Regional Collaborative Framework

Enhancing Queensland's local government biosecurity capacity

Queensland Government

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries proudly acknowledges all First Nations peoples (Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders) and the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the country on which we live and work. We acknowledge their continuing connection to land, waters and culture and commit to ongoing reconciliation. We pay our respect to their Elders past, present and emerging.

Cover page:
Behana Gorge, Yidindji Country, Far North Queensland (FNQ Silhouette).
Aurukun, Northern Cape Peninsula, Far North Queensland

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Table of Contents

Regional collaborative framework

Effective ***biosecurity*** practices are critical to ensuring that Queensland, its people, and its environments, are protected from the worst impacts of invasive species. However, this is not something that can be achieved in isolation. Weeds and pest animals do not adhere to local government or state boundaries and similar issues across regions mean that significant benefits can be achieved through working together. This framework is a practical tool to guide regional organisations in establishing collaborative networks for biosecurity planning.

The framework is based on the following principles, established at three levels:

1. Regional context: each region has a set of unique characteristics (landscape, communities and institutions) that will shape the regional partnership model.
2. Regional collaboration: requires a governance model, a regional biosecurity plan and guidelines on how implementation is to occur.
3. Beyond regions: this includes issues that extend beyond regional boundaries, including the relationship with State agencies, and how different regional groups might interact.

The regional collaborative governance framework highlights the need for a multilayered structure to support the engagement and active involvement of stakeholders within different levels of government, and across different industry and community sectors (see Figure 1 below). This will be explained further in the following step-by-step process.

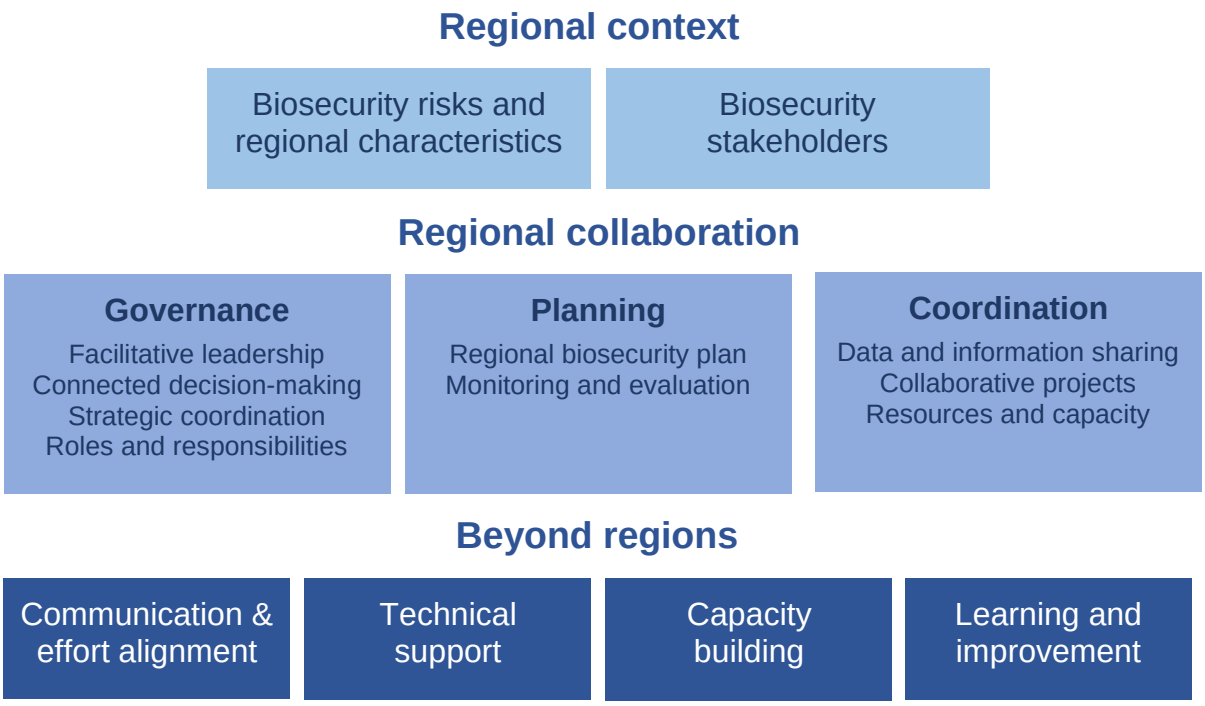

Figure 1. Summary of the collaborative governance framework

Stepping through the framework

Because governance systems need to be fit for purpose, the framework is adaptable. To support its use, the following section highlights critical elements of good collaborative practice and leads users through the process of establishing a collaborative partnership by posing key questions for consideration and action.

