

The background of the report cover is a photograph showing a pair of hands gently holding a small green seedling in a white container. The scene is set under a red fabric canopy, with bright sunlight filtering through, creating a warm, golden glow. The overall composition is centered and evokes a sense of care and growth.

HEALTHY SEEDS PHASE 1 PROJECT EVALUATION REPORT

Prepared for the NSW
Environmental Trust

17 June 2024

Clear Horizon

Disclaimer

This report was prepared by Clear Horizon in good faith exercising all due care and attention, but no representation or warranty, express or implied, is made as to the relevance, accuracy, completeness or fitness for purpose of this document in respect of any particular user's circumstances. Users of this document should satisfy themselves concerning its application to, and where necessary seek expert advice in respect of, their situation. The views expressed within are not necessarily the views of the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water and may not represent department policy.

© Copyright State of NSW and the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	V
About the Healthy Seeds Phase 1 Project	v
About the evaluation	v
Key findings.....	v
Recommendations	viii
1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1. About this report.....	1
1.2. About the Healthy Seeds Phase 1 Project	1
1.3. About the evaluation	4
2. EVALUATION FINDINGS	8
2.1. Achievement of Project outcomes	8
2.2. Contribution to Environmental Trust Objectives.....	13
2.3. Project design and delivery	15
2.4. Value for Money.....	27
2.5. Unintended outcomes	33
3. RECOMMENDATIONS.....	34
4. APPENDIX 1: REFERENCES	35
5. APPENDIX 2: VALUE FOR MONEY RUBRICS.....	36
6. APPENDIX 3: DATA COLLECTION TOOLS	39

List of figures

Figure 1: Project Timeline	3
Figure 2 4Es Framework for Value for Money	4

List of tables

Table 1 Assessment of value for money	viii
Table 2 Participants interviewed and surveyed for the evaluation	6
Table 3 Documents reviewed for the evaluation.....	6
Table 4 Value for money assessment	27

Dictionary

Acronyms	Description
AABR	Australian Association of Bush Regenerators (AABR)
ANPC	Australian Network for Plant Conservation
CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation
DFID	Department for International Development UK
DPE	Department of Planning and Environment
DPIE	Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (now DPE)
ET	Environmental Trust
KEQ	Key Evaluation Question
LLS	Local Land Services
NGO	Non-government organisation
NPWS	National Parks and Wildlife Services
NRM	Natural Resource Management
NSW	New South Wales
OEH	Office of Environment and Heritage
RfQ	Request for Quote
SERA	Society for Ecological Restoration Australasia
SPA	Seed Production Area
TOR	Terms of Reference
VfM	Value for Money

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

About the Healthy Seeds Phase 1 Project

The Healthy Seeds Project (the Project) was designed to identify suitable interventions for improving the genetic health and reliable native seed supply to support the resilience of ecological restoration in NSW. The Project was funded under the 2018 NSW Environmental Trust (Trust) Major Projects Prospectus, after undergoing a significant scoping and co-design process supported by the Trust. The Australian Network for Plant Conservation (ANPC) received a \$385,000 grant from the Trust in 2019 to deliver the Project over an 18-month period with the guidance of the Healthy Seeds Consortium. The project was completed in late 2021, having experienced some delays primarily due to external events.

The objectives of the Project were to identify interventions to be included in a publicly available Roadmap, gain agreement and coordination between government, community and industry sectors about the way forward for the industry and ensure practitioners had access to and were using up-to-date science and guidance materials for native seed management.

The production of six outputs were identified in the Business Plan, including the Australian Seed Survey and Report, the establishment of the Healthy Seeds Consortium, the Audit of Seed Production Areas (SPA), updates to the Florabank Guidelines and the Healthy Seeds Roadmap.

About the evaluation

The objectives of the evaluation were to determine the degree to which the Project had achieved its intended outcomes and deliverables and to identify lessons learned about a range of factors including governance, project planning, design and the delivery of intended outcomes and the overall value for money of the Project.

Data sources included documents and Trust administration involved in the Project's design and delivery, ANPC staff and industry stakeholders including representatives from the Project's reference group. These stakeholders were consulted through a combination of interviews and an online survey. Data from these sources was triangulated to provide a robust evidence base for evaluation findings. The initial synthesis of the data was provided to Environmental Trust administration to review and discuss before the preparation of the draft report.

The evaluation occurred two years after the Project's completion, during which time key contributors had either moved to new roles or retired. This lapse in time may have contributed to evaluation participants reporting diminishing recollections of the Project and uncertainty about their roles in the Project. This gap in time may have also contributed to some participants being unclear about the overall scope of the Project. This caused certain challenges when consulting with and capturing the experiences and reflections of stakeholders involved in the Project.

Key findings

Project outcomes

The evaluation assessed the extent to which the Project achieved the four ultimate outcomes identified in the Business Plan. It also assessed the Project's contribution to the two Trust objectives listed in the Business Plan. Overall, the project largely achieved these outcomes.

Project contribution to the ultimate outcomes

Ultimate Outcome 1

Better understanding of the most effective and efficient interventions to improve the genetic health and reliable supply of native seed for more resilient ecological restoration in NSW.

The Project achieved a better understanding of effective and efficient interventions needed in the native seed industry. It built an evidence base on which future action could be based and investigated potential coordination solutions within the native seed industry. The published Project outputs, particularly the Healthy Seeds Roadmap, detailed existing barriers and challenges and made recommendations for future action needed across the industry. This is likely to contribute to more resilient ecological restoration practices in NSW.

Ultimate Outcome 2

Better agreement and coordination between industry sectors and government on the way forward for improving the genetic health and reliable supply of native seed for more resilient ecological restoration in NSW.

During delivery, the Project achieved substantial agreement between industry sectors and government on the way forward for the native seeds industry. While the Project brought together people from different sectors to collaborate, some Consortium members did not have direct experience in the native seed sector or an understanding of the significance of proposed interventions for the industry. This may have limited agreement on the types of interventions needed for the industry.

Through its activities to coordinate the Healthy Seeds Project delivery with Greening Australia's Project Phoenix, the Trust enabled broader coordination across the industry than originally intended from the Project.

Ultimate Outcome 3

Better understanding of the current governance structure of the seed industry.

A better understanding of the governance structure of the native seed industry was reached during the Project and was included in the Healthy Seeds Roadmap and informed its recommendations. The Project found no workable governance structure for the industry. There was no single point of coordination for the industry.

Ultimate Outcome 4

Practitioners¹ are aware of, have access to, and are using up-to-date guidance materials for best-practice native seed management in ecological restoration.

The Project delivered the updated guidance materials with the revision of the Florabank Guidelines. These guidelines are available online and accessed by practitioners. However, the evidence suggests that practitioners have not found the guidance useful on ground. This appears to have resulted from the choice of academic and research focused authors with limited consultation and testing of the materials by practitioners.

¹ This report defines practitioners as seed collectors, and other commercial or volunteer participants.

Project contribution to Trust objectives

Objective 1

The Healthy Seeds Project contributed to **encouraging and supporting rehabilitation projects by identifying the issues required to support restoration and rehabilitation** of degraded lands, detailing what is required to provide a secure, reliable and genetically healthy seed supply, as set out in the Roadmap. Other Project outputs, including the updated Florabank Guidelines and the SPA Audit are available to inform rehabilitation projects being undertaken in NSW.

Objective 2

Through the outputs produced, the Project contributed to the **promotion of research into environmental problems in both the public and private sectors**. When producing the updated Florabank Guidelines, contributors drew on existing research to inform the content and recommendations contained in the modules. The Roadmap identifies gaps where further research is required and included research as one aspect of the coordination and liaison role identified in the first recommendation.

Project scoping and design

The Project was extensively scoped and appropriately designed to meet industry needs. Issues with the agreed design that arose during implementation were not apparent during the design phase.

- The Project was appropriately designed to address the need for greater information. The design reflected a comprehensive understanding of the gaps in knowledge about the issues of the native seed industry.
- The Trust utilised a co-design process during the scoping and design phase which was largely effective. However, the project may have benefitted from a review of the initial design to better address any issues that surfaced or became apparent during delivery.
- Budgeted expenditure was appropriate for delivering the outputs and outcomes as detailed in the Project plan. The original budget included the use of consultants to deliver three outputs. However, during project delivery, the grantee organisation identified internal staff that could deliver two of the three outputs. Further, the budgeted expenditure had no provisions to enable adequate involvement of practitioners to ensure they would benefit from the outputs.

Project delivery and management by the grantee

- The Project was efficiently delivered and well-managed by the grantee. The grantee delivered the Project with the support of Trust administration, undertaking broad consultations and managing the contributions from stakeholders across the native seed industry, drawing on extensive established relationships within the industry. However, the grantee needed further support to meet the Trust's administrative requirements, which the Trust administration provided.
- While the Project had been scoped and co-designed with the Trust, issues emerged during implementation. Some changes were made using the variation request process available to ensure efficient delivery and respond to external events. However, these mechanisms were not effective for addressing issues arising during delivery. These included issues of governance and managing stakeholders well. This may have impacted the sustainability of the outputs produced. It led some key stakeholders to have unrealistic expectations around the Project scope that were not adequately addressed, resulting in frustration across the industry.

Value for money

Value for money from the project was assessed across four domains: economy of implementation, efficiency of delivery, effectiveness of achieving intended outcomes and equity of project benefits shared across restoration stakeholders. Each domain was assessed by considering the evidence against different criteria which inform the judgements about the Project's value for money.

The overall assessment of the Project's value for money is summarised in the table below.

Table 1 Assessment of value for money

Domain	Excellent	Good	Adequate	Room for improvement
Economy <i>Project implementation costs are efficient</i>				
Efficiency <i>Planned project activities are efficiently delivered</i>				
Effectiveness <i>Achievement of the project's ultimate outcomes</i>				
Equity <i>Benefits shared equitably among stakeholders</i>				

The Project represented good value for money by delivering the intended outcomes. The Project team economically implemented the Project and the planned Project activities were largely delivered efficiently within the context of external challenges and opportunities. The main area where the Project's value may have been further improved was through ensuring practitioners, who were expected to be major beneficiaries, equitably shared the benefits from the Project outcomes.

Recommendations

The recommendations below have implications for the Trust when considering future scoping and co-design processes, including budget expenditure for grants. They also have implications for grantees when designing and delivering projects.

1. Where it is anticipated that Trust-funded projects may identify issues that have implications for government policies and responsibilities, due consideration should be made to effectively communicate the Trust's position and ensure stakeholders are aware of the remit of the Trust in these contexts. This approach will help manage industry stakeholder expectations regarding what can be requested and achieved by government agencies.

In making this recommendation, it is noted that there are cases where grant outputs may highlight areas for policy or legislative reforms. However, any activities undertaken by stakeholders to campaign for such changes would be outside the scope of the Trust funding, which precludes grants being used to change policy or legislation.

2. When designing projects that would benefit from the participation of practitioners², consideration should be given to some level of remuneration for their involvement in consortium and reference group activities beyond funded activities. This would assist them to produce project outputs without a subsequent loss of income from their primary business activities.
3. During project design and the development of the delivery schedule, ensure that practitioners have the opportunity to participate in relevant project activities, including involvement in the consortium and contributing to project outputs. These should not conflict with their major business activities (such as seed collection periods).
4. Ensure practitioners are involved in the co-design, and subsequent testing/piloting of any resources that are intended to be used in the field. This will ensure the outputs are practical and relevant and increase the likelihood of adoption.
5. When designing projects, consider building in a six-monthly or mid-term process evaluation to review a project's design and implementation to enable project teams to make modifications that could improve the appropriateness of the project's design and effectiveness of the project delivery. Process evaluations form part of the NSW Treasury Policy and Guidelines (Evaluation TPG22-22)³. Evaluation TPG22-22 indicate that process evaluations can be designed "to examine the contexts in which the initiative is operating, identify who the initiative is reaching and their experiences, identify issues with delivery, review appropriateness (to needs, community and conditions), assess efficiency, and provide information for process improvements." Further, the Guidelines suggest that process evaluation can be undertaken early to check if an initiative is being implemented as intended, or to support outcome evaluation by helping distinguish implementation issues from design issues."

² This report defines practitioners as seed collectors, and other commercial or volunteer participants.

³ NSW Treasury (2023) NSW Treasury [Policy and Guidelines: Evaluation TPG22-22](#), p13

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. About this report

This report presents the findings and recommendations of the evaluation of the Healthy Seeds Project Phase 1 Project. The report is structured as follows:

- About the Healthy Seeds Phase 1 Project
- Purpose and scope
- Methodology
- KEQs
- Data sources
- Limitations
- Findings
- Conclusion and recommendations
- Appendices

1.2. About the Healthy Seeds Phase 1 Project

The Healthy Seeds Project (the Project) was developed in response to an increasing awareness across the NSW native seed sector that a more concerted effort was required to address the widening gap between demand for and supply of 'high-quality' and 'genetically appropriate' native seeds. The Project was delivered over a 27-month period by the Australian Network for Plant Conservation (ANPC) Inc., a national not-for-profit organisation focused on promoting and developing plant conservation in Australia, following the awarding of a \$385,000 grant from the Trust in 2019.

The concept for the Project originated from an unsolicited proposal titled 'Restore and Renew' that was submitted by the Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney in 2017, via the Office of Environment and Heritage. A technical review of the proposal highlighted that provenancing and genetic consideration of seed and plants in restoration were priority issues, but further scoping was required to identify a needs-aligned approach to addressing these concerns. As a result, the issue was added to the Trust's Prospectus of new projects for further consideration.

An intensive scoping process was then undertaken, which included an in-depth desktop review and extensive consultations with key stakeholders in the native seed and restoration field. As part of this process, the Trust facilitated a workshop in June 2018 to gain input from 11 leading experts, including the Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney, ANPC, Greening Australia, CSIRO, universities in NSW, the Office of Environment and Heritage, and many other groups. A key outcome of this workshop was the identification of three options for Trust investment, followed by an options analysis. This led to the development of a fourth composite option, which was approved by the Trust, and formed the basis for the Healthy Seeds Project.

