FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
Discovery Projects Expression of Interest
Applications for funding commencing in 2026

Version 1.0   **Release Date: 31 October 2024**

- All participants should read the *Discovery Program Grant Guidelines (2024 edition): Discovery Projects* (Grant Guidelines) available on [GrantConnect](#) and specific *Instructions to Applicants* documents available on Grant Connect as they contain important information for Research Office staff and individual participants preparing applications.

- The Australian Research Council (ARC) does not respond to queries from individual participants. Individual participants should direct all queries regarding ARC grant opportunities to their Administering Organisation's Research Office (or equivalent). If further information regarding the National Competitive Grants Program (NCGP) is required, the Research Office should contact the NCGP at [arc-ncgp@arc.gov.au.](mailto:arc-ncgp@arc.gov.au)

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

This Frequently Asked Questions document will be updated as required.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Timing of Grant Opportunities

1.1 What is the 2-stage process relating to Discovery Projects and when was this implemented?

The Discovery Projects scheme moved to a two-stage process for funding commencing in 2025. Applicants, including those for DP26, will be required to submit an EOI, which will be assessed by members of the College of Experts. Shortlisted applicants will then be invited to submit a full application.

1.2 When will the EOI applications for Discovery Projects for funding commencing in 2026 open to applicants?

EOI applications will open for submission in RMS on 31 October 2024 and close on 13 December 2024.

Dates for all upcoming ARC Grant Opportunities are published in the NCGP scheme timelines, in the ARC Grants Calendar.

1.3 When will the Funding Outcomes be announced?

The ARC publishes anticipated Funding Announcement dates. Please refer to the Scheme Calendar PDF on the ARC Grants Calendar.

1.4 What changes to the DP EOI process have been implemented between this and the last round?

The DP EOI process will remain the same as last round. The Instructions to Applicants outlines the changes to questions in Part B, Participant Details that are being implemented across the Discovery Program.

2. Application information

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

Participants should ensure that the text is readable both online and in print as detailed in the Instructions to Applicants. It is recommended that to ensure readability 12pt font is used and it is recommended that for the readability of text within figures and tables 10pt font is used.

2.2 Can I use generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools in writing my application?

Please see the advice to participants in *ARC's Policy on Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence* in the ARC's grants programs available on the ARC website.

3. Application and Assessment

3.1 If my EOI is shortlisted, will I be able to update the participants or other information provided in the DP26 EOI when submitting the full DP26 application form?

A range of information included in the DP26 EOI will be auto-populated to the Full Application if the EOI is shortlisted.

Each question in the EOI Instructions to Applicants and Sample Form will clearly indicate if a question will auto-populate the information into the Full Application and if the information will be locked from further editing at the full application stage.

A range of questions use information from the applicant's RMS profile, and applicants should ensure their information is up to date.

3.2 Will the National Interest Test question be included in the DP26 EOI form?

No. The National Interest Test question is not included in the DP26 EOI form but will be a requirement in the Full Application.

3.3   Will the Medical Research Statement question be included in the DP26 EOI form?

No. The Medical Research Statement question is not included in the DP26 EOI form but will be a requirement in the Full Application.

3.4   Will I be required to provide a budget in the DP26 EOI form?

No. A budget is not included in the DP26 EOI form but will be a requirement at the Full Application.

3.5   Who will assess my DP26 EOI?

Expressions of Interest will be assessed by up to three members of the ARC College of Experts, according to the Assessment Criteria contained in the Grant Guidelines (6.2).

3.6   Will there be an opportunity to provide a rejoinder at the EOI stage?

The EOI application stage does not have a rejoinder process.

3.7   How many EOIs will be shortlisted?

The ARC anticipates that approximately 1,000 EOIs will be invited to proceed to full application.

3.8   What are the assessment criteria for an EOI, and will these be the same for a Full Application?

The assessment criteria and weightings for the EOI are distinct from the assessment criteria and weightings for a Full Application. Applicants should refer to the Grant Guidelines (6.1 – 6.4) and the Instructions to Applicants for more information on the criteria and weightings.

