

ACEDP Annual Planning Process

15 September 2008

Introduction

The 2nd meeting of the Joint Australia China High-level Roundtable of the ACEDP endorsed the consolidation of the ACEDP around its existing core of water management activities, with any new activities largely to complement, to fill gaps and to ensure that policy impacts are maximised. This has implications for the annual planning process.

The Annual Planning Process

The main purpose of the annual planning process is to guide the generation of a pipeline of activities and their effective implementation. The planning process is dynamic and ongoing. It is also a collaborative effort involving AusAID and China's Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM), the nine program core partner agencies from China and Australia, the independent Environment Advisory Team (EAT) and the Quality Assurance Advisor, the Managing Contractor GHD and other players such as the bi- and multilateral donor community. The Annual planning process culminates in the annual Joint Australia China High-level Roundtable that provides strategic and programming guidance for the Program Coordination Office (PCO) to effectively implement the ACEDP.

Funding

Grant funding is the main operational tool of the ACEDP and a diversified funding mechanism facilitates the policy outcomes as defined in the ACEDP Strategic Direction¹. Consistent with the consolidation of the program, its focus on management systems and policy development, and taking into consideration the existing funding constraints, new activities must either demonstrate they complement existing activities or address high priority policy gaps. In any case, the ACEDP contribution must not exceed \$200,000 for new activities and \$100,000 for activities that are complementary to existing activities.

Application and Selection

Applications for funding must follow the funding guidelines and application formats available from the Program Coordination Office and/or the ACEDP website www.acedp-partnership.org. Applications can be submitted at any time during the year and, on request, the PCO will assist such as through identification of a suitable partner agency (ies) in the other country. The PCO will share all applications with the nine program core partners, giving them an opportunity to comment and/or seek to become involved. If no response is received within ten working days, the PCO assumes that the program core partner is supportive of the application. At six-monthly intervals, eg in June and December of each year, the EAT in collaboration with the PCO will assess and rank proposals, taking also into consideration views espoused by program core partners. AusAID and MOFCOM reserve the right of final approval.

Role of Program Core Partners

National government agencies in both countries (the program core partners) will continue to set the strategic direction of the ACEDP and ensure the program remains relevant to, and aligned with, national government policy priorities. To the extent feasible, program core partner agencies from both sides should become involved in all ACEDP activities – as experts, as implementing agencies or as evaluators and reviewers. It is intended that one of the main outcomes of the ACEDP will be the deepening of the bilateral policy dialogue between Australia and China and this will require drawing in a wider group of dialogue partners from academia and research, as well as from other jurisdictions.

¹ Version of 15 September 2008, endorsed at the 2nd joint High-level Roundtable

This however must not occur in isolation from the program core partners that will continue to guide the process and provide policy steering.

Role of the Environment Advisory Team (EAT)

The EAT provides strategic and technical/scientific advice and also reviews activity performance. To do this effectively the EAT interacts on a regular basis with relevant national government agencies in both countries and also the wider stakeholder community. Prior to preparation of the Annual Plan for the following year, the EAT will conduct an annual 'policy gap analysis' to ensure the program remains aligned to national planning priorities and is responsive to emerging policy needs.

Role of the Quality Assurance Advisor (QAA)

The QAA is responsible for monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness and efficiency of ACEDP operational systems and procedures, including the EAT. Furthermore the QAA will review the policy impact of ACEDP interventions at the program level

Role of the Managing Contractor

The managing contractor, through its Program Coordination Office (PCO) in China and Australia, is responsible for implementing the annual plan in accordance with the strategic direction set by the two national governments, and the advice provided by the EAT and QAA. The managing contractor is responsible for developing relations with the stakeholder community in both countries, for collaboration with the bi- and multilateral donor community and, for assisting program core partners to build relationships with partners in the other country. The managing contractor will also facilitate ACEDP inter-agency collaboration (subject of course to government sovereignty), and for promoting program achievements. As the program matures, the focus of the PCO will shift towards supporting and assisting project teams and program core partners. The managing contractor will produce the Annual Plan

Role of the Annual Plan AP

The AP sets out a costed program of activities for each financial year (July to June). Activities can be generated through the six-monthly application process or as a direct proposal from the PCO, the EAT, QAA, AusAID or MOFCOM. The PCO will produce the draft AP after receipt of the EAT policy gap analysis in the first half of each year and submit it to AusAID/MOFCOM for approval by the end of the financial year in June.

Role of the High-level Roundtable

The Joint Australia China High-level Roundtable is the premier decision-making body of the ACEDP and its annual meetings scheduled for July provide an opportunity for both governments to review progress, assess impact, ascertain the strategic direction of the program, and, confirm or modify financial allocations. Its current composition of program owners (AusAID, MOFCOM), Chinese program core partners (Ministry of Environment Protection, Ministry of Water Resources, National Development Reform Commission, State Forestry Administration), Australian program core partners (Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation, Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry, Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, Murray Darling Basin Commission, National Water Commission), Environment Advisory Team (EAT), Quality Assurance Advisor (QAA) and Managing Contractor (PCO) is robust and adequate. Emerging policy priorities such as climate change may require the addition of new agencies from either country but the continuing focus on water management is not likely to obviate the need for any of the existing nine program core partners.