

# Biosecurity Emergency Management

## National Biosecurity Response Team Arrangements

2017-2019



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The National Biosecurity Response Team Arrangements have been developed by the Australian Government Department of Agriculture and Water Resources, in consultation with Animal Health Australia, Plant Health Australia and the following state and territory biosecurity agencies:

- Department of Agriculture and Food Western Australia
- Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment Tasmania
- Department of Primary Industries, New South Wales
- Department of Primary Industry and Resources, Northern Territory
- Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, Queensland
- Territory and Municipal Services, Australian Capital Territory
- Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources, Victoria
- Primary Industries and regions, South Australia

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Authority**

This document has been prepared by the Australian Government Department of Agriculture and Water Resources, in consultation with state and territory biosecurity agencies, Animal Health Australia and Plant Health Australia. The arrangements described in the document were endorsed by the National Biosecurity Committee on 15 February 2017.

### **1.2 Background**

Initially, a national Rapid Response Team was established in 2003 to assist smaller jurisdictions such as Northern Territory, South Australia and Tasmania, in the initial establishment of a Local Control Centre and State Coordination Centre during the response to an emergency animal disease. However it soon became evident that the national Rapid Response Team was a significant national asset that should be made available to all states and territories.

Over time the national Rapid Response Team has developed into a pool of response personnel that can be called upon to assist with all types of biosecurity responses. It comprises personnel with a range of skills, knowledge and experiences across a range of biosecurity sectors and can be called upon to perform a number of functions in a biosecurity response.

In recognising the value of the national Rapid Response Team, the National Biosecurity Committee agreed in January 2015 to formally broaden the scope of the emergency animal disease-focussed national Rapid Response Team to encompass animal, plant, aquatic and environment sectors. For the purpose of this document this cross sectoral resource is referred to as the National Biosecurity Response Team (NBRT).

To fulfil this requirement, the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources has consulted with representatives from state and territory biosecurity agencies, Animal Health Australia and Plant Health Australia. Throughout this consultation the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources maintained communication with the National Biosecurity Emergency Preparedness Expert Group. The arrangements described in this document represent the outcomes from this consultation.

### **1.3 Purpose of this document**

The purpose of this document is to outline the agreed arrangements for the NBRT over 2017-19. This includes:

- purpose of the NBRT
- role of the NBRT in preparing for and responding to biosecurity incidents
- structure of the NBRT
- governance arrangements for the ongoing management of the NBRT
- resourcing the NBRT

- management arrangements for the NBRT in both preparing for and responding to biosecurity incidents
- activities relevant to the NBRT
- funding arrangements for the NBRT.

This document provides guidance to the agencies involved in the management of the NBRT as well as a point of reference for future negotiations in relation to the application of the NBRT in preparing for and responding to biosecurity incidents.

### 1.4 Review

The arrangements outlined in this document will be reviewed every two years and/or as necessary to ensure that the NBRT continues to meet the needs of biosecurity agencies in preparing for and responding to biosecurity incidents.

## 2. PURPOSE OF THE NBRT

The purpose of the NBRT is to develop and maintain a pool of response ready personnel, across Australia, which can be accessed by a jurisdiction's biosecurity agency when responding to a biosecurity incident.

In fulfilling this purpose, the NBRT will provide access to:

- a cohort of mentors that can be called upon to assist a jurisdiction in establishing its initial response arrangements
- a cohort of response personnel that are able to perform a range of response functions within a State Coordination Centre or Local Control Centre, at any stage during the response to a biosecurity incident.

To achieve this, members of the NBRT will be provided with opportunities to participate in professional development activities and exercises relevant to their nominated function in the NBRT.

The NBRT is not a replacement for jurisdictional responsibilities to develop and train its own response personnel. It does however provide opportunities for enhancing the capability of jurisdictions to manage responses to biosecurity incidents by providing personnel to be part of this national cohort.

Being a member of the NBRT provides an opportunity for biosecurity response personnel to participate in activities that would not normally be available within their own jurisdiction. Examples include:

- establishing networks and sharing experiences, skills and knowledge with other biosecurity response personnel across Australia
- participating in professional development activities relevant to their biosecurity response function/s
- practicing biosecurity response functions in a large scale functional exercise
- opportunity to mentor response personnel from other jurisdictions during exercises and the response to biosecurity incidents.

