This guide contains advice and suggestions for writing your ARC Linkage Project application. We will focus particularly on Part C – the eight page Project Description section and Part G – the Personnel /Track Record section; we also provide some advice on writing the 100 and 75 word summaries in Part A, some advice on the ARC Assessment Process as relevant to – Part B and some brief pointers for the Budget Justification – Part F.

The Application itself comprises Sections A to I:

- A – Administrative Summary
- B – Statistical Information
- C – Project Description
- D – Partner Organisation Details
- E – Project Cost
- F – Budget Justifications
- G – Personnel
- H – Research Support and Statements of Progress of ARC-funded projects

It is important for you to be familiar with the ARC Funding Rules.

For further information about all other aspects of your Application, please refer to the following documentation from the ARC website:


It is critical that you are aware of the **NEW expanded ARC Medical Research Policy**:


General Tips:

The ARC Linkage Projects Scheme seeks to fund projects that **clearly** do two things simultaneously:

1. Present a clear research question that is important to the field and will advance the field in a major step (not an incremental step)

2. Present a clear case for the resolution of this research question being of critical and current importance to the Partner Organisations
Contents

Contents ................................................................................................................................................ 2

1 Strategic advice .................................................................................................................................... 3
   1.1 Objectives of ARC Linkage Projects Scheme: ..................................................................................... 3
   1.2 Target the most appropriate College Panel and assessors ............................................................... 3
   1.3 Understand and stay focused on the Selection Criteria .................................................................... 4

2 Formatting requirements and tips ................................................................................................... 5
   2.1 Requirements .................................................................................................................................... 5
   2.2 Some Tips........................................................................................................................................... 5

3 General writing tips ........................................................................................................................ 6
   3.1 Make your proposal reader-friendly – this is the most important thing you can do! ...................... 6
   3.2 Feedback and revision ....................................................................................................................... 6
   3.3 Make it interesting and hard to put down – Tell a Story .................................................................. 6

4 Part A – The Title and Summaries .................................................................................................... 8

5 Part B – Classification and Other Statistical Information ................................................................... 9

6 Part C – Project Description ........................................................................................................... 10
   6.1 Introduction – an optional but useful sub-heading ......................................................................... 10
   6.2 Aims and Background – ARC mandatory heading ......................................................................... 10
   6.3 Background – A useful subheading ................................................................................................. 11
   6.4 Significance and Innovation – ARC mandatory heading .................................................................. 11
   6.5 Research Environment - ARC mandatory heading ........................................................................... 14
   6.6 Partner Organisation Commitment and Collaboration .................................................................... 15
   6.7 Role of Personnel – ARC mandatory heading .................................................................................. 15
   6.8 Management of Data – ARC mandatory heading .......................................................................... 15
   6.9 References – ARC mandatory heading ............................................................................................ 16

7 Part F – Budget Justification .......................................................................................................... 17
   7.1 F1 - ARC Budget Justification ........................................................................................................... 17
   7.2 F2 – Non ARC Budget Justification .................................................................................................. 17

8 Part G – Personnel ........................................................................................................................ 18
   8.1 General Comments .......................................................................................................................... 18
   8.2 G10 - ROPE – Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence - Details on your career and opportunities for research over the last 10 years ................................................................. 18
   8.3 G11 – Recent Significant research outputs and ARC grants (since 2004) - 10 pages MAX .......... 19
   8.4 G12 – Ten Career Best research outputs – 4 pages MAX................................................................. 19
   8.5 G13 – ROPE - Further evidence in relation to research impact and contributions to the field over the last 10 years and most relevant to this proposal (1000 words) ......................................................... 20

9 Need help? Contact us for strategic writing assistance ................................................................... 21

Appendix A - Selection Criteria   Linkage Projects Scheme - Selection Criteria ........................................... 22
1 Strategic advice

1.1 Objectives of ARC Linkage Projects Scheme:

- support the initiation and/or development of long-term strategic research alliances between higher education organisations and other organisations, including industry and end-users, in order to apply advanced knowledge to problems and/or to provide opportunities to obtain national economic, social or cultural benefits;
- build the scale and focus of research in the Strategic Research Priorities;
- provide opportunities for researchers to pursue internationally competitive research in collaboration with organisations outside the higher education sector, targeting those who have demonstrated a clear commitment to high-quality research; and
- encourage growth of a national pool of world-class researchers to meet the needs of the broader Australian innovation system.

You need to keep these Scheme Objectives in mind, as you must specifically address them in the Project Description section – a new requirement this year.

1.2 Target the most appropriate College Panel and assessors

Who will judge your proposal? It is assigned to one of the ARC’s five disciplinary panels and then to external assessors on the basis only of the information you enter in the Application: your title, the 100 word summary in Part A and the FOR Codes and Keywords in Part B.

Given that some panel members and even some external assessors may be more interested in, knowledgeable about and receptive to the topic of your proposal than others, it is critical to steer your proposal to where it is likely to be best understood and appreciated and consequently, more highly ranked.

It is a good idea to be familiar with the current members of the Panels and their areas of expertise: http://www.arc.gov.au/arc-college-experts

1.2.1 ARC Assessment Process – in a nutshell

1. Your completed final application is submitted to the ARC via RMS by the Research Office

2. ARC bureaucrats check for eligibility issues and pass applications onto the most appropriate College Panels - based on the FOR Codes and the Keywords you nominate in the B Section.

3. College Panels assign and send applications to external assessors - based on the FOR Codes and the Keywords you nominate in the B Section. Within the Panel, two members who do not have a conflict of interest will be identified to assess your proposal. Using FOR codes and keywords, these Panelists will assign you application to external assessors.

