BCEC Research Grants Scheme 2014 – Call for Proposals
Instructions to Applicants

1. Statement of requirement

1.1 Background

The Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre (BCEC) is an independent economic and social research organisation located within CBS. The BCEC was established in 2012 through the generous support of Bankwest (a division of the Commonwealth Bank of Australia), with a core mission to undertake high quality, objective research on the key economic and social issues of relevance to Western Australia.

The BCEC’s research and engagement activities are designed to influence economic and social policy debates in state and Federal Parliament, regional and national media, and the wider Australian community. Through high quality, evidence-based research and analysis, our research outcomes inform policy makers and commentators of the economic challenges to achieving sustainable and equitable growth and prosperity both in Western Australia and nationally.

The BCEC capitalises on Curtin University’s reputation for excellence in economic modelling, forecasting, public policy research, trade and industrial economics and spatial sciences. BCEC researchers have specific expertise in economic forecasting, quantitative modelling, microdata analysis and economic and social policy evaluation.

In addition to conducting research through its own staff, the BCEC is interested in supporting and promoting relevant research being conducted by other researchers at Curtin University.

The BCEC is therefore inviting proposals from Curtin University researchers to conduct research aimed at supporting and informing the research priorities of the Centre. Funding for a number of research projects is available through a competitive selection process. It is anticipated that the majority of grants will be between $25,000 and $75,000 per project, although other amounts may be considered. Grants will commence in the second half of 2014 and should normally be completed in 6-12 months. Applicants are encouraged to develop proposals that also involve Centre staff (following discussion with the Centre Director), although this is not obligatory.

Instructions to applicants are contained in this document. The 2014 BCEC Research Proposal Template can be found at the 2014 BCEC Grant Advertisement webpage, which applicants should complete and submit by email before 5pm 11 July 2014, to:

Professor Alan Duncan
Director, Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre, Curtin University
Email: bcec@curtin.edu.au
1.2 Research Priorities

Proposals are particularly sought on the following issues:

- Income, poverty and disadvantage
- Promoting health and wellbeing
- Employment, workforce dynamics and skilled migration
- Housing markets and housing affordability
- Tax, regulation and the cost of doing business
- Trade and economic development in Asia

Potential research questions on each of these topics are provided in Appendix A. It should be emphasised that suggested areas for research listed under each research topic are in no sense exhaustive, and applicants are encouraged to submit proposals on other research questions within each theme that fit with BCEC research priorities. Applicants are encouraged to complete their work within a 6 to 12 month time period. Longer research projects may be considered in exceptional circumstances, but must have clear milestones and deliverables within the first year.

1.3 Who can submit proposals

BCEC invites proposals from suitably qualified and experienced researchers employed in Curtin University. Researchers or research teams would be expected to have a mix of skills including:

- A proven ability to conduct quantitative and/or qualitative research.
- Demonstrated research and analytical expertise in economics or related discipline.
- Ability to disseminate findings to lay audiences.
- An understanding and appreciation of the WA economy and the economic and social policy issues facing the State.

It is not essential that funded research projects should be framed to have an exclusively WA focus. Applicants are nevertheless invited to describe how their research may be leveraged to contribute to our understanding of WA economic and social issues policy issues. Research projects which involve national or international collaborations, expertise and comparative work are welcomed.

Successful applicants will be required to enter into a project agreement with BCEC of up to 15 months duration, commencing in the second half of 2014. Researchers must be capable of providing consistent high-quality and timely research services for that period.

Researchers can submit (or be listed on) more than one proposal, but funding a researcher for more than one project at a time will only occur in exceptional circumstances. BCEC is keen to encourage collaborative proposals which also involve researchers employed at BCEC. Prospective applicants should discuss this possibility with the BCEC Director before including Centre staff on their proposal.

1.4 Outputs

BCEC is seeking from applicants a detailed outline of the research project and outputs proposed, including milestones and deliverables.
An important aspect of BCEC’s research is the dissemination of research findings to appropriate audiences. Deliverables from the research project are expected to include, as a minimum, non-technical outputs that can engage external stakeholders and be used in BCEC’s flagship Report series. Non-technical outputs can be in the form either of an end-of-project report, or non-technical briefing notes (templates for which are available on request). Deliverables should include, in addition, working paper/s (published through the BCEC working paper series) and journal article submission/s.

A commitment to work with BCEC regarding the dissemination of findings from the project will be considered favourably.

1.5 Funding available
Funding for several research projects is available through a competitive selection process. It is anticipated that the majority of grants will be between $25,000 and $75,000 per project, although other amounts may also be considered.

Funding allocations will not necessarily be of equal value between each of the successful applicants. BCEC reserves the right to negotiate budgets with preferred applicants based on BCEC’s overall requirements.

