

Australian Government



National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy

Program Guidelines



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1 Introduction

The Australian Government provides grants to support the continued operations of eligible projects funded under the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy (NCRIS). In December 2015, under the National Innovation and Science Agenda, the Government announced ongoing funding from 1 July 2017, to support the operation of NCRIS subject to the 2016 National Research Infrastructure Roadmap (2016 Roadmap).

NCRIS funding is allocated as the result of the development of a roadmap investment plan following the completion of a national research infrastructure roadmap. As a result grants are not allocated through a competitive funding round.

The 2016 Roadmap, developed by an Expert Working Group led by Australia's Chief Scientist, sets out advice to Government on Australia's long term research infrastructure needs and proposed future areas of investment to maintain its research excellence and increase innovation across the economy to the benefit of the nation. Under the terms of reference for the 2016 Roadmap, the Government sought guidance on priorities and possible allocation of operating funding under NCRIS from 1 July 2017.

Based on the advice of the Expert Working Group, NCRIS operational grants may be allocated for a maximum two year period from 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2019 to projects and facilities that have been determined as an ongoing priority or that require realignment under the 2016 Roadmap. The total available for grants, subject to changes in indexation, is:

- \$152.8 million in 2017-18
- \$156.2 million in 2018-19.

These Guidelines set out the processes to determine funding for eligible projects and facilities from 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2019. The long term allocation of funding to projects and facilities beyond 30 June 2019 will be determined by the Government Response to the 2016 Roadmap.

Projects and facilities determined as <u>an ongoing priority</u> under NCRIS 2017 will be:

- provided with two years of funding to 30 June 2019 subject to the following:
 - \circ $\,$ funding for 2017-18 will be based on 2016-17 funding indexed by 2.5 per cent $\,$
 - funding for 2018-19 will be 2017-18 funding indexed by 2.5 per cent
 - funding will be conditional on the provision of a business plan
 - the business plan <u>may</u> include the requirement for a transition pathway to redesign existing activities or the addition or termination of existing activity. This will be established on a case by case basis in consultation with the Department of Education and Training (the Department).

Projects and facilities determined as requiring realignment under NCRIS 2017 may be:

- provided with one or two years of funding to 30 June 2019 subject to the following:
 - \circ $\,$ funding for 2017-18 will be based on 2016-17 funding indexed by 2.5 per cent
 - funding for 2018-19 will be 2017-18 funding indexed by 2.5 per cent
 - $\circ \quad$ funding will be conditional on the provision of a business plan

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 the business plan <u>will</u> include the a transition pathway to realign existing activities or the addition or termination of existing activity. This will be established on a case by case basis in consultation with the Department.

Projects and facilities determined as no longer a priority will be:

- \circ provided with no additional funding if determined that the project has been completed, or
- provided with limited funding over a period no longer than twelve months to transition to new arrangements or termination to be negotiated with the Department.

2 Key Dates

TIMEFRAME	ΑCTIVITY		
ТВС	2017 Guidelines issued by Minister and eligible projects informed of		
	outcomes		
20 business days after	Grant agreement variations provided to eligible projects and		
guidelines released	negotiations with the Department commence		
On or by 30 June 2017	Transition Plans provided to the Department		
On or by 30 June 2017	100 per cent of project grant agreement variations executed		
On or by 30 June 2017	2017-18 Annual Business Plans submitted to Department by		
	continuing projects		
On or by 31 July 2017	Transition Plans considered, amended as appropriate, and approved		
	by the Department		

3 Definitions

The following definitions are to be used in conjunction with the terms that appear in the Program Guidelines. Terms may be capitalised or non-capitalised.

