

*RV Investigator*  
**Assessment of MNF Granted Voyages (GV)**



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## 1. Purpose

This document articulates the process for assessing applications for Marine National Facility (MNF) Granted Voyages (GV).

## 2. Background

With two thirds of Australia underwater, at nearly 14 million km<sup>2</sup>, we have the third largest marine jurisdiction globally and Australia has sovereign rights over much of this vast estate and associated fishing, mineral and petroleum resources. These resources and their associated industries underpin the vitality and sustained success of the Australian economy. For example, in 2009 the national value of production across all marine-based industries was valued at AU\$42.3 billion, contributing to more than 10% of the nation's Gross Domestic Product. This contribution is expected to increase significantly over the coming years to approximately AU\$100 billion by 2025 through the expansion of existing and new industries associated with renewable energy (e.g. waves, wind and tide) and food (e.g. aquaculture and fisheries). Underpinning the growth and sustainability of ocean-based industries for future generations, marine research supports and informs evidence-based decisions by all stakeholders.

## 3. Marine National Facility (MNF)

Funded by the Australian Government since 1984 and overseen by an independent Steering Committee, the MNF provides a keystone element of the nation's research infrastructure by providing a blue-water research capability to Australian marine researchers and their international collaborators for work in Australia's vast marine estate. Through merit based grants of sea time, research undertaken through the MNF contributes to Australia's national benefit, and, through the research users of the MNF, provide key information to government, industry and other stakeholders to support evidence-based decision-making. Research use is focused on challenges in fisheries management, geological resources, regional and global climate, coastal and offshore developments and marine operations.

## 4. RV Investigator

In 2014 the MNF commissioned a new purpose-built 94m multi-purpose research vessel *Investigator*, providing a step change in Australian marine and atmospheric research capability. *Investigator* has greatly increased capacity over the previous MNF vessel *Southern Surveyor* and can carry out voyages from the tropics to the Antarctic ice edge with up to 40 scientists on-board and spending up to 300 days per year at sea on voyages up to 60 days in duration. *Investigator* also hosts an extensive suite of state of the art scientific research equipment and is one of a handful of research vessels globally designed for very quiet operation with the ability to undertake acoustic mapping and sampling to the deepest parts of our oceans. Accordingly, the commissioning of *Investigator* has significantly increased the ability of the MNF to address rapidly increasing demand in the national interest.

#### **4.1. MNF Granted Voyages (GV)**

In May 2014 the Australian Government reaffirmed a commitment to the MNF, allocating AU\$65.7million over the next four years to operate *Investigator*. This funding allows approximately 180 days at sea per year to be competitively funded on merit as Granted Voyages (GV) which is the fundamental principle underpinning the establishment of the Marine National Facility.

#### **4.2. MNF User-Funded Voyages (UFV)**

Given *Investigator's* capacity to provide up to 300 days per year at sea, the MNF can provide additional days through other arrangements to maximise research in the national interest. Currently, the MNF funding for 180 GV days creates significant opportunities to utilise up to 120 additional days at sea as UFV within each annual research schedule.

### **5. Types of use**

The MNF recognise three types of use of the vessel in order of priority:

#### **5.1. Type 1 use**

Researchers based in Australia from Australian research organisations and their international collaborators who are successful through the competitive MNF GV applications process. Successful applications are highly ranked in terms of science excellence, national benefit and track record.

#### **5.2. Type 2 use**

Research organisations and their collaborators who charter the MNF research vessel to complete the ship-based components of their research. Voyages of this type are UFV. For more information regarding the assessment of UFV please see the [Principles of Access to \*Investigator\*](#).

#### **5.3. Type 3 use**

Charter involving commercial charge arrangements subject to competitive neutrality policy. Voyages of this type are UFV. For more information regarding the assessment of UFV please see the [Principles of Access to \*Investigator\*](#).

### **6. Governance**

#### **6.1. Marine National Facility Steering Committee (MNF SC)**

RV *Investigator's* operation as a Marine National Facility is the responsibility of an independent Steering Committee appointed by the CSIRO Board.

