



Australasian Research Management Society

Submission from the Australasian Research Management Society (ARMS) to the Department of Industry, Science and Resources on the Horizon Europe Implementation Consultation

The [Australasian Research Management Society \(ARMS\)](#) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on Australia's implementation of Horizon Europe.

ARMS is the peak body for Research Management Professionals across Australia, New Zealand and Singapore. Our members work across universities, medical research institutes, government agencies, industry and not-for-profit organisations. They play an important role in supporting research and innovation by helping researchers access funding, build partnerships, meet compliance requirements and deliver successful research projects.

Australia's association with Horizon Europe presents a major opportunity to strengthen international collaboration and expand engagement with global research and innovation networks. To make the most of this opportunity, Australia will need strong support systems alongside talented researchers and high-quality institutions.

From an ARMS perspective, success will depend on investment in the people, systems, networks and organisational capability needed to support participation in Horizon Europe. Research management capability should be recognised as an important part of the infrastructure required to help Australia succeed in international research programs.

The Role of Research Management in International Collaboration

International research programs are becoming increasingly complex. Participation in Horizon Europe requires organisations to understand detailed program requirements, develop international partnerships, negotiate consortium arrangements, manage contracts and comply with a range of legal and reporting obligations.

Researchers cannot do this alone.

Research Management Professionals provide the expertise and support that make participation possible. They help identify funding opportunities, connect researchers with partners, coordinate proposal development, manage institutional approvals and support project delivery once funding is secured.

Experience in other countries shows that strong institutional research management and research support capability are key enablers of successful international research collaboration and engagement. If Australia wants to maximise the benefits of Horizon Europe, investment in research management capability should form part of the implementation approach.

National Contact Point (NCP) Network

ARMS supports the establishment of a nationally coordinated National Contact Point (NCP) network.

The NCP network should do more than provide information. It should offer practical support that helps organisations understand opportunities, develop partnerships and prepare competitive applications.

The model should be:

- Consistent across Australia and easy to access.
- Available to organisations of all sizes and locations.
- Connected to existing research and innovation networks.
- Focused on practical advice and capability building.
- Staffed by people with experience in international research funding and collaboration.
- Open and transparent; criteria for selection of host organisations should be published in advance, and periodically reviewed over the life of the program

The Tier 2 network should combine cluster-based expertise with cross-cutting specialist advice on First Nations engagement, industry and SME participation, legal and financial matters, intellectual property, audit and post-award management, data protection and research security. A hybrid hosting model may provide the best balance of expertise, credibility and national accessibility. Host organisations should be funded for the full cost of delivery, with protected staff time, administrative support and clear service expectations.

Research offices and research management teams are often the first place researchers seek advice about international funding opportunities. They should therefore be recognised as important partners in delivering and supporting the NCP model.

Roles across government, Tier 2 specialists, institutional research offices, EURAXESS and any Tier 3 network should be published in a clear service map, with referral and escalation pathways. This will reduce duplication and help applicants identify the appropriate source of advice.

Tier 2 appointments should be based on the expertise required for the function rather than seniority alone. The network should include people with direct experience of Horizon Europe, international consortium development and research management, including senior research management professionals who understand institutional systems and applicant's needs.

ARMS also notes that New Zealand's experience with Horizon Europe provides valuable insights. Many ARMS members work closely with colleagues across New Zealand and can help share lessons learned as Australia's implementation model develops.

Building National Capability

Building capability across the sector will be one of the key challenges for Australia.

Many organisations have limited experience with Horizon Europe or participation in European research consortia. While some larger institutions have dedicated international research teams, many organisations have fewer resources available to support this activity.

Capability building should therefore support both researchers and Research Management Professionals.

ARMS recommends investment in:

- National training programs.
- Proposal development workshops.
- Horizon Europe masterclasses.
- Communities of practice.
- Online resources and webinars.
- Mentoring and secondment opportunities.
- Sector-wide knowledge sharing initiatives.

Training should include practical, interactive support on consortium formation, role and budget negotiation, proposal writing against European evaluation criteria, costing, contracting and post-award delivery. Where Australian experience is limited, government should support access to experienced European practitioners and evaluators, including targeted travel support to deliver in-person training in Australia.

National guidance should also address the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and related data-management obligations. Australia should draw on practical guidance developed by other associated countries, including Canada and New Zealand, so that researchers and Research Management Professionals can identify data-protection issues early and obtain authoritative advice.

Capability is currently unevenly distributed. Implementation should be designed around organisations with little or no European program experience, rather than assuming that expertise held by a small number of experienced institutions will naturally flow across the sector.

DISR should compile and publish an authoritative, regularly updated map of Australian participation in Horizon Europe and Horizon 2020, including participating organisations, project roles and, where consent is provided, experienced Australian leads. This would support partner search, mentoring and sector-wide capability building.

