soilcquest.org.au

soilCquest 2031

ORGANISATION STRATEGY

We bring farmers and scientists together to increase soil carbon and reduce emissions for profitable and resilient farms

2025-27

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Chair Statement

We have a truly talented and highly motivated team here at SoilCQuest (SCQ), with an enviable depth and balance of skill sets. Because of this, we are in a genuinely powerful position to create meaningful impact. Guided and supported by a pragmatic, creative, insightful and well-considered strategic plan, we can move (sequester) mountains (of CO2) and move the needle on climate change towards a healthy, productive, thriving food-producing farmscape ecosystem. Our strategic plan informs the how, when and where of focused action. It becomes our map, compass, and clock to keep the bearing and timeline towards our vision and hold us accountable.

When I first clearly understood the existential threat to humanity that is climate change, it hit me like an overripe mango in the face. The yawning divide between what we do as a species to counteract climate change and what action is needed sometimes seems almost unfathomable and shoulder-slumping. However, flip the coin over, and crisis becomes an opportunity that can, in turn, be converted to action (the antidote to anxiety). Unsurprisingly, giving in is not effective… attack becomes the best form of defence. Optimism, opportunity, options and optimisation come from the Latin word '*optimus*', which means 'best'. For me, vision, hope and positive action are all founded on *optimus*. This is the subtext to my rise-and-shine each morning and underwrites my role as Co-Founder and Chair.

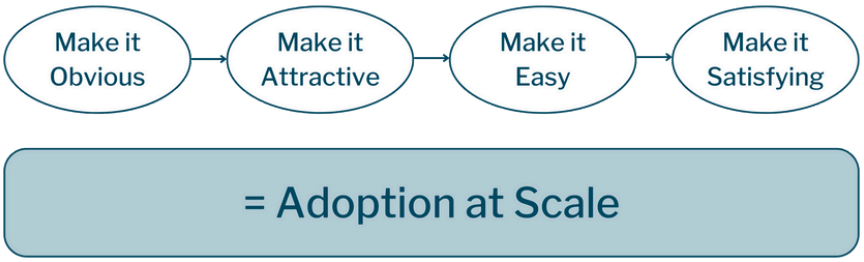
SCQ's strategic focus is to introduce adoptable and scalable climate action and amplify soil health outcomes into the current farming landscape. This is where the SCQ strategic rubber really hits the road and grips.

> Question: How do we move an industry quickly towards rapid adoption of climate-smart practices without 'spooking the horses' and losing the audience?
>
> Answer: Many in the industry may acknowledge the threat of climate change to agriculture, but few actually wish to talk about it openly or have it thrust upon them. Insight and a genuine empathetic understanding of the farming cultural landscape are required to inform a potent strategic plan. This is precisely the strength inherent in SCQ.

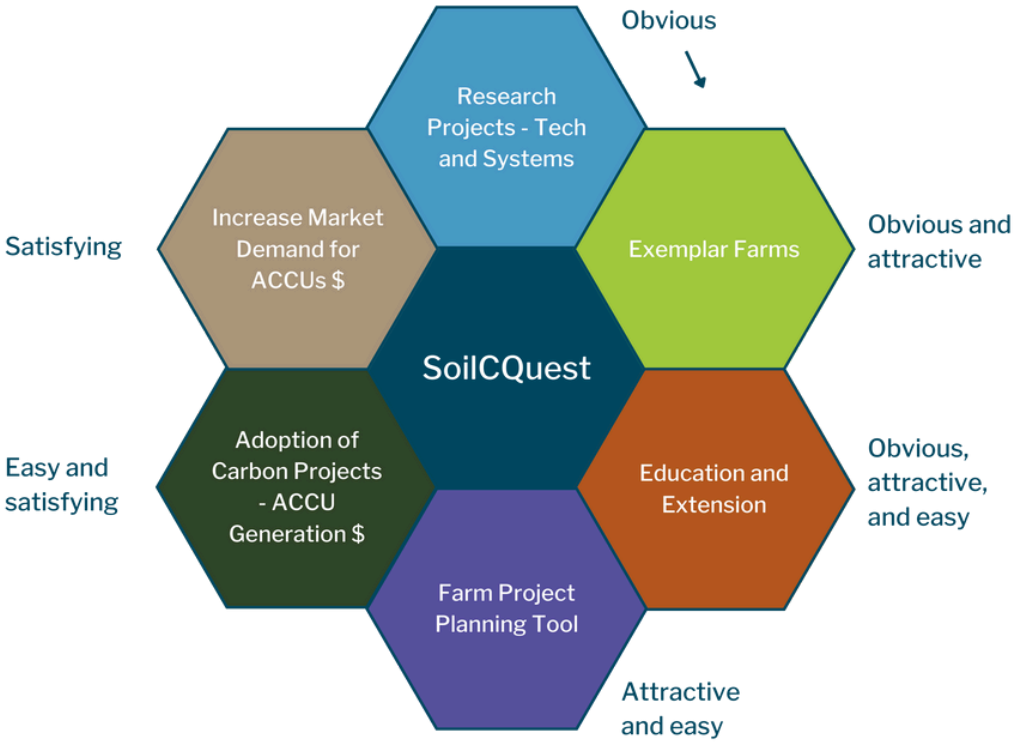
Ecosystem services and co-benefits are now in the farmers' lexicon. Building increased profitability via increased resilience into the farming system and highlighting the long-term benefits and legacy play has never had a downside, so this is our leverage point. Resilience is now a critical business decision to buffer against weather extremes. Many farmers have already learnt this the hard way, and it is clearly understood.

Climate-smart ag is just good business acumen. Of course, without a doubt, food security in the future will heavily rely on increasing farming resilience. Soil carbon has never been more important. SCQ has a mission to amplify this process, implementing the aggregation of soil carbon research into adopted practices on the farms via education, extension and experimentation of real-world working systems… to offer easily adoptable opportunities with clear benefits to the farm business.

To borrow the idea from my favourite book, Atomic Habits by James Clear; to drive adoption at scale of climate smart practices, four criteria need to be met that become the DNA of the SCQ strategy. Make it obvious, make it attractive, make it easy and make it satisfying… and scaled adoption follows.



Using this blueprint, an interactive, self reinforcing cycle to drive adoption can form an effective strategy:



For the SCQ team, may this SCQ strategic plan document become dog-eared and worn from use. Re-read and reference it often and modify it as required, it is not a clay tablet. With the rapidly changing climate driving the quickening of government, industry and market climate response ambitions, coupled with constant exciting innovations evolving across the ag landscape, we chart our course into uncharted waters with enthusiasm.

