



CRDC: Partner | Relationship Review
SUMMARY REPORT
February 2020



the Partner feedback exercise

Cotton Research & Development Corporation (CRDC) invited its key Partners to provide feedback on the health of the partnership, to identify what was working effectively, and also highlight what the opportunities were for strengthening the partnership. This feedback exercise was undertaken in late 2019 and early 2020 and replicated a similar study undertaken by CRDC in late 2016.

The feedback was collected through one of two pathways:

- o a total of 43 Partners took up the opportunity of responding to an online survey. Feedback was received from Government, industry partners, grower representative organisations and research partner organisations; together with
- o contributions from 9 key Partners who participated in a one on one telephone interviews.

The design allowed for both quantitative satisfaction ratings to be collected in addition to open-ended feedback on the issues raised and discussed during the online survey and telephone interviews. This key point summary provides a high level overview of the feedback provided. More detail around each of the areas covered is provided in the detail of this report.

We note that the online survey in 2019/20 attracted 43 responses. This was a lower response than that reported in 2016 (59 responses). In 2019/20 there were proportionally fewer industry partners and researchers who responded to the online survey.

The lower response was somewhat disappointing but may be, in part, attributable to the timing of the feedback exercise (December into early January). This may well have worked against achieving the same level of response. Consideration should be taken for future exercises to avoid this challenging time of year.

The areas explored throughout the survey sought Partners' perceptions of the engagement and partnership with CRDC. Given the small sample size and nature of the questions, some caution should be exercised in interpreting these results.

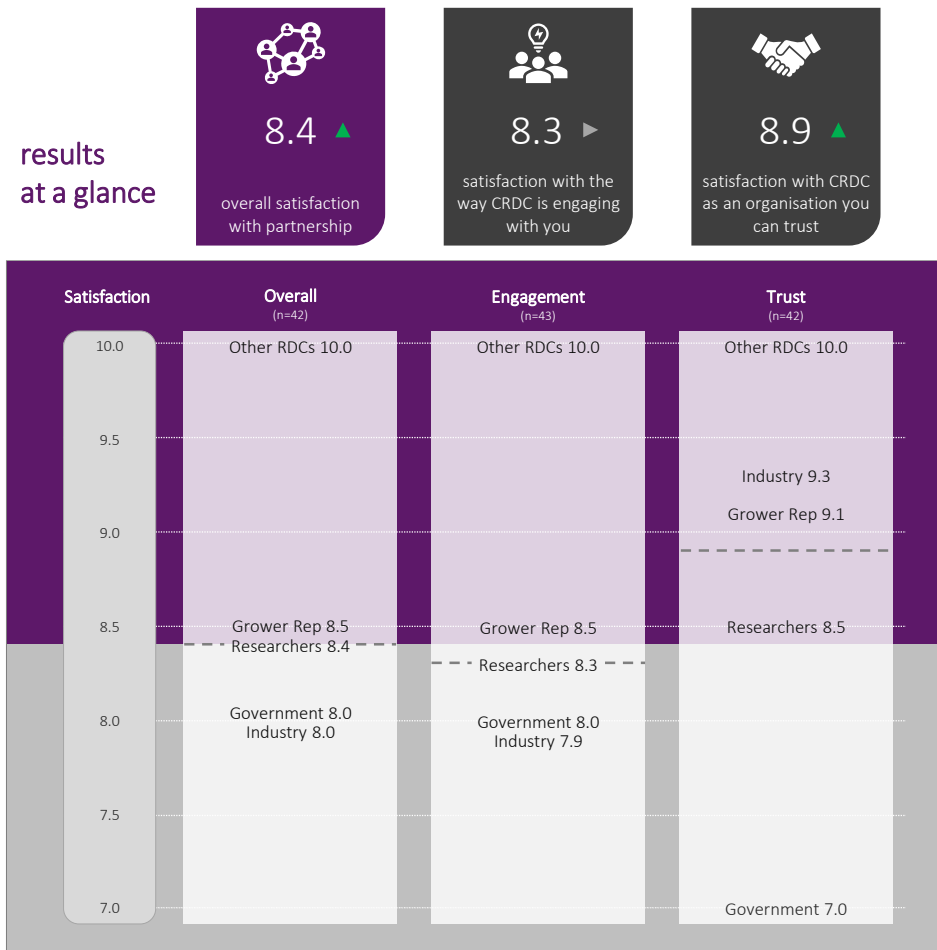


The Partner ratings

The 2019/20 feedback from CRDC Partners has demonstrated:

- strong results across each of the three headline organisational performance metrics measured in the survey (as shown opposite).
- an improvement in the Partner ratings across a large number of measures in the exercise (from those reported in 2016). This was particularly encouraging given the already high benchmarks achieved in 2016, the significant organisational changes at CRDC over the past few years along with the increasingly difficult operating conditions now faced by the industry.
- again in 2019/20 we note the high level of satisfaction in the trust between Partners and CRDC. A collective rating of 8.9 (up 0.2 this year, with no Partner rating this at less than a 5 out of 10) points to a strong foundation for a successful partnership. While this provides no guarantee of satisfaction with the partnership and engagement with CRDC, it is an important foundation from which to build.
- overall satisfaction with the partnership (across all Partners) was again strong with a rating of 8.4 (up 0.2). This rating is supported by almost two in three Partners (83%) who rated at an 8 or above but dampened by a small number of Partners (4%) who rated below a 6.
- Partner satisfaction with the way CRDC engages has remained unchanged at an overall rating of 8.3.
- In the 2019/20 exercise, feedback across the various Partners groups was largely consistent. Whereas in 2016 grower representative organisations and researcher partners were more critical in their ratings, the results this year suggest a more consistent response with perhaps industry representatives slightly more critical than the other groups.

