

# Linkage Infrastructure, Equipment and Facilities Grant Guidelines Changes

## Consultation

The ARC engaged with stakeholders as part of the development of these Guidelines. Stakeholders included researchers, university Research Office Directors and staff, and grant assessors. Feedback from stakeholders was considered in the drafting of these grant guidelines.

## STREAMLINING

### 1. Simplification of the Guidelines

- The Linkage Infrastructure, Equipment and Facilities (LIEF) Guidelines (Guidelines) have been updated to reflect the findings of the ARC's Process Review of the National Competitive Grants Program; recommendations 3, 8 and 9 of *Trusting Australia's Ability: Review of the ARC Act 2001*; and the Minister for Education's Statement of Expectations of 26 August 2022 which emphasised the goal of minimising administrative burden on researchers. The Guidelines have been considerably shortened, reducing redundancy and repetition in order to produce more user-friendly, fit-for-purpose guidelines. Changes to the Guidelines align them with the recently approved streamlined Grant Guidelines in both the Linkage and Discovery Programs, where appropriate.
- Key amendments include:
  - o Removal of detailed contextual information about the overarching Linkage Program and including a reference to the ARC website for further information.  
Guidelines reference: 1, 2.1
  - o Simplification of the information about eligibility, including moving table of Eligible Organisations to Appendix B.  
Guidelines reference: Appendix B, 4.1-4.33
  - o Simplification of the 'What the grant money can be used for' section to 2 subheadings: 'What grant money can be used for' and 'What grant money cannot be used for'.  
Guidelines reference: 5.1-5.5
  - o Simplification of the 'How to apply' section, including updated National Interest Test information, in line with streamlined Linkage Projects grant guidelines.  
Guidelines reference: 7.1-7.12
  - o Removal of 'Notification of application outcomes', 'How We monitor Your grant activity' and 'Consultation' sections and inclusion of relevant information in streamlined and expanded 'Successful grant applications' section, including new subheading 'Responsibilities'.  
Guidelines reference: 9.1-9.29
  - o Streamlining of 'Probity' section with links to ARC website for more information.  
Guidelines reference: 10.1-10.14

## ABOUT THE GRANT PROGRAM

### 2. LIEF Description

- Text added in response to feedback from stakeholders, to clarify that the intent of the scheme is not only to provide funding for cutting edge new technologies, but also for standard equipment where there is a demonstrated need due to lack of existing infrastructure, lack of access to existing infrastructure, or existing ageing infrastructure which requires replacement or upgrade.  
Guidelines reference: 2.3

### 3. LIEF Objectives

- The objectives and intended outcomes have been integrated and the objectives reworded to reflect the LIEF scheme aims more clearly within the broader Linkage Program. Feedback indicated that more clarity was needed about the objectives of the scheme (e.g. innovation, replacement of existing essential infrastructure, alignment with other ARC funding) and updates to the objectives were in response to this feedback.
- The terminology used in relation to research has also been updated to include 'pure basic', 'strategic basic' and 'applied research' to be consistent with the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Australian and New Zealand Standard Research Classification (ANZSRC) terminology with definitions for each term added to the Glossary along with a link to the ABS website.
- Addition of 'across all disciplines excluding clinical and other medical research' to objectives to highlight the ARC's broad funding areas.

Guidelines reference: 2.4, Appendix A

## ELIGIBILITY

### 4. Updated clauses about additional certification requirements

- New clause added about ensuring provision of additional certification requirements (replacing deleted clause about applications involving particular named participants) to more accurately represent the ARC's research integrity processes, and to make eligibility requirements clear to researchers and Administering Organisations.

Guidelines reference: 4.10

### 5. Medical Research as an eligibility clause

- New clause added stating that applications must not include medical research, as detailed in the ARC Medical Research Policy, to more accurately represent the ARC's eligibility processes and to make eligibility requirements clear to researchers and Administering Organisations.

Guidelines reference: 4.11

### 6. Update to references to participants, personnel and organisational participants

- Where possible, the use of the terms 'participants', 'personnel' or 'organisation participants' has been updated to specify 'named participants' or 'participating organisation' to ensure clarity and consistency of terminology.

Guidelines reference: Flowchart, 4.16, 6.2, 9.15,

## ASSESSMENT

### 7. Assessment Criteria and Weightings

- Following feedback from stakeholders, the assessment criteria have been amended to be more fit-for-purpose and to bring the assessment criteria into alignment with the updated objectives for the scheme.
- Feedback indicated that Investigator(s) Capability was difficult to evaluate for LIEF and too heavily weighted (given the focus of the scheme on infrastructure, equipment and facilities); and that there were too many points under each assessment criteria.
- Key amendments include:
  - o Removal of Investigator(s)/Capability criterion and inclusion of consideration of relevant investigator capabilities under 'Feasibility'.
  - o Renaming and reweighting of Assessment Criteria (Project quality and innovation – 30%, Strategic alignment – 20%, Feasibility – 25%, Benefit – 25%) and reformulation of sub-criteria to reduce overlap between criteria.

Guidelines reference: 6.2

- Updated wording on additional assessment criterion for projects involving Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander research to bring the criterion into alignment with recent developments around cultural, governance and ethical requirements, specifically in relation to the 2020 AIATSIS Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research and the 2018 Australian Indigenous Data Sovereignty Principles and move of additional assessment criteria to 'Project quality and innovation'.

Guidelines reference: 6.2

## **8. Clarification of wording on use of Detailed Assessors**

- The Flowchart has been updated to provide greater clarity on the use of Detailed Assessors, stating that an application may be assigned to Detailed Assessors and that the applicant will have the opportunity to respond to any Detailed Assessors' written comments.

Guidelines reference: Flowchart; 8.15

## **OTHER**

## **9. Additional information provided about Ministerial decision making**

- Additional information provided in the Flowchart under 'Grant decisions are made' outlining that, should the Minister choose not to fund a project based on national security concerns, the Minister may advise the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security to ensure that Administering Organisations and researchers are aware of this possibility.

Guidelines reference: Flowchart

## **10. Updated persistent identifier clause**

- The clause, previously encouraging named participants, now 'strongly' encourages named participants to have a persistent identifier such as an Open Researcher and Contributor Identifier (ORCID) in their RMS profile to emphasise the importance of persistent identifiers and reflect ARC open access policy accurately.

Guidelines reference: 9.25

## **11. Appeals process**

- Sentence referring to 30-day limitation for lodging appeals removed to reflect the ARC's most recent appeals process.

Guidelines reference: 10.2-10.4

## **12. Acronyms and definitions**

- Acronyms deleted or updated where terms are self-explanatory, are no longer used in the Guidelines, or are only used in other definitions.
  - CEO
  - KPI
  - LIEF
  - PGR
  - PhD
- New definitions or definitions updated to increase clarity:
  - Applied research
  - Australian Government priority areas
  - Construction
  - Grant recipient (previously 'recipient')
  - Honorary academic appointment (definition has moved from Eligibility to Appendix A)
  - Participating organisation

- Pure basic research
  - Strategic basic research
- Definitions deleted where terms are self-explanatory, are no longer used in the Guidelines, or are only used in other definitions:
  - ARC assessor community
  - ARC website
  - Chief Executive Officer
  - Combined cash contributions
  - Commonwealth
  - Commonwealth Fellowship
  - General Assessors
  - Key Performance Indicators
  - Linkage Program
  - Minister
  - National interest
  - National Manufacturing Priorities
  - Officials
  - PhD
  - Recipient (replaced with 'grant recipient')
  - Selection criteria

Guidelines reference: Appendix A.