



Australian Government
Australian Research Council

ARC

Establishment Toolkit

ARC Centres of Excellence

Date Updated 14 August 2024

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1. Purpose and Definitions

This toolkit supplements the CE26 Grant Agreement and aims to assist you in the establishment period and ongoing management of your ARC Centres of Excellence grant.

The **Project Start Date** is the date on which the project commences research and/or ARC Grant expenditure. This cannot occur until all Participating Organisation Agreements have been executed.

The **Establishment period** means the period before all written agreements with Participating Organisations are executed.

(Please also see [Establishment Funds](#) in this document)

The **Project End Date** means the date when the ARC funded project activity is completed, and all ARC Grant Funds are fully spent.

2. Commencement Timeline

	Within 30 days after Offer	Establishment (Before Project Start Date)		Deadline to start	Commencement (After Project Start Date)	
		Approx 1-6 months	Approx 6-12 months		Within 6 months	Within 12 months
Announcement						
Accept Grant Agreement						
Accept Grant Offer						
Extension (on request)						
Submit Transition Plan (if applicable)		Within 3 months of offer				
Request Establishment Funding						
Participating Agreements Executed						
Commencement / Project Start						
KPI development & submitted to ARC						
Strategic & Operational Plan development (see Grant agreement)						
Launch Date						

Figure 1 ARC Centres of Excellence Commencement Timeline

3. Before You Begin

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Hold a strategic planning workshop with the team within the first few months of establishment. Include as many participants as possible, noting you can use the establishment funds to support this activity. When everyone has buy-in to the vision, engagement will remain high.

Some topics/questions for this meeting might include:

- Development of **Strategic and Operational Plans** per the Grant Agreement
- Revisit the **budget** if necessary
- Development of a framework for implementing operational requirements
- Think about your legacy:
 - What are your impact pathways
 - How will you track evidence of impact from the beginning?
 - What tools will you use to collect impact evidence across the ARC Centre of Excellence lifespan?
- Define **Roles and Responsibilities**
- How will you collaborate?
- Process for reporting and variations to funding agreement
 - Detailed project plans with partners
 - Developing KPIs
- Preparation for recruitment – what are the challenges? What is your risk mitigation strategy?
- Development of a Prospectus for Partners

TIP: Invite the ARC to present key messaging about ARC expectations to CIs

BUILD AND USE YOUR NETWORKS

- Previous and current Directors and Chief Operating Officer (COOs) have a wealth of experience to share. The ARC publishes previously funded Projects on the website, or the ARC Post Award team can facilitate an introduction.
- COOs have established state based and national groups which provide a peer network and best practice.
- Your DVCR can be a great advocate and can also assist with problems. Keep them involved and aware of barriers you might be facing.
- Connect with your Research Office regularly – they can assist you with queries and are in regular contact with the ARC Post Award team.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Consider your own professional development as a Director. Do you have/need a coach or a mentor?
- In addition to providing training and development for your early career researchers and students, consider the professional development of your COOs.
- What is your succession plan for leadership?

MANAGE EXPECTATIONS

- It will take some time to get set up. Manage expectations of your Partners and other members.
- Be transparent and get early buy in from members on your vision, policies, and processes.
- Be strategic about onboarding **new Partners** – have a plan and purpose in place.

- Plan and consider documenting how you agree to make decisions, for example financial expenditure, succession planning, conflicts of interest, cross node supervision and other governance issues.
- Think about how you will communicate and collaborate.

4. Administering Organisation – Establishment Support

Early support from key University corporate administration is essential in the establishment period of a Major Investment.

The ARC encourages adoption of an administrative taskforce to assist you with navigating complex operational processes, policy, and legal negotiation with all Participants. This taskforce can include representatives from:

- Research Office
- Human Resources
- Finance
- Communications
- Information and Communications Technology
- Legal office
- Commercialisation and IP/Business Development

Some Universities have taskforce structures already in place, or you can request a temporary one. An Administrative taskforce can support the establishment of the Centre by providing guidance on:

- recruitment and appointments arrangements for new personnel (for the Administering Organisation and other participating organisations)
- grant budget set up and management and clear financial delegation/s
- setting up reporting requirements both to the ARC and with participating organisations
- development of corporate identity and branding of the Centre of Excellence
- establishing relevant key administration contacts for ongoing support
- assistance with legal agreements and negotiations with the Participating Organisations
- setting up best practice governance processes for your Centre of Excellence.

TIP: Document the operational guidance to create reference material over the life of the Centre of Excellence. This may assist to retain consistency in the event of staff changes over time.

