



Australian Government

Department of the Environment and Energy

Developing terms of reference— a guide



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Developing terms of reference – a guide

This guide or template can assist recovery teams in developing their terms of reference. Governance arrangements should be fit for purpose, so the template should be applied as suitable to the recovery team.

All recovery team members should participate in developing agreed terms of reference for the recovery team. The terms of reference describe the team's operating rules and should be one of the first items of business when the team is constituted.

The supporting 'Recovery team governance – best practice guidelines' provide further context and should be used in drafting terms of reference.

Terms of reference should include the following headings below, or similar.

1. Background
2. Role of the recovery team
3. Recovery team membership
4. Roles and responsibilities of recovery team members
5. Structure
6. Decision making
7. Operational arrangements
8. Review and reporting
9. Endorsement
10. National registration

The following pages provides suggestions of what recovery teams may want to address under each heading in their terms of reference. It can serve as a template.

Teams can then use the attached checklist to ensure they have considered and addressed all governance elements.

<Name> Recovery Team

Terms of Reference

1. BACKGROUND

The terms of reference should include a short general introduction which provides context for the operation of the recovery team. Include:

- a short description of the listed species or ecological community as well its/their status under both Commonwealth and relevant state/territory legislation;
- recovery plan/s or conservation advice and status (for example - in preparation, in review, in place);
- short history of the recovery team including how it was convened;
- other relevant context as needed.

2. ROLE OF THE RECOVERY TEAM

The terms of reference should clearly define the role that the group is to perform for a specified period of time. The functions of the group may change over time and/or several functions may need to occur concurrently - terms of reference can be updated accordingly.

For example: The primary function of the XXX Recovery Team is to coordinate the development of the Recovery Plan for the XXX species or ecological community. To achieve this, the Recovery Team will:

- hold regular meetings which will have the purpose of XXX.
- provide advice to XXX.
- broker and encourage involvement of key individuals to XXX.
- communicate outcomes of meetings to XXX.
- undertake annual reporting XXX.
- etc.

3. RECOVERY TEAM MEMBERSHIP

Terms of reference should list membership and explain the processes on how membership is established, who set up the team, how invitations for membership should be made. Include terms of appointment.

The “Recovery team governance – best practice guidelines’ provides guidance on what to consider to determine representation, knowledge and skills needed to perform the function. Membership can vary according to function (which may also change over time), availability of published information, and the rate at which decisions need to be made.

You may identify membership in a table such as:

Name	Organisation	Reason for membership (examples)
		Representative of Government Agency accountable for species/community
		Representative of [NGO/group] which aims to conserve the species/community
		Species expert Key landholder Geneticist Population modeller Communications/engagement expert Habitat / ecological process expert Threat management expert

4. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF RECOVERY TEAM MEMBERS

List the roles and responsibilities team members perform. Identify specific roles of any appointed office bearers. Consider the overall size of the group. Describe the terms and process that will be used to identify members and manage membership. You may identify membership in a table such as:

Position	Responsibilities (examples)
Chair	Arrange agenda Lead meetings Lead decision-making process Write and receive correspondence Act as spokesperson
Coordinator (if applicable)	Coordinate and chase-up action items Arrange meeting logistics Minute taking / noting agreed actions Circulate documents and maintain records Coordinate annual reporting Develop and disseminate communication products Seek funding opportunities
All members	Regularly attend and participate in meetings Contribute their skills, knowledge and experience Endeavour to align and coordinate the work of their organisation Report as necessary to their organisation to share knowledge on progress and issues in conservation of the XXX species or ecological community Identify gaps in the knowledge relevant to the conservation and management of the XXX species or ecological community - new research projects etc. Seek to make available relevant information held by the organisations they represent to assist the conservation and management process. Lead sub-groups (where required)

Include processes and timeframes for reviewing membership and roles, and how members will be elected. This may change at different stages of the recovery program. For example:

The above membership will be reviewed [insert time period annually, biennially etc., or specify a date xx/xx/20xx], and will be invited by [XXX]. The above position roles and responsibilities will be reviewed [insert time period annually, biennially etc., or specify a date xx/xx/20xx]. The position of chair [and include any other positions the team would like to vote on] will be

assigned according to [include method/process – voting at annual meeting, by consensus or more than 50% etc.].

5. STRUCTURE

Terms of reference should describe the structure of the recovery team, particularly if there are any sub groups and how they will interact with recovery team. Governance structures usually evolve over time, so allow structure to remain dynamic, where sub-groups are temporarily or permanently established to service specific functions. Consider team size and whether multi-unit structures are required.

6. DECISION MAKING

Terms of reference must clearly explain how decisions are to be made – for example by consensus, 50 per cent voting etc. Describe any relevant procedural processes, such as when and how the chair should call a vote. Consideration may be given to developing a conflict of interest policy.

7. OPERATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

Outline operational arrangements and processes. Where necessary detail arrangements/processes under these key areas:

- Meeting details
 - meeting locations / frequency (for example x times per year) / nature (i.e. face-to-face, phone, email)
 - records and minutes ,
 - protocols for conduct, conflict of interest, confidentiality
- Information management
 - how is information, including any data, managed within the team including any agreements associated with data usage
- Communication
 - procedures for communicating – within the team, externally beyond the team for example to partner organisations, broader recovery networks
 - communication messages;
 - communication tools, for example website (provide link)
- Fees and expenses
 - If applicable and where appropriate, costs and expenses for meetings and attendance

8. REVIEW AND REPORTING

Outline:

- procedures for reporting – within the team, any external obligations, how reporting is to be coordinated and communicated,
- procedures for reviewing the team's efficiency, effectiveness and terms or reference. Consideration should be given to seeking independent review.

9. ENDORSEMENT

These terms of reference have been endorsed by the recovery team on <date>

<signature>

<name>

Chair <XXX Recovery Team>

10. NATIONAL REGISTRATION

Include a statement as to whether the recovery team is nationally registered and date of registration, or whether registration is currently being sought, and how the team will maintain that registration through annual reporting.