Regional NRM Organisation Governance

Performance Expectation 1– Organisational governance.

Strong organisational governance is fundamental to sound decision-making and managing and using resources efficiently to ensure that the highest possible level of performance is achieved, including how risk is monitored and assessed. It allows the Australian Government to be confident that its NRM investment is being delivered by highly capable organisations.

Expected practices

1.1   The regional NRM organisation is complying with governance responsibilities according to its statutory/incorporation or other legal obligations, including Work, Health and Safety obligations.

This expected practice aims to demonstrate that a regional NRM organisation is fulfilling its legislative and stewardship obligations as a highly competent and capable organisation.

Supporting evidence may include:

- Documentation of a governance structure.
- Documentation or evidence from relevant authorities confirming that governance obligations have been met.
- A clearly defined suite of relevant policies and procedures, including but not confined to probity (inc. conflict of interest and financial), fraud, project management, risk management, transparent board and staff appointment processes and procurement.
- WH&S policies, guidelines, formal safety documents and processes in place demonstrating compliance with relevant State legislation, including compliance by contracted 3rd parties.
- Independent capability or performance reviews or audits are regularly conducted and improvements are implemented to address findings and are made public.
- An independent capability or performance review or audit where an organisation undertakes audits that focus on organisational and business areas with the highest risks.
- Where the regional NRM organisation is a statutory authority, evidence confirming their compliance is provided by the appropriate State Government department.

1.2   The regional NRM organisation has a process in place for formally reviewing the performance and composition of the regional NRM organisation's board of directors.

This expected practice aims to demonstrate that a regional NRM organisation has a board of directors (appointed or elected) that are fully conversant with their responsibility as directors of a statutory or incorporated organisation and are representative of the demography of the region.

Supporting evidence may include:

- Evidence that a board review process is in place and is regularly undertaken.

  Note - A review process would be expected to include any codes of conduct and delegations of authority, including discrete roles, responsibilities *and relationships between Board members and the organisation's management.*

- Evidence that recommendations from a board review process have been responded to and progress monitored.
- Evidence that an induction process is in place for new directors.
- Evidence that a board of directors can demonstrate a full range of skills and knowledge that reflect the responsibilities of the regional NRM organisation and the interests of the local community.

1.3 The regional NRM organisation has organisational decision making processes that are transparent and communicated regularly with the local community.

This expected practice aims to demonstrate that a regional NRM organisation is open, honest and transparent in its decision making processes and is engaging the local community in decision making.

Supporting evidence may include:

- Communication plans and policies are in place to ensure regular communication of organisational decisions and that these plans are being implemented and reviewed.
- Information about organisational decisions is easily available (e.g. websites, social media, newsletters and other communication material) within 6 months of an organisational decision being made.
- Regional community participation processes are used to engage local communities and inform organisational decision-making.

1.4 The regional NRM organisation ensures all staff and board of directors demonstrate Indigenous cultural awareness.*

This expected practice aims to demonstrate that a regional NRM organisation is creating an inclusive workplace that values, respects and develops employee and management competence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture.

Supporting evidence may include:

- Evidence of training for staff and Board members has been undertaken by a qualified/appropriate Indigenous cultural awareness trainer.

    Note - An appropriate Indigenous cultural awareness trainer may include Traditional Owners and elders who may not have formal training qualifications but are recognised as Indigenous cultural awareness training providers.

* As of 2020, the following will be included as a part of this expected practice – *"A cultural competency framework is in place and is being implemented, reviewed and updated in line with regional NRM plan updates."*

1.5 The regional NRM organisation has structures and processes in place to regularly communicate organisational and project performance achievements.

This expected practice aims to demonstrate that a regional NRM organisation is open, honest and transparent in how it is performing in delivering Australian Government NRM investment.

Supporting evidence may include:

- Corporate annual reports or other documents that clearly articulate organisational and project performance achievements are easily available (e.g. websites, social media, newsletters and other communication material) within 6 months of being finalised and approved.

