

Hort Innovation Levy Payer Workshop Outcome

**Novotel Vines, Swan Valley, WA
Tuesday 2 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 Swan Valley workshop.

Main discussion points

Hort Innovation in general

The issue was raised that there needs to be sharing of ideas with ongoing interaction, that is that the process cannot be one way in terms of information flowing into Hort Innovation. Information too must flow from Hort Innovation. The presenter acknowledged this and agreed that it is important that there is a free flow of information and regular updates coming from Hort Innovation to growers and industry. Hort Innovation confirmed the company is moving to an industry strategic focus rather than being researcher driven and Request for Proposals (RFPs) will be developed for those concepts progressed.

The suggestion was made of a periodic online poll for feedback on concepts, highlighting the importance of an 'open door' and the 'harvesting' of ideas. The point was made that it is difficult enough for Industry Representative Bodies (IRBs) and Industry Development Officers (IDOs) to get ideas from growers, it will be even more difficult for Hort Innovation. Hort Innovation acknowledged this suggestion.

Further to this, the need for suitable IP protection was raised. Some organisations are concerned that they will submit an idea but won't get to do the work. The presenter

acknowledged the importance of IP and explained the process of the new innovation concept pipeline and how concepts are submitted and considered for investment.

Advisory mechanism

The point was raised that growers must have respect for industry advisory panel appointees. Further, it was highlighted that there must be transparency in regards to both advisory and project selection processes. It was noted that information needs to be clear, easy to find, and explain exactly where money is being spent. The concern was raised that in the absence of clear information, people will speculate. Questions were also raised in regards to who is responsible for deciding panels as well as whether the panels will be ongoing. The presenter explained the roles of the panel members and confirmed a three year appointment for members. Hort Innovation agreed that the advisory panel process must be transparent and outcomes communicated to growers and industry as often as possible. Hort Innovation emphasised the importance of industries needing strong, comprehensive advisory panels that are stable.

Communications

Recommendations were made that Hort Innovation should work with the IRBs to provide a regional voice. The belief is that IDOs can feed ideas into Hort Innovation. In general it was commented that Pool 1 projects will generally be communicated through industry communication, while Strategic Co-investment (Pool 2) is uniquely Hort Innovation's and outcomes need to be communicated direct from Hort Innovation. The presenter acknowledged this.

Discussion was had around communication and the need for tailoring of information. Some communication is industry specific and some is broader. Across all communications, Hort Innovation must clearly show the benefits that it is delivering. When emailing, it was requested that headings be clear allowing for recipients to quickly decide whether to click-through.

Also, it was advised that content needs to be understandable and relevant to growers with several levels of communication 'product' required. It was noted that IRBs can assist with this. In specific, with regards to Final Reports, request was made that each has an expanded media summary and four-page fact sheet with the full report accessible for download.

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

In accessing information, it was requested that there be a searchable library of resources on the Hort Innovation website. It was further noted that appropriate IP management is important. Hort Innovation acknowledged this and advised that the feedback would be passed on to the communications team who develop these communications

Field days were recommended as a good means of communication, particularly for growers who do not use the internet regularly. This was acknowledged by the presenter.

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)	\$70
Industry data	\$110
Discovery research	\$0
Contingency research	\$50
Driving growth	
Asian markets (established)	\$105
Health, nutrition and food safety (established)	\$30
Consumer and market insights	\$20
New product development	\$0
Stimulating productivity	
Intensive and protected cropping	\$65
Emerging and advanced technologies	\$25
Genetic improvement and breeding	\$0
Food waste	\$45
Managing risk	
Fruit fly (established)	\$100
Pest and disease management	\$75
Chemical access and registration	\$35
Enabling sustainability	
Green cities (established)	\$150
Pollination capacity	\$15
Land, soil, water and climate	\$45
Northern Australia	\$0

After the voting, the group discussed the results. Some points/questions were:

- There must be suitable expertise on the Pool 2 advisory panels, including international.
- The establishment of funds under Pool 2 is evolving.
- The processes around project selection in Pool 2 must be transparent.
- A potential Pool 2 investment fund that is not listed would be social/economic research into industry labour issues.

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

Key takeouts for the Strategic Plan

Company operations

- Sharing of ideas between growers and Hort Innovation is critical, with ongoing communication, consultation and feedback from growers sought and actioned.
- Communication needs to be tailored and relevant with content customised for growers, with a searchable library of relevant resources.
- Hort Innovation needs to ensure IRBs are included in the communication mix.

Levy investment (Pool 1)

- Hort Innovation to ensure the advisory panel and project selection process is transparent and well-reported.

Strategic Co-investment (Pool 2)

- Green Cities attracted the highest level of funding support, reflecting the presence of the nursery and turf industries in the room.
- Industry Data, Asian Markets and Fruit Fly were the next most supported funds.

Attendees

Approximately 10

Industry sectors represented

Avocado, Citrus, Nursery, Turf, Vegetables