

THE PACIFIC RECOVERY ECONOMIC SUPPORT (PRES) EVALUATION REPORT

Prepared for DFAT Economic Policy
and Partnerships Section



Clear Horizon



EQUITY ECONOMICS

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Acronyms

Acronyms	Description
ASO	Additional Service Order
DFAT	Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
EOPO	End-of-program outcome
EOIO	End-of-investment outcome
EGS	Regional Trade and Private Sector Section
EPS	Economic Policy and Partnerships Section
FIMR	Final Investment Monitoring Report
GEB	Gender Equality Disability and Social Inclusion Branch
GEDSI	Gender equality, disability and social inclusion
IMR	Investment monitoring report
IMS	Information Management System
IO	Intermediate outcome
KRQ	Key review question
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MEL	Monitoring, evaluation and learning
OTP	Office of the Pacific
PAF	Performance Assessment Framework
PAG	PRES Advisory Group
PDFF	Pacific Direct Financing Fund
PEB	Pacific Economic and Trade Branch
PRES	Pacific Recovery Economic Support program
TN	Tasking Note
TNA	Tasking Note Assessment
VfM	Value for Money

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The Pacific Recovery Economic Support (PRES) program provides technical advisory services to DFAT's Pacific Economic and Trade Branch (PEB) within the Office of the Pacific (OTP) and contributes to economic analysis, policy and program development, program implementation and monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL). This four-year program commenced on 19 November 2021 and will conclude on 31 December 2025, with a total contracted value of \$16.4 million for PEB activities and \$6.2 million in additional service orders (ASOs) for specific activities undertaken within OTP and Pacific posts. PRES is delivered by Adam Smith International (ASI).

PRES aims to achieve two end-of-investment outcomes (EOIOs):

1. EOIO1 - Use of technical advice and support: DFAT staff use the technical advice, products or services accessed through PRES to support evidence-based policy, strategy, program coherence and enhanced investment design, management and performance.
2. EOIO2 - Learning within PEB: PRES contributes to improving knowledge management and learning within PEB.

DFAT commissioned this evaluation of PRES for the purposes of accountability, improvement and informing any future designs.

This evaluation uses two main methods of review:

- document review
- consultations with key informants.

See Appendix A for details.

Key limitations affecting the evaluation are:

- The absence of a design document creates evaluability challenges, particularly when attempting to judge the extent to which program achievements reflected DFAT's original intent.
- The evaluation did not benefit from interviews with end-users or counterparts of PRES services outside DFAT, e.g. partner government officials.

This evaluation covers the period from November 2021 to December 2024. However, some activities since this period are referenced where they are relevant to the findings.

Summary of findings

The evaluation has found there has been **significant achievement towards EOIOs**, particularly EOIO1.

1. **EOIO 1 is being achieved:** It is clear from the evidence that PRES' strength lies in the ability for DFAT to draw in specialist technical expertise to inform policy and programming activities. The PRES Core Team is also providing valuable support and improving program coherence.
2. **EOIO 2 is broadly achieved:** PRES has implemented various learning and knowledge management initiatives, such as a knowledge management system, seminars, and learning through tasking notes (TNs) and observation. However, there is a lack of clarity on the intent of EOIO2 and focus has tended to be on meeting DFAT's high demand for activities under EOIO1.

KEY REVIEW QUESTION 1 (KRQ1). HOW EFFECTIVE IS PRES AND WHAT ARE THE OPPORTUNITIES TO IMPROVE EFFECTIVENESS?

How effective is PRES? The evidence available to the review confirmed PRES is highly effective in its provision of technical advice, particularly the high quality of output, flexibility, and responsiveness. It has been found to meet DFAT's needs and has achieved EOIO1. EOIO2 has been broadly achieved, with a need for greater clarity from DFAT regarding this intended outcome.

Opportunities to improve effectiveness: Potential areas for improvement include clarifying the role of the PRES' Core Team in supporting strategy and knowledge management, with a clearer articulation of DFAT's intent for EOIO2.

PRES has been found to be effectively responding to DFAT needs, with overwhelmingly positive feedback from consultations.

Key areas of effectiveness include¹:

- **Quality of output.** Users of PRES consistently noted the high quality of work that was provided.
- **Streamlining.** PRES provides a less time-consuming mechanism for contracting technical advisers, removing significant administrative burden.
- **Responsiveness.** PRES provides a mechanism to deliver products and services more quickly than what may be possible through other mechanisms.
- **Flexibility of service.** The flexibility of PRES was consistently raised as a key benefit. This includes flexibility in the choice of technical experts, the type and length of engagements, adaptability in terms of reference and timeline amendments.

Through a process of continuous improvement, PRES has evolved and progressed over time, overcoming initial challenges related to alignment of the original consortium with the role and functions required of PRES by DFAT. Having initially focused on the inception phase, including establishing documentation (such as the operations manual and M&E framework), PRES has since demonstrated its effectiveness in the provision of technical advice and support.

The role of PRES in providing strategic support to DFAT is evolving and increasingly important. While the original concept of PRES included a strategic role, integrated within DFAT, a range of barriers emerged in the early years of PRES. These included: 1) PRES staff not being embedded in DFAT and difficulties surrounding security clearance; 2) limited access to information necessary for comprehensive strategic support stemming from PRES staff's external position; 3) concerns about the appropriateness of strategic capability being outsourced and 4) a lack of clarity around the specific strategic support that DFAT needs from PRES. Nevertheless, PRES Core Team technical expertise demonstrably provides valuable input into economic development strategy and programming, enriching organisational knowledge and fostering cohesion across DFAT's Pacific economic investments.

The available evidence suggests that while PRES is making a significant effort to achieve EOIO2, progress has been relatively slow. The evaluation identified a need for greater clarity from DFAT on what success looked like for EOIO2 and its ongoing suitability and relevance. Despite efforts to achieve EOIO2 through the Information Management System (IMS), initially a SharePoint platform and later a hub, significant usage is yet to be demonstrated. For example, results of the 2024 PEB staff survey

¹ Given that EOIO1 focuses on the provision of technical advice and support, evaluating its effectiveness inherently involves some crossover and consideration of the efficiency of its delivery.

found that although most respondents (67%) were aware of the PRES IMS, less than half (42%) reported using it. However, as the survey was conducted shortly after launch, this likely reflects a lag in usage.²

KRQ2. HOW EFFICIENT IS PRES AND WHAT ARE THE OPPORTUNITIES TO IMPROVE EFFICIENCY?

How efficient is PRES? PRES is highly efficient. There is strong evidence that PRES provides good value for money. PRES' efficiency stems from its flexibility and capacity to deliver quality outputs while minimising the time and cost associated with identifying, engaging, and managing contracted technical specialists. Having access to a small but extremely responsive PRES Core Team also presents value for money, given the breadth of teams requesting PRES support and the range of topics and capabilities sought from PRES.

Opportunities to improve efficiency: Potential areas for improvement include ensuring DFAT's engagement in final approval of all TNs, ensuring the resourcing of the PRES Core Team reflects the high level of demand for technical support, clarity on PRES' role in strengthening PEB linkages and coherence of strategy and investments, and strengthening the PRES Advisory Group (PAG) role in prioritisation and strategic planning of PRES.

PRES is achieving efficiency, particularly against EOPO1. Evidence from consultations and documentation is that PRES is providing value for money to DFAT. Primarily, this is achieved through reduced costs (both monetary and time) associated with the reduced burden of identifying, engaging and managing technical specialist consultations compared with other mechanisms and provision of efficient and effective technical expertise from the PRES Core Team. Consultation feedback indicates that PRES' current success is rooted in two key factors: the cultivation of strong trust dynamics and the consistent delivery of high-quality performance by specific PRES individuals. There are some areas where PRES could improve value for money and efficiency, including addressing a potential risk of reliance on preferred consultants. While PRES is demonstrating efforts to mitigate the risk of bias, they do not have authority over the final recruitment decisions and, as such, the potential risk remains.

KRQ3. HOW RELEVANT IS PRES AND WHAT ARE THE OPPORTUNITIES TO IMPROVE RELEVANCE?

How relevant is PRES? PRES is and remains highly relevant. The provision of technical support and services (EOIO1), remains relevant to both the Pacific context and the DFAT strategic and organisational context.

Opportunities to improve relevance: As DFAT priorities change and demand for technical expertise continues to grow and/or broaden, ensuring PRES is able to remain responsive and flexible while maintaining its focus on Pacific economic expertise will be important to continued relevance and unique value.

PRES is and remains highly relevant in terms of its technical support and services (EOIO1) both in terms of the Pacific context and the DFAT organisational context. Even as the immediate health crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic recedes, the need for specialist technical skills in the Pacific remains critical, particularly for economic recovery and growth. As such, PRES continues to be relevant in the context of the Australia-Pacific Regional Development Partnership Plan 2025-2029. The high demand for PRES services is driven both externally by counterpart governments and partners seeking Australia's

² Further, only two people (17%) had used the IMS many times and few responses cited the PRES IMS as a source of learning. It is also important to note that the survey had a 57% response rate (12 / 21 staff completed the survey), and usage of non-respondents may differ.

support and expertise, and internally. For example, in 2021-2022, PRES commenced 12 TNs across five areas of work; by 2023-2024, this had increased to 65 TNs across 12 areas of work.

There may be opportunities to adjust the scope of any future program to strengthen its relevance in terms of breadth of access and potential narrowing of technical scope, subject to DFAT's future priorities.

KRQ4. TO WHAT EXTENT DID PRES PROMOTE GEDSI OUTCOMES?

PRES has made notable progress in promoting GEDSI outcomes. There is evidence of strengthened identification of GEDSI dimensions in TNs and ASOs and increased gender, disability and diversity sensitivity in PRES activities. GEDSI IOs were developed as part of the PRES GEDSI strategy, and while outside of this evaluation timeframe, were integrated into the program logic in April 2025.

PRES has made significant progress towards improving GEDSI components of the program. Data indicates that PRES has been successful on GEDSI IO1 and making progress towards GEDSI IO2. PRES is increasingly reviewing TNs, identifying GEDSI entry points and making suggestions for improved consideration of GEDSI dimensions. In terms of practical implementation of GEDSI principles and practice, improvements could be made in understanding gender pay equity among PRES advisers and providing the GEDSI adviser with more access to strategic DFAT forums. Though outside the evaluation period, there is evidence of progress being made on this, with the GEDSI adviser attending PAG meetings, working group meetings and section meetings in 2025. Any future design should also explore opportunities for further engagement of Pacific Islander expertise for relevant TNs / deliverables, acknowledging much of PRES' work is Canberra-based.

KRQ5. DID THE PROGRAM OPERATIONALISE AN EFFECTIVE MEL SYSTEM THAT MET KEY STAKEHOLDER NEEDS?

PRES has adopted and delivered an effective MEL system, widely acknowledged as useful in assessing and improving the quality of work and strengthening PRES performance.

The PRES monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework is concise and well-aligned to DFAT standards. The framework explains the PRES program logic and details a Performance Assessment Framework (PAF) showing how progress against the PRES logic will be measured, by whom, and when. DFAT interviewees consistently reported satisfaction with the credibility and usefulness of PRES performance reporting for their contractual oversight of PRES overall and of individual TNs. At the same time, the evaluation found opportunities to adjust the frequency of reporting and reporting templates.

KRQ6. WHAT ARE THE OPPORTUNITIES TO ENHANCE THE SUSTAINABILITY OF PRES RESULTS?

PRES enhances and sustains DFAT's capability through the provision of technical expertise on Pacific economic development. Should a future program be supported, there is an opportunity to develop a sustainability strategy that continues to embed the programs lasting benefits.

PRES offers a unique form of sustainability. By providing technical specialists, PRES enables DFAT to effectively and efficiently draw in expertise to complete activities that may not be able to be completed in-house and increases the capacity of internal DFAT staff to focus on core work – effectively, it sustains DFAT's capability under its current operating model. In addition, PRES contributes to the sustainability of downstream programs through the provision of technical advice. Any future version of PRES may present an opportunity to further capture impact through the development of a sustainability strategy.

Recommendations

Effectiveness

Recommendation 1 (Next phase / Strategic) PRES should be continued, recognising the critical role it plays in providing DFAT with access to technical expertise and enhanced capabilities. PRES EOIOs should be reviewed in any subsequent design, in particular EOIO2.

Efficiency

Recommendation 2.1 (Long term / Operational) To ensure alignment with DFAT's needs, DFAT should work closely with PRES in the drafting of TNs and leverage the expertise of the PRES Core Team, where relevant. DFAT should continue to retain responsibility for final approval of all TNs in any future design.

Recommendation 2.2 (Next phase / Operational) Any future design must consider the resourcing needs of the PRES Core Team, to ensure they are adequate to respond to the high demand for support and maximise the value of PRES.

Recommendation 2.3 (Short term / Operational) Acknowledging PRES' ongoing efforts to deliver value for money, DFAT should continue to enhance transparency in its adviser selection process by providing clear justification for the selection of advisers, with the aim of achieving value for money, equitable consultant pay, and ongoing progress in adviser diversity.

Recommendation 2.4 (Next phase / Strategic) Any future design (including any Value for Money Framework refresh) should consider PRES' role and capacity to strengthen PEB linkages.

Recommendation 2.5 (Short term / Operational) DFAT should ensure that all deliverables are quality assured by PRES and support the PRES managing contractor in this process.

Recommendation 2.6 (Short term / Operational) The PAG should actively participate in prioritisation and strategic planning.

Relevance

Recommendation 3 (Next phase/Strategic) Any future design should consider continued alignment of PRES' scope with DFAT's strategic priorities and contextual needs. Any future design should re-name the program to reflect its new operating context.

GEDSI

Recommendation 4.1 (Short term / Operational) To ensure equitable compensation practices, it is recommended that PRES undertake a GEDSI analysis to examine pay equity among advisers.

Recommendation 4.2 (Short term / Operational) To increase visibility of strategic entry points for GEDSI work, the PRES GEDSI adviser should be included in PRES governance meetings.

Recommendation 4.3 (Next phase / Strategic) In any future program, opportunities for, and suitability of, engaging Pacific Islander expertise for relevant TNs / deliverables should continue to be explored, acknowledging much of PRES' work is Canberra-based.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

Recommendation 5.1 (Short term / Operational) PRES should conduct a small number of case studies, exploring the collective influence of multiple TNs in key thematic areas, with reference to EOIO1 and EOIO2; the factors influencing PRES effectiveness; and the appropriateness of PRES' responsive, tasking-based modality for optimising its thematic contribution.

Recommendation 5.2 (Next phase / Operational) In any future program, PRES and DFAT should revise reporting templates and timeframes so that quarterly reports provide concise operational updates and annual reports provide more in-depth exploration of strategic issues. The rating scales used in both reports should also be more closely aligned to DFAT Performance Assessment Framework (PAF) or Investment Monitoring Report (IMR) rating scales.

Sustainability

Recommendation 6 (Next phase / Strategic) In any future program, DFAT and PRES should develop a written sustainability strategy to capture sustainability in the PRES context. In developing a sustainability strategy, factors to consider include how TNs can be used to enhance sustainability, enhance linkages, mitigate key person risk, and increase the pool of expertise (particularly Pacific Islands expertise).

INTRODUCTION

The Pacific Recovery Economic Support (PRES) program aims to provide technical advisory services to DFAT's Pacific Economic and Trade Branch (PEB) within the Office of the Pacific (OTP). With a total budget of \$16.4 million and a further \$6.2 million for additional service orders (ASOs), it focuses on economic analysis, policy development, program implementation, and performance monitoring. PRES commenced in November 2021 and is set to conclude on 31 December 2025.

PRES was designed to help the Pacific region recover from the economic impacts of COVID-19 by providing access to technical specialists to support DFAT's policy and programming in economic recovery and growth delivered by Adam Smith International, the program provides advisory services in areas such as fiscal governance, private sector development, trade, labour mobility, and thematic expertise, including gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI) and climate resilience. PRES operates with a core team that works closely with PEB, facilitating the engagement of specialist technical assistance, providing logistical support, quality assurance, and a hub for coordinating advisory needs.

PRES aims to achieve two end-of-investment outcomes (EOIOs):

- EOIO1 – Use of technical advice and support: DFAT staff use the technical advice, products or services accessed through PRES to support evidence-based policy, strategy, program coherence and enhanced investment design, management and performance.
- EOIO2 – Learning within PEB: PRES contributes to improving knowledge management and learning within PEB.

To contribute to achievement of the EOIOs, PRES initially aimed to deliver against the following four intermediate outcomes (IOs):

1. IO1 – PRES (technical advice, tasking order process and products, cross-cutting support) meets DFAT staff needs.
2. IO2 – PEB / OTP staff are familiar with PRES.
3. IO3 – PEB staff engage with PRES information-sharing and learning events and processes.
4. IO4 – PEB staff are aware of and access the knowledge repository / information management system.

In mid-2024, a PRES GEDSI strategy was approved. This strategy aligns with the program's broader goals of inclusive and sustainable economic recovery. The GEDSI Strategy included a discrete GEDSI EOIO and two GEDSI IOs. Following finalisation of the GEDSI Strategy, the two new GEDSI IOs were added to the Performance Assessment Framework (PAF) in Quarter 4 of 2023-2024 and included in an updated Program logic in April 2025 (outside this evaluation period). The updated Program Logic is provided for ease of reference in Appendix B.

