Here are a series of tips to help your ARC DISCOVERY PROJECTS Grant application.

They are relevant to the Discovery Projects scheme itself, the process of grant-writing and lodging your application on the ARC RMS 2.0 (Research Management System). They contain the most common errors, issues and omissions we see each round. Some are particular to this round’s set of rules and instructions.

**TIP 1: Selecting Western Sydney University as the administering Institution**

In Part A3 of your draft proposal select Western Sydney University* as the Administering Organisation, otherwise REDI cannot review or access your proposal and submit it.

**TIP 2: Understanding how RMS works**

The RMS system will time out after a period of inactivity and data may be lost. Any accidental browser problem could also cause loss of data as changes are not automatically saved. **Save your work regularly**, especially when working on the budget or if you want to move to another section.

Use Word to develop text sections such as sections A and F before copying into the text boxes on RMS to eliminate typos etc

Formatting such as bold, italic, tables, **cannot** be used in these text boxes, but **bulleted lists will copy ok**. Make use of white space (line breaks) to break up the text – a line break only counts for one character and makes text sections easier for assessors to read.

**BROWSERs:**

Only the latest versions of Google Chrome and Microsoft Internet Explorer are fully supported by RMS 2.0. If you are seeing blanks pages or having other problems with RMS display, try changing and/or updating the browser you are using.
TIP 3: RMS Account

Some information in a Discovery Projects application is automatically populated from your personal details, so these must be up to date in the “Person Profile” section of your RMS account, otherwise the application will be incomplete. This includes updating:

- Personal Details
- Qualifications
- Employment

Ensure your account (not the application) is registered with WSU and not a previous institution. To fix this, navigate to the “Personal Details” section and check to see which organisation administers your account. If it is not WSU you have to select WSU from the Admin Organisation drop-down list.

TIP 4: Essential Documents

The ARC does not have the resources to answer researchers’ questions directly regarding scheme queries. Please direct all scheme queries to your Research Development Officer (RDO). Ensure you have read the Instructions to Applicants as many queries are addressed in this document.

The full information to lodge an application is split between 3 main documents:

- Funding Rules,
- Instructions to Applicants and
- Cross-Scheme Eligibility FAQs.

It is the applicant’s responsibility to ensure they are familiar with ALL this information. Ask your RDO if any aspects are not clear. The ARC also provides a quick guide on the main changes from the last round for this scheme.

Please note: If any of the participants listed as a Chief Investigator (CI) are employed via a contract, rather than a continuing position, contact your RDO asap to discuss. This could be an eligibility issue that might preclude your application from being submitted to the ARC or rejected by the ARC on submission.
**TIP 5: Project Descriptions**

When writing project descriptions, put your aims upfront/near the front.

A common structure for successful grants is:

1. An *introductory paragraph* or two to set the scene,

2. A *clear main aim* (or a few clear aims - often a ‘sub-aim’ of the main aim of the project – don’t lose your focus) and

3. *Then* the background explaining the context for your project and what gap it fills in the research landscape – but don’t overdo this – you should be talking about *your* project.

I’m sure you’ve been in a conversation with someone who gives you a lengthy background, seems to take forever to get to the point and leaves you wondering “what on earth are they talking about!?” You will likely get a similar response from assessors and the ARC College of Experts panel members if a clear explanation on the first page is missing. Assessors and Panelists read a lot of applications, so make your case clearly, concisely, and limit jargon. This is a grant application, not a journal article. *It is a persuasive text. Your first page must impress, excite and engage the reader.*

**TIP 6: Have a Plan B**

You may need to reduce what you can do in your project (or reallocate research tasks) if awarded less funds than requested. Your project plan may require a ‘Plan B’ or even ‘C’.

Design the project in consecutive or concurrent phases that are related but not contingent on each other – or at least have another design in mind in case your Discovery Project is funded but needs some ‘re-scoping’ due to budget constraints. However do not overinflate your budget to compensate for this possibility. This is noticeable and assessors comment on it.