3.9   Requests Not to Assess process

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

3.10 What is the maximum character limit for justification for RNTA?

If a request includes the name of a current ARC College of Experts member, as listed on the ARC website, or in RMS at the time of submitting the RNTA form, the request must be accompanied by a justification (the maximum character count for the justification has been increased to 2500 characters).

4.   Outcomes

4.1   If my DP26 EOI is shortlisted what is the next step, and do I need to start over again for a Full Application?

If your EOI is shortlisted, you will then be invited to submit a Full Application. The Full Application will already have a range of locked information populated over from the EOI and you will only need to provide information that has not already been pre-populated. Additional information required at the full application stage will include a National Interest Test statement, an expanded Project Description and a Capability Statement, a budget and budget justification, a Medical Research Statement and a Yes/No question on experimental development.

5.   Limits

5.1   Does the Discovery Projects 2026 Expression of Interest (DPEI26) stage have limits on the number of applications per participant that can be submitted?

Yes. Limits apply to all participants who hold the role of Chief Investigator. As per subsection 4.20 of the Discovery Program Grant Guidelines (2024 edition): Discovery Projects, the maximum number of grants that a named participant can be concurrently funded through the Discovery Program is:

(a)   two projects as a CI; or

(b)   one ARC Fellowship and one project as a CI; or

(c)   one ARC Fellowship or project if the individual holds a Director role on an active ARC Centre of Excellence and/or Special Research Initiative project.

The ARC will calculate limits of projects and applications, including DPEI26 applications at the closing time of submission of DPEI26 by totalling:

(d)   the number of Discovery Program CI roles or ARC Fellowships that the individual will hold on active projects as at the relevant active project assessment date;

(e)   the number of ARC Centres of Excellence and Special Research Initiatives Director roles that the named participants will hold on active projects as at the relevant grant opportunity active project assessment date;

(f)   the number of Discovery Projects EOI or full applications that are currently being assessed which include the named participant as a CI; and

(g)   the number of Discovery Indigenous applications that are currently being assessed which include the named participant as a CI.

Notwithstanding the above:

(h)   Applications for Australian Laureate Fellowships, Future Fellowships, Discovery Early Career Researcher Award, ARC Centres of Excellence or Special Research Initiatives will not count towards the limits at the closing time of submission for the DPEI26 round.

(i)   Named participants on successful applications for Australian Laureate Fellowships, Future Fellowships, Discovery Early Career Research Award, Centres of Excellence or Special Research Initiative projects must meet the project limit requirements before the project can start. This may be achieved by relinquishing existing project(s), or relinquishing role(s) on existing projects, or withdrawing application(s), where allowed, that would exceed the project limits. This does not need to occur until all outcomes are announced.

5.2   What is an active project?

An active project means a project that is receiving funding according to the terms of an existing grant agreement or funding agreement, or has any carryover funds approved by the ARC, or an approved variation to the project end date. The active projects, which affect your eligibility to apply for funding, are determined based on the project's end date in RMS.

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

5.3   What is the active project assessment date for DPEI26?

The active project assessment date is the date on which the active project eligibility will be considered for project and application limits per named participant. The active project assessment date is six months after the grant commencement for Discovery Projects 2026. The active project assessment date is 1 July 2026.

5.4   How do I find my active projects?

You can see the list of all current ARC Projects on which you are a named CI/Candidate in RMS. To find this list, go to the **Person Profile** section of RMS and click the link to Current ARC Projects. The projects will appear in a format like the following example:

Identifier	Investigators	Admin Organisation	Project Title	Funding	End Date	Final Report Due Date	Final Report Status
DP21XXXXXXX	A/Prof Example Example	The University of X	Example Project Title 1	$379,400	08/01/2024	08/01/2025	Draft
DP23XXXXXXX	A/Prof Example Example	The University of X	Example Project Title 2	$419,122	24/01/2026	31/12/2026	Draft
FT17XXXXXXX	A/Prof Example Example	The University of X	Example Project Title 3	$684,422	28/02/2022	28/02/2023	Submitted to ARC

This list from your Person Profile is pre-populated into the Personnel section of your DPEI26 application form at question B7 – Currently held ARC projects.

