

**NATIONAL COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH
INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY (NCRIS)**

INVESTMENT FRAMEWORK v.2

September 2009

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Purpose

As part of the process of implementing the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy (NCRIS), an Investment Framework v.1 was released in April 2006 to guide the development of investment proposals. With implementation of the program largely complete, Investment Framework v.2 sets out processes to deal with residual administrative issues during the remaining period until 30 June 2011.

1.2. Background

Announced in the 2004-2005 Budget, the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy (NCRIS) is providing \$542 million from 2004-05 to 2010-2011 to develop and fund national research infrastructure projects.

NCRIS addresses the problem that many high-priority research facilities, or infrastructure investments, are too large and complex to be supported by any single research institution and too important to the wider community to be confined to individual interests or jurisdictions. It seeks to avoid the waste of limited resources that would result from competitive or uncoordinated duplication of key research facilities. NCRIS embodies an approach, based on collaboration and co-operation, which builds research infrastructure networks that target critical research challenges facing Australia.

Extensive consultation on progressing the initiative was undertaken with the research community, funding providers, industry and government agencies at state, territory and federal level. This led to the development a Strategic Roadmap for Australia's medium-to-large research infrastructure requirements. That Roadmap was released in February 2006 and identified 16 capability areas.

An NCRIS Committee was established to advise the Government on the ongoing implementation, monitoring and review of NCRIS.

The NCRIS Committee determined that sufficient funding was available to progress 12 of the 16 capability areas identified in the 2006 Roadmap. Funding agreements have since been implemented to progress infrastructure projects in all 12 of these capability areas.

In April 2006, an Investment Framework v.1 was released which described the processes to be used to facilitate the development of investments relating to the capability areas specified in the 2006 Roadmap.

A high-level consultative review of the research capabilities and infrastructure requirements was undertaken in 2008 to reflect on and refresh the strategic view of Australia's needs going forward. The result of this review was the August 2008 Strategic Roadmap for Australian Research Infrastructure which builds on the 2006 Roadmap and provides an overview of where enhanced and ongoing development of Australia's research capabilities should be focused over the next five to ten years. This Roadmap reaffirms that the 12 capabilities progressed from the 2006 Roadmap continue to represent priority areas for investment.

The 2008 Strategic Roadmap is available on the Internet at:
http://ncris.innovation.gov.au/Documents/2008_Roadmap.pdf

This Investment Framework v.2 sets out processes to deal with NCRIS administrative issues during the period until 30 June 2011.

In May 2009, a National Research Infrastructure Committee (NRIC) was established to provide strategic advice on future research infrastructure investments, including those to be funded through the Super Science Initiative. The NRIC replaces the previous NCRIS Committee in having an oversighting role for the NCRIS program.

1.3. Program Objectives and Key Principles

The **objectives** of the NCRIS program are to:

- Provide major research infrastructure that is national, strategic, collaborative and world-class;
- Promote a sustained cultural shift towards investment attitudes that are national, strategic and collaborative; and
- Foster research activity that is collaborative and world-class.

The **key principles** underpinning NCRIS, are that:

- Australia's investment in research infrastructure should be planned and developed with the aim of maximising the contributions of the research and development system to economic development and social wellbeing;
- Infrastructure resources should be focussed in areas where Australia is, or has the potential to be, world-class (in both discovery and application driven research) and provide international leadership;
- Major infrastructure should be developed on a collaborative, national, non-exclusive basis. Infrastructure funded through NCRIS should serve the research and innovation system broadly, not just the host/funded institutions. NCRIS funding should encourage collaboration and co-investment among universities, government, independent and private sector research organisations. It should not be the function of NCRIS to support institutional level (or small-scale collaborative) infrastructure;
- Access is a critical issue in the drive to optimise Australia's research infrastructure. In terms of NCRIS funding there should be as few barriers as possible to accessing major infrastructure for those undertaking meritorious research;
- Due regard should be given to the whole-of-life costs of major infrastructure, with funding available under NCRIS for operational costs where appropriate; and
- The Strategy should seek to enable the fuller participation of Australian researchers in the international research system.

