



National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy 2023 Guidelines

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| Opening date: | 22 February 2023 |
| Closing date and time: | 15 March 2023 at 5.00pm |
| Commonwealth policy entity: | Department of Education |
| Administering entity | Department of Education |
| Enquiries: | If you have any questions, contact: Tony Rothnie Director, National Research Infrastructure Program Management 02 6240 2463 NCRIS@education.gov.au Questions may be sent at any time. |
| Date guidelines released: | 22 February 2023 |
| Type of grant opportunity: | Closed non-competitive |

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1. 2023 Guidelines process

The National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy (NCRIS) is designed to achieve Australian Government objectives

This grant opportunity is part of the above grant program which contributes to the Department of Education (Education) Outcome 2.6. Education works with stakeholders to plan and design the grant program according to the *Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines*¹.



The grant opportunity opens

These Guidelines implement recommendations of the 2021 National Research Infrastructure Roadmap. They complement earlier NCRIS Guidelines to maximise Australia's research endeavours and support the activities of NCRIS projects from 2023–24 to 2028–29. Eligible parties are invited to submit information on potential grants.



You submit information to Education

You provide information that demonstrates your project's suitability against the assessment criteria. You address all eligibility and other criteria to be considered for a grant.



We assess all information received

We assess all data collected during the submission process, which may include advice from sources other than submissions from entities seeking grants. We may seek further information during the submission process.



We make grant recommendations

We provide advice to the decision maker on the merits of the funding package based on the merits of each application.



Grant decisions are made

The decision maker decides which applications are successful.



We notify you of the outcome

We advise you of the outcome of your submission if it proposed a grant. We may not notify unsuccessful applicants until grant agreements have been executed with successful applicants.



We enter into a grant agreement

We will enter into a grant agreement with you if successful. The type of grant agreement is based on the nature of the grant and will be proportional to the risks involved. If you have been successful in a previous Research Infrastructure Investment Plan, your previous grant agreement may be varied to include this additional grant.



Delivery of grant

You undertake the grant activity as set out in your grant agreement. We manage the grant by working with you, monitoring your progress and making payments.

¹ <https://www.finance.gov.au/government/commonwealth-grants/commonwealth-grants-rules-and-guidelines>

We may seek to vary the activity following other activities to implement the 2021 and/or future NRI Roadmaps.



Evaluation of NCRIS

We evaluate your specific grant activity and NCRIS as a whole. We base this on information you provide to us and that we collect from various sources.

1.1 Introduction

These guidelines contain information for National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy (NCRIS) grants to implement actions in response to the 2021 NRI Roadmap².

This document sets out:

- the purpose of the grant program and grant opportunity
- the eligibility and assessment criteria
- how potential grants are considered and selected
- how grantees are notified and receive grant payments
- how grantees will be monitored and evaluated
- responsibilities and expectations in relation to the opportunity.

2. About the grant program

Objectives

The objectives of NCRIS are:

- to catalyse and support a national network of research infrastructure projects
- through this network, support high quality research that will drive greater innovation in the Australian research sector and the economy more broadly
- offer seamless access to National Research Infrastructure to empower Australian researchers to address key national and global challenges
- to support collaboration between researchers and other end users, such as industry both nationally and internationally.

Context

NCRIS was established by the Government following the March 2004 *Final Report of the National Research Infrastructure Taskforce*. In establishing NCRIS, the Australian Government recognised its role in bringing a more strategic direction to Australia's investment in research infrastructure. In the 2004-05 Budget, the Government announced that NCRIS would be implemented to provide the focus and coordination required in the sector.

NCRIS adopts a principles-based approach. The principles have evolved over time and build on the foundation of previous Roadmaps. In the 2021 NRI Roadmap a new set of NRI Principles were adopted which are complemented by a separate set of NRI Investment Principles to guide funding decisions (Appendix A).

As a result of the NCRIS program, Australia today is the beneficiary of internationally recognised and highly efficient research infrastructure that consistently delivers outstanding returns. It has been developed through the implementation of strategic roadmaps and funded by successive Australian Governments, with support from state and territory governments, universities, and research agencies.

The 2021 Roadmap found that funding stability since 2017-18 has resulted in the development of a strong suite of NRI that is well-positioned to support research in addressing national priorities, such as the National Reconstruction Fund priority areas. It also highlighted system-level gaps and

² <https://www.education.gov.au/national-research-infrastructure/2021-national-research-infrastructure-roadmap>

opportunities for further enhancement that are relevant to supporting the Step Change areas. These opportunities for system-wide Enhancements (Chapter 4) are:

- Continental-scale observations
- Large-scale integrated datasets
- Physical collections and biobanking
- Software analysis tools and platforms
- Bridging innovation gaps with translation NRI

The 2021 Roadmap also identified five Step Change areas (Chapter 6) of future investment with the potential to create fundamental change in Australian research and innovation capability (Appendix C). These Step Change areas are:

1. Cutting-edge national digital research infrastructure
2. Synthetic biology research infrastructure to deliver new environmentally sustainable bio-industries
3. Research translation infrastructure to drive increased industry investment and sovereign research capability
4. World-leading environmental and climate infrastructure to help protect Australia's unique environment and underpin its response to climate change
5. Scoping a national approach to managing Australia's unique and valuable collections

The system-wide Enhancements and Step Change areas that were identified in the 2021 Roadmap are highly interconnected. Addressing the system-wide Enhancements should uplift the current NRI system to address national priorities, in particular the National Reconstruction Fund priority areas, and are key to supporting the Step Change areas. The Step Change areas will deliver significant value and impact by boosting the ability of NRI to address national priorities in specific areas and potentially in new ways.

2.1 About the NCRIS 2023 grant opportunity

This grant opportunity is to provide funding that:

- provides uplift for the current NRI network to address national priorities, in particular the National Reconstruction Fund priority areas
- builds Australian capability in the Step Change areas, as described in Appendix C.

Grants under these Guidelines are additional to grants in the NCRIS 2022 Guidelines and earlier NCRIS Guidelines.