If you or the researcher believe that any of the project information on the individuals Person Profile is incorrect, contact Your Organisation's Research Office, who will contact ARC Post-award to submit a variation to a Grant Agreement if required.

5.5 What is a project end date?

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

5.6 Can I withdraw a person from an DPEI26 application that is currently under assessment in order to meet project and application limits?

No. It is not possible for a named Participant to be removed from an DPEI26 application once it has been submitted.

5.7 Can I wait until after I submit an application to change the end date of an existing project so it doesn't count towards grant limits?

No. RMS will not allow you to submit an DPEI26 application if you have exceeded the limits with the exception as described in the *Discovery Program Grant Guidelines: Discovery Projects (2024 edition)* at section 4.22, where applications for Australian Laureate Fellowships, Future Fellowships, Discovery Early Career Research Award, ARC Centres of Excellence or Special Research Initiatives will not count towards the limits.

6. Application/Project Limits – Examples

6.1 I have two Discovery Projects with an End Date of March 2026 and September 2026. Can I apply for a DPEI26?

Yes. The active project assessment date for Discovery Projects for funding commencing in 2026 is 1 July 2026. You will only be in receipt of one Discovery Projects grant as of 1 July 2026 and therefore you will be able to submit one DPEI26 application as you can be concurrently funded for a maximum of two projects as a CI.

6.2 I have two Discovery Projects and both have an End Date of June 2027. Can I apply for a DPEI26?

The active project assessment date for Discovery Projects for funding commencing in 2026 is 1 July 2026. You will be in receipt of two Discovery Projects grant as of 1 July 2026 and therefore you are already at the limit of what you can be concurrently funded for a maximum of two projects as a CI.

In this scenario, a role or a project would need to be relinquished first before a DPEI26 application could be submitted. For this to occur, a Variation must be submitted to the ARC via the Research Office and approved by the ARC before the close of applications for DPEI26. For example, if a Variation is submitted to relinquish a CI role of one of the currently held Discovery Projects and is approved by the ARC, then this researcher will be in receipt of one Discovery Projects grant and will be able to submit one DPEI26 application.

Please note, requests for withdrawal of roles from active projects must be fully justified and the project still viable despite the withdrawal of the Chief Investigator (CI). Any subsequent variation request for reinstatement will be considered on its merits and will also need to be fully justified.

6.3   I have no current Discovery Program grants or applications submitted how many DPEI26s can I submit?

If you hold no current Discovery Program grants or have no Discovery Program applications in, as well as no not holding a Director Role on an ARC Centres of Excellence or a Special Research Initiative you will be able to submit a maximum of two DPEI26 applications.

6.4   I have a current Discovery Project grant with an end date of April 2025. I have applied for an FT25 can I also apply for a DPEI26?

Yes. You will be able to submit a maximum of two DPEI26 applications as the current Discovery Project Grant will not be active as at the 1 July 2026. The Future Fellowship application will not count at the close of submission for DPEI26, however, if all three applications are funded you will need to relinquish one project so as not to exceed the limits. In this scenario Question 15 – Project Relinquishment or Application Withdrawal will be activated for the applicant to identify what action they would like to take to meet the project limits under section 4.22 of the Grant Guidelines. If the researcher is successful on all three applications (the FT25 and both DP26s), the researcher could not hold all three projects. The researcher can indicate in the question that the project limits will be met by relinquishing existing active project(s), relinquishing a role(s) on existing active projects or withdrawing application(s). This does not need to occur until all applications are announced.

6.5   I have a current DECRA grant with an end date of March 2027, can I apply for a DPEI26?

Yes. The active project assessment date for Discovery Projects for funding commencing in 2026 is 1 July 2026. You will only be in receipt of one grant (DECRA grant) as of 1 July 2026 and therefore you will be able to submit one DPEI26 application as you can be concurrently funded for a maximum of one ARC Fellowship and one project as a CI.

