Using Partnerships

An evaluation of the partnership between the Namoi CMA and the Cotton Catchment Communities CRC and A Partnership Strategy for the Future

Prepared for

Namoi Catchment Management Authority

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Using Partnerships

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Front Cover Photos: Namoi Catchment Management Authority and Cotton Catchment Communities Cooperative Research Council.
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ACRONYMS

BMP  Best Management Practices
CAP  Catchment Action Plan
CMA  Catchment Management Authority
Cotton CRC  Cotton Catchment Communities Cooperative Research Centre
CRC  Cooperative Research Centre
CSIRO  Commonwealth Scientific and Research Organisation
ICM  Integrated Catchment Management
Namoi CMA  Namoi Catchment Management Authority
NRM  Natural Resource Management
RCS  Regional Catchment Strategy
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Namoi Catchment Management Authority (Namoi CMA) has been delivering natural resource management outcomes in the Namoi Catchment since 2004. To achieve the vision of **vibrant communities and landscapes for the future**, partnerships are seen as crucial to expanding the influence of the organisation to achieve the outcomes of the Namoi Blueprint, Namoi Catchment Action Plan (CAP), and the Namoi Investment Strategy. Specifically, the Cotton Catchment Communities Cooperative Research Centre (Cotton CRC) partnership has been a core component of Namoi CMA’s partnership activities, a key partner in engaging the cotton industry and improving natural resource management outcomes. This review seeks to evaluate Namoi CMA’s partnership delivery model, evaluate the Cotton CRC and Namoi CMA partnership, as well as provide recommendations for a future Partnership Strategy.

In order to differentiate between an evaluation of the partnership between the Namoi Catchment Management Authority (Namoi CMA) and the Cotton Catchment Communities Cooperative Research Centre (Cotton CRC) and the partnership strategy for Namoi CMA for the future, this report is presented in three main parts (aside from the introduction and methodology). The first part examines the various types of partnership models that exist and their different characteristics, while the second part is a detailed evaluation of the existing partnership between Namoi CMA and the Cotton CRC. The findings from these parts are then taken into account in the final section which discusses the development of a general partnership strategy for Namoi CMA. A summary of the findings from these sections is presented below.

**Review of partnership models**

Different levels of partnerships are characterised by the level of inter-organisational involvement indicated by the degree of power sharing and the existence of mutual goals among the partners. Four levels of partnerships are identified: **networking**, where there is an exchange of information but no power sharing; **coordinating**, where there is a common purpose but no power sharing; **co-operating** for mutual benefit by sharing resources; and **collaborating** which includes a sharing of resources, risks and responsibilities to meet a common purpose. Partnerships may work at all four levels at different times and to achieve different outcomes.

In order to position the Namoi CMA partnership with the Cotton CRC in relation to the partnership models, the review begins by identifying the characteristics, acknowledged benefits, methods used and outcomes attributed to this partnership. The partnership was found to be active at all levels of involvement across the various activities undertaken.

Partnerships are also assessed by their effectiveness, efficiency and appropriateness. Three factors are identified that help to determine the effectiveness of a partnership: achievement of partnership goals; power sharing; and responsibility both between and within partner organisations and positive outsider perceptions. The cost effectiveness of partnership is indicated by the return on investment of partnership activities. Efficiency can be assessed in partnerships through the development of factors to do with relationships such as building social capital, learning, communication, shared values and risks, high levels of motivation and realistic expectations of the participants. Appropriateness is assessed in terms of the context and the resources available to the partners.

Governments recognise the need for partnerships in Australia in natural resource management (NRM), particularly in terms of leveraging and achieving synergies. Their growing prevalence can be understood in relation to the complexity of the challenges being addressed and these have been acknowledged by both Federal and State governments through the design of their funding policies.
These policies recognise the need for a network of actors who have a variety of skills and resources to address NRM issues.

The particular challenges and benefits of NRM partnerships are discussed in this report in terms of their principles and activities. The case studies in this report provide an indication of the breadth of existing NRM partnerships. The strengths and successes of these case studies and partnerships are presented in terms of focusing on particular types of organisations such as local government, government departments and Landcare groups; or illustrate the use of community networks and regional arrangements to further cooperation among NRM organisations. One case study also highlights the processes used by a CMA to identify suitable partners and project opportunities. Activities and processes that can improve partnership outcomes are identified and incorporated into the partnership evaluation and strategy below.

**Evaluation of Namoi CMA and Cotton CRC partnership**

The evaluation considered the investments made to achieve outcomes. The five areas targeted for investment under the partnership as specified in Schedule 1 provided the basis for determining the achievements that had been made against those areas. The activities that have been undertaken to achieve these objectives are listed and include: workshops, the role of the project officer, implementing best management practices, the funding of on-ground incentive and water use efficiency projects.

The appropriateness of the Namoi CMA partnership with the Cotton CRC is first examined to determine how closely the partnership aligns with key documents including strategic and action plans and agreements, partnership policy and reports and with other NRM stakeholders the Namoi CMA engages with. Evidence of mutual objectives between the Namoi CMA and Cotton CRC is drawn from analyses of the Namoi CRC’s vision and targets and those of the Cotton CRC. It was shown that there was a high level of synergies in terms of addressing similar issues. Lessons learned provided some idea of what could be the best design for a more general partnership strategy.

The partnership was formed in a manner that contributed to its strong success. There was a key staff member of Namoi CMA who initiated the formation of the partnership. This person was also involved with the Cotton CRC, and provided the foundation for the strong relationship. In addition, the negotiation period, while difficult, drew together the staff of the organisations. This resulted in a high level of motivation, shared values and mutual objectives in achieving good outcomes.

The effectiveness and efficiency of the partnership in achieving the outcomes of both organisations was also considered by examining changes in their abilities to carry out these objectives. It was found that the partnership had expanded the range of delivery methods by accessing the resources of both organisations. More importantly, the partnership was able to maximise the reach and impact and increase the scope of their target audiences – enabling Namoi CMA to reach cotton growers they would not have otherwise been able to reach with the same level of credibility, while building Cotton CRC’s capacity and credibility in terms of NRM. This partnership proved to be more effective and efficient than Namoi CMA using alternative partners or directly implementing the schedules, as highlighted in the cost effective analysis. Without the partnership, neither organisation would have been able to achieve the same level of natural resource management outcome that resulted from better management practices, improved use of resources, conservation and revegetation.

The broader impact of the partnership was also considered in this evaluation, in particular the perceptions of the staff directly involved and the landholders who benefited from some of the programs. Staff pointed to the contacts they had made with potential partners and the positive nature of the partnership provided a model and a marketing tool for any future partnerships Namoi
CMA may be interested in. The partnership was characterised by an open and trusting relationship that was based on goodwill. Goodwill made the implementation and management more effective.

Lessons learned from the evaluation about the design of the partnership include:

- The value of clearly defined investment targets specified in Schedule 1
- The importance of the relationship and goodwill between the partner members from the highest level of CEO to the operative level of implementation officers
- Each level had roles and responsibilities that while not written or defined, could be described and measured
- The partnership was appropriate in that objectives and plans overlapped
- The partnership was effective and efficient in that the objectives of both organisations could be met with less resources and effort.

**Namoi CMA Partnership Strategy**

The Namoi CMA partnership strategy was developed with reference to the preceding sections of the review. It was written as if it is an external document that could be given to organisations who were thinking of partnering with the Namoi CMA. It was written largely with organisations in mind rather than private landholders (with whom the Namoi CMA also partners). In order to contextualise the partnership strategy, current activities and partners, as well as potential partners, are detailed.

Six steps are identified that lead to the development of new partnerships. These are then followed by a discussion of on-going monitoring, evaluating and adaptive management strategies once the partnership has been established. The six steps are:

1. Ensuring that the values and principles of the partners are complementary and that they align with the way the Namoi CMA does business.
2. Identifying where mutual benefit will occur in terms of the management and operations of the partners.
3. Investigating how the partnership can add to the effectiveness and efficiency of the partners through shared goals, power and responsibility and the enhancement of relationships through shared learning and good communication.
4. Evaluating factors specific to NRM that may involve different operating styles and divergent views about the environment
5. Deciding on the type of partnership appropriate to the activities to be undertaken and the level of involvement this requires
6. Developing a partnership plan that includes the vision, objectives and operating procedures

An adaptive management approach links learning with policy and implementation, using the mechanisms of monitoring, reflection, and adaption during the life of the partnership. For the discussion on adaptive management, we consulted the literature and looked at best practice case studies of how other CMAs around Australia dealt with partnerships.

This report is structured as follows:

- Section I provides an introduction to the report and review;
- Section II provides an overview of the methodology used in the review
- Section III presents a review of the literature of partnership models
- Section IV is an evaluation of the Namoi CMA and Cotton CRC partnership
- Section V provides a synopsis of what to include in Namoi CMAs partnership strategy; and
- Section VI includes all appendices.
SECTION I – INTRODUCTION

The Namoi Catchment Management Authority (Namoi CMA) entered into a partnership with the Cotton Catchment Communities CRC (the Cotton CRC) in 2005 with the objective that, the Cotton CRC would deliver on a range of the Namoi CMA Management targets in return for a sum of $2.4m provided by the Namoi CMA over the period 2005-2008. The projects undertaken within this partnership essentially fall into two main categories: the delivery of on-ground works in the cotton growing areas of the catchment and a range of allied activities dealing with facilitation, training, capacity building and education.

Five areas are targeted for investment under the partnership:

- **Schedule 1.1** Building Natural Resource Management (NRM) capacity in the Namoi Cotton Districts
- **Schedule 1.2** Supporting the adoption of Delivering Best Management Practice (BMP) in the cotton industry in the Namoi Catchment
- **Schedule 1.3** Information Collation to Support the Delivery of Best Management Practice in the Namoi Catchment
- **Schedule 1.4** Implementation of NRM on-ground Incentive Projects in the Namoi Catchment
- **Schedule 1.5** Advanced water management on NSW

The first term of the partnership has come to an end and it is considered timely to review this arrangement. In essence the review focuses on the partnership at three levels:

- The Cotton CRC partnership itself, its effectiveness and how it can be improved
- More broadly, on the partnership model being employed and on how the Namoi CMA could best design partnership agreements in the future
- As a delivery model, how the effectiveness of the partnership program, such as the Cotton CRC partnership, compares with other approaches as a means of achieving on-ground change.

Currently the Namoi CMA is developing its Adaptive Management Strategy and this review will contribute to that process.

The evaluation objectives were:

1. An evaluation of the efficiency, effectiveness and appropriateness to achieve intermediate outcomes of the partnership program, focussing on the particular partnership delivery model employed
2. The provision of advice on ways to improve the partnership model
3. Provide an adaptive management paper to best design partnership agreements in the future
4. Provide a comparison of the effectiveness of a partnership program such as this compared to effecting on ground change directly using current Namoi CMA resources
5. A strategy for partnership development incorporating the “Namoi CMA Partnership Scoping Study”
Other parameters for the review

1. While two of the Schedules of the partnership deal with on-ground works and improvements to natural resources, the documents and information already gathered by the Namoi CMA were expected to be adequate to assess whether improvement have been made in these areas. It was not expected that further evidence would be required to make this assessment. In that sense this is not a technical audit of on-ground change.

2. In general, this review will contribute and align itself with pre-existing partnerships of Namoi CMA. It was not expected that we would gather evidence to establish where additional partnerships might be fruitfully sought by the Namoi CMA as this work has already been done in a recent study it commissioned. Instead, the focus was on providing a strategy for assessing and developing partnerships in the future. The development of this strategy was informed by the results of the study and other material.

3. It is appreciated that with regard to a comparison of the effectiveness of the partnership program versus direct delivery, it was not be possible to make a rigorous quantitative comparison with the data available. Some of the confounding issues here were the availability of data on outcomes (specifically intermediate outcomes) as distinct from outputs and, the mixture of on-ground and “people” centred activities, the varying timescales etc. Nevertheless, we believe that useful points of comparison were drawn and a partial cost effective analysis was used in conjunction with a partnership assessment model.

4. Whole scale collection of data from landholders and community members was not anticipated. Rather the focus is on the strategic aspect of the study. Having said that, information was gathered data from landholders in order to properly evaluate Schedules 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3.
SECTION II – METHODOLOGY

Below is a graphical depiction is provided of how the objectives of the evaluation can be met:

To meet the objectives of the study we carried out the following:

1. Document review
2. Literature Review
3. Program logic workshop and focus group with staff: 5 participants (3 Namoi CMA managers, 1 Cotton CRC manager, 1 Cotton CRC project officer)
4. Interview of Namoi CMA (4) and Cotton CRC managers (2) and project officer (1), the CEO of the Cotton CRC and landholders (9) who had been involved in the BMP workshops.
5. A follow up workshop was held in which the results and findings were presented and approval sought for the strategy and suggested directions.
Evaluation Objectives

As already mentioned, the evaluation objectives were:

1. An evaluation of the efficiency, effectiveness and appropriateness to achieve intermediate outcomes of the partnership program, focusing on the particular partnership delivery model employed
2. The provision of advice on ways to improve the partnership model
3. Provide an adaptive management paper to best design partnership agreements in the future
4. Provide a comparison of the effectiveness of a partnership program such as this compared to effecting on-ground change directly, by using existing Namoi CMA staff
5. A strategy for partnership development incorporating the “Namoi CMA Partnership Scoping Study”

Evaluation Objective 1. Evaluation of Namoi CMA and Cotton CRC Partnership

The review required an examination of the effectiveness, efficiency and appropriateness of the partnership. We take these terms to mean:

Effectiveness is a measure of the ability of a program, project or task to produce a specific desired effect or result that can be measured. It is governed by the objectives set for the initiative in question. By contrast, efficiency is the ability to achieve the objectives with the least amount of energy or waste (financial, administrative, human resource, etc). It focuses on the volume of output achieved for the input used and hence, is closely related to productivity. In the context of this study, we take appropriateness to be related to the concept of Caring for our Country’s concept of appropriateness in partnership delivery – that is, that the partnerships are aligned in their plans, investments and actions; promote coordination and inter-dependence; and are able to leverage from each other’s comparative advantage to achieve the outcomes sought. For example, the appropriateness of the partnership is dependent on whether the organisation is best placed to deliver the outcomes relative to other agencies or methods. This aspect of the study has particular relevance to the comparative aspect of the study (Objective 4).

In evaluating the partnership we applied the tool of cost-effectiveness analysis, a particular method within the broader theory of cost effective analysis. This tool is specifically applied to the partnership framework with criteria (see below) that select partnerships according to their ability to achieve the greatest outcomes (effects) relative to expenditures (costs). Benefits are identified not in monetary terms, but rather in outcomes and are sought to be maximised relative to alternative methods (i.e. considering synergies, value adding, etc).

The criteria that we used to evaluate the partnership took account of its ability to:

- Expand on the range of delivery methods used by Namoi CMA (i.e. appropriateness of new products and services)
- Maximise reach and impact (i.e. improving efficiency of existing resources)
- Increase the scope of target audience (i.e. effectiveness in reaching the cotton industry)
- Improve the value to stakeholder base (i.e. efficiency and value adding)
- Remain attractive to the cotton industry to achieving outcomes
- Provide a comparative advantage through the Cotton CRC (relative to others) in the ability to achieve outcomes
- Engage and involve stakeholders.
Some of these criteria and issues overlap with other facets of the evaluation, especially Objective 4.

In evaluating the partnership we examined each of the five schedules, the sub-projects and their components to see whether they have been fulfilled. Then, taken as a whole, we looked at how effective, efficient and appropriate the partnership is. In dealing with each of the schedules, notice is taken of the budget allocations and the relative outcomes for each one. It was recognised that, in some cases, making a judgement on matters such as increased capacity (e.g. Schedule 1.1) is not be easy.

With regard to efficiency, we examined the direct and indirect cost to the NAMOI CMA of running the partnership.

**Program logic**
When evaluating a program, we re-visit the program logic to test whether the objectives could be achieved given the activities planned. The process also discerns if there is a logical link between the outcomes and activities given the resources used and the timescales involved (i.e. the rigour of the causal links).

Within each of the five schedules there were a range of different activities which contributed to an overall objective. Here we examine whether, taken as a whole, the activities have the potential to meet that objective. For example, an information program needs to be well research, targeted and delivered in the appropriate way for the audience, have follow up exercises to test its longevity etc. To have all the links in the causal chain present is even more important when the activities are carried out by another organisation.

**Evaluation Objective 2. Review of Partnership Models**
In conjunction with the evaluation of the partnership we carried out a comprehensive literature review related to designing and delivering effective partnerships. This literature not only informed this aspect of the project but also provided a platform for the discussion on adaptive management and the development of the partnership strategy to follow.

The literature review operated at three levels:

- What are the generic features of successful partnerships?
- What are the features of successful NRM partnerships especially where one partner is a regional body?
- What are the features of a partnership with a R&D institution?

We already had some familiarity with the literature on each of these three aspects but this was built upon by further investigation. In making recommendations to improve on the model we drew on the literature (especially as it related to collaborative partnerships) plus the specific findings from the evaluation.

**Evaluation Objective 3. A paper on the adaptive management of partnerships**
This paper was developed from the literature review mentioned above and included the work of Peter Oliver. A comparison of what occurs in other CMAs was also added.
Evaluation Objective 4. Comparison of the partnership program with direct delivery methods

Here we conducted a simplified cost effective analysis which compares the costs of alternative methods to achieve the same outcomes. This comparison is built on the evaluation conducted above which identified the strengths and weaknesses of the existing partnership. But here we included the strengths and weaknesses of the direct methods, what is lost by one method or gained by another. Another element was to address the counterfactual. What would have happened if the partnership was not in place?

We examined the ability to address short and intermediate outcomes. The potential to address longer term goals and other requirements of the NAMOI CMA is dependent on whether such information and benchmarking is available or whether it required for foundational activities.

Included in this comparison is an examination what other CMAs are doing. We look at the literature on the topic but also we draw upon our experience from similar projects where we have reviewed a range of the delivery methods used by CMAs to achieve on ground change. Positive and negative examples are used, identifying what successful strategies have been utilised in terms of partnership development and achieving leveraging for greater outcomes.

Set out below was the starting point for a framework to guide this aspect of the study.
Framework for analysis: Comparison of Partnerships to Alternative Delivery Methods

- Cost Effective Analysis of Partnerships
  - What are the costs for partnerships to achieve the outcomes (including transaction costs, such as bargaining, negotiations, etc)?
  - How well have partnerships achieved those outcomes? (i.e. benefits/effects)
  - What alternative methods are there for achieving those outcomes?
  - What are the costs of those alternative methods to achieve those outcomes?
  - What are the potential benefits/effects of those alternative methods?
  - Which method can most effectively and efficiently achieve the outcomes desired?

- What are the strengths of partnerships?
  - Ability to expand capacity of existing methodologies (i.e. appropriateness of products and services offered by Namoi CMA)
  - Ability to expand the range of delivery methods used by Namoi CMA (i.e. appropriateness of new products and services)
  - Maximising reach and impact (i.e. improving efficiency of existing resources (leveraging))
  - Increasing scope of target audience (i.e. effectiveness in reaching Cotton industry)
  - Improving value to stakeholder base (i.e. efficiency and value adding)
  - Achieve cost effective on-ground outcomes across a large diverse area
  - Develop and enhance relationships with the communities
  - Ability to identify priorities at grass roots level
  - Able to better identify and capitalise on funding opportunities
  - Provide a conduit for development of a voice for community
  - Dedicate resources on a whole of region basis
  - Marketing, communication and other expertise

- What are Strengths of Direct Methods
  - Fewer transaction costs (i.e. no search, negotiation, bargaining, information, communication, etc costs)
  - Immediate alignment of objectives without the need for consideration of mutual interests

- Other considerations
  - What are other CMAs doing?
  - What can be learned from other partnerships programs by CMAs?
  - How does Namoi CMA’s partnership program compare with other the effectiveness, efficiency and appropriateness of other CMAs and NRM bodies partnerships program?

