

Research Advisory Committee (RAC) management procedure



FRDC

Executive Director's authorisation:

Effective date: 12 October 2016

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1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this procedure is to outline the:

- roles of the RACs
- governance arrangements for the RACs
- RAC management processes
- investment and portfolio balance requirements

2. RESPONSIBILITY

Responsibility for this procedure resides with the FRDC RAC Project Manager(s).

3. DEFINITIONS AND ACRONYMS

Definitions – follow link to [Definitions](#)

Acronyms – follow link to [Acronyms](#)

4. RELEVANT DOCUMENTATION

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

Relevant documentation	Document # or web address
Fishnet	Fishnet
FRDC's Research, Development and Extension Plan 2015-20	FRDC's RD&E Plan
How to apply for funding	FRDC website
Intellectual property management policy	IP management policy
Material personal interests for FRDC Committees policy	FRDC website
Success through innovation – the national fishing and aquaculture research, development and extension strategy 2016	FRDC website

5. PUBLICATION

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

6. ACTIONS

6.1 ESTABLISHMENT

Under the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation's (FRDC's) 2015-20 Research, Development and Extension (RD&E) Plan, the FRDC has devolved greater ownership and responsibility to industry sectors and jurisdictions in developing RD&E priorities, through Industry Partnership Agreements (IPAs); and Research Advisory Committees (RACs) respectively. [RACS were formerly known as Fisheries Research Advisory Bodies (FRABs).]

Eight RACs represent the jurisdictions of each state, the Commonwealth and the Northern Territory. A key role of a RAC is to provide advice to the FRDC on the

priorities and investment needs in its jurisdiction for those sectors that are not covered under IPAs, and issues of public good within the jurisdiction.

The RACs are (in alphabetical order):

- Commonwealth RAC
- New South Wales RAC
- Northern Territory RAC
- Queensland RAC
- South Australian RAC
- Tasmanian RAC
- Victorian RAC
- Western Australian RAC

6.1.1 Composition of RAC membership

RACs are constituted so that they incorporate broad fishing, aquaculture and community expertise (including Indigenous). The list below is FRDC's minimum requirement for membership:

- an independent Chair (knowledgeable of FRDC stakeholders)
- members with expertise in one or more of the following:
 - ✓ Commercial wild catch
 - ✓ Commercial aquaculture
 - ✓ Recreational fishing
 - ✓ Resource management
 - ✓ Processing, Post-harvest and Marketing
 - ✓ Environmental (optional)
 - ✓ RD&E execution and management
 - ✓ Indigenous
 - ✓ People development (optional)

RAC members can be members or executive officers of fishing and aquaculture representative bodies on the understanding that the role on the committee is expertise based.

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 6-8 members plus the Chair.

6.1.2 Application process

The FRDC calls for applications for RAC membership and the positions of Chair (see [application for membership of Research Advisory Committee form](#)). These calls are advertised through the peak industry bodies and fisheries management agencies in each jurisdiction, and the FRDC website. The FRDC also sends the calls to selected contacts within its database.

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 collates the applications and provides them to the selection panel. The selection panel is, at a minimum, the Director of Fisheries of the relevant jurisdiction, or his/her nominee, and a representative from the FRDC, normally the Executive Director. The Director of Fisheries and the FRDC Executive Director may agree for the panel to be expanded to include an independent observer or representatives from peak bodies within the jurisdiction. The selection panel assesses applications and appoints members so as to ensure that the composition of the RAC adequately represents and meets the needs of the jurisdiction; and acts efficiently.

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.

6.1.3 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 3 years) 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) as is specified in the instrument of appointment, but is eligible for re-appointment at the discretion of the selection panel.

6.1.4 Induction

The FRDC conducts an induction process for all new RAC members and Chairs. On their first appointment they will have the benefit of an induction program aimed at building their understanding of the FRDC, and the business and the environment in which the FRDC operates. They are inducted at their first RAC meeting.

