



Australian Government
Australian Centre for
International Agricultural Research



Employee Census Action Plan 2023-24

Our Action Plan

This action plan is developed in response to the 2023 employee census in order to support our people to deliver our key priorities. It outlines how we can work together to improve our experience at work and address the focus areas raised.

The employee census identified opportunities to focus on in our action plan and additional areas that we can celebrate. The employee census highlighted that our staff strongly believe in the purpose and objectives of ACIAR, are committed to our agency's goals, and take pride in the work we do. We must focus our action plan around leadership, consultative change management and being an innovative workplace.

Over the last three years, ACIAR, like most organisations, has experienced uncertainty and a dynamic work environment. We transitioned our workforce to work flexibly while continuing to engage with our key stakeholders both nationally and internationally. We explored different innovative ideas to continue to deliver on our 10-year strategy and we have recently welcomed a new CEO.

This action plan includes developing a workforce through targeted recruitment, an enhanced performance framework, and building a strong people culture that aligns with the APS values. We will continue to build on this action plan and improve our culture to ensure our staff work in a safe, innovative and collaborative environment.

Our People and Culture Vision

Our people and culture vision is to develop shared values and aspirations, foster positive culture and develop capability to deliver on our key priorities. We want to continue to build an inclusive culture that values and utilises the contribution of all employees. A culture that aligns with the APS values embedded in everything we do, to continue to make ACIAR a great place to work. It is the responsibility of all employees to work towards achieving this vision and building a positive workplace culture.

Workforce Planning and Recruitment

Our workforce is governed by a complex range of legislative requirements which set our mission and vision, guide our resource allocation and determine how we can engage staff.

Developing a workforce plan is a key component of business planning and will ensure that we have people with the right capabilities in the roles required to deliver our priorities. A workforce planning process will allow us to assess our capability gaps and identify the capabilities required for the future; thus, enabling succession planning for critical roles that support the government employment principles.

Following the workforce planning process, we will identify any recruitment necessary to continue to deliver on our priorities, and we will explore appropriate ways of attracting and retaining potential candidates. Our recruitment processes will ensure that we not only attract candidates that have the skills and capability required to fulfill roles, but will also align with the culture we are trying to build.

Action	Outcome
Pause all recruitment processes	Allow time to review existing structure and future requirements
Develop a workforce plan that aligns with our business planning processes	Provides a plan for the structure of ACIAR and ensures a transparent process when advertising positions
Review our current non-ongoing structure	Provides a structure that aligns with Government policy
Review and, where necessary, develop or amend existing position descriptions through consultation with staff	Provides all staff with clear duties that align with the workforce plan
Review and identify any capability gaps within existing position descriptions	Enables development opportunities to ensure we continue to achieve our priorities
Review existing recruitment processes	Streamline, where possible, the process for potential candidates and provide a consistent and modernised approach to recruitment
Review guidance documents to assist panels through the recruitment process	Provides panels with the tools for selecting the right people for the roles that align with our values and culture

Enhanced Performance Framework

The performance framework provides a mechanism for leaders and managers to engage with staff in performance discussions in an equitable and transparent manner which supports continuous improvement of both organisational and individual performance. The framework encourages honest and respectful discussions and builds trust between supervisors and employees.

The performance framework is a mandatory requirement. All employees engaged for periods greater than six months are required to participate. Employees are responsible for working with their supervisor to develop a workplan and establish performance goals that align with the corporate plan.

It is important that employees continue to develop their skills and knowledge to ensure they are empowered to be innovative and engaged and able to adapt to the dynamic work environment. Development activities must align with roles and should highlight future professional development needs for career planning.

Ultimately the purpose of the performance framework is to plan, set priorities for work and development and encourage open communication between employees and supervisors. Regular, meaningful and consistent feedback is a crucial element to performance and development and requires two-way feedback. Managers should regularly seek feedback from their teams and genuinely listen and consider feedback.

Action	Outcome
Review and develop a performance framework that encourages engagement	Set clear direction for all staff that aligns to our key priorities
Embed our values in our performance framework	Establish a culture of respect, accountability and transparency
Establish a section mission statement	Sets the direction for the section that can align to the direction of ACIAR
Hold annual section planning sessions	Enables engagement, motivation and opportunity to provide innovative ideas

Leadership and Direction

Leadership drives a culture where staff are engaged, motivated and inspired to perform their best. Leadership is having a vision and setting the direction for staff to follow, influencing and empowering people to achieve our priorities.

The APSC has developed the APS Leadership Capability Framework and the SES Performance Framework to make clear the leadership capabilities considered critical for success in the most senior roles in the APS. The APSC outlines that *SES are expected to lead by motivating and organising people to produce outcomes that make a difference to the nation. It is not just about what they deliver, but also how they deliver through their teams and networks. This includes engaging others to innovate, collaborate, and create change.*

Our employee census has shown there are opportunities for improvement within our leadership team. Our leadership team need to work together as a team to articulate the direction and priorities for ACIAR, communicate effectively with staff and create an environment that encourages innovation, cooperation, driving success and outcomes.

We live in an ever-changing world, which requires resilience and adaptability. ACIAR is about to embark on even more change in-house and will look to our leaders to guide staff through those changes and lead the way.

Action	Outcome
In-house customised Leadership program for all RPMs	Expand APS governance and accountability and strengthen leadership capability
SES Band 1 Leadership Program for selected EL2's (This action is almost complete, it commenced prior to the People and Culture Strategy)	The SES Band 1 Leadership Program strengthens the leadership capability of experienced senior executives across the broader APS
Executive Team planning session	Ensure alignment within the Executive team on expectations and direction to lead staff
All staff planning session	Set the expectations and direction for all staff, provide transparency from the Executive planning day, empower staff to be creative and innovative
Implement the APS Charter of Leadership Behaviours in Executive Team performance agreements	Provide consistent leadership behaviours that support the APS values

Strong People Culture

How we interact and collaborate with each other in the workplace is the core of our people culture. Staff at all levels and locations must work together to build a strong people culture that aligns with our values and enables engagement and innovation. Our values should underpin all our interactions both internally and externally. We need to be able to have open, respectful and effective communication, where people feel comfortable raising ideas, engaging in robust discussions, and collaborating across the agency. This needs to be two-way, ensuring genuine consultation occurs and final decisions are respected. We need to understand the importance of every role in the agency and how we can work together for one purpose.

A positive culture requires connection and collaboration with interactions that involve emotional intelligence. Building connections amongst colleagues is proven to provide a healthier and more inclusive workplace culture.

Over the next 12 – 18 months ACIAR will embark on many changes across the organisation. We need to focus on how we will work together through these changes.

Action	Outcome
ACIAR Day	Bring staff together collaboratively to identify strengths and values and develop actions for transitioning through change and working together
Consultation	Seek solutions from staff to address some of the focus areas in the employee census
RPM and PSO team building	Work together collaboratively to design a framework to strengthen to RPM and PSO working relationship
APS values training for all staff	An opportunity to stop and re-centre, refresh our understanding of the APS values and how we apply them in the workplace
Refresh our ACIAR values, people and culture policy	Embed the training and culture that we are aspiring to achieve into our everyday work life.
Display the values in the office	Keeping the values at the forefront of peoples mind in how we should behave, but also calling out bad behaviour