



INVESTMENT CALLS

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS - FAQ

Updated 04 November 2022

Contents

COOPERATIVE RESEARCH CENTRES (CRCs).....	2
What is a CRC?	2
What is the Soil CRC?.....	2
Who are the Soil CRC Participants?	2
What are the Soil CRC objectives?.....	2
INVESTMENT PROCESS.....	3
What is the Soil CRC Investment Process?	3
What are the different call types?	3
PROPOSALS.....	4
Are there specific topics and objectives required for research project proposals submitted to the Soil CRC?	4
How are the priorities chosen?	4
Who can submit a proposal?	4
Can I submit a project proposal team containing only members from one participant organisation?	5
When building my project proposal team, how can I find information about the Soil CRC participants?	5
Can third party (external) people and organisations be included in project proposals?	5
Can a project proposal incorporate more than one Program or priority?	5
What do I need to consider when setting a proposal start date for the project?	5
What's the difference between a Program Leader and a Project Leader?	5
Who is the Soil CRC Management Team?	6
How are proposals assessed?	6
Who is the Research and Adoption Committee (RAC)?	6
What happens when a proposal is unsuccessful?	7
What happens when a proposal is successful?	7
Who is the project agreement between?	7
BUDGETS	7
How do I determine a project budget?	7
I have a Grower Group running field trials in a project and they provided a single figure as the cost to run the trial. Is it OK to submit their cost as a single figure under consumables (operating) rather than breaking down the cost into separate items?	8
What is the ratio of in-kind funding to the CRC funding that projects need to submit?	8
PROJECT PROPOSAL SUBMISSION	8
How do I submit my proposal?	8
I cannot access SoilCentral what do I do?	8
Are there any 'how to guides' for using SoilCentral available?	8
I am having trouble submitting my proposal online, what do I do?	8
PhD SCHOLARSHIPS.....	8
What PhD Scholarships are available through the CRC?	8
I am student, how can I apply for a PhD with Soil CRC?	9
How do the PhD projects differ to major investment projects?	9
Are there any restrictions on which University I can complete my PhD through?	9
KEY DATES.....	10
When can I submit a proposal for a Soil CRC project?	10
When will I find out if my proposal is successful or not?	10
KEY CONTACTS.....	10
General enquiries	10
Program Related Enquires	10



COOPERATIVE RESEARCH CENTRES (CRCs)

What is a CRC?

A CRC is a Cooperative Research Centre that is established by the Australian Government as the result of a successful grant application to the [CRC Program](#). CRCs “provides medium to long term industry-led collaborations with matched funding to solve industry problems and improve the competitiveness, productivity and sustainability of Australian industries” (Australian Government, 2018).

A CRC can be further defined as: “a company formed through a collaboration of businesses and researchers. This includes private sector organisations (both large and small enterprises), industry associations, universities and government research agencies such as the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), and other end users. This team of collaborators undertakes research and development leading to utilitarian outcomes for public good that have positive social and economic impacts” (CRC Association, 2018).

What is the Soil CRC?

The [Soil CRC \(CRC for High Performance Soils\)](#) is bringing together scientists, industry, and farmers to find practical solutions for Australia's underperforming soils. It aims to enable farmers to increase their productivity and profitability by providing them with knowledge and tools to improve the performance of their soils. The Soil CRC is the biggest collaborative soil research effort in Australia's history with \$166 million in cash and in-kind contributions committed by Participants and the Australian Government over 10 years.

Who are the Soil CRC Participants?

There are currently 40 Participants contributing \$19 million cash and \$108 million in-kind contributions in addition to the \$39.5 million being contributed by the Australian Government. A list of Participants can be found on our [website](#).

The participants consist of 4 state government agencies, 8 universities, 8 industry partners and 20 farmer groups.

Soil CRC participants can find Participant contact details, specific capabilities and the purpose of Participants in the Guide provided in the members' area of the Soil CRC [website](#).

What are the Soil CRC objectives?

