



**WA Agricultural
Research
Collaboration**

Innovation • Transformation • Growth

WA Agricultural Research Collaboration

Strategic Plan 2025-2026



Acknowledgement Of Country

The WA Agricultural Research Collaboration acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land across this State. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging, and acknowledge the deep connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to the lands and waters. We recognise the ongoing contributions and resilience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Western Australia and commit to working towards reconciliation, respect, and understanding.





Foreword

As we present the inaugural WA Agricultural Research Collaboration (WAARC) Strategic Plan, we acknowledge collaborative efforts of the WAARC Steering Committee that have shaped its development. This document is the product of comprehensive planning and collaboration to ensure WAARC is positioned to support solutions to key challenges and opportunities in the WA agricultural industry. This plan aligns with our long-term goals to enhance the sustainability of WA's agricultural sector.

Agriculture is fundamental to Western Australia's economy, and is expected to grow in importance. WAARC has been established to address the sector's pressing challenges by adopting innovative scientific approaches and fostering strong partnerships. Our goal is to advance agricultural research and development (R&D), enhancing sector growth and competitive advantage.

This plan outlines WAARC's focus areas and strategies to 2026, with the backing of a Memorandum of Understanding from all six member organisations. It also marks a significant milestone with assembly of the WAARC Executive team and the appointment of Program Leads. With this strategic plan as our guide, the WAARC team is poised to support the development of a resilient and innovative agricultural sector in Western Australia, underscored by strategic insight. Our commitment to implementing this strategic plan highlights our dedication to fostering a thriving agricultural landscape, distinguished by pioneering research and strategic growth.



Terry Hill
*Steering Committee
Independent Chair*



Dr Kelly Pearce
WAARC Director



Purpose

Deliver industry impact through collaborative research excellence, capacity building and strategic investment, strengthening Western Australia's agriculture and food sector.

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Vision

Western Australia's agricultural research sector is recognised for its impactful leadership in climate-resilient agricultural production systems, driven by transdisciplinary solutions, industry collaboration, emphasis on capacity building and respectful engagement with Aboriginal knowledge yielding significant benefits.



Values

The following values shape WAARC's culture and guide our behaviours and decisions:

Collaboration

We participate in a culture of teamwork and partnership.

Impact

We drive measurable and positive contributions to Western Australia's society, environment and economy.

Integrity

We uphold ethical principles, honesty and transparency in all endeavours.

Inclusivity

We recognise that diverse perspectives, backgrounds and experiences enrich outcomes.

Openness

We promote sharing of resources, knowledge and findings to advance scientific progress and industry adaptation.

About WAARC

The WA Agricultural Research Collaboration (WAARC) officially commenced its operations in July 2022, as a strategic alliance between the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD), Australia's national science agency CSIRO, Grower Group Alliance, Curtin University, Murdoch University, and The University of Western Australia (UWA).

The formation of WAARC recognises the pivotal role of innovative science in addressing the State's distinctive agricultural challenges and opportunities.

Through strategic alignment with national and international research priorities and active engagement with industry, WAARC ensures that its research initiatives are not only cutting-edge but also directly applicable and impactful to WA.

WAARC's activity is framed by six key research programs to address critical areas of challenge and opportunity. Three programs focus on bolstering agricultural productivity and profitability in a changing climate:

- Northern Agriculture;
- Grains Transformation; and
- Resilient Agricultural Futures.

A further three programs are aimed at nurturing long-term sustainability and growth:

- Agricultural Technologies;
- Aboriginal Science Engagement; and
- Capacity Building and Extension.

WAARC intends for projects to seamlessly traverse these programs fostering collaboration across the six members and a wide range of disciplines, to yield impactful research outcomes.

WAARC is also nurturing future generations of agricultural scientists and leaders through a new Postgraduate Research Scholarship Program, to create a robust talent pipeline that will propel innovation and sustainability in the sector. This program not only offers stipend enhancements for participants but also develops and supports professional growth and networking, laying a strong foundation for their future contributions to agriculture.