The two GEDSI IOs incorporated into the program logic included:

- GEDSI IO1: TN identification of GEDSI dimensions is improved.
- GEDSI IO2: PRES activities are gender sensitive and disability inclusive.

Three additional process-oriented outcomes were intended to support effective and efficient implementation:

1. Process 1 – PRES operates as an integrated program in DFAT in accordance with the PRES partnership and one-team approach.

2. Process 2 – One-team partnership in place that supports efficient, collaborative management.
3. Progress 3 – PRES is efficient and offers value for money in delivery of technical analysis and expertise.

This evaluation

The evaluation is intended to serve three main purposes:

1. Ensure **accountability** by independently assessing PRES performance to inform the DFAT Final Investment Monitoring Report (FIMR).
2. Support **program improvement** within the current phase by identifying opportunities to improve implementation of PRES in its final year.
3. Inform any **design** of a successor to PRES by identifying lessons learned from the current phase and related strategic issues or questions for further consideration in the design phase.

Summary of methods

Two main methods were employed by this evaluation:

1. document review
2. consultations with key informants.

See Appendix A for details.

Key limitations

Key limitations affecting the evaluation are:

- The absence of a design document creates evaluability challenges, particularly when attempting to judge the extent to which program achievements reflected DFAT's original intent.
- The evaluation did not benefit from interviews with end-users or counterparts of PRES services outside DFAT, for example, partner government officials.
- Substantial changes (including to the GEDSI strategy, MEL framework, and Program Logic) have occurred outside the timeframe of this evaluation. The evaluation team has, where relevant, acknowledged key updates where possible.

The evaluation team found the absence of a design document problematic, especially with regards to understanding the intent and scope of EOIO2.

Scope

The boundaries of this evaluation are:

- It covers the period November 2021 to December 2024.
- It focuses on the effectiveness of PRES as a mechanism, including the relevance, quality and usefulness of PRES services; as distinct from the effectiveness of the DFAT investments to which PRES contributes, for example, the aviation program and the fiscal budget support package (some of which have been or will be evaluated separately).
- It is not a contractual performance assessment of the PRES managing contractor.

PRES STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND DELIVERABLES

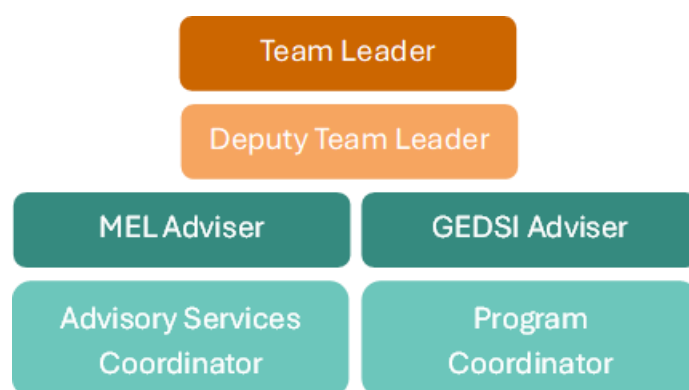
PRES structure

The PRES partnership includes Adam Smith International, as the managing contractor, working closely with OTP to deliver technical advisory services through a one-team approach. OTP provides PRES with strategic guidance, including key priorities and objectives and necessary documents. Adam Smith International provides the PRES Core Team, leadership, central management, strategy, technical expertise and cross-cutting functions to the PRES program.

Originally, PRES worked as a partnership between OTP, Adam Smith International and consortium partner, Deloitte. In May 2024, Deloitte closed its international development practice and withdrew from its role as a consortium partner to PRES.

The PRES Core Team leads on program delivery and at inception was intended to comprise the roles of: Team Leader, Advisory Services Coordinator, GEDSI Adviser, MEL Adviser, and Program Coordinator. A Deputy Team Leader role was introduced in December 2023.

Figure 1. PRES Core Team structure



Source: PRES

Evolution of PRES structure

In its initial phase, the PRES team included: Team Leader (full-time); Advisory Services Coordinator (80 days / Year 1, 100 days / year post-Year 1); Program Coordinator (130 days / year); MEL Adviser (100 days / year); and GEDSI Adviser (100 days / year).

From its start, PRES experienced significant structural evolution, marked by adjustments to role definitions and project day allocations. Over time, the PRES Core Team's structure evolved as demand led to its expansion.

Changes in role definitions and difficulties in recruitment, including key leadership positions, initially hindered project delivery. The first proposed team leader pursued another DFAT role, necessitating the recruitment of a new leader. This team leader's brief three-month tenure led to an interim DFAT senior adviser appointment until a permanent team leader was secured in December 2022. Another leadership transition occurred in December 2024, with the appointment of a new team leader, after finalisation of the

previous team leader's contract. Gaps in team leader appointments resulted in the program coordinator temporarily fulfilling that role for several months, leaving the PRES Core Team with limited resources.

Numerous staff transitions occurred within the core team, affecting positions such as Program Coordinator (three changes), Deputy Program Director (two changes), MEL Adviser (two changes), and GEDSI Adviser (two changes).

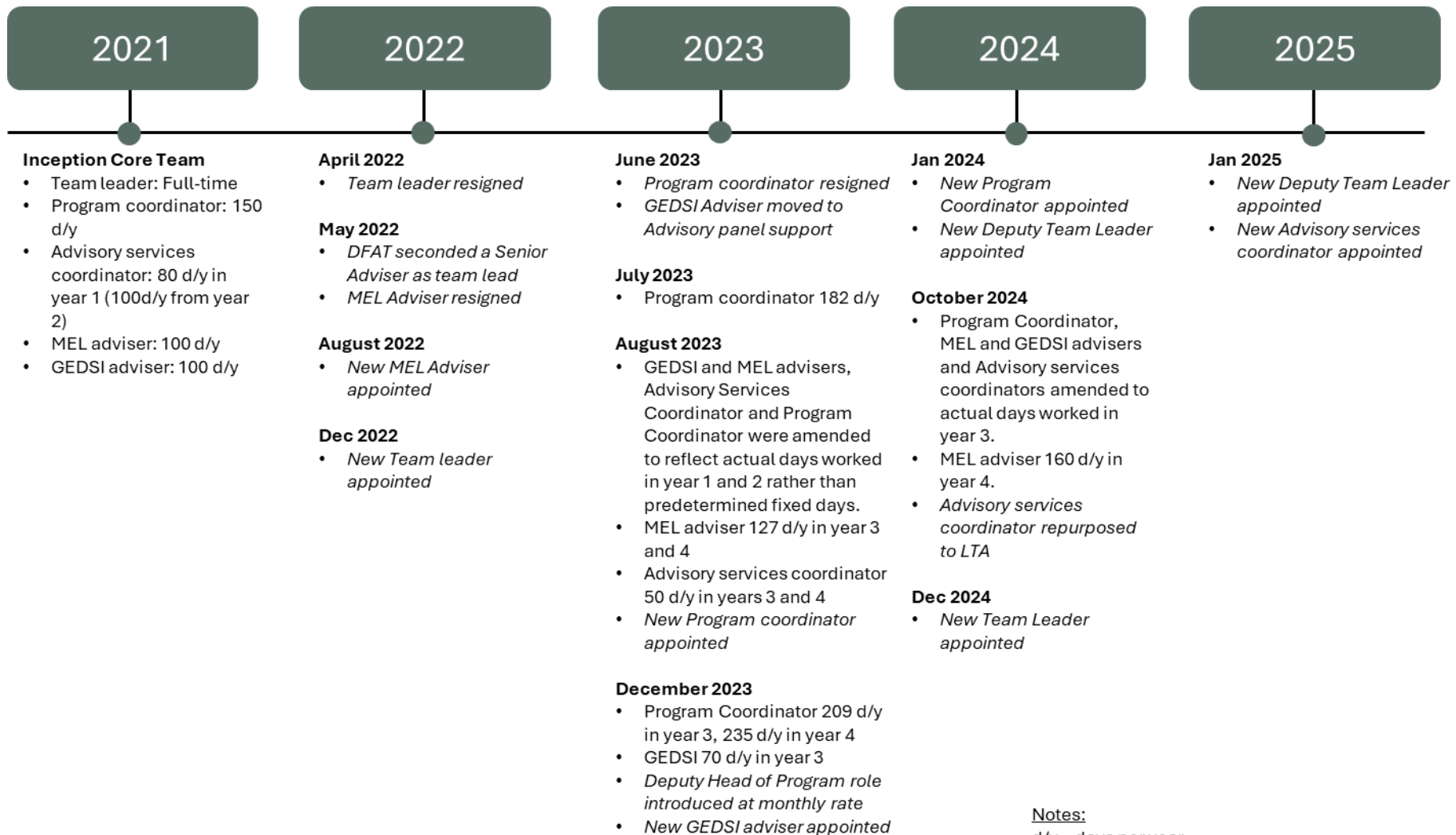
Importantly, some of these changes represented internal advancements, ensuring continued involvement within the program and did not necessarily result in program instability. For example, the Program Coordinator was promoted to Deputy Team Leader and subsequently Team Leader, and DFAT requested that the first GEDSI Adviser focus on fiscal budget support, which necessitated recruitment of a replacement GEDSI Adviser.

There have also been changes in the Advisory Services Coordinator role, which was originally intended to be the link between PRES and Deloitte. However, Deloitte was less involved with PRES than originally intended, and when Deloitte withdrew from PRES in 2024 the role became vacant. In December 2024, the role was repurposed to a long-term adviser role brought into the PRES Core Team to reflect the significant change in the value and scope of PRES over the life of the program.

While PRES saw substantial role changes, particularly in its early stages, the composition of the Core Team, in terms of the people involved, has been relatively stable since late 2023.

A full outline of the evaluation of the PRES Core Team is given in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Evolution of PRES Core team



Notes:

d/y – days per year

Team Leader and Deputy Team Leader roles were previously referred to as Program Director and Deputy Program Director

PRES governance

Governance of PRES comprises the PRES Advisory Group (PAG) and the PRES Working Group.

The PRES Advisory Group (PAG) is the mechanism that drives coordination between the PRES Core Team and PEB. It comprises the PRES Team Leader, Deputy-Team Leader, Adam Smith International's Contractor Representative, PEB Assistant Secretary, and PEB section heads. The PAG provides strategic guidance to PRES, reviews PRES performance and effectiveness, monitors and manages key risks for PRES, and reviews and endorses the annual priorities and budget allocations, including to PEB sections. The PAG meets quarterly, to discuss progress and provide strategic governance, high-level direction, leadership, guidance, and oversight of PRES. It reviews the annual health check of the PRES partnership and the PRES quarterly and annual reports, approves PRES workplans, and holds PRES accountable for performance.

The PRES Working Group guides the development and implementation of key PRES policies and strategies, including GEDSI and climate change, and the achievement of the EOIOs. It provides guidance on the development and implementation of PRES policies and supports achievement of PRES knowledge management and learning outcomes. The Working Group meets monthly, with attendance by at least one representative from each PEB section and the PRES Core Team.

PRES deliverables

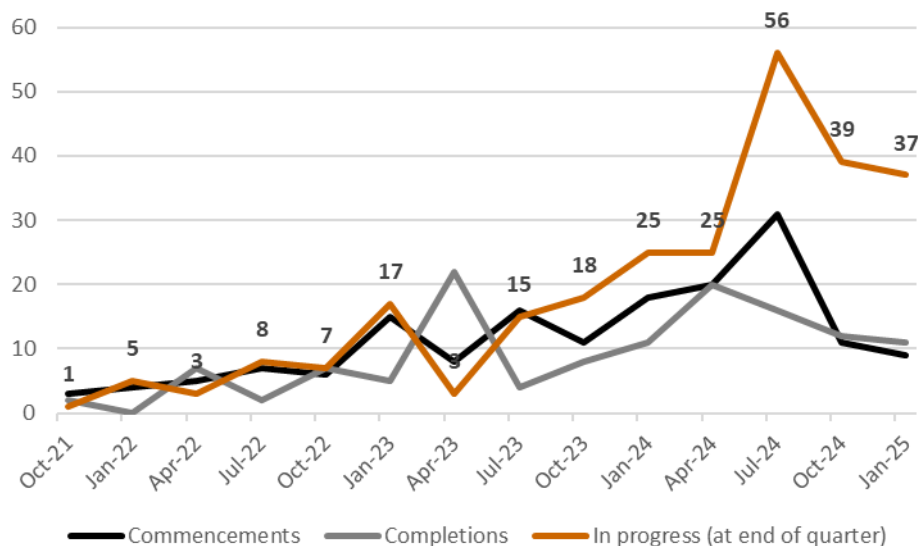
PRES is engaged to provide technical advisory support, primarily through the engagement of technical advisers to OTP across a range of economic sectors. The PRES Core Team is also available to support OTP to deliver the strategy development, design, and evaluation of aid activities in the portfolio. PRES is engaged through a Tasking Note (TN) process and can also be engaged to support teams beyond PEB or provide additional services to teams in OTP through ASOs.

In its operations manual, PRES is intended to support the development, strategy, design, and evaluation of aid activities across a range of disciplines in the Pacific region, including economic and fiscal governance, financial sector, private sector development, trade and labour mobility and education. PRES also provides access to cross-cutting expertise in social protection; gender; monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL); climate change, disaster management and impact on economics; political economy; and child protection, risk and safeguarding.

PRES currently delivers a range of activities, ranging from technical advisory support for Pacific aviation and budget support activities, economic program-level evaluations and designs, and thematic advice on banking and trade. It supports DFAT's Pacific desks, posts and Pacific Island countries, maintains a knowledge repository for PEB, facilitating information-sharing events, offers logistical support for advisers and provides performance management support for advisers.

Demand for PRES services has been increasing. Between the October 2021 quarter and January 2025 quarter, the number of TN commencements per quarter rose from one to nine (with a peak of 31 in the July 2024 quarter). The number of TNs in progress per quarter also rose from one to 37 (with a peak of 56 in the July 2024 quarter). While the number of TNs in progress can give an indication of demand for PRES services, it is important to note that TNs can vary in size (such that fewer TNs does not necessarily indicate a lower workload) and that, at full capacity, PRES is unable to take on more TNs even where demand exists.

Figure 3. TN commencements, completions and in progress by quarter (October 2021 quarter to January 2025 quarter)

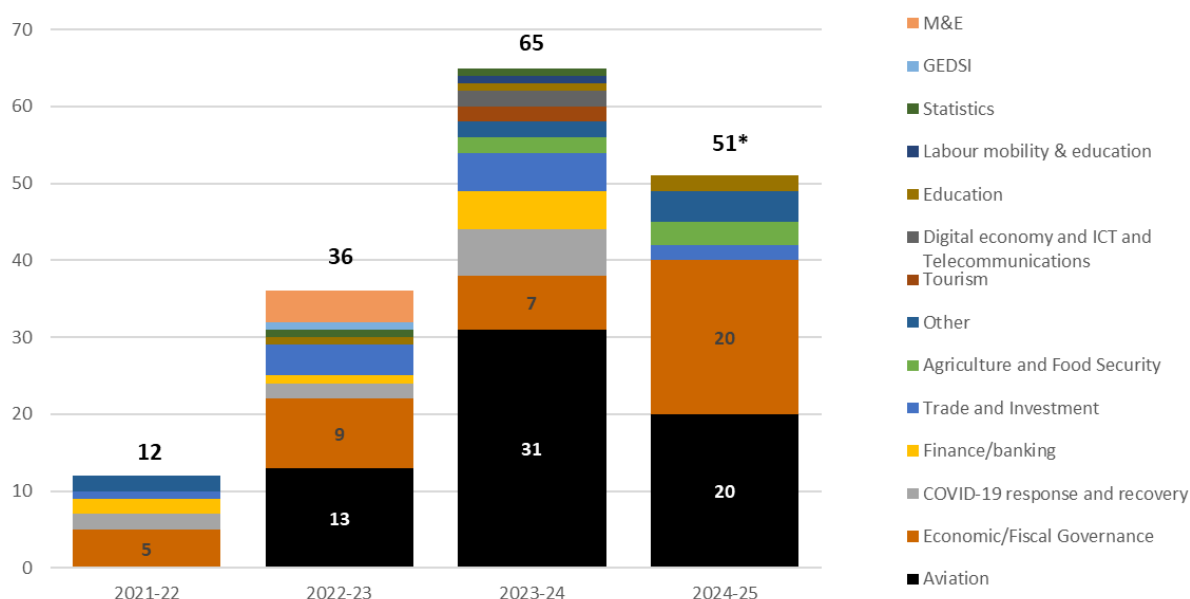


Source: PRES supplied TN data

PRES has also experienced an increase in the sectors that it supports, attributed to its growing reputation for positive outcomes. For example, in 2021-2022, PRES commenced 12 TNs across five areas of work; by 2023-2024, this had increased to 65 TNs across 12 areas of work (see Figure 4). The most common sector for TNs has been aviation (39% of all TNs); however, that is expected to drop off with most activities for this sector having transitioned to the Australia-Pacific Partnerships for Aviation program. The second most common sector for TNs is Economic / Fiscal Governance (25% of TNs).

Figure 4 depicts TN commencements by sector for 2021 to 2025.

Figure 4. TNs by sector and financial year of commencement



Note: There were 167 TN commencements since December 2021. Two TNs are excluded for Covid-19 response and recovery and one for Economic / Fiscal Governance due to the commencement year being unknown. *2024-2025 contains data up until 1 March 2025. Source: PRES supplied TN data.

