



Australian Government  
Australian Research Council

ARC

# ARC Centres of Excellence

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HASS ARC Centres of Excellence  
Workshop, 5 December 2023

Professor Alison Ross, ARC Executive Director Humanities  
& Creative Arts

Professor Anika Gauja, ARC Executive Director Social,  
Behavioural and Economic Sciences



# ARC National Competitive Grants Program (NCGP)

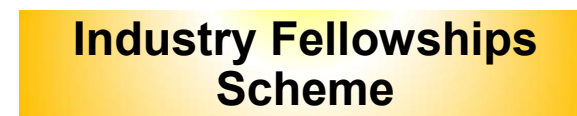
## Discovery Program



## Linkage Program



### Discovery Indigenous



Area of box represents  
ARC funding by scheme

# ARC Centres of Excellence

- ➔ One of the ARC's most prestigious schemes
- ➔ Funds: focal points of national expertise
- ➔ high quality collaborative research of international standing
- ➔ significant collaboration between universities, publicly funded research agencies, national and international research groups, governments and businesses
- ➔ Open to all fields of research except medicine
- ➔ Highly competitive
- ➔ Usually run every 3 years

# ARC Centres of Excellence

## FUNDING PERIOD

up to  
**7**  
years

## FUNDING LEVEL PER YEAR

**\$1,000,000**  
to  
**\$5,000,000**

## PARTNER ORGANISATION REQUIREMENTS

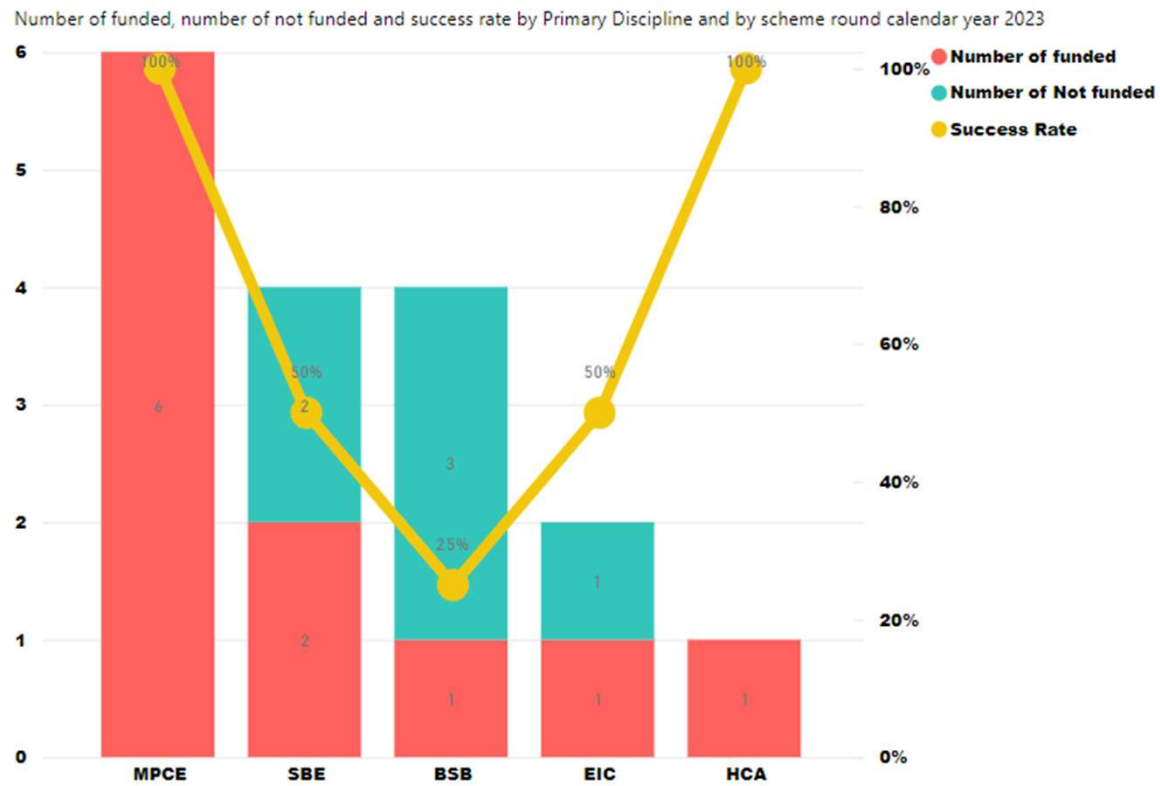
Must include at least **one** Partner Organisation

## CASH CONTRIBUTION REQUIREMENTS

Partner Organisation contribution is not prescribed but must demonstrate commitment to the proposed ARC Centre of Excellence through significant cash contributions and/or in-kind contributions and/or contributions of other material resources.