One of the key roles of the MNF SC is to provide high-level advice to the MNF Director and more broadly, to CSIRO on allocation of time on the Facility.

For further information on the MNF SC please visit the [Marine National Facility](#) website.

## 6.2. MNF Ship Management Group

The MNF Ship Management Group oversees the operation of the vessel and works with vessel users. The group also manages the application process for applications for GV and develops voyage schedules for the Steering Committee.

For further information on the MNF Ship Management Group please visit the [Marine National Facility](#) website.

## 7. Assessment of GV applications

### 7.1. GV Application Schedule

The Marine National Facility GV process operates on a rolling annual cycle of scheduled voyages which cover financial years from July to June. Each annual applications round begins two years in advance of the commencement of the relevant voyage schedule and applications for single or multi-year voyages up to three years ahead are accepted. Members of the scientific community submit their proposals in-confidence. This duty of confidence extends to the decision making process and feedback provided to applicants in order to protect innovative research ideas.

The annual GV applications round involves two stages:

1. the primary call which is used to build the primary research voyage schedule; and
2. the supplementary call which aims to fill any unused capacity on the vessel (supplementary applications).

Applications for sea time that fully utilise these capabilities, and engage in international collaborations or programs, are strongly encouraged. However, applications that do not fully utilise the vessels capabilities will also be considered as these provide further opportunities for collaboration and training activities.

The MNF remains strongly committed to training the next generation of marine scientists so applications that include involvement of students are also encouraged.

Multi-year applications for sea time of up to three years will be considered. Successful applications will be reviewed each year to ensure they have met agreed milestones, continue to deliver the stated objectives and align with the logistical requirements of supported applications in future years.

To facilitate collaboration between applicants a Pre-proposal will be required prior to submitting an Application for a GV. These will be shared with other potential applicants to encourage the formation of larger teams in preparing the full application.

### 7.2. Assessment Core Criteria

*Investigator* has been designed and built as a research vessel to undertake excellent research in the national interest.

Given this objective, applications for time on the research vessel's annual GV schedule are assessed relative to one another using three equally weighted selection criteria:

1. The scientific and/or technical excellence of the project;
2. The potential of the project to contribute to Australia's national benefit; and,
3. The ability of *Investigators* (demonstrated or potential, relative to opportunity) to successfully undertake the project.

The assessment is conducted via a peer review process conducted by external experts and a number of committees and panels that report to the MNF Steering Committee.

### **7.3. Assessment Panels**

In accordance with its [Terms of Reference](#), the MNF SC has established the following committees to assess GV applications:

#### **7.3.1. Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC)**

An independent committee with membership drawn from the Australian marine based research community to provide advice to the MNF SC on assessment of GV proposals, scientific operations, equipment needs, user feedback and any other marine research matters relevant to the MNF's operations as required.

The SAC operates in accordance with a [Terms of Reference](#) and membership comprises of:

- An independent Chair;
- Independent members that represent the full range of research undertaken by the Marine National Facility; and
- the Chair of the Marine National Facility Steering Committee (ex-officio).

The SAC is responsible for scoring GV applications against criteria 1 & 3 and reports directly to the MNF SC.

#### **7.3.2. Current membership**

The current membership of the SAC can be found on the [Marine National Facility](#) website

#### **7.3.3. External Referees**

The SAC is responsible for nominating External Referees to provide the initial review of GV proposals. Nominations are based on relevance of expertise and reputation. From these nominations, the MNF endeavour to obtain a minimum of 2 national and 2 international referees for each proposal.

It is the responsibility of External Referees to review and score GV proposals against Criteria 1 & 3 and provide written commentary to support their findings. The commentary, with scores redacted, is provided to respondents as part of the rejoinder process. This provides the opportunity for applicants to respond to comments, with these responses provided to SAC members for the final review.

#### **7.3.4. National Benefit Assessment Panel (NBAP)**

An independent panel convened to provide advice to the MNF SC on the alignment of applications for GV with Australia's national research priorities, and the extent to which the scientific outputs of applications for GV will benefit Australia.

