

SBT Research Program 2013-2017



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1. Introduction

The Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC) Southern Bluefin Tuna (SBT) Research Program provides the framework for FRDC investment and for the Australian Southern Bluefin Tuna Industry Association (ASBTIA) to address sustainable ranching research priorities.

The Program also assists FRDC and industry stakeholders, including research organisations and government institutions to collaborate in research programs for the benefit of the SBT ranching industry and stakeholders.

This document:

- outlines the goals to enable FRDC investment in the SBT Research Program;
- describes the portfolio of research areas;
- provides guidelines for project application development and assessment; and
- describes how the Program will be managed and evaluated

This document should be read in conjunction with the following:

- Industry Partnership Agreement (IPA) between the FRDC and the ASBTIA for arrangements for the implementation of a research and development program.
- FRDC ASBTIA Ranching Strategic R,D&E Plan – 2013 to 2018: Delivering a competitive edge in a global seafood market (Strategic R&D Plan).

2. Program goal and objectives

The goal of the SBT Research Program is to plan, invest and manage research and development to improve the outcomes of research investment in SBT ranching. The objectives are:

- To ensure sustainable development of the industry;
- To improve resource access and property rights;
- To improve profitability;
- To extend outcomes to stakeholders;
- To enhance market opportunity; and
- To improve safety and workforce development.

Objectives will be achieved through the functions of the SBT Research Council (refer section 8.1) and will be subject to evaluation (refer section 12)

3. Significant drivers

The Program draws momentum from three key drivers:

- economics;
- sustainability; and
- people.

4. Background

Ranching research has focused on value adding SBT through a variety of areas including fish health, production, product quality, environment and physiology.

4.1 Ranching research

The SBT industry has been actively involved in research through previous Cooperative Research Centres. This research has been managed through the FRDC's SBT Aquaculture Subprogram. Over the years, the SBT Aquaculture Subprogram has developed strategic plans that broadly defined the research framework and priorities to deliver both short and long term strategic research outcomes for the commercial SBT industry and its stakeholders.

Over the past 4 years, the SBT Research Program has been managed by industry through the SBT Research Council. This document provides the framework for continuing a strategic industry based approach to research past 2012.

4.1.1 Delivery of ranching research

Historically, research and development has been delivered by a diverse range of research partners, including:

- South Australian Research and Development Institute (Aquatic Sciences).
- Commonwealth Scientific Industrial Research Organisation
- University of Tasmania
- Flinders University,
- University of Adelaide
- James Cook University
- Barneveld Nutrition Pty Ltd.
- University of Queensland
- Queensland Museum
- Western Australian Fisheries
- PanAquatic Health Solutions
- Seafood Training Centre of Excellence

Significant research contribution has been made by ASBTIA member companies, feed companies (Skretting and Ridley's), and a variety of Australian and international research collaborators..

5. Strategic context

The SBT Research Council will implement the Strategic R&D Plan to build on objectives that:

- acknowledge existing wild fishery strategic research plans
- acknowledge national, rural and public good research priorities
- increase industry involvement, including design and implementation of research projects and adoption of research outcomes
- prioritise research directions based on changing environmental, economic and social issues that affect the SBT fishery and industry
- meet funding timelines as imposed by the SBT ranching cycle

Program priorities (detailed at 6.2) are aligned with the objectives of the SBT Research Program and Strategic R&D Plan. Investments will be consistent with the FRDC Strategic R&D priorities, ensuring they are within the FRDC's governance framework under section 3 of the PIERD Act, 1989.

6. Criteria for investment

6.1 Guiding principles

The SBT Research Program will actively engage research that encourages and values learning, innovation, and R&D adoption, and will invest in projects that build capacity for future action through tactical and strategic research.

6.2 Priorities for investment

The SBT Research Council encourages applications for research that address one or more of the following priorities:

6.2.1 Enhance the sustainability of ranching operations

Research must be focussed to ensure industry's current status is maintained or improved and research objectives and outcomes are carefully assessed to significantly contribute towards the sustainability of ranching operations.

This includes developing research projects that improve the following:

- providing information to support SBT marketing strategies
- understanding the environment and the potential to adapt to climate change
- mitigate threats or challenges to the industry;
- enhancing SBT production by understanding environmental influences, health and stress and developing ways to optimise ranching husbandry.
- synergies between wild and ranched research objectives

Refer to the Strategic R&D Plan for a comprehensive list of R&D priorities.