5. Transitioning Arrangements

In some cases, a new ARC Centres of Excellence grant is awarded before the end date of a previously funded ARC Centres of Excellence grant, and this will require a transition arrangement. To manage the transition arrangements the ARC requires you to submit a transition statement for our consideration. The transition statement must provide an explanation of how the transition will be managed, including any duplication or overlap.

The transition statement must be provided to the Post Award team via ARC-Postaward@arc.gov.au **within three months** of the new Grant Offer being executed by the ARC.

See Grant Agreement B2.4 for transition requirements.

IMPORTANT: If the transition statement is unsatisfactory in outlining the transition arrangements, or if there is potential overlap of funding, and these matters are not addressed, the ARC may recover funds from either the new and/or old Investment.

Examples of transitioning arrangements for Centre of Excellence

There are three general options for transition:

Example 1:

Allow the existing grant to conclude and then commence the new grant. Approval may be required from the ARC to delay the start of the new grant.

Example 2:

The existing grant continues with an acting Centre Director while the new grant commences with the original Centre Director. This arrangement must carefully describe the movement of all personnel from the old to the new, where relevant. You must seek approval from the ARC to appoint an acting Centre Director to manage the existing grant.

Example 3:

Seek approval from the ARC to conclude the existing grant early (with or without a partial relinquishment of funds) and then commence the new grant.

6. Participating Organisation Agreements

Negotiating and executing agreements with Participating Organisations requires significant coordinated effort and good engagement with parties on expected outcomes.

For more information regarding Participating Organisations, please see A2.2.5 of the ARC Grant Agreement.

INCLUSIONS IN PARTICIPATING ORGANISATION AGREEMENTS

All Participating Organisation Agreements must have specific inclusions under the ARC Grant Agreement.

Please see ARC Grant Agreement A2.2.5 for details of these inclusions.

Of particular importance is specifying roles and responsibilities, and clear guidance in Conflicts of Interest management arrangements. This should include the identification and ongoing management of current relationships within the Centre of Excellence and how potential future conflicts will be identified and managed.

FORMAT OF PARTICIPATING ORGANISATION AGREEMENTS

Building on the initial discussions and draft agreements developed during the Centres application phase, you may choose a format for Participating Organisation Agreements that is fit for purpose for the grant.

This may be a single agreement with multiple organisations or a single agreement per institution.

Negotiating Agreements with some overseas based Organisations can be particularly challenging and time consuming. You may also consider a simplified agreement in certain circumstances (for example if the organisation is making a smaller relative contribution).

TIP: ARMSIG have developed overarch Multi-Institutional Agreements to support large project negotiations. Speak with your Research Office or existing Centres of Excellence on best Participating Organisation Agreement practices.

MANAGING DELAYS TO EXECUTION OF PARTICIPATING ORGANISATION AGREEMENTS

If delays in executing any of the Participating Organisation agreements means that you are at risk of not starting your grant by the date specified in the Grant Agreement, please contact the ARC Post Award ARC-Postaward@arc.gov.au for advice.

ADDITIONAL INTEREST TO JOIN THE ARC CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE

You may experience a surge of interest from other organisations that would like to be involved during the Establishment Period and beyond.

Ensure there is a clear strategy and criteria for managing requests for adding new organisations including intellectual property.

Example Framework for considering new Participating Organisations

- How does the Participating Organisation align in the research program and collaboration framework of other organisations?
- Does the new Participating Organisation enhance the capability and direction of the research program?
- Is this organisation replacing a Participating Organisation that has been removed from the grant? Is this 'like for like', or not?
- What is the impact on the existing shared IP arrangements?
- Is there clear support from the current Participating Organisations to add the new organisation?
- Is the new partnership more appropriate for:
 - a Fee for Service contract or consultancy arrangement direct with a university (for example when the partners are seeking 100% IP ownership)
 - a separate grant opportunity (e.g., ARC Linkage Projects, ARC Discovery Projects or Cooperative Research Centres Projects [CRC-P]) (for example, shared IP and outside of the Centre's Research Program of activities).

TIP: Consider a stakeholder strategy or a framework to evaluate the merits, risks, and strategic value of the prospective collaboration.

7. Funding

The first ARC payment is made to the Administering Organisation in the next monthly pay run in the first funded year. For more information regarding ARC payments, please visit the 'Grant Payments' page on the [ARC website](#).

ESTABLISHMENT FUNDS

As per ARC Grant Agreement B2.2.1

Notwithstanding the execution requirements associated with Participating Organisations, You may expend up to \$100,000 from the Grant in the first year of the Grant Period before all Participating Organisation agreements are executed.