Additional practices

1.6 The regional NRM organisation also has the following additional practices. *(please list)*

Any additional practices should include a clear description of the practice and how it is of benefit to the organisation and the Australian Government. Any additional practice should not be one that could be considered 'business as usual'. For regional NRM organisations that are statutory authorities, responding to state legislative requirements and obligations is considered business as usual.

Additional practices may include but not be limited to:

- Compliance with industry accepted standards that are over and above statutory/incorporation, legal and financial obligations.

2.

Regional NRM Organisation Governance

Performance Expectation 2 – Financial governance.

Strong financial governance is important for good governance and financial stability. It allows the Australian Government to be confident that its NRM investment is being delivered by a financially competent and capable organisation.

Expected practices

2.1 The regional NRM organisation is complying with financial responsibilities according to its statutory/incorporation or other legal obligations.

This expected practice aims to demonstrate that a regional NRM organisation is fulfilling its financial obligations as a strong and financially capable statutory or incorporated organisation.

Supporting evidence may include:

- Documentation from relevant authorities demonstrating that this expected practice has been met.
- Evidence that financial governance structures and processes are in place that ensure the regional NRM organisation is financially competent and capable.
- Where the regional NRM organisation is a statutory authority, evidence confirming their compliance is provided by the appropriate State Government department.

2.2 The regional NRM organisation is complying with Australian Government NRM contractual obligations for project financial reporting and management, accurately and on time, including acquittal of funding as required.

This expected practice aims to demonstrate that a regional NRM organisation is able to manage its finances to deliver Australian Government NRM investment in a professional and timely manner, achieving value for money and NRM outcomes.

- Supporting evidence may include:
- Progress and annual financial reports approved by the Australian Government.
- Documentation showing financial variations to contracted projects have been prepared and managed in a timely and professional manner that meets contractual obligations and ensure potential delays to delivery are minimised.
- Evidence that a process exists to identify interest earned on Australian Government funding, including accurate reporting of interest on the National Landcare Programme Financial Report.
- Evidence showing that a process is in place to identify how interest from Australian Government funding has been used on projects delivering National Landcare Programme approved outcomes.

2.3 The regional NRM organisation has annual corporate financial reports that are publicly available.

This expected practice aims to demonstrate that a regional NRM organisation is open, honest and transparent in its financial operations.

Supporting evidence may include:

- Annual corporate financial reports are publicly available and easily accessible on the organisations website, within 6 months of being finalised.

Additional practices

2.4 The regional NRM organisation also has the following additional practices. *(please list)*

Any additional practices should include a clear description of the practice and how it is of benefit to the organisation and the Australian Government

Additional practices may include but not be limited to:

- Compliance with industry accepted standards that are over and above statutory/incorporation, legal and financial obligations. Any additional practice should not be one that could be considered as 'business as usual'. For regional NRM organisations that are Statutory Authorities, responding to state legislative requirements and obligations is considered business as usual.

3.

Australian Government NRM Delivery

Performance Expectation 3 – Regional NRM plans.

A comprehensive regional NRM plan has an important role in aligning national, state and regional NRM priorities while also providing linkages to other regional priorities, including the priorities of local communities. It allows the Australian Government to be confident that its NRM investment and priorities are being appropriately and strategically delivered. Comprehensive regional NRM plans are strategic, based on best available scientific, economic and social information and provide a blueprint for future NRM activity.

Expected practices

3.1   The regional NRM organisation has a regional NRM plan that provides the strategic direction to NRM activity within the region based on best available scientific, economic and social information.*

This expected practice aims to demonstrate that a regional NRM organisation has an up-to-date regional NRM plan.

Supporting evidence may include:

- A current regional NRM plan based on best available scientific, economic and social information.

