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Organisation

Regional Fisheries Groups Evaluation (MMO1403)



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MMO1403: Regional Fisheries Groups Evaluation, April 2024



Report prepared by:
Risk & Policy Analysts Ltd.

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Marine Management Organisation
Lancaster House
Hampshire Court
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE4 7YH

Tel: 0300 123 1032
Email: info@marinemanagement.org.uk
Website: www.gov.uk/mmo

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Contents

Executive summary	7
1. Introduction	10
1.1 Problem definition	10
1.2 Aims and Objectives of the study.....	11
1.3 Structure of this report	11
2. Overview of Theories of Change (ToCs)	12
2.1 Purpose of ToCs.....	12
2.2 Developing a ToC for RFGs	12
2.3 The aim of a ToC	12
2.4 The terms used in a ToC	12
3. Our approach to developing the ToC	14
3.1 Overview.....	14
3.2 Developing the first draft ToC	14
3.3 The co-design workshop.....	14
4. The Theory of Change (ToC)	16
4.1 Overview.....	16
4.2 The ToC diagram.....	16
4.3 Inputs.....	19
4.4 Activities	19
4.5 Outputs	19
4.6 Outcomes	19
4.7 Impacts	20
4.8 Assumptions	20
4.9 External influences	20
5. Evaluation Framework	21
5.1 Evaluation matrix	21
5.2 Data analysis and management strategy.....	32
5.3 Stakeholder engagement strategy	42
6. Evaluation of RFG first years (baseline assessment)	47
P1. What communication channels and strategies have been most effective for engaging stakeholders outside of formal arrangements, how can they be improved, and to what extent is engagement transparent and accountable?	47
P2. How do stakeholders perceive the effectiveness of engagement activities implemented by the RFG team, and what factors contribute to their assessments?	66
P3. How does the representation of fishing and other marine sectors in formal meetings align with principles of equity and inclusivity?	74
P4. How have different engagement methods and processes been received by fisheries stakeholders, are they perceived to be fair and feasible?	78
P5. Are stakeholders satisfied with the current arrangements and do they perceive that their input is making a meaningful impact?	79
P6. Which engagement activities have worked best to support different requirements across the MMO's core service areas (in particular, from working	

with the fisheries management team, marine conservation team and other activities related to Goal 4 and 6)?	82
7. Evaluation implementation plan	84
Overview.....	84
Steps to implement the evaluation.....	86
Communications and dissemination strategy	101
8. Conclusion.....	104
9. References.....	108
Appendix A. RPA stakeholder engagement (interview) materials	109
A.1 Participant information sheet.....	109
A.2 Participant consent form.....	112
A.3 RPA Interview guide.....	113
Appendix B. MMO stakeholder engagement materials (supporting future evaluations)	117
B.1 Participant information sheet (template).....	118
B.2 Participant consent form (template).....	120
B.3 Supporting survey script.....	121

Figures

Figure 1: The ToC for the RFGs.....	17
Figure 2: Number and type of communication channels used in 2023, by region	49
Figure 3: MMO survey results to the question “How did you hear about the RFGs?”	51
Figure 4: Number of industry stakeholders attending RFG meetings, by year, by region	53
Figure 5: Industry attendance at RFG meetings by type, location, and by year	54
Figure 6: Number of actions raised by year and by region as a result of formal RFG meetings and port visits / drop-ins	55
Figure 7: Regulator attendance at RFG meetings, by meeting type, location, and year	68
Figure 8: Industry and regulatory attendance at formal RFG meetings, location and year	74
Figure 9: Number of industry participants to formal RFG meetings.....	75
Figure 10: Summary of steps to implement the evaluation.....	86

Tables

Table 1: Data reviewed to inform the draft ToC.....	14
Table 2: Process evaluation questions.....	24
Table 3: Sources analysed.....	32
Table 4: Process evaluation gap analysis	33

Table 5: Stakeholder list.....	43
Table 6: Stakeholder mapping	45
Table 7: Type of communications channels and strategies used to communicate with stakeholders	47
Table 8: MMO social media platform reach.....	56
Table 9: Lessons learnt from RFG meetings:.....	61
Table 10: Lessons learnt from port visits:.....	62
Table 11: Number of actions undertaken by the RFGs as of 2024.....	65
Table 12: Sample newsletter “You said, we did” inputs/outputs (summer 2023).....	80
Table 13: Evaluation tools developed by RPA in this report.....	84
Table 14: Existing monitoring and data collection methods and sources	95
Table 15: Revised data collection recommendations	97
Table 16: Interview questions.....	113
Table 17: Stakeholder grouping	121
Table 18: Survey script.....	122

