



UNSW
SYDNEY

Australia's
Global
University

Office of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor
(Research Infrastructure)

Research Infrastructure Scheme

Supporting Collaborative Research

Guidelines for Funding in 2023

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1 OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES

The Research Infrastructure Scheme (RIS) will provide UNSW with a world-class research environment to attract and retain a critical mass of research excellence. Whether it is in the humanities, arts and social sciences, or in medical research, science or engineering, our investment in research infrastructure and equipment is a strategic commitment to enable our researchers to work at the cutting edge of local, national and international research. To achieve this goal, the scheme aims to enable not only the acquisition of high-end infrastructure, but also to maximise accessibility of infrastructure by funding support staff to facilitate access and training.

The following types of projects will be funded under the scheme:

1.1 Faculty Infrastructure Projects

This includes Faculty-based research equipment, equipment maintenance and upgrades, database subscriptions and other Faculty-based infrastructure. These proposals can include applicants from more than one Faculty.

1.2 Mark Wainwright Analytical Centre Infrastructure Projects

These projects are for infrastructure to be based within the Mark Wainwright Analytical Centre (MWAC) rather than within a Faculty. As above, proposals may include research equipment, equipment maintenance and upgrades, database subscriptions and other infrastructure.

Faculty-based staff are encouraged to contact the Executive Director of MWAC or the Head of the relevant MWAC Facility, if they feel a particular piece of equipment would be more suitable to be housed at the Centre than within a Faculty, or would like to suggest a cross-Faculty proposal involving MWAC.

1.3 Cross-Faculty Infrastructure Projects

Cross-Faculty Infrastructure Projects (cFIP) are identical to the projects described above except that **funds** are split over more than one Faculty, or Faculty(ies) and MWAC. Proposals that include applicants from more than one Faculty but only involve funding via a single Faculty are not considered cross-Faculty proposals.

Whereas splitting funds across multiple Faculties can be advantageous for resources that are shared across Faculties, experience shows that these projects are only successful if coordinated well across Faculties. If you are planning a cFIP, it is recommended you seek advice from the Office of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research Infrastructure) as soon as possible.

1.4 Network Labs – Support Personnel – Renewal of funding for existing projects only

Due to the financial impacts of Covid-19, funding in this category for 2023 will be limited to supporting incumbent staff in existing Network Labs which have been awarded RIS funds for 2022, but not for 2023. Investigators eligible to apply for Network Lab renewal in 2023 will be invited to submit an application directly.

If required, approval will be determined by a Network Lab Specialist Panel comprised of nominated Faculty and MWAC representatives and will be subject to scope for renewal via demonstrated excellence in research support and outcomes.

2 ELIGIBILITY AND FUNDING RULES

2.1 General Eligibility Criteria and Funding Rules

- a) Applicants must be members of the academic staff of UNSW, and on the payroll of UNSW or have been formally appointed to UNSW according to established processes for Conjoint or clinical appointments for Area Health Services or associated research institutions.
- b) Conjoint and clinical staff must have all their research productivity (e.g., grant applications, postgraduate research student supervision, UNSW affiliation on publications) submitted through and administered by UNSW to be eligible to apply for support under this scheme.
- c) Applicants may be named on a maximum of two proposals of any kind plus one MWAC Infrastructure Project in the same funding round.
- d) Emeritus and honorary staff are not eligible to apply for support from this scheme.

2.2 Network Lab Eligibility Criteria and Funding Rules – Renewal of funding for existing RIS Network Lab projects only

- a) Network Labs are funded from a separate budget to other RIS projects and will be ranked by faculties prior to assessment by a specialist panel (see Section 5 for more detail on the assessment process).
- b) Funding in 2023 will be limited to proposals requesting renewal of funding for existing RIS Network Labs which have been awarded funding for 2022, but not 2023. Network Labs are located in Schools, Faculties or Centres hosting significant *existing* research infrastructure that *could* and *should* be made more accessible to a wider range of researchers; and which requires specialist expertise to operate and to train research users.
- c) Proposals must demonstrate the research impact that could be made by renewal of funding support for the infrastructure and demonstrate the ongoing user-base that would be enabled to access the infrastructure. Alignment with Faculty and University strategic priorities should also be demonstrated.
- d) Proposals must demonstrate the research demand for the infrastructure beyond the local user-base and must include CIs from relevant stakeholder groups.
- e) Network Labs must not duplicate or compete with other shared facilities. A transparent access model including a booking system and a cost recovery mechanism to recover marginal operating costs will be required.
- f) Note that local research support staffing is still eligible for Infrastructure Projects (see Section 4.1.1 below).

