



Australian Government

Australian Research Council

Australian Research Council

Strategy 2026–2035

Message from the Chair of the ARC Board

It is my pleasure to introduce the Australian Research Council's (ARC) Strategy 2026–2035.

Over the next decade, evolving technologies, intensifying global competition and shifting geopolitical dynamics will reshape Australia's research landscape. Through sustained investment in early-stage research, the ARC has played an integral role in a strong and resilient research and development system that underpins Australia's future prosperity, productivity and global competitiveness. This Strategy sets out how the ARC will continue to fulfil that role.

The Australian Government commits almost AUD \$1 billion each year through the ARC's National Competitive Grants Program (NCGP). This significant investment generates new knowledge, drives innovation and lays the foundations for future economic and societal benefit. Our funding is a form of patient capital. Its value often takes many years to be fully revealed. For example, the ARC first supported research in quantum technologies more than two decades ago. Today, Australia is recognised as a global leader in a field with the potential to transform computing, communications, defence, national security, medical research, and healthcare.

In a rapidly changing external environment, the ARC will remain committed and responsive in contributing to a strong and evolving research system. We will prioritise the national interest, value long-term capability, and safeguard research integrity. We will provide independent, informed advice to advance Australian research and researchers. We will ensure that industry, government agencies and community organisations can play a role in shaping the research led by our universities.

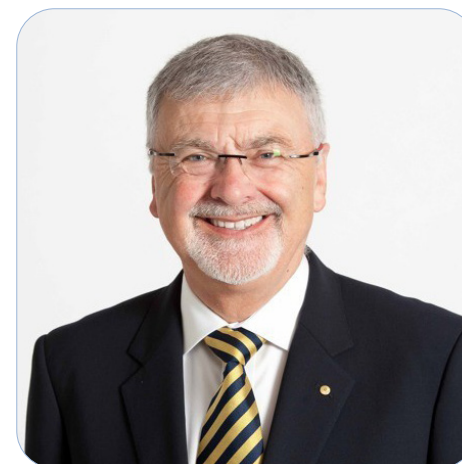
With the exception of medical research and experimental development, our distinctive remit enables us to support early-stage research across the full breadth of the research system. As outlined in the National Competitive Grants Program Policy Review, we will continue to support research across all disciplines spanning the humanities, arts and social sciences as well as science, technology, engineering and mathematics. We remain committed to championing diverse pathways for researchers. We will prioritise funding for early-career researchers as the foundation of excellence, capability and long-term system strength. We will support eminent leaders in their field of study to become mentors to the next generation of researchers. We will support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers and recognise the traditional knowledge of our Indigenous peoples.

Our leadership will continue to be exercised through stewardship and collaboration — enabling informed and constructive conversations, creating space for ambition and innovation, and guiding the evolution of Australia's research system in partnership with others. The ARC Board will seek to enhance the ARC's place within the national research landscape, listening to criticisms and suggestions and remaining open to challenge and improvement. We will contribute to, and engage with, government review and policy processes to maximise the value of Australia's investment in research. We will be transparent about our decisions and ensure that they are informed by evidence and evaluation. We see this as the foundation of our public accountability.

This Strategy provides a strong foundation for the ARC's work over the coming decade. It builds on a proud record while recognising that the future demands renewal, courage and clarity of purpose. The ARC will continue to champion excellence in research as a vital public good that underpins Australia's national interest.

Professor Peter Shergold AC

Chair of the ARC Board



Australian Research Council Strategy 2026–2035

Vision: Advancing Australia through the power of research

Mission: To champion excellence in Australian early-stage research and be a trusted steward for the Australian research system

GOAL 1

Leadership in research



GOAL 2

Value of research



GOAL 3

People in research



The ARC's Values: how we support excellent research

- **Ambition and curiosity:** we enable bold, creative, and ambitious research that pushes the boundaries of discovery and knowledge in all disciplines.
- **Value and impact:** we steward public investment in research to create knowledge and expertise of enduring value and benefit for Australia.
- **Equity and opportunity:** we support diversity and inclusion, recognising that diverse perspectives and capability contribute to high-quality research.
- **Integrity and diligence:** we aspire to the highest ethical standards in research and exemplify integrity and professional excellence.
- **National interest and collaboration:** we build Australia's research capability and advance Australia's security, defence and international relations while fostering the global collaborations essential for world-class outcomes.

