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Monitoring and evaluation plan - Environmental Research Program

There are two components to monitoring and evaluating your project:

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Plan

Project Measures Table

The first instalment of the grant is linked to your submission of a satisfactory M&E plan and Project Measures Table.

**How to use this form**

Use the [**instructions**](#instructions) at the back of this document when completing the form.

Each section of the form is hyperlinked to enable you to easily access instructions that are relevant to that question. Simply right click and select ‘open hyperlink’ on question headings to switch between questions and the instructions.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Grant reference number:** |  |
| **Project title:** |  |
| **Name of organisation:** |  |
| **Name of Principal Investigator:** |  |
| **Contact person:** |  |
| **Contact number:** |  |
| **Contact email:** |  |

If you have questions or need help at any stage, please contact the Trust’s Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Officer on (02) 8837 6314 or at [info@environmentaltrust.nsw.gov.au](mailto:info@environmentaltrust.nsw.gov.au).

Monitoring and evaluation plan: form

[Project objectives](#Projobj)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1 |  |
| 2 |  |
| 3 |  |

[Methodology overview](#methodology)

Please outline your research method/experimental design.

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|  |

[Project collaborators](#collaborators)

Please list your project collaborators and other stakeholders.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Individual, organisation or group** | **Interest and contribution to project delivery** |
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| OBJECTIVE 1: | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Activity and its output \*  (Significant steps or actions that are needed to meet the identified objective) | How will progress be measured\* | Team member or collaborator responsible | Activity completion date(s)\* |
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1. [Project plan](#Projplan)

Please use one table for each of your objectives listed in Part 1. Add rows for additional activities as required.

\* For a description of what this means please refer to the glossary.

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| --- |
| **What would success look like if you achieve this objective?**  It is important to consider what the overall success (expected outcomes) of this objective would look like and how you know that you have reached it. |
|  |

| OBJECTIVE 2: | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Activity and its output \*  (Significant steps or actions that are needed to meet the identified objective) | How will progress be measured\* | Team member or collaborator responsible | Activity completion date(s)\* |
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| **What would success look like if you achieve this objective?**  It is important to consider what the overall success (expected outcomes) of this objective would look like and how you know that you have reached it. |
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| OBJECTIVE 3: | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Activity and its output \*  (Significant steps or actions that are needed to meet the identified objective) | How will progress be measured\* | Team member or collaborator responsible | Activity completion date(s)\* |
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| **What would success look like if you achieve this objective?**  It is important to consider what the overall success (expected outcomes) of this objective would look like and how you know that you have reached it. |
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1. [Communication and dissemination strategy](#Comstrat)

Please use the table below to outline how you will involve collaborators, **particularly end-users**. Detail how you will engage collaborators/end-users during the life of the project, as well as to promote, implement and disseminate research findings. You may include or expand on the communication strategy provided in your Grant Application. Please also link your strategies to the Research Program Project Measures Table where applicable.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Target audience**  (identify collaborator or end-user) | **Target message**  (e.g. communication of project intent, demonstrating opportunities) | **Communication method**  (e.g. collaborator meetings, stakeholder forums, conferences, social media) | **Evaluation method to determine effectiveness**  (e.g. number of interactions, attitudinal survey, incorporation of findings in documentation) | **Who is responsible?**  (identify team member or collaborator) | **Completion date**  (during or post project) |
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1. [Risk management](#Riskmgt)

Considering your project’s objectives and the activities you are planning, what are the potential risks that may impact on your success?

Please follow the steps below in completing this section. This is to help you identify potential risks associated with your project, rate those risks according to their ‘likelihood’ of occurring and their ‘impact’ if they occurred along with ‘treatment/action’ you will implement to reduce the risk.

**Step 1 I**dentify potential risks to your project and complete Step 1 in the table below. Risks may include environmental, economic and/or social factors. You may want to include and/or expand on risks provided in your Grant Application.

**Step 2** Identify the likelihood of each potential risk occurring using the likelihood scale provided above and select the appropriate rating in Step 2 in the table below.

**Step 3** Identify the impact of each potential risk using the impact scale provided above and select the appropriate rating in Step 3 in the table below.

**Step 4** Identify the level of risk using the risk evaluation scale provided above and select the appropriate rating in Step 4 in the table below.

**Step 5** Identify the treatment/action or mitigation option you will implement to reduce and/or manage the risk and complete Step 5 in the table below.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Potential risk** | **Likelihood** | **Impact** | **Score** | **Treatment/action/mitigation options** |
| **Step 1** | **Step 2** | **Step 3** | **Step 4** | **Step 5** |
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Make sure you revisit identified risks and actions as regularly.

1. [Evaluation](#evaluation)

How do you intend to periodically evaluate your project?

Please use the key evaluation questions below and develop your own that relate to your specific project.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1 | To what extent are the objectives being achieved? |
| 2 | Is/was the project being delivered within budget? |
| 3 | Are the methods/activities chosen appropriate? |
| 4 | What can we do differently? |
| 5 |  |
| 6 |  |
| 7 |  |
| 8 |  |
| 9 |  |
| 10 |  |

[Instructions](#objectives): Monitoring and evaluation plan

The form is designed to help you develop an M&E Plan for your project. It is a more comprehensive version of the project planning you did as part of your Grant Application – so you’ve already done the hard part! While greater detail is expected in your M&E Plan, the information provided should be consistent with the project plan and communications strategy in your application. Please discuss variations with your Grants Administrator.

