Understanding the Australian Competitive Grant (ACG) and WSU Grants Process

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What we are going to look at…

1. The Australian Research Funding Landscape and how WSU/MARCS researchers perform.
2. How to identify appropriate funding sources for your research.
3. MARCS processes and tips & tricks for preparing for and applying to funding schemes (Australian Competitive Grant (ACGR), non ACGR/other).
4. WSU processes and procedures.
5. Q&A

1. The Australian Research Funding Landscape

- The Australian Government recognises four categories of research for funding purposes, they are:
- • Category 1: Australian Competitive Grants Register (ACGR)
- • Category 2: Other public sector research income
- • Category 3: Industry and other research income
- • Category 4: Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) research income.

1. The Australian Research Funding Landscape; ARC

- Australian Research Council (ARC) is a Commonwealth entity within the Australian Government and was established as an independent body under the *Australian Research Council Act 2001*, it is the primary source of advice to the Government on investment in national research.
- the ARC supports the highest-quality fundamental and applied research and research training through national competition across all disciplines
- Please note that ARC Grant Guidelines and Instructions to Applicants are accessed from https://www.grants.gov.au

ARC Grants Scheme

- Two major streams: Discovery Program, and Linkage Program.
- The ARC's Discovery Program recognises the importance of fundamental (discovery, basic or blue sky) research to the national innovation system. Schemes include Discovery project, Discovery Early Career Researcher, Future Fellowship and Australian Laureate Fellowship.
- The ARC's Linkage Program promotes national and international research partnerships between researchers and business, industry, community organisations and other publicly funded research agencies as a basis for securing commercial and other benefits of research. (translation, encouraging business investment in research). Schemes include Linkage projects, *Linkage Infrastructure, Equipment and Facilities* (LIEF) scheme, Special Research Initiatives (SRI), ARC Centres of Excellence (CoEs) and Industrial Transformation Research Programs.

I HAVE APPLIED FOR A GRANT FROM THE ARC.

What happens to my application?

MEMBERS OF A SELECTION ADVISORY COMMITTEE ARE ASSIGNED TO HAVE CARRIAGE OF YOUR FUNDING PROPOSAL.
At least 2 members (more for some schemes) are assigned. These selected members are called General Assessors and have a lead assessor (called Carriage 1).

EXPERT OR DETAILED ASSESSORS ARE ASSIGNED

Detailed Assessors can be experts in your field or bring other knowledge. Upto 5 Detailed Assessors are assigned. Depending on the scheme, sometimes the General Assessors will do this, other times it is an ARC Executive Director.

DETAILED ASSESSORS WILL LOOK AT YOUR PROPOSAL

They will provide detailed comments about your proposal as well as ratings against the selection criteria.

REJOINDERS

You will be provided with the written comments and an opportunity to provide a response—called a rejoinder.

Make sure you address areas of weakness identified by assessors. You do not get to see the ratings.

GENERAL ASSESSORS LOOK AT YOUR PROPOSAL AND THE COMMENTS AND RATINGS OF DETAILED ASSESSORS

General Assessors give their own ratings and create a ranked order of all applications they have been assigned.

ELIGIBILITY

At the same time, proposals are assessed for eligibility. The Eligibility Committee (consisting of ARC Executive Directors) makes recommendations to the ARC CEO on the eligibility of proposals. The CEO must not recommend ineligible proposals to the Minister for Education and Training for funding.

SELECTION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETS

All Proposals and proposed budgets are considered by a Selection Advisory Committee. Members of the Selection Advisory Committee are appointed by the CEO, taking into account discipline mix and end-user experience.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE ARC CEO

Recommendations from the Selection Advisory Committee are made to the ARC CEO of proposals to fund and the budget for the proposal.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE MINISTER

The Minister for Education determines proposals for funding and the budget for each proposal. The ARC CEO makes recommendations of proposals for funding and budgets to the Minister for Education.

SUCCESSFUL?

The Minister for Education and Training determines proposals for funding and the budget for each proposal.

We wish you luck with your proposal!