Allowable expenses are specified in the Grant Agreement.

Request to access the establishment funds.

- A breakdown of proposed expenditure and rationale (no more than one-page – see below example)
- Research Office to ARC-Postaward@arc.gov.au for ARC delegate approval.

The Administering Organisation ***holds the risk*** for incurring any other costs above and beyond the establishment funds before the grant has officially commenced.

Access to the remaining project funds for eligible budget items will only be available once the Grant has officially commenced.

Noting the early commencement of the COO and other support staff, please ensure that you phase your budget so there is salary support for the COO through to the end of the Grant.

Example of an establishment fund request:

Request for Total \$X of ARC establishment funding to support the following activities:

Personnel	Salary for the Chief Operating Officer (COO) at HEW Level 10 Recruitment costs including advertising to be employed by the Administering Organisation to directly assist in establishment activities	\$X
Personnel	Support widespread recruitment campaign	\$X
Outreach Activities	Website, branding and promotional material, set up social media accounts and protocols and develop dissemination strategies	\$X
Travel	Initial meeting/ retreat to discuss and establish governance framework and guidelines, research project plans and confirm processes for reporting requirements and KPIs incl Air fares and taxis (\$X each), accommodation (\$X each), venue hire and expenses \$X	\$X
Travel	Workshops/ meetings/ visits to Participating Orgs to discuss facilities, research programs, student supervision etc	\$X
Other	Early costs for governance committees	\$X
TOTAL		\$X

INDEXATION

Indexation is applied to ARC grant payments each year following the grant being awarded.

The indexation applied is intended to cover the increase costs from year to year.

Indexation funds can be used flexibly, for example some funding could be used to top up strategic funds and at the discretion of Financial Delegation.

All scenarios should be agreed to between all parties.

8. Governance

ARC Centres of Excellence grants are large Commonwealth investments with multiple organisations involved and are considered by the ARC to be independent national research entities. Clear governance arrangements facilitate successful program management, increased participation, good risk mitigation, and effective translation of outcomes.

The role and responsibilities of these leadership positions must be documented and clear.

The ARC does not give specific recommendations on governance structure. Talk to other existing Centres of Excellence Directors and COOs for examples of best practice.

GOVERNANCE PROCESSES

It is very important to document the governance of the ARC Centres of Excellence grant including how changes and issues will be managed. All committees require terms of reference which clearly outline the

role of each committee, quorum requirements, and provide guidance on any recommendation or decision-making processes.

Clear operational processes should be developed, documented, and understood by the senior leadership. These should set out clear ground rules about who to consult for key decisions and in what instances. For example, you may wish to document how you will manage Code of Conduct, Equity & Diversity, Communications, Complaints, Conflict of Interest, Risk Management etc.

This can become useful in situations where major decisions need to be made (e.g., changes with Investigators, the directions and performance of the Project, and budget/ scope Variations).

Reporting Lines

Establish clear management reporting lines for the ARC Centres of Excellence grant to ensure there is smooth and regular communication with the relevant parties. This is both reporting to participating organisations as well as reporting back to the Administering Organisation to comply with ARC requirements.

Consider reporting lines within the context of the governance structure of the ARC Centres of Excellence grant including across the nodes. Note that administration staff within other nodes may report to the Node Leader Chief Investigator rather than the central administration team. This needs to be managed carefully as administrative staff are contributing to the ARC Centres of Excellence grant as a whole, not appointed as executive or research assistants for researchers.

It is common for the Centre Director to report to a Head of School, Dean, or in some instances directly to Deputy Vice Chancellor Research (DVCR). The Administering Organisation should help inform Heads of School or Deans of their responsibilities in having a Centre Director of a national research entity funded by the ARC reporting to them.

Financial Delegations

Delegations must be determined early for expenditure of Financial and Human Resources activities to allow for smooth operational autonomy for the Centre Director, other Investment executives and COO.

If a change to the structure of delegations inside a university is required, renegotiate, and allow for lead time to complete this negotiation process.

Senior leadership should clearly support the efforts of the COO and administrative team in managing operational requirements and intervene when necessary to ensure compliance by all participants, people, and organisations in managing expenditure and other reporting requirements.

TIP: For more ideas and to assist in engaging with other universities, contact Research Office staff, and COOs from other ARC Centres of Excellence to learn about administrative structures, identify key contacts and understand their financial and other delegations.