6.6   Can I apply for two DPEI26s if I have submitted a FT25 application?

Yes. A researcher can submit two DPEI26s whilst they have a submitted FT25 application as the FT25 does not count towards the limits on close of applications. The FT25 will not count at the close of submission for DPEI26, however you will need to meet the limits if all three applications are funded. In this scenario Question 15 – Project Relinquishment or Application Withdrawal will be activated for the applicant to identify what action they would like to take to meet the project limits under section 4.22 of the grant guidelines. If the researcher is successful on all three applications (the FT25 and both DP26s), the researcher could not hold all three projects. The researcher can indicate in the question that the project limits will be met by relinquishing existing active project(s), relinquishing a role(s) on existing active projects, or withdrawing application(s). This does not need to occur until all applications are announced.

7.   Research Opportunity Performance Evidence (ROPE)

Question B9 – Career interruptions

7.1   How do I enter my career interruptions in the Application Form? Will assessors be able to see the details of my interruptions?

Information on how to enter the candidate's career interruptions can be found in Question B9 'Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence (ROPE) – Career Interruptions' of the Instructions to Applicants (ITAs). Examples of how career interruptions can be entered can be found in the Appendix of the ITAs.

Assessors will not be able to see the details of the entered career interruptions, nor will they be made visible in the PDF.

Assessors will only see the total period which RMS will automatically calculate using the entered career interruptions. The following question and answers from Question B9 will be viewable:

Question: Has the participant experienced a significant interruption that has impacted on research opportunity?

Answer: 'Yes' or 'No'

If answered 'Yes' and career interruptions are entered, the following statement will appear:

Question: Total Period of Career Interruptions

Answer (auto-fill): 'Researcher [Participant Name] has reported a career interruption of [duration] since [Year of earliest interruption].'

7.2 If an applicant has had legitimate career interruptions but was still able/required to work at 1.0 FTE in research based employment, is there a way for them to still claim an estimated quantified Career Interruption in Question B9 that is still allowable i.e. if an applicant has had a Career Interruption that they estimate at 0.2 FTE, but still technically worked 1.0 FTE, are they able to still claim a Career Interruption? If so, is evidence required for these circumstances?

Yes, quantified career interruptions can be specified at Question B9 when they have occurred concurrent with 1.0 FTE research-based employment. The DVCR, or equivalent, must be satisfied that there is evidence to support all career interruption claims. They can then certify the career interruption and its quantification. Please note that all periods of career interruption must be significant and not overlapping, occur after the conferral of a participant's PhD, or equivalent, and be certified by the DVCR, or equivalent.

7.3 Previously, applicants indicated in their ROPE the percentages of their time on research/teaching/administration. Should applicants claim FTE "lost" based on these percentages at B9? Do the Research Offices now need to keep evidence for this?

No. Applicants cannot claim career interruptions when they hold positions with standard allocations for research, teaching, and administration (e.g., 40/40/20) as there is a research component involved in their employment conditions. They can outline the details of such FTE allocations in Question B10, if relevant.

7.4 For ARC career interruptions, international relocation can apply up for three months interruption per relocation. If the relocation only takes two weeks, can applicant still claim three months interruption?

The total interruption per international relocation cannot exceed three months. In this case if it has taken two weeks to relocate then only two weeks can be claimed. Relevant evidence must be maintained and certified by the DVCR or equivalent.

7.5 Are any supporting documents required for claiming three months interruption? Given the difficulty for this would documents such as air ticket and/or contract or residential lease contract suffice?

There should be supporting evidence if making a claim for a career interruption. The documents need to be acceptable to the DVCR or equivalent.

7.6 Does the Research Office need to keep "evidence" of all career interruptions listed in B9 and if so, what evidence is acceptable as proof of career interruptions e.g. for unemployment etc?

Yes, the Administering Organisation needs to keep evidence. The type of evidence is up to the DVCR as they will need to certify that the information is correct in the application.

8. What has changed from last round? Summary of changes to the DPEI26 Application Form and DPEI26 Instructions to Applicants (ITAs).

8.1 Part B - Participant Details including ROPE

Question B10 - Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence (ROPE) - Career Narrative is a new question to provide an overview of the participant's career opportunities for research, including any periods of research only employment, access to periods of research leave, and proportions of time allocated for research, teaching and administrative responsibilities.

Please note, Question B10 - Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence (ROPE) - Career Highlights from the last round has been removed.

Question B11 - Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence (ROPE) - Evidence of the participant's research impact and contributions to the field, including those most relevant to this application. This question has been updated to remove mentoring and leadership components. A new question on mentoring and leadership has been added at B12.