DECRA success rates nationally

Funding year	Applications considered	Applications approved	Success rate (%)	Requested funds over project life for all applications considered ($)	Requested funds over project life for approved applications ($)	Funds allocated over project life for approved applications ($)	Return rate for approved applications (%)
2020	1248	200	16.0	$507,777,318	$81,972,769	$81,838,415	99.8
2021	1173	200	17.1	$506,629,691	$87,483,735	$84,041,533	96.1

Outcomes by discipline

A summary of outcomes by discipline panel is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Number of applications, success rates and requested and allocated funds for approved Discovery Early Career Researcher Award 2021 applications by discipline

**BSB – Biological Sciences and Biotechnology; EIC – Engineering, Information and Computing Sciences, HCA – Humanities and Creative Arts; MPCE – Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry and Earth Sciences; SBE – Social, Behavioural and Economic Sciences*

Discipline *	Applications considered	Applications approved	Success rate (%)	Requested funds over project life for all applications considered ($)	Requested funds over project life for approved applications ($)	Funds over project life for approved applications ($)	Return Rate for approved applications (%)
BSB	228	39	17.1	$101,082,210	$17,622,888	$17,283,974	98.1
EIC	331	56	16.9	$142,744,019	$24,344,551	$23,389,501	96.1
HCA	166	28	16.9	$70,190,285	$12,218,703	$11,649,670	95.3