The NBAP operates in accordance with a [Terms of Reference](#) and membership of the committee comprises of:

- An independent Chair with experience in both marine research and marine policy
- Chair of the MNF Scientific Advisory Committee (ex-officio)
- Chair of the MNF SC (ex-officio)
- Independent members that represent the range of MNF end-users including government and industry.

The NBAP is responsible for scoring GV applications against criterion 2 and reports directly to the MNF SC.

#### **7.3.5. Current membership**

The current membership is to be determined.

#### **7.3.6. External Review**

Assessment of applications by External Referees against criterion 2 is not routine as it is for criteria 1 & 3. Rather, members of the NBAP may approach external experts for review on an 'as needs basis' when required. Approach to external experts will be made at the discretion of each NBAP member.

Following initial review, any assessment commentary by NBAP reviewer or external expert shall be disseminated to applications for response. Any responses to commentary from applicants are considered as part of the final review and scoring assessment conducted by the NBAP.

**Note** – external experts do not sit on the NBAP's substantive membership and do not attend meetings and are therefore distinct from independent members.

#### **7.3.7. Supplementary Scheduling Committee (SSC)**

The SSC is a specialist working group setup to provide advice to the MNF SC on: Supplementary applications for GV for research, education and the testing of new equipment and processes; and the draft final voyage schedule.

The SSC operates in accordance with a [Terms of Reference](#) and membership comprises of:

- MNF Operations Manager (Chair)
- Two members of the SAC
- One member of the NBAP
- MNF Operations Officer(s)

The SSC assesses supplementary applications against 4 slightly different criteria to those applied to the Primary Schedule, they are:

- The scientific and/or technical and/or educational excellence of the project
- Logistical integration with other applications.
- The potential of the project to contribute to Australia's national benefit
- The ability of the Lead Principal *Investigator* (demonstrated or potential, relative to opportunity) to successfully undertake the project.

The modified criteria reflect the nature of Supplementary voyages to also provide educational and training opportunities and fill unallocated time within the primary schedule.

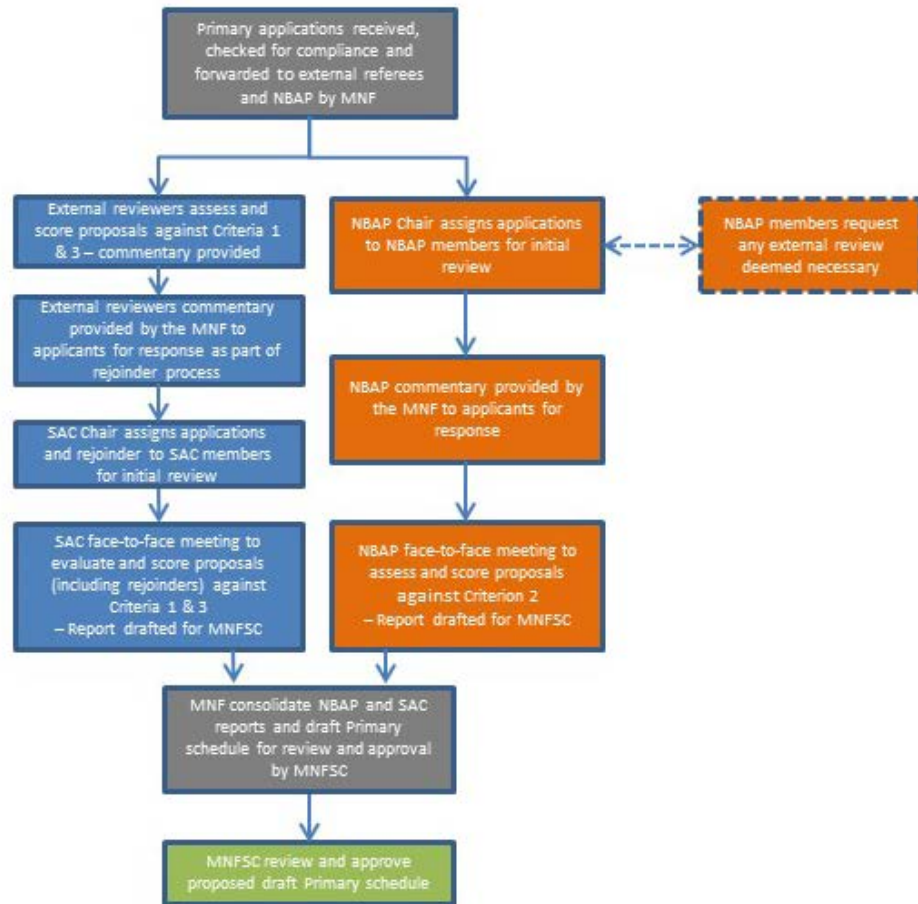
**Note** – the SSC is also involved in the assessment of UFV proposals as described in the [Principles of Access to Investigator](#).