Figure 2: Framework for Analysis

Evaluation Objective 5: Namoi CMA Partnership Strategy

The topics we covered were:

- Introduction
- Scope and Purpose of Partnership Strategy to include summary on relevant documents aligned
- Foundations
  - Organisation’s Values
  - Principles of Engagement
  - Partnership principles
  - Current Practices
Partnerships and Key Documents in Namoi CMA

The document review contributed secondary data towards the evaluation of the efficiency, effectiveness and appropriateness to achieve intermediate outcomes of the partnership program. Specifically, it provided a focus on the partnership delivery model employed and the fit for purpose given the objectives of the two organisations involved, as well as detailed project related information. The review consisted of:

- Constituent documents of the Namoi CMA including the Namoi Blueprint, the Namoi CAP, the Namoi Investment Strategy, as well as the Partnership Policy and Engagement Strategy. From these documents we identify the broader objectives of the organisation, the alignment with the partnership and the specific Management Targets addressed by the partnership.
- Strategic documents of the Cotton CRC, including the Strategic Plan, Mission and Outcomes, and program documents. These provided an understanding of the organisation’s direction and *modus operandi*, and how the partnership’s objectives align with the organisations values and direction.
- Partnership documents such as the agreement were also reviewed to provide an understanding of the structure and delivery model of the partnership.
- Finally, progress reports and project related documents were reviewed to provide input regarding the implementation of the partnership. This included other data and records showing completion of milestones and the achievement of outcomes.

Program logic workshop with staff

The program logic workshop was held with staff to gather feedback about the activities of the partnership and the outcomes of those activities. Staff were also asked about the partnership itself. The workshop was held at Gunnedah on 28 April 2009. There were five participants: three managers from the NAMOI CMA, one manager and one project officer from the Cotton CRC. All are directly involved in this partnership.

At this workshop participants were asked about the program logic and the value of the partnership:

Program Logic

- What are the causal links between the objective and activities?
- What were the expected outcomes?
- How was the partnership expected to add value?
- Were sufficient resources provided?
- What risks / assumptions are built into this?
The value of the partnership measured by the following criteria:

- Comparative Advantage of Namoi CMA & Cotton CRC
- Alternatives to Partnership
- Partnership Characteristics
- Effectiveness of Outcomes
- Adaptive Management
- Strengths and Weaknesses

**Interviews with staff**

All but one of the workshop participants were interviewed in more detail. In addition, the CEO and the Adoption Program Manager of the Cotton CRC were also interviewed. Interviews took place in Narrabri on 29 April 2009. Participants were asked the questions attached as an appendix of this report. In summary, these questions were about:

1. What makes you think that Namoi CMA and Cotton CRC are suitable partners?
2. Broadly, how effective do you believe the partnership has been in terms of:
   a. Achievement of goals (see schedules)
   b. Indirect benefits
   c. Formation, implementation and evaluation of the partnership (i.e. process management)
   d. Compared to alternative mechanisms of partnership outcomes?
3. Do you feel there has been shared power and responsibility?
4. What contextual issues outside the scope of either organisation has affected the partnership (i.e. movements in agriculture, NRM, etc)
5. Do you feel that there has been a good social relationship between the organisations?
6. What recommendations would you make for improving the partnership?

**Partnership Strategy**

7. If you were to be involved in designing a partnership strategy for Namoi CMA, what sort of values and principles do you think would be most important?
8. How do you believe existing partnerships could be strengthened?
9. Broadly, what do you think are the strengths and weaknesses facing Namoi CMA with partnerships as a method for achieving outcomes?

**Adaptive Management**

10. Do you feel that the partnership is able to adapt and adopt new directions and practices? Is there continuous improvement?

**Workshop with staff**

A workshop for senior staff and board members was held on 9 June 2009 in Tamworth to discuss the findings of the evaluation and the options suggested for the future. This workshop contributed to the development of a strategy and planning options and was also a valuable opportunity for us to collect data to support any modifications to the suggested strategies. It also provided an opportunity for staff to take more “ownership” of the process.
SECTION III – REVIEW OF PARTNERSHIP MODELS

In conjunction with the evaluation of the partnership we carried out a comprehensive literature review related to designing and delivering effective partnerships. This literature not only informed this aspect of the project but also provided a platform for the adaptive management paper and the development of the partnership strategy to follow. The literature review operated at three levels:

- What are the generic features of successful partnerships?
- What are the features of successful NRM partnerships especially where one partner is a regional body?
- What are the features of a partnership with a R&D institution?

The existing partnership arrangement between the Namoi CMA and the Cotton Catchment Communities CRC (Cotton CRC) has been described as having “successfully capitalised on the implementation of NRM Best Management Practices within cotton catchments” (Spanswick & Jones 2008, p.1). A review of the current partnership arrangement and supporting strategy will enable future arrangements to be improved and provide the basis for further successful partnership arrangements to be established and maintained within the region. Key characteristics, benefits, methods and the outcomes of the current partnership arrangement with the Cotton CRC are summarised below.

The main characteristics of the current partnership arrangement have been summarised as:

- Collaborative
- Focused on the delivery of integrated projects
- Fitting within the planning of both organisations (Cotton Catchment Communities CRC 2008; Roberts Evaluation 2009).

Benefits of partnering with the Cotton CRC have allowed the Namoi CMA to:

- Align on-ground investment with the latest research
- Gain greater access to specialists
- Improve credibility when working with growers (Spanswick & Jones 2008).

The methods adopted to achieve practical outcomes have involved:

- Co-investing to employ technical staff (and equipment)
- Co-investing to improve training by aligning the Namoi CMA’s on-ground incentive projects with the Cotton CRC’s workshop series
- Co-investing in the implementation of on-ground works (Spanswick & Jones 2008).

Outcomes have included:

- Increased skills among growers and consultants
- Increased access to technical information
- Increased participation in training and education programs
- Increased financial assistance to implement on-ground changes (Namoi CMA n.d.; Spanswick & Jones 2008).
However in considering how these successes might be extended and developed to make improvements to this current partnership and develop additional successful partnerships in the region in the future, there appear to be several key questions for consideration:

- How are partnerships defined and what are the different forms they take?
- What characteristics influence the effectiveness, efficiency and appropriateness of partnerships?
- What is the cost effectiveness of partnerships in terms of value adding?
- What are the core characteristics of a partnership strategy?
- What do best practice partnerships look like?
- How can partnerships incorporate adaptive management?

Each of these questions is systematically addressed in the following sections. The literature discussed in this section will be applied to the Namoi CMA and Cotton CRC partnership, as well as the development of the Namoi CMA Partnership Strategy.

Defining Partnerships

There are many definitions of partnerships to be found in the literature with little agreement on what constitutes a partnership in relation to other forms of collaboration or coalition. However there are some common criteria for determining the types of relationships, in particular the degree of power sharing and the mutuality of the goals of the various parties. Thus, the various forms of collaboration are frequently presented as a continuum based on the amount of power sharing required by the partners in order to be effective in achieving partnership goals. Himmelman identifies four levels:

- **Networking** where there is no power sharing but an exchange of information for mutual benefit;
- **Coordinating**, which involves the parties altering their activities for a common purpose but with no power sharing;
- **Cooperating**, where there is a sharing of resources for mutual benefit and a common purpose; and
- **Collaborating**, where there is a sharing of resources and “a willingness to enhance the capacities of another for mutual benefit and a common purpose...by sharing risks, responsibilities, resources and rewards” (Himmelman, 2001).

![Figure 3: Scale of Partnerships](image-url)
A similar classification is outlined by Brian Head, who suggests that there is both genuine interdependence and sharing of power in a collaborative partnership (Head, 2006, 2008).

In his work on NRM partnerships, Peter Oliver uses similar terms, describing cooperation as something that cannot be forced as it involves working together to achieve mutually desirable goals. He makes a distinction between both collaboration (which involves working together to achieve mutually beneficial goals) and an alliance (which does not involve the sharing of power) and a partnership which requires the parties to be working together for both mutually beneficial and mutually desirable goals. Recognising the importance of shared power to a partnership, Oliver points out that a partnership will only come into being if there is a tangible commitment by the parties. Power sharing should result in “recognition of dependency; a pooling of resources; exchange of information; the development of trust; mutual orientation and commitment over the long haul” (Oliver, 2004: 29).

Elsewhere, Jennifer Brinkerhoff’s definition of a partnership has been widely used:

“a dynamic relationship among diverse actors, based on mutually agreed objectives, pursued through a shared understanding of the most rational division of labour on the respective comparative advantages of each partner. Partnership encompasses mutual influence, with a careful balance between synergy and respective autonomy, which incorporates mutual respect, equal participation in decision-making, mutual accountability and transparency”

(Brinkerhoff, 2002a: 216).

Based on this definition, Brinkerhoff focuses on two broad characteristics when determining the nature and assessing the effectiveness of a partnership:

- **Mutuality** of the relations with horizontal coordination, accountability and equality in decision-making as opposed to the hierarchical domination by one or more partners; and
- **Organisation identity**, where the partnership maintains and benefits from each organisation’s core values and constituencies (Brinkerhoff, 2002b). “Partnerships with other actors are pursued precisely because these actors have something unique to offer, whether it is resources, skills, relationships or consent” (Brinkerhoff, 2002a: 26).  

Based on Brinkerhoff’s definition, researchers such as Plummer and Fitzgibbon describe two types of partnerships, one based on collaboration which involves the pooling of resources by multiple stakeholders to address particular issues and co-management, which is where there is a sharing of rights and responsibilities between state and local users (Plummer and Fitzgibbon, 2004; Berkes, 2009). Co-management is considered to be particularly relevant for many NRM situations.

It can be seen from the literature that there is no overall model for partnerships, but rather a scale of involvement by the organisations. Different levels of inter-organisation involvement will result in varying degrees of characteristics that are identified below for evaluating the effectiveness, efficiency and appropriateness of partnerships.

**Partnership Characteristics Influencing Effectiveness, Efficiency and Appropriateness**

This section considers the characteristics that influence the effectiveness, efficiency and then appropriateness of partnerships for the aforementioned varying levels of involvement. These have been used throughout the report for the Namoi CMA and Cotton CRC case study, as well as for the monitoring and evaluation framework of the Partnership Strategy in particular.
Effectiveness

Achievement of goals: Oliver suggests that it is important to determine if the partnership goals have been achieved and that the outcomes were better than could be achieved by the best alternative to a partnership option. This aspect highlights any indirect benefits partners and external parties may have accrued from the partnership (Oliver, 2004). Oliver also argues that effective partnerships are ones where the goals are mutually held by the partners. Through her use of the term, “mutuality”, Brinkerhoff makes a distinction between the mutual commitment to the partnership goals and an assumption that these objectives are consistent with each organisation’s mission and objectives (Brinkerhoff, 2002a). Oliver and Whelan argue that NRM partnerships have two discriminating features that set them apart from other types of alliances including: “the goals of the relationship are beneficial to, and desired by, all who may be affected by achievement of those goals, not just the partners directly involved” (Oliver & Whelan, 2003).

Shared power and responsibility: This is the second discriminating feature of an NRM partnership (Oliver & Whelan, 2003). In Oliver’s definition, effective partnerships involve the sharing of power and responsibility, not just between groups but within groups. Power is used in a positive way to enable and create opportunities rather than as a controlling mechanism by one party (Oliver, 2004). Whilst shared power does not imply equal power, no one party should be able enforce others to be responsible for their decision and actions (Brinkerhoff, 2002b). To avoid this, Brian Head suggests that a partnership requires a clear model for decision-making, governance and accountabilities (Head, 2006).

Outsider perception: In relation to specific NRM partnerships, Oliver lists a positive outsider perception of the partnership as an important indicator of its effectiveness. To some degree this relates to the nature of such relationships in aiming for and achieving goals that benefit all parties affected (see above – Oliver & Whelan, 2003)

Efficiency – Relationship Characteristics

Social capital building processes: Oliver’s study found that partnerships required good relationships and networks that can provide access to the ‘right’ people. Such processes should include effective conflict resolution that can be used as a source of creativity to develop relationships further and to establish norms of behaviour or sanctions for people not pulling their weight in the relationship (Oliver, 2004; Oliver & Whelan, 2003). These processes also promote trust, something that must be earned by developing productive relationships (Head, 2006). In regard to building relationships, Head specified two skills that are likely to be needed: “bridging and linking” in order to forge common understandings of goals and objectives and leadership capabilities to mobilise, persuade and adapt to changing contexts and challenges (Head, 2006).

Good communication: This involves dialogue between partners that is aimed at mutual understanding by speaking the same language (Oliver, 2004). Head suggests it is important to bring together and manage the differing disciplinary approaches and organisational biases in order for a partnership to be sustainable (Head, 2006). Good communication is also timely.

Social learning: The effective partnerships create an environment of open learning as a mechanism to build trust, where the partners acquire knowledge which is then reflected upon in order to make changes. Head refers to a learning orientation as one that becomes a “productive feedback loop” that allows partners to review their goals and strategies and the partnership processes they have in place (Head, 2006)

Shared Values: It is possible for partners to hold different values in relation to the issues that have brought them together. However it is important that the partners hold shared relationship values
about how the partners are going to work together in the relationship. These are likely to include transparency, honesty and mutual respect (Oliver, 2004). These values will help to determine the partners’ tolerance for shared power and their willingness to adapt their processes to optimise partnership performance (Brinkerhoff, 2002b).

**Shared intent:** Oliver found that partners had to be clear and open about their intentions and expectations about themselves and the role they saw for the partnership in addressing the NRM issues that brought the partnership together (Oliver, 2004). As with the goals and objectives, intentions need to be consistent over all levels of the partner organisations and over time, through personnel changes for example.

**Shared risk taking:** Partnerships involve risks at two levels—firstly, the risks of taking joint action to address the NRM issues that are the focus of the partnership and secondly, the risks associated with building the relationships necessary to make the partnership function effectively (Oliver, 2004). Oliver points out that a preparedness to take risks by committing to action can lead to further commitment and action.

**Efficiency – Participant Characteristics**

These are characteristics that exist independently of the relationship. Whilst Long and Arnold identified expertise, credibility, learning and listening ability, commitment and the issue or problem having “core relevance” to the participants as important participant characteristics, Oliver’s analysis of 19 NRM case studies pointed to the fundamental importance of two characteristics:

**High levels of motivation:** Oliver outlines two sources that are likely to provide high levels of motivation behind a partnership: firstly, the issue to be addressed by the partnership had “high core relevance” to each partner and was “seriously affecting their business and/or values” (Oliver, 2004: 170). The motivations may be different but as long as they were high in regard to the issue, partners were able to work together. Further, each partner understood that they did not have the capacity to solve the problems on their own. Secondly, the potential partners held positive perceptions about themselves and their partners so that they could identify mutual benefits from working together. Reflecting this aspect, Brinkerhoff suggests that the maintenance of each partner’s *organisation identity* both internally (to each organisation) and externally can be an essential component in securing staff commitment and motivation (Brinkerhoff, 2002a).

**Realistic expectations:** Partners need to base their expectations on their capabilities, including having the legal authority, time, skills and resources required to achieve those expectations. Some of these capabilities may increase over time through the social learning and capacity building benefits of the partnership. Oliver points out that it is possible to get an indication of the commitment to the partnership from the time and resources each party is willing to make available to the partnership (Oliver, 2004:170).

**Appropriateness**

The most appropriate form of engagement to deal with an NRM issue may not be a partnership. One way to determine what form of alliance is most suited to the issue and surrounding situation is to make a comparison of the best alternative to a partnership outcome (BATPO)\(^1\). Oliver developed a decision tree to determine the appropriate level of citizen participation in an NRM project based on eight questions that point to nine different types of citizen participation outcomes (Oliver, 2004: 68).

\(^1\) This is drawn from economics and game theory and can be used to consider the next best alternative when in negotiations for a partnership agreement.
The questions relate to the capacities an organisation has to deal with an issue, and whether the issues and the possible solutions can be clearly defined. These lead to suggested outcomes that form a continuum from “Information”, where government decides and acts and citizens are informed; to “Partnership with social learning” where there is widespread public consultation with decisions being taken by both government and citizen groups, both groups share power, responsibility and resources and take action in partnership. The context appropriateness can be determined by working through the decision-tree and assessing the types of partnerships to determine if they are appropriate to the nature of the issue being addressed, the partners involved and their existing relationship. In essence three factors must be assessed to determine the most appropriate response to an issue:

- The nature of the NRM problem
- The characteristics of the potential partners
- The type of relationship they share

**Cost Effectiveness of Partnerships**

The literature for cost effective analysis is drawn upon from economic theory, and in this case marketing to some degree. Cost effectiveness considers the return on investments through comparing outcomes (benefits) relative to the cost of the interventions. This is a reduced version of cost benefit analysis, as the outcomes are not required to be monetised which can often be difficult and costly in itself. Therefore, investment options are compared with like-for-like outcomes. This is successfully used in a public health framework, and can be adopted relatively easily for comparative analysis of projects, partnerships or expected outcomes (Mason, 2004). This is linked in with the results based management and adaptive management identified below.

The return on investment and thus cost effectiveness varies according to program area and project type. For example, the estimated return on investment for pest management is on average $26 worth of benefits, in the form of improved environmental outcomes and agricultural productivity, for every $1 of public funds invested (Roberts Evaluation, 2008). This can range from $100:1 for preventative works and as low as $1:1 for asset protection works (Roberts Evaluation, 2008). Comparative studies have shown that this is greater than other natural resource management activities, such as those addressing climate change or salinity (Australian Greenhouse Office, 2004; and Page and Lacey, 2006). However, within pest management the return on investment varies based on the project type.

Moreover, the delivery method can directly affect the return on investment, with Ward et al (2005) noting that the use of market based instruments has the potential to deliver cost savings of up to 25% under certain conditions. However, there are limited situations where the benefits can actually be appropriated due to the higher transaction costs – BushTender provides a good example (Department of Sustainability and Environment, 2008).

Partnerships can affect the cost effectiveness and return on investment through various avenues. The objective is to select partnerships according to their ability to achieve the greatest outcomes (effects) relative to expenditures (costs).

The criteria that are relevant for costs and achieving outcomes are drawn from the literature related to the value adding of partners in NRM and broader business arrangements. This includes the following characteristics that are identified as value adding to an organisation’s outcomes:
• Expand the range of delivery methods
• Maximise reach and impact
• Increase the scope of target audience
• Improve the value to stakeholder base
• Impact on risk to organisation and stakeholders
• Stakeholder engagement and involvement
• Remain attractive to stakeholders for achieving outcomes
• Comparative advantage of a partner relative to other organisations

It is now worth considering how this fits in within Partnership Strategies.

Adaptive Management of Partnerships

While there is a range of ways partnership strategies can be developed in regional NRM, it is also critical to look at how elements of adaptive management might be incorporated into such partnership arrangements. “The concept of adaptive management has gained attention as a means of linking learning with policy and implementation” (Stankey, Clark and Bormann 2005, p.1). While the use of adaptive management principles in NRM is widely accepted in terms of understanding on-ground works and policies as important elements in the learning cycle (and these can be subsequently adapted in line with those learnings to provide new actions and policies), it seems entirely possible that these principles might also be effectively applied to creating a system of adaptive partnership.

This idea of adaptive partnership harnesses all of those elements of adaptive capacity that are so well understood in the NRM sector in the creation and maintenance of successful regional partnerships (CSIRO 2008). It would appear that there are two main ways that adaptive management principles might be effectively incorporated into regional partnership arrangements. These mechanisms include developing processes for:

• Reporting and monitoring
• Reflecting and adapting.

