



strategic development group



Final REPORT - DFAT

Mid Term Review of Australia's Partnership with SPREP

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

This is the Mid Term Review of Australia's Partnership with the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Program (SPREP), the Pacific regional organisation mandated to lead on environmental and climate change issues. The Government of Australia (GoA), through Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and Australia's Department of Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Water (DCCEEW). A Partnership Arrangement was signed between GoA and SPREP for the period of 2021-2031 and applies to all GoA development activities with SPREP in the Pacific, which includes core funding as well as grant funding for programs. Key elements of the partnership include:

- Partnership Arrangement (2021-2031), a non-financial partnership document outlining objectives, commitments, roles and responsibilities of GoA and SPREP
- Grant Arrangement 76930/1 (2021-2025), an investment of AUD 17.2 million in core funding that is flexible and non-conditional
- Non-core funding of various projects, managed under separate grant arrangements

The overall purpose of the MTR was to assess progress of the current Grant Arrangement (10 June 2021 – 30 June 2025) under the Partnership between the GoA and the SPREP and broader program and project funding and to inform the next core funding arrangement. This MTR is both formative and summative in nature and focuses on lessons learned from the initial implementation phase to provide findings and recommendations for the remaining investment period. In line with the Evaluation Plan, the team utilised primary and secondary data collection methods with qualitative and quantitative analysis, and based its analysis on document review, key informant interviews (KIIs) and an E-survey, carried out via thematic coding and expert insights. Emerging findings and recommendations were summarised in an Aide Memoire slide deck and presented to the DFAT, DCCEEW and SPREP on Friday 1 November 2024.

Findings

The overarching findings of the review are as follows:

- The Partnership is considered valuable, positive and relevant to all parties in achieving their objectives, and the long-standing, well-established relationship is key to this sentiment.
- The Partnership is a complex amalgamation of financial and non-financial agreements, including core and non-core funding, which impacts efficiency, effectiveness and coherence, and could be streamlined in future iterations.
- Australia's expectations for the Partnership, as defined in the Partnership Arrangement and Grant Arrangement documentation, align with SPREP's priorities in supporting delivery of SPREP's Strategic Plan.
- The financial elements of the Partnership are well defined and understood by all parties. The non-financial supports provided by Australia could be more clearly captured and articulated within the Partnership.
- There are opportunities to streamline, realign and rebalance the Partnership, to improve clarity of obligations, responsibilities and progress.

Relevance

Overall, there is strong evidence that the Partnership Arrangement, Grant Arrangement and non-core grant funding are highly relevant to SPREP, GoA and SPREP Member countries. The design of the Partnership is aligned closely with SPREP in terms of its support to SPREP's delivery of its Strategic



Plan. The design of the Partnership appears somewhat skewed towards reform of systems and processes, such that responsibility for delivering on the Partnership objectives weighted heavily towards SPREP itself, while a raft of non-financial supports for which Australia is responsible (through technical agents, high level engagement, coherence and messaging across CROPs) are not well articulated in agreements and reporting despite their real and ongoing provision in the Partnership.

There is strong evidence that the stable, predictable and flexible core funding through the Grant Arrangement is strongly aligned to the needs of SPREP and its member countries. The Partnership responds to the needs and priorities of the Government of Australia, in terms of its international development policy, climate change objectives, and objectives around Pacific regionalism. There is the potential to streamline Australia's support to better articulate how the various parts relate to one another, capture evidence of progress, and manage knowledge sharing and engagement more effectively with SPREP.

Coherence

Australia's support to SPREP and membership of the regional program provides crucial operational funding, flagship projects, technical assistance, high level engagement, and diplomatic support to SPREP and across CROPs. The Partnership and Grant arrangements are designed to support SPREP's delivery of its Strategic Plan 2017-2026, and Australia's support is helping SPREP to hold its mandate in a contested climate resilience space. Australia has articulated its ambition to support Pacific regional architecture. The Partnership has the potential to fulfil an important element of Australian engagement on environment and climate initiatives in the Pacific, however, there is work to be done to untangle the multiple roles that Australia holds in its engagement with SPREP, and in the differing responsibilities across two federal department. Australia's support to SPREP forms a part of its wider package of support to climate change initiatives in the Pacific, in support of a range of actors and programs of work.

Effectiveness

The performance of the Partnership, with objectives and outcomes assessed against a rubric of performance standard descriptors for this review, was judged as follows:

- Partnership Objective 1: A strong relationship between GoA and SPREP: **Good**
- Partnership Objective 2: Effective and efficient program management to meet program objectives: **Adequate**
- Partnership Objective 3: Enhanced SPREP capabilities (people, systems and processes): **Adequate**
- Partnership Objective 4: Effective and efficient regional service delivery: **Good**
- Grant Arrangement Core Objective: The objective of the program is for core funding support for SPREP to deliver services to SPREP Member countries in the Pacific, in line with SPREP's mandate: **Excellent**
- Grant Arrangement Specific Objectives: **Good**
- Grant Arrangement Outcomes: **Good**

The non-core funded projects have enabled the partnership to support SPREP's Strategic Plan, and SPREP's delivery of non-core funding agreements has driven increased effectiveness. Evidence suggests positive progress on all non-core funded programs.

The Partnership is not structured in the most effective way, as there are a number of composite parts that are not formally considered together as contributing to the whole of Australian Government support to SPREP. Some commitments made in the Partnership Arrangement could be delivered more intentionally in practice, and in doing so would benefit the areas of the partnership that were rated as "adequate". Annex 4 provides a suggested approach to improve the design of Australia's Partnership



with SPREP, which goes some way to streamline the principles, objectives, responsibilities, processes and reporting mechanisms. The key findings/recommendations are as follows:

- One 10-year non-financial Partnership Arrangement, similar to its current form with fewer objectives, more clearly defined roles, a clearer articulation and balance of responsibilities, and clarity around accountability.
- One 5-year Grant Arrangement, which intentionally directs core funding to SPREP for Operations and Programs, plus DFAT funded projects
- Grouping of all DCCEEW project funding arrangements together as far as possible, for DCCEEW to manage as a combined project funding stream.

The amended approach suggests that designated partnership ‘health checks’ should be built into the existing bilateral meetings as part of the annual High-Level Consultations, with additional structure and some capture of agreements and commitments made, held internally between the Partnership.

Monitoring and Evaluation systems within SPREP are in their early stages, and the various reporting mechanisms associated with the Partnership are not fit for purpose in articulating the fulfilment of objectives and commitments of the Partnership Arrangement. The review found some evidence of GEDSI mainstreaming and capability, however, it is unclear how much this evidence of progress can be attributed to Australia’s partnership with SPREP and funding support. While GEDSI progress remains slow, and implementation challenges persist, DFAT have recently signed an agreement to support SPREP to address GEDSI implementation, safeguards and due diligence risks, particularly relating to PSEAH and Child Protection.

Efficiency

Overall, there is evidence that SPREP is efficiently utilising its core and project funding associated with the Partnership, however there is an identified need to strengthen and better integrate Monitoring and Evaluation. SPREP has strong financial processes as reflected in its auditing processes, and Australia’s provision of core funding has enabled SPREP to attract additional funding. There is evidence of a degree of inefficiency with regard to the strategic design, management and reporting processes for project contracts, as these require a minimum level of effort irrespective of the size of the project. SPREP’s governance arrangements, as laid out in the Strategic Plan, are clear and underpin the Partnership well. There is some ambiguity of roles within GoA around the governance and institutional arrangements of the Partnership Arrangement, and there are opportunities to streamline roles and resulting lines of communication to reduce confusion and facilitate more effective engagement between GoA and SPREP.

Impact

Evidence suggests that Australia’s partnership with SPREP demonstrates Australia’s increasing credibility in responding to regional impacts of climate change. Australia’s support to SPREP sits within a broader contribution to climate change programming in the Pacific (through bilateral and multilateral initiatives), and there may be scope within the Partnership to unpack areas of duplication and competition affecting the delivery and achievement of overall outcomes.

Sustainability

The relationship between GoA and SPREP is a longstanding, enduring and mutually beneficial one, and the review heard that this relationship will continue into the future. The benefits of the partnership in promoting shared values and drawing on strengths could be better articulated in future iterations in order for the benefits to be more clearly evidenced and communicated.



Recommendations

10 recommendations are presented, with links to the relevant sections in the main document for added context and rationale.

#	Recommendation	Relevant Section
1.	It is recommended that GoA and SPREP work closely together to simplify the modality in design and implementation, including objectives and results tracking, of the Partnership and Grant Arrangements according to the Proposed Partnership Arrangements described in Annex 4.	Section 2.1.1
2.	It is recommended that the existing annual bilateral meetings, as part of the High-Level Consultation's, are strengthened to incorporate a Partnership Health Check to reflect on the Partnership and agree on plans to strengthen the process and delivery of the partnership, capturing and sharing with each other.	Section 2.1.1, 2.3.2
3.	It is recommended that the GoA and SPREP agree on how they will work together to support SPREP's regional service delivery and the implementation of the SPREP Strategic Plan, including identifying non-financial cooperation from GoA.	Section 2.1.1
4.	It is recommended that DFAT and DCCEEW discuss and agree on roles, responsibilities and communications pathways for each entry point into SPREP, to ensure a united GoA approach to the Partnership.	Section 2.1.1
5.	It is recommended that where Australia bilaterally funds similar programs in the region with other organisations and through other CROP agencies, GoA considers and communicates resourcing coordination with SPREP to improve efficiencies and clarity.	Section 2.3.1
6.	It is recommended that GoA work closely with SPREP as a member and partner to contribute to SPREP's Strategic Plan and other policies and regional frameworks, including supporting systems and processes.	Section 2.1.1
7.	It is recommended that both Partners continue to engage with other CROPs to identify and leverage opportunities to achieve economies of scale and sharing resources where appropriate, in programming and corporate areas of implementation.	Section 2.4.1
8.	It is recommended that the Partnership develops a clearer articulation of bilateral and shared risks as part of the Partnership, to assist with safeguarding compliance and other risk management, to be taken forward in more detail at implementation.	Section 2.3.2
9.	It is recommended that SPREP optimises the GEDSI secondee/advisor position to respond to remaining gaps and instrumentalize implementation.	Section 2.3.2
10.	It is recommended that as part of HLCs, NZ and GoA consider aligning expectations of SPREP around due diligence, particularly PSEAH, and Child Protection.	Section 2.4.2



ACRONYMS LIST

Acronym	Expansion
AUD	Australian Dollar
BOM	Bureau of Meteorology
CROP	Council of Regional Organisations of the Pacific
CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation
DCCEEW	Australian Department of Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water
DFAT	Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
EOPO	End of Program Outcomes
EQ	Evaluation Question
GEDSI	Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion
GEIM	Gender Equality, Inclusion and Mainstreaming
GoA	Government of Australia
HLCs	High-Level Consultations
IDD	Investment Design Document
IDP	Australia's International Development Policy
IMR	Investment Monitoring Report
KII	Key Informant Interview
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MC	Managing Contractor
MIDP	Minister for International Development
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MTR	Mid Term Review
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NZ	New Zealand
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development - Development Assistance Committee
PAF	SPREP – GoA Partnership 2021-2031: Performance Assessment Framework
PCCC	Pacific Climate Change Centre
PIFS	Pacific Island Forum Secretariat
PIP	Performance Implementation Plan
POLP	The Pacific Ocean Litter Project
PSEAH	Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment
SAMOA	Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action (Pathway)
SDRF	SPREP-DFAT Results Framework
SLT	Senior Leadership Team
SPC	Pacific Community
SPREP	Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Program
TOC	Theory of Change
TOR	Terms of Reference
UNFCCC COP	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference of the Parties
VfM	Value for Money



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1. INTRODUCTION

The Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Program (SPREP) is the Pacific regional organisation mandated to lead on environmental and climate change issues. SPREP is a treaty-based organisation with strong buy-in and ownership, particularly from its Pacific island members. Australia is a founding member of SPREP, since its formal establishment in 1993 and is a signatory to the SPREP Agreement (1993). The Government of Australia and SPREP Partnership Agreement (2021 to 2031) was signed by the Minister for International Development (MIDP) and applies to all GoA development activities with SPREP in the Pacific.

GoA engagement with SPREP is shared between Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and Australian Government Department of Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Water (DCCEEW). DFAT has responsibility for the overall management of the Partnership on behalf of the GoA and DCCEEW acts as the Focal Point for Australia's membership to SPREP. Engagement with SPREP is consistent with the Australian Government's support for regional architecture and partnership with other Council of Regional Organisations of the Pacific (CROP) agencies such as the Pacific Community (SPC) and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS).

GoA supports SPREP through core funding as well as grant funding for programs. Key features include:

- The Partnership is supported by the current Grant Arrangement 76930/1 2021-2025, which is an investment of AUD 17.2 million in core funding that is flexible and non-conditional.
- The Partnership includes an agreed performance management framework which will inform future partnership arrangements up to AUD 4.3 million (>2031).
- As a member of SPREP, Australia is obliged to pay membership fees, and this is included in the core funding arrangement (USD 222,127/year).
- In 2019 core funding was increased from AUD 4 million/year to AUD 4.3 million/year to strengthen monitoring and evaluation, and gender and social inclusion mainstreaming across SPREP.

The Partnership brings together the comparative advantages of GoA as a key member and financing partner and SPREP as a Pacific-owned and managed specialist technical and scientific organisation with acknowledged expertise in advancing regional development in the Pacific. The agreement aims to change the nature of the relationship between the two parties to a partnership underpinned by a shared vision and a set of principles that seeks to enable reform and organisational development within SPREP and optimises the potential for effective regional development.

Implementation of the Partnership is, however, focused primarily on funding reform, enhanced monitoring and evaluation and improved formal consultation mechanisms. This includes Annual High-Level Consultations (HLCs) between Australia and SPREP (plus New Zealand), predictable multi-year funding through multi-year core funding agreements, a greater focus on clear measurable targets to define success (e.g. Performance Assessment Framework), enhanced management arrangements, and a comprehensive partnering approach with agencies across GoA, plus this mid-term review.