KRQ1. HOW EFFECTIVE IS PRES AND WHAT ARE THE OPPORTUNITIES TO IMPROVE EFFECTIVENESS?



How effective is PRES? Triangulated evidence from the evaluation team's consultations and document review confirms the high effectiveness of DFAT's use of PRES for technical advice, particularly regarding the quality of output, flexibility, and responsiveness. It has been found to meet PEB / DFAT's needs and has achieved EOIO1. EOIO2 has been broadly achieved, with a need for greater clarity from DFAT regarding its intended outcomes.

Opportunities to improve effectiveness: Potential areas for improvement include continuing to utilise the capabilities of PRES' Core Team to build knowledge within DFAT; and clearer articulation of DFAT's intent for EOIO2.

1.1 Achievement of EOIO 1

EOIO 1: *Use of technical advice and support: DFAT staff use the technical advice, products or services accessed through PRES to support evidence-based policy, strategy, program coherence and enhanced investment design, management and performance.*

EOIO 1 is achieved: It is clear from the evidence that PRES' strength lies in the ability for DFAT to draw in specialist technical expertise to inform policy and programming activities.,

The available evidence indicates that the EOIO1 is being achieved. Feedback from consultations regarding the use of PRES for technical advice has been overwhelmingly positive, with respondents highlighting the quality, flexibility and timeliness of advice provided – both from the technical consultants engaged through PRES and the PRES Core Team directly. It was also revealed that PRES outcomes have improved over time, with initial teething issues around recruitment and retention in the Core Team and external factors such as 2022 being an election year.

With its commencement in late 2021, PRES prioritised the development of foundational documents, including the operations manual and M&E framework. Consequently, the initial period spanning late 2021–early 2022, saw a lower output of TNs. The number of TNs have steadily increased in 2022-23 and 2023-24 reflecting growing recognition of the value of PRES. While a full years data for 2024-25 is not yet available, the transition of some program activities to the Australia-Pacific Partnerships for Aviation program may potentially see a drop in activities in 2024-25. Current quarterly data indicates that the number of "in progress" TNs decreased after reaching a peak in July 2024. However, the figures for October 2024 and January 2025 remained higher than levels observed before July 2024.

Given that EOIO1 focuses on the provision of technical advice and support, evaluating its effectiveness inherently involves some crossover and consideration of the efficiency of its delivery, which is further analysed in KRQ2.

Consultations revealed key highlights of effectiveness of PRES as:

- **Quality of output.** Users of PRES are happy with the quality of work that is provided, indicating that services provided by PRES met DFAT needs.

- **Flexibility of service.** The flexibility of PRES was raised as a benefit numerous times by stakeholders. This included flexibility in the choice of technical experts, the type and length of engagements, adaptability in terms of reference and timeline amendments, and the level of involvement of PRES (e.g. direct relationship with consultant and DFAT with administrative support from PRES, high level of PRES involvement).
- **Streamlining.** Stakeholders are happy with the ease with which the managing contractor simplifies the process from developing the TN, to contracting, to deliverables and provides a less time-consuming mechanism for contracting technical advisers. PRES actively removes much of DFAT's administrative burden of identifying, engaging with and managing high-quality advisers.
- **Responsiveness.** Stakeholders revealed that PRES provided a mechanism to deliver products and services faster than what may be possible through other mechanisms. More detail on the efficiency in the delivery of technical analysis and expertise is given in Section KRQ2.

This is consistent with findings in the documentation, including the annual reports and investment monitoring report (IMRs). Ratings for effectiveness were '4 – adequate' in both 2023 and 2024 IMRs. The annual reports also indicated strong progress against EOIO1, including 'evidence of high rates of use of completed TN deliverables, and high levels of contribution to various aspects of DFAT programming'.

It is clear from the evidence that PRES' strength lies in the ability for DFAT to leverage specialist technical expertise to fill specific capability or capacity gaps, allowing DFAT to focus on its core competencies. PRES provides technical advice both by connecting DFAT with consultant technical advisers and through the technical expertise of its own Core Team.

Consultations suggested that, in many instances, the capability gaps being filled by PRES are those where it would not be practical for DFAT to develop or maintain highly specialised technical skills in-house. Reasons for this include: 1) access to capability due to the small pool of highly skilled specialists; 2) inefficient use of resources as permanently hiring niche specialists would ultimately require these specialists to perform generalist tasks, potentially diminishing their specialist skills and expertise; and 3) engaging a range of technical specialists in specific areas provides internal specialists and generalists with access to expert new ideas, support and guidance.

Case Study 1: PRES support to the Pacific Aviation Section

PRES has provided a range of surge support to DFAT's Pacific Aviation Section (VNS), including program design, communications, MEL and GEDSI support, and specialist technical support. In terms of sectors, aviation has had the highest number of TNs since commencement of PRES (64 TNs, representing 39% of total PRES TNs since commencement).

PRES has added significant value through its enabling work and, in addition to a range of one-off TNs, it has supported long-term project goals to:

- support airlines in their efforts to improve safety, profitability and sustainability
- improve governance and decision-making processes within aviation boards
- track the achievements of the aviation program.

For example, governance training piloted through PRES has been very well received by stakeholders and is now up to its fourth iteration.

The aviation MEL adviser, a PRES MEL team adviser, has assisted with a range of activities including mapping of available planning and monitoring documentation, the development of a section activity tracker, technical assistance for baseline and reporting templates, review and update of the aviation program's MEL plan, M&E input into aviation program design, among others. The Pacific Aviation Section also received GEDSI support, including GEDSI input into aviation program and multiple briefings from the PRES GEDSI adviser, which resulted in a GEDSI lens filtering through to adviser reports – including one adviser changing his reporting to include GEDSI considerations / analysis.

In 2023-2024, following PRES' successful contributions to the Pacific Aviation Section, the new five-year Australia-Pacific Partnerships for Aviation program commenced, working with Pacific countries to build a safer, more resilient and sustainable aviation sector. PRES has continued to be engaged to support the aviation program activities, including developing an announcement package for the program launch and commissioning an independent evaluation.

Accordingly, aviation program activities have transitioned to the Australia-Pacific Partnerships for Aviation program, and some of the aviation advisers were novated across accordingly. In the second quarter of 2024-2025, the quarterly report noted that the Pacific Aviation Section had the highest number of taskings at 19; 15 of which were completed due to the transition over to the Australia-Pacific Partnerships for Aviation program and four of which were still active.

The case study highlights how PRES has been able to provide holistic support to a sector and incubate a strategic new program. This illustrates PRES' ability to provide adaptable and comprehensive sector support, particularly surge support, and to support transition to other sustainable delivery models. This evolution underscores PRES' flexible approach. The transfer of technical advisers further highlights PRES' ability to ensure continuity and foster sustainable growth.

To what extent has PRES supported enhanced investment design and performance and strategic policy and program coherence across its scope of work?

PRES has completed a range of TN deliverables that are effectively contributing to a range of diverse elements of DFAT areas, programs and activities. Consultations indicate that PRES has been most frequently utilised for the delivery of specialist technical advice across a range of areas where internal DFAT capabilities may not be available or have limited capacity. The 2024 PEB staff survey identified policy (9 of 11 respondents) and M&E (8 of 11 respondents) as key areas of PRES support, with least cited areas being investment / program design and investment performance (3 of 11 respondents). Twelve people responded to the survey (response rate was 57%).³

Consultation findings were consistent with the findings of the annual reports and annual IMRs, which report that PRES has become 'increasingly influential and aligned with other DFAT investments'. They also align with discussions with DFAT's Economic Policy and Partnerships Section (EPS) and Regional Trade and Private Sector Section (EGS), where discussions highlighted that 'key areas of work and programming would not have been delivered without PRES'. It is also consistent with the 2024 PEB staff survey where almost all respondents (91%, 10 of 11) reported either '*moderate to high*' or '*high*' levels of contribution.

The PRES concept note outlines that PRES will provide information and analysis to support strategic planning and reviews of economic diplomacy, partner dialogue and private sector engagement.

³ The summary results provided to the evaluation team indicate 12 people completed the survey, and 11 people responded to questions on PRES' contribution to PEB / DFAT work.

Consultations also indicate that the initial intention was for PRES to also support higher-level strategy support and expertise.

PRES has provided strategic support to DFAT, most notably through the PRES Core Team's expertise, and through adviser inputs, which has effectively contributed to thematic strategy development and increased cohesion across DFAT. The 2024 PEB staff survey indicated that six out of 11 respondents indicated that PRES had contributed to DFAT strategy (including strategy implementation). Consultations revealed that while there were mixed opinions on PRES' role in direct strategy development, PRES is generally seen as effective in supporting strategic policy implementation through specialised technical advice to programs and activities – both in terms of the provision of external consultants and the PRES Core Team's direct expertise.

However, there are intrinsic factors that hinder PRES' ability to holistically contribute to DFAT strategy, including:

1. PRES staff are not physically embedded in DFAT due to logistical difficulties and DFAT requirements (including the need for security clearances)
2. PRES staff have limited access to the information necessary for comprehensive strategic support, stemming from their external position
3. there are concerns about the appropriateness of strategic capability being outsourced and the view that additional strategic input can hinder efficiency and progress
4. there is a lack of clarity around the specific strategic support that DFAT needs from PRES.

This is consistent with findings from the annual survey of PEB staff, presented in the annual report, that said although PRES is viewed as 'important and valuable', higher-level strategy was an area of need that 'had not been met by PRES or met to a lesser degree'.

Despite inherent factors limiting PRES' direct involvement in strategy development, the PRES Core Team has the capability to provide specialist technical input into DFAT thinking, build cohesion across DFAT's economic activities and to enhance DFAT's capability more broadly (for example, in international development best practice, GEDSI and economic and trade capability). The expertise of PRES could also be leveraged to synthesise prevailing TN themes into actionable knowledge resources and provide guidance to DFAT regarding tasking priorities.

Any future design should consider the role of PRES in providing support for strategy development, and the most effective mechanism to do so, if relevant. This may include leveraging existing TN processes; for example, for GEDSI input into strategy or international development best practice expertise, such as specialist knowledge of aid modalities and their suitability for different contexts and development goals. It may also include exploring alternative capability-building approaches.

Case Study 2: The PRES Core Team increasing coherence across the Pacific Direct Financing Fund and budget support

The COVID-19 pandemic's prolonged and severe economic impact on Pacific nations, coupled with escalating climate change effects, has necessitated a shift in Australia's development assistance, including increasing direct budget support to address new recovery and growth demands. To support this, PRES has delivered technical advice on budget support across multiple activities, strengthening program coherence and ensuring direct budget support delivers for Pacific island countries.

For example, the PRES Core Team has provided extensive technical advice and implementation support to the Fiscal Budget Support program (2020-2023), and subsequently the Pacific Direct Financing Fund (PDFF). This has included a GEDSI assessment to inform delivery of the Pacific COVID-19 response package fiscal and budget support extension, GEDSI snapshots for various Pacific Island countries, and increasing awareness of gender equality in budget support programming. It has also included M&E support to the Fiscal Budget Support final evaluation, contributions to the Fiscal Budget Support program's FIMR, and support to the 2024-2027 Solomon Islands Budget Support program design, ensuring alignment with the overarching PDFF regional framework.

PRES has provided specialist advice for the design, delivery and evaluation of the PDFF, including the development of the terms of reference for the PDFF advisory panel. The PRES Team Leader is the Chair of the PDFF Advisory Panel and has led the assessment of PDFF proposals and subsequent advisory panel reporting.

In addition, PRES has supported the recruitment of an MEL team (two advisers) to develop and implement the PDFF MEL plan and system (identification of candidates, mapping inputs, and support to TN development). It has also supported delivery of an options paper for budget support in Papua New Guinea, case studies on how budget support contributed to private sector resilience during / after the COVID-19 pandemic in Fiji and Vanuatu, and provided support to Vanuatu Post in relation to their PDFF allocation (including contribution to the consultative design and initial drafting of the investment design summary).

Further, PRES has contributed to improving budget support knowledge management and learning within PEB, having facilitated a budget support panel discussion and supported the development of DFAT's Pacific Budget Support Community of Practice.

To what extent has PRES responded to and met PEB / DFAT needs?

Evidence suggests that PRES is effectively responding to DFAT needs. Feedback from consultations finds that staff are overwhelmingly satisfied with PRES and that its services meet their needs. PRES has received positive feedback regarding both the quality of consultants that it provides and the effectiveness of the PRES Core Team as a managing contractor and direct technical adviser.

This is consistent with reporting; for example, the 2024 PEB staff survey found that PRES is overwhelmingly reported as meeting the needs of DFAT staff, with all respondents indicating that they were either satisfied (64%) or very satisfied (36%), and that PRES has met their needs. Monitoring data captured through Tasking Note Assessments (TNAs), as presented in the 2024 Annual Report, also found 96% (154 out of 160) of ratings were adequate / satisfactory or above, and 79% were good or very good. Specifically, TNAs revealed that the median response was 5 or higher (good+) across all indicators: Quality, Timeliness, Value for Money, Communication, and Ease of Engaging.

Consultations raised that there were a few initial teething challenges regarding deliverables – primarily related to how needs have been expressed by DFAT in TNs, and the initial program structure where Deloitte had delivered some PRES services. These challenges appear to have been largely resolved.

Improvement has also been made on how DFAT staff complete TNs. However, consultations found that the managing contractor will often complete components of the TN on DFAT's behalf after DFAT has communicated what is wanted. Consultations gave mixed views on PRES' role in drafting TNs. While consultations confirmed PRES' role in drafting TNs often led to a higher quality outcome, some indicated that it allowed DFAT to be less engaged. For example, while there was strong evidence that the PRES GEDSI adviser improved the identification of GEDSI entry points in TNs, with some indicating that this

leads to DFAT learning through a cooperative drafting process, others noted that it can allow DFAT to shift responsibility for GEDSI to PRES. While co-drafting of TNs is practical and a value provided by PRES in terms of efficiency and effectiveness, this should always be done in partnership, and with DFAT retaining ultimate responsibility for final approval.

Consultations revealed some initial teething challenges with the original consortium contracted to deliver PRES, this included exploration of whether the nature of PRES Core Team work was best suited to specialised and extensive expertise in Pacific regional economic development versus more generalist economic knowledge. In Quarter 2 of 2024, the consortium's composition changed when one of the partners, Deloitte, made an organisational decision to cease its international development work and withdraw from the partnership.

1.2 Achievement of EOIO 2

EOIO 2: *Learning within PEB: PRES contributes to improving knowledge management and learning within PEB.*

EOIO 2 is broadly achieved: PRES has implemented various learning and knowledge management initiatives, such as a knowledge management system, seminars, and learning through TNs and observation. However, there is a lack of clarity on the intent of EOIO2, and focus has tended to be on meeting DFAT's high demand for activities under EOIO1.

The review found that PRES has experienced challenges in achieving EOIO2. This is, in part, due to a lack of clarity about the ambition of EOIO2 and the entry point for PRES to better support knowledge management and learning. Consultations revealed several challenges related to EOIO2. Participants expressed a lack of shared understanding regarding its purpose and how success would be measured. There were also ongoing debates about the importance of knowledge management and learning in the context of PRES as a provider of specialist technical capability.

A key to PRES' success has been its capacity to offer access to specialist technical expertise to inform economic policy and programming. A fundamental challenge in managing learning within this arrangement is defining the nature and objective of that learning. For example, direct learning through building the specialist capability of DFAT staff is inherently difficult. One of the primary reasons that DFAT benefits from PRES is that it requires highly technical skills that are not readily transferable to generalist staff through simple upskilling. High levels of internal DFAT staff turnover and its impact on organisational knowledge were also raised as challenges in consultations.

Opportunities for learning still exist, particularly in terms of providing generalist staff with a broader understanding of more technical areas, exposing them to different thinking and problem-solving approaches, and connecting them to technical areas to improve institutional communication and collaboration.

Consistent with this, consultations revealed that the most effective learning has come from observational learning and interaction with PRES consultants and the PRES Core Team. For example, positive feedback was given about embedded advisers (specialist advisers placed within DFAT to provide ongoing support), with respondents suggesting that the embedded M&E adviser has fostered learning by going beyond their core responsibilities and being a source of general advice for staff. However, this raises questions about the extent to which there is a need for more-permanent specialist internal staff members in these roles.

Consultation findings are supported by documentation analysed by the evaluation team. Notes from the PRES March 2024 Review and Reflection meeting identified that the Core Team had recognised that a key challenge for them was understanding what DFAT expectations were for PRES' contribution to PEB learning, knowledge management, and information sharing.

The November 2024 PRES Review and Reflection meeting focused entirely on EOIO2. At this meeting, while the Core Team agreed that the EOIO2 outcomes and outputs were still relevant, the meeting notes show that team members had raised 'the difficulty in capturing the more 'intangible' or less structured sharing of information and knowledge with DFAT staff, and the resulting emphasis in program reporting on more formal processes (e.g. seminars)'. Consistent with consultation findings, discussions in this meeting about EOPO2 indicated that the team recognised the value of knowledge sharing through informal processes; 'for example, sharing knowledge about a potentially useful deliverable / product or experience in one DFAT team with a different team in conversation / by email may be potentially impactful in terms of knowledge management and learning, but don't appear as heavily weighted in MEL reporting as more tangible learning events such as seminars'. It was suggested in this meeting that a possible solution is to ensure informal information and knowledge sharing processes are recorded and collated over time.

