

Application evaluation Procedure



FRDC

Executive Director's authorisation: *Patrick W Dae*

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	PURPOSE	2
2.	RESPONSIBILITY.....	2
3.	DEFINITIONS AND ACRONYMS	2
4.	RISK ASSESSMENT	2
5.	RELEVANT DOCUMENTATION	2
6.	PUBLICATION	2
7.	APPLICATIONS.....	3
8.	EVALUATION CRITERIA.....	3
8.1	Compliance	3
8.2	Attractiveness and feasibility	3
9.	EVALUATION PROCESS.....	5
9.1	Advice from Application reviewers (Comments – Reviewer (current))	5
9.2	Evaluation by Research Advisory Committee (RAC), sector IPA or subprogram	6
9.3	Preparing Application Evaluation (Comments – Management)	6
9.4	Evaluation Sheet.....	7
9.5	Executive Director Evaluation	10
9.6	Board evaluation	10
9.7	FEEDBACK TO APPLICANT.....	10
10.	NEXT STEP IN PROJECT LIFE CYCLE	10
11.	ATTACHMENTS.....	10

1. PURPOSE

This procedure describes the activities undertaken in the evaluation of competitive applications to reach a decision on an application for funding.

2. RESPONSIBILITY

Responsibility for this procedure resides with the Project Managers.

3. DEFINITIONS AND ACRONYMS

Definitions - follow link to [Definitions](#)

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

4. RISK ASSESSMENT

Risk	Applications that should not be funded are approved						
Source of risk				Impact/consequence			
RAC, IPA and subprogram members and FRDC employees not following procedures, inappropriate mix of skills and experience on the Committees, FRDC does not provide enough support resources				Financial loss, opportunity costs, reputational damage, unbalanced portfolio			
Risk type	RD&E Investment		Risk tolerance	High	Risk Appetite	Medium	
Inherent likelihood	Likely	Inherent Consequence	Medium	Inherent Risk Evaluation	High	Velocity rating	Medium
Control	Stringent evaluation criteria, the use of independent subject matter experts, continual evaluation throughout the application life cycle, engagement and consultation with industry/stakeholders						
Mitigated likelihood	Rare	Mitigated Consequence	Medium	Mitigated Residual Risk	Moderate	Residual risk evaluation action	Periodic review

5. RELEVANT DOCUMENTATION

This section contains links to internally and externally facing documents – access to internally facing documents is restricted to FRDC employees.

Primary policy	Document # or web address
Investment in Research, Development and Extension (RD&E) policy	RD&E Investment

Relevant documentation	Document location or web address
Internal	
Applications post evaluation DRAFT	NEMO-17443-135
Applying for funding DRAFT	NEMO-17443-157
Delegations policy	NEMO-29-1900
External	
Risk policy	Risk policy

6. PUBLICATION

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

Doc ID NEMO-17443-134	Version: 2.16	http://frdc-sp13/FilePlan/StratMng/Procedure Working Documents/Application evaluation procedure.docx	11:21:47	3-Nov-17	Page 2 of 11
--------------------------	------------------	---	----------	----------	--------------

7. APPLICATIONS

Applications are to be submitted via the FRDC application website www.fishnet.gov.au. Applications come in two forms, these being the Expression of Interest (EOI) and the full application.

8. EVALUATION CRITERIA

All applications are evaluated against the same criteria, as follows:

8.1 Compliance

The Board would expect only to see applications that are compliant and that management recommend for approval. The Board delegates to the Executive Director (ED) the ability to reject any application regardless of budget, however if the ED deems that there is an elevated risk level related to the decision to reject he/she can defer the decision to the Board.

Management should confirm that any application for consideration is:

- Complete and within the time frame for submission
- Submitted by a legal entity
- Has an identified source of funding and that sufficient funds are available (AOP)
- Fits within FRDC's legislative mandate of R,D & E
- Has satisfactory Project governance/ feasibility
 - Organisation, PI and team track record and ability adequate for task – Y/N
 - Methodology appropriate likely to succeed (external review if necessary- consult with appropriate Board member) – Y/N
 - All regulatory requirements compliant e.g. ethics, environmental Y/N

Only when the application is compliant would it progress to management evaluation.

