



Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels

Fourth Meeting of Advisory Committee

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Assessment Process for Funding Requests

Author: Secretariat

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Submitted by: Secretariat

Purpose: This paper sets out a transparent procedure that could be followed by the Advisory Committee to identify and prioritise Working Group's requests to the Advisory Committee for funding of research or other activities of relevance to implementation of the Agreement.

Background: The third meeting of the Advisory Committee (AC3) endorsed a proposal from Australia for the development by the Secretariat of a consistent and transparent procedure for identifying and prioritising each working group's requests to the Committee for funding; and for recording the Committee's decisions.

Under this procedure working groups would be required to present a written summary of their funding proposals — including a description of the work proposed to be undertaken, the funding sought and its relative priority — to each meeting of the Committee. These requests would then be consolidated into a work programme and budget for the Committee, which would then decide on which proposals would be funded and what would be priorities for further funding intersessionally, should funding become available.

The Secretariat, in consultation with the Advisory Committee's leadership, developed an interim procedure for use at AC4. In the development of this procedure it was recognised that there are a number of important considerations, such as how funding requests are sought and how they are assessed, that warrant further consideration by the Advisory Committee.

To elaborate these issues this paper has been prepared by the Secretariat in close consultation with the Advisory Committee's leadership to aid discussion on these issues by the Advisory Committee, with a view to reaching agreement on a procedure to be adopted for use in future years.

Submission of Proposals: For the current round of funding requests an advertisement was prepared by the Secretariat (Attachment A). To make the process transparent and to attract further expertise and resources in support of the Agreement's work, applications for funding support were advertised on the Agreement's web-site and through the offices of National Contact Points. A funding request form drafted by Australia (Attachment B) was also circulated.

The Advisory Committee is requested to decide on the appropriateness of this approach for future use.

Evaluation Process: To ensure that the evaluation process is equitable and transparent it is proposed that a three tier system be adopted.

The first level of assessment would be undertaken by the Working Groups, who would decide on the relevance of funding requests to their respective work programmes and whether they warrant support.

At the second level, all proposals that were supported by Working Groups would be prioritised by an assessment group comprising Working Group Convenors and the Advisory Committee's Chair and Vice-chair. Possible criteria for this assessment and a means of ranking proposals are suggested below.

The prioritised list of funding requests would then be considered by the Advisory Committee, which would conduct the third level of assessment by deciding on the allocation of funds to individual funding proposals.

Assessment Criteria: One of the difficulties faced at AC3 was how to determine the priority of the funding requests put before it. A clearly defined set of criteria would assist the making of an objective assessment of the merit of a funding request, e.g. its relevance to the Advisory Committee's Work Programme and its relative importance compared to other funding requests under consideration.

There are many different criteria that could be used, however those that may be considered more relevant are:

Relevance: Rates the relevance of the proposal to one or more areas of the Advisory Committee's work programme. A proposal with high relevance may rate 8 points, with a higher rating being provided if it is relevant to more than one area.

Highest Priority: Proposals that address high priority management/conservation issues would be rated more highly. These priorities will be identified from an analysis of the species assessments.

Scientific merit: Assesses the scientific and or operational merit of the proposal. Is the proposal's design robust enough to achieve the outcomes/objectives?

Budget feasibility: Assesses the capacity of the budget to meet the proposed work-plan.

Criteria having greater importance could be weighted higher as shown in the table below. The relative importance of the proposal in comparison to the other proposals submitted would then be identified by the cumulative total of the rating achieved against each criterion. Suggested weightings are indicated in the table below.

Criteria	Points
1. Relevance to Advisory Committee Work Programme (1-10)	
2. Addresses a conservation/management issue of high priority (1-10)	
3. Scientific merit and/or operational feasibility (1-5)	
4. Budget feasibility (1-5)	
Total Points	

Recommendation: The Advisory Committee is requested to consider the merits of the procedure set out above for the assessment of funding proposals and to give guidance on the process to be adopted for the next round of funding proposals.