TERM	DEFINITION		
Capability	The range of research infrastructure activities encompassed by this		
	term in a national research infrastructure roadmap		
Department	The Australian Government Department of Education and Training		
Expert Working Group	The high level group appointed by the Government to develop the		
	2016 Roadmap		
Grant Agreement	An agreement made between the Commonwealth, as represented by		
	the Department, and a Lead Agent, to undertake a set of activities		
	over a prescribed period for a prescribed grant.		
Lead Agent	The non-Department party to a Funding Agreement.		
NCRIS	National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy		
NCRIS 2013	This term refers to the \$180 million of NCRIS grants provided for		
	projects in 2013-14 (\$80 million) and 2014-15 (\$100 million)		
NCRIS 2015	This term refers to the \$150 million of NCRIS grants for projects to be		
	provided for 2015-16		
NCRIS 2016	This term refers to the \$150 million of NCRIS grants for projects to be		
	provided for 2016-17		

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NCRIS 2017	This term refers to the NCRIS grants to be provided from 2017-18 to 2018-19		
Program	Synonym for NCRIS 2017		
Program Guidelines	The NCRIS 2017 Program Guidelines (this document)		
Research infrastructure	The definition of research infrastructure provided in the most recent		
	Roadmap		
Transition Plan	 A plan for a project or facility that is no longer a priority under NCRIS that includes: how the project will transition to not having further NCRIS funding issues to be resolved between the Lead Agent and the Commonwealth expenses, including actually incurred decommissioning costs if any confirmation no liabilities remain for the Commonwealth. 		

4 NCRIS 2017 funding

4.1 Intent of NCRIS 2017

The intent of NCRIS 2017 is to ensure the projects and facilities which have been identified as a priority in the 2016 Roadmap are able to continue their operations until the Government Response to the 2016 Roadmap is announced. The grant is intended to ensure selected projects and facilities remain operational or commence a process to achieve realignment or transition, on a case by case basis.

Projects or facilities not identified as a priority in the 2016 Roadmap will commence a transition process under a Transition Plan.

4.2 Scope of NCRIS 2017

The scope of NCRIS 2017 includes:

- the development of Business Plans and Transition Plans to underpin the seamless transition of NCRIS projects in line with the Government's response to the 2016 Roadmap
- the operation and maintenance of national collaborative research infrastructure for the period up to 30 June 2019 for eligible projects and facilities
- membership fee obligations for government-to-government agreements, and other arrangements, identified as priorities in the 2016 Roadmap
- review, planning and development activities to meet project, facility, program and system needs
- promotion of the NCRIS program.

4.3 Objectives of NCRIS 2017

The objective of NCRIS 2017 is to implement the 2016 Roadmap, and by doing so, to support national research infrastructure to underpin high quality, priority research that will drive greater innovation in the Australian research sector and the economy more broadly by enabling Australian researchers to address key national and global challenges and support collaboration between researchers and other end users, such as industry both nationally and internationally.

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4.4 Use of NCRIS 2017 grants

The use of NCRIS 2017 grants is limited to the following:

- operational activities for eligible research infrastructure, including the provision of technical personnel to operate the infrastructure
- maintenance of eligible research infrastructure, which may include routine replacement of equipment and plant at the end of its useful life
- management, governance and administration activities required to ensure NCRIS 2017 projects are undertaken in an efficient, effective and accessible manner
- increased engagement between researchers, industry and other end users of research both domestically and internationally
- collection and/or analysis of information and data to measure the efficiency, effectiveness and outreach of projects or the program
- review, planning and development activities at the project, program and system level, including the provision of expert advice and operation of advisory structures
- activities by the Department to promote the NCRIS program
- preparatory activities required to undertake future expansion of capability, capital extension or major replacement activities, including pilot projects and design activities
- project wind-up for any project identified as no longer a priority.

NCRIS 2017 grants <u>may not</u> be used for Lead Agent administrative activities that are not directly applicable to the operation of the project, unless the Lead Agent's primary role is the management of an NCRIS project. Specifically, this includes costs such as information technology, human resources, accounting, legal overhead, depreciation or other routine expenses for universities or publicly funded research agencies.

4.5 Scope of projects

Subject to these Guidelines, the Department may, at its discretion, decide the scope of activities to be undertaken by a project. This may include any funding not allocated to projects in accordance with Section 6. This decision will be made by the program delegate.