Regional context

Step 1 – Consider biosecurity risks and regional characteristics

Q: What are the biosecurity risks and regional characteristics that are important to shape how biosecurity collaboration occurs in this region?

Regional characteristics can inform both the objectives of a collaborative effort, and the region over which the collaboration should occur. These include things like:

- Size and population of the region
- Major land uses: grazing, conservation, intensive agriculture, mining, urban peri-urban and rural, utilities and transport corridors
- Social, economic and environmental values and assets
- Biosecurity risks, including transport corridors and any special cases e.g. major ports, NQ proximity to PNG/Asia.

Consider the commonalities that might drive a collaborative effort and whether regional characteristics can inform which local government areas should work together.

Step 2 – Identify relevant biosecurity stakeholders, considering influence and capacity

Q: What institutions are important for regional biosecurity collaboration and how are other stakeholders connected?

Based on the outcomes of step 1, use the suggested stakeholder list and ranking system in Appendix 1 to further develop and refine your stakeholder list.

The level of relevance each group has to the key biosecurity issues you expect to address, the influence they might have, the level of interest they have shown in engaging and their capacity to contribute are all important considerations when determining what level of engagement is suitable.

Remember, collaborations benefit from broad membership, spanning management levels (operations to CEO) and incorporating all key stakeholders with relevant levels of involvement.

Depending on the size of the project, this could include a core membership of true collaborators (with equal decision-making rights), supported by a network of individuals/groups engaged to provide technical support and advice.

When considering which groups should be core collaborative partners, the following '*starting conditions*' are important to support effective collaborations:

- Similar power, resource and knowledge conditions across partners. If this is not possible, differences must be formally accepted and valued.
- Good incentives for, and few constraints on participation. This should include clear mutual benefits associated with the outcomes of the collaborative effort.
- A history of collaboration and cooperation between partners, with little conflict. This is beneficial, but not essential, as long as the new partnership is established with the right frameworks and agreements to support the development of trust.

Regional collaboration (governance)

Step 3 – Establish facilitative leadership processes and clear guidelines for engagement

Q: How can governance systems be established to support the growth of trust-based relationships through open and inclusive communication and decision-making?

Communication and decision-making within the group must avoid hierarchies and promote a culture of trust and respect through equality and transparency in decision-making. Facilitative leadership can support this via:

- Empowerment through assisted negotiation – supporting mutual and consensus-oriented decision making.
- Promotion of learning and innovation across the group.
- Providing support for adaptability of collaborative processes i.e. adaptive learning and flexibility to respond to new challenges, changing conditions and/or changing membership.

Agreed engagement processes should also support inclusiveness through active and equal participation between at least the core collaborators but extending as far as reasonably possible to others supporting the collaboration.

Jointly establishing (and formally recording) guidelines/rules of engagement can form an important foundation. These could include:

- A clear articulation of why there is the need for partnership and what will be gained.
- The scope and objectives of the collaboration and ground-rules for how decisions are to be made.
- Acceptance that the collaboration is an open forum to share, learn and innovate.
- Acceptance of everyone in the group as equal, with valuable information to share.
- Systems that support transparency and equal participation in decision making.
- Guidelines on how joint activities should be conducted.

Step 4 – Establish processes for connected decision-making

Q: How are different levels of decision-makers engaged?

Decision-making should be connected across different levels to effectively connect operational activities to higher-level decision makers. This includes across the organisational levels of the core collaborators (operations to mayors, CEOs, senior management) and to other decision makers in groups that may be expected to contribute to or advise on key outcomes, such as State agencies or key industry bodies.