We will remain nimble, responsive and creative throughout this important journey.

Onward with courage, clear intent and elevated emotion.

Guy Webb

CEO Statement

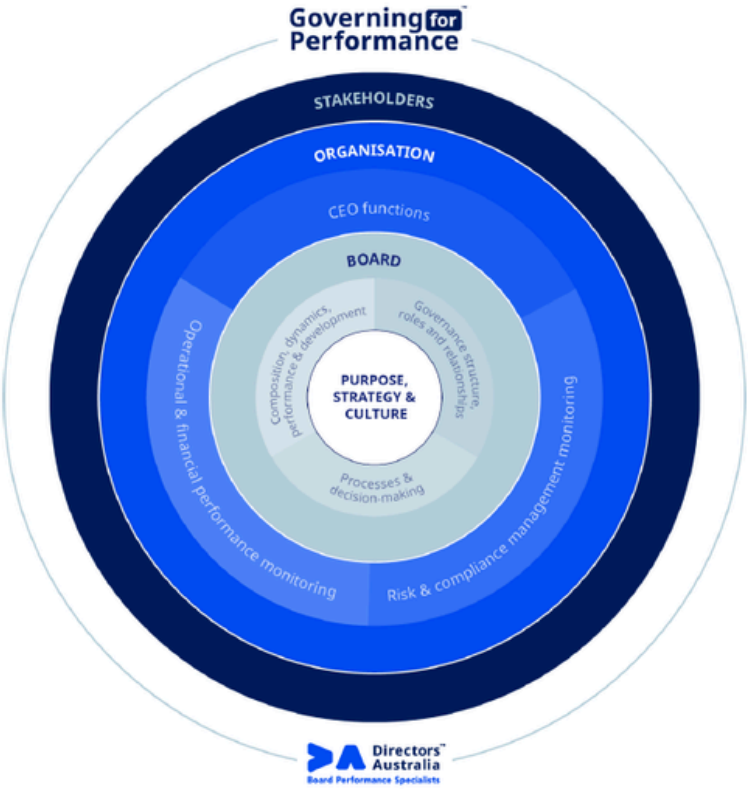
The opportunity to guide SoilCQuest, an organisation with a great story of achievement founded literally from getting hands dirty and 'pounding the pavement', is a privilege and a challenge.

There are few words I can add to strengthen the story leading to where we stand now, suffice to say, take a look at the amazing people who are our founders and what they have achieved; technology now being driven by Loam Bio as custodian of this success.

My challenge, and the opportunity this represents for us as an organisation filled to overflowing with talented, dedicated and passionate people is continuing this stellar legacy.

Leaning into the resources of Directors Australia, taking guidance on governing for performance, we look to our strategy being clear on purpose, values and culture. Developing and implementing an effective strategy that will drive us forward for future success means listening, learning, monitoring and, where necessary, adapting.

Governing for Performance assists boards in their continual improvement given complex and dynamic strategic environments and in light of contemporary societal expectations regarding boards and directors.



PURPOSE, STRATEGY AND CULTURE

Dimension 1
Purpose strategy and culture
The organisation is clear about its purpose, has well developed strategic and operational plans to drive success and clearly articulates, and monitors, organisational values and culture.

BOARD

Dimension 2
Governance structure, roles and relationships
The organisation's governance framework is fit for purpose and there is clarity as to key governance roles, relationships and authorities.

Dimension 3
Board composition, dynamics, performance and development
The board is comprised of the right people behaving in the right way to guide and drive strategy and effectively govern the organisation.

Dimension 7
Board processes and decision-making
The board's meetings result in effective decision-making through timely and relevant information sharing and purposeful, honest and challenging discussions.

ORGANISATION

Dimension 4
CEO functions
The board has appointed and monitors the performance of a 'fit for purpose' CEO.

Dimension 5
Operational and financial performance monitoring
The board oversees the organisation's financial and non-financial performance in light of strategic performance measures, and drives continuous improvement.

Dimension 6
Risk and compliance management monitoring
The board sets the organisation's risk appetite and ensures that appropriate risk and compliance management frameworks are in place and being implemented.

STAKEHOLDERS

Dimension 8
Stakeholder engagement
The board seeks to understand key stakeholder issues and engages with stakeholders in a way that informs and supports the delivery of the organisation's purpose and strategy.

See more at:
www.directorsaustralia.com

Listening

On the ground, constant conversation with our stakeholders allows us to hear and understand the challenges faced across the agriculture landscape, which in turn allows us to develop and deploy resources.

We are a team of active listeners, which means our delivery framework in this strategy is harnessed from the perspective shared by our stakeholders and delivery partners. Our messaging and audience engagement are driven by SoilCQuest's brand DNA, developed in collaboration with Silver Lining Agency, a B Corp-certified entity dedicated to organisations focused on positive impact.

Learning

Our actions are founded on learning;
…what we can discover through our research and informed by listening,
…incorporating enhanced foundational knowledge into farm-scale trialling and shared learning,
…extension for adoption for farmers and trusted advisors to secure their own soil carbon strategies.

Monitoring

> Our strategic and delivery frameworks emphasise the priority and focus SoilCQuest places in nurturing enduring collaborations for the development of our activities toward purpose.

Intrinsic to this model, aided by our project logic framework, is a hierarchy of monitoring, more than one-off actions, and project-specific evaluations. This will lead to a more holistic assessment of our organisational strategy's success.

This document emphasises our focus areas for research and extension for adoption, highlighting foundational activities from which we will elevate the understanding of growing soil carbon in our target audience and break down barriers that might otherwise prevent implementing soil carbon-building practices.

The support and encouragement we receive from agriculturalists, industry organisations, trusted advisors, and scientific and educational institutions keep us thriving. Thank you for the positivity and productivity you extend to us as we undertake our activities. We ask you to 'keep it coming'.

Our delivery framework builds the capability for SoilCQuest to self-fund some of our work; however, like all for-purpose organisations, we seek financial support too. Our 1% for the Planet endorsement validates our certified impact on people and the planet across soil carbon sequestration, agricultural productivity and resilience, and farm ecosystems. Our independent research institute standing and our strategic framework align us well for collaboration in grants, contributing as a valued consortium member for design, activity and evaluation. To our team, stakeholders, ambassadors and friends, we seek your continued advocacy in philanthropic and funding circles.

Working to deliver outcomes as outlined in this strategy gives us confidence that SoilCQuest will embolden farmers and agriculture to be a solution for climate impacts.

Andrew Bruem

About SoilCQuest

SoilCQuest 2031 Ltd is a not-for-profit, charitable research institute registered with the ACNC bringing farmers and scientists together to increase soil carbon and reduce emissions for profitable and resilient farms.