4.6 Impact on NCRIS 2013, NCRIS 2015 and NCRIS 2016

Recognising that NCRIS 2013, NCRIS 2015, NCRIS 2016 and NCRIS 2017 all provide grants to continue the operations of NCRIS projects and facilities, Section 4.4 'Use of NCRIS 2017 grants' will also apply to any the unexpended portion of any grant from those programs.

5 Eligibility

5.1 Eligibility criteria

To be eligible to receive a grant under Section 6 of these guidelines, a project must satisfy one of the following criteria:

- a grant has been received under NCRIS 2013 and;
 - an NCRIS 2013 grant agreement is in place with the Department at the date of approval of these guidelines, and

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- the project or facility has been determined as a priority ongoing funding within one of the priority areas identified in the 2016 Roadmap, or
- the project will fund an international membership fee, including Australia's associate membership to the European Molecular Biology Laboratory (EMBL) (see 5.1.1).

5.1.1 European Molecular Biology Laboratory Associate Membership

On 6 November 2013 the Australian Government signed a government-to-government agreement to extend Australia's Associate Membership to the European Molecular Biology Laboratory (EMBL). A grant for associate membership fees may be provided from NCRIS 2017. This grant will take the place of any funding the EMBL Australia project may be allocated in Section 6.

5.2 Assessment of eligibility

All eligible projects and facilities will be informed of their eligibility by the Department. Assessment of eligibility will be undertaken by the Department immediately following the approval of these Guidelines. The Department will advise NCRIS projects and facilities in writing of the Minister's decision, the grant amount and process requirements for that project or facility.

Projects should not submit any information in relation to eligibility for NCRIS 2017 grants.

6 Grant allocation process

6.1 Use of grant allocation model

Grants under NCRIS 2017 will be determined using a grant allocation formula. The process to finalise grant amounts includes:

- 1. Nominal allocation of a grant to meet Australia's EMBL Associate Membership Fee.
- 2. Calculation of indicative grant amounts using a formula (see Section 6.2). Projects and facilities advised. Grant agreements varied.
- 3. Consultation by Lead Agents with relevant stakeholders to develop proposed 2017-18 Annual Business Plan by Lead Agents. A template for the business plan is provided at Attachment B.
- 4. Agreement between the Department and Lead Agent on the 2017-18 business plan.
- 5. Grant amount to each project or facility confirmed or varied by Department.
- 6. Project implementation and management.

6.2 Indicative grant allocation model

The intent of the NCRIS 2017 grant allocation model is to provide projects and facilities with the grant necessary to continue the operation of research infrastructure from 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2019, or 30 June 2018 if the project requires a grant to transition to new arrangements. The allocation of a grant under this section is based on two core principles:

- 1. The grant allocated to projects and facilities in 2016-17 was appropriate, and should be maintained in real terms.
- 2. The maintenance of a contingency provision to allow for any necessary, urgent or high priority allocations.

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The formula to determine the indicative grant allocation for priority projects and facilities and projects and facilities to be realigned is:

- In 2017-18, Project NCRIS grant 2016-17 x indexation of 2.5 per cent
- In 2018-19, Project NCRIS grant 2017-18 x indexation of 2.5 per cent.

The formula to determine the indicative grant for non-priority projects to be transitioned from NCRIS funding is:

• In 2017-18, Project NCRIS grant 2016-17 x indexation of 2.5 per cent.

6.3 Determining grant under the allocation model

Once an indicative grant allocation has been calculated, the Lead Agent for each eligible project or facility will be:

- informed by the Department of the indicative grant allocation
- informed by the Department of matters to be addressed arising from evaluations and other relevant activities
- required to consult with partners and its user community as to how to best use the grant
- required to develop and propose to the Department a 2017-18 Annual Business Plan that sets out how the grant would be used in line with these Program Guidelines.