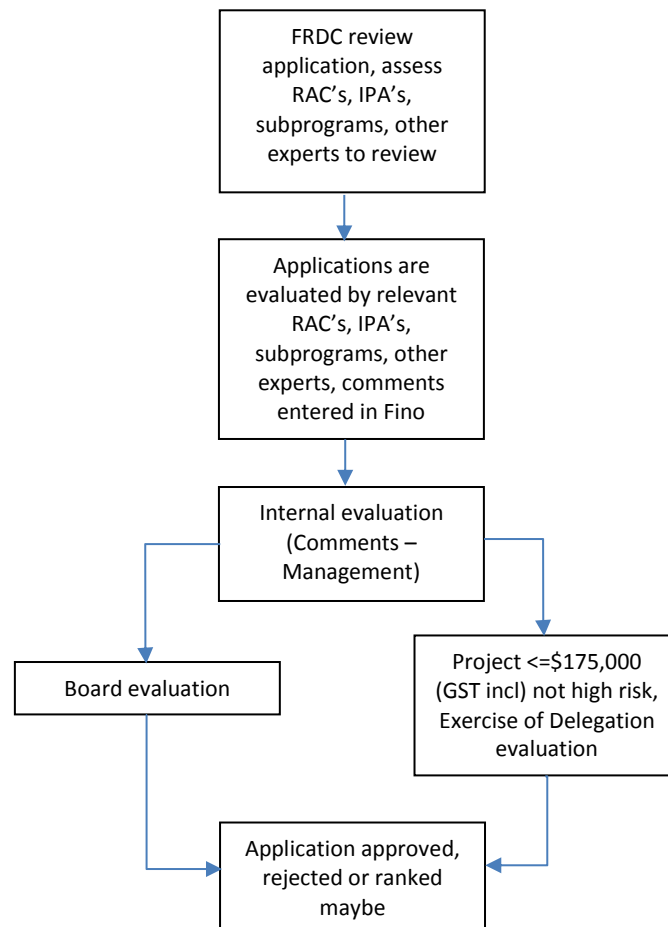
8.2 Attractiveness and feasibility

Applications are assessed on their feasibility and attractiveness. The evaluation criteria are detailed in the tables below:

Attractiveness	
Relevance to RD&E plan	Extent to which the application meets the priorities in the relevant RD&E plan (e.g. FRDC RD&E plan, RAC or IPA RD&E plan).
Stakeholder support	Clear evidence of stakeholder/end user support for the proposed research. This can be from stakeholder involvement in the proposed activities, letters of support from stakeholders, financial contribution from stakeholders, or demonstrated understanding of how project outputs relate to outcomes desired by stakeholders.
Likelihood of adoption	Are the outputs likely to be adopted or are readily adoptable, and are the pathways of adoption clear and achievable?

Value for money	Is the budget realistic for the proposed activities? What is the nature of capital items requested for funding and are they warranted?
Level of impact	What impact will the proposed activities have? Are they likely to contribute to new knowledge, and contribute towards demonstrable change? Are the proposed activities novel/innovative?
Linkages and collaboration	Is there evidence of collaboration/relationships linked to past or present research? Are research partners/stakeholders/sectors/jurisdictions working together? Is there collaboration outside of traditional networks?
Contribution to new knowledge	Are the proposed activities novel/innovative and contributing to new science/knowledge?
Consequence of not undertaking research	What are the risks associated with not undertaking this research? What are the consequences if the outputs are not known?
Feasibility	
Likelihood of success	From the description of the activities provided and from external sources (such as other experts), is the proposed activity likely to succeed?
Well defined planned outcomes	Are the planned outcomes, as described in the application, clear and realistic?
Outputs clearly defined and linked to planned outcomes	Are the outputs clear and achievable, and is the knowledge available required to achieve the planned outcomes?
Objectives clear	Are the objectives clear and measurable and are they likely to realise the outputs?
Methodology sound	Are the methods likely to achieve what is stated, and are they linked to achieving the objectives? (note that the methods in the EOI are word limited).
Track record of investigators	What is the capacity and capability of the applicant? Are the applicants experienced in the proposed field and are they able to undertake the required RD&E? Is their experience matched to the activities? Have they undertaken past projects, and how well did they manage those projects?
Capacity to deliver	Are the applicants (including the organisation) likely to deliver what has been stated in the application within the timeline and budget? How well have they fared with previous RD&E projects?

9. EVALUATION PROCESS



Research applications are reviewed and assessed by FRDC management, the relevant RAC, IPA and/or subprogram and possibly other experts. Final evaluation and approval of applications will be by the Board/Exercise of Delegation depending on the cost of the project and the risk profile (see Investment in Research, Development and Extension (RD&E) Policy and the Delegations Policy).

The Board will receive in their papers a summary of applications that are to be evaluated that records the FRDC Management recommendation either for rejection or approval.