1.6 Related research
Applicants should not duplicate existing research. However, they are encouraged to ensure proposals build on the current body of knowledge, including their own current research.

1.7 Timeframe
It is anticipated that the successful applicants will be engaged to provide research services to BCEC for between 6 and 12 months, commencing in the second half of 2014, although longer research projects may be considered. A timeframe for delivery of project milestones will be required.

1.8 BCEC contracts
Acceptance of a proposal will be subject to negotiation and execution of a project agreement with the BCEC, overseen by the Office of Research and Development. BCEC may accept the whole or part of the proposal offered. The final project will be defined in negotiation with the successful applicants.

1.9 Quality assurance processes
The following is a summary of the range of quality assurance processes undertaken by BCEC. These processes should be taken into consideration when planning projects, timelines, outputs and dissemination activities:

- Progress reports and discussion with BCEC at negotiated points during the term of the research project will be required, including reporting on specified milestones. The
progress reports provide BCEC with an opportunity to review and comment on the scope of the research, the methodology and research instruments being used, and any emerging issues.

- Where a research report is a scheduled output, BCEC will require submission of edited draft reports, which will be reviewed by BCEC and possibly an independent reviewer of BCEC’s choice. Written feedback will be given to the researcher to act upon prior to submission of subsequent drafts. Research teams should allow between 2 to 4 weeks after submission of their draft report for comments and feedback to be returned.

- Research reports will be required to be written in an ‘easy to read’ and accessible manner. A report template will be provided to ensure that BCEC house style is followed.

- While many reports are rich in content they often require extensive editing before publication. Where appropriate, BCEC may request that researchers arrange for an editor to proof read the final report before final submission.

- For all projects that are quantitative in focus, researchers must have a system for assuring the quality of the data they report and for conducting final data checks prior to submission of the report to BCEC. If the program of research involves developing and conducting a survey, researchers are to lodge the final data set to BCEC, with a view to making the data available to future researchers.

- BCEC requires ongoing dialogue with researchers regarding progress and direction of projects, including discussions about how impact of the research can be maximised.

- In negotiation with BCEC, researchers may be invited to make presentations at seminars, progress workshops, meetings or events. Where BCEC has requested this, the researchers may be asked to provide their time and BCEC will cover reasonable associated costs.

This list is not exhaustive and BCEC reserves the right to negotiate additional requirements where appropriate at the time of contracting.

1.10 Research ethics

Where ethics approval may be required, projects undertaken by researchers should be guided by the Universities Australia Joint Statement and Guidelines on Research Practice and Curtin University policy and procedures. For most qualitative research, we would expect researchers will be required to obtain ethics clearance for projects, and the outcomes of this process will form part of the contract milestones.

1.11 Selection process

The BCEC Director, in association with senior Centre staff and the BCEC Advisory Board, will be responsible for the selection process, and will evaluate all proposals against the selection criteria (Refer 1.12 Selection criteria). Those proposals not satisfying essential selection criteria may be set aside.

Applicants will be notified of selection outcomes, and project agreement negotiations will be initiated, in July-August 2014.
1.12 Selection criteria

Applicants must address each of the selection criteria and use the guidelines (Refer 2. Guidelines for Proposals) and proposal template provided with this information kit. In evaluating proposals against these selection criteria, the BCEC will:

- assess the overall risk to the BCEC of engaging the researchers identified in the proposal. This will include an evaluation of prior or current work undertaken for BCEC, with a focus on the quality and timeliness of such work;
- consider the extent to which the proposal builds on previous or concurrent research;
- take into account the balance of proposals across the research priorities.

### Selection criteria

| a. Proposed research project | a. The overall purpose and scope of the proposed research and the extent to which it will add to the current body of knowledge.  
| b. The alignment and contribution of the research proposal to the BCEC’s research priorities. |
| b. Research questions, methodology and timeframe | a. The quality and suitability of the proposed research method against the research questions proposed.  
| b. The approaches are clearly specified and realistic.  
| c. The novelty of the proposed research, and its relation to any previous research on the topic.  
| d. The existence of clear and achievable milestones. |
| c. Research experience, expertise & related research | a. The skills and experience of the researcher(s), including allocations of team members’ time and contribution to the project, are clearly identified.  
| b. Evidence of the applicants’ understanding of the key issues and relevant research. |
| d. Project quality assurance and risk management | a. The existence and effectiveness of project management, quality assurance and risk management processes to ensure production of timely, relevant and high quality research. Proposals will be evaluated on the capacity to adhere to the timelines proposed.  
| b. Demonstrated willingness to work co-operatively with BCEC and external partners, and be pro-active in negotiating the nature of the research and its outputs and dissemination activities. |
| e. Value for money | a. The total budget will be considered against the overall quality and depth of the research project proposed. |
| f. Research team composition and skills | a. Research teams would be expected to have demonstrated research and analytical expertise related to the topic.  
| b. If appropriate to the research topic and method, applicants are encouraged to consider external collaborators and cross-disciplinary research teams.  
| c. The availability of research team members for the project in light of other commitments they may have. |
2. Guidelines for proposals

2.1 Proposal format requirements

The 2014 BCEC Research Proposal Template to accompany this information kit is provided at the 2014 BCEC Grant Advertisement webpage.

