

Protecting our Places - Program Evaluation

Trust Administration Analysis

Evaluation

The Environmental Trust has in place a rolling platform of independent evaluations of all of its contestable grant programs. These evaluations explore the strengths and weaknesses of the respective program and assist the Trust in the refinement of objectives, value and scope of future funding rounds.

In accordance with this procedure, the Trust's Protecting our Places (POP) program was the focus of an independent evaluation in 2015. The POP program was established by the Trust in 2002 to specifically fund Aboriginal organisations to deliver projects that protect land that is culturally significant to Aboriginal people and support education projects about the environment and its importance in Aboriginal life. The program had been previously evaluated in 2005 and 2009.

Trust Administration engaged Inca Consulting to undertake an evaluation of the program over the period of 2009 to 2014. Inca Consulting were chosen due to their extensive experience in evaluating government initiatives across a variety of sectors, including recent projects with the Office of Environment and Heritage, NSW EPA, and various local governments. They also, more importantly, had strong credentials in evaluating programs aimed at Aboriginal people and working with Aboriginal communities across NSW.

A final evaluation report was submitted to Trust Administration in November 2015.

Evaluation Findings

The Program Evaluation Report concluded that the Protecting our Places program provides '*benefit to the Trust in meeting its aims and obligations*' and '*more importantly, ... provides an opportunity to support environmental works on Aboriginal lands in NSW and ... a conduit to Aboriginal communities for the delivery of culturally appropriate environmental education*'.

The program has, between 2009 and 2014, provided small grants for 79 projects. '*The projects have featured a variety of activities including weeding, bush regeneration, provision of walking trails, fencing and other protection of environmentally and culturally sensitive sites, bush tucker gardens, interpretive signage, community education and engagement activities, the production of educational and cultural resources and so forth.*'

The projects have been associated with a host of environmental outcomes. For example, for grants awarded in the year of 2011, the following outcomes were measured:

- At least 135 hectares were weeded.
- At least 119 hectares of bush was regenerated.
- Nearly 9,000 new plants were established.
- At least 183 educational events were run, engaging at over 1,500 participants.
- Other education and engagement activities reached over 111,000 people.
- At least 745 school students were engaged through the projects in some way.

'In addition, a host of ancillary outcomes have been seen, most notably the provision of employment and work experience opportunities for Aboriginal people, enhancement of the viability of Aboriginal bush regeneration teams and the like, the strengthening of relationships between Aboriginal community and other local organisations, the engagement of non-Aboriginal people and the showcasing of the ability of Aboriginal community organisations to carry out worthwhile projects.'

However, the report also noted that, 'the Trust has experienced some serious difficulties in managing poor grantee performance and obtaining information about project outcomes. The program has an administrative cost that is much higher (proportionally) than other Trust grant programs.'

The report then states that 'there is evidence of better grantee performance and more timely provision of information to the Trust, observed in the last few years (since 2011). It is likely that stronger outcomes will be seen from the pool of projects that are currently in progress (but for which outcomes data is not yet available).'

Analysis

The evaluation of any contestable grant program run by the Trust is an opportunity to get an independent assessment of the health of the program and identify the possible options and/or opportunities for the future delivery of that program. The evaluation of the POP program was especially relevant given the complex political and social context surrounding the program.

As identified by the Evaluation Report, the POP program has been a challenging program to administer, with examples of significant poor performance, lack of communication, and dubious financial probity by a number of grantees. However, many of these cases are legacy issues from grant rounds prior to the period of this evaluation (2009-2014), but are still being dealt with by Trust Administration.

As stated, the report suggests that *'there is evidence of better grantee performance ... in the last few years (since 2011)'*, and this claim is supported by Trust Administration. Therefore, the overall intent of the recommendations in the evaluation is one of 'evolution, not revolution'.

Value of POP

The original establishment of the POP program was in response to the concern of the Trust that Aboriginal community organisations were not pursuing or being successful in applying for 'mainstream' grants available through other Trust programs. In other words, the program was *'established at the discretion of the Trust – there is no specific requirement in the Act to make grants to any particular types of organisations or communities'*.

