

ACELG Research Partnership Scheme 2012: Guidelines for applications for partnerships

Introduction to the scheme

The Australian Centre of Excellence for Local Government (ACELG) established the Research Partnerships Scheme in 2011. It is designed to provide opportunities for local government researchers within councils and tertiary institutions to work with ACELG in undertaking research that will benefit local government and build research capacity in the sector.

ACELG has set aside approximately \$80,000 for this program in 2012. A maximum of \$20,000 will be provided to partners who can contribute at least \$10,000 in cash from their own organisation or from a third party. Smaller projects will also be considered. As a general rule, preference will be given to proposals that match ACELG's contribution in full. However, in exceptional cases ACELG will consider waiving the financial contribution – but will require evidence that substantial other resources are being contributed. Expressions of interest are invited by Friday 4th May 2012.

Aims of the ACELG Research Program

The Research and Policy Foresight Program (the Research Program) is one of six program areas of ACELG. The Research Program has two main objectives:

- to provide a strong evidence base to underpin the work of the Centre and to identify and explore issues facing local government that warrant further research
- to support local government in policy development.

Research Program activities include ACELG commissioned research papers, the Research Partnership Scheme, and other activities designed to disseminate research, encourage debate, and inspire the translation of the research into practice.

Key themes and topics explored in ACELG research have so far included:

- Local Leadership
- Financial Sustainability of Councils
- Community Engagement and Community Planning
- Local and Regional Development
- Collaborative Governance
- Climate Change and Sustainability
- Local Government Consolidation and reviews.

Please visit the ACELG website for copies of completed research publications, and for more details about the Research Program and other programs.

Aims of the Research Partnership Scheme

- To provide opportunities for local government organisations to work in partnership with ACELG as a national local government research centre, and with other tertiary institutions in undertaking research
- To build research capacity within the local government sector
- To improve the depth and scope of ACELGs research work through collaboration between researchers and local government practitioners
- To support the application of locally generated or place based knowledge and research to local government organisations nationally.

This scheme is designed to support genuine research partnerships, in which ACELG is an active contributor at each stage of the process, from the finalisation of project briefs and selection of researchers, through to the completion and publishing of research reports.

Management of the scheme

The ACELG Research Advisory Committee provides guidance and advice to the ACELG Director and Board in the oversight and management of the scheme. The committee includes a mixture of local government practitioners and local government researchers from across Australia. The committee, which meets bi-annually, is supported by the ACELG Program Manager – Research, who has responsibility for the day-to-day oversight of the scheme.

Who can apply for partnership support?

Applications are welcome from any of the following organisations, or from partnerships between any of the following organisations:

- Local councils
- Local Government Associations
- Local government professional bodies
- Regional Organisations of Councils and regional alliances
- Tertiary institutions who undertake local government related research
- Individual researchers who have extensive local government experience

Consulting firms will not be considered as a project proponent, however consultants may be engaged by research partners if suitably experienced researchers attached to a tertiary institution cannot be sourced and/or a particular consultant is considered to be the most appropriate person to undertake the research.

Criteria for proposals

In putting forward a topic for research, project proponents are expected to demonstrate that they are building on previous work carried out locally, nationally and internationally in their topic areas - rather than reproducing work already available. The following criteria, which apply to all ACELG research, must also apply to research partnership projects:

- Evidence based
- Aligned with ACELG research themes, or reflect key agendas for some local governments
- Applied and industry relevant while building on a strong conceptual base
- Practitioner inclusive
- Include mechanisms for translating research into policy
- Include strategies for engagement and dissemination.

Other factors that will be taken into account are whether the organisation has previously received financial support from ACELG, whether there are alternatives for funding support and the national spread of projects.

Research dissemination

ACELG disseminates completed research through its networks to benefit local government more broadly. To assist in the dissemination of the research and to encourage discussion about the implications of the findings for practice, ACELG requires that a research paper for a conference and/or an academic journal be produced by the researcher.

Intellectual property

Intellectual property will be held jointly with the project partners. The research material can be used for the purpose of teaching and publishing research papers, and the partners will be asked to seek each others' approval before using the material for other purposes.

Proposal assessment process

As a first stage applicants are asked to provide a brief expression of interest (EOI) which includes a brief outline of the proposed research and details of the proposed partnership. ACELG Research Advisory Committee members will assess the EOI and then invite selected proponents to provide a more detailed proposal. Completed applications will be assessed against the following criteria:

- Potential to challenge current thinking and contribute to innovation in policy or practice
- Proposed research method is appropriate and demonstrates academic rigour
- Fits ACELG themes and overall research objectives
- Involves practitioners and reflects implications for practice
- Outlines additional resources to be offered to the partnership.

Please note: Expressions of interest must be submitted to Stefanie.Pillora@acelq.org.au by Friday 4th May 2012. ACELG staff will work with prospective partners in developing detailed proposals.

Research Proposal Checklist

Title and summary of the proposal

- Does the title reflect the specific proposal?
- Have you included a brief description of the proposal?

Partners

- Have all the partners to the project been agreed and confirmed?
- If representing an academic institution, have you considered a local government partner?
- If representing a local government organisation, have you approached a tertiary institution as a potential research partner?

Researcher(s)

- If a researcher has been nominated, have details of their credentials been included?
- If a researcher is yet to be engaged, does the proposal include details of the process that will be undertaken to engage a suitable person?

Objectives

- Are the objectives for this research included?
- Is the research question specified?

Rationale for research

- Why is the research required?
- What are the intended benefits for the local government sector as a whole?
- What new knowledge do you anticipate will result?
- To support the need for this research, has evidence from recent literature been included?

Approach/method

- What is your proposed method?
- Have you checked that the proposed budget is adequate for the method you propose?

Budget

- Have you included a budget breakdown?
- Is your organisation, or a partnering organisation, able to make cash contribution of least 10k?

Project Plan

- Have you included a project schedule, inclusive inclusion of proposed commencement and completion dates?
- Has your proposed schedule been confirmed with partners and researchers?

Dissemination Strategy

- Has a dissemination plan been included, e.g. journal article paper/ presentation for a national conference?

For further information on the ACELG Research Partnership Scheme, contact **Stefanie Pillora**:

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