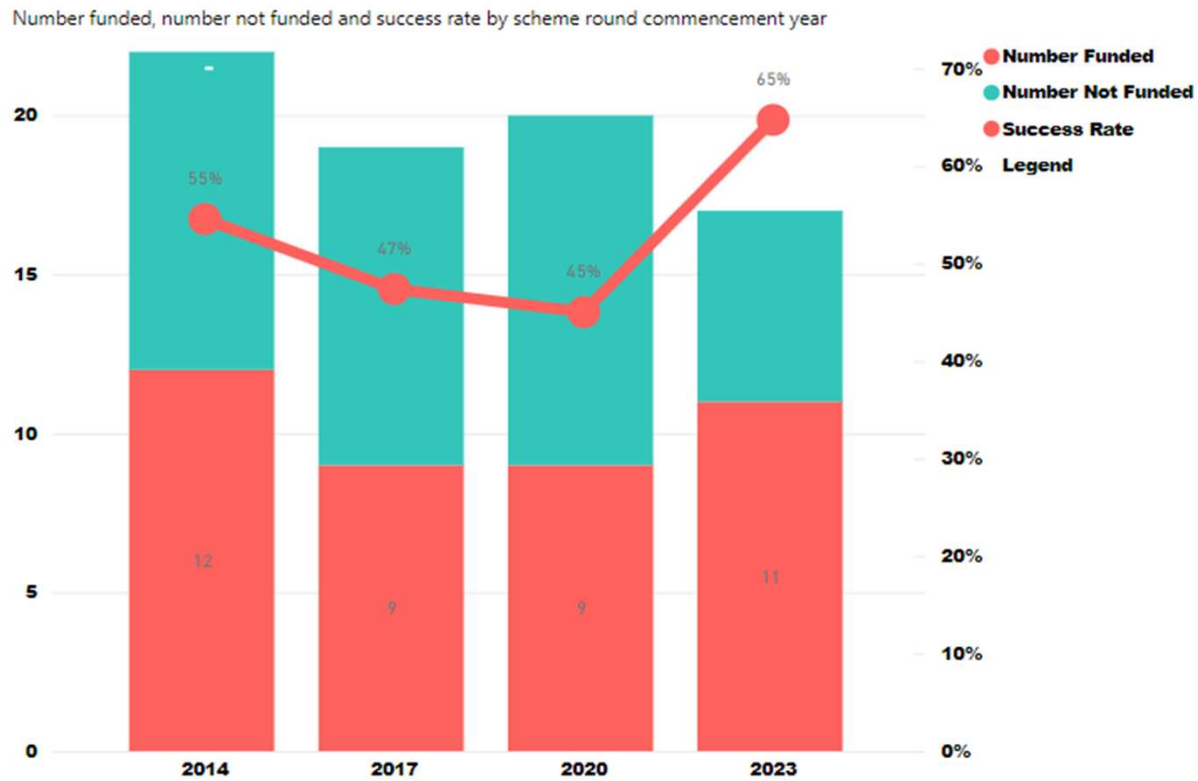
# ARC Centres of Excellence 2023: Full Application Numbers by Primary Discipline Group

## ARC Centres of Excellence



# ARC Centre of Excellence Success Rates for Full Applications by Calendar Year

## ARC Centres of Excellence



# ARC Centres of Excellence: funding by Field of Research Included : CE14, CE17, CE20 and CE23

FoR2D	Number of Centres	Funding
Physical Sciences	10	\$328,548,816
Biological Sciences	5	\$153,000,000
Chemical Sciences	4	\$126,806,464
Studies in Human Society	3	\$87,136,997
Technology	3	\$83,935,113
Engineering	2	\$70,000,000
Indigenous Studies	2	\$70,000,000
Earth Sciences	2	\$65,050,000
Language, Communication and Culture	2	\$59,783,576
Mathematical Sciences	2	\$55,000,000
Education	1	\$34,934,591
History and Archaeology	1	\$33,750,000
Environmental Sciences	1	\$28,000,000
Economics	1	\$27,250,000
Medical and Health Sciences	1	\$20,000,000
Information and Computing Sciences	1	\$19,000,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>\$1,228,445,557</b>

