



Australian Research Data Commons

Request for Proposal

Platforms Open Call 2019

v1.2, 15 October 2019

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1.0	27 September 2019	Andrew Treloar, Kerry Levett	-
1.1	9 October 2019	Kerry Levett	Section 3.1 - removed the word "cash" Section 5.4 - updated Proposal Template to match online form
1.2	15 October 2019	Kerry Levett	Section 2.2 - included requirement to have submitted an EOI

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Section 1 Introduction

1.1 ARDC

The Australian Research Data Commons Ltd has overall responsibility for the management and implementation of the ARDC project in accordance with reporting and accountability requirements as specified by the Commonwealth Department of Education.

The ARDC Board has been established as an independent body to provide strategic guidance to the ARDC and the ARDC Chief Executive Officer with regards to the ARDC objectives, delivery and progress.

One of the five strategic themes for the ARDC is Software and Platforms. This open call is in support of that Strategic Theme. Further details in the [exposure summary for the Software and Platforms Strategy](#).

1.2 The Platforms Program

1.2.1 Vision

The ARDC Vision for Platforms is 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. An explicit goal of the Platforms Program is to increase the number of researchers with access to platforms, both in terms of absolute number and in terms of diversity of disciplines. The program will also seek to support a community of platform operators.

1.2.2 Scope

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.

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).

Please note, this Open Call is funded under the Software and Platforms Theme and therefore the focus of Proposals has to be on the Platform, rather than on data-focussed activities (e.g. an activity to bring together new data which could then be accessed by a platform).

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.

Section 2 RFP Terms & Conditions

2.1 Introduction

Respondents should read this Request for Proposal (RFP) document in the context of the [ARDC Strategic Plan](#).

The rules contained in this section of the RFP apply to:

- The RFP and any other information given, received or made available in connection with the RFP including any additional materials and any revisions or addenda;
- The Proposal Selection Process; and
- Any communications, including any briefings, presentations, meetings or negotiations, relating to the RFP or the Proposal Selection Process.

If there is any inconsistency between any part of this RFP, a descending order of precedence will be accorded to the:

1. Schedules of the Contract agreement;
2. Addendum to the Request for Proposal document;
3. Proposed Contract agreement; and
4. This Request for Proposal document;

so that the provision in the higher ranked document, to the extent of the inconsistency, will prevail.

ARDC may at any time issue addenda to this RFP to modify or clarify the RFP in any manner whatsoever including as a response to any enquiries from a proposing organisation.

2.2 Eligibility to lead a proposal

ARDC will need to contract with a legal entity. 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. However, *collaborators* on proposals are not limited to these entities.

An Expression of Interest (EOI) must have been submitted for the proposed project in this Platforms Open Call for a Proposal to be accepted.

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

2.3 Proposal Preparation Queries

Proposing organisations are encouraged to ask questions if the content of the RFP document is unclear or they identify issues not covered by the provided documentation.

Questions should be submitted via the online form on the [Platforms webpage](#) no later than five (5) business days before the Closing Time specified in the timeline.

The response to the query will be made publicly available online via the [Platforms FAQ register](#) (without identifying the source of the question).

2.4 Responding to RFP

The Proposer must inform the ARDC promptly in writing of any material change to any of the information contained in their submitted Proposal, and of any material change in circumstance that may affect the truth, completeness or accuracy of any of the information provided in, or in connection with the Proposal.

By lodging a Proposal, Proposers acknowledge and agree that:

- to the maximum extent permitted by law, neither the ARDC nor its employees, advisers or agents will in any way be liable to any person or entity for any cost, expense, loss, claim or damage arising out of or in connection with this RFP;
- they have not relied on any express or implied warranty or representation made by or on behalf of the ARDC other than as expressly contained in this RFP or an addendum to this RFP;
- they have not received improper assistance from any staff member of the ARDC;
- ARDC may alter this RFP, including its specifications / requirements, structure and timing, at any time and for any reason;
- they have not colluded with other organisations to inflate funding estimates;
- they understand that proposals will be treated as confidential by ARDC and that ARDC will not disclose Proposal contents and Proposal information, except:
 - as required by law (including, for the avoidance of doubt, as required under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Vic) (FOI Act));

- for the purpose of investigations by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission or other government authorities having relevant jurisdiction;
- to external consultants and advisers of ARDC engaged to assist with the Proposal Selection Process;
- to the Department of Education and Training, at their request and if required, to enable transparency and accountability; and/or
- general information from Proposers required to be disclosed by government policy and as part of the RFP approval process.