Future grant opportunities may arise through the Government's implementation of Investment Plans expected in 2024 and 2026.

We administer the program according to the *Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines* (CGRGs)³.

³ <https://www.finance.gov.au/government/commonwealth-grants/commonwealth-grants-rules-and-guidelines>

3. Grant amount and grant period

3.1 Grants available

The Australian Government has announced a total of \$4 billion over 12 years for NCRIS. From this amount, for this grant opportunity, up to \$650 million is available over four years (2023-24 to 2026-27).

- Each application will be funded based on assessment against the criteria.
- Funding may not be fully granted in this opportunity. Funding not granted under this opportunity will be granted in future NCRIS grant opportunities. As mentioned in Section 2, future grant opportunities may arise through the Government's implementation of Investment Plans expected in 2024 and 2026.

There is no set minimum or maximum grant amount but grants cannot exceed the amount of available funds.

You are required to contribute towards the grant activities and seek other contributions. While there is no required minimum level of other contributions to be achieved, it is expected other contributions will at least match the NCRIS grant for each project.

3.2 Grant period

The maximum grant period is four years (i.e., 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2027).

You must complete your grant by 30 June 2027. Following the grant period, a final annual report is required within six months.

4. Eligibility criteria

4.1 Who is eligible to apply for a grant?

This grant opportunity is a closed, non-competitive selection process. Eligible organisations are therefore those that have previously received funding through either the NCRIS 2018 Guidelines, the NCRIS 2021 Guidelines, and/or the NCRIS 2022 Guidelines to implement NRI facilities, or organisations identified through consultation who are positioned to meet needs not covered by existing projects. The 2021 Roadmap recommended government provide continuity and long-term funding to NRI. It found that Australia's current network of national research infrastructure has been extremely successful in supporting national priorities and international collaboration

Eligible organisations and the associated projects for a grant are listed in Appendix B.

4.2 Assessment of eligibility

All eligible projects and facilities will be informed of their eligibility by Education. Education will advise NCRIS projects and facilities in writing of their eligibility and process requirements for that project or facility prior to the grant opportunity opening date.

5. What the grant money can be used for

5.1 Eligible grant activities

To be eligible your grant activity must:

- be in line with the Objectives of NCRIS (see Section 2)
- provide NRI in line with the 2021 Roadmap definition, i.e.

- “NRI comprises the nationally significant assets, facilities, services and associated expertise to support leading-edge research and innovation. It is accessible to publicly and privately funded users across Australia and internationally”
- be agreed to in writing by Education. This is typically done through the Activity Plan.

5.2 Eligible expenditure

You can only spend the grant on eligible expenditure you have incurred on agreed project activities.

Eligible expenditure items are:

- operation, management and governance costs
- salaries and on-costs for staff
- infrastructure maintenance
- new or upgraded infrastructure
- utilities
- rent
- consumables
- travel, engagement and outreach activities
- indirect costs of researchers using NCRIS infrastructure, such as researcher accommodation, where it is necessary for the supervision of research experiments and no reasonable alternative exists, for example the infrastructure is located out of a metropolitan area
- project wind-up for any project identified for defunding
- scoping activities required to effectively investigate potential new projects identified in Investment Plans or as otherwise determined by the Minister for Education
- other, single cost activities that enhance the research infrastructure to be openly accessible by Australian researchers (examples might include international access or membership fees)
- other agreed expenses necessary for the proper functioning of the national research infrastructure project (examples might include software subscriptions).

We may update our definition of eligible and ineligible expenditure from time to time. The version of the Guidelines under which your grant was awarded applies to your grant activity.

Not all expenditure on your project may be eligible for grant funding. The Program Delegate makes the final decision on what is eligible expenditure and may give additional guidance on eligible expenditure if required.

5.3 What the grant money cannot be used for

You cannot use the grant for the following activities:

- approval, compliance or other activities associated with Commonwealth Property Management Framework and/or Two-Stage-Capital Works processes
- administrative activities that are not directly applicable to, and additionally incurred for, the operation of the project, unless the primary role of your entity is the management of a National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy project

- the same specific, identifiable costs for which you receive funding from another Commonwealth government source. For example, grant money should only meet residual and unmet costs associated with research infrastructure funded in whole or in part by the Australian Research Council's Linkage Infrastructure, Equipment and Facilities program.

6. The assessment criteria

Grants under these Guidelines are to extend the NRI available to researchers through NCRIS projects in areas that address national priorities, in particular the National Reconstruction Fund priority areas and other Government priorities. Grants as described in your proposal are considered against the following criteria:

1. Funding will support activities and joint projects that:
 - support the current NRI network to address national priorities, in particular the National Reconstruction Fund priority areas and other Government priorities and/or
 - build Australian capability in the Step Change areas, as described in Appendix C.

Weighting: 30 per cent
2. Funding will support the development of a cohesive suite of NRI that strives to create an ecosystem of seamless services for researchers, which may include
 - how activities proposed by an NCRIS Project or Facility, in conjunction with other activities proposed by an NCRIS Project or Projects (other than Joint applications – see Section 7.1), address national priorities, in particular the National Reconstruction Fund priority areas and other Government priorities or Step Changes

Weighting: 20 per cent
3. Funding will support NRI that facilitates and enhances industry and international engagement

Weighting: 15 per cent
4. The intended impact of the funded NRI, including
 - scale and scope of benefits to Australian researchers and their international partners, including, but not limited to, enhanced access to existing NRI, access to new NRI, and the expected impacts on the timeliness, quality and scope of research that can be conducted

Weighting: 15 per cent
5. Funding will balance the long-term nature of NRI development, together with changes in national priorities and identified gaps in the research and innovation system

Weighting: 10 per cent
6. Governance arrangements for the Project or Facility

Weighting: 5 per cent
7. Proportion of co-investment from states and territories, university, public and private sources

Weighting: 5 per cent

7. How to submit information

You should propose to Education how you will expend grant funding on activities. The proposal should address:

- the objective of the activity

- anticipated achievements
- key challenges and risks
- duration
- methodology
- key performance indicators and associated targets and dates
- the budget for the activity.