Several organisations, including the ANPC, were considered and consulted to develop the Project. In recognition of the ANPC's role as a leading organisation driving reform and research in the sector, the Trust invited the ANPC to join the co-design process to develop the proposal for Stage 1 of the Project. The ANPC had led initial efforts to bring together key stakeholders in the native seed sector to workshop and discuss concerns about the state of the sector at their 2016 National Biennial Conference. In the lead up to the workshop, ANPC had undertaken a national survey of the Australian native seed sector that provided a baseline understanding of the sector. The survey provided critical insights into the sector,

with findings highlighting issues around a lack of regulation in the industry, poor seed supply and concerns around seed quality, with the majority of seeds sourced from wild harvesting, as well as limited access to seed testing and storage facilities. The survey also highlighted the need for a formal peak body to cohesively bring together diverse groups operating in the native seed sector.

Trust administration led the preparation of the Business Case with input from the ANPC. This was submitted to the Trust in 2018, followed by a Business Plan that was co-developed by Trust administration and the ANPC. The Business Plan outlined the proposed approach and design for Phase 1 of the Healthy Seeds Project, and was approved by the Trust in 2019, with the grant awarded to ANPC to deliver the Project.

The key objectives of the Project outlined in the Business Plan⁴ were to:

1. Identify the most effective and efficient interventions for improving the genetic health and reliability of the native seed supply for better resilience of ecological restoration in NSW. These interventions were to be identified in a publicly available Roadmap that could be used by both public and private partners to drive solutions.
2. Gain agreement and co-ordination between government, community and industry sectors on the way forward for improving the genetic health and reliable supply of native seed for more resilient ecological restoration in NSW.
3. Ensure practitioners are aware of, have access to, and are using up-to-date science and guidance materials for best-practice native seed management in ecological restoration.

⁴ NSW Environmental Trust (2018) Major projects Grant: Project Snapshot – Business Plan, Revision Approved 2 September 2020

1.2.1. Project timeline

Below is a timeline of the project from the submission of the business case through to the project's completion.

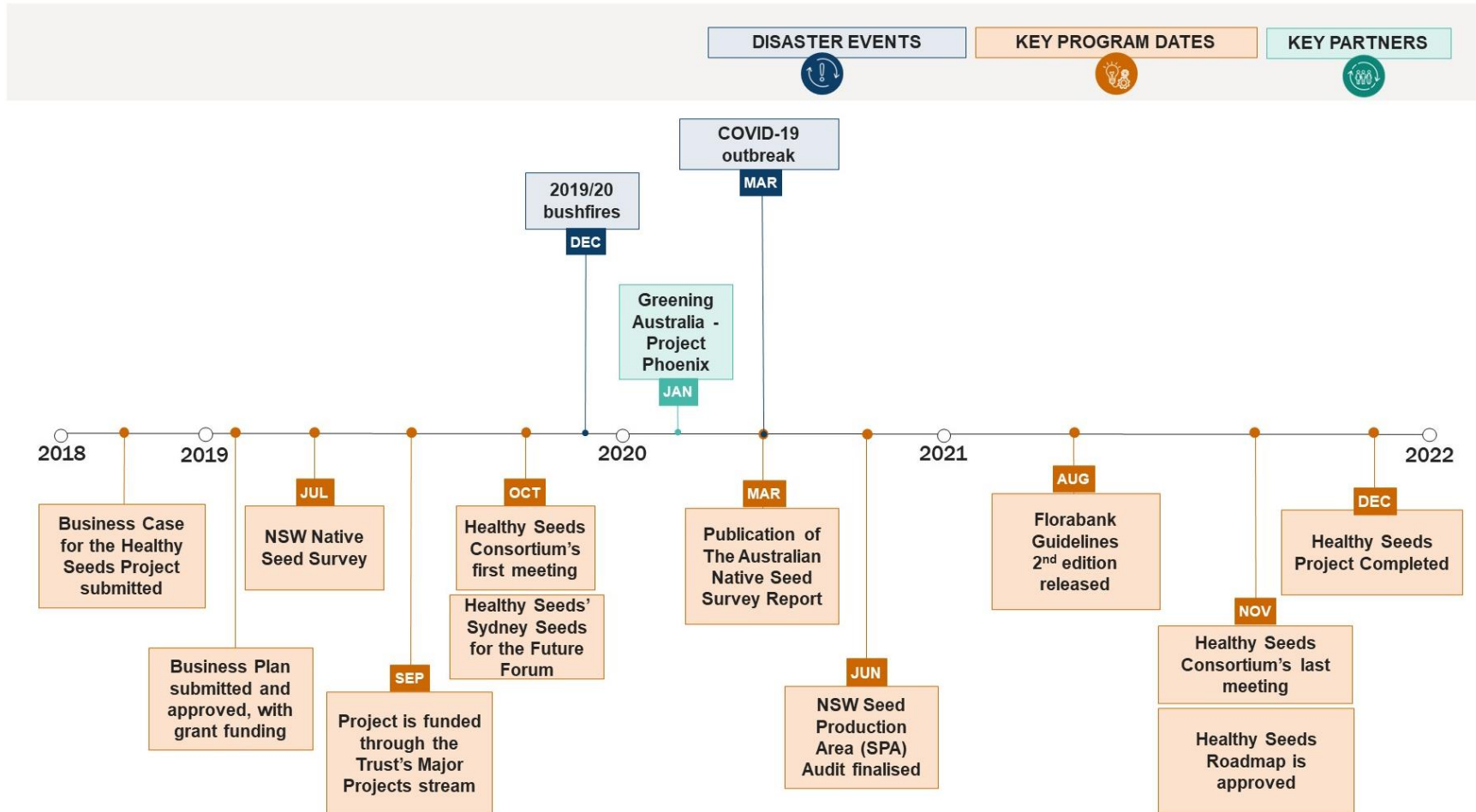


Figure 1: Project Timeline

1.3. About the evaluation

1.3.1. Purpose and scope

This evaluation assessed the appropriateness, effectiveness and efficiency of the Healthy Seeds Phase 1 Project's design, delivery and Value for Money (VfM). It also assessed the Project's outcomes, including to what degree it had met or exceeded intended outcomes and any unexpected outcomes, with recommendations for improving other projects administered by the Trust.

The evaluation covered the period from the Project's inception in 2019 to its conclusion in 2021 and focused on outcomes achieved within the project delivery timeframe.

1.3.2. Methodology

Evaluation approach

The evaluation employed theory-driven approaches and mixed-methods data collection, using existing data and collecting new qualitative and quantitative evidence to surface insights against the key evaluation questions exploring design, process, and outcomes. Each evidence source has been analysed separately before synthesising the multiple lines of evidence together to develop findings and subsequently inform recommendations.

The approach to evaluating the Project's **Value for Money (VfM)** is grounded in the **4Es Framework** (DFID, 2011)⁵. This Framework is based on the UK Department of International Development's approach to VfM and considers a program in terms of five domains: economy, efficiency, effectiveness, and equity described below.

- Economy: getting the best value or the right quality at the right price for inputs.
- Efficiency: maximising the outputs for a given level of inputs.
- Effectiveness: ensuring that the outputs deliver the desired outcomes.
- Equity: ensuring the benefits are distributed fairly.

The Framework enables an assessment of good resource use and whether the resources used to deliver the project contributed to good outcomes.

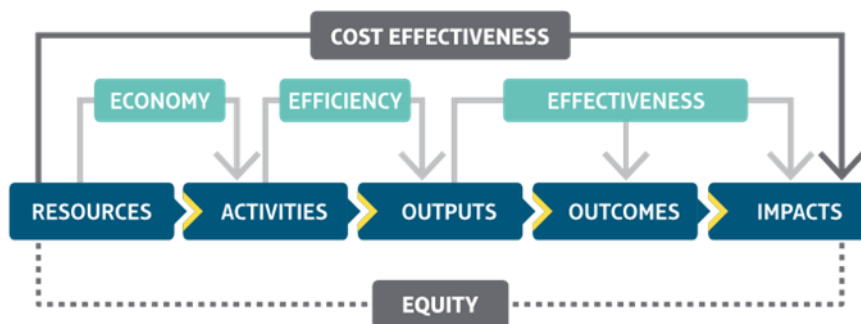


Figure 2 4Es Framework for Value for Money

⁵ The UK Department of International Development (2011) [DFID's Approach to Value for Money \(VfM\)](#)

Rubrics were utilised to guide transparent evaluative judgements about VfM. The rubrics employed a set of standards (Excellent, Good, Adequate and Area for Improvement). Each of these standards included sub-standards with criteria to guide evaluative judgements (see Appendix B: value for money rubrics).

Key evaluation questions (KEQs)

The following KEQs guided the evaluation by informing data collection and analysis, ensuring that all required questions were answered during the evaluation process. The insights in this report are informed by what was found against each KEQ during the evaluation process.

KEQs	Sub-KEQ
Design and process	
1. How appropriate was the Project design?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. How appropriate was the planning process in the initial scoping phase? b. Did the Project address the identified need? c. Was the Project appropriately planned and scoped to ensure delivery of intended outcomes? d. Was the budgeted expenditure appropriate for the Project?
2. How effectively was the Project delivered?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. How well-managed was the project managed by the grantee? b. Was the Project delivered on time and budget? c. Were the intended outputs delivered? d. Were the Project's activities implemented as intended? <p>If not, why and what was the impact?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> e. Was the Project appropriately planned and scoped to ensure delivery of intended outcomes the effective measurement of these outcomes? f. Were the methods for making decisions and managing the Project appropriate and likely to ensure success? g. What were the associated risks with governance, financial management and project planning?
Value for money	
3. Did the Project deliver value for money?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Were the project implementation costs efficient? (Economy) Could resources have been allocated more efficiently? b. How efficiently were the planned Project activities delivered? (Efficiency) c. To what extent were the ultimate outcomes of the Project achieved? (Effectiveness, Cost-Effectiveness) d. To what extent have the benefits of the Project been shared equitably among ecological restoration stakeholders in NSW? (Equity)
Outcomes and impact	
4. In what ways has the Project contributed to more resilient ecological restoration in NSW?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. In what ways has understanding increased about the most effective and efficient interventions to improve the genetic health and reliable supply of native seed? b. In what ways has agreement and coordination increased between industry sectors and government about how improved genetic health and reliable supply of native seed can be achieved? c. In what ways is there increased understanding of the current governance structure of the seed industry?

KEQs	Sub-KEQ
	d. To what extent are practitioners aware of and use the guidance materials for best-practice native seed management in ecological restoration developed during the Project?
5. In what ways did the Project contribute to Environmental Trust Objectives?	a. In what ways did the Project contribute to supporting restoration and rehabilitation projects in NSW? b. In what ways did the Project promote research into environmental problems in NSW?
6. What unintended outcomes did the Project contribute to (positive and negative)?	N/A
Learning	
7. What have we learnt from this Project that can inform future projects?	a. What were the lessons learned and other opportunities related to the Project? b. What could be done differently in future projects?

Data collection

Clear Horizon used the following methods to collect data for the evaluation.

Semi-structured interviews. 14 interviews were conducted with stakeholders involved in the design and delivery of the Project. The interviews captured diverse perspectives and experiences. They provided contextual understanding and breadth and depth of qualitative evidence against the Key Evaluation Questions (KEQs).

Survey. A survey collected quantitative and qualitative data from 10 stakeholders, complementing insights from the interviews.

Document review. A review of 273 documents was undertaken to inform a deep understanding of the Project and its context and collect evidence against the KEQs.

More detail on the data collected is provided in the tables below.

Table 2 Participants interviewed and surveyed for the evaluation

Participants	Interviews	Survey
Environment Trust administration	4	1
ANPC	2	-
Consortium	4	5
Reference Groups	4	2
Other ⁶	-	3
Total number of participants	14	10

Table 3 Documents reviewed for the evaluation

⁶ The survey asked respondents what their role was in the Project, with the option to select all that applied. The options included Environment Trust Project Team, ANPC, Consortium, Reference Groups, and Other. There were three respondents that selected 'Other' and identified as members of various external committees or individual contributors not formally affiliated with the Project.

Document type	Number of documents
Communications	152
External publications	1
Journal publications	18
Media and branding resources	11
Project administration documents	49
Project progress reporting ⁷	10
Project publications (outputs)	12
Project scoping documents	20
Total number of documents	273

Data analysis

All qualitative and quantitative data collected was thematically coded into evidence tables and analysed against the relevant KEQs. This facilitated the iterative identification of emerging themes. Following data analysis, Clear Horizon synthesised the data into a Results Pack reviewed by the Major Projects team before the Sense-Making Workshop (see below). The Pack included background information on the evaluation and a synthesis of draft findings for each KEQ along with underpinning evidence.

Sense-making and reporting

Following data analysis and synthesis, a sense-making workshop was held with the Major Projects team to review the evidence and contextualise the findings. Points raised during the workshop were incorporated into this report.

1.3.3. Limitations

- The evaluation was undertaken about two years after the completion of the Project. Due to this gap in time, some participants reported that they were unsure of their role and involvement in the Project.
- Contacting and engaging stakeholders in the evaluation was challenging, as many of them had moved on from government positions, changed roles within government, or retired, thereby limiting the number of interview and survey responses received.
- The findings confirm that some people involved in the Project were confused about its scope which has influenced their expectations about the Project's anticipated outcomes. Specifically, their expectations were for outcomes that were not within the scope of the Project to deliver. As a consequence, most stakeholders consulted for the evaluation had limited reflections about the design and delivery of the Project and focused their reflections on what had or had not happened since the project was completed.

⁷ Includes draft and final versions of project progress reports.

2. EVALUATION FINDINGS

This section presents the evaluation findings including:

- the extent to which the Project achieved its intended outcomes, including the contribution to Environmental Trust objectives
- the effectiveness of the design process, appropriateness of the resulting design, the effectiveness and efficiency of Project delivery and the value for money that resulted
- unintended outcomes of the Project
- recommendations (in orange boxes) which are shown following the related findings and evidence.

