

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

National Intelligence and Security Discovery Research Grants (NISDRG) for funding commencing in 2021

Version 1.1

- All participants should read the *Grant Guidelines for the National Intelligence and Security Discovery Research Grants 2020 (NISDRG)* (grant guidelines) and specific *Instructions to Applicants* documents available on GrantConnect as they contain important information for Research Office staff and individual participants preparing applications.
- We do not respond to queries from individual participants. Individual participants should direct all queries regarding NISDRG grant opportunities to their Administering Organisation's Research Office (or equivalent). If further information regarding the NISDRG is required, the Research Office should email NISDRG@arc.gov.au or call 02 6287 6600.
- Information regarding the Research Management System (RMS) is available at the Grants Services page on the [ARC website](#), or by contacting RMSSupport@arc.gov.au for assistance.
- To access the relevant version of RMS go to:
 - [Office of National Intelligence RMS](#) (Intelligence Challenges).
 - [Department of Defence RMS](#) (National Security Challenges).
- Please ensure that your application is eligible in accordance with the grant guidelines.
- This Frequently Asked Questions document will be updated as required.

Difference from ARC grant programs

1. Is the NISDRG Program funded by the ARC?

No. The NISDRG Program has been fully funded by the Office of National Intelligence (ONI) and the Department of Defence (Defence). It is not using any ARC funding.

The ARC is providing grant administration services, which means the ARC will facilitate the application and assessment process and manage the day to day administration for awarded grants on behalf of the ONI and Defence.

2. How does NISDRG differ from ARC grant schemes?

Some key points include:

- Applications for the Intelligence Challenges Grant Opportunity must select and address one or more Intelligence Challenges for ONI.
- Applications for the National Security Challenges Grant Opportunity must select and address one or more National Security Challenges for Defence.
- No ARC grant or application limits apply for these Grant Opportunities.
- The *ARC Medical Research Policy* does not apply to these Grant Opportunities.
- Every Eligible Organisation named on the application must have a Chief Investigator (CI) listed on the application.
- Every Other Organisation named on the application must have a Partner Investigator (PI) listed on the application.
- All CIs, PIs and personnel that receive salary support or stipends are required to be Australian citizens or Australian Permanent residents or New Zealand Special Category Visa holder.
- All organisations named on the application are required to have an Australian Business Number (ABN).

You must carefully read the NISDRG Grant Guidelines for all eligibility requirements.

Any person (named or unnamed) working on the research who are funded by the grant will need to meet the eligibility requirements.

3. What is the eligibility process for NISDRG?

The ARC will review your application against the eligibility criteria described in the grant guidelines on behalf of the ONI and Defence.

Definitions and Challenges

4. Chief Investigators (CIs), Partner Investigators (PIs) and personnel that receive salary support or stipends are required to be Australian citizens or Australian permanent resident visa holders. What does Australian resident mean for the purpose of the NISDRG Program?

As per the glossary in the grant guidelines, an Australian resident means "Australian permanent resident or New Zealand Special Category Visa holder".

5. Other Organisations must be Australian organisations. What does Australian Organisation mean for the purpose of the NISDRG Program?

As per the glossary in the grant guidelines, an Australian Organisation has its headquarters in Australia, has a board with a majority of Australian citizens or Australian residents, and has an Australian Business Number (ABN).

6. Can a multi-national organisation be an Other Organisation, if it has a formal branch in Australia?

An Other Organisation can be a multi-national organisation as long as there is a formal Australian subsidiary which meets all the eligibility requirements for organisations as outlined in the grant guidelines.

7. Can a potential participant with an adjunct or honorary position at an Eligible Organisation, who is also employed by a National Intelligence Community agency, be a Chief Investigator?

A CI must be employed at least 0.2 FTE at an Eligible Organisation **or** hold an honorary appointment (defined in the Glossary as ‘any honorary position that gives full academic status...The person would not be considered to hold an honorary academic appointment for the purposes of the grant guidelines if they hold a substantive, paid position elsewhere’) at an Eligible Organisation. A participant intending to apply for a CI role must meet one of these eligibility requirements, in addition to other requirements for participant eligibility.

Where a participant who meets the CI eligibility requirements also has a position with a National Intelligence Community agency, this agency cannot be included as an Other Organisation.

