



## Australia Program Funding to SPC FAME Division Evaluation 2023 DFAT Management Response to the Independent Evaluation

### Context

The Pacific Community (SPC) is the largest regional development organisation of its kind. It provides scientific and technical assistance to Pacific island countries to support regional sustainable development. Established in 1947, SPC is an inter-governmental organisation with 27 members including all 22 Pacific island countries and territories, as well as founding members Australia, New Zealand, France, United States and the United Kingdom.

SPC's Fisheries, Aquaculture and Marine Ecosystems Division (SPC FAME) supports fisheries management and sustainable development in the Pacific through the provision of scientific and technical expertise to the region, to individual Pacific island countries and territories (PICTs) and to regional bodies.

Australia has supported SPC's FAME Division since 2014 through both member contributions to SPC and direct programme funding. The current agreement for programme funding to SPC FAME is for the period 2021-2023 (extended until 31 May 2024) and is flexible funding to implement the SPC FAME Business Plan 2022-2027.

### The Evaluation

The Pacific Fisheries and Maritime Section (PFO) in Office of the Pacific (OTP) commissioned an independent evaluation of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's (DFAT's) support to SPC FAME. The Sustineo Pty Ltd was contracted to conduct the evaluation between July and October 2023<sup>1</sup>. The evaluation considered the:

- appropriateness and effectiveness of the funding
- strengths and weaknesses of the funding mechanism
- complementarity of the funding with other donor support to SPC FAME
- support for gender equity and social inclusion (GESI).

Overall, the evaluation found that SPC FAME is well-regarded as a member-focussed, responsive and professional body that is trusted for scientific and technical expertise and inclusive and collaborative approaches to working with partners. The evaluation also noted that SPC FAME and DFAT shared an interest to support food and economic security in the Pacific through sustainably managed fisheries.

The evaluation assessed that DFAT's flexible program funding support to SPC FAME is an effective and appropriate mechanism to support SPC FAME to achieve results for the region. It provides flexibility for SPC FAME with low administrative overheads compared to project funding and is appropriate for the intended purpose and in the context of *Australia's International Development Policy*.

The evaluation also highlighted DFAT's stronger focus on thematic issues such as climate change and GESI in the new policy - *Australia's International Development Policy*- and made recommendations to strengthen SPC FAME's focus in these areas, as well as ways to strengthen coordination and linkages across DFAT areas and with other donors. DFAT's management response to the recommendations is below.

The evaluation was conducted during negotiations of the new SPC-Government of Australia Partnership (2024-2033). The evaluation was an important opportunity to reflect on how DFAT can continue to build on its strong relationships and foundations with SPC and its FAME Division to better meet the interests of both SPC and DFAT. DFAT will implement the review findings with SPC under the new multi-year funding arrangement with SPC FAME in 2024.

---

<sup>1</sup> The report represents the independent views of the consultants and not necessarily the views of DFAT or SPC.



