



Australian Government
Australian Research Council

ARC

Discovery Projects 2026: Expressions of Interest

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About the Discovery Projects scheme

- The Discovery Projects scheme recognises the importance of fundamental, ‘blue sky’ research to drive innovation and create new knowledge for the development of new technologies, products and ideas, the creation of jobs, economic growth and an enhanced quality of life in Australia.
- First funded in 2002, the Discovery Projects scheme supports excellent pure basic, strategic basic and applied research and research training. Discovery Projects grants are awarded annually and include project funding from \$30,000 to \$500,000 per annum for up to 5 years.
- The Discovery Projects scheme is one the largest ARC grant programs. It has supported 17,124 projects since its inception. There are currently 2,511 Discovery Projects, supporting 8,479 researchers across all disciplines.
- Discovery Projects deliver significant outcomes in fields such as advanced manufacturing, cybersecurity, environmental change, health, and water. Some of the currently funded projects include developing new carbon fibre composites for rapid production and reduced cost, developing sophisticated cybersecurity techniques to provide active protection measures against attacks on artificial intelligence (AI) systems that process data, and examining the history of the Torres Strait through its local, national, and international sporting past.

2024 & 2025 Discovery Projects statistics

| Funding year | Applications considered | Applications approved/shortlisted | Success rate/ Proportion shortlisted (%) | Funds allocated over project life for approved applications (\$) |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|--|
| 2024 | 2590 | 421 | 16.3 | \$220,182,441 |
| 2025 Shortlisted | 4147 | 1141 | 27.5 | Not applicable |
| 2025 Full Applications | 1132 | TBA | TBA | TBA |

DP25 Applications Panel Breakdown & Comparison with DP24

| Discipline | Current Scheme Round – DP25 (Number of applications shortlisted) | Previous Scheme Round – DP24 |
|--------------|---|------------------------------|
| BSB | 298 | 652 |
| EIC | 281 | 767 |
| HCA | 137 | 209 |
| SBE | 224 | 438 |
| MPCE | 201 | 524 |
| TOTAL | 1141 | 2590 |

Changes to the Discovery Projects Grant Guidelines (2024 edition)

- Amendment to ensure compliance with the amended ARC Act,
- Additional information to relevant clauses relating to security, defence, or international relations,
- Amendment to dates of policies referenced in the Guidelines,
- Additional information about announcement and Grant Agreement information, and
- Updates to acronyms and definitions.

Discovery Projects: Objectives

The Discovery Projects objectives are to:

- a. support excellent pure basic, strategic basic and applied research, and research training, across all disciplines excluding clinical and other medical research, that addresses a significant problem or gap in knowledge and represents value for money;
- b. expand research capacity in Australia by supporting excellent researchers and teams;
- c. foster national and international research collaboration;
- d. create new knowledge with economic, commercial, environmental, social and/or cultural benefits for Australia; and
- e. enhance the scale and focus of research in Australian Government priority areas.

Discovery Projects: Assessment Criteria

Assessment Criteria for Expression of Interest (EOI)

- a. Investigator(s)/Capability – 30 %
- b. Project quality and innovation – 70 %

Assessment Criteria for Full Application

- a. Investigator(s)/Capability – 30 %
- b. Project quality and innovation – 45 %
- c. Benefit – 15 %
- d. Feasibility – 10 %

Application Form: Major Changes in last round

Reduced page lengths

- ROPE, Project Description, no Budget Justification at EOI stage

Reordered sections

- Information critical to assessment now appears first

Removal of some information

- Removed questions pertaining to, for example, applicant FoR codes and expertise text

No longer visible to assessors

- Details of career interruption, country of residence and project relinquishment no longer visible

Additional visibility

- Assessors now see National Interest Test

ROPE: Previous Major Changes

| ROPE Section | DP26 |
|--|--|
| Career Interruptions | Only total period of career interruption visible to assessors (details entered on form) |
| Career Highlights (NEW) | Up to 10 (up to 1500 characters approx. 200 words) |
| Career and Contributions Statement (REDUCED LENGTH) | Up to 1500 characters (approx. 200 words) |
| Supervisions (NEW) | Completions: Hons, Masters, PhD |
| Research Outputs (Number of research outputs REDUCED from previous limit of 100) | Up to 10 career-best |