3 FUNDING SOURCES AND ARRANGEMENTS

- a) The UNSW RIS is supported by the University's 2025 Strategy funding. Additional funding available via the Research Support Program (RSP) and the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Equipment Grant will also be rolled into this scheme.
- b) Faculty Infrastructure Projects, MWAC Infrastructure Projects and Network Labs are funded from separate funding allocations within the overall budget envelope for the scheme.
- c) For Faculty Infrastructure Projects, a formula is used to calculate the distribution of funds across Faculties based on each Faculty's research income averaged over the last three years. HERDC Category 1 income is weighted at 60%, Category 2-4 income at 40%.
- d) Successful projects will be fully funded when possible, hence a Faculty's allocation in a particular year may not exactly match the allocation formula. Adjustments will be made in future years to ensure appropriate allocation over time.
- e) On closure of a RIS project, any unspent funds will be made available to the relevant Faculty's RIS allocation for the next round.
- f) Faculty-based projects which are funded for two years will incur a forward commitment against that Faculty's allocation in the following year.
- g) Faculties or Schools may wish to coordinate a local expression of interest (EOI) call prior to the submission of a full proposal.

4 SUPPORTED EQUIPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

4.1 Faculty or MWAC Infrastructure Projects

These projects support similar infrastructure, with the distinction being the location and ongoing support of the infrastructure either occurring within a Faculty or within the MWAC. For the purpose of these projects, research infrastructure is defined as a single significant item (or a complete system or infrastructure initiative) required to support research activity at UNSW.

4.1.1 Items supported:

- a) All items consistent with the Department of Education and Training's Research Support Program's¹ objective to support the systemic costs of research. These could include, for example:
 - i. Support for libraries, database subscriptions, research computing centres, animal houses, herbaria;
 - ii. Equipment purchase, installation, maintenance and upgrades;
 - iii. Equipment and major facilities to underpin research activities, excluding capital works;
 - iv. Offsetting (or partly offsetting) the salaries of technical or research support staff who support research activities (including computing and IT support staff, laboratory technicians, support staff for major instruments and databases, etc.);
 - v. Funding for initiatives to support research activity in the humanities, arts and social sciences; and,
 - vi. Providing or improving the research infrastructure for postgraduate research students.
- b) Items eligible under the NHMRC Equipment Grants Scheme, as assessed against the following additional criteria:
 - i. The equipment should support the highest quality health and medical research, as supported by the NHMRC (or other competitive grant support);
 - ii. Consideration should be given to the lack of access to similar equipment in the institution or region; and,
 - iii. The collaborative gain through the use of the equipment should be explained, e.g. multi-user equipment which crosses disciplines, research groups or departments.

4.1.2 Level and duration of funding:

- a) There is no lower limit set on the level of funding requested. However, proposals must be significant and will be assessed on the basis that they will make a real and positive contribution to the University's research effort and 2025 Strategy.

¹Research Support Program guidelines, including objectives, are available from the Department of Education and Training's website at: <https://www.education.gov.au/research-support-program>

- b) There is no defined upper limit of funding that can be requested, however, Faculties should consider the size of projects relative to their funding allocation when ranking proposals. The allocation of funds across Faculties is calculated as described under Section c).
- c) For equipment and infrastructure above \$200,000, there must be a compelling reason why this should not be more appropriately obtained through the Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage Infrastructure and Equipment Facilities (LIEF) Scheme², or other eligible major infrastructure schemes.
- d) Generally funding will be awarded for one year only, however, multi-year proposals (up to a maximum of 2 years) will be considered if justified. If funds are not expended within the allocated timeframe due to unforeseen circumstances, funding may be carried forward for a maximum of one year with an extension request.
- e) Funding for this initiative will be allocated centrally. The payment for equipment and infrastructure will be made by the relevant School/Faculty/MWAC from an approved account on presentation of an appropriate invoice or order.