The objective of the CRC Program (and all funded CRCs) is “to improve the competitiveness, productivity and sustainability of Australian industries, especially where Australia has a competitive strength, and in line with government priorities” (Australian Government, 2018). The specific Soil CRC objectives are:

- a) to advance the Australian agriculture and primary production industries and to support regional communities by driving sustainable economic growth through improvement in soils and consequential improvement in agriculture, horticulture, pasture and sustainable production in agribusiness sectors and industries;
- b) to address farm soil management issues and thereby improve natural resources and increase farm productivity in the Australian agriculture and primary production sectors;
- c) to improve the natural environment and capacity of land to support agriculture, and primary production industries;



- d) to establish and operate a Cooperative Research Centre in the CRC field with the capability of pursuing world class scientific research and training relevant to the field;
- e) to ensure that the parties with their differing disciplines and backgrounds will, through their participation in the Soil CRC, add value to each other so that the performance of the Soil CRC will be greater than that of each Party acting independently;
- f) to promote a managed and cooperative approach to soil management, scientific research and education in the CRC Field so as to maximise the benefits to Australia and internationally from that scientific research and education;
- g) to carry out education activities in the CRC Field for students and for the professional development of persons working in the Field; and
- h) to increase the skills of persons already working in the CRC Field and to train and equip new postgraduate and other students with skills and attributes to continue being productive in the CRC Field;
- i) to build Australia's long term capacity in the CRC Field including building Australia's current agriculture, land management and pastoral skills and future workforce opportunities in the CRC Field;
- j) to ensure the outcomes of all activities are utilised in advancing the best interests of Australia to maximise the benefit to Australian industry and the Australian economy; and
- k) as an ancillary and supportive purpose, to utilise intellectual property generated from the research in such a manner as to advance the safety and security of food and agricultural resources and networks in Australia and ensure benefit to Australia, including Australian agriculture, horticulture and other farm sector industries, the Australian environment and the Australian economy generally.

INVESTMENT PROCESS

What is the Soil CRC Investment Process?

The Soil CRC invests in projects that meet the pre-defined activities (outputs and milestones) in our CRC Funding Agreement (20160024) which are designed to lead to identified impacts on Australian agriculture. These activities were identified by the Soil CRC Participants in their successful grant application to the CRC Program in 2016. In accepting the CRC Program grant, the Soil CRC is contractually bound to deliver these activities, all of which have prescribed delivery dates.

These activities will be delivered through completion of projects. Project proposals are called for through Investment Rounds (referred to as Calls). For each Call, the Soil CRC will identify priorities that will directly contribute to meeting the Activities that are due and when to release a Call.

As per the Agreement with the Australian Government, the Soil CRC is unable to invest in any projects that do not contribute towards completion of the prescribed activities. Soil CRC Participants are expected to financially contribute (i.e. invest) in each project and the Soil CRC provides a cash contribution (co-investment). Further details are available on the Soil CRC [website](#).

What are the different call types?

The Soil CRC has four types of calls for investments in which applicants can submit a project proposal,



1. Major Investment Rounds will be called for when there is an identified need for projects to be undertaken. These usually occur annually. Proposals called for in these rounds become the core projects of the Soil CRC and may include research, education and/or training (including PhD students). Each round will have differing priorities.
2. Major Investment Rounds (Students) are specific for education and/or training projects (including PhD students). The Soil CRC must commence and complete a prescribed number of PhD students, training courses and workshops. Depending on student numbers within Major Investments Round Projects, the Soil CRC may raise a separate call for students.
3. Expressions of Interest is an ongoing open call for any research discovered outside of the normal funding cycle(s) that fits the Soil CRC objectives and milestones. Projects funded under this call must justify why they need to be considered immediately rather than within the normal investment round cycles. For example, a researcher/advisor may have identified an opportunity that needs immediate attention. This category is not intended to receive proposals submitted to the major investment rounds that missed out on funding, and therefore, they are deemed ineligible under this category.
4. Special projects are attributed to a particular requirement (e.g. a co-funding opportunity offered by an external body), or strategy (e.g. commercialisation). Depending on circumstances surrounding the need for a project or external funding support conditions (e.g., a NSW only co-funded grant), only certain CRC Participants may be invited to submit a proposal.

PROPOSALS

Are there specific topics and objectives required for research project proposals submitted to the Soil CRC?

Yes. All projects funded must contribute to the CRC's delivery of its outputs (Commonwealth milestones) and link to one or more of the four Program themes. Participants can find further details of these in the members' area of the Soil CRC [website](#).