Data sources are referenced as follows:

Data source	Code
Group interview respondents: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Trust administration• Reference Committee members	TA RC
Individual interviews <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Healthy Seeds project team member, contracted suppliers• Healthy Seeds Consortium member	HS CM
Survey	SR
Documents	Footnoted and included in References section

2.1. Achievement of Project outcomes

The Project Business Plan⁸ identified four ultimate outcomes for the Project. This section presents an assessment of the Project's achievement of these outcomes.

Key finding

Intended outcome #1: Better understanding of the most effective and efficient interventions to improve the genetic health and reliable supply of native seed for more resilient ecological restoration in NSW.

The Project achieved a better understanding of effective and efficient interventions needed in the native seeds industry. It built an evidence base which can inform future action and investigated potential coordination solutions within the native seed industry. The published Project outputs, particularly the Healthy Seed Roadmap, detailed existing barriers and challenges and made recommendations for future action needed across the industry. This is likely to contribute to more resilient ecological restoration practices in NSW.

⁸ NSW Environmental Trust (2018) Major projects Grant: Project Snapshot – Business Plan, Revision Approved 2 September 2020

Intended outcome #2: Better agreement and co-ordination between industry sectors and government on the way forward for improving the genetic health and reliable supply of native seed for more resilient ecological restoration in NSW.

During delivery, the Project achieved substantial agreement between industry sectors and government on the way forward for the native seeds industry. While the Project brought together people from different industry sectors to collaborate, some Consortium members did not have direct experience in the native seed sector or an understanding of the significance of proposed interventions for the industry. This may have limited agreement on the types of interventions needed for the industry.

Intended outcome #3: Better understanding of the current governance structure of the seed industry.

A better understanding of the current governance structure of the native seed industry was reached during the Project and was included in the Healthy Seeds Roadmap and informed its recommendations. This understanding confirmed an absence of a workable governance structure for the industry. This lack of effective governance and leadership continues to limit the effectiveness of coordinated action within the industry.

Intended outcome #4: Practitioners are aware of, have access to, and are using up-to-date guidance materials for best-practice native seed management in ecological restoration.

The Project delivered the outputs identified in the Business Plan, including updated guidance materials. These outputs have been accessed by practitioners. However, the evidence suggests that practitioners have not found the guidance useful on ground. This appears to have resulted from the choice of academic and research focused authors with limited consultation and testing of the materials by practitioners.

Intended outcome #1

Better understanding of the most effective and efficient interventions to improve the genetic health and reliable supply of native seed for more resilient ecological restoration in NSW.

The Project identified effective and efficient interventions needed to improve the state of the native seed industry. These were consolidated in the Healthy Seeds Roadmap (the Roadmap). The Roadmap identified seven main supply barriers to the reliable supply and genetic health of native seed and proposed five interrelated interventions to address the supply barriers. These include:

- Coordination of seed supply and demand at the state and regional levels
- Changes to licencing systems and record keeping
- Changes to project management to consider the logistics and timelines of the seed supply chain
- Increased restoration planning at a regional level
- Training to improve seed literacy and community capacity for restoration.⁹

⁹ Martin Driver and Lucy Commander (2021) Healthy Seeds Roadmap. A strategic plan to improve native seed supply for ecological restoration in NSW (Draft). Report developed by the ANPC Healthy Seeds Project, funded by the NSW Environmental Trust, p.7

The Final Project Report identifies a key outcome for the project was:

The most effective and efficient interventions for improving the genetic health and reliability of the native seed supply... have been identified in the draft Roadmap that is now publicly available and can be used by both public and private partners to drive solutions.¹⁰

The report indicates that 100% of the Healthy Seeds Consortium members endorsed the Healthy Seeds Roadmap.¹¹

Most interviewees (13 out of the 14 interviewed) agreed that the Project had built an understanding of the interventions needed.¹²

I believe there were very detailed research and conclusions drawn and then a strategic roadmap. I think it probably shone a light on a lot of the issues the seed industry is dealing with that government agencies may or may not have been aware of and it identified some potential pathways forward. [TA]

Survey respondents (n=9) expressed a range of opinions about the level of agreement reached about issues to be addressed, with three agreeing or agreeing strongly, five who did not know/ were neutral and one disagreeing strongly with the statement.

Three participants in the evaluation reflected that one specific change the Project had contributed to was moving the native seed industry's focus away from seed provenance to genetic diversity. This reflects the focus given to genetic health in the design and delivery of the Project.

Intended outcome #2

Better agreement and co-ordination between industry sectors and government on the way forward for improving the genetic health and reliable supply of native seed for more resilient ecological restoration in NSW.

The primary mechanism used during the Project to achieve better agreement and coordination between industry sectors and government was through the workings of the Healthy Seeds Consortium. Through Consortium meetings, the Project brought together industry and government stakeholders to identify industry needs.

Further, the structure of the Consortium meant people were brought together from different sectors of the industry who would not normally collaborate. Members provided different perspectives and increased the understanding of Consortium members about the range of activities undertaken by the different stakeholders and the issues they faced.

The consortium, for me personally, [...] it was really useful to hear a lot of different perspectives and conversations between a lot of different parts of NGOs and government organisations sort of coming together and speaking and also hearing the linkages between the different bits of work

¹⁰ NSW Environmental Trust (2021) Project Final Report Version 3

¹¹ The Roadmap was endorsed after the addition of a statement was inserted on p.5 indicating that the "document does not represent the views of the agencies/organisations in which the Consortium members are employed." This is discussed in section 2.3.3 p. 27 of this report.

¹² One interviewee and two survey respondents did not make assessments of the project's achievements, indicating they were no longer involved in the project when outcomes had been achieved.

that they were doing, some of which we were aware of and some of which we weren't. Just hearing how all of those ties in together gave us a greater understanding and perspective of the issues affecting that native seed sector and market and also the bits of work being done all over the state towards this common focus on genetically and diverse native seed stock. [TA]

Two government stakeholders indicated that the Project had also provided government agency staff with the opportunity to hold discussions across agencies about how they could support the industry. These discussions were led by someone who had an interest in the issues facing the native seed industry. However, when that person changed roles, these discussions ceased.

Towards the end of my involvement in the Project, it started a conversation within the then Department of Planning, Industry and Environment and quite a broad ranging conversation with representation from pretty much every area of the department. Unfortunately, that was driven by someone who's very passionate, which is great, but it also meant that when that person changed roles, no one was there to pick it up. [TA]

The Project was able to achieve better coordination and substantial agreement through the Consortium processes. However, issues arose during Project delivery which demonstrated there were areas where agreement could not be achieved. Specifically, some government members of the Consortium were unable to endorse the Roadmap. This delayed its publication.

Responses from stakeholders surveyed for the evaluation indicated that there was limited evidence that there was greater coordination and cooperation among Healthy Seed industry stakeholders by the end of the Project. Six respondents (n=9) were either neutral or did not know if there was greater coordination with one respondent strongly disagreeing that there was. Two respondents indicated there was greater coordination. The range of responses supports the findings about challenges that exist for governance of the industry with no clear structure or central coordination.

One survey respondent indicated that there was an existing conflict in the priorities of different sectors of the industry, such as the suppliers and end users of native seeds. This made it difficult for the Project to facilitate agreement and coordination across those sectors.

There always has been a degree of tension – or at least divergence of priorities—between suppliers and consumers of native seed, as you would expect. Both have an interest in developing the industry and the quality of the product, and its effective deployment, but there continue to be some areas where priority of needs remains disputed or unclear. For example, many producers are in favour of developing an industry representative body, as are some consumers – but the means by which a body could accommodate the different interests and priorities of both those sectors is unclear. It was not within the scope of the Stage 1 project to resolve this. [SR]

Intended outcome #3

Better understanding of the current governance structure of the seed industry.

The Project achieved a clearer understanding of the governance structure of the seed industry. However, this understanding amounts to a finding that there was no structure or single point of coordination for the industry. As a result, challenges exist in bringing together suppliers and consumers of native seeds, researchers studying the genetic health of seeds or mapping seed supplies or

government agencies seeking to secure seed supply through the licencing system. These challenges were beyond the scope of the Healthy Seeds project to address.

A key finding established in this study was that there is no formal or informal single point of reference or data on native seed supply or demand, nor any one point of co-ordination in NSW.¹³

We keep on referring it to as a system. It is not a system and it's not systematic. It's got a whole lot of little elements that are not interacting and certainly not interacting effectively, and there's a whole lot of issues and policies of government and processes of government which are not fit for purpose. The licensing system is a classic one. It's supposed to be securing the native seed that's out there from over-exploitation and to be providing data on what's going on and it doesn't do either. [HS]

This finding reflects one of the major barriers identified in the Australian Native Seed Survey Report¹⁴ and reflected in the Healthy Seeds Roadmap¹⁵ that there is no state/regional coordination. Without industry leadership and coordination, it will be difficult for the industry to address the needs identified in the Healthy Seeds project.

Throughout the survey, many respondents made comments that spoke to a perceived lack of structure and cohesiveness in the sector. There was also a sense that there was little clear direction or progression towards key strategic goals at local, state or federal levels. These and similar concerns have been debated in the sector for many years....¹⁶

Intended outcome #4

Practitioners are aware of, have access to, and are using up-to-date guidance materials for best-practice native seed management in ecological restoration.

This outcome was focused on practitioners in the native seed industry accessing and using the guidance materials. Guidance materials updated and produced by the Project included The Australian Native Seed Survey Report, the SPA Audit which provided guidance about setting up seed production areas, the updated Florabank Guidelines and the Healthy Seeds Roadmap.

While these materials were produced or updated, there were limited communications activities detailed in the Project design to assist in building awareness and uptake of the guidance materials. Planned communications activities had to be modified further during the Project's delivery due to external factors, including delays caused by COVID-19 restrictions and alignment with Project Phoenix activities.¹⁷

Nevertheless, there is evidence that there were efforts to ensure the outputs are available beyond planned Project activities and that outputs have been accessed by industry stakeholders, in particular

¹³ Martin Driver and Lucy Commander (2021) Ibid

¹⁴ Hancock, N., Gibson-Roy, P., Driver, M. and Broadhurst, L. (2020). The Australian Native Seed Survey Report. Australian Network for Plant Conservation, Canberra.

¹⁵ Martin Driver and Lucy Commander (2021) Ibid p. 30

¹⁶ Hancock, N., Gibson-Roy, P., Driver, M. and Broadhurst, L. (2020). Ibid

¹⁷ Project Phoenix was a Commonwealth funded project delivered by Greening Australia. It aimed to address some of the immediate native seed priorities following the 2019-20 fires and undertaking critical steps in capacity building and mobilization of the native seed sector. Project outputs included the development of a [10-year Strategy](#) for the future design and success of the sector.

the Florabank Guidelines. Contributors communicated the outputs during conference presentations and made them accessible on organisational websites.

- The Australian Native Seed Survey Report was launched online by the Threatened Species Commissioner in March 2020 after the postponement of the Canberra based Australasian Seed Science Conference. It was promoted by the ANPC and is accessible on the ANPC Website.
- The SPA Audit is available on the ANPC website.
- The updated Florabank Guidelines are available on the Florabank website, with links to the site from the ANPC and Greening Australian websites. The Project Final Report details that over 200 practitioners were informed about the Florabank Guidelines update and that over 300 practitioners were using the updated guidelines¹⁸.
- The Healthy Seeds Roadmap is available on the ANPC Website.

Most survey respondents (6 out of 8 respondents) agreed or agreed strongly that there was improved access to up-to-date guidance and best-practice materials on native seed management in ecological restoration by the end of the Project.

2.2. Contribution to Environmental Trust Objectives

The Project's Business Plan¹⁹ identified two Trust Objectives the Project would contribute to. This section presents an assessment of the Project's contribution to these objectives.

Key finding

Objective #1: Encourage and support restoration and rehabilitation projects in both the public and the private sectors that will or are likely to prevent or reduce pollution, the waste-stream or environmental degradation, of any kind, within any part of New South Wales.

The Healthy Seeds Project contributed to encouraging and supporting rehabilitation projects by identifying the issues required to support restoration and rehabilitation of degraded lands, detailing what is required to provide a secure, reliable and genetically healthy seed supply, as set out the Roadmap. Other project outputs, including the updated Florabank Guidelines and the SPA Audit are available to inform rehabilitation projects being undertaken in NSW.

Objective #2: Promote research in both the public and private sectors into environmental problems of any kind and, in particular, to encourage and support:

- **research into and development of local solutions to environmental problem**
- **discovery of new methods of operation for NSW industries that are less harmful to the environment**
- **research into general environmental problems**
- **assessment of environmental degradation.**

When producing the updated Florabank Guidelines, contributors drew on existing research to inform the content and recommendations contained in the modules. The Roadmap identifies gaps where further research is required and includes research as one aspect of the coordination and liaison role identified in its first recommendation.

¹⁸ NSW Environmental Trust (2021) Project Final Report Version 3DOC122, p.2

¹⁹ NSW Environmental Trust (2018) Major projects Grant: Project Snapshot – Business Plan, Revision Approved 2 September 2020, p.10

Environmental Trust objective #1

Supporting restoration and rehabilitation projects in NSW.

Survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that project activities and outputs contributed to supporting restoration and rehabilitation in NSW (8 out of 9 respondents).

Likewise, interviewees thought that Project outputs had the potential to support restoration and rehabilitation by articulating existing issues for securing healthy seed supplies required to support restoration and rehabilitation projects.

The Healthy Seeds Roadmap was described as a 'planning document' detailing changes needed for the native seeds industry to produce and supply healthy seeds across NSW.

I think that speaks to sort of phase one being, the output being the planning document. I'm sure there are some groups that have seen what's in the planning document and potentially used it, but I think the bigger impact will come sort of in the what's next because it does try to address systemic issues. [TA]

The final report²⁰ states that "[this] project will directly support restoration and rehabilitation of degraded lands by working towards a secure, reliable and genetically healthy seed supply for ecological restoration projects."

Environmental Trust objective #2

Promotion of research into environmental problems.

The Project promoted research into environmental problems by drawing on existing research and the contributions of experienced researchers. The process of updating the Florabank Guidelines was described as a review of existing literature, with a substantial contribution from researchers when synthesising the relevant research.

