

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## National Intelligence and Security Discovery Research Grants (NISDRG) Round 1 for funding commencing in 2024 (EINI24R1 and NI24R1)

**Version 1 - Release date: 22 August 2023**

- All participants should read the *Grant Guidelines for the National Intelligence and Security Discovery Research Grants (NISDRG) 2023 for funding commencing in 2024* (Grant Guidelines) and specific *Instructions to Applicants* (ITAs) documents available on [GrantConnect](#) as they contain important information for Research Office staff and individual participants preparing applications.
- We do not respond to queries from individual participants. Individual participants should direct all queries regarding NISDRG grant opportunities to their Administering Organisation's Research Office (or equivalent). If further information regarding the NISDRG program is required, the Research Office should email [ARC-NISDRG@arc.gov.au](mailto:ARC-NISDRG@arc.gov.au) or call 02 6206 7206.
- Information regarding the Research Management System (RMS) is available at the Grants Services page on the [ARC website](#), or by contacting [RMSsupport@arc.gov.au](mailto:RMSsupport@arc.gov.au) for assistance.
- To access the relevant version of RMS go to:
  - [Office of National Intelligence RMS](#) (Intelligence Challenges).
- Please ensure that your application is eligible in accordance with the Grant Guidelines.
- This Frequently Asked Questions document will be updated as required.

### Difference from ARC grant programs

#### 1. Is the NISDRG Program funded by the ARC?

No.

The NISDRG Program has been fully funded by the *Office of National Intelligence* (ONI). It is not using any ARC funding.

The ARC is providing grant administration services, which means the ARC will facilitate the application and assessment process and manage the day-to-day administration for awarded grants on behalf of the ONI.

## 2. How does NISDRG differ from ARC grant schemes?

Some key points include:

- Expression of Interest (EOI) and full applications for the Intelligence Challenges Grant Opportunity must select and address one or more Intelligence Challenge/s for ONI.
- For EOI applications, only one Chief Investigator and the Administering Organisation should be listed on the application form.
- No grant or application limits apply for these Grant Opportunities.
- The *ARC Medical Research Policy* and the National Interest Statement do not apply to these Grant Opportunities.
- The Lead Investigator must be engaged with the Administering Organisation (i.e. if not an employee, the researcher must have access to research support comparable to employees e.g. an emeritus appointment).
- Every Organisation named on the application must have a person representing that organisation, named on the application.
- All Chief Investigators (CIs) and Partner Investigators (PIs), and personnel that receive salary support from the Grant, are required to be Australian citizens, Australian Permanent residents or New Zealand Special Category Visa holders.
- You must carefully read the NISDRG Grant Guidelines for all eligibility requirements.

## 3. Can a non-ongoing Postdoctoral Researcher submit an EOI application and then gather a team together if the EOI is successful?

Yes. The Grant Guidelines state that the first named CI (Project Lead) must be engaged by the Administering Organisation. Engaged means that a formal arrangement is in place that attaches the CI to the relevant eligible organisation. If not an employee, the researcher must have access to research support comparable to employees e.g. an emeritus appointment.

## 4. What is the eligibility process for NISDRG?

The ARC will review your EOI and subsequent application against the eligibility criteria described in the Grant Guidelines, as published on GrantConnect, on behalf of ONI. Information contained in the application may be provided to other Commonwealth entities for the purpose of confirming eligibility.

If an EOI or application is considered ineligible, you will be notified during the assessment period. You may submit an appeal against the administrative process in relation to this decision (eligibility appeal) within 30 days of the date of the eligibility decision notification, as specified in section 9 of the Grant Guidelines.

If an application is ineligible, the application may not be progressed through the assessment process and an ineligible application will not be recommended for funding.

## Definitions

### 5. Other Organisations must be Australian organisations. What does Australian Organisation mean for the purpose of the NISDRG Program?

As per the glossary in the Grant Guidelines, an Australian Organisation has its headquarters in Australia, has a board with a majority of Australian citizens or Australian residents, and has an Australian Business Number (ABN).

## Other

### 6. Where can I find the key dates for the NISDRG program?

You can find the key dates on the Research Grant Services website <https://www.researchgrants.gov.au/key-dates-nisdrq>

### 7. Matters to note before completing the EOI form

An EOI must be prepared and submitted through the specific ONI portal of the Research Management System (RMS) as a succinct but comprehensive summary of the proposed research. The EOI must contain all the information necessary for an assessment of the EOI without the need for further written or oral explanation, or reference to additional documentation including the internet. All details in the EOI must be current at the time of submission.