PROGRAM 1
Northern
Agriculture



PROGRAM 2
Grains
Transformation



PROGRAM 3
Resilient
Agricultural
Futures



PROGRAM 4
Agricultural
Technologies



PROGRAM 5
Aboriginal
Science
Engagement



PROGRAM 6
Capacity
Building and
Extension

**Bolstering
agricultural
productivity
and profitability
in a changing
climate.**



PROGRAM 1
Northern
Agriculture



Increasing the gross value of production through intensification of agriculture by 2030, focusing on sustainable growth of irrigated agriculture and the northern beef industry.



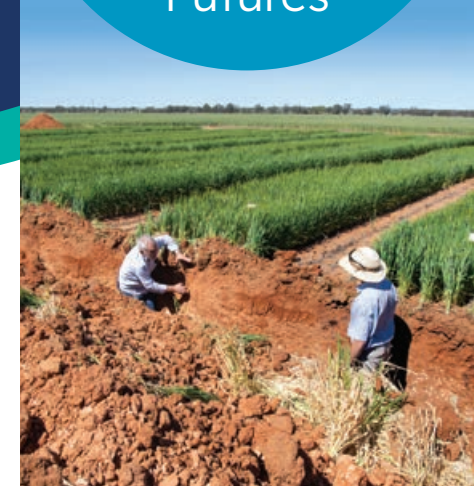
PROGRAM 2
Grains
Transformation



Transforming the WA grains industry to achieve an average 25 million tonne crop per annum by 2035, achieved with 50% decrease in fertiliser, crop protection and fuel input use than 2022.



PROGRAM 3
Resilient
Agricultural
Futures



Working collaboratively to develop innovative solutions for current and future agricultural challenges including climate change, biosecurity, and market dynamics, to advance and strengthen resilience across the agrifood sector.

**Nurturing
long-term
sustainability
and growth.**



PROGRAM 4
Agricultural
Technologies



Driving 20% improvement in margins of the leading 10% of producers by 2035.



PROGRAM 5
Aboriginal
Science
Engagement



Empowering First Nations people through Aboriginal-led agriculture and food production, building community capacity, and fostering scientific innovation aligned with First Nations priorities.



PROGRAM 6
Capacity
Building and
Extension



Support and build WA's capacity in agricultural research and development (knowledge, skills, experience, networks, collaboration, industry-focus, attraction of talent) to drive innovative solutions.

Who we are

We are a collaborative initiative focused on fostering innovation and research within the agricultural sector.

We facilitate industry-led, transformational and collaborative research.



Our members

WAARC's six members include the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD), CSIRO, Grower Group Alliance, Curtin University, Murdoch University, and The University of Western Australia (UWA).

We share a vision and commitment to work together to drive innovation and transformational change for agricultural R&D in Western Australia and beyond.



Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development

DPIRD is a Western Australian government agency that strives to cultivate and preserve WA's agriculture, food industry, and aquatic resources while also building vibrant regional communities with flourishing economies.



CSIRO

As Australia's national science agency, CSIRO solves the greatest challenges through innovative science and technology. Spanning a range of scientific disciplines, CSIRO applies their research to inform policy, develop new industries and evolve existing sectors.



Grower Group Alliance

GGA aims to shape the future of WA agriculture with a producer-led system of innovation, adoption and collaboration. The GGA is a diverse and thriving state-wide network of 89 organisations featuring over 65 local grower groups, and a membership of more than 4000 WA farm enterprises.



Curtin University

Curtin is an innovative, global university known for its high-impact research, strong industry partnerships and commitment to preparing its students for jobs of the future. Curtin welcomes students from all over the world to study at its vibrant, multicultural campus.



Murdoch University

Murdoch is a global centre for learning and discovery through its leading academics, innovative courses and ground-breaking research. It is a place of inclusive education since its inception as the first Australian university to introduce a flexible admissions system, making education more accessible.



