

Project prioritisation process and criteria

Discussion Paper



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This document has been issued by Standards Australia for consultation and discussion with Standards Australia stakeholders and the general public. It is available for download from the Standards Australia website at: www.standards.org.au.

Please provide any comments via e-mail to prioritisation@standards.org.au by 26 March 2010.



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List of Acronyms

AS	– Australian Standard
CIS	– Customer Information Service
NZS	– New Zealand Standard
PMG	– Production Management Group
RM	– Relationship Manager/Relationship Management
SDC	– Standards Development Committee

Overview

The purpose of this document is to provide an overview of the criteria and process for the submission, assessment, selection and prioritisation of Standards development project proposals to be resourced by Standards Australia.

In November 2009, Standards Australia announced it would continue to direct its resources to the core function of Standards development through support of the following pathways:

- Standards Australia Driven
Standards Australia Driven projects must be approved for Standards Australia resourcing through the prioritisation process. This pathway primarily relies on Standards Australia's resources, project management expertise and infrastructure. Standards Australia Driven projects require commitment and active contribution from stakeholders over a defined period of time.
- Committee Driven
Committee Driven projects may be eligible for Standards Australia resourcing through the prioritisation process but with the main contribution coming from stakeholders. Under this pathway an appropriately skilled committee, in addition to providing the subject matter expertise, will take project management and secretariat responsibility for the project.
- Bureau
Bureau projects are resourced and managed by stakeholders with minimal Standards Australia resourcing allocated through the prioritisation process. Under this pathway, a single legal entity acts as a 'bureau' which takes responsibility for managing the committee, its activities and projects under a formal agreement with Standards Australia.

This framework was developed in conjunction with, and has the support of, the Commonwealth Government and major member groups. In addition, the stakeholder funded Collaborative pathway is also available:

- Collaborative
The Collaborative pathway offers stakeholders choice in resourcing levels and project timeframes. Collaborative projects will be subject to the same project proposal and Net Benefit requirements and will be assessed on the same criteria, but will not be prioritised and resourced as part of the twice yearly assessment and prioritisation process.

In brief, if a proposed Standards development project can demonstrate the delivery of Net Benefit to the Australian community, and to the extent that it is unable to be resourced from any other source, it may be progressed using Standards Australia resources allocated on a priority basis in accordance with the project prioritisation process outlined in this document.

The Standards Australia resources available for development projects will be determined annually by Standards Australia's Board, taking into account the necessity to operate on a sustainable basis. The project prioritisation and selection process will be run twice per year, in April and October. Prioritisation and selection of projects will be determined by the Standards Development Committee using the framework and criteria described in this paper.

If Standards Australia receives more proposals than it is able to support then Standards Australia will not be able to resource all proposed projects, even if they satisfy the selection criteria. Standards Australia may also choose not to provide resourcing at the level sought by any particular proposal.

1 Guiding principles

The following key principles are set out to provide a clear decision making framework for the prioritisation process:

- The prioritisation process applies to projects resourced by Standards Australia that are:
 - new or revised Australian Standards or joint AS/NZS Standards
 - Australian or joint adoptions of International Standards
 - new or revised Handbooks or other publications
 - Australian involvement in International Standards development
 - annual support for ongoing oversight of national schemes and marks
- This process covers requests by proponents for support for projects and activities under the following pathways:
 - Standards Australia Driven
 - Committee Driven
 - Bureau
- This process has been established to prioritise Standards Australia support to Standards development projects that are of high priority to the nation and are unable to be fully funded by stakeholders.
- The criteria and process for proposal submission, assessment, selection and prioritisation will be publicly available on the Standards Australia website. Clear guidance on Net Benefit and other definitions will be provided.
- The scale of the proposal and Net Benefit case required of proponents will be relevant to project size and significance (e.g. a minor amendment or confirmation will require less detail).
- The criteria will be applied equally for every proposal and for subsequent rounds of proposals, although some modification may be required to accommodate lessons learnt following the initial rounds.
- The process for assessment, selection and prioritisation of new projects needs to be cost-effective for Standards Australia. Standards Australia may need to scale the process to ensure adequate and equal consideration of all proposals, if demand for new projects exceeds expectations.
- Approved projects will receive a level of service and support as defined by Standards Australia for each of its pathways, consistent across the portfolio of projects.
- Where there is a critical requirement for a new project Standards Australia's Production Management Group may, at its discretion, use the criteria to assess and recommend proposals for approval between assessment cycles.