6.2.2 Value add ranching operations

Of high priority are projects that add value to the ranching operations. Identified needs include:

- increase the volume of production through improved health, better feeding strategies, nutrition or longer term holding of SBT
- increase market price through the improvement of product quality
- tactical research when required to deliver urgent and immediate benefits.

6.2.3 Up-skilling to improve safety and workforce development

To understand and improve the SBT industry's workforce needs and build workforce capability. Specific needs include:

- Profile the workforce capability and understand skills shortages and identify ways to deliver education and training to match career paths in the industry.
- Ensuring research projects develop a suite of education and training materials suitable for a variety of delivery methods. Such as workshops, VET and tertiary education to improve industry profitability and sustainability.
- Explore opportunities for sharing of technical and practical husbandry knowledge between fish farming sectors.

Research outcomes will be communicated in an easy to understand technical language for students and industry through 'Tuna Briefs' which will be included in research project agreements. Research results will be communicated from a bottom up approach, and together with the existing range of research extension materials will ensure greater knowledge in industry.

Information will be provided to industry, training organisations and higher education providers where appropriate.

Where research outcomes do not align with accredited programs, but are seen as desirable and appropriate for non-accredited skills development, delivery of short courses will be negotiated with suitable service provider/s.

These approaches ensure that up-to-date project outcomes are quickly understood and adopted by industry and students, assisting in upskilling industry and developing job-ready graduates.

6.3 Application evaluation

The SBT Research Council evaluates both the attractiveness (need) of an application and its feasibility. The application evaluation criteria are:

Attractiveness:

- Relevance - how the application meets the existing Strategic R&D Plan.
- Stakeholder support - evidence of stakeholder/end user support for the proposed research. This can be conveyed through the SBT Research Council, evidence of

stakeholder involvement in the proposed activities or support in the form of correspondence outlining support and understanding of activities and how they relate to desired outcomes.

- Likelihood of adoption - are the proposed outputs likely to be adopted and the pathways of adoption clear and achievable?
- Value for money - is the budget realistic for the proposed activities, what are the nature of capital items requested for funding, are they warranted, and does the budget seem excessive?
- Levels of impact - what impact will the research have and is it likely to achieve demonstrable change?
- Contribution to new knowledge - is the proposed research novel and contributing to new science/knowledge?
- Linkages and collaboration - is there evidence of collaboration/relationships linked to past or present research, are several research partners/stakeholders/sectors /jurisdictions working together, and is there collaboration outside of traditional networks?
- Consequence of not undertaking research - what are the risks associated with not undertaking this research. Is it likely to be status quo if this proposed activity is not undertaken or are the consequences likely to be severe if the outputs are not known?

Feasibility:

- Likelihood of success - from the description of the activities provided and from external sources (such as other experts), is the proposed activity likely to succeed?
- Objectives clearly defined and linked to planned outcomes - is the knowledge required to achieve the stated planned outcomes sound?
- Sound methodology - are the methods likely to achieve what is stated and are linked to achieving the objectives?
- Well defined planned outcomes - are the planned outcomes as described in the application clear and realistic and reflect the needs of stakeholders?
- Track record - what is the capacity of the investigator(s) and research organisation to deliver on the project? Do they have experience in the proposed field, are they able to undertake the R&D, is experience matched to activities, and what is the success of past managed projects?

8.1 SBT Research Council

The SBT Research Council will undertake the following functions:

- develop a strategic plan for research and development that considers other strategic plans (refer section 5), and subsequently maintain strategic direction and be responsive to changing circumstances;
- set research and development priorities to maximise investment, avoid duplication and achieve the greatest potential return;
- invite research and development applications to address research priorities, based on capability;
- encourage collaboration between researchers, fisheries, and fishery managers;
- identify alternative funding sources;
- advise FRDC on decisions relative to applications evaluated by the council;
- be responsible for the development of processes by which applications will be encouraged and managed;
- assist the FRDC with communication and extension of research and development results; and
- monitor and review the SBT Research Program AOP and extend key outcomes to stakeholders.