Participants can use their ARC RMS login ID and password to access the portal. More information about RMS, and links to the ONI RMS portal for this Grant Opportunity, is available on the [RGS website](#).

### 8. Is the EOI and full application form available in RMS and how do I find the ONI portals to apply?

EOI applications, for the NISDRG Grant Opportunity must be prepared and submitted through the specific [ONI portal of the Research Management System](#) (RMS). You can locate the '*Expression of Interest Management*' section in the ONI RMS portal. Select the round from the drop-down selection and click 'Create Draft Expression of Interest'.

If you are invited to submit a full application, applications for the NISDRG Grant Opportunity must be prepared and submitted through the ONI RMS portal as relevant.

Participants can use their ARC RMS login ID and password to access the portal. More information about RMS, and links to the ONI RMS portal for this Grant Opportunity, is available on the [RGS website](#).

### 9. If I modify my user details in RMS, does this get reflected in the NISDRG application form?

The information currently stored in an RMS participant's '*Person Profile*' will be utilised across all RMS portals for auto-populating sections of the application form. '*Person Profile*' information can be edited by a participant in any portal and will be reflected in the others (i.e. if '*Person Profile*' information is changed in the ONI portal

of RMS these changes will be automatically reflected in the '*Person Profile*' section of ARC RMS).

Please ensure you have updated your *Personal Details* page of RMS as there are new questions that must be answered.

Sections within your RMS user profile that **do not** flow across RMS instances include:

- Admin Organisation,
- Relationships,
- Qualifications and
- Employment.

Please update your RMS profile for the ONI instance to ensure any Conflicts of Interest are managed within RMS.

**10. The ARC Policies only reference the National Competitive Grants Program and ARC funding, do they really apply?**

Compliance with ARC Policies detailed in the NISDRG Grant Guidelines and the NISDRG Grant Agreement is required for the NISDRG program.

Where Policies reference 'ARC funding applications' or 'ARC funded projects' this also means 'funding applications for grants funded by other Commonwealth entities administered by the ARC' and 'funded projects of other entities administered by the ARC'.

**11. What are the NISDRG Challenges and how do I find out more about them?**

The Intelligence Challenges have been developed under the broad National Security Science and Technology Priorities.

The Challenges are priority research areas which may be updated from round to round.

The Intelligence Challenges can be found on GrantConnect:

Forecast Opportunity – NI24R1

Grant Opportunity – GO6421

**12. Have the Challenges changed since the previous Grant Opportunity?**

The Intelligence Challenges have not changed. Unsuccessful applicants from previous rounds are welcome to reapply.

Information about the [Intelligence Challenges](#) is also available on the RGS Website. The Intelligence Challenges will be the same between the EINI24 EOI and the NI24 full application Grant Opportunity.

**13. Will the Challenges be the same in the next Grant Opportunities opening next year?**

The National Intelligence Challenges will be reviewed before the next Grant Opportunity.

**14. Why do I have to provide passport or visa information for all Chief Investigators and Partner Investigators for Participant Eligibility? Where does this information go and for what purpose?**

The Passport and Visa information entered in RMS will enable ONI to verify Australian citizenship, Australian Permanent Residency or New Zealand Special Category Visa status of named participants on NISDRG full applications. Information will be checked with the document issuer or official record holder via third party systems for the purpose of confirmation. Information entered into RMS will not be visible to other applicants or assessors, although can be viewed by Research Office staff.

**15. Are Australian National Intelligence Community member entities and their staff allowed to be named as participants in these grants?**

Member entities of the Australian National Intelligence Community (NIC) (a list is available on the [ONI website](#)) and their staff are not to be named participants (Chief or Partner Investigators), and NIC member entities (agencies) are not to be listed as an Other Organisation in a NISDRG application or funded grant. Existing relationships between participants and the NIC shall be declared and managed as a conflict of interest by the Administering Organisation. For example, participants receiving NIC funding for a different research project must declare this funding to ensure potential conflicts of interest are raised.

**16. Can Publicly Funded Research Agencies (PFRAs) be named as participants in these grants?**

Yes, a PFRA can be named as a participating organisation, however while a PFRA may be able to engage with an eligible institution on a grant application, there can be no flow of grant funds, either directly or indirectly, from the eligible institution to the PFRA. The PFRA must contribute their own resources e.g. staff time, facility access, etc, into the Project. An example would be if the PFRA was listed as an Other Organisation, and that PFRA's facility or equipment was to be used by the Project, no costs could be charged to the grant for the use of that facility or equipment.

**17. Are letters of support from an intelligence agency permitted?**

Letters of support from an intelligence agency are not permitted to be included as part of an application.

