

Call for Expressions of Interest

Project T7-A5: Measuring success for fire and rescue services – March 2025

Expressions of Interest due 5:00pm AEST, **17 April 2025**
to research@naturalhazards.com.au

Overview

Natural Hazards Research Australia (hereafter the Centre) is seeking Expressions of Interest from project teams for the following project:

T7-A5 Measuring success for fire and rescue services

Please note, this project was previously opened for Expressions of Interest (EOI) in December 2024. The project was not awarded at that time. This current call for EOI for this project has since been revised and contains the following changes: the addition of new mandatory evaluation criteria and an increased maximum budget.

Project description	<p>Fire and rescue services have for many years measured their performance against internal or external benchmarks. The emergency management section of the Report on Government Services by the Productivity Commission sets out an outcomes framework for fires that includes some outcomes-based performance measures and fire and rescue services have also developed outcomes-based reporting frameworks in recent years. There is, however, limited evidence-based contemporary analysis to help inform, monitor and evaluate the value and impact of service delivery of fire and rescue agencies. Many measures used in Australia remain output-related rather than outcome-based, relate to fire suppression to the exclusion of other functions of contemporary fire and rescue services and focus on response times as a measure of success with limited understanding of how that translates into successful outcomes for the community.</p> <p>This project aims to identify evidence-based measures that will support fire and rescue services to create their own performance frameworks based on objective criteria and support continuous improvement of policy and regulatory settings and short- and long-term business planning. The objective of the project is to determine relevant, meaningful measures that effectively demonstrate the value and benefit of the services delivered to the community and could enable national comparisons between organisations based on consistent criteria.</p>
Estimated duration	12 months
Budget	<p>The maximum budget for this project is \$300,000 (ex GST)</p> <p>(The research team should note that this is a competitive process and Expression of Interest submissions will be assessed on value for money and justification for any funds requested)</p>
Related national research priorities¹	<p>Communities and workforces of the future</p> <p>Evidence-informed policy, strategy and foresight</p> <p>Operational response and innovation</p>
Related Centre research priorities for 2023-25²	<p>Understanding and mitigating risk</p> <p>Next generation capability</p>

1 Natural Hazards Research Australia (2022) **National research priorities for disaster risk reduction and community resilience to the impacts of natural hazards**, accessible at www.naturalhazards.com.au/sites/default/files/2022-05/NatHazResAus_ResearchPriorities_FA02.pdf

2 Natural Hazards Research Australia (2023) **Biennial Research Plan 2023–25**, accessible at www.naturalhazards.com.au/sites/default/files/2023-06/Biennial%20Research%20Plan%202023%E2%80%9325_final.pdf

Supporting organisations

Fire Rescue Victoria
South Australian Metropolitan Fire Service
Fire and Rescue New South Wales
Fire and Emergency New Zealand
Northern Territory Fire and Rescue Service
Queensland Fire Department
Bushfires NT
Forest Fire Management Victoria

Centre contact

For any questions regarding this Call for EOI, please email research@naturalhazards.com.au.

Recorded project briefing

All applicants are required to view the recorded project briefing available for viewing on the project webpage

Submission of EOI

EOIs must be prepared using the [Centre's EOI submission form](#) and [Budget Template](#). EOIs are to be submitted to research@naturalhazards.com.au by **5:00pm AEST, 17 April 2025**

Statement of requirements

Background and context

Please note, this project was previously opened for Expressions of Interest (EOI) in December 2024. The project was not awarded at that time. This current call for EOI for this project has since been revised and contains the following changes: the addition of new mandatory evaluation criteria and an increased maximum budget.

Analysis of the service delivery of fire and emergency response agencies and the impact of programs and initiatives that support building resilience within the community, is critical for achieving the intended outcomes of global and national disaster risk reduction strategies and plans.

Emergency response agencies in Australia are guided by the National Emergency Management Agency's (NEMA) strategy documents **National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework (DRR Framework)** and **The Second National Action Plan to implement the DRR Framework**³. These were developed to address the **United Nations Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030**⁴.