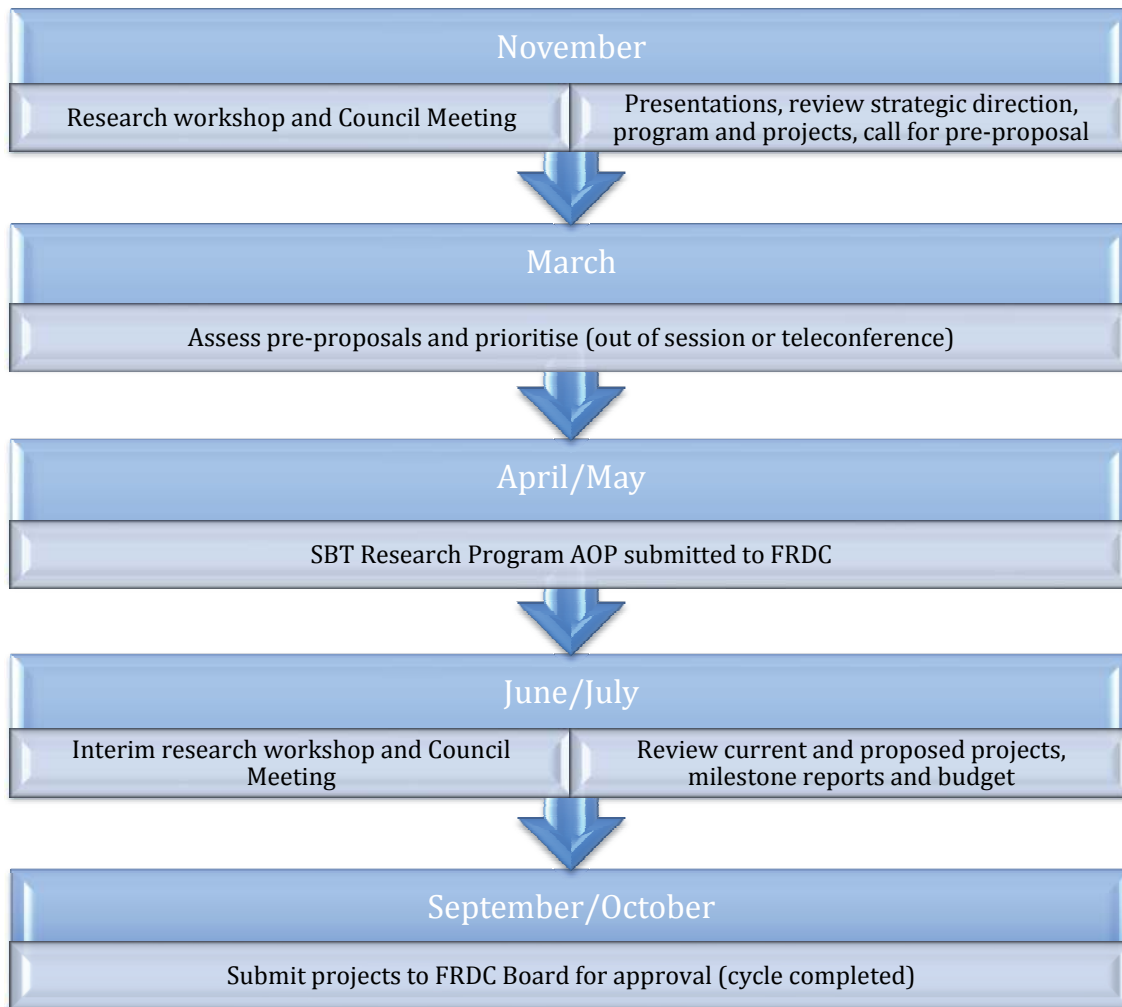
8.2 Governance

Whilst the SBT Research Council performs its governance obligations with a certain degree of autonomy, the *PIERD Act 1989* requires the FRDC Board to direct how FRDC funding is invested. The SBT Research Council will endeavour to provide the FRDC Board with projects for approval at scheduled board meetings. However, under some circumstances there will be a need to approve projects out of session. The SBT Research Council will be responsible for the administration and management of funded projects.

