NSW Research Centre – Ambassador Schools Program: Guidelines for Applicants

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| 1.0 **Program purpose** | 1.1 (**Seeking Applications**) The NSW Department of Education (“**Department**”) is seeking applications from a consortium of universities for a grant to fund the establishment and operation of a NSW Research Centre for the Ambassador Schools program (“**Research Centre**”). The lead university must be led by one of the following NSW universities:* Australian Catholic University
* Charles Sturt University
* Macquarie University
* Southern Cross University
* University of Newcastle
* University of New England
* University of New South Wales
* University of Notre Dame
* University of Sydney
* University of Technology Sydney
* University of Wollongong
* Western Sydney University

Partner universities may be from interstate. The consortium may identify other organisations with relevant expertise to contribute to the project. |
|  | 1.2 (**Objective**) The objective of the Research Centreis to develop a body of evidence-based research on effective practices at high performing NSW schools that can be scaled to like schools, thereby supporting improved student learning outcomes. |
|  | 1.3 (**Governance**) The Research Centrewill be governed by a joint governing body with representatives from the successful consortium and the Department. |
| 2.0 **Background and Scope** | 2.1.1 (**Ambassador Schools program**) As part of the Department’s School Success Model, the Department commenced an Ambassador Schools program in early 2021. The program will announce 10 high performing Ambassador Schools in 2021, selected on the basis of school performance relative to contextually similar schools. The selected schools will collectively represent a broad range of NSW public schools, including metro and regional locations, and primary and secondary schools.2.1.2 (**Identify effective practices, to scale**) The Department is establishing the Research Centre to investigate Ambassador Schools and identify effective practices that can be scaled to like schools. 2.1.3 (**Research for the Department**) The Research Centre will be responsible for developing a comprehensive body of evidence-based research on effective practices, which will be prepared for the Department. This body of evidence could include peer-reviewed publications, policy papers, program and project materials, and summary reports as well as new datasets. Close collaboration with the Department through an appropriate governance framework will ensure that the research can be applied within the NSW schooling framework. 2.1.4 (**Two streams**) The Research Centre will have two focus streams of research, recognising regional and metropolitan contexts.2.1.5 (**Effective translation**) The Research Centre will be high profile, and the results of its research will have strong impact through effective translation. Success is dependent on close collaboration with the Department. 2.1.6 (**Department support**) The Department will provide support to the Research Centre in areas related to school engagement, policy advice and development, and communications.2.1.7 (**Governance approach**) The Research Centre will be governed by a joint body comprising university and Department representatives. The governance of the Research Centre will align to the existing governance of the Ambassador Schools program within the Department. 2.1.8 (**Co-design**) The Research Centre will engage closely with the Department and Ambassador Schools to co-design the research.  |
|  | 2.2 (**Multi-stage research program**) The Research Centrewill lead a staged research program focused on effective practices. The Research Centre work will be undertaken using a multi-stage research program of up to 3 years.  |
|  | 2.3 (**Stage 1** **focus** **and deliverables**) Stage 1 (within 12 months) will focus on identifying effective practices in Ambassador Schools that can be scaled to contextually similar schools. Deliverables will include:a) (**establish centre**) Establishment and implementation of the Research Centre and its initial research program;b) (**interim reporting**) interim progress reports at least quarterly, including regular updates and early insights on research findings (within the first 3 months); c) (**detailed report**) A report on effective practices that result in improved student outcomes at the Ambassador Schools identified in 2021 (within the first 12 months). This may include: pedagogy and assessment, use of data and evidence, educational leadership, and professional learning practice. The report should recognise each Ambassador School, as well as metro and regional contexts, whilst identifying commonalities in effective practices across schools;d) (**peer-reviewed report**) A peer-reviewed report that can be published by the Department if appropriate; and e) (**plan for Stage 2**) A detailed plan for Stage 2, including a testing and scaling approach and forecast costs. |
