth of Australian research; providing expert advice and research grants services; supporting research integrity and promoting ethical research.				
Our key activities	**Fund high-quality, impactful research** Through the NCGP, we support excellent early-stage research and research training for the benefit of Australians, across all disciplines (excluding experimental development and medical research), by awarding funding based on a competitive peer review process.	**Evaluate research excellence, impact and depth** We develop and conduct holistic evaluations of Australia's university research, which supports a competitive and innovation-based economy, and drive improvements in national social and economic priorities.	**Safeguard research integrity and security** We safeguard the ethics, integrity, and credibility of Australian research through a framework of policies, processes and reviews.	**Provide research grant services to government entities** We partner with other Commonwealth entities through our Research Grants Services to support program design and administration of their research grants.	**Provide research policy advice** We use our datasets, stakeholder relationships and rigorous processes to position us to provide expert advice to government and other stakeholders on the Australian research system.
Our outcome[1]	**Outcome 1:** Growth of knowledge and innovation through managing research funding schemes, measuring research excellence and providing advice.				
Our programs[1]	**Program 1.1: Discovery – research and research training –** Building Australia's research capacity by supporting excellent, internationally competitive research projects, fellowships and awards. **Program 1.2: Linkage – cross-sector research partnerships –** Building Australia's research and innovation capacity by supporting excellent, internationally competitive research projects, infrastructure, fellowships, and Centres of Excellence that involve collaboration among researchers within and beyond the research sector. **Program 1.3: Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA)[2] –** Improving Australia's research capacity by evaluating research at eligible Australian higher education institutions against international benchmarks and identifying excellence across the full spectrum of research activities.				

1   As per the *ARC Portfolio Budget Statements 2025–26 (PBS)*.

2   The 2023 ERA round was discontinued, and the Australian Universities Accord has made recommendations regarding a future National Research Evaluation and Impact Framework. The government is currently considering the recommendations made in the Australian Universities Accord Final Report.

Key activities

Fund high-quality, impactful research

Through the NCGP, the ARC supports excellent early-stage research and research training. The NCGP is currently divided into 2 core programs – Discovery and Linkage – that encourage national competition across all disciplines outside of clinical and other medical research.

The Discovery and Linkage programs both deliver benefit to Australia by supporting excellent, internationally competitive research that strengthens Australia's capacity in areas of national priority, fostering national and international collaboration, and providing research training and career opportunities to current and emerging researchers.

Consultation undertaken with the research sector and other stakeholders as part of the NCGP Policy Review revealed a consensus that the NCGP has delivered value over the past 20 years, but that it needs to be reshaped for the future if Australia is to achieve the best research outcomes. Consequently, one of the ARC's key priorities (see page 9) is to design and implement a new model for the NCGP, including new schemes and processes, to deliver on the Board's bold new policy objectives.

Reforming the NCGP is a long-term endeavour. The final report on the NCGP Policy Review, outlining the proposed new model for the NCGP, will be provided to the government in Quarter 3, 2025. Existing Discovery and Linkage programs will continue to provide research funding until changes arising from the NCGP Policy Review are introduced progressively from 2026.

Evaluate research excellence, impact and depth

The ARC is responsible for evaluating the excellence, impact and depth of Australian university funded research as part of the ARC Act. The government is considering how to best evaluate research in the context of their response to the *Australian Universities Accord Final Report*, which was released by the Minister on 25 February 2024. In the interim, the ARC is working, in consultation with the Department of Education, to investigate a wide range of data holdings, international best practice and advances in data management such as persistent identifiers (reliable, long-lasting references to a digital resource) to understand and evaluate university research in a more data driven way.

A new National Research Evaluation and Impact Framework will have capacity to provide fundamental and new insights into the performance of the national research system. These insights will deliver significant benefits to Australians by supporting, influencing and contributing to Australia's endeavour to be a competitive, innovation-based economy.

Safeguard research integrity and security

The Australian community expects research to be conducted responsibly, ethically and with integrity. The ARC plays a vital leadership role in maintaining and promoting responsible conduct of research. In collaboration with the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) and Universities Australia, the ARC is a co-author of the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research* (Code), which articulates the broad principles and responsibilities that underpin the conduct of Australian research. Alongside the NHMRC, we provide secretariat support to the Australian Research Integrity Committee, which undertakes reviews of institutional processes used to manage and investigate potential breaches of the Code.

As the main funding agency for non-clinical research in Australia, the ARC works proactively with universities to help identify and manage potential research security risks in line with broader government frameworks.

Provide research grant services to government entities

The ARC partners with other Commonwealth entities to deliver their research grant programs through our Research Grants Services (RGS). RGS supports the administration of research grants for these partners via a range of service models, from software as a service through to identifying research expertise.