MPCE	233	40	17.2	$99,119,433	$17,137,900	$16,606,779	96.9
SBE	215	37	17.2	$93,493,744	$16,159,693	$15,111,609	93.5
Total	1173	200	17.1	$506,629,691	$87,483,735	$84,041,533	96.1

Discovery success rates nationally

Funding year	Applications considered	Applications approved	Success rate (%)	Requested funds over project life for all applications considered ($)	Requested funds over project life for approved applications ($)	Funds allocated over project life for approved applications ($)	Return rate for approved applications (%)
2020	2875	660	23.0	$1,641,948,285	$387,282,768	$284,952,924	73.6
2021	3019	603	20.00	$1,760,327,397	$371,657,208	$260,034,079	70.0

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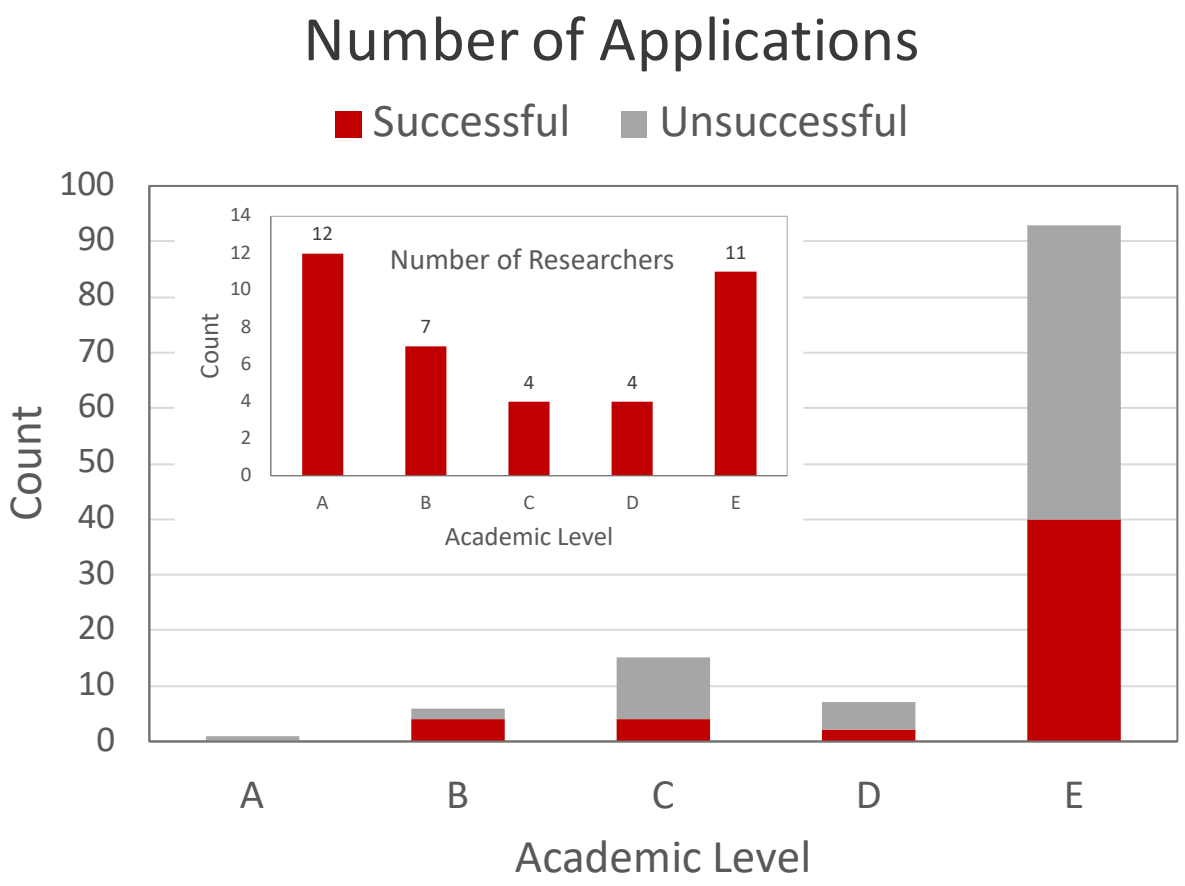
Discipline *	Applications considered	Applications approved	Success rate (%)	Requested funds over project life for all applications considered ($)	Requested funds over project life for approved applications ($)	Funds over project life for approved applications ($)	Return Rate for approved applications (%)
BSB	784	164	20.9	$546,806,340	$120,383,480	$83,808,816	69.6
EIC	770	143	18.6	$436,774,699	$88,596,990	$59,928,279	67.6
HCA	292	57	19.5	$127,712,964	$26,118,445	$18,208,630	69.7
MPCE	623	123	19.7	$365,334,622	$75,408,044	$53,722,175	71.2
SBE	550	116	21.1	$283,698,772	$61,150,249	$44,366,179	72.6
Total	**3019**	**603**	**20.0**	**$1,760,327,397**	**$371,657,208**	**$260,034,079**	**70.0**

