

Research Advisory Committee (RAC) management procedure



FRDC

General Manager's authorisation:


Crispian Ashby (Dec 13, 2021 06:50 GMT+11)

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	PURPOSE	3
2.	RESPONSIBILITY.....	3
3.	DEFINITIONS AND ACRONYMS	3
4.	RISK ASSESSMENT	3
5.	RELEVANT DOCUMENTATION	3
6.	PUBLICATION	4
7.	ACTIONS.....	4
	7.1 Composition of RAC membership	4
	7.2 Member application process.....	4
	7.3 Term of appointment	5
	7.4 RAC meeting attendance.....	5
	7.5 RAC meeting observers	6
	7.6 Induction.....	6
	7.7 Code of Conduct.....	6
	7.8 Member's interest.....	6
	7.9 Sitting fees	6
	7.10 Reimbursement of sitting fees and/or costs.....	7
	7.11 Retirement during the term of office.....	7
8.	ROLE OF THE RESEARCH ADVISORY COMMITTEE	7
9.	ROLE OF THE RAC CHAIR.....	7
10.	RAC MANAGEMENT	8
11.	MEETINGS	8
	11.1 Meeting documentation	9
12.	COLLABORATION	9

Doc ID NEMO-17443-167	Version: 4.3	https://frdc1.sharepoint.com/teams/StrategicManagement/Procedure Working Documents/RAC Management Procedure.docx	15:34:30	10-Dec-21	Page 1 of 14
--------------------------	-----------------	---	----------	-----------	--------------

13.	FRDC INVESTMENT LIFE CYCLE	9
14.	PRIORITY SETTING.....	11
15.	EXTENSION AND ADOPTION	11
16.	ACTIVITIES NOT FUNDED BY THE FRDC	12
	ATTACHMENT: FRDC Committee Member’s Code of Conduct.....	14

Doc ID NEMO-17443-167	Version: 4.3	https://frdc1.sharepoint.com/teams/StrategicManagement/Procedure Working Documents/RAC Management Procedure.docx	15:34:30	10-Dec-21	Page 2 of 14
--------------------------	-----------------	---	----------	-----------	--------------

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this procedure is to outline the:

- Roles of the RACs
- Governance arrangements for the RACs
- RAC management processes

2. RESPONSIBILITY

Responsibility for this procedure resides with the Research and Investment business unit.

3. DEFINITIONS AND ACRONYMS

Definitions – follow link to [Definitions](#)

Acronyms – follow link to [Acronyms and Abbreviations](#)

4. RISK ASSESSMENT

Risk	Uninformed priority setting						
Source of risk				Impact/consequence			
RAC members and FRDC employees not following procedures, inappropriate mix of skills and experience on the Committee, FRDC does not provide enough support resources				Financial loss, opportunity costs, reputational damage, not investing in agreed high priorities for a jurisdiction			
Risk category	Operational			Mitigated risk within risk appetite statement?			
Inherent likelihood	Likely	Inherent Consequence	Medium	Inherent Risk Evaluation	High	Velocity rating	Medium
Control	Induction of new RAC members and Chairs, stringent selection and evaluation criteria for new RAC members, FRDC has allocated dedicated resources to support, manage and oversee Committee activities						
Mitigated likelihood	Unlikely	Mitigated Consequence	Low	Mitigated Residual Risk	Low	Residual risk evaluation action	No major concern

5. RELEVANT DOCUMENTATION

Primary policy
Investment in Research, Development and Extension (RD&E) Policy
Relevant documentation
Internal
Confidentiality agreement
Applying for funding

Doc ID NEMO-17443-167	Version: 4.3	https://frdc1.sharepoint.com/teams/StrategicManagement/Procedure Working Documents/RAC Management Procedure.docx	15:34:30	10-Dec-21	Page 3 of 14
--------------------------	-----------------	--	----------	-----------	--------------

Relevant documentation
Application pre evaluation procedure
Application evaluation procedure
Application post evaluation procedure
Project management procedure
Intellectual property management policy
External
FRDC's Research and Development Plan 2020-2025
How to apply for funding
Fishnet

6. PUBLICATION

This procedure is to be made available on the FRDC website.