We believe soil carbon is a key metric of success for farm productivity and profitability.

SoilCQuest 2031 was established to develop a microbial inoculum from a carbon-capturing fungus discovered in our soils. The successful development of this technology resulted in a venture capital raise to establish Loam Bio, an independent enterprise now operating globally, deploying several crop innoculants and developing soil carbon projects; SoilCQuest remains a shareholder in Loam Bio.

SoilCQuest became a CSIRO Approved Research Institute in 2017; accordingly, our organisation strategy has a key focus drawn from the SoilCQuest Research Strategy.

Aim

Agriculture positively impacts our climate future.

Purpose

We bring science and agriculture together to increase soil carbon for profitable farming systems to respond to climate change.

Core Values

- Growth - of soil carbon and organisational stature
- Service - delivering to and for the community in every undertaking and engagement
- Environment - uncovering and delivering positive outcomes
- Education - extension for adoption
- Purpose - in what we do, how we do it and who we do it for

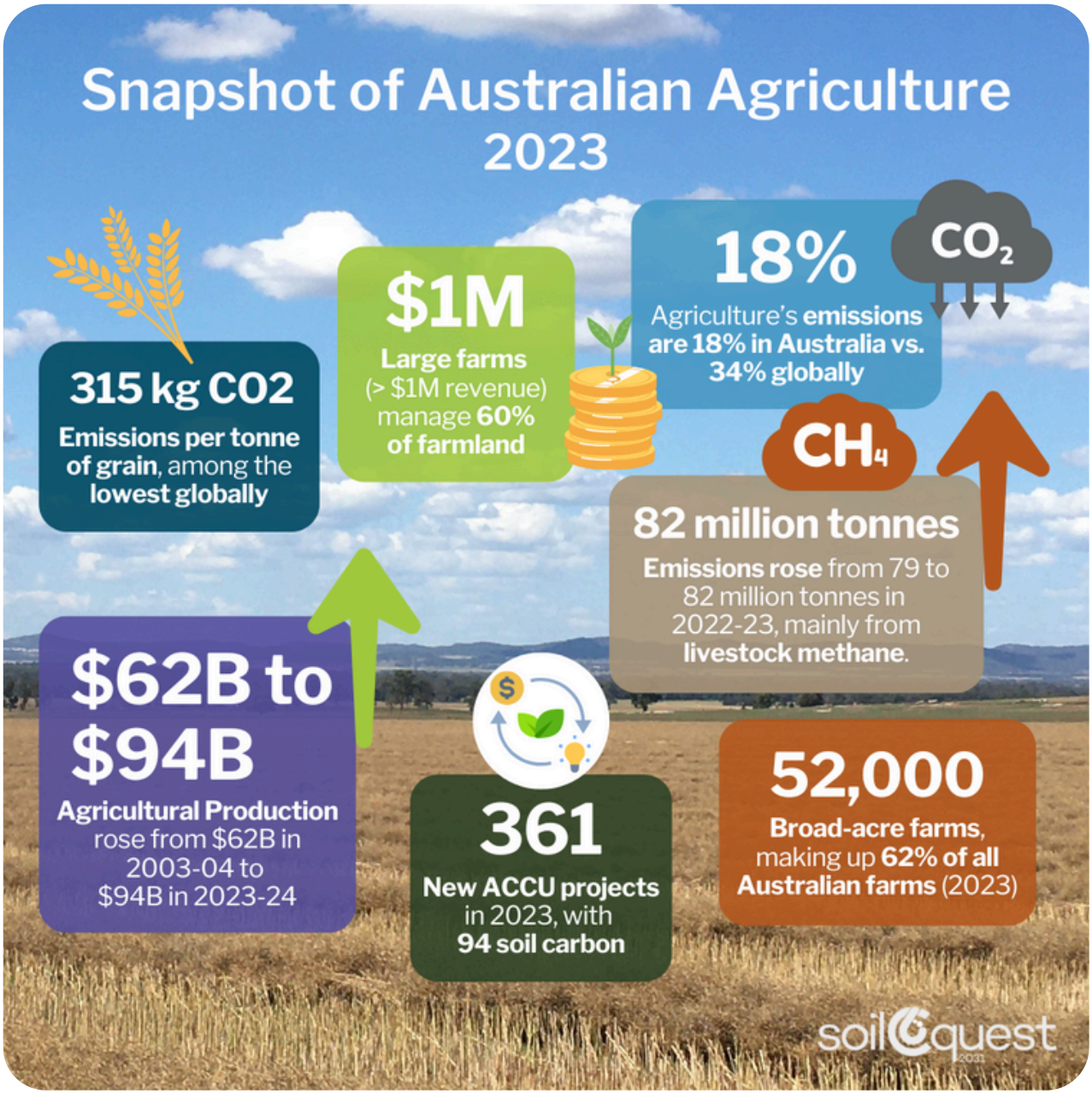
SoilCQuest Objectives

To deliver on our aim and purpose, SoilCQuest will focus on:

- Undertaking RESEARCH prioritising carbon dioxide drawdown through improvements in soil carbon, particularly by increasing the durable soil carbon pool on a large scale.
- Engaging in activities targeted to:
  - REDUCING the gap between scientific knowledge and on-farm adoption.
  - REMOVING barriers to adopting new, innovative practices while ensuring these practices contribute to profitable and sustainable farming businesses.
  - EVALUATING investments through three critical lenses: economic viability, soil carbon and emissions reduction science, and adoptability.
  - ENHANCING collaboration across soil carbon research, extension for adoption and the broader GHG solution ecosystem.
  - FOSTERING innovation, leadership and culture.

Strategic Priorities

- Soil carbon research
- Farmer innovation and extension for adoption
- Devising mechanisms for permanent carbon drawdown and retirement through agriculture


Snapshot of Australian Agriculture 2023
315 kg CO2
Emissions per tonne of grain, among the lowest globally
$1M
Large farms (> $1M revenue) manage 60% of farmland
18%
Agriculture's emissions are 18% in Australia vs. 34% globally
CO2
CH4
82 million tonnes
Emissions rose from 79 to 82 million tonnes in 2022-23, mainly from livestock methane.
$62B to $94B
Agricultural Production rose from $62B in 2003-04 to $94B in 2023-24
361
New ACCU projects in 2023, with 94 soil carbon
52,000
Broad-acre farms, making up 62% of all Australian farms (2023)
soilquest 2031

Team

SoilCQuest is a small, nimble, and effective multidisciplinary team with extensive expertise in governance, research, project development and management, extension, and stakeholder engagement. This expertise is complemented by strong networks across the agricultural industry, academia, community, and government.

