

# 2026 National Research Infrastructure (NRI) Roadmap Issues Paper Consultation

## Issues Paper Consultation Survey

Department of Education

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Response received at:

November 5, 2025 at 9:18 AM GMT+10

Response ID:

sbm38e742950dca162d5de4c

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- 1 My consent  
Yes, I agree
- 2 Other individuals consent  
Yes, I confirm
- 3 Title  
Prof
- 4 First Name  
Sach
- 5 Last Name  
Jayasinghe
- 6 Email Address  
executivedirector@acri.org.au
- 7 Organisation  
Academy for Collaborative Research Infrastructure

- 8 In what capacity are you responding?  
A representative of an organisation or group
- 9 Please select how you would like your submission treated  
I agree for my submission to be published and attributed to me or my organisation or group
- 10 Approval to be contacted  
Yes, I agree to the department contacting me to seek my further views regarding the 2026 NRI Roadmap
- 11 What best describes your occupational category?  
Other: "Members based RI advocacy academy"
- 12 Which of the below best describes your employment sector?  
Not for profit
- 13 If you are a researcher or directly involved in research support, please indicate your area(s) of research expertise or the area(s) you most commonly work in (as categorised by the Australian and New Zealand Standard Research Classification Fields of Research codes)  
Not answered
- 14 Overall, how would you describe your (or your organisation's) familiarity with NCRIS?  
Very familiar
- 15 If you or your organisation has used an NCRIS capability in the period since 2021, please select those capabilities  
Not answered
- 16 Q1. Should the proposed definition of NRI in the 2026 NRI Roadmap be modified – such as by elaborating what is meant by 'nationally

significant', or by other changes?

Not answered

17 If 'yes', please contribute a potential definition (or definitions).

Not answered

18 Q2. What should be done, and over what timeframe, to ensure future NRI investments respect cultural protocols, and support self-determination and promote benefit sharing, in line with the Australian Government's Framework for Governance of Indigenous Data?

Not answered

19 Q3. How might an appropriate balance be achieved between investment in a dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Research Data Commons capability, and provision of uplift in capability across relevant discipline and theme-oriented NRI?

Not answered

20 Q4. What are the current top 3 priorities for NRI investment for the humanities?

Not answered

21 Q5. What new or emerging areas of humanities research will require NRI investment in the next 3-5 years?

Not answered

22 Q6. Should Australia focus on developing a specialist humanities research infrastructure workforce or a generalist research infrastructure workforce with humanities domain expertise and ability to bridge across disciplines?

The NRI should focus on (and allocate national resources) to tackling the challenges and opportunities in developing the broader (generalist) research infrastructure workforce. Whilst there are undoubtedly unique attributes to humanities research infrastructure, by

no means is it exclusive. There are nuanced challenges and opportunities related to many subsets of the research infrastructure workforce, for example, research software engineers. Rather than focussing in developing a singular subset of the research infrastructure workforce (at the risk of marginalising others), develop within and provide tools to the generalist research infrastructure workforce to effectively build cross-domain teams to deliver transdisciplinary outcomes.

## 23 Q7. What are the critical skills that the NRI workforce should have regardless of their technical expertise?

On the path to establishing ACRI, a survey of the Australian research infrastructure workforce was conducted (response of circa 110 in 2022/23). The results of the survey noted the following critical, non-technical skills (in order of priority based on responses): Project Management (capital project delivery, equipment procurement, delivering industry projects, effective use of contracts); Strategy and Planning (aligning to organisational strategy, external factors, capability roadmaps, budgets, developing business cases, KPIs); Finance & Management Accounting (pricing, cost-recovery, operating ratio, forecasting, budgeting, financial reporting); Effective and Efficient Operations (policy, systems and processes, information systems, delivery of training, operating models); Customer Service (client focus, managing expectations, survey tools and metrics, continuous improvement); Quality Control and Assurance (NATA, ISO, industry requirements and expectations); Snapshot of the Australian Innovation Ecosystem (the tri-party system of academia, industry and government, funding system); Communication and Engagement (governance structures, end-user feedback, links to corporate functions (e.g. Facilities, Health and Safety)); Marketing and Business Development (competitive advantage, 4Ps, mix of fee-for-service versus projects); and Ethics and Integrity (animal ethics, human ethics, privacy, authorship and acknowledgement, research codes of conduct). With the recent developments, it would be prudent to also include AI and Machine Learning, which we suspect would be a high priority.

