



Australian Government

**Fisheries Research and
Development Corporation**

Social Sciences Research Coordination Program (SSRCP)

Terms of Reference

Abbreviations

AFMA	Australian Fisheries Management Authority
AFMF	Australian Fisheries Management Forum
AMC	Australian Maritime College
BRS	Bureau of Rural Sciences
CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation
DAFF	Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Australia.
DEWHA	Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts
FRDC	Fisheries Research and Development Corporation
LWA	Land and Water Australia
NRM	Natural Resource Management
R&D	Research and Development
RIRDC	Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation
SC	Steering Committee
SSRCP	Social Sciences Research Coordination Program
TAFI	Tasmanian Aquaculture and Fisheries Institute
ToR	Terms of Reference
TRG	Technical Reference Group

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1.0 Introduction

The Social Sciences Research Co-ordination Program aims to increase understandings of the social aspects of the seafood and aquaculture industry. The management of seafood and aquaculture activities - commercial, recreational and indigenous - has profound implications for fishers, their families, and their associated communities. The charter of this program is to increase the quality, amount and coordination of research in this area to assist the improvement of effective management of issues affecting fishers and seafood and aquaculture. The further benefit that is envisaged is the facilitation and development of leadership, communication and the adaptation capacity within and across the different sectors of the seafood and aquaculture industry.

Understanding the implications of factors such as an ageing workforce, labour shortages, economic variability, climate change and other environmental and economic pressures, on decision making criteria made outside rational economic models, is essential to the effective management of Australia's fisheries. Social sciences research assists in defining:

- The nature and shape of both industry sectors and their dependent communities and therefore any potential strengths and weaknesses in the face of change;
- Decision making criteria of various individuals and industries;
- Target audiences and effective means for research and extension strategies;
- Adoption strategies of new technologies and management approaches;
- The means to increase industry adaptability to uncertainty by identifying; barriers to change; skills auditing; identifying effective 'up' and/or 're' skilling techniques.

For the purposes of this program, the industry encompasses the commercial, recreational and customary sectors, taking into account of the views of fishers, fisheries managers, the public, researchers, and special interest groups in all three seafood and aquaculture activity areas.

The seafood and aquaculture industry is defined broadly as including any industry or activity conducted in, or from, Australia including; taking; culturing; aquaculture; processing; preserving; storing; transporting; marketing; and the selling of fish or fish products.

The program acknowledges that its activities will be conducted in the context of external factors, beyond the control or influence of the industry or the FRDC, which may provide barriers to the successful fishery outcomes.

In summary, the program will focus on directing and coordinating social science research funded by FRDC, in a manner that is synergistic and, where possible, collaborative with other agencies and organisations, toward the priority issues for Australian fisheries. This will encompass the following seafood and aquaculture sectors and activities:

1. Commercial sector
 - commercial wild-catch
 - aquaculture
 - post-harvest (up to and including retailing)
 - Indigenous

2. Recreational sector
3. Customary sector

2.0 Program Objectives

This program is designed to address social science research and development needs, through complementing and integrating (where possible) with biological and economic research, to provide evidence and strategies to support seafood and aquaculture industry identified outcomes. Specifically the program seeks to increase and improve outcomes through; leverage off past research, and building synergies across all fisheries and NRM research sectors. In collaboration with other agencies, organisations and industry, the aim is to efficiently allocate FRDC social science research funds to achieve project outcomes with greater reach in their contribution to fisheries' sustainability.

The objectives of the program as stated in the Project Agreement are to:

1. Establish a social research co-ordination program to facilitate the leverage of effort between projects; assess the synergy of project proposals with both FRDC and other NRM research agency activities and optimise beneficial resource allocation and opportunities for all fishery activities.
2. Identify social research and development priorities affecting the wild harvest, aquaculture, post harvest, recreational and indigenous seafood and aquaculture sectors.
3. Address research needs arising from FRDC's existing programs and ensure the quality and relevance of proposed social research projects.
4. Coordinate and undertaken the communication of key social research priorities to the research community and research outcomes to fishers. And to;
5. Provide program management for social projects including evaluation, commissioning of projects, review and provision of advice on projects.

