

Appendix A – Summary of assurance activities for Regional Land Partnerships

(SP – Service Providers, Depts – The Departments [DAWR & DoEE])

Assurance Activity	Description / Accountable Party	Frequency	Triggers	Line of Defence
MERI Plan in MERIT	<p>• The Departments:</p> <p>A Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Improvement (MERI) Plan will be developed for each Service Provider's project and submitted online in the MERI Tool (MERIT). This Plan is to be maintained in respect of each project delivered under Regional Land Partnerships for the Departments to effectively identify and manage project delivery and risk. The MERI Plan will need to be submitted prior to commencement of project delivery for approval by the Departments. The content of the MERI Plan also provides clarity about how the Service Provider will meet the contracted Services in the Project Work Orders.</p> <p>• Service Providers:</p> <p>Prior to signing of a Project Work Order, each Service Provider will develop a comprehensive MERI Plan for each project and submit the details into MERIT for approval by the Departments.</p> <p>The content of the MERI Plan should include, but not be limited to, entries for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Primary Project outcomes and investment priorities; - Additional project benefits; - Project description - Key threats or key threatening processes - National and regional plans; - Project risk assessment; - Project rationale; - Project methodology; - Monitoring indicators; - Project baseline(s); and - - Services to be delivered (as per the Project work Order). <p>Project reporting in MERIT will be based on the effective and timely delivery of the contracted Services in line with the MERI Plan and payments will be based on achievement of these Services.</p> <p>The content of the MERI Plan in MERIT will need to be maintained by the Service Provider in respect of each project they will deliver under Regional Land Partnerships.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The MERI Plan will need to be submitted by the Service Provider in MERIT and approved by the Departments prior to signing of a Project work Order. • The MERI Plan will need to be reviewed on a regular basis by the Service Provider for validity and currency and re-submitted for approval should any changes to project delivery or risk occur. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project proposal / early agreement • Design and establishment of any new project • Regular review 	<p>1 – Service Providers</p> <p>2 – Departments</p>
Performance monitoring and reporting	<p>• The Departments:</p> <p>Service Providers will regularly monitor and report on their performance at delivering contracted Services under the signed Regional Land Partnerships Services Agreement. The Service Providers MERI Plans will provide a clear statement of their rationale and methodology for monitoring the delivery of Project Work Order services. Reporting is done through MERIT, and provides a regular snapshot of progress for Departmental Project Managers.</p> <p>• Service Providers:</p> <p>Service Providers are required to monitor and report on their achievements at delivering NRM interventions including any emerging or imminent risks. This includes updating MERI Plans and risk assessments as needed. Reporting against the MERI Plan is done through MERIT, which gives a regular snapshot of a projects progress while also providing relevant information to allow Departmental Project Managers to determine how a project is performing and delivering on its Project Work Order. Service Providers should utilise the existing MERI Framework for the projects ongoing evaluation methodology to inform a process of continuous improvement.</p> <p>The Service Provider must provide the following reports in respect of each project:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Outputs Report - Annual Report - Outcomes report 1 - Outcomes report 2 (for Project Work Orders with a duration of 3 or more years) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Core Services</i> - Reports accompanying invoices to the Departments or more frequently if agreed to in the Services Agreement • <i>Project Services</i> –Reports accompanied by invoices to the Departments. Includes a mid-year report and an annual report. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required under Services Agreements 	<p>1 – Service Providers</p> <p>2 – Departments</p>
Project management	<p>• The Departments:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular and ongoing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular and ongoing 	<p>1/2 – Departments</p>