To ensure the FRDC Board is confident requirements of the *PIERD Act 1989* are being met, the FRDC board will play a strategic role in the following:

1. Endorsing the chair of the SBT Research Council in consultation with ASBTIA
2. Endorsing the SBT Research Manager in consultation with ASBTIA
3. Nominating a member of the FRDC Secretariat to be a member of the SBT Research Council
4. Endorsing and signing the FRDC ASBTIA Industry Partnership Agreement
5. Approving the SBT Research Program
6. Approving the Annual Operating Plan

8.2.3 Indicative governance timeline



8.3 Conflict of interest

Council members will be expected to declare any conflict of interest to the SBT Research Manager before appointment and through the Chair of the SBT Research Council at any time such conflict may arise while a sitting member. Conflicts will be recorded as a standard operating procedure.

8.4 Membership

The SBT Research Council shall comprise of:

- Up to 1 representative from each ASBTIA company (up to 10 members)
- The ASBTIA Chief Executive Officer
- 1 Nominee of FRDC secretariat

- 1 Nominee representing MISA
- 1 Nominee representing PIRSA
- 1 Nominee as an independent research advisor
- SBT Research Manager

It is recommended that a SBT industry member of SBTMAC sit on the SBT Research Council.

8.5 Appointment

The Chair of the SBT Research Council will be proposed by the ASBTIA Executive and endorsed by the FRDC Board. The Chair's initial term of appointment to the SBT Research Council is 24 months. Upon expiry of this initial term, the ASBTIA Executive, in consultation with the FRDC, will either re-appoint the chair for a further 24 months or alternately identify an appropriate candidate or call for expressions of interest.

The FRDC will nominate an employee of the FRDC Secretariat for membership on the Research Council.

The Research Manager will approach ASBTIA companies for their nomination to the Research Council at the commencement of the IPA.

The Research Council will nominate persons to the Council representing MISA, PIRSA and the independent research advisor.

8.6 Duties of members

8.6.1 The Chair

The Chair is responsible for:

- ensuring the SBT Research Council (the Council) provides leadership and vision to the FRDC
- ensuring the integrity and effective governance process of the Council
- representing the Council to stakeholders
- maintaining regular dialogue with the SBT Research Manager over all operational matters and will consult with the remainder of the Council promptly over any matter he or she deems necessary.
- acting as a mentor for the SBT Research Manager
- establishing the Council agenda
- directing Council discussions to effectively use the time available to address the critical issues facing the SBT Industry and its stakeholders
- acting as a facilitator at meetings and/or industry research workshops of the Council to ensure that no member, whether executive or non executive, dominates discussion, that appropriate discussion takes place and that relevant opinion among members is forthcoming - the Chair will ensure that discussions result in logical and understandable outcomes

- ensuring Council minutes properly reflect council discussions
- making sure that the council has the necessary information to undertake effective decision making actions
- overseeing the annual SBT Research Program performance evaluation process
- making him or herself available to the SBT Research Manager to provide counsel and advice where appropriate
- he/she may be remunerated to a level commensurate with their experience and ability.

8.6.2 The SBT Research Manager

The SBT Research Manager will:

- be responsible to the Council and FRDC for the overall management and performance of the SBT Research Program. He or she will manage the entity in accordance with the strategy, plans and policies approved by the Council and be accountable for the observance of any management limitations
- take and approve all and any actions and initiatives required to deliver the Strategic R&D Plan and SBT Research Program, Annual Operational Plan as approved by the Council & FRDC
- act within all specific authorities delegated to him or her by the Council. He or she will ensure transactions outside his or her delegation levels are referred to the Council for approval
- not cause or permit any practice, activity or decision that is contrary to the FRDC's Code of Conduct or commonly accepted good business practice or professional ethics
- adhere to the FRDC's mission within the confines of the PIERD Act in allocating the resources of the FRDC
- not cause or permit any action without taking into account the health, safety, environmental and political consequences and their effect on long-term stakeholder value
- not cause or permit any action that is likely to result in FRDC/ASBTIA becoming financially embarrassed
- not cause or permit payments to be made or rewards to be given unless they are in return for contributions towards the purposes of the business and are proportional to the extent that the contribution
- at each of its normal meetings, provide the Council with operational and other reports and proposals, and such assurances as the Council considers necessary to confirm that any management limitations are being observed
- keep the Council Chair informed on all important matters between board meetings

Overarching SBT Research Manager limitation

The SBT Research Manager will not take, allow or approve any action or circumstance in the name of FRDC/ASBTIA that is in breach of the law, is imprudent, which contravenes any organisation specific or commonly held business or professional ethics or is in breach of generally accepted accounting principles.