3.0 Program Terms of Reference

The program is tasked with:

1. Identifying the current socially effected or constructed issues impacting the sustainability and future of the seafood and aquaculture industry (commercial, recreational and customary) in Australia;
2. On the basis of the issues identified, identify the gaps existing in the current social sciences research being funded by FRDC and allied agencies and departments, and any related management areas (knowledge, skills etc);
3. Prioritisation of those issues in relation to the broadest benefit across commercial recreational and customary fisheries;
4. Based on the R&D priorities identified, develop a strategic plan for the funding of social sciences research. The plan will incorporate research objectives, scope, and strategies

- to achieve planned outcomes, with reference to past and current research funded by FRDC and other relevant agencies or departments, for approval by the Board;
5. Provide advice to the Board on research applications and their relevance to the Program's ToR, and recommend any necessary actions that may assist in the provision of social research for the Australian seafood and aquaculture industry;
 6. The Steering Committee will be responsible for ensuring that the strategic plan and high priority research projects are communicated to the industry, allied research agencies and industry departments, and the research community, utilising a communications strategy;
 7. The program will be responsible for ensuring an increase in the number of relevant and quality social sciences project proposals and outcomes.
 8. The Program Manager (Dr. Kate Brooks) will liaise with other FRDC (including People Development Committee, Economics Working Group, and Recfishing Working Group), industry and allied research programs (such as, but not limited to, SCRC, RIRDC, TAFI, SARDI, CSIRO, AMC), including State Fisheries research areas, to identify potential duplications, synergies and collaborative opportunities.
 9. The program will assist in the management of and provide guidance to social science research projects and assist in the dissemination of outputs.

4.0 Steering Committee

The Steering Committee will be comprised of a maximum of eight members, including the Chairperson and Program Manager.

- The remaining members of the Steering Committee will be selected on the basis of their expression of interest and combined experience across the scope of Australian seafood and aquaculture activities;
- Due to the level of importance represented by the Commercial seafood and aquaculture sector, AFMF is asked to nominate a member for the Committee. The objective is to provide a connection between AFMF and the SSRCP.
- Calls are made for expressions of interest for the remaining members of the Steering Committee, seeking expertise across the areas of;
 - Aquaculture Industry
 - Commercial (including Indigenous) fisheries
 - Recreational fishing and recreational fishing research; and
 - Industry management
- The Program Manager is responsible for making recommendations to the FRDC for review and approval, in regard to the Steering Committee members.
- The Steering Committee will meet twice a year (at least one meeting of which will be face to face at a location most convenient to all participating members), with the task of meeting the Terms of Reference of the Steering Committee and the Program. In regard to the technical aspects of the social science research conducted, or

applications received, the Steering Committee will take guidance from the Technical Reference Group.

- Members of the Steering Committee will be appointed for a minimum period of one year and a maximum of three years, subject to FRDC Board approval.

4.1 Steering Committee Terms of Reference

The terms of reference for the Steering Committee are derived from the Program Terms of Reference and are:

1. To identify and prioritise the current social* issues that are currently not, or only minimally, understood and which are impacting the sustainability and future of the seafood and aquaculture industry (commercial, recreational and indigenous) in Australia; (*created by or resulting from internal or external industry factors)
2. Based on the R&D priorities identified, develop a strategic plan for the development of social sciences research and FRDC's funding expectations. The plan will incorporate research objectives, scope, and strategies to achieve planned outcomes.
3. The strategic plan and its review is to be developed with input from and collaboration with other agencies and departments with an interest in NRM social science research, to ensure synergistic and complementary, if not collaborative, approaches. This will be subject to approval by the FRDC Board;
4. Provide advice to the FRDC Board on research applications and their relevance to the Program's Strategic Plan, and recommends any necessary actions that may assist in the provision of social research for the Australian seafood and aquaculture industry.
5. The Steering Committee will be responsible for ensuring that the strategic plan and high priority research projects and other activities are communicated to the industry, allied research agencies and industry departments, and the research community, utilising a communications strategy.
6. The Program evaluation will be through;
 - i) The effective implementation of the Board approved Strategic Plan and its identified activities to address the social science research priorities for fisheries in Australia.
 - ii) A demonstrated implementation of social research in the management of fisheries over the life of the program (three years), in the use of social standards and/or indicators that may be used to improve policy development and implementation.
 - iii) An increase in the common use of networks (social capital) and collaboration between aquatic sectors, fishers and the research community, with the result of greater relevance, communication, understanding and uptake of research.

