

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

AGENDA ITEM 2: PLATFORMS FOR COLLABORATION - UPDATES

Purpose

- To update AeRIC on a number of PfC activities.

Topics

Interoperation and Collaboration Infrastructure (ICI)/ ARCS

Executive Director appointment and Annual Business Plan

- Following consultation with AeRIC in November 2007, Professor Anthony (Tony) Williams was appointed to the role of the ARCS Executive Director in December 2007. Within the ARCS structure Tony is an ex-officio member of the ARCS Executive Committee and is responsible for developing operational and business plans and managing the Collaboration in accordance with these documents.
- Tony has commenced work on the first Annual Business Plan, due to be submitted to DIISR at the end of March 2008. DIISR expects to receive a request for an extension to April for the submission of the Business Plan, given the current state of the NeAT projects. Agreed NeAT projects must be incorporated in to the ICI Business Plan for 2008/09. Both Tony Williams and Dr Paul Coddington (interim ARCS Projects Manager) have been working closely with the AeRIC Executive Director and a number of research communities to advance NeAT project proposals.

Proposed Funding Agreement variations

- Consideration is being given to the allocation of an additional \$2 million to ARCS in the current financial year to establish a pool of expertise in the use of AAF-enabled authorisation solutions. If agreed by the ARCS Executive Committee, this funding will be provided on the basis that ARCS currently provides an appropriate national framework in which to manage and leverage such expertise. It is envisaged that this may take the form of a 'centre of excellence' within the ARCS framework that might build on existing interests and activities in NSW, while also providing access to expertise nation-wide.
- Negotiations are also underway to bring forward an ICI payment from next financial year to this financial year. This measure is designed to accommodate a minor reprofiling to address some flux in the NCRIS budget. Following agreement from the ARCS Executive Committee a slight contract revision would be made to the ICI agreement to accommodate this payment.

NSW developments – INTERSECT proposal

- In October 2007 a proposal for an eResearch Institute for NSW (to be named the "Institute for Transdisciplinary eResearch Services & Technology - "INTERSECT") was put forward by the Securities Industry Research Centre of Asia-Pacific (SIRCA). It is anticipated that INTERSECT will be the peak eResearch organisation in NSW and a focal point for interaction with PfC agencies. INTERSECT Australia Limited is to be a company limited by guarantee with foundation members made up of select NSW universities and SIRCA. INTERSECT will also coordinate the delivery of ARCS services from Ac3 (the current NSW signatory to the ARCS Collaboration Agreement) from 1 July 2008.
- Discussions are continuing between the foundation INTERSECT members, the NSW Government, the AeRIC Executive Director and the ARCS Executive Director, particularly in relation to funding support and possible ARCS and ANDS co-investment. The organisation is expected to be operating in an establishment state from July 2008 and anticipates being able to interact with PfC from this date. Full implementation will begin in the first half of 2009.

Australian National Data Service (ANDS)

- A contract was signed in November 2007 with Monash University to conduct the ANDS Establishment Project through to the end of June 2008. Under this agreement, Monash will work with the Australian National University (ANU), CSIRO and potentially a range of other parties to develop the necessary elements to move to full ANDS implementation from 1 July 2008.
- To comply with the contract, Monash is required to meet a number of milestones. The first milestone was met on 17 January 2008 with the submission of an initial report on the ANDS Establishment Project. The report outlined the membership of the Project Management Committee (PMC), including the appointment of Mr Andrew Treloar of Monash University as the Project Director. Ms Clare McLaughlin has been nominated as the Departmental non-voting member of the PMC.
- The PMC had its first meeting on Friday 15 February 2008. At this meeting, among other items, the role and responsibilities for the ANDS Establishment Project, including key deliverables, were discussed.

Deliverables

- The remaining deliverables for the ANDS Establishment Project are:
 - a detailed ANDS Business Plan for the period 1 July 2008-30 June 2009, including budget information;
 - an NCRIS Funding Agreement and a collaboration agreement for the delivery of ANDS from 1 July 2008;
 - a selection process (including international search) leading to an offer of employment for the ANDS Executive Director. The ANDS PMC is required to consult with AeRIC prior to an offer being made; and
 - an Interim and a Final Report on the ANDS Establishment Project.

Next steps

- Provision of an acceptable Interim Report by 29 February 2008.
- PMC to sign off on Position Description and to determine selection process for ANDS Executive Director by the end of February 2008.