Financial planning

Budgeting/financial planning for any financial year or the remaining part of any financial year will be designed to ensure the achievement of Council determined outcomes. The AOP will demonstrate a credible projection of revenues and expenses, projection of cash flows, and disclosure of planning assumptions.

Financial management

The SBT Research Manager is responsible for the financial management of the SBT Research Program. In carrying out this duty he/she will ensure that nothing is done, or authorised to be done, that could in any way cause financial harm or threaten the Council or FRDC/ASBTIA financial integrity.

Communication and support to the Council

The SBT Research Manager will not permit the Council to remain uninformed about issues and/or concerns essential to the meeting of its duty of care, the carrying out its responsibilities and the meeting of its accountabilities to its key stakeholders

Emergency SBT Research Program succession

The Council recognises that one of its major risks is the loss of key personnel, particularly its SBT Research Manager. There will also be at least one additional person capable of responding to Council concerns and requirements at a level necessary for effective governance.

Public affairs

The SBT Research Manager will not undertake, approve or in any way support any action that is directly or indirectly demeaning or derogatory or in any way damaging to the SBT Research Program or FRDC.

The SBT Research Manager will be proposed by the ASBTIA Executive for endorsement by the FRDC board.

8.6.3 The Members

The composition of the Council reflects the duties and responsibilities it has to discharge and perform as representative of the interest of stakeholders, and in setting the Strategic R&D Plan and seeing that it is implemented.

Generally, the qualifications for Council membership are:

- the ability and knowledge to make sensible business decisions and recommendations;
- an entrepreneurial talent for contributing to the creation of stakeholder value;
- the ability to see the wider picture;
- the ability to ask hard questions;
- experience in research,
- high ethical standards;
- sound practical sense; and

- total commitment to furthering the interest of stakeholders and the achievement of the SBT Research program.

Members will use their best endeavours to attend Council meetings and to prepare thoroughly for them. Members are expected to participate fully, frankly and constructively in Council discussions and other activities and to bring the benefit of their particular knowledge, skills and abilities to the Council table. Members unable to attend a meeting will advise the SBT Research Program Manager as early as possible.

The independent research advisor is a member of the Council to add value to research project integrity. He/she may be remunerated based on their experience and qualifications.

A member that does not attend two successive meetings without submitting an apology will have that position reviewed by the Council to determine if the position should be declared vacant and a new appointment made.

An alternate member may attend providing they have been nominated and accepted by the Council. The alternate member needs to be able to add value to the SBT Research Program.

When matters are referred to members for their comment or input outside a meeting then a response is required from all members even if it is “no comment”.

A member may resign from the Council by submitting a written notice of resignation to the Chair. A replacement for that member will be discussed at the following Council meeting.

8.7 Meetings

The SBT Research Council will meet face to face in line with major activities, up to two times a year. In addition, teleconferences or video conferences may be convened. Working groups of SBT Research Council members may also be convened to undertake specific functions, including project steering committee and selection panel functions.

The SBT Research Program will provide travel, accommodation and associated expenses (meals, taxis etc.) associated with face-to-face meetings for the Chair and independent scientific advisor.

8.8 Board reporting

In April of each year, the SBT Research Manager and SBT Research Council will submit an AOP for the approval of the ASBTIA Executive and FRDC Board. The AOP will include:

- Review of progress against Program performance indicators and the AOP of the previous year
- Recommendations for amendments to the Strategic R&D Plan
- Summary of activities and major outputs from the previous year
- Summary of current status of all projects
- Proposed projects, activities and budget for the coming year

8.9 Milestone reporting

Project milestones are aligned to coincide with meeting dates to facilitate the following:

- A review of project performance during meetings
- Setting strategic direction for projects
- The SBT Research Council will approve milestones for payment

8.10 Communications Panel

A sub-committee of the Council will be responsible for reviewing documents for publication, conference presentations and media releases. Documents and materials produced from research projects and proposed media activities are required to be reviewed for:

- accuracy
- content
- scientific rigour
- format
- appropriateness
- target audience

Members from the Council will nominate for positions on the Communications Panel. The Communications Panel has the role of providing an assessment of documents provided to them through the SBT Research Program on behalf of the Research Council.