We are a unique collaboration of farmers, agricultural and soil scientists, agro-ecologists, agronomists, educators, and business and communication specialists. The thread connecting our diverse backgrounds and experience is a deep respect for the farming profession and the agricultural industry. We understand daily farm life and culture, how it drives decisions and change on the ground.

Research Committee

SoilCQuest's Research Committee is made up of experts in soil science, agroecology, agronomy, and agricultural research. The committee combines knowledge and experience to inform SoilCQuest's research initiatives, providing strategic direction and ensuring our projects are grounded in sound scientific principles and current advancements. Thus, the committee delivers outcomes that are of value to Australian agriculture.

The committee helps shape SoilCQuest's research priorities, focusing on soil carbon sequestration, soil productivity and the resilience of farming systems. The Research Committee is key in advancing agricultural practices that build soil carbon and reduce emissions, providing valuable insights and guidance to our research efforts by bridging scientific knowledge with practical applications.

SoilCQuest is unique in working with farmers using co-design approaches to provide unbiased information that contextualises agricultural research within a commercial environment. The committee's work supports the SoilCQuest team in designing research projects that are scientifically robust and defensible. This allows for valid statistical analysis while addressing farmers' needs and focusing on practical outcomes.

Key Stakeholders

Our primary stakeholders in SoilCQuest are farm owners and managers. Our secondary stakeholders are agronomists and other trusted advisers who work closely with farmers.

Farmers possess significant knowledge of workable farming systems, environments and business practices, making them invaluable contributors to research and development. They also play a vital role in maximising the adoption of high-impact innovations through co-design approaches that recognise their individual and collective needs. These innovations are urgently needed for the agricultural sector to both mitigate and adapt to climate change.

Strategic Framework

Research

Our Research Strategy outlines the approach we will take for delivering outcomes in soil carbon research. Founded in program logic, this document introduces the research strategy aims and details design and other considerations for the research themes SoilCQuest has identified as:

1. Amelioration of under-performing soils
2. Increase plant species diversity in cropping and pastures
3. Increase the use of perennial plants in agricultural landscapes
4. 'Connecting the dots' – finding efficiencies and synergies
5. Biomass conversion for biochar production
6. Building soil carbon via bigger root systems

Context

Our approach acknowledges that:

- Agriculture is multidisciplinary and encompasses agronomic, economic, social, cultural, and ecological dimensions
- Soil carbon is important for both supporting the life of the soil (i.e. C cycling) and is itself a terrestrial C sink (i.e. C storage)
- The profitability of a given practice is a key determinant of whether it will be adopted in Australian agriculture
- Farming systems encompass various models influenced by enterprise, environment, soil type, markets, and risk.
- Holistic mechanisms are fundamental to outcomes for farmers adopting mitigation and adaptation strategies responding to the challenges of climate change.

Outcomes

- Increase engagement activities with farmers.
- Increase agro-ecological literacy among farmers and their advisers.
- Be a trusted voice for practices that build carbon for growers.
- Establish a network of Exemplar Farms to demonstrate innovative soil management techniques, validate practices through on-farm research, and showcase methods for restoring agricultural soil health and function.
- Transform research and experiential findings into educational materials to facilitate broader adoption of innovative farming practices.

Success will be

- *Compost granule project (themes 4, 5, 6):*
  - Identifying soil productivity benefits from closed circle recycling of nutrients and carbon between cities and agriculture that is profitable and beneficial for farmers.
  - Testing the agronomic effect of current compost granule formulations
  - Identifying improvement opportunities for current compost granule formulations, particularly regarding early plant root growth, vigour and fostering soil carbon growth.
- *Root stimulant (themes 1, 6):*
  - Identifying commercially viable ways to increase and support root development in early establishment through seed priming with nutrients and plant hormones that can enhance carbon sequestration potential.
- *N efficiency (theme 4):*
  - Field trialling two methods to identify improved N use efficiency so that reductions in total N applied are feasible.
  - Long-term research publication that improves farm business profitability by using N more efficiently while reducing GHG emissions.
- *Forage shrubs (theme 3):*
  - Identifying to what extent forage shrubs build long-term soil carbon stores through the drawdown of CO2 into standing biomass.
  - Building evidence that supports the practice, primarily implemented to increase feed security, protect fragile soils in hostile environments and contribute to drought-resilient farming practices.
- *Multigraze (themes 2, 4):*
  - Developing a case study project for field research
  - Identifying whether timely grazing animal movement improves the soil rejuvenation effects of multi-species cover crops compared to set-stock grazing management utilising soil carbon as the central soil health measure.
  - Build evidence to support that multi-species cover cropping and innovative grazing management have synergies between practices.
- *Remote sensing measurement of soil carbon (theme 4):*
  - Acquiring desktop and field statistical evidence that supports remote sensing tool estimates of soil carbon stocks over large areas and across seasonal farm management practices
  - Evidence from field and desktop assessments of soil carbon stocks shows whether practice change leads to changes in soil carbon stocks and that these can be confidently monitored using these tools.
  - Devising tools and techniques to use this evidence for supporting planning and land management optimisation that can be integrated into extension for adoption activities

Innovation and Extension for Adoption

Carbon Farmscapes

Begin at the beginning; understand the science of soil carbon and the broader farm landscape. Grow beyond the field; interact with trusted advisors, educators, industry, NRM and other service providers, and future innovators

Scope

In advocating for agriculture to become a gigaton carbon drawdown industry, SoilCQuest champions the agronomic, economic, environmental, and social value of soil carbon, working to remove the barriers to adoption for farmers engaging in carbon farming practices.

> Delivering a holistic approach to carbon farming; begin at the beginning with the fundamentals of soil carbon, extend this to include broader agroecological and hydrological practices.

Including biodiversity, agroecology and water management as key elements for carbon farm landscape (*Carbon Farmscape*) planning delivers a comprehensive farm-wide strategy for carbon sequestration and sustainable agriculture.

Numerous NRM organisations and approaches complement soil carbon to strengthen agricultural outcomes and farm management to be climate-smart and resilient. Collaborating with these will elevate Australian agriculture, its regenerative nature, and its sustainability while delivering viable initiatives for profitable farming.

Scale

Soil carbon development and measurement is the foundation of Carbon Farmscapes. Knowledge and adoption of soil carbon sequestration practices across farming systems is amplified through agronomic, economic, environmental and social data driven insights resulting in more sustainable and innovative Australian agriculture.