For Major Investment Rounds, each call will have unique project priorities listed for research to be undertaken. Only proposals addressing one of these priorities will be considered for investment in that Call.

How are the priorities chosen?

Unique priorities are identified for each Major Investment Round. These priorities are collectively identified by Soil CRC Program Leaders, the Management Team, and the Research and Adoption Committee (RAC). Priority identification is based on:

- the need to deliver the CRC's contracted milestones,
- outcomes of previous research projects,
- feedback from Participants, and
- available budget.

Who can submit a proposal?

Project proposals can only be submitted by the 40 Soil CRC Participants.

If you are an external stakeholder (third party) who wishes to collaborate with the Soil CRC, please contact us via email so we can talk through the options - enquiries@soilcrc.com.au.

Furthermore, the Soil CRC will only assess proposals submitted that meet all of the eligibility requirements detailed in the Guidelines for each Call.



Can I submit a project proposal team containing only members from one participant organisation?

No. To be eligible for funding, all project proposals must include at least two Soil CRC Participant Organisations.

When building my project proposal team, how can I find information about the Soil CRC participants?

To help find team members, the Soil CRC has created a Participant Capability and Contacts Guide that is located in the members' area of the Soil CRC [website](#).

In this Guide, the majority of the Soil CRC participants have provided:

- a summary about themselves (including specific capabilities and purpose of being a Soil CRC participant),
- where they are located,
- what research areas they are interested in and,
- the primary contact name and details.

Can third party (external) people and organisations be included in project proposals?

Yes, although no CRC cash can be provided to third parties within projects, and they are expected to contribute to the project with either cash or in-kind contributions.

Can a project proposal incorporate more than one Program or priority?

Yes. You should talk to all of the Program Leaders involved for assistance with your proposal formation and submission. All Project Leaders are required to discuss their proposal with the relevant Program Leader(s) before submitting a proposal, otherwise the proposal will not be considered. Contact details of the Program Leaders are included in the Call guidelines and are on the Soil CRC [website](#).

What do I need to consider when setting a proposal start date for the project?

The Soil CRC now includes an indicative commencement date in the timeline detailed in the Call guidelines. There are three key points to consider:

1. The notification date to Project Leaders if successful or not. In the Call timeline, there is a date indicated by which Project Leaders will be notified. You should not set a commencement date before the assessment process has concluded.
2. If you have all staff resources needed to commence or not. If not, you should allow time to advertise and recruit key personnel into your timeline.
3. Project Agreement revision and signing period. Soil CRC Projects will not commence (and no payments made) until Project Agreements have been executed. This could take approximately up to four months post notification if successful, and longer if you have to revise your proposal and resubmit as directed by the Board. Allow time for this to occur.

What's the difference between a Project Leader and a Program Leader?

A Project Leader leads an individual Soil CRC project. In each project, there is a project team consisting of various Soil CRC Participants, who nominate a Project Leader. This person, and their organisation, are responsible for delivery of their project in accordance with the project plan to achieve project milestones and deliverables. Besides providing scientific leadership, they manage the day-to-day conduct of the project, administration functions and reporting requirements.



Within the Soil CRC, there are four Programs, which will deliver the prescribed outcomes.

- Program 1 – Investing in high performance soils
- Program 2 – Soil performance metrics
- Program 3 – New products to increase fertility and production
- Program 4 – Integrated and precision soil management solutions

Each Program has a highly accomplished and experienced researcher/scientist responsible for oversight called a Program Leader. Although Program Leaders are employed by a Soil CRC Participant organisation, they also hold key positions within the Soil CRC, with 50% of their time attributed to leading their respective Programs. Individual projects are allocated across Programs and Program Leaders based on the Commonwealth milestone(s) their research is contributing towards.

Both Program Leaders and Project Leaders must be employed by one of the [Soil CRC Participant organisations](#).

Who is the Soil CRC Management Team?

The Soil CRC Management Team consists of the CEO, all four Program Leaders, the Finance Manager, the Chief Operating Officer, The PhD Program Manager, and the Communications Manager.

How are proposals assessed?

Proposals are assessed by the Research and Adoption Committee (RAC) who make recommendations on proposals to the Board for consideration. The Soil CRC Board of Directors then makes the final decision on which proposals to invest in.

After submission, proposals are checked for completeness, eligibility and compliance with funding rules detailed in the Call.