  Note - The NRM plan should be updated within the timeframe identified in the plan, organisational policies or state/territory (or other applicable) policies. Supporting information could include: brief description of how experts were involved in developing the scientific, economic and/or social aspects of the plan; and the appropriateness of the model used for the plan (e.g. asset based approach, system based approach).

- Documentation of information sources and skills used in development of the regional NRM plan.

  Note - This could include literature reviews, descriptions of use of technical advisory panels, description of expert input and an outline of staff expertise in developing plans.

*As of 2020, the following will be included as a part of this expected practice – *"The regional NRM planning process includes an independent scientific review process."*

3.2   The regional NRM organisation has a regional NRM plan that demonstrates strategic alignment with Australian Government and state/territory NRM policies and priorities.

This expected practice aims to demonstrate that a regional NRM plan aligns with national, state and regional NRM priorities.

Supporting evidence may include:

- The plan recognises an alignment of relevant Australian Government and state government policies and priorities in the regional NRM plan.
- Where appropriate, the plan is endorsed by the relevant state/territory government.

3.3   The regional NRM organisation has a regional NRM plan that has been developed with comprehensive and documented participation of the local community.

This expected practice aims to demonstrate that a regional NRM organisation has provided significant opportunity for local community participation in the NRM plan development.

Supporting evidence may include:

- Documentation of local community and stakeholder consultation and involvement in the regional NRM planning process.

  Note – Supporting information could include lists, minutes and agendas of community meetings, feedback forms with timing for responses, participation surveys and evaluations of participation surveys, summaries of feedback and how information was incorporated into the NRM Plan.

3.4   The regional NRM organisation has a regional NRM plan with clear priorities, outcomes and activities to achieve those outcomes.

This expected practice aims to demonstrate that a regional NRM organisation is aligning their activities and on ground implementation with the outcomes sought in the regional NRM plan.

Supporting evidence may include:

- Documentation of prioritisation methods, including decision support tools and spatial representation of priorities.

   Note - Clear links between the prioritisation tool and the regional NRM plan should be evident.

- The regional NRM plan and related documents include specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound outcomes or objectives.
- Systems are in place and utilised to measure the achievements and review the effectiveness of the NRM plan.
- A framework that clearly identifies public and private benefit and where and why government intervention is required.

3.5   The regional NRM organisation has a regional NRM plan that clearly articulates Indigenous land and sea management aspirations and participation and identifies strategies to implement them.

This expected practice aims to demonstrate that a regional NRM organisation is actively including Indigenous NRM participation and implementation into their regional NRM plan and outcomes.

Supporting evidence may include:

- Documentation of Indigenous and stakeholder involvement in the regional NRM planning process.
- The regional NRM plan identifies and incorporates Indigenous NRM interests relevant to the region.

   Note - The regional NRM plan should:
   - o *clearly identify and acknowledge the various Indigenous tribal and/or language groups, their interests, responsibilities and relationships to land and water and consider roles, responsibilities and capacity to achieve the outcomes and targets of the plan;*
   - o *incorporate Indigenous ecological knowledge, where appropriate, in accordance with agreed protocols and with prior approval of the Indigenous custodians of the knowledge;*
   - o *clearly articulate Indigenous land and sea management aspirations and opportunities and identify strategies to prioritise and implement them; and*
   - o *clearly identify the economic and social opportunities and benefits to be gained from Indigenous land and sea management aspirations and opportunities, including employment and training opportunities.*

Additional practices

3.6   The regional NRM organisation also has the following additional practices. *(please list)*

Any additional practices should include a clear description of the practice and how it is of benefit to the organisation and the Australian Government

Additional practices may include but not be limited to:

- Compliance with industry accepted standards that are over and above statutory/incorporation, legal and financial obligations. Any additional practice should not be one that could be considered as 'business as usual'. For regional NRM organisations that are Statutory Authorities, responding to state legislative requirements and obligations is considered business as usual.