The Standards Development Committee (SDC) is the approving body for the prioritised allocation of resources to Standards development projects, informed by Standards Australia's assessment and the recommendations of Standards Australia's Production Management Group (PMG).

2 Process

The process described below is provided as a diagram at Appendix A.

2.1 Proposal development and submission

Anyone wishing to propose a new Standards Australia project (a 'proponent') will need to download a copy of the project proposal form from the Standards Australia website, where guidance on completion and best practice examples will also be available. A proposal may be for a single project or for a program of work consisting of multiple defined projects.

Proponents are invited to contact a Standards Australia Relationship Manager (RM) to discuss their proposal and to receive advice on how to complete their proposal form. Contact with the RM team at this point will ensure that proponents are aware that new Australian Standards should not duplicate existing Australian or International Standards, ensure maximum alignment with International

Standards, and require a committed and balanced committee to develop them. RMs can also advise proponents of the existence of committees operating in their field of interest.

Proposals will need to be lodged with Standards Australia by the closing date. All proposals received will be listed on Standards Australia's website following the closing date for the public to review. Interested parties may contact Standards Australia's Relationship Management team to discuss publicly listed proposals further.

Standards Australia's Production Management Group may use its discretion to consider and approve minor projects requiring minimal resources to maintain the integrity of an existing document (e.g. correction amendments or minor technical amendments), without completing a full proposal.

2.2 Assessment

Standards Australia will confirm formal receipt of all proposals. The Customer Information Service (CIS) will be the initial point of contact for receiving and documenting proposals. Copies of all proposals will be publicly posted on the Standards Australia website.

Proposals need to address all sections of the proposal form, including providing a Net Benefit case.

Each proposal will be first reviewed for quality and capability. Following this initial appraisal, proponents may be asked to supply additional information.

If a proposal does not meet the basic criteria of quality and completeness, Standards Australia may exercise its discretion to not consider the proposal further. Proponents should be prepared to substantiate claims made in proposals if required.

Evidence of commitment of resources and commitment to timeframes from a balanced group of multiple stakeholder interests is mandatory – the proponents should have circulated the proposal to stakeholders and have documented responses to provide, if required. Additionally, if the proposal suggests a revision of an existing Standard, all organisations involved in the development of the existing Standard should be notified of the intention to revise the Standard.

If stakeholder groups are receiving substantial external funding to progress a project, proponents should be considering using the collaborative pathway, without needing additional resources from Standards Australia.

The formal assessment process consists of all proposals being individually assessed against the criteria described in Section 3 below, on the basis of information provided in the proposal.

The projected resource requirements for each project will be determined and will be used to assist in determining resource allocation across the project portfolio.

All project assessments and costings will be reviewed to prioritise the entire portfolio of projects.

2.3 PMG review and SDC approval

The Production Management Group will review the assessments and make recommendations to the Standards Development Committee for approval. The mix of pathways for approved projects will depend on the level of resources available for the full portfolio. Various scenarios may be modelled for consideration and approval.

The Standards Development Committee will approve a defined program of work and allocation of resources to projects across the available pathways, and identify projects which are not approved for that round.

2.4 Project scheduling and commencement

All proponents will be notified of the outcome of their proposal, and a list of all approved projects will be made available on the Standards Australia website.

Projects will be scheduled to commence as soon as possible considering assessed priority and availability of suitable resources to support the appropriate pathway. This means that start dates may be staggered depending on priority.

Each approved project will operate under an agreement that outlines the roles and responsibilities of Standards Australia and the relevant stakeholders. The agreement will indicate agreed timelines, resourcing mix and deliverables. Failure to meet agreed timeframes may put future support at risk.

2.5 Non-approved projects

Projects that do not receive Standards Australia support in any selection round, but meet the project proposal and Net Benefit criteria, may be submitted at any subsequent time through another stakeholder funded pathway, or resubmitted for reconsideration to future prioritisation rounds seeking Standards Australia support.

3 Criteria

The following criteria will be applied to the assessment of all proposals. While the primary criterion is Net Benefit, the impact of all other factors will be considered in the individual assessment of each proposal and in the comparison of projects across the portfolio of projects being considered. Appendix B provides further detail on these criteria.