In last year’s Discovery Projects round, the average percentage of funds awarded nationally was about *65.8%* of funds requested. This is the national average. Some projects still receive a very high % of funding requested. The budget justification has a strong bearing on how much the ARC is prepared to fund.
TIP 7: 10 Year Work

A common omission from applications is the 10-year work history. This is auto-populated into the application from the information in the “Person Profile” section of each applicant’s RMS home page (Select “Employment”).

The details of each CI’s and PI’s employment should be included. You do not need to enter them in chronological order, but include start and end dates, so current positions are clear.

TIP 8: Salary

In-kind costings for salaries and costings for Research Associates/Assistants.

1. Salaries cannot include indexation or pay rises but they can “include salary/performance increments, such as those within a salary band”. Step increases within a band are permissible, but a salary remains the same once it reaches the top salary band. (eg. HEW 6.3 can increase to 6.4 in year 2 but stays on 6.4 in year 3 of a project).

2. Part-time salaries across 1-5 years include base rate salary + 30%* oncosts
   Casual salaries include base rate salary + 16.5% oncosts and 25% casual salary loading

3. Part-time salary rates might be easier to cost per FTE (eg 2 days a week is 2/5days = 40% = 0.4 FTE) Casual salary rates may be easier to calculate using number of hours required on the project.

Many projects require part-time research assistance across the life of the project (generally three years). Think about what employment conditions may appeal to potential staff, especially if you are looking to recruit specialists.

* Though salaries requested include 30% oncosts, the Western employee will receive 28% oncosts as per university employment conditions. This means there could be a slight salary surplus available to the project.

If you have any questions about costings, please contact your Research Development Officer.
TIP 9: Collaboration

Projects with overseas (OS) participants may require periods of intense collaboration at each other’s institutions. This collaboration is not always easy to justify as a direct research cost. The Discovery International Award (DIA) is travel funding for an overseas (OS) researcher to come here for a period of time or an Australian researcher to go OS to collaborate on the project. Preference is given to OS researchers coming here. It is expected they will stay for a reasonable period of time (e.g. three weeks to a month) and that it is vital for the project’s progress.

If this level of collaboration is not required, ask for travel money in the main budget to visit each other’s institutions for meetings, field research and collaboration etc. over the life of the project. This must be justified as directly related to the project. Also in this case, select ‘NO’ at question F11.

Some budget notes on DIAs:
1) The award is for up to 2 researchers (CIs or PIs) per proposal and is no longer capped in terms of funding request. It is not included in the $50,000 travel limit.

2) A DIA has its own budget line. The CI/PI involved must first select “YES” at question F11 in their personnel section before having their name added to the DIA budget item in the online budget table.

3) Visiting fellows are subject to the Visiting and Adjunct Appointments policy and any visit longer than 3 weeks may result in a taxable allowance according to federal tax law. (See section 56 of this policy and visiting academic rates).

4) DIAs are non-transferable. If your awarded project’s budget is cut, you cannot cut the DIA amount or use it for other budget items, including general travel, except in exceptional circumstances and with approval from the ARC.
**TIP 10: Budget**

**Budget items** will appear across all three years when entered in RMS.

**Do not delete the item in the year it is not required** as this will delete the item for all three years.

If you require the item for a particular year enter the $ amount for that year and leave the other year dollar amounts as zero. The zero budget items do not appear when displayed as a pdf file.

For example on RMS, for budget items:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item Description</th>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>London-Sydney return flight to conference</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2399</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melbourne-Sydney return flight for field research</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This appears in the application pdf as:

Year 1: Travel
- Melbourne-Sydney return flight for field research $210

Year 3: Travel
- London-Sydney return flight to conference $2399
- Melbourne-Sydney return flight for field research $230

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**TIP 11: Travel costs**

**TOTAL travel costs cannot exceed $50,000 over the project’s life** (not including DIAs or fieldwork), e.g. airfares, car/train/taxi/bus, meals & daily allowances and accommodation. It applies to conference, workshop or other non-fieldwork activities. The system will not indicate an error, but if travel costs exceed the limit, the budget will be ineligible and risk application ineligibility.