In the 2024 PEB staff survey, while 83% of respondents reported PRES had made at least *some* contribution to knowledge management, responses were more varied than for EOIO1, with five out of 10 respondents indicating that PRES had made only a little or no contribution to knowledge management, and no respondents selected the highest point on the scale ('to a very good extent'). The survey found that 58% of respondents (seven out of 12 people) had not drawn on the PRES deliverables commissioned by others 'at all' or were 'unsure'. Of those who had drawn on deliverables, the majority had only drawn on deliverables 'a little'. Examining the ways in which PRES has contributed to knowledge management, the highest response was through the availability of TNs and deliverables on the PRES Information Management System (IMS) (four out of 12 respondents) and information sharing events / processes (four out of 10 respondents).

The IMS demonstrates a sincere and concerted effort by the managing contractor to achieve EOIO2. Initially the IMS was established as a Microsoft SharePoint platform; however, consultations revealed that the system was not being used widely. This is consistent with the results of the 2023 PEB staff survey that found half of respondents were unaware of the IMS (five out of 10 respondents). The survey had 11 responses (a 46% response rate), and one person skipped the IMS questions. The March 2024 Review and Reflection meeting notes also showed that the Core Team found 'the IMS may not be a site that DFAT staff instinctively refer to or seek out as it is not their primary communication / information sharing platform'.

In response to these identified issues, PRES engaged with DFAT to improve the IMS and subsequently launched a new 'hub' in September 2024. Post-launch consultations and documentation indicate that there has been increased DFAT staff knowledge about the hub. However, despite initial accessibility limitations (including security restrictions) being resolved and the expected timeframe for user adoption being acknowledged, there still is no evidence showing a significant increase in system usage.

Results of the 2024 PEB staff survey found that although the IMS was the most listed channel for PRES contribution to knowledge management, usage is low. Most respondents (67%) were aware of the PRES IMS, but less than half (42%) reported using it. Only two people (17%) had used the IMS many times. While it is unclear how useful those using the IMS are finding it, with consultations revealing that some staff find it more useful than others, few responses cited the PRES IMS as a source of learning.

This likely reflects a lag in the launch of IMS v.2, as the evaluation was undertaken in December 2024, which was only a few months after the hub's launch. No formal evaluation has been undertaken since the new hub has been fully launched. However, PRES notes that anecdotal evidence suggests that this may be changing; for example, the PRES Core Team have recently been asked by DFAT to on-board new DFAT staff and additional DFAT staff have indicated to the Core Team that they have accessed it.

It is also important to note that the IMS may serve multiple purposes, with consultations suggesting that it has proved useful for budget management and tracking.

There is also EOIO2's question of clarity, transferability of learnings, and how learnings are most beneficially presented. While an IMS helps ensure lessons are accessible, particularly in the context of high staff turnover, the existing IMS is not widely used.

Similarly, information sharing events and processes were listed as the most common way that PRES has contributed to knowledge management, and seminars received largely positive feedback (as outlined in the 2024 Annual Report). Nonetheless, consultations raised questions about the extent of these events' benefits and whether PRES resources are better directed to core activities, with knowledge management and learning better achieved indirectly, through TNs. This was consistent with the 2024 Annual Report findings (for the period up to June 2024) and evident through the 2023 PEB staff survey, which stated that although feedback on seminars / learning events were positive, 'discussions indicated limited progress overall in contributing to improved knowledge management and learning'.

PRES has consistently worked towards both improving and capturing knowledge sharing and learning. For example, in 2024, there was an increasing focus on incorporating knowledge sharing and learning opportunities within TNs, and the TN template and assessments were changed to better capture opportunities for knowledge sharing. The 2023-2024 Quarter Four report indicated that a rapid review of TNs found that at least 14 (out of 37 TNs⁴) incorporated knowledge sharing and learning dimensions. This included 11 new TNs (out of 19 new taskings). In Quarter Four of 2023-2024, four out of eleven (36%) TNAs included evidence of contributions to knowledge management and learning, increasing in 2024-2025's Quarter 1 to eight out of 11 (73%), and in 2024-2025's Quarter 2 to four out of nine (44%).

PRES is continuing to trial new approaches to meet EOIO2 and engage DFAT, including monthly section meetings where DFAT staff are updated on latest documents on the IMS, and sending brief summaries of deliverables to PEB, including links to those deliverables.

Recommendation 1 (Next phase / Strategic) PRES should be continued, recognising the critical role that it plays in providing DFAT access to technical expertise and enhanced capabilities. PRES EOIOs should be reviewed in any subsequent design, in particular EOIO2, and PRES' role in the provision of strategic support for which there is likely to be ongoing need.

⁴ The quarterly report indicates there were 48 active TNs and ASOs, including 37 TNs.

KRQ2. HOW EFFICIENT IS PRES AND WHAT ARE THE OPPORTUNITIES TO IMPROVE EFFICIENCY?



How efficient is PRES? PRES is highly efficient. There is good evidence that PRES provides good value for money. PRES' efficiency stems from its flexibility and capacity to deliver quality outputs while minimising the time and cost associated with identifying, engaging, and managing contracted technical specialists. Having access to a small but extremely responsive PRES Core Team also presents value for money, given the breadth of teams requesting PRES support and the range of topics and capabilities sought from PRES.

Opportunities to improve efficiency: Potential areas for improvement include ensuring DFAT's final approval of all TNs to ensure that these reflect DFAT needs; ensuring adequate resourcing of the PRES Core Team to reflect high demand for technical support; clarity on PRES' role to strengthen PEB linkages; and strengthening the PAG's role in prioritisation and strategic planning of PRES.

2.1 Efficiency in the delivery of technical analysis and expertise

One of PRES' guiding principles is efficiency. The PRES operations manual defines efficiency as the delivery of technical outputs and other deliverables in a resource-effective (cost and time) manner. This includes minimising time burden through a simple, transparent TN system that enables PRES to respond rapidly; and delivering transparency and value for money in resourcing; and costing the delivery of services by providing upfront estimates against TNs.

The available evidence indicates that PRES is achieving efficiency, particularly against EOIO1. This is consistent with the 2024 Annual IMR that found good evidence of the investment making adequate use of time and resources. Specifically, a rating of '4 – adequate' was given in relation to efficiency in both 2023 and 2024. However, consistent with Section 1.2, the evidence suggests that there could be improvements in efficiency around EOPO2, largely due to a lack of clarity regarding its intended scope.

Feedback from consultations demonstrates a high level of support for efficiency, in terms of allowing the engagement of specialist technical expertise in a manner that reduces time and cost burdens and through direct provision of technical advice from the PRES Core Team. PRES supports DFAT to initiate and complete projects much faster than what would otherwise occur, and this provides value when technical expertise is required quickly by projects, as lengthy engagement processes can delay project progress.

Many stakeholders suggested that PRES' efficiency is in its flexibility and ability to deliver quality outputs while minimising the time and cost burden of identifying, engaging with and managing contracting technical specialists.

In practice, engaging a managing contractor to streamline the engagement of technical specialist consultants presents a potential trade-off in: it reduces the administrative burden (both time and effort) of skill acquisition and management, allowing staff time to focus on core work, but adds an additional layer of communication and complexity, potentially resulting in increased information loss and misinterpretation. Evidence from consultations suggests that PRES' flexible approach to consultant engagement – which allows the managing contractor to adopt a highly involved or more hands-off role as required for each individual project – combined with growing understanding and trust between DFAT and Adam Smith International, is resulting in the benefits from PRES outweighing any potential risk in terms

of added bureaucracy, complexity or information loss. The PRES Core Team's own technical expertise provided to DFAT further complements this.

The efficiency of PRES processes, particularly TN processes, has improved over time. Initially, TNAs revealed there was a need for DFAT to more clearly specify tasks and deliverables in the TN, to ensure DFAT staff and advisers have a shared understanding of expectations. As a result, there were updates to the TN template and the TN development and approval process.

While consultations indicated that DFAT sometimes delegates the drafting of TNs, or parts thereof, to PRES, this collaborative approach is effective as long as DFAT maintains full engagement in the process and continues to hold ultimate responsibility for final approval. For TNs to accurately reflect DFAT's requirements and foster shared understanding, DFAT's proactive engagement in clearly defining its needs is essential. While the co-creation of TNs with PRES can be a practical and beneficial partnership, the fundamental responsibility for clear task articulation must continue to lie with DFAT in any future design.

Recommendation 2.1 (Long term / Operational) To ensure alignment to DFAT's needs, DFAT should work closely with PRES in the drafting of TNs, and leverage the expertise of the PRES Core Team. DFAT should continue to retain responsibility for final approval of all TNs in any future design

For the allocation of resources between the PRES Core Team, embedded advisers and short-term technical assistance, the evaluation team had limited access to financial data to be able to adequately determine whether allocation is optimal. However, evidence suggests that the PRES Core Team operates with a notably lean and efficient structure, comprised of a Team Leader, Deputy Team Leader, Program Coordinator, Advisory Services Coordinator, GEDSI Adviser, and MEL Adviser. Despite this efficiency, the team shoulders a considerable workload, managing both the operational and strategic aspects of PRES – including identifying, administering, and managing external technical consultants – alongside delivering direct technical assistance by leveraging PRES' in-house Core Team expertise. Consequently, the Core Team's capacity to absorb additional workloads appears limited, particularly given their expanding involvement in governance meetings and technical advisory tasks alongside their core duties, and the ongoing growing demand for PRES work. As the evaluation team has not yet got full data for the 2024-25 financial year, it is unclear whether there will be a reduction in the number of TNs the PRES teams undertakes (particularly given the transition of some program activities to the Australia-Pacific Partnerships for Aviation program). As such, any future design should consider the resourcing needs of the PRES Core Team to ensure it is flexible to respond to demand while also achieving value for money for the proposed scale of future activities.

This is consistent with the 2024 Annual IMR, which found PRES to be operationally efficient, with the Core Team overseeing up to 40 TNs and eight service orders per quarter.

Recommendation 2.2 (Next Phase / Operational) Any future design must consider the resourcing needs of the PRES Core Team to ensure it is adequate to respond to for PRES services and scale of activities in the future.

Feedback on embedded advisers has been positive, with staff reporting that they provide both direct task support and valuable informal advice, so contributing to indirect capacity building. Questions were raised regarding the cost-effectiveness and necessity of long-term embedded advisers, and whether these roles indicated an ongoing need for specialist roles / a conversion to permanent staff positions. However, there was a view that, given DFAT's preference for generalist staff, internal creation of specialist roles such as

M&E is unlikely. Therefore, long-term advisers offer a cost-effective solution, compared to hiring multiple short-term advisers.

2.2 Value for money (VfM): Economy, Efficiency, Effectiveness, Ethics and Equity

Evidence from consultations is that PRES is providing value for money to DFAT. Primarily, this is achieved through reduced costs (both monetary and time) associated with the reduced burden of identifying, engaging and managing technical specialist consultations compared with other mechanisms. For example, some respondents noted it can be more efficient to find highly technical specialists than panels, due to the speed with which consultants can be engaged and because many panels are becoming increasingly generalist. This is consistent with DFAT's Partner Performance Assessment and TNAs, as outlined in the PRES 2024 Annual IMR, which both rated value for money as '5 – good'.

The lean and effective structure of the PRES Core Team has also ensured value for money by efficiently providing administrative and strategic support, technical assistance across GEDSI, MEL, and PDFF, and fostering greater coherence among programs. The PRES Value for Money (VfM) framework defines value for money as 'good resource use, which is justified by the benefits and value generated by the investment' and outlines five criteria consistent with DFAT's value for money criteria, and a series of sub-criteria in the assessment of value for money. These include:

1. Economy (Cost-consciousness, Encouraging competition, Enhancing linkages)
2. Efficiency (Delivery, Budget management, Collaborative partnerships)
3. Effectiveness (Results-focused, Achieving outcomes, Meeting needs, Adaptive approach)
4. Ethics (Accountability and transparency, Safeguarding)
5. Equity (GEDSI mainstreaming and targeting, Gender balance and pay equity, Workforce disability equity)

Economy

Evidence from consultations indicates that PRES has made effort to provide detailed costings for technical advice and evidence-based justifications for adviser fees. This is consistent with the findings of the 2024 Annual Report, which found that 68% of relevant taskings included detailed budgets, explanations of how the tasking addressed the principle of 'encouraging competition', and expected outputs and deliverables. This included improvement over the 2023-2024 reporting period, with 76% recorded in the 2023-2024 Quarter 4.

Interviewees identified that substantial variations in consultant rates can exist. PRES provides options for different consultants and requires consultants to justify their rates by providing previous invoices from other DFAT (or non-DFAT) work. Where rates appear high, PRES compares rates between consultants, and where applicable, requires evidence to justify higher rates. However, ultimately, the decision regarding which consultants are engaged rests with DFAT. Further transparency on rates and decision-making processes may be useful, including transparency about DFAT's decision-making processes of why particular advisers are chosen over others and a benchmarking exercise including consideration of GEDSI pay equity. Discussions with PRES confirm that this work is already underway in 2025, including the comparison of minimum and maximum rates by sector and the tracking of adviser selection decision-making processes.

Reflecting the importance of trust in the effectiveness of technical advisors engaged through PRES, consultations confirmed a perception that DFAT relies heavily on preferred consultants. This potentially has implications for adviser diversity, such as Pacific Islander representation. While PRES is making

efforts to mitigate the potential for bias in DFAT's selection of advisers, the PRES Core Team does not have authority over the final recruitment decisions. As such, potential risks remain, particularly when DFAT requests specific consultants and advisers. This evidence is consistent with PRES' January 2025 internal value-for-money review, where PRES notes that 'TNs likely 'generally' state whether alternative candidates were considered in cases where DFAT requests a specific adviser, however it is important to ensure that DFAT specifically states this element when completing TNs'.

Recommendation 2.3 (Short term / Operational) DFAT should enhance transparency in its adviser selection process by providing clear justifications for the selection of advisers, with the aims of achieving value for money, equitable consultant pay, and ongoing progress in advisor diversity.

An additional issue raised in consultations was the application of multiple layers of management fees as a result of PRES subcontracting. It has been suggested that this is rare, and where this occurs, it can be due to the very technical nature of the work, where finding an individual consultant can be difficult. PRES indicates that a limited number of advisers have management fees and only two independent advisers split these out from their daily rates. For companies, one subcontractor identifies management fees, the others do not, but PRES has determined from rates and negotiations that management fees are being billed. They also note that in many instances, the rates of those advisers / subcontractors with management fees that are transparently included are not the highest rates paid in respective sectors.

The issue of multiple payments of management fees is complex and is not specific to PRES. Limiting management fees for short-term advisers, especially in skill-shortage areas, may unintentionally limit access to specialised organisation-based technical experts. In such cases, the value of acquiring this expertise likely justifies the incremental cost. However, for long-term or embedded advisers, more cost-effective contracting practices should be implemented. Any future design should consider the issue of efficiency in management fees and consider structures that reduce layers of sub-contractor management fees.

In terms of enhancing linkages across PEB, the VfM framework defines 'excellent performance' as PRES working with DFAT to consistently identify other relevant work being undertaken by PEB and, where possible, enhancing program linkages. Consultations revealed that this can be challenging due to the independent manner of working between various DFAT sections. As an external program, PRES faces various levels of buy-in with different sections and information limitations, which make it difficult to synthesise findings to enhance linkages across PEB and/or with other programs.

It is unclear what intended scope of enhancing linkages was. As such, the evaluation identified a need for greater clarity about what success looks like for enhancing linkages. Any future design should consider the role of PRES in enhancing linkages when reconsidering the EOIOs and the VfM framework.

Recommendation 2.4 (Next phase / Strategic) Any future design (including any VfM framework refresh) should consider PRES' role and capacity to strengthen PEB linkages.

Efficiency

In terms of deliverables, consultation feedback is that PRES quality is good and that DFAT is happy with consultant deliverables. This is consistent with monitoring data captured through TNAs, as presented in the 2024 Annual Report, which found 96% (154 out of 160) of ratings were 'adequate / satisfactory' or above, and 79% were 'good' or 'very good'. Specifically, TNAs revealed the median response was 5 or

higher (good+) across all indicators: Quality, Timeliness, Value for Money, Communication, and Ease of Engaging (see Section 1.1).

In terms of the managing contractor's role in deliverables, from consultations, the extent of the managing contractor's involvement in deliverables varies by TN. In some cases – particularly where deliverables are highly specialised and/or DFAT chooses to work more directly with the contractor - the extent of the managing contractor's involvement is very limited. Consultations indicated that at least one section was hesitant to share final deliverables with Adam Smith International, citing concerns about data access and the perceived lack of value due to the reports' technical complexity.

While PRES enables DFAT to work closely with contractors, and this is seen as beneficial, effective quality assurance requires coordination between DFAT and PRES. Consultation and documentation indicate that PRES may not consistently have direct oversight of deliverables or the specialised technical expertise for quality assurance in all instances. However, as the contractual link for individual deliverables is between the PRES managing contractor and the consultant, PRES' oversight and awareness of deliverable quality is therefore important for managing performance. Consequently, to enable PRES to effectively quality assure as part of managing performance, DFAT must provide PRES with any necessary information regarding deliverable quality that relies on DFAT's specific needs or expertise and where appropriate ensure PRES has oversight of all deliverables.