4.1.3 Alignment with Faculty Priorities

All proposals require Faculty-level approval before being eligible for RIS funding. As such, Faculties may apply restrictions to the types of supported/eligible items (Section 4.1.1), in accordance with their research and funding priorities.

4.2 Network Labs – Support Personnel

This type of project is specifically aimed at funding research support staff to manage **existing** Faculty-based shared infrastructure in order to facilitate access, and increase the support and training available to researchers across UNSW and external parties.

4.2.1 Items supported:

- a) Salary funding at 75% of total cost (i.e. salary plus oncost) will be provided for one support staff. In exceptional cases only, funding for two support staff can be requested but must be fully justified. The host Faculty/ School or Schools are required to contribute 25% of costs. In the current covid-19 financial climate, other sources of co-funding may also be eligible to make up the salary budget. Please ask for advice if necessary.
- a) Start-up costs and operational expenses of up to \$5,000 per annum.

4.2.2 Level and duration of funding:

- a) Funding is for a maximum of two years. If funds are not expended within the budgeted timeframe due to unforeseen circumstances, funding may be carried forward for a maximum of one year.
- b) The host Faculty/ School or Schools, or other approved sources of funding, are required to contribute 25% of total salary costs (i.e. salary plus oncost).

²Further details on the ARC LIEF scheme are available from the ARC website at:
<http://www.arc.gov.au/linkage-infrastructure-equipment-and-facilities>

- c) The salary level must be justified in the application. Applications can be made for salary costs up to Level 8 for professional staff or Level A for academic staff. Appointments at a higher level may be considered if the Faculty/ School carries the additional cost.
- d) A cost-recovery mechanism is expected to be set up for Network Labs to at least partially recover operational costs. The Office of the PVC (Research Infrastructure) and/or the MWAC will assist successful applicants with this. Successful implementation of a cost-recovery model will be considered when reviewing any applications for renewal of funding.

4.2.3 Renewal of funding:

- a) Applications can be made for renewal of funding for Network Labs in the year that the requested funding period concludes, and approval will be subject to demonstrated excellence in research support and outcomes.
- b) An updated report is required with any new renewal application. Refer to Section 8.1 for information on Network Lab post-award reporting.

4.3 Items Not Supported

The following items are not supported by the RIS:

- a) The provision of regular office or laboratory infrastructure, which would normally be supplied to members of staff.
- b) Computing equipment designed to support undergraduate teaching programs (e.g. general computer laboratories) or office equipment.
- c) Costs for equipment hire, the acquisition of services or purchase of time on computers, vessels, aerial photography or access to specialised facilities are NOT permitted.
- d) UNSW does not provide 'grant-in-aid' or contributions to equipment that will become assets of other institutions. Any items purchased through this initiative must be listed as assets of UNSW. If they are installed 'off-site', they still need to be recorded on the University's Assets Register with a fractional ownership if the equipment is jointly owned.
- e) Funding cannot be used for major capital works (buildings, also see Section 7), rental of accommodation, or travel costs directly associated with individual projects.
- f) Salaries of teaching and research staff, including the cost of "buying time" to free such staff to do more research (e.g. through the appointment of administrative staff),
- g) Salaries of staff supporting research at an institutional level or staff involved in research administration (e.g. Research Grants Officer), or postgraduate research student stipends.
- h) Network Lab costs not listed under Section 4.2, such as overheads for reporting and cost recovery mechanisms, operational costs, equipment upgrades, or maintenance not included in the initial application.
- i) Ongoing maintenance of funded infrastructure beyond the initial application – applicants will need to demonstrate how routine maintenance and operational costs will be met.
- j) "Rainy day" funds, such as funds for potential future repairs, or funds to purchase equipment on an "ad-hock" or "as-required" basis.
- k) Costs associated with networking events and workshops, including venue hire, promotional material (printing etc), catering, gifts and entertainment costs.