The ARC's Capability: how we engage with the research system

- **Our team and skills:** we attract and empower diverse, expert staff to deliver high-quality research support, policy advice, evaluation and sector engagement.
- **Our culture and practices:** we foster a collaborative, service-oriented culture focused on integrity, responsiveness, and continuous improvement, with processes aligned to Australia's needs and integrating international, industry and community expertise as appropriate.
- **Our data and technology:** we leverage powerful, reliable, secure data and digital tools to measure our success, inform evidence-based decisions and policy, and improve assessments and grants management.
- **Our partnerships and outreach:** we engage universities, research institutions, industry, government, research users and the broader community in Australia and globally to shape research culture, practices and priorities, and amplify research impact.
- **Our legislation and regulations:** we use our mandate, defined by the amended ARC legislation, to support funding excellent early-stage research, provide policy advice, and promote integrity and security across the research system.

Goal 1. Leadership in Research

The ARC is an influential guide to an effective, connected and visionary Australian research landscape

Actions	Success Indicators
1.1: We support bold, responsive research for Australia	- The ARC's investment and guidance encourage bold discovery, smart risk-taking, academic freedom of enquiry, problem-solving, and impact in early-stage research. - The ARC facilitates strong linkages across research system stakeholders to promote sharing of physical, financial and intellectual resources and knowledge.
1.2: We convene research expertise to create and share knowledge	- The ARC is a trusted advisor for government, industry and communities with recognised capability to convene research expertise within and across sectors. - The ARC strengthens engagement across research forums so that research and policy expertise informs an effective and connected research system.
1.3: We invest in Indigenous knowledge systems	- The ARC strengthens Australia's position as an international exemplar for protecting, valuing, and utilising Indigenous knowledge systems. - The ARC advances development of Indigenous Evaluation, Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Governance, and Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property mechanisms into Australian research culture.
1.4: We enhance Australia's international research reputation	- The ARC maintains active and productive collaborations for Australia with a wide range of international partners, consistent with our national interests. - The ARC is recognised globally for contributing to research policy, research ethics, and supporting excellent early-stage research.

Goal 2. Value of Research

The ARC is an advocate for excellent research and promotes its benefits

Actions	Success Indicators
2.1: We fund excellent early-stage research to equip Australia for current and future challenges	• The ARC is recognised for supporting a well-balanced, comprehensive portfolio of investigator-led research that serves the national interest in diverse ways. • The ARC, guided by national benefit and priorities, funds research that creates and advances knowledge to underpin further discovery. • The ARC funds research that creates pathways across the sector, including with other funding agencies to support the development, extension, translation and adoption of research.
2.2: We safeguard Australian research and national interests	• The ARC contributes to Australia protecting the security, integrity, credibility and availability of research and data, and responding effectively to breaches. • The ARC contributes to protecting national interests and sovereign capability through the research we fund.
2.3: We champion early-stage research to government and business	• The ARC provides evidence-based insights on the excellence, depth and impact of Australian research and expertise, and how it enables organisations to meet their objectives. • The ARC promotes international standard, responsible research assessment practices across the sector.
2.4: We demonstrate the value and impact of early-stage research	• The ARC promotes the importance and standing of Australia's world-leading, early-stage research across all disciplines. • The ARC encourages Australians to value and celebrate our place in world research. • The ARC funds research that generates new knowledge that provides economic, social and cultural benefit to Australia.

Goal 3. People in Research

The ARC is an enabler for Australian researchers

Actions	Success Indicators
3.1: We take a leading role in supporting Indigenous researchers	• The ARC improves opportunities for Indigenous researchers to launch, develop and sustain rewarding research careers. • The ARC amplifies Indigenous leadership of research and evaluation.
3.2: We advocate for equity and inclusion	• The ARC contributes to research careers that are accessible, supportive and fair for all researchers.
3.3: We support emerging research careers	• The ARC facilitates flexible career pathways to attract, retain and support early-career researchers in Australia. • The ARC embeds mentoring and leadership opportunities across the NCGP to strengthen early-career research capability, engagement and collaboration.
3.4: We promote research skills across and throughout careers	• The ARC supports the development of research skills across career stages, enabling researchers to engage across sectors and pursue diverse research opportunities. • The ARC's investments contribute to a capable, adaptable and sustainable research workforce that undertakes high-quality research and delivers impact over time.

The ARC's outcomes and impact: how we assess progress on the Strategy

The ARC will implement and evaluate the ARC Strategy, overseen by the ARC Board, in accordance with its functions under the *Australian Research Council Act 2001* and its obligations under the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (PGPA Act), the PGPA Rule and the Commonwealth performance framework.

Within this framework, the ARC will use a range of ongoing monitoring and evaluation tools, which will be updated over the life of the Strategy to evaluate performance against the 3 strategic goals (see Appendix A).