Before the assessment process, the Soil CRC Management Team review proposals and provide feedback to the proposal leader on:

- (i) Alignment with Soil CRC Program and Outputs,
- (ii) Likelihood of the expected impact and benefit and,
- (iii) Areas where the proposal might be non-compliant in some way.

Project Leaders are provided with this feedback and then have an opportunity to amend proposals and resubmit if they choose to, before the proposal is assessed by the RAC.

The RAC assesses the proposals, making recommendations to the Board based on the assessment criteria detailed in the Call guidelines. All proposals and the RAC recommendations are sent to the Board who review these and decide which ones will be funded (if any). Some proposals may be funded subject to changes such as reduced scope or budget or if identified as a high-risk project.

Who is the Research and Adoption Committee (RAC)?

The Research and Adoption Committee (RAC) monitors and advises on the research activities of the Soil CRC and makes recommendations to the Board. The RAC composition includes at least three Board Members, the Chief Executive Officer, at least three distinguished researchers from national and international research institutes or centres, and at least one end-user.

The Soil CRC Board appoint RAC members, Information about Soil CRC Board members can be found on our [website](#).

Project Leaders and Project team members of proposals submitted into an open Call **are not**



permitted to contact any members of the RAC about their proposal.

The members of the RAC include:

Member	Position
Professor Roger Swift	Chair, Independent Director, Researcher
Dr Michael Crawford	CEO
Dr Neil Ballard	Independent End User
Professor Di Hong	Independent International Researcher
Associate Professor Ann McNeill	Independent Australian-based researcher
Mr Malcolm Buckby	Non-Independent Director, End User
Mr Chris Sounness	Independent End User
Dr David Minkey	Non-Independent End User

What happens when a proposal is unsuccessful?

For proposals not approved by the Board, Project Leaders will be notified, and feedback will be available from the CEO. Dates for notification are listed in the timeline in the Call Guidelines.

What happens when a proposal is successful?

After the Board approves a proposal, the Project Leader will be notified by the CEO. Dates for notification are listed in the timeline in the Call Guidelines. Some proposals will have conditional approval and require changes such as budget and scope. These changes must be incorporated into the proposal and resubmitted before a project agreement is issued for signing by all project parties

The proposal will then be transitioned into a project and allocated a unique identification number. On signing of the Project Agreement by all project participant organisations (execution), an initial payment will be made to each of the project team organisations. Subsequent quarterly payments will be made subject to reporting of satisfactory completion of project milestones and deliverables. Final payments will be made once all final and technical reports are received by the Soil CRC.

Who is the project agreement between?

The Project Agreement is between the Soil CRC and all of the Project team organisations. Separate payments will be made by the Soil CRC to each team member's organisation as indicated in the proposal budget.

BUDGETS

How do I determine a project budget?

All priorities have an indicative budget maximum in the Call guidelines. Project Leaders must ensure that proposals submitted include budgets that do not exceed this maximum.

There is an appendix in the Call guidelines that will help you to prepare your budget.



I have a Grower Group running field trials in a project and they provided a single figure as the cost to run the trial. Is it OK to submit their cost as a single figure under consumables (operating) rather than breaking down the cost into separate items?

Yes, this is acceptable, but it should be clearly indicated what this cost covers in the justification (you do not need costs breakdowns but explain what the cost will cover).

What is the ratio of in-kind funding to the CRC funding that projects need to submit?

For all projects, the Soil CRC expects an average ratio of in-kind contribution to CRC funding as close as possible to 2:1 or greater. A higher value will increase the competitiveness of the proposal under the 'Value' criterion.

PROJECT PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

How do I submit my proposal?

Only proposals submitted online through SoilCentral will be accepted for Major Round Investment Calls. The link to SoilCentral can be found at: <https://soilcentral.soilcrc.com.au/>. **The Soil CRC will not accept late proposals or proposals via email or post.**

For Special Projects and EOIs, contact the Soil CRC to discuss submission forms and process via projects@soilcrc.com.au.

I cannot access SoilCentral what do I do?

If you are having trouble, **before you call the Soil CRC** please:

1. Check that you are registered, if you have not used SoilCentral before, you will need to register.
2. Check the password you are using. Note that the passwords to the Soil CRC members' site and for SoilCentral **are different**.
3. Try logging in with another internet browser and/or computer.
4. Reset your password. Note that your password for SoilCentral will require changing regularly as this is a security requirement of the Soil CRC.