# ARC Centres of Excellence scheme objectives

- a. undertake **highly innovative and potentially transformational research** that aims to **achieve international standing** in the fields of research envisaged and leads to a **significant advancement of capabilities and knowledge**;
- b. link existing **Australian research strengths** and **build critical mass** with new capacity for **interdisciplinary, collaborative approaches** to address the most **challenging and significant research problems**;
- c. develop relationships and **build new networks with major national and international centres** and research programs to help strengthen research, achieve global competitiveness and gain recognition for Australian research;
- d. build Australia's **human capacity in a range of research areas** by attracting and retaining, from within Australia and abroad, researchers of high international standing as well as the most promising research students;
- e. provide high-quality postgraduate and postdoctoral training environments for the **next generation of researchers**;
- f. offer Australian researchers **opportunities** to work on **large-scale problems over longer periods of time**; and
- g. establish Centres that have an **impact on the wider community** through **interaction with, and beneficial outcomes for, higher education institutions, governments, industry and the private and non-profit sectors**.



# Common Issues & Challenges in Meeting Scheme Objectives

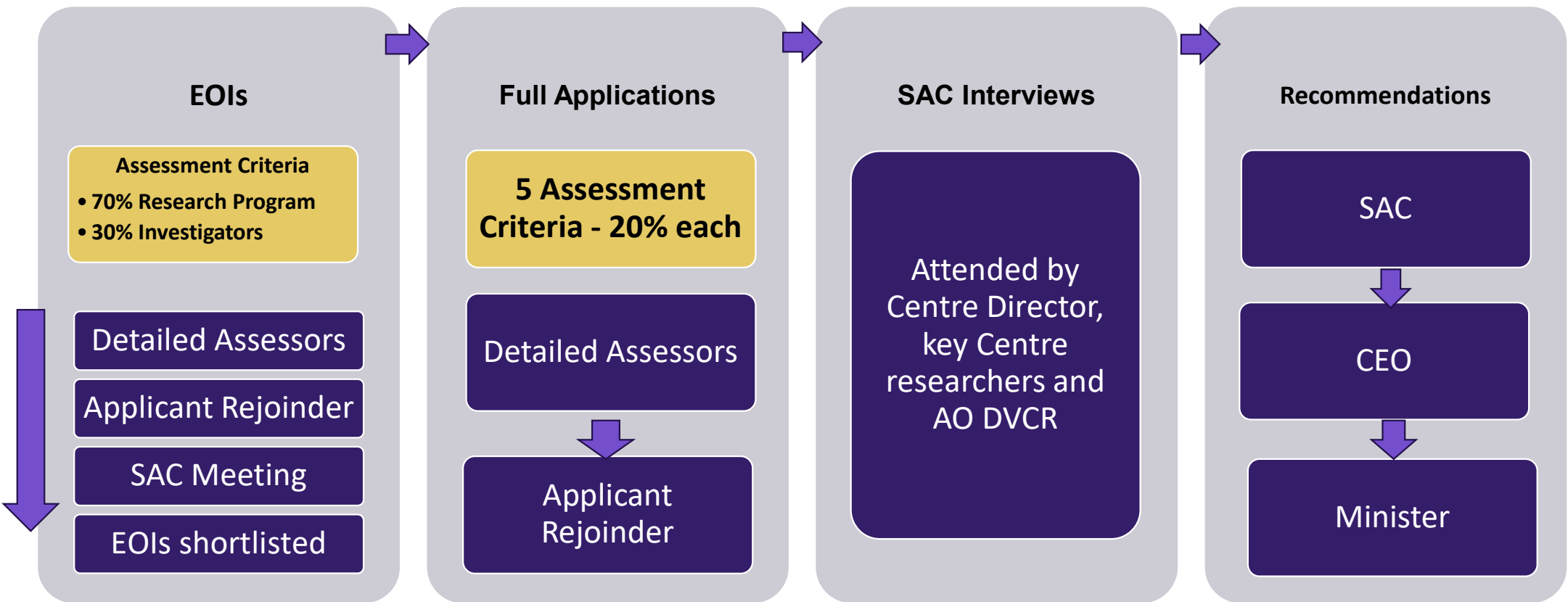
- Proposal lacks integration across its activities; looks like a series of Discovery Projects (criteria A & E);
- Governance arrangements have not been appropriately considered/developed for the size of the Centre and duration of its activities (criteria D);
- The vision of the proposal which ideally identifies a transformational challenge and a pathway to address it is hard to identify/understand/appreciate for out of field assessors (criteria A & E);
- The proposal is not driven by research questions, but by partner-driven outcomes (criteria A); or,
- There are noticeable gaps in collaboration; administering organisations who have staff with relevant expertise have not been included (criteria A & B); and
- The collaboration with relevant partner organisations to realise research outcomes and linkages is not convincing (criteria E);
- The budget is not well-designed for the size and scale of the funding opportunity (criteria A).