The **Objectives of the Partnership (2021-2031)** are:

- **Partnership Objective 1: A strong relationship between GoA and SPREP**, characterised by:
 - close collaboration on mutual priorities
 - effective and efficient communication and management arrangements
 - visibility and transparency to maximise communication and awareness under the Communications Plan: Australia and SPREP Partnership
- **Partnership Objective 2: Effective and efficient program management to meet program objectives**, characterised by:
 - effective and efficient program planning and implementation



- commitment to monitoring, evaluation and learning
- transparent and robust systems and processes
- professional and informed people
- **Partnership Objective 3: Enhanced SPREP capabilities (people, systems and processes)**, characterised by:
 - transparent financial budgeting and reporting, including implementation of full cost recovery practices
 - effective corporate systems in managing resources, adopting transparency and accountability mechanisms
 - improved practices and systems to support people and programs, including monitoring, evaluation and learning, and improved planning
 - mainstreaming of Gender, Equity and Social Inclusion principles across SPREP
- **Partnership Objective 4: Effective and efficient regional service delivery**, characterised by:
 - supporting SPREP's role to coordinate with development partners
 - a focus on results and measuring impact through joint, regular and evidence-based reviews of outcomes
 - equitable service delivery across the Pacific region, delivering on member priorities
 - an integrated regional response to common challenges through strong CROP agencies and regional agency cooperation and collaboration, to ensure efficiency and prevent duplication.

Objectives of the Grant Arrangement (2021-2025)

The objective of the Grant Agreement is to provide core funding support for SPREP to deliver services to SPREP Member countries in the Pacific, in line with SPREP's mandate. The specific objectives are as follows:

- To promote cooperation in the Pacific region and provide assistance in order to protect and improve its environment
- To ensure sustainable development for present and future generations
- To strengthen gender and social inclusion mainstreaming across SPREP, maintain representation of women in senior roles and promote an organisational culture in which all women and men thrive.

1.1.Purpose and Scope

The overall purpose of the MTR was to assess progress of the current Grant Arrangement (10 June 2021 – 30 June 2025) under the Partnership between the Government of Australia and the SPREP and broader program and project funding and to inform the next core funding arrangement.

The purpose of the MTR was to assess whether the Arrangement meets its intended objectives, as noted above, along with the high-level objectives set out under Section 3 of the Partnership Arrangement.

The scope of the MTR covers the Partnership Agreement, including the current Grant Arrangement for core funding (2021-present), along with program and project funding since 2021. The MTR considered consultation mechanisms, governance arrangements, and all aspects of the Partnership Arrangement, the Grant Arrangement and program and projects since 2021. The MTR did not specifically focus on SPREP itself, except in support of the assessment of the Partnership.

1.2.Methodology

This MTR is both formative and summative in nature and focuses on lessons learned from the initial implementation phase to provide findings and recommendations for the remaining investment



period. The evaluation questions (EQs) presented in Annex 1 are a refinement of the original EQs, based on the MTR team's understanding of the Partnership, context, and our experience evaluating similar programs. The EQs are categorised by OECD-DAC Evaluation Criteria.

In line with the Evaluation Plan, the team approached the evaluation with several key principles including constructivism, employing mixed methods to gather comprehensive data, a partnership-supportive approach, cultural appropriateness, utilisation-focused approach, and aligning all activities with DFAT standards and best practices. The team utilised primary and secondary data collection methods with qualitative and quantitative analysis, appropriately selected for the depth of information required, the respondents' familiarity and closeness to the Partnership and to ensure a balance of tools and sources for the review. The MTR team based its analysis on document review, key informant interviews (KIIs) and an E-survey.

Data was analysed according to the MTR Qualitative Evidence Table (coded and triangulated), which brought together the evidence and their sources, coded by the MTR team according to source type, evaluation criteria, evaluation question, and results statement. The Evidence Table contains direct quotes from key informants so for ethical reasons the full table cannot be shared.

Emerging findings and recommendations were summarised in an Aide Memoire slide deck and presented to the DFAT, DCCEEW and SPREP on Friday 1 November 2024, followed by discussion and feedback for validation.

1.3. Limitations

The methodology used to deliver this MTR has several limitations, which may affect the strength of the evidence. These include:

- There was **no travel included in the research**, so all data collection was carried out on video calls via MS Teams. This may have affected the extent to which a strong rapport was generated between evaluators and participants, and therefore the extent to which a full and frank conversation was achieved, particularly in the Pacific regional context. The team took the time during interviews to establish some level of trust and candour (through sharing ethical processes, and in our demeanour as experienced researchers), however, there is no replacement for in-person conversation for relationship building and sharing of experience.
- The **MTR team are all Australian nationals**, and this may have had an effect on the power dynamics between researcher and participant and possibly appearing representative of adjacent to the Australian government (i.e. the donor and more powerful economy). Efforts were made to ensure that respect was paid to all respondents equally, such as allowing space to allow respondents to feel they had fully responded to all questions (and anything that they may have wanted to share that was not asked), and to reassure participants that our team is independent of the Government of Australia.
- The personal circumstances of the MTR Team Leader during the review period means that **more time has passed between data collection and reporting than is usually appropriate** for MTRs. On reflection, much of the document review and analysis took place soon after data collection, which limits the impact of the time lapse, and the ongoing nature of the partnership (plus the Christmas holiday taking place in the intervening period) indicates that perspectives from stakeholders are likely to remain representative of the current sentiment.

2. FINDINGS

In this section, the MTR team presents a discussion of the review findings according to the evaluation criteria and related EQs, including related recommendations. Priority recommendations are synthesised and presented in the Recommendations Section (Section 3)



Overall Evaluation Findings:

- The Partnership is considered valuable, positive and relevant to all parties in achieving their objectives, and the long-standing, well-established relationship is key to this sentiment.
- The Partnership is a complex amalgamation of financial and non-financial agreements, including core and non-core funding, which impacts efficiency, effectiveness and coherence, and could be streamlined in future iterations.
- Australia’s expectations for the Partnership, as defined in the Partnership Arrangement and Grant Arrangement documentation, align with SPREP’s priorities in supporting delivery of SPREP’s Strategic Plan.
- The financial elements of the Partnership are well defined and understood by all parties. The non-financial supports provided by Australia could be more clearly captured and articulated within the Partnership.
- There are opportunities to streamline, realign and rebalance the Partnership, to improve clarity of obligations, responsibilities and progress.

Australia’s relationship with SPREP

Australia plays a multi-dimensional role in relation to SPREP, as it is a Partner, Member country, and donor, which is mapped out in Figure 1 below. The arrangements that determine the nature of the partnership between Australia and SPREP include the Partnership Arrangement between Australia and SPREP, the Grant Arrangement for core funding, and a set of non-core Project and Program funding arrangements between Australia and SPREP:

Arrangement	Timing	Budget	Focal Point
Partnership Arrangement	2021-2031	Non-financial	DFAT
Grant Arrangement	2021-2025	AUD 17.2 mil	DFAT
Non-core grant arrangements (around 12)	2019-2027 (various)	Around AUD 60mil	DFAT
Membership to SPREP	Annual	Subsumed in above Grant Arrangement	DCCEEW

Figure 1: Australia’s Relationship with SPREP

While Australia’s membership to SPREP is not within the scope of this MTR, it is mentioned here to set the scene and illustrate the many “hats” worn by Australia in its dealings with SPREP, which arises in discussion around relationships, communications and governance arrangements (e.g. Section 2.4.2).

2.1.Relevance: Is the intervention doing the right things?

2.1.1.EQ1. Is the design and implementation of the Partnership responding to the needs and priorities of SPREP, GoA, SPREP Members and other relevant stakeholders?

Relevant lines of enquiry:

- To what extent is the Partnership designed to support SPREP’s regional service delivery and advance Pacific regionalism?
- To what extent are the objectives of the Partnership relevant to the priorities of SPREP, its members, and GoA?



A complex set of partnership goals

The Partnership Arrangement is the overarching and governing document for Australia’s partnership with SPREP, spanning 2021-2031, which includes provisions for the establishment of core, program and project funding arrangements. The Grant Arrangement defines Australia’s provision of core funding to SPREP, from June 2021 to June 2025 (up to AUD 17.2 mil). Around 12 non-core project funding arrangements sit under the Partnership, with their own management and reporting processes and systems.

The review found that **the Partnership is guided by a complex set of what this review will term “goals”** (i.e. objectives, commitments and outcomes) as laid out in the Partnership Arrangement and Grant Arrangement documents, which is summarised in Figure 2 below.

Arrangement	Goals
Partnership Arrangement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 Partnership Objectives (with 15 characteristics) • 13 Commitments (4 GoA, 4 SPREP, and 5 made by both partners)
Grant Arrangement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 Program Objective • 3 Specific Objectives • 5 Outcomes
Non-core funding arrangements (12)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Numerous end of program objectives specific to each project

Figure 2: Mapping out the goals of the Partnership between Australia and SPREP

Overall, there is strong evidence that the Partnership Arrangement, Grant Arrangement and non-core grant funding are highly relevant to SPREP, GoA and SPREP Member countries. Evidence suggests there are opportunities to streamline the funding modalities and simplify the objectives, however, the financial and non-financial contributions to SPREP are highly relevant to all parties and support SPREP’s regional service delivery in advance of Pacific regionalism. Evidence suggests that much of the non-financial support provided by GoA to SPREP is implicit, in that it is not well documented nor captured, and its ongoing provision is essential for the Partnership to operate. This valued element of the arrangement would benefit from clearer articulation, and this review seeks to identify examples of such support.

Alignment with SPREP Priorities

The evidence reveals that in many ways, **the design of the Partnership is aligned closely with SPREP in terms of its support to SPREP’s delivery of its Strategic Plan 2017-2026.** However, there is an inherent tension in the design of the Partnership: on the one hand, it is based on mutual respect and responsibility, such that the Grant Arrangement enables SPREP to direct GoA financial and non-financial support in aid of the delivery of its Strategic Plan (2017-2026). On the other hand, the design of the Partnership appears somewhat skewed towards reform of systems and processes, such that responsibility for delivering on the Partnership objectives weighted heavily towards SPREP itself, with the supporting role of GoA made less clear. The GoA expectations for SPREP to deliver on improved effectiveness and efficiency are clear, however, the responsibilities of all parties are less so and does not capture the more implicit technical and high-level engagement of GoA with SPREP. The result is that the Partnership Arrangement is aligned with all parties in terms of priorities and objectives, however, it appears asymmetrical in terms of responsibility for its delivery due to the implicit roles of one partner.

The evidence to demonstrate close alignment of the Partnership with the priorities of SPREP includes:

- Partnership Arrangement wording - “both partners resolve to... advance regional integration, economic recovery and growth, and sustainable development in support of the objectives of SPREP’s Strategic Plan 2017-2026” (Partnership Arrangement, p2)



- Grant Arrangement text - the Grant Arrangement enables Australia to fund SPREP “to deliver services to SPREP Member countries in the Pacific, in line with SPREP’s mandate” (Grant Arrangement p.1).
- Insights from stakeholders from GoA, SPREP and outside of the partnership confirmed that the partnership supports the delivery of the SPREP’s Strategic Plan and that both parties are aligned in their values and regional priorities. For example, one stakeholder commented that the Partnership is relevant because funding can be targeted “to the needs that the SPREP requires. That flexibility is fantastic. It’s the type of support that other entities should be providing to the organisation, so SPREP can decide where the priorities are.”

There is strong evidence that the **stable, predictable and flexible core funding through the Grant Arrangement is strongly aligned to the needs of SPREP**. While SPREP’s project portfolio and budget almost doubled in 10 years (from USD 19mil in 2013 to USD 37mil in 2023), the income supporting SPREP’s core functions has remained stagnant, and as a result, SPREP’s funding has failed to keep pace with the management and administrative needs of an ever-growing project portfolio.¹ Donor core funding accounted for 36% of SPREP’s core budget income in 2023, with the remaining two-thirds covered by program management charges (39%), members contributions (19%) and other income (6%). The result is that SPREP is heavily reliant on core funding to operate, and Australia provides the majority of that core funding alongside New Zealand, with some more recent contributions from other metro Member countries (UK and USA). There remains a shortfall in funding for core personnel and operating costs, however, and SPREP is actively seeking out other avenues to fill those gaps.

Alignment with the priorities of SPREP Member Countries

The Partnership and associated Grant Arrangement respond to the needs and priorities of SPREP Member countries, given that the allocation of core funding and design of non-core project funding is guided by the SPREP Strategic Plan 2017-2026, and by SPREP’s mandate to be responsive to the needs of Member countries. In drafting the SPREP Strategic Plan 2017–2026, SPREP undertook an “extensive consultation process with Members, partners, and the Secretariat... and the plan has also been guided by Member commitments to the strategic directions for the region set out in the Framework for Pacific Regionalism, the priorities defined by the SAMOA Pathway, commitments to the Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement, and other important regional and global commitments” (SPREP Strategic Plan 2017-2026, p.3).

Alignment with the needs and priorities of Australia

The Partnership responds to the needs and priorities of Government of Australia, in that it is aligned with Australia’s International Development Policy, which commits to “enhance state and community resilience to external pressures and shocks; connect with Australia and regional architecture; [and] generate collective action on global challenges that impact us and our region” (Australia’s International Development Policy 2023, p37). The Government of Australia is a party to the Paris Agreement, and DCCEEW works closely with DFAT to negotiate and meet Australia’s climate change obligations under the Paris Agreement, a role that includes funding relevant sustainable development projects in the Pacific and elsewhere (e.g. support to Blue Carbon) and supporting climate action in the Indo-Pacific. Support to SPREP is made as part of the approximately \$265 million per annum that Australia provides in climate finance in the Pacific, and while SPREP is an important partner with a legacy of climate and environment initiatives in the Pacific, it is one of a number of actors that Australia works with in the region in these issues. Stakeholders referred to SPREP as holding

¹ “Core funding structure review - SPREP partner and donor interviews”, undated document by David Sheppard, Andrew Wilson and Rhona Barr.



“important mandate in terms of environment, oceans and climate, which are closely aligned with Australian Government at the moment.”