Section 3 Financial

3.1 Available funding

Proposals in the 2019 Open Call can apply for up to three years of funding, with up to \$3M of funding currently available per calendar year for proposals funded under the 2019 Open Call.



Proposals can request up to the total amount available per year (i.e. \$3M), but need to be aware that there will be a mandatory 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.

3.2 Co-Investment

The NCRIS funding rules establish a set of principles in ARDC for the investment of funds. ARDC requires at least an equivalent level of co-investment (1:1) to ARDC funding, over the total period of the project.

Co-investment must be in an auditable form (in accordance with reporting and accountability requirements as specified by the Commonwealth Department of Education) and can be cash (from project partners or other grants), investment from other NCRIS Projects, or effort/labour. NOTE: if contributing effort/labour, work on the project must be a significant amount of the person's time, i.e. 25% or more).

3.3 Funding Estimate Guidelines

The following guidelines should be observed in preparing the funding estimates requested:

- All funding estimates included in the proposal should be presented in Australian dollars (AUD) exclusive of Goods and Services Tax (GST).
- Where indicative pricing or cost information is provided, any assumptions made by the Proposer in estimating the price or cost should be clearly stated.

- All funding estimates should identify if the source of the funding is expected to be the ARDC funds or the co-investment funds.

3.4 Access to Platform and Pricing

The ARDC is partnering with institutions and other organisations to provide platforms of maximum use to researchers.

Parallel to this is an intent that the platforms are underpinned by sustainable funding models which enable continuous improvement, maintenance, and upgrades of infrastructure.

While the ARDC is not aiming to develop commercial facilities, it is recognised that there are several business models available which will enable sustainable resources to be provided to researchers. Examples include subscription services, fee for service, user-pays, and direct investment by partners into the platform’s host organisation.

Proposals are expected to comply with the following principles for the access and pricing of infrastructure:

- the infrastructure must be accessible to publicly and privately funded researchers;
- infrastructure should enable and support collaboration (for example between institutions or research groups or domains); and
- pricing policies must be clear and transparent and maximise public benefit.

If the host proposes to charge fees for use of the resource, the model and fees proposed must be outlined in the proposal. Absence of cost-recovery details will preclude the host from being able to subsequently charge fees for access to the resources without the express approval of the ARDC and agreement on an approved cost-recovery business model.

3.5 Payment milestones

The project must be broken down into milestones for the management of timely delivery and funding; the number of project milestones is not prescribed, and they should be scaled to the size and complexity of the project. All deliverables must be linked to scheduled milestones. Deliverables must be completed to ARDC’s satisfaction before a milestone can be claimed.

Payment milestones will be specified in the contract and the dates for delivery will need to be stated in the final project plan. Funding will be transferred upon successful completion and acceptance by ARDC of these milestones and associated deliverables. Indicative payment milestones for a three year project:

- | | |
|---|------------------------------|
| ● Proposal approved by ARDC and contract signed: | 30% of first year’s funding |
| ● Progress report June 2020: | 30% of first year’s funding |
| ● Progress report Dec 2020: | 40% of first year’s funding |
| ● Progress report June 2021: | 50% of second year’s funding |
| ● Progress report Dec 2021: | 50% of second year’s funding |
| ● Progress report June 2022: | 50% of third year’s funding |
| ● Final report and Platform delivered and approved: | 50% of third year’s funding |

Section 4 Project Management

4.1 Methodology

The project management methodology chosen for the project should be appropriate to the project's duration, scope and intended user community. At a minimum it should include:

- project plan to be developed in consultation/conjunction with ARDC, and approved by ARDC (first payment milestone)
- planning including breaking the project into deliverables and milestones;
- monitoring and control processes which enable early identification and rectification of potential problems. These processes will include noting any changes to schedule, budget, scope, quality, risk, issues, stakeholder communications and interdependencies;
- an appropriate governance framework as agreed with ARDC; and
- a person appointed to project manage the project, preferably with prior project experience.

