ARC

Australian Government

Australian Research Council

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
Linkage Projects for funding applied for in 2023 (LP23)

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- All participants should read the *Linkage Program Grant Guidelines (2023 edition): Linkage Projects* (grant guidelines) available on GrantConnect and specific *Instructions to Applicants* documents available on Grant Connect as they contain important information for Research Office staff and individual participants preparing applications.

- Individual participants should direct all queries regarding ARC grant opportunities to their Administering Organisation's Research Office (or equivalent). If further information regarding the National Competitive Grants Program (NCGP) is required, the Research Office should contact the NCGP at arc-ncgp@arc.gov.au

- Information regarding the Research Management System (RMS) is available at the ARC website, or by contacting arc-systems@arc.gov.au for assistance.

This Frequently Asked Questions document will be updated as required.

Frequently Asked Questions

1.   Timing of Grant Opportunities

1.1   Where are the key dates for upcoming ARC Grant Opportunities advised?
Dates of all upcoming ARC Grant Opportunities are published on the NCGP scheme timelines on the ARC Grants Calendar.

1.2   Will future grant opportunities be delayed, cancelled or extended due to the COVID-19 situation?
The ARC is continuing to progress NCGP grant application and peer review processes because an important role of the ARC is to ensure we continue to deliver funding outcomes that will support researchers in the recovery period and beyond.

The ARC is aiming to minimise the cumulative impact of COVID-19 on future rounds of funding.

Noting that all ARC Grants Calendar dates published on the ARC website are indicative, should any changes arise the ARC will issue a Network Message to the sector.

2.   Application information

2.1   Do I need to include a research contingency plan, with information about potential impacts of COVID-19 on my proposed research, within my application?
Whilst the pandemic is ongoing and continually evolving, the ARC acknowledges that the future impacts of COVID-19 are difficult for anyone to determine. In completing ARC grant applications, the application should be accurate as at the time of submitting the application. Researchers should include a realistic plan of how their research will be undertaken. If applicable, known project specific impacts of COVID-19 can be addressed under the feasibility heading of the Project Description.

However, a COVID-19 continuity plan is not required as part of the application. The DVCR is required to certify in the application that potential risks have been taken into consideration for the proposed project, including the impacts of COVID-19. Where an application is successful, applicants will be required to prepare a risk management plan before commencement and any changes in circumstances that affect the proposed research project will be managed as a post award issue.

2.2   Can I include requests for travel both domestically and internationally in my application?
Yes. You can still include requests for travel both domestically and international in accordance with the requirements set out in the relevant grant guidelines, noting the above advice that researchers should include a realistic plan of how their research will be undertaken. Where an application is successful, any changes to the proposed travel plans due to the impact of COVID-19 will be managed as a post award issue.

2.3   Will the minimum level of required cash and/or in-kind contributions by Partner Organisations be reduced?
No. All requirements of the current grant guidelines must continue to be met, including minimum cash and/or in-kind contributions from Partner Organisations. A key feature of the Linkage Projects scheme are the partnerships that are formed, which is in part signified by the level of cash and in-kind contributions pledged by participating organisations.

However, the ARC understands that the level of co-contribution pledged above and beyond the minimum threshold is likely to be reduced in future applications due to the financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. ARC assessors will be instructed that they should not make assumptions about an organisation's level of commitment and support of an application solely based on lower levels of pledged additional cash and/or in-kind support than historically provided.

2.4 What font size can I use for figures, tables, or pictures in my application to comply with ARC submission requirements?

Applicants should ensure that the text is readable both online and in print as detailed in the Instructions to Applicants. It is recommended that 12pt font is used. Readability needs to also be ensured with regards to text within figures and tables and it is recommended that 10pt font is used.

2.5 Will including a preprint or comparable resource in any part of my application make me ineligible?

No. The inclusion of preprints is not considered an eligibility issue and applications will not be excluded.

