



Australian Government
Australian Centre for
International Agricultural Research



Employee Census Action Plan 2024-25

Our Action Plan

This action plan is developed in response to the 2024 APS Employee Census to support our staff to deliver on ACIAR's key strategic priorities. The plan outlines how we can work together to improve our work environment and address feedback from the Census.

The employee census results revealed areas where we need to concentrate our efforts in the action plan. It also highlights areas to celebrate. The Census results showed that our staff believe in and connect strongly with ACIAR's mission and objectives and are dedicated to the ACIAR's strategic goals. However, it showed that we have more work to do to improve our change management, consultation and communication.

ACIAR continues to operate across a geopolitically challenged Indo-Pacific. Over the past 12 months, our staff have shown remarkable resilience navigating these challenges while also engaging with an agency-wide restructure, changes to investment decision-making, and a shift in culture and integrity.

Executive Vision and Priorities

The Executive have set a **vision** and priorities for the 2024-25 financial year based on insights from the Employee Census. The Executive vision is to:

1. lead with integrity, transparency, and unity. Ensure staff understand the organisation's strategic direction, contribution to achieving it, and feel empowered to innovate.
2. champion the foundations of collaboration, respect, integrity, and a positive learning culture, supported by effective structures, systems, and resources.
3. listen and engage authentically and foster a safe and inclusive environment where all staff are united in contributing purposefully towards fulfilling our mission.

The Executive have outlined four **priorities** emphasising integration and stabilising our foundations. This plan aims to build upon the previous action plan to further enhance our culture, ensuring that our staff operate in a safe, innovative and collaborative work environment.

The four priorities incorporated into this action plan include:

1. People and Culture
2. Organisational Change
3. Investment Decision-Making
4. Governance and Integrity

People and Culture

Establish shared values to foster a positive culture and develop capability to deliver on our mission. We want to continue to build a safe and inclusive culture that values and utilises the contribution of all employees.

A culture that aligns with the APS values embedded in everything we do.

Our People and Culture actions will be championed by the General Manager Corporate. This vision is building a culture of trust, that attracts, develops and fosters positive, safe and compliant work environments.

Our culture revolves around how we communicate and collaborate at work. All employees must unite to foster an environment that promotes engagement and innovation, allows open, respectful, and effective communication, and prioritizes staff connections. It must allow staff to feel comfortable to express their views, share ideas, and participate in meaningful discussions about their role and work environment. This exchange should be reciprocal, ensuring that genuine consultation occurs and that final decisions are respected.

Action	Outcome
ACIAR Day	Champion an all-staff collaborative forum to share ideas, learn from past experiences, and consider ACIAR's strategic priorities for the year ahead.
Improved consultation	Provide transparency in decisions and consider solutions to address staff feedback or concerns.
Refresh our ACIAR values, people and culture policy	Develop, consult and issue a new People and Culture policy that aligns to the APS values.
Display ACIAR's values in the office	To keep values at the forefront of staff minds, and allow staff to respectfully call out bad behaviour.
Accountable behaviour incorporated into performance agreements	Ensure staff are accountable for their behaviour, including in performance management discussions.
APS values training for all staff	Provide mandatory APS values training for all staff as part of the annual performance management process.

These priorities address the following employee census outcomes			
● Employee engagement	● Leadership	● Communication and change	● Wellbeing
● Working in the APS	● Retention	● Unacceptable behaviour	

Organisational Change

We need the right people in the most suitable roles, equipped with the necessary capabilities and supported by effective systems, processes, policies, tools and resources to achieve our mission.

The organisational change process will be championed by the Chief Executive Officer. The vision is to build a structure that champions delivery of the Government’s International Development Program, supported by experienced staff, systems and policies.

In 2023 ACIAR embarked on an organisational change process to provide a more contemporary and integrated workforce and to have a whole-of-agency investment decision making process. The purpose was to strengthen organisational planning, improve Executive oversight, and ensure our outcomes were aligned to the needs of Government.

Throughout this strategic change, we have learned valuable lessons and made adaptations to incorporate feedback from staff. The employee census underscored the importance of viewing change regularly as an opportunity for enhancement. The following actions will help improve our organizational change processes over the coming year.