4. External assessors return their assessment reports to the ARC by a specified date, in time for the Rejoinder process where you have the opportunity to respond to their comments.

5. The Assessor Reports are made available to Applicants via RMS for a short period – about ten days. The Rejoinder process runs for ten days about half way between submission date and announcements being made and applicants submit their response (Rejoinder) to the Assessor’s comments via RMS. Applicants may receive as few as one assessment or as many as six.

6. Rejoinders and Assessor Reports and scores are supplied to the College. The College Panels DO NOT see assessor reports until they get your Rejoinder. The College Panels convene to make their final recommendations of projects to be funded.

7. The Minister signs off on the recommended awards.
8. Announcements are made.

1.2.2 Excluding external assessors
You can make a Request Not to Assess if you believe there are people who would be incapable of giving a fair assessment due to unreasonable bias. This process has a separate and earlier closing date to the Project Application closing date.

1.3 Understand and stay focused on the Selection Criteria
Make sure you have a thorough grasp of the four Selection Criteria:

- **Investigator/s** (20%)
- **Proposed Project** (50%) – made up of
  - Significance and Innovation (25%)
  - Approach and Training (15%)
  - Research Environment (10%)
- **Commitment from Partner Organisation** (30%)

For a complete description of these criteria see Appendix A. Selection Criteria.

Keep these criteria in the front of your mind when writing your application, since your assessors will be requested to provide comments against each criterion.
2 Formatting requirements and tips

2.1 Requirements
The ARC has strict requirements about fonts, margins, images etc. If you don’t comply, your application may be ruled ineligible. (Funding Rules A7.2.2 - All Proposals must meet the format and content requirements, including certification, as set out in the RMS online form and the relevant scheme Instructions to Applicants).

2.2 Some Tips

2.2.1 Avoid web links
It is better to provide some information rather than ask your assessors to go elsewhere to find it. If you do add a web link, add some brief text explaining what the reader will find when they click on it.

2.2.2 Make diagrams and graphs legible and effective
The ARC warns that when your proposal is printed and photocopied for the assessors and panel, it may end up in black-and-white and there will probably be some loss of quality. Also, assessors often complain about images being unreadable, for various reasons. Therefore, if you include images, diagrams or graphs of any kind, make sure (1) they are not too small or fiddly, (2) they are clearly named and labelled, and (3) they will not be rendered ineffectual when translated from colour to black-and-white.

2.2.3 Leave some white space
If you fill up every available millimetre of space, cramming in as much information as possible, your proposal will be difficult to read and may even give the impression of an inability to discern what’s important from what’s not. Avoid pages of solid, unbroken text with no spaces between paragraphs – or worse still - no paragraphs at all!
3 General writing tips

3.1 Make your proposal reader-friendly – this is the most important thing you can do!

Communicating is work but someone has to do it. If you don’t put in the effort to make your research proposal easy to read, then you are in effect ‘passing the buck’ to your reviewers, who may have neither the time nor the energy to unravel what you are trying to say, and may also be irritated by the imposition. Throughout the proposal writing process and to avoid irrelevant detail, keep asking yourself of every paragraph, every sentence, ‘Is this advancing the case for my proposal?’

Here are a few tips to make your research proposal reader-friendly.

3.1.1 Use ARC mandatory headings but add your own sub-headings

Most proposals require several levels of heading: this helps your reader more easily understand the page in front of them as well as the overall proposal at a glance. Aim for a clear, uncluttered presentation.

3.1.2 Structure information for several levels of understanding

You can structure information to suit all the potential variety of readers, by organising it into subsections that follow a logical sequence and by using carefully chosen subheadings and topic sentences (the first sentence in a paragraph). A reader in a hurry will be able to grasp the main points of your proposal merely by looking at the subheadings. Topic sentences will then encapsulate the next level of detail.

3.1.3 Use concepts and language appropriate to readers’ levels of knowledge

As well as having different levels of ‘commitment’, the readers of your proposal will have different levels of knowledge about your research area. External assessors are likely to have specialist knowledge while it is common for members of the panel to have a general knowledge.

The first page of the application is critical – get your readers’ attention here, enable them to understand what you do and importantly, give them a reason to care about what you do - and therefore a reason to fund it; if you lose them here it’s often hard to win back their attention and engagement

Use plain language. Begin broadly, with what you’re sure is known to everyone, then lead into greater complexity step-by-step

Most sub-sections parts of the Application will require you to address the non-expert reader: it is in your interest that you give them the basis on which to judge for themselves the significance, innovation, benefit and feasibility of your proposal

The Method/Approach section is for the expert assessor so denser technical language and concepts are fine.

3.2 Feedback and revision

After drafting your proposal, get feedback from non-experts as well as experts. Non-experts sometimes notice errors or omissions that experts have become ‘blind’ to through over-familiarity. Also, try to consider it from an assessor’s perspective: in terms of the Assessment Criteria and Category Descriptors, and whether it represents value for money. If your proposal isn’t persuasive, revise it.

3.3 Make it interesting and hard to put down – Tell a Story

Applicants’ enthusiasm and excitement for their research projects often get lost in the process of drafting and redrafting these proposals. When you are satisfied with the content, take a break for a few days, then read back over the proposal and reinvigorate

At times reading this application felt like a hard slog and it should feel like an interesting and engaging read.