If You were selected to provide information, You are responsible for ensuring that your application is complete and accurate. Giving false or misleading information is a serious offence under the [Criminal Code 1995](#) and we will investigate any false or misleading information and may exclude your application from further consideration.

If you find an error after submitting it, you should contact us immediately at NCRIS@education.gov.au.

You should keep a copy of your application and any supporting documents.

We will acknowledge that we have received your application within three working days.

7.1 Joint (consortia) project delivery

We recognise that some organisations may want to join together as a group to deliver a project.

In these circumstances, you must appoint a 'lead organisation'. Only the lead organisation can submit the application form and enter into a grant agreement with the Commonwealth. The application must identify all other members of the proposed group. A joint consortia arrangement does not have any impact on the total grant funds to be allocated or reduce funding for other individual organisations which apply.

You must have a formal arrangement in place with all parties prior to execution of the agreement.

7.2 Timing of grant opportunity processes

You can only submit an application between the published opening and closing dates. We cannot accept late applications.

Table 1: Expected timing for this grant opportunity

| Activity | Timeframe |
|--|--|
| Assessment of applications | 6 weeks |
| Approval of outcomes of selection process | 2 weeks |
| Negotiations and award of grant agreements or variations | 4 weeks |
| Notification to unsuccessful applicants | 2 weeks |
| Earliest start date of project/activities | Date of execution of your grant agreement or variation on or after 1 July 2023 |

| | |
|------------------------------|--------------|
| End date of grant commitment | 30 June 2027 |
|------------------------------|--------------|

7.3 Questions during the submission process

If you have any questions, please contact Education by emailing NCRIS@education.gov.au.

Education will respond to emailed questions within five working days.

8. The grant selection process

8.1 Consideration of potential grants

We will assess your application against the assessment criteria (see Section 6). We consider your application on its merits, based on:

- the overall objectives to be achieved in providing the grant
- how the grant will achieve value with relevant money* (*as defined in the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*).
- the extent to which the evidence in your proposal demonstrates that it will contribute to meeting the outcomes/objectives
- how the grant will target support to researchers and research groups in line with national priorities, system-wide Enhancements and Step Changes
- how the grant will complement research infrastructure funded through the NCRIS 2022 Guidelines.

8.2 Who will assess submissions?

An assessment committee will assess each submission on its merit before recommending which grant submissions should be awarded a grant. The assessment committee will be made up of an assessment panel that will make recommendations to the Assessment Panel Chairperson:

Assessment Panel Chairperson – Assistant Secretary, Research Policy and Programs Branch

Assessment Panel Member – Director

Assessment Panel Member – Director

Assessment Panel Member – Assistant Director

Assessment Panel Member – Assistant Director

Assessment Panel Member – Policy Officer

Assessment Panel Member – Program Officer

We may ask any advisory body established to provide advice and guidance to Education, or the Minister for Education, to inform the assessment process.

We may ask external experts/advisors to inform the assessment process. Any expert/advisor, who is not a Commonwealth Official, will be required/expected to perform their duties in accordance with the CGRGs.

The assessment committee may seek additional information about you or your submission. They may do this from within the Commonwealth, even if the sources are not nominated by you as referees. The assessment committee may also consider information about you or your application that is available through the normal course of business.

The assessment committee recommends to the Program Delegate which applications to approve for a grant.

8.3 Who will approve grants?

Financial approval of grants under Section 23(3) of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act (PGPA)* will be made by the First Assistant Secretary, Research Division, Department of Education, or other relevant delegate in accordance with Education's Accountable Authority Instructions and financial delegations, taking into account Government decisions on the package of measures to implement an initial response to the 2021 NRI Roadmap and the availability of grant funds for the purposes of the grant program.

The decision is final in all matters, including:

- the approval of the grant
- the grant funding amount to be awarded
- the terms and conditions of the grant.

There is no appeal mechanism for decisions to approve or not approve a grant.

9. Notification of grant outcomes

If your submission included a proposal for grant funding, we will advise you of the outcome in writing. If you were successful, we will advise you of any specific conditions attached to the grant.

You can submit a new proposal for the same grant (or a similar grant) in any future grant opportunities under the program. You should include new or more information to address any weaknesses that may have prevented your previous submission from being successful.

9.1 Feedback on your application

If you are unsuccessful, you may ask for feedback within one month of being advised of the outcome. We will give written feedback within one month of your request.

10. Successful grant applications

10.1 The grant agreement

You must enter into a legally binding grant agreement with the Commonwealth.

Each agreement has general terms and conditions that cannot be changed. Sample grant agreements are available on GrantConnect.

We must execute a grant agreement with you before we can make any payments. We are not responsible for any of your expenditure until a grant agreement is executed. If you choose to start your grant activities before you have an executed grant agreement, you do so at your own risk.

Your grant agreement may have specific conditions determined by the assessment process or other considerations made by the Program Delegate. We will identify these in the agreement.

The Commonwealth may recover grant funds if there is a breach of the grant agreement.

Standard Grant Agreement

We will use a Departmental Grant Agreement based on the standard grant agreement.

You will have 30 days from the date of a written offer to execute this grant agreement with the Commonwealth ('execute' means both you and the Commonwealth have signed the agreement). During this time, we will work with you to finalise details.

The offer may lapse if both parties do not sign the grant agreement within this time. Under certain circumstances, we may extend this period. We base the approval of your grant on the information you provide in your application.

You may request changes to the grant agreement. However, we will review any required changes to these details to ensure they do not impact the grant as approved by the Program Delegate.

10.2 How we pay the grant

The grant agreement will state the:

- maximum grant amount to be paid
- schedule of payments
- schedule of deliverable milestones
- reporting requirements.

We will not exceed the maximum grant amount under any circumstances. If you incur extra costs, you must meet them yourself.

We will make payments according to an agreed schedule set out in the grant agreement. Payments are subject to satisfactory progress on the grant activity.

10.3 Grants Payments and GST

Payments will be 'GST Inclusive'. If you are registered for the [Goods and Services Tax \(GST\)](#), where applicable, we will add GST to your grant payment and issue you with a [Recipient Created Tax Invoice](#).

