

Linkage Projects Grant Guidelines Changes

Consultation

Feedback from stakeholders was considered in the drafting of these grant guidelines. Key stakeholders have been engaged, particularly members of the Australasian Research Management Society (ARMS).

PROCESSES

1. Updates to Flow Chart

Updated words under “We make grant recommendations” to more clearly capture relevant considerations. The sentence now reads: “The CEO will make grant recommendations to the Minister that are peer assessed for research excellence, satisfy the National Interest Test and which are eligible for funding.”

ASSESSMENT

2. Alignment with ‘Australian Government Priority Areas’

- The grant guidelines have been updated to reflect the alignment of the Linkage Projects scheme with ‘Australian Government Priority Areas’.

Guidelines reference: throughout as relevant.

- Reference added under Objectives to the Minister’s request (in the [letter of expectations](#) dated 6 December) that “no less than 70% of the recommended Linkage Program grants will be aligned with the National Manufacturing Priorities.”

Guidelines reference: 2.4

- Definitions for ‘Australian Government priority areas’ and ‘National Manufacturing Priorities’
- have also been added to the Definitions section.

Guidelines reference: 15.2

3. Due Diligence Updates

There are several updates in the grant guidelines to outline the due diligence activities undertaken by the ARC through the assessment process, and the responsibilities of the applicant in ensuring appropriate due diligence has been undertaken ahead of submitting an application. Changes include:

- **Processes** – Inclusion of any advice on national security risks in ‘We make grant recommendations’ and ‘Grant decisions are made’.
- **7.2e How to apply** clause amended to reference having regard to the *Guidelines to Counter Foreign Interference in the Australian University Sector*.
- **7.9 How to apply** clause amended to note revisions to the application prior to approval may be invited by the ARC.
- **8.4-8.5 The grant selection process** added new clauses:
 - o We may seek advice on national security or other matters from Commonwealth agencies in relation to the application.
 - o We may seek information from You regarding due diligence activities in relation to the application.
- **8.13 The assessment process:** amended clause to “During the assessment process We may request additional information, which does not change the nature of Your application”.

- **8.28, 8.30 Who will approve grants** clause amended to specify that: The CEO and the Minister may seek advice on national security or other matters from Commonwealth agencies before making recommendations.
- **12.15 Grant agreement variations** amended clause to reflect due diligence occurring in relation to changes that may occur following approval of a grant.

4. Assessment Criteria

- The weightings of the assessment criteria have been updated to place greater emphasis on contribution to Australian Government priority areas.
- Under the “Benefit” criterion, the National Manufacturing Priorities, Low Emissions Technology Statement, the National Agricultural Innovation Priorities and the Defence Science and Technology Strategy 2030 have been added as areas of potential contribution, to align with Government focus on these priority areas.
- The wording of the ARC’s standard Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities’ section has been updated to more accurately reflect the criterion’s intention in line with clarifications provided in past grant opportunity Frequently Asked Questions.
- There is a change in terminology from ‘candidates’ to ‘named participants’ to reflect collaborative project-based (rather than researcher-based) focus of *Linkage Projects* scheme. This is also reflected in the removal of ‘candidate’ from Definitions.

Guidelines reference: 6.3

5. Continuous Assessment

Updates have been made in the Grant Guidelines to clarify the fact that the Linkage Projects scheme receives applications on a continuous basis, but is assessed periodically via a competitive process in a series of assessment rounds. A definition of ‘assessment round’ has also been added.

Guidelines reference: 7.3, 7.14, 7.15, 8.2, 15.2 (see also Requests not to assess, below)

6. Who will assess applications

Updated Whole of Government clause about General Assessors involved who are not Commonwealth officials, requiring them to perform their duties in accordance with the Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines.

Guidelines reference: 8.25

7. Who will approve applications

There is a new clause, which reflects the existing process whereby appeals can only be brought for administrative reasons and there is no ARC appeal mechanism for decisions to approve or not approve a grant.

Guidelines reference: 8.33

ELIGIBILITY

8. Eligible Organisation

Avondale University has been added as an Eligible Organisation to apply for and receive ARC funding. Following an assessment by the Tertiary Education, Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) Avondale University has been registered as an Australian University in line with the new Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021 which came to effect on 1 July 2021.

Guidelines reference: 4.6

9. General

A new clause has been added to reflect the existing process whereby the ARC may refuse applications involving researchers who have breached the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2018)*.