GOVERNANCE PLAN

A robust governance framework for the ARC Centre of Excellence should identify:

- key expert advice needed
- structure of the committees with Terms of Reference, including reviewing membership regularly
- ARC policy frameworks for managing conflicts of interest and confidentiality clauses
- reporting requirements
- ongoing management of risks and mitigation strategies
- identify regulatory frameworks, university policy, and critical legislation requirements.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Centre Director and Deputy Director/s

The Centre Director is responsible for developing and implementing the strategies and managing the research project. The Centre Director must coordinate the research effort and reporting structures across the Other Eligible Organisation(s) and Partner Organisation(s).

Ensure any delegate responsibilities of the Centre Director as part of the Executive Management Committee are clearly outlined in the terms of reference. The Centre Director is expected to have oversight of budget/expenditure, human resources matters, reporting and other management matters.

The Deputy Director/s supports the Centre Director in all management activities and may be important for succession planning. Some ARC Centres of Excellence have more than one Deputy Director while other ARC Centres of Excellence have one Deputy Director with Node Leaders from each node.

Node/ Theme Leaders

ARC Centre of Excellence are encouraged to be cross-disciplinary and cross-nodal, as far as practicable. This will mean some administrative and leadership roles and responsibilities may need to be established and maintained at non-Administering Organisation Nodes.

The responsibility of theme/node leaders should be clearly defined. Responsibilities include:

- management and administrative delegations at their individual institutions
- ensuring the node is well integrated within the research program both within the node and across the ARC Centre of Excellence
- management and administration of research activities within their node
- oversight of the research directions and outcomes as specified in the Research Theme
- assist in building integrated ARC Centres of Excellence culture and delivering on the research program.

Associate Investigators (AIs)

Associate Investigators (AI) are researchers listed in the ARC Centres of Excellence Application who were not Chief Investigators or Partner Investigators but who will participate in the ARC Centres of Excellence Research Program. They may have specific expertise relevant to an aspect of the ARC Centres of Excellence Research Program, or may not be able to, or wish to commit to the responsibilities of a Chief Investigator or Partner Investigator.

In many cases, an AI's contribution is to provide mentorship or guidance to students or have a small role within one of the projects of the ARC Centres of Excellence's research program.

The ARC does not formally recognise Associate Investigators as a participant on the ARC Centres of Excellence, so they are not named in the ARC Centres of Excellence's details in RMS. As such, AIs cannot manage ARC funds or participate in the ARC Centres of Excellence as a project lead. Additionally, AI's contributions to the ARC Centres of Excellence are not counted towards any eligibility limits to apply for future grants.

The ARC Centres of Excellence may acknowledge the AI's contributions within the Annual Reports and on their websites.

Chief Operating Officer (COO)

ARC funds are allocated to appoint a highly qualified COO for the ARC Centre of Excellence at the HEW 10 level.

An appropriate competitive recruitment process should be followed. The COO is a vital participant and is expected to lead the business and operational management. As such, the COO is expected to be appointed at a HEW level 10.

As one of the first appointees, the COO will play an important role in coordinating the negotiation and execution of the Participating Organisation Agreements in collaboration with other Participating Organisations.

It is also important that the COO liaises with the Administrating Organisation and other administrative support personnel at the nodes from the early stages to build an operational network to support effective governance and administration.

Following formal appointment, please complete a Person - Add Variation to add the COO to the project as per B2.3.3(g) of the ARC Grant Agreement.

COMMITTEES

Executive Management Committee

The Executive Management Committee is responsible for providing leadership and decision making and thus requires organisational representation of senior leadership to ensure good management and research outcomes.

Clear roles and responsibilities should be documented for the Executive Management Committee to delineate between delegation/decision making responsibilities and when the committee provides advice.

The COO is an important member of the Executive Management Committee to ensure operational aspects of the ARC Centres of Excellence are present in discussions, as context for the decision-making.

Members of the Executive Management Committee should be working together for the best interests of the ARC Centre of Excellence (and not individual institutions).

Advisory Committee

The ARC recommends that an **Advisory Committee** is established as early as possible and maintained for the duration of the Project Activity Period as per clause B2.2.5 of the Grant Agreement.

The purpose of the Advisory Committee is to assist the ARC Centre of Excellence leadership by contributing to the development of strategies and vision for the future, relative to the proposed goals and objectives of the Centre.

The Advisory Committee can be an invaluable source of strategic advice to the Centre Director and senior leadership for developing and maintaining the strategic focus, the structure and general operating principles, and leveraging potential national benefits such as opportunities for new intellectual property, commercialisation and other important translation outcomes.

