



SUBMISSION TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING: INQUIRY INTO FUNDING AUSTRALIA'S RESEARCH

The Australasian Research Management Society (ARMS) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the House of Representatives' Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training on the Inquiry into Funding Australia's Research.

About ARMS

The Australasian Research Management Society (ARMS) is the professional society for research managers and administrators working throughout Australasia and Singapore. ARMS' mission is to promote the profession of research management, recognising that in order to enhance the research enterprise, the profession of research management must be acknowledged by funders, governments and research institutions as integral to the research endeavour.

As the professional representative body for research managers and administrators in Australia, ARMS maintains an abiding interest in the efficiency, effectiveness and coherency of the national system for funding pure and applied research in the public benefit. Our society includes more than 2700 members from Australian universities, research agencies and institutes, medical research institutes, R&D corporations, research centres, government departments, funding bodies, industrial R&D teams, service providers, commercialisation bodies and consultancies.

The Research Management Workforce

The primary interest of ARMS as it pertains to the current inquiry is to ensure research managers and administrators are prepared to lead the next generation of the research enterprise. ARMS aims to ensure our workforce is appropriately trained and resourced to meet the rapidly changing needs of the research and innovation system within Australia and in the increasingly competitive global system. Our membership undertakes a wide range of roles, aimed at facilitating and supporting Australia's research community to make a positive impact in line with government, community and industry expectations. These roles include support for the development and management of applications for research funding; the provision of expertise in the protection of research integrity and the ethics of research; coordination of administration and candidature support for graduate researchers; and the maintaining of systems and processes that track and allow accurate reporting of the research and innovation activities of research organisations. Furthermore, in recent years, our membership has adapted to the national and global shift toward industry-led and end-user focused research with impact, through the development and deployment of skills and expertise to engage industry and support cross-sectoral collaboration. Our members retain expertise across all fields of research, from science, technology and healthcare, to business, social sciences and the humanities. The contemporary research manager is an integral part of the research and innovation system and the roles of researcher and research manager co-exist within team contexts. As with researchers,

research managers and administrators have adapted to significant changes in the research funding system, including:

- The structural review of the NHMRC's grant schemes;
- The implementation of the Australian Council of Learned Academies Review of Research Training;
- The Watt review of research funding; and
- The introduction of the National Science and Innovation agenda.

Recommendations

With respect to the research management workforce, ARMS makes the following observations and recommendations:

1. Scale of the research funding landscape

Our members are involved in supporting the development of capability and provide advice to researchers on where effort is best placed to attract funding and thus deploy and translate that capability in line with government priorities. The national research funding system includes schemes operated by the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments, Local Government, industry, community and philanthropic organisations. Negotiating this landscape requires deep expertise on the part of research managers and administrators.

Recommendation 1: ARMS recommends that all levels of Government participate in a long-term concerted effort to increase system-wide efficiencies and raise the visibility of research funding opportunities in the national interest.

2. Administration of research funding applications

Our members operate end-to-end processes for the administration of research funding applications, from the provision of grant development assistance to researchers and industry partners through to contracting, post-award milestone management and reporting to funders and the Commonwealth. Many research organisations undertake internal Expression of Interest (EOI) or "pitch" processes in order to maximise positive outcomes, while simultaneously attending to the compliance requirements of individual schemes, which have increased in scale and complexity.

ARMS is working closely with the ARC, NHMRC and other Commonwealth funding bodies to contribute the expertise of our membership to the task of enhancing administrative efficiencies. The following recommendations will be further explored during joint workshops with Commonwealth funding bodies planned over the next few months.

Recommendation 2: ARMS recommends that the Commonwealth considers a two-stage process comprising an EOI (Stage 1) and full proposal and budget (Stage 2) to minimise wasted effort and to optimise alignment. ARMS points to staged processes for the Cooperative Research Centres program and internationally to European Commission and other national funding bodies as examples of EOI processes.

Recommendation 3: ARMS recommends that contracting arrangements for multi-partner schemes, such as ARC Linkage Projects and the Industrial Transformation Research Program are investigated with a view to streamlining and templating where possible.

Recommendation 4: ARMS recommends that funding rules for Commonwealth research funding schemes are standardised to the greatest extent possible in order to reduce the administration requirements for research support staff and researchers.

3. Application and management systems

Commonwealth funding bodies each retain bespoke application and management systems which are not integrated. This leads to the double handling of information and opportunities for increased processing errors.

Recommendation 4: ARMS recommends that the Commonwealth investigates the integration of research application and management systems, in order to increase efficiency and transparency and reduce administration within the research funding system.

Conclusion

The recommendations made by ARMS reflect the experiences of research managers and administrators, who operationalise the research funding system on a daily basis. Our members are employed across the diverse research and innovation enterprise and yet share a common concern to facilitate Australia's research community to undertake discovery and invention for the public benefit. To this end, ARMS will continue to liaise with Commonwealth research funding agencies to support the development of Australia's research and innovation system.

Yours sincerely,

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