2.6 What is a preprint or comparable resource?

A preprint or comparable resource is defined in the Grant Guidelines as a scholarly output that is uploaded by the authors to a recognised publicly accessible archive, repository, or pre-print service (such as, but not limited to, arXiv, bioRxiv, medRxiv, ChemRxiv, Peer J Preprints, Zenodo, GitHub, PsyArXiv and publicly available university or government repositories etc.). This will include a range of materials that have been subjected to varying degrees of peer review from none to light and full review. Ideally, a preprint or comparable resource should have a unique identifier or a DOI (digital object identifier).

Comparable resource refers to non-traditional research outputs that are not readily identified as peer-reviewed research outputs. This includes, but is not limited to, datasets, protocols, software, creative works, and documents sourced from or deposited with government and Academy repositories, such as policy papers, historical and herbarium resources, CSIRO data, software or other digital assets collections.

a. *In the sciences examples may include, but are not limited to the following: arXiv, bioRxiv, medRxiv, ChemRxiv, Peer J Preprints, Zenodo, GitHub, PsyArXiv and publicly available university repositories, EcoEvoRxiv, PaleorXiv, OSF Preprints, PCI Ecology, Dryad, Atlas of Living Australia, TERN AEKOS, GeneBank , Astrophysics Source Code Library (ASCL); CSIRO ASKAP Science Data Archive (CASDA); CSIRO Data Access Portal; data.csiro.au/collections; Academy of Science Decadal Plans.*

b. *In the Humanities and Social Sciences examples may include, but are not limited to the following resources and databases such as: Linguistics e.g. https://childes.talkbank.org/; https://catalog.ldc.upenn.edu/LDC99T42/; https://austalk.edu.au/, History e.g. https://dataverse.ada.edu.au/dataverse/australian_historical_criminal_justice_data; Archaeology e.g. https://core.tdar.org/collection/31020/national-archeological-database-nadb; and "Grey literature", including cultural heritage reports, and impact assessments housed on the servers of State and Federal government agencies.*

2.7 How many preprints can I include?

The ARC has not placed a limit on the number of preprints or comparable resources that you can include within your grant application. You will need to consider the disciplinary standards of preprint or comparable resource use in your field. Detailed and general assessors will consider the academic merit of your research outputs as part of their holistic assessment including the value, relevance and suitability of any preprint or comparable resources within your application.

2.8 Can I include a preprint in my 10 best research outputs at question E15 of the application form?

Yes, if it is best placed to demonstrate the excellence of your research, considering preprint or comparable resource use in your disciplinary area.

2.9 Why is the ARC's definition of preprint so expansive?

In conjunction with an academic reference group, in this instance comprising a cohort of the Australian Laureate Fellows, the definition of preprint was developed to be as inclusive of the different types of research output that could be considered given the wide disciplinary spread of research supported through the National Competitive Grants Program.

2.10 **The text of Question B1 Australian Government Priority areas refers to 'Priority areas', but the instructions text refers to 'policies'. Are you able to confirm whether only documents specifically identified as policies e.g. Energy Efficiency in Government Operations policy, announced 2017 (https://www.energy.gov.au/publications/energy-efficiency-government-operations-policy) can be listed here, or if other types of government strategies/priorities can be listed. E.g. digital government strategy, announced 2021 (https://www.dta.gov.au/digital-government-strategy)?**

The response to question B1 should include policies, initiatives, agendas, investments etc. that are a priority for the Australian (Commonwealth) Government. This could be a policy introduced by the current Government or a policy of a former Government that has been continued by the current Government. Examples could include: Digital Economy Strategy, Powering Australia Plan, Closing the Gap, Deregulation Agenda, Snowy Mountains Hydro-electric Scheme, Developing Northern Australia.

3.   Career Interruptions

3.1 **COVID-19 has affected my research opportunity. Is this considered a career interruption as part of the Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence (ROPE) – Career Interruptions?**
Yes. The Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence (ROPE) assessment criterion allows inclusion and consideration of any career interruption, which has affected a participant's ability to undertake and contribute to research.

Career interruptions arising from COVID-19 can be included under ROPE for consideration by assessors. Instructions to Applicants (ITAs) provide specific advice on how to enter this in the application.