5 ASSESSMENT PROCESS AND SELECTION CRITERIA

- a) Expression of Interest (where applicable)
 - i. For Faculty and MWAC infrastructure projects (including cross-Faculty Infrastructure Projects), your School, Faculty or Unit may elect to hold an internal Expression of Interest (EOI) process prior to the invitation for full applications. You will need to enquire with your local research management office to check if this is relevant to you and for the details of the EOI process. You may also check the RIS website for any news regarding internal EOI processes.
 - ii. Due to Covid-19, funding in this category will be limited to supporting incumbent staff in existing Network Labs. Investigators eligible to apply for Network Lab renewal in 2023 will be invited to submit a proposal directly.
- b) Proposals for Faculty Infrastructure Projects (including cross-Faculty Infrastructure Projects) will be ranked and recommended for funding by Faculties based on the selection criteria and strategic research priorities for the Faculty. Similarly, MWAC Infrastructure Project proposals will be ranked according to the selection criteria and the Centre's strategic priorities.
- c) Proposals together with ranked lists and recommendations are then submitted to the PVCRI who will assess them in consultation with Estate Management (EM) and Research Ethics and Compliance Support (RECS) regarding eligibility, duplication, ethics and other compliance, WHS, space and services risks. Ultimately, the PVCRI approves infrastructure projects for funding based on Faculty/MWAC ranked recommendations.
- d) Cross-Faculty Infrastructure Project proposals that are ranked disparately will be discussed with the relevant Faculties with the aim to resolve such borderline proposals.
- e) Network Lab proposals requesting renewal of funding will be assessed by the PVC (Research Infrastructure), and where required by a Faculty panel, based on the performance, sustainability, and feasibility of the Lab to receive continued RIS funding.
- f) Proposals will be assessed based on the following selection criteria. However, it is acknowledged that Faculties/ MWAC may base their ranking on additional Faculty-/ Centre-specific criteria.
 - i. Demonstrated need for the proposed infrastructure support 50%
 - What is the current availability and accessibility of this type of infrastructure at UNSW?
 - Is there demonstrated need from researchers wanting to utilise the proposed infrastructure to support current or emerging research strengths?
 - Does the proposed infrastructure improve the use of currently available but underused equipment/facilities?
 - Is there a demonstrated need for specialist staffing and support?
 - What are the access and support plans; e.g. role of the requested support staff?
 - ii. Capability of the proposed infrastructure to enhance collaborations 30%

- Is the infrastructure relevant to researchers from multiple disciplines/research areas?
- Has there been strong interest from researchers from other Schools/Faculties to access this equipment?
- Would any already-established, planned projects or collaborations be dependent on, or benefit from, the proposed infrastructure?

iii. Significance and innovative nature of research supported by proposal 20%

- Does the research supported by this infrastructure address a significant problem?
- Is the research supported by this infrastructure innovative and novel?
- How does the research supported by this infrastructure align with Faculty research priorities and the 2025 Strategy³?

³See <https://www.2025.unsw.edu.au/>

6 PROCUREMENT

- a) Any acquisition of research equipment or infrastructure under this scheme MUST, as any procurement activity made on behalf of UNSW Sydney, be in accordance with the University's procurement policy and procedure⁴. Detailed information is available in the "Buying" section of the Strategic Procurement website⁵.
- b) According to the University's procurement policy and procedure, minimum three written competitive quotes must be obtained for goods/services above AUD50,000 (excl. GST) and one quote for goods/services below AUD50,000 (excl. GST). Quotes are not required for goods/services below AUD3,000 (excl. GST).
- c) When requesting quotes from suppliers for applications to the RIS, please use the "Request for Quotes" (RFQ) template provided by Strategic Procurement⁶.
- d) If funds are awarded for infrastructure to be placed at an organisation affiliated with UNSW, then UNSW at all times retains title to goods purchased using these funds. The affiliated organisation is also responsible for: a) maintaining the equipment in good working order, unless the goods have, as reasonably agreed between UNSW and the affiliated organisation, reached the end of their useful life; and b) protecting the goods against theft, loss, damage, or unauthorised use.
- e) It is recommended that you contact the UNSW Strategic Procurement team to discuss your requirements and the support services they offer before commencing any major procurement process.

