

CALL FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

ERP 38 – FIRE ECOLOGY STRATEGY: ECOLOGICAL RESILIENCE ASSESSMENT TOOLS AND PROCESS REVIEW SUBPROJECT

PROPOSALS DUE **11.59PM 14 APRIL 2021** TO office@bnhcrc.com.au

SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre (hereafter the CRC), in conjunction with our client, the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (Victoria) (DELWP) is seeking expressions of interest for the following project.

ERP 38 – FIRE ECOLOGY STRATEGY: ECOLOGICAL RESILIENCE ASSESSMENT TOOLS AND PROCESS REVIEW SUBPROJECT

PROJECT AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1. Provide **an independent technical review** of the underpinnings of DELWP's ecological resilience assessment program and identify opportunities for future improvement and implementation.
2. Provide **strategic direction** regarding feasible options for improving the data, tools, processes, and metrics that DELWP use to measure and forecast ecosystem resilience.

BUDGET

The total maximum budget for this project is \$63,000 (excl. GST) and all work must be completed by 14 June 2021.

KEY STEPS

Key Steps	Lead	Due Date
1. Inception meeting	Research Organisation	30 April 2021
2. Commence engagement process: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schedule and complete interviews with relevant stakeholders. • Review relevant documentation. 	Research Organisation	30 April 2021
3. Draft report	Research Organisation	28 May 2021
4. Oral presentation	Research Organisation	14 June 2021

5. Final report and evaluation report	Research Organisation	25 June 2021
---------------------------------------	-----------------------	--------------

RESPONSE

Any research proposal once submitted will be treated as commercial in confidence. Applications must be submitted to: office@bnhcrc.com.au by **11.59pm 14 April 2021**.

Research teams responding to this Call for Expression of Interest are required to submit a project proposal of no more than 6 pages, clearly addressing the requirements of the specifications set out in this document and a project budget including details of any in kind contribution from the research organisation. The proposal should include an introduction, project plan for delivery, a detailed project budget and a summary of staff and skills.

INTRODUCTION

The Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC (hereafter the CRC), in conjunction with our client, the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (Victoria) (DELWP) is seeking expressions of interest for the following project.

ERP 38 – FIRE ECOLOGY STRATEGY: ECOLOGICAL RESILIENCE ASSESSMENT TOOLS AND PROCESS REVIEW SUBPROJECT

PROJECT AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1. Provide **an independent technical review** of the underpinnings of DELWP's ecological resilience assessment program and identify opportunities for future improvement and implementation.
2. Provide **strategic direction** regarding feasible options for improving the data, tools, processes, and metrics that DELWP use to measure and forecast ecosystem resilience.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

1. The consideration of ecological values as part of bushfire management planning is guided by an overarching state-wide planning framework, as well as a series of technical data, tools, processes, metrics, and policy documents. Since the 2015 release of the DELWP ecological resilience policy position and related technical guidance, the tools, methods, and metrics used within this framework have evolved at a regional level but not at a state level. Recent state inquiry recommendations have included that DELWP should seek to continue to improve how it measures ecological resilience, and provide more reporting of its ecosystem resilience metrics at a state level.
2. This project will inform DELWP's Fire Ecology Strategy and Ecological Metrics Enhancement project, which seeks to deliver a long-term Fire Ecology Strategy and enhance DELWP's forest and fire ecology program including its use of ecological resilience metrics.
3. The objective of this project is to deliver external expert advice regarding the technical underpinnings of DELWP's ecological resilience risk assessment program and identify opportunities for improvement and implementation. Key questions for this project are:
 - a. Is the data DELWP currently uses for assessing ecological resilience at the regional level fit for purpose, adequate or inadequate?
 - b. What is the best data DELWP could be using for assessing ecological resilience at a state level, particularly for its Fire Analysis Module for Ecological Values (FAME) tool?
 - c. What is the best format for that data to be input into FAME for effective analysis?
 - d. How could the analyses generated by FAME be formatted to be most useful for relevant reporting, impact-assessment and planning needs (see Scope)?