3.2 **If I have had a significant career interruption, how much information should I include in question E13 of the application form?**
All applications submitted to the ARC must be certified by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) (DVCR) in the Administering Organisation, and the DVCR does not need to provide any additional certification for this question.

All personal or confidential information relevant to the career interruption/s should not be included in the application form. For example, a medical certificate should not be included if the interruption was due to a medical condition.

4.   Certification

4.1 **Does the certification within RMS replace the ARC written evidence document (certification proforma) on GrantConnect for all named participants and their organisations?**
No. The certification within RMS is for the candidate only. The simplified process through RMS includes:
- individual participant certification within the RMS application form (Question E17)
- an additional DVCR certification clause in RMS prior to submission (delegate certification).
- Partner Organisation certification (question G2). Please note that a Partner Organisation template is available in Appendix A of the Instructions to Applications document.
- A certification proforma is available on GrantConnect for obtaining written evidence for all parties excluding named individual participants as this is now captured in the application form.

The Administering Organisation must obtain the written agreement of all relevant organisational participants to allow the proposed project to proceed as specified in the grant guidelines. This excludes the employing organisations of overseas Partner Investigators (PIs) and any participant's current organisation which is not their relevant organisation for the application. This written evidence must be retained by the Administering Organisation and must be provided to the ARC if requested.

The Certification Proforma document on GrantConnect can be used by the Administering Organisation to obtain written evidence from other participating organisations. However, the

use of the ARC certification pro forma is not mandatory for organisations other than Partner Organisations. The Administering Organisation may determine the format for written evidence.

5.   Logistics support for Antarctic research

5.1   What logistics advice should I seek if my proposed research project included Antarctic research?
If your proposed research project includes Antarctic research that will require logistical support, please contact the Australian Antarctic Division for advice about available logistical support prior to submitting your application.

6.   Assessment of applications

6.1   How will my application be assessed in relation to COVID-19 impacts on the proposed research project?
Assessment of applications will continue in accordance with ARC's peer review processes. ARC assessors will be instructed to assess all applications based on the content of the application only and not make assumptions about the viability of a proposed research project due to the potential impacts of COVID-19. Where an application is successful, applicants will be required to prepare a risk management plan before commencement and any changes in circumstances that affect the proposed research project will be managed as a post award issue.

6.2   Request Not to Assess process
A Request Not to Assess (RNTA) form is now submitted in RMS as detailed on GrantConnect and the ARC website.

6.3   What is the maximum character limit for justification for RNTA?
If a request includes the name of a current ARC College of Experts member, as listed on the ARC website, or in RMS at the time of submitting the RNTA form, the request must be accompanied by a justification (the maximum character count for the justification is 2500).

7.   Project Role and Employment Type

7.1   Am I a Chief Investigator (CI) or a Partner Investigator (PI)?
Whether a participant is a CI or PI is determined by meeting the eligibility requirements in sections 4.18-4.22 in the grant guidelines, not by the level of their intended involvement in the project. Please read the grant guidelines closely and refer to Appendix B of the Instructions to Applications for a decision tree to assist in determining whether a participant is eligible as a CI or as a PI.

A participant is not eligible to apply as a PI if they meet the requirements to be a CI.

7.2   When should I choose Honorary Academic Appointment at E6 'Employment Details as at the grant commencement date'?
Participants must only choose the honorary academic appointment role type at E6 if they meet the ARC's definition of an 'honorary academic appointment' as specified in Appendix A of the grant guidelines:

An honorary academic appointment for eligibility purposes means a position that gives full academic status to the researcher, as certified by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) (or equivalent) in the application. The researcher must have access to research support comparable to employees e.g., an emeritus appointment. The 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.

Where a participant is not an employee and does not meet the definition of an honorary academic appoint as specified above, they should select 'other' as their employment type.

7.3   Can I be a Project Leader if I hold an honorary academic appointment only?
A participant can be the Project Leader if they only hold an honorary academic appointment. The Administering Organisation must ensure that it has appropriate administrative controls in place to manage all governance risks should a participant with a honorary academic appointment act as the project leader for the duration of the project.