This procedure is to be made available on the directors' site.

7. ACTIONS

A network of eight Research Advisory Committees (RACs) representing the jurisdictions of each State, the Commonwealth, and the Northern Territory support the delivery of the FRDC's R&D Plan 2020-2025 by providing advice to the FRDC on priorities and investment needs relevant to public good and for sectors not covered under Industry Partnership Agreements (IPAs).

The FRDC considers that the RACs are accountable to the Director of Fisheries and the peak representative industry bodies within the jurisdictions.

7.1 Composition of RAC membership

RAC membership will include a mix of representation and expertise from areas that cover the broader fishing and aquaculture community, providing the committees with the necessary situational awareness within the relevant jurisdictions.

Independent Chairs will lead the RAC meetings. The FRDC will appoint a small number of common Chairs that will preside over two to three RACs each.

Whilst there is no cap on the number of members that a RAC can have, numbers should, where possible, be kept at manageable levels; ideally 6 to 8 members plus the Chair.

The FRDC provides administrative support for each RAC.

7.2 Member application process

The FRDC calls for applications for RAC membership and the positions of Chair using its communication platforms and stakeholder networks.

Doc ID NEMO-17443-167	Version: 4.3	https://frdc1.sharepoint.com/teams/StrategicManagement/Procedure Working Documents/RAC Management Procedure.docx	15:34:30	10-Dec-21	Page 4 of 14
--------------------------	-----------------	---	----------	-----------	--------------

Favourable consideration is given to applicants whose participation in the RAC will provide them with development opportunities (e.g. graduates from FRDC leadership programs).

Upon receipt of the RAC membership applications, the FRDC Management collates the applications and provides an assessment based on an alignment with the stated application criteria. This will consider the ability to link with stakeholders to derive research priorities, and ability to represent sectors or stakeholders without bias. A recommendation for membership is then made to the selection panel.

The selection panel will meet to assess the recommendations and appoint members to ensure that the composition of the RAC represents and meets the needs of the jurisdiction. The selection panel is, at a minimum, the Director of Fisheries of the relevant jurisdiction, or their nominee, and a representative from the FRDC, normally the Managing Director. The Director of Fisheries and the FRDC Managing Director may agree for the panel to be expanded to include an independent observer or representatives from peak bodies within the jurisdiction.

Successful applicants are notified, in writing, by the FRDC to confirm their appointments.

Unsuccessful applicants are notified, in writing by the FRDC, of the outcome of their application. Unsuccessful applicants are welcome to request feedback from the FRDC regarding the decision made by the selection panel. The selection of the RAC Chair and its members, however, lies with the selection panel and its decisions are final.

7.3 Term of appointment

A RAC member:

- (a) is appointed with effect from the day specified in the instrument of appointment
- (b) holds office for such term (not exceeding 2 years unless agreed by the Managing Director) as is specified in the instrument of appointment but is eligible for re-appointment at the discretion of the selection panel.

The RAC Chair:

- (a) is appointed with effect from the day specified in the instrument of appointment
- (b) holds office for such term (not exceeding 3 years unless agreed by the Managing Director) as is specified in the instrument of appointment but is eligible for re-appointment at the discretion of the selection panel.

7.4 RAC meeting attendance

If a RAC member is unable to attend a meeting they are expected to contact the Chair and FRDC at their earliest convenience. If a RAC member is unable to attend, the FRDC may seek comments from the RAC member regarding the meeting agenda ahead of time, to ensure that the absent RAC member is able to contribute to the meeting. If a RAC member is unable to attend more than two consecutive meetings, the Chair and FRDC will assess the suitability of the member to continue their role on the RAC.