These strategic documents serve as guides for developing policies and procedures at state and agency levels, including fire services for developing strategies on risk reduction, preparedness, response and recovery processes related to specific hazards and disaster events. Although the importance of monitoring and evaluation is acknowledged in the DRR Framework, the **Disaster Risk Reduction in Australia Status Report 2020**⁵ identifies a lack of appropriate evidence-based information (performance measurements) to be a gap in disaster governance which contributes towards problems in prioritising funding of diverse hazard mitigation activities. Development of an evaluative evidence-based monitoring system can address this gap.⁶

Similarities between the recommendations in the **Royal Commission Report on the 2009 Victorian Bushfires**⁷ and the opportunities for improvements identified in the **Final Report of the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements**⁸ reinforce the need for further research to inform performance measurement frameworks for fire and emergency response agencies. Both these reports highlight the need for assurance and monitoring and illustrate the importance of ongoing learning and continuous improvement. They also contain common themes such as evacuation and information and warnings, that indicate the recurring nature of issues in emergencies and the need for methods to measure improvement to address public and government expectations of fire and emergency services.

3 <https://nema.gov.au/about-us/policies/strategies-and-frameworks/disaster-risk-reduction>

4 <https://www.undrr.org/publication/sendai-framework-disaster-risk-reduction-2015-2030>

5 UNDRR (2020). Disaster Risk Reduction in Australia: Status Report 2020. United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific. Available at <https://www.undrr.org/publication/disaster-risk-reduction-australia-status-report-2020>

6 Gissing, A. (2017). Disaster Risk Management: Australian Challenges. Asia Pacific Fire, 3. Available at <https://apfmag.com/disaster-risk-management-australian-challenges/>

7 <http://royalcommission.vic.gov.au/Commission-Reports/Final-Report/Volume-2/Print-Friendly-Version.html>

8 <https://www.royalcommission.gov.au/natural-disasters>

Regarding public and government expectations, the Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council (AFAC) produced a discussion paper in 2014 on what constitutes operational success for fire and emergency services in response to a series of major disasters and subsequent inquiries across 2003-2014. It noted that “the question of ‘operational success’ for FES (fire and emergency services) usually arises most acutely in the aftermath of a major incident” and that a lack of clear objectives and measures for success to guide post-event reviews was a concern for the sector:

The real issue for agencies is what is the basis on which post-event judgement is made and how can the sector be heard when often individual agencies are silenced soon after disaster events owing to government legal or liability concerns, together with a lack of agreed standards to refer to. AFAC analysis of public inquiries suggests that there is no consistent benchmark used to determine operational success and concerns arise in some instances regarding balanced reporting based on evidence. There is a natural concern that if agencies are going to be judged, they should understand the likely criteria or be able to influence balanced commentary.⁹

Similarly, in a 2014 study that examined chief officer views of success, Eburn and Dovers noted that there are no clear measures of success and that “There is no assumption that there should, or could, be a single measure of success when reviewing the response to a natural hazard. What constitutes success is contested and each potential measure is not without its difficulties”¹⁰. They argued that “It falls on agencies and their political leaders to engage with stakeholders to identify and explain what they see as success and failure. If communities and individuals better understand what they can expect from emergency services organisations, they can make a more informed judgement on what they need to do to protect themselves” (p.20).

Measuring the performance of fire and rescue services

Within the Australian and New Zealand fire and emergency service landscape, fire and rescue services are traditionally associated with response to fires and other emergencies in the built environment. Taking Fire Rescue Victoria as an example, most of the geographical area for which it has responsibility is urban or suburban in character. Even in this context, however, structural firefighting makes up a minority of agency activity: in 2022-23 Fire Rescue Victoria attended 45% more non-structure fires than structure fires and more ‘other incidents’ than structure fires and non-structure fires combined.¹¹

Fire and rescue services typically deliver multiple technical and specialist emergency services in response to a range of hazards, including natural hazards, across the states and territories in which they operate. These include, but are not limited to, hazardous materials response, emergency medical response, swift water rescue, line rescue and disaster assistance response (sometimes referred to as urban search and rescue). Delivery of these services is not limited to the built environment and many fire and rescue services have statewide responsibility for the management of specified hazards.

