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National Intelligence and Security Discovery Research Grant (NISDRG) Program

Round 4 NI24R1

Guidance for Detailed Assessors

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Purpose of this document

The purpose of this document is to provide you, as a Detailed Assessor for NISDRG Intelligence Challenges Grant Round 4 NI24R1, with some guidance that aims to assist you while assessing Applications that have been assigned to you. This document will work in complement with the [Assessor's Handbook](#), which is available on RGS website.

About the NISDRG Program

The National Intelligence and Security Discovery Research Grants (NISDRG) program supports excellent research that deepens understanding of emerging science and technology and addresses intelligence and national security interests, and facilitates innovation and develops national security and intelligence capacity. The Office of National Intelligence (ONI) Intelligence Challenges Grants aim to enable Australia's National Intelligence Community to systematically engage with Australia's research and technology community.

The NISDRG program commenced in 2020 with funding from both ONI and the Defence National Security Science and Technology Centre (NSSTC). NSSTC funded the National Security Challenges Grants in Rounds 1 and 2. For funding commencing in 2024, ONI will provide funding for the program through the NISDRG Intelligence Challenge grants.

The Intelligence Challenges grants provide support to research that aligns with the priority research areas identified by the Australian Government. These research areas are outlined in the [Intelligence Challenges](#) developed under the broad National Security Science and Technology Priorities.

The program values equality, diversity, and inclusion in the research workforce and aligns with ARC's approach based on a number of established policies and practices, including the ARC's [Gender Equality](#) strategy.

Guidance for Detailed Assessors for NI24R1

Audience of Your Assessments

You will prepare your Assessments for two types of audiences as below:

1. The primary audience of your review is the Selection Advisory Committee (SAC), who have the task of identifying the academic excellence and capabilities of the applicants.
2. The secondary purpose is to highlight to the applicant what was not clear or may need greater clarity so that they can clarify the issues in their rejoinder and clear up any doubt that the SAC may have.

Key Question to Consider

While assessing, consider the following question:

Do you think this proposal identifies a clear gap in the challenge, and applies a novel and innovation solution, with potentially significant outcomes with respect to the challenge?

Overall Guidance

- The individual reviews should be of good quality, genuine, succinct but substantial.
- They should also be impeccably polite.
- Comments should take the form of a statement and explanation of key strengths and weaknesses of the proposal, in light of the evaluation criterion.
- Note that historically scores have been primarily A's and B's which does not assist the SAC in identifying relative excellence. An A is for the top level that you have *ever* assessed not simply that this is an excellent Application. The challenge for the SAC is identifying the outstanding from a collection of the excellent.
- Similarly, if you identify a potential issue or point of lack of clarity, raise it so that the applicant can address it in the rejoinder, as any unaddressed issue or lack of clarity identified by the SAC but not addressed in a rejoinder will result in the application not proceeding.

Considerations While Assessing

The following are some suggested considerations for preparing the review to assist the SAC in their task.

- a. **Project quality and benefit** **60%**
 - To what extent have the applicants outlined the knowledge gap and aligned the research to the challenge(s)
 - To what extent is the outlined hypothesis and approach feasible bearing in mind the extent that the proposed research is high risk-high gain?
 - To what extent does the proposal involve the development of novel methodology?

- If successful would the outcomes of this research provide further opportunities to address the Australian intelligence and national security challenges?
- To what extent does the proposal go beyond what the individual Chief Investigators could achieve alone?
- To what extent do the Chief Investigators succeed in proposing a combination of scientific approaches that are crucial to address the scope and complexity of the research questions to be tackled?
- Note that the program sponsor has an interest in high risk/high return research and this should be a consideration in the assessment

b. Investigator(s)/Capability 25%

- To what extent have the CIs demonstrated the ability to conduct ground-breaking research? (Give consideration to both professional and academic outputs, but in assessing publications, examine the content and do not rely solely on ‘impact factors’)
- To what extent do the CIs have the required scientific expertise and capacity to successfully execute the project?
- To what extent do applicants successfully demonstrate in the proposal that they bring together the know-how – such as skills, experience, expertise, disciplines, teams – necessary to address the proposed research question?
- Do the Chief Investigators have adequate experience in supervising Postgraduate Researchers (HDR students) and Postdoctoral Research Associates to completion (if requested for funding)?

c. Feasibility and commitment 15%

- To what extent are the proposed timescales, resources and CI commitment adequate and properly justified?
- To what extent are the proposed research methodology and working arrangements appropriate to achieve the goals of the project?
- Do the Chief Investigators have access to world-class research and research training environments that are appropriate to carry out this project?