In terms of the Florabank Guidelines, it was really more about [a] literature review of research. So, we actually collated a lot of the research that's happened over the last 20 years to be able to update those guidelines and we had researchers specifically helping us out.... It synthesised a lot of research, in terms of what's best practice, seed storage conditions and what's the sort of state of play of germination and dormancy, ... So, it was mostly synthesis and communication of research outcomes, written by a lot of the researchers themselves. [HS]

The Healthy Seeds Roadmap identified the important contribution of research to improving the genetic health and reliable native seed supply, pointing to gaps in the information available and making recommendations about further research.

In this Healthy Seed Roadmap, we did actually make some recommendations for research as well... and then the Roadmap was more about where to next, what do we need to do, what

²⁰NSW Environmental Trust (2021) Project Final Report Version 3

research is missing. So, I think it helped research in New South Wales in terms of providing some recommendations on what was still yet to be done. [HS]

I think what it does do is it also creates that watershed for research because you should have that pre- and post-comparisons coming online in the next sort of 10 years or so. So future research would hopefully go, "This was pre the roadmap when they didn't do it like we do it now," and so you can see the differences, you can see improvements, you can see whether the roadmap actually worked. [CM]

Interviewees indicated a need for greater applied research to address industry needs. While the Project focused on science-based research, less attention was paid to research on the practical responses needed to meet this Project's objectives to ensure the supply native seed is available.

Seven (n=8) survey respondents agreed or agreed strongly that the Project supported research into NSW Environmental problems.

2.3. Project design and delivery

2.3.1. Project scoping and design

Key finding

The Project was extensively scoped and appropriately designed to meet industry needs. Issues with the agreed design that arose during implementation were not apparent during the design phase.

- The Project was appropriately designed to address the need for greater information. The design reflected a comprehensive understanding of the gaps in knowledge about the issues of the native seed industry.
- The Trust utilised a co-design process during the scoping and design phase which was largely effective. However, issues that became apparent during delivery may have benefitted from a review of the Project design during delivery to better address those issues.

Budgeted expenditure was appropriate for delivering the outputs and outcomes as detailed in the Project plan. However, the budgeted expenditure included a significant commitment to the use of consultants and had no provisions to enable adequate involvement of practitioners to ensure they would benefit from the outputs.

This section identifies two phases of Project design:

- The initial scoping phase undertaken by the Trust to research industry needs and scope a project that would be funded under the Major Projects Prospectus.
- The co-design process where the Trust worked with the grantee to identify the activities and outputs expected for the Project and begin planning its delivery.

Initial scoping phase

The planning process during the initial scoping phase was appropriate and comprehensive. Discussions about the need for the Project and what it should include took place over a number of years. The process to inform the design included ongoing conversations between the Trust Major Projects team and important stakeholders over a number of years from 2015.

Consultation with a broad range of industry stakeholders

The Trust identified 'appropriate provenancing and genetic considerations for ensuring resilient ecological restoration under current and future pressures and threats' as an issue for inclusion in its Major Projects Prospectus for 2018-2020. To identify potential opportunities for Trust investment in relation to this issue and gather expert opinion and feedback, the Trust facilitated workshops, internal brainstorming sessions and attended meetings.

- A Trust workshop was run in Sydney, June 2018 (facilitated by Muller Enterprise) with key industry stakeholders. The workshop identified three opportunities for Trust investment: disseminating information to practitioners, developing SPAs and other infrastructure; and a contestable grants program for testing and developing genetic methods in restoration.²¹

[The] options analysis that was presented to the Trust Board in the 2018 Prospectus The upshot of this was that upskilling practitioners would not work on its own outside a broader program with clear benefits for practitioners; a contestable grants program would be unlikely to provide value for money without an overarching framework to guide it; new SPAs on their own would be expensive with long lead times and would not solve the broader industry problems. A new composite option was proposed with Phase 1 being an investigation of opportunities and development of a roadmap for broad industry reform. [TA]

- The three options identified from the June workshop were further investigated through individual meetings with key stakeholders plus a significant amount of desktop research to identify the key problem to be addressed. Meetings included:
 - Brainstorm session to consider unsolicited proposal from the Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney, July 2018²². A technical review showed that this is a high priority issue, and the research may be worthwhile, particularly in high priority landscapes for restoration such as mining landscapes. However, the proposal was premature, and more consultation and evidence were needed to support the proposal as the most cost-effective approach to address the issue. The review also indicated the proposal needed better integration with end users to ensure that it would be useful.²³ [ETPT]
 - Greening Australia held a workshop attended by Environmental Trust administration which brought together key public and private stakeholders at Mount Annan Botanic Gardens to talk about the seed supply issue. This workshop was very informative in helping shape the proposal. [ETPT]
 - The Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) held a Seed Roundtable at Mount Annan Botanic Gardens in August 2018 to discuss the issues raised at the Trust workshop with a broader range of participants.²⁴. At this meeting it was agreed by all parties that the Florabank Guidelines should be updated, and standards developed alongside those guidelines.²⁵

I feel like the NSW Environmental Trust engaged the right organisation to lead this work, and their networks and expertise provided the right intel for engaging the most relevant players in the native seed network. [SR]

²¹Muller Enterprise on behalf of NSW Environmental Trust (2018) NSW Environmental Trust Major Projects Prospectus: Investment Opportunities Report - Genetic considerations for resilient ecological restoration.

²² NSW Environmental Trust: Team brainstorm session on outcomes logic (undated)

²³ Ibid

²⁴ Martin Driver (2018) Major Projects Grant: Project Snapshot - Business Plan (Attachment)

²⁵ Email communication: Summary of seed forum notes - 8.2.2019

- The scoping phase concluded with the Trust approval of the prospectus. A meeting was then held with key stakeholders to agree on the lead organisation to deliver the Project.

It was identified that ANPC was the lead organisation driving change and research in this area. After investigation and vetting, ET staff began co-design of the Stage 1 proposal with ANPC, with a view to ANPC being a grant recipient (although this was dependent on ET board approval). [TA]

On a scale of 1 to 5 interview respondents rated consultation with the right stakeholders as 3.9 (n=7). Survey respondents rated the Trust's consultation to develop the business case for the Project as 3.4 on average (n=6).

The design addressed the identified need

The planning and scoping of the Project was effective for delivering the intended outcomes focused on identifying and understanding industry needs as they existed prior to the delivery of the Project.

- Stakeholders acknowledged that the Project's scope was clearly defined during the design phase.
- This assessment was made with an understanding that there were limits to the Project's capacity to address intractable issues in the native seed industry that became apparent during its delivery.

I almost consider phase one to be the plan to plan the solution, so the Roadmap, then the process was to develop the roadmap, which is the solution. So ... it wasn't a solution to the problem, it was sort of a solution to the process of getting to that next step. [TA]

Note also that scope and design quite deliberately did NOT address all major issues in the industry, partly because some of these only took definitive shape during the course of the Project as a result of practitioner participation, and partly because some were intractable within the Project's natural limits and timeframe (e.g. licensing and harvest-recording issues). [SR]

It was widely understood that there were major gaps in understanding the needs of the native seed industry, which prompted the design of the Project. The Business Plan described the Project as an "investigative piece" to understand complex problems.

The issues are complex and there are significant gaps in our understanding of the contributing factors to this problem, and the roles of different market participants. Therefore, an investigative piece, in collaboration with a consortium of industry partners is proposed to ensure that future action to address these problems is based on evidence, and that future solutions are collaboratively designed.²⁶

However, there is conflicting evidence about the extent to which stakeholder needs were addressed by the design of the project. Firstly, the capacity of different stakeholder groups to contribute during the scoping phase may have influenced the design. Survey respondents (n=10) rated the scope and design as 3.3 (average) in its ability to address all major issues facing the native seed industry.

²⁶ NSW Environmental Trust (2018) Major projects Grant: Project Snapshot – Business Plan, Revision Approved 2 September 2020

The diversity of stakeholders within the native seed industry and the capacity of some groups to participate created challenges for the design and delivery of the Project. In particular, practitioners such as seed collectors had limited capacity to engage with the Project.

I'd say [the consultation was] as representative as it could be, given the constraints of people's time and – yeah, mostly it's their time, which is their money. Seed collectors aren't rich people, so they can't really take days off to go to workshops here, there and everywhere, but I think doing that codesign thing was really helpful because it does show where all the bottlenecks are for different people, and so then they're the bottlenecks you have to work on. [CM]

[Stakeholders] who do some really great work on research and conservation of seed conservation, they're very, very different to people who [collect seed] for a living or in the regions. They're much better resourced, they have time [...]. [But] we're not paid by the government. And so, there's a disproportional weighting of their voice in the Project compared to people who are out in the field doing [practical]) things. And so, therefore, you get a bit biased towards those sorts of practices. [CM]

Interviewees rated the scope and design of the project highly, with 8 interviewees giving an average of 4.63 on a scale of 1 to 5. Survey respondents (n=10) rated 'the scope and design of the Project ensured the participation of key Native Seed industry stakeholders' as 3.7 on average and 'the scope and design of the Project reflected a good understanding of Native Seed Industry issues' as 3.8 on average.

Concerns about whether the Project design was sufficient to achieve all intended outcomes arose during the Project's delivery. This is when it became apparent that there was a need to establish and build trust across the diverse stakeholder groups. This was critical for achieving Ultimate Outcome 2 which sought better agreement and coordination across the industry and Ultimate Outcome 4 which required agreement on the guidance materials from practitioners. Specifically, respondents highlighted issues with the levels of engagement from government members of the Consortium which had implications for the quality of outputs and outcomes achieved.

I don't think you could have improved the original scoping. I think if we could have developed a greater trust with some of the stakeholders, and they were mainly government stakeholders. [HS1]

From memory, the level of engagement from members [of the Consortium] was quite low. In particular, it was difficult to engage OEH staff. This was important because many of the reforms needed were dependent on changes in government policies and/or procedures. However, there did not appear to be much of an appetite for change in this area and members did not push the agenda of the group out across the agency as we'd hoped. [TA]

Further, for some respondents, the Project design did not go far enough to ensure the outputs would lead to the production of high quality seeds. However, this was beyond the initial scoping discussions for the project.

I think there's more information available to people to make good choices, but there is still a massive shortfall in the right type of native seed with the Project. So, it's not just the fault of this Project, but there's some broader contextual stuff that is required to inform demand that would allow supply to increase, but it hasn't unblocked the fundamental problem, which is the right seed or the right quality in the right quantity. It's moved, it's certainly moved things along in a practical way, but possibly drifted a bit too academic just because of the nature of people having to retreat

to their bedrooms and their offices and do lots of stuff studying, rather than talking to each other.
[RC]

Budgeted expenditure reflected the scope of the Project

Budgeted expenditure was appropriate to deliver on the scope and outcomes identified for the Project. However, most stakeholders raised concerns about the Project scope which meant that, although achieving its intended outcomes, the Project has not contributed to sustainable outcomes. This would have required consideration of budgeted expenditure to address some of the needs identified.

At the time, stakeholders were telling us that action was urgently needed in the seed industry, however there was no clear path for investment due to the lack of knowledge about what specifically was needed and where. With hindsight I think the design was good, however, I might have pushed harder to ensure funds and Trust board support were secured at the outset for Stage 2. [TA]

2.3.2. Project delivery

Key finding

The Project was efficiently delivered and well-managed by the grantee. The right organisation delivered the Project with the Project team undertaking broad consultations and managing the contributions from stakeholders across the native seed industry, drawing on extensive established relationships within the industry. However, the grantee organisation would have needed further support to meet the Trust's administrative requirements which necessitated substantial capacity the grantee organisation did not have.

While the Project had been scoped and co-designed with the Trust, issues emerged during implementation. Some changes were made to ensure efficient delivery and respond to external events, however, there were no mechanisms available to modify the design to address issues arising during delivery. These included issues of governance and managing stakeholders' expectations well. This may have impacted the sustainability of the outputs. It led some key stakeholders to have unrealistic expectations around the Project scope resulting in frustration across the industry.

Delivery of planned outputs

Overall, the outputs delivered by the Project were of a high quality and represented appropriate rigour. The Business Plan lists six outputs/deliverables for the Project.²⁷ Five planned outputs were delivered including:

- Establishment of the Healthy Seeds Consortium – October 2019
- NSW Native Seed Survey – July 2019
- Australian Native Seed Survey Report – January 2020
- Review and update of the Florabank Guidelines – August 2021
- Healthy Seeds Roadmap – November 2021

²⁷ NSW Environmental Trust (2018) Major projects Grant: Project Snapshot – Business Plan, Revision Approved 2 September 2020

Overall, respondents to the evaluation (n=15) (interviewees and survey respondents) indicated the Project outputs were of a high quality.

Project management by the grantee

The project manager and grantee organisation brought substantial knowledge and experience across the sector to the Project's engagement activities. The project manager also identified team members with substantial experience to manage the delivery of the Project's outputs.

Due to their extensive knowledge of the native seed industry the project manager was in a good position to identify appropriate members of the Consortium.

Particularly the public consultation phase was really incredibly valuable and probably could have only been facilitated by someone with [the project manager's] status in the sector because he'd sort of worked across research, practice, not for profit because he had been the instigator of seed banks. He had a lot of trusted relationships and there were people, particularly the commercial operators, I think, were willing to talk to him in a way they would not have been with other people, so I think he was really able to get a really broad view of different segments of the sector, but particularly those small business owners. [CM]

The project manager also undertook the survey of NSW native seed collectors, suppliers and users from July 2019 to collect available seed data and outline the identified barriers and opportunities for the NSW native seed sector. The survey involved extensive communications between the Project team and seed industry operators and collaborators to discuss options and possible interventions for the sector. Data from the survey was integrated with the SPA Audit.

The SPA Audit was a recommended action in the Australian Native Seed Survey Report ²⁸. The project manager obtained an agreement from the Trust to negotiate directly with the Murray Local Land Services to complete the audit ²⁹. Murray Local Land Services (LLS) had significant experience having established and run SPAs over a number of years.

The audit was completed by staff of the Murray LLS who had significant practical experience with SPAs from January 2020, and combined with data from regional LLS on seed supplies and services³⁰.