Therefore the POP program has a unique place in the portfolio of contestable grant programs run by the Trust – as it is the only program that is restricted to a specific section of the community.

While the report concluded that *'the POP program was thought to be a valuable inclusion in the suite of programs managed by the Trust'* because of its role within *'the wider NSW Government context where support for Aboriginal communities is a priority'*, it also highlighted a range of other substantive benefits of the program. These included getting positive environmental outcomes on the significant lands managed by Local Aboriginal Land Councils, and providing *'a conduit to Aboriginal communities to allow access to environmental and cultural knowledge and to allow this to be shared within the community'*.

However, more importantly the Evaluation outlined the value of the program to the Aboriginal community and the range of activities that it allowed *'Local Land Councils, groups of elders and other community members to do that could otherwise not necessarily be pursued, for example:*

- Identifying land that was of environmental and cultural importance to the local Aboriginal community and to learn more about the significance of that land.
- Undertaking works to rehabilitate and/or protect land of significance.
- Finding ways to 'reinvigorate the cultural elements of the land'.
- Engaging the local Aboriginal community, young people in particular, and encouraging them to learn about the local area.
- Engaging non-Aboriginal people and providing opportunities for them to work alongside Aboriginal people and to learn more about local Aboriginal culture.
- Providing an opportunity to generate and demonstrate pride in the Aboriginal community's cultural and environmental knowledge and the community's ability to manage worthwhile projects.
- Providing employment, work experience and skills development opportunities, particularly for young Aboriginal people in regional areas, and providing opportunities to 'work on country'.
- Supporting existing work teams (eg bush regeneration teams) and adding to their ongoing viability
- Providing opportunities for collaboration and positive working relationships with other organisations – schools, local councils, NPWS, Local Land Services, etc.'

Grantee Performance

The issue of poor grantee performance has been a major one for the POP program, with *'significant difficulties in its early years'* creating *'an administrative burden on the Trust that has endured through until 2015'*. Performance issues included:

- Many grantees had difficulties in meeting the timelines and there were many instances of M&E plans, [progress] and final reports and audited financial statements being provided well after the due date. Extensions were granted for a fairly large proportion of projects.

- A considerable amount of correspondence was exchanged between the Trust and grantees in establishing the status of projects. There were many examples of correspondence being unanswered by grantees.
- Many projects encountered significant challenges brought about by a variety of organisational and external factors. These challenges impacted on timelines but were 'worked through' by the grantee, sometimes with the assistance of the Trust.

Therefore the Evaluation Report includes a range of Recommendations that focus on creating an environment for improved grantee performance, including changes to support mechanisms by Trust Administration. These recommendations and the Administrative Response are set out in the attached table. While Trust Administration accept the logic and intent of these recommendations, and will look at ways to implement them, some have potential resource implications that raise concerns over our ability to deliver over the life of a project.

Grantee Capacity

As stated in the report, *'grant recipients are generally not well-resourced organisations and they may lack capacity, particularly in terms of project management skills, project budgeting and the methods for reporting on environmental outcomes'*. The Trust carries this understanding into its interactions with grantees and provides support where and how it can within budget constraints.

Again there are a number of Recommendations that focus on building the capacity of Aboriginal organisations as applicants and grantees. While Trust Administration understand the value of such recommendations in some cases these are outside the capacity and legislative function of the Trust. In other words, despite the obvious benefit. It is not the Trust's job to solve the capacity issue of Aboriginal organisations. However, the Trust will work with other relevant government agencies and Aboriginal organisations to identify relevant information that could better inform our understanding of the capacity needs of Aboriginal communities and organisations.

Administrative Processes

While the report stated that according to stakeholders the *'application process, in particular the application form, was regarded as overly detailed and complex'*, it also acknowledged that the Trust required a certain level of information to adequately assess the merit of the application and that the application process is *'itself a means of gauging whether an applicant has the capacity to manage the project using public funds'*. Trust Administration has already instigated a process of continual improvement for the accessibility of all documentation, with the report noting that *'improvements and simplifications have been made to the application process in recent rounds and that many of the frustrations expressed related to the 'old process''*.