Applications should include the people most suitable and necessary to undertake the proposed research. It is expected their role in and responsibilities to the project are clearly explained in the application.

8. How are the two schemes distinct? It appears the Challenges overlap substantially.

The Challenges were prepared in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders across the intelligence and National security communities, whose research interests are not mutually exclusive.

Note that recipients of intelligence grants will have a Grant Agreement with ONI, whilst national security grantees will have a Grant Agreement with Defence.

9. What are the specific use cases which helped shape Intelligence Challenge 7 and Intelligence Challenge 8?

For further insight into use cases and context for the Intelligence Challenges, see the Report of the 2017 Independent Intelligence Review: <https://pmc.gov.au/resource-centre/national-security/report-2017-independent-intelligence-review>.

Application

10. Where can I find the key dates for the NISDRG program?

You can find the key dates on the Research Grant Services page on the ARC website - <https://www.arc.gov.au/research-grants-services/arc-research-grants-services-rms-nisdrq>

11. Can I apply for both NISDRG programs with the same or similar project?

Yes, however each program requires applicants to address differing research priorities for each NISDRG Program. Further information about the Challenges are available on the Research Grants Services page on the ARC website.

Consider how the proposed project addresses the Intelligence Challenges for ONI or the National Security Challenges for Defence. Also consider that if more than one project is awarded, how do they differ so there is no Commonwealth overlap of funding.

12. Is the application form available in RMS and how do I find the ONI or NSSTC portals to apply?

Applications for the NISDRG grant opportunity must be prepared and submitted through the specific ONI or Department of Defence portals of the Research Management System (RMS). Applicants and participants must not use the standard ARC RMS portal for this grant opportunity.

Participants can use their ARC RMS login ID and password to access either portal. More information about RMS, and links to the RMS portals for these Grant Opportunities, is available on the [ARC website](#).

13. If I modify my user details in RMS, does this get reflected in the NISDRG application form?

The information currently stored in an RMS participant's 'Person Profile' will be utilised across all RMS portals for auto-populating sections of the application form. 'Person Profile' information can be edited by a participant in any portal and will be reflected in the others (i.e. if 'Person Profile' information is changed in the ONI or Department of Defence portals of RMS these changes will be automatically reflected in the 'Person Profile' part of ARC RMS).

14. The ARC Policies only reference the National Competitive Grants Program and ARC funding, do they really apply?

Compliance with ARC Policies detailed in the NISDRG Grant Guidelines and the NISDRG Grant Agreement is required for NISDRG.

Where Policies reference 'ARC funding applications' or 'ARC funded projects' this also means 'funding applications for grants funded by other Commonwealth entities administered by the ARC' and 'funded projects of other entities administered by the ARC'.

15. What are the NISDRG Challenges and how do I find out more about them?

The Intelligence Challenges and the National Security Challenges have been developed under the broad National Security Science and Technology Priorities. The Challenges are priority research areas which will be updated from round to round.

The Intelligence Challenges can be found on GrantConnect:

- [Forecast Opportunity View - NI21R1](#)

- [Grant Opportunity View – NI21R1](#)

The National Security Challenges can be found on GrantConnect:

- [Forecast Opportunity View - NS21R1](#)
- [Grant Opportunity View – NS21R1](#)

16. Will the Challenges be the same in the next Grant Opportunity?

The National Security Challenges and National Intelligence Challenges will be reviewed annually before each Grant Opportunity. They may change in future years.

17. Why do I have to provide passport or visa information for all Chief Investigators and Partner Investigators in the Form for Participant Eligibility? Where does this information go and for what purpose?

The Form for Participant Eligibility will enable ONI and Defence to verify Australian citizenship, Australian Permanent Residency or New Zealand Special Category Visa status of named participants on NISDRG applications. The completed form must be provided by your Administering Organisation's Research Office (or equivalent) directly to ONI at Innovation_Science@oni.gov.au or NSSTC at NISDRG@dst.defence.gov.au by 5.00pm (AEDT) on 8 January 2021. The form should not be emailed to the ARC or uploaded to RMS.

