

## **SUMMARY OF NCRIS ACCESS AND PRICING PRINCIPLES**

This note draws on previous NCRIS papers to provide Facilitators with a summary of the access and pricing principles for reference as they complete their Investment Plans.

The comments below apply where a user requires access to a research facility. In some situations, however, a researcher may only require access to data. Where that is the case, the access and pricing regime in an Investment Plan should still set out the classes of users that will have access to the data, how they will be selected, any limitations on their access to, or use of, the data and any pricing arrangements that will apply.

### **Access Regime**

- NCRIS aims to develop infrastructure that is accessible by all classes of researchers including:
  - meritorious researchers (these include research students and early career researchers);
  - commercial users; and
  - international users.
- The terms of access should be transparent to users and potential users.
- It is important that each facility operator has a strong ‘customer service’ ethic and strives to provide a high level of service for users. Each facility will need to be adequately resourced to provide this level of service.
- Facilities should not put in place arrangements that become de facto barriers to entry for users. Policies on pricing, the treatment of intellectual property, compliance with industry standards, insurance, OH&S issues etc should not deter researchers from using a facility.
- Nevertheless, it is recognised that researchers will need to comply with reasonable security requirements and access standards where appropriate.
- The effectiveness of the access regime will be a key performance indicator that will be monitored throughout the life of the NCRIS programme.

### **Apportionment of capacity**

- Where NCRIS funds are directed to a facility (eg a university, the CSIRO, a State/Territory agency, a commercial provider etc), it is expected that a proportion of the capacity at that facility will be made available to users outside that institution. This principle applies both to existing and new infrastructure.

- Each access regime will need to clearly specify those instruments and/or facilities within the institution, and the proportion of their capacity, that will be made available to users under the NCRIS principles.
- To attract NCRIS funds, this capacity will need to represent a significant contribution to national research infrastructure for the relevant capability.
- Co-investing institutions will be free to utilise the balance of the infrastructure capacity as they see fit.
- The NCRIS Committee will agree a reasonable apportionment of access between the institution and users enabled under NCRIS as part of its consideration of the access regime for each Investment Plan.
- This consideration will take into account the value of the capacity being made available by the co-investing institution on the specified instruments/facilities. The proportion of facility capacity made available to users under NCRIS principles will vary based on a reasonable assessment of the circumstances in each case.
- The access regime should specify how this capacity will be apportioned among the various classes of NCRIS enabled users such as:
  - meritorious researchers (including student researchers and early career researchers);
  - commercial users; and
  - international users.

#### Selection of users enabled under NCRIS

- The access regime will need to specify how users enabled under NCRIS will be selected for each facility.
- For meritorious researchers, facility operators should avoid unnecessary duplication of merit assessment schemes and should, wherever possible, recognise existing merit based assessments.
- The NCRIS programme aims to encourage meritorious international collaboration and use of the facilities by commercial researchers. The mechanisms used to select researchers in each of these classes should be described in the access regime.

#### **Pricing Policy**

- The NCRIS objective is that pricing policy should not deter any class of user from accessing a facility.
- To achieve this objective, it is expected that pricing for meritorious researchers should not exceed the marginal cost of providing access. The

precise level of charging for these users at a particular facility will however need to take account of the cost structure applying in that instance.

- Marginal cost represents the cost of accommodating one additional user at the facility. In most instances, this will equate to the avoidable costs related to that extra user, such as consumables and any additional support staff.
- If user charges are set at a level that only recovers avoidable costs, then capital and fixed operating costs will need to be covered by NCRIS grants, support from other co-investors and/or profit from commercial users.
- It is not intended that pricing for meritorious researchers will recover depreciation expenses.
- Pricing for commercial users should generally be at a market rate. It is expected that this rate would normally reflect full cost recovery including depreciation.
- The pricing policy for international users should be specified. It is expected this will take into account differences between institutional and commercial users and will need to be consistent with any existing international agreements on access and pricing.
- Separate pricing arrangements may need to be put in place for other classes of users or for collaborative use, eg a collaborative research project involving university and commercial researchers. In all cases, the aim should be to make the research facility available at a price that is affordable for the respective classes of users.
- Overall, the financial projections in an Investment Plan will need to demonstrate that a facility's income from all sources is sufficient to cover its costs through the life of the NCRIS programme, ie until June 2011.
- Given that some prices will be set at marginal cost, it is recognised that in the absence of other action taken by the grant recipient, any profit shown in the organisation's profit and loss statement will be reduced, and the balance sheet will show declining asset values from year to year.

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