

DRAFT for comment**Input document setting out the proposed evaluation mechanisms along with existing and future routes for external inputs relating to radio research projects.****1.0 Introduction**

As a result of discussions at the last Radio Research Advisory Committee (RRAC) meeting in April 2002 the chairman has requested that the RA draft a paper on the Agency's perspective on appropriate evaluation mechanisms and external inputs for research proposals, along with a summary of the position on the Task Group and evaluation policy. (This covers action points 6/6 & 6/7.)

2.0 Background

Discussions at the RRAC meeting concluded that it was important to communicate the research strategy internally as well as externally. Following the Open Forum where external views were sought last year it was agreed that the RA's Technical Forum (TF) needed to have sight of the RRAC discussion documents on the research strategy and views on implementation for the Agency. Documents have been circulated to the TF but it has also been stressed that further involvement from Business unit managers is required. Also the link to potential (external) Task Group work to ensure a cohesive approach to projects is considered important.

3.0 Research project evaluation policy

The Agency now has a research strategy developed by the RRAC and endorsed by the Management Board. The aim is to link this with the Agency UK spectrum strategy document and to provide a set of themes to categorise research and to be able to address short, medium and long-term research requirements. A research programme will consist of the research projects that fit into broad themes and support the regulatory requirements of spectrum management. As there is a mix of size, time frame, and technical and policy requirements inevitably many projects are small and results are required rapidly. This makes the evaluation of these unique and although the Agency endorses the DTI principles of project management (PRINCE) and Treasury guidelines, the majority are managed in the short term by targets or a requirement driven process.

The Agency's Technical Forum (TF) has in the past developed a detailed Project Officers handbook that is specific to technical project management with related procedures. This has worked well for internally generated contract (tendered) research and in conjunction with the scrutiny of the Technical Forum has provided the basis for project management of radio related research work.

With the introduction of the RRAC themed approach to research topics, and the opening up of the process to allow potential external inputs, project evaluation procedures need to be developed. In addition, some research projects are moving to more interaction with Task Groups, and further collaboration, along with the need to increase the scope of some research areas to embrace the changes required for Ofcom regulators. All these factors have led to changes in the TF procedures and consideration of the evaluation process. Whilst expertise in particular areas lies in various parts of the Agency, the Engineering Research Unit (ERU) endeavours to coordinate and manage these activities along with experimental work at the Agency's Radio Technology Compatibility Group (RTCG).

4.0 Project evaluation procedure

Currently in most instances Agency staff produce an outline proposal (1-2 page) on the research work to the TF and after taking any comments into consideration, this is then worked up into a detailed proposal. Once agreed this is then put out to tender. Tender board selection panels are held and regular project progress meetings, with a final presentation where required.

From April 2002 the Management Board has agreed the following changes. The aim has been to introduce a concept based on a "research council" type proposal and evaluation format. The project will be assessed by at least two other people in the Agency, normally from a different business unit. This will include the following forms:

Outline proposal form

Project proposal form

Self evaluation form

Assessment form

(Further details are given in Annex 1.)

5.0 RA tendering procedure

The Agency has a policy of letting research contracts by competitive tender, and generally would only consider a single tender contract in very special circumstances. It is now proposed to move to a tender based on specifying contract requirements/outcome rather than the current case of specifying a "straight method of approach" which has typically been used.

The aim is to widen the options to a potential contractor who may have various ideas of how to achieve the end goal (without being too prescriptive on the method, to get to an expected outcome.) Such bids would be judged on the approach proposed to meet the RA goals and on potential cost, but the RA would not necessarily chose the lowest cost bid.

6.0 External inputs for research work

At the last RRAC meeting a document (RRAC(02)07Rev1) was introduced on guidance on submitting research projects to RA. The purpose is to clarify that the Agency's technical research needs to underpin the regulatory function of spectrum management and that it is not another funding body. However, there may be potential for collaborative work and projects that can be shared at an initial stage (e.g. Operators, Telecommunication companies, and University consortium).

This process is being reviewed by the Agency and if final agreement is reached it is proposed to publish this on RA's research web page, involve heads of business units and to disseminate this externally to Task Groups and organisations with a radio research interest.

7.0 Task Groups

The RRAC has sent an open letter to the Task Group chairmen to outline some proposed changes.

- It is proposed that the existing task groups would now report to RA through the head of ERU, Trevor Clarkson. (It is recognised that these are important forums for industry, operators, and regulators to meet informally with a common interest in defining updating and sharing information for future systems.)

- The terms of reference of the RRAC would be amended to reflect this change. However the RRAC would still retain links with the TG's and request the chairman of the TG's to provide an annually an update on work and developments for the future.
- The RRAC has agreed with the Agency's that if required it could instigate a specific "Focus group" (with specific terms of reference and timescales, funded through the TF) to address new or pan-service technology issues.

8.0 Summary

By broadening the potential source of ideas for radio related research projects from external sources the Agency hopes to increase the number of research projects and put in place some longer term research projects. The involvement of Task Groups, directed focus groups, and commercial or academic organisations is envisaged. The projects would be championed by a relevant business unit or ERU staff with the addition of a self evaluation and assessment procedure.

Annex 1

Changes to Technical Forum procedures:

Outline Proposals	
Former practice	New procedures
Presented to TF at any time	Presented to TF secretary at least one week before the meeting Project titles to be published on the Intranet or by email
Funding was reserved when outline was accepted	Funding only reserved when full proposal is seen
Free-format proposals	Standard outline proposal form to be used for all outline proposals
Full Proposals	
Presented to TF at any time (often tabled at the meeting)	Presented at least one week before the meeting Published on the Intranet or as a document in a shared folder
Common outline, free-format	Two-page project proposal form to be used, followed by the detailed case (as previous format but omitting Project Officer names and financial and tendering information)
Costed in man-days	Estimated duration to be used in place of "days"
Normally additional costs are added later	Estimated cost to include T&S and equipment (where appropriate)

Project evaluation

A **self-evaluation form** must accompany the final report.

The project report will be assessed by at least two other persons in the Agency, normally from a different business unit. A two-page **assessment form** is used for this purpose; this form is designed to minimise the time required in its completion.

Forms

The four forms referenced above will be available in a shared folder for manual or electronic completion.