

New ARC NCGP schemes: comparison

What replaces what, when each scheme opens, and what it means for your next application

Updated 27 October 2026 | Prepared by Hellie Lynch, Straight Up

Status: policy intent, plus one set of tabled guidelines

Figures come from the NCGP Policy Review Final Report (released 22 July 2026) and the ARC's new scheme pages.

Explore is the only new scheme with Grant Opportunity Guidelines so far. They have been tabled in Parliament, and the ARC expects to publish a forecast opportunity on GrantConnect in Q4 2026. For every other new scheme, amounts, eligibility and partner rules can still shift.

Open now under the old rules

Future Fellowships 2027 (FT27) closes 5 pm AEDT, Friday 6 November 2026. No FT28 round is scheduled.

ITRP 2027 Research Hubs and Training Centres close 5 pm AEDT, Wednesday 25 November 2026. Maximum ARC funding is now \$10 million per grant.

Discovery Projects 2028 (DP28) is the final DP round: opens February 2027, closes 10 May 2027. No EOI stage, one application per chief investigator (CI), and CIs awarded a DP in DP26 or DP27 can't apply.

At a glance

- 15 schemes become 7 schemes plus 1 sub-scheme: Collaborate: Infrastructure, Equipment and Facilities (CIEF).
- The Discovery/Linkage split is gone. Every scheme supports collaboration; only Collaborate and Prioritise require a Partner Organisation.
- ARC Research Points replace project limits. Each eligible CI and Salaried Chief Investigator (SCI) has 13 points. Points are committed when an application is submitted and held for the life of a funded project. Grants from legacy schemes don't count.
- No more salaried fellowships for mid-career and senior researchers. Future Fellowships has no direct successor, and FT27 is expected to be the last round.
- Early-career researchers (ECRs) within 5 years of their PhD can be named as SCIs, with salary funded. In Explore, that salary sits inside the project funding cap, not on top of it. Check how each later scheme handles this in its guidelines.
- All schemes fund early-stage research only. Experimental development and medical research are out.
- Every grant gets an establishment phase, so less information is collected at application. The ARC is exploring collecting full partner details from successful applicants only.
- Collaborate and Prioritise run every 2 years, alternating. Prioritise grants are approved by the Minister for Education, not the ARC Board.

Main comparison: new schemes

New scheme	Replaces (closest)	Who can lead	Partner requirement	ARC funding per year (indicative)	Duration	Grants per round	First round
Initiate Fellowships	DECRA; partly Early Career Industry Fellowships	ECRs within 5 years of PhD, assessed in 2 cohorts: up to 2 years, and more than 2 up to 5 years	None. Placements with universities, industry or end users encouraged	Up to \$50k project funding, plus salary and on-costs	Up to 3 years	About 300	Q2 2027
Indigenous Excellence	Discovery Indigenous	Early and mid-career Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers, up to 15 years post-PhD	None	\$50k–\$500k	Up to 5 years	About 50	Q4 2027
Lead and Mentor	Australian Laureate Fellowships	Mid-career and senior researchers with a strong leadership and mentoring record	None. Must mentor an ECR team	Up to \$250k project funding, plus 2 postdocs and 2 HDRs (no lead salary)	Up to 5 years	About 50	Q3 2027
Explore	New (no direct predecessor)	Any career stage, individuals or teams. Not open to anyone who holds, or in the past 3 years was awarded, an Explore grant	None. Low or minimal co-contribution	\$50k–\$400k, including any SCI salary	Up to 3 years	About 150	March 2027 (Explore 2028 round)
Breakthrough	Discovery Projects	Any career stage, individuals or teams	None. Low co-contribution	\$200k–\$600k	Up to 5 years	About 700	Q3 2028
Collaborate	Linkage Projects; ITRP Hubs and Training Centres	Multi-institution teams	At least 1 Partner Organisation. Significant cash; comparable in-kind accepted from not-for-profit and community partners	\$1m–\$2m	Up to 5 years	About 60	Q1 2028
CIEF (sub-scheme of Collaborate)	LIEF	Multi-institution teams	Infrastructure must be beyond one institution's capacity and open to multiple institutions and ARC projects	Not yet published	Not yet published	Not yet published	Q2 2028
Prioritise	Centres of Excellence; Special Research Initiatives	Multi-institution teams	At least 1 Partner Organisation. Strong cash focus, with not-for-profit concessions	\$4m–\$6m	Up to 7 years	About 3	EOI Q4 2028; full applications Q2 2029