The Advisory Committee should be designed as a source of ideas for creating better linkages between academia, industry, government, and other sectors.

Membership

The membership of the Advisory Committee must take into consideration strategic directions, risks and opportunities and seek the relevant expertise required to address the future challenges and opportunities for the ARC Centre of Excellence as it develops and matures. The committee can have national and international membership and can play an ambassadorial role for the ARC Centre of Excellence. Scientific, governance or operational expertise can be sought from members—whatever is needed to support the ARC Centre of Excellence.

The Centre Director, relevant executive and COO may be observers but not members.

The ARC does not stipulate the number of members for committees, only that it should have the right mix of expertise.

The ARC expects the Advisory Committee members to have significant reputations and expertise and provide broad representation of the research excellence and end-user communities. An Advisory Committee could include some of the following:

- senior international researchers,
- industry or end-user representatives,
- government and policy decision makers,
- community groups,
- academic expertise from other higher education institutions, or
- senior university staff such as the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research) if they bring important expertise or skills to the Committee.

Advisory Committee membership must be reviewed at least every two years.

Advisory Committee Terms of Reference

Develop clear Terms of Reference including:

- objectives and role
- scope of work and advice
- gender equality and diversity
- quorum requirements
- Early Career Researcher (ECR) participation (as a part of professional development and mentoring)
- equitable organisational representation
- refreshing membership regularly to continue developing and meeting new strategic directions.

International Research Advisory Committee (optional)

The ARC Centre of Excellence may choose to establish and maintain a separate International Research Advisory Committee in addition to the Advisory Committee.

The purpose of the International Advisory Committee is to:

- provide an international perspective on the ARC Centre of Excellence's research field,
- undertake benchmarking of the ARC Centre of Excellence's Research Program, and
- assist ARC Centre of Excellence management and the Advisory Committee in developing the strategic research direction of the ARC Centre of Excellence.

The International Research Advisory Committee must provide reports and advice to the Centre Director and Advisory Committee regarding the international standing of the ARC Centre of Excellence's Research Program.

While the final composition of the International Research Advisory Committee is a matter for the Administering Organisation and the ARC Centre of Excellence, it must consist of members with significant

reputations and include senior international researchers who are experts in the field and who are not Partner Investigators in the ARC Centre of Excellence.

The International Research Advisory Committee must meet at least once a year.

International benchmarking of the Research Program undertaken by the International Advisory Committee should take place regularly, at least once every two years.

The Advisory Committee may additionally take on some of the responsibilities of an International Advisory Committee, but in this case the membership of the Advisory Committee must have equivalent expertise.

9. Strategic and Operational Plans

Throughout the establishment phase, several plans need to be put in place within six months of the Project Start Date.

As per the Grant Agreement B2.2.7 the following are mandatory:

- Strategic Plan
- Gender equality and diversity plan
- Mentoring and professional development plan
- Communication, education and outreach plan

Further advice is highlighted below on some other policies and procedures you may want to consider.

INITIAL MEETING

An initial meeting or strategic planning day should be held with the team within the first few months of establishment. Include as many participants as possible, noting you can use the establishment funds to support this activity. Some topics for this meeting might include:

- [strategic plan](#) components
- development of a framework for implementing critical operational requirements
- processes for reporting and Variations to Grant Agreement
- [revisiting the budget if necessary](#)
- framework for use of strategic funds
- detailed project plans with partners
- development of operational procedures
- developing KPIs
- recruitment plan

STRATEGIC PLAN

The Leadership team, Chief Investigators and the Advisory Committee must participate in the development and maintenance of the Strategic Plan, with all ARC Centres of Excellence staff given the opportunity to provide input.

The Strategic Plan should incorporate:

- clear purpose and vision statement
- expected outcomes of the research and indicators of success
- detailed research translation and/or Intellectual Property strategies
- risk and mitigation plans
- succession plans for critical positions and how to have continuous development of staff as future leaders
- identified and/or potential opportunities for more end-user and industry collaborations, including management strategies to action these
- managing opportunities for exploring emerging research areas

- additional funding sources to support projects both during the Project Activity Period and once the Grant has ceased, to ensure continued support for key talent - students and postdocs
- approach for management of performance issues across the Research Program including:
 - provisions to allow projects which have reached their natural end to be closed down
 - discontinuing underperforming projects
 - redistribution of funding across the ARC Centre of Excellence and appropriate consultation and discussion with relevant organisations and personnel in relation to such projects.

Revise the Strategic Plan annually and update over the project activity period, ideally with input from a broad range of members.