6.1.5 Retirement during the term of office

If at any time during their term a RAC member or RAC Chair wishes to retire he/she is expected to provide written advice - to the RAC Chair and the FRDC in the case of a RAC member; and to the FRDC if a RAC Chair. If the retirement of a member results in a lack of expertise on the committee, a new member is appointed. If an alternate has been nominated for the retiring RAC member this person will be given first right of refusal. If there is no alternate, or the alternate declines becoming a member, a new application process is started to find a replacement. Applications for new RAC members follow the process outlined [7.1.2 – Application process](#). In the case of a RAC Chair the FRDC will appoint an interim Chair and start the process of selecting a new Chair following the process outlined in [7.1.2 – Application process](#).

6.2 ROLE OF THE RESEARCH ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The role of the RAC includes:

- developing a strategic jurisdictional 5 year RD&E plan (to align with the FRDCs RD&E plan), and annual mechanisms to enact those plans, taking into account other strategic plans and priorities developed by other RACs, Subprograms, coordination programs and IPAs; so as to encourage collaboration and co-funding of projects
- being responsive to the RD&E needs of stakeholders within each jurisdiction
- promoting the best scientific methods
- ensuring that RAC RD&E priorities are balanced across the programs of the FRDC RD&E plan and contain a mix of basic and applied RD&E
- maintaining a strategic direction and being responsive to changing circumstances
- setting RD&E priorities to maximise the opportunities of investment to meet identified priorities, avoid duplication and achieve the greatest potential return
- inviting RD&E applications to address identified priorities via the priority template (see [Attachment 1](#))
- providing investment advice on the RAC allocated budget and expenditure against it
- promoting collaboration between researchers, fisheries managers, and industry, both within, and among, jurisdictions
- considering other RD&E funding opportunities
- communicating regularly with potential beneficiaries through existing networks and FRDC communication channels
- influencing the adoption of RD&E results
- assessing project stop/go points
- providing reports to stakeholders in the jurisdiction regarding RAC activities
- providing reports on RAC activities to the FRDC for inclusion in the FRDC’s annual report

6.3 MANAGEMENT

The FRDC provides administrative support for each RAC by providing a dedicated RAC Project Manager and Project Officer. Each RAC Project Manager and Project Officer is responsible for four RACs. This assists in the identification of collaboration

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opportunities and efficiencies with regard to RAC processes, meeting dates and priority setting.

The FRDC:

- provides management and administration services for each RAC
- participates in RAC meetings to provide clear advice on FRDC priorities and related national priorities and initiatives and other IPAs and Subprograms
- provides clear, helpful advice to RACs on performance and quality of applications
- posts a timetable of RAC meetings on the FRDC website under [coming events](#)
- provides post-board updates on decisions made outside of RAC processes
- convenes an annual planning workshop, usually in October/November, to identify best practice for planning and evaluating fisheries RD&E; and to develop priorities and linkages 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 (e.g. RAC SharePoint sites)

The RAC Project Managers are responsible for supporting RACs including:

- setting and organising meeting dates and venues with the RAC Chair and members
- reporting on and managing RAC budgets
- preparing meeting papers including agendas
- keeping RD&E plans up to date
- assisting in the process of developing annual priorities with stakeholders in relevant jurisdictions
- being the conduit to:
 - ✓ promote the alignment of priorities between RACs
 - ✓ disseminating information from the FRDC as well as the other RACs, IPAs and Subprograms
 - ✓ manage potential overlap, share costs and aid collaboration among RACs, IPAs and Subprograms
- coordinating with national RD&E infrastructure and national priorities
- providing evaluation of applications (submitted to that RAC) to the FRDC board and/or Executive Director
- managing the external review of applications
- managing FRDC project contracts as endorsed by the RAC and approved by the FRDC
- providing project progress summaries to the RAC regarding active projects related to the RAC
- provide advice to the RACs on project stop/go points and review milestones
- assisting the RAC in identifying alternative opportunities to leverage funding and co-funding opportunities
- project extension and communication

The RAC Project Officers are responsible for the RAC administration and support including:

- supporting the RAC Project Managers
- organising of meetings, venues, travel etc. associated with RAC meetings
- paying travel claims
- project extension and communication
- preparing meeting papers including agendas
- recording and distributing the meeting minutes
- managing electronic files
- managing RAC contact lists, including alternates
- maintaining the RAC SharePoint sites

6.4 MEETINGS

The RACs convene a minimum of three meetings per year. RAC meetings are conducted either face to face or via teleconference, depending on the nature of the proposed meeting agenda and/or availability of RAC members. Meeting formats will be decided by the RAC Project Manager in consultation with the Chair.