6.4 Provision of grant

Grants will be provided to Lead Agents against agreed milestones set out in a grant agreement between the Department and the Lead Agent. Milestones include provision of:

- a business plan (see 8.7.2 Attachment B: Template for 2017-18 Annual Business Plan)
- project reports
- audited financial statements for the project
- data required for the annual NCRIS Program Level Report (see 8.7.3 Attachment C: Template for NCRIS Program Level Report
- a final report against the business plan.

6.5 Publishing the outcomes of the grant allocation model

In line with the Commonwealth Grants Guidelines, the Department will publish a complete list of final grant amounts under NCRIS 2017 on its website at <u>www.education.gov.au</u>.

6.6 Minister

NCRIS is administered by the Minister for Education and Training. The Minister is responsible for:

- determining the objectives of NCRIS
- approving the eligibility criteria for NCRIS
- approving the grant allocation mechanism for NCRIS
- issuing program guidelines.

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6.7 Department

The Department will:

- provide advice to the Minister
- deal fairly with Lead Agents and their nominated representatives
- conduct the development, implementation and administration of NCRIS 2017, including application of the eligibility criteria and determining grant allocations
- undertake project or program-level evaluations
- promote the NCRIS program
- approve grant amounts and payments
- negotiate, monitor and manage grant agreements for funded projects
- support the development of Transition Plans
- support the implementation of the Government Response to the 2016 Roadmap.

6.8 Lead Agents

Lead Agents are the organisations that the Department has executed a grant agreement with for a specific project. Lead Agents and their nominated representatives will:

- deal fairly with the Department and its stakeholders
- be responsible for the delivery of the project
- consult with relevant stakeholders, particularly governance and management partners and project participants and subcontractors
- deal fairly with governance and management partners and project participants and subcontractors.

7 Grant Arrangements

7.1 Conditions of Grant

The grant is provided in accordance with and subject to the requirements outlined in the *Public Governance*, *Performance and Accountability Act 2013 (PGPA Act)* and its associated regulations.

In addition to the project outcomes the following are some key conditions that may be included in the agreements:

- Grants must be spent within agreed timeframes set out in the grant or project agreements.
- Research infrastructure funded through this program must be operated in a national, collaborative manner consistent with the NCRIS Principles at Attachment A, or as subsequently amended resulting from the Government Response to the 2016 Roadmap.
- Grant recipients must have an access and pricing policy for the research infrastructure funded under this program.
- Grants can only be expended on operational and maintenance costs as detailed in section 4.4 of the program guidelines.
- All Commonwealth monies must be placed in a high interest bearing account where feasible and interest earned must be both expended on the project and reported to the Department.
- The distribution of financial benefits arising from the projects will be clearly documented.

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- Grant recipients will be required to participate in project level evaluations and report at regular intervals.
- The grant must be spent in accordance with the conditions of the Grant Agreement.
- Any unexpended grant amounts including interest accrued on grant monies at the end of the project are to be returned to the Commonwealth.

The list above is indicative only and is not intended to be exhaustive. In finalising the terms of the grant agreement, the grant agreement takes precedence if it is inconsistent with these Guidelines.

7.2 Performance Reporting

7.2.1 Program level reporting

Grant recipients will be required to report against performance indicators for NCRIS stipulated by the Department. These indicators must include, but are not limited to:

- effectiveness of financial, administrative and governance arrangements
- infrastructure use and other output measures
- impacts of all types, including outreach, industry and international engagement and where appropriate commercial outcomes.

7.2.2 Project level reporting

Monitoring and reporting requirements will be specified in the Grant Agreement.

Grant recipients will be required to provide reports on the progress and conduct of the project as specified in the Grant Agreement. Grant recipients are required to take a risk-management based approach to project management and at other times advise the program delegate if they are experiencing significant issues.

Reports will, among other things, detail project outcomes, short and long-term benefits/gains (quantitative and qualitative) and overall financial performance. This will support any evaluation of the overall benefits delivered by the project and in turn the program. The Department may select institutions or projects and facilities for site visits, financial and/or program audits.