These arrangements aim to make it easier for these partners to fund the best research and researchers in line with policy objectives, provide evidence about the value of research, and improve research related outcomes. The arrangements leverage the ARC's Research Management System (RMS), which is familiar to the research sector; improves consistency of grants administration data available to government; and makes it easier to apply for, assess and manage Commonwealth research grants in Australia.

Provide research policy advice

The ARC advises the Minister on a broad range of research matters that affect the research sector and its operating environment. We provide expert advice on research funding matters, research trends and career pathways. We engage and collaborate with government, universities, industry, and international stakeholders to monitor research trends, identifying areas for collaboration to ensure that the ARC retains our reputation as a world-class funding agency. Our data and analyses are used across government to inform decisions on research and innovation, industry sector investment, workforce issues, gender and equity.

Key priorities

The ARC is focused on driving world-class research and innovation for the advancement of Australian society. We play a critical role in providing ongoing investment in university research and researchers for Australia's economic, social, environmental and cultural benefit. The ARC Board will continue to drive the strategic direction of the ARC to shape Australia's research landscape and support researchers. In line with our purpose and strategic direction, the ARC's key priorities for 2025–26 include:

- Working with the Department of Education to implement findings and recommendations from the NCGP Policy Review and transition to a new model, including:
  - Designing and implementing new schemes and processes that address review outcomes.
  - Reforming the assessment model to ensure alignment with new scheme objectives and to reduce burden for applicants and assessors.
  - Embedding data-driven evaluation mechanisms to assess ongoing NCGP performance and inform future priority setting.
- Delivering a 10-year ARC Strategy to drive and support the best early-stage research.
- Working closely with the ARC Indigenous Forum, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers and communities, and the research sector to promote, embed, and support Indigenous researchers, research and knowledge systems.
- Continuing to work with the Department of Education, national security agencies and other stakeholders to further strengthen processes to protect the security of Australian research from foreign interference risks.
- Developing a National Research Evaluation and Impact Framework to assess the excellence, impact and depth of university research in Australia.
- Developing enhanced data, analytics and communication capabilities that offer greater insight into the Australian research landscape and better tell the story of ARC-funded research, and the ARC's place in the research landscape.
- Continuing to work with the NHMRC, universities and other stakeholders to strengthen and safeguard the integrity and credibility of Australian research.
- Delivering the ARC's research grants administration service.

Operating context

Governance

The ARC's governance structure (**Figure 1**) supports the agency in delivering its purpose. Our governance framework ensures the ARC operates in accordance with our responsibilities under legislation on matters of effective performance, risk oversight, compliance and reporting.

The ARC Board is chaired by Professor Peter Shergold AC and includes a deputy chair and 6 other members appointed by the Minister. The Board is responsible for determining the priorities, strategies and policies for the ARC and advising the Minister regarding these. As the accountable authority for the ARC, the Board is also required to establish and oversee the ARC's financial administration framework under section 20A of the PGPA Act.

To assist the Board to carry out its functions, it is directly supported by the following committees:

- The ARC Audit and Risk Committee is made up of independent members who are not officials of the ARC. The committee provides advice to the ARC Board on governance and risk matters. It reviews the appropriateness of the ARC's financial and performance reporting; system of risk oversight and management; and system of internal control.
- The ARC Advisory Committee comprises up to 15 members with a variety of skills and experience, including across higher education, industry, civil society and public administration. The committee reflects a breadth of knowledge and experience relevant to the role and functions of the ARC and assists the Board in determining priorities, strategies and policies for the ARC.
- The ARC Indigenous Forum comprises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives including eminent academics; industry, community and research end-users; and early- and mid-career researchers. The forum provides advice to the Board on a wide range of matters relating to the ARC's strategic agenda and provides advice on how to assess the quality, engagement and impact of Indigenous research. They have a focus on the future of Indigenous research, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers and communities, and looking at opportunities for engagement where the ARC can enhance the translation and benefits for Indigenous research.