The University of WA

UWA is creating the next generation of global leaders through experience-rich education and world-leading, trustworthy research. Students join a community of passionate, intelligent and resourceful leaders who are driving innovation and change.







Funding

The Western Australian Government has demonstrated strong initial support for WAARC through a \$25 million investment over three years from 2022/23 – 2024/25, enhanced by a further \$25 million (cash and in-kind) from WAARC members through to 2026.

This total funding of \$50 million lays a solid foundation for WAARC activities, designed to attract additional investments from external entities, such as industry-based Research and Development Corporations (RDCs).

To access this funding, there is a requirement for a 2:1 leverage ratio, ensuring that every dollar is effectively used to double the impact of the WA Government's \$25 million investment.


The aim of this substantial financial backing is to support critical research, development and extension projects that meet the immediate needs of WA's agricultural sectors, promoting their continuous growth and strengthening their resilience.

Governance

Since its establishment, WAARC has operated under a robust governance framework led by a Steering Committee comprising representatives from each collaboration member.

The Steering Committee has been instrumental in establishing WAARC and overseeing effective decision-making, strategic direction, and accountability. The Committee has shaped WAARC's priorities, reviewed project proposals, ensured efficient resource utilisation, and fostered collaboration and communication among members.

Guided by this inaugural Strategic Plan, WAARC may transition to a new governance structure as it works towards the Business Plan to secure round 2 funding. The new governance structure will align with WAARC's collaborative objectives while meeting the ongoing needs and requirements of its member organisations.



Resourcing

WAARC boasts a small, dynamic and skilled team dedicated to advancing agricultural research and development in WA.

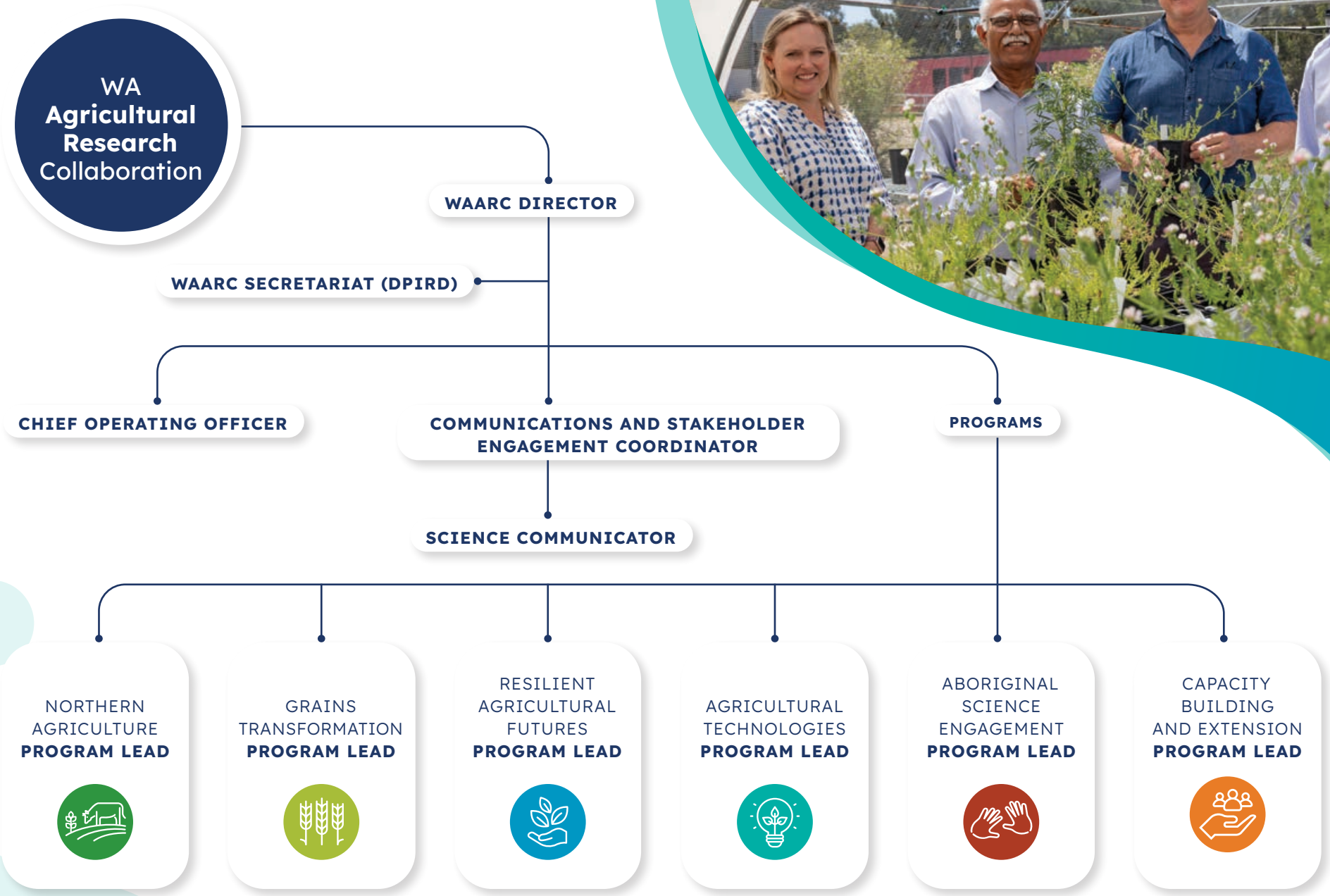
At the helm of this team is the Director, serving as the primary leader and strategist for WAARC. The Director plays a pivotal role in shaping the organisation's vision, overseeing its implementation, and fostering collaboration among stakeholders. Their responsibilities encompass strategic planning, stakeholder engagement, resource allocation, and ensuring the alignment of WAARC's initiatives with industry needs and government priorities. The Director is employed by UWA and funded independently by contributions from the members. Member organisations have provided significant operational support with offices/hot desks across each of the institutions.

