



Office of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research Infrastructure)
**Research Infrastructure Scheme:
Supporting Collaborative Research**

Guidelines for Funding in 2018

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1 OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES

The Research Infrastructure Scheme 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, Engineering and Technology, 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 to maximise accessibility of infrastructure by also 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

Projects considered under these applications will be 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

These projects are identical to the projects described above except that **funds** are split over more than one Faculty, or Faculty(ies) and the Mark Wainwright Analytical Centre. 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, especially for expensive projects, experience shows that these projects are only successful if coordinated well across Faculties. If you are planning a cross-Faculty Infrastructure Project, it is recommended you seek advice from the Office of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research Infrastructure) (see contact details in Section 10b)).

1.4 Network Labs – Support Personnel

These projects are for research support staff to manage **existing** Faculty-based shared facilities/infrastructure with the aim to increase accessibility across UNSW and externally in order to foster and support sharing of resources and enhance collaboration. Approved projects will receive up to two years of funding for support of appropriately qualified personnel. Note that a 25% cash contribution from the host School/ Faculty towards the total cost of these projects is required.

Infrastructure supported under this category will be advertised as “Network Labs” and will be coordinated by the Office of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research Infrastructure).

2 ELIGIBILITY AND FUNDING RULES

2.1 General Eligibility Criteria

- 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 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

- a) Network Labs are funded from a separate budget and will be ranked by Faculties prior to assessment by a specialist panel (see Section 5 for more detail on the assessment process).
- b) Proposals are invited for Network Labs to be located in Schools, Faculties or Centres hosting significant 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 funding support for the infrastructure and demonstrate the additional 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 below).

3 FUNDING SOURCES AND ARRANGEMENTS

- a) The Research Infrastructure Scheme is supported by the University’s 2025 Strategic fund. The **National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Equipment Grant** funding 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 research income averaged over the last three years (the weighting is HERDC Category 1 income weighted at 70% plus Category 2-4 income at 30%).
- 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) Faculty-based projects, which are funded for two years, will incur a forward commitment against that Faculty's allocation in the following year.

4 TYPES OF 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 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.

a) Items supported:

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 workshop staff, 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.

¹ Research 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) Items eligible under the NHMRC Equipment Grants funding:

All items consistent with the following additional criteria, are eligible for support:

- i. The equipment should support the highest quality health and medical research, as supported by the NHMRC (or other competitive grant support);
- ii. Consideration to the lack of access to similar equipment in the institution or region; and
- iii. The collaborative gain through use of the equipment, e.g. multi-user equipment which crosses disciplines, research groups or departments.

c) Level and duration of funding:

- i. 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.
- ii. 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 3c).
- iii. 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.
- iv. Generally funding will be provided for one year only, however, multi-year proposals 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.
- v. 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.

4.2 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.

a) Items supported:

- i. Salary funding at 75% of total cost (i.e. salary plus oncost) will be provided for

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

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.

- ii. Start-up costs and opex support up to \$5,000 per annum.

b) Level and duration of funding:

- i. Funding is for a maximum of two years. If funds are not expended within the allocated timeframe due to unforeseen circumstances, funding may be carried forward for a maximum of one year.
- ii. The host Faculty/ School or Schools are required to contribute 25% of total salary costs (i.e. salary plus oncost).
- iii. 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.
- iv. 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 the MWAC will assist successful applicants with this.

c) Renewal of funding:

Applications can be made for renewal of funds after two years subject to demonstrated excellence in research support and research outcomes. Refer to Section 9.2 for information on Network Lab post-award reporting, which will be used to assess performance of the project.

4.3 Items not supported

- a) The provision of normal 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 purchased and 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, salaries of teaching and research staff (including the cost of "buying time" to free such staff to do more research), salaries of staff supporting research at the institutional level or staff involved in research administration (e.g. Research Grants Officer),

postgraduate research student stipends or travel costs directly associated with individual projects.

- f) 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.
- g) Ongoing maintenance of funded infrastructure beyond the initial application – applicants will need to demonstrate how routine maintenance and operational costs will be met.
- h) “Rainy day” funds, such as funds for potential future repairs.