- The Board is responsible for the appointment of members to the ARC College of Experts. The College is made up of experts of international standing drawn from the Australian research community and assists the Board in the exercise of its powers, including the management and finalisation of ARC funding schemes through a peer review process.
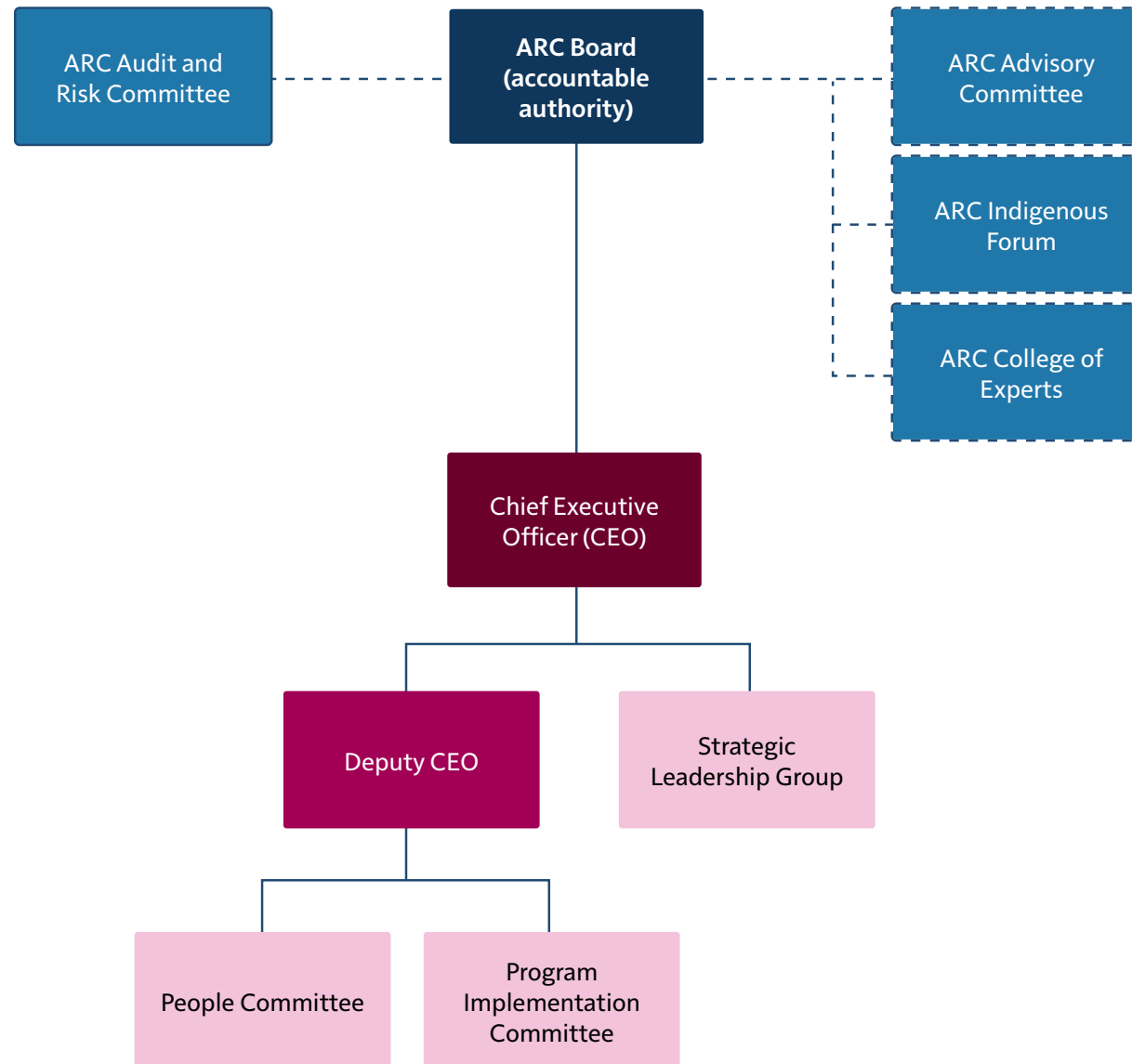
The CEO reports to the Board and is responsible for the agency's day-to-day operations and assisting the Board in the performance of its functions. The operations of the ARC are coordinated through internal management committees comprising the Strategic Leadership Group, People Committee, and the Program Implementation Committee.

The CEO is supported by the ARC's Deputy CEO; 4 branches; and a cohort of Academic Directors.

The Deputy CEO leads the team of senior managers and is responsible for providing sound strategic advice to the CEO on agency and government policies, programs and operations. The position determines organisational policies and strategies in consultation with the CEO. The Deputy CEO also oversees the strategic development and reform of the agency across a diverse range of areas including research grant policy and administration; improved research grant program design and delivery; stakeholder engagement; and the provision of advice on the higher education and research sectors.

The Academic Directors provide strategic advice on research matters.

Figure 1: Governance structure

Governance structure chart showing:
- ARC Audit and Risk Committee (connected by dashed line to ARC Board)
- ARC Board (accountable authority) at top centre
- ARC Advisory Committee, ARC Indigenous Forum, ARC College of Experts (connected by dashed lines to ARC Board, shown as dashed boxes)
- Chief Executive Officer (CEO) reporting to ARC Board
- Deputy CEO and Strategic Leadership Group reporting to CEO
- People Committee and Program Implementation Committee reporting to Deputy CEO

Environment

In 2024–25, the Australian Government spent an estimated $14.4 billion on research and development. As part of that national effort, the ARC has an enduring interest in supporting the highest quality early-stage research, which is fundamental to future innovations. Research is the intellectual basis upon which Australia can build its future.