Doc ID NEMO-17443-167	Version: 4.3	https://frdc1.sharepoint.com/teams/StrategicManagement/Procedure Working Documents/RAC Management Procedure.docx	15:34:30	10-Dec-21	Page 5 of 14
--------------------------	-----------------	---	----------	-----------	--------------

7.5 RAC meeting observers

Observers are welcome to attend RAC meetings. Attendance is considered on a case-by-case basis and is at the discretion of the FRDC in consultation with the RAC Chair. FRDC should ensure that the number of observers at any given meeting does not increase the numbers of those in attendance at the meeting past unmanageable levels (ideally no more than 10 individuals at the meeting in total).

Observer attendance is contingent on the Observer:

- Signing the FRDC Confidentiality Agreement prior to attending
- Not obstructing RAC members from providing input in the meeting
- Adhering to all directions from the RAC Chair

Observers are not entitled to claim sitting fees or expenses for attending meetings.

7.6 Induction

The FRDC conducts an induction process for all new RAC members and Chairs aimed at building their understanding of the FRDC, its operating environment, and the roles and responsibilities of the RACs. They are inducted prior to or at their first RAC meeting.

7.7 Code of Conduct

RAC members are required to sign the FRDC committee member's Code of Conduct prior to taking up their duties (see Attachment). Observers will be required to sign the FRDC's Confidentiality Agreement in lieu of the Code of Conduct.

RAC members found to be in breach of the Code of Conduct will be asked to justify why they should not be removed from the RAC; and failing an acceptable explanation, will be removed by the FRDC. A replacement RAC member may be sought particularly if the removal of the RAC member results in the loss of expertise. Applications for new RAC members will follow the process outlined above.

7.8 Member's interest

Potential issues arising from conflicts of interest have been addressed by removing the requirement for applications to be assessed by the RAC. Alternatively, members may nominate/be identified as an external reviewer of applications (where appropriate). The external review process (as per the Application Evaluation Procedure) is run independently of the RAC process. Once applications are received potential conflicts of interest will be considered by FRDC management prior to sending out the application for external review.

7.9 Sitting fees

The FRDC pays a pre-determined sitting fee (\$800 per day, as of 1/5/21) to the RAC Chair. Committee members will be paid a pre-determined sitting fee (\$500 per day, as of 1/5/21) (unless they are a government or university employee without a separate ABN) for participation at RAC Meetings and any other RAC related duties as directed and authorised by the FRDC (e.g. attendance at the Annual Stakeholder Workshop). Where required, RAC

Doc ID NEMO-17443-167	Version: 4.3	https://frdc1.sharepoint.com/teams/StrategicManagement/Procedure Working Documents/RAC Management Procedure.docx	15:34:30	10-Dec-21	Page 6 of 14
--------------------------	-----------------	---	----------	-----------	--------------

members (including the Chair) are reimbursed reasonable travel costs related to attending meetings. Observers are not entitled to claim sitting fees or expenses for attending meetings.

7.10 Reimbursement of sitting fees and/or costs

RAC Chairs and members to request reimbursement of sitting fees and/or costs using the FRDC expense claim form. Requests for reimbursement should be received by FRDC no later than 4 weeks after the meeting has been held. Claims should be sent to frdc.programs@frdc.com.au for processing.

7.11 Retirement during the term of office

RAC Chairs or members may retire by providing written advice to the FRDC. A new member may be appointed if the retirement results in an expertise gap. In the case of a RAC Chair the FRDC will appoint an interim Chair. Selecting a new Chair or member will follow the Member's application process outlined in 7.2.1 above.

8. ROLE OF THE RESEARCH ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The role of the RAC includes:

- Being responsive to the RD&E needs of stakeholders within each jurisdiction and being conscious of any changing circumstances
- Identifying RD&E priorities that will result in investments achieving positive impacts for beneficiaries aligned with the FRDC's R&D Plan 2020-2025
- Synthesising and aggregating priorities where commonalities among stakeholders occur
- Consideration of effective extension and adoption and impact planning principles, as part of the priority setting process
- Promoting collaboration within and among stakeholder groups and across jurisdictions
- Aid in identifying potential external technical reviewers of applications – this may include RAC members with suitable expertise (where there are no conflicts of interest)
- Communicating on RAC activities regularly through existing networks and communication channels
- Assist in monitoring invested activities to aid in the delivery of outputs to end users