## Common Issues & Challenges (continued)

- The project is not well-designed for the scale and significance of the funding opportunity (e.g., it lacks interdisciplinary range; the ambition is incremental; the research is organised around discrete projects; and the program activities have not been designed around a research translation & impact pathway) (criteria A & E)
- At the full application stage, the budget design and the commitment from Partner Organisations has not been articulated in a way that establishes pathways for enduring research linkages and collaborations (criteria C & E)
- At the interview stage, the team dynamics and pitch (including evidence of gender and career diversity, capacity across the team to speak to the project in a compelling way) fall short (criteria B & D)
- The team does not cohere; it is a collection of stellar individuals without a sense of common purpose (criteria B)
- There is no attention to succession planning; the project hinges on a couple of notable researchers (criteria B, C & D)
- The project is not well aligned with the strategic priorities of the Administering Organisation (criteria c)

# ARC 2023 Centre of Excellence – Assessment Process

Example - competitive three stage assessment process for 2023 applications



# The 2023 scheme assessment criteria

## Criteria & weightings for EOIs and Full Applications

### Expression of Interest: assessment criteria & weightings

Assessment Criteria	Eoi Weighting
A. Research program – quality and innovation	70%
B. Investigators	30%

# The 2023 scheme assessment criteria

## Full application: assessment criteria & weightings

Assessment Criteria	Weighting
A. Research program – quality and innovation	20%
B. Investigators	20%
C. Institutional support	20%
D. Governance, leadership and mentoring	20%
E. Outcomes and linkages	20%

# CE23 Application Form

## **9 Parts (A-I) in the CE23 application form:**

A) Administrative Summary

B) Classifications and Other Statistical Information

C) Centre Eligibility

D) Centre Description

E) Centre Cost

F) Participant Details including ROPE (This section will not appear until participant details have been added/accepted in Part A.)

G) Other Personnel Associated with the Centre

H) Capacity of Participants

I) Other Eligible and Partner Organisations

# Spotlight on Assessment Criteria: Research Quality and Innovation

## Research Program – Quality and Innovation

Assessment Criteria A (EoI [70%]; Full Application [20%])

Application Part D – Centre Description (+F, H & I).

### Identify how the proposed Centre:

- **addresses the objectives** of the ARC Centres of Excellence grant opportunity;
- **will be innovative and potentially transformational**, and lead to **significant advancement of knowledge, expertise and technologies**;
- will **build effective collaboration and critical mass** across groups of researchers;
- is **assembled into an effective and integrated research program** (including the proposed conceptual framework, design, human resource commitments, methods and analyses, project structures, budget planning and risk mitigation strategies); and
- **will build effective and high quality national and international partnerships, exchanges and networks.**

## Spotlight on Assessment Criteria: Research Quality and Innovation 2

If the project involves research pertaining to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities describe:

- the strategies for enabling collaboration with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities (for example, dialogue/collaboration with an Indigenous cultural mentor);
- any existing or developing, supportive and high-quality relationships with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities; and
- any personal affiliations with local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities that can facilitate the proposed research.



## Spotlight on Assessment Criteria: Research Quality and Innovation 2 (Potential Change)

If the project involves Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander research additional criteria include:

- the project's level of collaboration, engagement, relationship building and benefit sharing with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and First Nations Organisations and Communities;
- the project's strategy and mechanisms for Indigenous research capacity building within the project;
- the project's level of internal leadership of Indigenous research;
- the project's adherence to [the Australian Indigenous Data Sovereignty Principles](#); and
- the project's understanding of, and proposed strategies to adhere to, the [AIATSIS Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research](#) and [NHMRC's guidelines on Ethical conduct in research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and communities](#).

