

Cooperative Research Centres

AI for Learning Innovation and Future Education (AI for LIFE)

What is a CRC?

The Australian Government Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) program is a proven model that supports industry-led collaborations between industry, researchers, and government to develop new technologies, products, and services. CRCs are the longest running R&D Program in the Commonwealth industry portfolio and have the potential to deliver the significant funds required address grand challenges such as that posed by the introduction of AI into our education sector.

Since its inception in 1990, the program has committed \$4.6 billion in funding to support the establishment of 297 collaborations. Every dollar invested by government in collaborative research through the CRC program has delivered three times the value generating more than \$14 billion in direct economic benefits to the nation from CRC-produced technologies, products, and services.

CRCs are required to be established and governed as an incorporated company, limited by guarantee. The duration of a CRC can vary however generally they are funded for between 7 to 10 years for the purpose of addressing the challenge that forms the focus of the CRC.

CRC Governance

A CRC Board is established and is responsible for the strategic direction of the CRC the composition of which should include senior figures with general industry experience (not necessarily from the specific industry of the CRC) and reflect skills, experience, and expertise relevant to managing the CRC. The majority of Board members should be independent.

The CRC Board must include a chairperson who is independent of the CRC partners with the necessary skills and experience required to lead an organisation with diverse CRC partner needs and outcomes. A CEO is appointed and must commit 100 percent of their time and effort to the CRC unless otherwise agreed by the Department of Industry, Science and Resources and should have experience in project management, business management, commercialisation management (including Intellectual Property management) and relevant sector and technology experience.

A CRC's administrative structure is agreed by CRC partners and should reflect the need to effectively execute the management and administrative responsibilities of the CRC. These generally include financial and audit management, governance and operations management, research strategy and project portfolio management.

CRC Partners

Industry, University and Government CRC partners are effectively invested partners whose individual vision and goals strongly align with the vision and goals of the CRC. Partner investments generally take the form of cash and in-kind contributions for the life of the CRC. The size and scale of partner contributions is an important factor in securing the additional cash contribution from the commonwealth government as it reflects the industry-led commitment to the CRC.

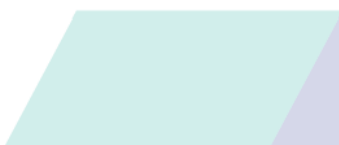


Partner contributions do vary however generally those that commit larger contributions are in a stronger position to influence the direction for the CRC, the focus of its projects and outcomes. They also may be offered additional benefits such as an option to take up a board position or occupy a key CRC role that influence the research direction of the CRC and its projects. These types of benefits are determined during the formation of the CRC by its partners. Beyond these benefits all partners of the proposed AI for Life CRC, can expect to enjoy the following benefits in return for their investment:

- **Be at the forefront** of developments in the Education and Training sector and have access to a pool of **Australia’s leading researchers** focussing on the major challenges facing this industry.
- Have **access to a network of the industry’s leading organisations** (providers and end-user clients) that are actively engaged in the sector.
- Have **access to cost effective applied research**, that is heavily subsidised by the Commonwealth and other participants. E.g., leverage investment dollar.
- Make a **measurable impact on increasing the quality and capacity** of Australia’s future pipeline of workforce talent.
- **Create IP** that can be leveraged for the **development of new products and services** that can offer competitive advantage.
- Be at the forefront of **future government policy development** that will influence procurement decisions.
- Leverage postgraduate and PhD students to **support your organisation** through co-working and **potential future talent acquisition**.

To accommodate the varying scale of CRC partner contributions, CRCs often categorise partners. This can take various forms and are established during the formation of the CRC. AI for LIFE CRC as established the following partner categories.

Partner		Contributions	Nomination rights for directors
Tier 1 Non-Research Partner	Voting rights	Minimum \$200K p.a cash Approx. \$400K p.a in-kind	Can nominate independent board member candidates and research committee member candidates
Tier 2 Non-Research Partner	Voting rights	Minimum \$100K p.a cash Approx. \$200K p.a in-kind	Can nominate research committee member candidates
Tier 3 Non-Research Partner		Cash and in-kind as appropriate	Project participation only



It is a requirement of a CRC submission that partners sign a declaration of their commitment and contribution to the CRC. Partner contributions, cash and in-kind, are totalled and then a decision is made as to the size of the commonwealth co-contribution request. Again, this varies but generally ranges from between the ratios of 1:1 to 2:1 (partner: commonwealth).