Recommendation 2.5 (Short term / Operational) DFAT should ensure that all deliverables are quality assured by PRES and support the PRES managing contractor in this process.

As the evaluation team had limited financial information on PRES, it was difficult to draw definitive conclusions on budget management. However, the 2024 Annual IMR identified that PRES 'demonstrated strong financial management, including proactive management of budgets for tasking notes and detailed analysis of unexpensed funds, fortnightly contact with teams to determine upcoming tasking note demand'.

For more information on PRES efficiency, see Section 2.

Effectiveness

Evidence suggests that PRES is effective and meeting DFAT needs. For more information on PRES effectiveness, see Section 1.

Ethics

Consultation feedback and documentation confirm that management and governance meetings are being conducted according to established schedules. However, an opportunity exists to enhance the strategic contribution of the PEB sections through the PAG and the PRES Working Group. Specifically, consultations suggested an opportunity for greater PAG involvement and participation in prioritisation processes (particularly during quarterly planning meetings). Concern was raised that the PAG has shifted more towards reporting and approval, rather than collaborative strategic development. Consultations also revealed further opportunity for more members of the PRES Core Team to be directly involved in governance meetings. For example, attendance by the GEDSI adviser would provide more opportunities for identification of strategic entry points for GEDSI work (see Section 4).

Given that the PAG is intended to facilitate coordination between the PRES Core Team and OTP and provide strategic guidance, there may be opportunities to further align its function with strategic decision-making and to improve engagement of PEB sections with the PAG and the PRES Working Group.

Recommendation 2.6 (Short term / Operational) The PAG should actively participate in prioritisation and strategic planning.

Equity

PRES is making significant effort to progress GEDSI and other equity outcomes. For more information on PRES and equity, see Section 4.

2.3 PRES as an integrated program within PEB in accordance with the PRES partnership and one-team approach

Observations from consultations indicate consistently favourable feedback regarding the current PRES Core Team. While an initial adjustment period was noted, the current team has established a trusted reputation for competence and reliability. This is consistent with findings of the 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 annual reports. In 2023, it was initially found that ‘though there were no significant issues, neither DFAT staff nor PRES partners considered the program well-integrated. Most staff thought integration would increase as more TNs were implemented and the level of interaction with PRES increased’. By the 2024 Annual Report, the majority of PEB considered PRES well integrated into PEB. This is also consistent with the 2024 annual partnership health check report that found both partners reporting positively on the health of the PRES partnership. In both the 2023 and 2024 partnership health checks, the partnership between DFAT and the managing contractor was viewed as on track. The 2024 partnership health check found that the PRES partnership was working well across the three partnership principles of Simplicity, Efficiency, and Accountability.

Consultation feedback indicates that PRES’ current success is significantly rooted in two key factors: the cultivation of strong trust dynamics and the consistent delivery of high-quality performance by specific PRES individuals. The development of this trust appears to have fostered an environment where there is increasing demand for PRES services.

While there are clear benefits, as PRES gains a better understanding of DFAT needs and communication becomes more open and activities more collaborative – it also creates risk. One of these is ‘key person’ risk, where DFAT relies heavily on existing individuals. If those people become unavailable, it could disrupt successful operations. This is a challenge both with PRES but also at the consultant level as it potentially results in over-reliance and stagnation, influencing the extent to which more suitable advisers are sought and increasing selection bias in decision-making.

Feedback about embedded advisers was also highly positive. Stakeholders report that embedded advisers have significantly enhanced learning by exceeding their standard duties, including providing general advice and answering questions. This observation suggests the potential need for a DFAT permanent role to fulfill these responsibilities, as opposed to a PRES engaged consultant, except where the position may be highly specialised and focused on a specific deliverable, that achieves value for money through a contracting arrangement.

There is also a question about whether PRES consultants should be hired as long-term advisers. Where these instances exist, it indicates that it may be more efficient for DFAT to hire a full-time staff member. However, this may not be possible due to overarching DFAT human resources strategies; in which case, PRES consultants may be required to continue to fill this gap. In-house recruitment of such niche technical experts could also lead to a diffusion of their specialised skills and potentially limit their impact. It may also simply be more efficient to hire someone in a long-term advisory role rather than a series of short-term advisory roles. In the current context, consultations suggest that the existing embedded and long-term adviser mechanisms are well-suited for their purpose.

Other challenges to an integrated team include changes to security clearance and office space. It was noted that these factors have made it increasingly difficult for the PRES Core Team and advisers to work more closely with DFAT staff. This is consistent with the annual survey of PEB staff that found, although staff need has been met, support to in-house capabilities due to the lack of security clearance is a challenge. It is also consistent with the 2024 Annual IMR, which found:

'PRES takes a 'one team' approach to implementation with PRES advisers regularly co-located with DFAT officers in Canberra and increased virtual engagement. This contributes to efficiency and increased engagement across commissioning areas but has been affected by logistical issues including PEB desk space and a need for PRES officers to be security cleared.'

KRQ3. HOW RELEVANT IS PRES AND WHAT ARE THE OPPORTUNITIES TO IMPROVE RELEVANCE?



How relevant is PRES? PRES is and remains highly relevant. The provision of technical support and services (EOIO1) remains relevant to both the Pacific context and the DFAT strategic and organisational context.

Opportunities to improve relevance: As DFAT priorities change and demand for technical expertise continues to grow, ensuring PRES is able to remain responsive and flexible, while maintaining its focus on Pacific economic expertise, will be important to continued relevance.

The concept note defined PRES' strategic intent as supporting economic recovery and growth investments. This was in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and Pacific Step-up, which created new challenges and demands for DFAT's economic recovery and growth portfolio in the Pacific. Consultations and documentation confirmed the relevance of PRES as addressing the increased resourcing need for economic recovery in the Pacific after COVID-19, and there is significant evidence of the relevance of PRES during this period. The evaluation has considered the ongoing relevance of PRES in the absence of the COVID-19 pandemic, in terms of both the Pacific regional context and the DFAT institutional context.

The economic impact of COVID-19 on Australia's Pacific partners is substantial and persistent. The Pacific has moved past coping with the health and economic challenges of COVID-19 and is focused on economic recovery and the identification of new opportunities for economic growth. Coupled with the effect of climate change, the region faces continuing challenges that will be enduring. With this has come increasing demand for support, to which Australia has responded with rapid growth in resourcing, and commensurate increases in the demand for high-quality external advice and surge support.

The Pacific remains a DFAT priority region. The Australia-Pacific Regional Development Partnership Plan 2025-2029 commits Australia to working within the Pacific and supporting Pacific partners to build effective, accountable states that drive their own development, 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'.

Even as the immediate health crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic recedes, the need for specialist technical skills in the Pacific remains critical, particularly for economic recovery and growth. The region continues to grapple with compounding crises, including climate change. Economic impacts from the pandemic have exposed vulnerabilities in Pacific economies, requiring ongoing support to establish and grow trade links, strengthen financial governance, and promote sustainable growth. Adding to these complexities, the evolving geopolitical landscape and shifts in global trade policy present new challenges and opportunities for Pacific nations. Navigating these changes requires specialised technical knowledge.

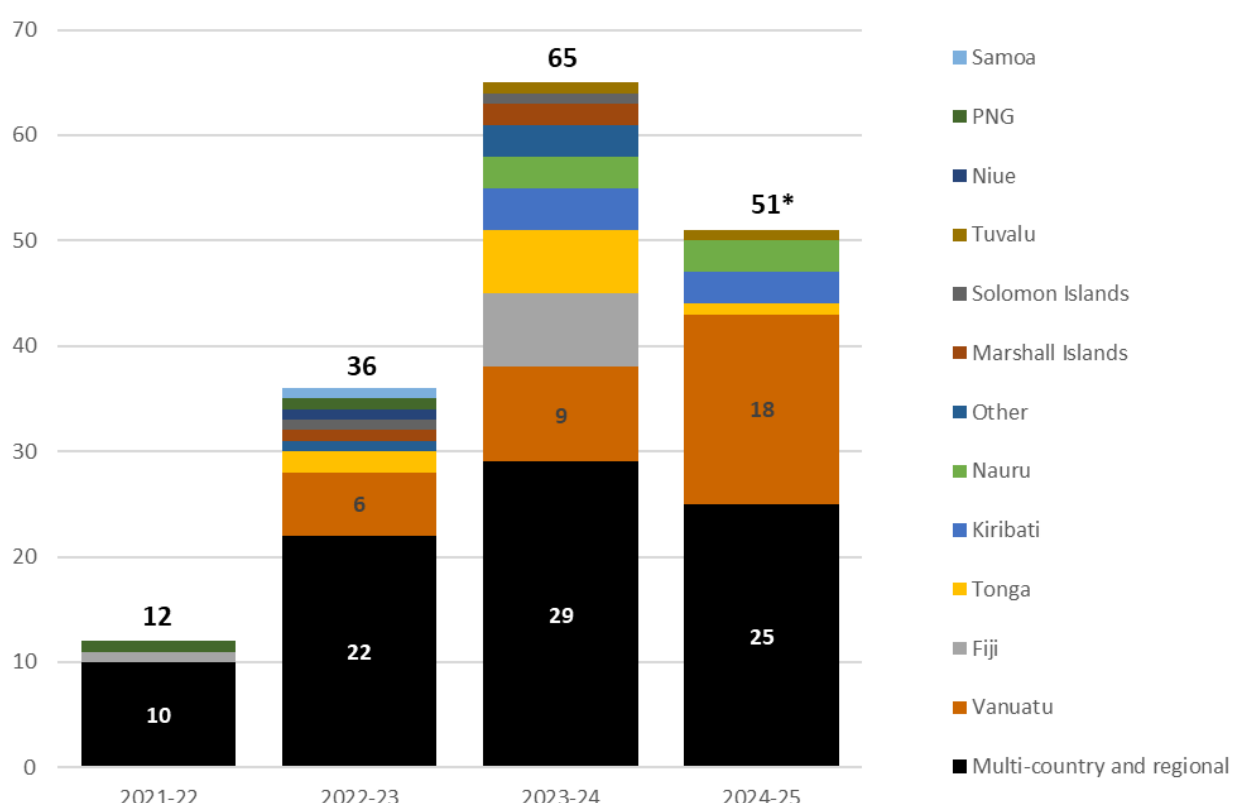
For example, Objective 3 of the Australia-Pacific Regional Development Partnership Plan 2025-2029 is 'sustainable and resilient economic development', with a key focus area on budget support and public financial management. These are areas where PRES already contributes and will continue to contribute meaningful support; for example, PRES' support of the Final Evaluation of the \$498 million Pacific Fiscal Budget Support Package.

The ongoing demand for PRES services indicates its ongoing relevance, and the broad geographical scope of requests for this service demonstrates its widespread relevance and necessity. For example, the 2023-2024 Annual report estimated the majority of TNs involved in-country travel on the part of advisers.

Since PRES commencement, most TNs are multi-country or regional (52%), with Vanuatu increasing in relevance (making up 33% of TNs).

The distribution of TNs by country is given in Figure 6.

Figure 6. TNs by country and financial year of commencement⁵



Source: PRES supplied TN data

Increasing demand for TNs is driven both externally by counterpart governments and partners seeking Australia's support and expertise, and internally by the compounding pressures of finding often very specialised skill sets. It is appropriate that highly technical skills, required for specific tasks, are sourced from external consultants, to improve DFAT's access to a niche skills in a timely and cost effective manner. The unique nature of DFAT as an organisation with regular staff rotation, and associated need for transferability of skills, presents a challenge for maintaining institutional memory and the availability of technical skills in some areas. Furthermore, the diverse and rapidly evolving nature of DFAT's work necessitates a breadth of specialised technical expertise that proves challenging to solely maintain through internal capability.

⁵ Notes: There were 167 TNs starts since December 2021. Three TNs are excluded, including one for Vanuatu and two for 'multi-country / regional' due to the commencement year being unknown. *2024-2025 contains data up until 1 March 2025.

In terms of thematic areas, PRES supports the development, strategy, design, and evaluation of aid activities across a range of disciplines in the Pacific region, including:

- economic and fiscal governance
- financial sector
- private sector development
- trade
- labour mobility and education.

In addition, PRES can provide DFAT with access to expertise in cross-cutting areas in the context of development, including:

- social protection
- GEDSI
- MEL
- climate change, disaster management and impact on economics
- political economy
- child protection, risk and safeguarding.

While all the disciplines and cross-cutting issues remain relevant across the Pacific region, consultations raised question about whether PRES' continuing focus should change. There were mixed views from those consulted, with some indicating that the relevance of, and demand for, PRES services mean it should be extended more broadly across OTP. Some indicated that PRES' primary focus should remain on economic support and/or narrowed to allow specialist focus on areas such as public financial management, whereas others thought the establishment of the Australia-Pacific Partnerships for Aviation program might necessitate or allow a wider focus. If the PRES focus is on economic support, as its core area of capability, it should be tested to determine whether broader disciplines (such as education) or cross-cutting areas (such as MEL) are better covered by other programs.

Recommendation 3 (Next phase / Strategic) Any future design should consider continued alignment of PRES' scope with DFAT's strategic priorities and contextual needs. Any future design should re-name the program to reflect its new operating context.

KRQ4. TO WHAT EXTENT DID PRES PROMOTE GEDSI OUTCOMES?



To what extent did PRES promote GEDSI outcomes? PRES has made notable progress in promoting GEDSI outcomes. Despite new GEDSI IOs only being integrated into Performance Assessment Framework (PAF) and program logic post July 2024, there is already evidence of strengthened identification of GEDSI dimensions in TNs / ASOs and increased gender, disability and diversity sensitivity in PRES activities.

4.1 Gender equality results

Consultations reveal that PRES initially struggled with GEDSI performance but that this has improved over time. Initially, the primary focus of the first GEDSI adviser was on supporting the Fiscal and Budget Support Program, resulting in individual TNs determining the integration of GEDSI. However, in late 2023 and early 2024, significant effort was made to enhance the program's GEDSI components, including the appointment of a new GEDSI adviser and the development of a GEDSI strategy. This resulted in two new GEDSI IOs being added to the PAF in 2023-2024 Quarter 4 and have been reported against in the 2024 Annual report and subsequent quarterly reports, all of which have found that both IOs are on track. The rating for gender equality has also improved from '3' in 2023 to '4' in 2024, according to the 2024 Annual IMR. The IOs were subsequently added to the new MEL framework and program logic in April 2025.

Although PRES is demonstrating significant effort toward improvement, success hinges on consistent support and engagement from all sections and DFAT staff. Consultations suggest that there are differences in how GEDSI considerations are applied across various sections and identified potential to strengthen the consistent application of GEDSI principles and practices.

The evaluation team has evaluated PRES current performance in terms of GEDSI against the two GEDSI IOs. These are:

- **GEDSI IO1:** TN identification of GEDSI dimensions is improved.
- **GEDSI IO2:** PRES activities are gender sensitive and/or disability inclusive.

Data indicates that PRES has been successful on GEDSI IO1 and making progress towards GEDSI IO2.

Quarterly reviews found that PRES reviewed seven out of nine (78%) new TNs in 2024-2025 Quarter 2, and 23 out of 30 (77%) of new TNs in 2024-2025 Quarter 1. The 2024-2025 Quarter 1 review also notes that suggestions for improved consideration of GEDSI dimensions were generally accepted. In addition, of 11 completed TN assessments, eight were assessed as assisting with GEDSI. However, in many instances, the GEDSI adviser is completing the GEDSI components of the TNs as opposed to DFAT itself. It was also found that support and engagement for GEDSI varies across sections and DFAT staff. This is consistent with the January PRES value-for-money assessment, which notes that 'there has been an increase over time in TNs targeting, or including components that target, GEDSI and GEDSI-related inequities, noting these improvements are largely because the program managing contractor drafts the TN with input from the GEDSI Adviser.'

PRES is also providing GEDSI technical advice to advisers. For example, in 2024-2025 Quarter 1, there were technical briefings of seven aviation advisers, including written advice to one. The GEDSI adviser

provided feedback on outputs, workplans and reports to Governance for Growth, technical advice in support of aid management, and work with a short-term adviser to draft a summary of the Australia-Vanuatu Development Partnership Plan. In addition, in 2024-2025 Quarter 2, GEDSI advice was provided to a consultant to integrate GEDSI considerations into two deliverables, and the GEDSI adviser worked to undertake a gender analysis of the Pacific one-stop shop concept.

Feedback from consultations indicate that PRES is making an effort to promote gender representation among advisers. Findings from the 2024 Annual Report are that 104 advisers were male (66%) and 58 were female (34%) during 2023-2024, which is approximately the same proportion as 2022-2023. The most recent quarterly report (Oct-Dec 2024) found 57% of advisers were male and 43% were female, for PRES TNs and ASOs. However, the figures are taken from advisers listed on TNs / ASOs and the same adviser may work on more than one TN. It was noted during consultations that achieving gender representation in highly niche and technical specialist areas can be challenging when the pool of qualified advisers is limited. In these specialised areas, finding advisers, regardless of gender, can be challenging due to the scarcity of experts. However, this may be further amplified by potential bias in adviser selection, with possible DFAT preference for previously engaged advisers.

PRES is not currently collecting or analysing pay equity among advisers in a systematic way.

Recommendation 4.1 (Short term / Operational) To ensure equitable compensation practices, it is recommended that PRES undertake a GEDSI analysis to examine pay equity among advisers.

