

# Framing Evaluation Questions

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BEYOND 2025 STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

AUGUST 24, 2023

# Today

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- Discuss take-aways from the focus group meetings
  - ERG's interpretation
  - Your viewpoints/additions
  
- Some draft evaluation question
  
- Demonstrate the process of assessing those within the Steering Committee
  - Consensus process

# Recap

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- ERG held six discussions related to evaluation questions
  - Internal, External, and Science
- Discussed how to define each category
- Discussed the EC charges related to each (ERG's interpretation)
- Discussed broader issues

# EC Charges – Internal

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- *S4. Identify opportunities to leverage action across multiple goals and outcomes of the Watershed Agreement.*
- *P2a. Assess the overall partnership to determine whether we are effectively hearing from and listening to all stakeholders.*
- *P2b. Assess the overall partnership to determine whether we have systems of evaluation and decision-making to enable meaningful action and allocation of partnership resources.*

# Themes – Internal

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- The goals and outcomes under the Agreement
- Processes and how they relate to outcomes and goals
- Structure of the Program and its relation to outcomes and goals
- Silos and how that potentially impacts the goals of the Program
- Decision-makers in the Program and how the processes and structure relate to decisions being made
- Co-benefits/cross-outcome results
- Stakeholders

# EC Charges – Science

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- *S1. Identify new and emerging scientific data and studies which could modify our progress reporting and adaptive management approach, as well as the goals and outcomes under the Watershed Agreement.*
- *S2. Enhance our monitoring and reporting capabilities to improve our understanding of existing conditions and trends.*
- *S3. Define the existing and emerging challenges (e.g., climate change conditions, increasing growth, diversity, equity, inclusion and justice considerations) to accomplishing the partnership's work under the Watershed Agreement, and how addressing those challenges might alter our collective restoration priorities, including the possibility of extending the target date for completing restoration of water quality beyond 2025.*

# Themes - Science

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- Natural and social science
  - Include the latter
- Monitoring and how to best to accomplish it
- Connections between monitoring/assessment and restoration
- Getting the science into the hands of decision-makers in ways it can be used
- Relationship between decision-making and science
  - Good decisions are backed by good science
- Emerging challenges such as climate change and the need to address the challenges in meaningful ways
- Large number of studies and reports available (inside and outside) and the need to synthesize those studies/reports

# EC Charges – External

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- *R1. Develop and begin to implement a communication strategy that identifies key partnership successes, associated ecosystem improvements and areas where more effort is needed.*
- *P1. Focus on moving beyond 2025 by seeking ways in which restoration can be relevant to all communities within the watershed.*



# Themes - External

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- Focusing on those who take action at the local level
  - Defining that broadly
- Building relationships with local stakeholders
  - Hearing their needs
  - Feedback loops
- Communication tools, but no communication strategy
- Providing local decision-makers with information the need/can understand
- Tiers of audiences
- Reaching 2025 had addressed some of these – starting point
- BMPs need to address not just restoration but also protection and stewardship

# The biggest take-away

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- Nothing is truly internal, external, science..
  - It's all connected
  
- Evaluation questions should reflect this

# Feedback?

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➤ 15 Minutes

➤ Emphasis

➤ Additions

➤ Modifications

# Moving from small groups to evaluation questions

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- Start with your input from the small groups
  - You did most of the talking
  
- Identify themes from the notes
  
- Find “macro themes”
  - Themes among the themes (presented above)
  
- Formulate into questions
  - Then compact those questions into common themes

# Structuring Evaluation Questions

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- Question itself
  - Main question with related questions that follow to further specify/expand on the main one
- Definitions to further specify it
- Methods (rigor) and timeline (Sept 1)
- Who takes it on (ERG or SC) (previewed today)
- Link back to EC Charge (Sept 1)

# Note on limits to methods

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- Given that ERG is working under contract to EPA, we are face legal constraints based on the Paperwork Reduction Act
- Any collection of information that involves 10 or more individuals requires approval from the Office of Management and Budget (possibly also including public review/comment periods)
  - Can be lengthy
- Federal employees are not counted in the “10 or more”
- This does not mean we can only talk to nine people

# EQ1: Looking inward

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➤ To what extent does the current organizational structure and processes support effective (1) decision-making and (2) outcome attainment? If so, why? If not, why not? What aspects of the structure and processes need to be kept or changed to better support effective decision-making and outcome attainment?

- Structure defined to include all levels below the Management Board (i.e., Teams, Committees, Workgroups, STAR)
- Processes defined to include the processes specified in the Governance document (SRS, etc.)
- Decision-making defined as any decisions made by Program entities in administering the Program (excluding decisions where the Program has no/little control; e.g., state laws)

# EQ1 – Suggested approach

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- Interviews with Program staff covering a set of questions that get at details related to this question
- Process mapping – map the processes used to identify issues
- Content analysis of previous analyses



# EQ2: Looking outward

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- To what extent is the Program providing decision-makers outside the Program with the information needed to make decisions contribute to the Program attaining its outcomes? Does the Program know the external decision-makers it needs to reach? Does the Program understand the needs of the decision-makers outside the Program? Does the current organizational structure allow for taking into account the needs of diverse stakeholder groups?
  - Decision-makers include individuals who are external to the Program who make decisions that can impact the Program's goal attainment. This includes (but not limited to) local government officials, landowners, and farms and other businesses.
  - Outside the Program is defined as entities or individuals that are not regular participants in Program meetings.
  - Information includes materials and communications that are distributed or could be distributed by the Program.
  - Decisions are defined as actions that could be taken (or not taken) that would impact the Program's goal attainment. (Once again, with some limits on what could be reasonably be affected by the Program.)

# EQ2: Suggested approach

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- Interviews with Program
  - Note: could be part of the EQ1 interviews as well
  
- Interviews with external stakeholders
  - May be limited by Paperwork Reduction Act
  
- Document review

## EQ3: Logical flow (value assessment)

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- What is the Program's goal/outcome attainment logic? Specifically, what are the logical flows of program activities to outputs, from outputs to outcomes, and from outcomes to goals? What are the underlying assumptions that underpin the flows from outputs to outcomes and are those assumptions grounded in sound theory/logic? Is the Program's performance tracking structure aligned with the logical flow?

# EQ3: Suggested approach

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- Interviews
- Document reviews
- Logic model development

# Evaluation Question Feedback Process

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- 9/1: ERG provides draft evaluation plan
  - Evaluation questions
  - Approach to answer those questions (methods/rigor)
  - Timeline
  
- Feedback routes (starting on 9/1)
  - Listening sessions (pre-set)
  - Electronic form (via a Qualtrics link)
  - Email to ERG/SC Chairs
  
- ERG leads a discussion on 9/21