Alongside the NCGP Policy Review, the Strategic Examination of Research and Development and the establishment of the Australian Tertiary Education Commission, reform will continue across the higher education and research sector. There is a shared appetite across government and the research sector to better coordinate government investment and policy direction to deliver better outcomes with reduced complexity. The model proposed under the NCGP Policy Review leverages the ARC's unique role in the research system, focusing on supporting a broad spectrum of innovative, early-stage research that feeds into better-connected translation pathways.

Further afield, rapid changes to the geopolitical and economic environment may pose additional foreign interference risks and uncertain consequences for the way that researchers, industry and other partners work together. Continued growth in the use and technology supporting Artificial Intelligence (AI) is creating new opportunities, challenges and risks for both the ARC's internal operations and for the wider research sector.

More than ever, Australia's research systems need to be adaptive, resilient and better connected to meet the challenges and opportunities ahead. Although many factors influencing the ARC's operating environment are out of our control, we recognise that our performance over the coming years can play a significant role in supporting the research sector to thrive in increasingly dynamic conditions. The ARC Board will provide stewardship and stability through the development of a 10-year strategy that anticipates, identifies and responds to emerging issues and plausible future scenarios over a long-term horizon.

Risk oversight and management

The ARC Board has overall responsibility for risk management at the ARC, setting the ARC's desired risk appetite and tolerance, and assessing strategic risks. The CEO and senior management work with the ARC Board to promote and communicate risk management strategies and practices within the ARC, managing strategic, operational, and fraud and corruption risks and their controls; monitoring the management of shared risks; and reviewing the ARC Risk Management Framework.

Business areas routinely monitor the ARC's risk environment and review their risks and controls through a centralised online governance and risk management system. Risk information from all business areas is periodically reported to the ARC Board, CEO and senior management. The ARC Audit and Risk Committee reviews the appropriateness of the ARC's system of risk oversight and management and system of internal controls and provides advice to the Board.

The ARC Risk Management Framework aligns with the Commonwealth Risk Management Policy and supports our staff in carrying out risk management effectively. The framework is designed to minimise the possibility of loss or damage to operations, staff, visitors, property, reputation and assets while recognising innovation and opportunities to meet our objectives. It is underpinned by the ARC's internal risk management policy, plan and toolkit, which articulate our risk culture, appetite, tolerance and approach to engaging with risk.

The ARC has 4 key strategic risks which could affect the agency's achievement of its objectives (**Table 2**). The ARC actively manages and regularly reviews the controls for these risks.

Table 2: Strategic risks

Strategic risk	Mitigation
Failure to provide strong leadership on research strategy	We play an integral role in supporting the research sector to produce high-quality and impactful research through the delivery of the NCGP. Our consistent engagement with stakeholders, participation in government interdepartmental committees as well as enhanced research policy and data capacity position us to succeed. The Policy Review of the NCGP and development of a new National Research Evaluation and Impact Framework will position the ARC at the forefront of Australian research strategy and policy.
ARC-funded research is not creating new knowledge or achieving national benefit	We have a range of policies and processes – including rigorous grants administration and peer review systems – to support the funding of research that will lead to new knowledge. Our strategic priorities continue to inform and drive business improvements. We continually improve grants administration processes, striving to enhance engagement with our stakeholders and to progress vital work on the NCGP Policy Review. The Advisory Committee and Indigenous Forum provide the Board with advice to assist the ARC in achieving these objectives.
The ARC is not engaging effectively with its stakeholders	We take a proactive approach to our engagement and communications activities, including through our partnerships and strategic communications. The Academic Directors bolster our engagement with the research community, and we continue to improve our engagement tools including our website and social media presence. We have strengthened agency coordination to ensure a consistent message across all vectors of engagement. We are working to build and maintain stronger relationships across the full diversity of our stakeholders including through consultation and co-design.
The ARC fails to comply with its legislative requirements and key government policies	We have well-established governance and financial processes for ensuring compliance with legislative requirements and key government policies. We undertake regular staff training, participate in cross-government groups and regularly review the agency's compliance with all applicable legislation. Our suite of governance documents and tools were reviewed during the transition to the new governance arrangements in 2024 and are aligned with the needs of the ARC Board.

Capabilities

The ARC is a small agency with big ambition. To achieve our goals, we must make the most of our people, processes, technology and infrastructure. In 2025–26, we will focus on maximising our resources by reprioritising efforts towards delivering the recommendations outlined in the NCGP Policy Review.