Proposal should be compact and focused tightly on the intended research question, and presented according to the following guides:

- ideally no more than 8 pages (excluding coversheet and principal researcher/s CVs)
- short CVs of no more than one page
- single space typing
- standard margins (as set in the template)
- 11-point Arial type face
- A4 page size only
- using the coversheet on the proposal template (a covering letter is not required)
- submission of proposal in both PDF and Word document formats.

2.2 Proposal content guidelines

Guidelines for completing each section of your proposal are offered here. It is the responsibility of applicants to ensure proposals meet the requirements for criteria outlined in 1.12 Selection criteria of this information kit.

Proposals must be clear, concise and sufficiently comprehensive to allow full analysis of the proposed research without reference to additional material. The proposal should be written for a broad audience.

All sections must be completed for your proposal to be considered.

Sections 1-4: Outline of overall research program and intended purpose and outcomes

This section must cover the overall scope and depth of the proposed research, including:

- A brief abstract of the research project.
- An outline of the proposed research project and outcomes. Highlight the importance of the proposed topic to the aims and mission of the Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre, and how it relates to the research priorities identified in 2.2 Proposal content guidelines.
- Key research topics and questions to be addressed – ensure your questions relate directly to the project purpose.
- Methodology – projects involving applied research can make use of either primary or secondary sources wherever possible. Where proposals include a bid to collect new survey data, a case should be made for the reasons why new data collections are desirable.
• Timeframe – outline a proposed and realistic timeline for the conduct of the project. This should include project milestones which can be reported against in progress reports. The timeframes for the projects will depend on the nature of the research proposed but should not exceed 12 months. Projects that can be delivered in shorter timeframes are welcome. In preparing their proposals, applicants should take into account any potential delays which may be required for ethics approvals.

• Deliverables – describe the proposed products and outputs intended from the project. These will normally include a research report but other materials or presentations are encouraged.

Section 5: Research experience and expertise

Proposals must provide names of individual researchers (including the Chief researcher) on the research team, with brief statements of their affiliations, research and analytical skills, their role on the project, and their suitability and availability to conduct the research proposed.

Research proposals must not duplicate existing or current research conducted by the applicant or others, although it can build on such research.

A brief resumé (limit one page per each individual) can be provided in an appendix.

A proposal submitted by a research team will only be considered if:

• a single point and lead contact for the research team is specified; and
• the proposal clearly specifies the details of all members of the research team.

Section 6-7: Project and risk management

Detail how project management processes will provide the necessary capacity to deliver a timely well-managed research program, including a statement of School/departmental support.

Detail the quality assurance processes that would be in place to ensure research is rigorous and timely. If the proposal is for a program that includes major quantitative components please identify what steps you will take to check the data.

A risk management plan should identify possible risks associated with the conduct of the research and preparation of outputs. Researchers should consider how other commitments will affect the conduct and completion of BCEC funded research.

Applicants should also consider how research teams propose to manage internal team arrangements to ensure communication, coordination, mentoring of new researchers, quality assurance and timeliness.

At a minimum, the risks associated with the following key areas must be identified, analysed and strategies detailed to mitigate impact on BCEC projects.

• The possible loss of key researchers (including proposed leave or secondment arrangements, other work commitments)
• Project management and coordination (especially important for research teams where members are spread across organisations/states)
• Adherence to timelines
Section 8: Budget

It is anticipated that the majority of grants will be for projects between $25,000 and $75,000, but other amounts may be considered. BCEC reserves the right to negotiate differing amounts with preferred applicants based on BCEC’s overall requirements.

Using the table provided in the template, the detailed budget items must cover:

- Research staff – indicate daily rate and number of days to be spent on the research project. Those stated as principal researchers should contribute a significant proportion of the time allocated to the research.

- BCEC staff – indicate (following discussions with the BCEC Director) if BCEC staff are to be included in the proposal, with an estimate of their (in-kind) costs based on the number of days they are expected to spend on the project *(this information can be provided by the BCEC Administrative Coordinator)*

- Clerical and other support staff – indicate daily rate and number of days to be spent on the BCEC research project.

- Specify any costs associated either with attendance at workshops or conferences, or with hosting a BCEC research workshop/event at Curtin.

- Specify any quality assurance costs (i.e. editing, proof reading reports). Note, if substantial editing is still required, BCEC will withhold funds to cover this expense.

