ATLAS OF LIVING AUSTRALIA MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

TERMS OF REFERENCE & OPERATIONS

1. Overview

The Atlas of Living Australia (ALA), established through the NCRIS program with funding from the Commonwealth (DEST), is a collaborative partnership of Commonwealth and State organisations that have stewardship of biological data and expertise in bioinformatics. It seeks to create one or more portals for deploying the rich biological data stored by Australian biodiversity institutions in flexible, integrated and innovative ways, and to provide tools for synthesis and analysis of these data.

A committee (the 'ALA Management Committee') is established to provide high level direction, strategy and guidance for the ALA and to represent and engage with key partners, data providers and the overall collection and user community.

The term of the ALA Management Committee will be 5 years (ie the term of the DEST Funding Agreement).

The ALA Management Committee will operate under the following terms of reference:

2. Roles and responsibilities

The role of the ALA Management Committee is to:

Strategy

- determine overall ALA priorities;
- advise the ALA Director on the setting of priorities for projects, milestones and the annual budget;
- recommend longer-term strategic directions for the ALA Project in consultation with the Participants, including strategies and sources of funding for the continued development of the ALA after the expiration of the project term;
- act as a bridge between the Participants of the ALA, CSIRO as head contractor with the Commonwealth, the Integrated Biological Systems (IBS) Steering Committee, the management committees of the other projects within the capability and committees of other NCRIS capabilities (e.g. 5.1, 5.3, 5.8, 5.16 etc) in order to facilitate and leverage interactions;

Policy

- assist the ALA Director and any subcommittees/working parties in the development of, and approve policies for, the ALA, such as intellectual property, ALA access and use;
- advise and assist with international engagement;
- identify possible solutions in the development and management of the ALA so that the vision and expectations of ALA contributors and users are addressed;

Operations

- establish subcommittees and/or working groups as needed to advise the ALA Management Committee on technical and other issues, and maintain engagement with key stakeholders;
- determine the role of, participate in the appointment of and advise on the performance of the ALA Director;
- review the Annual Business Plans, Performance Indicators, Progress Reports and Final Report and recommend to CSIRO whether all or part of these documents should be included in the various reports to be submitted by CSIRO to DEST under the Funding Agreement;
- monitor and review the contributions of Participants;
- advise on the admission of new Participants;

It is the responsibility of the ALA Management Committee to:

- operate in a timely, co-operative and proactive manner to ensure that the timelines, progress and performance indicators of the ALA can be achieved;
- provide transparency and accountability to the broader collection and user community on decision making and fund allocation.

3. Relationship with CSIRO

CSIRO has contracted with the Commonwealth through DEST to manage the ALA project and NCRIS funds and ensure that the project is carried out in accordance with the obligations under the DEST Funding Agreement. CSIRO undertakes to adhere to ALA Management Committee decisions unless such decisions are contrary to its obligations under the DEST Funding Agreement or conflict with relevant CSIRO internal policies and procedures. The ALA Management Committee will formulate policy or work plans consistent as far as practicable with CSIRO's requirements roles and legal responsibilities, with due regard for the aims of the ALA and the expectations of the collection community it will service. Departures from this will be resolved via the dispute resolution mechanism specified under item 11.

4. Membership

The Management Committee will comprise the following representatives from nominating organisations:

(a)   One representative from each of the four peak organisations that speak for the biological collections community in Australia:
   ● Council of Heads of Australasian Herbaria (CHAH);
   ● Council of Heads of Australian Faunal Collections (CHAFC);
   ● Australian Microbial Resources Research Network (AMRRN); and
   ● Council of Australian Museum Directors (CAMD).
(b)   a representative from CSIRO as the lead agency (eg Chief of Entomology or the Agribusiness Group Executive);
(c)   the project leader for the Mouse Genomics project (NCRIS 5.2.1);
(d)   the project leader for the Plant Phenomics project (NCRIS 5.2.2);
(e)   the ALA Director;
(f)   a representative from the Australian Biological Resources Study (ABRS); and
(g)   a technical expert in informatics, bioinformatics or IT, preferably with background biodiversity knowledge.