9 AFAC (2014) What is operational success for fire and emergency services? Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council: Melbourne, p5. Available at <https://www.afac.com.au/docs/default-source/doctrine/what-is-operational-success.pdf?sfvrsn=20&download=true>

10 Eburn, M. and Dovers, S. (2014) How chief officers view success in fire policy and management. Australian Journal of Emergency Management, 29 (3), p.20. Available at <https://ajem.infoservices.com.au/items/AJEM-29-03-06>

11 FRV (2023) Annual Report 2022-23, Fire Rescue Victoria, p22. Available at <https://www.frv.vic.gov.au/publications>

In addition to response services, fire and rescue services promote fire safety and must identify and assess the whole spectrum of foreseeable fire and rescue risks their community faces. As well as providing response, these services work to increase community awareness of fire safety and to foster fire safety behaviours and practices that will reduce the number of emergency events that require emergency response. The function of fire and rescue services in fire prevention and protection programmes, including assessing compliance with building codes, dangerous goods legislation and fire safety laws and regulations, is also included in this function of prevention and mitigation.

Fire and rescue services have for many years measured their performance against internal or external benchmarks. The emergency management section of the Report on Government Services (RoGS) by the Australian Productivity Commission sets out an outcomes framework for fire events that includes some outcomes-based performance measures¹² and fire and rescue services including FRV have also developed outcomes-based reporting frameworks in recent years.¹³ There is limited evidence-based contemporary analysis to help inform, monitor and evaluate the value and impact of service delivery of fire and rescue agencies. Many measures used in Australia remain output-related rather than outcome-based and there has historically been a focus on response times as a measure of success for fire and rescue services with a limited understanding of how that translates into successful outcomes for the community.

Project description

This Call for Expressions of Interest is based on a project concept submitted to Natural Hazards Research Australia by Fire Rescue Victoria, supported by South Australian Metropolitan Fire Service; Fire and Rescue New South Wales; Fire and Emergency New Zealand; Northern Territory Fire and Rescue Service; Bushfires NT; and Forest Fire Management Victoria.

The project aims to identify evidence-based performance measures that will support fire and rescue services to track their performance in a meaningful way and feed into continuous improvement of policy and regulatory settings and short- and long-term business planning. The objective of the project is to determine relevant, meaningful measures that effectively demonstrate the value and benefit of the services delivered to the community. It will consider a range of questions, including:

- what it is that the government and the public value from fire and rescue services and expect to get out of them

- how fire and rescue services internationally and nationally go about measuring and reporting on the value they bring

- how fire and rescue services have used the recommendations of reviews and inquiries to identify measures of value.

This project will build an evidence base and guidance to support fire and rescue services to develop and refine their performance measurement by:

- Reviewing how success is, or can be, determined for fire and rescue services, including through organisational strategic goal setting, government policymaking and reporting, post-event inquiries, legislation, research, public media and public sentiment.

- Synthesising current practice in performance measurement and reporting and identifying good practice case studies, considering other sectors and countries as well as Australian emergency management. This should include consideration of outcomes-based approaches to performance measurement and reporting.

¹² <https://www.pc.gov.au/ongoing/report-on-government-services/2024/emergency-management/emergency-services>

¹³ <https://www.frv.vic.gov.au/outcomes-framework>

Developing an intellectual foundation, principles and guidance to inform meaningful performance measurement frameworks for fire and rescue services in the first instance, with potential application to other fire and emergency services.

Considering how a model performance measurement framework connects with national initiatives, including the Second National Action Plan and assurance activities and the extent to which jurisdictional contributions to national outcomes are reflected in measures of success.

Identifying a range of potential evidence-based performance indicators and measures for use by fire and rescue services that can support the monitoring and reporting of tangible impacts and benefits of service delivery, projects and strategies in the built and natural environments, taking the different ways that the success can be determined into consideration. Valid connections between the identified measures and performance outcomes should be demonstrated.

Identifying challenges and conditions for using the potential evidence-based performance indicators and measures.