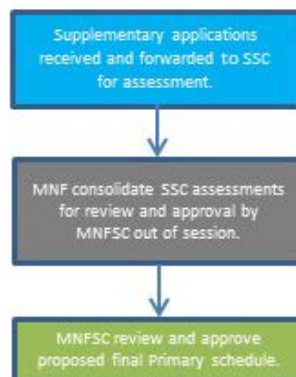
## 8. GV Assessment process

The application and assessment process consists of several key steps as described in the following diagram:

### Primary call for MNF Granted Voyages



### Supplementary call for MNF Granted Voyages



## 9. Documenting the Evaluation

### 9.1. External Referees, Scientific Advisory Committee and National Benefit Assessment Panel

#### 9.1.1. Scoring pro-forma

To assist evaluators, and for the purposes of continuity, the MNF has developed a scoring sheet pro-forma for use by assessors. Templates are attached to this document at:

- Attachment A - template for External Referees and Scientific Advisory Committee;
- Attachment B - template for members of the National Benefit Assessment Panel; and
- Attachment C – template for members of the Supplementary Scheduling Committee assessing GV applications.

Evaluators are requested to document both written comments and numerical scores to record their findings.

### 9.2. Written Comments

Written comments should provide evidence to support each key element of the assessor's critique and also weight individual criticisms to make it clear which of the criticisms are most important.

In making comments, assessors are asked to use their knowledge of the field involved to:

- Place the application in the context of other similar research projects being undertaken either in Australian regional waters or internationally;
- Draw the reader's attention to other relevant references or research, not necessarily drawn on by the applicant;
- Provide an opinion as to whether the amount of time requested is adequate to successfully undertake the research outlined in the proposal; and
- Record any other matters relevant to reaching an equitable assessment of the application in comparison to other applications being assessed.

Assessors are also invited to make further comments they consider would assist in the assessment of the application.

### 9.3. Numerical Scores

#### 9.3.1. Scientific Advisory Committee and National Benefit Assessment Committee

SAC and NBAP Assessors are asked to provide a score for the project, between one and one hundred, against their relevant criteria. So as to assist in this process, descriptions of the expected characteristics of projects falling into various score categories are provided in Attachments A and B below. Assessors should be careful to match the scores they give the application with these descriptions and with the tenor of comments they make. For example, a highly supportive assessment, would be expected to be accompanied by a relatively high score.

### **9.3.2. Supplementary Scheduling Committee**

The SSC evaluate supplementary proposals against slightly different criteria as noted in Section 7.3.3 above.

As a result, the SSC also use a different numerical scoring method. To assist evaluators, and for the purposes of continuity, the MNF has developed a scoring sheet pro-forma for use by the SSC. A template is attached to this document at Attachment C.

## ATTACHMENT A - Detailed Selection Criteria – External Referees and Scientific Advisory Committee

### 1. Criterion 1: The scientific and/or technical excellence of the project.

This criterion is used to measure any or all of the following:

- The scientific originality or innovation of the project, including the methods it proposes to employ;
- The likelihood that it will produce meaningful results – please differentiate between the feasibility of producing results if the program is successfully completed and the significance of the results in advancing the store of knowledge of international and Australian marine science;
- The degree to which it tests fundamental hypotheses;
- The extent to which the project represents a development of new methods and techniques with potentially wide applications to the growth of Australian and international marine research.

