



Australian Research Data Commons

# Institutional Underpinnings

## Background

The Australian Research Data Commons ([ARDC](#)) is a National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy ([NCRIS](#)) facility, providing Australian researchers with a competitive advantage through data. This Institutional Underpinnings program is part of the ARDC's larger [National Data Assets](#) initiative. Through strategic partnerships between the ARDC and key stakeholders, projects in this initiative will develop national scale data assets that support leading edge research. The National Data Assets initiative takes a portfolio approach to investment; this program specifically addresses the needs and capability of Australia's universities.

The research data maturity and capability of Australia's universities is crucial to the development of national data assets. The majority of Australia's research data is generated at these institutions, which support researchers in their day-to-day research practice by providing infrastructure, training and advice. As identified by the ARDC-supported [Research Data Culture Conversation \(RDCC\)](#), universities face a "Yin and Yang" of data management. Data is an asset that underlies and validates the findings of their researchers and feeds into new research, motivating the preservation, sharing and re-use of data. However, data also poses a challenge in terms of the growing burden of resourcing, the management of access and sensitivity, and the need to make decisions about longer-term retention and disposal. Meeting these challenges requires an understanding of the decisions and events which drive the data lifecycle, an approach which involves all research-supporting pillars within an institution and which allows for discipline specific profiles to inform decisions and events.

There is great value in bringing related comparable data together in significant national data collections. These collections and their supporting infrastructure are of key importance to meet the needs of specific disciplines and answer research and research translation questions. However, in the Australian data landscape the only obvious long term custodians for many such national significant data collections are the research institutions at which this data is generated. Therefore, the development and sustainability of national data assets requires collaboration across universities and developed thinking around standards, approaches, services, commitment and governance arrangements.

ARDC seeks to:

- catalyse a national, coordinated, and coherent approach to research data management at universities (including a common framework and coordinated action).

- support systemic improvements to research integrity and quality through uplift in research data management capability across universities
- support systemic improvements to research innovation and excellence through common data practices and capability that underpin national data assets.

## Institutional Underpinnings

In this program, participating universities will work together to develop an Institutional Research Data Management Framework. The framework will be developed, tested and validated by participating institutions, but should be able to be applied across all of Australia's universities, and should include:

- A joint statement of the principles underpinning effective institutional research data management
- A collective outline of the policies, procedures, services and infrastructure needed for effective research data management
- A shared profile of the archival principles appropriate to the management of research data
- A model of the common decisions and events that occur as research data interacts with each of these elements, including where possible a description of the information needed to feed into these decisions and processes (acknowledging that this may vary depending on discipline and institution).

As part of the development of this framework, each institution (or groups of collaborating institutions) will create a Framework Implementation (an activity that tests or validates an aspect of the framework). Feedback from these Implementations will be used to inform the final version of the framework, and wherever possible reusable outputs will be shared for adoption by other institutions. Implementations must:

- Have ongoing value beyond the duration of the project
- Involve improvement or change at the institution (not just business-as-usual)
- Be specifically related to the joint framework
- Produce some output that can be of value to other institutions.

Funds cannot be used to purchase hardware or software licenses, but the configuration of software is in-scope where that process explicitly acts as a test or validation of the framework.

## Expected Participants

All Australian universities (see the [Higher Education Support Act 2003](#) Table A and B providers) are eligible to apply. Each institution can only join once at the institution level, so we request only one registration of interest and one formal application to participate per university.

## Scale and Timeline

The ARDC proposes to invest \$65,000 per participating institution towards the collaborative development of the framework and testing or validation of an aspect of the framework at each institution.

All institutions that register their interest in participating in the program will take part in a workshop to confirm the aims and scope of the framework. These institutions will then be invited to submit a formal application to participate.

This collaborative project will have a duration of 18 months, and will take place in three stages. In Stage 1, all participating institutions will work together to produce a draft framework (6 months). In Stage 2, institutions will conduct their individual Implementations to test/validate the framework (9 months). In Stage 3, feedback from these activities will be used to produce a finalised version of the framework (3 months).

## Expected Contribution

Each university is expected to contribute to the development of the framework by:

- Attending regular meetings and workshops
- Engaging in consultation within their own institution
- Contributing to the drafting of a section of the framework
- Conducting a local Implementation of an aspect of the framework and providing feedback on that aspect of the framework in light of that Implementation
- Providing feedback on the framework document as a whole

## Co-Investment

The ARDC recognises that the COVID-19 situation has placed financial constraints on universities, which are restricting the funds available for infrastructure projects. To assist in the continued development of e-research infrastructure, the normal requirement for 1:1 matching co-investment will not apply for this investment program. However, this program is intended to align with existing institutional activities and priorities, and we expect co-investment in the project and the leveraging of existing activities from participating institutions. Co-investment includes but is not limited to funds, people, infrastructure, services, consultancy, strategy and long-term commitment.

## Selection Criteria

If more applications are received than can be accepted given the funds available for ARDC co-investment, applications will be assessed based on the research intensity of the institution.

## Call Process

The call for participation in this program will take place in two phases: Registration of Interest and a Formal Application to participate.

### Registration of Interest phase: 19/10/2020 - 9/11/2020

On **19 October 2020**, ARDC will launch a call for registrations of interest. Registration will close on **9 November 2020**. All eligible institutions who have registered their interest in the program will be invited to take part in a workshop to confirm the aims and scope of the Framework on **19 November 2020**.

### Formal Application phase: 7/12/2020 - 15/2/2021

A call for applications to participate in the program will open on **7 December 2020** and will close on **15 February 2021**. Applications will be invited from eligible institutions that have registered their interest in the prior phase.

If you have a question please [contact us](#). These questions and their answers will be entered into a publicly available [FAQ](#).

Forms to submit a Registration of Interest and Formal Application will be made available on the Institutional Underpinnings [webpage](#).