|  | 2.4 (**Potential Stage 2 – focus and expected deliverables**) Stage 2 (commencing following Stage 1 *if approved* and for a duration of up to 24 months) will focus on testing and scaling identified effective practices from Stage 1 in additional schools to achieve improved student learning outcomes. Expected deliverables include:a) (**interim reporting**) Interim progress reports, regular updates, and early insights on research findings; andb) (**final report**) A final report on the outcomes of testing and scaling of effective practices in additional schools.Note: As part of applications the Department is interested in receiving ideas on how the potential Stage 2 testing and scaling may be undertaken by the applicant. Stage 2 is an opportunity to pilot and test ideas identified as effective practices from Stage 1. This could, for example, include a delivery model involving schools applying under a competitive research grant process to be involved in the testing and scaling of practices. In this case, the Research Centre would manage the competitive research grant process. |
|  | 2.5 (**Stage 2 dependent on Stage 1**) The scope of Stage 2 will be dependent on the findings from Stage 1. Applicants should provide a detailed proposal for Stage 1 and a high-level outline of their anticipated Stage 2. This means Stage 2 is not guaranteed – it will require approval of the Department towards the end of Stage 1.  |
|  | 2.6 (**Research publication and Intellectual Property**) The Department’s model for publications and IP is as follows: (**Consult and obtain Department approval on research program before commencing**) Before commencing research, the Research Centre must first consult with the Department and also obtain the Department’s approval on the approach and focus. (**Department must approve any publications**) Communications about the research work or findings including publishing information about the program in academic publications is only allowed after the Department has reviewed and approved such communication. The approval will be at the Department’s discretion. The Department will only approve communications that detail the effective practices in Ambassador Schools. Also, no communications will be allowed which use identifiable Department data or personal information. (**Program IP**) All new program IP (e.g. reports, data and findings) generated arising out of the program, will be owned by the Department. This means the Department will be able to reproduce the new program IP (e.g. research) for any purpose including departmental and general public use. The consortium members may make reports available for study, publication and reproduction only with the Department’s prior written approval as described above.(**Ownership of existing IP unaffected**) Each party will continue to own their pre-existing IP (including IP developed independently from the Research Centre).  |
| 3.0 **Support Available** | 3.1 (**Level of grant funding**) Up to $1.96m a year (for up to three years), contingent upon the proposals received.  |
|  | 3.2 (**Stage 2 subject to approval**) The financial support for Stage 2 will be determined based on detailed plans submitted at the end of Stage 1. Availability of the grant funding for Stage 2 will be subject to the Department approving the detailed plan. |
| 4.0 **Use of grant funds**  | 4.1 (**Providing the funding**) The grant funding will be a cash contribution following the execution of a funding deed between the consortium members and the Department. The timing of payment will be based on certain milestones – see section 9.2 below.  |
|  | 4.2 (**Use**) The grant funding must be used primarily on resources and activities within NSW. If part of the research is occurring outside NSW, details must be included in the application. |
| 5.0 **Eligibility criteria** | 5.1 (**Composition of consortium**) Applications are open to consortia of at least two universities. A lead university must be identified in the application. The lead must be university as per section 1.1 of this application form. Partner universities may be from interstate. Applicants with clear representation from both metro and regional contexts will be preferred.  |
|  | 5.2 (**Ethics approval**) Proposed research must secure ethics approval from the relevant ethics committee at the university. |
|  | 5.3.1 (**SERAP after application is ok**) NSW State Education Research Applications Process (**SERAP**) approval is not required prior to submitting an application to establish the Research Centre. 5.3.2 (**Timing SERAP approval**) Prior to the Research Centre conducting research that involves schools or school students, the Research Centre will be required to apply for approval through the SERAP, or have evidence of SERAP approval.5.3.3 (**Funding conditional on SERAP approval**) If SERAP approval is unsuccessful, the proposed research will not be funded. |
| 6.0 **Selection Criteria**  | 6.1 Applications will be ranked and preference given according to the criteria outlined below.a) **Capability**:* (**experience of institution**) Experience of research institution in developing and delivering educational research
* (**quality of research team**) Quality and experience of research team in developing and delivering educational research
* (**translate and scale**)An ability to translate and scale research findings across the education system
* (**ability to work with schools**) Demonstrated capability to work closely with schools
* (**working with children**) Experience working with children and with sensitive data