Effective connections enable two-way communication about:

- Regional priorities
- Technical information
- Lessons learnt
- Emerging opportunities and risks
- Resource implications.

Establish and record agreed processes that support two-way communication and transparent decision-making.

Step 5 – Establish strategic coordination objectives

Q: What biosecurity matters are best addressed at the regional level?

In conjunction with core collaborators and key advisers, establish the objectives that will be addressed by the collaboration. The following information and principles should be considered:

- Regional characteristics (step 1).
- There must be a shared understanding and mutual benefit of objectives and proposed outcomes for all collaborators.
- Work must complement what is occurring at the local government scale.
- Commitment to and ownership of collaborative processes at all levels of participating organisations (senior management as well as operational staff).
- Perceived benefits must outweigh the costs.
- Address issues that are common across local government regions, which will support better decision making or are hard to resource individually e.g.:
    - Projects requiring spatial coordination e.g. surveillance and response actions.
    - Projects that can deliver more efficiently at the regional scale e.g. communications, monitoring and evaluation, industry engagement.
    - Projects that make best use of collective skills and resources in the region e.g. particular control techniques.

Step 6 – Clearly define roles and responsibilities

Q: How will regional biosecurity partnerships work?

The governance documents that support the collaboration should provide clarity about the roles and responsibilities of different partners and how they work together. This could be included in a Terms of Reference and protocols about decision-making that are transparent, and evidence based.

Regional collaboration (planning)

Step 7 – Develop a regional biosecurity plan

Q: What are the regional priorities and how will they be addressed?

The regional collaboration should develop and maintain a regional biosecurity plan based on the strategic coordination objectives established in Step 5. The regional biosecurity plan is central to coordinated regional biosecurity action. The regional plan should identify priority biosecurity risks, and articulate strategies and actions to address those risks.

It is important to include intermediate outcomes that can be used to assess progress toward objectives and support adaptive management (if things aren't going to plan). These smaller wins can also bolster on-going commitment to the collaboration. A formal Program Logic Model can support the establishment of appropriate intermediate objectives and provide evidence that actions being undertaken are likely to lead to the expected outcome(s). This model was used successfully with the Queensland Feral Pest Initiative (QFPI) grant scheme.

Step 8 – Monitoring and evaluation

Q: How will you know if the plan is being implemented and achieving its objectives?

The regional biosecurity plan should include a monitoring and evaluation strategy and actions to track the plan's implementation and the effectiveness and impact of actions taken. The monitoring and evaluation strategy may include:

- Evaluation of high-priority regional projects
- Evaluation of landholder engagement and communication activities
- Building monitoring and evaluation capacity of members
- Periodic review of the regional collaboration.

The monitoring and evaluation should be appropriate to the scale and complexity of activities (i.e., not overly complex, or onerous, but sufficient to support learning and improvement).

Q: How will you know if your collaborative processes are working?

Collaborative outcomes can be assessed based on:

- Quality of collaborative products. These can be of high quality if:
  - Goals and objectives are specific
  - Plans document and explain the collaborative approach and process
  - Plans and strategies are supported by a high-quality knowledge base and/or a system for further research and information gathering
  - Strategies that are resourced, with clearly delineated responsibilities for actions to achieve agreed upon goals.
- Sustainability of collaborative initiatives, which is supported by sufficient funds, staff materials and time, invested over a sufficient period. Other factors include:
  - Effective leadership
  - Stable staffing and participation
  - Technical information, data, and scientific support
  - Ongoing commitment by stakeholder organisations
  - External pressure that encourages ongoing collaboration.

Regional collaboration (coordination)

Step 9 – Establishing governance systems to support data and information sharing

Q: What is the best available data and information for regional biosecurity, and can it be collated and collected collaboratively?

Sharing data and information offers many potential benefits for regional biosecurity management, particularly spatial information about biosecurity risks and responses. Establishing standard protocols for collating, distributing, reporting and analysis of data will allow the regional collaborative group to interpret the information to make well-informed decisions, track progress and plan future objectives.