## **3. ROLE OF THE NBRT**

### **3.1 Preparing for response to biosecurity incidents**

The role of the NBRT in preparing for response to biosecurity incidents is to maintain and enhance the skills and knowledge of a national pool of 'response ready' personnel.

This will be achieved through NBRT members:

- participating in a suite of professional development activities that includes training, workshops and exercises
- establishing and maintaining networks with other NBRT members, across Australia
- sharing of knowledge, experiences, procedures and work products that are relevant to their function within the NBRT.

Importantly, NBRT members are drawn from existing resources within each jurisdiction and as such, the NBRT builds on the preparedness work already undertaken by jurisdictions as part of 'normal commitments' to establish and maintain their own capability to respond to biosecurity incidents.

### **3.2 Responding to biosecurity incidents**

The role of the NBRT in supporting a jurisdiction during the response to biosecurity incidents is two-fold, i.e.:

- Provide access to highly trained and experienced mentors at the initial stage of a response, in order to establish arrangements and provide guidance to less experienced response personnel.
- Provide access to additional response personnel for incident management functions within a State Coordination Centre or Local Control Centres.

The success of the NBRT in being able to support jurisdictions during the response to a biosecurity incident is reliant upon the ongoing support of all jurisdictions, particularly in relation to availability of appropriate personnel for deployment. Where practical, NBRT members should be released for deployment without delay unless:

- they are unavailable due to personal reasons (e.g. health or family commitments)
- work commitments exist that are of a higher priority than the biosecurity incident
- the risk of the biosecurity incident to a supporting jurisdiction is such that the NBRT member is not able to be released.

#### **3.2.1 Interstate Deployment Arrangements for Biosecurity Responses**

During biosecurity incidents:

- NBRT members should be identified as a priority resource that can be made available to support the affected jurisdiction/s
- NBRT deployments will be managed using the arrangements described in the *Interstate Deployment Arrangements for Biosecurity Responses*.



## 4. STRUCTURE OF THE NBRT

The NBRT includes two distinct cohorts of personnel, i.e. a mentor cohort and an Incident Management Team functional cohort.

The **mentor cohort** includes up to 20 personnel that can be deployed to another jurisdiction to assist that jurisdiction to establish its initial response structure and to provide guidance to less experienced response personnel.

The Incident Management Team **functional cohort** includes up to 50 personnel that can be deployed to another jurisdiction and are able to perform one or more incident management functions within a State Coordination Centre or Local Control Centre.

This structure recognises that there are other specialist resources that may not be members of the NBRT, which may also be called upon to assist a jurisdiction responding to a biosecurity incident, these include:

- other personnel in biosecurity agencies with response experience, skills and knowledge relevant to the particular response
- past members of the NBRT (or its previous iterations)
- staff with expertise specific to the needs of a particular response, such as:
  - epidemiologists
  - laboratory staff
  - plant pathologists and entomologists
  - veterinarians.

## 5. GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

The governance structure for the ongoing management of the NBRT and the associated arrangements will include:

- National Biosecurity Committee
- National Biosecurity Emergency Preparedness Expert Group
- NBRT Advisory Group

The **National Biosecurity Committee** provides executive level support to the NBRT. In doing this, the National Biosecurity Committee will consider and agree on the arrangements described in this document. In particular it will:

- approve the financial arrangements required to support the ongoing management and activities of the NBRT
- nominate a point of contact in each jurisdiction to coordinate relevant aspects of the management of the NBRT, in particular identifying and nominating potential NBRT members.

The **National Biosecurity Emergency Preparedness Expert Group** will provide strategic guidance and a jurisdictional perspective on the purpose and direction of the NBRT. In doing this the National Biosecurity Emergency Preparedness Expert Group will:

- nominate representatives to the NBRT Advisory Group
- approve an annual activity plan for the NBRT
- establish a schedule for future NBRT exercises
- ensure coordination of effort between the NBRT Advisory Group and task groups established by the National Biosecurity Emergency Preparedness Expert Group
- report to the National Biosecurity Committee on activities undertaken by the NBRT.