7.3 Variations to Grant Agreements

Requests to vary the Grant Agreement (for example, extensions to a project's timeframe or changes in scope) must be made to the program delegate in writing specified in the relevant agreement. Approval of variations to a Grant Agreement is at the discretion of the program delegate. All variations to Grant Agreements would be by written agreement of the parties.

7.4 Goods and Services Tax (GST)

The total grant payable to the grant recipient by the Commonwealth does not generally include an amount to cover GST. Applicants are advised to consider the likely implications of the *A New Tax System (Goods and Services Tax) Act 1999* (GST Act) on the grant provided by the Commonwealth.

Applicants are encouraged to seek their own advice on the treatment of funding grant under the Grant Agreement.

Where GST is payable, the Commonwealth will increase the funds payable to the grant recipient by the amount of GST that is payable for the purposes of the GST Act. For example, if payment due at a particular

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milestone is \$1.0 million and GST is payable on this amount, then the Commonwealth will increase the payment amount provided to the grant recipient to \$1.1 million.

8 Additional Information

8.1 Freedom of Information

All documents in the possession of the Department with regard to NCRIS are subject to the *Freedom of Information* Act 1982 ("FOI Act"). Additional information can be found at: <u>https://education.gov.au/freedom-information-0</u>

8.2 The Privacy Act 1988

The Department is bound in administering NCRIS 2017 by the provisions of the *Privacy Act 1988*. Schedule 1 of the Privacy Act contains the Australian Privacy Principles (APPs) which prescribe the rules for handling personal information. Additional information can be found at <u>https://www.education.gov.au/condensed-privacy-policy</u>

8.3 Conflict of Interest

A conflict of interest arises where a person makes a decision or exercises a power in a way that may be, or may be perceived to be, influenced by either material personal interest (financial or non-financial) or material personal associations.

Departmental employees are bound by the Department's Conflict of Interest and Insider Trading policy available at <u>www.education.gov.au</u>.

Notified conflicts of interest will be recorded by the Department. For grant recipients with a noted conflict of interest, the conflict of interest will be managed through the negotiation of the Grant Agreement.

8.4 Review of decisions and external review

In the first instance, if an applicant is dissatisfied with the way their grant allocation was dealt with, they should set out their concerns in writing to:

Branch Manager Research and Higher Education Infrastructure Research and Economic Group Department of Education and Training GPO Box 9880 CANBERRA ACT 2601

If, subsequent to consideration by the nominated delegate, an applicant is dissatisfied with the way their application was dealt with by the Department, they can approach the Commonwealth Ombudsman's office for external review of the administrative actions of the Department.

Applicants may be able to seek judicial review of decisions under the *Administrative Decisions (Judicial Review)* Act 1977 or the common law, and should seek their own advice in relation to this.

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8.5 Web-based reporting of grants

Within 14 days of execution of a Grant Agreement with the Commonwealth, the Department will report details regarding the award of each grant on its website, as per the requirements of *Finance Circular* 2013/02: Grants - Reporting Requirements.

8.6 Further Information

Information on NCRIS and other research infrastructure grant programs is available on the Department's website at <u>http://education.gov.au/national-collaborative-research-infrastructure</u>

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8.7 Attachments

8.7.1 ATTACHMENT A: NATIONAL COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY PRINCIPLES

The key principles underpinning NCRIS are that:

- Australia's investment in research infrastructure should be planned and developed with the aim of maximising the contributions of the R&D system to foster innovation, economic development, national security, social wellbeing and environmental sustainability
- infrastructure resources should be focussed in areas where Australia is, or has the potential to be, worldclass (in both discovery and application driven research) and provide international leadership
- major infrastructure should be developed on a collaborative, national, nonexclusive basis. Infrastructure funded through NCRIS should serve the research and innovation system broadly, not just the host/funded institutions. Funding and eligibility rules should encourage collaboration and coinvestment. It should not be the function of NCRIS to support institutional level (or even small-scale collaborative) infrastructure
- access is a critical issue in the drive to optimise Australia's research infrastructure. In terms of NCRIS funding there should be as few barriers as possible to accessing major infrastructure for those undertaking meritorious research
- due regard be given to the whole-of-life costs of major infrastructure, with funding available for operational costs where appropriate
- the Strategy should seek to enable the fuller participation of Australian researchers in the international research system
- The Strategy should enable Government initiatives which seek to maximise opportunities for industry and international engagement and commercialisation of research.