The National Facility Steering Committee expects that all users of *RV Investigator* will publish the results of any research undertaken in refereed journals.

### 2. Scoring guide – Criterion 1

The following is a guide to scoring against this criterion:

Score range	Characteristics
81-100	Highly innovative research of very high quality likely to produce scientific results of international significance or lead to the development of new and important methods and techniques for studying the marine environment.
61-80	High quality research likely to produce significant results of interest to the international scientific community.
41-60	Sound research likely to produce useful results of particular to the local scientific community.
21-40	Research likely to produce results of minor interest/value or a repetition of the results of previous studies; with some minor flaws apparent in the research objectives, research design and/or preparation.
1-20	Poor quality research unlikely to produce useful/interesting results; major scientific and/or planning flaws.

### 3. Criterion 3: The ability of Investigators (demonstrated or potential, relative to opportunity) to successfully undertake the project

This criterion requires an assessment of the likely ability of the Principal *Investigators* (PI) to undertake the project and achieve the stated scientific objectives. Assessment can be based on: a personal knowledge of the PIs and their contribution to the development of marine research; their publishing record relevant to the application; and their CVs. Copies of the last two are included in the assessment papers.

In order to not discriminate against applicants who are relatively new to ocean research, or are commencing their research career, it is important that assessors frame their remarks in light of the opportunities the applicant has had to both conduct relevant research and publish the results.

### 4. Scoring Guide – Criterion 3

The following is a guide to scoring against this criterion:

Score range	Characteristics
81-100	Highly experienced investigator/s of international standing, or new researchers showing outstanding promise relative to opportunities. Investigator\ s with a demonstrated ability to deliver on a project of the type proposed including an excellent relevant research record, publication record and leadership skills applicable to operating on a multi-disciplinary research vessel with competing priorities and multi-organisational teams. Investigator’s that have been awarded a previous MNF Granted Voyage must be able to demonstrate compliance with MNF data policy to achieve a score in this range.
61-80	Experienced Investigator/s or highly promising post-graduate researchers considered to have the ability to deliver on a project of the type proposed including a good research record, publication record and leadership skills operating on a multi-disciplinary research vessel.
41-60	Experienced investigator/s or promising recently graduated researcher with moderate research record, publication record and leadership skills operating on a research vessel.
21-40	Investigator/s with poor research and/or publication record and/or leadership skills operating on a research vessel.
1-20	Investigator/s not considered capable of undertaking the research and/or of producing the required results and/or of taking a leadership role on a research vessel.

## NATIONAL FACILITY RV INVESTIGATOR ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSAL

**1. Project Title**

**2. Principal Investigator**

**3. Assessment Against Criterion 1: the scientific and/or technical excellence of the project**

**Assessor's Comments:**

*Written comments should be made against both of the selection criteria and should take into account aspects of each of the criterion. Comments should provide evidence to support each key element of the assessor's critique and also weight individual criticisms to make it clear to the applicant which of the criticisms are most important and should be addressed in the applicant's response to the assessor's report.*

*In making comments, assessors are asked to use their knowledge of the field involved to:*

- *Place the application in the context of other similar research projects being undertaken either in Australian regional waters or internationally;*
- *Draw the Committee's attention to other relevant references or research, not necessarily drawn on by the applicant;*
- *Provide an opinion as to whether the amount of time requested is adequate to successfully undertake the research outlined in the proposal; and*
- *Record any other matters which could help the Committee in reaching an equitable assessment of the application in comparison to other applications that it is assessing.*
- *Assessors are also invited to make further comments they consider would assist in the assessment of the application.*

*Very broad, generalised comments, either supportive or critical of the application, are not particularly helpful in competitive assessment of proposals for allocation of time on RV Investigator.*

**Assessor's Ranking (1-100)**

**4. Additional Comments**

Assessors are invited to make further comments they consider would assist in the assessment of the application.