Supporting activities that complement on-farm soil carbon practice include:

- Biodiversity and agroecology farming practice methods that promote a diverse ecosystem on the farm. Exploring and developing resources that share knowledge can lead to more resilient farm systems, holistic farm ecology and better soil health, e.g., shelterbelts.
- Landscape hydrology management, promoting water retention through practices like contour farming, building swales, leaky weirs, or restoring wetlands. Improved on-farm water management supports the underlying drivers of soil carbon and can lead to more drought-resilient farms and healthier ecosystems.
- On-farm carbon strategy, with additionality, develops a comprehensive plan for increasing carbon sequestration on the farm, focusing on new practices that go beyond business-as-usual and complement soil carbon sequestration. This would integrate the above-listed elements and could include additional emission reduction practices like using renewable energy and more efficient fertiliser.

Duration

Carbon Farmscapes is an ongoing initiative that benefits farmers, agronomists, their trusted advisors, students and educators, industry service providers, and the NRM community.

The assets and resources created and shared within this program build soil carbon understanding from beginner through professional material, where stakeholder uptake and engagement are constantly reviewed and responded to. It is available as a combination of free and fee-for-delivery material to ensure currency, longevity, and minimum barrier access.

Outcomes

- Increased farmer adoption of carbon farming practices
- Enhanced understanding of soil carbon science among farmers and stakeholders
- Strengthened collaboration between farmers, advisors, educators, industry, and NRM providers
- Improved integration of soil carbon practices with other sustainable agricultural approaches
- Development of comprehensive on-farm carbon strategies

Success will be

- Number of farmers implementing carbon farming practices
- Percentage increase in soil carbon levels on participating farms
- Number of educational resources created and distributed
- Engagement metrics for educational materials (e.g., downloads, views, completion rates)
- Number of partnerships formed with NRM organisations and other stakeholders
- Increase in biodiversity metrics on participating farms
- Improvement in water retention and landscape hydration measures
- Number of farms with developed on-farm carbon strategies highlighting carbon as part of the balance sheet
- Economic benefits realised by farmers adopting carbon farming practices quantified as farm productivity through to a capital asset for security and monetisation
- Number of agronomists and advisors trained in soil carbon management
- Student engagement in soil carbon education programs
- Industry creation and adoption of soil carbon best practices
- Quantity and quality of professional materials developed for the program
- Ratio of free to fee-based resources and their respective utilisation rates

Exemplar Farms

Bringing carbon science to agriculture for implementing practical and viable carbon-building solutions

Scope

In advocating for agriculture to become a gigaton carbon drawdown industry, SoilCQuest is working to remove the barriers to adoption for farmers engaging in carbon farming practices.

SoilCQuest is highly cognisant of the collective ingenuity that lies amongst the world's farmers and their capacity for solving problems. We recognise the efficacy of peer-to-peer learning in helping farmers to approach the adoption of new solutions, and believe that by supporting advocate farmers, many more will follow.

We are providing a platform for farmers to develop their ideas, refine them, and scientifically validate them. To deliver on this outcome, SoilCQuest will implement the Exemplar Farms initiative, an applied research and communication program partnering with progressive farmers who are growing carbon as an additional enterprise to enhance their farm's financial and productive resilience.

Each on-farm interaction will be bespoke in collaboration with the farm system, considerate of their business and carbon strategy, supporting them to achieve their goals.

The formative benefit for a farm business to partner as a SoilCQuest Exemplar Farm is to be supported by a research institute working in the application and evaluation of carbon farming practices, providing key insights to enhance enterprise decision-making.

SoilCQuest will evaluate each Exemplar Farm carbon farming system through agronomic, economic and environmental lenses:

- Agronomic - soil and plant samples to assess soil chemical, physical and biological impacts from a given practice
- Economic - document the gross economic return from each carbon farming practice, compared to past practice or standard practice in that agricultural system or region.
- Environmental - soil carbon measurements at each Exemplar Farm will provide information about the soil carbon sequestration potential from a given agricultural practice. SoilCQuest may partner with other research organisations and universities and seek additional funds to research biodiversity, water quality, and other ecosystem health indicators.

Scale

The Exemplar Farms initiative aims to reach 400ha across four farm business systems in four geographically different regions by 2026, each participating for a minimum of three years.

Further unique case study enterprises with remarkable carbon strategy activities will be featured as part of Exemplar Farms. These will not necessarily have ongoing applied research engagement with SoilCQuest. However, they will benefit from, at a minimum, a 'snap-shot' data acquisition and interpretation by SoilCQuest to deliver on the scope of this initiative.

Duration

Exemplar Farms is an ongoing initiative that delivers benefits to the participating farmers who subscribe to act as advocates and ambassadors for carbon-building initiatives to the broader SoilCQuest stakeholder audience.

Each Exemplar Farm will be overseen through a steering committee and governed by the SoilCQuest Board with a review at the end of each three year period to measure its contribution to the six objectives of this strategy.

Outcomes

- Exemplar Farmers increase their ability to communicate applied knowledge and monitor soil carbon and farm emissions, improving productivity, profitability and resilience to challenges associated with climate
- Early adopter Exemplar Farmers' perceived risk of innovation is reduced (they learn that it is safe to innovate)
- Exemplar Farmers adopt novel or innovative carbon-building and emission-reducing land management practices that improve agronomic, economic and environmental outcomes for their farming enterprise
- Farmers in the public domain increase their awareness of carbon-building practices
- Mainstream farmers learn about innovative and established carbon-building and emission-reducing practices validated by the Exemplar Farms program for economic, agronomic and environmental outcomes.
- Mainstream farmers increase their confidence to trial and adopt carbon-building and emission-reducing practices. Mainstream and early adopter farmers have places to gather and pursue the exchange of experiences, learning and outcomes (networking)
- New carbon-building and emissions-reducing practices are tested and validated for Australian agriculture
- Exemplar Farmers increase their skills to use scientific and agronomic language to communicate the observable outcomes of their practice change

Success will be

- 4 Exemplar Farms spread across at least three geographically diverse regions
- Increased number of farming activities demonstrated and conveyed in case studies, resulting in positive and sustainable soil carbon outcomes
- Increased scale and scope of EF research trials approved by SCQ Research Committee
- Annual on-site workshops with farmers actively observing and interacting
- Annual virtual webinars and Q&A sessions with attendees actively observing and interacting
- Ability to attract sponsorship and funding from SoilCQuest/EF-aligned entities
- Surveys of attitude and behaviour change
- Target numbers of annual workshops; the number of partnerships with grower groups/ farmer networks; workshop online booking registration and attendance statistics (% of SCQ key stakeholders, e.g. agronomist/corporate farm manager/ family farm manager/farmer network/Landcare/ RD&E group/organisations/ state government)
- Growth in audience reach and engagement across social media content specific to EF

Carbon Drawdown and Retirement

Carbon credits are assets; use them to make a difference
Hold for your balance sheet and insetting
Sell for revenue with a Buy to offset natural impact
Retire for reset

Scope

SCQ has purpose in research activities designed to increase the amount of atmospheric carbon stored and retained in soil utilising Australian Carbon Credit Unit (ACCU) retirement mechanisms that are commercial alternatives to offsetting. We seek to characterise the measurement and verification of carbon stored in the soil as well as investigating carbon project benchmarks with co-benefit opportunities, thereby facilitating and supporting ACCU or equivalent retirement with the highest integrity and enhanced outcomes. This research review examines what constitutes a high-integrity carbon unit that goes over and above singular drawdown activities and results in ethical, additional environmental or societal benefit.