This is an important task that requires ongoing commitment, including:

- Prioritisation of relevant information
- Establishment of data sharing agreements
- Standardisation of data collection and reporting process (common attributes etc.)
- Protocols and timetables for contributing data
- Access to online spatial information systems and support
- Quality control mechanisms
- Evaluation, review, and reporting of results.

Step 10 – Planning and delivering collaborative projects

Q: What collective priorities can be met through collaborative projects and how will these be delivered?

Implementation of the regional biosecurity plan will involve coordinated and collaborative biosecurity projects. For example:

- Coordinated campaigns and shared communication resources
- Sharing technical resources and materials (e.g., traps)
- Sharing leadership and expertise across regions (e.g., response capabilities, specialised projects such as aerial shooting of pigs)
- Capacity building for land protection officers (e.g., training, mentoring, exchanges).

The resourcing of deliverables needs to be carefully shared among partners as imbalances in contribution can undermine relationships. Where one or more partners have less access to funding or human resources, allowances or alternative inputs need to be carefully negotiated and supported by all partners.

Step 11 – Resources and capacity building

Q: How do regional partnerships improve biosecurity capability?

The potential benefits of regional collaborations are often constrained by the human and financial resources of local governments. As identified earlier, the most successful collaborations benefit from the availability of flexible funding, allowing responsive and proactive activities in the face of new or emerging priorities, but this is uncommon in the invasive plant and animal management sector.

Assess the capacity and resources of the regional collaborative group to identify where the constraints lie and how to alleviate them. Regional facilitators should aim to broker support and resources across government levels and the broader regional network.

Some methods to alleviate identified constraints could include:

- Leveraging existing resources across the network
- Brokering resource and procurement channels across scale and regions
- Developing new funding models (including cost sharing)
- Considering utilising retired or semi-retired experts in biosecurity for their knowledge and experience.

Successful collaborations that engage the support of higher-level decision-makers within and across organisations may be able to negotiate additional funding for joint ventures if there is a strong likelihood of achieving outcomes that are politically/socially favourable.

Beyond regions (communication & effort alignment)

Step 12 – Align and communicate biosecurity operations with those across scales (local, state, national) to support the holistic impact of biosecurity nationwide.

Q: Is there sufficient communication and coordination with biosecurity efforts at other scales?

Consider the bigger scheme of biosecurity efforts, beyond local areas and on broader levels. Localised biosecurity management should be recognised as a vital piece that contributes to the greater state and national biosecurity systems.

Beyond regions (technical support)

Step 13 – Access expertise and technical knowledge to assist regional collaborations with planning and support.

Q: How is the technical quality of regional biosecurity supported?

Regional collaborations offer an opportunity to transfer research, data, technical information, and resources between stakeholders. Those operating in the field can receive the support they need while also providing valuable feedback to relevant organisations.

Beyond regions (capacity building)

Step 14 – Alleviate capacity and capability constraints by accessing wider resources.

Q: Are the human resources available for regional and local biosecurity sufficient?

The combined cross-regional experience, knowledge and skills can help those stakeholders who face greater challenges to overcome constraints. The regional collaborative group could provide support in areas such as:

- Training and workshops
- Equipment and resource sharing arrangements
- Pest management officer/Ranger exchange programs
- Grant writing and future funding application assistance

Beyond regions (learning and improvement)

Step 15 – Sharing experiences and lessons learnt across regions increases the capacity of the broader biosecurity sector to use 'collaboration' as a tool to combat biosecurity threats.

Q: How do regional partnerships learn from each other?

The benefits of collaboration at the regional scale can be enhanced by sharing learnings across regions. Mechanisms to enable this could include:

- Common data and information sharing platforms and approaches
- Shared training, exchanges, and mentoring opportunities
- A cross-regional community of practice to share learnings across the network; and
- An annual or bi-annual forum to bring practitioners together.

Completion

Congratulations to have reached this stage you have now completed stepping through the framework. You are on your way to developing strong, lasting, collaborative partnerships with others.

Appendix 1 – Suggested list of biosecurity stakeholders for engagement/consultation

The following list can be used as a guide to prompt discussion about the relevant stakeholders in your region. Remove those that are not relevant to you and add the additional groups that have been missed from this list.