If a RAC member is unable to attend a meeting they are expected to contact the Chair and RAC Project Manager at their earliest convenience. In the event that a RAC member is unable to attend, the RAC Project manager may seek comments from the RAC member regarding the meeting papers 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 make an assessment of the suitability of the member to continue their role on the RAC.

A quorum of at least 50% of RAC members need to be present at each RAC meeting in order for project applications to be considered. If, in organising dates for a RAC meeting, a quorum of members is not available an alternate date for the meeting should be sought. In the case of multiple short-notice absentees leading up to the RAC meeting, where a date had been set for the meeting to allow for a quorum, and that quorum cannot now be met, the Chair may seek a decision out of session, enabling the RD&E needs of the jurisdiction to progress efficiently.

The FRDC pays a sitting fee to the RAC Chair. No sitting fees is be paid to RAC members. Where required, RAC members (including the Chair) are provided with reasonable meeting travel costs.

RAC meetings are held at a date agreed to by the majority of members, with the target months being:

- March
- July
- Late September/ Early October

The timing of the three RAC meetings aims to align with the timing of FRDC board meetings (see [RAC annual planning and investment cycle](#)). This schedule allows project applications and Expressions of Interest (EOI) to be reviewed by the RACs just

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prior to their consideration by the FRDC board; thereby expediting the start of successful research applications.

Points of discussion for RAC meetings are outlined in the 'RAC Annual Planning and Investment Cycle' (See [RAC annual planning and investment cycle](#)).

All relevant documents to both upcoming and previous RAC meetings (e.g. agendas, minutes) are located on the relevant RAC SharePoint site. RAC Project Managers and Project Officers distribute meeting papers using these sites, using the timeline outlined below:

- RAC Project Managers provide an agenda and meeting papers for each meeting that are available on the relevant RAC SharePoint site two weeks prior to the meeting date – a notification email sent to all members advising when the papers are available.
- meeting minutes are completed for each meeting following the agenda for that meeting that is available on the relevant RAC SharePoint site
- draft meeting minutes are available on the relevant RAC SharePoint site within two weeks of the meeting date
- finalised meeting minutes are ratified and signed by the Chair of the RAC at the next meeting

RAC meeting alternates

Each committee member can nominate one individual as their designated alternate. The nominated alternate can be changed with the approval of both the RAC Chair and the FRDC.

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 Chair and RAC Project Manager.

6.5 RAC RD&E PLAN

Each RAC is required to develop an RD&E Plan using the RAC RD&E Plan template (available from the FRDC). This template is partially completed to assist in the alignment with the FRDC's RD&E Plan. However, several sections require significant input by each jurisdiction. The plan should contain:

- an overview of the operating environment for the jurisdiction
- the drivers, challenges and opportunities specific to the jurisdiction
- the goals of the Plan
- the strategic priority areas aligned with FRDC's RD&E programs specific to the jurisdiction (as outlined in the FRDC RD&E Plan)
- an estimated investment allocation percentage across the Plans Programs based on the nominated Strategic Priority Areas
- Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) against which the success of the plan will be measured

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The plans' strategic priority areas form the basis of the annual investment priority setting processes. These annual plans are circulated to all RACs, subprograms, coordination programs and IPAs, and made available through the FRDC website.

6.5.1 Planning and Priority Setting

Annually, the RAC reviews its 5 year RD&E Plan. This occurs at the October RAC meeting. The plan is reviewed to:

- assess performance against the priority areas of the plan and KPIs
- identify gaps against the priority areas of the plan
- determine priority areas for investment against these gaps and other priority setting processes that may have been undertaken

Revised/updated plans are circulated to all RACs, subprograms, coordination programs and IPAs, and made available via the *Investment partners* SharePoint site.

At each meeting the RAC should also undertake a situational scan of the jurisdiction to identify any tactical or immediate areas of RD&E needed and requiring short-term or immediate action. Priorities may be identified/developed in consultation with relevant stakeholders in the jurisdiction; for example, through strategic workshops or via regional assessment groups (RAGs).

