DFAT Management Response to the Independent Evaluation of the Pacific Research Program Phase Two

Recommendation (summarised)	DFAT response	Explanation	Action plan
Future program **Recommendation 1: Clarify intended audience and purpose** Should a future program be supported, it is critical that DFAT clearly articulates who the program is seeking to benefit- is it primarily intended for DFAT, for Pacific policy makers, or equally for both?	Agree	DFAT agrees that there should be greater clarity on the intended audience and purpose of the program. Ensuring this clarity to drive program activities and assess program success will be part of the partner-led design process for any future investment phase.	DFAT will instruct the successful design partner for a future program to better clarify program purpose and beneficiaries as part of the design.
Future program **Recommendation 2: Deepen Pacific voices and leadership** Any future Pacific program should intentionally include Pacific stakeholders in the design process, including tertiary institutions, regional bodies and policy makers. The design should also include new or strengthened mechanisms to include Pacific voices throughout the program, for example in identifying new research priorities or partnership opportunities. Diverse Pacific voices, including those from civil society, representative organisations and communities, should be integrated where possible.	Agree	DFAT agrees that a future program should build upon the success of PRP and identify ways to further strengthen Pacific voices and leadership. This is in line with Australia's International Development Policy's prioritisation of locally led development as well as DFAT's Pacific Regional Development Partnership Plan. Specific ways of achieving this will be considered as part of the partner-led design process for a future program.	DFAT will instruct the successful design partner to consult Pacific stakeholders during the design and identify specific ways Pacific voices and leaders will be included in a future program.
Future program **Recommendation 3: Strategic institutional capacity development** A future phase could include development and resourcing of a multi-year capacity strengthening/sharing plan. The plan should be co-developed and delivered, jointly owned, and where possible, address broader barriers to institutional capacity. Development of a baseline study, mapping institutional strengths, gaps and opportunities across the region could inform planning and enable measuring of progress for future phases.	Partially agree	DFAT agrees that a future program should have a dedicated focus on institutional capacity development. Specific ways of achieving this will be examined in the partner-led design process.	DFAT has included institutional capacity building as an indicative end of program outcome in the Investment Concept Note for a future program and will work with the successful design partner to consider feasible ways to make progress in this area in a future program.

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Future program
 	
Recommendation 4: Scope additional modalities to support Pacific-led research agendas
Refinements to the delivery modality should be informed through a detailed co-design process. Should the program remain focussed on deepening research and education partnerships across Australia and the Pacific, and enabling greater reach, impact and sustainability, options for further exploration include:
    o Maintaining a similar consortium model to manage activities currently under EOPO2 and 3, while enhancing opportunities for other research and education institutions to provide services currently provided under EOPO1.
    o Broadening the delivery modality to include a greater number of Australian and Pacific universities for key priority research areas, with funding allocations to enable longer-term institutional partnerships and multi-year workplans.
 	
Pasifika philosophies embedded within PRP's teaching and approaches have been a strength and should continue. However, there is a need to also build the knowledge base of research end-users to understand and engage more deeply with Pacific research and frameworks.
	Partially agree	DFAT will undertake a partner-led design process to inform a future program. While the overarching modality for the program will be a grant to a lead Australian higher education institution, ensuring the program supports a Pacific led research agenda is a core priority. The design process will examine different ways of ensuring this, which may include pursuing different activity modalities to those used in PRP.	DFAT has included an explicit focus on ensuring Pacific Islanders shape the research agenda in the indicative intermediate outcomes in the Investment Concept Note for a future program. DFAT will instruct the successful design partner to examine feasible and innovative ways to achieve this in a future program.

Future program
 	
Recommendation 5: Strengthen GEDSI integration throughout program
The next design could:
    o Strengthen disability equity and inclusion, including ensuring disability equity is more systematically mainstreamed in implementation.
    o Broaden gender focus and ensure Pacific voices are informing GEDSI research needs.
    o Mainstream GEDSI in labour mobility research and continue to integrate GEDSI analysis.
	Partially agree	DFAT agrees to strengthen GEDSI integration throughout a future program, particularly in relation to disability equity and inclusion. The inclusion of labour mobility research in a future program will be determined by a partner-led design process.	DFAT will ensure GEDSI experts are engaged in the partner-led design of a future program and will include program outcomes related to GEDSI in program design/logic.

Current and future program **Recommendation 6: Expand policy engagement approaches and networks**	Partially agree	DFAT agrees to focus on expanding policy engagement approaches and networks for the remainder of the program and will consider approaches to broadening policy engagement and networks during the	DFAT and the Australian National University (ANU) to work together to circulate updates and research outputs to relevant Post colleagues for the remainder of the program.

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Policy engagement networks and approaches should be broadened beyond the focus on Canberra-based policy stakeholders to greater leverage DFAT's in-country networks

Prioritise pro-active engagement with Post and their networks for greater coordination and alignment with complementary programs for remainder of program and future phases.

Future phases should evolve policy engagement beyond the focal point network approach to be more tailored to the specific information needs, timelines, forums and networks of policy stakeholders within each thematic area.

Refresh the format of the Pacific Update and include new policy engagement forums in other Pacific countries. | | partner-led design for a future program. DFAT agrees with the principle of expanding policy engagement opportunities across the Pacific and specific events and activities will be determined through the partner-led design process. | |
| *Current program*

Recommendation 7: Prioritise resourcing towards addressing gaps in MEL
In the last year of delivery, PRP should continue to prioritise MEL, with a focus on comprehensive reporting against the MEL Framework and strengthening program learning. The PRP should consider expanding case studies to capture additional areas of the PRP's influence, including contributions to gender equality. | Agree | DFAT agrees that MEL should continue to be a priority in the current program, noting that MEL has already been agreed as a core priority for the remainder of the program. | MEL has already been agreed as a core priority for the remainder of the program. |