**Transcript: ITRP Assessors Video**

**Introduction**

Good day, and welcome to the Industrial Transformation Research Program Assessor information video. I begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia, and pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging. I extend that respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people viewing this video today.

This video provides information, instructions, and advice for both Detailed and General Assessors on the assessment process for the ARC Industrial Transformation Research Program (or ITRP) applications.

**NCGP**

The ARC’s National Competitive Grants Program (or NCGP) supports the highest-quality fundamental and applied research and research training across all disciplines except clinical medical research.

The ARC encourages partnerships between researchers and industry, government, community organisations and the international community.

The NCGP comprises two main elements – Discovery and Linkage – under which the ARC funds a range of complementary schemes in order to:

* + support researchers at different stages of their careers
  + build Australia’s research capability
  + expand and enhance research networks and collaborations
  + develop Centres of research excellence

**NCGP Graphical Representation**

This slide provides a graphical representation of schemes in the ARC's National Competitive Grants Program. Each scheme is a rectangle with the area of the rectangle representing the proportionate scale of ARC funding for 2019.

The ITRP scheme is part of the Linkage Program, and is considered one of the ARC’s major investments.

**Linkage Program**

The ARC's Linkage Program funding schemes aim to encourage and extend cooperative approaches to research and improve the use of research outcomes by strengthening links within Australia’s innovation system and with innovation systems internationally.

The [Linkage](https://www.arc.gov.au/linkage-program) Program schemes are:

* + *Linkage Projects*
  + *Industrial Transformation Research Program*
  + *ARC Centres of Excellence*
  + *Linkage Infrastructure, Equipment and Facilities*;
  + *Special Research Initiatives; and*
  + *Learned Academies Special Projects.*

As previously mentioned, the ITRP schemes sits within the Linkage Program.

**ITRP Overview**

The Industrial Transformation Research Program (ITRP) consists of two sub-schemes:

* + Industrial Transformation Research Hubs (referred to as **Research Hubs)**
  + Industrial Transformation Training Centres (referred to as **Training Centres**).

Research Hubs focus on building capability – partnerships between academics and industry to create innovative and transformative solutions for industry.

Training Centres focus on building capacity – training and developing a future research workforce with experience in end-user research.

Funding of up to $5 million for up to 5 years is available from the ARC for each funded Training Centre or Research Hub.

**ITRP Objectives**

When assessing applications for Training Centres or Research Hubs, assessors must consider both the objectives and the assessment criteria of each scheme as outlined in the Grant Guidelines for ARC Industrial Transformation Research Program for funding commencing in 2022.

Grant Guidelines can be accessed on the GrantConnect website – www.grants.gov.au.

**Industrial Transformation Priorities**

The ITRP schemes encourage and support university-based researchers and industry to work together to address a range of strategic government priorities to transform Australian industries

There are currently 9 Industrial Transformation Priorities identified by the ARC.

In addition to demonstrating research excellence, an application must address one or more of the current Industrial Transformation Priorities. Assessors are asked to comment on the alignment of the proposed program to the publicly released priority plans of the area. New and additional priorities have been bolded for easy reference.

**Engagement by Applicants**

Industry Growth Centres are becoming independent entities during the financial year 2021-22.

Applicants are still encouraged to engage meaningfully with the relevant industry experts including Industry Growth Centre(s) and relevant Government Agencies such as the Australian Space Agency

**ITRP Assessment Criteria**

The assessment criteria for the Research Hubs and Training Centres grant opportunities are:

* + Investigator(s)/Capability – 20%
  + Project Quality and Innovation – 30%
  + Feasibility and Commitment – 20% and
  + Benefit- 30%

Only the very best applications are recommended for funding. As a guide, those in the top scoring band (‘A’) would be assessed as flawless or near flawless across all assessment criteria relevant to the application stage. It is expected that a successful application will be truly excellent across all four assessment criteria.

All assessors, are typically assigned a number of applications to assess and rank in accordance with their individual expertise.

**ITRP: Summary of assessment process**

At the core of the ARC National Competitive Grants Program (NCGP) is a community of Australian and international researchers who peer review all research applications submitted to the ARC. As an ARC Assessor, you make a valuable contribution to the research community by contributing your discipline specific expertise and knowledge to the ARC’s robust peer review process.

The flowchart shows the assessment process for the ITRP schemes.

Assessments are undertaken by two groups of experts known as General and Detailed Assessors.

The Detailed Assessors have specific discipline knowledge, and the General Assessors form the Selection Advisory Committee. Experts from each group assess applications against the assessment criteria and contribute to the process of scoring and ranking applications. These reviews assist in the evaluation, selection, shortlisting, recommendation, and funding of the applications.

The General Assessors come together at a Selection Advisory Committee meeting to review and discuss every application and provide recommendations to the ARC. The CEO of the ARC then makes recommendations to the Minister for Education and Youth, who decides which Training Centres and Research Hubs will be allocated funding under the NCGP.

For ITRP21 – 8 Training Centres and 8 Research Hubs were funded.