Executive summary

Study overview

This report presents the findings from the process evaluation of Regional Fisheries Groups (RFGs) conducted by Risk & Policy Analysts Ltd (RPA) on behalf of the Marine Management Organisation (MMO). RFGs have been established to enable the inshore fleet and non-sector fleet to engage with government. The vision underpinning the RFGs is for the inshore fishing industry to become part of the decision-making process for fisheries management. The RFGs' intended impacts are to achieve greater participation from inshore fishers in discussions and decisions, and thus a different, participative mode of managing fisheries. These impacts also include the institutionalisation of RFGs and a transformed, positive perception of fisheries management among fishers. This study's aim has been to:

- identify constructive and negative feedback on processes from both the early and current arrangement stages of the development of the RFGs
- assess early and ongoing work with a focus on how it is helping the participatory element of the Joint Fisheries Statement (2022) to be delivered. This includes through commitments beyond the Fisheries Act, and internal commitments set by the RFG team
- develop baseline data

Evaluation design

To fulfil this, RPA and the RFG Delivery Team began by developing a Theory of Change (ToC) to map the RFGs and understand the causal pathways/processes leading to outcomes and impacts. RPA also constructed an evaluation framework to create a transparent path to evaluate the RFGs, focussing on existing data collection processes and sources to reduce the need for additional resources and the potential for increased burden on stakeholders to provide data. However, a data gap analysis revealed that existing data collection processes are not currently suitable to fully answer the evaluation questions, and where suitable, RPA has suggested additional data gathering solutions.

As part of the evaluation framework RPA has also defined and mapped stakeholders involved in the delivery of the RFGs and its beneficiaries. Due to time and budget constraints RPA were not able to collect information from all stakeholders to inform the baseline analysis, instead the analysis has been developed to support future data collection and evaluation. Furthermore, RPA has provided draft engagement materials that can be used by the RFG Delivery Team to collect previously absent data as efficiently as possible.

Findings from the baseline assessment

To provide initial findings to support the RFGs operations, as well as establish a measure to compare future evaluations against, RPA conducted an initial evaluation of the RFG's first years of operations (hereto referred to as the baseline assessment). The baseline assessment identified that the current engagement

processes used by the RFGs to support its stakeholders appear to be working effectively. Data suggests that in-person meetings are better received amongst stakeholders across regions. It was noted that formal meeting attendance is generally low throughout regions and that the RFG Delivery Team are working towards making meetings more attractive to relevant stakeholders. Port and coastal visits appear to be well received by stakeholders and are actively working towards building positive relationships with those in the fishing industry. Existing data was not sufficient to assess whether the activities are effectively capturing and engaging with the intended stakeholders, however it was noted that more work can be conducted across all regions to increase the amount and type of stakeholders involved in the activities. Engagement is less successful where there is a lack of continuous communication, or where quick progress on issues raised is not feasible. Overall, feedback suggests the RFGs are effectively working toward improving the satisfaction and engagement of stakeholders, and effectively contribute toward the MMO's achievement of Goal 4 (transforming regulation) and 6 (assuring sustainable fisheries).

Key findings

Accordingly, the RFGs' *impacts* include industry contributions to decisions and a collaborative mode of working across regulators and industry within a stable, institutionalised landscape of RFGs. It also includes fishers' support for the policy decisions made in relation to fisheries management.

There has been very limited evidence on how the inshore fishing industry has perceived the MMO's efforts in setting up the RFGs and engaging the industry, however anecdotal evidence and the feedback from the RFG Delivery Team has been positive.

There are signs that relationships with industry have been growing, thanks to the MMO's engagement efforts, although expected outcomes have not been fulfilled. Some ports have not been taking part in RFG events yet suggesting that 'lasting engagement from industry' has therefore not been observed everywhere after three years of the RFG programme. In addition, 'the level of information among fishers' – has not been systematically measured. While not all target audiences have been reached equally, the MMO's communication efforts have expanded its reach among different categories of fishers.