Project Planning and Reporting

The Report outlined a series of concerns raised by grantees about monitoring and evaluation (M&E) reporting. In fact, *'several grantees complained vociferously about the requirement and said that it would deter them from applying for future POP grants'*. Similarly, providing the required interim and final report to the Trust was regarded as *'burdensome'* by grantees.

However, these complaints are not unique to the POP program, with some minor complaints also coming from grantees under other programs. Trust Administration has been working hard over the last few years to streamline and simplify project planning and reporting to reduce the burden on grantees, however still strongly support the need for such planning and reporting. The allocation of public funds must be managed in an open and transparent manner, and grantees should be required to plan and report on the expenditure of those funds.

That being said, Trust Administration will continue to look at different approaches that may be more culturally appropriate for Aboriginal grantees to comply with Trust requirements, especially in progress and final reporting. For example a narrative report supported by chronological time-ordered images of events as they occur, or as the grantee achieves established milestones contained within the Project (M&E) Plan. This model could also be used for verbal reports where there would need to be a minimal visual element to prove that works were completed in accordance with the Project Plan.

Overall however, Trust Administration acknowledges that there needs to be more emphasis placed upon the importance of the M&E (or project) plan as a tool that assists the grantee manage their project rather than as an administrative tool used by the Trust. This process has already begun.

Program Design (Funding Model)

The current program design allows for any incorporated and registered Aboriginal organisation or community group to apply for funding. Aboriginal groups who are not incorporated may also apply, but must be supported

by another organisation (administrator of the grant). While there are many examples of individual Aboriginal organisations successfully managing POP grants, the Evaluation Report found that *'projects that were delivered by an Aboriginal community organisation in association with a Local Council or some other organisation tended to be better documented and to show stronger outcomes'*.

This finding led to the recommendation that the Trust amend the program design to *'encourage grant applications from consortia that feature an Aboriginal community organisation in partnership with one or more other organisations'*. However, it was strongly noted in the report that this should not be made a mandatory requirement of any application to the program.

The report also noted that *'there was value in the POP program in allowing existing or past projects to be extended or augmented'*. It also said that POP grants allowed for *'the establishment or first stage of a project that could be continued or expanded upon in future using other funds or in-kind resources'*. In particular, it was noted that a project that had been initiated with a POP grant often resulted in the provision of local council or NPWS funds or other resources to *'see the project through'*.

Recommendation

The report findings and the resulting Recommendations provide an opportunity to look at a revised program design to improve efficiency and effectiveness of Trust investment. This could include prioritising partnership projects that possess a greater sustainability focus (both institutional and project planning) and scale through a multi-stage project development pathway.

These projects could incorporate a smaller Stage 1 project (\$15k – \$35k) over 1–2 years followed by a larger (\$50k - \$100k) Stage 2 project over a further 2–3 years. Stage 2 projects would build upon the outcomes developed in Stage 1 and mentoring by Trust Administration and other agencies could occur at the beginning of both stages to reinforce knowledge gained through the pathway.

Any suggested change to the program design should be discussed with relevant Aboriginal organisations and stakeholders to determine if our proposed approach is appropriate.