5.0 Technical Reference Group

The Technical Reference Group (TRG) will be comprised of a maximum of five members, including the Program Manager.

- The remaining members of the Technical Reference Group will be selected on the basis of their expression of interest and combined experience in social sciences research across the scope of Australian seafood and aquaculture activity, with a focus not only on commercial, but also recreational and indigenous activities;
- Calls for expressions of interest are made for members of the Technical Reference Group, seeking *social sciences research* expertise in the area of natural resource management generally and fishing specifically, from a range of sources including;
 - Industry research bodies (such as Recfish Research Australia)
 - Other Research and Development Corporations
 - Marine research agencies
 - Universities
 - Government Research Agencies
- The Program Manager is responsible for making recommendations to the FRDC for review and approval, in regard to the members of the Technical Reference Group.
- The TRG will meet twice a year (at least one meeting of which will be face to face at a location most convenient to all participating members), with the task of meeting the Terms of Reference for the TRG, which follows.
- Members of the TRG will be appointed subject to FRDC Board approval, for a period of one year with the option to re-stand should the TRG continue, and subject to the continued approval of the FRDC Board.

5.1 Technical Reference Group Terms of Reference

While the program is proposed as having a three year term, the Technical Reference Group will be appointed for an initial period of one year, to provide technical direction and support to the Steering Committee. The continuation of the TRG will be subject to a review of its success in relation to its Terms of Reference. The Group is tasked with:

1. From the issues and priorities identified by the Steering Committee, the Technical Reference Group, will be responsible for;
 - Identifying and recommending actions in regard to synergies and opportunities to cross fertilise from other social science research, and related FRDC biological and economic research programs and activities;
 - Making appropriate recommendations in regard to strategic research options to the Steering Committee for consideration in the development of the Strategic Plan.
2. Review of research proposals to provide recommendations to the Steering Committee in regard to;
 - Guidance or recommendation about methods for the collection of data or project scopes, for dissemination to the research community thereby assisting in the generation of relevant research applications;
 - Advice on ethical issues and possible strategies to deal with them.
 - The value and benefits or possible improvements to “Extensions and Outputs” of research proposals.
3. Provide technical expertise and management advice to the Steering Committee on project research strategies and methods to address specific identified issues, and ensure that needs are being met;
4. Assist the Program Manager where required:
 - In the management and provision of guidance of social science research projects; and
 - In the dissemination of outputs.
5. To review project milestone reports, and make recommendations.
6. The performance of the Technical Reference Group will be evaluated by the Steering Committee, which will assess the timely and relevant provision of advice in regard to;
 - Technical aspects of the Program’s Strategic Plan;
 - Project Pre proposals and proposals;
 - Extension methods of the Programs Projects
 - Program research communications and networks.

6.0 Code of Conduct for the Steering Committee & Technical Reference Group.

Members of the SSRCP Steering Committee and Technical Reference Group are expected to adhere to the highest ethical standards and to ensure that these standards permeate the program. Committee and Group Members have the responsibility to ensure that the Program's activities are achievable and contribute to positive and tangible, on the ground outcomes for sustainable fisheries. To do this, they must strike a balance between short and long term as well as between the social focus of this program and economic and environmental outcomes for fisheries.

Committee and Group Members of the SSRCP undertake:

1. To act honestly, in good faith and in the best interests of the Program.
2. To use care and diligence in fulfilling the duties required of them as members of the Program.
3. Not to take improper advantage of their position in the Program or attempt to improperly influence other members.
4. To make decisions in the best interest of the Program, ahead of their own personal or professional/business interest, or in the interests of their employer. Please refer to "Conflict of Interest" (7.0 in this document)
5. The obligation to be independent in judgement and actions and take all reasonable steps to be satisfied as to the soundness of all decisions of the Program.
6. Not to disclose confidential information received in the course of the Program activities, or make public statements, unless otherwise authorised by the FRDC or the Program Manager (this includes former Program members).
7. To attend all meetings of the Program unless there is a reasonable excuse for failure to attend a particular meeting or meetings. Where attendance is not possible, members will notify the Chairperson in advance. No substitutes or proxies will be accepted. A leave of absence may be requested of the Program in advance if the member reasonably believes they will miss two consecutive meetings.
8. The continuing obligation to keep informed about the activities of industry research
9. To treat all other program members with professionalism, courtesy and respect. To work cooperatively with fellow members towards agreed goals and to achieve consensus within the Program through open, frank and friendly discussion, and will treat all meeting discussions under 'Chatham House' rules. If the final position is a majority decision - that will be the decision of the Program; all members (including dissenting members) are then obligated to support the majority decision. A dissenting member may have his/her vote recorded in the minutes upon request.
10. (Not withstanding Point 9) The Steering Committee Chairperson will retain the right to vote and make a casting vote.
11. To disclose any conflict of interest with the activities or subject of discussions of the Program on joining (see attached Register of Conflict of Interest), and as appropriate during the work of the Program. If a situation or potential "conflict of Interest" should arise, the member concerned will discuss the matter with the Chairperson (or Program Manager) and will withdraw if requested while the Committee discusses the potential conflict. If it is decided that a conflict does exist, then depending on the assessed

significance, the member involved will be requested to take one of the following actions (in order of increasing significance)

- a. Refrain from voting on a relevant matter during a Committee meeting;
- b. Withdraw from discussion of relevant matter(s) during a meeting;
- c. Take a leave of absence from the program for a period; or
- d. Resign from the Program.
- e.

7.0 Conflict of Interest

The purpose of this section is to provide guidance to Steering Committee (Committee) and TRG (Group) Members as to what would constitute a conflict of interest in their participation on the FRDC's Social Sciences Research Coordination Program (SSRCP).

It is required that Program Committee and Group Members must, subject to some limited exceptions, give the other Members notice of a "material personal interest" in a matter that relates to the affairs of the FRDC's SSRCP.

Importantly, where a Member has a "material personal interest" in a matter that relates to projects or issues considered by the Program, in addition to the duty to disclose that interest, the Member must not be present while the Committee or Group is discussing that matter and, importantly, must not vote on the matter unless one of a number of specific exceptions applies.

Members are appointed on the basis of their expertise and for the purpose of obtaining an appropriate balance of expertise in as many as possible of the fields of the seafood and aquaculture industry.

A Member's connection with any particular organisation or interest group will not necessarily be a material personal interest in the affairs of the FRDC.

The FRDC encourages FRABs, subprograms and other committees that provide the FRDC with advice, to adopt this policy.

Definitions

Material personal interest is not defined in the CAC Act 1997 or the Corporations Act 2001 (Cth)

Case law suggests that an interest that does not give rise to a "real sensible possibility of conflict" would not be a material personal interest. The interest would need to be materially affected by the outcome of the board's deliberations, and the duties to disclose and not participate in deliberations would be limited to a matter that is, or might reasonably be expected to be, brought before the board for its consideration.

The types of interests that a Member of the program would generally (other than some specific exceptions) have a duty to disclose, and in relation to which a Member should not participate in Program deliberations, include:

- (a) any contract or proposed contract in relation to which the Member either directly or indirectly might receive a benefit;

- (b) any office held by a Member in any entity that would be reasonably expected to have dealings, directly or indirectly, with the FRDC;
- (c) any pecuniary interests (such as holding shares) in entities that have dealings, directly or indirectly, with the FRDC; and
- (d) an interest in property that might be affected by any decision of the Program.

Depending on the circumstances, a Member is also required to disclose non-financial interests (such as having assisted in preparing an application that the directors are to consider for FRDC funding).