8.   The National Interest Test (NIT)

8.1   Where can I find information regarding the National Interest Test?
Information regarding the requirements of the National Interest Test, including examples and detailed FAQs, can be found on the ARC website.

9.   Linkage Projects Frequently Asked Questions

9.1   How do I know if my Partner Organisation is one of the types that is exempt from the cash contribution? Can the ARC provide a ruling on this?
The ARC does not provide advice on whether a specific organisation meets the definition of an exempt Partner Organisation type in the Glossary of the grant guidelines. It is the responsibility of the Administering Organisation to determine whether a potential Partner Organisation meets the definition of an exempt Partner Organisation type. Please refer to section 4.3.d and the Definitions in the grant guidelines in consultation with the Research Office.

9.2   I have two Partner Organisations on my application, one is an organisation whose funds are appropriated predominantly from Commonwealth or Australian State or Territory Government funding sources for the purposes of research and the other is a not an exempt type. What are the requirements to match the cash and in-kind contributions?
Partner Organisations whose funds are appropriated predominantly from Commonwealth or Australian State or Territory Government funding sources for the purposes of research are restricted in their capacity to contribute to the required Partner Organisation contribution. Cash and/or in-kind contributions from Partner Organisation(s) of this type are only eligible to make up a maximum of 25% of the required Partner Organisation contribution. There is no limit to the contributions that can be provided, but they will not be counted as part of the required PO contribution beyond matching 25% of the funding requested from the ARC.

For Linkage Projects, the application must demonstrate that the combined Partner Organisation(s) eligible contributions for an application (i.e. the total of the cash and/or in-kind eligible contributions of the Partner Organisation) must at least match the total funding requested from the ARC. Therefore, on an application with a Partner Organisation restricted under 4.10, the remaining minimum of 75% of eligible cash and/or in-kind contributions must be made up by other Partner Organisations.

For example, if the **total** funding requested from the ARC (in 3 years) is $300,000 and a Partner Organisation of this type (whose funds are appropriated predominantly from Commonwealth or Australian State or Territory Government funding sources for the purposes of research) is contributing $400,000 (cash and /or in-kind), only $75,000 will be counted towards matching the total funding requested from the ARC. The additional $325,000 will not count towards matching the total funding requested from the ARC. This means that another type of Partner Organisation will be required to participate on the application and make contributions (cash and/or in-kind) **to match** the total funding requested from the ARC.

9.3   I would like to use funds awarded through other funders (HERDC Category 2 or Category 3) as an Eligible Organisation contribution to a Linkage Projects application. Would this be possible and if so, would it be considered as a cash contribution from the Eligible Organisation or would it be noted as an in-kind contribution?
The Administering Organisation would need to be cautious to ensure that any awarded HERDC Category 2 or Category 3 funds are not misrepresented as university funds contributing to a Linkage Projects application. This is to ensure that clause 8.3 of the Linkage Program Grant Guidelines (2023 edition): Linkage Projects is not contravened (clause copied below):

- 8.3 In Our absolute discretion, We may recommend an application not be approved if we consider it (a) incomplete, (b) inaccurate or contains false or misleading information, or (c) is otherwise in breach of the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research.

The two categories are as follows:

- If the funds awarded through other funders is category 3 funding, it may be an acceptable contribution on a Linkage Projects application, with an explanation in the budget justification about what the funds were for originally, and what the funds will be used for now. Please check the funder's grant agreements and with your finance team to ensure these sourced funds do not contravene any clauses within the funder's grant agreement(s).

- If the funds awarded through other funders is category 2 funding, government non competitive funding, this is more difficult. It may be an acceptable Linkage Project contribution if it was not awarded for research, of if the university could justify how the original grant is related to the intended contribution and show it is not the grant money being represented as university money. Any funds sourced from grant money must not be represented as university money. An example of this is:

  - Commonwealth fellowships funding as mentioned in the Grant Guidelines – the money is coming from the Commonwealth for research, so the university cannot represent it as a university contribution.