Scale

This program has a global scale from initial national reach for stakeholders aligned to ESG outcomes, invested in positive purposes harnessed from agriculture, business and climate response.

Duration

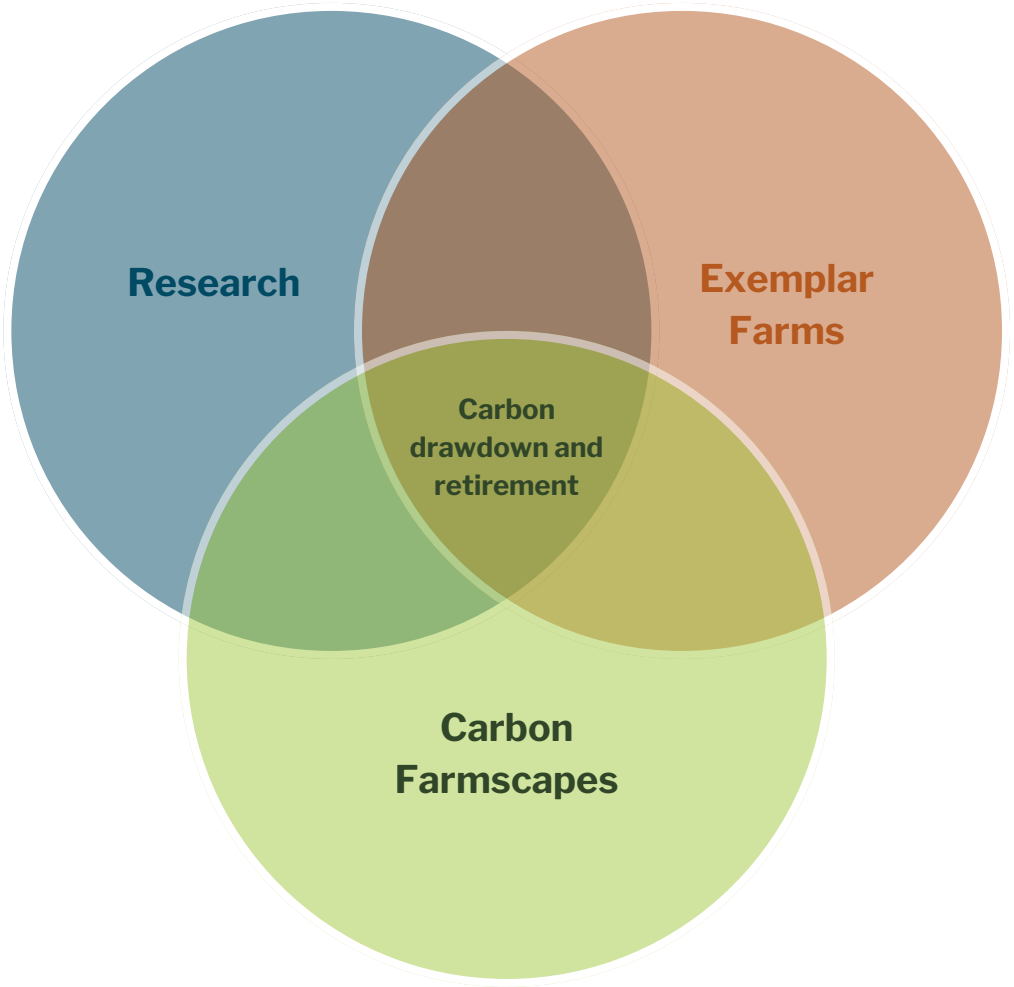
SoilCQuest intends for this to be a legacy program.

Outcomes

- Broad public and community identification that this retirement mechanism is generated by projects associated with genuine and meaningful action, in a distinguishable process that is synonymous with verifiable, integrous, transparent and actual permanent GHG/ACCU retirement outcomes which is recognised and reputed regionally, nationally and globally
- SoilCQuest establishes itself as a leader and key delivery partner connecting soil carbon projects and positive outcomes generated with global responsible citizens/communities who share aspirational goals to address historical emission removal from the atmosphere in an act of good
- Evidence supporting community recognition that farmers are one of the most important participants in the fight against climate change and food insecurity
- The program is regarded by peers and the community as a high integrity and impactful vehicle for the good of the agricultural sector, our planet as well as associated brand, values and ESG outcomes for donors
- The program is regarded by peers and the community as a key national initiative highlighting the agricultural sector as a participant in GHG removal and creating value from the generation of co-benefits and ethical activities
- The program is regarded by peers and the community as a key national initiative with public evidence highlighting that donors for this process are key stakeholders supporting a sustainable agricultural sector to participate in the removal of GHGs associated with co-benefits in acts of good
- Strong messaging recognises SoilCQuest as a key organisation providing leadership enabling agriculture to participate in the removal of GHGs and ACCU retirement associated with co-benefits
- The program is synonymous with action for greater impact than singular drawdown activities, and results in ethical, additional environmental or societal benefits

Success indicators

- Numbers of interactions - email, industry events, direct engagements (meetings)
- Social media and other public forum insights and commentary/feedback
- ANREU account transactions
- Donations
- Google Search, Analytics and AdWord insights
- Expressions of interest
- Industry and stakeholder engagement surveys
- Project/ACCU availability, demand and statistics associated with transactions (land area, CO2e metrics etc.)
- Trustpilot, Google and/or other review/qualification services



Delivery Framework

Agri-sector Collaborations

Fostering relationships, building strength and amplifying impact for effective and efficient farmer-focused outcomes

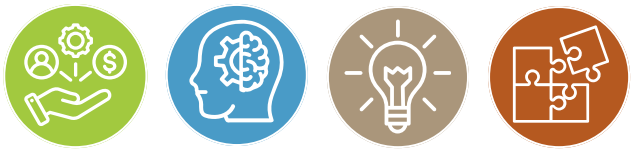
Scope

The SoilCQuest Stakeholder Engagement Strategy maps out collaborations that can positively impact achieving our mission and delivering against our objectives.
By identifying stakeholders relevant to our projects, we create key outcomes for each of our target audiences, which in turn guide our day-to-day communications.