Your M&E Plan is a tool to help keep your project on track, to adapt if necessary and ultimately to support you in achieving the outcomes of your project. Monitoring your program means checking that it is reaching its expected level of performance (as defined by your objectives and expected outputs) at regular intervals.

This plan includes a section to help you assess any risks that may have an impact on you meeting your objectives and think about how you could mitigate the risks. The template also asks you to consider how you are going to communicate with your project collaborators, including end-users of the research. The communication strategies you use can make an enormous difference to your project’s success, so planning for this ensures you are less likely to miss the opportunity to get others constructively involved with your project.

When you monitor and evaluate your project, you can learn from your experiences and adjust your project if you need to. Evaluation provides a feedback mechanism for continuous improvement of your effort. It should inform decision-making at every stage of the project and encourage you to reflect on your outcomes so that you can consider future actions. Ideally, evaluation starts from the moment you design your project and runs through to the completion of the project.

Apart from guiding you in planning your project, the M&E Plan will help you to demonstrate how successful your project is as you come to report against it. You will put a large amount of effort and time into planning and delivering your project so it is important for you to know what worked (and why), and what did not work so well and how to adapt your strategies to ensure you have a positive result. Knowing that your program is making a difference is crucial for everyone who is conducting the project with you and it encourages continual improvement.

At the same time as completing this M&E Plan, you will need to complete the Research Program Project Measures Table. The Research Program Project Measures Table provides a range of baseline data and target criterion that are meant to help you to record, monitor and guide the outcomes of your project. These measures, developed by the Environmental Trust, also enable data to be collated and reported at a project, program and state-wide level. You will need to refer to the Research Program Project Measures Table when completing your Project plan (Part 3 of this document) and ensure that your figures are consistent with those in your plan.

**Grant Application**

* + - * Details the project objectives
      * Develops an initial Project Plan
      * Outlines to the Technical Committee the feasibility and relevance of the proposed work

**Project Measures Table**

* + - * Offers a starting point of possible project measures including some which are mandatory
      * Identifies the Environmental Trust project measures that are relevant to achieving the objectives
      * Provides projected outputs for identified project measures
      * Becomes a quick ready reckoner for progress over time

**Monitoring and Evaluation Plan**

* + - * Is based on the Project Plan developed in the Grant Application
      * Considers collaborator contributions as well as communication and dissemination strategies
      * Details what will be done, that is, the activities planned to achieve the project’s objectives
      * Identifies how progress will be monitored and how success will be evaluated

**Reporting**

* + - * Reports on the implementation and ongoing application of the Monitoring and Evaluation Plan
      * Compares projected outputs to actual outputs (what was achieved) including against the Project Measures
      * Evaluates the success of the project

**Figure 1:** Linking the Grant Application, Project Measures Table, M&E Plan and Reporting.

The M&E Plan and Project Measures Table will form the basis of your progress and final project reports

**M&E question explanations and details**

1. [Project objectives](#objectives)

Please list your project objectives as provided in your grant application. However, you may wish to revise and refine these objectives to make them clearer and to remove ambiguity and/or overlap. Generally your project should have a maximum of two to three objectives. The objectives should clearly identify what the program is intending to achieve in a specific and measurable form.

You might find it useful to look at a resource we have on line called [*What makes a good objective*](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/resources/grants/11846MEgoodob.pdf.).

1. [Methodology overview](#methodology)

Provide a brief overview of your methodology for achieving your project objectives, including the investigative techniques you will use and how you will analyse your data.

This section is for your scientific research methodology, your communication methodology should be outlined at 5. Communication and dissemination strategy.

1. [Project collaborators](#collaborators)

**Collaborators** are your confirmed project partners. Your collaboration should demonstrate partnerships that will improve the delivery of your research and the application of research outcomes. It is therefore essential that you identify at least one end-user who will be applying your research outcomes as a collaborator. Your end users may be any number of organisations or groups, such as: state government agencies, councils, non-government organisations, community groups, landholders, environment groups or industry groups.

1. [Project plan](#plan)

Please use one table for each of your objectives listed in Part 1.

Information from these tables will be used when you are reporting on your project. The M&E Plan will be a major component of progress and final reports. The [reporting template](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/grants/MEplan.htm) can be downloaded from the Trust’s website.

If you require additional rows for activities and/or project measures in the tables below, please use the ‘Table’ tab from the Microsoft Word menu to insert additional rows. If you need help please contact Trust administration.

Please see the glossary at the end of the document for explanations for each of the headings in the following tables.

1. [Communication and dissemination strategy](#communication)

A communication and dissemination strategy aims to help you get your message out to the appropriate audience and to your collaborators and end-users of the research.