TIP: Circulate and consult in the development of the Strategic Plan and provide copies of it to all ARC Centre of Excellence participants when they are appointed as part of their induction to the ARC Centre of Excellence. The ARC may ask questions relating to this at the Mid-term Review.

TIP: Seek feedback from Partner Organisations and end-users to define what success looks like to them which will help refine the future outcomes mentioned in the Strategic Plan.

TIP: Consider setting the KPIs prior to finalising the Strategic Plan.

GENDER EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY PLAN

You must put in place a Gender Equality and Diversity Plan which will support recruitment and employment of postdoctoral researchers, students and other staff including committees. This plan should include:

- Consider innovative strategies to position the ARC Centre of Excellence as a flexible, inclusive, and an environment that enables a good work life balance.
- Support innovative recruitment processes and employment conditions of postdoctoral researchers, students and other staff including committees.
- Encourage the recruitment of and flexible employment arrangements for research personnel and other staff including committees.
- Be developed in conjunction with the human resources areas of the Participating Organisations.

MENTORING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

An ARC Centre of Excellence is expected to build human capacity and provide high-quality training for the next generation of researchers and research leaders, above and beyond the opportunities offered at the employing universities. To facilitate these responsibilities, the ARC Centre of Excellence must establish and implement a high-quality mentoring and professional development program, encompassing students, postdoctoral researchers, and mid-career researchers. The ARC Centre of Excellence should establish flexible supervision arrangements for students through which supervision can be arranged with researchers at Centre Nodes other than that at which the student is located or with Partner Investigators or Associate Investigators as appropriate.

This plan should include:

- Outline the implementation of a high-quality supervision, mentoring and professional development program which encompasses all students, postdoctoral researchers, and mid-career researchers.
- Outline mechanisms for student supervision, including co-supervision by researchers both across nodes and across academic disciplines or even across participating organisations.
- Where appropriate, confirm that the Centre Director, CIs and PIs must act as supervisors and mentors to assist less experienced personnel in developing research management and leadership skills and outline mechanisms through which this can occur. AIs may also undertake a mentoring role.

TIP: Consider what professional development courses can be leveraged from what is offered by the Administering Organisation, but also build into the budget funding for specialised training.

TIP: Consider having an ECR committee as an avenue for students and post docs to provide feedback to management.

TIP: Consider including a training plan.

COMMUNICATION, OUTREACH, AND EDUCATION PLAN

The ARC Centre of Excellence must develop, implement, and maintain a Communication, Education and Outreach Plan. The plan should outline the ARC Centre of Excellence's public awareness, education and outreach programs which must be relevant and appropriate to the ARC Centre of Excellence and its research area. Joint programs or events with ARC Centre of Excellence in similar or related fields can be established as appropriate.

All ARC Centre of Excellence researchers should receive media communications training and should be encouraged to participate in the public awareness, education, and outreach programs. The ARC Centre of Excellence and its research program must clearly articulate and promote the potential research impact to a wide range of audiences, as far as practicable.

RECRUITMENT PLAN

Adopt innovative and best practice university recruitment processes for the recruitment of staff to the ARC Centre of Excellence, the investment should attract the best candidates.

For example, you might consider innovative recruitment procedures to enable gender equality and diversity outcomes.

Consider the timing of appointments for staff and students across the life of the ARC Centres of Excellence to ensure an appropriate balance of resources and supervision of staff. Also plan for the final years of the ARC Centre of Excellence to ensure students are not left unsupported or unsupervised or have research activities that extend beyond the project end date.

It is important to achieve a balance of senior positions and postdoctoral researchers across all academic levels. This will create a strong foundation for effective succession planning in the ARC Centre of Excellence.

Following recruitment, all staff should undergo an induction process and a plan for their ongoing [professional development and mentoring](#) ensuring that plans are in place throughout the life of the Project.

Be innovative in ideas for mentoring and supervision—the ARC Centre of Excellence is building a future research workforce.

DATA MANAGEMENT PLAN

A data management plan must be developed prior to commencement.

The plan needs to describe how the ARC Centre of Excellence will manage the long-term preservation of data and metadata arising from the grant. Some considerations include storage, access and reuse arrangements of the data emerging from the ARC Centre of Excellence.

This plan should be reviewed and updated regularly.

TIP: Document the project IP through an IP register: this can be a simple excel document list or something more technical to suit the needs of the grant. Include information on Background IP , Expected Project IP and Process for managing new/emerging IP

DETAILED PROJECT PLANS

Each Centre will need to set up detailed project plans. While the activity occurs across the entire grant parties, the oversight of the process is driven centrally by the Centre of Excellence's executive leadership.