Mutual Responsibility and Clear Objectives

Review of the documentation, and triangulation with stakeholder insights, found that while a principle of the partnership is mutual responsibility, the balance of responsibilities is not clearly articulated, such that the roles and responsibilities of SPREP and GoA do not appear to be balanced. As the agency utilising the associated funding, and with the mandate amongst its members to carry out implementation of its strategic priorities, SPREP holds much of the responsibility to deliver against the majority of the Partnership Objectives with support from GoA in that process. The substance of non-financial support provided by GoA is implied, but not clearly articulated in the arrangement documentation.

For example, the Partnership Arrangement consists of four Partnership Objectives (each with 4-5 characteristics), two of which appear to sit under SPREP responsibility, two appear to have joint GoA/SPREP responsibility, and none of which is solely the GoA responsibility to achieve. The Commitments made by each partner and jointly (13 in total) shed some light as to how the objectives are expected to be met through the Partnership. Commitments made by SPREP tend to be action-oriented and related clearly to the Objectives (e.g. “further strengthen SPREP’s planning, reporting and monitoring processes, including results-based reporting and financial reporting (4.2a)”, whereas associated Commitments by GoA are supportive in nature (e.g. “Support SPREP’s program management on GoA funded programs, to ensure policy and program objectives are met. (4.1c)”, without clear direction as to the type or mode the support will take. Provision for this to take shape is made in the GoA commitment to “articulate clear expectations of the Partnership with SPREP through regular, open dialogue” (4.1a), however, this could be strengthened and more clearly defined at the outset, while protecting the flexibility and longevity of the partnership. This could include an articulation of GoA coordination amongst its agencies and funded programs to ensure alignment in the region, provision of technical support to build organisational capacity (people, policy and process), and high level engagement with SPREP.

The table below (Figure 3) presents the Partnership Objectives along with their stated characteristics, the partners with primary responsibility for delivery of each objective, and the related commitments made by each partner. The statements of responsibility are judgements made as a result of the review of documentation and triangulation with stakeholder insights. Commitments are grouped together based on the MTR team’s understanding of their relevance to the objectives, based on document review and validated through stakeholder insights. Commitments that are not specifically linked to an individual objective are listed below:

- **GoA:** GoA to articulate clear expectations of the Partnership with SPREP through regular, open dialogue (4.1a)
- **BOTH:** Work together to support SPREP’s organisational reforms to enable more effective program and project delivery (4.3b)
- **BOTH:** Meet regularly, including on an informal basis, to share all relevant information, discuss any performance concerns as early as possible, and resolve any issues through dialogue (4.3d)
- **BOTH:** involving the other partner in pertinent activities and raising awareness of each other’s activities throughout the region (4.3e)

Objective	Characteristics	Partner Responsible	Relevant Commitments
a) A strong relationship between GoA and SPREP	i. Close collaboration on mutual priorities	Both	GoA: Promote the value of SPREP’s role in the Pacific as opportunities arise (4.1b)



Objective	Characteristics	Partner Responsible	Relevant Commitments
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ii. Effective and efficient communication and management arrangements iii. Visibility and transparency to maximise communication and awareness under the communications plan: Australia and SPREP partnership 		
b) Effective and efficient program management to meet program objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Effective and efficient program planning and implementation ii. Commitment to monitoring, evaluation and learning iii. Transparent and robust systems and processes iv. Professional and informed people 	SPREP (with support from GoA)	<p>SPREP: further strengthen SPREP's planning, reporting and monitoring processes, including results based reporting and financial reporting (4.2a)</p> <p>GoA: Support SPREP's program management on GoA funded programs, to ensure policy and program objectives are met. (4.1c)</p> <p>GoA: Align GoA monitoring and assessment of SPREP performance as closely as possible with SPREP's own performance measures and assessment systems (4.1d)</p>
c) Enhanced SPREP capabilities (people, systems and processes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Transparent financial budgeting and reporting, including implementation of full cost recovery processes ii. Effective corporate systems in managing resources, adopting transparency and accountability mechanisms iii. Improved practices and systems to support people and programs, including monitoring, evaluation and learning, and improved planning iv. Mainstreaming of Gender, Equity and Social Inclusion principles across SPREP 	SPREP (with support is from GoA)	<p>SPREP: disburse all funds provided by GoA in accordance with the principles, terms and conditions of this Partnership (4.2c)</p> <p>SPREP: take all reasonable steps to achieve and demonstrate VFM, in accordance with sound financial and administrative practice (4.2d)</p> <p>BOTH: promote a full cost recovery approach to program and project funding (4.3c)</p>
d) Effective and efficient regional service delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Supporting SPREP's role to coordinate with development partners ii. A focus on results and measuring impact through joint, regular and evidence-based reviews of outcomes iii. Equitable service delivery across the Pacific region, 	<p>GoA</p> <p>Both</p> <p>SPREP</p> <p>SPREP</p>	<p>SPREP: Strengthen an integrated regional response to common challenges through stronger CROP coordination and cooperation (4.2b)</p> <p>BOTH: Advance regional integration, economic recovery and growth, and sustainable development in support of the objectives of SPREP's Strategic Plan 2017-2026 (4.3a)</p>



Objective	Characteristics	Partner Responsible	Relevant Commitments
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> delivering on member priorities iv. An integrated regional response to common challenges through strong CROP agencies and regional agency cooperation and collaboration, to ensure efficiency and prevent duplication 		

Figure 3: Analysis of Partnership Goals

In some respects the above arrangement reflects a partnership between an implementing agency such as SPREP and a supportive (financial and non-financial) partner such as GoA. However, the apparent imbalance in terms of achieving the Partnership Objectives is not fully consistent with the first principle of the partnership: “mutual respect and responsibility” (p1), and warrants clearer and more tangible articulation of those non-financial supports from GoA that are both expected and found to be provided.

The review finds that there is an opportunity to **distil the numerous objectives, commitments and outcomes** into a clearer and more aligned set of objectives that “speak to one another”, which would allow for more streamlined management and reporting of progress for all parties. In addition, clarity about the types and modes of support that GoA offers to SPREP as part of the Partnership, channels through which these are offered and provided, would be helpful in bringing more clarity and therefore symmetry to the Partnership Arrangement.

The review found there may be opportunities for GoA to compare and contrast the SPREP partnership (in design and execution) with other agreements (e.g. with SPC), to learn from them and consider opportunities with GoA to share knowledge and improve ways of working collaboratively.

Implementation

The Partnership Arrangement is distinct from the Grant Arrangement in that the former sets out the objectives of the Partnership over a longer term, with principles that include mutual respect and responsibility, and the latter has a financial component along with a results framework against which progress is reported by SPREP. Anecdotal evidence suggests that these principles remain relevant and important to all parties. In practice, **the modality of the Partnership has not sufficiently enabled a clear process to define roles and track partners’ progress against the objectives and commitments of the Partnership Arrangement.** While informal meetings were found to be taking place, the outcomes and sentiments are not being captured in a meaningful enough way for partners to collaboratively reflect on progress against expected results, the state of the partnership, or concerns one or both partners might wish to raise and resolve. The bilateral meetings that take place as part of the annual HLC would benefit from a more guided and intentional partnership review discussion, which could then be captured and held within the partnership as a loose accountability and learning mechanism for these higher level objectives and commitments.

Specific objectives of the Partnership Arrangement are not being sufficiently prioritised by SPREP (e.g. due diligence policies, risk management), and the evidence indicates that this may be a result of the lack of sufficient funding allocation of Core funding (including the additions to core funding to this end) towards those reforms by SPREP. There are no specific reporting mechanisms within the Core or Partnership Arrangement to track progress against those objectives, which is in line with the flexible nature of the grant. While the objectives of the Partnership align overall with the partners’ priorities, the **Partnership is primarily meeting the funding needs of SPREP, and in practice it is not fully meeting**



all of Australia’s priorities as laid out in the Objectives and Commitments of the Partnership Agreement. This is discussed further in section 2.3.2, regarding the effectiveness of the Partnership set-up. Improvements to the Partnership and Grant Arrangement documentation could include a clearer definition of the mechanism to communicate and track expectations and progress against objectives of the overarching Partnership. This process would also benefit from a discussion and articulation of overarching risks to Partners (jointly and separately), in terms of safeguarding and due diligence, as a driver for policy development and improvements (e.g. PSEAH and Child Protection).

In addition, there is evidence to suggest that **the roles and responsibilities of the GoA parties as set out in the documentation could be more clearly articulated and better aligned with the strengths of each agency to deliver a more effective Partnership for all parties.** The separation of focal points (DFAT and DCCEEW) for the SPREP Membership and the Grant Arrangement was found to complicate implementation, and roles have not always been aligned with the strengths of each agency. For example, while blurring of roles has taken place in some cases to cover for fluctuations in capacity between agencies – a good example of agility and overall support for a ‘Team Australia’ approach – there is an opportunity to improve the Partnership documentation such that there is clear delineation between roles, such as contract management (due diligence, risk management, financial management), diplomacy, and technical leadership.

There is the potential to streamline Australia’s support to better articulate how the various parts relate to one another, capture evidence of progress, and manage knowledge sharing and engagement more effectively with SPREP. This approach was found to be supported by all partners, and as such a recommended way of working has been developed by the MTR team, which can be found in Annex 4.

Partnership Review and Reflection

The Partnership Arrangement provides somewhat for review and reflection of the partnership. The Partnership Agreement sets out the purpose and content of the High Level Consultations (HLCs), which mainly focus on the meeting of senior officials from GoA, New Zealand (NZ) and SPREP (referred to informally as “trilateral” meetings), in paragraph 5.3 and 5.4. This is followed by a brief mention of the intention for GoA and SPREP to “schedule other meetings to discuss the Partnership and other issues at mutually determined times” (paragraph 5.5). The review found that these meetings take place annually at the time of the HLCs, and are informal in their format, without documentation of the sentiment or agreements made. These opportunities for partnerships discussions could be improved with a more intentional approach, in line with a “Partnership Health Check”, to support the principles that guide the partnership in terms of ways of working together to function effectively and in the spirit of the overall objectives of the partnership.

In the SPREP-GoA partnership, there is a set of principles that can frame how to approach a regular health check discussion, especially the principle of mutual respect and responsibility, including openness to working together and exploring new opportunities together, and resolving through open discussion any issues that emerge. A form of a regular health check can support the GoA’s commitment to ‘articulate clear expectations of the Partnership with SPREP through regular, open dialogue’, and it is intended to manage and maintain the partnership.

There are many critical factors in successful partnerships, and one of them is mutual accountability and regular reviews. This is where intentional and regular (i.e., annual) spaces for a considered discussion on the health of the partnership can be important. The Partnership Brokers Association identifies ten key elements for effective partnering:

1. A clear understanding between the partners of the word ‘partnership’
2. Agreement to a shared vision and common purpose
3. Account and allowance being made for individual partners’ interests



4. The co-creation of design, decisions and solutions
5. Commitment to sharing risks as well as benefits
6. Every partner contributes resources (whether tangible or intangible)
7. Partners share decision-making and leadership responsibilities
8. Partners commit to mutual / horizontal accountability
9. Partners work together to develop a principled approach to their partnering endeavours
10. Attention is paid to the partnering process as well as the partnership's projects

Number 10 speaks to the value of regular partnership health checks. Considerations for taking a health check approach to the annual GoA-SPREP partnership discussion may include:

- Think of it as maintenance, with the idea of identifying small issues before major problems arise.
- It is about keeping the partnership on track
- It is about intentionally reflecting back on the partnership principles that have been discussed and agreed at the beginning of the partnership process, and seeing if partners are actually working together as they said they would
- Using an independent facilitator is good practice and can be valuable at particular points, however, health checks can also be done effectively internally
- Health checks help support continuous improvements.

Further guidance on the format of this approach can be found in Annex 5.

A Streamlined Approach

Annex 4 provides a suggested approach to improve the design of Australia's Partnership with SPREP, which goes some way to streamline the principles, objectives, responsibilities, processes and reporting mechanisms. Ideally, one overarching Partnership Arrangement encompassing all non-financial and financial aspects of the partnership would be preferable in terms of easing the administrative burden and supporting a wholistic reporting process on the entire Partnership. However, the 10-year duration of the overarching Partnership Arrangement (necessary to nurture the trusted and enduring nature of the relationship) is not a realistic timeframe for standard financial support arrangements under DFAT procurement and contract management guidelines and norms.

Similarly, consolidating all financial support (core and projects) from GoA to SPREP into one arrangement would reduce the administrative burden and would certainly streamline the reporting for the financial aspects of the Partnership. However, given the nature of funding (ODA from DFAT and non-ODA from DCCEEW), this is not a realistic solution for the current range of projects. It is aspirational for GoA to identify opportunities to group the funding arrangements together in such a way that meet governance and procedural requirements of consolidating funding from two departments. Some amendments could be made from GoA to ensure monitoring and reporting formats and processes are streamlined, to ease SPREP's reporting burden and support collation of results amongst GoA to tell a clearer story of the outcomes and lessons of the overall partnership.

The recommended modality is summarised as follows:

- **One 10-year non-financial Partnership Arrangement**, which is similar to its current form except it contains fewer objectives, more clearly defined roles and responsibilities, and clarity around accountability. Existing annual conversations that take place between GoA and SPREP as part of the HLC should be guided by a 'Partnership Health Check' approach (noted above), to reflect on the partnership and discuss progress of objectives and commitments, with agreements and reflections captured in an internal document for clarity and transparency.



- **One 5-year Grant Arrangement**, which intentionally directs core funding to SPREP for Operations and Programs, in accordance with the current Strategic Plan (2017-2026 and its future iterations), plus all DFAT Projects. This would remain largely similar to the current Core Grant arrangement, which allows SPREP to flexibly allocate funding where it is needed according to its Strategic Plan, including Operations staff, Program staff, capacity building, policy development, and implementation, with the addition of project funding. A Grant Arrangement Results Framework would be developed in alignment with the Strategic Plan, with additional objectives around program delivery improvements as agreed in the overarching Partnership Arrangement.
- **DCCEEW Projects Grant**: This would encompass all DCCEEW project grant arrangements.

2.2. Coherence: How well does the intervention fit?

2.2.1.EQ2. How well does the Partnership fit in supporting SPREP to deliver a unique and complementary role in the region?

Relevant lines of enquiry:

- How well does the Partnership support SPREP to fulfil a clearly defined and complementary role in relation to other Pacific regional organisations?
- Is the Partnership, in its design and implementation, aligned with Australia's International Development Policy, and relevant development plans in the Pacific?