⁴ UNSW's procurement policy and procedure link: <https://www.fin.unsw.edu.au/policies-procedures>

⁵ <https://www.fin.unsw.edu.au/services/buying> (login required)

⁶ The template is available on the RIS website: RIS website: <http://research.unsw.edu.au/unsw-research-infrastructure-scheme>

7 SPACE REQUIREMENTS, RISK ASSESSMENT AND RESOURCE SUPPORT

- a) Any application for research equipment or infrastructure under this scheme needs to demonstrate that consideration has been given to:
- i. The availability of on-going suitable space to house/operate the equipment/staff requested.
 - ii. Installation requirements for the equipment; these must be fully costed in the budget. For this purpose, a Site and Services Checklist⁷ must be completed, signed by the Head of School and the applicant, in consultation with EM where necessary, and attached to all applications. In many cases, there will not be any issues regarding installation or space. However, unforeseen issues can lead to major project delays and cost blow outs. The checklist has been designed to pick up any unforeseen circumstances, and as such submission of the completed and signed checklist is mandatory.
 - iii. Any need for refurbishment of existing space to accommodate the equipment. In this case, such costs must be covered by the School/Faculty budget **or** the School/Faculty submission for funding through the Capital Works Program. Such applications can only be supported in principle, subject to approval of the refurbishment budget.
 - iv. The OHS and risk assessment requirements for the design, manufacture, importation, supply, installation/erection, commissioning, use, alteration, dismantling, storage and disposal of the equipment.
 - v. Any other requirements associated with ethics, radiation safety, gene technology or other compliance⁸.
 - vi. The on-going maintenance and technical staff requirements beyond this funding application. These costs must be covered by the School/Faculty budget.
 - vii. For Network Labs, considerations should be given to the implementation of cost recovery mechanisms to cover operational costs during and especially after the initial funding period.

⁷The latest checklist template is available on the RIS website: RIS website: <http://research.unsw.edu.au/unsw-research-infrastructure-scheme>

⁸For more information, visit <https://research.unsw.edu.au/recs>

8 APPLICATION PROCESS

- a) Individuals (or teams of individuals) will put forward a strategic case and obtain approval from their Head of School using the scheme's online Application Management System (AMS). The link to AMS as well as detailed guides and instructions are available on the RIS website.
- b) Schools/Faculties may elect to run an internal EOI process prior to accepting full applications. These EOI processes are managed by the Schools/Faculties, and are not managed by the PVC (Research Infrastructure). If unsure, please contact your local research office to check if you are required to submit an EOI.
- c) All mandatory sections of the online application, including the attachment of any **supporting documentation**, must be completed. A preview of the application questions is available on the RIS website⁹. These sections include:
 - i. a clear and concise description of equipment, infrastructure or support requested;
 - ii. the strategic purpose of the request including the impact the equipment or infrastructure will have on improving UNSW's research capacity;
 - iii. a statement of the research programs or groups which will be supported by the equipment or infrastructure;
 - iv. details of the funding requested **including quote(s)** and budget justification (equipment funded under the RIS will be expected to undergo a rigorous procurement process to ensure value for money is achieved and probity and risks are managed. This means that the eventual supplier may not be the same as the supplier named in the application. At the same time, it is important that budgets are based on competitive quotes and fully justified); and
 - v. a completed and signed **Site and Services Checklist** (see Section 7a (ii) above).
- d) Failure to attach the required **supporting documents** (i.e. Site and Services Checklist and quote(s)) with your application may result in the application being deemed ineligible for funding.
- e) Applications must be submitted by the University-wide common deadline below.
- f) Via the AMS, applications are first submitted to Schools and MWAC units who may run their own internal processes for ranking (optional) and approval of applications. Once applications are approved by Schools/MWAC Units (via AMS), they will be automatically forwarded to the relevant Faculty or the MWAC Executive Director's Office.
- g) The relevant Faculties/MWAC will be required to conduct a ranking and approval process based on RIS selection criteria and Faculty/MWAC priorities (via the AMS portal) by a University-wide common deadline (see below). All approved applications, together with their ranking and recommendations, will be forwarded to the PVCRI.