Establishing a system of monitoring and reporting around partnerships arrangements provides a system of quality assurance that allows partnerships to be examined and assessed based on their performance and provides information on what is working well and what might be improved. In the examples discussed below, the use of reporting and monitoring processes were explicitly identified by Southern Rivers CMA via incorporation of partnership principles in their MERI Strategy, by Corangamite CMA with their triple bottom line reporting of social outcomes from their partnership with Landcare, by North Central CMA through the Service Level Agreements which govern their agency level partnership with Victorian DPI, and by East and West Gippsland CMAs through their Natural Resources Management Forum which requires annual reporting on the condition of the region’s natural assets. However, this process of monitoring and reporting must be able to capture information at two distinct levels within partnership arrangements if it is going to effectively enable a climate of adaptive partnership.

At the first level, it should capture how well the partnership is performing and the satisfaction of the partners with a range of basic performance measures. This would likely include an analysis and performance evaluation of aspects of the partnership such as:

• Quality of communication
• Effectiveness of meetings
• Governance arrangements
• Clear expectations
• Shared approach (Harlow 2020 Local Strategic Partnership Board 2009).

However at the second level, reporting and monitoring also needs to capture how well the partnerships is achieving against its shared objectives and delivering on agreed outcomes. The findings of this stage of monitoring and evaluation can be used to inform processes of reflection and adaptation of the partnership arrangement and might reasonably evaluate aspects such as:

• Monitoring, reporting and reviewing processes
• Evidence and need
• Outcomes, options and priorities
• Design interventions
• Support delivery
• Commission delivery (Harlow 2020 Local Strategic Partnership Board 2009).

In this way, the evidence that is systematically collected during monitoring and reporting can be systematically applied to reflecting on elements of partnerships that have worked well or used to identify design interventions to better manage those partnerships which are not performing well. Linking this level of the evaluation process to the delivery of outcomes also means that any changes or design interventions can be focused on improving performance of the partnerships against key organisational objectives.

This second stage of review also provides opportunity for capitalising on the learnings that flow out of an adaptive management process. In this case, key learnings might include knowledge regarding the socioeconomic systems and their interactions (especially as they directly relate to partner and partnership performance) “as well as greater insight as to how new understanding can be communicated, enhanced, and incorporated into organisational policies, programs and procedures” thus improving partnerships arrangements in the region (Stankey, Clark & Bormann 2005, p.58). As a result, the process of reflection and evaluation which potentially leads to design adaptations and interventions also provides opportunity for documenting the learnings of various partnerships and increases the capacity of all organisations involved within those evaluated partnerships.

The Use of Partnerships in Natural Resource Management

Within the natural resource management sector in Australia, the activities of each regional body are undertaken within a partnership agreement that has been established with both the Australian government and the relevant state or territory government. The formation of these overarching partnership agreements in the sector are importantly linked to the formal release of investment funds. As such, these partnership agreements define:

• “Funding amounts for salinity and water quality actions identified in the investment strategy
• Responsibilities for undertaking the activities
• Cost-sharing arrangements
• Agreed outcomes to be achieved
• Performance measures, targets and milestones
• Monitoring and evaluation processes” (Australian Government 2008).

It is widely accepted that the action required to address threats to natural assets will necessarily rely upon strong partnerships (Australian Government 2008; Cotton Catchment Communities CRC 2008; Corangamite CMA 2003; Keith, Ross & Gorringe 2006; Namoi CMA n.d.). “The growth in partnerships
is also a result of a much wider range of stimuli, including the need to deliver more seamless services, and to provide greater choice for service users, as well as more general improvements in service delivery” (Harlow Council 2005, p.3). For these reasons, partnership arrangements have become increasingly common as organisations seek to respond to the array of complex challenges they face.

Keith, Ross and Gorringe (2006) have identified that in establishing partnerships in the NRM sector, the lessons from the reviews of the Integrated Catchment Management (ICM) process are also pertinent to regional bodies attempting to establish partnerships with multiple stakeholders. This forms the basis of the visions and criteria for partnerships in the partnership strategies. The following is a list of structural and process issues important for successful regional body planning:

- “Agreement on roles of stakeholders and functions of horizontal and vertical linkages
- Sufficient resources to empower collaborative and adaptive governance
- Recognition that stakeholder collaboration is the heart of policy formulation
- Respect for varying ‘ways of thinking’
- Authentic indigenous involvement
- Flexibility to facilitate engagement of different operational styles” (Bellamy et al. 2002 cited in Keith, Ross & Gorringe 2006, p.22).

This is supported by the findings put forward in a report to Namoi CMA on future opportunities for partnerships within the region. Specifically, all partnerships the NAMOI CMA currently held or established in the future would be dependent on a range of factors including:

- Strength of relationships between individuals and groups
- Capacity of other individuals/groups/organisations to partner effectively – namely available expertise and resources
- Previous experience in partnership projects and programs
- Synergies in NRM focus.

Thus effective management of natural resources relies upon a network of actors with a variety of skills and resources (Moynihan 2005). The critical management aspects related to leveraging these networks have been identified as:

- **Activation** – identifying participants and stakeholders, arranging, stabilising, nurturing, and integrating the network structure
- **Framing** – establishing and influencing the operating rules of the network, influencing its values and norms, altering the perceptions of participations
- **Mobilising** – creating a perception of the network as a strategic whole and identifying a common set of objectives; involves mobilizing organizations and coalitions, forging agreement on operations and the role of the network, motivating members and inspiring commitment
- **Synthesising** - creating conditions for favourable, productive interaction among network participants that lowers the cost of interaction; changing incentives, rules, and roles for the purposes of establishing a pattern of relationships that facilitates interaction, enables information exchange, creates cooperation, and minimizes disruption (Agranoff & McGuire in Moynihan 2005, p.7).

There is however, a key difference between networks and partnerships and this has been described as follows:
Networks operate through links between individuals and shared interests. They are informal arrangements with indistinct boundaries and fluid memberships. Partnerships involve links between organisations and are formally constituted with fixed memberships and clearer boundaries. Networks and partnerships exist alongside each other. Sometimes a network is formalised and becomes a partnership. Often informal networks continue to operate in parallel with partnerships (McCabe, Lowndes & Skelcher 1997, p. 39).

However in recognising the critical difference between informal networks and formal partnerships, the identification of the core characteristics of successful partnership strategies might still be understood as a framing activity. This is because the focus is on identifying and defining the key operating rules and requirements (including the priorities and values of both the Namoi CMA and potential partner organisations) for successful partnership arrangements. While successful partnerships necessarily rely on a range of factors including the commitment, participation and available resources of each partner, establishing these operating rules can provide a useful framework for understanding and enabling those successes, including identifying where there are opportunities to leverage informal networks into more formal partnership arrangements.

As identified by the study, various groups and organisations have commented on the tendency toward more informal working relationships in the region. However, as these arrangements are not formalised they are consequently viewed as being less stable. The recommendation put to Namoi CMA was that working partnerships should be formalised wherever possible and the formalisation of partnerships may be further reinforced through the Namoi Catchment Action Plan (CAP). As a result, developing a strong partnership strategy is useful in terms of aligning the growth and development of partnership arrangements with the need to deliver against the objectives in the Namoi Blueprint, the Namoi CAP and the Namoi Investment Strategy.

Core Characteristics of Partnership Strategies

Activities

Rather than a checklist of characteristics that define a successful partnership, this section identifies a range of activities worthwhile considering when creating a partnership strategy. Partnership strategies are used in a range of sectors (e.g. NRM, local, state and federal government, not for profit sector etc). The main aims of an organisation’s partnership strategy are generally directed towards:

- Developing the organisation’s vision for the future of its partnering arrangements
- Making better use of partnerships in the delivery of services
- Ensuring the organisation’s effective response to the demands and opportunities presented by partnership arrangements and collaboration with stakeholders
- Establishing effective methods and processes to represent the organisation with other local, regional, state and federal agencies (Harlow Council 2005).

Other key elements and issues that must be considered by Namoi CMA in the creation of an effective Partnership Strategy will include:

- Clarity about what considerations will be used to prioritise and inform partner selection and partnership arrangements in the region. For example, will partnership decisions be prioritised by:
  - Focus on or level of engagement with NRM (i.e. shared values, common objectives; will this mean working with traditional NRM partners or does the Namoi CMA need to look at strategies for encouraging cross-sectoral partnerships?)
• Availability of resources to invest in the partnership (e.g. power differentials, responsibilities of each partner clearly articulated and agreed on)
• Strength of networks (The recent study identified this in their report to the Namoi CMA)
• Geographical location of the partner and/or partnership activity (how important is this factor?).

• The nature of and ability to make a long term investment in establishing, developing and maintaining regional partnership arrangements is critical and it is recognised that there is real risk associated with “sacrificing long-term value creation for short-term performance” (Kaplan & Norton 2001 cited in Brinkerhoff 2002, p.215). From a strategic perspective, this is important as “focusing only on results is simply not an effective management approach” (Brinkerhoff 2002, p.215). It must be understood that in some cases it may only be possible to measure the performance and health of partnerships over a longer time frame.

Principles

These concerns might be reflected in the following principles of a Partnership Strategy for the Namoi CMA (adapted from Harlow Council 2005):

• Consistent with other Namoi CMA strategies and plans
• Identifies and selects partners that are a good strategic fit
• Provides a partner selection criteria that can be used to evaluate potential partners based on partnership objectives and business rules. These objectives and rules should be measurable to allow the Namoi CMA to evaluate the success of each partnership over time. Evaluation of partnerships may also require the Namoi CMA to develop a response to the failure of certain partnerships to perform and outline how both parties might withdraw from partnership arrangements that are not fulfilling their requirements.
• Supported by research to identify potential partners. The recent study (2008) provides evidence of such research and can be further supported by activities such as exploring informal networking arrangements in the region that Namoi CMA staff have developed, or advertising for Expressions of Interest around developing joint projects, for example.
• Provides a checklist to ensure partnerships are being used to the Namoi CMA’s best advantage. The checklist should clarify the kind of partnerships other organisations can expect from entering into an arrangement with the Namoi CMA and might reasonably identify the partnering strengths the Namoi CMA can offer to other organisations and groups in the region.
• Provide a framework for assessing how the partnership can and does contribute to the goals and work of the Namoi CMA. “It also provides valuable feedback on the effectiveness of existing partnership arrangements and this side should engender a greater degree of commitment from all sides to working in partnership” (Harlow Council 2005, p.5).

While these overarching aims and principles define the purpose of developing a partnership strategy, it is also critical to be aware that partnerships can be developed in a range of ways around various and diverse activities. The recent study has already provided a comprehensive report on potential partnering opportunities to the Namoi CMA. These partnering opportunities might be usefully understood in terms of how they fit within various partnership frameworks and activities. For example:
Type of partnership

The following scopes of partnerships and relationships exist:

- **Networking partnerships** can be usefully developed around information sharing, training and communication.
- **Coordinating partnerships** might be developed where a partner agency is carrying out their own activities but these activities align with the Namoi CMA's objectives. The Namoi CMA might provide staff time, expertise, or other resources (i.e. information) and would provide access to decision makers via Steering Committee structures or other similar arrangements.
- **Cooperating partnerships** define how the Namoi CMA might work with other organisations to jointly develop, fund and implement projects that align with both the Namoi CMA's objectives and the partner’s objectives.
- **Collaboration partnerships** whereby the Namoi CMA contracts a partner to undertake a specific piece of work or task that has been identified by either the Namoi CMA or the partner (if that task is in line with the Namoi CMA’s objectives) (Mekong Wetlands Biodiversity & Sustainable Use Program 2004-5).

In considering this range of activities it is worthwhile noting that the partnership with the Cotton CRC was active in all four of these areas (i.e. the partnership was focused on developing training and skills development in the region’s cotton industry, involved co-investment from the partners, aligned the activities of two organisation’s to achieve mutual objectives, and was managed via a contractual arrangement). Clearly not all partnerships will have the capacity to be activated across all four of these areas at all times (some partnerships may even cycle through various stages of activity) and some potential partner organisations will not wish to work in some of these ways.

In thinking about opportunities, the Namoi CMA could also use a range of activities to consider the barriers to partnership in the region. For example, the two main categories of limitation relate to local government and non-government issues. For example for local government authorities (and other organisations) that experience staffing and funding limitations, partnerships based around co-investment might initially prove limiting but elements of networking and parallel partnerships might be reasonably explored in the first instance to begin to strengthen the potential of these partnerships.

Thus this range of activities should not be understood as a checklist for assessing successful partnerships but rather a framework to guide strategic thinking about the kinds of activities around which successful partnerships might be grown where possible, or where particular strengths can be focused on in terms of developing the best potential for all partners.

Case Studies of Best Practice Partnership Strategies

In considering best practice partnership strategies, a range of examples of different kinds of approaches to partnership undertaken by CMAs in New South Wales, Tasmania and Victoria are profiled below. These examples provide evidence of the various ways partnership strategies can be developed in regional NRM according to regional strengths and opportunities.

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2 The Victorian examples are drawn from a review of partnership agreements in regional NRM undertaken by Keith, Ross and Gorringe (2006).
Southern Rivers CMA (NSW) – Engagement and Partnering Strategy and Partnerships Conference

Southern Rivers CMA has developed a strategy which combines their commitment to community engagement with establishing stronger partnerships (Southern Rivers CMA 2008). In developing this dual purpose strategy, they have adopted the principles developed by Aslin and Brown (2004) for the Murray-Darling Basin Commission. These principles capture the many elements of partnership best practice that have been identified elsewhere in this report.

The partnership strategy was based on a review of the existing NRM structures in the region which was used to develop and refine the Southern Rivers CMA’s approach to partnering. In doing so, Southern Rivers CMA usefully identified a systematic approach to capturing stakeholder information and activity that occurs at varied levels and through a variety of methods across the region. Figure 1 below captures how Southern Rivers CMA has summarised the main engagement mechanisms in their region and different partners work with the Southern Rivers CMA at a variety of different levels.

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<td>• Board members with geographic and interest portfolios</td>
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<td>• SRCMA Chair and GM with Local Government Mayors and GMs</td>
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<td>• Chair with Australian Government</td>
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<td>• Chair and GM with State Government</td>
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<td>• Service Level Agreements with State NRM Agencies</td>
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<td>• Production of CAP, Investment Strategy and Annual Implementation Plan</td>
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<th>Corporate level</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Decentralised team of skilled staff including community support officers, project officers and “partnership” focused staff</td>
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<td>• Staff roles and culture established to support quality engagement processes</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Local management teams established in Eurobodalla, Bega and Snowy/Monaro sub regions</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Communication strategy, including targeted information sessions</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Consultation on draft NRM plans and strategies</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Partnership Agreement with Conservation Volunteers Australia</td>
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<td>• MOUs with local councils</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program and project level</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Multi-stakeholder groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Program teams</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Consultation on project proposals</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Interest and Area-based Networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Interstate and Multi-CMA initiatives</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Participation at local and regional events (field days, conferences, shows)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Community Partnership Fund in place to foster partnership formation and capacity building</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Reference or Advisory groups</td>
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<td>• Project Steering Committees</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual level</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• SRCMA officers with high degree of personal contact with individual landholders &amp; stakeholders</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4: Current engagement and partnering practices by Southern Rivers CMA
(Source: Southern Rivers CMA 2008, p.10)

In addition to this, in 2007, the Southern Rivers CMA held a major regional conference that brought together 190 people with the purpose of sharing partnership success stories. This event provided a forum for workshopping regional priorities for sustaining vibrant NRM partnerships. The four priorities identified at this event were:

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3 The review undertaken by Molino Stewart (2008) for the Namoi CMA would provide a similar basis for developing an effective partnership strategy for the region.
• Integrating NRM into local environment planning
• Telling our stories
• Engaging the “disengaged”
• Keeping on learning (Southern Rivers CMA 2008).

Actions to address these partnership priorities were subsequently incorporated into their Engagement and Partnership Strategy and also the MERI Strategy and Communication Strategy developed by the Southern Rivers CMA. The initial conference was followed up with a one day NRM Partnerships Forum in 2008 and a second regional conference is scheduled for 2009.

**NRM South (TAS) – Local Government Partnership Support**

In Tasmania, NRM South has focused their partnership strategy around developing a relationship with local government. This is coordinated through the implementation of the highest priority management actions as identified in the Natural Resource Management Strategy for Southern Tasmania (NRM South 2006).

Priority activities are executed in the form of projects that are implemented by NRM South in partnership with local government or which are of direct interest to local government. Similar to Southern Rivers CMA’s approach to identifying the varying levels of partnership activity, NRM South also run projects at a more strategic level in conjunction with the Southern Tasmanian Councils Board, in the delivery of on-ground works that are geographically matched to particular Councils, and by implementing projects with additional partners that are of interest to local government in a more general sense.

Examples of strategic level projects include implementation of regional strategies such as the Southern Weeds Strategy or the development of systems for improving council based information and data for NRM reporting. Examples of matching on-ground works to geographically based Council partners are the implementation of the Glamorgan Spring Bay Weed Management Plan with the Glamorgan Spring Bay Council and the North West Bay River Restoration project with the Kingborough Council. And finally project activities that are of interest to local government but do not necessarily rely upon their participation in implementation are projects such as the development of NRM incentives for landholders in conjunction with Greening Australia and research to address rural tree decline with the University of Tasmania (NRM South 2006).

**Corangamite CMA (VIC) – Landcare Partnership Support**

“The contribution of Landcare groups to Regional Investment Strategies varies, with some regions seeing them as key contributors and others perhaps believing that the volunteer model cannot deliver what is required” (Keith, Ross & Gorringe 2006, p.74). In the Corangamite CMA, the partnership arrangements with Landcare demonstrate a strong commitment to a highly valued sector.

“In Corangamite Region there are about 160 natural resource management groups (about half are called Landcare groups), with 20 Landcare coordinators serving nine networks of groups. Each network is an incorporated body and employs the coordinators. Each group in the network has a representative on the network executive committee. Landcare project agreements with the networks amount to about $2.5m of the region’s $8m allocation. Projects generally have 2-3 year agreements” (Keith, Ross & Gorringe 2006, p.74). A particular feature of these projects is that they fit a ‘triple bottom line’ framework that requires social outcomes are included (whether through capacity building or other social capital benefits) and this captures some of the important aspects of partnering in the region.
The Corangamite CMA has established a long term partnership arrangement with Landcare and developed a comprehensive and systematic support strategy (in conjunction with regional Landcare groups) (Corangamite CMA 2005). While this strategy governs the partnerships between the Corangamite CMA and Landcare, it also provides for extending and supporting Landcare groups to increase their own partnering capacity in the region. For example, the strategy advocates the use of the Being Investor Ready package which is designed to help Landcare groups access support from businesses, and it has indicated investment of $5000 per annum to support Landcare groups develop partnerships that will enable them to access multiple funding sources.

**Goulburn-Broken CMA (VIC) – Implementation Committees**

Goulburn-Broken CMA has demonstrated that it is possible to harness governance arrangements to support partnering in their region. For example, the creation of CMAs was accompanied by the provision for sub-regional management of NRM objectives to be made via implementation committees. These committees were generally selected from nominees by the CMA Board. While in some regions, there has been a shift away from implementation committees and towards an advisory committee approach, Goulburn-Broken CMA has demonstrated that the selection and use of implementation committees can have direct benefits for partnering.

For example, within the region, “the Shepparton Irrigation Region Implementation Committee members are selected based on their specific skills and links to community networks” (Keith, Ross & Gorringe 2006, p.75). This means there is immediate potential to develop and leverage those informal networks into more formalised partnerships. Within the framework of the Implementation Committee there are four program areas managed by Working Groups. These Working Groups are made up of community and stakeholder representatives and the focus of these groups can be oriented towards on-ground works or facilitating community action as required.