**ITRP Assessment Process**

Training Centre and Research Hub applications are submitted in RMS.

Detailed Assessors provide scores and written comments against the 4 assessment criteria in their assessments. Applicants are then provided with Detailed Assessors’ comments only (not scores) anonymously and are invited to submit a rejoinder to the ARC.

General Assessors – who form the Selection Advisory Committee - independently assess the applications and provide a score only against the assessment criteria. Applications, scores, detailed assessments and the applicant’s rejoinder are provided to the Selection Advisory Committee (or SAC) for further consideration. The SAC meet to discuss and recommend which applications will be shortlisted and recommended for funding. They also formulate brief feedback for unsuccessful applicants.

**Detailed Assessments**

Detailed Assessors may receive applications to assess at any stage of the assessment process. This is due to late conflicts of interest being declared by other assessors.

As a Detailed Assessor, you will be asked to review Training Centre and/or Research Hub applications within your broad discipline field (noting these grants may be interdisciplinary).

Detailed Assessments must meet the minimum character count of 200 characters per assessment criterion and a minimum of 3,500 characters for the overall assessment

If a Detailed Assessor has any concerns regarding the eligibility or integrity of an application, they should raise them with the ARC separately and not include such information in their assessment comments.

Detailed Assessors should not source information outside what is contained in the application.

**High Quality Detailed Assessments**

Detailed Assessors are asked to provide high quality, constructive assessments with the following elements:

* + Objective, constructive and professional comments.
  + Detailed comments on the merits or otherwise of the application with respect to the selection criteria.
  + Sufficient information to allow applicants to provide a Rejoinder.
  + Comments that align closely with the scores provided
  + Comments that are fair, meaningful and balanced.
  + Comments free from exaggeration and understatement.
  + Timely submission via RMS by the ARC deadline.
  + Observation of the ARC Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Policy.

Please refer to the ARC Peer Review webpage for examples of good Detailed Assessments. If necessary the ARC may contact you to request clarification of your comments

**Scoring and Ranking Assessments**

The Scoring Matrix table on the screen shows an example of the scores applicable to the ARC Industrial Transformation Research Program grant opportunity. It is important that Detailed Assessors follow the Scoring Matrix, and that the assessment comments fit the scores given

**Assessment Screen 1 for Detailed Assessors**

This slide provides a screen shot of an assessment form for Detailed Assessors. From this screen, Detailed Assessors are able to open the application, enter the assessment screen, access assessor material and submit their scores and rankings.

**Assessment Screen 2 for Detailed Assessors**

This slide and the following slide provide screen shots of the assessment screen where Detailed Assessors are required to input their written comments and scores against the application to which they are assigned. Please note that RMS does not autosave, and the Save button on the top of the screen can be used if the assessment is not ready for submission.

**Role of General Assessors**

General Assessors are selected to form an ARC Selection Advisory Committee (or SAC) to conduct the peer review process and provide recommendations to the ARC.

The SAC for the ARC Industrial Transformation Research Program has eminent members of the wider national and international academic community and/or key industry groups. General Assessors provide scores only in RMS. The Selection Advisory Committee attends a meeting to discuss and recommend applications for funding.

**General Assessments**

General Assessors are asked to review the application to identify merits or otherwise of the proposed research and provide a score against the assessment criteria. General Assessors may receive applications to assess at any stage of the assessment process due to late COIs being declared by other assessors.

Each application will have 3 General Assessors assigned to provide an assessment.

Prior to the SAC meetings, all General Assessors who are not conflicted with an application should review the Detailed and General Assessors’ assessments and scores, and rejoinder text for each application.

During the meetings, all unconflicted SAC members will be expected to participate in discussions on all applications with a lead General Assessor leading the discussion. All unconflicted Selection Advisory Committee members will vote on applications to shortlist and to recommend when called to do so by the Chair.

**Assessment Screen 1 for General Assessors**

This slide provides a screen shot of the assessment screen for General Assessors. From this screen, General Assessors are able to open the application, enter the assessment screen, access assessor material and submit their scores and rankings.

**Applications outside your broad area of expertise**

If you believe that the ARC has misunderstood your expertise or has made an error in assigning an application to you, please give early notice to the ARC by rejecting the application in RMS and entering a reason in the comment box.

To assist the ARC to accurately assign applications, please review your RMS profile expertise text and FoR codes regularly to ensure your profile remains accurate and up to date.

Assessors are required to assess all research on a fair and equal basis, including applications and outputs involving interdisciplinary and collaborative research.

**What to look for when assessing an ITRP application**

Here is a high-level summary of what to look for when assessing an ARC Training Centre or Research Hub application. As an assessor, you should consider the following:

* The Scheme/s objectives - If the application meets the scheme objectives and explains how these are being met
* The Team - The appropriateness of the team’s research track record to achieve the Training Centre’s or Research Hub’s goals. Are there any critical personnel or groups missing
* If participants are demonstrating their commitment to the research program itself
* If the participants are creating a collaborative and integrated team
* Research Program and structure - If the proposed Training Centre or Research Hub is genuinely integrated, cross-disciplinary, innovative and original
* Costings - The extent to which the Training Centre or Research Hub represents value for money
* Priorities - The extent to which the research clearly addresses one or more of the Industrial Transformation Priorities

**Avoiding Inappropriate Assessments**

Here are some tips in preparing an assessment and common issues that can arise.