Stage of process	Criteria applied	Sub-criteria
Preliminary Assessment	Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completeness • Clarity • Positive Net Benefit (indicative) • No duplication • Dependencies • Options and alternatives considered
	Capability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder support • Committee capability • Funding provided
Proposal Evaluation	Assessment measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Net Benefit - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Public Health and Safety impact ○ Social and Community impact ○ Environmental impact ○ Competition ○ Economic impact • Strategic alignment to national interest and public policy issues • Evidence of market failure • References in legislation and other standards • International alignment • Breadth and depth of application
Costing	Resource requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project type • Product type • Project complexity • Likelihood of success • Pathway
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessed benefit • Resource requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All proposal assessments are compiled, prioritised and ranked as a portfolio, based on weighted Net Benefit score, alignment to public priority, breadth and depth of application, international alignment, sectoral diversity, project • Likelihood of success Pathway
Review	Portfolio scenarios	Review of scenarios by PMG
Approval	Options	Final decision by SDC

3.1 Quality

Every project proposal will be subject to a preliminary assessment to ensure it meets quality and completeness criteria and that the project is clearly and reasonably defined. The preliminary assessment will identify that projects have appropriate Net Benefit cases and do not duplicate or overlap published and 'in development' Australian or International Standards. If positive Net Benefit is not demonstrated, then the proposal is not suitable for consideration as an Australian Standard, and the project will not be considered further. If these conditions are satisfied, the proposal will be fully evaluated.

3.2 Capability

The proponent and stakeholder group will need to demonstrate their capability to undertake the project. Standards Australia will take into consideration factors including previous experience in delivering successful standardisation projects in the proposed field.

3.3 Net Benefit

The main criterion for project prioritisation is Net Benefit to the Australian community. This is a combination of the sums of negative and positive impacts across each of the agreed Net Benefit criteria described in Standards Australia's Guide to Net Benefit.

Each of the Net Benefit sub-criteria are assessed on a defined scale taking into account potential positive and negative impacts on different stakeholders – for example, on a relevant community of interest versus the Australian community as a whole. Standards Australia will apply qualitative examination and considered judgement to the assessment of each project as necessary.

Where a program of work is proposed under a single Net Benefit case, proponents will need to provide appropriate detail, including the scope, duration and risks of each project and internally prioritise the projects within the program.

3.4 Assessment measures

Other major criteria to be flagged as additional indicators of priority are:

- Strategic alignment to national interest and public policy issues;
- Evidence of market failure;
- References in legislation;
- International alignment;
- Breadth and depth of application; and
- Industry sector.

These factors will be reviewed to ensure balance in the portfolio of Standards Australia funded projects.