SCOPE

INCLUSIONS

1. Relevant contacts, data, tools, and background documents will be provided to the party contracted to complete this project.
2. DELWP is seeking detailed expert advice regarding the following key technical subjects:
 - a. Review biodiversity data sources and formats to use in assessing ecological resilience (including but not limited to Victorian Biodiversity Atlas, expert elicitation, monitoring data, and/or combination of all).
 - b. Review data layers relating to ecosystem resilience used in FAME (including but not limited to an alternate TFI layer (ARI) and Vegetation group layers (EVC, EFG, etc.)).
 - c. Determine the best available data for state-wide reporting on the following metrics within the FAME tool:
 - i. Tolerable Fire Intervals (TFI);
 - ii. Geometric Mean Abundance (GMA); and
 - iii. Changes in species abundance.
 - d. Review the technical integration of metrics within FAME, in order to assess "next step" technical improvements that can be made to the tool and its architecture (including but not limited to the incorporation of new data sources, formats and layers)
 - e. Review the theoretical underpinnings of these metrics, to assess:
 - i. The scientific adequacy of these theoretical underpinnings; and
 - ii. Whether the metrics are being applied in a way that are relevant to these theoretical underpinnings.
 - f. Determine FAME outputs that are the most useful for:
 - i. State-wide reporting of above-mentioned metrics at ecologically appropriate scales
 - ii. Considering the impacts of planned burning in the context of DELWP's legislative requirements under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 and Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988; and,
 - iii. Forecasting ecological resilience for strategic planning purposes (e.g. Joint Fuel Management Plan and Bushfire Management Strategies).
3. Identify and review decision points for FAME inputs not addressed above and provide advice on a standard. Including but not limited to fire history inputs, fire scar data, species thresholds, timber harvesting impacts.

EXCLUSIONS

4. Recommendations regarding options for future governance and portfolio coordination across DELWP's forest and fire ecology program.
5. Recommendations regarding DELWPs ecosystem resilience governance, ownership, or technical authorisation framework.

PROJECT SPECIFICATIONS

KEY STEPS

In developing the project proposal to be submitted in response to this Call for Expression of interest researchers should be mindful of the following project requirements.

Key Steps	Lead	Due Date
6. Inception meeting	Research Organisation	30 April 2021
7. Commence engagement process: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schedule and complete interviews with relevant stakeholders. • Review relevant documentation. 	Research Organisation	30 April 2021
8. Draft report	Research Organisation	28 May 2021
9. Oral presentation	Research Organisation	14 June 2021
10. Final report and evaluation report	Research Organisation	25 June 2021

EXPECTED OUTPUTS

1. A written report:
 - a. Summarising the review and findings in relation to the key technical subjects, with each subject addressed independently and within the context of any interactions and relationships between them.
 - b. Summarising preliminary recommendations regarding feasible options for improving the data, tools, processes and metrics DELWP uses to measure ecosystem resilience, including a possible pathway/s towards these improvements.
 - c. Include improvement recommendations for each technical subject separately, and how these improvements will interact with other listed subjects to improve the ecosystem resilience reporting framework as a whole.
 - d. Including any script, methodology, and results from analyses or modelling undertaken.
 - e. Including a reference list of resources used (including but not limited to people engaged, literature used, and research considered) when developing recommendations.

2. An oral presentation:
 - a. 30-minute presentation of report findings, recommendations, and possible pathways to improvement to key project stakeholders following the completion of the project report.
 - b. This presentation should occur in the final week of May or first week of June 2021 on a date suitable to the review panel and project partners.

QUALITY CONTROL

Final report and other project outputs

It is the expectation of the Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC and our client DELWP that the material delivered as part of this project will meet the highest scientific standards and will be suitable for internal and external distribution.

It is a requirement of this project that the final report (and any supporting material) be submitted to the Project Control Board's satisfaction. To ensure the final report meets this expectation, it will be subject to up to two rounds of review (with a minimum of two weeks for each review) by DELWP. Research organisations are required to ensure an internal peer review process is undertaken prior to the draft final report being submitted for DELWP consideration.

Before the final report is submitted to the Project Control Board for approval it must also have been:

- Through an independent peer reviewer approved by the Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC Project Manager
- Professionally proof read and copy edited.

These steps must be arranged by the research organisation costed as part of project budget and completed within the project timeframe.

Reports that have not been independently peer reviewed, and professionally proof read and copy edited will not be considered final. A copy of the independent peer review and the researcher response to any comments must be provided to the CRC.

Communication

To further assist with the quality assurance it is expected that:

- The project team will utilise a consultative approach when developing the overall framework and data management processes/criteria, and will demonstrate this by documenting engagement activities within the relevant reports. This will involve seeking input from DELWP subject matter experts to ensure development of a framework and processes that are fit for purpose.
- The research team leader will give periodic presentations (e.g. annually) to key stakeholder groups to gain critical feedback on project milestones.

Any further quality control processes that are required for this piece of work, as well as key success measures, will be agreed with the DELWP Research Lead as part of the planning process.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND PROCESSES

CONTRACTUAL ARRANGEMENTS

This project is being delivered under an Agreement in place between the CRC and DELWP in the State of Victoria. Under this Agreement the CRC is responsible for the delivery of a number of bushfire, ecological and compliance related research projects. The contract put in place between the CRC and the research organisation selected to undertake this work will reflect the terms of the Agreement between DELWP and the CRC.

A draft copy of the contract between the CRC and the successful research organisation is provided with this document. This contract should be reviewed as part of the EOI process. This is a standard agreement, and any changes will be at the sole discretion of the CRC. If you would like to request amendments to any of the terms and conditions set out in the proposed contract, details of the proposed changes and the reason the changes are requested must be included with the submitted response. In considering this contract and proposing changes, please note the CRC has been advised by DELWP that (i) changes to provisions relating to the ownership of Intellectual Property will only be varied to take account of substantial in-kind contribution from the successful research organisation/s, and (ii) no changes can be made to the publications approvals processes.