This strategy provokes us to think about how deeply we seek to engage with our stakeholders, helping us to set clear expectations of what we can deliver and what our stakeholders can expect of us, that is, forming trustworthy and mutually beneficial collaborations.

These relationships are crucial to:

- Supporting and amplifying resources
- Supporting the removal of barriers to adoption
- Fostering innovation
- Building strength in our programs and research



Scale

SoilCQuest will engage with the broadest audience of:

- Australian agricultural practitioners
- Australian agriculture advocates
- Commonwealth and State agencies
- trusted advisors to agriculture businesses
- agriculture and science institutes undertaking climate and soil carbon research
- climate and agriculture research and development organisations
- Australian financial and legal sector service providers in agriculture
- NRM organisations
- media and industry personalities

Duration

Collaboration is fundamental to delivering outcomes for our objectives; hence, these initiatives will function perpetually.

Outcomes

- Innovative carbon-building and emissions-reducing agricultural practice trials that are designed, conducted, managed and/or reported in shared situations
- Tools and resources devised and delivered that support and empower farmers to develop and trial innovative practices
- Increased knowledge, awareness and understanding of soil carbon, how to increase it and reduce greenhouse gas emissions in cropping and grazing systems, and the agronomic, economic and environmental benefits farmers can expect by building it.

Success will be

- Number of partnerships or collaborative relationships formed
- Diversity of organisations we collaborate with, i.e. representation across our key and general stakeholders
- New opportunities that are generated from new collaborations and relationships
- Funding or income generated from the collaboration
- Promotion of our organisation and/or projects by other organisations or individuals
- Access to new resources that our collaborators share with us. e.g. access to staff knowledge, loaning of materials and sharing of contact details of networks.

Communications

SoilCQuest's communication strives to raise awareness, showcase impact, and engage our target audiences with our innovative work in soil carbon sequestration

Audience and objectives

Our brand DNA segments our audience to identify:

- Australian farm owners and managers, as well as their trusted advisors, are our primary targets. These people are pragmatic and down-to-earth so our endeavours aim to connect this audience with an appreciation of the productivity, environmental and financial benefits of carbon farming. Providing education, peer support, knowledge tools and resources about carbon farming so practices advised for and implemented on farms (corporate or family) is key to our communication activity.
- Agricultural scientists, the public, and potential funders interested in sustainable agricultural practices as our secondary audience. The focus here is to identify, reiterate and share the potential impact of carbon farming and the need for further research.

Channels

- Digital platforms:
  - An active and growing presence on social media channels with an intra-organisation content creation
  - The website provides detailed information about our programs, research, and resources.
  - Additional pathways for enhanced digital communication and network building include search engine marketing and podcast and multimedia partnerships.
- Industry activities:
  - Events, including conferences, workshops and field days
  - Networking extension and webinars

Approach

- Our communication tone is informative and educational, using straightforward language that resonates with farmers.
- Authentic and relatable, highlighting positive impacts to motivate and encourage the adoption of innovative practices.

- Content we share includes real-world stories of farmers implementing soil carbon-building practices, educational resources such as case studies, and research updates summarising our findings.

Outcomes

- Communications align with our mission to support and validate innovative farming practices that build soil carbon and reduce emissions, contributing to a more sustainable and resilient agricultural sector.
- Increased awareness and engagement across communication channels demonstrating enhanced understanding of soil carbon sequestration among Australian farmers and their advisors, greater visibility for our initiatives in soil carbon farming, and broader public awareness of the environmental and financial benefits
- Increased participation in SoilCQuest's programs and online platforms that promote the adoption of innovative practices farmers and agricultural stakeholders can adopt and implement for soil carbon-building
- Increased research activities and broader stakeholder engagement resulting from stronger networks, collaborations, and expanded partnerships to support ongoing research and innovation.

Success will be

- Audience engagement through tracking growth in social media followers, shares, likes, comments and reach using platform analytics
- Increased website traffic using Google Analytics.
- Measuring knowledge-sharing success using the volume of research reports, case studies, educational resources published on our website, and associated engagement metrics.
- Growth in inquiries, enrolments, participation and sign-ups for SoilCQuest communications, programs and resources.

Governance Framework

Board

Per the company Constitution, SCQ is governed by a skills-based Board mapped within our Board Matrix document. Our organisational governance is underpinned by recognised skills acquired from the Australian Institute of Company Directors and supported by continuing professional development from an array of professional organisations, including the Governance Institute of Australia, the Australian Institute of For Purpose Leaders and the Institute of Community Directors Australia.

The Board sets the strategic direction and objectives for SCQ, ensuring strong corporate governance practices and high standards of behaviour. It also provides oversight of management's implementation of strategic objectives and instilling of company values. The roles and responsibilities of our Board are set out in the Board Charter, which is reviewed on an annual basis.

Our Annual Reports contain detailed information about our Board and governance. All potential SCQ initiatives are considered and assessed through our program logic process.

Committees

One Board Committee – the Research Committee – fulfils the Constitutional requirement for Research Institute endorsement. The Terms of Reference for the Research Committee state that its purpose is to propose, develop, review, and advise on the strategic direction and performance of the research undertaken by SCQ to achieve its purpose. The Committee is responsible for ensuring that all research activities undertaken are scientific in nature, are (or may prove to be) of value to Australia and determining research activities that are funded by the Research Fund.

Convergence of interest

Under the Corporations Act and SCQ's Conflict of Interest policy, Directors must promptly disclose any actual or perceived conflicts of interest and follow the procedures outlined in the policy.

Directors and responsible persons in management have an obligation to disclose any convergence or perceived conflicts of interest, and to comply with this policy to ensure they are effectively managed. The Board records all notices disclosing Director interests in the minutes of each meeting.

Policies

SCQ has a suite of policies and procedures to support effective governance of the company, including privacy, delegation of authority, fair and inclusive employment, IT and connectivity, work health and safety as well as other human resource matters.

Governance and compliance recording

SCQ is committed to strong systems of governance and compliance to secure organisational strategy and integrity. Our annual calendar of actions for recording, reviewing, and reporting governance and compliance underpins Board and Executive attention to a standard that exceeds minimum statutory, regulatory, and community standards.