Australian Government NRM Delivery

Performance Expectation 4 –Local community participation and engagement.

Regional NRM organisations play an important role in engaging and supporting their local community in prioritising and delivering NRM activities across their NRM region, including assisting them through partnerships and cooperative arrangements. It allows the Australian Government to be confident that the local community, including the Indigenous community, is participating in the planning and delivery of priority NRM and sustainable agricultural activities and contributing to wider social and economic benefits.

Expected practices

4.1 **The regional NRM organisation has a current community participation plan and a current Indigenous participation plan.**

This expected practice aims to demonstrate that the regional NRM organisation has high level commitment to community and Indigenous participation and works with the local community to identify appropriate approaches to participation.

Supporting evidence may include:

- A current **community participation plan** that identifies the stakeholder context for NRM in the region and includes appropriate participation approaches.

  Note - A community participation plan should support the organisation to improve its engagement and participation, provide clear guidance on the opportunities available through effective local community and Indigenous participation in NRM planning, programs and processes and clearly set out targets and measures of success to ensure the strategy is successfully implemented.

- A current **Indigenous participation plan** that identifies the Indigenous context for NRM in the region and includes appropriate participation approaches.

  Note - While the content and intent of an Indigenous participation plan will vary from region to region and across relevant tribal and language groups, there are a number of <u>key areas</u> that should be included and expanded on in a plan. These are:
    - o *Purpose;*
    - o *Acknowledgement of Country;*
    - o *Vision and guiding principles;*
    - o *Indigenous land and sea management across the region;*
    - o *Key objectives, outcomes and activities;*
    - o *Implementation of plan;*
    - o *Measures of success;*
    - o *Review and evaluation; and*
    - o *References for further information.*

4.2 **The regional NRM organisation has an established process in place that allows the local community to participate in priority setting and/or decision making.**

This expected practice aims to demonstrate that the regional NRM organisation involves the local community in decision making and priority setting.

Supporting evidence may include:

- Evidence of mechanisms that promote and facilitate ongoing local community participation in regional NRM planning and decision making.
- Evidence of local community involvement in the development and implementation of regional NRM priorities.

4.3   The regional NRM organisation is actively building the capacity of the local community to participate in NRM through funding support for training, on ground projects and related activities.

This expected practice aims to demonstrate that the regional NRM organisation is actively supporting the local community to participate in NRM.

Supporting evidence may include:

- Evidence of initiatives or mechanisms that support the local community to implement projects addressing local priorities and evidence of the funded activities.
- Evidence of initiatives or mechanisms that support local community participation in activities and training including, for example WHS; and evidence of the funded activities.
- A demonstrable increase in local community capacity and participation in NRM.
- Evidence of local community engagement and participation tools.
- Evidence of local community partnerships and cooperative arrangements.

4.4   The regional NRM organisation is actively supporting increased participation of Indigenous people in the planning and delivery of NRM projects and investment.*

This expected practice aims to demonstrate that a regional NRM organisation is actively increasing the number of Indigenous people participating in the planning and delivery of NRM projects and investment.

Supporting evidence may include:

- Evidence of initiatives to support increased participation of Indigenous people in NRM planning and delivery and evidence of funded activities.
- Evidence of mechanisms that support increased participation of Indigenous people in the planning and delivery of NRM projects and investment.
- A demonstrable increase in the participation of Indigenous people in the planning and delivery of NRM projects and investment.

*As of 2018, the following will be included as a part of this expected practice - a Reconciliation Action Plan is in place; a preferential procurement policy/strategy is in place to support local Indigenous businesses; and an Indigenous advisory group or similar that provides advice to the Board is in place.

Additional practices

4.5   The regional NRM organisation also has the following additional practices. *(please list)*

Any additional practices should include a clear description of the practice and how it is of benefit to the organisation <u>and</u> the Australian Government

Additional practices may include but not be limited to:

- Compliance with industry accepted standards that are over and above statutory/incorporation, legal and financial obligations. Any additional practice should not be one that could be considered as 'business as usual'. For regional NRM organisations that are Statutory Authorities, responding to state legislative requirements and obligations is considered business as usual.