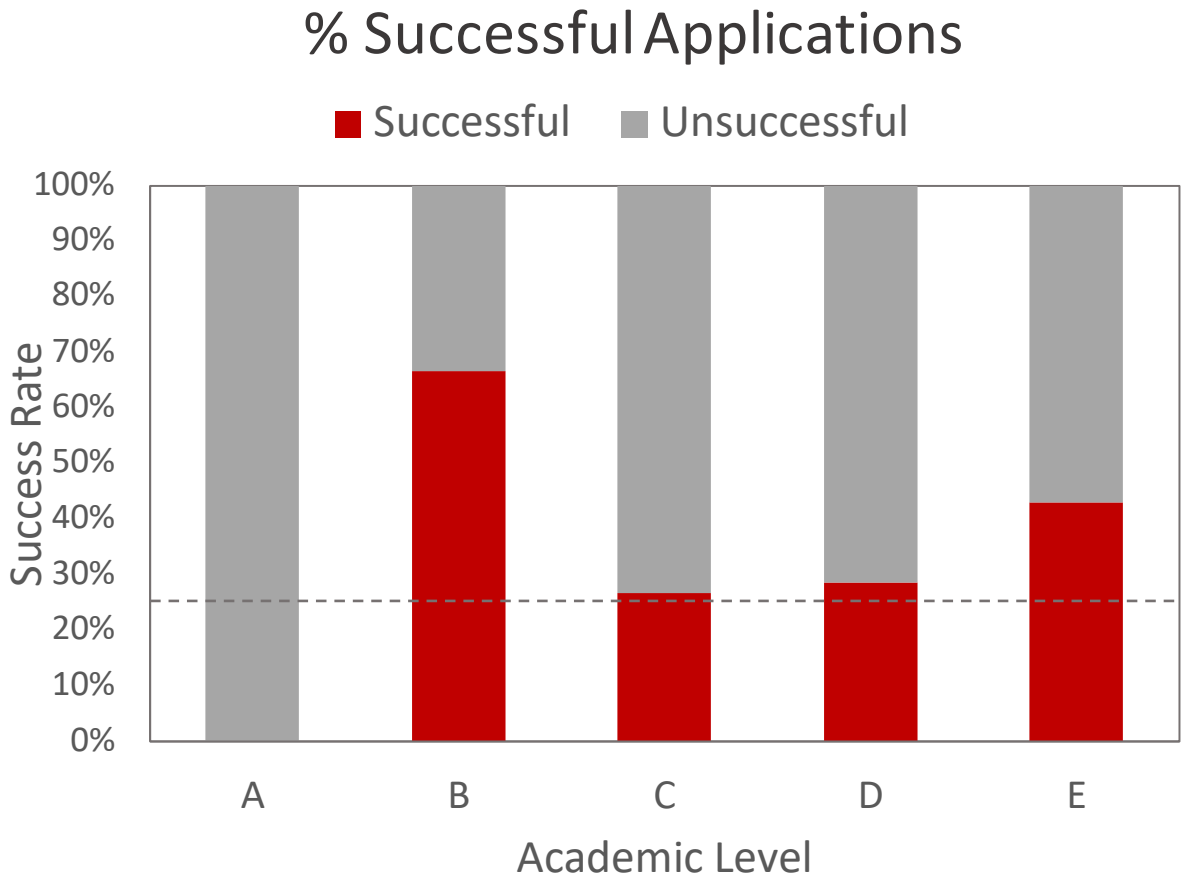
ARC WSU recent success rates

- DECRA 2021: 15 submitted, 5 successful, 33.3% success rate, $1.9M
- Discovery 2021: 33 submitted, 6 successful, 18.2% success rate, $2.4M
- Linkage 2020: 4 submitted, 3 successful, 75% success rate, $2.8M
- LIEF 2021: 1 submitted, 0 successful, 0% success rate, $0M
- SRIs 2020: 20 submitted, 1 successful, 5% success rate, $143K
- Future Fellows 2020: 4 submitted, 0 successful, 0% success rate, $0M
- ARC Centres of Excellence 2020: 1 submitted, 0 successful, 0% success rate, $0M

MARCS Grant Statistics

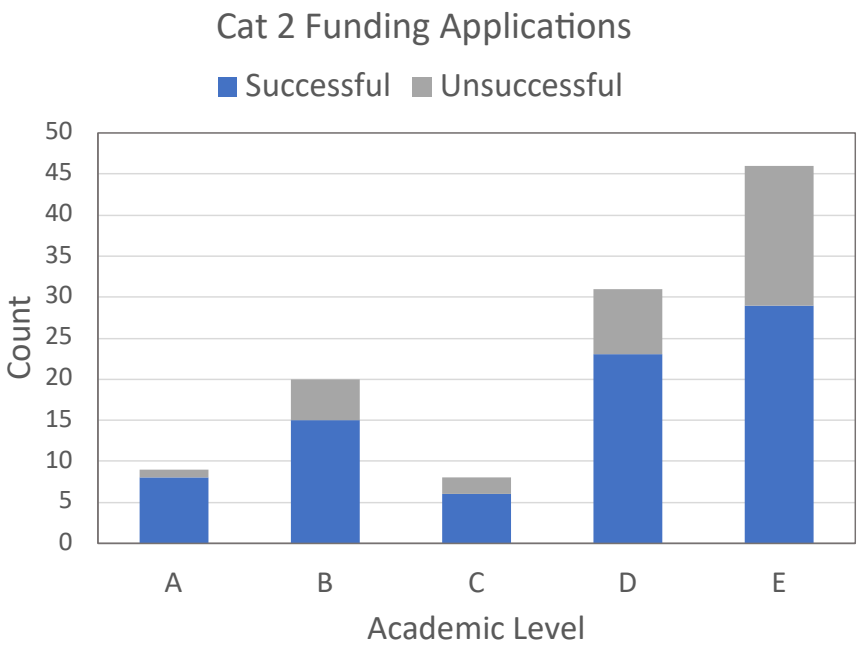
Category 1: Australian Competitive Grants