Assurance Activity	Description / Accountable Party	Frequency	Triggers	Line of Defence
	<p>Departmental Project Managers will be responsible for the administration of the Services Agreements under Regional Land Partnerships. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - initial development of a risk assessment for each Service Provider and each of their projects; - regular review of risks in line with MERIT progress reports (including alignment of Project Services with the MERI Framework); - assessment of Services delivery; - invoice payments; and - on-going engagement with Service Providers. <p>They will also be responsible for identification and notification of any emerging risks requiring further action.</p> <p>• Service Providers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - maintain regular, on-going relationships and communications with the Departments, primarily through their designated Departmental Project Managers. - respond to requests from Departmental Project Managers for any additional or clarifying information in relation to the Service Providers monitoring and reporting in MERIT. - provide advice and information on any change to the project risk profile of impediments or delays to delivery of contracted Services. - if the need arises to address a delay, unforeseen circumstances, or other change that will alter the delivery of the project from that agreed to in the Services Agreement a request with a clear explanation will need to be provided to the designated Departmental Project Manager. 			
Compliance checks	<p>• The Departments:</p> <p>Departmental staff or a nominated representative may conduct ad hoc or regular compliance checks to ensure that Service Providers are complying with the Services Agreement and Schedules. The need for a compliance check may arise based on the quality and content of the Service Providers MERIT reporting, advice and information received highlighting a potential non-compliance, or if the Service Provider indicates a possible breach or non-compliance themselves.</p> <p>• Service Providers:</p> <p>When reporting in MERIT there are a number of specific responses required indicating that the Service Provider is currently compliant and delivering their obligations and responsibilities under the Agreement. It is important if these specific components are not being met it is clearly identified and separately notified to the Department Project Manager.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular and as required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spot checks as determined • Adverse findings during Departmental contract management processes • Notification of compliance issues by the Service Provider / external sources • 	2/3 – Departments
<p>Audits</p> <p><i>(of Service Providers' delivery of Core and Project Services)</i></p>	<p>• The Departments:</p> <p>Audits will be conducted for all Service Providers throughout the duration of the Services Agreement. In Year One, initial desktop audits will be conducted based on a predetermined series of criteria developed in order to ensure compliance with the Program objectives. Structured and documented audits, including desktop and onsite audits, will be conducted on a regular basis by experienced and qualified Departmental officers or nominated representative. Audit content and focus will be informed by the Service Providers obligations and responsibilities under their Services Agreements and Schedules and will include audits of both Core Services and Project Services.</p> <p>Each Service provider will have at least one desktop and at least one on-site audit during the program with other possible random or targeted audits as required if triggered.</p> <p>Additional audits may also occur outside of the schedule if triggered by issues like fraud, corruption, and non-compliance or breaches of Services Agreements.</p> <p>Audits will be conducted in line with Australian Auditing Standards and internal Departmental auditing procedures and policies.</p> <p>The Departmental Audit Team will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Notify Service Providers of the scheduled audit date and audit criteria - Discuss requirements in terms of evidence required and access to staff - Provide a letter of confirmation and intention to audit - Provide documentation to assist the Service Provider prepare for the audit - Conduct the audit at an agreed time, either as a desktop or onsite. 	<p><u>Core Services:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least one scheduled desktop audit in year one for all Service Providers • Additional site audit/s as required, if triggered <p><u>Project Services:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least one scheduled site audit during the project period for all Service Providers • Additional site audit/s as required, if triggered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scheduled audits • Adverse findings during compliance checks or contract management processes • Requested by Service Providers for continual improvement • External advice indicating a potential non-compliance or breach of Services Agreement. • Follow-up to confirm adverse findings of a previous audit have been addressed 	2/3 – Departments

Assurance Activity	Description / Accountable Party	Frequency	Triggers	Line of Defence
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discuss initial findings of the audit to check for accuracy and address any issues raised - Provide a Final Audit Report including any actions to address any non-compliances <p>• Service Providers :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide the Departmental audit team with full and free access to staff, premises, and identified sites as required - Provide documented evidence to confirm Services are being delivered in accordance with the Agreement - Provide facilities and assistance to the Audit Team during onsite audits - Respond in reasonable timeframes to requests for access to relevant staff, sites and information to assist in the efficient conduct of the audit - Respond in a timely manner to requests to address any non-compliances identified by auditors. 			
Investigations	<p>• The Departments:</p> <p>Investigations may be instigated where anomalies are identified in delivery or provision of Services. Matters that may be investigated include breaches of the Services Agreement or legislation, regulations, allegations of fraud or non-compliance. The Biodiversity Conservation Division would refer the matter to the Departments Office of Compliance who have policies and processes in place for conducting investigations internally or, if necessary, accessing external investigators.</p> <p>• Service Providers:</p> <p>Where a Departmental investigation may be triggered, a Service Provider's cooperation would be sought.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As needed in response to triggers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adverse findings during compliance check, audit or Departmental contract management processes • Work Health and Safety incident investigation • Notification of compliance issues by the Service Provider / external sources 	2/3 – Departments
Program reviews	<p>• The Departments:</p> <p>Regular reviews, monitoring, and evaluation activities may be undertaken by the Departments for purposes including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Compliance checks; - Quality assurance and audit; and - Evaluation of Services <p>Program and departmental reviews contribute to a broader continual improvement process. A review of Regional Land Partnerships will be conducted mid-way through and at the end of the program to determine effectiveness in delivering stated outcomes. Participation of Service Providers will inform these reviews.</p> <p>• Service Providers:</p> <p>A Departmental program review may seek a Service Providers cooperation for the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Allowing for personnel to interviewed; - Access to premises, records, and personnel; - Facilitating access to sites where Services will or have been performed; - Participation in the review, research, or other associated activities; - Fully implement any recommendations in specified timeframes that may arise from a review; and - To bear its own costs in relation to the review. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mid-program • End of program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scheduled 	<p>3 – Departments</p> <p>4 – External</p>
Internal audits	<p>• The Departments:</p> <p>The Departments have processes in place for conducting independent internal audits and these audits may take place as necessary. Internal auditing is an independent, objective assurance and consulting activity designed to add value and improve Departmental operations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scheduled or as needed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scheduled as part of an annual work plan • In response to adverse findings of an audit or attention from an external source • Gateway check 	3/4 – External
Audits by Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) (external)	<p>• The Departments:</p> <p>ANAO conducts regular audits on programs through a sample of specific contracts and projects, to determine compliance and delivery of best practice. The ANAO drives accountability and transparency in the Australian Government sector through quality evidence-based audit services and independent reporting to Parliament, Executive of agencies and the public, with the aim to improve public sector performance.</p> <p>• Service Providers:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scheduled by ANAO or as needed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scheduled as part of an annual work plan, or as needed. The first ANAO audit of Regional Land Partnerships is scheduled to be conducted in 2018-19. 	4 – External

Assurance Activity	Description / Accountable Party	Frequency	Triggers	Line of Defence
	While an ANAO audit will generally not directly impact Service Providers, the findings may provide suggested improvements to the program and its ongoing management. This may have an indirect flow-on effect to Service Providers through improvements the Departments' may implement to program management.			