Through both of our extensive networks, we developed up lists for the various catchments in New South Wales and contacted individuals, Landcare groups, Local Land Services, there were a couple of individuals who did seed collecting and so we had a very comprehensive list that I worked through. [HS]

Stakeholders indicated that the audit was designed to be a practical document built on the experience and an understanding of the practicalities of on ground work.

It was a practical document for people who are involved in restoration work and that was pretty important because I often find that sometimes there's a lot of work done in the field of science with restoration, but when it comes down to doing practical on-ground work, they don't fit. I really think that the report was for anyone to pick up and be able to understand and use those

²⁸ Hancock, N., Gibson-Roy, P., Driver, M. and Broadhurst, L. (2020). Ibid

²⁹ Email communication: Direct negotiation request for SPA audit contract - 31.10.2019

³⁰ NSW Environmental Trust (2020) 2019-20 Healthy Seeds Annual Report Version 6

recommendations in a very practical way: a landholder, a seed bank coordinator, a Landcare facilitator. [HS]

The Business Plan originally budgeted for the updating of the Florabank Guidelines to be contracted to consultants. However, the grantee employed a seed scientist to project manage the updating. This is likely to have had efficiencies and advantages with the Florabank project manager working closely with the Healthy Seeds project manager and drawing on their substantial knowledge and relationships with contributors used to update the various Florabank modules.

[The Florabank project manager] coordinated the review and update of the Florabank Guidelines. This enabled the appointment of first authors, co-writers and reviewers for all 15 modules of the guidelines. The Florabank Partnership overviewed the development of these guidelines through to completion.³¹

The design and budgeted expenditure for the Project also indicated that the Healthy Seeds Roadmap would be contracted to consultants. However, the project manager undertook this task and was supported by the project manager contracted for the Florabank Guidelines update. The use of ANPC staff to manage these projects is likely to have been efficient and effective due to their substantial experience and contacts within the native seed industry. Administratively, project variations were required to accommodate the budget requirements for staff and salary rather than consultants.³²

The grantee and other industry stakeholders contributing to the Roadmap appear to have lacked the experience with and understanding about the capacity of government agencies to respond to recommendations in the Healthy Seeds Roadmap. This lack of knowledge about how government agencies operate and the limits on their capacity to act appears to have led to ongoing frustration within the industry about the lack of action to address industry needs that were identified during the project.

It's a tricky space to manage where government... shouldn't be seen as particularly driving these things without the input of non-government organisations and expert stakeholders and so their engagement is really important. But then there's a sense that I get from non-government organisations that their involvement through government could be seen as ... not so helpful as if we were to do it ourselves. But then again non-government organisations at the time felt like parts of government weren't doing enough in this sort of space to keep up with where the native seed industry is or should be and so there's a definite ongoing conversation and collaboration that needs to occur between the government and these types of stakeholders [TA]

Recommendation 1

Where it is anticipated that Trust-funded projects may identify issues that have implications for government policies and responsibilities, due consideration should be made to effectively communicate the Trust's position and ensure stakeholders are aware of the remit of the Trust in these contexts. This approach will help manage industry stakeholder expectations regarding what can be requested and achieved by government agencies.

In making this recommendation, it is noted that there are cases where grant outputs may highlight areas for policy or legislative reforms. However, any activities undertaken by stakeholders to campaign for

³¹ NSW Environmental Trust (2021) Project Final Report Version 3

³² Email communication: ANPC to Trust Report on Factual Findings 20-04-22

such changes would be outside the scope of the Trust funding, which precludes grants being used to change policy or legislation.

The grantee organisation also lacked the capacity and capabilities needed to meet Trust administrative requirements. This was understood and accepted by Trust administration who provided administrative support to enable the Project team to focus on delivering the activities and outputs and ensuring outcomes could be effectively measured.

I think that's one of the positive parts of the Trust's Major Projects program is that collaborative work where we are able to assist grantees in that administrative side of things. I think the split in how it worked out was quite good to enable the grantee to be able to continue doing their stuff and not get too burdened by the reporting requirements and other government administrative things.
[TA]

Delivery budget

The Project was delivered within budget, with funds returned to the Trust for the final output (the Stakeholder Forum), resulting in the Project coming in under budget.

Two variations to the budget were approved. While not affecting the overall funds needed, the variations were required to accommodate the use of salaried staff rather than consultants to undertake the development of two outputs: updating the Florabank Guidelines and the Healthy Seeds Roadmap. It was anticipated that the work completed by Project team members would be more efficient than contracting consultants who may not have the same industry knowledge and existing relationships with industry stakeholders. These changes were approved retrospectively.³³

*The Trust was not supportive of the variation to reduce expenditure on consultancies. However, it was submitted retrospectively and approved; the funding agreement was not explicit about retrospective variations.*³⁴

The budget was developed based on the assumption that a substantial in-kind contribution would be feasible for all stakeholders who contributed to the Project. While this was the case for all salaried contributors from government agencies and large NGOs, it was not possible for practitioners (such as seed collectors) who are reliant on income from activities in field. As the practitioners did not receive reimbursement for their involvement in the Project, (including Consortium membership and providing input to the updated Florabank Guidelines), their involvement was limited. This has resulted in the outputs not fully addressing their needs.

Recommendation 2

When designing projects that would benefit from the participation of practitioners³⁵, consideration should be given to some level of remuneration for their involvement in consortium and reference group activities beyond funded activities. This would assist them to produce project outputs without a subsequent loss of income from their primary business activities.

³³ Email communication: ANPC to Trust - Healthy Seeds timeline variation - 8 March 2021

³⁴ Acquittal Recommendation Form Healthy Seeds, dated 22 September 2023

³⁵ This report defines practitioners as seed collectors, and other commercial or volunteer participants.

Delivery timeframe

The Project was delivered on time after an approved extension. The Project experienced a number of delays largely resulting from the need to respond to external factors including alignment with Greening Australia's Project Phoenix and COVID-19 restrictions.

The Final Report³⁶ indicates that '*given the constraints and delays of COVID-19, and the need for a 6-month project extension, the project was extremely timely and delivered on time*'.

There were early delays approving the business plan. This resulted from the grantee not realising they were required to produce a business plan based on the Trust's Business Plan template.

The Project team delayed the delivery of some Project outputs to facilitate alignment of activities and outputs of the Healthy Seeds project with the Commonwealth funded, Project Phoenix. This was to ensure there was no duplication and maximise the outcomes from both projects. Minor delays also occurred where contributors were responsible for producing outputs for both projects.³⁷

Some changes were also made to the delivery timeframe of several outputs to ensure efficient delivery and respond to external events.

Updating of the Florabank Guidelines was delayed for a number of reasons. The COVID-19 restrictions delayed consultations. Several contributors worked on both the Healthy Seeds project and Greening Australia's Project Phoenix outputs which added to their workloads.³⁸ Also, the in-kind nature of contributions often meant contributors had other priorities to meet first.

The completion of the Healthy Seeds Roadmap was similarly affected by these delays. There was a need to ensure there was no duplication between the Healthy Seed project outputs and the activities and outputs from Greening Australia's Project Phoenix. The Project team also undertook more extensive consultation than originally planned to seek the support and buy-in of agencies who would ultimately be responsible for implementing some recommendations the Roadmap proposed.³⁹

It was intended that feedback about the Roadmap would be collected at the Stakeholder Forum. However, as the Forum had been re-scheduled multiple times due to COVID-19 restrictions, the Project obtained endorsement of the Roadmap from the Consortium on 21 October 2021⁴⁰. With the agreement of the Trust, the Stakeholder Forum was ultimately cancelled due to ongoing COVID-19 restrictions.

The delivery of the SPA Audit survey also incurred some delays. It was impacted by drought conditions, followed by the widespread and extended fire season of 2019-2020. These events reduced the capacity of Local Land Services across NSW to respond to requests for information for the audit. There were also delays due to the planned seed collecting activities of stakeholders to be consulted that coincided with audit consultations. Further the COVID-19 restrictions of 2020 required remote consultations rather than the planned field visits.^{41 42}

Because of COVID, I wasn't able to go out into the field. Originally, I was going to go out into the field and investigate different areas to see whether they were true SPAs, whether they'd been set

³⁶ NSW Environmental Trust (2021) Project Final Report Version 3

³⁷ Email communication: ANPC to Trust - Healthy Seeds timeline variation - 8 March 2021

³⁸ Email communication: ANPC to Trust - Healthy Seeds timeline variation - 8 March 2021

³⁹ Ibid

⁴⁰ NSW Environmental Trust (2021) Project Final Report Version 3

⁴¹ Ibid

⁴² Item 2 – Draft Minutes – Healthy Seeds meeting 23 July 2020

up along the guidelines, which [the] Florabank [guidelines] had set years ago, so I wasn't able to do that because of COVID. [HS]

The draft SPA audit report was included for endorsement in the agenda of the Consortium meeting of 23 July 2020⁴³. The final SPA Audit Report was incorporated in the endorsed Healthy Seeds Roadmap.⁴⁴

Stakeholders engaged during delivery

The Project engaged a wide range of stakeholders throughout delivery. This was initially designed to enhance the quality of the outputs. However, issues were identified relating to the skills and experience of some key stakeholders, the capacity of some stakeholders to contribute to the outputs, and stakeholder expectations for the Project. Unfortunately, there were little to no mechanisms in place to resolve these issues which may impact the sustainability of the outputs.

A press release for the Florabank Guidelines indicated that “over 40 national and international experts including practitioners, agency staff and researchers generously gave their time and expertise.”⁴⁵ Contributions of the authors of the Florabank Guidelines were in-kind. Reimbursements were not available for seed collectors who are self-employed or small business owners reliant on earning income from field work. This is likely to have limited their capacity to contribute to both the Guidelines and to the project as a whole.

The Florabank Guidelines are mostly written by researchers and therefore has a heavy emphasis on the sort of things that they think are important, but not enough emphasis on really practical business applicable methods and things. So, a lot of the recommendations in the Florabank Guidelines are just going to get ignored because they're just too onerous for somebody running a business to do. So that's a bit of a shame that we couldn't get more practitioners involved.... If you're asking a seed collector to contribute and you value their opinion, then you pay them for their time so they can fully participate. [CM]

While acknowledging the scientific rigour that underpinned the research resources used to update the Florabank Guidelines and the significant academic experience of many of the contributors, concerns were expressed that the guidelines have been revised without adequate opportunities for practitioners to interpret and test them.

I do believe that the Florabank Guidelines now need to be more clearly interpreted for practitioners... The decision to have academics write the chapters without them being edited for clarity by say [Industry specialist] was suboptimal. This does not take away from the fact that the document is nonetheless highly valuable to the industry. [SR]

Recommendation 3

During project design and the development of the delivery schedule, ensure that practitioners have the opportunity to participate in relevant project activities, including involvement in the consortium and contributing to project outputs. These should not conflict with their major business activities (such as seed collection periods).

⁴³ Healthy Seeds / Florabank Consortium Meeting Minutes - Progress Status - dated September 2020.

⁴⁴ NSW Environmental Trust (2021) Project Final Report Version 3DOC122

⁴⁵ ANPC 2021, Healthy Seeds for Resilient Restoration - Florabank Media Release

Recommendation 4

Ensure practitioners are involved in the co-design, and subsequent testing/piloting of any resources that are intended to be used in the field. This will ensure the outputs are practical and relevant increasing the likelihood of adoption.

The Healthy Seeds Consortium was established in October 2019⁴⁶ and met 11 times during the Project delivery period. A Terms of Reference (TOR) was developed and endorsed by Consortium members⁴⁷.

Consortium members came from the following organisations: ANPC, Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney, Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE)—National Parks and Wildlife Service, Saving Our Species, Murray Local Land Services; Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), Greening Australia, Australian Seed Bank Partnership, Australian Association of Bush Regenerators (AABR) and Society for Ecological Restoration Australasia (SERA).

Two interviewees reflected that, once the project was underway, it became apparent that some members of the Consortium did not have direct experience of the native seed industry or an understanding of its contribution to its role on ecological restoration in NSW. This was reflected in the final project report which also pointed to conflicts of interest for some Consortium members and their organisations which may have impacted on the issues or industry needs that were considered and identified by the Project and ultimately included in the Roadmap⁴⁸.

We thought that we had the right agencies and the right people, but once we got underway [we] realised that the understanding was limited and the grasp of what was needed was limited. Well, it's not that they're not the right people, it's just that they just don't have the experience and I don't think the people exist in the departments. [HS]

I suppose what I did see through the delivery of the project was that I suppose probably more from the government side, the stakeholders might have been the right roles, but I don't think there was a lot of investment from the individuals within those roles. It seemed to be more like a turn up for the meeting, do your time and then move on and don't think about it until the next meeting. So, I'm not sure that they were really able to get the traction within government that the project really needed. [CM]

A considerable proportion of the Consortium makeup did not have any direct involvement or understanding of the native seed sector or practical consideration of its role or importance to NRM outcomes. At least some individuals and organisations had conflicts of interest which were never entirely resolved and impacted on some directions of investigation and issues of importance. As a result, some Roadmap recommendations may not be implemented by some agencies.⁴⁹

To enable the Roadmap to be published, a statement was included in the published document advising the recommendations contained in the document do not necessarily represent the views of the agencies and organisations that consortium members represent.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Healthy Seeds 2019- 20 Annual Report as submitted to the Trust

⁴⁷ ANPC Healthy Seeds Project Consortium Terms of Reference and governance Guidelines – Interim Draft (Undated); Healthy Seeds Consortium Meeting, Draft Minutes 7 May 2020

⁴⁸ NSW Environmental Trust (2021) Project Final Report Version 3

⁴⁹ Ibid

⁵⁰ Email communication: ANPC - draft agenda and docs - 20.10.2021. p.5

This statement was necessary to temper expectations about the recommendations being aligned with government policy.

I'd raised concerns about the optics of... government employees looking to endorse something and, well, I'd already known that some of the things being driven by the non-government sector were pretty wildly different to how the government saw it. So, the approach wasn't necessarily to change what the Roadmap would look like, but just to temper expectations around the level of endorsement. So, essentially, it was a Roadmap that was informed by the Consortium, not necessarily endorsed in an official capacity, which I think is a sensible outcome. [TA]

A common observation from evaluation respondents was that the recommendations included in the Roadmap identified areas to be addressed rather than providing solutions that could be taken up by industry stakeholders and implemented without further discussion and planning.