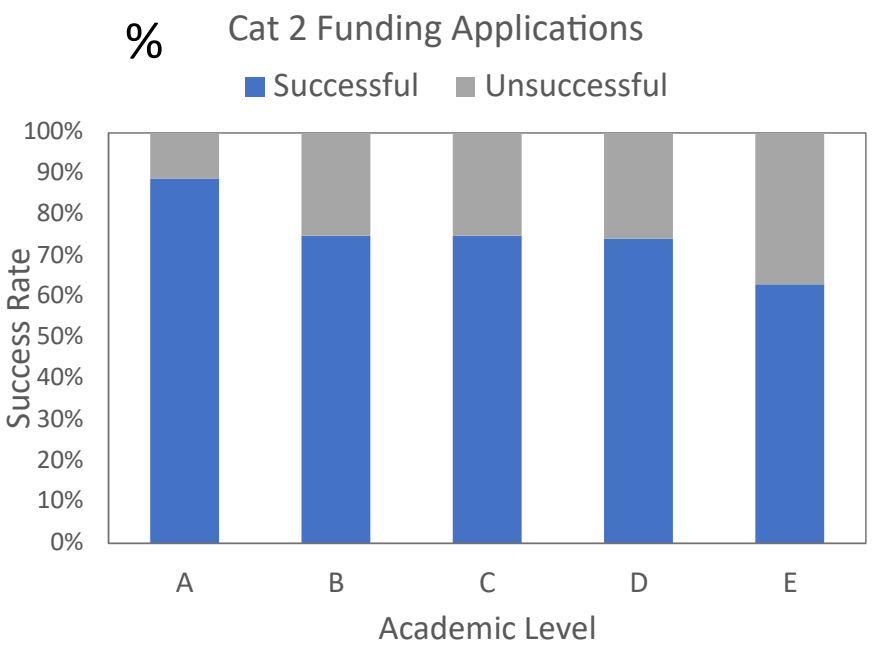




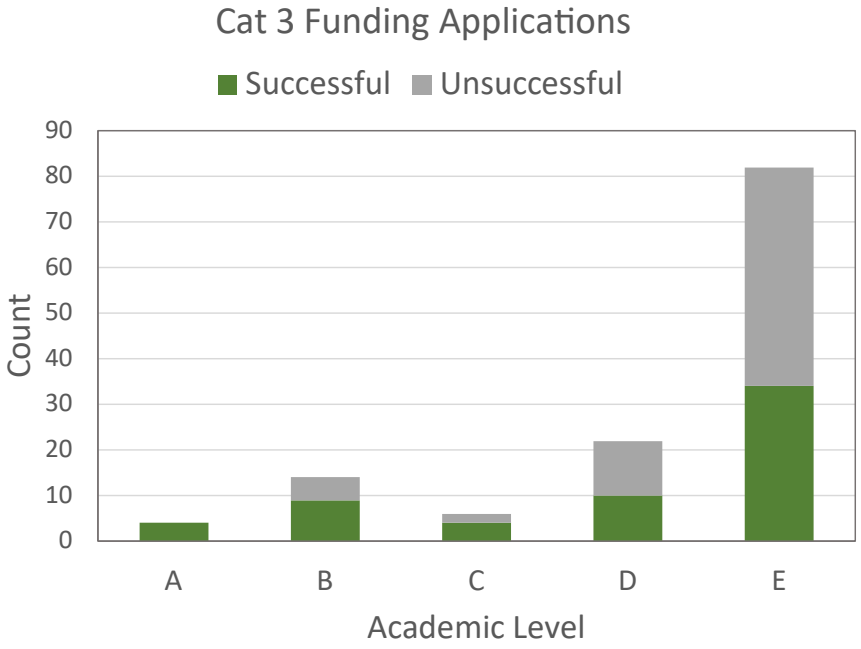
Harvested from WSU Researcher Portal Research Activity Statements (2015-2019)