The **NBRT Advisory Group** will provide operational direction for the NBRT. In doing this they will:

- identify the number of people required to maintain an effective NBRT
- perform the role of NBRT recruiting panel, in order to:
  - manage the nomination and recruiting processes for NBRT members
  - guide and endorse recommendations for exit/demobilisation of NBRT members
- identify appropriate activities required to develop and maintain the NBRT
- develop an annual activity plan for the NBRT
- participate in the development of activities and exercises that are developed for the professional development of NBRT members
- maintain this document and progressively develop policies to manage the NBRT
- provide an annual activity report to the National Biosecurity Emergency Preparedness Expert Group on activities undertaken by NBRT members.

The NBRT Advisory Group will be chaired by the Australian Government Department of Agriculture and Water Resources, with administrative support provided by Animal Health Australia.

Membership of the NBRT Advisory Group will include representatives from:

- Australian Government Department of Agriculture and Water Resources
- Animal Health Australia
- Plant Health Australia
- at least two state/territory biosecurity agencies.

State and territory representatives will be nominated by the National Biosecurity Emergency Preparedness Expert Group. In doing so, the Expert Group will endeavour to ensure that there is equitable representation across biosecurity sectors and jurisdictions.

The NBRT Advisory Group will maintain contact with task groups established by the National Biosecurity Emergency Preparedness Expert Group to ensure a coordinated effort in developing and maintaining the NBRT and reducing the likelihood of duplication.

## **6. RESOURCING THE NBRT**

### **6.1 Recruiting processes**

The Department of Agriculture and Water Resources, in consultation with Animal Health Australia, Plant Health Australia and state and territory biosecurity agencies, will design a nomination, recruiting and exit/demobilisation process for NBRT members. This process will be coordinated and executed through the NBRT Advisory Group.

In selecting members of the NBRT, consideration will be given to ensuring that there is an equitable spread across jurisdictions, biosecurity sectors and incident management functions performed in a State Coordination Centre and Local Control Centre. Selection processes will clearly articulate the requirements of being a member of the NBRT.

While recruiting may occur throughout the year to fill critical vacancies, a formal annual program will typically be conducted. The criteria for nomination and selection will be based on a written application that includes support from a nominee's jurisdiction and demonstrates relevant experience in responses and/or exercises.

Selection of new recruits will be coordinated to ensure that it allows sufficient time for NBRT members to be inducted into the NBRT and participate in either an NBRT professional development activity or jurisdiction based exercise in their first year.

In nominating to be a member of the NBRT, personnel and their management are agreeing to a commitment to:

- participate in the relevant induction, professional development activities and exercises that are being conducted for the NBRT
- be available to participate in deployments to another jurisdiction, nominally of two weeks in duration.

### **6.2 Mentor cohort**

The mentor cohort will include up to 20 members.

The mentor cohort is a pool of personnel that can be called upon to assist and guide a jurisdiction when establishing its initial response structures.

When deployed, mentors will work alongside jurisdictional response staff in order for them to perform their assigned incident management function/s.

While it is ideal that during a response, mentor/s be present in the respective State Coordination Centre or Local Control Centre in the first instant, the role of mentor may be able to be performed remotely via regular telephone/video contact.

#### **6.2.1 Skills, knowledge and attributes**

Members of the mentor cohort will:

- have performed the incident management function they are mentoring in an actual response
- have a high level of experience in and understanding of emergency management and/or incident management systems and their application in a biosecurity context

- have the appropriate temperament to mentor others in a high pressure response environment.

Priority will be given to applicants who possess or are actively obtaining relevant incident management training or qualifications, this includes the Certificate IV or Diploma level biosecurity response qualifications.

As part of their participation in the NBRT, members of the mentor cohort will be provided an opportunity to participate in 'mentor' training, as well as practicing this role during NBRT exercises and other professional development activities.

### **6.2.2 Tenure**

Members of the mentor cohort will be appointed initially for three years. This appointment will be reviewed at the end of this period and may be extended for a further three years. Further appointments will be considered on a case by case basis.

## **6.3 Incident Management Team functional cohort**

The Incident Management Team functional cohort will include up to 50 members.