4.2 Reporting

Reports to the ARDC shall follow the Project Status Report template provided by the ARDC, and will be required every six months.

4.3 Change Management

ARDC anticipates that projects at times will seek to modify the scope or timing of the project. Any changes must be approved by ARDC where they impact on the project total time, scope, cost, quality or impact other projects or ARDC's strategic or tactical direction.

Section 5 Proposal submission and evaluation

5.1 Submitting a Proposal

Proposals must be submitted using the online form that will be on the [Platforms](#) webpage, with submissions open on 7 October and closing at 8pm AEDT on 1 November 2019.

Please note: an Expression of Interest (EOI) must have been submitted for the proposed project in this Platforms Open Call for a Proposal to be accepted.

Proposals under this program must ensure that they have read and understood all of this document, and that all sections in the online form are completed.

5.2 Evaluation and selection of Proposals

Proposals will be evaluated by a selection panel to be appointed by the ARDC (comprised of ARDC and external members), and scored according to the [Selection Criteria](#).

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 final decision to award funding to Proposals rests with the ARDC Chief Executive Officer.

5.3 Selection Criteria

The NCRIS funding rules establish a set of principles in ARDC for the investment of funds, and together with the ARDC Strategic Plan lead to specific selection criteria as set out below.

Impact Criteria

I1 - The proposal provides clearly demonstrated support for broad areas of research in one or more National Science Research Priorities.

I2 - The proposal provides clearly demonstrated support for broad areas of research in one or more National Research Infrastructure focus areas.

I3 - The proposal will be relevant to and usable by a large number of researchers, preferably across multiple disciplines. NOTE: This is not restricted to Australian researchers, as we want to support international collaborations where the nexus is Australia.

I4 - The proposal supports a transformation to enable new kinds of research, or answer research questions that couldn't previously be answered.

I5 - The Platform has the capability to accelerate research (i.e. decreases the time taken to do a type of research or answer a research question).

Solution Criteria

S1 - The Proposal preferences Adopting solutions over Adapting, with Building new technologies/components/approaches only where necessary.

S2 - The operation and maintenance of the Platform will be sustainable at the end of the project.

S3 - The Platform (as a whole) or components of the Platform will be reusable outside the initial research community at the end of the project.

S4 - The project budget is well-described, and provides good value for money.

S5 - The level of Partner co-investment is at least 1:1 (Mandatory).

Proposer Criteria

P1 - The Proposal is supported by a broad group of collaboration partners, who represent a wide range of the Platform's intended research community.

P2 - The Proposer's ability to deliver the project is clearly demonstrated, with well articulated milestones and deliverables assigned to appropriate Partners, and appropriate project management methodology and governance structure described.

5.4 Indicative Proposal Template

The following section is intended to provide guidance as to the questions that will be asked in the online form that will be made available on the ARDC website once the RFP period opens (<https://ardc.edu.au/collaborations/strategic-activities/software-and-platforms/platforms/platforms-open-call/>). It is not anticipated at this point that the form will vary from this indicative template, but the ARDC reserves the right to make enhancements to the form before the RFP period opens.

[Selection criteria relevant to the question are provided in square brackets]

1. Proposed Project Title or Platform Name (max 25 words)

2. Executive summary: Summarise the proposed project and expected outcomes. NOTE: This summary will be used as the basis for the default public description of the project (if successful) (500 words)

3. High level FOR code(s) for area(s) of research who will be able to use the proposed Platform **[I3 - The proposal will be relevant to and usable by a large number of researchers, preferably across multiple disciplines]**

NOTE: This will be used to build a portfolio investment.