Key Strategic Resources

SCQ's resources will be allocated to help drive our outcomes within each strategic priority.

Income

Licence fees and income generated from educational resources are the focus for achieving long-term financial security.

Opportunities to grow revenue from strategic partnerships, grant funding and other areas of operational enterprise will be identified and targeted to facilitate organisational growth when aligned with the SCQ strategy.

Enhanced opportunities for philanthropic and general public donations, including maximising the potential of our endorsement with *1% for Planet™* will be identified and engaged where they align with organisational outcomes and the strategic framework.

Expenditure

Expense allocation will change over time to meet our strategic outcomes, responding to performance against success indicators in the strategic framework as well as income opportunities that are successful.

Revenue and reserve funds can be applied to research and other program activities contingent on their source purpose and subject to Board approved annual budgets. Further details on changes to allocation of expenditure will be reflected in each annual budget and Annual Report.

Application

The SCQ Relationship Map outlines projects and activities that are formative to strategic collaborations with outcomes. Application of human and other organisation resources to each of these relationships will be explored, managed and developed to the best possible mutual advantage in achieving shared outcomes, maximising the strengths and value each entity can bring to the SCQ aim.

As we progress our strategic plan, we will align our human and financial investment to our priority areas based on evolving industry needs and relationships in strategic focus areas.

Risk Management

Assessment

The Board and management of SCQ have conducted a comprehensive risk assessment as part of the organisational governance oversight process. Our risk register maintains a detailed record identifying risks, their causes, consequences, likelihood, controls and evaluation.

Treatment

All risks with a critical consequence, a likelihood equal to or exceeding possible and therefore a rating of high or more, have a treatment plan that addresses the following standard risk management strategy approaches:

- Avoidance
- Retention
- Spreading
- Loss prevention and reduction
- Transfer

Review

The risk register is reviewed quarterly and is consistent with the SCQ Board Annual and Compliance Calendar details.

Strategy Monitoring, Evaluation, and Review

SCQ targets commercially viable practice change to positively impact farm productivity and profitability, utilising increased soil carbon and reduced emissions as holistic indicators for success. Active monitoring and evaluation of our strategic and delivery frameworks utilising the identified success metrics will be ongoing. Each initiative will be subject to active management through our program logic process and adjusted where outcomes, gap analysis and/or evaluation indicates change is appropriate.

Appendix

Organisational Strategy Background

Strategy and governance

Every organisation exists to fulfil a fundamental purpose embodied in its vision, mission, values, and goals. The organisational strategy involves clarifying this core purpose and determining how the organisation will achieve its goals in light of internal capabilities and external market forces.

Strategy is characterised as being long-term in orientation and fraught with uncertainty. It is an iterative process of conceiving plans, executing them, measuring effectiveness, and refining approaches to outperform competitors. Strategy is not just a fixed, long-term plan but an ongoing learning, adaptation, and growth process.

As the governing body, the board supervises organisational performance and legal/regulatory compliance. Regarding performance, the board may focus on three interdependent areas: strategy, risk management, and outcomes such as financial performance.

Specifically, strategy in a governance context refers to the high-level decisions made by both the board and senior management to chart how the organisation will fulfil its purpose and goals amidst an ever-changing context. This strategic guidance includes determining where to allocate resources and capital to maximise long-term competitiveness.

> **While management spearheads day-to-day strategy implementation, the board plays an oversight role in shaping the strategic course of an organisation and providing high-level guidance. There is a clear division of duties – the board sets strategic direction while management drives execution.**

Board engagement in strategy

It is a critical mistake for a board to take a hands-off approach to strategy and see it as the job of the CEO and management team. An engaged board provides insights that enhance strategy formulation and oversight, which improves execution.

The board possesses objectivity, wisdom, and experience, which management should leverage in crafting strategy. Directors provide diverse perspectives from multiple industries, functions and backgrounds. This breadth of view can challenge assumptions and identify blind spots. The board also understands shareholder needs and oversees risk management.

By contributing to the strategic dialogue, the board helps ensure the strategy aligns with the organisation's vision, mission, and values. Directors who are independent from management can ask tough questions to sharpen strategies before they are implemented.

Oversight from the board also enables improved strategy execution. The board monitors metrics and results, holds management accountable to the strategic plan, removes roadblocks, and aligns executive incentives properly. This governance discipline increases the likelihood of successful implementation.

In today's rapidly changing world, no competitive advantage lasts forever. Boards play an essential role in fostering a culture of agility, innovation, and learning, so the organisation continually evolves its strategies with new insights.

Best practices for organisational strategy

For boards to provide effective strategy evaluation and guidance, there are certain best practices to follow:

- **Understand the strategic context.** The board should have a strong comprehension of industry dynamics, competitive forces, market trends, disruptions, regulatory climate, and other external factors comprising the strategic context. A sharp understanding enables insightful strategic dialogue.
- **Review missions, values and goals.** The board periodically reviews the foundational vision, mission and values that underpin strategy, proposing changes to keep them relevant amidst external shifts.
- **Collaborate on strategic priorities.** Based on internal and external analyses, the board collaborates with management to identify 3-5 priority strategic goals for the company to focus on over the next 1-3 years.
- **Support management in execution.** While avoiding micromanagement, the board receives regular briefings on progress in strategy execution, risks, and results. They remove roadblocks, align incentives and provide resources to enable success.
- **Foster a culture of innovation.** The board shapes a culture that can respond rapidly to change and new strategic insights. This includes encouraging measured risk-taking, innovation, and continuous learning.
- **Conduct regular strategy reviews.** The board has candid, constructive strategy review sessions with management every 6-12 months to assess effectiveness, competition, risks and needed course corrections.
- **Guide major strategic decisions.** For fundamental moves like mergers, acquisitions, market expansion, and new technologies, the board utilises wisdom and experience to guide management.

- **Assess competitive advantages.** The board assesses current strengths and capabilities that differentiate the company, guiding and reinforcing them. Gaps are identified for improvement.
- **Benchmark performance.** Strategic gaps and opportunities become apparent by benchmarking against competitors, industry peers, and best-in-class organisations.
- **Oversee risk management.** The board continually evaluates risks tied to strategy, ensuring appropriate mitigation measures are implemented, and risks are balanced against potential strategic rewards.
- **Recruit strategic thinkers.** The board recruits independent directors with diverse strategic thinking aptitudes who enhance discussions with fresh perspectives and expertise.
- **Evaluate CEO and succession planning.** A key duty of the board is to hire and evaluate the CEO based on how well the strategy is executed. Robust succession planning is critical to long-term strategic success.

Background: https://www.aicd.com.au/good-governance/organisational-strategy.html