

A photograph of three people standing in a field at sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow. The people are silhouetted against the bright light. One person on the left is wearing a cap and a plaid shirt, looking towards the center. A woman in the middle is wearing a white cap and a plaid shirt, holding a tablet. A man on the right is wearing a cap and a light-colored shirt, looking towards the woman. The background shows a field of crops under a hazy sky.

# Discussion Guide for the consultation and design of future investment planning

January 2025

**Hort**  
**Innovation**

# Investing in the future of Australian horticulture



Hort Innovation's investment planning system is critical to achieving our vision – a prosperous and sustainable industry, built on innovation.

With the current system of five-year industry Strategic Investment Plans (SIPs) due to expire by June 30, 2026, we are seeking to partner with industry to design future investment planning.

## Focus on the future

Our industry faces big challenges and big opportunities. Forecasts indicate that we will invest some \$814 million in levies and government contributions over the next five years.

In order to make the transformative investments that will underpin future success, we need a sound investment framework and a partnership with industry built on trust, transparency and a rigorous focus on impact.

## An invitation to collaborate

The Strategic Horticulture Investment Framework (SHIFt) program set out in this Discussion Guide is an invitation to Hort Innovation stakeholders to work together to design future investment planning and reporting that is effective and fit for purpose.

We aim to ignite an ambitious and creative dialogue about the future of Australian horticulture.

On behalf of the Hort Innovation team, we look forward to working closely with you to create this exciting future together.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brett Fifield', written in a cursive style.

Brett Fifield  
Chief Executive Officer, Hort Innovation

# Why are we developing a new investment planning model?

The current Strategic Investment Plans (SIPs) are the key documents guiding our levy investments through each industry fund.

The expiration of the current five-year plans by June 30, 2026, provides an opportunity to review the planning system and to explore more ambitious and effective planning models.

Outcomes we hope to achieve through this work include:

- Greater impact and value for industry
- Simplified planning and reporting
- Deeper engagement with industry stakeholders.

## Grower and Partner Survey (GaPS)

Hort Innovation's annual GaPS seeks industry views on our strategy and effectiveness. In the most recent (2024) GaPS, we learned that:

- 33% of grower respondents reported they understand their industry's SIP fairly well or very well, while just over one in three reported very little or no understanding of the SIP
- 29% of growers believe the industry SIPs and Annual Investment Plans (AIPs) align with the challenges growers face, down from 34% in 2023
- 85% of PIB respondents reported that SIPs align with industry needs 'well' or 'very well'.

# Approach and process

The SHIFt program comprises four distinct workstreams:

- Investment framework** – the structure, horizon and domain of the plans
- Users and needs** – systems and tools to make plans accessible and straightforward
- Investment content** – the strategic direction of investments, goals, priorities and evaluation
- Project management** – program governance and co-ordination.

We are prioritising industry consultation on the **investment framework**, with discussions on the **investment content** to follow later in 2025.

Set out on the following page are observations and feedback we have received about the current system, and questions you may wish to consider.

## Program timeline



# Observations on the current Strategic Investment Plans

The [current five year industry-based SIPs](#) have been largely effective as our primary tool for planning, evaluating and reporting on levy investments and to help ensure that levy investment decisions align with industry priorities.

We have consistently sought feedback from industry to inform continuous improvement of the SIPs system. This feedback includes:

## Structure

**Horizon** – the current five-year plans are not linked to either the timing challenges of certain industries, nor the range of project durations, or long-range issues

**Scope** – the current industry-based SIPs are in the same size, shape and format, regardless of size or complexity of a given industry

**Industry silos** – industry-specific plans create focus for decision makers from the particular industry, but may hamper opportunities for greater impact and efficiency through co-operation across industries

**Role of Annual Investment Plans (AIPs)** – the current system does not clearly distinguish between the role of the SIP (long-range strategic lens) and the AIP (near-term investment allocation).

## Usage

**Implementation** – There are opportunities to streamline the workflow and systems required to deliver industry investments

**Clarity of reporting** – Accurate and timely reporting of impact is critical to good decision making

**Accessibility** – broadening the circle of industry participants who can meaningfully consume and contribute to investment planning is a key priority.

## Content

**Duplication** – more than a third of the some 1,110 strategic goals in the current 37 SIPs are common to more than 10 industry SIPs, with two-thirds common to five or more. This suggests possible duplication of effort, compromising value-for-money of levy funds

**Snapshot** – the current five-year strategies are somewhat static, and are not formally reviewed or reshaped to respond to industry dynamics, emerging issues or opportunities to 'double-down' on successes

**Not 'FIT'** – the introduction of FIT (Foundational, Incremental, Transformational) thinking to Hort Innovation has the potential to unlock value and help industry funds go further, but the current SIP system is not built around the FIT model

**Proportionality** – SIPs do not immediately highlight the different weight we should give to various issues and opportunities

**Evaluation** – the new investment framework will incorporate a review of project and outcome metrics and inform future performance reporting

**Futures** – design of the current investment portfolios reflects current thinking, rather than desired future scenarios.

# Focus questions

## An open call for industry feedback

We invite all industry ideas and contribution to this process. To prompt thinking and discussion, some key questions are as follows:

### Horizon

- What are the benefits and drawbacks of the current five-year planning horizon?
- How might a new framework help industry to anticipate long-range scenarios and meet future challenges?
- What are the best approaches to review and update plans after they have been 'set'?
- How frequently and by what mechanisms might we revisit plans during the cycle, to ensure they remain relevant and flexible?

### Domain

- What is the most important information to be included in a SIP and how should it be structured?
- How could we better ensure that strategic intent clearly translates to investment allocation?
- What is the best way to incorporate industry-wide expertise into investment planning?
- How might we work together to develop impactful multi-industry / clustered programs and projects?
- How might Hort Innovation better align with the strategic plans of PIBs and industry participants?
- How might investment models benefit from portfolio thinking, including better allocation of funds to foundational, incremental and transformational investments?

### Impact evaluation and reporting

- What impact reporting will best support credibility and decision making?
- How can we better inform discussion about changes, pivots and refinements to investments?
- What evaluation and reporting improvements would industry like to see Hort Innovation focus on?
- What evaluation metrics would support the optimisation of scarce resources?

### User needs

- What are the preferred formats and dashboards for investment reporting to be presented?
- How can we broaden the circle of contributors to and users of our investment plans?

### Governance

- How should strategic investment plans be governed?
- What can Hort Innovation do to best ensure objective oversight of investment decisions?
- How can we ensure the industry is broadly represented in decision making and oversight?



# Seeking your feedback

## How you can participate

We are committed to a collaborative approach and will be seeking your feedback and contribution regularly throughout the next 12-18 months.

The closing date for feedback on this first framework stage is **May 4, 2025**.

Consultation on the content of investment plans will begin in August 2025 and continue through until May 2026.

Please contact us in any of the following ways:

- 🌿 [Click here](#) to provide your feedback in response to this Discussion Guide
- 🌿 Speak with Hort Innovation contacts, including your Industry Service Manager (ISM), whose contact details are available [here](#) on the Hort Innovation website
- 🌿 Email the SHIFt team at [shift@horticulture.com.au](mailto:shift@horticulture.com.au)
- 🌿 Attend industry meetings, the details of which will be regularly updated on the Hort Innovation website
- 🌿 Join webinars and online meetings, details of which will be advised on the Hort Innovation website.



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