The ARC Capability Framework sets out the essential organisational capabilities the ARC requires. Throughout 2025–26, we will undertake a range of development activities to enhance our capabilities.

People

- Continue implementation of the *ARC People Strategy 2023–26* to support our employees by providing them the skills and knowledge needed to achieve our purpose and develop their careers.
- Achieve the 2026 milestones outlined in our *Diversity and Inclusion Framework* to provide a safe and inclusive workplace that values diversity.
- Uplift data literacy and access across the ARC in line with the ARC Data Strategy.
- Continue to examine opportunities to reduce outsourcing of core work in the Portfolio, Program and Project Management job family,[3] in line with the *Australian Public Service (APS) Strategic Commissioning Framework*.

Processes

- Review and update the ARC's performance frameworks to align with new strategic and policy directions.
- Establish new methodologies and processes to evaluate the effectiveness of NCGP programs.
- Grow purposeful stakeholder relationships through a new ARC Communications and Engagement Plan.
- Uplift the agency's privacy maturity rating, policies and procedures regarding personal information management and privacy by building on the ARC's internal Privacy Management Plan and Personal Information Data Breach Response Plan.
- Review and update ARC grant administration, including peer review and post-award, to reduce burden and maintain compliance with the *Commonwealth Grant Rules and Principles*.

Technology

- Maintain and adapt RMS as the core platform for managing the NCGP.
- Establish a solution to improve consistency, reliability and accountability regarding the management of enquiries to the ARC.
- Optimise the ARC website to provide tailored content, interactive resources and real-time updates on research outcomes and funding.
- Improve cyber security measures to ensure the security and integrity of ARC and stakeholder data.
- Develop internal or use external AI models to inform policy development and, where required, provide insights to the ARC's stakeholders. As stated in our *AI Transparency Statement*, any internally developed models or the use of external models will have appropriate evaluation methods applied, and the results will be verified by domain experts. This rigor will ensure that the results are fit for purpose and responsibly used.

Data

- Implement new technologies to better harvest and analyse available data for a more robust understanding of the policy environment.
- Investigate and collect a wide range of available data to evaluate and analyse the performance of the Australian university research system.
- Uplift usage of ARC data holdings to make them more accessible, interpretable and reliable.

Infrastructure

- Relocate the ARC's office to new, modern and fit-for-purpose premises.
- Promote re-use of digital investment by providing and consuming shared digital capabilities with other government agencies.
- Implement a new information management system to improve the management of the ARC's records and information holdings.

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3   As per the *APS Job Family Framework*.

Cooperation

In addition to supporting the Minister for Education, we cooperate and collaborate with a broad range of national and international stakeholders. We also work in partnership with our stakeholders to showcase research highlights that benefit the Australian community. The organisations and stakeholders that play a significant role in helping us achieve our purpose are outlined in **Table 3**.

Table 3: Stakeholder contribution to achieving our purpose

Stakeholder	Contribution towards achieving our purpose
Australian universities	Australian universities are our key stakeholders under the ARC Act. They are recipients of funding through the NCGP, the program under which the ARC evaluates the excellence, impact and depth of research. We work closely with university leaders, such as Deputy Vice Chancellors (Research), and with university research offices to ensure we are informed by sector knowledge and that there is awareness and understanding of our policies and grants processes, compliance with the funding requirements and participation in our national research assessments.
Researchers	Researchers, including early- and mid-career researchers, play an important role across the NCGP and our national research assessments by delivering excellent research and research outcomes, peer reviewing applications for the NCGP and participating in our national research assessments. Australian researchers of international repute form the ARC College of Experts and play a central role in identifying and recommending research excellence for funding.
Research peak bodies	We collaborate closely with Australian and international research peak bodies to ensure our policies and programs are fit for purpose and meet the needs of the Australian research sector, given the broad range of research we fund and evaluate.
Department of Education	We sit within the Education portfolio and regularly engage with the Department of Education to ensure our expert advice on research policy is available to the government and that our priorities are aligned with government activities.
Other government departments and agencies	We work across government to ensure our activities align with strategic government priorities and that we comply with cross-government legislative requirements. We collaborate closely with the NHMRC to align grant administration practices where possible and to oversee the Australian Research Integrity Committee. Similarly, we collaborate with the Department of Industry, Science and Resources and the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) to enable research commercialisation and translation opportunities. We also partner with other Australian Government entities to support program design and administration of their research grants.
First Nations communities and individuals	We engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers, their partners and their communities to ensure our activities are culturally sensitive and aligned with their priorities. We collaborate closely with these communities to guide research priorities and ensure the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and perspectives. Similarly, we work with organisations focused on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research to support the translation and commercialisation of research outcomes. We also partner with other entities to support the design and administration of research grants that impact Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Stakeholder	Contribution towards achieving our purpose
Industry, not-for-profit organisations and other research end-users	Industry, not-for-profit organisations and other research end-users help to maximise the benefit of ARC-funded research by collaborating and participating in ARC-funded research. These partnerships can include cash and/or in-kind contributions and can lead to better outcomes for research and research translation across sectors.
International research collaborators	We are committed to creating and boosting international research collaboration opportunities. Encouraging global research linkages through our schemes is key to ensuring Australian researchers can connect and partner with outstanding international researchers to produce world-leading research outcomes.