Australia's support to SPREP and membership of the regional program provides crucial operational funding, flagship projects, technical assistance, and diplomatic support to SPREP that enables the program to continue its mandate of protecting and managing the environment and natural resources of the Pacific. While core funding supports governance and operations, it is also allocated to program staff across the priority areas of climate change resilience, environmental governance, island and ocean ecosystem services, and waste management and pollution control. This allows SPREP to deliver its mandate in supporting Member countries in meeting their environmental commitments and priorities, beyond the limits of donor-funded projects, and also enables SPREP to develop funding proposals and carry out the priorities of its Strategic Plan. Project funding primarily supports climate change resilience, and waste management and pollution control, through projects such as the Pacific Ocean Litter Project and support to the Pacific Climate Change Centre (PCCC), all within the priorities of the Strategic Plan.

The Partnership and Grant arrangements are designed to support SPREP's delivery of its Strategic Plan 2017-2026, and **Australia's support is helping SPREP to hold its mandate in the contested climate resilience space**. With funding from bilateral and multilateral organisations increasing in recent years in support of various CROP agencies beyond SPREP (e.g. SPC and PIF), Australia's support is crucial to SPREP to maintain regional leadership on climate and environment, and to reduce duplication of efforts. In support of the PCCC and strengthening climate negotiations, both DCCEEW and DFAT are assisting SPREP to play an integral role on the international stage in representing its member countries in the Pacific with a coherent voice. This also serves to further Australia's interests in promoting climate resilience in the region, a key theme of Australia's International Development Policy. As such, there is strong evidence that the Partnership assists SPREP to fulfil a clearly defined role in the region, complementing other regional organisations. While acknowledging that CROP coordination is the mandate of CROPs, there may be opportunities for Australia to engage with other CROPs to lend support to coordination efforts, to avoid duplicating efforts and share lessons and knowledge. The review found anecdotal evidence of regular engagement of the DFAT team with other areas of DFAT and wider GoA to discuss alignment, share information, in an effort to coordinate and reduce duplication.



Australia has articulated its ambition to support Pacific regional architecture, as part of the International Development Policy (2023), stating “We stand strong with, and continue to respect and support, Pacific led regionalism and unity” (p. 41), and in support of its partners to “connect with Australia and regional architecture” (p.37). Australia’s investment in SPREP sits alongside its support to other CROPs, including the Pacific Island Forum (PIF), and the Pacific Community (SPC). The Partnership also works in tandem with the various Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) between Australian government agencies (e.g. BOM and CSIRO) and SPREP, as well as academic partnerships (e.g. University of Melbourne).

The Partnership has the potential to fulfil an important role for Australian engagement on environment and climate initiatives in the Pacific. Evidence triangulated from stakeholder insights suggests that this is somewhat complicated as a result of the multiple roles that Australia holds in its engagement with SPREP (as member, partner, and donor), the separation of responsibilities across two federal departments (DFAT and DCCEEW), as well as the close and longstanding ties between other agencies (e.g. CSIRO and BOM) and SPREP program teams. SPREP is challenged by the leadership role played by other CROPs on climate (i.e. SPC and PIFS) and the general all-pervasive nature of the climate crisis particularly in the Pacific context.

2.3. Effectiveness: Is the intervention achieving its objectives?

The secondary evidence base for assessing the extent to which the objectives of the various arrangements and programs have been achieved was found to be mixed, and as such the strengths of evidence for the review findings are varied. **The evidence base for each arrangement** is listed below:

- **Partnership Arrangement:** The only formal reporting mechanism for progress against the Partnership Arrangement is the annual HLCs and summary brief. This meeting includes New Zealand, and while it is an important opportunity to align core funding approaches and build relationships, it is not solely focused on tracking commitments and objectives of the Australia-SPREP Partnership. Evidence has been drawn from the HLC meeting briefs and key informant reflections. It is acknowledged, though, that the rationale for the absence of a results framework specific to the Partnership is in part intended to reduce additional reporting burden on SPREP. However, the Partnership Arrangement states both partners commit to meeting regularly to discuss progress, which may be taking place informally, with little to no evidence collated to formally track progress.
- **Grant Arrangement:** The evidence for assessing the effectiveness of the Grant Arrangement is more structured, given the existence of the “SPREP – GoA Partnership 2021-2031: Performance Assessment Framework” (PAF) and annual reporting process. While the framework and subsequent reporting is aligned closely with the SPREP Performance Implementation Plan (PIP), it does not report against Specific Objectives of the Grant Arrangement, nor does it support reporting against high-level Partnership Agreement objectives. Evidence is drawn from DFAT annual Investment Monitoring Reports (IMR) for “INN813 – Support for SPREP”, which report on the funded aspects of the partnership – the core and non-core funding.
- **Projects:** Non-core funding from Australian Government (e.g. DFAT and DCCEEW) to SPREP takes the form of a set of standalone projects, with their own set of tailored objectives, results frameworks and management arrangements, which form the basis of evidence for this review.

2.3.1. EQ3. To what extent are the Objectives (of the Partnership, the Grant Arrangement, and funded programs) being achieved? Is the result more than the sum of its parts?

Relevant lines of enquiry:



- Has the Partnership been effective in enhancing SPREP capabilities (people, systems and processes)?
- Has the Partnership supported the core functions of SPREP, such as its governance and policy (e.g. safeguarding and due diligence)?
- How is the Partnership supporting SPREP to share knowledge and lessons across the program and with others in the region?

The ‘goals’ and reporting measures of the Partnership and related arrangements between Australia and SPREP are mapped out in Figure 4 below, and this helps to unpack the question of whether the result is more than the sum of its parts. The non-core grant funding (e.g. project) arrangements are functionally separate from the Partnership, despite the arrangements sitting mainly within the Pacific Regional, Climate and Communications Branch of DFAT, which manages the Grant Arrangement and the Partnership Arrangement. Grant Arrangement reporting is not linked closely to the objectives of the Partnership Arrangement, and as such there is not a clear line of sight from each composite part to the overall outcomes of the Partnership.

The achievements of the Partnership are collected through the IMR process, which reports on the achievements of SPREP in delivering its Performance Implementation Plan objectives, as well as Australian-funded projects, non-core grant funding, and progress on actions as agreed between Partners at annual HLCs and other informal discussions. **The IMR process would benefit from clearer objective setting for each Arrangement, and from defining the boundaries of the investment and its reporting** – it is not made sufficiently clear which results are attributable to Australia’s Partnership with SPREP, and which are results being achieved beyond Australia’s contributions. The IMRs have rated the investment increasingly positively, however: with Effectiveness and Efficiency moving from “4” in 2022 and 2023 to “5” in 2024.

Arrangement	Goals	Reporting
Partnership Arrangement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 Partnership Objectives (with 15 sub-objectives) • 13 Commitments (4 GoA commitments, 4 SPREP commitments, and 5 commitments made by both partners) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No results framework • No formal process for reviewing progress of objectives and commitments bilaterally. • High level discussion in trilateral “High Level Consultations”, which are not structured around these goals.
Grant Arrangement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 Program Objective • 3 Specific Objectives • 5 Outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Results Framework in place measuring Outcomes only.
Non-core funding arrangements (12)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Numerous end of program objectives specific to each project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Results framework per project agreement, limited alignment with Grant Arrangement results framework
Overarching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All of the above 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DFAT IMRs for INN813 - Support for the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme

Figure 4: Reporting on Goals

Overall, there is **some evidence of enhancement of SPREP capabilities**, although the extent to which this is attributable to the Partnership with Australia is limited. Several sources noted that core funding from Australia and New Zealand is directed to salaried positions, and other core funding is used for capacity building. For example, technical Program teams are encouraged to incorporate capacity building into projects to optimise those resources due to limited funding from core. The delivery of the People Strategy as part of the Strategic Plan (Organisational Goal 5) includes ambitions for training and professional development, although resources are limited and training on issues such as MEL and GEDSI have tended to be run remotely and delivered internally on top of existing workloads. Resourcing gaps continue to challenge SPREP in building capacity of staff, and numerous sources



raised the potential for non-financial support that Australia may consider offering, such as secondments and technical assistance from counterparts in Australia.

The review found **strong evidence for sharing of knowledge and lessons** with others in the region, through regional roundtables (e.g. nature conservation, climate change, clean Pacific), coordination with other CROP agencies (SPC, PRIF, PIFS), and engagement with other bilateral and multilateral donors (e.g. Agence Française de Développement, Green Climate Fund). Australia’s support to the PCCC has enabled the centre to operationalise its knowledge brokering services through several online and face-to-face training events. Knowledge sharing within SPREP takes place via SPREP’s Senior Leadership Team (SLT), and at a high level between SPREP, Australia and NZ at the annual HLCs.

The discussion below provides an assessment of performance, and available evidence, against the various “goals”, using the Performance Standard Descriptors found in Figure 5 below.

Standard	Descriptor
Excellent	Performance is clearly very strong or exemplary in relation to the question. Any gaps or weaknesses are not significant and are managed effectively.
Good	Performance is generally strong in relation to the question. No significant gaps or weaknesses, and less significant gaps or weaknesses are mostly managed effectively.
Adequate	Performance is inconsistent in relation to the question. Some gaps or weaknesses. Meets minimum expectations / requirements as far as can be determined.
Poor	Performance is unacceptably weak in relation to the question. Does not meet minimum expectations/requirements.
Insufficient evidence	Evidence unavailable or limitations were experienced in collecting sufficient evidence to make a determination of performance.

Figure 5: Performance Standard Descriptors

Assessment of performance and evidence against Partnership Objectives

Partnership Objective 1: A strong relationship between GoA and SPREP, characterised by: close collaboration on mutual priorities; effective and efficient communication and management arrangements; visibility and transparency to maximise communication and awareness under the Communications Plan: Australia and SPREP Partnership

- **Performance Rating:** Good
- **Evidence:** Key informants (including observations from external informants) reported a close, enduring and trusted relationship that allowed openness and honest conversation, supported by public communications² and formal DFAT/SPREP annual reporting. This falls short of an Excellent rating given the blurred lines of responsibility within the GoA agencies, which affects relationship-building and communication processes.

Partnership Objective 2: Effective and efficient program management to meet program objectives, characterised by: effective and efficient program planning and implementation; commitment to monitoring, evaluation and learning; transparent and robust systems and processes; professional and informed people

- **Performance Rating:** Adequate
- **Evidence:** Improvements have been made to SPREP program management systems and processes. There remain around 43 unfunded positions and reportedly slow recruitment processes that have caused delays to the inception of several projects (2-year start-up periods of investments was noted to be the norm). Low management fees continue to be

² <https://www.sprep.org/news/sprep-and-the-government-of-australia-strengthen-partnership-for-a-resilient-pacific>



paid on donor-funded projects (except Australia/NZ), which leads to shortfalls in core funding. There is evidence of new systems coming into play to improve internal document keeping. SPREP's resource needs continue to increase, in terms of number of projects and increasing priorities, members' needs increasing through more treaties and expanding environmental challenges. A focus on quality and strategic priorities over quantity of projects may support improvement in this area. SPREP member country support needs are increasing but not being met, due to competing priorities with donor-funded projects. MEL systems are in place through MEL leadership and internal training, although not fully embedded yet.

Partnership Objective 3: Enhanced SPREP capabilities (people, systems and processes), characterised by: transparent financial budgeting and reporting, including implementation of full cost recovery practices; effective corporate systems in managing resources, adopting transparency and accountability mechanisms; improved practices and systems to support people and programs, including monitoring, evaluation and learning, and improved planning; mainstreaming of Gender, Equity and Social Inclusion principles across SPREP

- **Performance Rating:** Adequate
- **Evidence:** Budgeting is transparent and accounts are audited, with evidence of cost recovery practices in place. Many safeguarding and due diligence policy documents remain in draft or are non-existent, which increases the risk for GoA (as a donor) and SPREP in implementation. Core operations have limited resources, and many staff are stretched and risk burnout. MEL systems are in place but not well embedded across SPREP, and a digital data management system is needed to streamline and improve data management and reporting. Capacity building takes place but not in formal, structured ways nor is it captured and reported on. GEDSI policy and processes have progressed, although these are not finalised.

Partnership Objective 4: Effective and efficient regional service delivery, characterised by: supporting SPREP's role to coordinate with development partners; a focus on results and measuring impact through joint, regular and evidence-based reviews of outcomes; equitable service delivery across the Pacific region, delivering on member priorities; an integrated regional response to common challenges through strong Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific (CROP) agencies and regional agency cooperation and collaboration, to ensure efficiency and prevent duplication.

- **Performance Rating:** Good.
- **Evidence:** There is strong evidence for positive engagement in the region.³ SPREP has a clear mandate within the busy space of CROP agencies in the environment and climate space, although with smaller teams and budgets compared with other agencies doing similar work (e.g. SPC), so coordination is challenging. Goodwill between agencies "can only go so far" according to some stakeholder insights, and there is an opportunity for clearer arrangements at CROP level for coordination and responsibilities where mandates overlap. GoA could be more proactive in supporting coordination with similar programs and initiatives it funds with regional agencies, through other donors and also bilaterally, to reduce that burden. Support to member countries is built into project designs where possible, and covered through core funding of Programs, which can be stretched when not directly funded and staff are busy

³ Examples of regional engagement: Weather Ready Pacific (with Pacific Met Council) and Leaders Ocean Statement (OPOC, PIFS, SPC, FFA, SPREP). One CROP for Blue Pacific; Regional advocacy for COP 29; Coordination and technical advice to support Pacific negotiating teams in the lead up to and at COP28 including the Pacific Preparatory meeting, Bonn Climate Change Conference and as led by the SPREP and the One CROP Plus Team. Technical input and support with the FRDP Mid Term Review in 2023, the Pacific Resilience Meeting and the draft FRDP Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, Pacific Resilience Partnership. Joint Support Unit (with SPC and PIFS) for the Pacific Regional Partnership; CROP Energy Technical Working Group with PIFS and SPC; Technical support and advice to the FOC Specialist Sub-Committee on Sea-Level Rise (with PIFS, OPOC, SPC, FFA); CROP Marine Sector Working Group; CROP Taskforce on International Engagement and Advocacy for Ocean Events (PIFS, FFA, SPC, SPTO, USP, OPOC).



delivering projects. The Partnership supports the core resourcing for this as well as with 15% management fees on projects, although this is not well attributed through current MEL systems.