The commonwealth contribution provides additional financial leverage to partner contributions. For example, a CRC project that comprises 4x partners of equal contribution along with an equivalent commonwealth contribution delivers a project value 5x that of a single partner contribution thus effectively each project partner receives 5x leverage on their contribution. While this is a convenient example the reality is CRC project partner numbers and contribution vary on a project-by-project basis and both the contributions and outcomes are often negotiated at the project development stage. Refer later in this brief for more detail.

A common concern for potential CRC partners is the 7-to-10-year commitment expectations of a CRC. There are provisions in the CRC agreement that allow partners to exit a CRC, offering options in the event their business circumstances change. There are also provisions that allows partners to join an established CRC, which is an option for partners that cannot make a longer commitment but see an opportunity to contribute to CRC projects.

CRC Research Program

During the development of the CRC, industry and research partners set about defining the CRC vision, its target outcomes, and the key focus areas for the CRC. From this, the CRC research program is developed and generally comprises a suite of research strands to which CRC partner own product development roadmap align. Following represents some initial thinking regarding some of the key areas that need to be addressed by the AI for Life CRC.

Students	Teachers	Leaders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Supporting student learning experiences and outcomes ■ Personalisation and adaptive learning ■ Increase equitable and inclusive learning experiences ■ Effective use of data to monitor learner progress ■ Advance learning outcomes ■ AI literacy and skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Supporting teacher needs and integration of AI in classroom practice ■ Support teacher tasks and workload ■ Curriculum design and delivery ■ Student progress monitoring and assessment ■ Impact ■ AI literacy and skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Supporting education vision, policy and strategy ■ Supporting student learning experiences and outcomes ■ Support leadership practices ■ Social and ethical design of AI platforms and infrastructures ■ Development of governance guidelines ■ Data and trust

The needs of industry partners drive the CRC's research program

As previously highlighted the CRC is required to put in place a governance structure that ensures it effectively manages and administers its operations. To manage the CRC research strategy, a research committee is established whose primary role is to review and prioritise project proposals and put in place the approval process. This will include establishing project criteria which generally includes alignment to the goals of the CRC, industry need and the research basis for the project. A well-defined, industry informed and supported CRC project portfolio, including those projects that will be initiated at the commence of the CRC, is a key requirement for a successful submission.

As it is an expectation that a CRC will deliver outcomes and impact, the translation of research project outcomes that result in the commercialisation of new products and services for CRC partners is an important goal. Not surprisingly to successfully achieve this outcome, IP and commercialisation rights are a key consideration, thus it is important that this be addressed when establishing the CRC. While this can vary by CRC, the AI for Life CRC proposes that project IP ownership and commercialisation rights be negotiated on a project-by-project basis with background IP being retained by the original owner and project agreements defining access to background, project IP and commercialisation outcomes.

CRC Submission Rounds

The commonwealth accepts CRC submissions yearly (single round per year) that generally open in late December and ends the following December, effectively a 12 -month process.

A submission is a two-stage process. Stage-1 opens late December and is a formal written application that addresses specific criteria, closing the following March. Stage-1 down-select occurs in late June and successful applicants are invited to participate in Stage-2 which opens in July, includes an interview and further enhancements to the written application, closing in August. Outcomes are announced in December with funding commencing the following July.

Assuming a submission is successful it is an 18-month process from a CRC Round opening to CRC establishment.

Join the AI for LIFE CRC

CRCs are the longest running R&D Program in the Commonwealth industry portfolio. They have the potential to deliver the significant funds (in the tens of millions of dollars) and time (up to a decade) needed to address grand challenges such as preparing Australian citizens and the economy for a life with AI. Preparing Australia's citizens and future workforce for a world rich in AI technologies are a societal learning challenge on a grand scale. What will our future citizens need to know about, and be able to do with, AI? This CRC will enable strategic private and public investment to cohere leadership and regulation resulting in the development of trusted, responsible, and secure AI education and training solutions supporting Australia's future prosperity.

Join the AI for LIFE CRC and partner in leading AI development and contribution to building a harmonised EdTech ecology that addresses Australia's education and training needs. Collaborate with university researchers and industry AI experts to establish the future standards for open human-centred education AI. Promote inclusive, sustainable, and resilient education infrastructure for AI and aspire to establish Australia as the world leader in developing AI for education and training.

If you're interested in partnering with the AI for LIFE CRC, contact Mr. Patrick Hygonnet, patrick.hygonnet@unisa.edu.au.