WAARC's leadership team also includes a Chief Operating Officer (COO), responsible for managing the day-to-day operations of the organisation. The COO oversees administrative functions, financial management, and human resources, ensuring the efficient and effective functioning of WAARC's internal processes. Collaborating closely with the Director, the COO plays a crucial role in translating strategic objectives into actionable plans and operational initiatives.

Facilitating communication and outreach efforts are the Communications and Stakeholder Engagement Coordinator and Science Communicator, tasked with enhancing WAARC's visibility and engagement with stakeholders. These roles involve developing and implementing communication strategies, managing media relations and coordinating outreach activities to promote awareness of WAARC's research initiatives and achievements.

Supporting the administrative and operational functions of WAARC is the Secretariat, based at the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development and providing essential administrative support, logistics coordination and project management assistance.

Additionally, WAARC has six dedicated Program Leads, each responsible for coordinating specific research programs within the organisation. These Program Leads oversee the development, implementation and evaluation of research initiatives, working closely with researchers, industry stakeholders and funding partners to address key challenges and opportunities in Western Australia's agriculture and food sector.



**WA
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WAARC DIRECTOR

WAARC SECRETARIAT (DPIRD)

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

**COMMUNICATIONS AND STAKEHOLDER
ENGAGEMENT COORDINATOR**

PROGRAMS

SCIENCE COMMUNICATOR

**NORTHERN
AGRICULTURE
PROGRAM LEAD**



**GRAINS
TRANSFORMATION
PROGRAM LEAD**



**RESILIENT
AGRICULTURAL
FUTURES
PROGRAM LEAD**



**AGRICULTURAL
TECHNOLOGIES
PROGRAM LEAD**



**ABORIGINAL
SCIENCE
ENGAGEMENT
PROGRAM LEAD**



**CAPACITY
BUILDING
AND EXTENSION
PROGRAM LEAD**



Our Strategic Plan



Through strategic alignment with national and international research priorities and active industry engagement, WAARC ensures its research initiatives are not only cutting-edge but directly applicable and impactful to WA.