**North Central CMA (VIC) – Agency Partnership**

The development of an agency partnership very much mirrors Namoi CMA’s experience with the Cotton CRC partnership. However the example of North Central CMA’s experience in a similar arrangement with Victorian DPI may provide evidence of how Namoi CMA’s current partnership might be usefully developed and extended. This kind of partnership arrangement tends to be managed via an MOU (which sets out operational principles, processes, standards and relationships, and emphasises values such as trust, collaboration, team work, and mutual respect) and Service Level Agreements (to cover products and services to be delivered and provide a mechanism for monitoring performance). North Central CMA has entered a three year arrangement with Victorian DPI to deliver on-ground landholder projects using an area management or geographically based approach (on-ground works include fencing, revegetation, extension etc).

Delivery is “based on case management: a single point of contact for all services within a defined area. (This is to overcome previous overlap in service with different incentive programs of different value for the one activity)” and assessed using the PACE approach (Partnerships, Action, Community Effectiveness) (Keith, Ross & Gorringe 2006, p.76). This approach also incorporates a team dedicated to developing a single suite of incentives, coordinating works to ensure cost effectiveness is realised and providing additional professional advice. “A Partnership Steering Committee monitors the implementation of the case management model and considers recommendations from the Implementation Committees in relation to regional delivery. A strict monitoring regime has been put in place for all projects to ensure that problems in the system are revealed and corrected” (Keith, Ross & Gorringe 2006, p.76) which suggests stringent monitoring and reporting has been an important focus in this partnership arrangement.
North East CMA (VIC) – Workshops for Partnership Formation

North East CMA has successfully explored cross sectoral collaborative project partnerships by adopting “a more inclusive investment planning and engagement model designed to maximise stakeholder input into investment planning” (North East CMA 2006 in Keith, Ross & Gorringe 2006, p.77). This was linked to a review of the regional priorities document, which involved a call for Expressions of Interest (EOIs) and established a collaborative process by which to develop projects in the region.

EOIs from potential partners were initially evaluated based on how well they aligned with regional priorities. Strong matches were progressed to the collaborative project development stage. Unsuccessful EOIs were however supported with advice on how they might effectively access alternative sources of federal and state level funding (indirectly building relationships between the North East CMA and these organisations despite the relationships not being immediately identified for direct funding support). This appears to be an important aspect of the way the EOI process was managed.

In terms of the EOIs that were progressed to the next stage, all successful applicants were invited to a workshop to explore opportunities for project development. These workshops included members of the North East CMA Board and Community Advisory Committees and indicative budgets were decided by the consensus of the Project Development Working Group. Where projects were successfully identified, a second workshop was held for project proponents to present their developed Regional Catchment Investment Plan projects for review and approval of the Project Development Working Group. The approach thus identified suitable partnership and project opportunities within the region that allowed the North East CMA to encourage submissions from a range of sectors.

Glenelg Hopkins CMA (VIC) – South West Sustainability Partnership

A strategic regional approach to partnering has been adopted by Glenelg Hopkins CMA. In this example, the Glenelg Hopkins CMA is involved in a partnership of 14 organisations which also includes five shire councils, three water boards, three tertiary education institutions, a coastal management board and a government agency. In this case, the partnership has been developed to support and implement regional sustainability through joint initiatives, cooperation, collaboration and free exchange of information.

This regional arrangement is described in the South West Sustainability Blueprint and outlines the requirements of the partners as follows:

- “The partners adopt a sustainability charter
- Policies and protocols be established to support the charter and the interaction between the partners
- The partners individually agree to undertake activities to promote the adoption of sustainability within their individual responsibility and control
- Admission of new partners to the partnership be governed by their commitment to incorporation of sustainability principles within their activities
- Create further partnerships and networks with non-partner organisations to promote the sustainability initiative” (South West Sustainability Blueprint cited in Keith, Ross & Gorringe 2006, p.77).

The nature of the partners in the region also defines some of the major activities of the partnerships. Developing mentoring relationships between the education sector and industry, developing curriculum to support sustainability objectives, designing training programs and assessing emerging skills requirements are just some of the priorities of this partnership. It has been observed however,
that there is currently no self-audit or peer review process built into the partnership arrangement so it is unclear whether these partnerships will be successfully sustained over the longer term (Keith, Ross & Gorringe 2006).

**East and West Gippsland CMAs (VIC) – Gippsland Integrated Natural Resources Forum**

East and West Gippsland CMAs are also involved in a large scale coalition which is made up of approximately 60 NRM organisations and focused on facilitating cooperation among the many agencies and organisations involved in the NRM sector in south east Victoria. The Forum is governed by an executive of ten senior members of representative organisations and it aims to achieve a more strategic approach to NRM in the region. The elements which underpin the Forums activities are: (i) leadership; (ii) collaboration; (iii) knowledge; (iv) strategy; and (v) reporting. The reporting element is achieved through “annual, independent reporting on the condition of Gippsland’s natural resources” (Keith, Ross & Gorringe 2006, p.78).

Keith, Ross and Gorringe (2006) have observed that large scale coalitions such as this one are generally more effective in the area of encouraging and enabling relevant organisations and stakeholders to engage in strategic dialogue but less effective in terms of research and publications output. However it does provide a model for looking at how strategic dialogue can be mobilised to increase regional capacity around partnering.

**Lessons from the Literature for Namoi CMA**

The following has been extracted from the literature to identify what is required in a partnership strategy:

- **Introduction:** to include a description about the Namoi CMA’s interest in partnering with organisations and individuals
- **Scope and Purpose of Partnership Strategy** includes a statement about the limitations of strategy and its purpose.
  - Include brief on relevant documents aligned
- **Foundations.** These are elements that need to be in place before an partnership is considered.
  - A statement about the Namoi CMA’s Values
  - Principles of Engagement
  - Partnership principles
  - Current Practices – to include what the Namoi CMA is currently engaged in
- **Strategies**
  - Criteria for Working Partnerships
  - Strengthening Existing Partnerships
  - Building New Partnerships
  - Capacity Building with Partners
  - Tools, Techniques
- **Monitoring and Evaluation**
  - Outputs, Outcomes of Partnerships
  - Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Improving on Partnerships

The range of case studies provides alternative ways of framing, managing and improving partnerships. The key learnings that can be drawn from these examples are summarised in the table below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ways of leveraging off partnership</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Potential benefits</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organising a major regional event such as a conference or workshop series</strong></td>
<td>Southern Rivers CMA used a regional conference and workshop format to bring potential partners together to share stories and identify opportunities in their region. North East CMA adapted this approach through an EOI process to attract submissions from partners, supported by a series of workshops to identify project and partnership opportunities in their region.</td>
<td>Attracting potential partners or project development opportunities that exist outside current networks and enabling cross sectoral partnership opportunities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Identifying priority activities within the framework of a key regional partnership</strong></td>
<td>NRM South developed their strong partnership with local government through strategic, on-ground and research projects of relevance. This allowed the partnership to develop and be active at a variety of levels (i.e. regional management &amp; coordination, project implementation and information sharing).</td>
<td>As demonstrated by NRM South this approach can be useful for building partnership at various levels with a key sector (e.g. local government). Strong links at the strategic level might be leveraged into strong levels of activity and commitment at the project level and Namoi CMA might consider whether such an approach would be helpful in addressing geographical disparities in their current partnership activities with local government bodies through regional partnership workshops.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recognising the value of long term partnerships</strong></td>
<td>Corangamite CMA recognised the value of Landcare within their region by developing a comprehensive and systematic support strategy around that partnership with a view to enhancing long term performance.</td>
<td>Long term commitment supports partnerships that are sustainable and can outlast personnel changes or other factors that can destabilise such arrangements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Using governance arrangements to support partnership</strong></td>
<td>Goulburn-Broken CMA used the Implementation Committee framework to support on-ground works and facilitate community action. North Central CMA identified the use of a Partnership Steering Committee as a valuable way of supporting an agency partnership in their region.</td>
<td>This approach adapts current governance arrangements being used within the Namoi CMA and directs them toward enhancing the Namoi CMA’s Partnership Strategy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participation in large scale coalitions and NRM networks</strong></td>
<td>Glenelg Hopkins joined a partnership of 14 organisations to support sustainability more broadly within their region. East and West Gippsland CMAs also joined a large scale coalition to enable and support strategic dialogue in their region.</td>
<td>This approach can be useful where dialogue is limited or with establishing higher level connection between organisations which might be leveraged into formalised partnership arrangements and shared activities.</td>
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Table 1: Key Learnings from Partnerships in Regional NRM
SECTION IV - EVALUATION OF NAMOI CMA AND COTTON CATCHMENT AND COMMUNITIES CRC PARTNERSHIP

This section refers to Evaluation Objective 1 of the review. The review required an examination of the effectiveness, efficiency and appropriateness of the partnership. The terms are defined in the section on methodology in this report and summarised here.

**Appropriateness** relates to alignment of partnership plans, investments and actions; promote coordination and inter-dependence; and are able to leverage from each other’s comparative advantage to achieve the outcomes sought.

**Effectiveness** is a measure of the ability of a program, project or task to produce a specific desired effect or result that can be measured. It is governed by the objectives set for the initiative in question.

**Efficiency** is the ability to achieve the objectives with the least amount of energy or waste (financial, administrative, human resource).

As mentioned in the methodology section, in evaluating the partnership we examined each of the five schedules and the sub-projects and components to see whether they had been fulfilled. Then, taken as a whole we looked at how effective, efficient and appropriate the partnership was.

Data for a review of the partnership came from comments made at the staff workshop and through interviews with staff and landholders. Evaluation of the partnership is also supported by a review of documents and the literature.

We look now at the objectives of the partnership and its appropriateness, followed by effectiveness and efficiency of the partnership in achieving its objectives.

**Objectives of the Partnership**

The five objectives of the partnerships were set out in Schedule 1.

**Schedule 1.1 Building Natural Resource Management (NRM) capacity in the Namoi Cotton Districts**

This was implemented through the employment of a full time Catchment Officer. The position acted a NCMA Catchment Officer for this part of the Catchment and was responsible for rolling out the incentive funds in the same way that other NCMA Catchment Officers do in their respective regions. The position was located at the Australia Cotton Research Station and through the Cotton CRC the Officer had access to cotton researchers and production extension staff. The NCMA funded the salary, on-costs and education resources component of the position and the Cotton CRC funded the office, vehicle, etc.

**Schedule 1.2 Supporting the adoption of Delivering Best Management Practice (BMP) in the cotton industry in the Namoi Catchment**

This was implemented through the employment of a BMP Officer for the Namoi Catchment. The cost of the position was shared between the NCMA, Cotton CRC and Cotton Australia. The position assisted growers in fulfilling the necessary requirements to successfully enter the Land and Water Management module of the BMP program. The type of activities covered in this module relate to the generation of farm maps, management of riparian corridors, native vegetation etc all of which are consistent with the aims of the NCMA. As part of this role, the BMP Officer identified those growers that would be eligible for some assistance through Schedule 1.4 and Schedule 1.5.
Schedule 1.3  Information Collation to Support the Delivery of Best Management Practice in the Namoi Catchment

The information was sourced mainly from the NCMA / Cotton CRC joint research projects. There were approximately 10 research projects varying from small summer scholarships to large groundwater quality projects delivered by independent consultants. The projects were a combination of investments from the Cotton CRC and other partners as well as solely Namoi CMA funds. Research topics covered included:

- A groundwater scoping study
- Groundwater / surface water interactions studies
- Groundwater quality benchmark
- Riparian vegetation condition assessment
- Aquatic biodiversity review

Schedule 1.4  Implementation of NRM on-ground Incentive Projects in the Namoi Catchment

The on-ground incentive projects were delivered by the Cotton CRC on behalf of the Namoi CMA. The Cotton CRC entered into a contract with the grower and the on-ground projects were funded after consultation with the NCMA to ensure that the proposed project:

- delivered against the NCMA management targets
- is in their priority areas of the catchment
- the financial offer made was consistent with other NCMA offers made to other similar projects.
- the level of contribution made by the grower.

The Catchment Officer (Schedule 1.1) was the lead manager of the on-ground project developed however, technical expertise in water use efficiency was provided by the Irrigation officer (Schedule 1.5) for the WUE projects and the BMP Officer (Schedule 1.2) also encouraged growers undertaking the BMP program to access the funds. The BMP Officer was also able to identify the type of projects that the grower could implement that would enable them to meet their BMP requirements. The Cotton CRC made the involvement in the BMP program an additional requirement for growers before they could access these funds which created a direct link to the Schedule 1.2 project.

Schedule 1.5  Advanced Water Management on NSW

This project involved a number of partners including NCMA, Cotton CRC, Border Rivers Gwydir CMA, Cotton RDC and NSW DPI. The project employed two Irrigation Officers, one in the Namoi and one in the Gwydir through NSW DPI. The aim of the project was to lift industry water use efficiency through a coordinated industry approach to advisory and education/training services in water use efficiency (WUE). This involved demonstrations, trials and the delivery of a modified Waterwise during the farm training course that incorporates Cotton industry's BMP guidelines. These are designed to assist CMAs achieve CAP and Investment Plan targets relevant to the cotton industry. This project aimed to contribute to a 15% increase in whole farm water use efficiency over the next five years by irrigation in the Namoi Valley and other valleys.

Appropriateness of the Namoi CMA partnership with the Cotton CRC

In this section we looked at:

- The alignment in of key documents investments and actions
- How the organisations promote coordination and interdependence through their strategies, agreements and partnership reports
- Mutual objectives of the Namoi CMA and Cotton CRC - whether the organisations are able to leverage from each other’s comparative advantage to achieve the outcomes sought.
We carried out this investigation by looking at relevant documents from the Namoi CMA and the Cotton CRC and by asking staff from both organisations for their views in relation to those three points.

Key documents relating to the partnership

This section reviews the key documents from Namoi CMA, the Cotton CRC and the Partnership. The following figure identifies the structure and relationship between the organisations and the key documents.

Figure 5: Namoi CMA, Cotton CRC and Partnership Documents

**Strategies of Namoi CMA**

The CAP is the ‘strategic framework which will guide natural resource management for the Namoi catchment over the next ten years’ (p.3). It is separated into two components, Part A which includes the policies and procedures for quality natural resource management, and Part B which includes the more tangible natural resource management plan. In comparison, the Investment Strategy provides the vehicle for implementing the vision of the CAP, moving beyond identifying outcomes to highlighting the activities and milestones that will achieve those outcomes.

The scope of the CAP is broader than the Investment Strategy, a reflection of the fact that the CAP is a long term strategic framework including strategic, operational, legislative, risk and review components while the Investment Strategy is a three year implementation document which guides the prioritisation of funding. The wide scope of the CAP with particular reference to the policies and
procedures outlined in Part A has provided the necessary foundation for the creation and adoption of the Investment Strategy and the Decision Support Tools (DST) used by Namoi CMA.

Even though there is an aspect of the CAP that goes beyond the activities of the NCMA, it is important to note that outputs are the effects that are directly related to the activities undertaken by Namoi CMA whereas the outcomes are the impacts of those activities to society, economy or the environment that can be attributed to the Namoi CMA’s activities. It is those impacts that are the ultimate goal for Namoi CMA.

The investment principle relating to outcomes as stated in the CAP (Part A p2) is that ‘Investment is to “buy outcomes” rather than ‘prescribe inputs”’. The intent of this statement flows throughout the document and subsequently underpins the program logic and the Investment Strategy. For example, monitoring and evaluation of MTW1 (Management Target Water1 - riverine ecosystems) is based on achieving the outcome of improved riverine ecosystems to a specified quality. Therefore, it is the health of the ecosystem that needs to be monitored and measured rather than the success of the works that were carried out to achieve it. That is to say that the restoration works on a riverine system will only show evidence of their contribution to the health of an ecosystem when the ecosystem is showing signs of becoming healthy.

While the actions and activities may be similar, the monitoring and evaluation of targets has shifted from achieving certain standards of outcomes to meeting the levels of outputs identified in the Investment Strategy. For example, to evaluate the achievement of the CAP it would be necessary to measure the outcomes or the standard of environment before and after. This would be commensurate with documents such as the State of the Environment Reports, the production of which is highlighted in the CAP. In contrast, to evaluate the Investment Strategy it is not necessary to measure the quality of the environmental outcomes, but rather to monitor the progress and achievement of outputs (i.e. the results of funding provided to landholders for activities such as hectares revegetated or fenced off).

**Partnership Policy**

The Namoi CMA Partnership Policy recognises that, for the organisation to achieve its objectives, it must operate in a strategic and collaborative way with industry groups, scientists, government agencies, the community and others. This is specifically identified to facilitate the delivery of the Catchment Action Plan and the related targets to increase the effectiveness of its investments and achieve natural resource outcomes. The policy document is designed to act as a guide for organisations and individuals during the development and delivery of Namoi CMA partnership opportunities.

Partnerships are expected to align with certain targets in the people, landscapes, water and native plants and animals section of the CAP.

The policy states that partnerships or collaborations are to be conducted in the spirit of cooperation and mutual benefit, specifically incorporating the principles of:

- Planning and designing partnerships:
  - Alignment with Namoi CMA objectives
  - Synergism and mutual benefit
  - Financial justification
  - Commitment and capacity
  - Partnership equity
• Implementing partnerships:
  o Financial criteria
  o Knowledge and information
  o Public relations and media
  o Deliverables and reporting

These have been used for the broad basis of the Partnership Strategy and reflect well the literature on the value of partnerships.

**Review of Partnerships and the Investment Strategy**

As recognised and stated in the Namoi CMA’s Catchment Action Plan (CAP) (January 2007), Engagement Strategy (March 2007), and Partnership Policy (May 2007), the vision of ‘vibrant communities and landscapes for the future’ is not one that can be reached by the Namoi CMA in isolation. Partnerships with other relevant agencies and organisations are critical to the achievement of improvements in environmental management and conditions in the Namoi catchment.

According to Roberts Evaluation (2008, p. 45), Namoi CMA has developed a range of partnerships to assist in achieving the objectives set out in the CAP:

> So far the CMA has developed and maintained strong and effective partnerships with the Cotton CRC, Tamworth Rural Lands Protection Board, to a lesser extent Greening Australia, and on a specific project, the Liverpool Plains Land Management Group. It has a good level of contact with local government through the Namoi Local Government Group, however, varied success in true collaboration with councils beyond this group. In an informal way, CMA staff are engaging well with a large range of stakeholders in the catchment, and many of the other industry and research bodies in the catchment think highly of the CMA.

Throughout the review of the investment strategy, Roberts Evaluation highlighted that partnerships with local councils have been perceived as variable – whereby some collaborations are extremely useful and could be further developed, whereas other individual projects have been less successful. However, the Cotton CRC and Tamworth Regional Lands Protection Board were considered the most formed partnerships, perceived as assisting with “promotion, strategic and better informed decisions, and more collaboration; [while] other organisations felt they could provide technical resources, research, aligning on farm outcomes to catchment targets, conduit to networks, reputation with landholders, and information sharing” (p. 68).

The review found that there is still room for improvement in the Namoi CMA’s approach to partnerships. Partnerships need to be prioritised and recognised for the cross-cutting and vital contribution that they make to achieving the Namoi CMA’s targets. Partnerships need to be actively sought, pursued, and strategically developed (as appropriate to the particular partner) by the Namoi CMA with a wider range of organisations involved in the Namoi catchment. Potential organisations to include are those with the capacity and a willingness to partner, such as Agforce, Cotton CRC, Dairy Australia, Liverpool Plains Land Management Committee, Meat and Livestock Australia, Northern Grain Alliance, Northern Regional Inland Development Board, and Tamworth Rural Lands Board.

This was also identified in the Ipsos report (2007), which highlights that there is a belief by the broader community that government agencies and community groups are defending their own territory and even existence, rather than working in partnership together for the good of the
catchment (p.8). The report recommends that Namoi CMA take a leading role to overcome these differences and bridge the gaps between organisations to maximise local knowledge, expertise and NRM outcomes.

The Roberts Evaluation report highlights that cost benefit analysis or comparative models can be used to assess the costs/benefits of partnerships. Other criteria would also include alignment, synergies, capacity, influence and impact. It was recommended that these feature where possible in the partnership strategy.