POP Evaluation - Management Response

No.	Recommendation	Response
Overview		
1	<p>Through continued promotion of the POP program, the Trust should aim to always attract a sufficient number of applications to allow the selection of a diverse set of high quality projects. Should the number of quality applications received grow further, some consideration should be given to an increase in the total fund set aside for POP projects.</p>	<p>Accepted.</p> <p>The Trust will continue to look for opportunities to improve the promotion of the program to relevant Aboriginal communities and organisations to encourage a sufficient number of applications.</p>
Measurable Project Outcomes		
2	<p>The Trust should always acknowledge the significant in-kind contribution of grantees but explore ways of shielding grantees from unexpected financial impacts by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing larger grants or access to additional 'emergency' funds. • Providing some cautionary tips to POP applicants via the POP website, application forms etc. • Assessing successful applications in order to identify potential over-runs or risks to grantees and to bring this to the attention of grantees, encouraging them to scale down projects as required. • Openly communicating with grantees from the outset and throughout projects to help identify and work through issues that may be financially burdensome on grantees. 	<p>Partly Accepted.</p> <p>The Trust acknowledges in-kind contributions from all grantees, but will investigate ways to address the issue of unexpected financial impacts on grantees.</p> <p>This will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Looking at the implications of increasing the size of grants. • Continuing to look at ways of improving guidance material for applicants and grantees. • Continuing to work with grantees on reducing risk. • Continuing to build strong and open relationships with grantees. • Identifying (during the assessment process) risks applicants may face and providing feedback to applicants before committing to funding agreements.
Importance of POP to Aboriginal organisations		
3	<p>In assessing grant applications, the Trust should give particular consideration to projects that are an extension of an existing (successful) project or a precursor to an ongoing program of work. Grantees should be mentored and encouraged to think about projects in the context of an ongoing program of environmental work and to use POP as a catalyst for leveraging other sources of funds. At the completion of projects, the Trust should initiate a dialogue about 'next steps' and encourage grantees to submit proposals for further funding, whether through the Environmental Trust or other sources.</p>	<p>Partly Accepted.</p> <p>The Trust will review the current funding model used by the POP program to identify options for improving the availability of funds for these types of projects. This may include the introduction of a 2 stage application process that identifies a larger project involving discrete components through an EOI and then focusses on particular components for a more detailed application.</p> <p>The review of the current funding model will also consider how an alternative design can incorporate and address the important aboriginal community values expressed within the report (p16).</p>
Building capacity in Aboriginal organisations		
4	<p>The Trust should develop a better understanding of the capacity needs of Aboriginal community organisations and the available services and agencies that can help or are helping to build capacity. The Trust could offer, for example, better access to advice or resources to assist with project management techniques, book-keeping and budget management, evaluation and monitoring, report writing and sustainability leadership.</p>	<p>Partially Accepted.</p> <p>The capacity building activities suggested, although beneficial in assisting grantees to implement their projects more effectively, in most part are outside the capacity and legislative function of the Trust.</p>

No.	Recommendation	Response
		<p>The Trust will continue to work with other relevant government agencies (ie Department of Aboriginal Affairs) to identify relevant information that could better inform our understanding of the capacity needs of Aboriginal communities and organisations.</p> <p>However, for this to be more effective, the Trust may need greater support from other government organisations and build additional partnerships (e.g. NSWALC).</p>
5	<p>The Trust should establish a mechanism for allowing grantees to signal their support needs at the outset, so that appropriate support can be provided or brokered. For example, grantees should be asked to indicate their level of comfort in preparing reports on the environmental outcomes achieved through their projects. A grantee interview or survey could be administered soon after a grant is awarded and grantees referred to sources of assistance that are identified.</p>	<p>Partially Accepted.</p> <p>While the concept of this recommendation is supported, it has potential resource implications for Trust Administration that raise concerns over our ability to deliver over the life of a project. The Trust requirements around reporting are a threshold that must be met and generally, organisations that do not want to comply do not apply.</p> <p>For this situation to be feasible, the Trust would have to implement the program as a multi-stakeholder collaboration program pulling relevant, skilled and well-resourced organisations together to offer / support the types of assistance identified during the interview process.</p>
6	<p>The effort to build <i>organisational capacity</i> should be understood as a process of building <i>individual capacities</i>. Any dialogue with POP applicants and grantees about 'capacity' would be usefully and perhaps more clearly framed around 'individual training needs'.</p>	<p>Partially Accepted</p> <p>While it is accepted that '<i>organisational capacity</i>' is based on '<i>individual capacity</i>', the POP program is not designed to be a training program. While it does and can fund training, it is focussed on actually restoring or rehabilitating Aboriginal land or land that is culturally significant to Aboriginal people. To achieve that objective, there is a need to build the broader capacity of Aboriginal organisations to deliver quality projects. This role sits outside of the Trust.</p>
7	<p>The Trust should discuss with the M&E contractor the strategies that could be employed to ensure that there is a higher degree of engagement from grantees with regards to monitoring and evaluation. There should be some agreement reached on the amount of assistance that should be provided and the responses to a lack of engagement on the part of grantees.</p>	<p>Accepted</p> <p>The agreement with the 'M&E contractor' already includes guidance to the amount of assistance that should be provided to grantees, and actions required for appropriate communication with grantees.</p> <p>However, the need for further work on improving the communication and engagement with grantees is accepted.</p> <p>One option under the current funding model, would be to enable the contractor to revisit each project at the conclusion of the first reporting period to work with each grantee and facilitate a review and incorporate lessons learned into their following year (ie. adaptive management).</p> <p>However, this would incur an additional financial burden for one off projects which could be considered an ineffective allocation of resources. The implementation of this approach could become better value if multi-stage projects were allowed, where intervention at the correct time could really increase the effectiveness of projects and ensure on-going capacity building at a practical level.</p>
8	<p>A mechanism should be created for providing monitoring and evaluation advice and mentoring throughout the project, at least for those grantees that need it. The aim would be to ensure that the M&E plan remains central to the project and that grantees develop some real M&E skills and capacity. This could be achieved through an expansion of the role of the M&E contractor and/or the grants administrator function.</p>	<p>Partially Accepted.</p> <p>While the concept of this recommendation is supported, it has potential resource implications for Trust Administration that raise concerns over our ability to deliver.</p>