Snapshot of WAARC's Strategic Plan 2025-2026

Purpose Deliver industry impact through collaborative research excellence, capacity building, and strategic investment, strengthening Western Australia's agriculture and food sector.

Values Collaboration • Impact • Integrity • Inclusivity • Openness

Vision Western Australia's agricultural research sector is recognised for its impactful leadership in climate-resilient agricultural production systems, driven by transdisciplinary solutions, industry collaboration, emphasis on capacity building and respectful engagement with Aboriginal knowledge yielding significant benefits.

Strategic focus areas	1. Deliver impactful and transformational R&D for WA	2. Support and build WA's capacity in agricultural R&D	3. Ensure organisational excellence and investment
Goals	Generate impactful and transformational science for WA's benefit.	Strengthen capacity in key agricultural R&D areas to benefit WA.	Achieve long-term investment to ensure continuous growth and stability in WAARC's agricultural R&D initiatives.
	Drive innovation and transformational change in WA's agriculture and food industry through collaborative, transdisciplinary research and strong member and partner alignment.	Attract and inspire talent to pursue careers in WA's agricultural R&D sector.	Implement a viable, adaptive business structure and effective governance for WAARC.

Strategic focus areas

Our strategic focus over the next three years will be across the following three focus areas. These provide a framework for us to strategically deliver on our purpose, uphold our values and achieve our vision.

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1 Deliver impactful and transformational R&D for WA

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3 Ensure organisational excellence and investment

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2 Support and build WA's capacity in agricultural R&D

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1 Deliver impactful and transformational R&D for WA

Strategic Objective:

Maximise industry partnerships to drive impactful initiatives for Western Australia's agriculture and food sectors, through collaboration between WAARC members and partners to deliver research excellence and transformative outcomes.

Goals	Strategies
<p>Generate impactful and transformational science for WA's benefit:</p>	<p>Identify and prioritise research opportunities aligned with WA's R&D needs to achieve significant strategic advantage.</p> <hr/> <p>Establish Strategic Initiatives in key focus areas that leverage WA's unique strengths and position WA as a leader in agricultural research and innovation.</p> <hr/> <p>Facilitate and lead co-design processes with industry stakeholders to develop achievable and impactful projects alongside WAARC partners.</p>
<p>Drive innovation and transformational change in WA's agriculture and food industry through collaborative, transdisciplinary research and strong member and partner alignment:</p>	<p>Facilitate collaborative opportunities for WAARC members, partners and industry that foster innovation and drive transformational change in key focus areas.</p> <hr/> <p>Leverage expertise and insights from diverse sectors, such as technology and mining, to benefit WA's agriculture industry by establishing interdisciplinary research project teams.</p> <hr/> <p>Work with traditional owners, Indigenous communities and organisations to create and support Indigenous-led agricultural science initiatives.</p> <hr/> <p>Align member and partner goals with WAARC's strategic objectives by defining roles, responsibilities, expectations, success metrics and promoting shared outcomes to enhance collaboration.</p>

2 Support and build WA's capacity in agricultural R&D

Strategic Objective: Support and build WA's capacity in agricultural R&D (knowledge, skills, experience, networks, collaboration, industry-focus, attraction of talent) to drive innovative solutions.	
Goals	Strategies
Strengthen capacity in key agricultural R&D areas to benefit WA:	Identify and prioritise key agricultural R&D areas for capacity development through targeted training.
	Attract, integrate and support transdisciplinary and trans-sector skills into WA's agricultural R&D system/environment.
	Strengthen capacity of agricultural researchers in extension and evaluation planning.
Attract and inspire talent to pursue careers in WA's agricultural R&D sector:	Targeted postgraduate programs and opportunities to nurture the next generation of agricultural researchers and innovators.
	Create initiatives and events to inspire and support the pipeline of undergraduates and emerging researchers to pursue careers in agriculture and food R&D.
	Highlight the significance and accomplishments of researchers involved in WA's agriculture and food R&D to inspire new talent.
	Collaborate with WAARC members and partners to provide professional experiences offering real-world RD&E experiences to pre and emerging researchers.