**5. Assessment Against Criterion 3: the ability of *Investigators* (demonstrated or potential, relative to opportunity) to successfully undertake the project**

**Assessor's Comments:**

*This criterion requires an assessment of the likely ability of the Principal Investigators (PI) to be able to undertake the project and achieve the stated scientific objectives.*

*Assessment can be based on a personal knowledge of the Principal Investigators, their publishing record relevant to the application and the applicant's curriculum vitae (CV). Copies of the applicant's relevant publishing record and curriculum vitae are included in the assessment papers.*

*In order not to discriminate against applicants who are relatively new to ocean research, or are commencing their research career, it is important that assessors frame their remarks in light of the opportunities the applicant has had to both conduct relevant research and publish the results.*

**Assessor's Ranking (1-100)**

**6. Additional Comments**

Assessors are invited to make further comments they consider would assist in the assessment of the application.

## ATTACHMENT B - Detailed Selection Criteria – National Benefit Assessment Panel Assessors

### 1. Criterion 2: The potential of the project to contribute to Australia’s national benefit

Contribution to the national interest will be assessed by how well a project addresses the national research priorities and the extent to which the scientific outputs of applications for GV will benefit Australia. High scores will be achieved for applications that can demonstrate the likelihood of significant impact at a National and International level.

Please refer to the national research priority documents listed below for more information:

- [Strategic Research Priorities](#)
- [National Marine Science Plan](#)
- [National RD&E for Fishing and Aquaculture Strategy 2010-15](#)
- [Climate Change](#)
- [Australia’s Biodiversity Conservation Strategy 2010-2030](#)
- [Australian Antarctic Strategic Plan 2011-12 to 2020-21](#)
- [To live within Earth’s limits – An Australian plan to develop a science of the whole earth system](#)

### 2. Scoring guide – Criteria 2

The following is a guide to scoring against this criterion:

Score range	Characteristics
81-100	Proposal contains a demonstrable: policy; industry or other stakeholder link; and uptake by end users. A proposal achieving a score in this range will: offer clear, realistic and appropriate objectives; provide a high level of supporting documentation; apply novel as well as routine ways of engaging end users; and demonstrate significant potential for impact at a National and International level.
61-80	Proposal contains a demonstrable: policy; industry or other stakeholder link; and uptake by end users. A proposal achieving a score in this range will: offer clear, realistic and appropriate objectives; provide a high level of supporting documentation; apply routine ways of engaging end users; and demonstrate significant potential for impact at a National level.
41-60	Proposal contains some: policy; industry or other stakeholder link; and potential for uptake by end users. A proposal achieving a score in this range will: offer mostly clear, realistic and appropriate objectives; provide a reasonable level of supporting documentation; apply routine ways of engaging end users; and demonstrate some potential for impact at a National level.
21-40	Proposal is unclear on: policy; industry or other stakeholder link; and potential for uptake by end users. A proposal achieving a score in this range will: offer unclear, unrealistic objectives; provide little supporting documentation; offer little strategy around engagement of end users; and demonstrate little potential for impact at a National level.



Score range	Characteristics
1-20	Proposal has little or no: policy; industry or other stakeholder link; or potential for uptake by end users. A proposal achieving a score in this range will: offer unclear, unrealistic objectives; provide no supporting documentation; offer no strategy around engagement of end users; and demonstrate little or no potential for impact.

## NATIONAL FACILITY RV INVESTIGATOR ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSAL

### 1. Project Title

### 2. Principal Investigator

### 3. Assessment Against Criterion

**Criterion 2:** The potential of the project to contribute to Australia's national benefit.

#### Assessor's Comments:

*Written comments should be made against only the relevant selection criterion and should take into account aspects of the criterion. Comments should provide evidence to support each key element of the assessor's critique and also weight individual criticisms to make it clear to the applicant which of the criticisms are most important and should be addressed in the applicant's response to the assessor's report.*

*In making comments, assessors are asked to use their knowledge of the field involved to:*

- *Place the application in the context of other similar research projects being undertaken either in Australian regional waters or internationally;*
- *Draw the Committee's attention to other relevant references or research, not necessarily drawn on by the applicant;*
- *Provide an opinion as to whether the amount of time requested is adequate to successfully undertake the research outlined in the proposal; and*
- *Record any other matters which could help the Committee in reaching an equitable assessment of the application in comparison to other applications that it is assessing.*

**Assessor's Ranking (1-100)**

### 4: Additional Comments

Assessors are invited to make further comments they consider would assist in the assessment of the application.