**18. Question A2, the full application form does not allow a user to select a Relevant Organisation. This then appears to cause a validation error that states the admin organisation has no participants?**

All organisations participating in the NISDRG program and listed in question A3 must have at least one named participant listed in question A2.

In full applications, for this question to validate all participants must complete the relevant question in Part F of the application form (once Part F is completed the error will disappear). If the error remains, check that the employment of the participant is the same as the organisation listed in question A3 (you must select the organisation from the drop-down list and not type the name in).

**19. Are international collaborations supported by the grant?**

Any international collaboration must be necessary to the Project and justified in relevant questions in the form, including the project description and budget justifications.

**20. Why aren't my Field of Research codes appearing in my RMS profile?**

In 2020, a new set of ANZSRC Fields of Research (FoR) codes were released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). You will need to convert your existing 2008 codes to the 2020 codes within your person profile for them to populate to the application form. More information about converting FoR codes can be found in the RMS User Management Guide located on the [RGS Website](#).

**21. Does everyone working on the Grant Project need to be an Australian Citizen?**

All personnel paid from the grant must be an Australian citizen, have permanent residency or hold a New Zealand Special Category Visa as detailed in the Grant Guidelines at section 4.17c and the Grant Agreement, at section A2.2.7 ('Other Personnel') & A2.2.6 ('Specified Personnel') of the Grant Agreement. All applicants named within the application must meet the citizenship eligibility requirements at the time of application submission, and if awarded, at all times throughout the grant. Individuals working on the Project who would be named in publications or would otherwise link their association with the Government funded project must also comply with the citizenship eligibility criteria.

**22. Section 10.6 of the Grant Guidelines states that unsuccessful NISDRG applications may be considered for funding under an ARC scheme. Is this likely?**

The intention of this clause is to enable the ARC to review, and if eligible, to fund unsuccessful NISDRG applications. The ARC will only seek NISDRG applications for review if the funding allocation for the NCGP is not exhausted by meritorious applications. Due to the high number and quality of submissions within the NCGP schemes it is unlikely that the ARC will require unsuccessful NISDRG applications for funding.

**23. Does the certification within RMS replace the ARC written evidence document (certification proforma) on GrantConnect for all named participants and their organisations?**

The Certification Proforma document which was previously available on [GrantConnect](#) has been replaced with a simplified process through RMS. The RMS process includes:

- participant certification within the RMS application form

- an additional DVCR certification in RMS prior to submission (delegate certification).

It remains the responsibility of the Administering Organisation to obtain and hold confirmation of participating organisation certification. A template is not required.

**24. Will the success rate for this application round be similar to that of the previous round?**

The success rate is determined by the number of applications received and the amount of funding available. Whilst the amount of funding available has increased for funding commencing in 2024, it is not possible to determine the number of applications that will be submitted and therefore the success rate is unknown.

**25. Would it be beneficial to have multiple institutions listed on a grant application? Which industry partners can be added to a project?**

The number of participants or institutions will not determine the success of an application. All applications are assessed based on the eligibility and assessment criteria outlined in the Grant Guidelines to determine merit and funding decisions. Applications should include the people and organisations most suitable and necessary to undertake the proposed research.

**26. As this program is funded by ONI is there a security classification requirement? Or will outcomes of the research be restricted?**

The NISDRG program is intended to facilitate unclassified research and therefore all outcomes may be published in accordance with the ARC Open Access Policy available on the [ARC Website](#).

**27. Can applications with a social sciences or humanities focus, or applications with a mix of STEM and non-STEM participants, be submitted for NISDRG?**

Applications must address one or more of the Intelligence Challenges and will be assessed on their merits. In the NISDRG program outcomes in the Grant Guidelines and descriptive text accompanying the Challenges, there are examples of non-STEM research areas, including communication and information dissemination, and legal/criminal aspects of security measures.

**28. If the grant is awarded, how will progress be measured?**

Each awarded grantee is required to complete a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) report at the beginning of the project. The targets entered at this stage of the Project will be reported against in a six-monthly progress report. In addition, financial acquittals and outreach by ONI will provide additional insight into the progress of research funded under the NISDRG program.

**29. A Technological Readiness Level (TRL) is required within the application form, do you expect proposed research to have a minimum TRL?**

No. The TRL scale is used only to understand the technological readiness level of the proposed research. As the objective of the NISDRG program is to support

fundamental research there is no minimum or maximum TRL expectation. However ONI advise that they are looking for blue sky projects between TRL 1 and 3.