When thinking of the specific recommendations from the Roadmap, I think they are more conversation starters, rather than the actual solutions. I think the practicalities of the items put forward in a realistic situation in the government may require a different avenue or pathway to achieving certain things and so what may have been recommended in the Roadmap may not be the potential solution or final output.... But it definitely is a very useful piece and does sort of kick-start that process as a foundation of providing what are the issues, what are we looking at, how did they come about this, why is that the case, what are potential options to be done. [TA]

Neither the Project design nor the Consortium ToR incorporated mechanisms that would have enabled the Project team and the Consortium (as the body responsible for the Project's governance) to review or modify the Consortium role or membership to accommodate these lessons during delivery. Further, when conflicts of interest delayed the endorsement and publication of the Roadmap, Consortium members from government agencies appear to have informally negotiated a solution to enable publication.

My feeling was that we changed the Consortium's function with respect to the actual Roadmap, because it put some of the government members in a pretty awkward position.... But that was always a sticking point for me, that some of the things that the consortium was being asked to approve, created a potential conflict, and it sort of was above their pay grade.... [TA]

Recommendation 5

When designing projects, consider building in a six-monthly or mid-term process evaluation to review a project's design and implementation to enable project teams to make modifications that could improve the appropriateness of the project's design and effectiveness of the project delivery. Process evaluations form part of the NSW Treasury Policy and Guidelines (Evaluation TPG22-22). Evaluation TPG22-22 indicate that process evaluations can be designed "to examine the contexts in which the initiative is operating, identify who the initiative is reaching and their experiences, identify issues with delivery, review appropriateness (to needs, community and conditions), assess efficiency, and provide information for process improvements." Further, the Guidelines suggest that process evaluation can be

undertaken early to check if an initiative is being implemented as intended, or to support outcome evaluation by helping distinguish implementation issues from design issues."⁵¹

One area where the project manager and the Consortium were not successful during the project was in communicating the scope of the project and managing industry expectations about the project. This issue has continued and was reflected in responses from different agency stakeholders to the evaluation.

I think it's an expectation management exercise, being clear about what the outcome is and what the potential steps after are going to be and then a communications exercise in the sense of when this is being implemented and the grantee is putting publications out there, that it is clear that this is not non-government working with government to change government policy, it's everyone - it's a collaborative effort to say what is the future of seeds and how can we get there? (TA]

2.4. Value for money

The value for money assessment presented in this section is an assessment of good resource use, that is, whether the resources used to deliver the program contributed to good outcomes. This evaluation examined four domains to assess value for money. Each domain is made up of different criteria which inform judgements:

- Economy: Were the project implementation costs efficient? Could resources have been allocated more efficiently?
- Efficiency: How efficient were the planned project activities delivered?
- Effectiveness, cost effectiveness: To what extent were the ultimate outcomes of the project achieved?
- Equity: To what extent have the benefits of the project been shared equitably among ecological restoration stakeholders in NSW?

The evaluation assessed a number of criteria in each domain. The criteria and description of the standards of performance against each of the domains can be found in Appendix 2: value for money. Judgements against each domain are included below.

Key finding

Project delivery represented good value for money delivering the intended outcomes. The Project team showed economy implementing the project and the planned Project activities were largely delivered efficiently within the context of external challenges and opportunities. The main area where the Project's value may have been further improved was through ensuring practitioners, who were expected to be major beneficiaries, equitably shared the benefits from the Project outcomes.

Overall assessment

Table 4 Value for money assessment

⁵¹ NSW Treasury Policy and Guidelines: Evaluation TPG22-22, p13

Domain	Excellent	Good	Adequate	Room for improvement
Economy <i>Project implementation costs are efficient</i>				
Efficiency <i>Planned project activities are efficiently delivered</i>				
Effectiveness <i>Achievement of the project's ultimate outcomes</i>				
Equity <i>Benefits shared equitably among stakeholders</i>				

2.4.1. Economy – project implementation costs

Rating: Good

Identifying suitable consortium members and agreeing on the Consortium's TOR was undertaken efficiently, with some adjustment required to Consortium membership affected by agency changes. Likewise, administration processes appear to have been straightforward and investments in resources led to high quality outputs overall. However, challenges arose within the Consortium when approving outputs. Specifically, the Roadmap. These challenges were overcome informally but delayed publication.

Processes used to establish the Healthy Seeds Consortium were mostly efficient. Problems encountered were efficiently addressed.

The establishment of the Consortium drew on the combined knowledge and relationships of the Healthy Seeds project manager who identified industry representatives and Trust administration to assist in identifying suitable agency staff. Communications between the project manager and the Trust were required to ensure appropriate agency staff were included in the Consortium after changes were made to the structure of the lead government agency, DPIE⁵². The Consortium met for the first time in October 2019. A draft TOR was provided for the second meeting of the Consortium where it was endorsed, with the finalised TOR distributed for the next meeting⁵³.

Issues that arose with the Consortium membership occurred during delivery when agency representatives were unable to endorse the Healthy Seeds Roadmap recommendations. As such they have been assessed as part of the Efficiency assessment.

⁵² Email communication: ANPC - proposed Healthy Seeds Consortium Membership - 8.8.2019

⁵³ Healthy Seeds Consortium Meeting, Draft Minutes 13 February 2020; Healthy Seeds Consortium Meeting, Draft Minutes 7 May 2020

The RFQ administration process and engagement of consultants were mostly efficient (SPA audit, Florabank Guidelines update and Roadmap RFQs). Problems encountered were efficiently addressed.

The ANPC used established processes to engage the project manager and seed researcher employed to undertake the project management for two outputs⁵⁴. Engagement of consultants for these two outputs (the Florabank guidelines and the Roadmap) did not take place. Engagement of Murray LLS appears to have been efficient, due to existing relationships between the project manager and the contracted LLS.

The Consortium ToR enabled the efficient approval of outputs most of the time. Problems encountered were efficiently addressed.

The conflict-of-interest provisions in the Consortium ToR⁵⁵ were not adequate to provide a clear process to resolve a conflict-of-interest issue for government members of the Consortium. These members were unable to endorse the Roadmap due to a lack of authority and possible conflicts of interest within their agencies. While the issue appears to have been addressed informally through discussions, it demonstrated that the TOR required a clearer process to address issues that might (and did) arise.

Investments were largely appropriate (e.g., paid staff, volunteers, materials) to enable the efficient delivery of high-quality outputs.

Project team members managed the delivery of the Florabank Guidelines and Roadmap. While this increased salary costs, it reduced budgeted consultancy costs, having no impact on the overall budget. It is unclear if this change from consultant delivery to project team affected the delivery of high-quality outputs. However, it is likely that the salaried staff had similar or superior knowledge and experience of the native seed industry than available consultancies. Further, the quality of the outputs may have been affected by external events, such as COVID-19 restrictions reducing face to face consultation opportunities. However, the changed consultation processes that were required during COVID-19 were appropriate for ensuring the Project could be delivered.

The Project used in-kind support from a range of research organisations to develop and review project outputs. This was appropriate where there was organisational support that could bear the cost of these contributions. However, certain stakeholders, such as seed collectors, could only make limited contributions to the project due to their capacity to contribute their time without payment.

The Project delivered on its objectives but would have benefited from greater resourcing to enable more people to deliver the required work. [SR]

2.4.2. Efficiency – Delivery of project activities

Rating: Good

The use of Project team members to manage project activities in place of consultants led to efficiencies. While the reduced opportunities to engage with stakeholders face-to face due to COVID-19 restrictions may have affected the quality of both the engagement and the outputs from the engagement, there are likely to have been efficiencies from using online consultation methods. For example, online

⁵⁴ Email communication: ANPC to TRUST - employment arrangements for staff - 9.8.2019

⁵⁵ ANPC Healthy Seeds Project Consortium Terms of Reference and governance Guidelines – Interim Draft (Undated)

consultations by the project team member based in Western Australia ensured their contribution to the project was time and cost efficient.

ANPC administration of contracts to complete the SPA audit, review of Florabank Guidelines and Roadmap was mostly efficient. Delays encountered only had minor consequences.

The contract for the SPA audit undertaken by Murray LLS was set up efficiently after the ANPC received approval to negotiate directly with the LLS to contract a person with the required skills to undertake the audit⁵⁶. Contracts for the Florabank Guidelines and Roadmap were not required due to the work being completed within ANPC. Position descriptions were provided for these roles⁵⁷.

The Healthy Seeds Consortium efficiently supported, guided, and endorsed Project deliverables most of the time. Problems encountered were efficiently addressed.

The endorsement of deliverables by the Consortium was efficient for all but one output, the Healthy Seeds Roadmap. There were delays in reaching agreement on the direction and proposed interventions to address identified issues in the NSW seed sector which would enable the Consortium to endorse the Roadmap. The recommendations in the Roadmap were only endorsed by government members when a caveat was included in the Roadmap. Agreement was reached by discussion among Consortium members on this solution, but these discussions delayed the endorsement and publication of the Roadmap⁵⁸.

The Healthy Seeds Consortium supported the development of quality outputs.

While the evidence shows that the Healthy Seeds Consortium supported the development of quality outputs, the ways in which it did so and to what extent is unclear. Outputs were reviewed by the reference committees prior to Consortium approval. While the outputs were regarded as high quality, their focus and content may not have adequately addressed the needs of practitioners in the information and advice provided. Practitioner needs and how to best address them do not appear to be considered in Consortium discussions when endorsing the outputs.

Outputs were delivered mostly on time and budget, with only minor delays and no additional expenditure.

The Project was delivered on budget. Two variations to the budget were approved. The Project Final report stated “[the] project was extremely cost-effective given the extent of engagement, published outcomes and resources produced. Total expenditure was less than approved costs.”⁵⁹. The report also indicates that there was no scope for better use of resources under the circumstances.

While not affecting the overall funds needed, variations were required to accommodate the use of salaried staff rather than consultants to undertake the development of two outputs: updating the Florabank Guidelines and the Healthy Seeds Roadmap. It was anticipated that the work completed by Project team members would be more efficient than contracting consultants who may not have the same industry knowledge and existing relationships with industry stakeholders. These changes were approved retrospectively.

⁵⁶ Healthy Seeds Consortium Meeting, Draft Minutes 31 October 2019

⁵⁷ Florabank Guidelines Project Manager - Position Description; Healthy Seeds Project Manager – Position Description

⁵⁸ NSW Environmental Trust (2020) 2019-20 Healthy Seeds Annual Report Version 6; NSW Environmental Trust (2021) Project Final Report Version 3

⁵⁹ NSW Environmental Trust (2021) Project Final Report Version 3, p.16

While there were delays delivering outputs, these delays were largely due to the Project responding to external risks and events. Early delays were experienced during the design and planning phase with the finalisation of the business plan.

It is also likely that there were delays in producing the outputs with most contributors providing in-kind support and prioritising their ongoing work. Further, for practitioners there are specific periods when their seed collecting took priority.

The Project mostly identified and adapted to external risks and events (e.g., COVID-19) to deliver outputs.

Two significant external risks and events were identified during delivery with the Project adapting to ensure the outputs were delivered.

COVID-19 restrictions commenced in March 2020 and continued throughout the Project's delivery. The limitations on face-to-face engagement may have impacted on the quality of the support received from the Consortium with all meetings held by telephone or Zoom. The level of agreement and coordination that could be achieved remotely across the Consortium may also have been affected detrimentally. Most industry consultations for the SPA Audit were online rather than in field. Plans to update the Florabank Guidelines originally included workshops across NSW. The information needed was collected through telephone calls and emails, which may have reduced the level of collaboration possible to produce the various modules and the input of practitioners to those modules.

[We] wanted to run workshops in New South Wales, and it was just not possible because of COVID, but that was definitely something that we had wanted to do. [The Project Manager] ended up having to call a lot of people and I basically just did everything by email in terms of the consultation because we were just unable to hold workshops [HS].

2.4.3. Effectiveness – Achievement of ultimate outcomes

Rating: Good

The assessment of the extent the Project achieved its ultimate outcomes is detailed in Section 2.1. Evidence to support the rating given for each outcome is summarised below.

Effective and efficient interventions to improve the genetic health and reliable supply of native seeds were mostly identified.

The proposed interventions were initially identified in The Australian Native Seed Survey Report⁶⁰ and further refined to include results from the SPA Audit and detailed in the Healthy Seeds Roadmap⁶¹. However, the Project team did not have the opportunity to ensure that this document fully identified the challenges for practitioners responsible for delivering reliable supply of native seeds, due to limited opportunities for practitioners to contribute to the Project overall and the cancelled Stakeholder forum which was expected to provide an occasion for participants from all sectors of the industry to discuss the Roadmap recommendations prior to its endorsement by the Consortium.

⁶⁰ Hancock, N., Gibson-Roy, P., Driver, M. and Broadhurst, L. (2020).

⁶¹ Martin Driver and Lucy Commander (2021) Healthy Seeds Roadmap. Ibid

Most industry and government stakeholders had agreement and coordination about the way forward for improving the genetic health and reliable supply of native seeds.

The Project detailed the way forward for improving genetic health and reliable supply of seeds in the Healthy Seeds Roadmap, drawing on other outputs from the Project including The Australian Native Seed Survey Report and the SPA Audit. While the Consortium endorsed the Roadmap, a further consultation process had been planned to engage with a broader range of industry stakeholders and the Stakeholder Forum. This did not occur due to delays associated with COVID-19 restrictions.

The evaluation was not able to determine if coordination on the way forward continued beyond the Project timeframe. While outside of the Project scope, the evidence suggests that progress was insufficient to enable industry stakeholders to progress the interventions detailed in the Roadmap. This was evidenced by industry stakeholders consistently expressing their frustrations that the Roadmap had not progressed.

The current governance structure of the native seed industry is mostly understood.