01 MATHEMATICAL SCIENCES 02 PHYSICAL SCIENCES 03 CHEMICAL SCIENCES 04 EARTH SCIENCES 05 ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES 06 BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES 07 AGRICULTURAL AND VETERINARY SCIENCES

4. Proposal Lead details - Name, Group/Department, Organisation, Email, Phone. NOTE: This will be used as input to the contracting process.

Lead Name *	<input type="text" value="First"/>	<input type="text" value="Last"/>
Lead Research Group	<input type="text"/>	
Lead Organisation *	<input type="text"/>	
Lead Email *	<input type="text"/>	
Lead Phone		

5. Collaborator details (include all organisations that are involved in putting this Proposal together) - Lead investigator, Group/Department, Organisation, Email **[P1 - The Proposal is supported by a broad group of collaboration partners, who represent a wide range of the Platform’s intended research community]**

Name	Research Group	Organisation	
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="button" value="⊕"/>
			+ Email

Did the EOI process lead to any (extra) collaborations? (200 words max)

6. Funding

What is the annual co-investment requested from ARDC? (only provide numbers for each year that the project will run - leave blank otherwise) **[S4 - The project budget is well-described, and provides good value for money]** NOTE: This will be used to determine how many projects can be supported - proposers may be asked to adjust these numbers prior to contracting.

Year 1 =

Year 2 =

Year 3 =

What is the total amount of co-investment to be provided by project partners? **[S5 - The level of Partner co-investment is at least 1:1 (Mandatory)]**

7. What is the target research community (i.e. who will be able to use the proposed Platform)? What is the estimated size of this research community in users, and what proportion of the community are potential and/or expected users of the Platform? Provide evidence of your answer (e.g. if there is an existing Service or Platform, how many users does it have?). **[I3 - The Platform will be relevant to and usable by a large number of researchers, preferably across multiple disciplines]**

NOTE: This will be used to assess the impact of the project.

8. Which of the [National Science and Research Priorities](#) (NSRPs) will this Platform support? **[I1 - The Platform provides clearly demonstrated support for broad areas of research in one or more NSRPs]**

(choose all that are relevant):

- Food,
- Soil and Water,
- Transport,
- Cybersecurity,
- Energy,
- Resources,
- Advanced Manufacturing,
- Environmental Change,
- Health,
- None

How will this support be provided? (max 200 words)

9. Which of the [2016 National Research Infrastructure Roadmap](#) focus areas will this Platform support? **[I2 - The Platform provides clearly demonstrated support for broad areas of research in one or more NRI focus areas]**
 (choose all that are relevant):

- Platforms for Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences,
- Characterisation,
- Advanced Fabrication and Manufacturing,
- Advanced Physics and Astronomy,
- Earth and Environmental Systems,
- Biosecurity,
- Complex Biology,
- Therapeutic Development,
- None

How will this support be provided? (max 200 words)

10. Demonstrate how the proposed Platform is transformative (i.e. will it enable new kinds of research, or the answering of research questions that couldn't previously be answered, and/or will it accelerate research outcomes?) and provide evidence where possible. **[I4 - The Platform supports a transformation to enable new kinds of research, or answer research questions that couldn't previously be answered]**
I5 - The Platform has the capability to accelerate research (i.e. decreases the time taken to do a type of research or answer a research question)]

NOTE: This will be used by the panel to assess the degree of transformation being enabled.

11. Describe how you will adopt, adapt and build technologies, applications, tools, methodologies, approaches and/or platforms in your proposed Project.