Grants are assessable income for taxation purposes, unless exempted by a taxation law. We recommend you seek independent professional advice on your taxation obligations or seek assistance from the [Australian Taxation Office](#).⁴ We do not provide advice on your particular taxation circumstances.

11. Announcement of grants

Grants will be listed on the GrantConnect website 21 calendar days after the date of effect as required by Section 5.3 of the [CGRGs](#).

12. How we monitor your grant activity

12.1 Keeping us informed

You should let us know if anything is likely to affect your grant activity or organisation.

We need to know of any key changes to your organisation or its business activities, particularly if they affect your ability to complete your grant, carry on business and pay debts due.

You must also inform us of any changes to your:

⁴ <https://www.ato.gov.au/>

- name
- addresses
- nominated contact details
- bank account details.

If you become aware of a breach of terms and conditions under the grant agreement, you must contact us immediately.

You must notify us of events relating to your grant and provide an opportunity for the Minister or their representative to attend.

12.2 Reporting

You must submit reports in line with the grant agreement. We will provide sample templates for these reports as appendices in the grant agreement. We will expect you to report on:

- progress against agreed grant activity milestones and outcomes
- contributions of participants and other parties directly related to the grant activity
- expenditure of the grant.

The amount of detail you provide in your reports should be relative to the size, complexity and grant amount.

We will monitor progress by assessing reports you submit and may conduct site visits or request records to confirm details of your reports if necessary. Occasionally we may need to re-examine claims, seek further information or request an independent audit of claims and payments.

Progress reports

Progress reports must:

- include evidence of your progress towards completion of agreed activities and outcomes
- show the total eligible expenditure incurred to date
- be in the format provided in the grant agreement
- be submitted by the report due date (you can submit reports ahead of time if you have completed relevant activities).

We will only make grant payments when we receive satisfactory progress reports.

You must discuss any reporting delays with us as soon as you become aware of them.

Ad-hoc reports

We may ask you for ad-hoc reports on your grant. This may be to provide an update on progress, or any significant delays or difficulties in completing the grant activity.

Final report

When you complete the grant activity or project, you must submit a final report.

Final reports must:

- identify if and how outcomes have been achieved
- include the agreed evidence as specified in the grant agreement
- identify the total eligible expenditure incurred
- be submitted within 90 days of completion in the format provided in the grant agreement.

12.3 Audited financial acquittal report

We may ask you to provide a declaration that the grant money was spent in accordance with the grant agreement and to report on any underspends of the grant money.

We may ask you to provide an independently audited financial acquittal report. A financial acquittal report will verify that you spent the grant in accordance with the grant agreement. The financial acquittal report template is attached to the sample grant agreement.

12.4 Grant agreement variations

We recognise that unexpected events may affect your progress. In these circumstances, you can request a variation to your grant agreement. You can request a variation by sending a written request to NCRIS@education.gov.au.

You should not assume that a variation request will be successful. We will consider your request based on provisions in the grant agreement and the likely impact on achieving outcomes.

12.5 Compliance visits

We may visit you during or at the completion of your grant activity to review your compliance with the grant agreement. We will provide you with reasonable notice of any compliance visit.

12.6 Record keeping

We may also inspect the records you are required to keep under the grant agreement.

12.7 Evaluation

We will evaluate the grant program to measure how well the outcomes and objectives have been achieved. We may use information from your application and reports for this purpose. We may also interview you, or ask you for more information to help us understand how the grant impacted you and to evaluate how effective the program was in achieving its outcomes.

12.8 Acknowledgement

The program logo should be used on all materials related to grants under the program. Whenever the logo is used, the publication must also acknowledge the Commonwealth as follows:

'NCRIS – an Australian Government initiative'.

If you make a public statement about a grant activity or project funded under the program, we require you to acknowledge the grant by using the following:

'This activity received grant funding from the Australian Government through the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy.'

13. Probity

The Australian Government will make sure that the grant opportunity process is fair, according to the published guidelines, incorporates appropriate safeguards against fraud, unlawful activities and other inappropriate conduct and is consistent with the CGRGs.

These guidelines may be changed from time-to-time by Education. When this happens, the revised guidelines will be published on GrantConnect.

13.1 Enquiries and feedback

Education's Complaint Handling Policy, found at www.education.gov.au/about-us/contact-us/complaints, applies to complaints about this grant opportunity. All complaints about a grant process must be provided in writing.

Any questions you have about grant decisions for this grant opportunity should be sent to ResearchInfrastructure@education.gov.au.

If you do not agree with the way Education has handled your complaint, you may complain to the Commonwealth Ombudsman⁵. The Ombudsman will not usually look into a complaint unless the matter has first been raised directly with Education.

The Commonwealth Ombudsman can be contacted on:

Phone (Toll free): 1300 362 072
Email: ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.au
Website: www.ombudsman.gov.au

13.2 Conflicts of interest

Any conflicts of interest could affect the performance of the grant opportunity or program. There may be a conflict of interest, or perceived conflict of interest, if Education staff, any member of a committee or advisor and/or you or any of your personnel:

- has a professional, commercial or personal relationship with a party who is able to influence the application selection process, such as an Australian Government officer or member of an external panel
- has a relationship with or interest in, an organisation, which is likely to interfere with or restrict the applicants from carrying out the proposed activities fairly and independently or
- has a relationship with, or interest in, an organisation from which they will receive personal gain because the organisation receives a grant under the grant program/ grant opportunity.

You will be asked to declare, as part of your application, any perceived or existing conflicts of interests or that, to the best of your knowledge, there is no conflict of interest.

If you later identify an actual, apparent, or perceived conflict of interest, you must inform Education in writing immediately.

Conflicts of interest for Australian Government staff will be handled as set out in the Australian [Public Service Code of Conduct \(Section 13\(7\)\)](#) of the [Public Service Act 1999](#). Committee members and other officials including the decision maker must also declare any conflicts of interest.