Each Representative is to be appointed for a period of one year.

Each Representative must be re-endorsed by their appointing body during the Annual Meetings of the ALA Management Committee.

Each Representative must nominate an alternate representative to attend ALA Management Committee meetings if and when the nominated representative cannot attend.

Where a Representative is not re-endorsed by its appointing body, or where the representative is otherwise required to step down from the ALA Management Committee, the nominating organisation must put forward the name of a replacement that is acceptable to the other Representatives of the ALA Management Committee. The alternate representative will take over the Representative's duties until such time as a replacement has been approved.

Each Representative will sign letters of appointment that set out their roles, address confidentiality and covers off any financial issues.

5. Appointment of Chairperson

A Chairperson of the ALA Management Committee will be elected by the ALA Management Committee at its first face-to-face meeting. The Chairperson will be appointed for a term of one year. The Chairperson will be re-elected during the ALA Management Committee's Annual Meetings.

The Chairperson must:
   ● where possible, circulate an agenda at least 1 week before each meeting;
   ● convene and adjourn the meetings, and ensure that the agenda for the meeting is followed; and
   ● keep minutes of the meeting and promptly circulate the minutes to each representative following the adjournment of the meeting.

6. Remuneration

Sitting fees will not be paid to Representatives.

If the employer of a Representative is unable to provide travel expenses for its Representative's attendance at ALA Management Committee meetings, then such Representatives will be reimbursed by CSIRO from ALA funds for economy air fare and all other reasonable travel expenses.

7. Meetings

ALA Management Committee meetings will be held quarterly.

There will be at least one face-to-face meeting per annum; other meetings may be held by video or phone-conferencing. Out-of-session decisions may be made by email.

The ALA Management Committee will aim for consensus decision-making and will rely on majority if consensus fails following reasonable consideration and discussion.

The Chairperson may invite other persons from other NCRIS infrastructure projects, key agencies, support agencies or ALA subcommittees or working groups to attend as needed.

The ALA Management Committee will hold an Annual Meeting each year where the Chairperson will be elected and Representatives on the ALA Management Committee will be either re-endorsed or new individuals appointed. The Annual Business Plans and the Project Budget will be also be reviewed and endorsed at the Annual Meetings.

8. ALA Director

The ALA Management Committee will advise on the role, selection, appointment and performance of the ALA Director. The ALA Director will be employed by CSIRO.

The ALA Director will be responsible for:

- overseeing the design, development and implementation of the ALA;
- considering and approving recommendations and advice from the ALA Management Committee.

The ALA Director will be primarily responsible to the ALA Management Committee for the development of the ALA. .

9. Project Officer

CSIRO will appoint a Project Officer who will be responsible for the day-to-day administrative aspects of the ALA, and in particular will be responsible for:

- providing secretariat support to the ALA Director;
- meeting the reporting requirements to DEST;
- assisting the ALA Management Committee with its duties.

10. Reporting

The ALA Management Committee will review the ALA Annual Business Plans, Performance Indicators, Progress Reports and Final Report and recommend to CSIRO that these be incorporated into the various reports to be submitted by CSIRO to DEST under the Funding Agreement.

11. Other NCRIS Committees

IBS Steering Committee

The ALA Management Committee will appoint a representative to sit on the IBS Steering Committee.

If a deadlock or disagreement occurs in relation to any matter that the ALA Management Committee must decide on or if between the ALA Management Committee and CSIRO the matter will be referred to the IBS Steering Committee for consideration.

Liaison with other committees

The ALA Management Committee will liaise with other NCRIS committees, especially NCRIS 5.2.1 (Mouse Genomics) and 5.2.2 (Plant Phenomics) and 5.16 (Platforms for Collaboration).

12. ALA Project Budget

The ALA Management Committee will approve an annual budget for the ALA Project. The budget will be managed by the ALA Director with assistance from the Project Officer and the Financial Manager of CSIRO.