For knowledge management and learning, PRES completed and submitted a first draft of a pilot knowledge product on gender and trade in the Pacific. An opportunity was also identified to provide support for the PACER Plus Implementation Unit GEDSI Strategy implementation to be explored further in 2025. There is also significant opportunity to learn from TNs. Concern has also been raised about the feedback loop for GEDSI and other PRES advice on deliverables, which can make it difficult to measure impact. Consistent with findings on EOIO2 more broadly, there is room for further clarification about DFAT's GEDSI knowledge management and learning needs.

There are also challenges in PRES' ability to work with the DFAT Gender Equality Disability and Social Inclusion Branch and PEB to identify discrete opportunities for GEDSI work. This is because, like with the barriers to the provision of strategic advice, there are intrinsic factors that hinder PRES' ability to identify opportunities, including 1) the GEDSI adviser is not embedded in DFAT and so has limited oversight of activities and information; and 2) there is a lack of certainty around the specific GEDSI support that DFAT needs from PRES. To date, the GEDSI adviser has also not been included in governance meetings (e.g. PAG or Working Groups meeting), which further limits visibility of strategic entry points to identify opportunities for GEDSI work. However, PRES notes progress is being made on this outside the scope of this evaluation, with the GEDSI adviser attending the PAG and Working Group meetings and Section meetings in 2025.

Recommendation 4.2 (Short term / Operational) To increase visibility of strategic entry points for GEDSI work, the PRES GEDSI adviser should be included in PRES governance meetings.

4.2 Disability inclusion results

Disability inclusion remains challenging for PRES, primarily due to fewer entry points, though effort is being made. This effort includes consideration of entry points to achieve disability inclusion in TNs and inclusion of disability collection data in the TN template.

An example of this increased effort is PRES' support for the Tonga Agriculture Sector Plan, which identified entry points to address GEDSI, including disability; conducted a standalone GEDSI analysis (including disability); and provided advice to the lead author on multiple occasions. As a result, the plan explicitly identifies and seeks to address the needs of people with disabilities, as compared with the first draft of the plan, which was silent on disability.

The GEDSI adviser also provided Nauru Rescue and Fire Fighting Services support, which resulted in more disability considerations, including consideration of emergency response for people with a disability and those with limited mobility. PRES has also advised on the Kiribati Airport Master Plan terms of reference, specifically regarding accessibility for people with disabilities (physical access, signage, assistance services, security, safety, information, and emergency procedures).

The 2024 Annual IMR notes:

'disability is not a principal objective of this investment, and there are limitations on how much PRES can influence disability inclusive outcomes. However, during the reporting period there has been an uptick of effort to integrate disability inclusion across activities, and there is adequate evidence that PRES has incorporated disability engagement and equity in program implementation.'

The report found that PRES performed 'unsatisfactory' for Quarter 1 ('active involvement of people with disabilities and/or organisations of persons with disabilities in planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation') and 'satisfactory' for Quarter 2 ('does this investment identify and address barriers to inclusion, provide opportunities for participation, and enable people with disabilities to benefit equally from the investment'). The 2024 Annual IMR rated PRES at '1' for disability inclusion in 2023, improving PRES to '3' for 2024 Quarter 1 (and N/A for 2024 Quarter 2).

The 2024-2025 Quarter 2 report also noted that no opportunities to engage with disabled persons organisations were identified and identified as a priority for the following quarter an expansion of a TA panel of individuals and organisations, including of Pacific Islanders and people living with a disability.

In the context of PRES' provision of specialist technical advisers, its primary role in disability inclusion is centred on increasing the representation of people with disabilities within the adviser pool and identifying opportunities to integrate disability inclusion into TNs. This means there is limited opportunity for PRES to engage with disabled persons organisations, which is more likely to occur at the adviser and TN level.

4.3 Adviser diversity results (including Pacific Islander adviser diversity)

Considerable effort has been made by PRES to promote diversity in advisers, despite challenges given the nature of the specialised technical advice provided. This includes conscious effort to increase the number / proportion of Pacific Islander advisers proposed to DFAT and inclusion of whether advisers identify as Pacific Islander / First Nations in data collection in the TN template. PRES includes Pacific Islander / First Nations candidates in lists of potential advisers provided to DFAT, where possible;

however, final determination rests with DFAT, where a preference for established consultant relationships over the engagement of new Pacific Islander consultants may exist.

In the 2024-2025 Quarter 1 report, out of approximately 101 advisers on active TNs (noting many advisers work on more than one tasking note), approximately 21 were Pacific Islander. Nine Pacific Islander advisers were recruited (six females, three males) in the quarter. In the 2024-2025 Quarter 2 report, out of approximately 77 advisers listed on TNs, 11 were Pacific Islander and two Pacific Islander advisers were recruited (female).

In 2023, PRES engaged Sustineo, who contracted numerous locally engaged staff in key Pacific Island countries to support data collection. In the past 12 months, PRES has also engaged a firm operated by three ni-Vanuatu women to undertake two TNs and has engaged at least 15 other Pacific Islanders in various capacities (in addition to those engaged via Sustineo), such as leading TNs to being engaged via subcontractors.

The first two quarterly reports for 2024-2025 indicate there were no Australian First Nations advisers working or recruited in either quarter. However, Gunggandji Aerospace, a wholly Indigenous-owned aviation company, has been engaged. The OTP's Indigenous Engagement Plan outlines a clear commitment to fostering deeper connections between First Nations and Pacific Islander people, and to embedding First Nations perspectives within OTP's strategic work. PRES has increased Indigenous engagement, including engaging Gunggandji Aerospace to undertake aviation work and engaging InTravel, an Indigenous company, as PRES' travel provider. Further consideration is needed on how to best integrate First Nations' voices and expertise into PRES work.

Despite much PRES support being Canberra-based, specific TNs or deliverables in Pacific Island countries should prioritise expertise from those countries for contextual relevance and local capacity building. Interviewees emphasised the necessity of Pacific representation but also recognised the existence of capacity constraints and that not all TN activities lend themselves easily to engaging Pacific advisers due to location of support provided or area of specific expertise. It was considered that investment could be made in building a broader Pacific Islander advisory pool by building local capacity. However, there may be other DFAT programs or projects better suited to building Pacific Island capacity.

Recommendation 4.3 (Next phase / Strategic) In any future program, opportunities for and suitability of engaging Pacific Islander expertise for relevant TNs / deliverables should continue to be explored, acknowledging PRES' existing and ongoing efforts to achieve this, and that much of PRES' work is Canberra-based.

KRQ5. DID THE PROGRAM OPERATIONALISE AN EFFECTIVE MEL SYSTEM THAT MET KEY STAKEHOLDER NEEDS?



PRES has adopted and delivered an effective MEL system, widely acknowledged as useful in assessing and improving the quality of work and strengthening PRES performance.

5.1 Appropriateness of monitoring and evaluation framework

The PRES M&E framework (version 2, November 2022) is concise and well-aligned to DFAT standards. It explains the PRES program logic and details a PAF, showing how progress against the PRES logic will be measured, by whom, and when. Simple and fit-for-purpose data collection methods are proposed for tracking progress against all levels of the PRES logic. Subsequently, the document was amended to better reflect GEDSI considerations.

In line with the DFAT standards, the M&E framework sets targets at all levels of the PRES logic. Reflecting the difficulty of defining what overall success looks like for flexible and responsive DFAT investments, these targets are less clear and appropriately pitched at higher levels of the logic, particularly the EOIOs (e.g. EOIO 1 – Instances of PRES contribution and level of significance are evident in majority of taskings assessed). Appropriately, the M&E framework flagged an intent to develop rubrics (qualitative scales) that would better define what success looks like for PRES, but no rubrics have been formally developed for PRES EOIOs.⁶ This reflects the broader challenges that PRES and DFAT have faced in clarifying PRES' overall level of ambition, especially in relation to EOIO 2 (see Section 1.1). On a more positive note, rubrics were subsequently developed for assessing PRES' adherence to DFAT's value-for-money criteria in a comprehensive PRES VfM framework. In April 2025, the PRES MEL framework was updated. As this evaluation's scope predates the revision, the assessment is based on the previous version.

Data collection has improved over time, especially in terms of the collection of consistent TN data. Data collection mostly consists of surveys and interviews to gather and triangulate participant feedback on PRES' ways of working, outputs and perceived effects of taskings.⁷

Case studies were also proposed in the M&E framework but have not been implemented as planned. The M&E adviser noted plans to adapt this tool to explore the overall significance of PRES' contribution (via multiple PRES TNs) in a few key thematic areas. This could provide an opportunity to capture not just the results to which PRES contributed, but also positive and negative contributing factors, including the extent to which key assumptions underpinning the PRES logic held true (e.g. DFAT staff time to engage and willingness to share information with PRES). These case studies could also explore, with the benefit of hindsight, the extent to which PRES' responsive, tasking-based modality was the optimal

⁶ Although the M&E adviser notes that the three-point progress scale was used and describes an intention for more detailed rubrics for evaluative pieces. The benefit of using rubrics regularly, rather than at key points, is to assess and capture change over time.

⁷ The M&E adviser has done a good job of repeatedly following up with DFAT staff, where required, to gather this data. Notably, this feedback is currently limited to DFAT staff rather than partner government counterparts. Interviewees reported that there are very few TNs for which it would be relevant to also seek feedback from counterparts in partner governments. It was not possible for the review team to verify this.

modality for supporting DFAT's agenda in each thematic area. This would be valuable learning for any PRES successor.

Recommendation 5.1 (Short term / Operational) PRES to conduct a small number of case studies exploring: the collective influence of multiple TNs in key thematic areas, with reference to EOIO1 and EOIO2; the factors influencing PRES effectiveness; and the appropriateness of PRES' responsive, tasking-based modality for optimising its thematic contribution.

5.2 Use of performance information for management and learning

DFAT interviewees consistently reported satisfaction with the credibility and usefulness of PRES performance reporting for their contractual oversight of PRES overall and of individual TNs. Use of PRES M&E data is evident in DFAT IMRs – including a greater focus on outcome-level data in the IMR for 2023, compared to 2022.

There is a range of evidence that PRES is using the PAF as a tool for planning and delivery management. This is mostly about operational tracking of key management commitments, but also includes a degree of more strategic learning and reflection about overall issues and challenges. Review and Reflection meetings are conducted internally, and staff report that this enables frank exploration of strategic challenges (e.g. notes from the March 2024 meeting explore institutional challenges with supporting DFAT on strategy and policy development). While DFAT is not present in these meetings, PRES staff report that key issues are followed up with DFAT where required. In other instances, remedial actions can be taken forward by PRES more independently. As a recent example, PRES has made several changes to better plan and monitor less visible knowledge sharing and learning that is occurring within individual taskings (as opposed to formal program-level learning events, such as seminars).

PRES produces both annual and quarterly reports. These are logically structured and informed by DFAT standards. However, the evaluation team's review of documents found that improvement can be made. The content of these reports is very similar, whereas a more differentiated approach to reporting may be more efficient and useful. Quarterly reports could be shorter and reframed as operational updates (e.g. the DFAT requested detailed annex of PAF evidence is probably not required every quarter). Annual reports could be more strategically pitched, with more in-depth contextual analysis (including about institutional changes in PEB and OTP) and exploration of strategic challenges (many of which appear to be discussed in the Review and Reflection meetings). For both reports, a better rating scale is needed for assessing progress. The scale should provide clearer definitions of each standard / rating; and include different criteria for assessing implementation progress against work plans versus progress against outcomes. It could be more aligned with DFAT's PAF or IMR rating scales.

PRES conducts TN assessments, which contribute primarily to internal PRES learning and identifying opportunities for improvement. Feedback from TN assessments is synthesised and fed back to PRES management through PRES Core Team meetings etc. Key issues also feed into quarterly reports; for example, in the early stages of PRES, several TNAs revealed that tasks and deliverables needed to be more clearly specified in TNs to ensure shared understanding of expectations, as a result there were changes to the TN template and the TN development and approval process.

Recommendation 5.2 (Next Phase / Operational) In any future program, PRES and DFAT should revise reporting templates and timeframes so that quarterly reports provide concise operational updates and annual reports provide more in-depth exploration of strategic issues. The rating scales used in both reports should also be more closely aligned to DFAT PAF or IMR rating scales.

KRQ6. WHAT ARE THE OPPORTUNITIES TO ENHANCE THE SUSTAINABILITY OF PRES RESULTS?



PRES enhances and sustains DFAT's capability through the provision of technical expertise on Pacific economic development. Should a future program be supported, there is an opportunity to develop a sustainability strategy that continues to embed lasting benefits beyond the program's immediate timeframe.

The inherent provision of specialist technical capability by PRES necessitates a distinct approach to sustainability, unlike that of traditional development investments. This is particularly in terms of the viability of internal skills development, given the DFAT organisational context which involves regular staff rotation and the breadth of technical specialists needed in DFAT work.

PRES offers a unique form of sustainability. By providing technical specialists, it empowers DFAT to more effectively and efficiently complete activities that may not be able to be completed in-house and increases the capacity of internal DFAT staff to focus on core work. Effectively, it sustains DFAT's capability under its current operating model.

The 2023 IMR noted that 'PRES does not have a documented sustainability strategy which would ensure high-quality, targeted services and products will have lasting benefits to DFAT staff, with dissemination and knowledge translation'. This report also highlighted that EOPO 2 is 'most closely aligned to a sustainability agenda for this investment. PRES holds a significant amount of corporate knowledge and technical reports across a range of economic sectors and countries, efforts. Significant efforts have been made to improve performance in this area'.

As a program, continued demand and relevance suggests an ongoing need for PRES. Interviewees also indicated a view that PRES is not eroding DFAT capability, as most of the work is specialist technical expertise that currently is not available in-house and is unlikely to be in the future.

The March 2024 Review and Reflection meeting noted that, as PRES is largely a technical advisory facility, 'addressing the question of sustainability needs a different approach to 'traditional' development investments. Supporting knowledge sharing and learning across PEB (and potentially other areas) from work undertaken through [TNs] is one way of ensuring that benefits endure beyond the end of investment'.

The evidence suggests the need for a sustainability strategy that is effectively aligned with PRES context and EOIOs.

In the absence of a sustainability strategy, the evaluation team considered sustainability against PRES' two end-of-investment outcomes. EOPO2 is most compatible with sustainability. The use of external contractors to provide highly specialist technical advice creates an inherent challenge for long-term sustainability (in terms of building DFAT internal capacity) as many of the skills are not readily transferable to generalist staff. While significant effort has been made to retain knowledge through efforts to achieve EOIO2 (e.g. the development of an IMS), there are challenges associated with sharing and utilising that knowledge. Clarity on the scope of EOIO2 would assist in the evaluation of PRES sustainability. Further information on achieving EOIO2 can be found in Section 1.2.

Also at the TN level, it is unclear how sustainability is being considered or informing the scoping phase. In developing a sustainability strategy for any future design, attention could be given to how TNs may be used to enhance the sustainability of PRES results.

Linkages are also a key avenue for sustainability as they foster collaboration and sharing of knowledge. However, enhancing linkages across PEB is increasingly challenging for PRES, which faces various levels of buy-in with different sections and information limitations, which make it difficult to synthesise findings to enhance linkages across PEB and/or with other programs (see Section 2.2).

A further challenge to sustainability is related to 'key person' risk. PRES' success is significantly attributed to the PRES team's extensive experience, networks and the strong collaborative relationships established between the PRES team and DFAT. This means that critical knowledge, skills and relationships are dependent on current individuals within PRES. Where DFAT relies heavily on existing individuals, if those people become unavailable, it could disrupt successful operations. A sustainability strategy should consider the impact of key PRES personnel.

Sustainability of the pool of technical experts is another critical consideration. The need for very specific and niche technical expertise means the pool of available experts can be limited. This scarcity poses a significant challenge to the long-term viability of PRES and knowledge transfer. Consequently, a strategic approach is required to bolster the availability of expertise, particularly Pacific expertise where relevant. While much PRES-supported work is based in Canberra, a specific TN or deliverable within a Pacific Island country should ideally prioritise the engagement of expertise from that country to ensure contextual relevance and build local capacity. This necessitates a focused effort on localisation and the use of Pacific experts (see Section 4.3).

In addition to sustainability of PRES itself, the program also contributes to the sustainability of downstream activities and programs. Consultation findings and documentation indicate that many key areas of work and programming would not have been delivered without PRES. For example, PRES' extensive support of the PDFF (and case studies in Sections KRQ1).

Recommendation 6 (Next phase / Strategic) In any future program, DFAT and PRES should develop a written sustainability strategy to clearly capture ongoing sustainability. In developing a sustainability strategy, factors that should be considered included how TNs can be used to enhance sustainability, enhancing linkages, mitigating key person risk, and increasing the pool of expertise (particularly Pacific Islands expertise)

APPENDIX A EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

EVALUATION PLAN: THE PACIFIC RECOVERY ECONOMIC SUPPORT (PRES) EVALUATION REPORT

Prepared for DFAT

20 January 2025



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1. INTRODUCTION

Overview of PRES

The Pacific Recovery Economic Support (PRES) Program aims to provide technical advisory services to DFAT's Pacific Economic and Trade Branch (PEB) within the Office of the Pacific (OTP). With a total budget of \$16.4 million and an additional \$4 million for specific service orders, it focuses on economic analysis, policy development, program implementation, and performance monitoring. PRES commenced in November 2021 and is set to conclude 31 December 2025. DFAT plans to evaluate the program's performance and design a follow-up initiative, PRES 2, based on the evaluation outcomes.

