



Everyone involved in protecting the environment wants to make the best use of the money that is available, but the issues are complex and it is difficult to tell what would be 'best'. At the same time, governments that provide these funds are often forced to choose projects despite important information gaps.

Bringing clarity to environmental decisions – INFFER

This is where INFFER comes in, enabling managers to set clear priorities and write robust, compelling project proposals, and investors to apply effective, relevant criteria that simplify decision making. INFFER integrates biophysical, economic and social information to help governments and managers make wise decisions about investing in environmental assets. It gives scientific knowledge a workable economic framework.

INFFER focuses on environmental assets, such as rivers, wetlands, areas of coastal dune, bushland remnants, threatened plants or endangered animals.

INFFER aims to help people assess critical questions, such as whether the environmental and natural resource projects they are investing in will deliver tangible results within budget; whether the tools and technical capacity needed to attain those results will be available; and whether the right people who need to come on board to make it happen will be there when the time comes for action.

INFFER:

- Provides a strong basis for a preparing business cases for funding.
- Highlights the funding required to achieve particular environmental outcomes.
- Provides confidence about using public money more cost-effectively through the choice of appropriate delivery mechanisms.
- Provides a robust, transparent basis to enable strategic direction setting, debate and discussion about the future of the assets in question.
- Builds on existing knowledge, integrating biological, physical, social and economic factors with institutional and political risks and costs to assess the cost-effectiveness of actions.
- Helps to highlight and prioritise limitations in current knowledge.
- Provides internal logic and consistency, ensuring that actions funded by the project will be sufficient to deliver the stated goal.
- Reduces bias in decision making by making assumptions about the process fully transparent.

INFFER is funded by:



Australian Government





Top: Scientists discussing feasibility of asset protection.

Centre: The INFFER team won the prestigious Australian Research Council Eureka Prize for Excellence in Research by an Interdisciplinary Team in 2009.

Below: Community members locating environmental assets.

How does it work?

INFFER entails a seven-step process that begins with identifying valuable assets, followed by project development, assessment, and selection, then moving on to monitoring, evaluation and adaptive management. INFFER is a comprehensive tool — documents are available on the website at www.inffer.org. INFFER complements existing available knowledge (technical and local), data and modelling tools.

Organisations using INFFER are given access to an on-line Project Assessment Form. Users collect information about the asset, the threats it faces, the goals that the project will achieve, and the actions needed to achieve those goals. They also make judgements about the likelihood of success in terms of technical feasibility; community and government support; and proposed project budget. The information is used to calculate a Benefit: Cost Index (BCI) that provides insight into the project's value for money. INFFER provides a Quality Assurance process so investors have confidence that projects are of high quality and have defensible BCIs. Along the way, practical support is provided.

Who can use it?

INFFER is a framework that can be used for strategic catchment planning or as a tool that helps decision makers assess and rank environmental and natural resource projects. It compares various aspects of projects, such as value for money, degrees of confidence in technical information and the likelihood of achieving stated goals.

INFFER was the only environmental planning tool recommended by the Australian Government in the 2009 round of applications under the *Caring for our Country* program. Project assessment criteria in *Caring for our Country* are highly compatible with INFFER.

So far INFFER has been adopted by six Catchment Management Authorities across Victoria, New South Wales and Western Australia and trialled at a further 12 across Australia.

Two Provincial governments in Canada have begun a comprehensive pilot of INFFER, and it is also being used by environmental scientists at the University of Florence, Italy.

When should it be used?

INFFER can be used to establish priorities for internal funds or to prepare proposals for external funds. The process could be undertaken each year to assist with developing action plans, or less frequently, to develop an overall investment plan or strategy for a region.

Who developed it?

INFFER was developed, and is being implemented, by a small team of people — Geoff Park (North Central CMA Victoria); Anna Roberts, Jennifer Alexander (Department of Primary Industries, Victoria), and David Pannell (University of Western Australia).

INFFER's development was motivated by a belief that a lot more could be achieved if available resources were allocated well.



For more information visit: www.inffer.org
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