2. PROGRESS UNDER NCRIS AND ONGOING PROGRAM ISSUES

2.1 Progress made under the 2006 Investment Framework

As foreshadowed in the 2006 Investment Framework, facilitators were appointed to develop investment plans for the nominated capability areas that were to receive funding.

As a result of their work, investment plans have been developed for 12 capability areas, and funding agreements established for these. The investment plans have been translated into Project Plans and incorporated into the funding agreements.

Under the funding agreements, the funding recipient is contractually required to report on the progress and completion of the relevant Project Plan, and to acquit the funding.

Where there is any discrepancy between the provisions of the funding agreement and this Investment Framework, the provisions contained in the funding agreement take precedence.

2.2. Management of Ongoing Program Issues

During the implementation phase of the NCRIS funded projects, situations may develop that lead to the funding recipients seeking to change the scope of, timing of, or payment arrangements for the project. In such situations, the funding recipient should contact the relevant NCRIS project officer as soon as possible and discuss the circumstances and an appropriate course of action.

For matters of a minor nature, it may be possible to resolve or clarify the matter via correspondence with the funding recipient or through other action.

In those instances where a variation to the funding agreement appears necessary, the Manager will assess the circumstances in conjunction with the relevant General Manager. Where it is considered that a variation is necessary, the Manager will progress the variation.

Where the situation involves issues having strategic significance for the program or for an individual capability area, advice may be sought from the NRIC. Any comments received from NRIC will be considered by DIISR before a variation is progressed by the Manager.

Small amounts of funding provided for NCRIS projects may become available for re-allocation to capability areas identified in the 2008 Strategic Roadmap. Such amounts would be insufficient to progress new capabilities but could be used to supplement existing projects or activities.

The Head of the Science and Infrastructure Division in DIISR will have responsibility for considering proposals for use of any such funds, and for approving the commitment of these funds to research infrastructure projects in the capability areas or to other NCRIS related activities eg program evaluation. Such consideration and approval will be in line with the program objectives and principles set out in Section 1.3.

As appropriate, DIISR may consult with the NRIC on any specific proposals for the use of such funds where there is considered to be strategic significance for the program.

2.3 General Conditions

NCRIS funding is provided under a funding agreement between the Commonwealth, represented by DIISR, and the funding recipient. Funds will not be provided unless a relevant agreement has been finalised and commenced to have effect.

No decisions should be made in anticipation of any funding agreement coming into effect until it has been signed by the Commonwealth and the funding recipient. The Commonwealth will not be liable for any loss, cost or expense arising directly or indirectly from any such decision.

Other than through the agreement referred to above, the Australian Government will not in any circumstances compensate individuals or organisations for any costs associated with their participation in the arrangements described in this Investment Framework.

The Australian Government may vary or terminate implementation of the NCRIS program at any time, subject to the terms of the relevant funding agreements.

As any new funding agreements are concluded, DIISR will publish information about agreements on its website within 7 working days. This advice will include the name of the program, the funding recipient, the purpose for the funding, the term of the funding and the total value.

3. PROJECT PLANS AND REPORTING

3.1 Content of Project Plans

The Project Plan for each funding agreement will appear at Attachment A to the agreement. This Plan provides detailed information about the project objectives, context and scope, as well as the participating organisations and the implementation principles. The Plan will be formulated taking account of the investment criteria set out in **Attachment A**.

3.2 Project Infrastructure

The Project Plan identifies the nodes to be established, the new facilities and equipment to be installed, and the scientific and technical support to be provided. The Plan also describes the purpose of nodes, and their contribution to building a national research capability in the research area.

3.3 Access and Pricing

The Project Plan includes information on the development of a policy that the funding recipient and individual nodes will adopt in relation to access to facilities, and pricing arrangements for that access.

This can include the creation of Access Committees for individual nodes. These Committees will oversee access to node facilities, including implementing the access policy, prioritising the use of facilities and monitoring operating costs and access income.

The policy must recognise the existence of different categories of researchers who might seek access to the facilities, including early career researchers, international researchers and researchers who are able to pay commercial prices for access.