**30. Are funding decisions made based solely on application merit, or is the intention to fund a grant in each challenge area?**

The ideal scenario is that all Challenges are supported through the funded research however, decisions on funded grants is based on merit, the fit with the relevant set of Challenges, the National Intelligence Community priority research needs, Australia's national interest, including national security, applications already funded, and available funding.

**31. 60% of the assessment criteria is allocated to Project Quality and Benefit. Can you advise how benefit will be assessed for fundamental research?**

The Project Quality and Benefit assessment criteria are detailed in the Grant Guidelines at section 6.3a. All applications, including those with a fundamental research focus, will be assessed against all criteria outlined within this section. Assessment of criteria is undertaken in accordance with the process outlined in the Grant Guidelines. Further information regarding the assessment of applications can be located on the [RGS Website](#).

**32. Do NISDRG applications or awarded grants count towards ARC grant eligibility limits?**

No. The NISDRG Program applications and grants do not impact ARC application or grant eligibility limits.

**33. How will 'outreach' for the NISDRG program be conducted?**

Outreach under the NISDRG program is intended to support the objectives and outcomes of the program including the objective to 'enhance collaboration in the research, science and technology community'. Outreach will be completed by ONI to better understand the research, in addition the RGS team will conduct outreach to support administration activities for funded grants.

**34. Where will I find feedback from an unsuccessful application?**

Upon announcement of a scheme, feedback is provided to applicants within RMS. For further information on locating feedback to unsuccessful applicants please see the 'How to View Outcomes' page on the [RGS website](#).

**35. Clarification of Section F7 Research Load from non-ONI sources in the application**

Where the applicant is currently receiving funding for research that is from sources other than the NISDRG program, including those funded by ONI, a document formatted as outlined in the instructions to applicants should be uploaded. This section will assist to provide NISDRG assessors and ONI with an indication of the work load that CIs and PIs will be undertaking should the application be funded.



### **36. How do I know if my project is in scope?**

ONI are unable to provide applicants with pre-emptive advice about whether a project topic is in scope for the NISDRG program and the National Intelligence Challenges. The reason for this is that a very broad range of topics are likely to be in scope and the purpose of the EOI is to enable applicants to assess the strength of the link between the proposed research topic and how it will support one or more relevant Challenges.

If the research area being considered is broad, depending on the specific research project focus, the projects may, or may not be in scope for the Program. Individual research proposals in EOI applications are not expected to respond to the Challenge in its entirety, and may focus on a critical problem area within the Challenge that helps meet the broader Challenge in the longer term. Projects are, however, expected to support basic or fundamental research, and that research is expected to be undertaken at a low level of technological readiness. Looking at the potential short term, medium term and long-term outcomes of the proposed research projects may help to work through how a Project will support a Challenge area.

ONI notes that the Program is in its early stages, and thus determining what kind of projects are in or out of scope may be more difficult due to the small number of funded grants that, consequently, do not provide a broad suite of coverage across the Intelligence Challenges. The EOI is purposefully designed to reduce the effort in writing applications which may be in scope and it is an opportunity for applicants to succinctly describe the research topic and how it will support the Challenge areas without the effort and resources needed to complete a full application.

On that basis, we encourage you to submit an EOI application having regard to the advice above.

### **37. Should I include details of the project team in the project description of my EOI application?**

The one-page project description should provide details about the proposed project and how it will significantly advance the science and technology area pertaining to the challenge selected.

If successful, the full application will assess the academic (team) merit. However, you may add information about the project team in the EOI application, if you believe that adding information will enhance the focus on how the project will address the relevant challenge.

### **38. Have the dates for question F7 on the application form in RMS changed since full applications opened?**

Yes. The details of research funding from non-ONI sources (in Australia and overseas) awarded or requested involving the participant are required for 2023 to 2026 inclusive. These dates have been updated and now align with the *Instructions to Applicants* document.

**39. The Guidelines suggest that no more than one HDR stipend can be requested in this scheme.**

Multiple HDR stipends are allowable under the NISDRG Grant Guidelines. Each stipend must be equivalent to 1.0 FTE.

Each individual HDR should be a complete scholarship – they can participate on a part-time basis, but they are individually a full employee for budget purposes.

**40. My passport expires in February 2024. I am planning to apply for a new passport but for the purpose of citizenship proof in F3, will the current passport suffice?**

As long as the details you enter into RMS are from the one document (a current or expired passport) your details will be able to be verified. If there are any issues regarding your citizenship we will contact you.

**41. What documentation does the CI need to justify teaching relief?**

The availability of teaching relief for a CI needs to demonstrate value for money for the SAC members. It is important to demonstrate why that person is needed and why they can't be involved in the project without teaching relief. Keep in mind that the more Grant funds you use for activities other than research, the less will be available to spend on the research project.