The Incident Management Team functional cohort is a pool of personnel that can be called upon to perform a range of response functions within a State Coordination Centre or Local Control Centre. These response functions include:

- Incident Management (Coordination/Control)
- Liaison Management
- Public Information
- Planning
- Operations
- Logistics.

For the purpose of the NBRT, members of the Incident Management Team functional cohort should be willing and able to perform a number of roles within their nominated function. For example, a person nominated to Planning activities could be called upon to undertake any one or more of the functions within the Planning section during a response, such as Situation and Assessment or Response Planning.

### **6.3.1 Skills, knowledge and attributes**

Members of the Incident Management Team functional cohort will, as far as possible:

- have performed the incident management function they are nominating for in an actual response
- have experience in and understanding of incident management systems and their application in a biosecurity context.

Priority will be given to applicants who possess or are actively obtaining relevant incident management training or qualifications, this includes the Certificate III biosecurity response qualification, or above.

### 6.3.2 Tenure

Members of the Incident Management Team functional cohort will be appointed initially for three years and may apply for an extension of a further three years.

At any time, members of the Incident Management Team functional cohort with sufficient skills and experience may apply for a position within the mentor cohort.

## 7. MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

The management and administration of the NBRT is a joint approach, involving shared responsibilities between the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources, Animal Health Australia, Plant Health Australia and state/territory biosecurity agencies.

The division of responsibilities is detailed in [Appendix 1](#) and recognises the need for continued jurisdictional support through financial contribution and provision of resources for the development, conduct and evaluation of NBRT related activities.

## 8. ACTIVITIES

The continued success of the NBRT is underpinned by a regular program of activities that are designed to support and develop the skills and knowledge of the NBRT members. As a minimum, these activities will include:

- annual recruiting for new/replacement members
- induction of new members into the NBRT
- an annual professional development activity (this may be NBRT specific or include participation in a jurisdiction based exercise)
- facilitating opportunities for NBRT members to participate in other development activities in their home or another jurisdiction.

The significant value to NBRT members from participating in large scale functional exercise is recognised by all jurisdictions. However, as these exercises are costly, time consuming and require a significant contribution from the host jurisdiction, the interval of large scale exercises should be biennial (i.e. every two years), with smaller scale exercises and/or professional development activities being conducted in alternate years.

Based on a three year tenure (which is seen as a minimum) a member of the NBRT could expect to participate in the following:

- first year:
  - NBRT induction (two days)
  - NBRT professional development activity or jurisdiction based exercise (up to five days)
- subsequent years:
  - NBRT professional development activity or jurisdiction based exercise (up to five days)

- where identified and available, provided with the opportunity to participate in role/function specific activity hosted by their home or another jurisdiction.

Further, NBRT members may be nominated to participate in the review or development of materials specific to their function within the NBRT (e.g. procedures, training materials).

### **8.1 Induction of new members**

New members of the NBRT will participate in an induction activity, designed to prepare them for participating in the NBRT and any upcoming professional development activity or exercise.

The induction activity should provide an opportunity for new members to:

- understand the purpose of the NBRT and its responsibilities in preparing for and responding to biosecurity incidents
- develop networks within the NBRT
- prepare for their nominated function in the NBRT.

The induction activity, should also provide an opportunity for one or more existing NBRT member/s to share their experiences with new members.

It is anticipated that the length of this induction will be in the order of two days. Depending upon the needs of individual members, NBRT specific professional development activities could be included or added to the induction which may extend this commitment to three days (held over one working week).

### **8.2 Professional development activities**

NBRT professional development activities will be conducted that are designed to enhance NBRT capability. These will take many forms and could include:

- NBRT specific professional development activities/workshops
- coordination of NBRT development activities with those being conducted by individual jurisdictions
- individual NBRT members attending training/workshops specific to their function, whether these are conducted in their home or another jurisdiction.

It is anticipated that the length of professional development activities could range from two to four days. As far as possible this should be conducted in one block and within a single working week.

