

Hort Innovation Levy Payer Workshop Outcome

Market City, Perth, WA

Wednesday 3 February 2016

Background

Horticulture Innovation Australia (Hort Innovation) has held Levy Payer Workshops nationally to assist with the development of the company's inaugural Strategic Plan, setting the strategy to 2018. The purpose of the workshops was to consult with horticulture levy payers to gain their input in shaping the company's strategy and its implementation. The strategy is also underpinned strongly by Hort Innovation's constitution and the Deed of Agreement with the Commonwealth.

Presentations were delivered at each workshop regarding company operations, particularly in relation to levy investments (Pool 1) and the Strategic Co-investment Funding Pool (Pool 2). Feedback was received at each workshop and collated into a summary. All workshop summaries will contribute towards the compilation of the company's inaugural Strategic Plan.

The summary below outlines the feedback received from attendees at the Perth workshop.

Main discussion points

Hort Innovation in general

Discussion focused on Hort Innovation membership, and questions were raised around voting entitlements (at the Annual General Meeting) and how they are determined. The presenter acknowledged this feedback and the voting entitlements for members were explained.

Concern was raised over the lack of industry oversight of the marketing programs, in reference to the turf industry specifically. Turf industry attendees commented that there had been no activity except for a social media campaign and industry feels Hort Innovation has been dismissive of the concerns raised. This comment was noted by the presenter and an undertaking was made to ensure this feedback was provided to Hort Innovation.

Advisory mechanism

The limitation of two Industry Representative Body (IRB) board members on the Strategic Industry Advisory Panels – specifically in relation to turf – was raised as being too restrictive. It was recommended that flexibility between industries is preferred. It was also noted the selection process for the Strategic Investment Advisory Panels has resulted in an inappropriate nomination for the advisory panel in at least one instance. Suggestions were made around the need for balance between levy payers – a range of growers is needed, large/small, and different regions – in addition to other skills. It was stated that this is not

clear in the process and recruitment guidelines. Hort Innovation explained the panels are skills based and the selection process aims to ensure that there is good representation of growers and industry representatives from different sectors and geographic areas. It was noted that the expression of interest process was open and transparent and allowed any grower to apply to participate on the panels.

Additional questions were raised about whether the Strategic Industry Advisory Panel process is fluid or fixed. It was also asked who the members of the tender advisory and evaluation panels are, and who decides on both panels' composition. Hort Innovation further detailed the process around the selection and recruitment of members.

Communications

Recommendations for communication incorporated a mix of digital and hard copy channels. It was suggested that this would address the high percentage (95 percent) of vegetable growers who do not use digital. Tailored communications to non-English speaking growers – particularly Vietnamese growers – was also recommended.

Industry-specific communication was highlighted as important, with communications on cross-industry projects (especially Pool 2) less important and potentially optional for growers. It was recommended that Hort Innovation should report levy expenditure by project/program, provide quarterly updates on reports issued during the period, as well as a one-page summary for each report. This recommendation also included the provision of information and contact details for levy payers to find out more if they required.

Attendees suggested that Hort Innovation communications should also be delivered through state bodies and IRBs and not duplicated.

Hort Innovation acknowledged these suggestions and they will be taken into consideration for future Hort Innovation communications.

Confidentiality and IP protection were also raised as important considerations for Hort Innovation going forward.

Strategic Co-investment (Pool 2)

A process was undertaken in which each participant 'invested' a nominal \$100 across the five established and further 14 proposed funds under 'Pool 2' (the Strategic Co-investment Fund Pool).

It was noted that this process was not the only process being used to prioritise investment and that other factors would be considered when determining the final investment funds. The results were as follows:

Theme/Fund	'Investment'
Building capacity	
Leadership and people development (established)	\$120
Industry data	\$50
Discovery research	\$0
Contingency research	\$0

Driving growth	
Asian markets (established)	\$70
Health, nutrition and food safety (established)	\$80
Consumer and market insights	\$30
New product development	\$20
Stimulating productivity	
Intensive and protected cropping	\$30
Emerging and advanced technologies	\$70
Genetic improvement and breeding	\$5
Food waste	\$40
Managing risk	
Fruit fly (established)	\$160
Pest and disease management	\$120
Chemical access and registration	\$80
Enabling sustainability	
Green cities (established)	\$100
Pollination capacity	\$20
Land, soil, water and climate	\$210
Northern Australia	\$0

The results of the vote will be collated with those of the other workshops and taken into account by Hort Innovation board and management as decisions are made regarding the establishment of further funds.

Key takeouts for the Strategic Plan

Company operations

- Communication needs to be a mixed approach including digital and printed channels. It also needs to be tailored and relevant with content customised for growers, including those with non-English speaking background.
- Communication needs to have a focus on demonstrating how levies are invested for the benefit for growers – this includes R&D and marketing programs.
- IRBs and grower associations need to be included in the communication approach, and without the duplication of content.

Levy investment (Pool 1)

- The advisory panels must show a fair and equal representation of growers.
- The activities and outcomes of Hort Innovation’s advisory panels are to be more transparent, and the process must be transparent and well-reported.

Strategic Co-investment (Pool 2)

- Land, Soil, Water and Climate Management attracted the highest level of interest for attendees. Fruit Fly, Pest and Disease Management and Leadership and People Development also attracted strong support.

- The Green Cities fund also attracted a high level of interest which was likely influenced by the presence of the turf industry at the workshop.

Attendees

Approximately 12

Industry sectors represented

Apple and Pear, Avocado, Cherry, Citrus, Nursery, Olive, Strawberry, Summerfruit, Vegetable, Turf