## 24 Q8. What is the best approach to retain staff and add to new capabilities to the current NRI workforce?

Aligned with well-established theories such as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, the retention of staff and attraction of new talent (capabilities) is addressed via:

- 1) Providing secure employment through stable funding of salaries;
- 2) Within the Higher Education dichotomy of Professional (about job) and Academic (about person), ensure staff have a sense of belonging and identity. The broader implementation of the research infrastructure specialist (RIS) job family is required. In the

long-term, the Enterprise Bargaining Agreements require review to formally embed enduring changes. ACRI would welcome the opportunity to work with the Advisory Group and the Department in how we can meaningfully engage the NTEU and the universities to work towards necessary EBA transformations. The cultural changes at the institutional-level and the sector more broadly is also required, as demonstrated internationally via initiatives such as the UK Technicians Commitment. Thus, ACRI calls on a similar initiative to be established in Australia; and

3) Akin to academic peers, the research infrastructure workforce require esteem as scientists and engineers who contribute the national research and innovation ecosystem. Too often they are in the background without due recognition and denied career progression (in most cases there is no avenue for career progression). ACRI looks forward to working with its members and stakeholders, in supporting and developing paths for enhancing the esteem of the research infrastructure workforce. However, it is incumbent on national policy makers to invest in opportunities for the research infrastructure workforce, such as access to bespoke fellowships and competitive grants (ARC, NHMRC to remove any barriers for RIS-led applications and address any bias within the peer review process).

- 25 Q9. How can NRI facilities ensure their capabilities are made widely known and available to potential users in relevant industry sectors across Australia's cities and regions?

Not answered

- 26 Q10. How can NRI facilities build the know-how and support that will lead to an increase in productive research-industry collaborations?

Investing in business development/industry engagement professionals, especially those cutting across multiple NRI is a prudent strategy. However, this needs to be complemented with broader training of all NRI workforce. Many of the research infrastructure specialists have an intimate knowledge of their respective technology, whether it is the nuances of the different equipment or pushing the boundaries of applications. This deep expertise lends these experts to be particularly good at addressing a breadth of challenges and to be highly innovative in dealing with industry problems. The specialists, with their close ties with the academics, are ideal brokers in bringing industry opportunities to our researchers and driving industry-academia collaborations. This ability will only be reinforced when the specialists obtain further business acumen through formal training (i.e., can come to appreciate and empathise with often contrasting cultures of industry and academia). However, in order for this workforce to be successful contributors to the industry engagement objectives and research impact, appropriate

signals need to be in place to drive this behaviour, including suitable key performance indicators and rewards. Moreover, such engagement activity requires time, and as such capacity must exist to materialise the activity (i.e., the staff must have the time available to actively engage with industry rather than relying on industry to come to them). Aligned with its mission, ACRI looks forward to investment in developing and deploying aforementioned skills within the NRI workforce.

**27** Q11. To improve research translation capability, can you identify and briefly describe needed enhancements of existing NRIs, and/or new NRI?

Not answered

**28** Q12. How should research translation be planned for in the development of new NRI?

Not answered

**29** Capability 1

Not answered

**30** Capability 2

Not answered

**31** Capability 3

Not answered

**32** Q14. If you wish to propose an additional priority suggestion for a new or enhanced capability, that was not in the Survey responses, please name it here, and briefly describe the need, the capability, the medium-term goals, impacted research communities, and the timeframe over which its establishment should occur.

Not answered