Performance

Our performance measures are an integral component of the ARC performance cycle and are designed to demonstrate the effectiveness and efficiency of our work in achieving our purpose and key activities. We recognise the importance of reliable and relevant performance information to illustrate how we are achieving our purpose and regularly report on performance to the ARC Board, CEO and senior management.

Performance measures and targets

Performance measure 1	The percentage of ARC schemes completed in time to meet ARC published timeframes		
Target	100% of scheme rounds outcomes are announced within the published timeframes on the ARC website		
Methodology	The number of ARC schemes where outcomes were announced within the published timeframes on the ARC website against all ARC schemes where outcomes were announced, for the reporting period		
Changes from previous year	Nil		
Related programs in PBS[4]	1.1 and 1.2	Planned reporting periods	2025–26 to 2028–29
Measure types	Quantitative and efficiency	Related key activity	Fund high-quality, impactful research
Outcome	NCGP application assessment processes are conducted in an efficient and timely manner		

Performance measure 2	The percentage of submitted final reports reviewed on time		
Target	More than 90% of completed final reports submitted are reviewed by the ARC within 90 days of submission		
Methodology	Percentage of final reports processed within the reporting period i.e. finalised (approved/waived) or de-submitted back to the Research Office for action. 90 days is calculated from the last date of submission.		
Changes from previous year	This measure has been adjusted to focus on final reports, which if not processed within appropriate timeframes can impact applicants from submitting further grant applications		
Related programs in PBS	1.1 and 1.2	Planned reporting periods	2025–26 to 2028–29
Measure types	Quantitative, efficiency and effectiveness	Related key activity	Fund high-quality, impactful research
Outcome	The ARC reviews completed final grant reports in a timely manner (within 90 days of submission) to ensure researchers are not impeded in applying for additional grants		

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4 PBS programs are outlined on page 6.

Performance measure 3	The proportion of appeals received for NCGP applications		
Target	The percentage of appeals received for all NCGP applications is less than 1%		
Methodology	The percentage of appeals received for all NCGP applications in the specified reporting period		
Changes from previous year	This measure has been adjusted from the percentage of successful appeals to the proportion of appeals received for NCGP applications		
Related programs in PBS	1.1 and 1.2	Planned reporting periods	2025–26 to 2028–29
Measure types	Quantitative and effectiveness	Related key activity	Fund high-quality, impactful research
Outcome	The ARC manages NCGP application and assessment processes fairly and in accordance with Grant Guidelines		

Performance measure 4	The percentage of ARC-funded research projects involving international collaboration for all ARC-funded research projects		
Target	More than 70% of research projects involve international collaboration		
Methodology	The number of research projects indicating actual international collaboration divided by the total number research projects displayed as a percentage. Data based on collaboration with nominated country/countries as per final reports approved within the reporting period.		
Changes from previous year	Nil		
Related programs in PBS	1.1 and 1.2	Planned reporting periods	2025–26 to 2028–29
Measure types	Quantitative and output	Related key activity	Fund high-quality, impactful research
Outcome	The ARC funds a high proportion of projects involving international collaboration		

Performance measure 5	The average number of days to action research integrity investigation outcomes reported to the ARC		
Target	Investigations reported to the ARC Research Integrity Office are considered and actioned by the ARC in less than or equal to 30 working days on average		
Methodology	The total number of working days for the ARC to action research integrity investigation outcomes divided by the total number of research integrity investigation outcomes actioned in the reporting period. Total days and total number include only research integrity investigation outcomes actioned in the reporting period.		
Changes from previous year	Nil		
Related programs in PBS	1.1 and 1.2	Planned reporting periods	2025–26 to 2028–29
Measure types	Quantitative and efficiency	Related key activity	Safeguard research integrity and security
Outcome	ARC-funded research is undertaken with integrity and complies with national codes on research ethics and the *ARC Research Integrity Policy*		