The vision underpinning the RFGs and their intended impacts refer to the inshore industry's participation in consultation and decision-making. Records show that industry attendance at RFG events has grown and has varied from place to place. Capacity and motivation contribute to fishers' participation. The success of informal drop-in sessions and port visits appears to reflect in part how convenient they are to fishers. While some inshore fishers still have doubts and feel distrust towards the MMO, there are promising signs of improvement that have been detected by members of the RFG team.

This evaluation has pointed to the ways that the MMO has sought to demonstrate to inshore fishers how their input is considered and informs fisheries management

decisions. It was not possible to verify whether stakeholders recognise being listened to by regulators (one of the RFGs intended outcomes), although members of the RFG team have reported hearing stakeholders expressing greater satisfaction with the MMO over time. The evaluation has also noted how decisions on matters inshore fishers raise are not all in the MMO's capacity to make, which makes the prospect of achieving one of the intended outcomes of RFGs – the production of appropriate responses to regional/local issues – uncertain.

As mentioned above, the benefits of informal, face-to-face meetings, noted by members of the RFG team and in anecdotal comments from fishers, suggest that these meetings could play a crucial role in building rapport and progressively increasing participation from currently under-represented groups and ports. In the absence of systematic evidence, comments collected by the MMO on RFG meetings suggest the possibility of greater interactions between regulators and stakeholders, for instance by reducing one-way presentations, and increasing time for discussion. Finally, the evaluation noted that, while sufficient for the day-to-day work, the level of resourcing for RFG activities has been insufficient when certain issues have been raised by stakeholders that called for a greater level of effort to engage, investigate or resolve, than the RFG team could provide. Besides, some of the challenges raised call for the contribution of other teams within the MMO or more broadly as resources and priorities from other teams contribute either positively or negatively – to the RFGs' effectiveness.

Overall, the RFG Delivery Team's feedback suggested that stakeholders appear to be satisfied with RFG activities (although increased participation in RFG activities would be beneficial). Engagement is less successful where there is a lack of continuous communication, or when quick progress on issues raised is not feasible. Nevertheless, the feedback suggests the RFGs are effectively working toward improving the satisfaction and engagement of stakeholders, and effectively contribute toward the MMO's achievement of Goal 4 (transforming regulation) and 6 (assuring sustainable fisheries).

Implementing the evaluation going forward

Using the tools developed as part of this study, insights gathered from the baseline analysis, and a workshop with RFG leads, RPA has drafted practical guidance on how to implement the evaluation going forward. This implementation plan contains advice on the evaluation processes (including updates to the tools developed in this study), considerations for resourcing, as well as an outline of existing data collecting processes, and how they could be refined to collect missing data for future evaluations. Finally, the implementation plan provides recommendations on how to best communicate with stakeholders throughout the evaluation, and advice of cost-effective solutions to disseminate its findings.

1. Introduction

1.1 Problem definition

Prior to the EU exit, fisheries management in England has been delivered in a top-down manner (Sissenwine and Symes, 2007; Linke and Siegrist, 2023), with limited capacity to change fisheries management at a regional level through consultation with the fishing industry. The management of English fisheries is complicated given the jurisdiction, remit and powers of different organisations involved – Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (IFCAs), the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) and the UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). The diversity and disparate make-up of the English fleet makes representation of the views of the industry extremely difficult. Representative bodies for the fishing industry include Producer Organisations, national level organisations and numerous smaller Community Interest Companies, fisher organisations and associations but there are many in the inshore fleet which lack representation and a mechanism to voice concerns to regulatory bodies at the local and regional levels. Consequently, fishers have often expressed the feeling that policy decisions on fisheries management were generally made without taking their views into account, even when they were being formally consulted. Such feelings have contributed to fishers' distrust in policy.

At a local and regional level, there has been a lack of effective communication between fishers and representatives of regulatory and policy bodies. Fishers often interact with several entities (IFCAs, MMO coastal officers, Centre of Environment Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (Cefas), etc.), to whom they would report concerns or issues, although the entity informed might not have power or resources to address them. There are also issues regarding the communication between such organisations. This has further contributed to fishers' distrust.

The Regional Fisheries Groups (RFGs) seek to address these problems by actively engaging with the inshore fishing industry by undertaking regular port visits, providing fishers with access to formal meetings/forums as well as ad hoc telephone and email lines to provide support. This engagement enables issues to be raised at the local/regional levels where they have not previously been effectively captured or communicated. Through these activities, the RFGs seek to provide a means for inshore fishers to connect and reinvigorate relationships with regulatory bodies, in order to increase active participation of the inshore fishing industry in the sustainable fisheries management decision making processes. This is embedded within the RFG vision statement:

“The establishment and operation of RFGs will facilitate and enable the inshore fishing industry to become part of the decision-making and consultation process for fisheries management, recognising their shared vested interest in developing and moving towards a world-class sustainable fisheries management system that supports local communities.”