Annually, at the end of October, the FRDC holds a workshop for all RACs, subprograms, coordination programs, IPAs and National RD&E Infrastructure projects to provide updates on priority areas for investment and any potential overlap and collaborative opportunities for the coming financial year.

RAC Annual Planning and Investment Cycle

Activities			
March RAC Meeting	July RAC Meeting	Late September/ Early October RAC Meeting	Late October FRDC Annual Planning Meeting (Chairs: RACs, IPAs, Subprograms, National.)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of available RAC funds (including management of allocated budget) Review of any applications or expressions of interest (EOI) requiring consideration Consideration of priorities for the annual funding cycle that may require calls for applications Situational scan of issues impacting the jurisdiction for immediate investment response Update on current projects and activities of interest to the RAC Other business 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of available RAC funds (including management of allocated budget) Review of any applications or expressions of interest (EOI) requiring consideration Consideration of priorities for the annual investment cycle that may require calls for applications Situational scan of issues impacting the jurisdiction for immediate investment response Update on current projects and activities of interest to the RAC Development of process to determine priorities for stakeholders Other business 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of available RAC funds (including management of allocated budget) Review of progress against the RAC RD&E plan, priorities nominated by stakeholders, gap identification and focus for investment for new annual investment Review of any applications or expressions of interest (EOI) requiring consideration Consideration of priorities for the annual funding cycle that may require calls for applications Situational scan of issues impacting the jurisdiction for immediate investment response Update on current projects and activities of interest to the RAC Other business 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The FRDC will hold an annual workshop for all RACs, Subprograms, Coordination Programs, Industry Partnership Agreements and National RD&E Infrastructure projects to provide updates on priority areas for investment and any potential overlap and collaborative opportunities for the coming financial year Review/Coordinate RD&E Plans
		RAC Budget estimate for following financial year provided by FRDC.	
<p>Project applications can be assessed at the April, August & November FRDC board meetings - applications equal to or less than \$175,000 of FRDC funds can be submitted for assessment by the Executive Director of the FRDC at any time.</p>			

6.6 CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

RAC members (including alternates) are required to sign the [FRDC committee member's code of conduct](#) prior to taking up their duties. Observers will be required to sign the [FRDCs Confidentiality agreement](#).

RACs maintain a register of 'material personal interests' that is updated at the start of each meeting; and recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

RAC members are required to treat all funding applications (including Expressions of Interest) as commercial-in-confidence, and to respect the intellectual and moral property rights of applicants. RACs may seek external reviews of applications, subject to having the permission of the applicant, and having confidentiality agreements in place with the reviewer. This process is coordinated by the FRDC.

If a RAC member, alternate or observer to the RAC meeting declares a 'material personal interest' with regard to an application under consideration or an agenda item of the meeting they are required to leave the meeting, for the time that the application or agenda item is being discussed. The conflicted member is not to participate in any discussion of a matter; unless the committee agrees otherwise. The committee's decisions on these matters are to be taken without the conflicted member present.

RAC members found to be in breach of the conflicts of interest policy 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 at the discretion of the Chair and the FRDC. This may be enacted if the removal of the RAC member results in the loss of expertise. Applications for new RAC members will follow the process outlined above.

6.6.1 Guidance – applying 'material personal interests' policy

The following are examples that provide a guide to the application of this advice, but in practice will depend on the particular circumstances. An advisory group member would usually be expected to declare a material personal interest if he/she is:

- a Principal Investigator for an application under consideration
- an employee of an organisation whose application was being evaluated by the group
- an employee of an organisation with an application that is in competition with an application being evaluated by the group
- a shareholder of an organisation that holds a licence to commercially fish in a fishery in which management changes (to either the organisation's financial or reputation benefit or detriment) could result from a successful application
- closely involved in the development of an application (e.g. drafting)
- directly associated with a fishery's research, policy, and/or management, the operation of which could be affected by the group's recommendation on an application

Note that these examples extend to the active member’s immediate family, or to any organisation with which the member is associated.