Action	Outcome
Embed the structure	Complete recruitment processes to fill vacant positions while ensuring engagement of the right capability.
Strategic Commissioning Framework	Complete the transfer of contract skills to core APS work to establish stability in ongoing positions.
Review and identify any capability gaps within existing position descriptions	Enable development opportunities to ensure we continue to achieve our priorities.
Review existing recruitment processes	Streamline, where possible, the processes for potential candidates and provide a consistent and modernised approach to recruitment.
Review guidance documents to assist panels through the recruitment process	Provide recruitment panels with the tools for selecting the right people that align with our values and culture.

These priorities address the following employee census outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Leadership• Wellbeing• Job satisfaction• Performance• Clarity and autonomy

Monthly Investment Meetings

Approach investment decisions through whole-of-agency collaboration, promoting a mutual understanding of country partner investment priorities in alignment with Australia’s International Development Policy.

The Monthly Investment Meetings and associated processes will be championed by the General Manager Partnerships and the General Manager Research. The aim is to create a transparent investment decision making process that values staff input, considers investment efficiencies and risks, and aligns outcomes to Australia’s International Development policy.

The investment decision-making process at ACIAR has evolved over the last 12 months through the strategic change process. The changes reflect a desire for more open and transparent decision-making and elevation of partner countries’ voices with consideration of organisational lessons learnt and adaptations based on staff feedback. Throughout 2024, ACIAR has taken a learning-by-doing approach to developing and improving the processes around investment decision-making. Input from staff will guide the evolution and improvement of the investment decision-making process with the aim of further evolving and maturing the process throughout 2025. The ambition is to develop a clear, efficient and transparent system and associated processes around the Monthly Investment Meeting that effectively informs decision-making and places an emphasis on listening and responding to the priorities of our partners across the Indo-Pacific.

Action	Outcome
Reflection and lessons learnt	Guidance to improve the Monthly Investment Meeting process
Consistent and effective decision-making	Greater clarity and improved timeliness of investment decisions
Improved communications	Increased transparency
Delegation of responsibility	Clarity on roles and responsibilities in the investment decision-making process
Monitoring and evaluation	Provision of information to all ACIAR to guide continuous improvement and to address issues and risks in a timely manner, and to help track and manage the change process
System and reporting	Improvement in information management

These priorities address the following employee census outcomes

- Employee engagement
- Leadership
- Communication and change
- performance

Governance and Integrity

Further enhance corporate governance by reviewing and updating policies, ensuring compliance, managing risk and establishing an Integrity Framework that fosters public trust, promotes professionalism and upholds a high standard of ethical behaviour and respect for governance.

The governance and integrity actions will be championed by the General Manager Corporate. The vision is to pursue high standards of professionalism, respect and transparency across all aspects of our work and interactions with partners.

Achieving good governance and integrity involves managing the risks of fraud and corruption across the enterprise. We will manage this by regularly reviewing our internal controls, proactively scanning the environment for emerging risks, speaking openly with staff about their concerns, and undertaking targeted internal audits on areas of risk exposure. This will be delivered in an environment that values staff transparency and supports safe and shared learnings.

Action	Outcome
Develop an Integrity Framework	Establish a Framework that promotes a culture of integrity, professionalism and appropriate conduct.
Establish a Governance Structure	Ensure governance structures are reviewed regularly, comply with relevant Commonwealth frameworks and legislation, and support the successful completion of the strategic change process.
Establish a Branch mission statement	Set the direction for the Corporate Branch and to ensure alignment to ACIAR's core outcomes.
Hold annual Branch planning sessions	Improve engagement, motivation and opportunities for staff to inform and innovative.
Executive Team planning session	Ensure alignment within the Executive on enterprise expectations, strategic directions, and consultation with staff.
All staff planning session	Share with staff the enterprise expectations and strategic directions. Improve transparency, ensure consistency in message, and empower staff to be creative and innovative.

These priorities address the following employee census outcomes			
● Employee engagement	● Leadership	● Enabling innovation	● Wellbeing
● Working in the APS	● Unacceptable behaviour	● Clarity and autonomy	● Flexible work