

Lessons in
Coalescence + Cohesion + Culture
from three centres of excellence

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Weather of the 21st Century

Three take home messages questions

Coalescence

- Your team must *want* to do what you're promising: Question: What *grand* challenge or *shared* vision are you rallying around?

Cohesion

- Your aim is organisational maturity as soon as practicable – hopefully already somewhat evident by the full application stage. Question: What will be your centre's strategic, structural and symbolic integrators for 7 years?

Culture

- Centres of Excellence do things differently and can shape a generation of HDR scholars and ECRs. Question: How do you plan to alter the status quo?

Coalescence

- You're asking people to get out of bed for \$35 million. *What grand challenge and shared vision are you rallying around?*
- It's all good and well to craft a proposal to wow grant reviewers, but you have to be able to deliver what you promise once you're funded. You, your team, your nodes and your partners must *want* to do all of what you say you'll do. *Again, what are your rallying points? What people and organisations do you need?*
- Your CIs will gladly coalesce around money! How you structure your budget will either incentivise or unintentionally damage collaborative research. Budget for *activities*, not for *individuals*. *How are you structuring your budget to address your rallying point/s? "Every CI gets a postdoc and discretionary funds for 7 years" doesn't work.*
- What's in it for your partners? What's in it for the centre? Choose partners wisely and make sure they know what they're signing up to. *Can you define the mutual benefit of each partnership to rally around?*

Cohesion

Strategic – Structural – Symbolic

- What will success look like? It's not just conducting your research, but running a successful, cohesive and impactful organisation. Take strategic planning and research design seriously. **What strategic portfolios do you need to build apart from your research teams? Who do you need to hire? Early reality check: if you have trouble creating coalescence around strategy at the EOI stage, seven years of trying to implement your vision is going to be ... challenging.**
- Governance, executive leadership, organisational structure and centre operations are critically important. **What might your advisory body/ies look like? Who are the right people for leadership roles? How much regret do you want to live with if you under-invest in professional and third space staff?**
- Symbolism is important. You may balk at terms like “branding” or “messaging” but this is more than mere marketing. **You want to be recognised as an authoritative voice outside the centre and create invisible bonds for those within. People relate to symbols!**

Culture

- “Culture eats strategy for breakfast” but what is culture in a cross institutional research organisation and how much influence do you as a leadership team have?
- You’ll shepherd hundreds of HDR students and ECRs over 7 years. They are the future of research. What environment do you want to create for them? OR what environment will *they* create for *you*? What do your partners want in their future employees?
- Attributes of the centres I’ve worked in:
 - Dynamic & Innovative
 - Cooperative
 - Healthy, respectful debate
 - Nurturing
 - Progressive and equitable
 - Courageous
 - Integrated
 - Democratic
 - Kind and respectful

21st Century Weather



ARC Centre of Excellence

Coalescence

Cohesion

Culture

\$35 mil



Thank you



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