**Partners in Context**

Following the recommendations for further developing partnerships and the identified need for partners in achieving the objectives of the CAP, Namoi CMA commissioned a study in 2008 to prepare a report identifying partners and potential partners within the Namoi catchment. A report was sought by the NCMA to become better informed about:

- Partnership opportunities
- Current community based capacity and interest in conservation and natural resource management in the catchment

The report prepared for Namoi CMA featured a social network analysis methodology and sought to explore partnership opportunities with the Namoi CMA.

**Key Namoi CMA partners**

From a recent study undertaken for the Namoi CMA, a number of stakeholders are identified in the table below who are considered highly connected in the NRM network in Namoi Catchment. Due to confidentiality issues, the details relating to the partner organisations, the potential for relationship with Namoi CMA, and the value this may provide is not included in this report. However, this is available to internal stakeholders. *See Molino Stewart* (2008).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Stakeholders (General)</th>
<th>Key Stakeholders (Cotton)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caroona Coal Action Group (CCAG)</td>
<td>AusCott</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Primary Industries (DPI)</td>
<td>Namoi Cotton Co-Operative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gunnedah Shire Council</td>
<td>Cotton CRC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liverpool Plains Land Management Committee</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Liverpool Plains Shire Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>Namoi Local Government Group (NLGG) &amp; Namoi Regional Organisation of Councils (NROC)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Red Chief Aboriginal Lands Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rural Lands Protection Board</td>
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<tr>
<td>Southern New England Landcare</td>
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<tr>
<td>TAFE NSW New England Institute</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tamworth Birdwatchers Association (TBA)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tamworth-Manilla Landcare Association</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tamworth City Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wallhallow Aboriginal Corporation</td>
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Table 2: The study Identified Key Stakeholders and Networks
Through its community engagement process, the Ipsos report (2007) identified a core group in the community who are strongly engaged in NRM activities and issues. The report states “these residents show a greater participation in local groups, activities focused on protecting and improving the environment, NRM training / workshops / field days, are more ‘in the know’ about the Namoi CMA and are more inclined to seek funding” (p.14). These individuals are likely to be more engaged in NRM and more likely to adopt BMPs. The report recommends the development of relationships and partnerships with these key constituents to strengthen Namoi CMA’s presence in the region, as well as to innovate and improve knowledge where possible.

The list of key stakeholders identified above provides a road map of the organisations with networks in the catchment that could be drawn upon through partnerships to achieve the Namoi CMA’s identified NRM outcomes. This is useful for the Partnership Strategy in terms of value adding and achieving cost effective outcomes through maximising the reach and impact of the Namoi CMA, increasing the scope of target stakeholders, improving the value to the stakeholders, and potentially expanding the range of delivery methods.

The Cotton Catchment Communities CRC

The Cotton CRC’s objective as per the relevant Commonwealth Agreement (p.3) is:

To enhance Australia’s industrial, commercial and economic growth through the development of sustained, user-driven, cooperative public-private research centres that achieve high levels of outcomes in adoption and commercialisation.

The Strategic Plan 2006-2012 is the overarching document of the Cotton CRC. It highlights the objective of the Cotton CRC to provide high quality collaborative research, education, and adoption activities which benefit the cotton industry, regional communities and the nation. This is undertaken in part through its five program areas of best management practices, research in yield and fibre improvements, and generating social and economic improvements. The Cotton CRC operates five program areas: the farm, the catchment, the community, the product and adoption.

Without detailing the Strategic Plan, it includes natural resource management targets that broadly align with the direction of the partnership and the interests of the Namoi CMA:

- To reduce potential environmental impacts of cotton pesticides by at least 50 percent;
- To reduce the irrigation water used per bale of cotton produced by at least 50 percent
- To improve the reliability of groundwater recharge estimates in cotton regions by at least ten percent, and
- Targets relating to extension, knowledge, education and training that apply to natural resource management indirectly though the partnership directly.

It is worthwhile acknowledging that this strategic move was purposefully made with the third phase of the Cotton CRC, as noted by the inclusion of communities and catchments. This has resulted in a stronger alignment of objectives between the Cotton CRC and Namoi CMA which previously may not have been apparent. Other works by the Cotton CRC have also been indirectly promoting outcomes (often through improved knowledge and education) of Namoi CMA.

For example, the study of The Impact of Drought on Small Businesses in Wee Waa highlighted the devastating nature of drought on the region. Drought contributes to significant contraction in the regional economic, leading to significant job losses, people moving out of the community, lower schooling attendance, and health issues such as depression. There are management strategies
growers can employ to help manage drought times. This research promotes some of the practice changes that are likely to lead to outcomes in alignment with the CAP targets.

In addition, a recent report by Roy Powell and Linden Chalmers (2008) prepared on behalf of the Cotton CRC and Centre for Agricultural and Regional Economics considered the socio-economic impact of the cotton industry and the economic potential of cotton regions in NSW. This report highlighted that cotton contributed almost 20% or $520m per annum to the regional economy and that cotton research has had significant economic importance. Despite this however, the regional economic growth has been relatively slow and small, though alternative capital intensive and resource-based opportunities exist in the area of energy development. The report states that there is a need for deriving additional value from existing natural resources, particularly those based on technology, knowledge and human capital. While the report focuses on general business development for communities, this emphasis on improving the use of natural resources can certainly be considered in a best management practice context for the cotton industry.

Coordination and Interdependence through Partnership Strategies and Agreements

The umbrella agreement between Namoi CMA and Cotton CRC states that NRM outcomes will be delivered through programs in return for cash and non-cash contributions based on the following NRM aspects:

- Delivery of Cotton BMP extension and advice in the Narrabri area;
- Provision of project and contract management for Namoi CMA in the Narrabri area;
- Delivery of NRM extension and advice to a range of agricultural industries in the Narrabri area;
- Development and maintenance of linkages between Cotton CRC and Namoi CMA programs, projects and activities.

This was later formalised into five schedules through an iteration process between key individuals in both organisations. The agreed schedules with associated levels of outputs to be achieved through the partnership include the following five areas targeted for investment:

**Schedule 1.1** Building Natural Resource Management (NRM) capacity in the Namoi Cotton Districts

**Schedule 1.2** Supporting the adoption of Delivering Best Management Practice (BMP) in the cotton industry in the Namoi Catchment

**Schedule 1.3** Information Collation to Support the Delivery of Best Management Practice in the Namoi Catchment

**Schedule 1.4** Implementation of NRM on-ground Incentive Projects in the Namoi Catchment

**Schedule 1.5** Advanced water management on NSW

Good relationship management between individuals and organisations tend to reduce the need for reliance on agreements and contracts. Whist these are needed, it will be shown later that this is what has been achieved by the organisations, in that their informal relationships have dominated the high level agreements.
**Partnership Reports**

The partnership progress and final reports (a.k.a. milestone reports) are not summarised here, however they have been directly and indirectly incorporated in the evaluation. It is worthwhile noting however, that the reports are presented on a routine basis, every six months in alignment with the Cotton CRC’s reporting requirements and the needs of the Namoi CMA. These are presented to both boards. In addition, informal reporting exists between project personnel.

In addition to formal partnership reporting requirements, external reports and conference proceedings have been published that highlight the activities and achievements of the partnership. A recent paper by Spanswick and Jones (2008) considered the partnership of Namoi CMA and the Cotton CRC, considering how the partnership worked to improve water management to achieve industry and catchment outcomes. The partnership is identified as a co-investment with the research organisation to align their on-ground investment with the latest research while gaining access to technical specialists and providing confidence with the growers. Specifically the partnership provides technical resources and advice, training and education, as well as financial assistance to achieve best management practice on farm.

The paper states that using the multi-pronged approach, the partnership “has seen the water use efficiency skills and knowledge of growers and consultants increase through: access to technical information, participation in training and education programmes and financial assistance to implement on-ground changes” (p2). While uptake was originally slow, the technical support provided has assisted, as did the contextual issues of drought and water entitlement cutbacks.

In total, 8,464 hectares of irrigated land was improved through water use efficiency practices. On average, approximately 15% of water use efficiency improvements were made, a net saving of 4,733ML to irrigators. This cost Namoi CMA $598,185 directly in incentive funds, and a total contribution by growers and Namoi CMA of $1,318,352. The cost effective analysis below provides more detail regarding the relative costs. See Cost Effective Analysis of Partnership.

The outcome on the land has been decreased deep drainage, reduced water logging and reduced risk of salinisation; as well as increased production of bales of cotton per megalitre of water and compliance with best management practice. The report concludes that financial incentives with structured extension can lead to adoption of new and better practices, while the partnership improves the use of each organisation’s resources.

**Mutual Objectives of Namoi CMA and Cotton CRC**

To begin the investigation into whether the partnership was able to achieve its objectives, we asked participants at the workshop held 29 April 2009 to recall the logic behind how they thought objectives were going to be met. We found that the logic of the partnership was not developed to go progressively from activities to outcomes. However the activities of the projects funded by the Namoi CMA through the partnership are expected to contribute to the targets and outcomes of the Namoi CMA as the diagram above shows. Similarly, the activities of the partnership complement the goals and objectives of the Cotton CRC.

The partnership is expected to add value to both organisations in very specific ways by extending the capability of both to make it easier for them to achieve their goals and aspirations. For example, first, the Namoi CMA applied Cotton CRC research findings, which is a requirement for the Cotton CRC but one that it has been unable to achieve sufficiently previously. Second, the partnership ensures that the funding and research is carried out in the catchment, where it is more applicable and aids local community. Third, two full time positions have been created because of the
partnership. The individuals in these positions have almost full access to the resources of both organisations. Fourth, both organisations have been forced to embrace the three fundamentals areas of the social, economic and environmental and not fall back to their preferred areas. Fifth, all research results are freely available to both organisations as well as to landholders.

We also asked why the partnership was formed. The response we received from several spokespeople for the Namoi CMA and the Cotton CRC was because the interests of the Namoi CMA and the Cotton CRC overlapped. For example, both organisations:

- Are in the same catchment
- Deal with the same issues
- Deal with industry sustainability
- Have many similar targets

In addition, it was because of mutual benefit. The Namoi CMA now has access to clients it has not had in the past and it is able to invest in research. Further, both organisations have access to each other’s networks and expanded their stakeholder base.

The document review shows that the aims of Namoi CMA and Cotton CRC were shared in many respects. Specifically, Schedule 1 of the partnership agreement reflected the catchment and management targets well. However Schedule 1.3, Information Collation does not have any direct links with any of the Management Targets. This is because research could not be funded by the Namoi CMA. But, by its nature, the program indirectly affects outcomes through the promotion of awareness, acceptance and presumably adoption of practice change that leads to physical outcomes. If considering purely alignment of the partnership’s aims with Catchment and Management Targets, many more lines could be drawn. But, in order to keep the diagram clear, only the direct outcomes of the partnership actions were considered, rather than longer term (biophysical) outcomes which may result.

The figure below highlights the relationship between Namoi CMA’s vision, catchment action plans, management action targets, and the schedules of the partnership:
Figure 7. Alignment of Partnership with the Cotton CRC's objectives and programs

- Best practice cotton enterprises delivering sustainable ecosystems and reduced impacts on catchments
- Mutually beneficial interactions between industry and regional communities
- Increased adoption of new knowledge and enhanced decision-making capability of people working in or with the cotton industry, its catchments and communities
Effectiveness and Efficiency in Achieving Outcomes

This section looks at the effectiveness and efficiency of the partnership in terms of its ability to:

- Achieve the objectives (Schedule 1)
- Expand the range of delivery methods
- Maximise reach and impact
- Increase the scope of target audience
- Improve the value to stakeholder base
- Impact on risk to organisation and stakeholders
- Stakeholder engagement and involvement.
- Remain attractive to stakeholders to achieving outcomes
- Be of comparative advantage of partner relative to other organisations

Achievement against objectives

As mentioned above, a measure of effectiveness is the ability of the partnership to achieve its objectives. These objectives are set out in Schedule 1 (1.1 – 1.5). Following is what has been achieved against each schedule.

Schedule 1.1 Building Natural Resource Management capacity in the Namoi Cotton Districts. The Catchment Officer was employed to assist the development of the NRM capacity of growers. Much of this was achieved through the workshops, events and field days held.

Schedule 1.2 Supporting the adoption of Delivering Best Management Practice (BMP) in the cotton industry in the Namoi Catchment. Schedule 1.2 funds the implementation officer for the BMP program of the Cotton CRC. The BMP is the Australian cotton industry’s voluntary farm management system that provides self assessment mechanisms, practical tools and auditing processes to ensure that cotton is produced with best practice including the management of land and water resources. As such, it fits within Namoi CMA direct share investment to leverage funds. The program provided the opportunity to integrate BMP and NRM with Cotton and ensure the implementation of NRM was appropriately supported with technical knowledge and resources. The cotton industry lacked resources in this area, which is the Namoi CMAs area of expertise.

As a result, the capacity of the 45 landholders who took part in the BMP workshop has been increased. Of the 9 landholders interviewed for this review, 6 had made improvements that were deliberately aimed at improved the biodiversity on their properties.

The BMP Program is an industry driven scheme supported by the major industry bodies including Cotton CRC, Cotton Research and Development Corporation, Cotton Australia and the Australian Cotton Growers Research Association. The 7th module and latest addition to the program, is the ‘Land & Water Module’. The schedule was developed around the implementation of this module more specifically. Cotton producers needed support from extension officers of the Cotton CRC to implement the program, though not all were interested in pursuing certification.

The module was already established, and the schedule was defined around the existing program. Some landholders did not want the BMP verification, but still were willing to participate in the program. The project officer was able to build trust with the participants by not telling them what to do, though by providing assistance when they asked.

During the period of the project the BMP Program has been moved into a second phase using an online facility driven by growers. This allows them to benchmark on a regional and national basis,
provides them with better access supporting information and allows them to undertake on-line interactive activities to support the implementation of best practice to their own enterprises.

**Schedule 1.3 Information Collation to Support the Delivery of Best Management Practice in the Namoi Catchment.** The Namoi CMA cannot invest in research, so Schedule 1.3 allowed the CMA to access research information by directing some of its research needs through the Cotton CRC and providing the Cotton CRC with much needed funds to expand its research. This complementarity has proved very valuable for both organisations. The CMA is an end user of this information and their involvement means that the resulting research is utilised. Also, the research was undertaken in the Namoi Catchment and is specific to the catchment.

**Schedule 1.4 Implementation of NRM on-ground incentive projects in the Namoi catchment.** Funding of schedule 1.4 was allocated, and the details of the scheduled and the implementation methodology appeared to be a good way to invest Namoi CMA funding. The targets came from the Namoi CMA. These were identified in the Investment Plan of Namoi 03/04. Mutual benefit was established and investment from both organisations maximised returns.

The roll-out of on-ground incentives by the Cotton CRC meant that:

- it could add additional grower requirements to the incentive monies that the Namoi CMA couldn’t i.e. had to be involved in the BMP program (Schedule 1.2), and
- the CRC was able to have a full integration of research from its development to extension to finally its adoption on ground.

This demonstrated ability for on-ground change was not considered a previous core requirement of the Cotton CRC, though it was something it wanted to do.

**Schedule 1.5 Advancing water management in NSW.** Specific change in understanding, attitude and management practices was measured throughout.

The water use efficiency program was oversubscribed, whereas revegetation projects needed proactive engagement to meet its targets. Prior to the advent of technology such as BT cotton, agronomists were predominantly focussed on insect monitoring and management. Now they have the opportunity to expand their businesses and become involved in a range of other resource management issues as well.

The Schedules finish June 09 based on existing funding. The partner organisations are currently renegotiating, however the potential for future work is restricted by funding availability within both organisations.

**Expand the range of delivery methods**

The partnership has expanded the range of delivery methods open to the CMA by now being able to use the Cotton CRC delivery methods as well as its own. These other methods include established information delivery channels, the BMP program, by tapping into other cotton projects and the National Extension Team to bring relevant additional resources or information products to the Namoi.

As well as expanding the range of delivery methods, both organisations also access to each other’s resources. The Cotton CRC staff now have access to the Namoi CMA’s NRM knowledge and support and the Namoi CMA has access to the Cotton CRC’s researchers, extension specialists, growers,
consultants and relevant programs. The partnership has given the Namoi CMA more exposure and it has come from a source that is credible with growers.

A comment was made by a participant to the workshop at the Namoi CMA office in Gunnedah that the partnership made it easier to better engage and involve stakeholders. The partnership gave better exposure to each other. It raised the profile of the environmental aspects of the catchment management program within the Cotton CRC and the Namoi CMA became more industry sympathetic. As a result the Namoi CMA was gaining recognition in the catchment and both organisations now had access to each other’s stakeholders and networks.

**Maximise reach and impact**

The value adding of the partnership was most significant in the form of maximising the reach and impact of Namoi CMA’s influence. There was general agreement among senior managers at the CMA and the CRC to whom we spoke that the partnership has enabled the CMA engage with the cotton growers, and would not have been able to achieve the extent of this engagement without the CRC. The partnership has given the CMA credibility among cotton growers it could not have achieved without the partnership.

Comments were made by those involved in the partnership and interacting with the cotton growers that they do not believe the CMA could have implemented best management practices, information programs, incentive funds, or water use efficiency programs without the one on one extension work of the CRC (paid by the Partnership). The reach was a significant component of value adding as the CMA did not have networks existing with the cotton growers, and it is unlikely there are other regionally based organisations that had those networks either. In addition, not only is the CMA gaining access to cotton growers and to the cotton industry but the CRC is getting its environmental message across and getting access to conservation organisations.

The growers have little knowledge of the partnership but seem to be aware that the project officer is somehow closely associated with the CMA. The lack of branding of the partnership may have improved the reach and ultimately the impact of the partnership, as it was felt that initially the cotton growers would have had some trepidation about engaging with the CMA.

With regard to the impact, the CRC had a base of information and research that was valuable for the cotton growers. This was incorporated into the programs as previously mentioned, which increased the value to the CMA in terms of the scope of their projects influence, and the landholders in terms of the integrated natural resource management issues with other on farm issues.

The comment was made by a project officer that she could see the gradual increases in growers being more comfortable about taking on environmental issues and she was clear that this was largely because the environmental message was coming from the Cotton CRC rather than the CMA. This comment is supported by what the landholders themselves imply. Through their interviews, they stated that the CMA is a valuable source of information and important to their future.

**Increase the scope of target audience**

As mentioned above, the target audience had limited access to the technical support and information in order to employ best management practice regarding natural resources on their individual properties. The partnership has increased this opportunity and introduced them to facilitators and project officers who present the concepts in ways that they are comfortable with.
Improve the value to stakeholder base

Similarly, the value to the landholder stakeholders is that they have greater access to information on how to manage their natural resources. The comments through interview in this regard have been positive and the information has been well accepted.

Impact on risk to organisation and stakeholders

Whilst the focus of the partnership was to improve the efficiency of the water being used, there is a risk that water use efficiencies will be used to increase cropping rather than the excess water go back to the environment. This was implied in a comment that was made that land is not the limiting factor for growers, but rather water. That is why land holders on efficiency improvement programs may not release any water back to the environment but rather use it to expand production. Therefore, it may be useful to acknowledge that while water savings may not be returned to the environment in the short term, the effects of the use of ground water may now come into consideration. The point was made by a Namoi CMA Senior Manager that the Cotton CRC would not have become aware of the effects of use on the environment of ground water if it was not for the monitoring of the Namoi CMA.

Stakeholder engagement and involvement

Stakeholders were engaged through the BMP workshops and through various events hosted by the Namoi CMA, the Cotton CRC, the Department of Primary Industries or other organisations. Mention was also made farmers and others attending meetings and forums.

Remain attractive to stakeholders to achieving outcomes

The partnership has been attractive to both organisations on several counts. Some have already been listed. The partnership has been cost effective with regard to access to new information because of the Cotton CRC’s ability to use PhD and other students. This has extended the funds of the Namoi CMA because to find this information themselves would have cost much more. All relevant information is freely available to both organisations.

