



Review of marine plan monitoring indicators and their associated logic chains: review of logic models (MMO1151)

Aim

MMO1151 provided a review of the South Marine Plan Approach to Monitoring, including the logic model contained therein and its links to policy making and monitoring, as well as the proposed indicators and indicator gaps. The first part of the review aimed to analyse the individual elements of the logic model and make recommendations, applying these to the East Marine Plan. The second part of the review focussed on the indicators proposed for the draft South Marine Plan and the indicator gaps in both the draft South Marine Plan and East Marine Plan. Specifically the aim was to provide recommendations to improve the MMO's existing logic models and indicator descriptions.

Introduction and Methodology

The draft South Marine Plan has one overarching logic model for the marine plan. The model provides a framework used to guide the identification of monitoring indicators.

The review of the logic model (part 1) focused on the adequacy of the specification of the logic model. It examined opportunities to simplify the logic model and unpack or remove steps which were potentially irrelevant. A number of activities, outputs and outcomes specific to proposals were identified which were taken forward at the local level whereby the relevant draft South Marine Plan policies are applied in the decision making processes. Suggestions for re-drafted logic models were produced.

In part 2, each draft South Marine Plan monitoring indicator and each policy for the East and draft South Marine Plan (where the policy-specific indicators had not been identified) were reviewed. Report cards were developed for each indicator setting out practical details. For each reviewed policy, there is a summary of the policy-specific indicator requirements and suggestions of possible approaches for defining indicators. The suggested approaches were not fully investigated (e.g. to examine their appropriateness and feasibility) as part of this project. Rather, they comprise ideas for policy-specific indicators which require further investigation and testing before their viability can be determined.

Results

Part 1 of MMO1151 found that the overarching logic model for the draft South Marine Plan was overly complicated and included several elements that reduced the clarity of line of sight from inputs to impact. These included:

- Steps relevant only to the creation of marine plans, which is completed following adoption and is not relevant to ongoing monitoring
- An inappropriate mixture of different 'levels' of information, i.e. high-level plan implementation, such as related to organisational processes, and low-level policy usage, related to people on the ground and decision-making which uses policies
- At the objective level, there was a lack of clarity of the logical steps following through from the inputs to outcomes.
- Key steps in policy application and project delivery were missing.



Review of marine plan monitoring indicators and their associated logic chains: review of logic models (MMO1151)

These elements lead to a lack of line of sight between inputs and outcomes/ impacts. This results in confusion with respect to the key inputs, activities and outputs required for the delivery of outcomes. The review also found that the current set of proposed indicators is overly burdensome, creating significant resource demands and reducing the added value of individual indicators, and that there are significant gaps, inconsistencies and weaknesses in the current indicator set.

The critique of indicators found that proposed indicators often comprised of multiple sub-indicators under a common indicator theme. In total, 24 indicator report cards were prepared, providing details on over 80 specific indicators. The report cards detail information on each indicator's current status and trends as well as technical details including the methodology for constructing the indicator and any key weaknesses.

In the policy specific review it was found that policy-specific effects can be difficult to monitor because they cover complex issues, a broad range of issues which cannot be adequately covered through a small number of indicators and issues for which a desirable indicator can be identified but for which no data sources (or suitable proxy sources) are known to be available.

Conclusions and Recommendations

To strengthen the line of sight in the draft South Marine Plan logic model, it is recommended that elements within the model irrelevant to ongoing monitoring (i.e. plan creation) are presented separately, simplifying presentation. High-level and low-level elements of the logic model should also be separated, presented in distinct, albeit linked logic models. This linkage can be achieved using a hierarchy of 'nested' logic models which present different processes that ultimately contribute to the same outcomes.

It is further recommended that the objective level logic models are redrawn, starting from the actual proposals (that deliver the outcomes and HLMOs) as inputs, rather than the introduction of policies. Objective/Policy Logic Models should be constructed to relate to policies of one type only allowing the draw up of more consistent logic models at the objective/policy level which have a clear line of sight from inputs to outcomes. Logic models are presented for each of the 5 identified types of policies. Re-drafted logic models can be used as a communication tool with stakeholders, having implications for how monitoring of how marine plan monitoring should be done.

In some cases, recommendations for the proposed draft South Marine Plan monitoring indicators are provided at the end of the report card on further work that could be carried out to address weakness or further develop the indicator. Policies that have not had specific indicators identified have been reviewed and suggestions made for approaches to further investigate to attempt to fill these gaps.

MMO Comments

This project provides a useful recommendations that can be made to the MMO's existing logic models and a valuable critique of the draft South Marine Plan monitoring indicators and review of policy indicator gaps, which can be utilised.