5 ASSESSMENT PROCESS AND SELECTION CRITERIA

- a) Proposals for Network Lab and 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.
- b) Proposals together with ranked lists and recommendations are then submitted to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research Infrastructure), who will assess them in consultation with Facilities Management and RECS with regard to eligibility, duplication, ethics and other compliance, WHS, space and services risks. Ultimately, the PVC (Research Infrastructure) approves Faculty and MWAC Infrastructure Projects for funding based on Faculty/ MWAC ranked recommendations.
- c) Following ranking by Faculties/ MWAC, Faculties / MWAC will be consulted on cross-Faculty Infrastructure Project proposals that were ranked disparately with the aim to resolve such borderline proposals.
- d) Network Lab proposals will be assessed by a specialist panel following ranking by Faculties. The specialist panel will decide which of these proposals are approved and funded.
- e) The specialist panel is composed of:
 - i. the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research Infrastructure), as non-voting Chair;
 - ii. One member nominated by the Mark Wainwright Analytical Centre; and
 - iii. One researcher nominated by each Faculty who is highly active in multidisciplinary research and has been the recipient of ARC LIEF, National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy, Cancer Institute NSW or other major infrastructure 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 ease of access to 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?
 - Demonstrated need for specialist staffing and support
 - Access and support plans – role of the requested support staff position
- 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 or planned projects or collaborations be dependent on or benefit from the proposed infrastructure?
- iii. Significance and innovative nature of research supported with the proposed infrastructure 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?

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. Additional information is available in the "Buying" section of the Strategic Procurement website⁵.
- b) According to the University's Procurement policy and procedure, three written competitive quotes must be obtained for goods/ services above AUD30,000 (incl. GST) and one quote for goods/ services below AUD30,000 (incl. GST). Quotes are not required for goods/ services below AUD3,000 (incl. GST).

³See <https://www.2025.unsw.edu.au/>

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

⁵<https://www.fin.unsw.edu.au/services/buying>

- c) When requesting quotes from suppliers for applications to the Research Infrastructure Scheme, please use the “Request for Quotes” 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 starting your major research equipment, services or IT procurement project.

7 SPACE REQUIREMENTS, RISK ASSESSMENT AND RESOURCE SUPPORT

- a) Any application for research equipment or infrastructure under this scheme needs to take into account:
 - 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 Facilities Management 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 out. 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

⁶ The template is available at <https://research.unsw.edu.au/unsw-research-infrastructure-scheme>

⁷The Checklist is available at <https://research.unsw.edu.au/unsw-research-infrastructure-scheme>

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.

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 application forms⁹.
- b) The application must include the following:
 - 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; and
 - iv. details of the funding requested including quote(s) and budget justification. (Equipment funded under the Research Infrastructure Scheme 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 or may not be the same as the preferred supplier named in the application. At the same time, it is important that budgets are based on competitive quotes and fully justified.)
 - v. A completed and signed Site and Services Checklist (see Section 7a)ii above).
- c) Applications are submitted to the relevant School Office / MWAC Unit by a University-wide common deadline.
- d) MWAC, Faculties and Schools may run their own internal processes for approval and ranking of applications according to selection criteria and Faculty priorities.
- e) MWAC Units and Schools forward the approved applications to the MWAC Director and Faculties, respectively, by a University-wide common deadline.
- f) MWAC and Faculties forward the approved applications together with their ranking and recommendations to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research Infrastructure) by a University-wide common deadline.

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

⁹The forms are available at <https://research.unsw.edu.au/unsw-research-infrastructure-scheme>

g) Timetable

Applications open: 2018 guidelines and application forms released	Monday, 14 August 2017
Applications close: applications due to School Offices or MWAC Unit Heads	Monday, 18 September 2017
Applications from MWAC Units and Schools due to MWAC Director and Faculties, respectively	Tuesday, 3 October 2017
Faculties' and MWAC's rankings along with applications due to Office of PVC (Research Infrastructure)	Monday, 16 October 2017
Announcement of funding outcomes	Mid November, 2017 (not prior to the 2018 ARC LIEF announcement)
Distribution of funds	January 2018

9 POST-AWARD REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

9.1 Faculty, MWAC and cross-Faculty Infrastructure Projects

- a) These projects must submit a final report 12 months after expenditure of funds and in case of multi-year projects also annual reports by the 31st of January the year following release of funds.

9.2 Network Labs – Support Personnel

- a) Network Labs must submit annual reports of expenditure and Lab access metrics by the 31st of January the year following release of funds as well as a final report by 31st of January following the last year of funding **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, grants based on access to the infrastructure)

10 RESOURCES AND CONTACT

- a) The application form as well as 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 Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research Infrastructure) via pvcresin@unsw.edu.au.