⁹RIS website: <http://research.unsw.edu.au/unsw-research-infrastructure-scheme>

h) Timetable for the 2023 RIS round. All deadlines are COB unless otherwise stated.

| Phase | Event/Milestone | Dates |
|---|---|---------------------------------|
| Announcement and EOI ¹ (if applicable) | RIS 2023 guidelines published | Wednesday, 10 August 2022 |
| | <i>EOI (if applicable¹) closes no earlier than:</i> | <i>Monday 22 August 2022</i> |
| Applications | Call for full applications via the RIS online Application Management System (AMS) open | Monday, 29 August 2022 |
| | Information session (MS Teams) <i>link to be advertised via the RGC MyGrants mailing list and on the RIS website</i> | Thursday, 1 September 2022 |
| | Applications close | Monday 26 September 2022 |
| Approval | Schools/MWAC Units to complete review and approval of applications | Monday 10 October 2022 |
| | Faculties/MWAC to complete review, ranking and approval of applications | Monday 24 October 2022 |
| Funding | Announcement of funding outcomes | Early-mid November |
| | Distribution of funds | January 2023 |

Note 1 – Applicable only if your School, Faculty or MWAC unit chooses to run an EOI process. The EOI close date for your School/Faculty may be later than this. Please check with your local research office if unsure.

9 POST-AWARD REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

9.1 Faculty, MWAC and cross-Faculty Infrastructure Projects

- a) As a condition of the award, reports must be submitted annually for all open RIS projects.
 - i. For 1-year projects, a final report will be requested approximately 12 months after the release of funds.
 - ii. For 2-year projects, annual report will be requested approximately 12 months after release of funds, **and** a final report approximately 24 months after release of funds.
 - iii. All annual and final reports are strictly due by the date indicated in the reporting notice.
- b) Reporting will be conducted via a personalised online survey system that will be sent to Chief Investigators via an automated notice. A preview of the report questions can be found on the RIS website¹⁰
- c) Requests for an extension for project expenditure can be submitted during the annual and final reporting process.
- d) Reports will be used by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research Infrastructure) to assess project progress and to establish a register of equipment / infrastructure funded under the Research Infrastructure Scheme. The register will be made available on the Research Infrastructure Scheme website.
- e) Failure to comply with reporting requirements may affect approval for carrying funds forward, if required, and may impact eligibility for future rounds of RIS.

9.2 Network Labs – Support Personnel

- a) Network Labs must submit annual reports of expenditure and lab-access metrics, **unless** an application for renewal of funding is made. In the latter case, the final report is to be submitted together with the application so that it can be used to assess the application in terms of demonstrated excellence in research support. If funds were approved for carryover, additional reports may be required at the time all funds are expended. Access metrics to be reported on include:
 - i. Access by local researchers
 - ii. Access by cross-faculty researchers
 - iii. Access by external researchers
 - iv. Access by industry
 - v. Training activities provided
 - vi. Research outputs (e.g. publications and grants based on access to the infrastructure, etc)

¹⁰ RIS website: <http://research.unsw.edu.au/unsw-research-infrastructure-scheme>

10 RESOURCES AND CONTACT

- a) Additional resources for this funding scheme, such as templates, report forms and Frequently Asked Questions, are available on the Research Infrastructure Scheme website:

<https://research.unsw.edu.au/unsw-research-infrastructure-scheme>.

- b) For enquiries or advice on this scheme, please contact the Office of the PVC (Research Infrastructure) via pvcresin@unsw.edu.au.