* Assessments must only be based on the information contained within the application
* Ensure all assessment meet the minimum character count
* Contact the ARC directly if you have any concerns regarding the eligibility or integrity of an application
* Ensure you do not provide information in your assessment text that could identify you.
* Provide comments that are specific to each assessment and do not compare one application to another.
* Do not include comments that can be perceived to be discriminatory, defamatory or distastefully irrelevant
* Do not restate or rephrase excessive parts of the application
* Do not use scores or acronyms within the assessment text
* Do not simply quote the rubric or restate the metrics provided by the applicant.

**Treatment of Inappropriate Assessments**

Inappropriate Assessments compromise the integrity of the peer review process. To be fair to all applicants, the ARC will review assessments that have been identified to contain inappropriate comments. If the ARC considers an assessment to contain inappropriate comments, the ARC has absolute discretion to decide what action will be taken. Actions may include requesting a Detailed Assessor to amend their assessment text or removing the assessment from the peer review process

**The Research Management System (RMS)**

RMS is a web-based computer system for the preparation and submission of research applications, assessments and rejoinders to the ARC.

All ARC Assessors use RMS to submit their assessments. To assist General and Detailed Assessors to navigate the assessment functionality in RMS, there is an RMS Handbook for Assessors available on the ARC website.

As a Detailed Assessor, you should ensure that your RMS profile is kept up to date. Your expertise text should highlight your discipline-specific and/or interdisciplinary knowledge, including areas of speciality and techniques. It is not a career summary, but an expertise summary. Please select your most relevant Field of Research (FoR) Codes. Please ensure that both 2008 and 2020 FoR codes are listed in your profile. An accurate and up to date Employment History helps minimise the chances that you will be assigned an application with which you have an organisational conflict of interest

**COVID-19**

Assessors should continue to assess each application based on the content of that application only and without making assumptions about the impact of COVID-19. Assessments must not make assumptions about the viability of a proposed Training Centre or Research Hub due to the potential impacts of COVID-19. An assessment that includes assumptions about the impact of COVID-19 could be considered an inappropriate assessment and handled accordingly. Assessors should not make assumptions about an Administering Organisation and Other Eligible Organisations’ level of commitments and support of an application solely based on lower levels of pledged additional cash and/or in-kind support than provided historically for previous Training Centres or Research Hubs.

**Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest**

The ARC Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Policy is designed to ensure that all COIs are managed in a rigorous and transparent way. It aims to prevent individuals from influencing decisions unfairly and to maintain public confidence in the integrity, legitimacy, impartiality and fairness of the peer review process.

Any individual who is reviewing material for the ARC must agree to a confidentiality and conflict of interest statement and must clearly disclose any material personal interests that may affect or might be perceived to affect, their ability to perform their role.

The information in your RMS profile will assist the ARC with the identification and management of organisational conflicts of interest. Failing to declare a conflict of interest may result in a Detailed Assessor being investigated for breaching the ARC’s Research Integrity Policy. For any conflict of interest queries, please contact the ARC using the peer review email address if you are a Detailed Assessor or the College email address if you are a General Assessor.

**What to Disclose**

In reviewing an application prior to accepting it for assessment, Detailed Assessors must disclose any close personal relationships with named participants on a research application as well as any professional relationships with that named participant including the following being some of the common examples.

**Unconscious Bias**

As Assessors you should also be aware of how your unconscious bias could affect the peer review process. Unconscious biases are pervasive and may relate to perceptions about a range of attributes including gender and/or sexuality, social/cultural background, career path, institutional employer, or even discipline. The ARC encourages you to recognise your own biases and be aware of them in your assessments. All Detailed Assessors are encouraged to complete Implicit Bias training offered by Harvard

**Eligibility**

If, while assessing an application, you have concerns about eligibility, ethics or other issues associated with an application, you must not include this information in your assessment.

Please send an email highlighting your concerns to the peer review mailbox as soon as possible. Please complete your assessment based on the merits of the application without giving consideration to the potential eligibility issue.

The ARC’s NCGP Eligibility Committee is responsible for reviewing the eligibility of applications and will be advised of your concerns

**Key contacts**

We would like to thank you for your contribution to the peer review process for applications for the Industrial Transformation Research Program commencing in 2022. We greatly value your time, expertise and contribution to the assessment of the ITRP22 applications.

Should you have any questions or require assistance, please contact any of the people listed on this slide.

**Thank you**

Thank you for watching this video on the assessment process for Detailed and General Assessors for Industrial Transformation Research Program applications. We thank you for your valuable contribution to Australian research through your participation in the ARC’s peer review processes. Thank you.