Assessment of performance and evidence against Grant Arrangement Objectives

Grant Arrangement Core Objective: The objective of the program is for core funding support for SPREP to deliver services to SPREP Member countries in the Pacific, in line with SPREP's mandate.

- **Performance Rating:** Excellent
- **Evidence:** Australia's core funding to SPREP is significant, and the allocation of funding by the SPREP SLT according to SPREP's Strategic Plan, towards operations and program staffing, provides strong evidence for the importance of the stable, predictable and flexible funding arrangement. There was no evidence to refute this from any source, and the grant funding was found to be highly valued by SPREP in order to deliver their mandate, and by GoA to support environment and climate resilience initiatives in the region. The challenge is in generating evidence and reporting of Australia's contribution towards SPREP's delivery against its mandate given the flexible nature of the funding, and other non-financial support provided through the partnership. This is an area for improvement in its implementation and generation of evidence.

Grant Arrangement Specific Objectives: To promote cooperation in the Pacific region and provide assistance in order to protect and improve its environment; To ensure sustainable development for present and future generations; To strengthen gender and social inclusion mainstreaming across SPREP, maintain representation of women in senior roles and promote an organisational culture in which all women and men thrive

- **Performance Rating:** Good
- **Evidence:** The performance against these objectives is covered to varying degrees in the above Partnership Objectives. The second objective is broad in nature and features in the SPREP Strategic Plan set of principles: "SPREP mandate for improved environmental management and sustainable development" (SPREP Strategic Plan 2017-2026, p.23), so Australia's flexible funding towards the delivery of the Strategic Plan provides some evidence that this objective is being supported. GEDSI is discussed above, however in addition, there is evidence for progress against the objective for representation of women in senior leadership: At the institutional level, the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) has integrated gender as a standing paper into its monthly meeting agenda. Within the SLT, 4 out of 9 Directors are women.

Various Grant Arrangement Outcomes

- **Performance Rating:** Good
- **Evidence:** SPREP's latest annual report (covering Jan-Dec 2023) demonstrates that a majority of the performance indicators in the SPREP-DFAT Results Framework (SDRF) 2021-2025 are achieved (64%), and that SPREP are on track to meet the remainder noting many are ongoing indicators and are in progress. The effectiveness score for the DFAT-led 2024 IMR (covering 2023) received a rating of "5-Good".



Assessment of performance and evidence against Non-Core Funding Arrangements

The evidence base for results against non-core funding arrangements between GoA and SPREP is found in the individual contracts for each project and brought together for annual reporting as part of the IMR Process.

The non-core funded projects have enabled the partnership to support SPREP's Strategic Plan, and the IMR states that SPREP's delivery of non-core funding agreements has driven an increased effectiveness score for the reporting period (Jan-Dec 2023). The flagship AUD 16m The Pacific Ocean Litter Project (POLP) enables SPREP to progress its Regional Goal 3 (Pacific people benefit from improved waste management and pollution control), and is undergoing an MTR during this review period. IMR reports suggest positive progress on all non-core funded programs, and that longer-term projects such as POLP and the PCCC enable SPREP to recruit and retain highly skilled staff.

The review heard that the long-term nature and ongoing core funding to SPREP through the partnership with GoA set a foundation of trust, which supported positive relationships in delivering the standalone non-core projects. It is recommended that the partnership nurtures this effect of cross-pollination by bringing the funding arrangements of core and non-core investments more closely together. This would also provide a rationale for a Program-centre results framework, in which projects and their outcomes would sit, and could provide for a central evidence base for reporting against support to SPREP programs as a whole.

2.3.2.EQ4 How effectively is the Partnership set up to achieve its objectives?

Relevant lines of enquiry:

- Is the current Grant Arrangement structured in a way that is most effective? What are the strengths and weaknesses of this model?
- Is the Partnership supported by robust and appropriate monitoring & evaluation processes?
- Are considerations for GEDSI embedded in policy and practice?

Overall, **the Partnership is not structured in the most effective way, as there are a number of composite parts that are not formally considered together as contributing to the whole of Australian Government support to SPREP.** This is discussed in the Relevance section and is unpacked in further detail in this section.

In terms of its strengths, **the Partnership Arrangement reflects the mutually valuable and enduring relationship between Australia and SPREP** and sets the stage for a variety of supports to SPREP, such as funding arrangements and other non-financial supports. The Partnership identifies the key roles of DFAT, as foreign policy and donor lead, and DCCEEW, as technical climate and environment lead, to best support SPREP in its implementation of its mandate. The flexible Grant Arrangement is a highly valued contribution to SPREP and funds a significant shortfall in core funding that SPREP is reliant on to function.

Australia has utilised its influence with other partners within Australia and abroad to improve management fees of other donors (e.g. New Zealand) and to support SPREP in its identification of new funding opportunities (e.g. UK). The relationships brokered through the Partnership have enabled SPREP to develop significant projects, such as POLP, in close collaboration with DCCEEW and member countries. The support to core operational functions of SPREP provided by the Grant Arrangement enables SPREP to fund the "less attractive" elements of the organisation to external donors (e.g. HR and corporate services), and to seek external support for the more attractive program positions with a technical focus, although a portion of Australia's funding also supports Program positions.

The Objectives and Commitment laid out in the Partnership Arrangement were agreed in the spirit of mutual collaboration and respect, and these sentiments were found to remain in place amongst key



informants. The review found that several commitments made in the Partnership Arrangement could be delivered more intentionally in practice, and in doing so would benefit the areas of the partnership that were rated as “adequate” in terms of performance above (**Partnership Objective 3:** Enhanced SPREP capabilities [people, systems and processes], and **Partnership Objective 2:** Effective and efficient program management to meet program objectives). The commitments recommended to be carried out in a more purposeful manner are those that were judged to be ‘catch-all’ activities, to be carried out across the partnership rather than relating to a particular objective and therefore may not have been prioritised by either party, on the assumption they were taking place informally, and/or not as highly prioritised as more substantive commitments. These are presented in Figure 6 below.

#	Commitment	Opportunities to strengthen delivery
4.1a	GoA to articulate clear expectations of the Partnership with SPREP through regular, open dialogue	Structuring formalised meetings annually to reflect and discuss expectations, between GoA and SPREP with a Health Check approach. Continuing informal dialogue throughout the year.
4.3b	BOTH: Work together to support SPREP’s organisational reforms to enable more effective program and project delivery	GoA to consider the offer of support for organisational reforms, communicate these in formal/informal spaces, with clear pathways for SPREP to access. SPREP to identify and discuss specific areas for support, where GoA (Canberra / Post) may be in a position to assist.
4.3d	BOTH: Meet regularly, including on an informal basis, to share all relevant information, discuss any performance concerns as early as possible, and resolve any issues through dialogue	More structured discussion of concerns early in informal/formal spaces and capturing (internally) issues raised and progress or outcomes to bring to more formal settings if more detailed planning and agreement is needed.

Figure 6: Commitments to be strengthened and suggested opportunities

The challenges associated with the modality are mentioned variously above and mainly focus on the absence of a streamlined engagement between Australia and SPREP, which misses opportunities for improved knowledge management, evidence gathering, and contract management from GoA and SPREP.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Progress by the partners, against the objectives and commitments of the Partnership Arrangement, is not clearly articulated, and this is partly due to the absence of a well-defined process or forum through which Australia and SPREP can share results and lessons at the Partnership Agreement level, and to agree on ways ahead. The various reporting mechanisms associated with the Partnership (e.g. DFAT IMRs, SPREP annual reporting against the Grant Arrangement PAF) are not fit for purpose in articulating the fulfilment of objectives and commitments of the Partnership Arrangement. Similarly, the links between the objectives of the Partnership Arrangement and the allocation of core funding via the Grant Arrangement are not clearly defined in the documentation, nor in practice. For example, SPREP’s process for allocating core funding (from Australia and other sources) is to adhere to the SPREP Strategic Plan 2017-2026 priorities, and in practice, this has resulted in Australia’s funding primarily being utilised to fund core positions (program and operational), plus limited operating budgets for the programs (where feasible). There is little evidence of SPREP formally allocating resources to the specific objectives of the Partnership, partly due to gaps in reporting processes, but also due to the allocation approach which is primarily focused on funding significant, ongoing program and operational positions.

The review found that much of the above could be avoided with the formalisation of regular (annual) Partnership Health Check meetings, externally facilitated and focused on reflecting on how the partnership is going and discussing and agreeing to the actions and approaches which all parties (SPREP and GoA) intend to take, to deliver against the objectives and commitments of the Partnership



Arrangement. This forum for tracking progress of agreed actions in a neutral space, facilitated effectively to support constructive discussion, would be an effective tool here. PBAS states: “Encouraging partners to be reflective in the midst of their inevitably busy schedules can be a challenge, but those who adopt more reflective practices see a return on investments. Reviewing a partnership can take many forms ranging from regular health checks (perhaps at the end of each meeting) to far more structured in-depth approaches.” These Annual Partnership Health checks could assist in revising the partnership arrangement (collaboratively) and articulating actions and approaches by which all parties are expected to achieve.

The Grant Arrangement is the main focus of reporting from SPREP and also by DFAT. As such, the results achieved from the Partnership Arrangement are not being adequately drawn out in reporting, particularly the non-financial support and collaboration elements. The review found numerous anecdotal examples of engagement from GoA that delivered technical and more operational support, such as in MEL, GEDSI and in engagement with external climate finance opportunities. The Partnership would benefit from a more intentional approach to reflecting and capturing (and recording) these achievements. Similarly, the IMR process is specific to the Grant Arrangement, however, it also reports on non-core funding initiatives, which are outside of the Grant Arrangement. The Partnership Arrangement would therefore benefit from a more structured approach to reporting and reflection, such as reporting on progress and lessons of the recommended Partnership Health Checks, to inform the IMR process.

GEDSI Considerations

The review found some evidence of GEDSI mainstreaming and capability. Consultations emphasised that conversations on gender within SPREP had progressed significantly since the introduction of the 2016 Gender Policy, gaining more prominence at the organisational level. 2024 IMR ratings saw the SPREP partnership rated a 4 for gender equality and a 3 for disability, ratings that were retained from the 2023 performance cycle. Evidence underpinning this rating included the work of SPREP’s Gender, Equality, Inclusion and Mainstreaming (GEIM) Committee in reviewing the 2016 Gender Policy ahead of updating. Gender has become mainstreamed into SPREP’s Senior Leadership Team (SLT) as a standing agenda item at monthly meetings. The PCCC organised and hosted a series of climate change, gender and social inclusion workshops for Samoa’s Fa’afafine Association, the Brown Girl Woke (a young feminist group working in Samoa) and the Samoa Office for the Ombudsman to build capacity on the basics of climate change, adaptation and mitigation strategies. The PCCC is also a member of the Women of the Wave (WOW) Network which supports women in leadership opportunities. A ‘Gender 101’ session was conducted with staff at the end of October to address the definition of ‘gender’ and understanding of social inclusion.

However, it is **unclear how much of this evidence of progress can be attributed to Australia’s partnership with SPREP and funding support** or which results were being achieved beyond Australia’s contribution. Reporting (DFAT IMR, HLC reports and annual reporting) would benefit from a clearer delineation of the boundaries of the investment and associated reporting.

Despite evidence of some improvements, **GEDSI progress remains slow, and implementation challenges persist.** The review of SPREP’s 2016 gender policy has been completed, including input from DFAT as part of development workshops. However, there have been delays in the finalisation of this policy and enactment of commitments. Consultations articulated the slow and incremental nature of policy change efforts within SPREP, a challenge that is compounded by the need for socialisation and buy-in from SPREP member countries. There is recognition of the importance of GEDSI to SPREP’s work, but also acknowledgement that the vocabulary associated with aspects of the social inclusion agenda (particularly discussions of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities) may, at times, be new or confronting for some member countries.



There is appetite within SPREP for improvement, but limited centralised resourcing makes coordination and implementation a challenge. Implementation of the 2016 Gender Policy was constrained by a lack of centralised gender expertise. The GEIM committee and appointment of two gender champions at the organisational level have helped drive the policy review, but gaps in SPREP’s organisational structure and a lack of formal, centralised gender resourcing constrains implementation ability. Centralised GEDSI support is necessary in order to ensure appropriate integration of GEDSI as a cross-cutting priority at the institutional level, including within MEL processes, as well as aggregation of project-level GEDSI commitments and progress. SPC are supporting a centralised Gender Specialist who is set to commence in early 2025, with SPREP committing to an additional period of financing for this position. It is important for this incoming role to be used strategically in support of the partnership’s GEDSI objectives.

Safeguarding and due diligence risks remain for DFAT, particularly relating to PSEAH and Child Protection. Currently, there is little articulation of these risks as part of the Partnership Agreement. While GEDSI is captured as an overarching partnership objective, the partnership would benefit from clearer articulation of overarching risks at the agreement level to assist with joint mitigation of these risks and ensure safeguard compliance. This would enable DFAT to place GEDSI requirements and compliance more centrally within the partnership and provide an accountability tool in the absence of formal reporting mechanisms. The framing of these considerations as partnership risks can assist in prioritisation throughout the partnership more broadly as well as model principles of equity and mutual accountability. It is important that GEDSI and safeguarding risks are prioritised through the proposed partnership health checks. There is also a need for a **re-articulation of GEDSI priorities to ensure stronger integration of disability inclusion, equity and rights**. The review of SPREP’s 2016 gender policy included consideration of disability as an emerging priority area, alongside gender justice in climate change, and gender-related indicators for reporting. However, this updated policy is still awaiting finalisation and endorsement. As such, there is a lack of clarity over SPREP’s approach to disability. At the same time, DFAT’s prioritisation of disability equity has increased since the SPREP partnership and grant agreement were developed, necessitating a review of objectives language as part of a broader shift from GESI to GEDSI. DFAT’s recently updated disability and gender strategies⁴ represent an opportunity for a re-articulation of GoA priorities in this space, including refreshed performance criteria and standards.

2.4. Efficiency

This set of evaluation questions seeks to answer the question: How well are resources being used?

