



Australian Government
Australian Research Council

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Linkage Projects for funding applied for in 2022 (LP22)

Version 1.1

Release Date: 14 April 2022

-
- As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, the Australian Research Council (ARC) understands that it is a challenging time for researchers and research administrators preparing grant applications.
 - The following Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and responses are designed to provide advice to assist researchers planning applications for ARC National Competitive Grants Program (NCGP) Grant Opportunities for the Linkage Program and include FAQs relevant to general effects of COVID-19.
 - While these FAQs relate to addressing some of the general impacts of COVID-19, please also visit the [ARC Grant Calendar](#) for key dates and links to [GrantConnect](#) documentation specific to each new Grant Opportunity. *Please note, while the Grant Guidelines are available to view on GrantConnect, you will need to register with GrantConnect to access all documentation.*
 - All participants should read the Linkage Program Grant Guidelines (2022 edition): Linkage Projects (grant guidelines) available on [GrantConnect](#).
 - The Instructions to Applicants (ITAs), which are available on [GrantConnect](#), also contain important information for Research Office staff and individual participants preparing applications.
 - The ARC does not respond to queries from individual participants. Individual participants should direct all queries regarding ARC funding schemes to their Administering Organisation's Research Office (or equivalent).
 - Please ensure that your application is eligible in accordance with these guidelines, which may differ from funding rules/grant guidelines for previous years.
 - The ARC will continue to monitor the COVID-19 situation and will update our advice as required. Please visit the [ARC Pre Award Guidance for preparing applications: Responding to the impact of COVID-19](#) page on the ARC website for more information.
 - If further information regarding any of the NCGP schemes is required, the Research Office should contact the ARC at ARC-NCGP@arc.gov.au or 02 6287 6600.
 - Information regarding the Research Management System (RMS) is available on the [ARC website](#), or by contacting RMSSupport@arc.gov.au for assistance.
-

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. Applicants are required to declare 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?

ARC funding applications must comply with the application format and submission requirements, including the advice in the **Instructions to Applicants** (ITAs).

As clarified within the ITAs, text included in figures, tables or pictures are required to be an equivalent sized font to 12-point Times New Roman. Only references may be in 10-point font.

In judging the equivalence (or otherwise) of text within figures, tables or pictures, it might be useful to keep in mind the intent behind this font size requirement, i.e. to ensure that no application is afforded a material advantage over other applications by inserting substantially more information into their applications through using text that is less than 12-point font. For example, a structural diagram that includes atom labels as part of the image would be acceptable, but images that contain lengthy descriptive text (e.g. paragraphs of small font information) would not comply with the application format and submission requirements in the Linkage Program Grant Guidelines (2022 edition): Linkage Projects and the Instructions to Applicants.

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

No. The inclusion of preprints will no longer be 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 preprint 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://chilides.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 do I appropriately cite a preprint in the project description?

If preprints or comparable resources are cited, these should be explicitly identified in the reference list by including [PREPRINT OR COMPARABLE] after the reference. The reference should include DOI, URL or equivalent, version number where available and/or date of access, as applicable. This indication is only required in the reference list and not in the project description itself.

2.8 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.

2.9 Can I include a preprint in my 10 best research outputs?

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

2.10 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.

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 F16 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 If I am concurrently applying for funding from the Australian Government (ARC or elsewhere) for similar or linked research, what information should I provide in Question C4 of the application form?

Question C4 asks you to briefly explain how funding this project would not duplicate Australian Government funding or overlap with existing projects.

You should briefly explain why you are applying for funding for similar or linked research from the Australian Government and describe how any duplication, overlap or other involvement in applications would be managed if these applications are funded (including any withdrawal of

application(s), intention of relinquishing current grants, withdrawal of investigators, or amendment of current project end date).

4.2 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 participant only. The simplified process through RMS includes:

- individual participant certification within the RMS application form (Question F22)
- an additional DVCR certification clause in RMS prior to submission (delegate certification)
- Letter of support for the application including Partner Organisation certification (question G2). Please note that a Partner Organisation letter of support template is available in Appendix F 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. 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 4.22-4.30 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 D 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. Applications may be found ineligible if incorrect information is provided in response to this question.

7.2 When should I choose Honorary Academic Appointment at F7 'Eligibility - Employment Details as at the grant commencement date'?

Participants must only choose the honorary academic appointment role type at F7 if they meet the ARC's definition of an 'honorary academic appointment' as specified in section 4.24b 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 I hold an honorary academic appointment only can I be a Project Leader?

A participant can be the Project Leader if they only hold an honorary academic appointment. In certifying the submission of an application, the Administering Organisation confirms that appropriate administrative controls will be in place to manage all governance risks should a participant with an honorary academic appointment for eligibility purposes act as the Project Leader for the duration of the project.

8. The National Interest Test (NIT)

8.1 What is the NIT statement and how is it assessed?

The NIT statement is a requirement in all ARC application forms for funding within the National Competitive Grants Program (NCGP). It was first introduced, following the Minister's announcement in 2018, for the Discovery Projects round for funding commencing in 2020 and has been included within all subsequent schemes.

The NIT statement is a standalone statement assessed by the ARC Chief Executive Officer (CEO) prior to making recommendations to the Minister. The purpose of the NIT is to demonstrate the societal benefits (economic, commercial, environmental, social and/or cultural) of the proposed research beyond the academic community. The audience of the NIT is the general public, which is a different audience than that of the Application Project Summary, whose audience is the applicant's peers.

The assessment of the NIT is undertaken by the ARC CEO, and is undertaken separately to the peer assessment process. Peer reviewers are not able to view the NIT statement submitted as part of Linkage Project applications.

The NIT statements are a critical part of the funding recommendations to the Minister, in addition to the processes that consider due diligence, eligibility, and peer review assessment of applications.