9.1 Advice from Application reviewers (Comments – Reviewer (current))

Step	Task description	Responsible
1	The Programs Manager and Project Managers will discuss/decide whether and what type of review is required. Those groups that are being asked to fund a project (IPA's, subprograms, RACs) will be required to review and comment on the application. Other categories are external reviewers with a particular expertise of the topic or methodology for example. It is expected that the subprograms which are expert groups	Project Manager

Step	Task description	Responsible
	would be used quite frequently (Indigenous, Human Dimensions, Aquatic Animal Health and Biosecurity and Recfishing Research).	
2	Information on whether reviews of the application were undertaken should be included in the evaluation, including justification if they weren't undertaken.	Project Manager
3	All reviews are entered into FINO and added to the evaluation information.	Project Manager

Note. where an external review is required, the FRDC will ask the external reviewer to:

- a. certify that they have no known interest that may conflict with the proper execution of the review;
- b. agree to treat the R&D application, and associated information provided in confidence, including
 - not to reveal or discuss the contents of the R&D application in whole or part to another party without the written permission of the FRDC; and
 - not to copy the R&D application in whole or part for whatever reason;
- c. agree to review the application for the purpose of forming an objective opinion as to issues of concern notified by the FRDC.

Acceptance of the R&D application by reviewers will imply acceptance of the above conditions.

9.2 Evaluation by Research Advisory Committee (RAC), sector IPA or subprogram
RACs, IPA's and subprograms are required to undertake evaluations on the same merits as the FRDC, details of this process are in their respective management procedures. The comments from these reviews are considered as comments, detailed above in section 9.1.

9.3 Preparing Application Evaluation (Comments – Management)

When applications are received by the FRDC, FRDC management will review them for compliance, ensuring they meet the basic application requirements and identify the correct funding source/s.

FRDC management evaluate an application throughout the entire evaluation process; taking information from external experts, discussions with funding partners and internal analysis and providing information to the board or Executive Director for their final evaluation.

Step	Task description	Responsible
1	The programs manager will advise the project managers of the date on which the Application Evaluations will need to be completed.	Programs Manager, Project Manager
2	Application Evaluation information is prepared in FINO under the 'Comments – Management' heading.	Project Manager

Step	Task description	Responsible
3	Comments from any identified reviewers and any identified other experts should be entered into Fino under 'Comments – Reviewer (current)' and should be displayed in the Application Evaluation report.	Project Manager

9.4 Evaluation Sheet

An evaluation sheet will be prepared by FRDC management and provided to the relevant delegate for evaluation. The evaluation will be in the following format and placed on FINO under the relevant project number. Information for the requirements of the evaluation sheet can also be found on the FRDC Wiki ([Preparing application evaluation comments –management](#)).

This information is critical for Board or Executive Director consideration and custodianship of investment. Any areas for concern should be highlighted for consideration by the Board or Executive Director.

BOARD <NUMBER> <MONTH> <YEAR> OR ED DELEGATION <DATE>

MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATION

Standard text – That the Board/Executive Director approves this application with an FRDC budget of <\$> conditional on Management being satisfied that: <insert relevant comments> OR That the Board/Executive Director rejects this application for the following reasons: <insert reasons>

GVP: consult the current fisheries statistics or other known sources and record the value of the relevant sector (Refer ABARES latest Fisheries Statistics or other sources)

RELEVANCE TO GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

- [Australia's Science and Research Priorities](#)
- Relevance to Australia's [Rural Research, Development and Extension Priorities](#) (from the Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper and Rural R&D for Profit Programme <http://www.agriculture.gov.au/ag-farm-food/innovation/priorities>)

RELEVANCE TO FRDC RD&E PLAN:

Standard text - This project comes under the <lead, collaborate or partner > component – from the current FRDC RD&E plan specifically <outline broad area such as National priority 3 or the Southern Rocklobster IPA>

PRIORITY

This application addresses the following from the <nominate relevant plan> Plan:

Outline the specific priority or area that the application is addressing followed by a brief description on how the application is addressing the priority.

Doc ID NEMO-17443-134	Version: 2.16	http://frdc-sp13/FilePlan/StratMng/Procedure Working Documents/Application evaluation procedure.docx	11:21:47	3-Nov-17	Page 7 of 11
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SOURCE OF FUNDS:

Add the source of fund (i.e. bucket)

IN KIND CONTRIBUTIONS:

Outline any in kind contributions

STAKEHOLDER SUPPORT

Outline the support from the application i.e.

- RAC IPA or subprogram priority
- Identified stakeholders support – i.e. letters, contribution, cash and in kind

LIKELIHOOD OF ADOPTION

Outline the likelihood of adoption of the outputs using the following headings followed by a brief description.

- High, Medium or Low
- Pathway to adoption articulated and feasible - Yes/No

VALUE FOR MONEY

Do application costs accurately/appropriately reflect the activities to be undertaken

LEVEL OF IMPACT IF SUCCESSFUL (Output)

Use the following headings to provide a brief description on the level of impact.