Assessor comment
your prose, especially on the first page. Make it lively and interesting – and enjoyable to read. Find adjectives and verbs that are fresh and have an impact – get that thesaurus off the shelf! – rather than resorting to what is well-worn and clichéd. For example, ‘This result exceeded all expectations’ rather than ‘This was a very positive outcome’. Or ‘Our research may unlock the door to...’ rather than ‘Our research may provide appropriate and relevant information to...’.
4 Part A – The Title and Summaries

4.1.1 Title
Your title should arrest the attention of the reader. Make the idea of the project clear. Go for memorable and meaningful over cute. A limit of 75 characters (approx. ten words) has been set for this round.

4.1.2 A4 – Proposal Summary – 100 words
This is your first opportunity to make your reader care about what you are proposing. Make them feel engaged by the issue you will be addressing. Use easily accessible language to describe WHAT the project’s about; WHY it matters to do it; and WHAT you expect to achieve. Point out the things that are novel, original and innovative. Remember too, this summary may be part of the way assessors are selected.

Here the language you use should be what you would find in the Women’s Weekly or Sun Herald. It must be highly accessible yet meaningful, the general public want to understand WHAT your project is about and WHAT you will achieve - give these explanations in terms that relate to their lives – they are after all funding you.

N.B. It usually takes quite a number of iterations to get these 100 words just right. Work it and re-work it; each time you refine the draft of the Project Description (C Section), re-visit A4 and A5.

4.1.3 A5 – Impact Statement – 75 words
Your impact statement should outline the intended impact of the project by demonstrating its contribution to the economy, society, culture, national security, public policy or services, health, the environment, or quality of life, beyond contributions to academia.

You should include specific examples of research impact specific to your project. Examples are available in the Research Impact Pathway document on the ARC website.

4.1.4 A4 and A5
Both these summaries may be made available for public release should you be funded; the ARC also reserve the right to modify your words.
5 Part B – Classification and Other Statistical Information

5.1.1 B2 – Field of Research Codes (FOR)

The FOR codes are critical – take great care to read through them and choose wisely. 

These codes are used to direct your Application to the most appropriate Panel and assessors. You are allowed to nominate three FOR codes. One code must be the dominant code, Do NOT split them 50/50. The relative percentages you allocate to each code make clear the way YOU want your project understood. The first and more important code you list should reflect what is innovative in your project. Ask yourself, “Who will be most excited about what is proposed in my application?”

Avoid codes that end in 99 wherever possible – they are not helpful in directing your project to appropriate assessors.
6 Part C – Project Description

This must be no more than 8 A4 pages. The following headings are mandatory and in this order:

- Project Title
- Aims and Background
- Significance and Innovation
- Approach and Training
- Research Environment
- Partner Organisation Commitment and Collaboration
- Role of Personnel
- Management of Data
- References

6.1 Introduction – an optional but useful sub-heading

Remember – the first page is critical, applications that lose the interest and/or understanding of their readers here, make it hard for the assessors to recommend funding. We suggest that you begin with an Introduction (about half a page is a good length.) Leaping straight into the project’s aims can be like throwing your readers in at the deep end. Without some prefatory context, some readers may fail to comprehend the aims, and worse, fail to grasp what’s significant or innovative about them. An introduction, though not officially required, offers a non-technical entry point for all readers, regardless of their level of expertise. It gives them a sense of how your project fits into the ‘big picture’, and can provide a succinct and compelling rationale for the project.

The introduction to your project should grab the attention and interest of your reader; be clear, bold and ambitious in describing what it is about and what it will achieve. You may like the idea of opening the Introduction by posing a question. The introduction should make your research question/s clear; use plain language to state the problem or issue you are addressing. Explain why it matters to do this research, if possible, make the case, if you can do so convincingly, that the problem is pressing and demands urgent attention; provide some details about what the expected outcomes will be; draw attention to the scale of the problem and its impact; where the impact is felt – a deficit in the knowledge of the field without which progress will be difficult or impossible; the cost to human lives; the cost to the environment; the cost to the national economy.

Avoid acronyms and too many statistics in this first couple of paragraphs – keep it plain spoken and simple.

6.2 Aims and Background – ARC mandatory heading

Having set the scene in the Introduction, your project’s Aims should now appear self-evidently important and interesting – a worthwhile, innovative, even long overdue, response to an important problem.

6.2.1 Subheadings

Carefully chosen subheadings are especially useful approach for structure. By ‘carefully chosen’ we mean subheadings that succinctly convey important information in their own right and are therefore easy to skim-read. Each subheading might conform to a step in your argument or reflect a sub-set of information within a mandatory heading. They might be the actual bullet points the ARC ask you cover or they might be paraphrased versions of these bullet points. Make your choices based on what makes the reading of your application easiest while addressing the Selection Criteria.

Aims – An optional useful sub-heading
Your Aims should appear on the first page. Your Aims should not come as a complete surprise to the reader. A large leap in complexity or level of specificity, between the Introduction and the Aims makes it very difficult for the reader to follow the line of argument.

To write the Aims clearly, keep definite outcomes in mind. It can be a good idea to use dot points for clarity and brevity; this makes them easy for your reader to grasp and easy to recall.

Beware Aims which promise merely to ‘explore’ (and similar) – reviewers tend to view these as ‘fishing expeditions’. Interesting and/or novel Aims are obviously a big plus. It also helps if the Aims anticipate and mirror the subsequent Research Plan. Beware also of aims that if not achieved, stymie any further progress in the research.

6.2.2 Summary so far: importance of the opening page
A number of researchers who have been very successful with ARC Grants (any scheme) tell us that they spend hours, if not days, drafting and redrafting the first page in order to achieve maximum impact. People who’ve been on panels also confirm the importance of the first page.

