



## Call for Applications to the NCI Merit Allocation Scheme

January 2010 – December 2010

Closing Date: November 9, 2009

### Background

National Computational Infrastructure (NCI, <http://www.nci.org.au>), the successor to the successful National Facility Program of APAC (Australian Partnership for Advanced Computing), provides Australian researchers with access to world-class high-end computing services. NCI was established in 2007 under the NCRIS Platforms for Collaboration program through an agreement between the Australian National University (ANU) and the Commonwealth Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research.

### Facilities Available

During 2009, the facilities at the NCI National Facility have been substantially upgraded. Late in 2008, the development / transition system, comprising an SGI Altix XE, was installed in preparation for the arrival of the new peak system. During September 2009, the first phase of the new peak system, comprising a Sun Constellation, was commissioned, replacing the SGI Altix 3700 installed in 2005. The second and final phase of the new Sun Constellation will be commissioned in December 2009 in preparation for the 2010 allocations under the Merit Allocation Scheme.

The facilities (<http://nf.nci.org.au>) available for 2010 are:

- Sun Constellation with 11,936 cores and having a peak speed of 140 Tflops,
- SGI Altix XE 1300 with 1,248 cores and a peak speed of around 15 Tflops.

### Access

Access to the NCI facilities is available in two ways:

- Merit Allocation—in which resources (processor time and related data storage) are allocated to public sector researchers on merit through a process which assesses applications on their research quality and computational requirements,
- Shares—in which organisations subscribe to a share of NCI facilities and manage this allocation internally through their own processes.

Merit Allocation Resources are provided for by Commonwealth (NCRIS) funding. Accordingly, researchers granted access under this scheme are not charged by NCI for the resources provided. For 2010, the value of these resources on the peak system is approximately \$0.12 per core hour, an amount which can be stated as an in-kind contribution to other research granting bodies (e.g., ARC).

### Merit Allocation Scheme (MAS)

The Merit Allocation Scheme calls for applications twice yearly—in October (the major round) for the following year, and in May (the minor round) for new projects which cannot wait until the main round at the end of the year.

'Start-up Grants' are available immediately to enable researchers to assess the usefulness of the National Facility for their research, and to assist in framing proposals to the Scheme.

**This call for applications to the MAS closes on November 9, 2009.**

MAS applications are assessed according to the quality of the research to be supported, the appropriateness of the NCI facilities for the project, the justification for the resources requested, and the track record of the research team in the use of high-end computing. Further details about the selection criteria are available at [http://nf.nci.org.au/policies/MAC\\_criteria.php](http://nf.nci.org.au/policies/MAC_criteria.php).



### **Who May Apply?**

The Merit Allocation Scheme is available to researchers in publicly funded research organisations. This includes universities, organisations such as CSIRO and ANSTO, and the NCRIS Capability areas. Post-graduate students at universities may not apply in their own right but, instead, should be attached to projects in which their supervisors are Chief Investigators.

### **How to Apply**

Forms for applications to the Merit Allocation Scheme or for Start-Up Grants can be found at <http://nf.nci.org.au/accounts/>.

Before applying, applicants should read the NCI National Facility policies and guidelines at <http://nf.nci.org.au/policies/> and also the criteria for evaluating MAS proposals [http://nf.nci.org.au/policies/MAC\\_criteria.php](http://nf.nci.org.au/policies/MAC_criteria.php).

Although proposals for 2010 should be made to the Merit Allocation Scheme now, under special circumstances they may be submitted at any time.

### **Advice and Support**

Assistance in completing the forms may be obtained from staff of the NCI National Facility (NF) who are also available to discuss the suitability of NF systems and their environment to the proposed project. NCI NF staff are also available to assist with the installation and optimisation of programs and other software.

### **Contact Details**

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