The policy must also address the issue of how the ownership of intellectual property will be addressed in situations where research is undertaken at the facility by researchers from another organisation.

3.4 Governance, Ownership and Management

The Project Plan includes details of the governance arrangements for the funding recipient entity, including membership, Board and/or executive management structures. It identifies specific

responsibilities of the Board and/or the executive, the advisory arrangements supporting the Board and/or executive's work, and key performance indicators for the capability.

The Project Plan also recognises that contractual arrangements will be established between the lead organisation and the individual nodes that will govern the roles of the nodes, the disbursement and use of funds, the implementation of access and pricing policies, and the development of annual business plans and progress reports.

3.5 Implementation Strategy and Financial Information

The Project Plan includes an implementation plan to cover the start-up stage of the project, including milestones for the achievement of key outcomes.

It also provides projected cash flow statements for the project, including the individual nodes.

3.6 Annual Business Plans

Each year, an Annual Business Plan for the coming financial year must be submitted to DIISR. Through this process, funding recipients are able to highlight any changes to the project plan.

DIISR will consider the plan and, where appropriate, taking into account any advice received from the NRIC, approve the plan or commence negotiations on changes to the content of the plan.

3.7 Annual reports

The funding recipient will report on an annual basis to DIISR to allow the progress of the project to be monitored against the Project Plan and associated Annual Business Plans.

4. PRIVACY AND FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

4.1 Privacy

The Department is bound, in administering the NCRIS Investment Framework, by the provisions of the Privacy Act 1988 ("Privacy Act"). Section 14 of the Privacy Act contains the Information Privacy Principles (IPPs) which prescribe the rules for handling personal information.

Persons, bodies and organisations involved in the NCRIS Investment Framework must abide by the IPPs and the Privacy Act when handling personal information collected for the purposes of that scheme/program. In brief, persons, bodies and organisations must ensure that:

- personal information is collected in accordance with IPPs 1-3;
- suitable storage arrangements, including appropriate filing procedures are in place;
- suitable security arrangements exist for all records containing personal information;
- access to a person's own personal information held by the organisation is made available to the person at no charge;
- records are accurate, up-to-date, complete and not misleading;
- where a record is found to be inaccurate, the correction is made;
- where a person requests that a record be amended because it is inaccurate but the record is found to be accurate, the details of the request for amendment are noted on the record;

- the personal information is only to be used for the purposes for which it was collected, or for other purposes where expressly allowed by IPP 10; and
- personal information is only disclosed in accordance with IPP 11.

Complaints about breaches of privacy should be referred to the Privacy Officer in the Corporate Strategy Branch in the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research. Privacy complaints can be made directly to the Federal Privacy Commissioner; however the Federal Privacy Commissioner prefers that the Department be given an opportunity to deal with the complaint in the first instance.

Queries may be directed to privacy@innovation.gov.au

4.2 Freedom of Information

All documents created or held by the Department with regard to the NCRIS Investment Framework are subject to the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (“FOI Act”). Unless a document falls under an exemption provision, it will be made available to the general public if requested under the FOI Act.

All FOI requests are to be referred to the Freedom of Information Coordinator in the Corporate Strategy Branch in the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research. Decisions regarding requests for access will be made by the Department’s authorised FOI decision-maker in accordance with the requirements of the FOI Act.

Queries may be directed to foi@innovation.gov.au

ATTACHMENT A: NCRIS INVESTMENT CRITERIA

The NCRIS investment criteria set out in this Attachment specify the outcomes that must be achieved by a Project Plan established for a specific capability area.

- Criterion 1:** A project plan must result in excellent research infrastructure that addresses the national requirements of the relevant capability area described in the NCRIS Roadmap.
- Criterion 2:** A project plan must result in research infrastructure that is accessible by researchers on the basis of merit at reasonable prices, and that encourages collaboration in research.
- Criterion 3:** A project plan must include a facility ownership and management structure that will result in the efficient and effective operation of the infrastructure.
- Criterion 4:** A project plan must include an implementation strategy and business case that will result in the efficient implementation and effective ongoing financial management of the infrastructure.