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8.7.2 ATTACHMENT B: TEMPLATE FOR AN NCRIS ANNUAL BUSINESS PLAN

The purpose of the Annual Business Plan is to provide a succinct summary of the activities the project or facility proposes to undertake for the period 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018, and for any following year where a project or facility is to receive an NCRIS grant. It is expected that the business plan will be no more than ten pages (without attachments) or three pages (with attachments).

Each annual business plan must include:

- (i) An outline of governance, management arrangements and key personnel.
- (ii) Descriptions of each of the project's major components.
- (iii) Proposed changes to the intent or strategic direction of the project, including major changes to key personnel or significant partnership arrangements.
- (iv) Descriptions of linkages to other NCRIS projects and actual or planned mechanisms to increase coordinated delivery of services to researchers.
- (v) A plan for industry and/ or other end user engagement including international engagement and public outreach.
- (vi) A minimum of one target performance measure and associated achievement level for each project component.
- (vii) Expected expenses for each major component:
 - operation, management and governance costs identified separately
 - salaries and on-costs for management, technical staff and other staff identified separately
 - infrastructure maintenance
 - utilities
 - rent
 - consumables
 - international travel and engagement to promote international researcher usage of the project or facility, and/or expand access to complementary international research infrastructure
 - industry and other end-user engagement
 - outreach activities
 - other.
- (viii) Expected co-investment including cash and in-kind identified separately.
- (ix) An overall accounting for the total grant provided under NCRIS showing the amounts to be used for major components and the amounts allocated to smaller projects.
- (x) A one page Capital Upgrade Path, for the coming five financial years, which outlines strategic capital upgrade/renewal requirements, their timing by financial year and estimated total quantum of funding required.
- (xi) An outline of the amount of the grant to be applied to Lead Agent expenses that addresses the limitations set out in 4.4 'use of NCRIS Funds'.

If any confidential information is provided, it is to be clearly identified as such and presented in a separate attachment.

DECLARATION

I confirm that the information in this report is true and correct to the best of my knowledge following due investigation.

	/	/2017
Signed		

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Name

Position

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8.7.3 ATTACHMENT C: TEMPLATE FOR NCRIS PROGRAM LEVEL REPORTS

The purpose of this template is to enable the aggregation of data from individual NCRIS projects and facilities to demonstrate the performance of the NCRIS program.

Please provide the following information, where relevant:

Effectiveness of financial, administrative and governance arrangements

- Co-investment data both cash and in-kind, including amount and source
- Philanthropic donations
- Number and nature of any qualified audit findings
- List of all collaborative delivery arrangements
- Number and nature of external consultative mechanisms
- Project employment breakdown by employment category and geographical location
- Changes to key personnel
- Number of governance body meetings

Infrastructure use and other output measures

- User numbers
- Breakdown of user numbers by host and other institutions
- User institution summary
- Utilisation rates
- Unmet demand measures and levels

Impacts of all types, including outreach, industry and international engagement, and, where appropriate, commercial outcomes

- Number and types of publications directly quoting the project
- List of outreach activities by key audience
- List of all industry collaborations and engagement activities and outcomes
- List of all international collaborations and engagement activities and outcomes
- List of all government agency collaborations and engagement activities and outcomes
- Number and types of commercial activities and outcomes
- List of contributions to the achievement of Australian Government policy objectives

DECLARATION

I confirm that the information in this report is true and correct to the best of my knowledge following due investigation.

	/	/2017
Signed		

Position

Name

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