When completing this section it is important that you reflect on both the collaborators that were identified and the objectives and associated activities provided in the Project Plan and consider how you are going to measure whether you effectively communicated your message to the intended audience.

1. [Risk management](#risk)

Risk management involves identifying, assessing and prioritising risks that may impact on the successful delivery of your project. Although some risks have the potential to have a positive influence, most risks create a degree of uncertainty and can affect your ability to meet the project’s objectives. You would have already identified a number of risks in your grant application. Here we go a step further and assess the degree of risk posed on your objectives. This process asks you to identify risks, determine the ‘likelihood’ of those risks occurring, assess the ‘impact’ if those risks occurred and identify actions/treatments to mitigate the risk.

When completing this section it is important to consider each of your objectives along with the activities that you have identified in the Project Plan (Part 3).

The likelihood scale uses ‘very likely’, ‘likely’ or ‘unlikely’ to determine the probability of a risk occurring. A description of the likelihood scale is provided in the following table:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Likelihood scale** | |
| Very likely | Almost certain, it will probably occur several times a year |
| Likely | High probability, it will happen once a year |
| Unlikely | Unlikely, but not impossible |

The impact scale uses ‘major’, ‘moderate’ or ‘minor’ to determine the consequences if a risk occurred. A description of the impact scale is provided in the following table:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Impact scale** | |
| Major | Huge consequences |
| Moderate | Moderate level consequences |
| Minor | Minor or negligible consequences of effects |

Risk evaluation combines the likelihood together with the level of impact to evaluate the potential severity of risk. Risk evaluation is categorised by extreme, high, medium and low. For example if a risk was determined as ‘likely’ under the likelihood scale and ‘moderate’ on the impact scale then the risk would be evaluated as medium.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Risk evaluation scale** | | | | |
| LIKELIHOOD | **Very likely** | Medium | High | Extreme |
| **Likely** | Low | Medium | High |
| **Unlikely** | Low | Low | Medium |
|  |  | **Minor** | **Moderate** | **Major** |
|  |  | IMPACT | | |

The last step in the risk assessment process is to identify treatments/actions based on the risk evaluation. The treatment/action should reflect the level of risk. Obviously the higher the risk evaluation the more priority should be given to ensuring the risk is mitigated.

1. [Evaluation](#evaluation)

The final step in developing your M&E Plan is to consider how you will periodically evaluate your project. Project evaluation requires you to critically analyse your activities and outputs and determine the extent to which your objectives are being met or have been met during the project and at project completion. The Trust has developed a number of key evaluation questions that relate to most projects and should be used to evaluate your project (please see below). Also, the Trust encourages you to develop additional key evaluation questions which specifically relate to your project.

You will be required to reflect on your key evaluation questions in your progress and final reports to the Trust. Here are some other examples you may use:

* To what extent did you achieve your objectives?
* How effectively and efficiently did you achieve your objectives?
* Will the project’s outcomes continue once the project has been completed?
* If your outcomes are different to those planned, what impacted on the results? What of those were within your control? What of those were outside your influence?
* What would you do differently?
* Was the project cost effective?
* How well did you make use of available resources?
* Did the methods chosen to implement the project ensure success?
* Who did not get involved in the project and why?
* Did you identify all of the risks and were they appropriately managed?

Ultimately, your evaluation questions should explore the following dimensions of your research project and the related methods and outputs:

* Appropriateness
* Effectiveness
* Efficiency
* Impact
* Continuity

Glossary

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Objectives** | Objectives define what is going to be done to achieve the overall aim of the project. These are more specific than aims. They are clear, realistic and measurable intended results of a project.  For more information, refer to [What makes a good objective](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/resources/grants/11846MEgoodob.pdf) on the Trust’s website. |
| **Activities** | These are significant steps or actions that are needed to produce the identified projected outputs. They relate to dates by which specific actions will be achieved. They map out the key steps for the project and set dates for ensuring the programs objectives are met. |
| **Project Measures** | Project measures include, but are not limited to, a standardised list of indicators (outputs) with units of measure that the Trust uses to report on projects across its programs. Project measures identify criterion that you will use to show the efficiency and effectiveness with which your outcomes are being achieved against the objectives of the project. They are used to judge the impact of a project.  **Project measures may be quantitative** (numerical – how much did we do?) **or qualitative** (descriptive – How well did we do it?).  Refer to the Project Measures Table for more information. |
| **Outputs** | What you expect to achieve, deliver or produce. Some of these outputs may be the same as provided in the ‘Total Projected’ column in the Project Measures Table (Excel document). |
| **Outcomes** | The outcome is the actual change in the environment or behaviour as a result of the project activities. What you expect to achieve. |
| **How will progress be measured** | The methods used to monitor progress of an activity. For example; quadrats to measure success of regeneration or a survey to measure increase in awareness and understanding. Monitoring techniques should adhere to best practices and/or proven methods, where possible. |
| **When will progress be measured** | Identifies when monitoring will be conducted. Monitoring may occur more than once for a particular activity e.g. monthly, quarterly etc. |
|  | . |
| **Activity completion date** | The realistic and achievable date by which an activity is expected to be completed. |
|  |  |

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