No.	Recommendation	Response
Reasons for projects experiencing difficulty		
9	Formal communications from the Trust and informal communications from the grants administrator should always carry an understanding tone and acknowledge the constraints faced by Aboriginal community organisations . Clearly, the grants administrator needs to have a deep understanding of the operating environment of these organisations and have the ability to work collaboratively. The aim should be to present the grant agreement as a partnership and to avoid a perception of a paternal or 'us and them' relationship . This relationship should be cemented from the outset and every effort should be made to let grantees know that the Trust is 'here to help'.	Accepted. The view that grant agreements are a 'partnership' between the Trust and the grantee is consistent with current message being promoted by Trust Administration with <u>all</u> grantees. It was clear from the report that there is a common misconception amongst POP grantees relating to outlook and role of the Trust. This could be due to a legacy of previous interactions with government agencies and/or power and control relationships that may have been in play. However, the Trust may need to approach things differently (reposition ourselves) utilising more culturally appropriate methods to convey that we have just as much stake in a project as the grantee does, and we want to assist them to solve problems, rather than just focussing on compliance and punishment.
Assessing applications		
10	The Trust should continue to provide workshops to assist potential grantees with their applications and to recommend sources of available assistance. The Trust should also continue to assess applications carefully and to work with applicants to help shape projects that contribute to the Trust's objectives and that reduce risks for both the Trust and grantees.	Accepted. Trust Administration will continue to look at the best ways of assisting applicants, including through the provision of regional workshops. However, with only one Aboriginal officer available covering the state, a series of workshops around all regions may not be the most appropriate delivery mechanism. There could be regional workshops or the focus of the funding model could shift to particular regions on a periodic rotating basis so that greater levels of attention could be devoted to one area (problematic though in itself). In addition, more opportunities may be created for Trust staff to engage with indigenous communities / applicants (when they are visiting other projects in the area) to assist in overcoming misconception about power / control relationships.
11	The POP Technical Committee should be dissuaded from approving projects that lack merit or which carry too much risk . It should be emphasised that it is preferable to not allocate the entire funding pool than to create risk and an ongoing burden for both the Trust and Aboriginal community organisations.	Partially Accepted. It is likely that this comment refers to projects where the Technical Committee has recommended projects with significant conditions. While there is no evidence that the Technical Committee has recommended projects that lack merit, there may be some cases where the level of risk was too high. Now that there are sufficient high quality applications, there is less need to bring projects 'above the line' through conditions.
12	The Trust should develop a grantee risk assessment and management framework and ensure that appropriate referee checks are completed.	Accepted. Trust Administration is already working on the development of a Risk Register for all grantees to monitor past and current performance to influence future investment decisions.
Application process from grantee perspective		
13	In assessing POP applications, the Trust should take a broader view of 'environmental outcomes' and acknowledge that 'environment' and 'culture' are inextricable in the context of Aboriginal land . The Trust should avoid insisting that grantees revise their proposals in order to fit within a non-Aboriginal paradigm.	Partially Accepted. While the Trust could consider taking a broader interpretation of 'environmental outcomes', it may be restricted by the legislation under which it operates. The Trust would be required to work with Aboriginal communities to determine these interpretations in more detail.