As already mentioned, the structure of the financial systems of the Cotton CRC has allowed the Namoi CMA to disperse funds in practical timeframes to useful projects with the help of the Cotton CRC. The scrutiny of both organisations with regard to projects ensures that each project has to be of value to both parties in the partnership and spreads the risk of inappropriate projects.

The point was made by a project officer that the BMP goals could not have been achieved if the Namoi CMA did not step in and obtain materials such as aerial property maps. This project officer works together with Namoi CMA deliverers at workshops and field days. She stated that this helps to break down the negative perception that growers have about the Namoi CMA if they see the staff working together and being respectful of each other. This project officer feels that her relationship with the growers is now strong enough that she can ask them to help with environmental monitoring and they do it willingly.

A senior Manager of the Cotton CRC made the point that the partnership is very effective at achieving the Cotton CRC goals and the Namoi CMA requirements through the combined funds for research and development, education and practice change. The on-farm best practices application provides the opportunity for growers to showcase appropriate resource management, to build better recognition of this in their communities.
Comparative advantage of partner relative to other organisations

The general consensus among the individuals who made comment to this review was that while partnerships can be difficult, this is not the case here even though several challenges were faced. However, the Namoi CMA would like to make some changes to the structure and expectations of the agreement that are largely to do with funding.

A comparison was made about how the Cotton CRC works with other CMAs but the feeling was that, although others were effective, none works as well as the partnership with the Namoi CMA and again it was to do with the distribution of funding. It seems that the efforts involved in working closely in order to work out how funding would be distributed and accounted for, commissioning and managing projects has lifted the capacity of the Cotton CRC to manage the process and the ability of the Namoi CMA to distribute the funds.

Cost Effective Analysis of Partnership

A cost effective analysis of the partnership considers the method used relative to alternatives, such as direct methods of implementation. The objective is to compare the opportunity cost (i.e. what is the next best alternative) of using partnerships in terms of achieving outcomes. The following considerations are drawn from the literature:

- What are the costs of partnerships to achieving the outcomes (including transaction costs, such as bargaining, negotiations, etc)?
- How well have partnerships achieved those outcomes? (i.e. benefits/effects)
- What alternative methods are there for achieving those outcomes?
- What are the costs of those alternative methods to achieve those outcomes?
- What are the potential benefits/effects of those alternative methods?
- Which method can most effectively and efficiently achieve the outcomes desired?

Costs and Outcomes of Partnership with Cotton CRC

The cost of the partnership is $2.4million over its lifetime. This includes hiring two full time equivalent staff as part of best management practice and irrigation practice engagement. In addition there are program-orientated costs (i.e. incentive funds, information provision, etc). However, the costs associated with implementing the program – the two staff members – by and large is considered relatively low for the nature of this program.

However, there are management costs that have been borne by both organisations in terms of using resources and staff to manage the partnership. This was substantial in the initial bargaining, negotiations and in particular defining the schedules that would guide the partnership. The search and information costs associated with finding partners in this case were not prohibitive or substantial in this case, as one of the key members of the Namoi CMA that drove the initial phases had in fact been on the board of the Cotton CRC.

While the costs associated with the schedules were substantial due to the negotiations required, this actually had the contradictory outcome of promoting motivation and improving attitudes to one and other. The adversity that the middle-management staff went through during this tough process increased the drive to succeed due to the professional reputation for the staff being on the line. This strengthened their relationship as individuals as well as at the organisational level, creating a lot of trust. Anecdotally, respondents from both organisations have noted that this led to improved outcomes for the partnership in the longer term.
Moreover, ongoing maintenance of the partnership, such as reporting, has also required time and resources to be invested by both partners, though this has been relatively small considering the strong relationship forged between the individuals of the organisation.

While the costs are over and above the $2.4million allocated and the in-kind contribution of the Cotton CRC, this needs to be considered in the context of the outcomes achieve. This has been identified above, and is summarised as follows:

- Ability to expand capacity of existing methodologies (i.e. appropriateness of products and services offered by Namoi CMA)
- Ability to expand the range of delivery methods used by Namoi CMA (i.e. appropriateness of new products and services)
- Maximising reach and impact (i.e. improving efficiency of existing resources and leveraging resources)
- Increasing scope of target audience (i.e. effectiveness in reaching Cotton industry)
- Improving value to stakeholder base (i.e. efficiency and value adding to landholders through integrated approaches of cotton practices to include NRM)
- Achieve cost effective on ground outcomes across a large diverse area (See below for example on water use efficiency)
- Develop and enhance relationships with the communities
- Ability to identify priorities at grass roots level
- Able to better identify and capitalise on funding opportunities
- Provide a conduit for development of a voice for community
- Dedicate resources on a whole of region basis
- Marketing, communication and other expertise

All of these factors have been a positive gain for both organisations. However, it can be difficult to quantify all of these outcomes and contrast them quantitatively with alternative methods of delivery. At the outcome level, the following data exists:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Investment Area</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Outcomes Achieved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Native vegetation conserved</td>
<td>365 ha</td>
<td>440 ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native vegetation enhanced</td>
<td>33 ha</td>
<td>540 ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riparian in stream structures</td>
<td>6 structures</td>
<td>12 structures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riparian re-vegetated</td>
<td>10 km (1 side)</td>
<td>16.6 km (1 side)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riparian areas conserved</td>
<td>40 km (1 side)</td>
<td>65.4 km (1 side)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irrigated land farmed sustainably (WUE and salinity)</td>
<td>2520 ha</td>
<td>5111 ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water use efficiency improvements</td>
<td>15% WUE</td>
<td>15% WUE improvement over 8464ha, equating to 4733ML</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Outcomes of Partnership

There are several caveats we should consider. Firstly, the above table reflects the outcomes of the partnership in terms of natural resource management. The cost effective analysis relies on outcomes, not outputs (i.e. x number of best management practices or whole farm plans) nor impacts (i.e. x number of species protected or $x of socioeconomic benefits from water use efficiency improved).

Secondly, the outcomes cannot be disaggregated according to the individual schedules, even though much of the funding for achieving these outcomes came from the on-ground incentives. This is
because the schedules are interrelated and interdependent. Prior to receiving on-ground incentive funds, whole farm plans related to best management practices were required.

Therefore, the costs associated with achieving the outcomes are the combined costs of the partnership including the cash and in-kind contributions from both Namoi CMA and Cotton CRC. This evaluation is a reflection of Namoi CMA’s investments however, and the added contributions are considered the benefits of leveraging from the partnership.

We shall consider the alternative methods to partnering with the Cotton CRC, specifically direct intervention by Namoi CMA or alternative partners. This will be followed by a quantitative cost effective analysis of comparing the cost of achieving outcomes with the next best alternatives (where data is available).

**Alternative Methods to Partnering with Cotton CRC (Direct Intervention)**

During the workshop with Namoi CMA and Cotton CRC staff, the question was asked about what alternatives exist for achieving the desired outcomes as identified in the schedules. It was noted that few if any alternatives exist, and in particular, it is unlikely that any alternative would be as effective or efficient as the existing partnership.

An alternative was to consider other partner organisations within the cotton industry in the Namoi catchment. One could reasonably argue that it would be possible for Namoi CMA to seek these outcomes from different industries; however with the range of other programs in the catchment the objective for this funding was specifically to target the socio-economic important cotton industry that had been considered slow in adopting better NRM related management practices.

The Cotton CRC is the main industry body within the region that has some degree of mutual objectives. Specifically, the Cotton CRC now includes ‘catchment’ and ‘communities’, which reflects well on Namoi CMA’s objectives. The alternatives from an industry perspective include three grower groups in the region, however these are volunteer-based and do not have a well formed management structure. This would make it more difficult to achieve the type of outcomes that Namoi CMA was seeking. Moreover, with three organisations there would be significantly higher transaction costs for Namoi CMA in maintaining the partnership. Finally, the grower groups did not have existing capacity and capabilities – that is, were not “investment ready” – and thus would have taken significant amount of effort to prepare the organisations for Namoi CMA’s needs.

There are other industry bodies. However these either operate at a higher level (i.e. Australia wide) without representation in the region, or do not incorporate natural resource management within their objective. Therefore, from Namoi CMA’s perspective, the alternative would be to not partner and directly deliver the programs internally.

From the Cotton CRC’s perspective, the next best alternative partner would be the New South Wales’ Department of Primary Industries. While a strong funding source with an interest in natural resource management, the amount of funding available and thus the scale of the program would be significantly less. It should however be noted that the Cotton CRC had many partners prior to Namoi CMA, and this program did not reduce their ability to partner with other organisations but in fact was in addition. While Namoi CMA had funding constraints, Cotton CRC was investment ready and thus the ‘alternative’ was not to partner with Namoi CMA.

Therefore, the next best alternative is direct implementation by Namoi CMA. This would most likely involve Namoi CMA recruiting cotton specific engagement personnel, as well as incorporating cotton specific objectives into existing Namoi CMA staff. The strengths of direct methods are:
• Fewer transaction costs (i.e. no search, negotiation, bargaining, information, communication, etc costs)
• Immediate alignment of objectives without the need for consideration of mutual interests

In addition, Namoi CMA would need to pay for other infrastructure costs, such as cars, administrative, managers, etc. The belief of respondents is that it would be possible to recruit more personnel, though it is likely that the ongoing management and other associated costs would be greater than the start-up costs of the partnership.

More significant than the cost of implementing the programs however are the benefits that could be achieved. The Cotton CRC had existing networks with the cotton growers and was considered investment ready in terms of the capacity and capability to implement the program. Namoi CMA did not have the contacts with the cotton growers, and it is believed would find it very difficult to engage with the target stakeholders. Therefore, the belief is that the outcomes would not have been achievable without the partnership of the Cotton CRC, and in particular, it would not have been possible to have achieved the outcomes within the same timeframe. Nor would it have been possible to allocate and disburse of the funds in such a rapid manner, an objective of Namoi CMA to meet its targets and budgetary requirements.

At this stage the costs of the partnership are not great and the objectives that govern the activities relevant to the partnership with the Cotton CRC align without much negotiation. The only factor that is in contention is the continued ability of the Namoi CMA to fund the current level of activity. The data suggests that the partnership is achieving the intended outcomes which would have been a lot more difficult to achieve had the Namoi CMA tried to without the help of the Cotton CRC. Therefore, on a cost effectiveness analysis, the partnership at this stage seems to be the better option than any direct methods.

Comparing Costs of Achieving Outcomes

This section aims to compare the costs associated with achieving outcomes in the partnership with the next best alternative. Data is restricted in terms of cost per unit of outcome for the partnership and for the next best alternative.

Progress reports on the partnership have been used to identify outcomes achieved. The cost per unit of outcome have been calculated based on the on-ground incentives paid per investment area plus a pro-rata costing of other costs associated with the partnership. Specifically, this refers to the costs associated with building NRM capacity, supporting the adoption of BMP and information related costs.

The next best alternative has been identified as direct investment by Namoi CMA in achieving the desired outcomes in the investment area. The costs have been calculated based on the current costs for direct investments by Namoi CMA based on the 2006-09 Investment Plan. It is acknowledged that there are limitations to the accuracy of these figures, particularly due to the costs of engaging cotton growers would be more expensive than others due to there being no established networks, and because irrigation costs may differ from dryland croppers or alternative landholders.

However, the cost effective analysis provides a useful benchmark for comparing the cost of the partnership to Namoi CMA – not the entire cost of delivering the program – and highlights the benefits of leveraging from the Cotton CRC. The table below provides a summary of the cost effective analysis.
### Table 4: Outcomes of Partnership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Investment Area</th>
<th>Outcomes Achieved</th>
<th>Namoi CMA Partnership Cost⁴</th>
<th>Namoi CMA Direct Costs⁵</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Native vegetation conserved</td>
<td>440 ha</td>
<td>$69,536</td>
<td>$359,333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native vegetation enhanced</td>
<td>540 ha</td>
<td>$86,920</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riparian in stream structures</td>
<td>12 structures</td>
<td>$182,532</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riparian re-vegetated</td>
<td>16.6 km (1 side)</td>
<td>$278,144</td>
<td>$476,534</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riparian areas conserved</td>
<td>65.4 km (1 side)</td>
<td>$304,220</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irrigated land farmed sustainably (WUE and salinity)</td>
<td>5111 ha</td>
<td>$438,946</td>
<td>$928,764⁶</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water use efficiency improvements</td>
<td>15% WUE improvement over 8464 ha, equating to 4733ML</td>
<td>$1,039,884</td>
<td>Unknown ($8,637,725 on open water markets⁷)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Cost Effectiveness Comparisons**

It can be seen that native vegetation conservation and improvement has been achieved at a substantially lower price relative to direct investments by Namoi CMA. This is a reflection of the established networks of the Cotton CRC and ability to leverage funds and relationships from the cotton growers to implement better practices.

The leveraging achieved in this partnership is quite substantial. Across the five schedules, Namoi CMA contributed $2.5m in cash and in-kind contributions – not including the management and transaction costs. This was supported through cash and in-kind contributions of Cotton CRC to the value of approximately $1.5m. The net leveraging rate was therefore 60%, or for every $1 invested by Namoi CMA a total of $1.60 was invested in achieving the outcomes.

With regards to riparian related outcomes, it is not known what the cost of riparian structures would be to Namoi CMA directly. However, it can be stated that Namoi CMA would be able to achieve

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⁴ The partnership costs are related to the financial outlays of Namoi CMA and exclude the leveraging benefits from the Cotton CRC and partners. The figures for the outcomes relate to Namoi CMA’s contribution to the on-ground incentive funds provided, with remaining partnership costs (c.42%) such as best management practice, capacity building and information collation being apportioned on a pro-rata basis. Pro-rata basis is defined as per unit dollar of incentive funds, such that for every $1 provided as an incentive an extra $0.73c is allocated for “support” costs. It is acknowledged that the costs are only approximates and are only estimates at best.

⁵ Direct implementation costs are related to the actual costs allocated and expended by Namoi CMA in achieving related catchment targets, as per the 2006-9 Investment Strategy, table 2.2, table 2.3, and table 2.4. The costs associated are pro-rated on an outcome basis to calculate the cost per unit of outcome, multiplied by the units achieved within the partnership. It is acknowledged that the costs are only approximates and are only estimates at best.

⁶ This figure is based on irrigated cropping, dryland cropping and perennial pastures. There may be some cost differentials, though this is believed to be a conservative estimate.

⁷ Current price of water is $1,825 per ML for March quarter 2008/09 ([www.environment.gov.au](http://www.environment.gov.au)). However, it is worth noting that only 40ML of water traded in that period, well short of the desired amount of water. Moreover, the price would be expected to fluctuate, and in fact increase substantially if a request for 4733ML was put in to the water markets due to the ‘thin’ amount of trades.
Using Partnerships

Riparian revegetation and conservation areas more cost effectively through their established arrangements. Information was collected in terms of riparian vegetation condition assessments, and relatively higher contributions by the Namoi CMA were required for on-ground incentives for the revegetation and conservation. This is not surprising, as there is little private benefit to the cotton growers, and thus required extra incentives for action. However, the benefits noted in terms of kilometres of riparian affected does not incorporate the benefits of awareness and action by landholders nor the potential cost savings in not needing to maintain those areas. Therefore, it is likely a holistic cost effective analysis with a long term perspective may not have the same result.

Irrigated land farmed sustainably aligns with the Namoi CMA landscape management target. It can be seen that operating through a partner such as the Cotton CRC – which also has other partners it relies upon – is more cost effective than Namoi CMA in this instance. This once again highlights the added benefit of leveraging and relying upon established networks.

**Water Use Efficiency Case Study**

Water use efficiency and achieving water savings provides an interesting case study, as there are significant socio-economic equity considerations in terms of what the water is used for and how savings are generated. The partnership was able to achieve 4,733ML water savings at a total cost to Namoi CMA of $1.04m. This is a cost of $219 per ML to Namoi CMA, and a total cost for the partnership including all contributions of approximately $351 per ML. This is substantially less than the $1,825 per ML on the open water markets, the next best alternative for cotton growers or Namoi CMA in terms of buying/selling water rights. Moreover, the open market is considered ‘thin’ in terms of limited water availability, and it is unlikely the quantity of water could be purchased without significantly distorting the market and driving up the price for water.

However, the water savings in the water use efficiency schedule in this instance are retained by the cotton growers. That is, the water rights are retained by the cotton growers and are expected to be used in expanding land under irrigation for cotton production (or other mixed cropping). Therefore, it is expected that the cost to Namoi CMA and the partnership ought to be substantially less than the market rates, as there are significant private benefits to the cotton grower. The public benefits of such a program are limited to less drainage into groundwater systems for example, and socio-economic benefits to the regional economy through a more productive and profitable agribusiness sector. The Roy Powell and Linden Chalmers (2008) report highlights the socio-economic influence of the cotton industry.

In comparison, if water rights were purchased by Namoi CMA from the open water markets for example, this would reduce the productive capacity of the region. This may have natural resource management benefits through less land under cultivation (i.e. less fertiliser use, aerial spraying, etc). However, it would also reduce the socio-economic capacity of the region by removing natural assets. The priority of the environmental impacts relative to the social and economic impacts is a debate that is currently being undertaken by State and Federal Governments and is outside the scope of this review.

Regardless of the beneficiary of the water savings, what is interesting is that the cost of water use efficiency is considerably cheaper than alternatives. Generally, the cost of water use efficiency improvements on farm or through water supply mechanisms approximate the open market price for water – as an efficient market should operate.

Using Victoria as an example, channel automation and other infrastructure upgrades have yielded water efficiency improvements at approximately $2,000 per ML (Roberts Evaluation, 2009b). The Food Bowl Modernisation Project for example divides irrigation efficiency upgrade water into thirds...
between Melbourne, irrigators and the environment. This initially cost around $1,600 per ML, though has increased to $2,000-$2,500 per ML as upgrades become more difficult to achieve\(^8\). This is comparable with Victorian water market prices of $1,700 to $2,500 in the Murray, Goulburn and Macalister regions\(^9\) (Roberts Evaluation, 2009b).

The comparison with infrastructure upgrades is more accurate than water markets for the purpose of Namoi CMA, Cotton CRC and the partnership. Infrastructure upgrades and on-farm upgrades increases the investment in water as an asset, and lead to more efficient productivity and ultimately profitability improvements. Rather than reducing the natural and physical assets of a community, the investments seek to increase the carrying capacity of an industry and improve its sustainability. However, the difference is that on-farm upgrades have private benefits which ought to be funded through grower contributions.

Finally it is worthwhile mentioning that not all comparable options have the same cost associated with implementing the models (i.e. transaction costs). While this has not been factored in to the cost effective analysis – only the cost of water is considered - it is worth noting that the partnership is expected to have the greatest transaction costs in terms of staff resources and the financial cost of conducting the program. This is likely to be similar to the Food Bowl Modernisation Project’s overhead, though this has already been factored in to the cost per ML. Finally, purchasing water rights off the open market is a relatively simple process, though as noted this has social and equity implications.

Perceptions of the Partnership

**Namoi CMA and Cotton CRC staff**

The views of these two groups have been combined because staff from both organisations were in a workshop together and were largely interviewed together.

Some of the unexpected benefits of the partnership as stated by a Namoi CMA manager were:

- Not expected to have such a good ally and the partnership is held up as a good example.
- Increased contact with other organisations through the Cotton CRC e.g. Namoi Water; through Namoi CMA e.g. Greening Australia.
- Use as model for other partnerships
- Confidence now with forming other partnerships
- Learned about designing partnerships and how to change others

Comments from the Cotton CRC about unexpected benefits were that the partners were flexible and able to adapt with each other largely because there were good interpersonal relationships at all levels of the partnership. In addition, the Cotton CRC had an ability to vary how they deliver and achieve outcomes when needed and this flexibility allowed the Namoi CMA to disperse funds to useful projects.