Supporting Partnership Development

Strong international partnerships are critical to success in Horizon Europe.

Many Australian organisations have excellent research capability but may have limited connections to European research networks. Building these relationships takes time and often requires targeted support.

ARMS recommends investment in:

- Brokerage and networking events.
- Consortium-building activities.
- Strategic engagement with European research networks.
- Early-stage collaboration initiatives that help partnerships develop before funding opportunities arise.

Successful international collaborations are rarely built a few weeks before an application deadline. Strong applications are often the result of relationships that have been developed over many years.

Support should recognise barriers that are not purely informational, including Australia's distance and time zones, the higher cost of travel, limited visibility of Australian institutions to European coordinators and the need to build trust before a consortium is formed. Practical preparation should also cover differences in consortium working styles, including explicit expectations about roles, budgets, deliverables and decision-making.

Proposal Development Support

Preparing a Horizon Europe proposal requires significant time and resources.

The size and complexity of many applications can present challenges for organisations that are new to the program. Without additional support, capable Australian organisations may be placed at a disadvantage compared with more experienced European participants.

ARMS recommends consideration of:

- Seed funding for proposal development.
- Support for consortium meetings and partnership activities.
- Funding to allow researchers time to participate in proposal development.
- Specialist grant development support.
- Collaborative funding to bring potential partners together.
- Proposal-development support that is rapid, low burden and available early enough to influence call selection, partner identification and consortium formation. It should align with Horizon Europe timetables rather than conventional domestic grant cycles, remain provider-neutral and favour lowering the cost of entry over success-contingent payments that primarily reward organisations already equipped to win.

Investment in proposal development should be viewed as an investment in Australia's future success and competitiveness within Horizon Europe.

Inclusion and Broad Participation

Australia's implementation model should encourage participation from across the research and innovation system.

This includes:

- Universities of all sizes.
- Medical research institutes.
- Government research organisations.
- Industry partners and small and medium-sized enterprises.
- Regional organisations.
- Early and mid-career researchers.
- First Nations researchers and communities.
- Direct engagement with First Nations research leaders on the design of any Indigenous-specific NCP function.
- Regional and remote organisations, supported through virtual access, accessible training times, targeted outreach, travel budgets, shared access to legal and financial expertise, and reserved or weighted proposal-development support.

Barriers to participation vary across sectors and organisations. Measures of success should therefore consider not only funding outcomes but also whether participation is broad, diverse and spread across the country.

Where practicable and without adding institutional reporting burden, performance measures should cover service quality, reach and equity, capability building, proposal progression, partnership outcomes and system learning. In addition to applications and awards, government should consider any practical means of tracking entry into consortia, invitations to participate, Australian coordination and work-package roles, evaluator outcomes where available, and the points at which prospective applicants withdraw. Baselines should be established early and reviewed over time, including readiness for FP10.

Aligning National Priorities and International Opportunities

ARMS supports efforts to align Horizon Europe participation with Australia's national priorities.

At the same time, the implementation framework should remain flexible enough to support emerging research areas and new opportunities for collaboration.

Because Pillar II calls are already framed around European strategic objectives, additional Australian priority tests should broaden rather than narrow access. Overly prescriptive alignment requirements could exclude emerging or multidisciplinary opportunities, create duplicative assessment and encourage superficial reframing rather than genuine strategic fit. This is distinct from measures that improve equitable access, such as targeted support for regional, remote or under-represented

applicants, which expand who can participate rather than filtering proposals by subject-matter priority.

International partnerships often deliver benefits well beyond individual projects. These can include workforce development, access to international infrastructure, knowledge sharing, capability building and long-term strategic relationships.

Australia's approach should therefore balance national priorities with opportunities emerging from the international research landscape.

Conclusion

Australia's association with Horizon Europe represents a significant opportunity for the research and innovation sector.

Success will require more than access to funding. It will depend on strong partnerships, national capability, effective support structures and a skilled workforce that can support participation throughout the research lifecycle.

Research Management Professionals are a key part of this capability. They help researchers and organisations navigate complex international programs, develop competitive proposals and deliver successful research outcomes.

As the peak body for Research Management Professionals in Australasia, ARMS is well placed to support implementation through professional development, capability-building activities, guidance and sector engagement. We look forward to working with government and sector partners to help maximise the opportunities Horizon Europe presents for Australia's research and innovation community.

Given the short lead time to the 2027 calls, implementation should be fast-tracked. If permanent arrangements cannot be completed immediately, interim NCP contacts, essential guidance and early capability-building support should be put in place so that applicants can begin forming consortia and preparing proposals without delay.

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