As noted in 2016, it is important that CRDC also acknowledge and respond to the feedback provided by Partners.



what's working

The ratings and feedback provided in the 2019/20 exercise highlighted a number of perceived strengths of the current engagement and relationship with Partners. They included:

- ✓ acknowledgment that CRDC's motivation is driven by its role as an 'industry custodian'.

In an environment where there are at times competing priorities across Partners, this is an acknowledgement of CRDC's commitment to their strategic objective of benefiting Australia's cotton industry.

This 'whole of industry' posture is an important positioning for CRDC to continue to support.

- ✓ the commitment to invest in, develop and improve relationships with Partners.

A number of Partners identified a more proactive approach in recent times from CRDC to build, nurture and sustain open, frank and robust relationships with its industry partners.

Raising the bar on how engagement is conducted will create a 'new normal' in Partner expectations. There will likely be expectations that each and every touchpoint meet or beat these new benchmarks.

- ✓ the personal connections that underpin the engagement processes provide strong threads for engagement to build on.

Within a small industry, these types of relationship are possible and productive. The ongoing investment in establishing and nurturing these one to one relationships will deliver dividends for CRDC.

- ✓ a consistent acknowledgement of CRDC as one of the better performing RDCs.

While the size of the industry was acknowledged as arguably aiding a stronger performance, there was consensus CRDC operated more effectively, collaboratively and openly than other RDCs. A number of Partners characterised the industry as being more united with shared goals and objectives through the discussions and survey feedback.

- ✓ an effective management of changing industry conditions and the resultant reduction in available R&D investment funds.

Partners, while concerned about the changes, acknowledged CRDC for being proactive, transparent in their planning, clear in their communications and cognisant of the ramifications of budget tightening of its effect on Partner organisations.

The 'front foot' positioning CRDC has taken on pro-actively engaging Partners looks to have been acknowledged and delivered a relationship dividend.

where the opportunities for improvement are

It is often challenging when an organisation scores strong and consistent ratings to identify areas where improvement can be achieved. Partners, whilst providing a strong endorsement of the CRDC relationship, did identify a number of areas that could be strengthened. These include:

- o ensuring an empathy with & understanding of the Partner organisations, strategies and objectives is sustained. While this will be challenging (given the diversity of Partners and the capacity of CRDC), it is an area where CRDC could review what is being done now and what could be done better.

Most Partners acknowledged the changing nature of their (and other) organisations which place different pressures on existing partnerships.

- o a number of the key Partners identified the increased size of CRDC (staff numbers) as an issue which has attracted attention and concern of various Partners.

The concerns identified by these Partners related to an otherwise contracting investment pool, an outcome that appeared inconsistent with the larger size of the organisation. For some there was an opportunity for CRDC to exhibit leadership (for the industry more generally) and trim back the organisation to reflect the changes in available funding.

- o for some Partners, concerns over the level of bureaucracy created, at times, tension in the relationship.

There were calls from a small number of Partners for CRDC to cut the red tape, refine processes and build a posture towards and a capability around more flexibility, greater nimbleness and ability to respond more quickly.

- o the capability around, and lack of success at, delivering commercialisation outcomes was a concern for some Partners.

For some Partners there were clear suggestions about CRDC either ceasing attempts to achieve commercialisation or partner with the services available in other organisations (including other RDCs) to achieve better outcomes.

Research Program	The research program was designed to obtain feedback on the health of CRDC's relationship with their Partners. The research is aimed to provide some key indicator metrics together with some diagnostics that will provide insights to support a program that will deliver stronger relationships with these key Partners.
Target Audience	The target respondents for this research were identified by CRDC. A listing of the Partner organisations and the individual representatives that were in scope for the research were provided to Intuitive Solutions by CRDC.
Methodology	<p>A total of n=9 one on one telephone interviews were undertaken with key Partners. These interviews were conducted across the period of 5th December 2019 and 14th January 2020.</p> <p>For the online survey, a list of Partners was provided including the key contact details. The program initially targeted a total of n= 91 identified Partners. A total of n=43 surveys were completed with key Partners. This represents a 47% response rate.</p>
Questionnaire	<p>The online survey and face to face discussion guide explored issues on the following topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">o fundamentals of the partnership;o outcomes and dividends from the partnership;o empathy and alignment;o how CRDC do things;o key metrics; ando other feedback. <p>A range of Likert rating scale, closed and open-ended questions were used throughout the survey to accomplish this.</p>

Want more information?

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