DPEI26: New changes to Application Form – ROPE

| ROPE Section DP25->DP26 | DP26 |
|--|---|
| B9 Career Interruptions (NO CHANGE) B10 Career Narrative (NEW in DPEI26) – career opportunities for research | Total period of interruption visible for assessors Free text box - details entered on form (565 characters, 75 words). |
| B10 Career Highlights | REMOVED |
| B11 Evidence of research impact and contributions to the field (up to 1,500 characters, approx. 200 words) | Language focused on research impact and contributions since B10 covers career research opportunities & the new B12 covers mentoring and leadership. |
| B12 Supervision Completions (REMOVED). Replaced by: B12 Mentoring and Leadership (NEW DPEI26) | Free text box – details entered on form (up to 750 characters, approx 100 words) |

Additional notes for Expression of Interest application preparation

- The importance of making sure the EOI is designed and communicated as the full project will be conducted as no changes can be made to locked questions in Parts A (Administrative Summary) and B (Participant Details).
- Enter all participating organisations at Question A3.
- The budget (when required at full application stage) will auto-populated from the locked A3 question.
- Each application is allocated a 'home panel' for administrative and reporting purposes at the EOI stage. However, this is not definitive for assessment at EOI stage as all College are used, depending on their specific expertise.
- The panel allocation is more significant at full application stage, as applications are assessed in one of five disciplinary panels. The ARC also has mechanisms for cross panel assessment.

Types of Research Funded by the ARC

Pure basic research is basic research carried out for the advancement of knowledge, without seeking long-term economic or social benefits or making any effort to apply the results to practical problems or to transfer the results to sectors responsible for their application.

Strategic basic research is experimental and theoretical work undertaken to acquire new knowledge directed into specified broad areas in the expectation of practical discoveries. It provides the broad base of knowledge necessary for the solution of recognised practical problems.

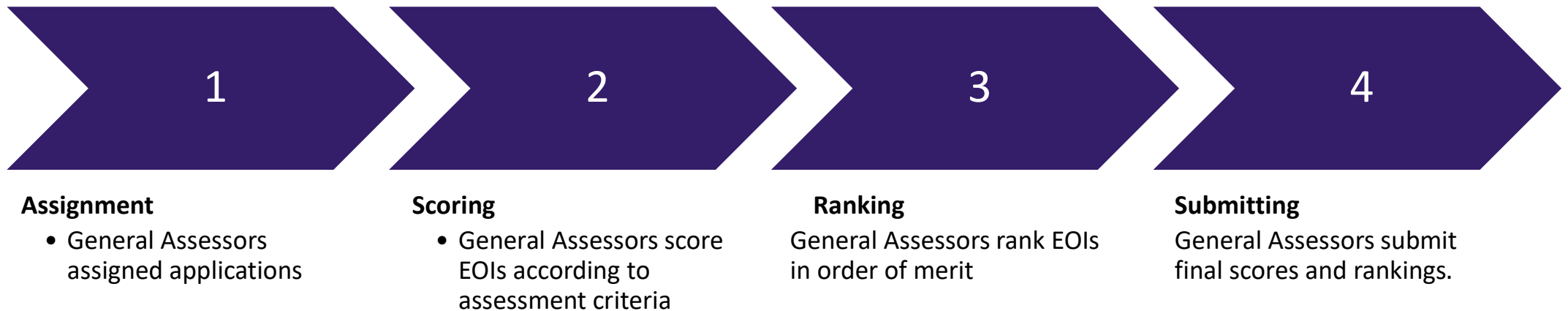
Applied research is original investigation undertaken in order to acquire new knowledge. It is, however, directed primarily towards a specific, practical aim or objective. ([ABS 2020 definition](#)).

Legislative Exclusion on ARC Funding Experimental Development

The amended ARC Act 2001 specifies that activities classified as 'experimental development' are not funded by the ARC.

Experimental development is systematic work, **drawing on knowledge gained from research and practical experience and producing additional knowledge**, which is **directed to producing new products or processes** or to improving existing products or processes. ([ABS 2020 definition](#))

Stages of EOI assessment



Key dates for Discovery Projects – DP26 round

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Application period | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• EOI Applications Open: 31 October 2024• Request Not to Assess (RNTA) Open: 31 October 2024• Request Not to Assess (RNTA) Close: 26 November 2024• EOI Applications Close: 13 December 2024• Full Applications Open : 5 March 2025• Full Applications Close: 16 April 2025• Rejoinder Period: 30 June – 11 July 2025 |
| Anticipated announcement | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• EOI Announcement - 26 – 28 February 2025• Full Application Announcement – 16 – 30 October 2025 |

Planned ARC Webinars for scheme openings

The ARC will present another Webinar at the Full Application stage for DP26 and an invitation to Research Offices will be sent nearer the date.

A reminder that questions can be sent to the ARC-NCGP@arc.gov.au at any time.



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Thank you and
Questions

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