2.4.1.EQ5. How well are the resources associated with the Partnership being utilised?

Relevant lines of enquiry:

- How efficiently is SPREP utilising its core and program funding associated with the Partnership?
- Is the Partnership delivering value for money in relation to management and delivery costs and effort for DFAT, DCCEE and SPREP?

Overall, there is evidence that SPREP is efficiently utilising its core and project funding associated with the Partnership, and delivering a wide mandate and range of outcomes in the context of a stretched overall budget. For example, the review team found examples of staff delivering value for money in

⁴ DFAT’s *International Disability Equity and Rights Strategy* was released in late 2024 and *International Gender Equality Strategy* in early 2025.



working across multiple projects, optimising project budgets for capacity building of the SPREP team, and in supporting member countries beyond their remit. The review heard SPREP staff being praised for their commitment, however, the resource-stretched nature of operations at SPREP presents a HR risk, which is acknowledged by the SPREP SLT. Resource allocations are clearly linked and aligned with the Strategic Plan 2017-2026, with set processes including regular SLT budget setting meetings, the development of detailed Implementation Planning and budgeting documentation that identifies funding sources, plus clear accountability process for financial and progress reporting against the Strategic Plan and Implementation Plans. SPREP is challenged with funding shortfalls in its delivery of its Strategic Plan, and in its reliance on donor project funding, this can stretch the team beyond that scope. The review found that while core funding was found to be efficiently utilised, the strain resulting of delivering and reporting on donor-funded projects (with relatively lower management fees compared with GoA) is adding to the resource constraints, without which GoA funding might be utilised more strategically and in aid of organisational improvements.

SPREP has strong financial processes as reflected in its auditing procedures, and evidence suggests there is funding (from the UK and NZ) towards an integrated management system soon to be utilised. Many SPREP systems are still manual, so this process improvement is expected to deliver efficiencies in data management, communication and reporting. The evidence suggests that there are clear processes for the allocation of core funding, prioritised towards providing longer-term job security for salaried positions according to the Strategic Plan and Organisational chart.

Australia's provision of core funding has enabled SPREP to attract additional funding, such as NZ core funding, donor-funded projects, and DFAT-funded projects. Similarly, the review found evidence of value for money in cross-program collaboration within SPREP, and in coordination of regional initiatives, supported by core funding. This does hold some risk as noted above with regards to administrative burden of donor-funded projects and the resultant strain on resources to deliver core services to SPREP's members and other operational objectives.

There is evidence of a degree of **inefficiency with regard to the number of grants and arrangements that require management and reporting processes**, including DFAT funded projects, as these require a minimum level of effort irrespective of the size of the project. In seeking out additional donor funding for projects to support the Strategic Plan, the low management fee paid by many donors (e.g. 7% as mandated by EU legislation) puts a strain on the core functioning of SPREP. While Australia has increased its management fee to 15% (and influenced NZ to raise theirs to 10%), SPREP may consider identifying longer larger donor-funded programs to gain economies of scale or perhaps to consider reporting frameworks and processes that meet requirements of all project donors, to reduce the reporting burden.

The review found that the tight management of operational resources, as a result of historically low membership fees and project management fees, **limits the effectiveness of the programs in delivering non-project core mandated work**, such as responding to requests for support from Member Countries. One example of this is in responding to requests from Member Countries for support and training on Environmental Impact Assessment, for which SPREP is mandated as the lead Pacific agency to provide support, however, this is deprioritised due to the lack of a dedicated budget, and project budgets (with strict donor-mandated accountability and reporting schedules) taking precedence.

Given the resourcing challenges for SPREP, and its small size, there may be potential for SPREP to work with other CROPs to gain economies of scale such as in negotiating running costs and technical inputs, as part of its coordination with CROPs.

2.4.2.EQ6. To what extent are the governance and institutional arrangements efficiently underpinning the partnership?

Relevant lines of enquiry:



- Do the arrangements facilitate effective and clear engagement with partners within GoA and with SPREP?
- Do they promote cross-learning and reduce duplication?

The review found there is strong commitment towards Australia's Partnership with SPREP from all parties. However, there is some observed ambiguity of roles within GoA around the governance and institutional arrangements of the Partnership Arrangement. The combined status vis-a-vis GoA as donor, partner and SPREP member country has caused some confusion with SPREP staff regarding appropriate lines of communication with DFAT and DCCEEW, and in many cases, staff have taken to including both agencies in correspondence as a risk-averse but less efficient approach. Evidence was found for the emergence of parallel stakeholder relationships as a result of the dual roles of GoA, which suggests that the current arrangement does not facilitate the most efficient and clear engagement between SPREP and GoA. As noted in previous findings, there are opportunities to streamline roles and resulting lines of communication to reduce confusion and facilitate more effective engagement between GoA and SPREP.

SPREP's governance arrangements, as laid out in the Strategic Plan, are clear and underpin the Partnership well. The review found evidence that the collaborative way of working between members of the SLT has led to knowledge sharing and coordination and reduced the prevalence of siloed approaches to implementation of the Strategic Plan. In future iterations of the partnership, the review team sees the value in nurturing this approach.

There is considerable work to be done on due diligence policies, which requires clear planning and resourcing. DFAT have recently signed a grant arrangement to address these gaps. There may be opportunities for Australia and NZ to consider alignment of due diligence expectations to support this process.

The review found opportunities within the Partnership to anchor into wider partnerships between SPREP and Australian Universities, such as the University of Melbourne and the University of Newcastle, to achieve more tangible and enduring benefits beyond the research funding cycle. SPREP may consider seeking out opportunities for connection and knowledge sharing, such that research and evidence informs programming within SPREP. GoA may find opportunities to encourage sharing of information and knowledge in an informal setting with those academic partners, as part of wider engagement in the sector.

2.5. Impact: What difference does the intervention make?

2.5.1.EQ7. Is SPREP achieving its Strategic Objectives, and how is Australia's Partnership with SPREP contributing to these results?

Relevant lines of enquiry:

- How well is the Partnership supporting SPREP to be a high-performing organisation that delivers environment and climate outcomes for its Members?
- Does the Partnership contribute to SPREP's ability to undertake regional cooperation and collaboration with CROP agencies to ensure efficiency and prevent duplication?
- Is the Partnership supporting SPREP to strengthen GEDSI mainstreaming across SPREP, maintain representation of women in senior roles and promote an organisational culture in which all women, men, LGBTQIA+ people, and people with disabilities thrive?

Through the process of data collection and analysis, this question was agreed to be redundant on reflection: the Partnership is intentionally closely aligned with the SPREP's Strategic Plan, and this is discussed in Section 2.1 of this Report.



2.5.2.EQ8. How well is the Partnership supporting Australia in achieving its priorities in the region?

Relevant lines of enquiry:

- Does the Partnership with SPREP affect Australia's influence in the region?
- What levers might there be to further Australia's influence over the way SPREP operates in the region?

Evidence suggests that **Australia's partnership with SPREP demonstrates Australia's increasing credibility in responding to regional impacts of climate change** and does this through investing in SPREP with its broad and relevant mandate. The Pacific Ocean Litter Project is one example, alongside GoA's work supporting Pacific High-Level Dialogue of regional Climate Change Ministers and officials.

The review found some evidence of regionalism being progressed in supporting regional architecture and climate and environment priorities, via knowledge sharing, coordination, projects and joint working. For example:

- The Australian-funded project supporting United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference of the Parties (UNFCCC COP) 29 processes enabled SPREP and Australia to work closely with member countries in support of a regional position on climate.
- Australia's funding towards the PCCC has supported SPREP to engage in knowledge brokering within the region on key climate issues.

Evidence indicates that GoA representation in the Partnership with SPREP via DFAT could be strengthened, in terms of matching the level of seniority from DFAT with the associated SPREP representative (Director General), and that this might support the level of influence GoA has in the relationship and wider region. The enduring connection between GoA and SPREP was found to be built on mutual trust and respect, and as this continues it sets the scene for further opportunities for influence.

The funder-partner relationship is a particular dynamic. The review suggests that it is important for all partners to work hard to bring balance into the partnership, and to nurture equity, capabilities and trust as the partnership matures and evolves. This requires an ongoing working relationship in which risk and benefits are shared. Australia might consider reflecting on its overall contribution to climate change programming in the Pacific (through bilateral and multilateral initiatives), and identify areas of duplication, competition and/or undermining of effective delivery and achievement of overall outcomes.

Additional levers for Australia to influence SPREP's mode of operation were found to be in supporting further initiatives such as secondments with relevant Australian agencies, to enhance capacity and build relationships with key SPREP technical and operational leads. Australia may also find opportunities to engage with SPREP via Posts in the region, given these relationships are yet to be well developed.

2.6.Sustainability: Will the benefits last?

2.6.1.EQ9. Will the benefits of the Partnership, for SPREP and the wider Pacific region, last?

Relevant lines of enquiry:

- To what extent is it likely that the results of GoA support to SPREP will be embedded and sustained?
- How is the Partnership supporting SPREP to generate funding from diverse sources (e.g. UK)?

The relationship between GoA and SPREP is a longstanding, enduring and mutually beneficial one, and the review heard that this relationship will continue into the future, with no suggestion that GoA's



support and membership with SPREP is under threat. The question of sustainability is therefore situated in the extent to which the results of the partnership are likely to be embedded and sustained.

The high-level partnership between SPREP and GoA as a model is sustainable as Australia’s investing in CROP agencies has a long history and is unlikely to discontinue. The benefits of the partnership in promoting shared values and drawing on strengths could be better articulated in future iterations in order for the benefits to be more clearly evidenced and communicated. The review recommends that the partners would benefit from an agreed plan for achieving a more streamlined set of objectives at the partnership level and identify ways of working that will nurture further maturity of the partnership. These are presented in Annex 4.

In terms of core funding, as SPREP works towards its next Strategic Plan, there are opportunities for the partners to embed the priorities and objectives of the partnership into this new Strategic Plan, where possible, to create space to be responsive to those mutual objectives.

With regards to non-core funding, evidence and lessons are captured in an ad-hoc way via the IMR process (on top of additional reporting against project results frameworks), and there are opportunities to capture this in a more strategic fashion that could link the progress and achievements made within projects with wider SPREP programmatic priorities, creating a more meaningful story of GoA support. Streamlining DFAT’s core and non-core funding, and grouping results by priority areas may be a way to do this, for example, by reporting on program and operational results (led by SPREP strategic priorities) to tell the story of GoA investments. Aligning with the existing SPREP MEL frameworks and results reporting at project level, rather than adding additional processes, would be recommended. At present, the inclusion of non-core funding outcomes and some partnership objectives in the IMR process for the Core Grant Arrangement does not provide a consistent and cohesive narrative of the overall partnership. Simply put, stating what is in and what is not, in terms of IMR reporting, could benefit the investment.

A further consideration around sustainability relates to SPREP staffing, as the review found evidence of turnover of technical, program staff due to the short-term nature of project contracts. While SPREP funding allocation processes prioritise the funding of permanent positions, there is a shortfall in resourcing that leads to this turnover of highly skilled staff. There may be opportunities in a new iteration of the Partnership to identify ways to support longer-term contracting arrangements with staff.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

This section provides recommendations for the Partnership to function more effectively, efficiently and in line with the priorities of all parties.

A set of 10 recommendations for the program are summarised below, with reference to the relevant discussion in the wider document where additional rationale or context may be needed.

#	Recommendation	Relevant Section
11.	It is recommended that GoA and SPREP work closely together to simplify the modality in design and implementation, including objectives and results tracking, of the Partnership and Grant Arrangements according to the Proposed Partnership Arrangements described in Annex 4.	Section 2.1.1
12.	It is recommended that the existing annual bilateral meetings, as part of the High-Level Consultation’s, are strengthened to incorporate a Partnership Health Check to reflect on the Partnership and agree on plans to strengthen	Section 2.1.1, 2.3.2



#	Recommendation	Relevant Section
	the process and delivery of the partnership, capturing and sharing with each other.	
13.	It is recommended that the GoA and SPREP agree on how they will work together to support SPREP's regional service delivery and the implementation of the SPREP Strategic Plan, including identifying non-financial cooperation from GoA.	Section 2.1.1
14.	It is recommended that DFAT and DCCEEW discuss and agree on roles, responsibilities and communications pathways for each entry point into SPREP, to ensure a united GoA approach to the Partnership.	Section 2.1.1
15.	It is recommended that where Australia bilaterally funds similar programs in the region with other organisations and through other CROP agencies, GoA considers and communicates resourcing coordination with SPREP to improve efficiencies and clarity.	Section 2.3.1
16.	It is recommended that GoA work closely with SPREP as a member and partner to contribute to SPREP's Strategic Plan and other policies and regional frameworks, including supporting systems and processes.	Section 2.1.1
17.	It is recommended that both Partners continue to engage with other CROPs to identify and leverage opportunities to achieve economies of scale and sharing resources where appropriate, in programming and corporate areas of implementation.	Section 2.4.1
18.	It is recommended that the Partnership develops a clearer articulation of bilateral and shared risks as part of the Partnership, to assist with safeguarding compliance and other risk management, to be taken forward in more detail at implementation.	Section 2.3.2
19.	It is recommended that SPREP optimises the GEDSI secondee/advisor position to respond to remaining gaps and instrumentalize implementation.	Section 2.3.2
20.	It is recommended that as part of HLCs, NZ and GoA consider aligning expectations of SPREP around due diligence, particularly PSEAH, and Child Protection.	Section 2.4.2



Annex 1 – Evaluation Questions

Evaluation Criteria	Evaluation Question, and Lines of Enquiry
Relevance <i>Is the intervention doing the right things?</i>	1. Is the design and implementation of the Partnership responding to the needs and priorities of SPREP, GoA, SPREP Members and other relevant stakeholders? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent is the Partnership designed to support SPREP’s regional service delivery and advance Pacific regionalism? • To what extent are the objectives of the Partnership relevant to the priorities of SPREP, its members, and GoA?
Coherence <i>How well does the intervention fit?</i>	2. How well does the Partnership fit in supporting SPREP to deliver a unique and complementary role in the region? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How well does the Partnership support SPREP to fulfil a clearly defined and complementary role in relation to other Pacific regional organisations? • Is the Partnership, in its design and implementation, aligned with Australia’s International Development Policy, and relevant development plans in the Pacific?
Effectiveness <i>Is the intervention achieving its objectives?</i>	3. To what extent are the Objectives (of the Partnership, the Grant Arrangement, and funded programs) being achieved? Is the result more than the sum of its parts? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has the Partnership been effective in enhancing SPREP capabilities (people, systems and processes)? • Has the Partnership supported the core functions of SPREP, such as its governance and policy (e.g. safeguarding and due diligence)? • How is the Partnership supporting SPREP to share knowledge and lessons across the program and with others in the region? 4. How effectively is the Partnership set up to achieve its objectives? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the current Grant Arrangement structured in a way that is most effective? What are the strengths and weaknesses of this model? • Is the Partnership supported by robust and appropriate monitoring & evaluation processes? • Are considerations for GEDSI embedded in policy and practice?
Efficiency <i>How well are resources being used?</i>	5. How well are the resources associated with the Partnership being utilised? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How efficiently is SPREP utilising its core and program funding associated with the Partnership? • Is the Partnership delivering value for money in relation to management and delivery costs and effort for DFAT, DCCEEW and SPREP? 6. To what extent are the governance and institutional arrangements efficiently underpinning the partnership? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do the arrangements facilitate effective and clear engagement with partners within GoA and with SPREP? • Do they promote cross-learning and reduce duplication?
Impact <i>What difference does the intervention make?</i>	7. Is SPREP achieving its Strategic Objectives, and how is Australia’s Partnership with SPREP contributing to these results? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How well is the Partnership supporting SPREP to be a high performing organisation that delivers environment and climate outcomes for its Members? • Does the Partnership contribute to SPREP’s ability to undertake regional cooperation and collaboration with CROP agencies to ensure efficiency and prevent duplication?