No.	Recommendation	Response
		<p>There is currently no issue for Aboriginal applicants identifying potential projects that meet both their cultural objectives and the Trust's environmental ones. Projects that are purely cultural are not eligible.</p> <p>Most project revisions are recommended by the Technical Committee which has a majority membership of Aboriginal people.</p>
14	<p>Periodically review the application form and associated materials in light of grantee feedback and continue to strive for an application form that is as simple as possible while meeting the information needs of the Trust.</p>	<p>Accepted.</p> <p>This is standard practice for all Trust contestable programs.</p> <p>Trust Administration staff could prepare case studies of previous successful POP projects and provide relevant reference materials that could potentially be used by applicants whilst preparing their applications etc.</p>
Partnership applications		
15	<p>The Trust should more strongly encourage grant applications from consortia that feature an Aboriginal community organisation <i>in partnership</i> with one or more other organisations. The program's supporting materials should make it clear that the Trust will have high regard for applications that – as well as satisfying the program's guidelines – set out partnerships arrangements and the roles to be played by project partners. Eligibility should not, however, be entirely contingent on Aboriginal community organisations partnering with another organisation. The advantages of working in partnership should be promoted to Aboriginal community organisations.</p>	<p>Accepted</p> <p>The Trust has moved towards prioritising funding for partnership (or consortium) applications, especially in some of its newer large scale programs (i.e. Bush Connect, Saving our Species Partnerships). To date this has been very well received by stakeholders and led to the development of very strong proposals.</p> <p>The implementation of this model within the POP program has some potential risks, including the perception of inability of Aboriginal organisations to manage grants, as well as other organisations using Aboriginal organisations to gain funding but not truly including them in projects.</p> <p>However, the potential benefits (especially reduced investment risk) as outlined in the evaluation suggest that this is could be a positive approach to take.</p> <p>A partnership approach could also open the way to offer larger scale grants for indigenous-themed projects, especially where project governance arrangements are strengthened.</p>
Developing M&E plans		
16	<p>There should be an effort to reposition M&E as a tool for helping grantees to better deliver projects and to allow successes to be celebrated, rather than simply being a means of 'reporting to the funding body'. This could be a key message delivered by the M&E contractor and one that is emphasised in communications with applicants and grantees.</p>	<p>Accepted.</p> <p>Trust Administration is currently reviewing the 'Monitoring and Evaluation Plan' (M&E) to reposition it as a 'Project Plan' to assist in transitioning the application proposal into an implementation project.</p> <p>Guidelines on how to plan are a project are easily accessible and could be used by the Trust to outline a suggested project development process.</p> <p>Repositioning the M&E Plan (Project Plan) as a tool to assist grantees track their project and assist with adaptive project management, rather than a perception that it is a Trust administration process, might be a proactive approach.</p>