6.7 INVESTMENT

To ensure consistency in the approach to investment, the following parameters have been applied:

- Budgets for RACs (as with IPAs and subprograms) will be prepared in the same format (i.e. the 5 year rolling format developed for IPAs)
- Budgets will be updated on an as needs basis to take into account AGVP determinations, forecast contribution levels, new project approvals, additional income, etc.
- The investment rules for RACs will be the same as those for IPAs and subprograms
- An over-commitment percentage will be individually allocated to each RAC (and IPA) each year. This will allow the FRDC to individually compensate for the effects of projects slippage (they will be specific to each RAC and IPA). Typically, the over-commitment percentage will be in the order of 30%.

Allowing RACs to over-commit their budgets is to encourage the RACs to deliver investment into RD&E that has a significant impact within the jurisdiction; while achieving targeted levels of FRDC annual RD&E investment (given the potential for ‘project slippage’).

The RACs should take a risk based approach to their investments. This risk appetite should be set to deliver a balanced portfolio, with a mix of low and high risk investments.

The FRDC invests through a flexible approach. The following criteria will apply:

1. applications in excess of \$175,000 (GST included) of FRDC funds will be assessed by the FRDC board
2. applications equal to or less than \$175,000 (GST included) of FRDC funds can be submitted for assessment by the Executive Director of the FRDC at any time. If it is assessed that the application contains sufficient risk to require further governance, FRDC management may suggest evaluation by the FRDC board. The risk considerations include:
 - reputational risk
 - political risk
 - financial risk
 - potential for interactions with Threatened Protected and Endangered Species (TEPS)

This evaluation of risk is at the discretion of the FRDC. If the application is to be assessed by the FRDC board, assessment will be at the April, August and November FRDC board meetings (see [RAC annual planning and investment cycle](#)).

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6.7.1 Short-Term Investment

The RAC is to be aware that at times there is a need for RD&E to address short-term issues of immediate need. These activities are often characterised by their “emergency” nature, rapid identification and need for immediate implementation. These applications can be, as required, assessed by the RAC outside of the standard meeting schedule and provided to the FRDC for rapid assessment where the criteria above will be followed.

6.7.2 Balanced Portfolio

FRDCs RD&E portfolio incorporates projects that address issues of national importance for government, and fishing and aquaculture stakeholders. The FRDC works to achieve an overall balance of:

- FRDC RD&E programs
- Project length
- Project risk
- Research type
- Investment approach

As far as possible, RD&E Plans (FRDC, IPA, and RAC) will demonstrate how they will achieve a balanced portfolio of RD&E investment, based on the points above. Note that each of these may not achieve a balanced approach individually, but in aggregate the FRDCs investment through its partners aims to achieve a balanced portfolio. Further details on the balanced portfolio can be found in the FRDCs Investment in Research, Development and Extension (RD&E) Policy.

The primary areas of balance for the RACs will be across the FRDC’s five program areas:

- **Environment** – This program relates to RD&E that supports natural resource sustainability in managing fishing and aquaculture activities in Commonwealth, state and territory waters. Many components of FRDC-funded RD&E focus on improving the sustainable use of Australia’s aquatic resources.
- **Industry** – This program relates to RD&E that assists the production and value of seafood. It could be in the form of business profitability, international competitiveness, opportunities for productivity increases, resource access, and experience or wellbeing benefits. This program aims to help all sectors improve their overall performance.
- **Communities** – This program relates to RD&E that maintains the long-term sustainability of the commercial sector by understanding the interactions and co-dependence between fishing and aquaculture, and the wider community. It is enhanced by knowledge about the social importance of fisheries.
- **People** – This program relates to RD&E that is needed to attract and advance people who will lead fishing and aquaculture towards a sustainable and profitable future. The FRDC has taken a strong role in this area, from

employing and developing young researchers, through to facilitating access to leadership development for all sectors of fishing and aquaculture.

- **Adoption** – This program relates to how project outputs are delivered so they can be easily adopted and support stakeholder decision making and practices. The FRDC continually works with researchers and end users to determine and implement the best way of extending these results. In addition, the FRDC is continuing to develop its systems to ensure its ‘knowledge bank’ is widely accessible.

This balance can be displayed as an estimated percentage allocation against these investment programs during the life of the plan, and is monitored by the RAC Project Manager throughout the life of the plan so as to provide actual expenditure against each of the programs.