9. ROLE OF THE RAC CHAIR

The role of the RAC Chair includes:

- Representing the RACs to stakeholders
- Providing strategic overview across multiple RACs
- Leading RAC meetings such that logical and understandable outcomes are achieved and summarised
- Direct committee discussions to effectively use the time available to identify and prioritise the critical issues facing the jurisdiction
- Act as a facilitator at RAC meetings to ensure that all members can contribute to discussion, that appropriate discussion takes place and that relevant opinion among members is forthcoming

Doc ID NEMO-17443-167	Version: 4.3	https://frdc1.sharepoint.com/teams/StrategicManagement/Procedure Working Documents/RAC Management Procedure.docx	15:34:30	10-Dec-21	Page 7 of 14
--------------------------	-----------------	---	----------	-----------	--------------

- Lead the committee in meeting its roles including:
 - Ensuring that R&D priorities are clearly established, that strategies are in place for engagement relevant networks of stakeholders, and satisfy itself that the committee is achieving its role
 - Foster a corporate culture that matches the FRDC’s values and strategies
 - Ensure the committee adheres to high standards of ethics and corporate behaviour, including maintaining the Code of Conduct
- Promoting the alignment of priorities among RACs, including regularly engaging with the other Chairs of the RACs as facilitated by FRDC
- Attending the Annual FRDC Stakeholder Workshop
- Resolving potential issues arising from the interests of members
- Reviewing meeting papers prior to distribution to the RAC members

10. RAC MANAGEMENT

The role of the FRDC include:

- Provides management and administration services for each RAC (including organising meetings, preparation of meeting papers, booking of travel, financial administration, maintaining electronic files)
- Provide clear advice on FRDC roadmaps and related national priorities as well as relevant initiatives
- Assisting in developing priorities with the RAC and its stakeholders, highlighting alignment of priorities among RACs, where relevant
- Conducting the call for applications that address priorities identified by RACs
- Disseminating information among the FRDC’s consultative structures and managing potential overlap, share costs and aid collaboration among RACs, IPAs and Co-ordination programs
- Undertaking general investment management duties (i.e. external review of applications, review of milestone reports, extension and communication)
- Provide outputs of investment to RACs as progress updates or consideration of extension opportunities
- Provides updates on decisions made outside of RAC processes
- Provide a timetable of RAC meetings on the FRDC website
- Convenes an Annual Stakeholder workshop to develop priorities and linkages as well as collaborative opportunities for the coming financial year
- On an as needs basis, commissions an independent review of RACs, focusing on the performance, structure, outcomes and support network of the RACs
- Provides Information and Communications Technology (ICT) systems in support of the RACs

11. MEETINGS

The RACs convene a minimum of two meetings per year among the RAC membership. In addition, opportunities will be developed for multiple RACs to convene joint meetings throughout the year.

Doc ID NEMO-17443-167	Version: 4.3	https://frdc1.sharepoint.com/teams/StrategicManagement/Procedure Working Documents/RAC Management Procedure.docx	15:34:30	10-Dec-21	Page 8 of 14
--------------------------	-----------------	---	----------	-----------	--------------

At each meeting, the RAC should undertake a situational scan of the jurisdiction to identify strategic and tactical areas of RD&E need. Priorities may be developed in consultation with relevant stakeholders in the jurisdiction or other advisory groups. RAC members may also share potential priorities identified through consultation with their networks. The FRDC may also highlight priority areas relevant to the jurisdiction or priorities provided by stakeholders directly to the FRDC.

RAC meetings are conducted either face to face or via video conference, depending on the nature of the proposed meeting agenda and/or availability of RAC members. Meeting formats will be decided by the FRDC in consultation with the RAC Chair. As required, the RAC may be engaged out of session to address pressing needs of the jurisdiction.