The native seed industry was described in The Australian Native Seed Survey Report as “an ad hoc group of individuals and businesses representing suppliers and primary users spanning a wide range of land managers and other users of native seed”.⁶² As such, the Project outputs, including The Australian Native Seed Survey Report and the Roadmap, have pointed to the need for greater coordination and leadership in the industry.

Practitioners are mostly accessing and utilising the up-to-date guidance for best practice native seed management.

There is evidence that practitioners are accessing the guidance materials available. However, the Project scope did not allow for extensive communication of the guidance materials. Further, there are questions about the extent to which some practitioners are utilising the materials, which are perceived by some to have an overly academic focus, making them challenging to use in the field.

2.4.4. Equity – Benefits equally shared among stakeholders

Rating: Adequate

The Project engaged multiple stakeholders but faced important limitations relating to small business and government participation. Although various sectors were involved to some extent, there were shortcomings including Project outputs not being effectively communicated or accessible to industry stakeholders.

The Project enabled some level of involvement across industry sectors to develop outputs.

The Project enabled broad consultation across industry sectors, but involvement in the Project from two important sectors was limited in two ways:

- Small businesses and seed collectors were limited in their capacity participate in the Project.
- The level of interest and involvement of government stakeholders did not enable consideration of future actions to implement the Roadmap (see page 27).

⁶² Hancock, N., Gibson-Roy, P., Driver, M. and Broadhurst, L. (2020). Ibid, p. ii

The Project enabled some level of involvement across industry sectors to distribute the benefits from Project outputs.

There was limited provision in the Project design to ensure the Project outputs were communicated and accessible to industry stakeholders. Further, the agreement and coordination achieved during the Project did not support the distribution of benefits as it was beyond the Project's scope to support the industry in efforts to address the needs identified.

2.5. Unintended outcomes

Key finding

While the Project was focused on NSW, there have been outcomes across the country with the Florabank Guidelines being accessed and used in other states. Within NSW, the Project identified regions that had the capacity to deliver restoration projects requiring access to healthy seeds.

Coordination between the Healthy Seeds project and Project Phoenix ensured the needs of the industry were identified and practical solutions to some of those needs could be addressed.

The career of the seed scientist who project managed the updating of the Florabank Guidelines was strengthened and advanced through their contribution to the Project.

The evaluation identified the following unintended outcomes that the Project contributed to:

- **Project outputs, and particularly the Florabank Guidelines, are being used nationally.** This outcome is unsurprising as many of the practices of the native seed industry are not contained within political borders. As the industry has moved its best practice focus from local provenance for restoration to improving the genetic health of seeds, the value of quality seed supplies from national sources is likely to become more important. This is particularly relevant when restoration efforts seek to ensure climate ready seeds are used.

I think the issues in the seed industry are not unique to New South Wales. A lot of them are national issues. There's perhaps different levels of importance or priorities in different states, I think, depending on who's demanding the seed. [HS]

- **By facilitating and streamlining the delivery of the Healthy Seeds project with Greening Australia's Project Phoenix, Trust administration ensured the two projects contributed to industry needs by concentrating their efforts at different levels.** While the focus of the Healthy Seeds Project was on identifying industry needs, Project Phoenix had a greater focus on addressing some of the industry's practical needs.
- The Project contributed to the **development of a seed scientist's career** by providing an extended project management role for updating the Florabank Guidelines which brought substantial experience to the seed scientist employed by ANPC. In an industry where other scientists have retired since the Project was completed, there is value in ensuring early career scientists are given similar opportunities.

I think we were part of [Seed Scientist's] development as a scientist, and as a researcher, and as a publisher. [CM]

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are flagged in the body of the report and consolidated here for easy reference. These recommendations have implications for both the Trust during the scoping and co-design phases of projects and for grantees planning and delivering projects.

1. Where it is anticipated that Trust-funded projects may identify issues that have implications for government policies and responsibilities, due consideration should be made to effectively communicate the Trust's position and ensure stakeholders are aware of the remit of the Trust in these contexts. This approach will help manage industry stakeholder expectations regarding what can be requested and achieved by government agencies.

In making this recommendation, it is noted that there are cases where grant outputs may highlight areas for policy or legislative reforms. However, any activities undertaken by stakeholders to campaign for such changes would be outside the scope of the Trust funding, which precludes grants being used to change policy or legislation.

2. When designing projects that would benefit from the participation of practitioners⁶³, consideration should be given to some level of remuneration for their involvement in consortium and reference group activities beyond funded activities. This would assist them to produce project outputs without a subsequent loss of income from their primary business activities.
3. During project design and the development of the delivery schedule, ensure that practitioners have the opportunity to participate in relevant project activities, including involvement in the consortium and contributing to project outputs. These should not conflict with their major business activities (such as seed collection periods).
4. Ensure practitioners are involved in the codesign, and subsequent testing/piloting of any resources that are intended to be used in the field. This will ensure the outputs are practical and relevant increasing the likelihood of adoption.
5. When designing projects, consider building in a six-monthly or mid-term process evaluation to review a project's design and implementation to enable project teams to make modifications that could improve the appropriateness of the project's design and effectiveness of the project delivery. Process evaluations form part of the NSW Treasury Policy and Guidelines (Evaluation TPG22-22). Evaluation TPG22-22 indicate that process evaluations can be designed "to examine the contexts in which the initiative is operating, identify who the initiative is reaching and their experiences, identify issues with delivery, review appropriateness (to needs, community and conditions), assess efficiency, and provide information for process improvements." Further, the Guidelines suggest that process evaluation can be undertaken early to check if an initiative is being implemented as intended, or to support outcome evaluation by helping distinguish implementation issues from design issues."⁶⁴

⁶³ This report defines practitioners as seed collectors, and other commercial or volunteer participants.

⁶⁴ NSW Treasury (2023) NSW Treasury Policy and Guidelines: Evaluation TPG22-22, p13.

APPENDIX A REFERENCES

This evaluation reviewed 276 documents, including planning and reporting documents, publications, communications documents (such as emails). The documents listed below are referenced in the report.

Name
NSW Environmental Trust (2020) 2019-20 Healthy Seeds Annual Report Version 6
Acquittal Recommendation Form Healthy Seeds, dated 22 September 2023
Email communication: ANPC - draft agenda and docs - 20.10.2021
Email communication: ANPC - proposed Healthy Seeds Consortium Membership - 8.8.2019
Email communication: ANPC to TRUST - Business Plan and budget comments, response to delays - 07.07.19
Email communication: ANPC to TRUST - employment arrangements for staff - 9.8.2019
Email communication: ANPC to Trust - Healthy Seeds timeline variation - 8 March 2021
Email communication: ANPC to Trust Report on Factual Findings 20-04-22
Martin Driver and Lucy Commander (2021) Healthy Seeds Roadmap. A strategic plan to improve native seed supply for ecological restoration in NSW (Draft). Report developed by the ANPC Healthy Seeds Project, funded by the NSW Environmental Trust
Martin Driver (2018) Major Projects Grant: Project Snapshot - Business Plan (Attachment)
NSW Environmental Trust (2018) Major projects Grant: Project Snapshot – Business Plan, Revision Approved 2 September 2020
Email communication: Direct negotiation request for SPA audit contract - 31.10.2019
NSW Environmental Trust (2021) Project Final Report Version 3
Florabank Guidelines Project Manager - Position Description
Healthy Seeds 2019- 20 Annual Report as submitted to the Trust
ANPC Healthy Seeds Project Consortium Terms of Reference and governance Guidelines – Interim Draft (Undated)
ANPC 2021, Healthy Seeds for Resilient Restoration - Florabank Media Release
Healthy Seeds Project Manager – Position Description
Item 2 – Draft Minutes – Healthy Seeds meeting 23 July 2020
Healthy Seeds / Florabank Consortium Meeting Minutes - Progress Status - dated September 2020.
Healthy Seeds Consortium Meeting, Draft Minutes 31 October 2019
Healthy Seeds Consortium Meeting, Draft Minutes 13 February 2020
Healthy Seeds Consortium Meeting, Draft Minutes 7 May 2020
Hancock, N., Gibson-Roy, P., Driver, M. and Broadhurst, L. (2020). The Australian Native Seed Sector Survey Report. Australian Network for Plant Conservation, Canberra.
Email communication: Summary of seed forum notes - 8.2.2019
NSW Environmental Trust: Team brainstorm session on outcomes logic (undated)
Muller Enterprise on behalf of NSW Environmental Trust (2018) NSW Environmental Trust Major Projects Prospectus: Investment Opportunities Report - Genetic considerations for resilient ecological restoration

APPENDIX B VALUE FOR MONEY RUBRICS

This section explains the criteria used to evaluate each aspect of value for money.

Rubric standard	Criteria
Economy	Project implementation costs are efficient.
Excellent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Processes used to establish the Healthy Seeds Consortium were efficient with no problems encountered. The RFQ administration process and engagement of consultants were efficient (SPA audit, Florabank Guideline update and Roadmap RFQs) with no problems encountered. The Consortium ToR consistently enabled the efficient approval of outputs with no problems encountered. Investments were consistently appropriate (e.g., paid staff, volunteers, materials) to enable the efficient delivery of high-quality outputs.
Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Processes used to establish the Healthy Seeds Consortium were mostly efficient. Problems encountered were efficiently addressed. The RFQ administration process and engagement of consultants were mostly efficient (SPA audit, Florabank Guideline update and Roadmap RFQs). Problems encountered were efficiently addressed. The Consortium ToR enabled the efficient approval of outputs most of the time. Problems encountered were efficiently addressed. Investments were appropriate most of the time (e.g., paid staff, volunteers, materials) to enable the efficient delivery of high-quality outputs.
Adequate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Processes used to establish the Healthy Seeds Consortium were somewhat efficient. Only some problems encountered were addressed effectively. The RFQ administration process and engagement of consultants were somewhat efficient (SPA audit, Florabank Guideline update and Roadmap RFQs). Only some problems encountered were addressed effectively. The Consortium ToR enabled the efficient approval of outputs only some of the time. Only some problems encountered were addressed efficiently. Investments were limited (e.g., paid staff, volunteers, materials) and may have compromised the efficient delivery of high-quality outputs
Area for Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There were several problems encountered with processes to establish the Healthy Seeds Consortium and they were not addressed efficiently. The administration of RFQs and engagement of consultants to produce outputs was disorganised and led to delays. Problems were not addressed efficiently. The Consortium ToR led to inefficiencies and delays in approving outputs. Problems were not addressed efficiently. Investments were inappropriate (e.g., paid staff, volunteers, materials) to enable the efficient delivery of high-quality outputs.
Efficiency	Planned Project activities are efficiently delivered.
Excellent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ANPC administration of contracts to complete the SPA audit, review of Florabank Guidelines and Roadmap was efficient with no delays. The Healthy Seeds Consortium efficiently supported, guided, and endorsed Project deliverables with no problems encountered. The Healthy Seeds Consortium supported the development of high-quality outputs. Outputs were delivered on time and budget. The Project consistently identified and adapted to external risks and events (e.g., COVID-19) to deliver outputs.

Rubric standard	Criteria
Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ANPC administration of contracts to complete the SPA audit, review of Florabank Guidelines and Roadmap was mostly efficient. Delays encountered only had minor consequences. The Healthy Seeds Consortium efficiently supported, guided, and endorsed Project deliverables most of the time. Problems encountered were efficiently addressed. The Healthy Seeds Consortium supported the development of quality outputs. Outputs were delivered mostly on time and budget, with only minor delays and additional expenditure. The Project mostly identified and adapted to external risks and events (e.g., COVID-19) to deliver outputs.
Adequate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ANPC administration of contracts to complete the SPA audit, review of Florabank Guidelines and Roadmap was somewhat efficient. Some delays encountered had significant consequences. The Healthy Seeds Consortium was somewhat efficient at supporting, guiding, and endorsing Project deliverables. Only some problems encountered were efficiently addressed. The Healthy Seeds Consortium supported the development of outputs, but their quality was not always adequate. Outputs were delivered somewhat on time and budget, with some delays and additional expenditure. The Project identified and adapted to external risks and events (e.g., COVID-19) to deliver outputs somewhat efficiently with some risks that were not identified.
Area for improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inefficiencies in the administration of contracts led to significant delays in the delivery of outputs. Inefficiencies in the Healthy Seeds Consortium processes led to significant problems and delays in the delivery of outputs. The Healthy Seeds Consortium processes did not ensure high-quality outputs were produced. Outputs were delivered significantly later than planned and at a significantly higher cost than planned. The Project failed to identify and adapt to external risks and events (e.g., COVID-19) to deliver outputs.
Effectiveness	Achievement of the Project's ultimate outcomes.
Excellent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The most effective and efficient interventions to improve the genetic health and reliable supply of native seeds were clearly identified. Industry and government have substantial agreement and improved coordination about the way forward for improving the genetic health and reliable supply of native seeds. The current governance structure of the native seed industry is well understood. Practitioners are actively accessing and utilising the up-to-date guidance for best practice native seed management.
Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective and efficient interventions to improve the genetic health and reliable supply of native seeds were mostly identified. Most industry and government stakeholders have agreement and coordination about the way forward for improving the genetic health and reliable supply of native seeds. The current governance structure of the native seed industry is mostly understood. Practitioners are mostly accessing and utilising the up-to-date guidance for best practice native seed management

Rubric standard	Criteria
Adequate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interventions to improve the genetic health and reliable supply of native seeds were identified, with some disagreements/gaps in knowledge. • There are some gaps in industry and government agreement and coordination about the way forward for improving the genetic health and reliable supply of native seeds. • There are some gaps in the understanding of the current governance structure of the native seed industry. • Some practitioners are accessing and utilising the up-to-date guidance for best practice native seed management
Area for improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are significant disagreement/gaps in knowledge about the most effective and efficient interventions to improve the genetic health and reliable supply of native seeds. • There is substantial disagreement and lack of coordination between industry and government about the way forward for improving the genetic health and reliable supply of native seeds. • The current governance structure of the native seed industry remains unclear. • Practitioners are not using up-to date guidance about best practice native seed management.
Equity	The benefits of the Project are shared equitably among ecological restoration stakeholders in NSW.
Excellent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Project enabled broad and comprehensive involvement across all industry sectors to develop outputs. • The Project enabled broad and comprehensive involvement across all industry sectors to distribute the benefits from Project outputs.
Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Project enabled involvement of the most relevant stakeholders across all industry sectors to develop outputs. • The Project enabled involvement of the most relevant stakeholders across all industry sectors to distribute the benefits from Project outputs.
Adequate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Project enabled some level of involvement across industry sectors to develop outputs. • The Project enabled some level of involvement across industry sectors to distribute the benefits from Project outputs.
Area for Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The breadth of industry sectors involved when developing outputs was very limited. • The breadth of industry sectors involved when distributing benefits from Project outputs was very limited.