Australian Government NRM Delivery

Performance Expectation 5 – Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Improvement

The Australian Government is committed to accountability and demonstrating that its NRM investments achieve desired NRM outcomes. Regional NRM organisations are expected to manage projects consistent with the principles of Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Improvement (MERI). MERI provides a model for designing outcomes based projects and assessing progress with project delivery, program performance and the change over time in resource condition against stated outcomes. It provides opportunities to adaptively improve program and project design and delivery and to reorient investment at key decision points.

Expected practices

5.1 The regional NRM organisation is providing comprehensive, accurate and timely project MERI plans and MERIT reporting.

This expected practice aims to demonstrate that a regional NRM organisation is fully competent in MERI and that MERI plans and MERIT reporting reflects Australian Government NRM priorities and is complying with Australian Government NRM contractual reporting obligations.

Supporting evidence may include:

- Documentation demonstrating high quality project planning and programme logic is applied during project delivery.
- Documentation demonstrating that monitoring and reporting is managed in a timely manner and meets contractual obligations.
- Documentation demonstrating how project activities and outcomes align and are contributing to Australian Government investment priorities.
- Documentation demonstrating that project MERI plans are being reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis using an evidence-based evaluation approach.
- Evidence of regular input of project data into MERIT as projects progress.

5.2 The regional NRM organisation is implementing processes to ensure that MERI activities are adequately resourced by appropriately skilled and informed staff.

This expected practice aims to demonstrate that a regional NRM organisation is committed to high quality MERI activities.

Supporting evidence may include:

- Evidence of processes and procedures that support MERI.
- Evidence of resourcing allocated to support MERI processes.
- Evidence of regular staff training/professional development in MERI.
- Evidence that contracted service providers to the regional NRM organisation have been made aware of their MERI requirements, including data/evidence collection associated with project delivery.
- Evidence of the timeliness and quality of MERI planning and reporting.

5.3 The regional NRM organisation is demonstrating and communicating progress towards NRM project outcomes through regular monitoring, evaluation and reporting of project performance and the use of results to guide improved practice.

This expected practice aims to demonstrate that a regional NRM organisation is using MERI processes appropriately to demonstrate and publically communicate progress towards project outcomes, improve delivery through adaptive management, and ensure appropriate local community and stakeholder participation in MERI processes.

Supporting evidence may include:

- Evidence that MERI is used to publically communicate and demonstrate NRM outcomes, including communication and promotion of project outcomes.
- Evidence of systems and processes used to inform continuous improvement/adaptive project management.
- Evidence of community and stakeholder involvement in MERI planning processes
- Evidence that project promotional materials and activities comply with contractual obligations.
- Public reporting of monitoring findings and the impact of NRM activities on the condition of the environment and production landscapes.

Additional practices
5.4   The regional NRM organisation also has the following additional practices. *(please list)*   Any additional practices should include a clear description of the practice and how it is of benefit to the organisation <u>and</u> the Australian Government
Additional practices may include but not be limited to: • Compliance with industry accepted standards that are over and above statutory/incorporation, legal and financial obligations. Any additional practice should not be one that could be considered as 'business as usual'. For regional NRM organisations that are Statutory Authorities, responding to state legislative requirements and obligations is considered business as usual.

Note - In the context of the National Landcare Programme and these performance expectations, it is recognised that the composition of the local community will likely differ between NRM regions. Depending on the NRM region, this might include stakeholders such as:

- identified landcare groups and other 'care' groups such as bushcare, coastcare, rivercare etc;
- 'friends of' groups and other community environment groups;
- farmer/producer groups and individuals;
- Indigenous people, communities and organisations; and
- individual land managers working in the landcare/NRM sector.