The following are examples that provide a guide to the application of this policy, but in practice will depend on the particular circumstances:

- A Member would usually be expected to disclose if he/she, or a member of that member's immediate family is an employee of a company or research agency and an R&D application from the organisation was being evaluated by the board.
- A Member would usually be expected to disclose that he/she, or any organisation to which the Member is associated, is a shareholder of an organisation that holds a licence to fish in a fishery in which management changes (to either the organisation's benefit or detriment) could result from FRDC funded R&D.
- A Member would usually be expected to disclose that he/she, or his/her immediate family, or any organisation to which the Member is associated is a member of an organisation such as an industry association or research agency that has had a strong involvement in the development of an application that, if approved, could benefit the organisation or a member of the organisation.
- A Member would usually be expected to disclose that his/her immediate family, or any organisation to which the director is associated is directly associated with a fishery's research, policy, management and/or other related agency, the operation of which could be affected by the board's decision on an application; or may have close personal ties with an applicant.

Policy

A Member who considers that he/she may have a material personal interest in a matter to be discussed by the Program ("conflicted Member") will:

- (1) as soon as practicable after the Member becomes aware of his/her interest in the matter give details of the nature and extent of that interest, and the relationship of the interest to the FRDC, either in a "standing notice" or at a meeting of the Program; and
- (2) before any discussion takes place on that matter, leave the meeting while that matter is discussed

The Chair may raise with any of the remaining Members any issue that has come to the Chair's attention, and may request the Program Manager to raise any issue that has come to the Manager's attention, that might suggest that a remaining Member ("affected member") has an actual or perceived material personal interest in a matter to be discussed by the Program, and the Chair will invite the affected Member to respond;

If the affected Member confirms that he/she has a material personal interest, they will leave the meeting while that matter is discussed. If the affected Member maintains the he/she does not have a material personal interest, they may choose to leave or remain in the

meeting while that matter is discussed, and the remaining Members (including the affected Member if he chooses to remain) may vote on whether discussion on that matter should be postponed;

In the absence of the conflicted Member(s), the remaining Members will discuss the nature of each of the declared interests and whether to:

- pass a resolution inviting a conflicted Member back to the meeting on the basis that those Members are satisfied that the interest should not disqualify the conflicted Member from voting or being present
- invite a conflicted Member back to the meeting to answer Committee/Group queries
- not invite a conflicted Member back to the meeting while that matter is discussed.

The Chair may seek legal advice at any time in relation to any issue arising from a Member's perceived or actual material personal interest in a matter.

In deciding whether to invite a conflicted Member back to the meeting to answer Committee/Group queries, the remaining Member's will take into account the unique expertise the Member would be able to provide. The remaining Members, in querying a conflicted Member, will ensure that the Member is not able to influence the Committee/Group in making its decision. If the remaining Members choose to invite a conflicted Member back to answer queries, the conflicted Member will leave the meeting immediately after answering those queries.

The remaining Members will discuss the matter, and make its decision in the absence of the conflicted director(s).

All Members are subject to the same conflict-of-interests requirements.

Any Member, in relation to any matter, may:

- request that her/his concerns are recorded in the minutes of the meeting
- request that the Committee/Group pass a resolution allowing the Member to participate
- inform the Chair that she/he intends to inform the FRDC CEO of the Committee/Group's decision

A standing notice about Member's interests will be updated at each board meeting. All declarations of interests, and their consideration by the Steering Committee, will be recorded in the minutes.

Exceptions from disclosure requirement

A Member does not have to disclose a material personal interest where:

1. the interest is in a contract, or proposed contract, with, or for the benefit of, or on behalf of, a subsidiary of the FRDC and the Member's interest arises merely because the Member is a director/employee of the subsidiary;
2. all the following conditions are satisfied:
 - a. the Member has already given notice of the nature and extent of the interest and its relation to the affairs of the Program;
 - b. if a person who was not a Member of the Program at the time when the notice was given is appointed as a SSRCP Program Member—the notice is

- given to that person; and
 - c. the nature or extent of the interest has not materially increased above that disclosed in the notice; or
3. the Member has given a standing notice of the nature and extent of the interest and the notice is still effective in relation to the interest.

8.0 Matters reserved for the FRDC Board

The following matters are reserved for FRDC Board approval and sign off.

1. Approval of strategy, program plans and objectives and monitoring of performance against them.
2. Program Appointments of all positions
3. Monitoring of performance of program management staff
4. Appointment of the terms of reference of the Program
5. Delegation of Authority to the Program Manager when appropriate
6. Remuneration of the Program Manager
7. Code of conduct for the Program