### **8.3 Biennial exercises**

Biennial exercises that include the NBRT are required to develop and maintain the skills of NBRT members. These exercises also provide a benefit to the level of preparedness of the host jurisdiction. Exercises will:

- be rotated amongst jurisdictions
- provide opportunities for NBRT members to practice their assigned role, either as a mentor or performing their assigned function within a realistic exercise environment.

A schedule of forthcoming exercises will be determined by the National Biosecurity Emergency Preparedness Expert Group and included in the annual activity plan for the NBRT.

It is anticipated that the length of biennial exercises could range from three to five days. These should be conducted within a single working week.

The host jurisdiction will have primary responsibility for leading the design, planning, conduct and evaluation of the biennial exercise. The host jurisdiction will be supported by both Animal Health Australia and Plant Health Australia

In recognition of the costs to a jurisdiction when conducting the biennial exercise, provision has been made within the NBRT budget for a financial contribution to cover the logistical costs of conducting the exercise. Notwithstanding this, a host jurisdiction may also seek funding from other sources available at the time to cover any additional costs they may incur.

## **GLOSSARY**

The following terms have been used within this document and their definitions provided for ready reference.

<b>Term / acronym</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>Functional cohort</b>	Member of the NBRT that are able to perform a range of response functions within a State Coordination centre or Local Control Centre, at any stage during the response to a biosecurity incident
<b>Interstate Deployment Arrangements for Biosecurity Responses</b>	A nationally agreed document that describes the arrangements for coordinating the deployment of personnel between jurisdictions for biosecurity responses
<b>Jurisdiction</b>	In this document means a state, territory or Australian governments and their respective area of responsibility
<b>Mentor cohort</b>	Members of the NBRT that can be called upon to assist a jurisdiction in establishing its initial response arrangements, during the response to a biosecurity incident
<b>NBRT</b>	National Biosecurity Response Team
<b>NBRT Advisory Group</b>	The group responsible for providing operational direction for the NBRT. This group is chaired by the Australian Government Department of Agriculture and Water Resources and includes representatives from Animal Health Australia, Plant Health Australia and two state/territory biosecurity agencies

## **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1: Division of responsibilities



## **Appendix 1: Division of responsibilities**

### **Summary of responsibilities**

This appendix provides an outline of the responsibilities and the full time equivalent (FTE) contribution for the ongoing management and maintenance of the NBRT and its associated activities. This is summarised in the following table and further described below.

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>FTE</b>	<b>Responsibilities</b>
Department of Agriculture and Water Resources	0.30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NBRT management and maintenance</li> </ul>
Animal Health Australia	0.78	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NBRT management and maintenance</li> <li>• NBRT logistics</li> </ul>
Plant Health Australia	0.25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NBRT maintenance</li> </ul>
State/territory biosecurity agencies	< 0.20 Per state/territory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NBRT maintenance</li> </ul>

### **Department of Agriculture and Water Resources**

**Annual contribution: 0.30 FTE**

#### **NBRT Management and maintenance**

The Department of Agriculture and Water Resources has a responsibility to support Animal Health Australia in the management of the NBRT. In this case, the department will:

- chair the NBRT Advisory Group meetings
- participate in NBRT Advisory Group meetings
- lead the development of processes for nomination, recruiting and exit/demobilisation for NBRT members
- lead the nomination and recruiting processes required to recruit new NBRT members. This will be undertaken through the NBRT Advisory Group and may include seeking, receiving, reviewing, ranking and commenting on nominations, as well as communicating with successful and unsuccessful applicants
- chair the NBRT recruiting panel
- participate in the design, planning and conduct of an annual induction activity
- participate in the design, planning and conduct of a biennial professional development activity
- participate in the design, planning, conduct and evaluation of the biennial NBRT exercise.

It is anticipated that the staff time required for the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources to support the management of the NBRT is in the order of 0.30 FTE. This commitment will be provided by the department as an in-kind contribution to the ongoing maintenance of the NBRT and as such is not included in the NBRT annual budget. Notwithstanding this, costs associated with participate in activities (travel, accommodation etc) will be covered and are included within the NBRT annual budget.

During the response to a biosecurity incident, the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources will work with Jurisdictional Deployment Coordinators, in accordance with the Interstate Deployment Arrangements for Biosecurity Responses, to assist with access to and ensure appropriate use of NBRT members.