6.3 Background – A useful subheading
This should be relatively concise – 1 to 1.5 pages. Think of the Background both as an argument that provides a strong rationale for the research plan that follows later and as a story that brings readers up to speed on the key issues while maintaining their interest. Give a brief snapshot of what has already been done to address the problem and why it hasn’t worked or why the evidence is incomplete or why the problem continues to present a challenge. In taking this approach, your introduction allows you to demonstrate (a) that you’re aware of the various approaches taken to addressing the problem, (b) what their limitations or drawbacks are, and therefore (c) that a new approach (such as yours) is what is required. It can also implicitly convey a sense of the impact on the field/discipline and beyond that your project is likely to have. Mentioning related research and the key people involved is also important because some of them may be your assessors. Your own relevant published work should be mentioned and your unpublished preliminary results or pilot studies may be referred to briefly although such work can be more appropriately expanded upon in the Approach and Method section and where you argue for the feasibility of the project.

6.4 Significance and Innovation – ARC mandatory heading
Sub-headings within the Research Project section will be particularly helpful to your reader. It may even work for your project to use the ARC’s dot points found in their Instructions to Applicants. Be consistent.

In addressing each ARC requirement, be guided by the verb they use for the manner in which to structure your response.

In this section you are asked to:

- describe the significance of the proposed research and explain HOW it addresses an IMPORTANT problem
- describe HOW the proposed research meets the objectives of the Linkage Projects Scheme
- describe HOW the outcomes you anticipate will advance the disciplinary knowledge base
- and WHY the Aims and Concepts are NEW and INNOVATIVE
- (with regard to your Approach and Method section) – detail the new methodologies and technologies you will develop
• Describe how the Proposal might maximise economic, environmental and/or social benefits to Australia.
• If the research has been nominated as focusing upon a topic or outcome that falls within one of the Strategic Research Priorities, describe the potential for the project to contribute to the associated Priority Goals.
• Describe how the Proposal might benefit Partner Organisation(s) and other relevant end-users.
• Describe how the Project might significantly enhance links with organisations outside the Australian publicly-funded research and higher education sectors.

6.4.1 Significance and Innovation – ARC mandatory heading - the ‘SO WHAT’ part

Significance

Questions to keep in your mind when drafting your response to this requirement should be:

• What is profound about my project – i.e. what will its impact be on the broader discipline and beyond? (Think about what ‘broader discipline encompasses for you);
• Why is the research I am proposing significant? – i.e. how does it address an important problem

Being succinct here will have the greatest impact on your reader – (0.75 page would be a typical length). The significance of the proposed research should engage both expert AND non-expert readers.

If it is clearly understood, the significance of your proposed research will be measured by the extent to which your project is likely to:

• advance knowledge – i.e. make an important academic/intellectual contribution to knowledge in the field(s) of research (and beyond)
• have an impact on the issue in question for your Partner Organisations – i.e. make an important difference more broadly than to the discipline area in which you work

Scale and ambition matter. Projects promising only incremental advances or minimal impact are usually harder to fund. A real measure of importance is the level of interest in the outcomes of the research from other researchers, journals, community groups, or policy makers for example. Open by making your key point then unpack it. (The opposite of the way you would write a journal article).

It can help to think about impact by asking yourself who or what will benefit from your project’s outcomes –it will need to be both researchers in your field and a specific industry sector; is there a regional impact you can point to?; global scale impact; a sector of the economy or the economy as a whole or Australia’s Strategic Research Priorities.

Think too about how you might persuade the assessors that your project needs to be funded now. If two research proposals are neck-and-neck in every other respect, the one that appears more urgent is surely going to win the race. Is the issue your project is addressing currently worsening (dramatically)? Has a golden opportunity presented itself to your research team? Is there only a short time period in which to conduct the research? And so on. Take care not to fabricate the urgency of the matter.

Innovation

This should also be dealt with in a succinct manner (0.75 pages is a typical length). Avoid simply asserting innovation. Highlight novel concepts, methods and original thought; critically explain HOW and WHY what you are claiming is innovative, is in fact innovative. Use accessible language and just enough detail to ensure your readers are able to understand the innovative nature of your proposed research and that your ideas can be judged credible. What’s innovative in the project should align with your Aims and clearly resonate for your expert readers.
Innovation may be in your approach or method, advances in concept(s) or new outcomes (knowledge, applications, technologies, policies), or a combination of some/all of these things. Innovation doesn’t necessarily mean ‘complex’. Innovative solutions can be very simple and low cost. Be aware that for some readers, innovation may equate to ‘risk’. So you need to balance innovation with feasibility: the more innovative the project, the more persuasively you will need to argue its feasibility.

6.4.2 National Economic, Environmental and/or Social Benefits – an optional sub-heading
Start with the big-picture perspective, the global and national importance and potential benefits in the context of the broader discipline/area and then focus on the specific outcomes of your project. Be realistic – assessors complain about exaggerated claims – if your project cannot promise that lead will become gold or world peace will be achieved, don’t claim it. Do try however, to come up with several different dimensions. For example, some of these choices might be appropriate for your project:

- Training – students and post-docs gain specific knowledge and important generic skills.
- Social or cultural impact/benefit particularly if beyond the immediate discipline.
- Creating intellectual linkages and leadership – national, regional and international.
- Direct economic benefit (e.g. potential workforce for Australia in a key area, wealth creation through commercialisation).
- Contribution to cutting-edge national and/or international research infrastructure.
- Strategic Research Priority area (if appropriate).

6.4.3 Contribution to Discipline of Project Outcomes – a useful sub-heading
You might use a sub-heading or instead choose to note the outcomes progressively throughout the Approach and Method section. Make your choice based on what works best for your project; whichever way you choose, briefly and clearly point to the outcomes you anticipate from your project. To make clear how the outcomes and aims mesh, use language to describe your outcomes that is consistent with the language used to explain your aims.