3

Ensure organisational excellence and investment

Strategic Objective:

Achieve organisational excellence and secure long-term investment through strong governance, leadership, sustainable funding and dynamic partnerships to address WA's agriculture and food R&D priorities.

Goals	Strategies
Achieve long-term investment to ensure continuous growth and stability in WAARC's agricultural R&D initiatives:	<p>Demonstrate WAARC's capacity for impact to the WA State Government and partner organisations by highlighting potential growth, evolving partnerships and our critical role in addressing WA's agricultural R&D needs.</p> <p>Investigate alternative revenue streams for WAARC and secure long-term investment.</p>
Implement a viable, adaptive business structure and effective governance for WAARC:	<p>Identify and implement robust governance and contemporary fit-for-purpose corporate practices to support future growth, changing research priorities, evolving partnerships and ensure long-term relevance.</p> <p>Transition to a strategic WAARC Board, supported by industry and science advisory groups and partner steering committees, to enhance strategic direction and governance.</p>

Implementation, monitoring and evaluation

This inaugural Strategic Plan sets out WAARC's strategic priorities to 2026 and will guide resource allocation and operational directives over this period. It also serves to inform stakeholders about WAARC's strategic focus.

The future trajectory of WAARC will be influenced by its ability to secure continued State funding post-2026. As such, WAARC is committed to monitoring and evaluating its performance, impact and effectiveness through various mechanisms:

- 1. Operational Plan Development:** WAARC will formulate an Operational Plan detailing specific actions, activities, roles and responsibilities to fulfill this Strategic Plan. The Operational Plan will be endorsed by the Steering Committee/Board with regular status updates to ensure alignment.
- 2. Performance Reporting:** WAARC will provide regular reports on project and program progress, funding acquittals and leverage requirements. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and evaluation requirements per the State funding agreement will be included to measure progress and effectiveness accurately.
- 3. Stakeholder Engagement and Awareness:** WAARC will leverage the Strategic Plan as a communication tool to raise awareness and engage external stakeholders, fostering a deeper understanding of WAARC's purpose and strategic priorities.
- 4. Alignment with Government and Industry Priorities:** WAARC will ensure that its activities and initiatives are closely aligned with the strategic priorities and objectives of the State Government and industry. This alignment will be regularly assessed and adjusted to ensure maximum impact and relevance to State-level policy objectives.

5. Ongoing Evaluation:

An Evaluation Framework will be developed for WAARC which will include the means to assess the effectiveness and impacts of WAARC initiatives on agriculture and food, economic growth and the community-in both the short and longer term.

Tools used to implement the Evaluation Framework will include outcome mapping, program logic, cost-benefit analysis, continuous review and improvement, feedback from members, partners and stakeholders, and more.

6. Continuous Improvement:

Establishing a continuous improvement process to systematically review and refine WAARC's strategies, programs and operations based on evaluation findings and stakeholder feedback. This iterative process ensures that WAARC remains responsive to changing needs and priorities, maximising its impact and relevance over time.

By implementing these strategies and mechanisms, WAARC will effectively execute its Strategic Plan, monitor its progress and evaluate its impact to drive meaningful change and advancement in Western Australia's agricultural sector.





Postgraduate Research Scholarship program

WAARC is inspiring and nurturing future generations of agricultural scientists and leaders through a new Postgraduate Research Scholarship Program, to create a robust talent pipeline that will propel innovation and sustainability in the sector.



The formation of WAARC recognises the pivotal role of innovative science in addressing the State's distinctive agricultural challenges and opportunities.



SOILSWEST

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Department of
Primary Industries and
Regional Development



**GROWER
GROUP
ALLIANCE**
Together we grow