11.1 Meeting documentation

All relevant documents to both upcoming and previous RAC meetings (e.g. agendas) to be sent to members and archived in FRDC’s SharePoint system. FRDC will distribute meeting papers as outlined below:

- FRDC to email an agenda and any meeting papers to members for each meeting two weeks prior to the meeting date
- Meeting outputs to be disseminated by FRDC two weeks after the meeting

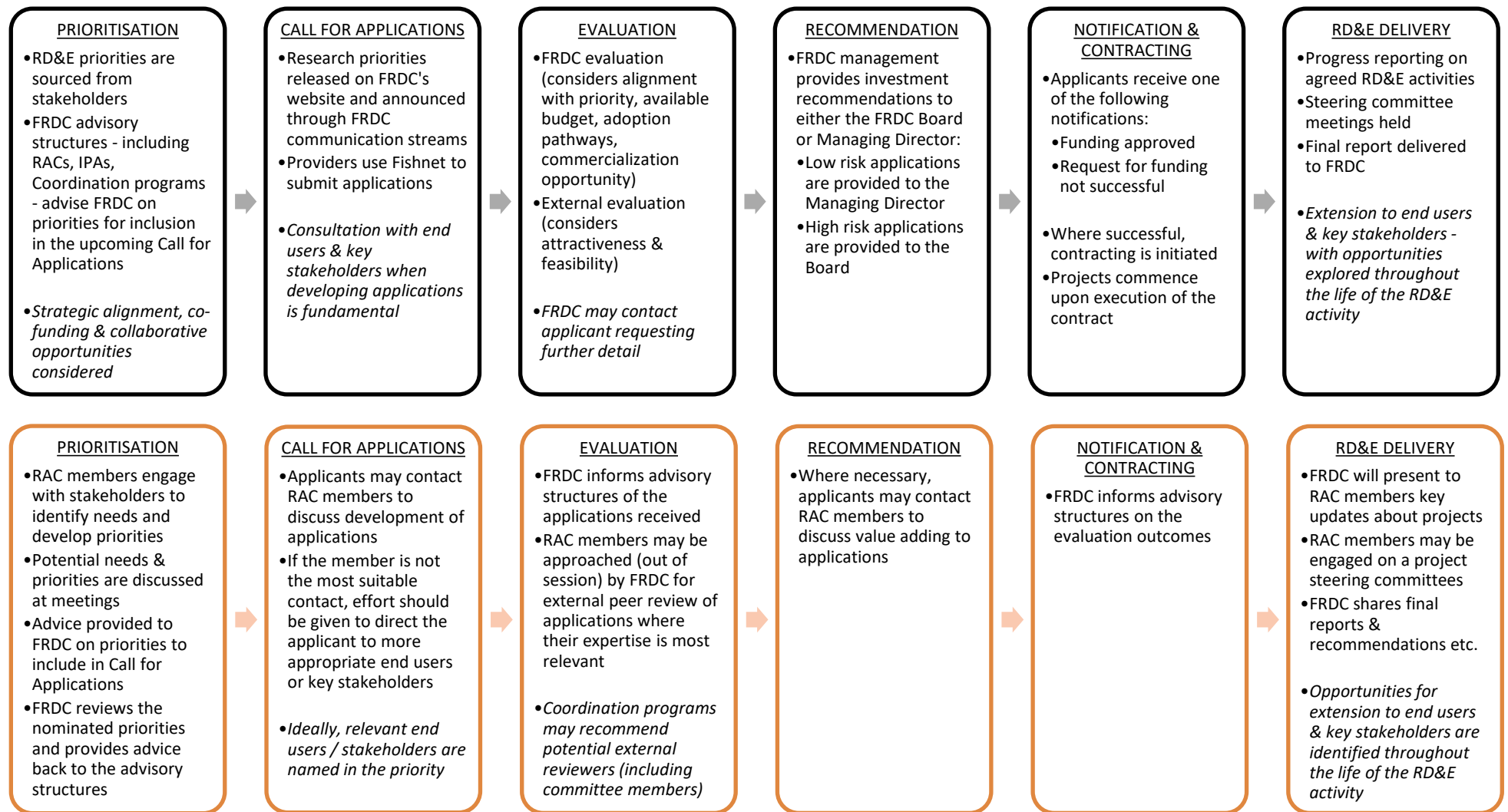
12. COLLABORATION

Collaboration provides the opportunity to identify and address shared priorities across common areas of interest, promote RD&E execution efficiency and facilitates broader extension of RD&E outputs. Therefore, RACs are to be mindful of collaborative opportunities among other jurisdictional RACs, IPAs, coordination programs and external stakeholders. The Annual Stakeholder Workshop provides a forum to promote collaboration. Where relevant FRDC will also highlight collaborative opportunities pertinent to the RAC.