- For Adopt - Include detail on why the chosen elements are good targets for reuse in this project
- For Adapt - Include detail on effort required to make the chosen elements reuseable for the proposal, and whether this is applicable to other potential reusers

- For Build - If this is part of the project, must explain why this is necessary and include detail on how potential reuse will be considered in work undertaken

Also explain what components of the project will be reusable by others, and include the proportion of total effort/funding required for this. **[S1 - The Proposal preferences Adopting technological solutions over Adapting, with Building new technologies/components as a last resort, S3 - The Platform (as a whole) or components of the Platform will be reusable outside the initial research community at the end of the project]**

NOTE: This will be used by the panel to assess alignment with the Adapt/Adopt/Build approach, and also potential for reuse.

Dot points are acceptable

Adopt...

Adapt...

Build...

12. List any dependencies between your proposal and other projects that are subject to competitive funding (including in this Platforms Open Call). What is your contingency approach if these other projects are not funded or need to conclude?

13. What will be the ongoing operation and maintenance requirements and how will these be met?

Particular elements you might wish to address include:

- which components of the overall platform are tied to enduring organisations?
- how will any key data assets be preserved should the platform cease to continue?
- Can parts of the platform continue to be used in the absence of others?
- Is there (or will there be by project end) a community committed to the use and maintenance of the service provided by the platform?
- What is the longer term commitment (expressed as in-kind investment and statements of commitment) from the organisations involved to sustain the platform at project end (letters of support can be attached at the end of this form)?

[S2 - The operation and maintenance of the Platform will be sustainable at the end of the project]

NOTE: This will be used by the panel to assess the likely sustainability outcomes.

14. Describe your proposed Project Governance structure, and Project Management approach
[P2 - The Proposer’s ability to deliver the project is clearly demonstrated, with well articulated milestones and deliverables assigned to appropriate Partners, and appropriate project management methodology and governance structure described.]

NOTE: This will be used by the panel to assess ability to deliver.

15. Budget and Milestone Breakdown

Using the [template provided here](#) (NOTE: this has two sheets, one for budget, one for milestones), provide:

- A proposed breakdown of the project budget, over the proposed length of project. Include proposed roles; where actual individuals have not been allocated to the project, use a role name and Full Time Equivalent (FTE). Each individual or FTE role is to be included as a separate line item.
- A Milestone and Deliverable breakdown, with associated budgets. The milestones shown in the template are required, others may be added to suit the needs of the project.

[S4 - The project budget is well-described, and provides good value for money]

[P2 - The Proposer’s ability to deliver the project is clearly demonstrated, with well articulated milestones and deliverables assigned to appropriate Partners, and appropriate project management and governance structures described.]

NOTE: This will be used by the panel to assess the reasonableness of the co-investment request and the quality of the initial project planning.

Section 6 Acronym List & Glossary of Terms

Term	Meaning
ARDC	Australian Research Data Commons
Australian Research Community	The Australian Research Community is the collection of all Research Communities in Australia.
Co-investment	Funds contributed by the Proposing partners towards the project. Co-investment must be in an auditable form (in accordance with reporting and accountability requirements as specified by the Commonwealth Department of Education) and can be cash (from project partners or other grants), investment from other NCRIS Projects, or effort/labour. NOTE: if contributing effort/labour, work on the project must be a significant amount of the person's time, i.e. 25% or more).
Collaboration partner	An individual or group that is outside the Proposal Lead organisation, that has helped to develop the Proposal and will contribute to the Project delivery
Infrastructure	The term 'Infrastructure' includes hardware and software used to support the eResearch activity of the Australian research community.
NCRIS	National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy
Platform	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 research communities.
Project Governance Body	A formally constituted group that takes ultimate responsibility for the oversight and delivery of the project outcomes, and directs the Project Manager accordingly.
Proposal	The document written by the Proposer in response to this RFP that describes the Platform that they will develop and commission in consideration for the ARDC funding provided by the ARDC in accordance with the terms and conditions defined and requested in this RFP.
Research Community	Research Communities are composed of researchers from multiple institutions, including possibly international institutions, and one or more disciplines. Working on a common set of research problems, goals, tools and data.
RFP: Request for Proposal	The Request For Proposal is this document, with any current or subsequent attachments.