6.7.3 Programmatic applications

Projects within each of the investment types vary. The average timeframe for research projects is 3 years; however, timeframes can range from months to more than 3 years. The FRDC’s project application outlines the proposed RD&E to be undertaken and details the objectives and methods amongst other information. Often a project will be theme based in its approach, meaning that it will address a particular need within a broader program structure. In this case, the application and project structure can be clear in its objectives, activities and methods to accomplish the desired outcome.

However, in some cases an application may seek a program approach to RD&E. In these circumstances the project may involve a lengthy timeframe (e.g. over 5 years); have clear work plans for the short-term; but rely on the results of the short-term RD&E to inform future work plans in later years of the project. These applications may have less detail on the methods and outputs to be addressed, but will be expected to be clear on the overall objectives and planned outcomes of the activity.

The FRDC assesses these broader programmatic applications on a case by case basis, with the minimum requirements being:

- clear alignment with nationally agreed priorities for fisheries RD&E
- clear overall planned outcomes that outline the intended benefit of the proposed RD&E outputs
- clear objectives to achieve overall outputs that will meet the intended planned outcomes
- clear key performance indicators of success
- FRDCs formal engagement in the overall governance and oversight of the program, and in setting project objectives
- a broad but clear initial work plan (that may be adapted through the course of the project) that meets the objectives of the application

Review points will be incorporated to evaluate future work plans. These future work plans will be provided for consideration by the FRDC or a steering committee if one has been established. This information will be evaluated with regard to whether the project will be continued; such as through the use of stop/go points.

6.7.4 Collaboration

Collaboration provides the opportunity to share investment across common areas of interest, promote RD&E execution efficiency and facilitates broader extension of RD&E outcomes. Therefore, RACs are to be mindful of collaborative opportunities with external funding sources (other than the FRDC) as well as collaboration among other jurisdictional RACs and IPAs including:

- Abalone Council of Australia IPA (50%)
- Australian Abalone Growers Association IPA (100%)
- Australian Barramundi Farmers Association IPA (100%)
- Australian Council of Prawn Fisheries IPA (50%)
- Australian Prawn Farmers Association IPA (100%)
- Australian Southern Bluefin Tuna Industry Association IPA (100%)
- Oysters Australia IPA (100%)
- Pearling IPAs (80%)
- Southern Rock Lobster IPA (100%)
- Tasmanian Salmonid Growers Association IPA (100%)
- Western Rock Lobster IPA (50%)

RACs should note that some IPAs contribute a percentage of funds to jurisdictional RAC budgets (values shown in the parentheses indicate percentage of funds within the IPA).

Collaboration occurs through the sharing of RD&E Plans (e.g. through open access via SharePoint parent site), and as a result of the priority planning processes. The annual planning workshop provides a forum to promote collaboration. Finally, RAC Project Managers will explore collaborative opportunities within the FRDC programs team and external sources.

6.7.5 Activities in which the FRDC will not invest in

It is expected that when developing priorities or considering RD&E applications, RAC members ensure that FRDC funds are invested in a manner 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</p>

Activity not funded by the FRDC	Comment
	<p>collection or assessment is new and innovative or supports developmental fisheries.</p> <p>Similarly, the FRDC will not fund activities 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 in new knowledge, processes and technology, and that these are clearly articulated. RD&E around a new stock assessment method or refining an existing method would be considered by the FRDC.</p>
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>
Venture capital	The FRDC will not provide venture capital or invest in capital works associated with RD&E.
Marketing	The FRDC will not provide investment in the direct funding of marketing activities such as advertising campaigns, store promotions and product placement.

Activity not funded by the FRDC	Comment
	However, the FRDC can provide funds to undertake market research that may be more broadly applicable to the jurisdictional and/or national industry sector.

6.8 RD&E APPLICATIONS

If requested by a RAC, the FRDC posts a competitive call for applications on the FRDC website (the default mechanism) or tender for applications. This call takes the format as shown in priority template (see [Attachment 1](#)). This call will include closing dates for applications to meet, for example, with FRDC board meeting dates, allowing sufficient time for review. These dates are as follows:

- 15th February for the March RAC meeting
- 15th June for the July RAC meeting
- 15th September for the October RAC meeting

In exceptional cases, and at the discretion of the FRDC, applications may be provided to the FRDC board out of session or at a non-standard board meeting.