### DFAT Management response to specific evaluation recommendations

Recommendation	Response	Explanation	Action Plan
1. DFAT consider using at least a four-year term for the next grant agreement to cover the period 2024-2027 to align with the current SPC FAME Business Plan term.	Agree	Longer term funding arrangements are appropriate to align with the current term of the FAME Business Plan. This also provides SPC further funding certainty and reduces administrative processes in the long term.	DFAT and SPC will enter into a new five-year arrangement for flexible program funding under the 2024-2033 Partnership between SPC and DFAT from May 2024.
2. DFAT to explore opportunities for closer linkages and coordination with relevant internal areas to promote synergies across DFAT's programme and project funding in cross-cutting issues such as climate change and GESI.	Agree	DFAT acknowledges that achievement of our broader development objectives would benefit from a more coordinated approach to our engagement with SPC. Climate change and gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) are key focus areas of <i>Australia's International Development Policy</i> .	OTP DFAT has established a group of internal representatives that manage agreements with SPC to guide the implementation of the 2024-2033 Partnership between DFAT and SPC. This group will meet quarterly to better coordinate DFAT's engagement and funding across various SPC divisions, including on climate and GESI related work. Key points relevant to SPC-FAME will be relayed through regular fortnightly OTP-SPC FAME catch ups.
3. DFAT to consider additional support to SPC FAME to address climate change impacts on fisheries in the region in the context of DFAT's broader climate change funding to the Pacific.	Agree	Climate change is at the heart of Australia's new International Development Policy. The policy commits Australia to strengthen climate resilience across our development program. SPC FAME leads work in the Pacific to understand the impact of climate change on fisheries and advises Pacific governments as they adapt fisheries to climate change. DFAT funding to SPC FAME enables the FAME program to flexibly support this work. We have considered additional support but at this stage, DFAT is unable to provide additional funds for climate change specific work.	In the new funding agreement with SPC FAME, DFAT will report annually on climate change objectives as part of investment monitoring reports. This reporting will draw on existing work and Key Result Areas in the SPC Strategic Plan that includes providing analysis and advice on climate change adaptation and mitigation. SPC will consider how to align its results framework to reflect reporting with SPC flagships (including on climate change and gender equality).



Recommendation	Response	Explanation	Action Plan
4. DFAT encourage SPC FAME to optimise opportunities to highlight and acknowledge DFAT’s programme funding support for specific activities.	<b>Agree</b>	The SPC-Government of Australia visibility strategy provides general guidance on branding and acknowledgement of Australia’s funding to SPC. DFAT acknowledge that due to the flexible and untagged nature of program funding, it is difficult for SPC to track how DFAT funds are allocated across its program. DFAT does not intend to unnecessarily burden SPC with complex branding requirements.	Under the current funding arrangement SPC FAME will report on progress against their business plan to DFAT in March. DFAT will use this opportunity to discuss with SPC FAME ways to further acknowledge where DFAT program funding has supported specific activities. This will include a review of the SPC-Government of Australia visibility strategy under the new broader Partnership.
5. DFAT encourage SPC FAME to maintain a watching brief on the number and focus of prospective donor-funded projects in the region, particularly donors seeking to partner directly with PICTs, to minimise potential for duplication and contradiction.	<b>Agree</b>	The evaluation highlighted that the flexible nature of DFAT’s programme funding enables SPC to use funding in ways that complement, rather than duplicate or contradict, funding provided by other donors. DFAT acknowledges that the donor space in the Pacific is becoming more crowded and complicated and supports the recommendation to encourage SPC FAME to maintain awareness of relevant donor projects in the region.	DFAT will add this topic to the agenda for 6 monthly discussions between PFO and SPC FAME team. This will provide a regular check-in, in addition to existing fortnightly catch ups, to build awareness of relevant donor projects and interests in the region.
6. DFAT consider exploring with SPC FAME opportunities to integrate gender equality throughout programs supported by DFAT’s programme funding.	<b>Agree</b>	Improving gender equality outcomes in the Pacific region is key focus area of <i>Australia’s International Development Policy</i> . We acknowledge that SPC has an increasing focus on gender equality through its <i>Social and Environmental Responsibility Policy</i> and recent establishment of SPC’s Gender Equality Flagship. We acknowledge the challenges for women in science, technology, engineering, and mathematic (STEM) fields. SPC FAME does work to work to address gender inequality like regular GEDSI training for staff, publication of the Pacific handbook for gender equity and social inclusion in coastal fisheries and aquaculture and has achieved gender balance in SPC FAME personnel.	DFAT will add gender equality to the agenda for 6 monthly discussions between PFO and SPC FAME team. This will provide a regular check-in to build shared understanding of social inclusion work that FAME does. SPC FAME will consider how to align its results framework to reflect reporting in line with SPC flagships (including on climate change and gender equality). As the Gender Equality Flagship becomes more established at SPC, DFAT will request SPC FAME team to expand efforts to align FAME activities with SPC’s broader focus on GESI.