APPENDIX C DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

This section includes the data collection tools used to collect evidence for this evaluation.

Interview Guide

Preamble

Hello, my name is [interviewer name] from Clear Horizon Consulting. We have been contracted by the NSW Environmental Trust to complete an evaluation of the Healthy Seeds Phase 1 Project undertaken by Australian Network for Plant Conservation (ANPC) between 2019 and 2021. The Project sought to gain a better understanding of the issues affecting the supply of native seeds in NSW and develop advice and guides to support a healthy native seed industry in the state. These included the Healthy Seeds Roadmap, publication of the Australian Native Seeds Survey in 2020, an audit of Seed Production Areas (SPAs) and a review of the Florabank Guidelines. Focused on providing collaborative solutions, approval of these resources was guided by the Healthy Seeds Consortium.

The purpose of this evaluation is to assess how well the Project was designed and delivered to meet those objectives and identify the outcomes achieved by the Project's conclusion and the contribution the Project has made to Environmental Trust objectives. It will also be an opportunity to identify lessons from the Project that could assist in improving other projects and programs.

You have been identified by Environmental Trust staff as having played an important role in the Project with insights that will be valuable to the evaluation.

The information you provide will be analysed and presented at the evaluation sense-making workshop as well as in the evaluation report. Your comments will be analysed with other interviews and other data and some quotes may be presented in the report. While you will not be identified by name, people may still be able to identify you by your role. Please let me know if there are any comments that you do not want to be associated with or that you would like to be off the record.

Participation in this interview is entirely voluntary. We can stop the interview at any time, and you do not have to answer any questions if you do not want to. If, after the interview concludes, you would like to withdraw your comments, you can contact me to remove them from our database.

I will be recording this interview for my notes, but it will be kept on a secure and confidential server and will be removed once the report is finalised. Is this ok with you? Y/N

Are you happy to participate in the interview? Y/N

Background

I'd like to start with a couple of questions about you and your involvement with the Healthy Seeds Phase 1 Project. This will help us to contextualise your experiences and enable me to ask questions relevant to your involvement.

1. To begin, please tell me about your role and how you were involved in the Healthy Seeds Project. (ET project team; ANPC project management team; Consortium (working group); reference group role; other)
 - a. How did you become involved?
 - b. When did you become involved?

- c. Were you involved in the preparation of the business case?
- d. Were you involved in the design of the Project?
- e. Were you responsible for delivering a particular output? (e.g. the Healthy Seeds RoadMap; the 2020 Australian Native Seeds Survey; the audit of the Seed production Areas; updating the Florabank Guidelines)
- f. Did you provide technical support to the Healthy Seeds Consortium?

Design

Moving now to the design of the Healthy Seeds Phase 1 Project. Here I'd like you to think about what was included in the Project, how decisions were made about what was included and by whom.

Ask only those stakeholders involved in the Project scoping and design

2. Can you describe the scoping process for the Project? (KEQ1a)
 - a. Who was consulted from the native seeds industry, from Environmental Trust, others?
 - b. Which existing documents/information and experience did you draw on to scope the Project?
 - c. How did Project stakeholders identify the potential activities and outputs and budget for the grant application? (KEQ1d)
3. To what extent were other solutions (activities and outputs) considered during the scoping process? (KEQ1a,1b,1c)
4. Were any modifications required to the Project design? (KEQ1c)
 - a. Prior to grant approval
 - b. During project delivery
 - c. If, yes why were these modifications required?
5. In your opinion, how efficiently was the Healthy Seeds Consortium established? (KEQ3a)
 - a. Were there any problems encountered?
6. Overall, did you have sufficient opportunity to engage and contribute to the design of the Healthy Seeds Project? (KEQ1a)

Ask all

7. To what extent do you think the design of the project was appropriate for addressing the needs of the Native Seed Industry in NSW on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is not at all appropriate and 5 is very appropriate? (KEQ1a). Please comment on why you gave this score.
8. Again, on that scale of 1 to 5, to what extent were the right stakeholders engaged to ensure that the design of the Project was appropriate for addressing the needs of the Native Seed industry in NSW where 1 is not at all and 5 is all the right stakeholders were engaged? Please comment on why you gave this score.
9. Following the Environmental Trust Major Projects Prospectus, the project was developed using a co-design process between key native seed industry stakeholders and the Environmental Trust. Based on your experience and perspective, did the co-design process work effectively?
 - a. What was it about the codesign process that worked well?
 - b. What was it about the codesign process that was challenging?
10. What changes, if any, would you suggest that could have improved the scoping and design of the Project? (KEQ1, KEQ7)

11. Are there other approaches that could have been taken to better address the needs of the Native Seed industry? (KEQ1b, KEQ7)

Delivery

In the following questions, I'd like you to think about how the Healthy Seeds Project was delivered, including the support and resources available to deliver the different outputs.

12. Based on your experience, did the Project delivery overall work well to achieve a better understanding of native seed supply issues and develop solutions to support a healthy native seed industry in NSW? (KEQ2, KEQ2c, KEQ4)
- a. If yes, in what ways?
 - b. If no, what limited the effectiveness of the Project to achieve these objectives?
13. What worked well about the delivery of the Project? (KEQ3, KEQ4) Please consider:
- a. Resources available (people and funding) (KEQ3ai)
 - b. RFQ administration process and engagement of consultants (KEQ3a)
 - c. Project management processes including planning, governance, financial management (KEQ2f)
 - d. Collaborative decision-making (via the Healthy Seeds Consortium) (KEQ2e, KEQ3a, 3b)
 - e. Technical support available (KEQ2d, KEQ3b)
 - f. Delivery of planned activities and approval of outputs (KEQ2c, KEQ3a)
 - g. Sector involvement to develop outputs (KEQ3d)
 - h. Response to external events (such as COVID pandemic) (KEQ3b)
 - i. Measurement of outcomes (KEQ2d)
 - j. Anything else?
14. What were the challenges delivering the project?
- a. Resources available (people and funding) (KEQ3ai)
 - b. RFQ administration process and engagement of consultants (KEQ3a)
 - c. Project management processes including planning, governance, financial management (KEQ2f)
 - d. Collaborative decision-making (via the Healthy Seeds Consortium) (KEQ2e, KEQ3a)
 - e. Technical support available (KEQ2d, KEQ3b)
 - f. Delivery of planned activities and approval of outputs (KEQ2c, KEQ3a)
 - g. Sector involvement to develop outputs (KEQ3d)
 - h. Response to external events (such as COVID pandemic) (KEQ3b)
 - i. Measurement of outcomes (KEQ2d)
 - j. Anything else?
15. Based on your experience, do you have any suggestions to improve the way similar projects are coordinated and delivered in the future? (KEQ2, KEQ7)

Outcomes

I'd now like to turn to the outcomes achieved during the delivery of the Project. To answer these questions, you might like to think of the changes in terms of knowledge and understanding, and the ways of working in the Native Seed Industry that occurred during the Project.

16. Do you think the Project had success in improving the understanding of issues affecting the genetic health and supply of native seeds in NSW? (KEQ 3c, KEQ4, KEQ5a)
- a. If yes, in what ways did the improved understanding address the issues affecting the supply of native seeds? (e.g. enabled informed decisions about effective and efficient solutions; industry agreement on actions and investment priorities)

- b. If no, what was it about the Project that was not successful? (e.g. Not all issues addressed; lack of industry agreement about issues)
17. Do you think the solutions developed out of the Project will result in a healthy native seed industry in NSW? (KEQ4, KEQ3c)
- a. If yes, in what ways did these solutions contribute to a healthy native seed industry? (probe: greater understanding of the governance structure of the native industry; greater coordination and cooperation among industry stakeholders to address issues; improved access to and confidence in up-to-date guidance and best practice materials)
 - b. If no, what was it about the solutions developed that was not effective in contributing to a healthy native seed industry?
18. Did you experience or identify other positive or negative outcomes that resulted from the Project? (KEQ6)
19. Thinking more broadly, in your opinion, did the Project activities and outputs contribute to supporting restoration and rehabilitation projects in NSW? If yes, in what ways? (KEQ5, KEQ3c)
20. Again, more broadly, what contribution, if any, did the Project make to research into NSW environmental problems? (KEQ5, KEQ3c)

Wrap up

21. Are there any other comments or reflections you would like to note about the Healthy Seeds Project?

Closing

Thank you for your time and your comments, they have been most useful.

If you would like to amend anything you have mentioned today, or would no longer like your comments used in this evaluation, our telephone number is (03) 9425 7777. Once again, my name is [name], or if you would like to speak to my manager, his name is Nathan Delbridge.

Survey Tool

Between 2019 and 2021 the Australian Network for Plant Conservation managed the delivery of Healthy Seeds Phase 1 Project with the support from a grant from the NSW Environmental Trust. The Project sought to gain a better understanding of the issues affecting the supply of native seeds in NSW and develop solutions to support a healthy native seed industry in the state, including Healthy Seeds Roadmap, the 2020 Australian Native Seeds Survey, an audit of Seed Production Areas (SPAs) and a review of the Florabank Guidelines.

Clear Horizon consulting is conducting an evaluation of the Project for the Environmental Trust. The purpose of this survey is to reach out to the Project's stakeholders to gather evidence about the Project's design and delivery and the outcomes achieved when the Project concluded in 2021. It will also give you an opportunity to suggest improvements that could be made to future Environmental Trust projects and programs.

Participation in this survey is voluntary and your responses are confidential. Any identifying information such as names and other details that could be used to identify you or anyone else will be edited or removed prior to any reporting.

Clear Horizon consultants will review and analyse the survey responses and use these results to deliver a report to the Environmental Trust. For more information, please contact Gabrielle Chamberland at gabrielle@clearhorizon.com.au or 0498 008 264.

1. Do you consent to the above conditions to proceed?

- a. Yes
- b. No

About your involvement with the Healthy Seeds Phase 1 Project

2. What was your role in the Project? (Please check all that apply)

- a. ANPC project management team
- b. Member of Healthy Seeds Consortium (working group)
- c. Consortium Reference Group
- d. Florabank reference group
- e. Other (please specify)

3. Were there particular Project activities or outputs you contributed to?

- a. Healthy Seeds Road Map
- b. 2020 Australian Native Seeds Survey
- c. Audit of the Seed Production Areas
- d. Updating the Florabank Guidelines
- e. Other (please specify)

4. In what ways did you contribute to the Project? (Please check all that apply)

- a. Contributed to Project scoping and design
- b. General project management
- c. Development of Project outputs
- d. Technical Review of Project outputs
- e. Other (please specify)

5. When did your involvement in the Project commence?

- a. Prior to 2019 (developing the business case for the grant)
- b. 2019-21 During Project delivery

Project design and scope

When answering the following questions, please consider what issues were addressed in the Project, how decisions were made about what was included and by whom.

6. Please indicate if you agree with the following statements (strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree, don't know).
 - a. The Environmental Trust consulted widely to develop the business case for the Project
 - b. The scope and design of the Project reflected a good understanding of Native Seed Industry issues
 - c. The scope and design of the Project ensured the participation of key Native Seed industry stakeholders
 - d. The scope and design of the Project sought to address all major issues facing the Native Seed Industry
7. Please comment on your ratings [Open ended]
8. Are there any changes you would like to suggest that could have improved the scoping and design of the Project? [Open-ended]

Project approach and delivery

These questions ask you to think about how the Healthy Seeds Project was delivered, including the support and resources available to deliver the different outputs.

9. Please indicate if you agree with the following statements (strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree, don't know).
 - a. The Healthy Seeds Consortium processes enabled collaborative decision-making
 - b. The Project was managed efficiently
 - c. Key stakeholders in the Native Seed industry contributed to Project outputs
 - d. Engagement with Project stakeholders was appropriate
 - e. The Project accessed technical advice where required
 - f. Outputs from the Project were of a high quality
 - g. The resources available to the Project were appropriate
 - h. The project benefited all native seed industry sectors
10. Please comment on your ratings [Open ended]
11. Are there any changes you would like to suggest that could have improved the way the Project was delivered? [Open-ended]

Outcomes and impact

Please describe any changes you observed that occurred during the project.

12. Please indicate if you agree with the statements (strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree, don't know).
 - a. By the end of the project there was improved understanding of the way the Native Seed Industry in NSW is governed

- b. By the end of the project there was greater coordination and cooperation among key Healthy Seed Industry stakeholders
- c. By the end of the project there was improved access to up-to-date guidance and best-practice materials on native seed management in ecological restoration
- d. By the end of the project the native seed industry had greater agreement about the issues to be addressed
- e. By the end of the project there was greater agreement on actions to be taken and investment priorities

13. Please comment on your ratings [Open ended]

14. Are there any other changes (positive or negative) that occurred during the Project? [open-ended]

15. Please indicate if you agree with the following statements (strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree, don't know).

- a. Project activities and outputs have contributed to supporting restoration and rehabilitation in NSW.
- b. The Project supported research into NSW Environmental problems.

16. Please comment on your ratings [Open ended]

Wrap up

17. Do you have any comments you would like to note about the Healthy Seeds Project overall? [Open-ended]

Thank you! You're finished.

For further information about Clear Horizon, please visit www.clearhorizon.com.au or contact Nathan Delbridge (nathan@clearhorizon.com.au).

For any questions about the Healthy Seeds Phase 1 Project Evaluation, please contact Sheree Livingstone (sheree.livingstone@environment.nsw.gov.au)

Thank you for completing the survey. This will help the NSW Environmental Trust support the ecological restoration by the native seed industry in NSW.