13.3 Privacy

We treat your personal information according to the [Privacy Act 1988](#) and the [Australian Privacy Principles](#). This includes letting you know:

- what personal information we collect
- why we collect your personal information
- who we give your personal information to.

⁵ <https://www.ombudsman.gov.au/>

Your personal information can only be disclosed to someone else for the primary purpose for which it was collected unless an exemption applies.

The Australian Government may also use and disclose information about grant applicants and grant recipients under this grant opportunity in any other Australian Government business or function. This includes disclosing grant information on GrantConnect as required for reporting purposes and giving information to the Australian Taxation Office for compliance purposes.

We may share the information you give us with other Commonwealth entities for purposes including government administration, research or service delivery, according to Australian laws.

As part of your application, you declare your ability to comply with the *Privacy Act 1988* and the Australian Privacy Principles and impose the same privacy obligations on officers, employees, agents and subcontractors that you engage to assist with the activity, in respect of personal information you collect, use, store, or disclose in connection with the activity. Accordingly, you must not do anything, which if done by Education would breach an Australian Privacy Principle as defined in the Act.

13.4 Confidential Information

Other than information available in the public domain, you agree not to disclose to any person, other than us, any confidential information relating to the grant application and/or agreement, without our prior written approval. The obligation will not be breached where you are required by law, Parliament or a stock exchange to disclose the relevant information or where the relevant information is publicly available (other than through breach of a confidentiality or non-disclosure obligation).

We may at any time, require you to arrange for you; or your employees, agents or subcontractors to give a written undertaking relating to nondisclosure of our confidential information in a form we consider acceptable.

We will keep any information in connection with the grant agreement confidential to the extent that it meets all of the three conditions below:

1. you clearly identify the information as confidential and explain why we should treat it as confidential
2. the information is commercially sensitive
3. revealing the information would cause unreasonable harm to you or someone else.

We will not be in breach of any confidentiality agreement if the information is disclosed to:

- Commonwealth employees and contractors to help us manage the program effectively
- employees and contractors of Education so we can research, assess, monitor and analyse our programs and activities
- employees and contractors of other Commonwealth agencies for any purposes, including government administration, research or service delivery
- other Commonwealth, State, Territory or local government agencies in program reports and consultations
- the Auditor-General, Ombudsman or Privacy Commissioner
- the responsible Minister or Parliamentary Secretary, and
- a House or a Committee of the Australian Parliament.

The grant agreement may also include any specific requirements about special categories of information collected, created or held under the grant agreement.

13.5 Freedom of information

All documents in the possession of the Australian Government, including those about this grant opportunity, are subject to the [Freedom of Information Act 1982](#) (FOI Act).

The purpose of the FOI Act is to give members of the public rights of access to information held by the Australian Government and its entities. Under the FOI Act, members of the public can seek access to documents held by the Australian Government. This right of access is limited only by the exceptions and exemptions necessary to protect essential public interests and private and business affairs of persons in respect of whom the information relates.

All Freedom of Information requests must be referred to the Freedom of Information Coordinator in writing.

By mail: Freedom of Information Coordinator Schools, Child Care and Corporate Legal Branch

Location Code: C50MA10 - LEGAL GPO BOX 9880 CANBERRA ACT 2601 By email:

FOI@education.gov.au

14. Glossary

| Term | Definition |
|--|---|
| accountable authority | see subsection 12(2) of the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013 |
| administering entity | when an entity that is not responsible for the policy, is responsible for the administration of part or all of the grant administration processes |
| assessment criteria | are the specified principles or standards, against which applications will be judged. These criteria are also used to assess the merits of proposals and, in the case of a competitive grant opportunity, to determine application rankings. |
| commencement date | the expected start date for the grant activity |
| completion date | the expected date that the grant activity must be completed and the grant spent by |
| co-sponsoring entity | when two or more entities are responsible for the policy and the appropriation for outcomes associated with it |
| date of effect | can be the date on which a grant agreement is signed or a specified starting date. Where there is no grant agreement, entities must publish information on individual grants as soon as practicable. |
| decision maker | the person who makes a decision to award a grant |
| eligibility criteria | refer to the mandatory criteria which must be met to qualify for a grant. Assessment criteria may apply in addition to eligibility criteria. |
| Commonwealth entity | a Department of State, or a Parliamentary Department, or a listed entity or a body corporate established by a law of the Commonwealth. See subsections 10(1) and (2) of the PGPA Act |
| Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines (CGRGs) | establish the overarching Commonwealth grants policy framework and articulate the expectations for all non-corporate Commonwealth entities in relation to grants administration. Under this overarching framework, non-corporate Commonwealth entities undertake grants administration based on the mandatory requirements and key principles of grants administration. |
| Enhancements | described in Chapter 4 of the 2021 NRI Roadmap |

| Term | Definition |
|------------------------------|---|
| grant | <p>for the purposes of the CGRGs, a 'grant' is an arrangement for the provision of financial assistance by the Commonwealth or on behalf of the Commonwealth:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. under which relevant money⁶ or other Consolidated Revenue Fund (CRF) money⁷ is to be paid to a grantee other than the Commonwealth; and b. which is intended to help address one or more of the Australian Government's policy outcomes while assisting the grantee achieve its objectives. |
| grant activity/activities | refers to the project/tasks/services that the grantee is required to undertake |
| grant agreement | sets out the relationship between the parties to the agreement, and specifies the details of the grant |
| GrantConnect | is the Australian Government's whole-of-government grants information system, which centralises the publication and reporting of Commonwealth grants in accordance with the CGRGs |
| grant opportunity | refers to the specific grant round or process where a Commonwealth grant is made available to potential grantees. Grant opportunities may be open or targeted, and will reflect the relevant grant selection process. |
| grant program | a 'program' carries its natural meaning and is intended to cover a potentially wide range of related activities aimed at achieving government policy outcomes. A grant program is a group of one or more grant opportunities under a single [entity] Portfolio Budget Statement Program. |
| grantee | the individual/organisation which has been selected to receive a grant |

⁶ Relevant money is defined in the PGPA Act. See section 8, Dictionary.