Evaluation Criteria	Evaluation Question, and Lines of Enquiry
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is the Partnership supporting SPREP to strengthen GEDSI mainstreaming across SPREP, maintain representation of women in senior roles and promote an organisational culture in which all women, men, LGBTQIA+ people, and people with disabilities thrive? <p>8. How well is the Partnership supporting Australia in achieving its priorities in the region?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does the Partnership with SPREP affect Australia’s influence in the region?• What levers might there be to further Australia’s influence over the way SPREP operates in the region?
<p>Sustainability <i>Will the benefits last?</i></p>	<p>9. Will the benefits of the Partnership, for SPREP and the wider Pacific region, last?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To what extent is it likely that the results of GoA support to SPREP will be embedded and sustained?• How is the Partnership supporting SPREP to generate funding from diverse sources (e.g. UK)?



Annex 2 – Stakeholder Consultations

List of Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) undertaken

Name	Organisation	Role
Susan McErlain	DCCEEW	Pacific and Regional Section
Nicole Coombe	DCCEEW	Director, Pacific and Regional Section
Kirstin Donaldson	DCCEEW	Director, Pacific Policy and Engagement
Claire Chivell	DFAT	Director, Pacific Climate Change
Bridgette Cottrill	DFAT	Senior Policy and Development Officer, Pacific Climate
Alex Knox	DFAT	Assistant Director, Regional Organisations and Governance
Andrew Tapper	External	Conducting a review of the Pacific Meteorological Council
Easter Chu Shing	SPREP Staff	Deputy Director General
Stuart Chape	SPREP Staff	Director, Islands, Ocean and Ecosystems (IOE)
Amanda Wheatley	SPREP Staff	Biodiversity Adviser
Petra Suhren-Chan Tung	SPREP Staff	Director, Finance and Administration
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Annex 3 – List of Documents

Organisation	Document Name
SPC	Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific: An Integrated Approach to Address Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management (FRDP), 2016
SPREP	SPREP submission into Australia’s response to the priorities to Pacific Island countries and the Pacific Region, 2024
DFAT	Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Plan for the Strengthening Pacific Leadership in International Climate Change Engagement investment, undated
SPREP PROE	PIP 4 (2024 – 2025) Updated Priority Activities, 2024
SPREP	Policy Brief: Finance & Resource Sustainability Strategy, April 2024
DCCEEW	Pacific Ocean Litter Project – Mid-term Review and Evaluation – Terms of Reference, undated
SPREP PROE	Applicant Information Package Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist – Pacific Ocean Litter Project (POLP), April 2020
DFAT	Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Plan for Strengthening the Services of the Pacific Climate Change Centre, (undated)
SPREP	Project Proposal: Strengthening the Services of the Pacific Climate Change Centre, undated
SPREP	Project Proposal: Strengthening Pacific Leadership in International Climate Change Engagement, undated
SPREP	Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Plan for Strengthening the Services of the Pacific Climate Change Centre
DFAT	Grant Arrangement with SPREP for project Strengthening Pacific Leadership in International Climate Change Engagement, June 2022
DFAT	Grant Arrangement with SPREP for Project: Strengthening the Services of the Pacific Climate Change Centre, June 2022
DFAT	Respective roles and responsibilities of DCCEEW and DFAT pertaining to SPREP, September 2024
SPREP	Core Funding Structure Review - SPREP Partner And Donor Interviews, 2023
SPREP PROE	PIP 3 (2022 – 2023) Outcome Indicators and Key Activities, Work Programme and Biennial Budget, 2023
PCCC	Pacific Climate Change Centre Monitoring, Evaluation, Reflection and Learning (MERL) Framework, 2021
DFAT	Grant Arrangement between DFAT and SPC for Program Funding for SPC’s Fisheries, Aquaculture and Marine Ecosystems (FAME) Division, 2024
DFAT	SPREP-Australia-New Zealand High Level Consultations June 2023 Summary of Outcomes, 2023
SPREP PROE	Annual Progress Report 2023 for Core Funding Support to the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, April 2024
SPREP PROE	Annual Progress Report 2022 for Core Funding Support to the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, March 2023
SPREP	Annual Progress Report 2021 for Core Funding Support to the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, March 2022
SPREP	Director General’s Performance Development System 2022/2023 Assessment, 2023
SPREP	31 st SPREP Meeting of Officials, Agenda item 5.2: Strategic outcomes from the 2022/2023 Performance Implementation Plan (PIP), August 2023
SPRE	PIP3 (2022-2023) High Level Summary Report: Crosscutting Issues and Lessons Learnt, 2023
SPREP	High Level Summary Report, PIP3 (2022-2023) Progress Towards Achieving PIP3 Outcomes by Strategic Goals, undated

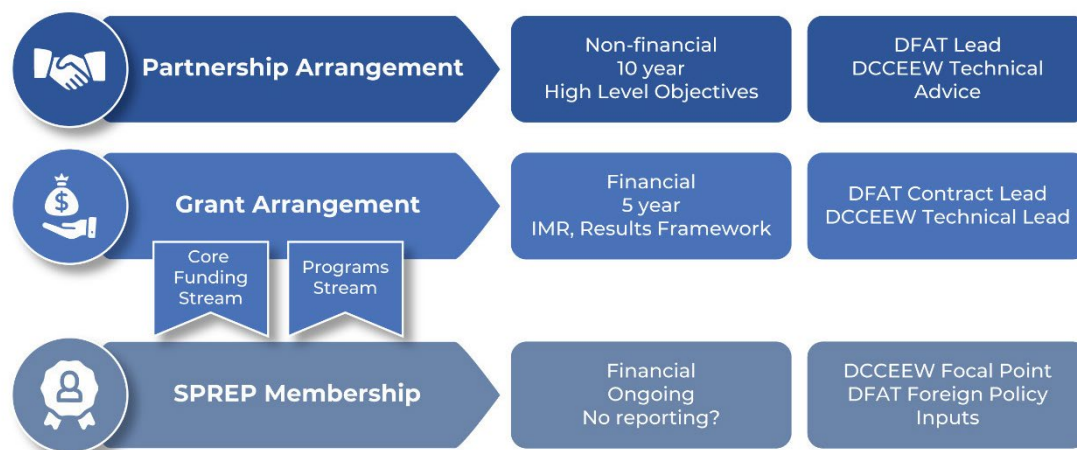


SPREP	PIP 4 (2024 – 2025) Work Programme and Biennial Budget 2024 – 2025, undated
SPREP	SPREP Updates to Baseline Plus Due Diligence Assessment Report, undated
DFAT	Baseline Plus Due Diligence Assessment Report, January 2023
SPREP	31st SPREP Meeting of Officials, Agenda item 6.4: Report of the Working Group for the Prioritisation of Recommendations of the 3rd Independent Corporate Review (ICR) and the Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the SPREP Strategic Plan, August 2023
AidWorks	Annual Investment Monitoring Report 2022,
AidWorks	Annual Investment Monitoring Report 2023,
AidWorks	Annual Investment Monitoring Report 2024,
Natural Solutions Pacific	Independent Corporate Review of SPREP and Mid-Term Review of the SPREP Strategic Plan, September 2021
SPREP	Financial Reports as of 31 December 2023, Government of Australia Grant to SPREP, undated
SPREP	Environmental and Social Management System, Volume 2: Processes and Procedures Manual, October 2019
SPREP	Environmental and Social Management System, Volume 1: Policies and Standards, October 2019
SPREP	Top Priority Enterprise Risk (PER) and Enterprise Risk Management Plan (ERMP) Matrix, undated
SPREP	SPREP Results Framework 2017-2026, August 2019
SPREP	Strategic Plan 2017 – 2026, 2017
DFAT	SPREP-DFAT Results Framework 2021-2025, September 2021
DFAT	Grant Arrangement with SPREP for Core Funding to SPREP, June 2021
DFAT	Partnership between Government of Australia and the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme 2021 – 2031, May 2021



Annex 4 – Recommended Partnership Modality

This section outlines a recommended partnership modality for the partners to work towards, with the recognition that changes may be iterative, and in the immediate term may relate to implementation, and in time will influence the inclusions and wording in the next Partnership Arrangement. The preferred modality would encompass a 10-year non-financial Partnership Arrangement, and one underlying Grant Arrangement with two streams: core and programs funding (the latter including longer-term program funding and longer larger projects), presented visually below.



Partnership Arrangement

This is the overarching partnership arrangement between Australia and SPREP, articulating shared partnership objectives, partnership principles and commitments that underpin the way the partnership operates and what it seeks to achieve for the partners together, and for each partner individually, for SPREP Member countries and the region. A suggested addition would be to improve the current bilateral meetings (during annual HLC) by taking a health check approach, which would review the partnership and progress against objectives with additional structure.

Objectives

The objectives of the existing Partnership Arrangement have been distilled in the narrative below, with characteristics and commitments (from the original document) set against objectives and separated out to frame discussions on reviewing progress, as well as to guide associated implementation planning. Formal reporting against objectives is not recommended. Instead, objectives and progress should guide discussion in bilateral meetings, then summarised and shared amongst partners. All wording is drawn from existing documentation unless otherwise specified (i.e. in Recommended Additions), and changes and additions are clearly marked in red text and strikethroughs.

Partnership Objective 1: A strong relationship between GoA and SPREP

Characteristics (existing)

- close collaboration on mutual priorities
- effective and efficient communication and management arrangements
- visibility and transparency to maximise communication and awareness under the Communications Plan: Australia and SPREP Partnership

Relevant Commitments (existing)



GoA confirms its commitment to:

- (a) Articulate clear expectations of the Partnership with SPREP through regular, open dialogue
- (b) Promote the value of SPREP's role in the Pacific as opportunities arise

Both partners resolve to:

- (d) Meet regularly, including on an informal basis, to share all relevant information, discuss any performance concerns as early as possible, and resolve any issues through dialogue
- (e) Involve the other partner in pertinent activities and raise awareness of each other's activities throughout the region

Recommended Additions

- Additional bilateral Partnership Health Check to reflect on relevant activities/results, review progress, and discuss the relevance of objectives
- Clear roles and responsibilities articulated for both partners (with clear reference to DFAT and DCCEEW when GoA is mentioned)
- Identify gaps and opportunities for non-financial support from GoA

Partnership Objective 2: Effective and efficient program management to meet Partnership objectives

Characteristics (existing)

- effective and efficient program planning and implementation
- commitment to monitoring, evaluation and learning
- transparent and robust systems and processes
- professional and informed people

Relevant Commitments (existing)

GoA confirms its commitment to:

- (c) Support SPREP's program management on GoA-funded programs, to ensure policy and program objectives are met
- (d) Align GoA monitoring and assessment of SPREP performance as closely as possible with SPREP's own performance measures and assessment systems

SPREP confirms its commitment to:

- (a) Further strengthen SPREP's planning, reporting and monitoring processes, including results-based reporting and financial reporting

Both partners resolve to:

- (b) Work together to support SPREP's organizational reforms to enable more effective program and project delivery

Recommended Additions

- Identifying issues early and supporting improvements
- Promotion of the use of core grant funding to support MEL, training, systems and processes as well as overall resourcing of key positions
- Define the non-financial support provided by GoA and map out plans to cooperate and strengthen together



Partnership Objective 3: Enhanced SPREP capabilities (people, systems and processes)

Characteristics (existing)

- transparent financial budgeting and reporting, including implementation of full cost recovery practices
- effective corporate systems in managing resources, adopting transparency and accountability mechanisms
- improved practices and systems to support people and programs, including monitoring, evaluation and learning, and improved planning
- mainstreaming of Gender, Equity and Social Inclusion principles across SPREP

Relevant Commitments (existing)

SPREP confirms its commitment to:

- (c) Disburse all funds provided by GoA in accordance with the principles, terms and conditions of this Partnership
- (d) Take all reasonable steps to achieve and demonstrate vfm in accordance with sound financial and administrative practice

Both partners resolve to:

- (c) Promote a full cost recovery approach to program and project funding
- (b) Work together to support SPREP's organizational reforms to enable more effective program and project delivery

Recommended Additions

- Promotion of core grant funding to support enhanced SPREP capabilities through resourcing key positions to further systems and processes, and developing capacity building plans
- Articulate non-financial support from GoA, and identify additional gaps.
- Clear articulation of GEDSI, due diligence and safeguarding risks, with implementation of SPREP gender policy commitments

Partnership Objective 4: Effective and efficient regional service delivery by SPREP to Member countries, regional organisations

Characteristics (existing)

- Supporting SPREP's role to coordinate with development partners
- A focus on results and measuring impact through joint, regular and evidence-based reviews of outcomes
- Equitable service delivery across the Pacific region, delivering on member priorities
- An integrated regional response to common challenges through strong Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific (CROP) agencies and regional agency cooperation and collaboration, to ensure efficiency and prevent duplication.