18. Is the Department of Defence and its staff allowed to be named as participants in these grants?

Department of Defence staff, including members of the Australian Defence Force and reservists, are not to be named participants (Chief or Partner Investigators), and the Department of Defence is not to be listed as an Other Organisation in a NISDRG application or funded grant. Existing relationships between participants and the Department of Defence shall be declared and managed as a conflict of interest by the Administering Organisation. For example, participants receiving Department of Defence funding for a different research project must declare this funding to ensure potential conflicts of interest are raised.

19. Are National Intelligence Community member entities and their staff allowed to be named as participants in these grants?

Member entities of the National Intelligence Community and their staff are not to be named participants (Chief or Partner Investigators), and National Intelligence Community member entities (agencies) are not to be listed as an Other Organisation in a NISDRG application or funded grant. Existing relationships between participants and the National Intelligence Community shall be declared and managed as a conflict of interest by the Administering Organisation. For example, participants receiving National Intelligence Community funding for a different research project must declare this funding to ensure potential conflicts of interest are raised.

20. Can Publicly Funded Research Agencies (PFRAs) be named as participants in these grants?

Yes, a PFRA can be named as a participant, however while a PFRA may be able to engage with an eligible institution on a grant application, there can be no flow of grant

funds, either directly or indirectly, from the eligible institution to the PFRA. The PFRA must contribute their own resources, e.g. staff time, facility access, etc, into the proposed project. An example would be if the PFRA was listed as an Other Organisation, and that PFRA's facility or equipment was to be used by the project, no costs could be charged to the grant for the use of that facility or equipment.

Applications should include the people and organisations most suitable and necessary to undertake the proposed research, noting that all participants (people and organisations) must meet the eligibility requirements for each role.

Note that while the Defence Science and Technology Group (DSTG) is classified as a PFRA, it cannot be listed as a named Other Organisation, nor can staff from DSTG be listed as named participants (Chief or Partner Investigators), on an NISDRG application.

21. Can the Department of Defence or member agencies of the National Intelligence Community, or their staff, be participants? What organisations are members of the National Intelligence Community?

National Intelligence Community agencies and the Department of Defence (including the Defence Science and Technology Group (DSTG) and other areas within Defence conducting research) cannot be listed as a named Other Organisation, nor can staff from these agencies or Defence be listed as named participants (Chief or Partner Investigators), on an NISDRG application.

A list of organisations which are members of the National Intelligence Community can be found on the ONI website (<https://www.oni.gov.au/national-intelligence-community>).

22. Is international collaboration encouraged in NISDRG grants?

One of the objectives of the National Intelligence and Security Discovery Research Grants (NISDRG) program is to 'build Australia's research capacity and capability in these areas...'. Any international collaboration must be necessary to the project and justified in relevant questions in the form, including the project description and budget justifications. Note that due to the personnel and organisation eligibility requirements and form validations, international participants will not be able to be listed as named participants unless they meet those requirements.

23. Can applications with a social sciences or humanities focus, or applications with a mix of STEM and non-STEM participants, be submitted for NISDRG?

Applications must address one or more of the Challenges (Intelligence Challenges or National Security Challenges) and will be assessed on their merits. In the NISDRG program outcomes in the grant guidelines and descriptive text accompanying the Challenges, there are non-STEM research areas, including social and behavioural sciences, security implications of environmental change, and legal/criminal aspects of security.

24. What budget items can be included in an NISDRG application?

Budget items allowed and not allowed are listed in the grant guidelines and grant agreement available on GrantConnect. Items listed are similar to those in grant

guidelines for ARC schemes. All requested budget items must be justified in the application. You must include any indexation in your budget request, as the grant payments will not include indexation.

25. How much funding is available per grant? How much funding is available for the NISDRG program?

It is anticipated that there will be three application rounds under the NISDRG program, the first for funding commencing in 2021 (NI21 and NS21). The total available funding for each application round is expected to be \$3 million from ONI and \$3 million from Defence – for the NISDRG program for funding commencing in 2021 there is a total of \$6 million available. Each successful grant may be awarded between \$400,000 and \$600,000 over three years. Applications may request between \$100,000 and \$400,000 per year but cannot exceed \$600,000 requested over the duration of the project.

26. For Partner Investigators, why is the information in question F14 appearing in the PDF version of the form, but not in RMS?