Due to the sensitive nature and IP of material reviewed by the panel, all content must remain confidential and not for further distribution unless approved by the SBT Research Manager.

The Communications Panel shall consist of:

- ASBTIA Chief Executive Officer
- SBT Research Manager
- Up to 3 ASBTIA company representatives
- An independent research advisor
- Chair of the Research Council

Resignations from the Communications Panel will be received by the Chair, in writing, for discussion at the following Council meeting

A Communications Policy supports the activities of the Communications Panel and shall be referred to for clarification of the publications process.

9. Collaborators

In implementing the Strategic R&D Plan, it is acknowledged that relationships must be built to encourage stakeholder-initiated activity addressing the objectives of the Strategic R&D Plan and to encourage multi-disciplinary R&D.

Collaborators include:

- Australian Fisheries Management Authority
- Bureau of Rural Sciences
- Department of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries
- Primary Industry and Regions South Australia
- South Australian Research and Development Institute
- Commonwealth Scientific Industrial Research Organisation
- ASBTIA
- Fisheries Research Advisory Boards,, and
- external funding organisations, including government departments.

The program will host an annual workshop in Port Lincoln and facilitate the presentation of all SBT ratched research and wild capture when possible to researchers, stakeholders and industry. The intention is to develop synergies between the two sectors and develop ways to meet research objectives and resources with greater interaction from all SBT research participants.

10. Communication and extension

The strategic plan will be promoted to stakeholders via:

- Commonwealth and state ministers for primary industry, in particular, fisheries
- distribution to all relevant FRABS and subprograms
- FRDC biennial stakeholder workshop

Opportunities and coming activities will be promoted through:

- ASBTIA internal communication processes, including newsletter and email
- the FRDC website
- ongoing updates

Outcomes and outputs will be shared and promoted through:

- conference presentations
- scientific journals and popular publications
- final reports and non-technical summaries
- training and education documents and Tuna Briefs
- FISH
- FRDC website

11. Risk assessment

Table 2. Risk assessment and mitigation measures

Major Risk	Mitigation
Stakeholders unaware of the SBT Research Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication program • Promotion and explanation of program by ASBTIA and FRDC members to a range of stakeholder groups
Failure of SBT Research Program to identify and address stakeholder needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role of SBT Research Council & ASBTIA • Annual and interim research workshops • Strategic planning research sessions • Individual consultation with stakeholders
Failure to attract and invest in quality applications that address priorities for SBT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication and extension strategy • Expert review of applications • Guiding principles and priorities documented in the strategic plan
Failure of members of the SBT Research Council to engage with the program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of scope, membership and arrangements of SBT Research Council • Appropriate appointments • Constructive relationships developed between Chair, Research Manager and members • Clear terms of reference for members
Failure of SBT Research Manager to deliver stated outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear strategic plan, annual operational plan and regular monitoring against the KPIs by SBT Research Council • Active involvement of the Chair in a mentoring capacity
Poor management of projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance linked to program objectives • Project management will be undertaken using FRDC processes and systems

12. Monitoring and evaluation

This is a 'working document.' The SBT Research Program is for a four-year period 2013 – 2017 and builds on the previous research program (2008-2012).

The Program and progress against its objectives will be reviewed annually by the SBT Research Council, and an annual report and operational plan provided to the ASBTIA and FRDC boards.

12.1 Program performance indicators

The following series of dot points will be used to assess the effectiveness of the program.

- An orderly and structured approach to research and development associated with SBT aquaculture meeting the needs of the industry and research managers/funders (measured by the level of industry and FRDC satisfaction in the program).
- An up-to-date R&D Plan meeting the needs of industry participants (measured by the number and success of new research applications).
- Efficient management and administration of the SBT Research Program - achieving the specified milestones, outcomes and outputs (measured by the timeliness of milestone and final reports).
- Efficient and coordinated use of the limited resources available for SBT aquaculture related research and development (measured by the diversity, suitability and satisfaction with the research platforms in use).
- Appropriately managed communications disseminating research results (measured by the level of communication and the presence of positive and absence of negative media issues).
- The ability of the program to attract alternative sources of funding to meet research objectives and priorities.

