



ARC NATIONAL INTEREST TEST

Background

The National Interest Test (NIT) was announced in October 2018 to ensure ARC applications articulate how research projects will benefit Australia. The NIT will be included in all future ARC schemes. The NIT question has replaced the previous benefits and impact summary that was only used internally by the ARC.

Assessors will be able to view the NIT response as part of the application form – but it will not form part of their assessment and has no weighting.

If a project is recommended for funding by the Selection Advisory Committee (SAC) – the ARC CEO will review the NIT response and if there is a concern WSU will have the opportunity to respond. Your NIT response and project summary will then be part of the package of information presented to the Minister and will inform his or her final funding decision.

ARC Question Text:

“Outline the extent to which the research contributes to Australia’s national interest through its potential to have economic, commercial, environmental, social or cultural benefits to the Australian community. Write your description of national interest simply, clearly and in plain English. No more than 1125 characters, approximately 150 words.”

Tips

Your NIT response should communicate to the Minister and the general public how an investment in your research will benefit Australia. It is an opportunity to highlight the benefits and impact of your research in a way that is linked to the Australian community.

- The ARC have emphasised that the NIT response must be in **clear and in plain English**. Please avoid the use of acronyms and make sure your response could be understood by a lay person. The NIT response of the successful applications will be published by the ARC so the general public can understand the how the Australian Government is investing in research.
- The NIT response must specifically mention at least one of the benefit types listed in the question (economic, commercial, environmental, social or cultural).

We suggest including wording that makes this explicit:

l.e. “This research will result in a/an [economic/commercial/environmental/ social/ cultural] benefit to the Australian community by ...”

- There are other considerations apart from the research results/outcomes that could contribute to the National Interest. For example, could development of methodology in an Australian context benefit other Australian research/projects?
- The benefit to the national interest does not have to be realised by the end of the project and does not need to include any tangible measures. There is no limit to the timeframe for which the research can contribute to the national interest. Researchers can use terms such as ‘foregrounding’,



‘pioneering’ and ‘knowledge-base building’. This is most relevant to long-term/‘blue sky’ research and fields where the impact/benefit may not be well understood by a layperson.

For instance, a project in pure mathematics may have an economic benefit to Australia in ~300 years via the potential development of new technologies. It may be helpful to look at impacts of past research in your field that may not have been apparent at the time.

- The NIT response for research on politically contentious/controversial issues should clearly articulate a benefit to the Australian community.
- The NIT response for research involving international collaborations should focus on the benefit of the collaboration to Australia specifically (rather than the international community).
- The NIT response will be viewed alongside the project summary. It must be logical and specific to the project.

Closing notes

Remember - there is no appropriate template for the NIT response. Each project will benefit Australia’s national interest in different ways. Think carefully about the benefits of your project and consider how each benefit could be linked to Australian interest.

If you are having trouble articulating the benefit of your research, please contact the Grants Team at researchRDO@westernsydney.edu.au.