The successful research team will be expected to engage with key stakeholders to inform the project, including fire and rescue services, government departments and the Emergency Management Working Group of the RoGs.

Expected outputs

Core outputs

- Report on how success may be defined for fire and emergency services
- Current practice synthesis and good practice case studies
- Principles and supporting guidance for design and refinement of performance measurement frameworks for fire and rescue services, based on a strong intellectual foundation
- A range of potential evidence-based performance indicators and measures for use by fire and rescue services
- Final report – including identification of future research opportunities
- Stakeholder presentation/s – including sector presentations/briefings
- At least one conference presentation, e.g. at AFAC Conference
- Guidance note for fire and rescue services
- Academic publications in high-ranking international journals
- Please detail other innovative outputs that your team can deliver to address the outcomes below.

Additional outputs

- Project plan and plain language statement
- Quarterly progress reports
- Project evaluation report
- Relevant communications outputs including but not limited to a presentation and a Hazard Note¹⁴

¹⁴ See for example https://www.naturalhazards.com.au/resources/resources?prod_resources%5BrefinementList%5D%5Btype%5D%5B0%5D=Hazard%20Note%20edition

Anticipated outcomes

The outcomes sought from this project are:

- a shared understanding of how societal and governmental expectations of fire and rescue services play out in strategic and policy goal setting and measuring performance towards those goals
- greater national convergence in determining success and measuring the performance of fire and rescue services in the first instance and potentially of wider fire and emergency services in the longer term
- an increase in the public value delivered by fire and rescue services for Australian communities
- increased transparency and intellectual rigour in the way fire and rescue services report performance, with commensurate increased public trust
- greater objectivity in the way that post-event reviews measure the success of fire and emergency services in managing significant emergency events
- higher levels of interoperability between fire and rescue services / fire and emergency services arising from a shared understanding of success factors
- increased Australian contribution to understanding disaster risk reduction progress globally

Quality control and reporting

The project will be overseen and supported by a Project Management Committee (PMC) comprising the Principal Researcher, a Centre representative and at least one stakeholder representative. Composition of the PMC will be determined in consultation with the Principal Researcher.

Reports

The Centre expects that the outputs delivered by this project will meet the highest scientific standards and will be suitable for publication on the Centre website and in industry newsletters, as well as in high-quality scientific journals.

The successful research organisation/s must prepare a project plan and project summary using the Centre's templates. The project summary should explain in plain language what the project is about, what questions it intends to answer and describe the expected practical outputs that will make use of the research findings. The project plan must be approved by the PMC and will become an attachment to the contract.

Reports (and any supporting material) must be submitted to the PMC's satisfaction and will be subject to review by PMC members. The project team will be required to ensure an independent peer review process is undertaken prior to the final report being submitted.

Milestone reporting

The project team must report all milestone deliverables into the Centre's Project Management System. This will include sufficient justification for the completion of milestones to the satisfaction of the PMC and the Centre.

Communication

To further assist with quality assurance, it is expected that:

- regular PMC meetings will be held
-

the project team will use a consultative approach, documented in quarterly reports
the Principal Researcher will give periodic presentations to key stakeholder groups to gain critical feedback on project milestones.

Additional quality control processes may be agreed as part of the project planning process.

Contractual arrangements

A copy of the Research Services Agreement, the proposed form of contract for the purposes of this project, can be [found here](#). The Centre reserves its rights to make amendments to the form of contract.

This contract should be reviewed by applicants as part of the EOI submission.

If you would like to request amendments to any of the terms and conditions set out in the proposed form of contract, details of the proposed changes and the reason the changes are requested must be included in the EOI submission form. Requests for any changes will be at the sole discretion of the Centre.

Selection as a shortlisted or preferred provider does not give rise to a contract (express or implied) between the shortlisted or preferred provider and the Centre for the supply of goods or services. No legal relationship will exist between the Centre and the shortlisted or preferred provider until such time as a binding contract in writing is executed by both parties.

In the case of consortiums, the Centre requests that one consortium member be nominated as Lead Research Provider and take responsibility for subcontracting other parties.