For competitive call applications, the call is provided on the FRDC website, and distributed through the FRDC contacts database with a due date for the application as outlined above. If an alternative date is required, this is to be agreed with the FRDC. 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.

6.8.1 Application receipt

The RAC Project Manager provides all applications received for consideration to the RAC. These are sorted into applications by the priority nominated by the RAC, and then 'other' for those applications that the applicant has nominated the RAC as a beneficiary, but it does not meet a nominated RAC priority. Applications are provided as an agenda item for the next RAC meeting.

6.8.2 Evaluation criteria

Applications are assessed on their feasibility and attractiveness, with attractiveness being given a higher weighting at the EOI stage. 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.
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?
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?

6.9 PROJECT EXTENSION

The FRDCs general approach to facilitating the extension of the results of RD&E is to:

1. foster awareness amongst research providers of issues relating to the extension of the results of RD&E and intellectual property
2. require research providers to have in place a system for the effective management of the extension of the results of RD&E and intellectual property
3. require research providers to detail their proposed extension strategy in their research applications, and review them at key milestones
4. review proposed extension strategies for each project
5. form and document an FRDC extension “position” with regard to each project, and update the position as necessary
6. require research providers to keep the FRDC informed of any extension activity
7. work with other groups to develop “products” and/or facilitate extension
8. support specific commercialisation arrangements

The overall goal is to achieve the outcomes targeted in the FRDCs RD&E Plan. Therefore, the extension of the results of RD&E will, as much as possible, involve free dissemination, but other modes of extension shall also be used where they deliver a greater benefit; for example, by increasing the adoption of new technology through extension activities. The FRDC aims to make project results publicly available as soon as possible after completion of a project. As such, there is a compelling reason for no protection or confidentiality applying to the results of FRDC funded projects. In some cases, RD&E may generate Intellectual Property (IP) and/or commercialisation opportunities. This will be assessed by the FRDC initially at the application stage with potential further negotiations occurring if the application is approved.

6.10 PROGRAM EVALUATION

The FRDC has adopted the Commonwealth input, output, outcome reporting framework policy. The Department of Finance and Deregulation has determined that the FRDCs planned outcome is:

Increased economic, social and environmental benefits for Australian fishing and aquaculture, and the wider community, by investing in knowledge, innovation, and marketing.

The FRDCs performance is measured against its ability to deliver this outcome.

The success of the FRDCs planning, investment, management and adoption framework is measured by an evaluation process that ensures the framework is based on adaptive management. The investment evaluation framework has the following structure:

- evaluation of the FRDCs performance against its KPIs in its RD&E Plan
- an investment framework that ensures investment against priorities where research can contribute to a significant improvement
- total portfolio evaluation based on the Council of Rural Research and Development Corporations evaluation methodology
- continual review of the planning and investment framework by the board based on the performance against KPIs

The FRDC has implemented the Council of Rural Research and Development Corporations' Evaluation Framework methodology (<http://www.ruralrdc.com.au/impact-assessment-performance/>) to achieve the total portfolio evaluation assessment. This is based on a rolling series of cost benefit analysis of project clusters (based on previous 5 years investment). The results of the project cluster assessments links to the agreed KPIs that are relevant to that cluster. This process ensures that the investment decisions are continually being adjusted to ensure optimal investment performance. In this ongoing evaluation, the FRDC measures the performance of RAC investments after the life of its RD&E Plan.

During the life of its RD&E Plan, the RAC should self-evaluate its performance against the priority areas of its plan, as well as monitoring investment to ensure balance in investment across the FRDCs five programs. This is to be aligned with the prioritisation and RD&E Plan review processes undertaken in the October RAC meeting.

The RAC Project Manager provides the following information for the October meeting:

- a list of approved projects against the priority areas of the RD&E Plan
- investment against the FRDCs 5 programs
- investment in applied versus basic research

This will allow the RAC to review areas of investment deficiency to help inform future investment priorities.

7. Attachments

#	Description
1	Priority template

Attachment 1 – Priority template

Priority	<Priority heading/description>
Need	<Outline succinctly or in dot point form the need for the proposed application>
Planned outcomes	<Outline the intended planned outcomes that could result from the outputs generated by the activity>
Jurisdictions	<These are the jurisdictions/sectors that are requesting the application>