National Computational Infrastructure (NCI)

- Subsequent to discussion between DIISR and the ANU regarding the draft NCI implementation plan, a revised plan including an updated steering committee and budget has been requested.
- Professor Mark Wainwright has been appointed to the Chair of the NCI Steering Committee;
- Professor Williams the Director of the Research School of Physical Sciences and Engineering at ANU is the Acting Director of NCI
- Professor Brian Yates, the Head of the School of Chemistry, University of Tasmania, and the Chair of previous APAC Merit Allocation Committee, will chair of the NCI Merit Allocation Committee
- ANU is in the process of formally selecting and appointing the NCI Executive Director.
- Lindsay Hood from ANU and Professor Wainwright (by phone) will brief the meeting in the afternoon on latest developments in NCI.

Australian Access Federation (AAF)

- The AAF Steering Committee has agreed in principle to a two tier model for the AAF that includes a top tier legal, governance and overall management entity for the AAF and an Operator providing services under a Service Level Agreement (SLA).
- It is also clear that the governance functions can be separated into those of a legal entity, able to charge subscriptions and enter into contracts as required and those of a governance committee which represents the members in determining policy for the federation.
- Mr Nick Tate reported that the Board of Universities Australia (UA) met in early February and did not have any objection to the proposal for UA hosting the AAF. Further work is being undertaken on the operational structure that would exist below Universities Australia.
- A teleconference was organised to brief Ms Virginia Hickey, a corporate governance consultant and lawyer, on the status of the project and issues of concerns relating to the governance issue. Ms Hickey is expected to provide an options paper for consideration by the AAF Steering Committee at the face-to-face meeting of the AAF Steering Committee in Brisbane on 17 March 2008. Ms Virginia Hickey is Director of the *@ the Board Table Pty Ltd*.

eResearch Australasia Conference

- DIISR have engaged the University of Queensland to operate an annual conference in the eResearch space for the next three years.
- DIISR are underwriting the conferences with \$60,000, however the conferences are not expected to make a loss and the conference organisers (Martin Lack and Associates) have considerable experience in running conferences in this domain.
- The first conference will be held in September 2008 located in Melbourne.
- The intention is to run a three day general programme followed by two days of specialist workshops encouraging all elements of Platforms for Collaboration to participate.

eResearch Forum at the eResearch Australasia Conference

- A session during the conference could be opened up as an eResearch Forum to provide an opportunity for feedback on any of the PfC activities.
- It would be a plenary session held later in the conference possibly late afternoon before the conference dinner
- The format should involve a panel - possibly the Chair and Executive Director of AeRIC plus the Executive Directors of the Platforms for Collaboration components - NCI, ARCs, ANDS, AAF and AREN.
- It could be structured along the lines of the "Town Hall Meetings" held at the W3C conferences.
- The session should be interactive - Conference participants should be encouraged to submit questions or comments in advance of the conference via a forum email inbox and at the conference.
- Questions and comments would also be taken from the floor
- AeRIC might also identify issues which participants would be invited to address.
- Conference participants would be encouraged to participate in the forum and it may be necessary to have incentives; eg prizes for best question or comment etc.

AeRIC Membership

- The Executive Director, Anne-Marie Lansdown and Mike Sargent met to review the issues arising in AeRIC membership.
- However, as significant planning is needed in the next six months regarding the future shape of Platforms for Collaboration in a revised NCRIS roadmap, and a broader set of changes may be envisaged as an outcome of the process, it is desirable to retain the contextual background of the current membership.
- This issue will be revisited in the second half of the year. In light of the revised NCRIS Roadmap, and in the meantime, NCRIS can provide a process for making approval decisions should AeRIC find itself inquorate.

NCRIS Roadmap review and the Government Innovation Review

- NCRIS has been invited to make a submission to the Innovation Review by the Minister
- Accordingly, NCRIS proposes to accelerate its revision of the NCRIS Roadmap and has determined as follows:

“The Review is intended to both review and refine the capabilities identified in the current Roadmap and the process that was undertaken to identify those capabilities, and to identify key new capabilities.

To assist in reviewing the Roadmap, five expert working groups of approximately 7-10 members each will be established. Four of these groups will be aligned with the National Research Priorities (Environmentally Sustainable Australia, Promoting and Maintaining Good Health, Frontier Technologies, Safeguarding Australia). The fifth group will cover the Humanities, Arts and the Social Sciences. We will devise a consultation means through which the Review process can review, capture and articulate the requirements for information and communication technologies (ICT) across and within the working groups. However, at this stage, it is not envisaged that an expert working group dealing specifically with this will be established.”

- The Executive Director has proposed that an ICT Strategy Group be established which has cross membership with the other working groups as well as some broader ICT community membership and which meets and reports separately to NCRIS on the needs and solutions in the ICT infrastructure area.
- The intention is to avoid a group that would have to double up on all the work of the other groups, while at the same time allowing for a consolidated foundational outcome.

Action

- Members to note the report and provide feedback during the meeting on items as appropriate.

AeRIC Secretariat
February 2008