### Animal Health Australia

#### Annual contribution: 0.78 FTE

Animal Health Australia has the following responsibilities:

- NBRT management and maintenance
- NBRT logistics

#### NBRT management and maintenance

NBRT management includes maintaining the NBRT, in preparation for being able to be deployed to assist one or more jurisdictions during the response to a biosecurity incident. NBRT management will be undertaken primarily by Animal Health Australia, with the support of Plant Health Australia. In fulfilling these responsibilities, Animal Health Australia will:

- provide administrative and secretariat support to and participate in the:
  - NBRT Advisory Group
  - NBRT recruiting panel.
- support the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources to manage the nomination and recruiting processes required to recruit new NBRT members maintain relevant details of existing and previous NBRT members
- establish and maintain a method for NBRT members to share information and stay informed about NBRT activities
- lead and participate in the design, planning and conduct of an annual induction activity
- o
- identify opportunities for NBRT members to maintain and/or enhance skills and knowledge relevant to their NBRT function
- lead and participate in the design, planning and conduct of the biennial professional development activity
- evaluate and report on the biennial professional development activity and biennial exercise
- support the host jurisdiction to design, plan and conduct of the biennial NBRT exercise
- support the host jurisdiction to plan and manage an appropriate evaluation approach for the biennial NBRT exercise
- develop and provide an annual report to the NBC (via the Expert Group) on activities undertaken by the NBRT.

It is anticipated that the staff time required to perform the NBRT management and maintenance functions is in the order of 0.55 FTE (full time equivalent). Staff cost, including overheads, for Animal Health Australia to fulfil these responsibilities are included in the annual NBRT budget.

### **NBRT logistics**

The provision of logistical support to NBRT activities is an extension of the NBRT management and maintenance functions. This includes managing the administrative and logistical\* requirements for:

- NBRT Advisory Group meetings
- NBRT induction panel meetings
- an annual induction activity
- the biennial professional development activity
- the biennial NBRT exercise
- NBRT member participation in ad-hoc training and professional development activities.

\* logistical requirements may include arranging travel, accommodation, venue hire and catering.

It is anticipated that the staff time required to perform the NBRT logistics function is in the order of 0.23 FTE (full time equivalent). Staff cost, including overheads, for Animal Health Australia to perform this function are included in the annual NBRT budget.

### **Plant Health Australia**

**Annual contribution: 0.25 FTE**

#### **NBRT maintenance**

In addition to supporting Animal Health Australia with the management of the NBRT, Plant Health Australia will also participate in activities that contribute to the maintenance of the NBRT.

Specifically, Plant Health Australia will:

- participate in NBRT Advisory Group meetings
- participate in NBRT recruiting panel
- participate in the design, planning and conduct of an annual induction activity
- participate in the design, planning and conduct of a biennial professional development activity
- participate in the design, planning, conduct and evaluation of the biennial NBRT exercise.

It is anticipated that the staff time required to participate in the activities outlined above is in the order of 0.25 FTE. Staff cost, including overheads, for Plant Health Australia to contribute to the maintenance of the NBRT are included in the annual NBRT budget.

### **State and territory biosecurity agencies**

**Annual contribution: < 0.20 FTE (per participating state/territory)**

#### **NBRT maintenance**

To ensure that the NBRT continues to meet the needs of all jurisdictions, two state/territories will be represented on the NBRT Advisory Group and participate in the design, planning, conduct and evaluation of NBRT activities. Represented jurisdictions will:

- participate in NBRT Advisory Group meetings
- participate in NBRT recruiting panel
- participate in the design, planning and conduct of an annual induction activity
- participate in the design, planning and conduct of a biennial professional development activity
- participate in the design, planning, conduct and evaluation of the biennial NBRT exercise.

It is anticipated that the staff time required to participate in the activities outlined above will be less than 0.20 FTE per jurisdiction during the years they participate in the NBRT Advisory Group. This commitment will be provided by the relevant states/territories as an in-kind contribution to the ongoing maintenance of the NBRT and as such is not included in the NBRT annual budget.

Notwithstanding this, costs associated with participating in activities (travel, accommodation etc) will be covered and are included within the NBRT annual budget.