A suggested rating system for involvement has been provided, based on relevance to invasive pest and animal management, the influence they might have, the level of interest they have shown in engaging and their capacity to contribute to the objectives. These ratings can be added up and provide a guide as to the level of involvement they might want or should have in the regional biosecurity planning process. The levels of involvement could include core collaborators, key advisors, general consultation, communication targets (the categories and levels of engagement should be agreed with key partners).

Organisation/Group	Relevance (1-3)	Influence (1-3)	Interest (1-3)	Capacity (1-3)	Overall rating (sum)	Type of involvement
Local government						
Local governments in the regional grouping – list and rank individually						
Neighbouring LGs (outside the regional grouping) – list and rank individually						
Councilors / management						
LGAQ						
Regional Organisation of Councils (ROCs)						
Regional pest management groups						
Other regional pest management groups – list and rank individually						
Regional NRM Groups						
NRM Regions Queensland						
Burnett Mary Regional Group						

	Cape York NRM						
	Desert Channels Group						
	Fitzroy Basin Association						
	Gulf Savannah NRM						
	Healthy Land and Water						
	NQ Dry Tropics						
	Reef Catchments						
	Southern Gulf NRM						
	Southern Queensland Landscapes						
	Terrain NRM						
	Torres Strait Regional Authority						
State government agencies							
	Biosecurity Queensland- IP&A						
	Biosecurity Queensland IP&A research						
	Department of Agriculture and Fisheries						
	Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service						
	Department of Resources						
	Department of Transport and Main Roads						
	Safe Food						
	Queensland Health						
Commonwealth agencies							

	Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (DAWE)						
	Australian Department of Defense (ADF)						
	Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy (NAQS) – part of DAWE						
	DAWE National Coordinators – wild dogs, feral pigs, feral deer						
	Wet Tropics Management Authority (WTMA)						
	Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA)						
Gov. owned corporations and utility providers							
	Queensland Ports Corporation, including Ports North						
	Plantation Forests managed under lease arrangement by HQPlantations						
	Sunwater						
	SEQWater						
	Powerlink						
	Ergon						
	CS Energy Ltd						
	Energex						
	Stanwell						
	Queensland Rail						

	Tourism Queensland						
	Wet Tropics Management Authority						
	Great Barrier Reef Marine Authority						
	Telstra						
	Optus						
Mining companies							
	BHP						
	Rio Tinto						
	Queensland Gas Corporation						
	Australia Pacific LNG						
	Santos						
Indigenous groups / cultural liaisons							
	Land and Sea Ranger Groups						
	Registered Native Title Body Corporates						
	Traditional owner peak bodies – land trusts or councils						
	Local indigenous communities						
	LGAQ Cultural Liaison Officer						
	Murri network						
Industry and grower groups							

AgForce							
Queensland Farmers Federation							
Nursery and Garden Industry of Queensland							
Pet and Aquarium Association							
Growcom							
Australian Banana Growers Council							
Queensland Dairy farmers Organisation							
Canegrowers							
Queensland Fruit growers Association							
Queensland Horticultural Association							
Sunfish							
Queensland Cane Harvesters Association							
Queensland Grain Harvesters Association							
Cotton Australia							
Meat and Livestock Australia							
Australian Lot Feeders' Association (Peak national body for the Aust Cattle Feedlot Industry) (ALFA)							
Pork Queensland							
Queensland Chicken Growers Association							
Australian Veterinary Association							
Australian Petroleum Production and Exploration Association Ltd							

	Queensland Resources Council						
	Biological Farmers of Australia						
	Fruit and Vegetable Growers						
	Cotton Australia						
	Airport operators						
Professional societies							
	Weed Society of Queensland						
University and research organisations							
	CSIRO (research)						
	Centre for Invasive Species Solutions (research)						
	Relevant universities						
Community / interest groups							
	Landcare groups						
	Catchment groups						
	Greening Australia						
	Bushcare						
	WWF						
	Queensland Conservation Council						
	Sporting Shooters Association Australia						

Australian Pig Doggers and Hunters Association						
Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland						
RSPCA						
Other community						
Pet stores						
Private zoos						
Wildlife parks						
Rural landholders						
Urban landholders						