The Cotton CRC has been able to showcases benefits of NRM to industry and through the partnership it now has more NRM partners like Greening Australia. The partnership has highlighted how a really good partnership works and shows up where others do not work well. The Namoi CMA partnership will be used as example for Cotton CRC’s M&E (i.e. a pilot, champion).

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Landholders

We had in mind to interview landholders who had been involved with the adoption of the cotton industry’s best management practice guidelines either through a BMP workshop or by using the manual without this help of a workshop. Forty five landholders were in this category and of these 14 gave permission for us to call them and a further 14 were available in that they had not said ‘no’. Only nine of the twenty eight landholders could be interviewed in the time allowed. They were difficult to reach because they were in the paddock from early in the day until late and out of range of contact through mobile phone.

All of the landholders contacted for this review were from mixed farming operations having both dryland and irrigated crops. Views of the Cotton CRC were varied amongst landholders (not all grew cotton) although 6/9 felt that the research results were relevant and valuable. Others did not grow cotton but had been part of the BMP workshops.

All nine landholders interviewed knew something about the Namoi CMA and all felt that it was relevant to what they were doing. Only three, particularly the ones who are growing cotton, knew about the partnership. Eight of the nine landholders have been involved in BMP workshops at some stage and spoke about them very positively. Comments were made by nearly all landholders about how beneficial the back up and support was from field officers who came and helped with the implementation. Adoption and implementation of BMP was occurring for all nine landholders and thought to be occurring for the majority of landholders’ neighbours.

Suggestions for modifications to the BMP NRM module centred on the need for a greater focus on improved native species in the area and more research being required into soil and water health and their relationships. NRM grants and incentives had been used by landholders in this review on farm over several years.

Incentives and grants were used for:

- Fencing off river banks to improve bank stability, reduce erosion, revegetation, etc
- Fencing off of dams and implementing pipe works to improve water quality, stock health and reduce traffic and land degradation on the river bank
- Implementation of contour like banks and planting of saltbush for alternative stock feed
- Fencing off of remnant vegetation for enhancing biodiversity and trees on farm and improve productive grazing areas on farm
- Tree planting for increased stock protection and biodiversity
- Improved water use efficiency for production and the environment

Comments in relation to Catchment officers were very positive. Landholders also preferred communicating with the one officer and building a relationship with them – particularly the older style operators.

All landholder respondents stated that their involvement with the Cotton CRC and the Namoi CMA had been valuable. It had opened their minds, given them access to resources and increased their networks. A telling comment was:

*I now tell my wife about the CMA meetings in town and she loves coming to them with me - it is great that she can understand and is interested in what is happening. It has brought the community together as a group in many ways to really focus on local issues - please continue to do this.*
Implementing and Managing the Relationship

What we found with regard to managing the implementation and managing the relationship was that there were three clear levels at which the partnership operated. These were at the level of:

- CEO/General manager
- Senior and middle management
- Project officer/implementation staff

There were clear expectations and roles for each level even if these were not written. At the highest level, individuals were expected to support and give consent for the partnership. The middle levels of management are where the work goes into setting up and maintaining the partnership and at the implementation level, officers are expected to implement the activities of the partnership. Participants to this review provided clues as to what made this partnership successful by what they mentioned worked well. For example, all participants to the review spoke candidly of the partnership and the individuals involved and these remarks were always positive. This is a testament to the individuals involved in the partnership who have worked hard to develop goodwill. Also, if issues occur that affect the partnership they are resolved quickly. The relationship is open and trusting and mention was made on several occasions that there is a lot of goodwill among individuals on which they can rely.

The partnership agreement also incorporates the following components which are useful for managing the partnership:

- Cash and non-cash contributions. The non-cash contribution comes in the form of sharing office space and equipment, sharing networks and providing positive introductions, supporting each other at events and gaining access to restricted materials such as aerial maps
- Specified personnel. Personnel at both the Namoi CMA and the Cotton CRC have roles that are specific to supporting the partnership
- Provision of information to and by the organisations. Information that is created by either partner or to which either partner has access is made freely available
- Intellectual property rights. These are freely shared
- Allocation of risk. Risk is shared by the partners by having a sound system that disperses funds to good projects, carries out relevant research and manages staff.
- Conflict resolution. Conflict or issues that could cause conflict are resolved quickly.

All these aspects are covered in the information below although not in this order. For example, implementing and managing a partnership involves the management of relationships between individuals which brings up the question of power. When Cotton CRC and Namoi CMA relevant staff were asked at the workshop and later through interview, if power was shared equally they all commented that it was. They all spoke very positively about the relationships within the partnership. Staff feel comfortable about going into each other’s office space. For example, the comment was made by the project officer that even though she is not an employee of the Namoi CMA (only paid by them) she feels very comfortable about using Namoi CMA resources. The staff are welcoming, she said.

Comments about improvements to the partnership included: tightening the monitoring and evaluation systems, looking at a contribution of funds from both organisations, focussing on intermediate outcomes, looking at the possibility of a less formal arrangement than currently exists, and identifying and reconfirming or modifying what each wants out of the partnership.
When asked how an outsider would view the partnership, all replied that an outsider would not be aware of the partnership. It has not been particularly promoted. However, they stated that if they did know, some may be sceptical about why it was created but would see that it is working well.

The partnership is used as a success story to highlight what an effective partnership looks like although one person commented that the partnership is at a point where it needs to be reinvigorated but without too much change. A lot of trust has been developed between the two organisations and it may be an opportune time to make the partnership agreement less formal.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations: Best design for this partnership

What is valuable about the design of the partnership with the Cotton CRC is:

- The detail of the requirements in Schedule 1
- The relationship and goodwill between the partner members from the highest level of CEO to the operative level of implementation officers
- Each level had roles and responsibilities that while not written or defined, could be described and measured
- The partnership was appropriate in that objectives and plans overlapped
- The partnership was effective and efficient in that the objectives of both organisations could be met with less resources and effort. Much was achieved against each of the sub programs in Schedule 1. For example:
  - 1.1. NRM capacity was built in the landholders contacted for this review (9 of the 45 possible) and many others have been made aware of NRM issue by attending field days and other events where members of both organisations delivered together.
  - 1.2. The NRM module of the cotton BMP manual was delivered to 45 growers
  - 1.3. delivered much needed research for the Namoi CMA and delivered much need funds for research to the Cotton CRC
  - 1.4. Funds were dispersed to carry out on-ground works through projects of great value to both organisations
  - 1.5. Work on water use efficiency begins with the BMP module and ends with growers carrying out their own measurements and evaluations.

There are some changes that influenced both organisations that will have an effect on the partnership. With regard to the Namoi CMA, it is that funding from the Commonwealth Government has been reduced by 40% and this will in turn decrease the funds available to the partnership. The effect of fewer funds may mean that the relationship between the two partners will become more even where funds are concerned. With regard to the Cotton CRC, its members are now much more aware of environmental issues and the need for the Namoi CMA to deliver the environmental information may not be as important.
SECTION V - NAMOI CMA PARTNERSHIP STRATEGY

Namoi CMA has developed a Catchment Action Plan to help natural resource managers develop sustainable land management practices. The Catchment Action Plan provides the basis for delivering incentive funding provided through the Australian and State governments natural resource management programs, as well as other funding available to the catchment community through partnerships or alternative funding opportunities.

A key feature of the Namoi Catchment Action Plan is working with industry, Landcare and environmental groups, research organisations, local government and the Indigenous community, as well as individuals. The Namoi CMA is seeking to establish collaborative, investment partnerships that will assist in delivering the proposed activities, increase the effectiveness of investment funding programs, and achieve positive natural resource outcomes.

One of the catchment targets identified in the Catchment Action Plan is the development of strong links with local government bodies located within the Namoi catchment. This has led to the formation of the Namoi Local Government Group (NLGG) to focus on natural resource management issues where the potential to achieve successful outcomes is enhanced by a collaborative approach. Such an issue is the production of a catchment-wide State of the Environment Report.

Acknowledging the need for a partnership strategy and its alignment with other strategies of Namoi CMA, the following has been extracted from the literature to identify what is required in a partnership strategy:

- **Introduction**: To include a description about the Namoi CMA’s interest in partnering with organisations and individuals
- **Scope and Purpose of Partnership Strategy**: To include a statement about the limitations of strategy and its purpose, as well as alignment with other relevant strategies.
- **Values and Principles**: The foundations that underpin the framework and objective of Namoi CMA’s business activities and partnerships.
- **Current and Potential Partners**: Provides an analysis of the direction of partnerships of Namoi CMA at the time of writing the strategy, with a perspective on where the organisation would like to be.
- **Strategies and Tools**: The methods in which partnerships will be considered, implemented and evaluation. Specifically this considers the use of partnerships as a delivery method, strengthening existing partnerships, building new partnerships, and monitoring, evaluation and adaptive management of partnerships.

In recognition of the objective of this review, this section provides an outline of what would be in a partnership strategy for Namoi CMA. This is built upon the most recent literature available with regards to partnerships by regional NRM bodies. Moreover, tools and checklists are provided throughout this section to support decision making by Namoi CMA. It needs to be reiterated that this is *not* a partnership strategy per se, but rather incorporates all the ingredients that would formulate Namoi CMA’s partnership strategy.

**Introduction**

The introduction to the partnership strategy is expected to have two facets. The first is that it would introduce the organisation and the region that it operates in. For example, a brief about the key issues of the region, the types of organisations and industries in the region, the placement of the
CMA with regard to those organisations, and, perhaps, some background to the key stakeholders for the CMA. The final component of the introduction will provide an outline of the partnership strategy. This includes:

1. A description of the scope and purpose of the strategy
2. A statement of the values and principles of the Namoi CMA
3. A list of current and potential partners
4. How to build new partnership
5. How to monitor, evaluate and improve partnerships

**Scope and Purpose of Partnership Strategy**

The scope and purpose of the partnership strategy will vary according to the target audience and the intended use of the document. This is likely to include internal and external stakeholders, providing information for Namoi CMA, current partners and potential partners in terms of a guide as what is being targeted.

The scope of the strategy is that it provides guidelines about partnerships only, and not all of the engagement activities of the Namoi CMA. It is also limited to providing guidelines about the business involved with partnerships, not all the business of the Namoi CMA.

This section should also outline the alignment of the partnership strategy within the organisation as a whole. The key documents of the partnering organisations that need to be aligned are those that outline the organisation’s vision, values and strategies for implementation:

- Regional catchment strategy
- Catchment action plan
- Investment plans

The purpose of the partnership strategy is to have a document that can be used by the Namoi CMA and potential partners to evaluate where a partnership will be useful and, if that is the case, determine what type of partnership will be most useful.

First are the foundational elements that need to be in place before a partnership can be considered. These are values, principles and current practices of both partners that need to be complementary.

**Values and Principles of the Namoi CMA**

The values and principles that underpin the way the Namoi CMA does business are fundamental to helping it decide who potential partners are and what type of partnership to create. The partnership strategy is expected to build on and align with existing values and principles of the organisation, the guide to how business is undertaken.

**Values**

The statement of values is already provided in the Catchment Action Plan (p1: Part A) and states that:

“The CMA and its Board will encourage decision making that uses creativity, innovation and self motivation. The Board will lead by example and assist the CMA to become an organisation that is:
• **Outcome driven**
• **United in its purpose for the benefit of the catchment**
• **Energetic in pursuing its objectives**
• **Creative and flexible in its approach to delivery of services**
• **Displays integrity and honesty**
• **Transparent in its work**
• **Highly regarded by its peers**
• **Trusted by the community.**


It is expected that the above values will be replicated in the partnership strategy.

**Principles**

The principles of the partnership strategy build on the principles of the organisation. It is expected that the principles – as opposed to the values – will become more specific to partnerships. The principles of engagement with potential partners are already outlined in the Partnership Policy and states that:

• Partnerships must align with the Namoi CMA Catchment Action Plan targets and objectives
• Partners are expected to adhere to the NSW Statewide Standard for Quality Natural Resource Management
• Partnerships are expected to be mutually beneficial and equal
• Partners need to bear their own costs
• Parties should be fully committed to the partnership

There are also guidelines identified in the Partnership Policy that may influence the principles of partnerships or be included at this point in the strategy. Specifically, these guidelines include:

• **Financial arrangements** include no charge for project development, equal financial contribution, no contribution to existing salaries, partnership-specific positions to be salary plus on-costs and only and a standard travel allowance, partners supporting each other’s partnership staff with office space and equipment.
• **Knowledge and information** sharing such as making experts available; sharing intellectual property; and sharing the responsibility of project management, monitoring and evaluation and information, with public information jointly badged and raw data being made available to each other.
• **Public relations and media** such as joint badging and partners enhance each other’s public and private image.
• **Deliverables and reporting** to include projects having steering committees, adherence to milestone reporting, and adherence to normal contractual arrangements.

The Namoi CMA has the management of the natural environment as its core business. Therefore any partnership will need to add to that. Some factors that are important for this are:

• Respect for varying ways of thinking. For example, there are divergent views about how industry, indigenous groups and conservation groups see the natural environment. These need to be accommodated
• Authentic indigenous involvement
• Flexibility to facilitate engagement of different operational styles
Using Partnerships

- Organising a major regional event such as a conference or workshop series
- Identifying priority activities within the framework of a key regional partnership
- Recognising the value of long term partnerships
- Using governance arrangements to support partnership
- Participation in large scale coalitions and NRM networks

While the Partnership Policy is an internal document, it would be expected that this would form the basis of the principles in the strategy for external viewing as well.

Current activities of the Namoi CMA

In addition to the values and principles of Namoi CMA, it is worthwhile bearing in mind the current activities. This will guide understanding in where the Namoi CMA is placed in terms of its objectives, as well as aid in the identification of roles and responsibilities for current and future partners. In addition, this will assist external partners in identifying their role and responsibility and how Namoi CMA fits within their partnership strategy.

The current practice of the Namoi CMA includes activities with regard to:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Asset Class</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Native plants and animals</td>
<td>Native Vegetation, Threatened, Property Vegetation Plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water</td>
<td>Aquatic Plants and Animals, Managing Our Water, Surface Water, Groundwater</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Working with Aboriginal Communities, Consultation, Awareness, Attitude and Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring and Evaluation</td>
<td>Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Improvement activities for the Namoi Catchment, Soil and Land Capability Maps</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Current Activities of Namoi CMA
Current and Potential Partners

This section provides an analysis of the direction of partnerships of Namoi CMA at the time of writing the strategy, with a perspective on where the organisation would like to be. It is useful to strategically consider the direction of Namoi CMA in the near future, which could be developed through focus groups with key staff and stakeholders. Most of this ground work has been undertaken already through other studies.

Current partners

The current partners of Namoi CMA include:

- The Cotton Catchment of Communities Cooperative Research Centre
- The Tamworth Regional Lands Protection Board
- The Namoi Local Government Group
- Greening Australia
- The Liverpool Plains Land Management Group
- Private landholders

The types of partnership with these groups vary from those that are defined by formal contracts to others that are much less formal. While it is not necessary, these partnerships could be plotted on the scale of partnerships. See Figure 3: Scale of Partnerships.

Potential partners

A recent report considered the networks of organisations within the Namoi Catchment. This report provides a stakeholder analysis of potential partners, focusing on the existing relationship and the value of a partnership. The key organisations, including the cotton focus, have been included in the above evaluation. See Molino Stewart (2008) and Table 2: The study Identified Key Stakeholders and Networks.

Building New Partnerships

The Namoi CMA is a dynamic organisation, seeking to build on existing programs and partnerships as well as build new partnerships. Therefore, it is important that consideration is made to the process of building new partnerships after the key stakeholders have been identified. A checklist is provided below in the toolbox; however the following steps are necessary:

1. Ensuring that values and principles are complementary
2. Identifying where mutual benefit will occur
3. Investigating how the partnership can add to the effectiveness and efficiency of the partners
4. Evaluating factors specific to NRM
5. Deciding on the type of partnership
6. Developing a partnership plan

Ensuring values and principles are complementary

As has been previously stated, it is important to partner with organisations that have values and principles complementary to Namoi CMA. The values and principles of the Namoi CMA are listed above. Other factors to consider in this regard include:
Using Partnerships

• The focus on or level of engagement of the potential partner with regard to NRM (i.e. shared values, common objectives; and will this mean working with traditional NRM partners or encouraging cross-sectoral partnerships?)
• Availability of resources to invest in the partnership
• Geographical location of the partner and/or partnership activity (appears apparent from the evaluation of Cotton CRC).

Identifying where mutual benefit will occur

An assumption is made that any partnership with the Namoi CMA will be mutually beneficial and that power will be shared equally. This will enable the most cost effective and efficient partners to be selected and utilised, and will ensure that there is buy-in by both organisations. The selection of partners is should be supported by research that incorporates this facet.

Mutual benefits can be in at several levels:

• *Organisational benefits*: the partnership adds to the credibility of both organisations
• *Managerial benefits*: the partnership makes management easier for both organisations
• *Operational benefits*: the partnership improves the implementation of works and activities for both organisations

Investigating how the partnership can add to effectiveness and efficiency

Assuming the previous hurdles have been met, the following phase is to utilise the research and investigate how the partnership can add to the effectiveness and efficiency of the partner organisation and Namoi CMA.

The criteria to assess effectiveness are:

• Achievement of goals
• Shared power and responsibility
• Enhancing each other’s image
• Sufficient resources to empower collaborative and adaptive governance

This is done by building the relationship between partners through:

• Building networks that strengthen the relationships of staff in the partnering organisations as well as those to individuals in relevant outside organisations
• Good communication between staff in the partnership
• Staff in the partnership learning from each other
• The organisations in the partnership share values about how to work together
• Staff in the organisations being open about their intent
• Individuals in the partnership having high levels of motivation for the partnership
• Individuals in the partnership having realistic expectations of each other (legal authority, time, skills and resources)
• Agreement on roles and functions of staff

Making the partnership cost effective is assessed by the partnership’s ability to:

• Expand the range of delivery methods
• Maximise reach and impact
• Increase the scope of target audience
• Improve the value to stakeholder base
• Impact on risk to organisation and stakeholders
• Stakeholder engagement and involvement
• Remain attractive to stakeholders for achieving outcomes
• Comparative advantage of partner relative to other organisations

This is incorporated into the appropriate checklists and toolbox adjunct to the partnership strategy.

Deciding on the type of partnership

There are several types of partnership and at times, one partnership may use all four types. For example, some activities of the partnership may be informal networking and other activities may be governed by formal contracts. The types of partnerships are:

• **Networking partnerships.** These can be usefully developed around information sharing, training and communication
• **Coordinating partnerships** might be developed where a partner agency is carrying out their own activities but these activities align with the Namoi CMA’s objectives. The Namoi CMA might provide staff time, expertise, or other resources (i.e. information) and would provide access to decision makers via Steering Committee structures or other similar arrangements.
• **Cooperating partnerships** define how the Namoi CMA might work with other organisations to jointly develop, fund and implement projects that align with both the Namoi CMA’s objectives and the partner’s objectives
• **Collaboration partnerships** are the Namoi CMA contracts a partner to undertake a specific piece of work or task that has been identified by either the Namoi CMA or the partner. These partnerships are usually governed by contracts.

The type will determine the level of involvement of the partners, for example, networking involves a lower commitment than collaborating. The partnership strategy should include how the type of partnership is chosen, or the preferred types of partnerships for different activities. Again, this could be graphically represented on the Scale of Partnerships figure.

Developing a partnership plan

The partnership strategy should go beyond selecting partners and identifying mutually beneficial activities, and include plans to implement and undertake partnerships. This begins with developing a partnership plan in consort with the target organisation.