PRES was designed to help the Pacific region recover from the economic impacts of COVID-19 by improving DFAT's programming and performance in economic recovery and growth. Delivered by Adam Smith International, the program provides advisory services in areas such as fiscal governance, private sector development, trade, labour mobility, and thematic expertise, including gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI) and climate resilience. PRES operates with a Core Team integrated into PEB, offering logistical support, quality assurance, and a hub for coordinating advisory needs.

The program delivers a range of activities, including program-level evaluations, technical advisory support for Pacific aviation and budget activities, and thematic advice on banking and trade. PRES supports DFAT's Pacific desks, posts, and Pacific Island Countries by maintaining a knowledge repository, facilitating information-sharing events, and offering logistical and performance management support for advisers.

PRES aims to achieve two End of Program Outcomes (EOPOs). EOPO 1 focuses on enabling DFAT staff to use PRES technical advice and services to enhance evidence-based policy, strategy, and investment management. EOPO 2 aims to improve knowledge management and learning within PEB. Intermediate outcomes include meeting DFAT staff needs, ensuring familiarity with PRES products, and encouraging engagement with information-sharing processes and tools.

A PRES Gender Strategy was approved in mid-2024, with a focus on mainstreaming GEDSI into all PRES-supported activities. End-of-investment outcomes include improved identification of GEDSI dimensions in tasking notes and service orders, as well as increasing the gender sensitivity and disability inclusiveness of PRES activities. This strategy aligns with the program's broader goals of inclusive and sustainable economic recovery.

Overview of this document

This document presents a plan for evaluating PRES and initial thinking on the plan for designing its successor ('PRES 2'), pending DFAT decisions about whether to commence the design phase. It:

- Summarises the proposed **scope** – framed by a set of purposes, primary audiences, and guiding questions (Section 2).
- Proposes a **methodology**, including guiding principles and the approach to data collection, sampling, analysis, sense-making, and reporting, including ethical issues and limitations (Section 3).
- Maps out the proposed **process** for this assignment, including phasing, responsibilities and coordination, and key risks (Section 4).

The assignment work plan, data collection plan, draft data collection tools and sources are attached as appendices.

2. SCOPE

Purpose and Audience

The evaluation phase serves three main purposes:

- Ensure **accountability** by independently assessing PRES performance to inform the DFAT Final Investment Monitoring Report (FIMR).
- Support **program improvement** within the current phase, by identifying opportunities to improve implementation of PRES in its final year.
- Inform the **design** of PRES 2, by identifying lessons learned from the current phase and related strategic issues or questions for further consideration in the design phase.

The primary audience is the Economic Policy and Partnerships Section within the Pacific Economic and Trade Branch (PEB). Secondary audiences are DFAT staff in the Office of the Pacific and Pacific Posts who have used and/or intend to use PRES services.

Guiding Questions

Data collection and analysis will be guided by the following key evaluation questions, framed by DFAT's Final Investment Monitoring Report (FIMR) quality criteria. These are mostly summative, apart from one formative sub-question per criterion, asking about opportunities for improvement, to inform the PRES 2 design. High priority evaluation questions are marked with asterisks, given their importance to the design.⁸

Indicative design questions and sub-questions are also provided below, framed by DFAT's investment design document requirements. These will be confirmed, revised and further detailed in February as an update to this plan, informed by evaluation findings and recommendations and DFAT's decision about whether and when to commence the design.

Evaluation questions

*1. How effective is PRES and what are the opportunities to improve effectiveness?**

- a. Is PRES on track to achieve its expected outcomes?
- b. To what extent has PRES supported strategic policy and program coherence across its scope of work?
- c. In what ways has PRES enhanced investment design and performance across its scope of work including in the areas of gender equality and disability inclusion?
- d. To what extent has PRES contributed to knowledge management and learning within the Pacific Economic and Trade Branch?
- e. To what extent has PRES responded to and met PEB/DFAT needs?
- f. In its next phase, how could PRES effectiveness be improved? [links to Design Question 2]

*2. How efficient is PRES and what are the opportunities to improve efficiency?**

- a. How efficiently does PRES deliver technical analysis and expertise?

⁸ Questions are informed by the terms of reference for this assignment, revised to improve clarity, feasibility, and coherence. Key changes include amending KEQ1 sub-questions to more comprehensively align to the existing PRES logic; focusing KEQ2 on efficiency rather than value for money, which is much broader and overlaps with other KEQs; adding one formative (forward-looking) sub-question consistently for all KEQs; and adding a sub-question under KEQ5 focused on factors influencing program sustainability.

- b. To what extent has PRES successfully operated as an integrated program within PEB in accordance with the PRES partnership and One-Team approach?
- c. To what extent did PRES governance arrangements, including the Program Advisory Group, function as intended and support program effectiveness?
- d. To what extent has PRES optimally allocated resources between its core team, embedded advisers, and short-term technical assistance?
- e. To what extent does the PRES contracting arrangements promote value for money?
- f. In its next phase, how could PRES delivery approach and implementation arrangements better support program efficiency? [links to Design Question 2]

3. How relevant is PRES and what are the opportunities to improve relevance?

- a. How relevant and appropriate has PRES been to the operating context, DFAT staff needs, and DFAT policy priorities?
- b. Looking forward, how is the operating context, DFAT staff needs and DFAT policy priorities evolving?
- c. In its next phase, how could PRES relevance be improved? [links to Design Question 1]

4. To what extent did PRES promote GEDSI outcomes?

- a. To what extent did PRES deliver results on gender equality, including outcomes identified in the PRES GEDSI strategy?
- b. How well has PRES addressed disability inclusion in program approaches and activities?
- c. To what extent has PRES increased adviser diversity over its implementation, including Pacific Islanders?
- d. In its next phase, how could PRES better promote GEDSI? [links to Design Question 2]

5. Did the program operationalise an effective MEL system that met key stakeholder needs?

- a. How appropriate is the PRES Performance Assessment Framework (PAF) for guiding ongoing programming?
- b. To what extent did PRES use performance information to support management decision making and learning?
- c. How well did the performance reporting, including progress towards outcomes, meet stakeholder needs?
- d. In its next phase, how could PRES MEL arrangements be improved? [links to Design Question 3]

6. What are the opportunities to enhance the sustainability of PRES results?

- a. What factors have supported or hindered the sustainability of PRES results?
- b. In its next phase, how can PRES promote more sustainable results? [links to Design Question 2]

Design questions

1. What is the operating context, evidence base, and strategic rationale for PRES 2?

This includes the regional and sector development context, priority development issues, political economy analysis, and lessons learned. It also includes the positioning of PRES 2 within DFAT's Development Policy and relevant regional, bilateral and/or thematic strategies, and its expected contribution to GEDSI, climate change action, and locally led development / localisation.

Indicative questions:

- a. What are the key Pacific economic issues, sectors and thus skills that may be required by DFAT now and into the future to support inclusive economic growth and economic reform in the

Pacific? (prompt for PFM, aviation, market development, finance, etc. specific countries). What is the gap the program could seek to support?

- b. How could PRES 2 fit with existing and new regional programs? (e.g. budget support, aviation etc)?
- c. What DFAT policies or procedures could underpin the need for a Pacific Economic Facility? Is there any alignment with partner government policies?

2. What could PRES 2 aim to achieve, and how would it be implemented?

This includes the PRES 2 program logic, delivery approach, and measures for promoting gender equality, climate change action, disability inclusion, and other priority cross-cutting issues. It also includes governance and management arrangements, early activities, policy dialogue approach, public diplomacy opportunities, and sustainability strategies.

Indicative questions:

- a. Which sections of OTP may need the most support and why?
- b. Would OTP be the only division requiring support?
- c. What would the benefit of an in-house program be, versus externally contracted panel of resources?
- d. What kinds of deliverables may need to be supported?
- e. How could the program be more sustainable and strengthen DFAT skills in an ongoing way?
- f. To what extent could the program support GEDSI, climate change and other cross-cutting themes rather than seek this support through other desks? (i.e. SURGE).

3. How could monitoring, evaluation and learning work in PRES 2?

This includes an outline of the proposed MEL approach, questions, indicators, methods etc. as well as arrangements for independent evaluation and contestability.

Indicative questions:

- a. How could program MEL strengthen OTP's understanding of its needs?

4. What are the main risks facing PRES 2 and how will they be managed?

This includes key risks, safeguards issues, and mitigation strategies.

Boundaries

The following points clarify the scope of the evaluation:

- It covers the period November 2021 to December 2024.
- It focuses on the effectiveness of PRES as a mechanism, including the relevance, quality, and usefulness of its services; as distinct from the effectiveness of the DFAT investments to which PRES contributes e.g. Aviation program, Fiscal budget support package (some of which have been or will be evaluated separately).
- It is not a contractual performance assessment of the PRES managing contractor.

3. METHODOLOGY

A lean methodology is proposed, informed by based on the nature of the evaluand (predominantly a delivery mechanism) and the short timeframe for the evaluation. All questions will be answered via a mix of document review and semi-structured Interviews with key informants. Interviewees will be purposively sampled to access a diverse range of perspectives. After analysing the data, the team will lead a workshop with DFAT stakeholders to validate preliminary findings and explore design issues. More information on the methodology is provided below.

Principles

The evaluation will be guided by the following principles:

- **Focus on intended uses** – The evaluation questions respond to the purposes and audiences in Section 2.1. Opportunities will be taken throughout the evaluation process to foster ownership and learning by primary audiences, including via regular check-ins and a sense-making workshop toward the end of the evaluation phase.
- **Work collaboratively** – The evaluation team will work collaboratively with DFAT and the PRES team throughout the process (within any commercial-in-confidence constraints) to draw on their tacit knowledge, build ownership, identify any required changes to this evaluation plan, and manage expectations.
- **Optimise efficiency** – For some respondents, the team will cover evaluation data collection and design consultation in one interview. The evaluation sense-making workshop will also provide an opportunity for early deliberation and feedback on key design issues.
- **Take an evidence-informed approach** – In line with DFAT's design, monitoring and evaluation standards, the evaluation will be based on a transparent and systematic data collection and analysis process. While respecting privacy and confidentiality, sources for findings will be clearly referenced in the report.

Data collection and sampling

Semi-structured interviews

Interviews will be guided by broad questions and prompts (see **Appendix 2**), with flexibility to respond to other relevant issues raised by respondents. Approximately 18 interviews will be conducted with

- DFAT managers of PRES (Economic Policy and Partnerships Section), including staff involved in PRES design and inception.
- DFAT users of PRES, focusing on Office of the Pacific and relevant Pacific Posts.
- PRES Core Team
- PRES i) advisers embedded in PEB and ii) consultants engaged by PRES.

Across these stakeholder groups, respondents will be selected for maximum variation in terms of geography, thematic issues, scale (cost and duration) of PRES' investment, and level of familiarity with PRES and its services.

A draft list of interviewees is shown at **Appendix 3**.

Document review

A range of program documents will be reviewed, including strategies, work plans, progress reports, knowledge/communications products etc. **Appendix 3** provides an indicative list of key document types to be reviewed. The team may also request assistance from the PRES team to analyse and report available financial, activity, or M&E data from PRES database/s.

Appendix 4 shows which data sources will be the focus of data collection for each key evaluation question.

Data analysis and sense-making

The team will conduct thematic analysis to organise collected data against the evaluation sub-questions, as well as other key issues that emerge during data collection. PRES financial, activity, and results data will also be quantitatively analysed to summarise the scale and coverage (geographic, thematic, etc.) of PRES funding, delivery, and achievements.

A **stakeholder workshop** toward the end of the evaluation phase (Feb/Mar) will provide an opportunity to test preliminary findings and recommendations with primary audiences and discuss related design issues. In addition, regular check-ins between the evaluation team and DFAT will be used for iterative sense-making throughout the process.

Reporting and quality assurance

The primary report will be the **PRES evaluation report** (15-20 pages plus annexes), adherent to DFAT DM&E Standard 10 and DFAT accessibility requirements. DFAT intends to publish this report online with its management response.

This will be subject to internal quality assurance by Clear Horizon and will benefit from review and feedback from primary audiences.

Ethics and limitations

This evaluation will be conducted in accordance with the best practice guidelines set out in Clear Horizon's Ethics Policy and Guidelines, the Australasian Evaluation Society's (AES) 'Guidelines for the Ethical Conduct of Evaluations', and DFAT's Ethical Research and Evaluation guidance note.

- **Informed consent** will be obtained from all respondents, ensuring that they understand the purpose, procedures, risks and benefits of participation in the evaluation. Participants will have the right to refuse or withdraw from participation at any time without consequence.
- **Confidentiality and anonymity** will be safeguarded by ensuring that data is anonymised when reporting findings to prevent the identification of individuals or groups without their consent.

Key limitations affecting the evaluation are that:

- The absence of a design document creates evaluability challenges, particularly when attempting to judge the extent to which program achievements reflected DFAT's original intent.
- The evaluation phase is short and runs over the Dec/Jan period when some staff will have limited availability to participate in interviews.
- The evaluation will not benefit from interviews with end users or counterparts of PRES services outside DFAT e.g. partner government officials, although such feedback may be accessed via review of PRES progress reports and PRES-commissioned evaluations.

4. PROCESS

Phasing

A phased approach to the evaluation and design is planned, noting that DFAT decisions about the design phase are still pending:



- Phase 1 (Dec) is the development of an evaluation plan (this document).
- Phase 2 (Jan-Mar) is evaluation phase data collection, analysis, sense-making and reporting. This will be guided by the evaluation questions (**Section 2.2.1**), some of which ask about opportunities for improvement, to inform the design of PRES 2.
- Contingent on DFAT's decision to commence the design phase, Phase 3 (Feb) involves developing the design plan, including by adding design sub-questions (**Section 2.2.2**) and updating the list of design consultations (**Appendix 3**), informed by design issues identified during Phase 2, and remaining information gaps.
- Phase 4 (Mar-Jun) is design phase data collection, analysis, sense-making and reporting, guided by the design plan and resulting in a draft investment design document in June 2025.

A detailed **work plan** is shown at **Appendix 1**.

Responsibilities and coordination

The evaluation team will be led by co-led by Amanda Robbins and Gabrielle Stewart, with Dave Green as team member⁹. Dr Kristy Jones (Equity Economics) will provide technical support as needed across the evaluation and design, and Cassidy Tyler (Clear Horizon) and Jacqueline Brown (Equity Economics) will provide administrative support.

The team will work collaboratively across all phases of the evaluation and design process, guided by the following division of responsibilities:

Team member	Lead responsibilities
Amanda Robbins	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lead drafting of Investment Design Document• Lead coordination with DFAT• Contribute to data collection, analysis, and reporting (eval and design)
Gabrielle Stewart	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lead drafting of Evaluation Report• Lead drafting of design plan• Manage work plan implementation (see Appendix 1)• Contribute to data collection, analysis, and reporting (eval and design)
Dave Green	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lead drafting of evaluation plan• Lead Clear Horizon quality assurance• Contribute to data collection, analysis, and reporting (eval)

⁹ There will be a change from Dave Green to a new Clear Horizon team member in late February.

Team member	Lead responsibilities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribute to program logic and MEL development (design).

DFAT and PRES will provide an indicative list of DFAT and PRES interviewees, assist with arranging interviews with DFAT and PRES staff, provide the evaluation team with relevant background documents, and provide timely, filtered feedback on the evaluation report (within two weeks). In addition, DFAT will oversee the evaluation team, coordinate feedback on the investment design document (within two weeks), attend some design phase meetings, and manage internal design quality assurance and approval processes. DFAT will also facilitate appropriate engagement with senior management (Assistant Secretary, Pacific Economic and Trade Branch).

DFAT will meet with the evaluation team fortnightly to check-in on progress, provide early feedback on key issues, and discuss any required adaptations to the work plan. PRES may be invited to attend some or all these meetings.

Risks

Key risks and proposed management strategies are that:

- *Access to interviewees is limited during January due to staff leave.* The team will be as flexible as possible in its availability for interviews during this time, to accommodate different staff leave periods. DFAT will also send an initial email to planned interviewees as early as possible to flag the interview request and identify interviewee availability constraints.
- *DFAT is unable to indicate clear management responses to evaluation findings in time to inform the design process.* Regular check-ins with DFAT during this period will be used to highlight any pressing issues or questions about which the design team requires clear strategic direction by DFAT, informed by the evaluation.
- *Evaluation findings do not adequately reflect the perspectives of PRES 'end users' e.g. Pacific Island Country government counterparts.* This will be noted as a limitation in the evaluation report. Given the primary focus of the evaluation and design on the effectiveness and efficiency of PRES as a delivery mechanism (rather than the end results achieved by its services), this is not considered a major concern. In addition, end user perspectives may be accessed from PRES monitoring and evaluation finding.