6.4.4 Impact for Partner Organisations – a useful sub-heading
Provide a summary of how the work that advances the field will also provide a specific solution for the issue/s being faced by the Partner Organisations and other relevant end-users. Make clear how the project will significantly enhance links between universities and organisations outside the higher education sector. Keep tying the two things together clearly.

6.4.5 Summary so far: a strong rationale
With the exception of the Aims, all the information leading up to the Approach and Methodology should serve the single purpose of providing a persuasive rationale for your Approach and Method. By the time your readers get to the Approach and Method section, they should be primed for it, expecting it to offer a logical, necessary and desirable way of addressing the problem, question or state of affairs you’ve described.

6.4.6 Approach and Training – A RC mandatory heading – the ‘HOW’ part
A well-written Approach and Method section will make it easy for the reader to see how the methods and techniques will serve the Aims and deliver the Outcomes. Your approach should therefore clearly map onto your Aims. If it makes sense, begin each part by restating the Aim; it doesn’t matter that this repeats the Aims given on the first page; it helps readers understand exactly how the methods align with, and serve, the Aims. Similarly, at the end of each part of the research plan (i.e. each ‘part’ corresponding to an Aim) you might summarise the anticipated outcomes; use a subheading like ‘Expected outcomes’. This explicitly links methods to outcomes, and neatly encapsulates for the reader what the Aim is intended to achieve and carries an implicit message about the feasibility of the plan. Include a research plan and timelines.

You must write this section with the expert reader in mind. (about 1.5 to 2 pages); use future tense – “We will……”; briefly describe the framework or strategy for the overall approach and note any relevant
preliminary data or pilot study results but remember, the focus of this section is on what you are GOING TO DO. Now get into the detail that the expert has been waiting for.

6.4.7 Ensure a sound and thorough approach is clearly explained
It must be clear that you know exactly what you’re doing, if you overlook mentioning something your assessors won’t be aware that it has simply been overlooked, they’ll see a gap or flaw in your plan. Describe clearly and directly how your methods are integrated and will enable the Aims to be achieved. Don’t try to hide weaknesses, raise the issue yourself then neutralise potential criticisms by explaining how you will deal with the issue should it arise – a kind of pre-emptive strike.

Many assessors’ comments challenge the approach researchers take to address their aims. Wherever necessary, acknowledge the limitations and/or technical challenges then, importantly, note in a positive way, how you plan to accommodate or overcome these. If it’s a case of alternative approaches being possible, consider whether or not you have adequately justified the approach you are taking and the methods you are using. Convincing all your assessors that you are going about the project in the best possible way, confirms the feasibility of the project and reinforces the picture of you and your team presented in the Track Record sections.

To ensure your approach is rigorous and comprehensive, we also recommend that you seek feedback from other researchers on your approach.

6.4.8 Training
Make clear how the project provides opportunities for research training and show how the intellectual content and scale of the proposed work will be appropriate to a Higher Degree by Research. Make clear how the work of the project and the needs of the Partner Orgs serve the training purpose embodied in the Linkage Projects Scheme. Training is a forward looking activity – it’s about the future; keep this idea in mind when you describe the way your project will support the individual HDRs as well as the discipline, the partners and Australia.

6.5 Research Environment - ARC mandatory heading
(approx. 0.5 page is an appropriate length)
The ARC Funding Rules contain the definition of Research Environment that applies to your proposal:

“Research Environment means the laboratory, department, school, centre or institute within the Administering Organisation where research will be undertaken, and which provides opportunities for knowledge growth, innovation, collaboration, mentoring and student training. “

You do not need to say very much about the research environments other than the Administering Organisation, however, it is important to note specific resources that are located at the organisations of your named CIs and PIs.

This section is worth 10% of your overall score. It’s important to ensure you discuss this section with whoever has oversight of research within your School or Department. It is also important, that this section doesn’t sound generic; statements about the ‘Research Environment’ should be project specific. We recommend a maximum of 1/2 page and that you include the following points in your response:

- Use future tense – for example, you might want to note the required resources are present – “Our project will have full-time access to the machine that goes ping for the first stage of Experiment one…..”
- Use ERA outcomes VERY sparingly as they are a retrospective measure
- Start with the local environment where the research will be conducted then move on to the institutional level. Sell the environment as being highly appropriate to the work and success of the
project. Be quite specific about what the ‘Research Environment’ is made up of: the required equipment/infrastructure (name them), support/technical staff, senior staff who act as mentors, ability to attract students and the research- training environment, the way collaboration is facilitated within and beyond the local environment, the extent to which knowledge growth and innovation are fostered. The environment is thus presented as layered and multi-faceted.

- Point also to where other items will be sourced should they not be readily available to you within the ‘Research Environment’ - as defined by the ARC.
- Describe briefly how the project aligns with the University / Faculty / School Strategic Plan and any other applicable strategic developments (these may include things like the appointment of key new staff to specific roles).
- Describe how you plan to communicate your results and how the research outputs developed by the project will be disseminated.

6.6 Partner Organisation Commitment and Collaboration
You need evidence here that convinces assessors that the Partner Org/s are genuinely committed to the project. Did they approach you? Do you have a long standing relationship? Who (what roles) in the Partner/Org is involved and why? What is the specific value to the Partner Org of their involvement? What does their involvement offer the project in terms of funding, opportunities to train tomorrow’s researchers and leaders; how does the project serve the overall strategic aims of the organisations? Will the project lead to further projects together? Your response should make clear a true collaborative effort and connection where project roles draw on the various expertise and benefits flow in both directions.

