Research Infrastructure Investment Fund (RIIF) Collaborative Equipment Grant (CEG)  
2023 Frequently Asked Questions

1. **How do I apply?**  
   Applications for the 2023 RIIF CEG round will be administered through SmartyGrants. The link to this can be found on Research Infrastructure Investment Fund (RIIF) Collaborative Equipment Grant (CEG) Webpage. Clear instructions on starting, saving and submitting applications can be found on the landing page of SmartyGrants and in the guide that can be downloaded.

2. **How do I provide evidence of co-investment?**  
   Download the “Co-Investment Approval Form” on the RIIF CEG webpage. Complete the form, obtain the required signatures for approval, and upload the form when prompted to do so within the SmartyGrants application form. Please forward the signed copy to your Faculty research contacts.

3. **Can I put in an application for a software purchase?**  
   Yes, but only if it is a one-off purchase with a minimum threshold of $50,000. A clear rationale for purchasing the software and evidence of a one-off cost associated with this purchase must be provided. Any subsequent costs associated with the one-off software purchase (i.e., upgrades, support and other trailing costs) will need to be provisioned for as an in-kind contribution with the funding source articulated in the application. Subscription-based access to software will not be supported.

4. **The guidelines state that the primary applicant must hold a 0.5FTE salaried appointment within the University; is the appointment required to be continuing?**  
   No. The primary applicant may be employed on a fixed-term contract if they have a 0.5FTE salaried appointment at the time of the award.

5. **Can a researcher of any level apply? Should I ask a senior academic to lead my proposal?**  
   There is no restriction on the level of appointment of the lead or associate applicants in this scheme. Early/mid-career researchers, Platform Managers, professional staff members and female applicants are particularly encouraged to apply. Assessment is not made based on the track record of listed applicants.

6. **Should I seek to obtain letters of support from potential users or other departments?**  
   Letters of support describing the equipment’s value and importance and making an argument for funding are useful. Applicants may attach a maximum of three letters of support to their applications.

7. **The LIEF grant I applied for last year was unsuccessful. Can I apply for the same or similar equipment through the RIIF Collaborative Equipment Grant Scheme?**  
   Yes, you may apply for support through the RIIF Collaborative Equipment Grant Scheme for purchasing the same or similar equipment as proposed in an unsuccessful LIEF award; however, the request will be considered in the context of potential reapplication through the ARC LIEF scheme. There is an opportunity within the RIIF CEG application form to articulate why the equipment is unlikely to be successful through LIEF reapplication.
8. **The equipment I am requesting is not going into an established Research Platform. Is it still considered eligible?**

Aligning with principles of the Melbourne Collaborative Research Infrastructure Program (MCRIP), the RIIF Collaborative Equipment Grant Scheme aims to support equipment purchases of a collaborative nature; that is, have an impact beyond, and support more than one research group. While Research Platforms represent an established mechanism for collaborative equipment access within the University, applications for equipment to be located outside a Research Platform may be considered eligible, provided the collaborative nature is demonstrable. The ‘collaborative test’ within the Funding Rules (Appendix A) should be used to ascertain whether the proposed equipment meets the collaborative requirements of the scheme.

For equipment to be located within a Research Platform, the Platform Manager must be contacted no later than two weeks prior to the application submission/deadline to allow sufficient time for consideration by the Platform Steering Committee. Platform Managers and Steering Committees reserve the right to decline offers to manage equipment procured through this scheme.

Applicants are encouraged to contact RIC Research Infrastructure during application development to discuss eligibility.

9. **I need to upgrade a piece of existing equipment. Can I apply for the cost of this upgrade through the RIIF Collaborative Equipment Grant Scheme?**

Yes, upgrades to existing equipment will be considered for funding provided other eligibility criteria for the scheme are met (i.e. the value of the upgrade exceeds the $100,000 threshold, and the integrated equipment passes the ‘collaborative test’).

10. **Can I pool equipment items to meet the $100,000 minimum threshold?**

The total request may comprise multiple components, provided they are fully integrated. A good example may include a request for imaging equipment with numerous interchangeable lenses, filters, and collection/dispensing modules. Requests that, for the purpose of meeting the minimum value threshold, comprise collections of standalone equipment are not eligible for funding through the RIIF Collaborative Equipment Grant Scheme.