- Specify any expected travel and accommodation costs to fund visits to Curtin by external project researchers.

- Data extraction / data gathering costs.

Funds cannot be used for the purchase of computers.

Curtin University has waived normal overhead costs for the BCEC and as an internal grant BCEC would expect a similar commitment from applicants.

The budget does not need to include costs for the production and printing associated with research reports.

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Appendix A - BCEC research priorities for 2014

1. Income, poverty and disadvantage
Research projects under this theme should examine the incidence, causes and effects of economic and social disadvantage in WA, or comparatively with the rest of Australia. Research methods should look not just at income-based measures of poverty, but at multidimensional aspects of poverty and disadvantage (eg. lack of access to services; marginalisation; social exclusion; community deprivation). This topic provides a counterpoint to the first BCEC Sharing The Boom report, with output ideally timed to coincide with Anti-Poverty Week.

- Which families and groups suffer most from poverty and disadvantage across the state or the nation, and what factors have contributed most to their poor economic or social situation?
- Where are our major concentrations of disadvantage? What are the implications for local service provision?
- What social or community support strategies offer the greatest potential to improve household wellbeing?
- What is the role for the not-for-profit sector? What opportunities exist for government, communities and businesses to improve the trajectories of the state’s most disadvantaged?

2. Housing markets and housing affordability
Research under this topic complements Bankwest’s Key Worker and First Home Buyers Affordability surveys by looking at how housing-related costs affect the lives of Australian families.

- What factors prevent the efficient functioning of housing markets, and the market’s capacity to provide affordable housing across the widest population?
- What are the major barriers to housing market entry, and how might those barriers be lowered?
- Do high housing costs affect employment, economic growth and skilled migration (overseas or inter-state)?
- What is the link between housing, health, disadvantage and (individual and community) wellbeing?

3. Employment, workforce dynamics and skilled migration
Despite population growth, skills shortages remain evident in resources-rich states such as Western Australia. This research theme will focus on labour market incentives, access to appropriate job opportunities, and the link between work and health. Research projects are also welcomed that take a regional perspective to labour market issues and challenges in the WA economy.

- How can the workforce needs of the WA economy be met with a changing industrial composition post-resources boom? What role will skilled migration continue to play?
- How do interactions in the Federal tax and welfare system discourage workforce retention?
- What actions by government and industry might reduce underemployment, under-participation and promote increased labour market utilization?
- Are there appropriate labour market opportunities for mature age workers?
- What work-related factors impact upon the quality of life for individuals and their families? Are there effective work or employment strategies to improve health and happiness?
4. **Promoting health and wellbeing**

Research projects are invited on any topics that can help us better assess the relationship between health conditions and economic or community participation. Projects are also invited that seek to explore the dynamics of health conditions in childhood and adolescence, and future health, social and economic outcomes.

- What barriers to economic participation currently exist for population groups with particular challenges from poor health or disability, and how might access to social and economic opportunities be improved for these groups?
- What role do working conditions play in driving good or poor health and life satisfaction? Is there evidence that current working patterns contribute to greater stress in the workplace?
- What is the relationship between work and wellbeing for people with caring responsibilities or health difficulties?

5. **The Costs of Doing Business in WA**

Research projects are requested that explore the regulatory burdens facing companies, and the impacts of tax and regulation on the activities of businesses across different scales and sectors.

- What are the major costs to firms doing business in different industrial sectors? What is a reasonable regulatory burden for firms to bear?
- Are there specific tax, policy or regulatory issues that affect WA companies to a greater extent than those in the rest of Australia?
- To what extent do taxes and regulations affect firms’ decisions and behaviours, their capacity to operate efficiently, and their contributions to growth, investment, regional labour markets, sustainable communities etc?
- What tax or regulatory issues particularly affect the establishment, growth or survival of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in WA/Australia?
- What health or social costs do small business owners face in sustaining their businesses, particularly in WA in a time of economic transition?

6. **Trade and economic development in Asia**

The economic sustainability of WA depends on the strength of our trading relationships with partners in Asia (including, but not limited to, China, Japan, Indonesia). Australia’s location (and WA’s location within Australia) highlights the importance of our trading relationships with other countries in the region. Research projects under this theme should address issues that affect current trading patterns with Asia, and opportunities for enhanced future trade and strengthened economic relationships with China, Japan and other countries in the Asia-Pacific and Indo-Pacific regions. Projects can look either bilaterally at trade between WA/Australia and a single country in the region, or consider trade with Asia multilaterally.

- How should we measure the strength of our trading relationships in a period of ever-increasing ‘Asianisation’?
- What role does international trade have to play in strengthening industrial sectors within the WA economy – including, but not limited to, the mining and resources sectors?
- What opportunities exist for international trade to support a diversification of the strengths in the WA economy?
BCEC research themes and issues