- Make sure the project agreements are well integrated within the research program to avoid it becoming a loose network of projects.
- Consider outlining the key milestones, reporting requirements, and an escalation process for issues/risks and mitigations.
- Consider how the projects will be managed through to translation of research outcomes including government engagement, avenues into influencing policy development, spin offs, and commercialisation. Have agreed tracking mechanisms for broad theme progress with partners and stakeholders ("stage gates").

Detailed project plans must be implemented in accordance with the 'Project Description' and within the broad structure of the proposed 'Project Cost' contained in the application, as well as any Special Conditions.

ARC Centres of Excellence grants may need to seek ARC approval for significant Research Program scope changes, at the program level. These could emerge during the early negotiations or during the lifespan of the agreement. For further details please see [Variations to Grant Agreement](#).

TRANSLATION PLAN

As per B2.5.3(i) of the ARC Grant Agreement, Centres are required to be evaluated against the quality and achievements against the strategic and translation plan. The translation plan should include:

- identify actual and potential end users including industry sectors and what success looks like to them
- map a clear pathway to research impact
- describe how progress can be monitored and measured
- show how data will be collected to undertake impact monitoring and evaluation
- outline of the benefits including IP arrangements and commercialisation pathways.

Consider mapping your translation of research outcomes early and plan for what impact and engagement measures can be used. What do the key successes look like to the end users? What is the measure for these successes? Have a strategic plan for capitalising on those opportunities.

Consult with your stakeholders and end-users of the research to ensure the impact measures are fit for purpose.

SETTING KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPIs)

You must submit Key Performance Indicator (KPI) targets, for the ARC Centre of Excellence for ARC approval within six months of the Project Start Date as per B2.2.3 of the ARC Grant Agreement

Prior to commencement of the project, all ARC Centres of Excellence must set performance targets across a range of categories for each year of funding. These performance targets or KPIs, are reported annually through the Annual Report.

KPIs are only one measurement of the overall performance of the ARC Centre of Excellence. It is important that adequate time and consideration is given to setting up KPI data collection processes.

Consider KPIs early and as one important mechanism for monitoring progress. KPIs targets must have targets to stretch performance. Excluding Year 1 performance where the ARC Centre of Excellence is still

establishing, consider reviewing KPI targets each year to ensure they are fit for purpose, as the targets may be revised with ARC approval.

TIP: The Centre can amend the KPI targets for the forward years at any time. You will need to seek approval from the ARC by emailing ARC-Postaward@arc.gov.au and provide a short rationale for the changes. If approved by the ARC, the updated targets can be reported on in forward years.

BUDGET PLAN

It may be necessary to revisit the original budget costings to the research program. If revisions are needed, make sure it is clearly documented. Include details on other changes in research direction or issues with equipment purchases or infrastructure access.

Have clear arrangements on the distribution, and in some cases recovery of funds, across nodes in response to managing the performance of the research program.

It is important to ensure that sufficient funds are allocated for administrative costs right to the end date of the ARC Centre of Excellence grant, or beyond (with approved use of Administering Organisation funds), to ensure all final reporting requirements are met.

Carefully consider the eligible budget items which the ARC funds can support, and which items will need to be supported through other funding sources. See the Grant Guidelines 5.1-5.4 for more information on eligible and non-eligible budget items.

It is important to have clearly documented rules for how the funds will be distributed so there is transparency in the process, including strategic funds.

It is also advisable to have a clear mechanism in place to report costs associate with ARC funds separate to other funds.

If there are significant changes to the budget, which include large amounts of funding being moved across line items, then a Budget Variation approval is required to be obtained from the ARC. For more information, please see the Variation to a Grant Agreement information on the [ARC Website](#).

In kind contributions should be documented and reported annually alongside the annual report. This ensures that the funding information provided to the ARC accurately reflects the contributions of partner organisations. The amounts must reflect what has been reported in the Partner Organisation Contribution Report (POACR). Detailed information is not required, but it should be reflective of the level of support provided by Participating Organisations.

Strategic Funds

Consider setting aside a pool of funds for strategic purposes. Agreement on the use and distribution of these funds should be established early and should be tied to rigorous performance management of the research projects.

The Administering Organisation should centrally administer strategic funds and its distribution with oversight by the [Executive Management Committee](#).

Previous Administering Organisations have set aside extra income from ARC indexation or bank interest to supplement strategic funds.

These funds can support new or serendipitous opportunities that may emerge. You must ensure these emerging investments align with the research program in the application or subsequent approved project scope change. These strategic funds can also be used for management of risk by funding mitigation plans if risks are realised.