Reverse lookup: old scheme to new home

Old amounts are from the most recent funding rules, for comparison only. 'Status now' reflects the ARC Scheme Calendar as updated 24 September 2026. * ITRP27 Hub cash ratio is from secondary sources: confirm against the Research Hubs 2027 guidelines (GO8609) before advising a client.

Old scheme	Old funding (indicative)	Old partner rule	Status now	New home	What changes
Discovery Projects (DP)	\$30k–\$500k per year, up to 5 years	None	DP28 is the final round: opens February 2027, closes 10 May 2027, outcomes April–May 2028	Breakthrough (or Explore for high-risk ideas)	Higher floor (\$200k). Breakthrough doesn't open until Q3 2028
DECRA	Salary plus up to \$50k per year, 3 years	None	Not in the 2026–27 Scheme Calendar	Initiate Fellowships	Two cohorts by years post-PhD. Needs a career development plan showing the administering organisation's support
Future Fellowships	Salary plus up to \$60k per year, 4 years	None	FT27 open, closes 6 November 2026. No FT28 scheduled	No direct successor	Mid-career salaries no longer funded. Use Breakthrough, Explore or Lead and Mentor
Australian Laureate Fellowships	Salary supplement plus 2 postdocs and 2 HDRs, 5 years	None	Additional round run in 2026 during the transition	Lead and Mentor	Lead salary no longer funded; mentoring is core. Fitzpatrick and Sweet awards continue, plus 2 new awards for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers
Discovery Indigenous	\$30k–\$500k per year, up to 5 years	None	Additional round run in 2026 during the transition	Indigenous Excellence	Dedicated funding lifts from about 1% to about 5% of the NCGP; any discipline
Linkage Projects (LP)	\$50k–\$300k per year, 2–5 years	Partner cash and in-kind combined at least match ARC funding; cash at least 25% of the ARC request	LP26 was a single round (closed March 2026); outcomes due 9–23 December 2026. No later LP round in the calendar	Collaborate	Much larger scale (\$1m–\$2m per year); runs every 2 years, first round Q1 2028
LIEF	\$150k–\$1m	Institutional co-funding	LE27 outcomes due 22 December 2026 to 13 January 2027	CIEF	Interim only, until a whole-of-government infrastructure solution exists
ITRP Hubs and Training Centres	ITRP27: up to \$10m per grant, up to 5 years	Partner cash required. ITRP27 Hubs: cash at least 37.5% of the ARC request, down from 75%*	ITRP27 open, closes 25 November 2026	Collaborate (Prioritise if national-priority scale)	No industry-specific scheme; collaboration is industry-agnostic
Centres of Excellence	Up to about \$5m per year, 7 years	Partners expected	Not in the 2026–27 Scheme Calendar	Prioritise	Tied to national priorities; the Minister approves
Special Research Initiatives	Varies	Varies	Not in the 2026–27 Scheme Calendar	Prioritise (ad hoc rounds)	Ad hoc rounds at government direction or with international funders
Early Career Industry Fellowships	Salary contribution for up to 3 years, plus project costs	Partner required	Paused pending the policy review	Initiate (placements)	No dedicated industry fellowship
Mid-Career Industry and Industry Laureate Fellowships	Salary contribution, plus project costs	Partner required	Paused pending the policy review	No direct successor	Salaried fellowships for established researchers end

TRL mapping

The ARC does not use technology readiness levels (TRLs). The final report says all 7 schemes fund early-stage research and exclude experimental development and medical research. The ranges below are a Straight Up interpretation for planning, not ARC policy.