Are there any 'how to guides' for using SoilCentral available?

Yes. You will find user guides, short guides to complete certain tasks and a webinar in the members' area of the Soil CRC website under **DOCUMENTS/RESOURCES/SOILCENTRAL**.

I am having trouble submitting my proposal online, what do I do?

If you having issues submitting and the online information guides do not help, please contact the Research Administration Officer on projects@soilcrc.com.au.

PhD SCHOLARSHIPS

What PhD Scholarships are available through the CRC?

The CRC has set prescribed tiers and values for the scholarships, and are currently offering four scholarships for PhD students within the investment call proposal system of three-year duration:



Scholarship Type	Set Stipend Value \$
Full	\$30,000 per annum
Part (50%)	\$15,000 per annum
Top Up	\$7,500 per annum
In-kind	Zero (but is provided cash for operating, travel or access to project resources and team)

I am student, how can I apply for a PhD with Soil CRC?

Only Principal Supervisor or Investment Call Project Leaders can request a PhD scholarship from the Soil CRC, not individual students. The Soil CRC however encourages potential students who do not yet have a research project to contact us so we can share your details with our Program and Project Leaders.

The Soil CRC and participating universities will advertise opportunities when they open. Notifications will be shared via social media, so ensure you follow our **Soil CRC** LinkedIn and Twitter account @**SoilCRC**.

PhD proposals can be submitted as part of a general investment round with consultation with the Project Leader. Depending on student numbers and budget availability, there may be dedicated investment calls for PhD projects released up until 2023. Each CRC Participant is notified when Call opens via the CEO Communique that is sent to Soil CRC Participants.

If you would like more information about PhD projects please contact the Soil CRC office via email - enquiries@soilcrc.com.au.

How do the PhD projects differ to major investment projects?

The project details and outputs are different. A major investment project may run for four years and contain many different components and deliverables. There may be several different sub-project teams who are working on separate components. A PhD project may be embedded into a major project as a sub-component and address only one of the many project outputs. A stand-alone PhD project will be only delivering what the PhD student is working on. The team will be smaller and the project less complex. PhD Projects are also restricted to three years duration.

Are there any restrictions on which University I can complete my PhD through?

Yes, PhD enrolment is only permitted through one of Soil CRC Participant Universities. These are currently:

- Charles Sturt University
- Federation University Australia
- Griffith University
- Murdoch University
- Southern Cross University
- The University of Newcastle
- The University of Southern Queensland
- The University of Tasmania



KEY DATES

When can I submit a proposal for a Soil CRC project?

The Soil CRC will periodically release Major Investment Calls. These will be announced in the CEO Communique that is sent out by email to all Soil CRC Participants. If you are a member or employee at one of the CRC's Participants and you do not receive this email currently, you can contact the Soil CRC via email - enquiries@soilcra.com.au to be added to the mailing list.

For Special Projects and EOLs, potential applicants are to contact the Soil CRC via email - enquiries@soilcra.com.au

When will I find out if my proposal is successful or not?

The process takes approximately four months as the assessment process involves various stages to ensure compliance and coherence to priorities. The specific dates for notification are described in the Call Guidelines, which can be found in the Members Section of the Soil CRC [website](#).

KEY CONTACTS

General enquiries

Soil CRC
Head Office
P: 02 4921
5473
E: enquiries@soilcra.com.au

Program Related Enquires

Program 1 – Investing in high performance soils
Professor Catherine Allan – Charles Sturt University
P: 02 6051 9781
E: callan@csu.edu.au

Program 2 – Soil performance metrics
Associate Professor Richard Doyle – University of Tasmania
P: 03 6226 2622
E: Richard.Doyle@utas.edu.au

Program 3 – New products to increase fertility and production
Professor Megh Mallavarapu – The University of Newcastle
P: 02 4913 8734
E: megh.mallavarapu@newcastle.edu.au

Program 4 – Integrated and precision soil management solutions
Dr Lukas Van Zwieten – NSW Department of Primary Industries
P: 02 6626 1126
E: lukas.van.zwieten@dpi.nsw.gov.au