⁷ Other CRF money is defined in the PGPA Act. See section 105, Rules in relation to other CRF money.

| Term | Definition |
|---|---|
| National Reconstruction Fund priority areas | <p>the priority areas (Industry, Science and Resources Portfolio Budget Statement, October 2022-23 Budget) that the National Reconstruction Fund will drive investments in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • renewables and low emission technologies • medical science • value-add in resources • transport • value-add in agriculture, forestry and fisheries • defence capability • enabling capabilities, such as data science, artificial intelligence (AI), robotics, and quantum. |
| PBS Program | <p>described within the entity's Portfolio Budget Statement, PBS programs each link to a single outcome and provide transparency for funding decisions. These high-level PBS programs often comprise a number of lower level, more publicly recognised programs, some of which will be Grant Programs. A PBS Program may have more than one Grant Program associated with it, and each of these may have one or more grant opportunities.</p> |
| publicly funded research agency | <p>these include Australian higher education providers listed in the Higher Education Support Act 2003, and federal, state and territory government departments or agencies which undertake publicly funded research.</p> |
| selection criteria | <p>comprise eligibility criteria and assessment criteria.</p> |
| selection process | <p>the method used to select potential grantees. This process may involve comparative assessment of applications or the assessment of applications against the eligibility criteria and/or the assessment criteria.</p> |
| Step Changes | <p>identified in Chapter 6 of the 2021 NRI Roadmap and described in Appendix C.</p> |
| value with relevant money | <p>When administering a grant opportunity, an official should consider the relevant financial and non-financial costs and benefits of each proposal including, but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the quality of the project proposal and activities; • fitness for purpose of the proposal in contributing to government objectives; • that the absence of a grant is likely to prevent the grantee and government's outcomes being achieved; and • the potential grantee's relevant experience and performance history. |

Appendix A. Principles

The NRI Principles as set out in the 2021 Roadmap are:

- NRI maximises the capability of the research and innovation system to contribute to economic outcomes, national security, social wellbeing and environmental sustainability
- Research infrastructure is collaborative and planned in a way to provide a network of capabilities that serve the national interest and are aligned to government priorities
- NRI includes people, skills and knowledge, data, processes and equipment
- NRI resources are focused to achieve maximum impact in national priority areas
- NRI is managed to deliver maximum impact as efficiently as possible. Synergies with complementary and related capabilities drive an ecosystem of support for researchers
- NRI is widely accessible to researchers and industry across Australia. Barriers to access are as low as practicable
- NRI enhances participation of researchers in, and provides access to, the international research system
- NRI is respectful to Indigenous cultures and knowledges, and adopts the principles of Indigenous self-determination, leadership, impact and value, and sustainability and accountability as outlined in the AIATSIS Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research

The NRI Investment Principles as set out in the 2021 Roadmap are:

- Funding for investment in NRI is in areas of national significance that can demonstrably support Australia's research and innovation system
- Investment should balance the long-term nature of NRI development, together with changes in national priorities and identified gaps in the research and innovation system
- Investment should produce NRI that facilitates and enhances industry and international engagement
- Investment cases describe the intended impact and reflect the resources and governance needed to develop and manage world-class research infrastructure capability. These include the equipment, processes, data, skills and knowledge needed to deliver maximum value
- Investment encourages and leverages opportunities for co-investment from states and territories, university, public and private sectors
- Investment supports the development of a cohesive suite of NRI that strives to create an ecosystem of seamless services for researchers

Appendix B. Eligible organisations and projects

This table shows the name of the NCRIS project (where applicable) and associated grantee (known as the lead agent) eligible to apply for funding under these Guidelines.

| NCRIS Project Name | Lead Organisation Name (Grantee) |
|---|---|
| Australian Community Climate and Earth-System Simulator (ACCESS) National Research Infrastructure (NRI) | <i>Australian National University</i> |
| Astronomy | <i>Astronomy Australia Ltd</i> |
| Atlas of Living Australia | <i>Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation</i> |
| AuScope | <i>AuScope Ltd</i> |
| Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness | <i>Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation</i> |
| Microscopy Australia | <i>University of Sydney</i> |
| Australian National Fabrication Facility | <i>Australian National Fabrication Facility Ltd</i> |
| Phenomics Australia | <i>Australian National University</i> |
| Australian Plant Phenomics Facility | <i>University of Adelaide</i> |
| Australian Urban Research Infrastructure Network | <i>University of Melbourne</i> |
| Bioplatforms Australia | <i>Bioplatforms Australia Ltd</i> |
| Australian Research Data Commons | <i>Australian Research Data Commons Ltd</i> |
| Heavy Ion Accelerators | <i>Australian National University</i> |
| Integrated Marine Observing System | <i>University of Tasmania</i> |
| Marine National Facility | <i>Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation</i> |
| National Computational Infrastructure | <i>Australian National University</i> |
| National Deuteration Facility | <i>Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation</i> |
| National Imaging Facility | <i>University of Queensland</i> |
| National Sea Simulator | <i>Australian Institute of Marine Science</i> |
| Nuclear Science Facility (ACNS and CAS) | <i>Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation</i> |
| Pawsey Supercomputing Centre | <i>Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation</i> |
| Population Health Research Network | <i>University of Western Australia</i> |
| Southern Coastal Research Vessels | <i>South Australian Research and Development Institute</i> |

| NCRIS Project Name | Lead Organisation Name (Grantee) |
|--|---|
| Therapeutic Innovation Australia | <i>Therapeutic Innovation Australia Ltd</i> |
| Terrestrial Ecosystem Research Network | <i>University of Queensland</i> |
| Australia's Associate Membership of the European Molecular Biology Laboratory (EMBL) | <i>EMBL Australia (noting the membership fee is paid directly, not via a grantee)</i> |
| Trust and Identity | <i>Australian Access Federation</i> |

Appendix C. Description of Step Change Areas

Cutting-Edge National Digital Research Infrastructure (NDRI)

- **Vision**

Step change in the scale and complexity of digitally-driven research made possible through NDRI.