PROJECT GOVERNANCE

Each project is carried out under the supervision of a Project Control Board (PCB) and in accordance with the governance arrangements agreed between CRC and DELWP.

While the contractual relationship for the delivery of this project will be between the research organisation and the Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC, there will also be a strong relationship between the research team and DELWP staff. Communication is an important element of the success of this project and Researchers will be required to maintain strong links with both the DELWP Research Lead and the CRC Project Manager throughout the project.

A governance plan has been prepared which shows the roles and responsibilities of each of the participants. The successful research team will be required to comply with the processes and expectations as set out in that document.

PROJECT PLANNING

The project overview included in this document describes the way the DELWP subject matter experts believe the project can most successfully be undertaken. Alternative approaches can be

considered. Any alternative approaches must ensure the delivery of the required outputs including any intermediate outputs identified in this document.

Following acceptance of a project proposal the successful research organisation must prepare a detailed project plan and risk treatment plan using the DELWP template. This plan must be approved by the DELWP Research Lead and will become an attachment to the contract. The project plan must be approved within three months of the notification of the acceptance of the project proposal.

REPORTING

The successful research organisation will be required to make at least one presentation (and possibly two) annually to the Project Control Board or other nominated DELWP group during the life of the project.

Research organisations will also be required to:

- provide a poster for CRC conferences;
- provide a fact sheet within three months of signing the contract between the research organisation and CRC (DELWP/Safer Together template);
- provide detailed progress reports on a quarterly basis; and
- contribute to the Project Evaluation Report.

Dates for submitting Quarterly Progress Reports:

Period covered	Report required
1 July to 30 September	October
1 October to 31 December	January following calendar year
1 January to 31 March	April
1 April to 30 June	July

SUBMISSION OF EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Research teams responding to this Call for Expression of Interest are required to submit their response, including:

- A project proposal of no more than 6 pages, clearly addressing the requirements of the specifications set out in this document. The proposal should include an introduction, project plan for delivery, a detailed project budget and a summary of staff and skills. Proposals must include achievable timelines, which will be used to monitor progress.

- Project budget including details of any in kind contribution from the research organisation. A statement of acceptance of the terms and conditions of the proposed contractual arrangements. If such arrangements are not acceptable details of any changes must be included with the submitted response.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Research bids from a consortium of research organisations with expertise in the relevant fields are specifically encouraged.
- Attached is a draft contract which we ask your organisation to review. In your response to the EOI you should identify any items in this contract that will require attention /amendment should your organisation be selected to undertake this piece of work. This contract is based on the Head Agreement between DELWP and the Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC and as such there is very limited scope to make changes to the draft contract.

The total maximum budget for this project is \$63,000 (excl. GST) and all work must be completed by 14 June 2021.

Any research proposal once submitted will be treated as commercial in confidence.

Applications, must be submitted to: office@bnhcrc.com.au by **11.59pm 14 April 2021**.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

After the closing date the Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC along with the DELWP Research Lead will review proposals against the evaluation criteria below and make a recommendation to the State's representative on the most appropriate organisation to undertake this work. The evaluation criteria provide an indication of those matters that should be included in the project proposal and associated documentation – details are provided in the table below.

You will be advised by **30 April 2021** if your application has been accepted and it is expected work on the project will commence upon signing of the contract.

The decision of the BNHCRC and our client DELWP will be final. The BNHCRC reserves the right not to offer the work, or only allocate a proportion of the available funding, if a proposal does not meet the client's needs. The Project Control Board reserves the right to invite any other specific researchers as it sees fit to submit proposals before or after the closing date.

Evaluation Criterion	% weighting
Research Capability The capacity and capability to deliver an excellent applied research project in a Victorian environment.	15
Project Proposal A clear demonstration that the research team has an understanding of the project scope through the proposed research approach The proposal must also include an indicative timetable of work and interim milestones/project outputs as described in this document Quality Control Clear documentation of quality control processes including proposed internal and external reviewers. Identification of copy editors and proof readers.	50
Industry Engagement Strong Track record of industry engagement with the ability to support and influence bushfire management in Victoria through interaction with land and fire agency personnel Victorian Focus Ability to undertake research in Victorian environments individually and/or in cooperation with land and fire managers	15
Value for Money Delivery of required outcome within available budget along with the ability to leverage the funds provided with in-kind contributions or supplementary opportunities. The evaluation team will consider the membership of the project team and the proposed roles and time commitment.	20

ATTACHMENTS

1. Draft Contract
2. Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC / DELWP Governance Arrangements
3. DELWP Project Plan Template
4. Project Evaluation Report Template
5. Quarterly Reporting Template