Linkage Projects Grant Guidelines Changes

Consultation

The ARC engaged with stakeholders as part of the development of these Guidelines. Stakeholders included University Research Offices, Chief Investigators and Partner Investigators and former grant assessors. Changes made to the guidelines are based on feedback received.

STREAMLINING

1. **Simplification of the Guidelines**

   - The Linkage Projects Guidelines (Guidelines) have been reviewed and updated to reflect the findings of Phase 1 of the ARC's Process Review of the National Competitive Grants Program and the Minister for Education's Statement of Expectations of 26 August 2022 which emphasised the goal of minimising administrative burden on researchers.
   - In consultation with stakeholders the Guidelines have been considerably shortened, reducing redundancy and repetition and supporting more user-friendly, fit-for-purpose guidelines.
   - Key amendments include:
     o Removal of detailed contextual information about the overarching Linkage Program, and including a reference to the ARC website for further information.
       Guidelines reference: 2.1
     o Simplification of the 'What the grant money can be used for' section to 2 subheadings: 'What grant funds can be used for' and 'What grant funds cannot be used for'.
       Guidelines reference: 5.4
     o Inclusion of a new 'Responsibilities' section, which brings together and simplifies material previously dispersed across eligibility and other sections.
       Guidelines reference: 9.14-9.16
     o Inclusion of high-level summary of the application process for applicants.
       Guidelines reference: 7.1-7.9
     o Removal of definitions where they are no longer used in the guidelines, or are only used in other definitions
       Guidelines reference: Appendix B

ABOUT THE GRANT PROGRAM

2. **Linkage Projects Objectives and Intended Outcomes**

   - The objectives and intended outcomes have been reworded to more clearly reflect this scheme's role within the broader Linkage Program. This is to support applicants' understanding of which Linkage Program scheme might best suit their needs.
   - In particular, consultations indicated that it would be useful to have a cleaner focus on collaboration between teams of researchers and research end-users, given the introduction of the new Industry Fellowships Schemes under the Linkage Program.
   - In response to this feedback, the objectives and outcomes sections have been amended to:
     o remove "growth of a national pool of world-class researchers to meet the needs of the broader Australian innovation system" from the intended outcomes of this scheme. The ARC recognises that this will still be a result of successful Linkage Projects, but notes that other schemes are more closely directed towards this outcome.
     o emphasise the importance of building and growing research alliances within the intended outcomes, by including "new or strengthened collaborations and research alliances between universities and research end-users".

Guidelines reference: 2.3

ASSESSMENT

3. **Australian Government priority areas**

   - References to, and alignment with, the National Manufacturing Priorities have been removed throughout, consistent with Government policy.

   Guidelines reference: 2.3c, 2.4b, 6.1b.

4. **Assessment Criteria**
   - Following consultation with stakeholders, the Assessment Criteria have been amended to be more fit-for-purpose and to align with the updated objectives.
   - Key amendments include:
     o Addition of 'Strength of the proposed research alliance' as a new criterion: Elements of this criterion were spread across the other criteria. Given the importance given to this element of the scheme in the sector consultations, the existing references were consolidated and elevated to a new criterion.
     o Removal of the separate 'Feasibility and Commitment' criterion: The commitment of partners is now captured in the 'Strength of the proposed research alliance' criterion. The feasibility or appropriateness of other aspects of the application are addressed in the criteria assessing those aspects e.g. the budget including value for money considerations and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander research are assessed under Project Quality and Innovation.
     o Adjustment of weightings: 50% for the project (Project quality and innovation – 30% – and Impact – 20%), and 50% for the people/team/alliance (Investigator(s') capability and quality of team – 20% – and Strength of the proposed research alliance – 30%); and reordering of the criteria to reflect this approach.
     o Removal of references to Higher Degree by Research (HDR) students (Project quality and innovation) in line with equivalent change to Objectives and Intended Outcomes.
   - Minor editorial changes to the wording of the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities' section.

   Guidelines reference: 6.1

ELIGIBILITY

5. **Eligible Organisation**

   The Eligible Organisations table has been moved to an Appendix.

   Guidelines reference: Appendix B.

6. **Partner Organisations**

   Clause stating that Partner Organisations must "provide evidence of new or on-going collaboration directly with You and/or with an Other Eligible Organisation on the application" as an eligibility requirement has been removed. This is not an eligibility check but rather is assessed as part of the peer review process.

   Guidelines reference: 4.6.

7. **Participants**

   - The rule preventing honorary academics from being Project Leaders has been removed in line with a policy update communicated to the sector in March 2022.

     Guidelines reference: 4.17b

8. **Limits**

   - New clause added to clarify that industry fellowships schemes are not included in the limit of 4 projects across the Linkage Program.

     Guidelines reference: 4.23d

WHAT THE GRANT MONEY CAN BE USED FOR

9. **What grant funds can be used for / What grant funds cannot be used for**

   - Change in language to clarify that Higher Degree Research student stipends can be requested at less than 1.0FTE, and that Partner Organisations may part-fund Higher Degree Research student stipends.

     Guidelines reference: 5.3-5.4

OTHER

10. **National Interest Test**

    - The National Interest Test section has been simplified and moved from Section 8 ('The grant selection process') into Section 7 ('How to apply'), in line with the new National Interest Test process.
    - Reference added in Flowchart to addressing the National Interest Test as part of completing and submitting an application.

      Guidelines reference: Flowchart, 7.7; throughout.

11. **Clarified language in relation to 'industry'**

    - References to 'industry' have been replaced with 'research end-users' throughout, in response to feedback from stakeholders that this language may contribute to lower take-up of the scheme, especially from researchers in the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (HASS) disciplines and partners in the Not-for-profit sector.

      Guidelines reference: throughout.

12. **Definitions**

New definition has been added:

    - research end-user

Definitions deleted where terms are self-explanatory, are no longer used in the guidelines, or are only used in other definitions:

    - KPIs
    - Commonwealth
    - Commonwealth Fellowship
    - Chief Executive Officer
    - Minister
    - national benefit
    - ARC Assessor Community (and removed reference in Detailed Assessors definition)

- General Assessors
- Officials
- Participants (as distinct from named participants; not used)
- Preprint or comparable resource
- Updated recipients to 'grant recipients'
- research output
- Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence (ROPE) (noting that this is not a policy change, but merely a wording change, as the term in not used in the Guidelines)
- Science and Research Priorities
- selection criteria
- technical workshop services
  <u>Guidelines reference</u>: Appendix A.