13. FRDC INVESTMENT LIFE CYCLE

The schematic below outlines how the RAC process (orange text boxes) aligns and inputs into the FRDC’s annual planning and investment cycle (black text boxes).

Doc ID NEMO-17443-167	Version: 4.3	https://frdc1.sharepoint.com/teams/StrategicManagement/Procedure Working Documents/RAC Management Procedure.docx	15:34:30	10-Dec-21	Page 9 of 14
--------------------------	-----------------	---	----------	-----------	--------------



14. PRIORITY SETTING

RACs will be integral to linking priorities and subsequent proposed activities to end users and beneficiaries, ensuring investment delivers impact. RACs will consider the suite of priorities developed through the meeting process as well as those identified through strategic workshops, regional assessment groups (RAGs), and via the FRDC.

Priorities will be drafted using the FRDC Priority Template:

Title	<Descriptive priority heading>
Need	<Outline succinctly or in dot point form the opportunity or need to be addressed through RD&E investment>
Deliverables	<Outline planned outcomes that could result from the outputs generated by the activity. Where possible, define optimal methods of delivery>
Timing	<Define the expected duration of the activity, if known> <Outline the closing date for submissions>
End user	<Outline the end users of the RD&E outputs. This could be an individual or a group>
Jurisdictions	<Jurisdictions/sectors that are requesting the application>
FRDC Outcome(s)	<Alignment with the Outcome(s) from the FRDC R&D Plan 2020-2025>
Other	<Any other supporting information>

Priorities identified by RACs during their meeting will be amalgamated, reviewed, and published by the FRDC and the advisory structures on FRDC's website and in FishNet, as a basis for seeking proposed solutions (calls for applications).

The RAC may also recommend an external review of a request for funding linked to a specific priority, including a RAC member (where appropriate).

Where the priority is considered quite technical, with limited appropriate applicants, FRDC management may progress a tender approach. If a tender approach is being used, the call format can still be used, but more specific information relating to the requirements associated with the body of work to be undertaken is provided.

15. EXTENSION AND ADOPTION

Effective extension that leads to adoption of research and development is critical to achieve impact with investments. RACs have an important role to identify where and when extension is required and to ensure that it is effective by:

- Identifying likely end users and beneficiaries of R&D priorities, and where possible, their motivations and issues
- Identifying possible extension strategies or expertise requirements for specific priorities
- Prioritising the need for specific extension projects where:
 - there is existing knowledge that meets the needs of end users; or

Doc ID NEMO-17443-167	Version: 4.3	https://frdc1.sharepoint.com/teams/StrategicManagement/Procedure Working Documents/RAC Management Procedure.docx	15:34:30	10-Dec-21	Page 11 of 14
--------------------------	-----------------	---	----------	-----------	---------------

- where there is an identified strategic challenge that requires behavior change (e.g. animal welfare, safety, bycatch)

16. ACTIVITIES NOT FUNDED BY THE FRDC

When developing priorities, the RAC needs to be mindful that any resultant investment is likely to be consistent with the business and the environment in which the FRDC operates. The following activities have been deemed by the FRDC board as inappropriate for FRDC investment:

Activity not funded by the FRDC	Comment
Agri-political activity	The FRDC will not invest in agri-political activity. The FRDC believes that this type of activity is more appropriately undertaken by industry. It may invest in tools for assisting industry with promotion activities.
Fisheries restocking	The FRDC will not invest in fisheries re-stocking. The FRDC may invest in the RD&E components of fish re-stocking related projects providing those components meet the basic requirements of RD&E in terms of being innovative and resulting in new knowledge, processes and technology.
Fishery or enterprise level certification	The FRDC will not invest in the direct costs of fisheries certification for individual fisheries or enterprises to gain quality or environmental certification [e.g. Marine Stewardship Council (MSC), the Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC), and Friends of the Sea] or in the on-going roll out of Environmental Management Systems (EMS) or Codes of Practice. It may invest in tools for assisting with these activities; such as tools to develop certification processes and procedures; or novel tools for EMS development.
Stock assessment	<p>The FRDCs core business is RD&E, and priority is given to investments in innovation, as opposed to the routine application of science.</p> <p>The FRDC will not invest in stock assessment, the data required to undertake a stock assessment, or the development, refinement or running of stock assessment models unless the collection or method for collection or assessment is new and innovative or supports developmental fisheries.</p> <p>Similarly, the FRDC will not fund projects associated with other management activities such as the maintenance and running of harvest strategies and management strategy evaluations associated with a fishery or stock or transferring techniques and technology from one fishery to another. For example, where a fishery will be undertaking a harvest strategy for the first time using techniques and methods from other fisheries as examples, this is considered the core business of the management agency. However, the FRDC may invest in the RD&E components of these activities providing those components meet the basic requirements of RD&E in terms of being innovative and resulting</p>

Activity not funded by the FRDC	Comment
	in new knowledge, processes and technology, there could also be elements of technology transfer or adoption. The R&D should be clearly articulated. RD&E around a new stock assessment method or refining an existing method would be considered by the FRDC.
Training	The FRDC does not invest in training when other funding sources are more appropriate; or where the benefit is clearly commercial.
Capital	<p>The FRDC will not usually invest in capital that would be expected to form part of the research provider's infrastructure capacity.</p> <p>The FRDC prefers to cover the depreciation or leasing costs of a capital item that is directly attributable to a project. However, the FRDC is prepared to consider each case on its specific merits, and if the FRDC does invest in capital, it must relate directly to the cost of undertaking RD&E, any residual value in the capital item at the completion of the project must be returned to the FRDC.</p>
Marketing	<p>The FRDC will not provide investment in the direct funding of marketing activities such as advertising campaigns, store promotions and product placement.</p> <p>However, the FRDC can provide funds to undertake market research that may be more broadly applicable to the jurisdictional and/or national industry sector.</p>
Retrospective activities	The FRDC will not fund expenditure related to activities that have been undertaken prior to approval of funding.

ATTACHMENT: FRDC Committee Member’s Code of Conduct

By FRDC committee members		
1	In relation to committees of the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation, I acknowledge:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) the requirement to act with honesty and integrity; and to exercise due care, diligence, and skill b) the requirement to use information appropriately, and the prohibition of improper use of inside information or position. I will treat all committee information and discussion as in-confidence. c) my duties to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • act in good faith • act fairly and impartially • avoid or declare material personal interests 	
2	I recognise that although the committee’s primary responsibility is to the FRDC, I should also have appropriate regard for:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) those who invest in the FRDC; and b) the interests of all stakeholders. 	
3	I acknowledge that confidential information received by me in the course of my duties remains the property of the entity from which it was obtained. I also acknowledge that it would be improper to disclose that information, or allow it to be disclosed, unless disclosure has been authorised by that entity, or the person from whom the information was provided.	
4	I will respect the views and practices of people with whom I have contact on FRDC business and treat those people with dignity and goodwill.	
5	I acknowledge my responsibility to report corrupt practice, breaches of the law and matters detrimental to the FRDC or its reputation.	
6	I acknowledge my obligation, at all times, to comply with the meeting principles, spirit as well as the letter of this code.	
7	I acknowledge my obligation to be independent in judgement and actions, and to take all reasonable steps to be satisfied as to the soundness of all decisions taken by the committee.	
Name	Signature	Date

RAC Management Procedure

Final Audit Report

2021-12-12

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