## Spotlight on Assessment Criteria: Investigators

### **Investigators/Capability**

Assessment Criteria B (EoI [30%]; Full Application [20%])

Application Parts D, F, G, H

#### **Demonstrate Investigators/Capability through identifying:**

- the contribution of the Centre Director, CIs and PIs to the proposed research program and their demonstration of appropriate capability, capacity and commitment to the Centre; and
- the extent to which the investigators are suitable and relevant to the conduct and delivery of the proposed research program, giving consideration to Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence (ROPE).

## Spotlight on Assessment Criteria: Institutional Support

### **Institutional Support**

Assessment Criteria C (Full Application [20%])

Application Parts D, E, I (D3 Statement by the Administering Organisation)

#### **Demonstrate this through identifying:**

- the extent to which the Centre is aligned with the research focus and strategic direction of the Administering Organisation; and
- how the combined level of support and commitment from the Administering Organisation, Other Eligible Organisations and Partner Organisations will be sufficient for the proposed Centre.

# Spotlight on Assessment Criteria: Governance, Leadership & Mentoring

## Governance, Leadership & Mentoring

Assessment Criteria D (Full Application [20%])

Application Parts D, E, F, G, H

**Demonstrate this through identifying:**

- the **appropriateness of the organisational structure of the Centre**, including:
  - proposed **management arrangements and responsibilities** (including management of dispersed and diverse teams and reporting arrangements both internally and externally)
  - financial systems, strategic and translation plans, **milestones for achievement of objectives and delivery of outputs, outcomes and benefits**, and draft Key Performance Indicators

## Spotlight on Assessment Criteria: Governance, Leadership & Mentoring 2

- the relevance of the performance measures listed in the application to the proposed Centre’s objectives, project outputs, outcomes and benefits, and their appropriateness for assessing the Centre’s performance;
- the **leadership ability and vision of the Centre Director and leadership team** including their capacity to perform the responsibilities of the role including strategic planning and management;
- the contribution of the Centre to **research training and mentoring at the Honours, postgraduate and postdoctoral level**; and
- the contribution of the Centre’s education and engagement programs to professional development, ethical and technical training, and **outreach**.

# Spotlight on Assessment Criteria: Outcomes and Linkages

Assessment Criteria E (Full Application [20%]): **Outcomes and Linkages**

Application Parts D, I.

**Demonstrate this through identifying the:**

- way the proposed Centre **articulates the path of its research program to Research Impact in terms of delivering benefit to Australia;**
- **links with Australian researchers in universities, other research organisations, industry and strategic agencies that will facilitate collaboration in, and application of the outcomes of, the proposed research program;**
- **partners and end-users which will be involved in the translation of outcomes arising from the proposed research program;**
- **plans and strategies in place for the translation of research outcomes including: knowledge transfer, knowledge application, and if applicable, technology transfer, including fostering a culture of innovation, focus on outcomes and Centre legacy;**

## Spotlight on Assessment Criteria: Outcomes and Linkages 2

- **supporting organisational arrangements and plans** in place relating to ownership and potential exploitation of intellectual property and/or utilisation or commercialisation of research (where appropriate);
- proposed research program **expands Australia’s knowledge base and research capability and enhance Australia’s international reputation and competitiveness;**
- proposed research program makes a **significant contribution to one or more of the Science and Research Priorities;**
- proposed research program delivers effective outcomes commensurate with the request for appropriate resources (**value for money**);
- proposed Centre **involves partners and end-users in development of strategic and translation plans and proposed Centre governance;** and
- proposed Centre **develops and enhances high-level international linkages to benefit the research, training and translation of program outcomes.**

## Timeline: ARC Centres of Excellence 2026.....

### **Consultation on ARC Centres of Excellence Grant Guidelines and Processes - Closed 29/11/23**

Pending review of submissions received and Ministerial approval of any changes, CoE scheme timing is expected to be roughly similar to the CE2023 round:

approx. end Q2 2024 for submission of **EoI**;

approx. end Q1 2025 for submission of **full application** for those invited to full application stage;

**interviews** approx. beginning of Q3 2025.\*

\*These dates are subject to change and will be confirmed with the sector when finalised\*



**Questions?**

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Thank you

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