The steps to develop a plan are:

• Develop the partnership’s vision for the future of its partnering arrangements
• Develop objectives for the partnership
• Develop operating procedures such as:
  o Making better use of partnerships in the delivery of services
  o Ensuring the organisation’s effective response to the demands and opportunities presented by partnership arrangements and collaboration with stakeholders
  o Establishing effective methods and processes to represent the organisation with other local, regional, state and federal agencies (Harlow Council 2005).
The partnership plan should incorporate the monitoring, evaluation and adaptive management of the partnership. This will reflect the nature of managing relationships as opposed to contracts, in terms of pre-empting any issues by having a clear understanding of what is expected, appropriate mechanisms for communication, etc.

**Monitoring, Evaluation and Adaptive Management of Partnerships**

The partnership strategy, plans, and implementation thereof should be incorporated into other project and relationship management tools. Where possible, this is expected to align with the Monitoring Evaluation Reporting and Improvement Framework of Namoi CMA. Specifically, a good strategy will include components of reporting and monitoring, as well as reflecting and adapting.

Prior to focusing on any individual partnership, a partnership strategy may wish to incorporate considerations to what and how peers are implementing their partnership strategy. This should consider:

- What other CMAs are doing
- What can be learned from other partnerships programs
- How the Namoi CMA’s partnership program compares with other CMAs and NRM bodies partnerships program

At the partnership level, the first question to be answered is whether the partnership is still an option or are direct delivery methods now more efficient. The framework to make this decision is included in the section on tools and techniques below but in essence this revolves around answering the following questions:

- What are the costs of the partnership and do they outweigh the effectiveness?
- What are the strengths of partnerships?
- What are strengths of direct Methods
- Are there other considerations, such as what can be learned from what others are doing?

Once a partnership has been established, the Namoi CMA will evaluate its effectiveness, efficiency and appropriateness on a regular basis using some or all of the following criteria:

- Achievement of outcomes for both partners
- Expansion of the range of delivery methods
- Maximisation of the reach and impact
- Increase in the scope of target audience
- Improvement of the value to stakeholder base
- Impact on risk to organisation and stakeholders
- Engagement and involvement of stakeholders
- Remains attractive to stakeholders for achieving outcomes
- Remains a comparative advantage

In addition to an output focused monitoring and evaluation strategy, there is clear value in considering the partnership processes as well. Like any relationship, the partnership strategy’s monitoring and evaluation component should include consideration for:

- Quality of communication
- Effectiveness of meetings
- Governance arrangements
- Clear expectations
- Shared approach.
Checklists, Tools and Techniques

This section includes the following checklists, tools and techniques for use in conjunction with the partnership strategy:

- Checklist for assessing partners
- Checklist for strengthening existing partnerships
- Tool for adaptively managing partnership
- Framework for deciding if a partnership is still viable.

This has been developed from the literature and key stakeholder interviews, and is expected to be modified by internal stakeholders and used with the partnership strategy. This is not anticipated to form part of the external document.

Checklist for assessing new partners

Have you considered during the assessment of new partners:

- Do the partners have complementary values to Namoi CMA
- Are the principles of the organisations complementary
- Are the partners strategically aligned with Namoi CMA (or could they be)
- Are the activities of the potential new partner within the range of what Namoi CMA is or would like to be doing (or could they be)
- Are there mutual benefits:
  - Organisational benefits (i.e. credibility)
  - Managerial benefits (i.e. ease of implementation)
  - Operational benefits (i.e. works and activities)
- Has consideration been provided to how the partnership will add value to the effectiveness and efficiency of meeting Namoi CMA’s objectives:
  - Expand the range of delivery methods
  - Maximise reach and impact
  - Increase the scope of target audience
  - Improve the value to stakeholder base
  - Impact on risk to organisation and stakeholders
  - Stakeholder engagement and involvement
  - Remain attractive to stakeholders for achieving outcomes
  - Comparative advantage of partner relative to other organisations, or
  - Ability to move the partner to achieve objectives in the future
- Does the type of partnership being embarked upon reflect the nature of the relationship sought:
  - Networking partnership
  - Coordinating partnership
  - Cooperating partnership
  - Collaboration partnership
- Are appropriate management processes able to be implemented:
  - Building on networks
  - Good communication
  - Cooperative staff learning
  - Honesty and trust
  - High levels of motivation
  - Realistic expectations
  - Agreement on roles and responsibilities
## Checklist for strengthening existing partners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expected outcomes of partnership</th>
<th>Partnership effective to achieve outcome (1= not effective; 5= very effective)</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Achieve outcomes for both partners</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expand the range of delivery methods</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximise reach and impact</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase the scope of target audience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve the value to stakeholder base</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact on risk to organisation and stakeholders</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engage and involve stakeholders</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remain attractive to stakeholders to achieving outcomes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use each other’s comparative advantage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management of relationship</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Checklist for Strengthening Existing Partners
## Using Partnerships

### Level of Support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Roles and responsibilities</th>
<th>CEO</th>
<th>Managers</th>
<th>Project officers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support the idea and later, its implementation</td>
<td>Set up the partnership and maintain it</td>
<td>Implement the partnership through projects, events and activities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Indicators of success

- Determined within the Partnership Plan and initial meetings. *This will vary according to each partnership based on the expected outcomes.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality of communication</th>
<th>CEO</th>
<th>Managers</th>
<th>Project officers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partners promote the partnership</td>
<td>Managers have a trusting relationship and can rely on goodwill</td>
<td>Officers implement the partnership positively and raise any issues relating to it are relayed to managers quickly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effectiveness of meetings</th>
<th>CEO</th>
<th>Managers</th>
<th>Project officers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Managers contribute to each other's planning and implementation meetings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Governance arrangements</th>
<th>CEO</th>
<th>Managers</th>
<th>Project officers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Process are transparent, conveyed and written</td>
<td>Managers find arrangements easy to administer. Managers know the governance arrangements</td>
<td>Implementation officers find arrangements easy to implement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clear expectations</th>
<th>CEO</th>
<th>Managers</th>
<th>Project officers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partners agree and share expectations</td>
<td>Expectations of the partnership are realistic</td>
<td>Expectations of the partnership fit with current activities. Implementation staff and recognised for their role in keeping the partnership healthy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shared approach</th>
<th>CEO</th>
<th>Managers</th>
<th>Project officers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partners agree on a shared approach</td>
<td>Managers have a shared approach</td>
<td>Implementation officers have a shared approach</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Achievement of Namoi CMA outcomes</th>
<th>CEO</th>
<th>Managers</th>
<th>Project officers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The partnership continues to support the Investment plans</td>
<td>Processes are in place to ensure projects and activities react to the investment plan and monitoring data are collected.</td>
<td>Monitoring data are collected about biophysical change</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7: Tool for Adaptive Management
Framework for assessing partnerships vs direct delivery

Framework for analysis-comparison of Partnerships to Alternative Delivery Methods

- Cost Effective Analysis of Partnerships
  - What are the costs for partnerships to achieve the outcomes (including transaction costs, such as bargaining, negotiations, etc)?
  - How well have partnerships achieved those outcomes? (i.e. benefits/effects)
  - What alternative methods are there for achieving those outcomes?
  - What are the costs of those alternative methods to achieve those outcomes?
  - What are the potential benefits/effects of those alternative methods?
  - Which method can most effectively and efficiently achieve the outcomes desired?

- What are the strengths of partnerships?
  - Ability to expand capacity of existing methodologies (i.e. appropriateness of products and services offered by Namoi CMA)
  - Ability to expand the range of delivery methods used by Namoi CMA (i.e. appropriateness of new products and services)
  - Maximising reach and impact (i.e. improving efficiency of existing resources (leveraging))
  - Increasing scope of target audience (i.e. effectiveness in reaching Cotton industry)
  - Improving value to stakeholder base (i.e. efficiency and value adding)
  - Achieve cost effective on-ground outcomes across a large diverse area
  - Develop and enhance relationships with the communities
  - Ability to identify priorities at grass roots level
  - Able to better identify and capitalise on funding opportunities
  - Provide a conduit for development of a voice for community
  - Dedicate resources on a whole of region basis
  - Marketing, communication and other expertise

- What are strengths of Direct Methods
  - Fewer transaction costs (i.e. no search, negotiation, bargaining, information, communication, etc costs)
  - Immediate alignment of objectives without the need for consideration of mutual interests

- Other considerations
  - What are other CMAs doing?
  - What can be learned from other partnerships programs by CMAs?
  - How does Namoi CMA’s partnership program compare with other the effectiveness, efficiency and appropriateness of other CMAs and NRM bodies partnerships program?
SECTION VI – APPENDICES

References


Centre for Agricultural and Resource Economics (2008). *The Socio-Economic Impact of Cotton on Cotton Catchment Communities in NSW and QLD*. Project 3.01.02, Information Paper, Armidale, NSW.


Namoi Catchment Management Authority (2007). *Partnership Policy*. Tamworth, NSW.


Workshop Agendas and Questionnaires

Questionnaire – Namoi CMA and Cotton CRC Staff

Introduction
Roberts Evaluation is undertaking a review of the Namoi CMA and Cotton CRC partnership as part of a broader review of partnerships for Namoi CMA. This project has three objectives:

- Evaluation of partnership between Namoi CMA and Cotton CRC
  - Including recommendations on how to improve the partnership and comparisons of the partnership with other direct delivery methods
- Formulate a strategy for partnership development within Namoi CMA, and
- Incorporate an adaptive management component to existing and future partnerships

This one-on-one interview will provide you with confidentiality as opposed to the open forum workshops, and will enable you to delve more deeply into the tasks and issues that affect your role directly.

The interview is expected to take around 60 minutes, and we expect that there might be follow up telephone calls to provide further information at a later date.

Questions

Evaluation of partnership [some of this may have already been covered in the workshop]
6. What is your role in Namoi CMA/Cotton CRC?
7. What do you believe is your organisation’s main objective?
8. What makes you think that Namoi CMA and Cotton CRC are suitable partners?
9. Broadly, how effective do you believe the partnership has been in terms of:
   a. Achievement of goals (see schedules)
   b. Indirect benefits
   c. Formation, implementation and evaluation of the partnership (i.e. process management)
   d. Compared to alternative mechanisms of partnership outcomes?
10. Do you feel there has been shared power and responsibility?
11. What contextual issues outside the scope of either organisation has affected the partnership (i.e. movements in agriculture, NRM, etc)
12. Do you feel that there has been a good social relationship between the organisations?
13. How do you think an outsider would perceive the partnership?
14. What recommendations would you make to improving the partnership?

Partnership Strategy [perhaps Namoi CMA staff only]
15. What are the current practices in forming partnerships?
16. How adequate do you think these are?
17. If you were to be involved in designing a partnership strategy for Namoi CMA, what sort of values and principles do you think would be most important?
18. What criteria do you think are necessary for working partnerships?
19. How do you believe existing partnerships could be strengthened?
20. How do you believe new partnerships can be built?
21. Broadly, what do you think are the strengths and weaknesses facing Namoi CMA with partnerships as a method for achieving outcomes?

Adaptive Management

Using Partnerships

Prepared for Namoi CMA
July 2009
22. Do you feel that the partnership is able to adapt and adopt new directions and practices? Is there continuous improvement?
23. From your experiences, how do partnership managers monitor and evaluate situations?
24. What opportunities are there to improve the adaptive practices of partnerships for Namoi CMA?

Final
25. Any other thoughts or issues you think are relevant to Namoi CMA’s partnerships and its relationship with Cotton CRC?
Questionnaire – Cotton Growers

Introduction
Hello my name is ... I am from Roberts Evaluation

Roberts Evaluation has been commissioned by the Cotton CRC and Namoi CMA to carry out a review of their partnership. This review seeks to understand the value of the partnership for the organisations and the growers in incorporating natural resource management as part of best management practice for cotton growers.

We would like to talk to you about your involvement with the Cotton CRC and your understanding of the partnership. Your comments will remain confidential and you will not be identified in any report. This interview should take about 15 minutes. Are you happy to proceed? Is now a good time to talk to you or when should I call back?

Questions

Background Information
1. What is your role on farm?
2. Can you briefly describe your farming operation? (i.e. cotton growing, irrigation, size, etc)
3. Do you belong to any landholder groups? (i.e. Landcare) What are they?

Understanding of Organisations
4. Can you briefly describe your knowledge of the Cotton Catchment Communities Cooperative Research Centre?
5. How relevant do you think the organisation is to your operations?
6. Can you briefly describe your knowledge of the Namoi Catchment Management Authority?
7. How relevant do you think the organisation is to your operations?

Knowledge of Partnership
8. Prior to this review, were you aware that Cotton CRC and Namoi CMA were in partnership?
   a. If yes, How did you hear about this partnership?
   b. What was your understanding of their partnership?
9. Do you think the organisations are suitable partners? Why, why not?

Involvement in Programs
10. Have you been involved with the Best Management Practice workshops?
   If yes:
      a. Were you aware that this was part of a partnership with Namoi CMA and Cotton CRC?
      b. Have you adopted any of the Best Management Practices?
         i. If Yes: What were they? How did the workshop and program contribute to these changes?
         ii. If No: What barriers are there preventing you from adopting best management practices?
      c. Have you noticed your neighbours adopting any Best Management Practices?
      d. Any other comments relating to the workshops?
11. Have you received any incentives for implementing natural resource management projects?
   If yes:
      a. Were you aware that this was part of a partnership with Namoi CMA and Cotton CRC?
      b. What were the incentives for? [prompt if needed]
i. Conservation of native vegetation  
ii. Revegetation of native vegetation  
iii. Building in stream structures to improve riparian health  
iv. Revegetating riparian areas  
v. Conservation of riparian areas  
vi. Improving irrigated land sustainability (i.e. water efficiency, deep drainage)  
c. What have been the most significant changes to your operations as a result of these incentives?  
d. Have you done anything else as a result of these incentives? i.e. other on farm works, encouraged others to do works, etc?  
e. Any other comments relating to the incentives?  
12. Have you been involved with the catchment officer?  
   If yes:  
   a. Were you aware that this was part of a partnership with Namoi CMA and Cotton CRC?  
   b. What was the nature of your involvement?  
      i. Getting information  
      ii. On farm planning  
      iii. Improving water use efficiency  
      iv. Other  
   c. What have been the most significant changes to your operations as a result of your involvement with the catchment officer?  
   d. Any other comments relating to the catchment officer?  
13. Have you been involved with the Water Use Efficiency program?  
   If yes:  
   a. Were you aware that this was part of a partnership with Namoi CMA and Cotton CRC?  
   b. Have you adopted any of the irrigation Best Management Practices?  
      i. If Yes: What were they? How did the workshop and program contribute to these changes?  
      ii. If No: What barriers are there preventing you from adopting improved irrigation practices?  
   c. Have you noticed your neighbours adopting any new irrigation practices?  
   d. Any other comments relating to the water use efficiency program?  

Broader Impacts  
14. To what extent have your networks changed?  
15. Do you know interact directly with Namoi CMA?  
16. What value do you feel has been gained by being involved with the Cotton CRC and Namoi CMA?  

Final  
17. Any other thoughts or issues you think are relevant to Namoi CMA’s partnerships and its relationship with Cotton CRC?  

Thank you for your time and for your comments, they have been most useful. If you wish, you can see a copy of the notes I have taken of the interview and make any comments or amendments. If you have any questions regarding the interview our telephone number is 03-96700745. My manager is Byron Pakula.
Objective

The Namoi Catchment Management Authority (Namoi CMA) entered into a partnership with the Cotton Catchment Communities Cooperative Research Centre (Cotton CRC) in 2005. It was agreed that Namoi CMA would fund the Cotton CRC for $2.4m over 2005-2008 to assist with delivering on a range of the Namoi CMA Management Targets which coincide with the Cotton CRC’s own strategic plan. The projects undertaken within this partnership essentially fell into two main categories: the delivery of on ground works in the cotton growing areas of the catchment and a range of allied activities dealing with facilitation, training, capacity building and education.

The first term of the partnership has come to an end and it is considered timely to review this arrangement. In essence the review focuses on the partnership at three levels:

- A review of the Cotton CRC partnership, its effectiveness and how it can be improved
- Provide more broad review of the Namoi CMA partnership model being employed and how Namoi CMA could best design partnership agreements in the future, and
- The effectiveness of the partnership program to achieve on ground change compared with other approaches

This workshop aims to bring the key stakeholders of Namoi CMA and the Cotton CRC together to discuss the partnership. Specifically, the workshop will consider the design, implementation and effectiveness of outcomes of the partnership, and identify future improvements where possible to achieve improved results for Namoi CMA, Cotton CRC and landholders.

Details

Who: Namoi CMA and Cotton CRC staff
Paula, Bronwyn, Sally, Glenn, Kate & Jane

Where: Namoi CMA, Gunnedah Offices

When: 11am til 3pm, Tuesday 28th of April 2009

Lunch: Lunch will be provided (please respond if you have specific dietary requirements).

Preparation: No specific preparation is required, though bring any documents you believe may be useful for sharing.

Namoi CMA Contact: Bronwyn Witts,
Catchment Coordinator Monitoring and Evaluation
(02)6764 5908, bronwyn.witts@cma.nsw.gov.au

Facilitator: Kate Roberts
Director, Roberts Evaluation
kroberts@robertsevaluation.com.au
(03) 9670 0745

Byron Pakula
Senior Consultant, Roberts Evaluation
bpakula@robertsevaluation.com.au
(03) 9670 0745
**Agenda & Questions for Consideration**

**11:00AM - Introduction**

Introduce ourselves to each other, and provide background information to the partnership and the review that is taking place. The agenda and objectives of the workshop will be discussed here.

**11:20AM – Session 1**

Session one will consider the designing of the partnership between Namoi CMA and the Cotton CRC, focusing on the objectives of the five schedules and the two organisations. It is expected that this session will discuss the comparative advantage of the partnership (as opposed to alternatives), and begin discussing the characteristics of the organisations and the partnerships such as design and implementation factors.

**12:45PM – Lunch (30 min)**

To be provided for all participants. Please identify any special dietary needs you may have. It is expected that a break will be taken during this period.

**1:15PM – Session 2**

This session will include a discussion on the effectiveness of outcomes for Namoi CMA and the Cotton CRC relative to the objectives and the adaptive management of the partnership. Finally, we will discuss the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threat.

**2:45PM – Final Thoughts**

Opportunity to discuss any final thoughts and recap what has been discussed.

**3:00PM – End of Workshop**

For the Cotton CRC staff based in Narrabri, please allocate time for one-on-one after the workshop. Thank you!
Site Visit – Agenda

This agenda was used in planning, though was considered flexible during the field trip. The actual agenda included site visit to Narrabri on Wednesday 29th of April to interview Cotton CRC staff, while the afternoon on the Tuesday 28th of April was used for interviewing Namoi CMA staff.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6:00-9:25AM</td>
<td>Melbourne-Sydney/Sydney-Tamworth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:30-10:30AM</td>
<td>Travel to Gunnedah with Bronwyn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00-3:00PM</td>
<td>Workshop with Namoi CMA &amp; Cotton CRC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:00-5:00PM</td>
<td>Interviews with Cotton CRC (Paula, Letitia, Phillip &amp; Kate, Jane)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:00-6:00PM</td>
<td>Return to Tamworth with Bronwyn</td>
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</table>

Tuesday 28th of April 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9:00-11:30AM</td>
<td>Interviews with Namoi CMA (Bronwyn, Sally, Glenn)</td>
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</table>

Wednesday 29th of April 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11:30-1:30PM</td>
<td>Travel and lunch as required.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:30-2:30PM</td>
<td>Program Logic Workshop (Glenn, Paula, Sally, Bronwyn)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Alternatively, this can be swapped with the Program Logic on the following day if Glenn, Paula or Sally not available.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2:30-4:00PM</td>
<td>Available as required.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:00-5:00PM</td>
<td>Travel to Airport (may require time from Gunnedah, depending on location)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:05PM-8:30PM</td>
<td>Tamworth-Sydney/Sydney-Melbourne</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>