- Will the project contribute to planned strategic RD&E outcomes
- What is the level of impact - for example, added value of end product, increase market opportunity, reduced costs, WHS improvement, environmental improvement, social and cultural benefits

CONSEQUENCES OF NOT FUNDING

Outline any risks associated with not funding this RD&E using the following:

- High, Medium, Low - loss of opportunity explored, is there a risk to FRDC or stakeholders in not funding

DATA MANAGEMENT

- Is this relevant, is there a plan to address access

COMMERCIALISATION

Doc ID NEMO-17443-134	Version: 2.16	http://frdc-sp13/FilePlan/StratMng/Procedure Working Documents/Application evaluation procedure.docx	11:21:47	3-Nov-17	Page 8 of 11
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Use the following to provide a brief description

- Is there a commercial opportunity
- Has a plan been submitted
- Is any commercialisation plan budgeted

GENERAL

- Describe the development of the application (including the board has seen the application previously)/priority and summary of what the application intends to achieve
- Describe any relationship with other activities/previous projects that the project does/should link to value add to the project or avoid duplication

COMMUNICATIONS ACTIONS

Use the following to provide a brief description

- Has communications been planned
- Have plans been budgeted
- Describe any communications required or extra activities that need to be undertaken

RISK ASSESSEMENT

Use the following to provide a brief description.

- Reputational Yes/No (risk to reputation/brand or its stakeholders, could activities generate negative publicity?)
- Political - Yes/No (does proposed activity contravene government policy - requested/supported by a political party - could activity cause embarrassment to a minister)
- Financial Yes/No (are any financial risks associated with the project such as external costs not yet factored in or yet to be considered - any hidden costs)
- Ethical - Yes/No (potential for interactions with threatened or protected or endangered species, any WHS implications)
- Likelihood of the RD&E achieving its objectives – this relates to the feasibility of the activity and centres around whether the proposed methods are sufficient to achieve the stated objectives. This evaluation could also be accomplished through an external review of an application or assessment by a RAC, IPA or other committee

OTHER EXPERT REVIEW

Did the FRDC have an expert external review undertaken of the application and reasons for or for not doing this. If a review was undertaken the comments need to be included with the evaluation sheet.

Doc ID NEMO-17443-134	Version: 2.16	http://frdc-sp13/FilePlan/StratMng/Procedure Working Documents/Application evaluation procedure.docx	11:21:47	3-Nov-17	Page 9 of 11
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9.5 Executive Director Evaluation

Additional to the preparation of an Application Evaluation outlined above, the following needs to occur.

Step	Task description	Responsible
1	The Evaluation of the Exercise of Delegation is done through FINO under the 'Approvals – Agreements – Acquittal' heading as an approval.	Project Manager
2	Exercise of Delegation can only be allocated to those people who have delegation to approve a new project or variation to the level stipulated in the Delegations policy. Only projects less than \$175,000 (incl. GST) and are not deemed to be high risk are eligible for this level of evaluation.	Project Manager
3	The information included in the Exercise of Delegation evaluation is the same as above and should be put in both the approval record and under Comments – Management.	Project Manager

9.6 Board evaluation

Step	Task description	Responsible
1	A summary sheet of all applications management recommends for approval listed by area, an evaluation sheet and the applications as an appendice to the board papers.	Programs Manager
2	A link to the RD&E Plan budget dashboard	
3	All decisions made by the Board are recorded in the board minutes.	Board Secretary

9.7 FEEDBACK TO APPLICANT

At the conclusion of the application process, detailed feedback is provided to the applicant. This feedback aims to be transparent, and includes but not be limited to, performance against selection criteria, comments from external reviewers (if applicable) and feedback from relevant stakeholders (e.g. RAC, sector IPA). See [Application post evaluation procedure](#).

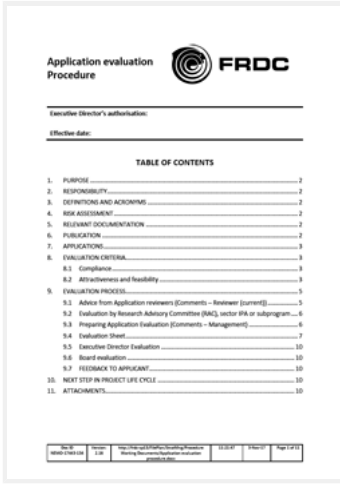
10. NEXT STEP IN PROJECT LIFE CYCLE

Application post evaluation procedure.

11. ATTACHMENTS

#	Description				
Doc ID NEMO-17443-134	Version: 2.16	http://frdc-sp13/FilePlan/StratMng/Procedure Working Documents/Application evaluation procedure.docx	11:21:47	3-Nov-17	Page 10 of 11

1	Nil
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