12.2 Project independent review

Research proposals can be independently reviewed depending on the nature of research to be performed.

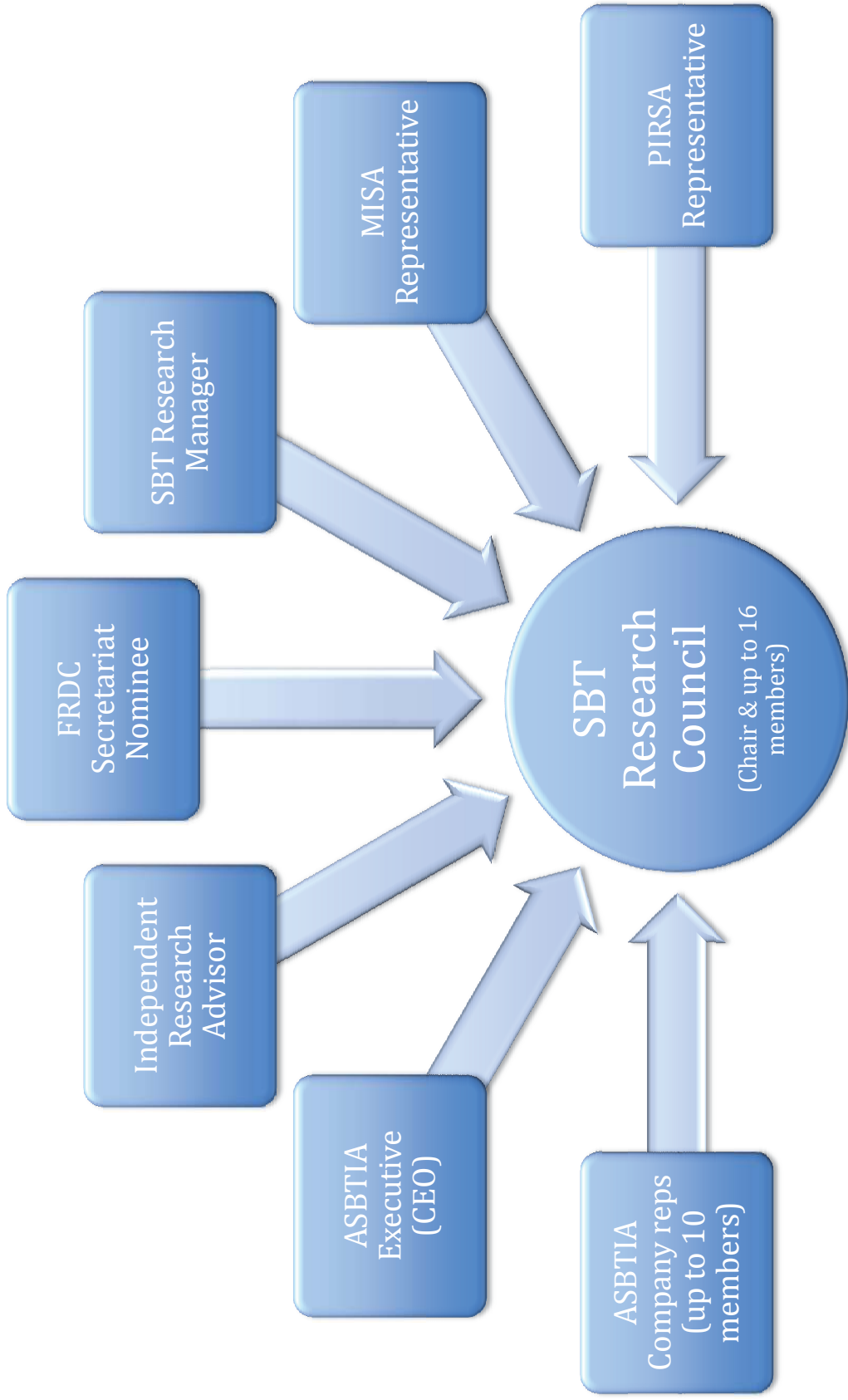


Diagram 1. Composition of SBT Research Council