Guidelines reference: 4.20

New sub clause added to allow applicants to “nominate none, one or more Partner Investigators (PIs)” to reflect a change in RMS recognising that some applications may not include partner investigators.

Guidelines reference: 4.1c

10. Participants

- The Project Leader must be employed by the Administering Organisation for at least 20% of Full Time Equivalent (0.2 FTE).

Guidelines reference: 4.22

- Based on feedback identifying that the definition of an ‘honorary academic appointment’ was unclear and being inconsistently applied across the sector, it has been moved from the glossary into the body of the Guidelines and changed to note that a researcher is not eligible to be a Chief Investigator using their honorary academic appointment if they are employed by an organisation other than an eligible organisation for more than 0.2 FTE.

Guidelines reference: 4.24b

- Increased clarity has been included around what is meant by ‘predominantly’ for the purposes of assessing Chief and Partner Investigators’ Australian residency: the word ‘predominantly’ has been replaced with “more than 50% of the project activity period.”

Guidelines reference: 4.25, 4.30

- Greater clarity has been provided about timing of named participants meeting eligibility criteria. Named participants must meet eligibility requirements at the grant commencement date, unless otherwise specified. If the application is successful, eligibility criteria must continue to be met for the project activity period and any changes, including those relating to employment, must be submitted as a post-award variation request.

Guidelines reference: 4.22, 4.24, 4.28

- To reflect Whole of Government requirements, no named organisation may be included on the National Redress Scheme’s website on the list of ‘Institutions that have not joined or signified their intent to join the Scheme’ (www.nationalredress.gov.au).

Guidelines reference: 4.7, 4.14

11. Partner Organisations

Updated wording in a number of places to clarify requirements for partner organisations.

- "Applications in which all Partner Organisations are exempt from the cash contribution requirements do not have to meet the overall *eligible* cash contribution requirement specified at Section 4.1."

Guidelines reference: 4.13

- Addition of ‘and/or other material resource’ as type of eligible contribution to be consistent with other parts of the Grant Guidelines.

Guidelines reference: 7.13d (see also 4.2, 4.8c, 15.2)

- Addition of “for Partner Organisations” to clause to remove ambiguity about requirements that must be met by Partner Organisations.

Guidelines reference: 7.13i

12. What grant funds can be used for

- Clarification that stipends for Higher Degree Research students must be included as full-time at time of application: “stipends at 1.0 FTE for HDR students at an appropriate level for the Administering Organisation or the relevant industry sector”.

Guidelines reference: 5.8a(ii)

- New clause regarding Antarctic research: “If Your proposed research project includes Antarctic research that will require logistical support, contact the Australian Antarctic Division for advice about available logistical support prior to submitting Your application”.

Guidelines reference: 5.8d

13. What grant funds cannot be used for

- Reference to salary top ups has been removed, as this is not relevant to the Linkage Projects scheme.

Guidelines reference: 5.10

OTHER

14. National Interest Test

- Additional text has been provided on the National Interest Test, to support applicants to clearly articulate the potential of the project to support Australia’s national interests.

Guidelines reference: 8.16

- A reference to the National Interest Test Statement has been included in the How to Apply section.

Guidelines reference: 7.2c

15. Requests not to assess

- The timeframe to submit a RNTA form on RMS has been clarified to indicate that the form must be received by the ARC “two weeks prior to the assessment round closing date” as opposed to the “application submission date”.

Guidelines reference: 8.18

16. Timeframes

- The timeframe to execute a Grant Agreement and the timeframe to make an appeal have both been changed from 28 days to 30 days, reflecting Whole of Government practice.

Guidelines reference: 10.3, 13.4

17. Research policies and practices

There are several updates in the grant guidelines to clearly outline requirements about research policies and practices. Changes include:

- Reference added to the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research* and the codes, guidelines, practices and policies on the [ARC website](#).

- An ethics plan must be in place prior to the commencement of the project in line with the grant agreement.
- A data management plan must be developed prior to the commencement of the project in line with the grant agreement.

Guidelines reference: 10.6-10.10

18. Definitions

New definitions have been added:

- assessment round
- Australian Government priority areas
- exempt Charity
- exempt Non-Profit Organisation
- grant opportunity
- National Manufacturing Priorities
- preprints
- research outputs

Guidelines reference: 15.2