6.7 Role of Personnel – ARC mandatory heading

6.7.1 Things to do here
While the heading is mandatory, this is nevertheless a very brief section – a paragraph in total is sufficient.

- If you have collaborators (other than the named investigators), give a short background on these others and what they will specifically be doing in/for the project
- Use this section to make clear how the team will interact and work as a cohesive whole, in addition to summarizing the roles of each member
- Make clear explanations about HOW you will ensure the team’s time and capacity to undertake the proposed research, taking into account the other grants you each hold. You won’t need to go into great detail; provide sufficient information about the time and other resource efficiencies you will implement

6.7.2 Things NOT to do here

- Do not justify your Personnel Budget (you MUST do this in Part F)
- Do not explain the skills of the CIs and PIs (this belongs in Part G)

6.8 Management of Data – ARC mandatory heading
Use the following text:

Research data and related materials will be retained in accordance with the University’s Research Data Management Policy and Research Code of Conduct; research data will be stored on University managed storage infrastructure with access provided to all members of the project team. Research data collections will be made available for re-use by other researchers, unless this is prevented by the requirements of legislation or University policy, or ethical, contractual or confidentiality obligations.
You must include a description about how your project research data will be managed that adds project-specific detail and which is additional and different to the above text. Refer to the Data Management plan guidance on Research Support Linkage page for further information.

6.9 References – ARC mandatory heading

We strongly recommend you include the required references as a separate section at the end of the ten pages of the Project Description section. You can use 10 point font in either place but the references MUST FIT WITHIN the 8 pages, as has always been the case.

Medical Research Policy – you MUST answer this question with a YES or a NO

The ARC does not fund research of a medical or dental nature.

The ARC definition has now been written in a more expanded form intended to avoid uncertainty. We urge ALL applicants to read the new expanded definition of the research they will and will not fund.

7 Part F – Budget Justification

7.1 F1 - ARC Budget Justification

This section is limited to a maximum of two pages. It is easier to follow and makes for clearer understanding by your readers if you mirror the structure and order of the items requested in the Budget screens of RMS.

It is necessary to **JUSTIFY** each item requested from the ARC in your Budget – Part D. This means not simply noting the item and its cost but explaining why it is needed in the project, how it will support the successful outcomes of the project, why you chose the particular version if there are various types available. You are asking for tax-payer funds to pay for the items that make up the resources required – keep this in your mind; assessor often comment on the lack of information in Budget Justifications.

**Personnel** – What will personnel actually be doing in the project? What will their responsibilities be? The more senior the responsibilities, the more important and profound your project will appear. You are justifying the roles that you are asking funds for.

**Travel** – Briefly describe how you calculated the requested figure; where relevant, identify the exchange rate you used; be clear about the costs of PI travel – justify it in terms of how it will foster and strengthen collaborations between participants in Australia and overseas.

**Equipment** - Provide details of manufacturer/supplier, cost and installation based on quotations obtained (do not supply quotes). Justify the importance of the equipment to the proposal and demonstrate that access to such equipment is not otherwise available. There is an expectation by the ARC that the Admin Org will contribute to the cost of expensive equipment. Check with your HOS/HOD/Dean about such a contribution before including it in your budget.

**International Collaboration Award** - Requests for ICAs must demonstrate fully how the award will assist researchers to collaborate on the project and justify the reason for the length requested. You must be able to make a case for the need to get together to do the specific aspect/part of the work. If in the opinion of the assessors, the collaboration can be achieved without this special award, i.e. you have not made a strong case for it, you will likely miss out.

7.2 F2 – Non ARC Budget Justification

Think of this part as an **EXPLANATION** of what funds/contributions you are getting from the Non-ARC sources. This section is limited to a maximum of two pages.

Again, it is helpful to mirror the structure and order of the RMS Budget Screens as the items apply to the non-ARC sources. Explain **how** the contributions will support the project.

**The P/Org contribution** - must describe a significant contribution of funds (other than salary/time commitment) OR other material resources from the PIs institution, the size of the contribution being relative to the total cost of the project and the relative contribution of each investigator. This contribution is part of the case for their commitment to the project. Describe **HOW** their contributions will support the project; make clear which Partner Org is contributing what.

**Admin Org** - Other than the use of specific costed University facilities, it would be unusual to specify anything other than the salary value of the CI’s time commitment to the project, plus any salary gap between ARC and University salary scales. A sample paragraph is: “The University contribution to this project comprises (1) the salary value of the CIs’ time commitment to the project, and (2) the use of infrastructure and facilities including [in technical disciplines any specific items/laboratories should be identified], libraries, computing facilities and office accommodation.”
8 Part G – Personnel

8.1 General Comments
The Track Records of the Investigators named in the Project are assessed at 20% of your total score.

Think of Part G as your opportunity to introduce yourself to the assessors; to represent yourself factually but in a way that serves your cause. It is helpful to imagine you have the opportunity to speak to the assessors in person, this helps you to pitch the message and tone more appropriately. The ‘interview’ waiting room is a helpful scenario, you know everyone is there for the same job, you know everyone there is qualified to do it. On this basis you know that many of the things that can possibly be said by each interviewee will be quite similar……..your job is to not simply confirm your ability to do the job but to make yourself stand out and be memorable.

While much of Part G is completed in RMS and requires little explanation from us here (some is even auto-populated), the free-text sections that make up G10 to G13 require greater thought. These sections inclusive, which can at first seem limited in scope, in fact require a strategic language and approach to provide a nuanced and highly readable response. G10 to G13 are your chance to set yourself (and your team) apart, make yourself memorable and give assessors confidence that you absolutely have the ‘goods’ to ensure the proposed project delivers on its aims.