3.5 Resource requirements

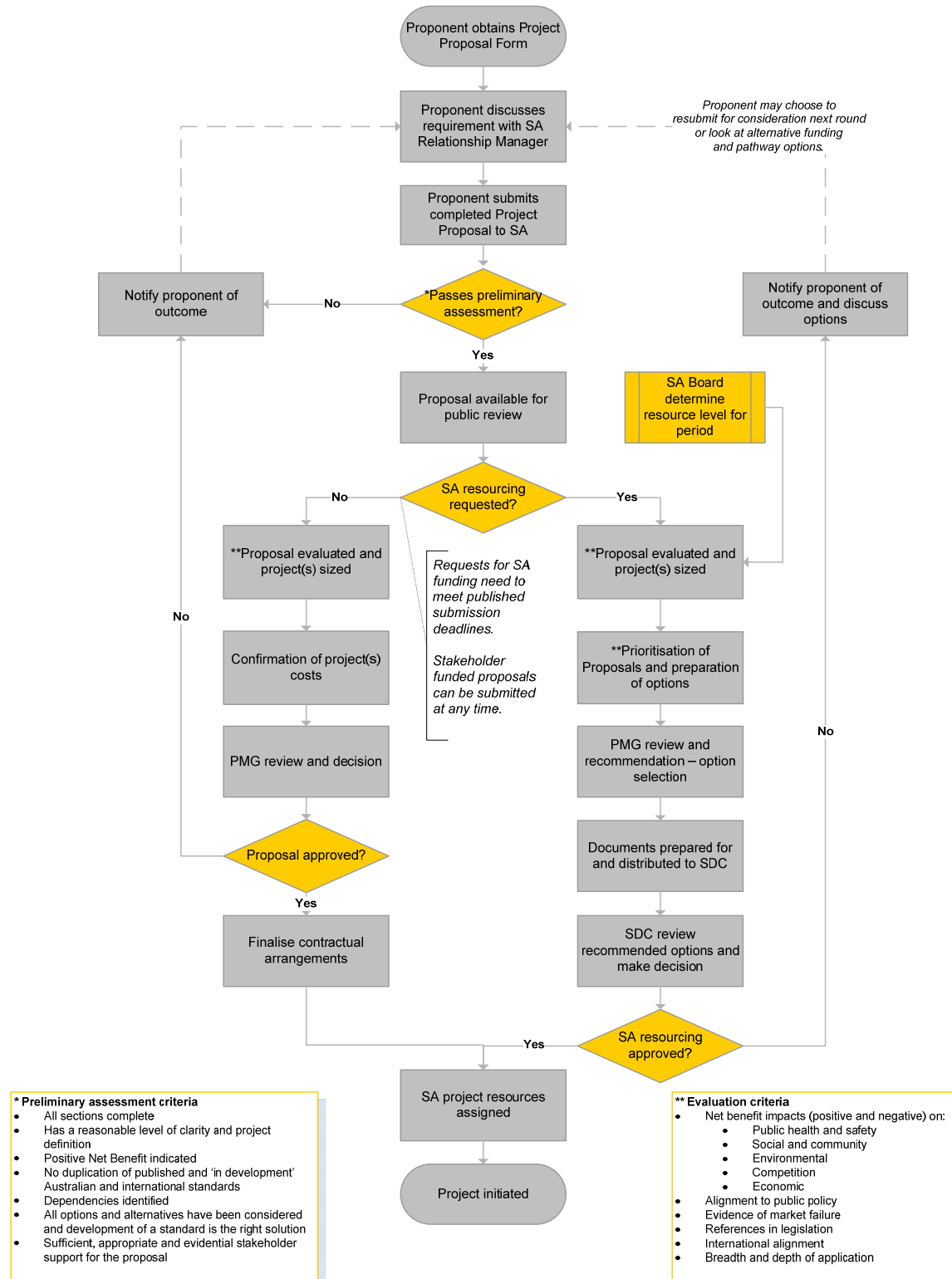
Additional criteria applied to differentiate project priority include:

- Declared preference for a particular pathway;
- Product and project type;
- Size/dimension of project (combination of document size, project type, complexity);
- Likelihood of project success; and
- Expected project duration.

4 Conclusion

The project assessment and prioritisation criteria and process described in this document is subject to refinement following stakeholder feedback, and will be implemented in the first half of 2010.

Appendix A: Process for evaluation of project proposals for Standards development



Appendix B: Prioritisation Criteria

Preliminary Assessment Criteria

Stage of Process	Criteria	Detail	Comment
Preliminary Assessment	Quality	Completeness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All sections of proposal form completed
		Clarity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposal has a reasonable level of clarity and project/ program definition
		Positive Net Benefit (indicative)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On initial review the proposal indicates a positive Net Benefit case
		No Duplication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not duplicate published and 'in development' Australian and/or International Standards
		Dependencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifies any interdependencies with other Standards that may require consequential changes
		Options & alternatives considered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proponent has considered options and alternatives to the development of an Australian Standard, such as the development of industry codes or guidelines, or regulation
	Capability	Stakeholder support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of commitment of resources/to timeframes from a balanced group of multiple stakeholder interests
		Committee capability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capability/ previous experience in delivering successful standardisation projects
		Funding available	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Declaration of any funding received or allocated by the Committee, its members or related stakeholders for the proposed project/program.