Performance measure 6	The proportion of funded Chief Investigators who identify as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander researcher		
Target	The percentage of Chief Investigators who identify as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander researcher on funded applications is higher than the previous reporting period		
Methodology	The percentage of unique Chief Investigators who identify as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander researcher on funded applications, as a proportion of the total percentage of unique researchers on funded applications under the NCGP, for an average of 4 years. The target will be met if the result is greater than the figure calculated for the previous reporting year.		
Changes from previous year	Nil		
Related programs in PBS	1.1 and 1.2	Planned reporting periods	2025–26 to 2028–29
Measure types	Quantitative and output	Related key activity	Fund high-quality, impactful research
Outcome	ARC grant activities support leadership of projects by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander researchers		

Performance measure 7	The percentage of approved projects where the Administering Organisation is notified within 21 days of approval		
Target	Administering Organisations are notified within 21 days for all (100%) of approved projects		
Methodology	The percentage of approved project notifications sent to Administering Organisations within 21 days throughout the reporting period		
Changes from previous year	Nil		
Related programs in PBS	1.1 and 1.2	Planned reporting periods	2025–26 to 2028–29
Measure types	Quantitative and output	Related key activity	Fund high-quality, impactful research
Outcome	NCGP application decisions are communicated in accordance with the *Australian Research Council Act 2001*		

Performance measure 8	The ARC peer review process identifies research excellence		
Target	The ARC achieves this measure by using a robust peer review process to make funding recommendations based on expertise representing the breadth of research fields funded by the ARC, and through close engagement with the research sector		
Methodology	The ARC has identified 3 reporting mechanisms (with defined targets) to determine whether the ARC peer review process identifies research excellence. The ARC considers the mechanisms identified appropriate to assess the overall measure.		
Changes from previous year	The 2025–26 target for reporting mechanism 3 has been established based on benchmarking results from 2024–25		
Related programs in PBS	1.1 and 1.2	**Planned reporting periods**	2025–26 to 2028–29
Measure types	Quantitative and output	**Related key activity**	Fund high-quality, impactful research
Outcome	The ARC uses a robust peer review process to make funding recommendations based on expertise representing the breadth of research fields funded by the ARC, and through close engagement with the research sector		
Reporting mechanism 1	The percentage of full applications that receive a minimum of 2 peer review assessments per application across all NCGP schemes		
Target	More than or equal to 90% of applications receive a minimum of 2 peer review assessments		
Reporting mechanism 2	The percentage of different Fields of Research the ARC College of Experts covers reflecting broad experience and expertise of the College		
Target	ARC College of Experts represents more than or equal to 80% of the total number of Fields of Research covered by the NCGP		
Reporting mechanism 3	The number of outreach engagements where the ARC promotes, educates or recognises participation in the peer review process		
Target	The number of outreach engagements held or attended by the ARC – where the ARC promoted, educated or recognised participation in the peer review process – is more than or equal to the previous year		

Performance measure 9	The total contribution from Partner Organisations for all research projects funded under the Linkage Projects scheme		
Target	Average dollar contribution is more than or equal to the previous year		
Methodology	Total Partner Organisation contribution (cash and in-kind funding) divided by total ARC funding for the same scheme round. Includes all funded Linkage Projects where outcomes were finalised within the reporting period.		
Changes from previous year	Nil		
Related programs in PBS	1.2	Planned reporting periods	2025–26 to 2028–29
Measure types	Quantitative and effectiveness	Related key activity	Fund high-quality, impactful research
Outcome	The ARC fosters an environment for collaboration between researchers and Partner Organisations. Total contribution from Partner Organisations for every ARC dollar is equal to or higher than the previous year.		

Performance measure 10	Design a new approach for evaluating the excellence, impact and depth of Australian university research		
Target	The ARC develops a new research evaluation framework to evaluate research excellence, impact and depth in Australia		
Methodology	The measure will be met if the ARC develops a proposal for a new research evaluation and impact framework		
Changes from previous year	This measure has been revised following publication of the *ARC Corporate Plan 2024–25* to reflect the work being undertaken on the development of a new National Research Evaluation and Impact Framework. The target for this measure was adjusted to 'not applicable' for the 2024–25 reporting period as this work is ongoing; reporting for this measure will occur in 2025–26.		
Related programs in PBS	1.3	Planned reporting periods	2025–26
Measure types	Qualitative and output	Related key activity	Evaluate research excellence, impact and depth
Outcome	The ARC has a proposal for a new research evaluation framework which will evaluate the excellence, impact and depth of Australian research		