8.2 G10 - ROPE – Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence - Details on your career and opportunities for research over the last 10 years
Track records are read and assessed ‘relative to opportunity’. This instruction is taken very seriously by the ARC: College Panel members regularly confirm for us just how seriously this understanding of a research career is taken. There are places in the G section where you will have the opportunity to highlight your stellar moments as well as any career impediments. These opportunities should be grasped; assessors want to have a complete picture of you as a researcher – within the stipulated time frame.

Think of the whole G section as a set of complementary layers of description about you, your career and achievements. G10 is therefore in effect a ‘snapshot’ of you, where you very briefly introduce yourself. G11 to G13 are opportunities to logically and progressively expand on the information in this snapshot. Thinking of the G section in this way helps you to be quite brief and focused at G10 because you know you will have opportunities to provide greater detail as you work through the remaining G11 to G13 sections.

It’s helpful to your readers if you use the Roman numerals to which the ARC dot points relate – this makes it easier for the assessors to see which dot points you are answering and when you have moved to the next dot point. You are under no obligation to fill the space (750 words MAX) - No life stories here; No full explanations – if relevant, they can come later. This is a teaser to get your readers interested in you.

- Use FIRST PERSON
- Use the personal pronoun ‘I’ mostly and only use ‘we’ sparingly – this is about you
- Avoid repetition
- Refer only to the last ten years
- You may answer (ii) and (iii) together if it makes sense to do so (and it often does)

(i) – simply state years since your highest qualification was conferred – eg It is nine years since the award of my PhD in 2005.
(ii) and (iii) – opportunities to undertake research in the context of your employment – this is essentially about whether you’ve been in employment that has required you to do your own (paid) research as part of your duties. Be brief in noting the Research component percentage of your current position which appears already F8, the Teaching percentage and the Admin
percentage; give a broadly accurate percentage too of the time you have committed to research over the last ten years. If it’s more appropriate for you to deal with (ii) and (iii) separately, don’t go into details about positions held in answering (ii) - generalise. For example, it might be that you have held a number of positions across a number of universities; this could be conveyed thus, “Over the last ten years I have held a number of positions as lecturer and senior lecturer at UWS, UNSW and USyd.” (iii) might then be explained by, “My current role is…..”; Any PIs will need to complete this section also – they may have authored or co-authored reports or policy documents, these are the types of things they can point to.

(iv) – career interruptions come in a variety of forms; state the type/s that apply to your career and note the dates. Very brief explanations are all that is required.

(v) – research mentoring and facilities available to you should be simply stated and may, for more senior/established researchers, include being a mentor. This section should be generic though. If there is something that is special or unique, mention it here – encourage your reader to want to know more about it, push them to want to read the Research Environment section of the Project Description; be positive.

(vi) – here you have an opportunity to mention any other aspects of your career or opportunities for research that are relevant to assessment. For example, you may have worked in industry where you were unable to publish important work and/or things that may provide an interesting insight, perhaps some previous employment provided an important underpinning to your current ability to conduct your research – you may have previously worked as a journalist or as a Vet in clinical practice. You may also want to note things like up-coming publication highlights; If you need to draw to the reader’s attention here to something with a negative career impact, try for a positive angle – eg, “Despite the setback/impediment this caused, I have since regained my momentum and expect to ..... within the next year.”

8.3 G11 – Recent Significant research outputs and ARC grants (since 2005) - 10 pages MAX

- Output Types must be listed in the required order – scholarly books, scholarly book chapters, refereed journal articles, refereed conference papers (from full proceedings), other – including Non-traditional research outputs
- Publications should be listed in reverse chronological order (i.e. most recent first) using continuous numbering throughout the Output Types
- Asterisk ALL outputs relevant to the proposed research
- Use the Grants Template provided by the ARC in their Instructions to Applicants document to note and explain your relevant ARC grants; if you have no ARC grants to note, add a short explanatory note to state the table is N/A to you
- add citation information only if it pertinent to your discipline
- Add a note at the top of this section that explains the impact factors of the journals in which you publish – this knowledge should not be assumed in your readers

8.4 G12 – Ten Career Best research outputs – 4 pages MAX

- Provide the full publication reference details for each item
- Provide ARC grant ID number from which the publication arose (if relevant)
- Asterisk ALL publications relevant to the proposed research
- add citation information only if it pertinent to your discipline, but do not include ERA ratings
• **You are now allowed a short paragraph for each of your ten best;** Your list should contain a majority of first or last author publications – this list will be read in relation to your G11 section, assessors will look for career progression and a publishing strategy; **MOST IMPORTANT** – your reader wants to understand **WHY** this publication is in your Ten Best list, so explain its significance to your field - this is now the best place in the application to explain the contribution you have made to your field.

8.5 **G13 – ROPE - Further evidence in relation to research impact and contributions to the field over the last 10 years and most relevant to this proposal (1000 words)**

• Be generous/broad in the way you define ‘the field’

• Use first person

There are two aspects to this section – (i) research outputs that are NOT academic publications; and (ii) a description of your research IMPACT for your discipline and end-users.

The ARC’s words:

*Definition of Research Impact:*
*Research impact is the demonstrable contribution that research makes to the economy, society, culture, national security, public policy or services, health, the environment, or quality of life, beyond academia.*

**IMPORTANT** - The ARC take the view that your research contributes to your field and that these contributions will have an impact for all those places and people they list in their definition of research impact above.

In this section, the ARC asks that you describe your:

• Research Impact relative to opportunity and in the context of discipline/end user benefits. Outline significant achievements and outcomes that have contributed to a tangible impact for end users.