*Draft for discussion purposes only***Evaluation and Prioritisation Criteria**

Stage of Process	Criteria	Detail	Comment
Proposal Evaluation	Net Benefit	Public Health and Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe how the Standard will improve public and/or workplace health or safety; Demonstrate that the Standard is the most appropriate method to improve health or safety; and Summarise the overall health and safety impact of the Standard.
		Social and Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider the social and community impact of the Standard including 'intangible' costs and benefits borne by different sectors of the community, including the most vulnerable consumers or end users (such as better information; improvements to products and services; more reliable outcomes); and Summarise the overall social and community impact of the Standard.
		Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider the environmental impact of the Standard, including 'intangible' costs and benefits (e.g. noise; pollution; amenity); and Summarise the overall environmental impact of the Standard.
		Competition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe how the Standard enables international alignment in global markets; Identify potential competition restrictions or improvements that may result from the Standard; Identify potential impacts upon innovation; Detail how the Standard can enable most widely used technology and/or supports international interoperability (demonstrate if applicable); and Summarise the overall impacts on competition.
		Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider the economic impact of the Standard over its life on different sectors of the community, such as consumers, manufacturers, small business, suppliers etc; Detail the impacts which may include elements such as increased/decreased costs; increased/reduced utility; redistribution of wealth; inequitable impacts across or between sectors; inequitable impacts on the most vulnerable consumers or end users; employment; economic growth or contraction, productivity outcomes; and Summarise the overall economic impact on the community.

Draft for discussion purposes only

Stage of Process	Criteria	Detail	Comment
Proposal Evaluation	Assessment Measures	Strategic alignment to national interest and public policy issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public and national interest objectives as specified by the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments will be taken into account.
		Evidence of market failure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence provided that there is a fundamental issue that can be defined as market failure and that an Australian Standard is the best or most appropriate solution. The most common types of market failures that may be addressed are need for a public utility, negative externalities, information asymmetry, and consumer safety issues, particularly where the consumer or end user may not have an identified proponent to represent them, other than government.
		References in legislation and other standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> References to the Australian Standard in primary legislation, subsidiary legislation or other statutory rules made under the authority of the Commonwealth, a State or Territory or in other standards.
		International Alignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specifies level of alignment to relevant international activity where there is an existing International Standard or project
		Breadth and depth of application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indicates size and diversity of impact of the standard on various elements of the Australian community

Costing

Stage of Process	Criteria	Detail	Comment
Costing	Resource requirements	Designation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Type of project/activity to be delivered, whether Australian specific, joint development with Standards NZ or participation in the development of an international Standard or Committee
		Project type	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indicates the type of project and change to the Standard – New, Revision, Amendment or Reconfirmation
		Product type	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirms whether project is for a Standard, Handbook, Technical Report or other document
		Project complexity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Combination of document size, project duration, consensus risks, project type, likelihood of successful outcome to calculate an overall project complexity
		Likelihood of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anticipated risks to the building of consensus which may jeopardise successful project completion to agreed timeframes have been identified
		Pathway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preference of pathway as specified by the proponent

Appendix C: Q&As

What do I need to do to get my project approved?

You need to complete and submit a project proposal form by the closing deadline. You should ensure that all parts of the form are completed, including preparation of a Net Benefit case, and that your proposal has the support and commitment of other interested stakeholders.

What are the key dates for the submissions and evaluations?

Submissions are due by 30 April 2010. Proposals may be discussed with Standards Australia Relationship Managers before this date. Proponents will be notified of the outcome of their proposal by the end of June 2010. A further round of assessments will take place in October. Closing dates for future rounds will be advised on Standards Australia's website.

What forms do I need? Where do I get them from?

New project proposal forms and guidance material are available from the Standards Australia website www.standards.org.au

Who should I talk to before submitting a proposal for a Standards Australia project?

You can discuss your idea for a Standards development project with the Standards Australia's Relationship Management team at any time. You should also talk to other stakeholders who may be interested in the field, or in participating in the development of your project. This could include representatives of industry, unions, Commonwealth, State, Territory or local Governments, regulators, academics or researchers, consumers or other users of the proposed Standard.

How long will it take me to prepare a proposal?

The completion of the project proposal form to a reasonable degree of quality will depend in part on the complexity of the proposed project. Larger projects or programs of work will require greater levels of detail than simple or minor projects. The depth of detail required in the Net Benefit case will depend on the level of impact of the Standard. More detail and quantitative data will assist us in assessing the potential impacts of your proposal. It is also important to allocate plenty of time to circulate and discuss your proposal with other interested stakeholders and to take into account their opinions and comments.

What are the Standards development "pathways"?

The pathways form a spectrum of involvement, resourcing and responsibility by stakeholders and Standards Australia for Standards development projects. For further detail, please see the Pathways Guide on www.standards.org.au (currently under revision). Summarised characteristics of each Standards development pathway are provided below.