**42. International collaborations**

Researchers may discuss their projects with outside parties however, they should be mindful of not divulging potential IP or discoveries that should be retained for the benefit of Australia. The projects are not deemed secret, but we suggest that the research be discussed with some care.

Individuals working on the project who would be named in publications or would otherwise link their association with the project, such as being a collaborative partner, must meet the citizenship criteria.

All partner organisations and investigators must meet the relevant criteria, whether they are named in the application or participating and/or collaborating post award.

Please talk to your heads of department, make use of systems and regulations within the university. Contact your University's counter foreign interference officer / office to seek specific consideration of the proposal and advice re sharing and collaboration. ONI has advised that if you have questions about collaboration and partnerships, their advice, if any, will be dependent on the university foreign interference office assessment.

#### **43. RMS Warning Message**

To help ensure eligibility criteria is met, the application form includes warning messages, including question A2 – Person Participant Summary for CI eligibility.

The two errors listed under question A2 will clear once Part F Questions F9 (employment details) and F10 (relevant organisation for the application), have been completed by all participants.

#### **44. Annual Conference in Canberra**

NISDRG ONI recipients are required to attend the annual ONI conference in Canberra, provisionally to be held in the second half of each year. At least one named participant should attend the conference which will provide a networking opportunity with the National Intelligence Community and an opportunity to present your research to the attendees.

Applicants should include a line in each year of the budget for travel to Canberra which can include accommodation for three nights and flights (depending on participants location). A registration fee is not applicable.

The conference dates and agenda will be provided by ONI closer to each conference.

#### **45. Can the CI change roles from the EOI to full application?**

Usually the CI named in the EOI application would remain the Lead CI in the full application, however when adding additional CIs to the full application the roles can be changed for the betterment of the project. You will need to ensure that the Lead CI has the capacity to manage the project as per the Grant Guidelines.

#### **46. Can I select “not employed” in the application form if I’m employed by a non-Australian organisation (not eligible to be a named organisational participant) and do not meet the requirements for honorary academic appointment at an Australian university because of the employment elsewhere?**

All applicants are required to provide accurate information in their application form and as per 9.16 of the Grant Guidelines (2023): “If We consider that a full application is inaccurate or contains false or misleading information, or is otherwise a breach of the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research*, We will in Our discretion decide to recommend that the full application not be approved for a grant.”

Given the policy objective of the NISDRG program is to build Australia’s research capacity, you should consider whether the applicant will be paid with grant funds, as paying a researcher from an international organisation would be likely to compromise that objective.

It is important to have regard to the importance of the named applicant to the strength of the proposal – if they are critical, then being based in a foreign country obviates the policy objective of building Australia’s research capacity. If they are non-core or complimentary, and the application details how they will support the project and that policy objective, that can be taken into account by assessors.

In all cases applicants should consider the merits of the named participants role against the objective and ensure any relevant information is included in the application.

To add a named participant that is employed by non-Australian organisations to an application, they will need to note themselves as ‘Not employed’ in Part F of the application form in order for the form to validate and enable submission.

**47. Is there a restriction on the type of organisation a project can collaborate with?**

While Grants are provided to Australian Universities, collaborative engagement with Australian start-up companies is strongly encouraged.

**48. Who can apply for the NISDRG Fellowship award?**

The Fellowship award is available to Chief Investigators, with less than 10 years since the award of their earliest PhD, including Allowable Career Interruptions. This may include EMCR’s and Engaged personnel as defined in the Grant Guidelines. Only one Fellowship can be requested per grant. The NISDRG Fellowship can be requested in addition to other personnel salary from eligible universities.

**49. Who can apply for the for the NISDRG Scholarship?**

Postgraduate researcher can apply for the NISDRG Scholarship. The NISDRG Scholarship can be requested in addition to other personnel salary (clause 5.5a(ii)) within the application and from eligible universities.

**50. Are the NISDRG awards on top of the \$800,000 funding available?**

No. The NISDRG awards are included in the funding available to the project. The Awards have been designed to provide additional salary support to early-mid career researcher (EMCR) or engaged personnel chief investigators, and Post Graduate students.

**51. Who can draw salary from the grant?**

- Those that meet the citizen eligibility criteria
- CIs with less than 10 years since the award of earliest PhD, including Allowable Career Interruptions (*Fellowship only*)
- Postgraduate researchers (*salary plus NISDRG scholarship*)
- Other personnel.

**52. Who cannot draw a salary?**

- Those that do not meet the citizen eligibility criteria
- CIs with more than 10 years since the award of earliest PhD, including Allowable Career Interruptions
- PI’s.