Please note: There are 3 types of ‘travel’ in the budget table at D1:

- Travel, as above, that is non-fieldwork (Travel section of budget table)
- Travel (plus accommodation & allowances) directly related to fieldwork (Fieldwork Expenses section of budget)
- DIA travel (Discovery International Award budget)
**In-kind/Cash contributions**

List CI/PI salary contributions in the Administering/Collaborating Organisation columns under ‘In-kind’.

List other institutional support, for example, organising a conference or workshop, conference support for CIs/Pis, stipend top-ups for PhD students or other cash contributions under ‘Cash’.

**PhD Stipends**

The **ARC PhD/HDR stipend for this round is set at $26,300 per year**. We recommend some level of stipend top-up to demonstrate institutional support and ensure a competitive stipend. This is typically $5,000-$10,000 per year. You will need **approval from your Dean/Director** for this top-up **prior to submitting your application**. There are no central funds guaranteed for this purpose.

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**TIP 12: Publications**

In press publications must have been accepted and should be written (for example):

<publication>, in press (accepted December 2015).

**Do not write “forthcoming” or “pending”** - there is no indication of publication acceptance with this term – the ARC want to see a definite acceptance date. Assessors or ARC College of Experts panel members are likely to discount papers that have no acceptance date. If a publication has not been accepted (ie it has not gone through a peer review assessment by the journal and been approved), list it in section **F15**, but not your publications list.

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**TIP 13: Teaching Relief**

Teaching relief and how much to calculate depends on your salary and length of required teaching relief. The maximum amount is $50,000 per year. It is generally understood that the replacement lecturer will be a casual employed for less time or at a lower level of salary, or the school may need to provide a top-up for the replacement. You should discuss this with your School/Centre/Institute manager and Dean of School/Director of Centre/Institute. If your grant is successful, you will need to have the teaching relief approved by them. Teaching relief will appear under Personnel with the associated CI/PI if ‘yes’ is selected at **F10** for that participant.

For Example:

**YEAR1: Personnel**

| Teaching Relief for Professor Zack Jones | $50,000 |

**YEAR2: Personnel**

| Teaching Relief for Professor Zack Jones | $30,000 |
| Teaching Relief for Dr Sherry Yang      | $20,000 |
Section G1 includes two tables. The first shows ARC proposals applied for in this round; not yet awarded; or recently awarded but not yet active for 2017 - 2022.

The second table shows all NON-ARC research grants with funding for 2017 - 2022:
- currently requested (R - requested)
- currently running (C - current)
- previously awarded (P - past - do not include unsuccessful grant applications!)

Section F16 shows current ARC GRANTS for all participants and is autofilled from ARC records. If a project is finished, but the final report has not been submitted to the ARC and approved, the project is ‘open’. If applicants have concerns about how an assessor might perceive an extended project, address delays in the Statement on Progress report in section G2.

Note: Cross scheme eligibility is based on the original award of the grant and not on extensions of carryovers. If unsure, read the FAQs for Cross-Scheme Eligibility document and contact your RDO.

Some common mistakes and omissions on final applications:

1. Different font sizes – all uploaded documents must use size 12 font (Times New Roman or equivalent size to this) throughout. References ONLY in Part C1 can be 10pt. Note: some 12pt fonts are actually smaller than 12pt Times New Roman.

2. Section G1 in landscape – it must be in portrait format otherwise it gets ‘squashed’ when incorporated into the full pdf application.

3. Section G1 not included – this section is green by default (as it is possible, though highly unlikely that the applicant(s) may not have applied for or received any recent research funding).

4. 10-year employment history or qualification details missing (change the Personal Details section of the relevant RMS account).

5. Incorrect section headings used in Publications list.

6. Publications not numbered in continuous sequence.

7. Top ten publications description is more than 30 words or not included. (Note: this was removed for ARC Linkage Projects but still applies for Discovery Projects).

8. Publications relevant to this proposal not marked with ‘*’.

9. Typos and grammar – assessors do comment on this. It leaves readers with a sense of lack of care about detail and a rushed application without careful effort.