Question B12 - Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence (ROPE) – Mentoring and Leadership is a new question to provide evidence of the participant's leadership, mentoring and research training or supervision experience, achievements and capability. This question has replaced the previous question on number of PhDs, Masters and Honours student completions.

9. Discovery Projects Information Session for DP EOI 2025 (for Research Offices) Questions and Answers – 17 November 2023

Limits/Eligibility:

9.1 If, at the active project assessment date for this round i.e. 1 July 2025, you hold a DECRA, FT or another DP, how many DP EOIs can you be listed on. Is it one?

The active project assessment date is 1 July 2025 (see section 5 of this FAQ for more detail regarding limits). In this example, if the researcher has one active DE, FT, FL, DP or IN grant, that is, the project end date is on or after the 1 July 2025, then the researcher can only submit one EOI application.

9.2 If an applicant has two DPs – one of which has the project end date as 30th June 2025, will they be eligible to submit an EOI for DP25?

If one of the two DPs has a project end date on or after the 1 July 2025, the project assessment date, and the researcher's other DP has an end date of 30th June 2025, this researcher could submit one DP EOI application. See section 5 Limits in this FAQ for more information.

9.3 Are there any instances where RMS will block the submission of an EOI (re: DP limitations)?

Yes, limits will apply at the EOI stage for applicants. For example, if a researcher holds two active DP grants at the project assessment date (that is they have a project end date on or after 1 July 2025) then they will not be able to submit an EOI application. RMS will also not allow a researcher to submit an EOI if they have an overdue final report. See section 5 in this FAQ for more information.

9.4 Can a CI be the first named CI on an EOI and be a co-CI in another EOI as long as the research team, institutions, research questions and methodology are different?

Yes, noting as long as the CI is not in breach of any project limits, they can be on two DP EOI applications.

9.5 If a researcher intends to relinquish their role on an existing project prior to the submission of an EOI, when does that need to be actioned? The Guidelines say variations must be approved by the closing date, but the Instructions say they can still be submitted provided the limits are met before the project starts.

In instances where a researcher currently holds two active Discovery Project grants, we must approve any Variation, including the relinquishment of roles, before the grant opportunity DPEI25 closing date.

The Instructions to Applicants at Question B15 – Project Relinquishment or Application Withdrawal relates to applicants that have a submitted application for Australian Laureate Fellowships, Future Fellowships, DECRA, ARC Centres of Excellence or Special Research Initiatives which, if successful, will exceed the limits if the Full DP25 application is also successful. As these applications are not counted on close of submission for the DPEI25 then the limits must be met before the project can commence, noting that this does not need to occur until all applications are announced. See section 5 and 6 of the FAQ regarding limits and examples.

Please note, requests for withdrawal of roles from active projects must be fully justified and the project still viable despite the withdrawal of the Chief Investigator (CI). Any subsequent variation request for reinstatement will be considered on its merits and will also need to be fully justified.

9.6 Will there be an 'early warning' in RMS if a CI may exceed proposal limits, or will Research Offices only find out upon submission to ARC (i.e. when it's too late)?

RMS will not provide an early warning, however where a researcher is already at the limit, a warning message in Section B of the EOI form will appear and the application will not be able to be submitted. For example, if the researcher already has two active Discovery Projects, they will not be able to submit an EOI application. We recommend that researchers check the number of Discovery Program grants they hold prior to commencing an EOI.

9.7 Will eligibility be assessed at EOI as well as full submission, or only at full submission?

Yes, we will review the EOI against the eligibility criteria and at the full application stage as well.

9.8 A Researcher is employed at 0.5 FTE and is also PhD student. Being a PhD student excludes them from being a CI. So can they be a PI (even though they're employed at the Lead Institution).

If a researcher is undertaking a Higher Degree by Research (HDR) during the project activity period they are not eligible to be a CI. They may be a PI.

9.9 Why is that there is no Medical Research statement at EOI stage? Wouldn't it be saving time for applicants to knock off projects for medical research eligibility at the EOI stage?