- **Ambitions**

Proposals that are aligned with the NDRI step change should support the following ambitions:

- Australian researchers possess the digital resources required to solve complex research problems by collaborating at scale and across a wide spectrum of disciplines.
- Australia has the computational and data sovereignty needed to deliver activities of national importance (e.g. supporting international climate change projections) and keep step with international developments in advanced computing, big data and emerging disruptive technologies.
- Australian research outputs are safeguarded against cybersecurity threats through measures and mechanisms that implement international best practice.

- **Desired NRI Outcomes**

Proposals that are aligned with the NDRI step change should support the following outcomes:

- NDRI is planned and developed around current and anticipated needs of its diverse user-base, including from academia, PFRAs, government and industry.
- The NDRI system is able to effectively respond to current or emerging technological shifts through strategic and shared planning.
- Projects enable consistency and best practice in the collection and curation of research data and facilitate user access to maximise its value.
- Digital resources are integrated to facilitate seamless user access across different data and compute offerings.
- Australia's NRI have appropriate cybersecurity mechanisms and capabilities to safeguard NDRI resources, outputs and users, and align with Government cybersecurity strategies and guidelines.
- NRI facilities have the necessary services and expertise (e.g. data analysis, software engineering) to support NDRI users.
- NRI projects provide training to researchers to optimise use of NDRI.

- **Identified Needs**

To support this step change, the following investment needs have been identified. You may propose other needs with appropriate justification against the above step change ambitions and desired NRI outcomes:

- **Uplift of high-performance computing capability**
 - Support for strategic computational uplift that is necessary to meet future national demand and needs of research communities, the rise of computationally-driven technologies, and nationally important HPC-activities.
 - Evolution of non-computational NDRI capabilities to support ongoing compatibility with HPC.
- **Data storage and management**
 - Diversify data storage capabilities so that NDRI are able to respond to differing project needs (high/low data volumes).
 - Resources that improve whole-of-lifecycle data management and enable long-term data archiving capabilities to ensure ongoing accessibility for important datasets.
- **Analytics and Software**
 - Expanded interfaces where researchers can access a range of datasets along with the necessary analysis and synthesis tools for its application to complex research problems.

- Support for the curation and roll-over of software that is necessary for NDRI-supported work.
- New resources that support the application of AI/ML to research and real-world applications.
- **Other advanced computing**
 - Building capability in the other forms of advanced computing that leverage Australian research strengths (quantum) or that cater to different types of computational needs (high-throughput computing) that add value and breadth to Australia's NDRI system.
- **Trust and Identity**
 - A coordinated NCRIS system-wide approach that enables purpose-built and up-to-date trust and identity solutions for the NRI sector.

Synthetic Biology Research Infrastructure to Deliver New Environmentally Sustainable Bio-industries

• Vision

Step change in Australia's ability to innovate and deliver disruptive biological products, technologies and new environmentally sustainable bioindustries.

• Ambitions

Proposals that are aligned with the synthetic biology step change should support the following ambitions:

- Australian bio-innovation leads to the creation of jobs and wealth through new sustainable industries that utilise renewable biological feedstocks.
- Australian biotechnologies create real-world solutions that help address important societal challenges, including protection of the environment and biodiversity, climate change mitigation and adaptation, improved public health through personalised medicine, increased agricultural productivity, and sustainable advanced manufacturing.
- Australian synthetic biology researchers become partners of choice in major international collaborations and world-leaders in areas that leverage Australia's existing and emerging strengths. These include a strong agricultural industry, a track-record of biomedical innovations, a responsible regulatory environment, and expertise in commercial fermentations at scale.

• Desired NRI Outcomes

Proposals that are aligned with the synthetic biology step change should support the following outcomes:

- Australia's synthetic biology community has access to an NRI network that is highly connected (both nationally and internationally), integrated, accessible and virtually centralised (National Biofoundry). This network:
 - has enough capacity to support a rapidly growing research community;
 - has the capability to support research with an array of biological organisms that are aligned to Australia priorities and strengths;
 - accelerates synthetic biology discoveries and supports their translation into real-world interventions through process testing and scale-up;
 - is supported by a critical mass of workforce with the skills necessary to operate highly complex automated workflows, deliver process scale-up and research translation;
 - is linked with expertise and services (legal, ethical, governance, social license) to support real impact through the translation of research discoveries into transformative real-world interventions; and
 - provides leadership and a point-of-reference for a growing synthetic biology community of practice, bringing together infrastructure, experts, commerce and government.

• Identified Needs

To support this step change, the following investment needs have been identified. You may propose other needs with appropriate justification against the above step change ambitions and desired NRI outcomes:

- **National BioFoundry**
 - Connected facilities that are virtually centralised into a national-level biofoundry to support automated Design-Build-Test-Learn workflows.
 - Expansion of capabilities in plant synthetic biology to overcome existing bottlenecks in producing and testing new organisms.
- **Pilot process and scale-up**
 - New and expanded commercially oriented resources to validate synthetic biology applications beyond laboratory-scale and attract international investment. These may include bioreactors, quality frameworks, and industry incubators that strengthen the capabilities of Australia's synthetic biology community of practice.

- **Transdisciplinary skills and expertise**
 - Availability of the transdisciplinary expertise that is required for synthetic biology research and commercialisation, including AI/ML, automation, robotics, bioprocess engineering.
 - Linking of research at NRI with services and expertise to support research translation and freedom-to-operate, including business development, market analysis, legal (IP, regulatory) and social science.
- **Supporting capabilities**
 - Adequate capacity and capability for resources that are necessary to support synthetic biology NRI and biological engineering more broadly, including omics, bioinformatics, microscopy, imaging.

Research Translation Infrastructure to Drive Increased Industry Investment and Sovereign Research Capability

• Vision

Step change in Australia's ability to transform early Australian research discoveries into real-world impact, bolstering sovereign research capability and supply chain resilience.