Scheme	Indicative TRL	Notes
Explore	1–2	Bold, unproven ideas; higher risk appetite in assessment
Breakthrough, Initiate, Indigenous Excellence, Lead and Mentor	1–3	Fundamental and use-inspired research
Collaborate, Prioritise	1–4	Partnered, but still early-stage
CIEF	Not applicable	Infrastructure

What this means for clients

Old Linkage and ITRP projects often reached TRL 3–5. Under the new model, that upper end fits less comfortably in the NCGP. Translation-heavy work points more towards CRC-P, CRC and ARENA.

The federal gap past proof of concept has widened. Australia’s Economic Accelerator won’t fund new projects beyond 2025–26, after a 2026–27 Budget decision; existing grants continue, with projects expected to run until 30 June 2028.

Partnered ARC research faces a gap of more than a year. LP26 is the last Linkage round in the calendar and Collaborate doesn’t open until Q1 2028, which makes ITRP27 (closing 25 November 2026) the last large partnered ARC opportunity until then.

Research Points turn CI roles into a budget. A Lead CI on Explore commits 5 of their 13 points, so teams should plan who leads what across Explore, Breakthrough and Collaborate before the first round opens.

Launch timeline

When	Scheme	Notes
Now to 6 November 2026	Future Fellowships 2027 (legacy)	Expected final round
Now to 25 November 2026	ITRP 2027 Hubs and Training Centres (legacy)	Outcomes expected 31 August to 14 September 2027
Q4 2026	Explore forecast opportunity on GrantConnect	Subject to the guidelines passing the disallowance period
February to 10 May 2027	Discovery Projects 2028 (legacy)	Final DP round, single stage
March 2027 (Q1)	Explore	First new scheme
Q2 2027	Initiate Fellowships	
Q3 2027	Lead and Mentor	
Q4 2027	Indigenous Excellence	
Q1 2028	Collaborate	
Q2 2028	CIEF	
Q3 2028	Breakthrough	
Q4 2028	Prioritise expressions of interest	
Q2 2029	Prioritise full applications	

Frequency once running: Collaborate and Prioritise alternate every 2 years. All others, including CIEF, run every year.

Assumptions and gaps

- Mappings to old schemes are the closest match by purpose and scale. The ARC has not published an official one-to-one mapping. UQ Research Support's summary of the final report is the most useful secondary reference.
- Partner cash ratios for Collaborate and Prioritise are not set yet. The final report says only 'significant' cash, proportionate to scheme scale.
- CIEF funding amounts are not published.
- Research Points values for each role are indicative until each scheme's final guidelines are released.
- About 4% of NCGP funding is reserved for infrastructure and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement and research capability combined. How that flows into individual schemes is not yet confirmed.
- We have not confirmed whether previous DECRA attempts count towards any attempt limit for Initiate Fellowships. Check the Initiate guidelines before advising an ECR.
- Old scheme figures are from recent funding rules. Check the specific round if quoting to a client.

Sources

- ARC: Release of the NCGP Policy Review Final Report (22 July 2026)
- ARC: New NCGP Schemes Overview, and individual scheme pages for Explore and Initiate Fellowships
- ARC: Revitalised NCGP FAQ
- ARC: Advance information about Explore Grant Opportunity 2028 (30 September 2026)
- ARC: ARC Research Points
- ARC: NCGP Scheme Calendar (updated 24 September 2026)
- ARC: Update to the ITRP 2027, Future Fellowships 2027 and Discovery Projects 2028 grant opportunities
- ARC: Now open, ITRP 2027 grant opportunities (16 September 2026)
- Department of Education: Australia's Economic Accelerator program update
- UQ Research Support: Policy Review of the NCGP
- WaterRA: ARC reform summary