11. **Can I include an extended warranty in the purchase price in order to meet the $100,000 minimum threshold?**

Applicants are recommended to engage with University Procurement Services in seeking assistance with negotiating competitive pricing, including an extended warranty, as part of the quotation package. Other operational costs may not be included in the equipment request.

12. **If the proposed equipment is to be used by two different research groups within one department, is it deemed to have passed the ‘collaborative test’?**

Equipment requests intended to support multiple user groups and carry investment from multiple Faculties will be viewed more favourably than single-department requests. However, the request may be considered eligible for support if a case can be made for a strong user base over multiple research groups within one department.

13. **My Faculty/School/Department has made a cash contribution to the Research Platform where the equipment will be located via MCRIP. Can this be counted as a cash co-investment?**

No. Co-contributions for MCRIP fund the salaries of Research Platform support staff, not equipment. Co-investments of funds must be independent of MCRIP investments.

14. **Will cash investment from non-University of Melbourne research groups and MRI-based research groups be considered as contributing to the (minimum) 25% co-investment threshold?**

Yes. Investment from precinct partners is encouraged.
15. Are non-University of Melbourne and MRI-based research groups counted in the ‘collaborative test’?
   While precinct engagement is encouraged, the ‘collaborative test’ is only deemed to be passed if multiple
University of Melbourne research groups have identified the need for and intend to use the proposed
equipment.

16. Are all groups listed on the application expected to contribute to the cash co-investment?
   While not prescriptive, cash co-investment from all user groups is encouraged and is a strong signal of need for
the equipment. A minimum cash co-investment of 25% of the total equipment cost from multiple groups is
expected.

17. I have not been able to obtain current quotes from the supplier. Can I apply without these?
   No. The submitted application must include current quotes for the proposed equipment purchase from the
preferred supplier.

18. Will my application be considered less competitive if a Platform Manager or early career researcher led the
    bid?
   No. Applications are evaluated on how the equipment will contribute to research-teaching capability at the
University and collaborative merits. ECRs and Platform Managers are encouraged to lead applications if they
bring relevant expertise.

FAQs relevant to the 2023 Ageing Critical Research Infrastructure (ACRI) allocation

19. In 2023, additional funding will be allocated to support applications that address Ageing Critical Research
    Infrastructure via the RIIF CEG process. How does this apply to me?
   The Ageing Critical Research Infrastructure allocation is a subset of funding available via the RIIF CEG Scheme.
Within your SmartyGrants application, if you declare that your application is for “replacing, repairing or
upgrading” existing equipment (question 6.1), you will automatically be considered for support by this
mechanism (in addition to RIIF CEG).

20. What is considered Ageing Critical Research Infrastructure?
   The intent of this scheme is to address, via co-investment, the worst of the ageing collaborative research
infrastructure fleet at the University of Melbourne. Priority will be given to infrastructure that demonstrates
both advancing age and criticality of impact should the research infrastructure become defunct, while meeting
the other eligibility criteria associated with the RIIF CEG Scheme.

21. Do I need to apply separately for both schemes, or can I apply to both with one application?
   The Ageing Critical Research Infrastructure allocation is a subset of funding available via the RIIF CEG Scheme.
Therefore, applications must meet eligibility criteria for RIIF CEG, and where it is declared that they are for
“replacing, repairing or upgrading” existing equipment (question 6.1 of the application form), they will
additionally be considered for the Ageing Critical Research Infrastructure allocation.

22. Will the applications identified as eligible for the Ageing Critical Research Infrastructure allocation be
    assessed separately from those that are not?
   No. All applications submitted via the RIIF CEG process will be evaluated via the same process. Applications are
prioritised based on the same set of criteria and ranked/evaluated accordingly, to arrive at a list of funded
projects (via panel assessment). The source of funding for each project will differ (either RIIF CEG or ACRI) based
on the type of equipment requested as it relates to the Ageing Critical Research Infrastructure definition (i.e.,
“new piece of equipment” or “replacing, repairing or upgrading” existing equipment (question 6.1)).