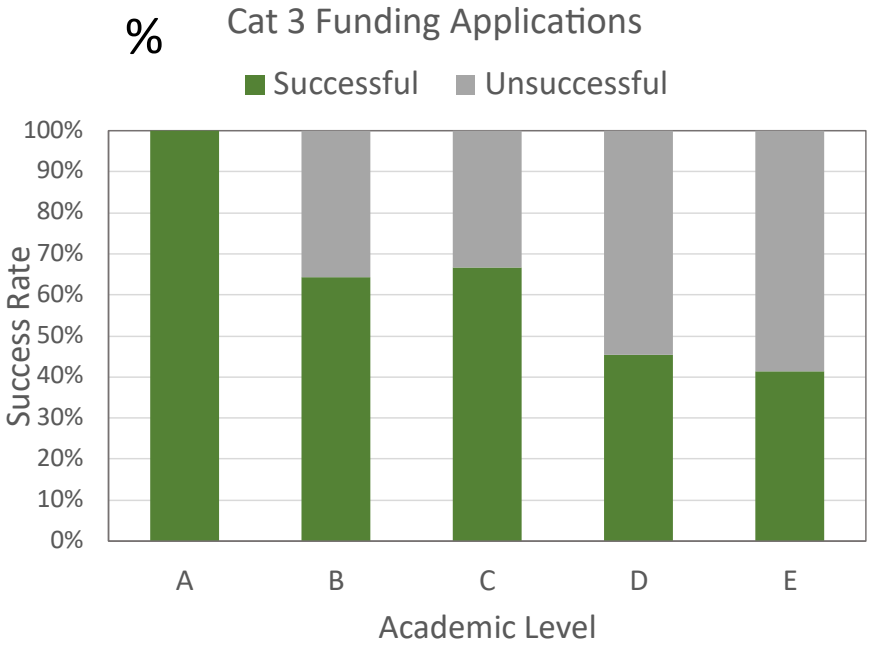
Category 2:
Other public sector





Category 3:
Industry and other





The Australian Research Funding Landscape: NHMRC

- National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) is the Australian Government's primary health and medical research funding agency.
- Investigator Grant, provides high-performing researchers at all career stages with funding for their salary (if required) and a significant research support package.
- Synergy Grant, provides $5 million per grant for outstanding multi-disciplinary research teams to work together on complex questions.
- Ideas Grant. supports innovative and creative research projects, especially early and mid-career researchers.
- Strategic and Leveraging Grants, support research to address identified national needs, with a dedicated funding stream for Clinical Trials and Cohort Studies. Includes Centres of Research Excellence, Development Grants, international collaborative schemes, and Partnerships for Better Health (Partnership Centres and Partnership Projects).

Key grant opportunities you might consider…

- ARC and NHMRC including Discovery Early Career Researcher grant (ARC DECRA) and Ideas and Investigator grants (NHMRC)
- NSW My Community Project grant
- AMP Tomorrow Fund, Westpac Foundation, BUPA Foundation
- Fulbright and Rhodes scholarships
- WSU Researcher Development internal schemes including WSU Research Support Program for EMCAs: an information session detailing processes will be held on **Wednesday 17 March at 11am.** Expressions of Interest currently open.

2. How to identify appropriate funding sources for your research.

- Work out what you need the funding for and how much…
- Do your research! Find out what the funding bodies are looking for and how that aligns to your research area.
- Check out WSU, ARC, and NHMRC websites to find the schemes most relevant to your research. Subscribe to ARC's *Archway* and NHMRC's *NHMRC Tracker* emails.
- Use Research Professional https://www.researchprofessional.com and GrantConnect https://www.grants.gov.au/ to create tailormade email alerts.

2. How to identify appropriate funding sources for your research.

- Read the weekly REDI updates that have news of upcoming grants as well as training sessions to help develop your skills.
- Subscribe to blogs and newsletter feeds for government, philanthropic and industry bodies as well as ECR and research discussion groups: Research Whisperer is also a must. https://researchwhisperer.org/
- Networking and conferences – word of mouth.

3. MARCS Processes

- Notify Karen, Peter and Jodie (REDI) when you are thinking about applying… Some schemes will be capped so that not everyone who wants to apply may apply.
- Submit MARCS EoIs for DECRA, Discovery rounds, Future Fellow and Laureate. These must be signed by your mentor, the Research Director and MARCS Director. For schools based members they must also be signed by both your Associate Dean of Research and Dean.
- These then go to MARCS Research Committee for shortlisting and are sent to Kate for approval before a final list is sent to REDI for their EoI process.
- Candidates are then informed if they are approved to proceed.

3. MARCS Processes

- MARCS EoI process begins at least six months prior to the ACG grant round and:
- (i) evaluates your readiness in terms of benchmarking you to your peers relative to opportunity;
- (ii) assesses your potential project idea and funding source; and
- (iii) gives feedback from internal and external advisors to maximise the success rate of your application at an early stage.
- May involve presenting your idea at a Concept Pitch event.

3. MARCS processes: DECRA 2023

- The applications for DECRA 2023 will be submitted on 17th November 2021:
- Key dates for Discovery Early Career Researcher Award 2023:
- **WSU Notice of Intent to Submit (NoI) due**: *2nd April 2021* *(please note that this is in addition to the MARCS EoI process)*
- **Release of Grant Guidelines:** *coming soon*
- **Applications Open:** *15th September 2021*
- **Mature draft due to REDI**: *20th October 2021*

3. MARCS processes: DECRA

- Applicant submits EOI form
- Benchmarking carried out by WSU Library
- DoR/Research Committee and Director evaluate EOI Outcome: Approve (pending final approval); Tentative approval for future round; Decline
- Applicant and supervisor/RPL informed of outcome
- If approved, applicant presents at Concept Pitch event

3. MARCS processes: DECRA

- The applicant submits draft application to DoR

- **MARCS internal review**
- DoR send draft to readers (if appropriate)
- DoR send readers' comments to applicant
- Applicant submits revised application to DoR