Cash Contributions

Consider and document a model for managing and distributing cash contributions from Participating Organisations.

RESPONSIBLE CONDUCT OF RESEARCH AND RESEARCH ETHICS

Please refer to the Grant Agreement A2.1.2 for specific requirements.

CREATING AN ARC CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE AS AN ENTITY

See Grant Agreement B2.2.6 and B2.3.1 for website, social media and use of ARC logo.

An ARC Centre of Excellence is considered a national research enterprise that operates as an entity within the Administering Organisation.

You can engage external consultants to assist with web design and branding or reach out to the University's marketing/public relations staff for assistance.

Website and Social-Media

Establishing a website and social media presence is necessary to distinguish the ARC Centre of Excellence as its own entity and not a sub-department of a university and a great way to effectively communicate activities and outcomes.

It may be beneficial to establish a placeholder website to ensure that there is a domain name and URL available. There is currently no specific guidance from the ARC around domain names and previous entities have used .com, .org, and .edu.

TIP: Centre Directors can acknowledge their title in their signature block prior to the ARC Centre of Excellence commencing but only after the Grant Offer has been executed.

TIP: Share your Twitter handle with ARC-Communications@arc.gov.au and tag ARC in your posts (@arc_gov_au).

Logo

The ARC does not have any specific requirements in the development of a logo; however, you must ensure that branding material such as banners and signs acknowledge the ARC.

Further information on usage of the ARC logo can be sought from the ARC communications team via Communications@arc.gov.au.

Signage

Signage for the ARC Centre of Excellence should be in a prominent place within the Administering Organisation and nodes. Signage must include the ARC logo and full title of the ARC Centre of Excellence.

Launch Event

All ARC Centre of Excellence grants are required to hold a launch event within 12 months of commencing.

Launches should be organised in consultation with the ARC, following protocols set out in the ARC's event advice documentation which is available from the ARC Stakeholder Relations team via arc-parliamentary@arc.gov.au.

The Federal Minister for Education and the ARC CEO must be invited to the launch. Please refer to the ARC event advice for protocol if The Minister and/or the ARC CEO cannot attend.

TIP: Read the ARC event advice before you commence planning your launch event.

TIP: The timing of the event should be chosen so that initial achievements of the ARC Centre of Excellence can be showcased. Attendance by Partner Organisation representatives is desirable.

Some example formats for launches:

- Opening of a new building
- New equipment and laboratory tours
- Unveiling of signage

Launch functions are often held near laboratory facilities or within a general function area in the University. External venues could include Parliament House in Canberra or the Shine Dome.

In some cases, the launch is held in conjunction with another event such as a workshop, summer/winter school, or annual meeting to maximise attendance. Inviting the Minister and ARC CEO is not a requirement for satellite events or general non-launch events.

TIP: The ARC Stakeholder Relations team (arc-parliamentary@arc.gov.au) can assist with contacts for the Federal Minister for Education. It may also be appropriate to consider inviting other Federal or State Parliamentarians. Ensure you advise the ARC that you are doing that.

Acknowledging the ARC

ARC Centres of Excellence will need to develop clear strategies around which research outputs and outcomes are appropriate to be acknowledged under the Investment.

For more information regarding ARC Acknowledgement, see Section 7 of the ARC Grant Agreement.

10. Reporting and Monitoring

Reporting requirements are outlined in A5 and Section 16 of the ARC Grant Agreement. These will require data collection and use of reporting tools. Consider how data is requested, collected, and presented and how it will be used over the years. The leadership will need to ensure a robust and accurate mechanism to report and track against KPIs for the Centre of Excellences own purposes as well as reporting to the ARC.

TIP: Report against KPIs monthly or quarterly over the life of the ARC Centre of Excellence. This information can be sent out for communications across the nodes and will be easier to collate data for the Annual or Progress Reports.

TIP: There are many tools available beyond Excel—speak to existing COOs about the different systems they use. Some have an in-house custom-built tool, while others use externally commissioned online reporting databases.

VARIATIONS TO A GRANT AGREEMENT

Your Research Office will provide guidance on Variations to the Grant Agreement. More information can be found on the [ARC website and in A2.3 and B2.6 of the ARC Grant Agreement](#).

Scope Changes

A need for a change in scope can either emerge during the early negotiations or during the lifespan of the agreement. Scope changes must be approved by the ARC through a Variation request in RMS. Contact your Research Office immediately for variation support.

For more information see A2.3.5(a) of the ARC Grant Agreement.