The Minister makes the final funding decision.

8.2 What changes have been made to the NIT?

Under the Linkage Projects scheme rounds for funding applied for in 2022, the NIT question in the application form has been updated to clearly identify the information being sought on how the proposed project will benefit Australia beyond the academic community. These considerations are:

1. What is the project about? Describe the project in 1-2 sentences.
2. What are the expected outcomes of the project? What gap is it addressing?
3. How will the research benefit Australia (economically, socially, environmentally, commercially or culturally)? How might the research be used?
4. What translation and adoption pathway(s) might be used to achieve the outcome? For example, are there conditions that would need to be in place for the outcome to occur? If so, briefly describe them.

You should address these four considerations as a single cohesive statement. You should take particular care in addressing each element concisely, noting the statement must be between 100 to 150 words in length and that it needs to be understood by members of the general public.

Avoid technical explanations or jargon that would not be understood by a member of the public without background in the area. Consider whether the statement is written in plain English. For example, does it use a style that would be suitable for popular publications and media? Are there evidence-based outcomes directly related to the proposed research identified? It may be useful to share the draft NIT statement with others outside the application discipline or sector to ensure the project's benefits are clearly understood.

For further information, including examples of well written NIT statements and examples of extracts from NIT statements that do not meet the ARC requirements, please refer to the [Articulating National Interest in grant applications Network Message](#) on the ARC website.

8.3 Who can I talk to about the NIT?

In the first instance, researchers should talk to their Research Office staff for help preparing their NIT statement. Researchers can also contact communications teams or technology transfer officers to test how the proposed project benefits are best articulated for a wider audience. Research Offices may also contact the ARC if further information about the process requirements is needed by using this email - ARC-NCGP@arc.gov.au .

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 sections 4.12, 4.13 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.

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 8.11 of the Linkage Program Grant Guidelines (2022 edition): Linkage Projects is not contravened (clause copied below):

- 8.11 If We consider that an application is inaccurate or contains false or misleading information, or is otherwise a breach of the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, We will in Our absolute discretion decide to recommend that the application not be approved for a grant.

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, or 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.

9.4 Can I request more than one HDR stipend?

Yes. More than one HDR stipend can be included per application. As per clause 5.8aⁱⁱ of the Grant Guidelines, all HDR stipends in the application must be requested as full-time (1.0 FTE) at an appropriate level for the Administering Organisation or the relevant industry sector.

If an application is successful, stipends may be divided amongst more than one person, for example dividing 1 stipend between 2 students at 0.5 FTE each as per the Linkage Program Grant Agreement (2022 edition): Linkage Projects.

9.5 I understand that HDR stipends must now be requested for 1.0 FTE, can the request be for a 1.0 FTE HDR student but with the stipend 50% funded by the ARC, and 50% funded by the Partner Organisation cash contribution?

Yes. The Grant Guidelines do not preclude any participating organisation, including a Partner Organisation (PO), from making a contribution to support part or all of a stipend. It would be acceptable to request a 1.0 FTE PhD student with the stipend 50% funded by the ARC, and 50% funded by a PO cash contribution.

10. Project Limits

10.1 For eligibility purposes, how is the number of projects and applications with which I am involved counted?

As per subsections 4.33 and 4.34 of the grant guidelines, a named participant can apply for and be concurrently funded through the Linkage Program for a maximum of four Linkage Program projects (not including LIEF) as a CI or Director.

For the purpose of counting project limits, Linkage Program projects:

- a. include CIs on Linkage Projects, Industrial Transformation Research Program and ARC Centres of Excellence;
- b. include Directors on Industrial Transformation Research Program, Special Research Initiatives and ARC Centres of Excellence; and
- c. do not include CIs on LIEF, Special Research Initiatives, LASP or Supporting Responses to Commonwealth Science Council Priorities.

At the date of submission of applications we will count:

- a. the number of Linkage Program projects that the named participant will hold as a CI or Director on active projects as at the active project assessment date; and
- b. the number of Linkage Projects applications We are currently assessing which include that participant as a CI.

10.2 What is an active project?

An active project means a project that is receiving funding according to the terms of an existing funding agreement or grant agreement, or has any carryover funds approved by the ARC, or an approved variation to the project end date.

The active projects, which affect your eligibility to apply for funding, are determined based on the project's end date in RMS.

The number of active projects that a researcher is considered to have is counted as at the active project assessment date.

10.3 What is the active project assessment date?

The active project assessment date is the date on which the active project eligibility will be considered for project and application limits per named participant. The active project assessment date is six months after the grant commencement date. The important dates on the [ARC website](#) lists the dates.

For Linkage Projects 2022:

- The grant commencement date for the Linkage Projects grant opportunity for funding applied for in 2022 is 1 January 2023. This date is when grant funding may commence.
- The active project assessment date for the Linkage Projects grant opportunity for funding applied for in 2022 is 1 July 2023. This date is used to consider project and application limits per named participant.

10.4 What is a project end date?

The project end date means the expected date that the project activity is completed and the grant spent by.

10.5 Can I withdraw a person from an application that is currently under assessment in order to meet the project and application limits?

No. A named Participant cannot be removed from an application once it has been submitted.

10.6 Can I relinquish my role or active project in order to meet the limits?

As per subsection 4.35 of the grant guidelines, if a role or Project must be relinquished to meet the limits, the ARC must approve the Variation before the application is submitted. Any relinquishment Variation submitted or approved after the application is submitted will not be taken into account when counting the number of projects help by the participant.

Changes to document

- 7.3 Provided updated advice regarding Project Leader eligibility.
- 9.4-9.5 Inserted new FAQs.
- 10.1-10.6 Inserted new FAQs.