

## **FAQs from Levy and Return on Investment workshop discussion 28/07/21**

### **Category 2/3 FAQs**

#### ***Is there an Expression of Interest procedure for Cat 2/3 applications in MARCS?***

There is no formal Expression of Interest procedure. However, if you are considering a Cat 2/3 application, or are approached by another institution to join one, please notify Karen Hutchings via email (and cc MARCS Director) as early as possible in the process, including draft budget and guidelines for the scheme.

#### ***How can I maximise my success with feasibility and pilot projects announced by Cat 2/3 funders?***

Feasibility and pilot projects come from researchers who have been actively lobbying the funders (i.e., initiated a dialogue saying “look we think we can do something here”), and that call is then announced broadly. There is usually one group instigating that announcement and that group should be you. If you are waiting for the announcement to see if it fits then you are doing it wrong. Develop contacts and talk to them, see who is interested and before you know it you will have a call that is crafted just for you and that is how you should approach that.

#### ***How should I construct my Cat 2/3 budget?***

Start early – contact Karen and Kate to discuss in the first instance. Include your time as a cash cost to the project rather than donating it as an in-kind contribution. Consider build in a contingency cost of at least 10% especially when constructing something as costs are often higher than you first expect.

#### ***I am being asked to participate in another institution's bid but they are not offering me any cash – what should I do? It's only two days until it goes in so no time to negotiate terms...***

As a research Institute, there is an expectation that we lead applications. If you are being feted and invited to join another organisation's application, tell us early so we can help you secure some budget for income for you to do the work. Last minute applications without funds coming to MARCS are not encouraged. Sometimes there might not be a lot of money but request what you can (even a relatively small amount like \$10K can contribute to a research assistant) salary, for example). Bottom line is you should budget for MARCS funds even for bids led by another university.

#### ***What is the university's expectations of return on investment for their cash contribution?***

At least 1:1 and preferably more than that, closer to 2:1.

### **Levy FAQs**

#### ***What is a research levy and how/when does it apply to my research funding?***

The Research levy applies to Cat 2/3 income unless the funding rules exclude that levy. Projects with a registered charity all three components of the levy are waived e.g. 0%. At Western Sydney University the research levy typically is 35% of the project total and has three components, 15% of the levy goes to the university itself, 15% to MARCS and the third component of 5% goes to Research Division. This last 5% is waived for projects under \$100K per year.

#### ***What is the purpose of the research levy?***

The purpose of the levy is to cover the expenses of doing business, operational costs or indirect costs incurred during the operation of the research project to MARCS and the university, that is the costs of infrastructure, admin, running expenses etc.

***How do I represent the research levy in my budget estimates?***

These levies are confidential – the amount of indirect costs **should not be disclosed** externally. You will need two spreadsheets, one with line by line items and one with only the total amounts, you don't show calculations or inner workings on how you have arrived at those figures to the client. You must be careful on how you describe your line items so it makes sense. E.g. participants \$10 each x 100 and you are adding in the levy of +35% but not including that in the description. In such cases, it is usually preferable to put the total as “participant payments” rather than showing the breakdown.

***How does the research levy work within MARCS?***

Within MARCS the 15% levy is split 60/40 researcher/MARCS: 40% of it goes to the Institute to cover overheads and 60% goes to the researchers to reinvest in research activities that they want to pursue. This might be used towards the salaries of ECRs between contracts, towards research equipment or seeding some pilot data for a different grant. Expenditure of this 60% must be approved by Prof Kate Stevens as Director of the Institute.