• Research outputs other than academic publications. Examples may include patents, IP licences, other research support income, relevant consultancies, policy advice, and other professional activities.

  • **Helpful hint to organise your thoughts** - draft a list under the headings **Contributions to - The Discipline / Other End Users**; in a third column, **describe the impact** of these contributions and in a fourth column, **note HOW you know**. When you actually write this section however, use a **narrative style** – tell your story, it’s so much more interesting and engaging and even compelling than a long list of dot points but do avoid large solid blocks of text, use sub-headings and line breaks – be kind to your readers.

  • Here it is helpful to be **generous in the way you define ‘the field’**. It will make it easier to situate your proposed work against the background of your field if it is broadly defined. It also makes it easier for your assessors to understand the connection.

  • Describe your research IMPACT in the context of advances to the discipline and how this provides benefit to other end-users. Outline your significant achievements and outcomes that have contributed to TANGIBLE IMPACT for end-users; you will need to say how you know. Explain where and how your work has impacted/benefitted the economy, society, culture, national security, public policy or services, health, the environment or our quality of life – choose the ones that apply – keep it real.
• So -who are your end-users?  The Assessors are looking here for impact that is tangible, think about the ways in which the work you are engaged in actually makes a difference. Are you influencing policy – how and what is the evidence? Does your contact with end-users support their real-world efforts? Are you invited by them to speak at meetings of groups? Are you active in your community engagement efforts? Are you a person the media seek out on the topic of x, y or z? Does this aspect of your career build clear messages in the education of the general public? Does industry seek out your expertise?

• There must of course also be benefit to your discipline; the field must advance because of your work. (Fundable advances are not incremental). Is your work immediately useful to your peers? Does it change the way your peers think about problems you resolve? Does your work re-focus the field’s direction? Do your interesting unusual collaborations open the way for new possibilities? Does your work influence the way the field teaches the next generation of researchers? Do your methods and techniques underpin new approaches? Point to these sorts of things AND give examples of how you know – what are the indicators that confirm your claim/s – citation rates, H-index, awards and prizes, editorships, the journals in which you publish (but not their impact factors), your reviewing obligations, key-note and other invitations.

• To address the second dot point – “……outputs other than academic publications…..” other output types which you SHOULD add might include some/all of the following - patents and licenses, your research support income other than ARC funding, consultancies, policy advice, awards etc.

• DO NOT include your academic publications anywhere in this part, you have already listed them at G11 and in G12, you have provided commentary about them.

• How to decide how much of the 1000 words should be made up of the first dot point response and how much for the second. This is the Linkage Scheme – broad usefulness of your work and its impact are very important; cherry pick the things you want to include in your response to the second dot point these items will round out the picture of you as an engaged and useful researcher; (vi) in the G10 part is also useful in achieving this.

9 Need help? Contact us for strategic writing assistance

If you would like assistance with the logic, argument, language, presentation and overall clarity of your research proposal, contact the Research Portfolio’s Research Development team. Andrew Black, Jennifer Turner (all disciplines), Graeme Gill ((Arts and Humanities and Social Sciences) and a number of other experienced Faculty academics and Ian Hume (Sciences) will review your draft application and work with you to discuss its strengths and weaknesses and to suggest ways to make it more competitive.

To obtain assistance, please contact any one of us:

• andrew.black@sydney.edu.au
• jennifer.turner@sydney.edu.au
• graeme.gill@sydney.edu.au
• ian.hume@sydney.edu.au
Appendix A - Selection Criteria   Linkage Projects Scheme - Selection Criteria

Proposals will be assessed and merit ranked using the following selection criteria:

a. Investigator(s)  
   (20%)
   - research opportunity and performance evidence (ROPE);
   - potential to engage in collaborative research with end-users; and
   - time and capacity to undertake and manage the proposed research in collaboration with the Partner Organisation(s).

b. Proposed Project  
   (50%) comprising

i. Significance and Innovation  
   (25%)
   - Will new methods or technologies be developed that address a specific market opportunity?
   - How will the anticipated outcomes advance the knowledge base and/or provide an industry advantage?
   - Does the Project plan provide a business model for implementation?
   - Will the proposed research maximise economic, commercial, environmental and/or social benefit to Australia?
   - Does the Project address the Science and Research Priorities?
   - Are the Project aims and concepts novel and innovative?
   - Does the research address an important problem for the partners?
   - How will the Project benefit Partner Organisation(s) and other relevant end-users?
   - Does the Project significantly enhance links with organisations outside the Australian publicly-funded research and higher education sectors?

ii. Approach and Training  
   (15%)
   - Are the conceptual framework, design, methods and analyses adequately developed, well integrated and appropriate to the aims of the Project?
   - Where relevant, is the intellectual content and scale of the work proposed appropriate to a higher degree by research?
   - How appropriate is the proposed budget?
   - Does the Project represent value for money?

iii. Project Research Environment  
   (10%)
   - Is there an existing, or developing, supportive and high-quality Project Research Environment for this Project, both within the Administering Organisation and in the Partner Organisation(s)?
   - Are the necessary facilities available to conduct the proposed research?

a. Commitment from Partner Organisation(s)  
   (30%)
   - Is there evidence that each of the Partner Organisation(s) is genuinely committed to, and prepared to collaborate in, the research Project?
   - Will the proposed research encourage and develop strategic research alliances between the higher education organisation(s) and other organisation(s)?
   - Is the budget justification for Cash and In-kind Contributions adequate?
   - Are there adequate strategies to encourage dissemination, commercialisation, if appropriate; and promotion of research outcomes?