3. MARCS processes: DECRA

- DoR evaluates revised application in consultation with Director
  - Outcome: Approve; Tentative approval for future round; Decline

- Applicant and supervisor (School DoR) informed of outcome

- **Submission to WSU Research Services (2 weeks before final deadline)**

- If approved, applicant submits Clearance Form

- Applicant sends final version to DoR, who passes it on to WSU Research Services for compliance check (Cc to Director)

3. MARCS processes: DECRA

- **Eligibility:**
- Covid extension: Researchers in their final year of eligibility for DECRA may choose to apply in 2020 (for DECRA 2022) within the existing eligibility timeframes **or** in 2021 (for DECRA 2023) utilising the automatic one-year extension. i.e.
- To be eligible, the candidate must, as at Dec 2020:
- have an award of PhD date on, or after 1 March 2016, or
- have an award of PhD date together with an allowable period of career interruptions that would be commensurate with an award of PhD date on, or after 1 March 2016.

3. Tips & tricks for applying to funding schemes (ACG, non ACG).

- Make it timely – why this, why now?
- Pitch to non-experts, avoid jargon.
- Boost your expertise with expert colleagues in your team.
- Consider what is in it for the funding body and write from that angle.
- Build impact: “a demonstrable contribution beyond academia”, from the start.
- Write the budget from the beginning: ask for and justify specific funds for personnel, travel, equipment and consumables.
- Plan for data management.

3. Tips & tricks for applying to funding schemes (ACG, non ACG).

Prepare a word cloud of your application using your title, FOR and SEO codes, and project summary. https://www.jasondavies.com/wordcloud

(what is a FOR code? This is a Field of Research code your project and publications will be linked to. SEO code is a Socioeconomic code.

- https://www.arc.gov.au/grants/grant-application/classification-codes-rfcd-seo-and-anzsic-codes
- https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/mf/1297.0 (new info on new FOR and SEO codes just released))

ScholarOne Manuscripts | Word Cloud Generator

jasondavies.com/wordcloud/

Paste your text below!

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3. Tips & tricks for applying to funding schemes (ACG, non ACG).

Use ARC Grant Search dataset to look at past awarded grants – you can search on names, FOR codes etc and identify collaborators or even people you don't want assessing your application. https://www.arc.gov.au/grants-and-funding/apply-funding/grants-dataset

4. WSU processes and procedures.

- The online clearance form in Sharepoint is the institutional sign off for your participation in a research project and also a way for WSU to get a sense of your research activity.
- This must be filled out at least two weeks before submission of your application to allow for sign off by Prof Kate Stevens.
- https://westernsydneyedu.sharepoint.com/sites/Research/REDI/ResearchForms/Lists/Clearance_Form/AllItems.aspx

4. WSU processes and procedures.

- Any external application must be lodged through REDI a minimum of 5 working days prior to the external closing date.
- The lead CI is responsible for the final submission to the funding body unless prior arrangements/delegations have been made in the event of travel, sick leave etc. This avoids version control issues and/or multiple submissions or missing the deadline.

Common misconceptions…

- "I don't need a clearance form for an overseas grant"
- "I don't need a clearance form for non-ACG schemes"
- "I don't need a clearance form if the grant is submitted through another university"
- "The clearance form is only an annoying piece of red tape with no impact on my career trajectory"

5. WSU processes and procedures.

- **New applications for ACGRs**
- NOI Form submitted by researcher by the deadline (draft submission is mandatory).
- Grants Services collate track record data, drafts and NOI forms and send to the Schools/Institutes.
- Schools/Institutes review NOIs and provide feedback to Grants Services.
- Recommendations will be made to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research, Enterprise and International) for a final decision regarding which proposals will proceed to submission.
- Applicants notified of the outcome of their NOI.
- Applicants will be supported by Grants Services and their School/Institute/Cluster. Applicants must pay close attention to the internal deadlines (details below).

5. WSU processes and procedures.

- **Resubmissions for ACGRs** (from the previous round only)
- When the outcomes from the previous round are known Grants Services will provide guidance regarding which grants will be supported for resubmission. Justification and endorsement may be required from Deans/Institute Directors for lower ranked applications.
- Eligible applicants wishing to resubmit should seek support from their Dean/Institute Director.
- Applicants will be supported by Grants Services and their School/Institute/Cluster. Applicants must pay close attention to the internal deadlines.

Q&A