When Partner Investigators answer ‘no’ at question F13, the online form automatically inhibits question F14 as well as a number of other questions related to ROPE. However, as information for question F14 is automatically drawn from the RMS participant profile, the data is auto populated and visible in the PDF version of the application form.

Prior to certifying the accuracy of the application information, participants and RO delegates should check the information displayed at F14 of the application PDF for Partner Investigators. If updates are required, this can be done by updating a participant’s RMS profile.

27. Do participants need to be eligible at the application submission date or at the grant commencement date?

The application form validations for personnel and organisational eligibility use data either entered into the form or auto-populated from other RMS data such as personal profiles. The validations will not allow the form to be submitted if participants do not meet the requirements in the form.

Variations to grants may be made after the grant is awarded, subject to participants and organisations meeting eligibility requirements as stated in the grant guidelines.

28. If a key problem has been identified with a current DSTG contract, and DSTG cannot be part of the NISDRG grant, can the application be written with knowledge of what DSTG needs and/or will use DSTG data?

The NISDRG program is designed to support innovative, fundamental research across a range of intelligence and security priorities. Applicants will need to consider whether a research project arising from an existing agency contract/grant will meet the objectives and assessment criteria of the NISDRG program. Applicants should note that the National Security Challenges address the needs of the national security community, whereas the many non-national security research programs by DSTG focus on the needs of the Department of Defence. See www.dst.defence.gov.au/nsstc for further information on the role of DSTG in national security S&T.

29. Robust Consequences Management Improving Australia’s Responses to, and Recovery from Disasters and Emergencies’ is a National Security Challenge. What does Management mean here?

The Challenge is seeking research to improve the management of a crisis, which typically includes the response and recovery phases, but could also cover protection (e.g. for critical infrastructure) and investigation.

30. The definition for analysis and decision support for 2040 is broad. Is any particular area the main target for this challenge?

This Challenge is deliberately broad and includes a number of application examples.

31. How advanced, or how far along the development pathway, should the projects be?

The NISDRG program is designed to support innovative, fundamental research across a range of intelligence and security priorities. Projects under NISDRG are expected to focus on the earliest stages of research, i.e. discovery. Participants with promising NISDRG outcomes which could warrant further development may explore further funding opportunities for development research with Defence or the National Intelligence Community.

Assessment

32. Are Selection Advisory Committee members drawn from the ARC only or will there be representatives from ONI or Defence?

The Selection Advisory Committee (SAC) will have a multidisciplinary expert membership, reflecting the broad discipline range covered by the Intelligence Challenges and the National Security Challenges. The Selection Advisory Committee will not include staff or representatives from the National Intelligence Community or Defence.

Assessment processes will be similar to those conducted for ARC grant schemes, including assessment by Detailed Assessors and SAC members, rejoinders, and selection meetings. The ARC will make recommendations to ONI and Defence. ONI and Defence will approve applications for funding. Successful applications will be announced by the ARC on behalf of ONI and Defence. The grant guidelines contain further information on the assessment process for the NISDRG program.

33. Are expert peer review assessors drawn from the ARC only or will there be representatives from ONI or Defence?

Assessors will be selected from the ARC’s assessor database and matched against FOR codes listed in the application. Expert peer review assessors will not include staff or representatives from the National Intelligence Community or Defence.

Assessment processes will be similar to those conducted for ARC grant schemes, including assessment by Detailed Assessors and SAC members, rejoinders, and selection meetings. The ARC will make recommendations to ONI and Defence. ONI and Defence will approve applications for funding. Successful applications will be announced by the ARC on behalf of ONI and Defence. The grant guidelines contain further information on the assessment process for the NISDRG program.

Outcomes and Post-Award Management

34. Will successful applications be publicly announced?

Once the selection outcomes have been approved by ONI and Defence, the outcomes will be publicly announced by the ARC and released in the ONI and Defence RMS portals.

35. How will progress be measured?

A key objective of the NISDRG program is to increase the engagement between the National Intelligence Community and Defence and the research communities, thus a key goal of progress reporting is to facilitate this engagement.

The grant guidelines and grant agreement provide information on the reporting measures required of the NISDRG grants, including the development of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). KPIs may include for example, quality of research outputs, number of persons employed, number of collaborations, as well as some KPIs which may be more project-specific. Administering Organisations will be expected to submit a range of reports across the life of the project.