

TERMS OF REFERENCE

ARMS Special Interest Group: Major Research Collaborations (MRC)

Purpose

The Major Research Collaborations (MRC) Special Interest Group (SIG) is a collaborative forum for research management professionals to exchange knowledge, experiences, and best practices in the management of significant research initiatives. The primary purpose of this SIG is to enhance the strategic and operational capabilities of research management professionals in handling large-scale, complex funding opportunities, including but not limited to major national and international (competitive) research grants. This group will foster a community of practice that supports innovation, continuous improvement, and the sharing of expertise in managing the complexities of major collaborative investments to drive research excellence and impact.

Aims and Objectives

- Strengthen the capabilities of research management professionals that support major initiatives in research offices and schools/faculties for pre-award and post-award processes.
- Collaborate to facilitate the development of strategies and response to opportunities that align with institutional goals and broader research priorities.
- Encourage and share innovative approaches to overcome challenges inherent in managing large research collaborative initiatives.
- Provide a platform to discuss the impact of policy changes and funding landscapes on the administration of major investments, and a network to provide feedback to major funders on changes to their policies and processes.

Scope and Responsibilities

The scope of the SIG encompasses a wide range of activities related to the development and management of major research initiatives. These include:

- **Inclusion:** Invitation of research management professionals from a wide range of organisations who are encouraged to lead the conversation and to ensure they are well positioned to lead and navigate innovation in research support practices.
- **Knowledge sharing:** Facilitation of the exchange of best practices, case studies, and lessons learned among members regarding the management of major research projects and leveraging strategic grants that support their development.
- **Capacity building:** Support of the professional development of research office staff and creating MRC specialists through workshops, webinars, models for staff collaboration that focus on the unique challenges in major research initiatives.
- **Policy advocacy as a core function of ARMS:** The Society leads coordinated advocacy efforts to influence research policy and administration for major research initiatives. The Special Interest Group (SIG) provides input and advice to the ARMS Board and Executive Office, particularly in response to the requirements of funding bodies (e.g., ARC, NHMRC, MRFF) and national research agendas.

- **Resource development:** Collaboration on the creation of tools, templates, agreements (in collaborations with other SIG's), and guidelines utilised by research offices to improve management of large-scale research projects.
- **Strategic planning:** Assist research offices in aligning their operations with institutional research strategies, ensuring that major initiatives contribute to broader organisational goals.
- **Networking:** Building a network of professionals with a shared interest in the development and management of major research initiatives, fostering peer support and collaboration across institutions.

Membership

- Membership in the MRC SIG is open to professionals who are actively involved in research management within universities, research institutions, and other related organisations.
- Members must be current financial members of ARMS.
- Members should have responsibilities related to the management (administration) of large-scale grants, strategic funding programs, and interdisciplinary research programs/projects.
- Members from a variety of roles within and outside of research offices are welcome including those involved in pre-award, post-award, compliance, and strategic planning. Diversity will ensure that the SIG benefits from a broad range of perspectives and experiences.
- Members are expected to actively contribute to the SIG's activities, through participation in meetings, contribution to discussions, or involvement in working groups (e.g. COO's/Business Managers of COE's and/or ITRP's, CRC's etc.)
- Membership limited to up to two persons per institution, for a maximum of two to three years, with an option to refresh.
- Membership will include members from the Australian, New Zealand and Singapore ARMS Chapters.

Role of Convenor(s)

The role of the Convenor(s) is crucial to the effective functioning of the SIG. The Convenor(s) will:

- **Leadership:** Provide leadership to the SIG, guiding its activities in line with its purpose and objectives. Convenors will set the agenda for meetings including the development of an annual workplan, oversee the progress, and ensure that the SIG remains focused on its goals.
- **Meetings:** Organise and chair meetings, ensuring that discussions are productive and inclusive. The Convenor(s) will also ensure key meeting action items are recorded and distributed.
- **Communication:** Serve as the primary point of contact for SIG members, facilitating communication within the group and with external stakeholders.
- **Representation:** Represent the SIG in external forums (e.g. conferences, workshops, meetings with funding bodies, etc.). The Convenor(s) will be responsible for communicating the SIG's activities and outcomes to the ARMS Board.

Meetings

- The SIG will meet quarterly per annum, with additional meetings scheduled as needed to address emerging issues or opportunities, such as the development of new resources or responses to significant policy changes.
- Additional persons will be invited to attend the meetings at the request of the Convenor(s) on behalf of the SIG to provide advice and assistance where necessary.
- Meetings will be held in person or virtually, depending on the preferences of the members.
- Members are expected to attend meetings regularly and actively participate in discussions.
- The ARMS Executive Office shall provide dedicated Secretariat support to the SIG.

Reporting

The SIG will maintain regular communication with the ARMS Board to ensure alignment with broader goals and to secure support for its activities. It will report to the Board on its operations, compliance, and achievement of objectives as outlined by the Board or in the *ARMS Strategic Plan: Towards 2030*.

At the end of each year, the SIG will report on its activities, achievements, and any challenges faced and outline plans and objectives for the upcoming year. Additionally, the SIG will seek feedback from members and ARMS to evaluate its effectiveness and identify areas for improvement.

Quorum

For decisions to be representative, a quorum, including at least one Convenor, must be present at meetings. Decisions will be made by consensus, or by majority vote if needed, with the Convenor(s) casting the tie-breaking vote. The quorum is set at half of the SIG's membership.

Sponsorship

The SIG may seek sponsorship or external funding through the ARMS Executive Office to support its activities and enhance its capacity to deliver valuable outputs to its members provided it aligns with the group's objectives and maintains independence. All sponsorship arrangements will require approval from the SIG membership and the ARMS Board/Executive Office, with full transparency and accountability on sources and terms.

Winding up

Special Interest Groups may be dissolved by action of the Board upon being advised that such Group does not comply with the By-Laws, but only after due notice has been served and a hearing afforded.

The MRI SIG may be wound up if its objectives are achieved or if it is determined that the group is no longer needed, by written notification from Convenors to the Board and subsequent approval.

- Decision to wind up: The decision to wind up the SIG can be made by the Board, a majority vote of the members. The Convenor(s) will then coordinate the winding-up process, ensuring that all outstanding activities are completed.
- Distribution of resources: Upon winding up, any remaining resources, tools, and documentation, will be returned to ARMS or distributed as agreed by the members. The final distribution will be documented and communicated to all members.

Version Control

Version	Date of Approval	Date for review	Circulation	Document owner
Version 1	26/06/2025	12 months	MRC SIG	SIG Convenors
Version 2				