Relevant Commitments (existing)

SPREP confirms its commitments to:

- (b) Strengthen an integrated regional response to common challenges through stronger CROP coordination and cooperation



Both partners resolve to:

- (a) Advance regional integration, economic recovery and growth, and sustainable development in support of the objectives of SPREP's Strategic Plan 2017-2026

Recommended Additions

- Define any additional roles of GoA in this objective (referencing to DFAT/DCCEEW).
- Identify needs and opportunities for non-financial support from GoA

Roles and responsibilities for Partnership Arrangement

DFAT: Focal Point for Australia-SPREP 10-year Partnership Agreement and Foreign Policy Lead

- Pacific Climate Section, DFAT
- Lead engagement with SPREP on the Partnership Agreement
- Lead engagement on Australian Government's Foreign policy interests and engagement with SPREP
- Lead on Australian Government's finance and governance arrangements with SPREP
- Meetings: Delegate at all key SPREP meetings; Leadership on finance, foreign policy and governance agenda at HLCs

DCCEEW: Focal Point for Australia's membership to SPREP and Technical Lead

- Pacific and Regional Section, DCCEEW
- Lead engagement with SPREP on policy and matters associated with Australia's membership to SPREP and the Noumea, Apia and Waigani Conventions
- Oversight of the Australian Government's policy interests and engagement with SPREP
- Coordination of briefing package for Australia's attendance at key SPREP meetings (above)
- Meetings: Head of Delegation (Assistant Secretary level) at;
 - Environment Minister's High-Level Talanoa: Environment Minister and First Assistant Secretary attendance;
 - Lead representation at the SPREP Meeting of Officials, Noumea and Waigani Convention COPs, and the Partner's Dialogue
- Leadership on technical work streams and membership agenda at trilaterals

SPREP: Regional Partner

- Lead delivery of SPREP Strategic Plan. Implementation of key Partnership Objectives, reporting of progress and identification of needs and gaps. Engagement in HLC meetings.
- Collaboration with CROP agencies and other bilateral and multilateral agencies as mandated regional environment and climate change program.

Reporting

- **HLC meetings** (no change)
- **Bilateral Meetings:** Use of the bilateral partnership meeting (between SPREP, DFAT and DCCEEW) to include a Partnership Health Check. In the lead-up, GoA partners may wish to meet to prepare and discuss. Health Check to review progress, discuss key issues with communication and coordination, and maintain an open and honest discussion on ways to work more effectively. See Annex 5 for Health Check Guide.



Grant Arrangement (Core and DFAT Program Streams)

The Grant Arrangement recommended here combines both core and (DFAT) non-core streams of funding and combines them under one agreement to reduce the contract management burden and provide more strategic support to SPREP. The suggested Core and Program stream objectives are discussed below.

Core Funding Stream Objectives

Core funding provided to SPREP to support the implementation of Regional and Organisation Goals of SPREP in line with SPREP's Strategic Plan, including service delivery to SPREP Member countries, in line with SPREP's mandate. As the current Strategic Plan (2017-2026) comes to a close and the next phase is developed, core funding will seek alignment through discussions with SPREP as both Member and Partner in that process. The objectives and outcomes proposed in this section concentrate on cooperation, institutional strengthening and delivery of SPREP's Strategic Plan. This should allow for a smooth transition into support for the next Strategic Plan, and assumes transparent communication of institutional processes in management, programming and budgeting.

The following objectives are drawn from the Grant Arrangement currently in place:

- To promote cooperation in the Pacific region and assistance to protect and improve its environment, through:
 - a strong relationship between GoA and SPREP
 - effective and efficient service delivery in support of SPREP's role in coordinating with development partners, responding to member priorities, and engagement with CROP agencies and other regional collaboration to avoid duplication
- To ensure sustainable development for present and future generations, through:
 - Untied support to SPREP to deliver its Strategic Plan, including widespread adoption of the FRDP
- To enhance SPREP capabilities (people, systems and processes) through:
 - transparent financial budgeting and reporting, including implementation of full cost recovery practices
 - effective corporate systems in managing resources, adopting transparency and accountability mechanisms
 - improved practices and systems to support people and programs, including MEL and improved planning
 - mainstreaming of GEDSI principles across SPREP

Core Funding Outcomes:

The following outcomes are recommended for the Core Funding stream, against which progress should be measured:

- Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific (FRDP) 2017-2030 operationalised and incorporating the delivery of results-focused capacity development strategies in PICTs
- Strengthened effective and efficient service delivery including innovative approaches on key strategic priorities of the Strategic Plan 2017-2026 and its future iterations in collaboration with key stakeholders and partners across the region
- Improved visibility of the SPREP and GOA partnership and funding support to SPREP through programmes, communication, and outreach



- Effective and efficient regional service delivery through strengthening SPREP M&E outcome-focused framework and collaborative engagement with peer CROP Agencies towards advancing Framework for Pacific Regionalism
- Enhanced SPREP capabilities for effective and efficient management of corporate systems upholding transparency and accountability standards.
- Strengthened GEDSI mainstreaming capability

Program Stream Objectives

The following set of Program Stream Objectives are suggested to bring together the outcomes of GoA support to projects and programs, as they align with the SPREP Strategic Plan. The scope of these objectives would include support to SPREP Programs (staff and operational costs) in the delivery of SPREP Regional Goals (Strategic Plan), with dedicated project and program-level funding allocations:

- To promote cooperation in the Pacific region and assistance to protect and improve its environment;
- To ensure sustainable development for present and future generations; and
- To enhance SPREP capabilities (people, systems and processes), particularly in relevant technical areas

Program Stream Outcomes

The following outcomes and indicators are proposed, which would enable SPREP to more effectively measure progress and generate evidence of the outcomes of the grant funding.

Outcomes (proposed)	Indicators (proposed)
1. Programmatic support to SPREP to deliver its Regional Goals through the funding of ongoing and new DFAT funded projects as co-designed by GoA and SPREP representatives, plus other Program-related positions and operating costs	# and % of DFAT projects underway being delivered according to implementation plans # and % of SPREP Programs with contribution from GoA are reporting progress and results
2. Strengthening of GEDSI mainstreaming through SPREP across programs through dedicated capacity building of people and systems	Progress of GEDSI mainstreaming according to SPREP implementation plan
3. Sharing of knowledge, lessons and resources across programs to optimise efficiency and prevent 'siloed' delivery of programming	Evidence of programs working together and sharing knowledge and resources such as capacity building, regional collaboration and engagement with CROP agencies and multilateral/bilateral agencies
4. Visibility of the SPREP and GoA partnership and support to SPREP through programs, communications and outreach	Communication and dissemination of collaboration with GoA in terms of results and impact

Roles and responsibilities

- **DFAT:** Focal Point, contract management, compliance, GoA representation and foreign policy. Lead engagement with SPREP on governance and finance associated with Australia's core funding of \$4.3m annually to SPREP.



- **DCCEEW** – Technical leadership (climate, environment, sustainable development) of Program Stream, technical review of progress, capacity building and secondments.
- **SPREP** – allocation of funding and resources, reporting on progress.

Reporting

- Single Results Framework, measuring progress against Outcomes, aligned with SPREP reporting where possible (program reporting, GEDSI reporting)
- 6-monthly check-ins on progress, annual reporting aligned with SPREP reporting processes

Considerations:

- Only DFAT-funded projects to be included in this grant, due to regulations around combining ODA and non-ODA funding streams.
- Total funding envelope: currently around \$30 million between 2021-2027, with most projects ending by 2026 and majority spent by end of 2025. GoA to consider whether the funding envelope be matched over next 5-year period, through new or extended projects.
- Criteria for new funding proposals, with recommended criteria to include alignment with SPREP priorities, supporting needs that are challenging to fund.
- Management fee – assumed to remain at 15%.
- Timing of approval for new funding proposals- annual submission of budget against overall grant envelope.
- Structure of approvals process: approvals committee, conference call/email comms, engagement with SPREP SLT to sign off on prioritisation.
- Inclusions for any new funding within this grant envelope:
 - Workplan
 - Itemised budget
 - Rationale and alignment with SPREP Strategic Priorities.

KPIs (aligned with SPREP Results Framework) DCCEEW – Combined Projects Grant

Combination of all DCCEEW-funded projects to SPREP under one agreement, where appropriate.

Program Stream Objectives

The following set of Program Stream Objectives are suggested to bring together the outcomes of GoA support to projects and programs, as they align with the SPREP Strategic Plan. The scope of these objectives would include support to dedicated DCCEEW project funding allocations:

- To promote cooperation in the Pacific region and assistance to protect and improve its environment;
- To ensure sustainable development for present and future generations;

Program Stream Outcomes

The following outcomes and indicators are proposed, which would enable SPREP to more effectively measure progress and generate evidence of the outcomes of the grant funding.

Outcomes (proposed)	Indicators (proposed)
1. Support to SPREP to deliver its Regional Goals through the funding of	# and % of DCCEEW funded projects underway being delivered according to implementation plans



Outcomes (proposed)	Indicators (proposed)
ongoing and new DCCEEW funded projects as co-designed by GoA and SPREP representatives	# and % of SPREP Programs with contribution from GoA are reporting progress and results
2. Sharing of knowledge, lessons and resources across programs to optimise efficiency and prevent 'siloed' delivery of programming	Evidence of programs working together and sharing knowledge and resources such as capacity building, regional collaboration and engagement with CROP agencies and multilateral/bilateral agencies
3. Visibility of the SPREP and GoA partnership and support to SPREP through programs, communications and outreach	Communication and dissemination of collaboration with GoA in terms of results and impact

Roles and responsibilities

- **DCCEEW** –Focal Point, Contract Management, Compliance and Technical leadership (climate, environment, sustainable development)
- **DFAT**: GoA representation and foreign policy.
- **SPREP** – Implementation of projects, reporting on progress

Reporting

- Single Results Framework, measuring progress against Outcomes, aligned with SPREP reporting where possible (program reporting, GEDSI reporting)
- 6-monthly check-ins on progress, annual reporting aligned with SPREP reporting processes



Annex 5 – Partnership Health Check Guide

1. A partnership health check: the rationale

Partnering is a process – and it can be challenging. For partnerships to be effective, they need regular effort to build productive relationships.

The reason/rationale to explicitly invest in regular conversations that reflect a partnership health check include the following advice from the Partnership Brokers Association which is based on a wide range of research and evidence:

- “A healthy partnership can only be achieved if the partners pay attention to **how** they work not just **what** they do and they are prepared to **invest** quality time in the partnership process itself”.⁵

A partnership health check aims to support the principles which guide a partnership. These principles seek to articulate ways of working of each partner.

2. What makes for effective partnerships?

There are many critical factors in successful partnerships – and one of them is mutual accountability and regular reviews. This is where intentional and regular (i.e., annual) spaces for a considered discussion on the health of the partnership can be important.

Let’s remember what makes an effective partnership. For example, the Partnership Brokers Association identifies ten key elements for effective partnering⁶

- i. A clear understanding between the partners of the word ‘partnership’
- ii. Agreement to a shared vision and common purpose
- iii. Account and allowance being made for individual partners’ interests
- iv. The co-creation of design, decisions and solutions
- v. Commitment to sharing risks as well as benefits
- vi. Every partner contributes resources (whether tangible or intangible)
- vii. Partners share decision-making and leadership responsibilities
- viii. Partners commit to mutual / horizontal accountability
- ix. Partners work together to develop a principled approach to their partnering endeavours
- x. Attention is paid to the partnering process as well as the partnership’s projects

Number 10 speaks to the value of regular partnership health checks.

3. What form can a health check take?

It is important to remember that – a health check can take on a variety forms. There is no one size fits all – for either a partnership agreement or an approach to a health check. Health checks can range from light touch to comprehensive assessments.

The aim is to reflect on the effectiveness of how the partners are working together, to help partners better understand each other’s perspective (i.e. deepening the partnership), highlight what is working well and develop actions to address any challenges.

⁵ “Brokering Better Partnerships: by investing in the partnering process”, Handbook, Partnership Brokers Association, 2019, page 5

⁶ Ibid, page 5



Essentially, these are conversations to check in on the partnership itself – the ways of working, shared risks and benefits, quality of the relationships, etc. For example, a health check can be:

- Built into or alongside existing HLC bilateral discussion between GoA and SPREP
- Managed/facilitated internally or via an external facilitator
- Supported by tools (i.e., there are a range of self-assessment tools which partners can use to assess the health of the partnership) or be a more informal discussion guided by a series of questions that the partners co-develop and agree are important in taking stock of the partnership itself.

Whichever approach is adopted (and the approach can change over time), it is important to capture agreed actions which aim to improve the way the partnership is operating.

4. Reflective questions to support a health check

Some sample reflection questions that can support a health check can include:

- Are we still partnering as per our agreed principles as set out in the partnership agreement?
- Do we do what we said we would do?
- Are we being open and honest with our partners?
- Are we being accountable to each other for delivering on our respective commitments?
- Are our roles and responsibilities clear?
- Are we communicating effectively between and within the partners and being as transparent as we can?
- Are our decision-making processes working and are we providing the right level of collective leadership of the partnership?
- What are we learning from our partnering experience?
- Have we still got the right people around the table?
- What actions could we take to improve the way the partnership is operating?

Note: these are sample questions, and we would recommend that GoA and SPREP develop a set of questions to reflect on, if they wish to take this approach to a health check discussion.

An alternative approach could be to develop and agree on a checklist prior to the meeting to discuss the partnership. For example, setting out a table with a series of statements relating to partnership principles, and use a simple traffic light system:

- Green – no concerns
- Amber – some concerns
- Red serious concerns

In setting up and holding a health check, it is important to operate in a way that ensures that the health check is not about judgement or blaming. It should be framed as a positive opportunity to bring up issues, learn together and improve the partnership.

The aim is to identify and talk through areas of the partnership that could be further enhanced or meaningfully improved; and determine what actions could be undertaken, by whom and by when.