## ATTACHMENT C - Detailed Selection Criteria – Supplementary Scheduling Committee Assessors - Funded Voyages

### Explanation of assessment criteria

The applications are assessed using the following rating system for each criterion:

Criteria #	Score	0	1	2	3
1	<b>Logistical integration with other applications. Supplementary applications are to fill unused capacity in existing voyages. If what is proposed cannot be accommodated in the proposed voyage schedule then it is not logistically viable. Issues to consider include – impact on primary voyage, extra time required, scientific equipment required and the number of extra personnel.</b>	Proposal is not logistically feasible or would create unacceptable risk for the primary voyage.	Can be included in the voyage but would require significant changes to the voyage plan.	Can be included in the voyage but will require minor changes to the voyage plan.	No problems with the proposed project being included in the voyage.
2	<b>The scientific and/or technical and/or educational excellence of the project</b>	Poor quality research, technical or educational proposal unlikely to produce a useful outcome. This could be influenced by poor objectives, methodology or planning.	Satisfactory quality research, development or educational outcomes likely to produce results of minor interest/value that may be a repetition of the results of previous work <b>or</b> lead to the development of satisfactory methods	Good quality research, development or educational outcomes likely to produce significant results of interest to the scientific community <b>or</b> lead to the development of useful methods and techniques for studying the marine environment <b>or</b> provides a	Highly innovative research, development or educational outcomes of very high quality likely to produce scientific results of international significance <b>or</b> leads to the development of new and important methods and

Criteria #	Score	0	1	2	3
			and techniques for studying the marine environment <b>or</b> provide a satisfactory educational outcome for future marine scientists or others working in the marine community.	good quality educational outcome for future marine scientists or others working in the marine community.	techniques for studying the marine environment <b>or</b> provides a very high quality educational outcome for future marine scientists or others working in the marine community.
<b>3</b>	<b>The potential of the project to contribute to Australia's national benefit</b>	Poor proposal with little or no potential impact.	Routine proposal with some potential impact.	Good proposal with moderate potential impact.	Outstanding proposal which has the potential to have a large impact.
<b>4</b>	<b>The ability of the Lead Principal Investigator (demonstrated or potential, relative to opportunity) to successfully undertake the project</b>	Lead Principal <i>Investigator</i> with a low probability of delivering the required results based on their past experience and/or record of achievements.	Lead Principal <i>Investigator</i> with a satisfactory record of achievement or a new <i>Investigator</i> that is capable of carrying out the work.	Experienced Lead Principal <i>Investigator</i> with a good record of achievement or a new <i>Investigator</i> showing future potential.	Highly experienced Lead Principal <i>Investigator</i> with an excellent record of achievement or a new <i>Investigator</i> showing outstanding promise.

**NATIONAL FACILITY RV INVESTIGATOR ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSAL**

**1. Project Title**

**2. Principal Investigator**

**3. Assessment Against Criteria**

**Assessor's Comments:**

*Written comments should be made against only the relevant selection criteria. Comments should provide evidence to support each key element of the assessor's critique and also weight individual criticisms to make it clear to the applicant which of the criticisms are most important and should be addressed in the applicant's response to the assessor's report.*

*In making comments, assessors are asked to use their knowledge of the field involved to:*

- *Place the application in the context of other similar research projects being undertaken either in Australian regional waters or internationally;*
- *Draw the Committee's attention to other relevant references or research, not necessarily drawn on by the applicant;*
- *Provide an opinion as to whether the amount of time requested is adequate to successfully undertake the research outlined in the proposal; and*
- *Record any other matters which could help the Committee in reaching an equitable assessment of the application in comparison to other applications that it is assessing.*

Criteria #	Comments	Score (0-3)
1		
2		
3		
4		

**4: Additional Comments**

Assessors are invited to make further comments they consider would assist in the assessment of the application.