APPENDIX A1: WORK PLAN

Task	DEC				JAN				FEB				MAR					APR (incl easter)				MAY				JUN				
Week commencing	9	16	23	30	6	13	20	27	3	10	17	24	3	10	17	24	31	7	14	21	28	5	12	19	26	2	9	16	23	30
Team Meetings	-	✓	-	-	-	✓	-	✓	-	✓	-	✓	-	✓	-	✓	-	✓	-	✓	-	✓	-	✓	-	✓	-	✓	-	✓
PHASE 1 DEVELOPMENT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
WORK PLAN & KICK OFF	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Summary evaluation and design work plan submitted	-	20	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Document familiarisation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DESKTOP REVIEW	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Conduct desk-based review of documents provided by DFAT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
PHASE 2 AND 3 EVALUATION AND DESIGN PREPARATION	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
CONSULTATIONS (Round 1)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Finalise consultation questions and consultation list	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Conduct online consultations	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DESIGN PLAN UPDATE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Revise design plan (including consultation list) and resubmit	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	25	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DFAT review and feedback on revised design plan	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
EVALUATION REPORTING	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Data analysis	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Drafting	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Workshop - prelim findings and design issues	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
First draft submission	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DFAT review and feedback	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Team revises	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Final submission	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	30	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Task	DEC				JAN				FEB				MAR				APR (incl easter)				MAY				JUN					
Week commencing	9	16	23	30	6	13	20	27	3	10	17	24	3	10	17	24	31	7	14	21	28	5	12	19	26	2	9	16	23	30
PHASE 4 DESIGN	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
CONSULTATIONS (Round 2)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Conduct online consultations	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
IDD DRAFTING	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Drafting of IDD	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Submit Draft	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		-	-	-	20	-	-	-	-	-	
DFAT reviews and provides feedback	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Team revises	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Submit Final Draft	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	20		

APPENDIX A2: DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

Note: These interview guides are draft only. They will be revised after key program documents are reviewed and will be tailored to each respondent based on their role and level of PRES knowledge/experience. Interviews will range from 45-90 minutes depending on respondent.

Interview Guides

Preamble

Hello, my name is _____ from [Equity Economics/ Clear Horizon].

We have been contracted by DFAT to carry out an evaluation of PRES. The evaluation is looking at strengths and weaknesses of PRES, in relation to key DFAT's investment-level quality criteria i.e. effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, GEDSI, MEL and sustainability.

The purpose of this interview is to explore your experiences with PRES. We are interested in hearing your perspectives, both positive and negative, including any areas for improvement, that could inform the design of PRES 2.

Participation is voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw from participating at any stage. I/We will record notes from your consultation. However, any information obtained in connection with this review that can identify you will remain confidential. Only members of the review team will have access to the data.

The information will be analysed with other responses and will be used to inform the evaluation findings, as well as the PRES 2 design. If necessary, we may request a second interview with you during the design phase to follow-up on key issues.

The interview will take around X minutes of your time.

- Do you have any questions before we begin?
- Are you willing to proceed with the interview?

Questions

1) DFAT managers of PRES 2) PRES staff /core team

- For how long have you been / were you involved with PRES and what is / was your role?

Effectiveness and sustainability

- How did the aims and scope of PRES change over time?
- Overall, how well do you think PRES has progressed against its current expected outcomes?
Prompts – informing DFAT policy and strategy; supporting and investment design and management; improving knowledge management and learning within PEB; other.
 - Where do you think progress has been most positive and why?
 - Where do you think progress has been most challenging and why?
- To what extent is it clear what benefits, supported by PRES, are expected to endure after it ends?

Prompts – program level (e.g. knowledge management systems) v task/activity level

- How have these expectations played out in reality?

Prompts – reasons for main achievements and challenges

- Given PRES achievements and challenges relating to effectiveness and sustainability, what changes do you think could be considered in the design of PRES 2?

Prompts – changes to logic (scope, ambition, specificity), implementation arrangements, resourcing, etc.

Efficiency

- Overall, how efficient was PRES' delivery approach and implementation arrangements? What do you see as its main strengths and weaknesses in this regard? Can you provide examples?

Prompts –

- *Flexibility and timeliness?*
- *Balance of resource allocation right between its core team, embedded advisers, and short-term technical assistance – adapting the technical modality to the need*
- *Operating as an integrated program within PEB – in line with PRES partnership and One-Team approach*
- *Governance arrangements, including the Program Advisory Group*
- *Contracting arrangements - tasking note process, basis of payments structure, other*

- Given these efficiency achievements and challenges, what changes do you think could be considered in the design of PRES 2?

Prompts – changes to delivery approach, management/governance arrangements, contract structure, resourcing, etc.

Relevance

- Overall, how well-aligned was PRES to DFAT staff needs, policy priorities and operating context? Did this change over time?

Prompts – relevance of thematic focus, suitability of mechanism to DFAT needs, balance between discrete/one-off and programmatic offerings, proactive v reactive approach, etc.

- Looking forward, how might DFAT's needs, policy priorities, and operating context continue to evolve?

- Given this, what changes do you think could be considered in the design of PRES 2?

Prompts – changes to logic, delivery approach, types of offerings, proactive v reactive approach, etc.

GEDSI

- What were PRES' main achievements and challenges in relation to promoting GEDSI?

Prompts –

- *GEDSI strategy – evidence base, clarity, feasibility,*
- *GEDSI management – Resource allocation, staffing diversity, integration in management systems, tasking process etc.*
- *GEDSI outcomes - key results / challenges?*

- What changes do you think could be considered in the design of PRES 2 to promote GEDSI?

Prompts – changes to logic, delivery approach, management arrangements, budget, etc.

MEL

- How well did the MEL system incl. PAF support program improvement and reporting?
Prompts:
 - *DFAT information needs – inform overall program oversight and IMR / ad hoc reporting; inform oversight of individual tasks/activities*
 - *PRES information needs – inform program management, task/activity management, progress reporting*
- What MEL-related changes do you think could be considered in the design of PRES 2?

3) DFAT clients/users of PRES and 4) PRES embedded advisers and STA

- What has been your role in relation to PRES-funded activities?

Effectiveness and sustainability

- How effective were the PRES-funded activities you have been involved in?
Prompts – key results, challenges
- More generally, how well do you think PRES has progressed against its current expected outcomes?
Prompts – informing DFAT policy and strategy; supporting and investment design and management; improving knowledge management and learning within PEB; other
- To what extent is it clear what benefits, supported by PRES, are expected to endure after it ends?
Prompts – program level (e.g. knowledge management systems) v task/activity level
 - How have these expectations played out in reality?
Prompts – reasons for main achievements and challenges
- Given PRES achievements and challenges relating to effectiveness and sustainability, what changes do you think could be considered in the design of PRES 2?
Prompts – changes to logic (scope, ambition, specificity), implementation arrangements, resourcing, etc.

Efficiency

- How efficient have you found PRES implementation arrangements? Can you provide examples?
Prompts –
 - *Tasking process*
 - *Recruitment and mobilisation process*
 - *Balance of resource allocation right between its core team, embedded advisers, and short-term technical assistance – adapting the technical modality to the need*
- Given these efficiency achievements and challenges, what changes do you think could be considered in the design of PRES 2?
Prompts – changes to delivery approach, management/governance arrangements, contract structure, resourcing, etc.

Relevance

- Overall, how well-aligned do you think PRES is to DFAT staff needs, policy priorities and operating context? Has this changed over time?

Prompts – relevance of thematic focus, suitability of mechanism to DFAT needs, balance between discrete/one-off and programmatic offerings, proactive v reactive approach, etc.

- Looking forward, how might DFAT's needs, policy priorities, and operating context continue to evolve?
- Given this, what changes do you think could be considered in the design of PRES 2?

Prompts – changes to logic, delivery approach, types of offerings, proactive v reactive approach, etc.

GEDSI

- What were PRES' main achievements and challenges in relation to promoting GEDSI?
Prompts –
 - Task/activity level – GEDSI analysis, considerations during scoping/tasking process
 - Program-level – GEDSI strategy, management outcomes [if aware]
- What changes do you think could be considered in the design of PRES 2 to promote GEDSI?
Prompts – changes to logic, delivery approach, management arrangements, budget, etc.

MEL

- How well did the MEL system inform reporting and improvement on the PRES-funded activities you were involved in?
- What MEL-related changes do you think could be considered in the design of PRES 2?

Interview Records

Interview

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Date:

Notes

[Provide interviewer comments in parentheses]:

-

Follow up actions (if any):

-

APPENDIX A3: DATA SOURCES

Below is an indicative list of interviewees and documents that will be the focus of data collection. This list will be updated throughout the evaluation and design process, particularly in February 2025 when the design plan is elaborated in more detail.

Interviewees

PRES Core Team

Team/Position	Name	Interview type
Director Asia Pacific, Adam Smith International	Warren Turner	Individual
Former Program Director, PRES	Nicholas Poletti	Individual
PRES Team Leader	Natalie Cooke	Group
Deputy Team Leader	Danielle Rossi	Group
Operations Manager	Angus Paterson	Group
PRES GEDSI Advisor	Abby McLeod	Individual
MEL Advisor	Kate Peacock	Individual

DFAT (PEB)

Team/Position	Name	Interview type
Assistant Secretary, PEB	Andrew Cumpston	Individual
EPS	Tamika Underwood	Group
EPS	Heather Randall	Group
EPS	Anna Szabo	Group
EPS	Claire Birks	Group
EPS	Joanna Pickles	Group
EPS	Jonathan Perotti	Group
EPS	Anisha Gupta	Group
Former DFAT PRES Program Manager	Angus Hinton	Individual
OTP Economics	Jonathan Pryke	Group
OTP Economics	Ro McCrossin	Group
OTP Economics	Anngalee Toth	Group
OTP Economics	Wilma Gilles	Group
EGS	Ben Power	Group
EGS	Andrew Abel	Group
EGS	Ria Bhagat	Group
EGS	Tash Payne	Group
Pacific Aviation Section (VNS)	Charlotte Cullen	Group
VNS	Jennifer Alexander	Group
VNS	Narelle Hallion	Group
VNS	Avi Baskar	Group
VNS	Mike Wight	Group

DFAT (Additional users of PRES / Broader OTP / Selection of PRES ASOs)

Team/Position	Name	Interview type
77209/12 - Pacific Recovery Economic Support Program (Vanuatu)	Vanessa Balmesen Tambeana (AidWorks Contract Manager, Program Manager, Governance for Growth)	Individual
77209/2 - Provision of Nutrition Sensitive Value Chain Advisory Services (Papua New Guinea)	Jessica Evans (AidWorks Contract Manager) Policy Officer, Goods and Government Procurement Section, Office of Global Trade Negotiations	Group
77209/11 Agriculture and Food Security Technical Advisory Services Order (Pacific)	Luke Simmons (AidWorks Contract Manager) Agriculture Sector Specialist, Climate Resilient Agriculture and Food Security Section	Group
77209/9 - Solomon Islands veterinary deployment (Solomon Islands)	Eleanor Percival (AidWorks Contract Manager), Senior Policy Officer, Climate Resilient Agriculture and Food Security Section	Group

PRES embedded advisers in PEB

Team/Position	Name	Interview type
M&E Adviser with EPS	David Kelly	Individual
Aviation Adviser with Pacific Aviation Section	Don Mortimore	Individual

Consultants engaged via PRES

Team/Position	Name	Interview type
Consultant / PDFF Advisory Panel Member	Bob Warner	Group
Consultant / PDFF Advisory Panel Member	Inge Stokkel	Group
Aviation Consultant	Sean McGee	Group
Aviation Consultant	Kell McGregor	Group
Consultant	Richard Braddock	Group
Consultant	Sven Callebaut	Group

Documents

The following types of documents will be provided by DFAT and PRES:

- PRES operations manual
- PRES strategies e.g. GEDSI
- PRES annual work plans and budgets
- PRES MEL Plan including program logic
- PRES risk framework
- PRES progress reports
- Documents relating to selected PRES service orders (to be agreed with evaluation team after review of PRES work plans and progress reports, guided by sampling criteria in Section 3.2) e.g. terms of reference, work plans, key outputs.
- Key outputs of MEL system e.g. analysis of survey data, reflection workshop agendas and minutes, evaluation products.
- DFAT Investment Monitoring Reports
- DFAT Partner Performance Assessments

APPENDIX A4: DATA COLLECTION MATRIX

The following table shows how the key evaluation questions will be answered, with reference to the data sources in Appendix 3.

Key evaluation questions	Interviews	Documents
<p><i>1. How effective is PRES and what are the opportunities to improve effectiveness?*</i></p> <p>g. Is PRES on track to achieve its expected outcomes?</p> <p>h. To what extent has PRES supported strategic policy and program coherence across its scope of work?</p> <p>i. In what ways has PRES enhanced investment design and performance across its scope of work including in the areas of gender equality and disability inclusion?</p> <p>j. To what extent has PRES contributed to knowledge management and learning within the Pacific Economic and Trade Branch?</p> <p>k. To what extent has PRES responded to and met PEB/DFAT needs?</p> <p>l. In its next phase, how could PRES effectiveness be improved? [links to Design Question 2]</p>	<p>PRES core team</p> <p>DFAT managers</p> <p>DFAT users – as relevant to SO</p> <p>PRES embedded advisers</p> <p>PRES consultants – as relevant</p>	<p>PRES MEL Plan including program logic</p> <p>PRES progress reports</p> <p>Key outputs of MEL system e.g. analysis of survey data, reflection workshop agendas and minutes, evaluation products.</p> <p>DFAT Investment Monitoring Reports</p> <p>DFAT Partner Performance Assessments</p>
<p><i>2. How efficient is PRES and what are the opportunities to improve efficiency?*</i></p> <p>a. How efficiently does PRES deliver technical analysis and expertise?</p> <p>b. To what extent has PRES successfully operated as an integrated program within PEB in accordance with the PRES partnership and One-Team approach?</p> <p>c. To what extent did PRES governance arrangements, including the Program Advisory Group, function as intended and support program effectiveness?</p> <p>d. To what extent has PRES optimally allocated resources between its core team, embedded advisers, and short-term technical assistance?</p> <p>e. To what extent does the PRES contracting arrangements promote value for money?</p> <p>f. In its next phase, how could PRES delivery approach and implementation arrangements better support program efficiency? [links to Design Question 2]</p>	<p>PRES core team</p> <p>DFAT managers</p>	<p>PRES operations manual</p> <p>PRES annual work plans and budgets</p> <p>PRES MEL Plan including program logic</p> <p>PRES risk framework</p> <p>PRES progress reports</p> <p>Documents relating to selected PRES service orders (to be agreed with evaluation team after review of PRES work plans and progress reports, guided by sampling criteria in Section 3.2) e.g. terms of reference, work plans, key outputs.</p> <p>DFAT Investment Monitoring Reports</p> <p>DFAT Partner Performance Assessments</p>
<p><i>3. How relevant is PRES and what are the opportunities to improve relevance?</i></p> <p>a. How relevant and appropriate has PRES been to the operating context, DFAT staff needs, and DFAT policy priorities?</p> <p>b. Looking forward, how is the operating context, DFAT staff needs and DFAT policy priorities evolving?</p> <p>c. In its next phase, how could PRES relevance be improved? [links to Design Question 1]</p>	<p>PRES core team</p> <p>DFAT managers</p> <p>DFAT users – as relevant</p> <p>PRES embedded advisers</p>	<p>PRES strategies e.g. GEDSI</p> <p>PRES progress reports</p> <p>DFAT Investment Monitoring Reports</p> <p>DFAT Partner Performance Assessments</p>
<p><i>4. To what extent did PRES promote GEDSI outcomes?</i></p> <p>a. To what extent did PRES deliver results on gender equality, including outcomes identified in the PRES GEDSI strategy?</p>	<p>PRES core team</p> <p>DFAT managers</p>	<p>PRES strategies e.g. GEDSI</p> <p>PRES annual work plans and budgets</p> <p>PRES MEL Plan including program logic</p> <p>PRES progress reports</p>

Key evaluation questions	Interviews	Documents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> b. How well has PRES addressed disability inclusion in program approaches and activities? c. To what extent has PRES increased adviser diversity over its implementation, including Pacific Islanders? d. In its next phase, how could PRES better promote GEDSI? [links to Design Question 2] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DFAT users – as relevant to SO PRES embedded advisers PRES consultants – as relevant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documents relating to selected PRES service orders (to be agreed with evaluation team after review of PRES work plans and progress reports, guided by sampling criteria in Section 3.2) e.g. terms of reference, work plans, key outputs. DFAT Investment Monitoring Reports DFAT Partner Performance Assessments
<p><i>5. Did the program operationalise an effective MEL system that met key stakeholder needs?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. How appropriate is the PRES Performance Assessment Framework for guiding ongoing programming? b. To what extent did PRES use performance information to support management decision making and learning? c. How well did the performance reporting, including progress towards outcomes, meet stakeholder needs? d. In its next phase, how could PRES MEL arrangements be improved? [links to Design Question 3] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PRES core team DFAT managers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PRES MEL Plan including program logic PRES progress reports DFAT Investment Monitoring Reports DFAT Partner Performance Assessments
<p><i>6. What are the opportunities to enhance the sustainability of PRES results?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. What factors have supported or hindered the sustainability of PRES results? b. In its next phase, how can PRES promote more sustainable results? [links to Design Question 2] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PRES core team DFAT managers DFAT users – as relevant to SO PRES embedded advisers PRES consultants – as relevant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PRES strategies e.g. GEDSI PRES progress reports Documents relating to selected PRES service orders (to be agreed with evaluation team after review of PRES work plans and progress reports, guided by sampling criteria in Section 3.2) e.g. terms of reference, work plans, key outputs. DFAT Investment Monitoring Reports DFAT Partner Performance Assessments

APPENDIX B: APRIL 2025 PROGRAM LOGIC

