



Australian Research Data Commons

Platforms Open Call 1

Public Overview

Andrew Treloar and Kerry Levett

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Background

Context

This Open Call will be carried out as the major activity for 2019/20 in support of the Software and Platforms Strategy (exposure summary [available here](#)). ARDC anticipates running three Open Calls (in 2019, 2020, and 2021). This document describes the process to be followed for Call 1 (2019). ARDC will finetune the process for later calls based on what is learned from this first call and the progress of the funded projects.

As noted in the Software and Platforms Strategy, ARDC will be guided in its investment decisions by the [NCRIS Principles](#) and the [Principles from the ARDC Strategic Plan](#).

Definitions

A continually running instance of an application usable by many users is often called a service. Increasingly, such services are available through cloud platforms.

For the purposes of this call we define a Platform as a set of services, often with associated integration and/or orchestration functions, as well as connections to specific data resources, that are intended to enable researchers to carry out some of their research activities.

Platforms are often designed to meet the needs of particular communities. [Data-Enhanced Virtual Laboratories](#), a previous ARDC program, are instances of eResearch platforms.

Process desiderata

The process described below has been designed to achieve a number of strategic goals:

- Provide as much transparency as possible
- Reward collaboration over competition
- Enable new entrants to the eResearch sector to take part

ARDC recognises that a number of possible new entrants might, for historical reasons, be disadvantaged in submitting competitive proposals in the first call. Therefore, ARDC plans to undertake a program of focussed engagement between the end of the EOI phase for Call 1 and the start of the EOI phase for Call 2 (in 2020). This will involve community facilitation, education about the benefits of platforms technologies, and brokering possible adoption opportunities for existing platforms. Further details about this engagement will be made available later this year. [Contact us](#) if you wish to discuss this.

Call Details

Expected outcomes

A growing portfolio of research-oriented platforms and services that connect and provide access to a range of resources (data, storage, compute, tools) of relevance to researchers.

Scope

The broad scope for this call is Platform solutions (or elements thereof) that enable researchers to collect or generate data, analyse those data, and produce outputs that can be made Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable (FAIR).

In scope	Out of scope
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Adoption of existing platform used by a research community (e.g. interstate or overseas) and implementation by a new or expanded community in Australia. ● Adaptation of an existing platform to a new community in a different area of research (with associated work on additional integrations to data sources and tools). ● Support for adoption of a relatively generic platform solution. ● Re-engineering of an existing solution to make it more sustainable (i.e. adoption of shared services, move to micro-services architecture). ● Instantiation and operation of specific services/micro-services that could be integrated into platforms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Development of a new platform technology. ● Purchase of a Commercial Off the Shelf Solution (COTS). ● Development of significant additional new functionality, such as development of brand new tools or applications for management/analysis/visualisation of data in a specific/narrow field of research.

Funding

The ARDC anticipates running three Open Calls (in 2019, 2020, and 2021). Proposals (in the 2019 and 2020 calls) can apply for up to three years of funding, with up to \$3M of funding available for each call, per year.

Proposals can request up to the total amount available in each call, but need to be aware that there will be a mandatory cash co-investment contribution of 1:1. That is, the ARDC will only fund up to a maximum of half of the cost of each project. Proposals should also not assume that they will be allocated the full amount of funding they request - project scope variations may be requested to ensure balance across the investment portfolio.

Eligibility

Proposals will be accepted from Project Leads from higher education institutions (specifically Higher Education Support Act 2003 Table A providers); the following Commonwealth publicly funded research agencies: AIATSIS, AIMS, ANSTO, CSIRO, DSTG, GA, BoM; state-based eResearch service providers (Intersect, QCIF, TPAC, and VicNode), and NCRIS Facilities. Note that ARDC will need to contract with a legal entity.

Existing Data Enhanced Virtual Laboratory projects are neither advantaged nor disadvantaged by their previous funding in this space.

Phases

Expression of Interest

The expression of interest (EOI) phase is intended to facilitate collaboration between researchers, research groups, research organisations and communities around a proposed Platform investment, with the aim of investing in projects that will deliver improved outcomes. As such, all EOIs will be made public upon submission.

Because the ARDC wants to encourage sector collaboration, there is an advantage to submitting early and thus providing the maximum time for collaboration opportunities to mature. In addition, the ARDC will broker discussions between similar EOIs so that shared proposals can be developed and submitted in the RFP phase.

View the [indicative EOI template](#).

Request for Proposal

The request for proposal (RFP) phase is a competitive funding call and will only be open to those who submitted an EOI, and their collaborators. RFP submissions must demonstrably build on proposals made during the EOI phase. That is, it is not possible to submit one proposal to the EOI and then something

completely different to the RFP. The RFP template will be made available well before the RFP opens (see timeline below).

Proposal Evaluation

Proposals will be evaluated against a defined set of selection criteria by a panel containing ARDC staff and external experts. The final criteria and the scoring weightings for each criterion will be provided when the RFP call opens.

In addition to the broad criteria inherent in the NCRIS Principles¹, the ARDC will assess proposals against platform-specific criteria. The current draft criteria are:

More desirable <-----> Less Desirable		
<i>Impact criteria:</i>		
Supports one or more National Science and Research Priorities		Supports no National Science and Research Priorities
Supports one or more National Research Infrastructure Areas ²		Supports no National Research Infrastructure Areas
Supports a transformation in the kinds of research that are possible		Does not support a transformation in the kinds of research that are possible
Supports a transformation in the speed at which research can be undertaken		Supports little or no transformation in the speed at which research can be undertaken
<i>Solution criteria:</i>		
Adopts an existing platform	Adapts an existing platform	Builds a new platform
Well-described and convincing end-of-project sustainability story		No end-of-project sustainability story
<i>Organisation criteria:</i>		
Many collaboration partners	Some collaboration partners	No collaboration partners
Proven track record of successful delivery		No track record of successful delivery

¹ <https://docs.education.gov.au/documents/ncris-2018-guidelines>, p. 35

² <https://www.education.gov.au/2016-national-research-infrastructure-roadmap>

Funding Decisions

The decision to fund proposals will not just be based on the results of the evaluation process. The ARDC is looking to fund a balanced portfolio of projects, and this will be a factor in the final decisions.

The portfolio of platforms projects that the ARDC is seeking to fund over time (it may not be possible to deliver a completely balanced portfolio in the first call) will have the following characteristics:

- covers a broad range (not necessarily all) of NCRIS focus areas
- addresses a broad range (not necessarily all) of the National Science and Research priorities
- covers a broad set (not necessarily all) of the Fields of Research
- is not dominated by any particular research area or technology or focus
- includes investments with different risk levels
- includes entrants not previously supported.

Timelines

Documentation Activity	Call Activity	Date
Software and Platforms Strategy summary released for public comment		25 July - 14 Aug
Platforms Public Overview and EOI template made available		2 Aug
	Call for Expressions of Interest (EOI) in Platforms Program (opens-closes)	19 Aug - 20 Sep
Webinar to provide context and take questions		19 Aug
RFP Template and Final Weighted Selection Criteria made available		23 Sep
	Request for Proposals (RFP) for Platforms Program (opens-closes)	7 Oct - 1 Nov
	Proposals evaluated by a panel and funding decisions made	Late Nov
List of successful proposals made available		Late Nov
	Contracts sent out to successful projects	Early Dec
	Projects begin	Jan 2020