- **Standards Australia Driven**
Standards Australia Driven projects must be approved for Standards Australia resourcing through the prioritisation process. This pathway primarily relies on Standards Australia's resources, project management expertise and infrastructure. Standards Australia Driven projects require commitment and active contribution from stakeholders over a defined period of time.
- **Committee Driven**
Committee Driven projects may be eligible for Standards Australia resourcing through the prioritisation process, or may be funded by stakeholders. Under this pathway an appropriately skilled committee, in addition to providing the subject matter expertise, will take project management and secretariat responsibility for the project.
- **Bureau**
Bureau projects may be funded by stakeholders or may be eligible for Standards Australia resourcing through the prioritisation process. Under this pathway, a single legal entity acts as a 'bureau' which takes responsibility for managing the committee, its activities and projects under a formal agreement with Standards Australia.
- **Collaborative**
The Collaborative pathway provides a customised approach where stakeholders and Standards Australia jointly drive and resource a project through a negotiated sharing of responsibility.

Who can I ask for help if I don't understand something?

Standards Australia's Customer Information Service (CIS) is the first point of contact for project proponents. They will be able to assist with finding forms and guidance materials and proposal submissions, or can refer you to Standards Australia's Relationship Management team for more specific guidance on individual proposals.

Why do you have new criteria?

The criteria described above are not new. The individual approval of projects has always considered these factors. However, as this is the first time that proposals will be submitted, assessed and approved in bulk, it is appropriate to make transparent all the factors considered as part of the approval process. The criteria and prioritisation process will assist Standards Australia to prioritise projects and ensure the organisation does not operate beyond its means.

How much funding is available from Standards Australia?

The resources available for Standards Australia funded projects will be determined annually by Standards Australia's Board, taking into account the necessity to operate on a sustainable basis.

How will the resource requirements for my project be determined?

Standards Australia has a consistent internal methodology to scope and determine appropriate resourcing for all pathways and project types for Standards development.

How will you split up approvals between new, revisions, international, Standards Australia Driven and Committee Driven projects?

There is no pre-determined split of resources or approvals across different project types. The entire body of proposals received will be assessed and prioritised on the basis of the criteria described to determine the balance of the portfolio of approved projects.

How are the different industry sectors being treated?

Standards Australia will ensure that there is an appropriate balance of support across the twelve industry sectors.

Who makes the decisions?

Each year, taking into account the necessity to operate on a sustainable basis, the Standards Australia Board determines the resources available for Standards Australia funded projects. The Standards Development Committee approves the selection and prioritisation of projects and allocation of resources to Standards development. It is assisted by the Production Management Group, composed of Standards Australia's Standards Development executive team.

Who is the SDC?

The Standards Development Committee is a committee of the Standards Australia Board responsible for the oversight of Standards Australia's priorities for Standards development, ensuring process approval for the publication of Australian Standards. It is composed of representatives of Standards Australia's members. The Standards Development Committee will be expanded in 2010 to include additional representation of Standards Australia members, who will be appointed by the Standards Australia Board. In circumstances where additional information may be required by the SDC to assess proposals, it may seek the advice of suitably qualified experts.

When will my project start if it is approved?

All approved projects will commence in the 2010-11 financial year when appropriate resources become available. Standards Australia is committed to finalising existing active projects within defined timeframes.

What can I do to accelerate development of my project?

The commitment of stakeholders to completing a project will be a key factor in the time it takes to draft a Standard. If there is a delay in the commencement of a project due to the prioritisation of Standards Australia resources, stakeholders may choose to negotiate a revised commencement date under the Collaborative pathway.

What happens to my proposal if it is not approved for Standard's Australia support in the current project round?

You may submit your proposal in subsequent project approval rounds or contact Standards Australia's Relationship Management team to discuss options under the Collaborative or ABSDO pathways.

Do I have to wait for the next round if my project is urgent?

Stakeholder funded pathways are open to receive new project proposals at any time. Please contact the Standards Australia Relationship Management team to discuss your proposal. Standards Australia may consider proposals for approval in between selection rounds in exceptional circumstances.

How are ongoing commitments to Australian participation in international committee work handled?

Projects which solely involve participation in International Standards development (as a precursor to Australian adoption once published) will be considered against the same criteria as proposals for the development of an Australian Standard. As the majority of international participation is organised via standing committees and project timeframes are largely out of the control of Standards Australia, it is important that resources are assigned for a specific period and then reviewed at the end of this period to establish whether the work continues to be a priority. The current process for requesting travel funding to attend international meetings remains unchanged.