No.	Recommendation	Response
Preparing reports		
17	<p>The Trust should establish a mechanism for allowing grantees to signal their support needs at the outset, so that appropriate support can be provided or brokered. For example, grantees should be asked to indicate their level of comfort in preparing reports on the environmental outcomes achieved through their projects. As appropriate, suggestions could be made for finding the necessary skills, whether through a partner organisation or an external party.</p>	<p>Partially Accepted - Also see Recommendation 5</p> <p>While the concept of this recommendation is supported, it has potential resource implications for Trust Administration that raise concerns over our ability to deliver over the life of a project.</p>
18	<p>The Trust should trial a process that allows grantees to use alternate means to report on the outcomes of their projects. For example, grantees who may struggle with preparing written reports could be allowed to provide a verbal report through an interview with the grant administrator or other Trust representative. There would obviously remain a requirement for grantees to provide an audited financial report and this option should be exercised only when an acceptable written report may not be forthcoming.</p>	<p>Partially Accepted.</p> <p>Trust Administration is investigating a range of options for alternate ways of reporting on a grant across all of its programs. This is consistent with the Trust’s principles of equity, accountability and appropriateness. However, the Trust may be restricted in some options due to legislative, regulatory and audit requirements.</p> <p>A range of options could be determined, following further collaboration with indigenous groups, with guidelines prepared by Trust Administration. These guidelines would provide clear direction on overarching content, minimum quality expectations, etc.</p>
Trust administration		
19	<p>The Trust should continue to acknowledge the high support needs and administrative cost of the program and ensure that person with appropriate background and work style is selected to fill the position of grant administrator. The selection criteria for the POP grants administrator should ensure that they, among other things:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify as an Aboriginal person. 2. Have experience in working with Aboriginal community organisations and have an understanding of the cultural and operational context of Aboriginal community organisations. 3. Have good problem-solving skills and like to work in a collaborative way. 4. Have good interpersonal skills and conflict resolution skills. 	<p>Partially Accepted</p> <p>While Trust Administration recognises the high support needs of the program, it must also ensure equity in program support levels and staff member workloads.</p> <p>The selection criteria recommended are already included within the Role Description (and relevant capabilities) of the Aboriginal Programs Officer role.</p>
20	<p>There should be an effort to be more proactive in following up with grantees, to obtain verbal updates on the progress of projects. Making personal visits to a selection of project locations should be a part of the duties of the grant administrator. The POP grant administrator should have a work plan that ensures:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All grantees are contacted on a regular basis and that grantee relationships are monitored. 2. A risk management plan for each project is maintained. 3. Support and other ‘interventions’ are provided in a timely fashion. 4. A register of available support/capacity building service providers is maintained. 	<p>Partially Accepted</p> <p>While the concept of this recommendation is supported, it has potential resource implications for Trust Administration that raise concerns over our ability to deliver over the life of a project.</p> <p>Maintaining regular communication with all grantees and keeping up to date with project progress is already a key objective of Trust Administration. With over 700 active grants at any one time, the availability of resources will determine when and where site visits are undertaken.</p> <p>A risk management plan is already a required component of the Application Form and Monitoring & Evaluation Plan for every project. However, Trust Administration will continue to look at ways to strengthen the ongoing implementation of these.</p>

No.	Recommendation	Response
Program promotion		
21	The methods used to promote the POP program should be continued. While the regional workshops may at times be poorly attended, they clearly provide benefit. There may be an opportunity to provide some training or other capacity building activities to coincide with the workshops that may help to boost attendance as well as provide a further benefit to potential grantees.	<p>Accepted.</p> <p>Trust Administration will continue to look at the best ways of promoting the program, including through the provision of regional workshops.</p> <p>These workshops could potentially be coupled with other related activities like sessions on project conception, design / planning, risk assessment, budget calculation etc.</p>
Program governance		
22	The Trust should consider the advantages and disadvantages of a Technical Committee comprised of experienced, long-serving members. Some consideration should be given to the suggestion for refreshing the committee on a regular basis .	<p>Partially Accepted.</p> <p>While Trust Administration accept the need for 'refreshing' the membership of the Technical Committee over time, experience shows that it takes a number of funding rounds for a new member to fully understand the process and their role on the TC. A mix of new and more experienced TC members usually provides the best outcome. Trust Administration will continue to review the membership of the TC in conjunction with the Trust Secretary. The POP Technical Committee has a similar turnover of members to other Trust committees.</p>

Every effort has been made to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of publication. However, as appropriate, readers should obtain independent advice before making any decision based on this information.

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