A Medical Research statement will be required only at full application stage. The determination of whether an application incorporates medical research is made after careful consideration of the application, including the project's aims, outcomes and research design. This is most appropriately evaluated at the full application stage.

Assessment/Shortlisting:

9.10 When EOIs go to the College of Experts, will there be an assessor who will champion the application?

No. Each EOI will be assessed independently by up to three College of Experts members.

9.11 Will there be any interventions in the EOI shortlisting phase to ensure there is a spread across disciplines, organisations, gender etc?

Expressions of interest, like full applications, will be allocated to one of five disciplinary panel groupings during assessment based on primary FOR code. The number of EOIs that are shortlisted from each disciplinary panel will reflect the relative volume of submissions to that panel.

9.12 Is the algorithm that assists with initial matching of College members a proprietary one, or one developed inhouse?

When Expressions of Interest are received, they will be allocated to College Members for assessment on the basis of disciplinary fit. This process is overseen by the ARC Executive Directors with the assistance of an algorithm, developed in-house, that matches assessor expertise with the FOR codes indicated in the EOI.

9.13 By "Selection of three COE according to best disciplinary fit" – will this process include manual selection by an ARC Executive Director? Or does this process include any word cloud (visual summary) process that is being currently used for sourcing external assessors?

Answered above.

9.14 Also, What sections of EOI will be considered in selecting the COEs – FOR codes, application summary, any other sections? Can you please explain how this process is expected to happen?

Disciplinary fit will be determined predominantly on the basis of FOR code matching. However, this process is overseen by the Executive Directors who may consider the EOI in its entirety in allocating College of Experts assessors.

9.15 How does the ARC ensure a relatively even success rate across the 5 different discipline panels?

See answer to Q8.11, above.

9.16 If you could address in any Q&A document that follows today's session, … How does the algorithm to allocate assessors and the use of the word-cloud differ (if at all) during the EOI stage compared to the full app stage?",... that would be much appreciated.

At the EOI stage, applications will be assigned to three College members on the basis of disciplinary fit, utilising an algorithm developed in house that matches applicants with assessors. This matching is based on the relevant FOR code(s) nominated in the application and the FOR code(s) nominated by College as their areas of expertise. This process is overseen by the ARC Executive Directors, who may refer to the EOI during the allocation process.

At the full application stage, Detailed Assessors are assigned by Carriage 1. Carriage 1 is assisted in this task by a list of suggested assessors generated by RMS, which matches Assessor expertise text with the FOR and SEO code(s) contained in the application, and keywords from the Application Title and Summary.

Outcomes:

9.17 For the EOI outcomes, will Research Offices be notified via the RMS notifications? And will there be full outcomes data (EOI and Full apps) be published via a selection report after the round final outcomes are released?

Research Office staff can be notified via RMS notifications by subscribing to email notifications where one email per scheme outcome will be received, or the Research Office staff member can choose to subscribe to an RMS notification where one in-app notification will be received per scheme round outcome in RMS. Research Office staff can also access outcomes and scores for EOIs via the API reporting functionality.

For named participants on an EOI, RMS will automatically send an email to the First Named Chief Investigator notifying them of the outcome of the EOI.

9.18 Will it be possible for the Research Office to download an outcomes report following the EOI phase?

See answer to the above question.

9.19 Will feedback be provided to unsuccessful EOIs?

Unsuccessful EOIs will receive their scores, application rank and banded feedback.

Certification

9.20 Will the ARC require universities to collect certification forms from the employers of CIs from other organisations? If so, will this be required at the EOI stage? Or only required for applications that make it to full application?

Certification proforma will not be required at the EOI stage.

Other:

9.21 What information is available for applicants on the EOI process?

There are several resources for applicants on the ARC website.

Applicants are encouraged to refer to the Shortlisting Process Explainer and FAQ on the ARC Website for more information on the EOI assessment process.

The ARC held a Webinar "How to Pitch an EOI" on 29 November 2023, which was recorded and distributed to Research Offices. The recording is also available on the ARC website: https://youtu.be/gEFrZABjVPQ

Applicants can also watch an information webinar on the two-stage process and the Expression of Interest process, available on the ARC website: https://youtu.be/DOpbuazBEcY