b) **Approach**:* (**alignment with objectives**) Alignment of the approach with the Department’sobjectives
* (**co-design**) Co-design approach with the Department and the Ambassador Schools
* (**proposal**) Clear, cohesive and robust proposal (including research objectives, plan, methodology, deliverables and governance)
* (**deliverables**) Clarity and robustness of interim and final deliverables, including the ability of the Department to use the results of research to inform policy, program delivery and broader communications
* (**evidence-based research**) Creation of a body of evidence-based research that can be drawn on by the Department, teachers and schools
* (**collaboration**) Collaborative and flexible approach to developing and sharing research insights
* (**context**)An approach that encompasses the breadth of schools (e.g. metro and regional), and demonstrates an ability to work in different contexts
* (**research practices**)Access to leading-edge research practices and theories, and an ability to bring innovative and creative approaches to the research
* (**testing and scaling**) Capability to design and deliver a process for testing and scaling the results of research (potentially required for Stage 2 scope)

c) **Feasibility**:* (**governance**)Appropriate governance model
* (**value for money**) Cost-effectiveness and value for money
* (**sustainability**) Feasibility and sustainability
* (**proposal to meet objectives**) Extent to which the overall proposal provides confidence in timely and successful delivery of the Research Centreobjectives

d) **Commitment**:* (**co-investment**) Co-investment for the establishment of a Research Centre (e.g., in-kind support through facilities and other support)
* (**endorsement**) Institutional endorsement of the proposal
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|  | 6.2 (**Assessment against criteria**) Applications will be assessed against these criteria by a selection panel to determine whether to award the grant funding to the applicant, and how much grant funding to award. |
|  | 6.3 (**Assessment discretion**) The Department reserves the right, at its absolute discretion, to adopt any strategy in assessing applications received. |
|  | 6.4 (**Discretion to proceed**) The Department may choose not to proceed with this program or otherwise not award funding under this program. |
| 7.0 **Application process**  | 7.1 (**Closing time**) Applications close at 6PM AEST on **2 August 2021.** |
|  | 7.2 (**Electronic submission**) Applicants are required to submit an electronic copy of the completed application form to: AmbassadorSchools@det.nsw.edu.au with the subject line ‘Ambassador Schools - Research Centre’  |
|  | 7.3 (**Signing the application**) Applications must be signed by the lead researcher, and endorsed by the relevant university Dean and the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research). |
|  | 7.4 (**Copy research office**) The Research Office of the Lead University should be copied on the application email.  |
|  | 7.5 (**Late applications**) Late applications will not be accepted. |
| 8.0 **Selection process**  | 8.1 (**Selection panel**) A selection panel will:1. Assess and rank grant applications according to eligibility and selection criteria on a competitive basis; and
2. Determine which applicant, if any, should receive the grant, and the amount of the grant.
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|  | 8.2 (**Clarifications**) An applicant may be contacted to clarify their application. |
|  | 8.3 (**Informing outcomes**) All applicants will be informed of the outcome of the decision on their applications.  |
|  | 8.4 (**Timetable**) The timetable for the selection process is as follows: |
|  | **21 June 2021** | Applications open for the Research Centre  |
|  | **6PM AEST on 2 August 2021** | Applications close for the Research Centre  |
|  | **Anticipate by September 2021** | Successful and unsuccessful applicants notified |
| 9. **Grant** **Funding Deed and reporting requirements** | 9.1 (**Grant Funding Deed**) The successful applicant that accepts the offer of theResearch Centregrant will be required to enter into a formal Funding Deed (“**Deed**”) with the Department. The Deed will specify obligations including to the recipient’s accountability for the grant, such as using the grant for activities occurring in NSW, the return of unspent grant monies, and reporting on the use of the grant. It will also set out the publications and intellectual property regime and the mechanism for how the Department may approve Stage 2 (which may be in one or more phases). |
|  | 9.2 (**Milestone payments**) Payments to successful applicants will be triggered at agreed milestones including: 1. The signing of the Funding Deed, which requires an agreed project plan with milestones;
2. The interim deliverables of each stage, as agreed;
3. The deliverables of each stage, as agreed;
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|  | 9.3 (**All consortium members to sign deed**) The Funding Deed must be signed by an authorised signatory of the Lead University and also each partner university. |