Appendix A

ARC Evaluation Plan 2026–2029: How we will monitor performance against the Strategy

Monitoring of performance of the Strategy will be embedded into ARC evaluation and reporting mechanisms:

- Performance Measures outlined in the Portfolio Budget Statements and reported against in the Annual report
- NCGP evaluation including publication of selection outcomes and data, and periodic evaluation of scheme performance against policy objectives
- Research insights that examine the Australian research system using data and analysis from ARC evaluations and broader sector sources.

These mechanisms will establish the targets that support the ARC to monitor, evaluate and continuously improve performance against the Strategy's goals and progress towards achieving its success indicators.

Evaluation principles

- **Purpose and scope:** we undertake proportionate, fit-for-purpose evaluation to generate robust evidence on the ARC's strategic goals, outcomes and research impacts, informing decision-making, policy, continuous learning and improvement.
- **Governance and integrity:** we align evaluation with legislative requirements, the Commonwealth Evaluation Policy, the Indigenous Evaluation Strategy and ethical standards, ensuring findings are relevant, credible and transparent.
- **Evidence and methods:** we use holistic, best practice approaches, drawing on diverse sources and methods to systematically collect and analyse data and establish a robust evidence base for high-quality evaluation and advice.
- **Research identifiers:** we invest in research identifiers, including persistent identifiers (PIDs) and supporting data infrastructure to align with national data standards and enhance impact evaluation across the Australian research sector.
- **Research insights:** we draw on evidence, traditional and non-traditional metrics, and expert analysis to provide insights on the performance, quality and impact of Australian research.
- **Reporting and accountability:** we use advanced tools, data and analytical capability to develop and share evaluation findings on the ARC's strategy and the economic, social, environmental and cultural impacts of Australian research, including ARC-funded research.

ARC Evaluation Plan 2026–2029

GOAL 1 Leadership in research

1.1

- NCGP Evaluation
- Research Insights

Bold, responsive research is supported

1.2

- Performance Measures

Research expertise is convened to share knowledge

1.3

- NCGP Evaluation
- Research Insights

Investment in Indigenous knowledge systems

1.4

- Performance Measures
- NCGP Evaluation
- Research Insights

International research reputation is enhanced

GOAL 2 Value of research

2.1

- NCGP Evaluation
- Research Insights

Excellent early-stage research is funded

2.2

- Performance Measures
- NCGP Evaluation

Research and national interests are safeguarded

2.3

- Performance Measures
- Research Insights

Early-stage research is championed to government and business

2.4

- Research Insights

Value and impact of early-stage research is demonstrated

GOAL 3 People in research

3.1

- NCGP Evaluation
- Research Insights

Indigenous researchers are supported

3.2

- Performance Measures
- NCGP Evaluation

Advocacy for equity and inclusion

3.3

- NCGP Evaluation
- Research Insights

Emerging research careers are supported

3.4

- NCGP Evaluation
- Research Insights

Research skills are promoted across careers

Australian Research Council Strategy 2026–2035

Vision: Advancing Australia through the power of research

Mission: To champion excellence in Australian early-stage research and be a trusted steward for the Australian research system

GOAL 1 Leadership in research

The ARC is an influential guide to an effective, connected and visionary Australian research landscape

Action
1.1 We support bold, responsive research for Australia

Action
1.2 We convene research expertise to create and share knowledge

Action
1.3 We invest in Indigenous knowledge systems

Action
1.4 We enhance Australia's international research reputation

GOAL 2 Value of research

The ARC is an advocate for excellent research and promotes its benefits

Action
2.1 We fund excellent early-stage research to equip Australia for current and future challenges

Action
2.2 We safeguard Australian research and national interests

Action
2.3 We champion early-stage research to government and business

Action
2.4 We demonstrate the value and impact of early-stage research

GOAL 3 People in research

The ARC is an enabler for Australian researchers

Action
3.1 We take a leading role in supporting Indigenous researchers

Action
3.2 We advocate for equity and inclusion

Action
3.3 We support emerging research careers

Action
3.4 We promote research skills across and throughout careers

Values, Capability and Evaluation

The ARC's Values

How we support excellent research

● Ambition and curiosity

● Value and impact

● Equity and opportunity

● Integrity and diligence

● National interest and collaboration

The ARC's Capability

How we engage with the research system

● Our team and skills

● Our culture and practices

● Our data and technology

● Our partnerships and outreach

● Our legislation and regulations

The ARC's Evaluation Principles

How we assess progress on the Strategy

● Purpose and scope

● Governance and integrity

● Evidence and methods

● Research insights

● Reporting and accountability