Performance measure 11	The ARC provides expert advice on research across government		
Target	The ARC achieves this measure by providing timely and expert advice on research across government		
Methodology	The ARC has identified 3 reporting mechanisms (with defined targets) to assess whether the ARC provides expert advice on research across government. The ARC considers the mechanisms identified appropriate to assess the overall measure.		
Changes from previous year	The 2025–26 target for reporting mechanism 2 has been established based on benchmarking results from 2024–25. Wording for reporting mechanism 3 has been amended to reflect the change of title from 'Executive Directors' to 'Academic Directors'. This change better reflects the academic leadership role these positions have within the ARC.		
Related programs in PBS	1.1, 1.2 and 1.3	Planned reporting periods	2025–26 to 2028–29
Measure types	Quantitative and output	Related key activity	Provide research policy advice
Outcome	The ARC is a trusted source of advice on research matters across government		
Reporting mechanism 1	The ARC provides expert advice to parliamentary inquiries on research across government within timeframes provided		
Target	100% of responses to parliamentary inquiries are submitted within the timeframes provided		
Reporting mechanism 2	The number of government committees and forums on research attended by the ARC		
Target	The ARC attends a total of 15 government committees and forums on research		
Reporting mechanism 3	The number of senior academics engaged as Academic Directors who provide the ARC with expert advice on research		
Target	The average number of Academic Directors employed by the ARC across the year will be more than or equal to 3		

Performance measure 12	Partners are satisfied with the services provided by Research Grants Services		
Target	100% of partners are satisfied with the services provided by the ARC's Research Grant Services (RGS)		
Methodology	All ARC RGS partners will be surveyed. The survey will allow partners to rate their satisfaction with the services provided by RGS.		
Changes from previous year	Nil		
Related programs in PBS	Nil	Planned reporting periods	2025–26 to 2028–29
Measure types	Quantitative and output	Related key activity	Provide research grant services to government entities
Outcome	The ARC's RGS are high-quality, fit for purpose and meet the needs of partners		

Reference material

Acronyms and abbreviations

AC	Companion of the Order of Australia
AI	Artificial Intelligence
AM	Member of the Order of Australia
APS	Australian Public Service
ARC	Australian Research Council
ARC Act	*Australian Research Council Act 2001*
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
Code	*Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research*
Corporate Plan	*ARC Corporate Plan 2025–26*
CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation
ERA	Excellence in Research for Australia
FAA	Fellow of the Australian Academy of Science
Minister	Minister for Education
NCGP	National Competitive Grants Program
NHMRC	National Health and Medical Research Council
PBS	Portfolio Budget Statements
PGPA Act	*Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*
PGPA Rule	*Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Rule 2014*
RGS	Research Grants Services
RMS	Research Management System

Glossary

Administering Organisation: An Eligible Organisation that submits an application for grant funds and is responsible for the administration of grant funds under a Grant Agreement.

Australian Universities Accord: An Australian Government review of the higher education system, aimed at devising recommendations and performance targets to improve the quality, accessibility, affordability and sustainability of higher education for the long-term benefit of the nation.

Chief Investigator: A researcher who satisfies the eligibility criteria for a Chief Investigator under the Discovery Program or Linkage Program Grant Guidelines and takes responsibility for the conduct of an ARC-funded project.

Early-career researcher: A researcher who has held a PhD or equivalent qualification for a period of less than or equal to 5 years at the time of their application.

Eligible Organisation: An organisation that satisfies the eligibility criteria for an administering organisation under the Discovery Program or Linkage Program Grant Guidelines.

Early-stage research: The initial phase of investigation in pure basic, strategic basic and/or applied research, characterised by the exploration of novel ideas or concepts. Research outcomes may include proof of concept, preliminary data, or new theoretical frameworks.

Fields of Research: A term used to describe common knowledge domains and/or methodologies used in research and experimental development.

Final report: A report to the ARC that researchers must submit within 12 months of completing their research project. The report includes a range of data and information including a description of research outcomes, academic and commercialisation outputs, and details of collaboration.

Grant Agreement: The agreement entered into by the ARC and an administering organisation when an application from that organisation is approved for funding.

Grant Guidelines: Documents published on the GrantConnect website for each grant opportunity that provide applicants with information about schemes, eligibility requirements, the application, selection and approval processes, and requirements for the administration of funding.

Mid-career researcher: A researcher with between 5 and 15 years of research experience since the award of a PhD or equivalent qualification at the time of their application.

Partner Organisations: National or international organisations (other than Eligible Organisations) that satisfy the eligibility criteria for partner organisations under the Grant Guidelines and contribute to the research project in accordance with the requirements of the scheme.

Peer review: Evaluation of research applications or outputs by experts who assess individual research applications within their field of research or across a broader disciplinary area on the basis of established assessment criteria.

Research Office: A business unit within an Eligible Organisation that is responsible for administrative contact with the ARC regarding applications and projects.

Research translation: The process through which knowledge is used or applied to achieve outcomes.

Schemes/scheme rounds: A scheme is a grant round that targets a particular set of researchers and organisations or research issues with individual eligibility requirements, with one or more rounds of grant opportunities to be offered in a financial year.

Copyright and contact details

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