Submitting an Expression of Interest

Application and review process

Project selection and approval will be a two-stage process. The first stage is evaluation of the EOIs that are received. The second stage is development of a project proposal, where a preferred provider will be selected and offered an opportunity to co-develop a detailed project proposal with input from key stakeholders.

Key dates

3 March 2025	Call for EOI opens
17 April 2025	Due date for EOIs
Mid-May 2025	Applicants notified of EOI outcome

Submission requirements for this EOI

Project teams responding to this EOI are required to submit their response using the [Centre's EOI submission form](#) and [Budget Template](#). Submissions must include: a statement of capability (max 600 words), including the proposed contributions of each research team member to the project

a statement (max 400 words) about the diversity of the project team

-
- a statement (max 400 words) about the project's inclusion and respect of First Nations peoples, philosophies, cultures, rights and/or knowledges
 - an outline (max 1000 words) describing how the project team intends to approach the project, strategies for effective collaboration and an indicative methodology
 - an indicative schedule of work and interim milestones/project outputs as described in this document
 - a proposed project budget in line with the budget envelope provided, including details of any in-kind contribution from research organisation/s – a detailed budget to be provided using the downloadable [Budget Template](#) provided on the Centre's website
 - a clear statement (max 400 words) describing the outcomes that will be delivered for this project and how they will be used by stakeholders
 - a clear statement (max 400 words) describing the outputs that the proposed approach to this project will deliver and how the findings could translate into practice
 - a statement (max 500 words) demonstrating the project team's relevant industry and stakeholder engagement
 - a risk management statement (max 500 words)
 - any requested changes to the Centre's proposed form of contract
 - up to two-page CVs for each proposed project team member

Additional information

In responding to this Call for Expressions of Interest, advice should be provided on any known or anticipated impacts of COVID or other pandemic restrictions or human resource risks on the timely delivery of the project. Where appropriate, risk management for the impacts of pandemic restrictions should be incorporated into the EOI.

Frequently asked questions

Additional information provided to individual respondents will also be published on the Centre's website to ensure access to all interested parties. Respondents are encouraged to check the website for any additional information via these published FAQs, prior to the closing date.

Recorded project briefing

All applicants are required to view the recorded project briefing available for viewing on the project webpage. Any questions arising from the briefing should be emailed immediately to research@naturalhazards.com.au.

Please note, two changes have been made to the EOI specifications since this briefing was recorded:

- Addition of two mandatory evaluation criteria
- Increase in the maximum allowable budget to \$300,000.

Submitted EOIs must address the new mandatory evaluation criteria as well as the weighted criteria outlined in the briefing.

Evaluation criteria

After the closing date, the Centre will review submitted EOIs against the evaluation criteria below. The evaluation criteria indicate those matters that should be included in the EOI and supporting material – details are provided in the table below.

The Centre reserves the right not to offer the work, or only allocate a proportion of the available funding, if a proposal does not meet the Centre’s needs. The Centre reserves the right to invite any other specific researchers as it sees fit to submit proposals before or after the closing date.

Mandatory evaluation criteria

Specific research capability: Demonstrated research expertise and/or experience in the field of public governance and management, particularly relating to public performance measurement. Expressions of Interest must clearly explain how this expertise addresses the project requirements outlined here.

Recorded project briefing: Confirmation that the lead applicant has viewed the recorded project briefing.

Weighted evaluation criteria	% weighting
Research capability: the capacity and capability to deliver an excellent research project in an Australian environment	25
Project approach: a demonstrated understanding of the project requirements and a proposed project approach and methodology that is appropriate, feasible and robust Relevant outline of a collaborative approach to assist in the translation and transfer of knowledge to end-users and to ensure the project meets their needs	20
Project outcomes and outputs: demonstrate a high-level understanding of the intentions of the project and how outputs/outcomes translate to practice	20
Industry engagement: strong track record of industry engagement with the ability to support and influence Australian disaster management at a national or state/territory level through interaction with key stakeholders	15
Value for money: delivery of required outcome within available budget along with the ability to leverage the funds provided with in-kind contributions or supplementary opportunities	20