• Ambition:

Proposals that are aligned with the research translation step change should support the following ambitions:

- Australian sovereign research capability is bolstered to alleviate reliance on international resources and/or establish Australia as the provider of choice for products, services and expertise.
- Research translation benefits a wide range of end-users, including government, industry and community groups, through diverse outputs including new or improved commercial products, services and processes, and well-informed decision-making and policy.
- Effective commercialisation of research in Australia maximises social and economic returns and leads to the creation of new businesses, revenue and jobs. For this:
 - novel technologies are effectively developed to support new and emerging Australian industries;
 - Australia retains and grows businesses developed out of Australian research innovations; and
 - Australian researchers are partners of choice for industry.

• Desired NRI Outcomes

Proposals that are aligned with the research translation step change should support the following outcomes:

- NRI support effective industry and government investment and decision-making through:
 - the validation and testing of the commercial potential of research discoveries;
 - the generation and analysis of data and creation of models that provide information that is critical for different forms of decision-making (investment, policy, risk assessment); and
 - the provision of expertise necessary to support applied research and its translation into real-world outcomes.
- NRI catalyses innovation by operating as an interface between its diverse user-groups, and provides the tools and environment for researchers and end-users to work together.
- NRI removes bottlenecks in the translation of research outputs that support national priorities, in particular the National Reconstruction Fund priority areas.
- NRI bolster Australian research sovereignty by providing critical resources (equipment, services, expertise) that support national priorities.
- NRI are connected to services that provide early guidance on market analysis, business development, intellectual property, and freedom-to-operate, needed to inform key decision points in research and development.
- NRI brings together the critical mass of experts necessary to support a wide range of research translation activities.

• Identified Needs

To support this step change, the following investment needs have been identified. You may propose other needs with appropriate justification against the above step change ambitions and desired NRI outcomes:

- **Research testing and validation**
 - A network of equipment for early testing and validation, prototyping and demonstration, pilot-scale manufacturing and scale-up, and manufacturing of minimum viable products.
 - New modular manufacturing capabilities that are configurable to different process workflows and regulatory requirements.
- **Information services**

- Infrastructure that support the translation of research data into information-based products, services, and predictive capabilities to inform decision-making in industry and government.

- **Technology transfer**

- Avenues that link translation NRI with technology transfer expertise and services required to support researchers.

- **Support for national priorities:**

Particular consideration will be given to infrastructure that support Australia in addressing climate change and achieving net zero emissions, including but not limited to:

- **Critical minerals and resources** - NRI that lifts Australia's predictive geoscience capability for the discovery of new critical mineral reserves, to insulate Australia from global supply chain disruptions and reinforce Australia's position as a trusted supplier of critical resources.
- **Clean energy and low emissions technologies** - NRI that supports the development and advanced manufacturing of low emissions technologies such as electric battery production, green hydrogen or other renewable energy applications that could see growth in the next decade.

World-Leading Environmental and Climate Infrastructure to Help Protect Australia's Unique Environment and Underpin its Response to Climate Change

• Vision

Step change in Australia's ability to predict future continental scale climate and environmental changes to inform government and industry decision-making and solve regional, national and global climate and environmental challenges.

• Ambition

Proposals that are aligned with the environment and climate step change should support the following ambitions:

- Australian researchers are world-leaders in environmental and climate science that:
 - monitor and understand changes to our environment and climate and make accurate projections of future risks; and
 - contribute to international activities that enhance understanding and global management.
- Environmental, societal, and economic benefits are gained from supporting world-leading research into environment and climate science:
 - support for communities and industrial sectors to manage risk, mitigate emissions and adapt to climate change;
 - protection of human health and prosperity through management of biosecurity threats, pollutant sources and habitat loss;
 - prevention of biodiversity loss and species extinction;
 - support for sustainable discovery, extraction and use of Australia's natural resources.
- Sophisticated environmental predictions (scenario analysis) unlock lucrative new industries, including information-based and spatially sensitive industries, and grow existing industries, such as Australia's agriculture and critical mining industry.
- Cross-sector modelling communities bring together climate, environment, and other domains (e.g., public health, built environment) to deliver unprecedented insights into current and future states.

• Desired NRI outcomes

Proposals that are aligned with the environment and climate step change should support the following outcomes:

- NRI underpins Australian excellence in climate and environmental science by providing national-scale environmental and climate observing, data and modelling capabilities that are **highly connected (both nationally and internationally), integrated and accessible**.
- **Strategic planning takes into account** Australia's needs, advantages and unique environment and geographic location.
- Analytics and model-ready data are delivered to the research sector to accelerate the pace, scale and accuracy of climate and environmental research activities and support the translation of discoveries into real-world interventions;
- NRI is underpinned by a workforce with the diverse technical and digital skillset to operate and develop observation and modelling infrastructure;
- NRI supports and partners with industry to build tools and solutions for climate resilient and sustainable Australia industries.
- NRI appropriately engages with Traditional Owners - from monitoring and data custody to modelling and translation of research - to support the aspirations of Traditional Owners to manage their Country.

• Identified Needs

To support this step change, the following investment needs have been identified. You may propose other needs with appropriate justification against the above step change ambitions and desired NRI outcomes:

- **Concerted support for climate adaptation efforts, including:**
 - Predictive capability and the creation of information products that inform and guide Australia's climate adaptation efforts.

- The development of renewable energy and environmentally sustainable industries through the creation of new technologies and access to the critical resources required to support these.
- **Enhanced continental-scale monitoring**
 - Increasing Australia's capacity in areas of need to ensure to provide fit-for-purpose data. Areas include:
 - atmospheric monitoring (GHG, particulates)
 - freshwater, groundwater, coastal and estuarial monitoring
 - biodiversity and biosecurity monitoring
 - subsurface (incl. sampling).
- **Integrated national datasets**
 - Standardised, integrated and comprehensive data sets which are accessible and housed in repositories with requisite tools and services for data transformation.
- **Shared modelling infrastructure**
 - Shared platforms, modelling tools, expertise and advanced computational capability to support interoperable models will enhance Australia's predictive capabilities. This will include the use of next-generation computing to upscale current capability.
 - A formal collaboration framework which brings diverse modelling communities together and makes clear their respective complementary responsibilities and contributions to unleash new capability.