1.2 Aims and Objectives of the study

The overall purpose of the project is to develop an approach to evaluate the processes previously and currently used by RFGs, particularly in regard to meeting and exceeding the participatory requirements of the Joint Fisheries Statement (2022) and internal commitments set by the RFG team, and to produce an evaluation of the current data (hereto referred to as the baseline data/assessment). The specific objectives are to:

- identify constructive and negative feedback on processes from both the early and current arrangement stages of the development of the RFGs
- assess early and ongoing work with a focus on how it is helping the participatory element of the Joint Fisheries Statement (2022) to be delivered. This includes through commitments beyond the Fisheries Act, and internal commitments set by the RFG team
- develop baseline data.

To meet these objectives, our approach is based on developing an evaluation framework and the tools that will enable implementation of that framework, and is focused on six tasks:

- task 1: inception meeting
- task 2: produce a Theory of Change (ToC) to describe how the corporate commitments on engagement and the RFG engagement objectives will be delivered
- task 3: develop an evaluation framework and indicators drawing on the ToC
- task 4: develop an evaluation plan setting out how the indicators can be measured and monitored, and who needs to be involved
- task 5: undertake a baseline assessment and produce an interview script to gather the information needed to inform the indicators and so answer the evaluation questions
- task 6: identify how data is currently collected by the RFG team, whether this needs to change going forwards and recommendations on the most cost-effective approaches to collect the data.

1.3 Structure of this report

[Section 1](#) of this report provides a general overview of the need for this study. [Section 2](#) provides an overview of the ToC and its purpose, [Section 3](#) sets out our approach to refining the initial draft of the ToC (including an overview of a co-design workshop that was used for feedback), [Section 4](#) provides the detail around the final ToC that has been used to underpin the process evaluation, [Section 5](#) outlines the evaluation framework, [Section 6](#) provides the baseline analysis, [Section 7](#) outlines the implementation plan, and [Section 8](#) provides the conclusions.

2. Overview of ToCs

2.1 Purpose of ToCs

A ToC serves as a structured and evidence-based framework which outlines the rationale and expected outcomes of the implementation of an intervention, policy, or policy change. In the current context, 5 RFGs were set up at the end of 2020 by Defra/MMO to provide a formal platform for inshore fishers and those not represented by a wider national group to come together with organisations such as the MMO, Defra, Cefas, and IFCA. The purpose is to hear from each other, share views, and develop collaborative working relationships between policy makers, scientists, regulators, and fishing sector interest groups. This way of collaborative working supports the Joint Fisheries Statement which aims to ensure that industry can play a greater role in managing fisheries through developing new management practices, contributing to fisheries science, being more actively engaged in fisheries management decisions, and co-designing future policy.

2.2 Developing a ToC for RFGs

RPA developed a ToC to understand the structure of the RFG, identify inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, impacts, and stakeholders for future evaluation.

The theory is presented in the form of a diagram showing the connections and causal pathways between interventions and impacts. The ToC therefore demonstrates what should happen for the RFG vision to be met (see [Section 1.1 Problem definition](#)).

2.3 The aim of a ToC

The ToC aims to set out all the steps that are expected to be involved in the process to achieve the desired impacts, together with the assumptions that have been made, and consideration of the wider contextual factors and external influences. The ToC is, in short, a description of how and why the objectives of the RFGs are expected to be achieved.

2.4 The terms used in a ToC

The ToC is designed to show the causal pathways, specifically, what needs to happen for the vision to be delivered. The causal pathways required to deliver the vision are shown by the linkages (arrows) between impacts, outcomes, outputs, activities, and inputs. Each of these terms is defined below, with these definitions following those in the Magenta Book (HM Treasury, 2020), with the slight adaptation of having 'Activities' as a separate term (instead of being considered under 'Inputs') and the inclusion of the 'Vision' definition. This way, the ToC shows what needs to happen for the vision to be achieved. If each step is successfully implemented, then the next level up shows what should be achieved, working up from the inputs at the bottom to the vision at the top. Inputs are required for activities to take place. The activities then deliver the outputs, delivery of the outputs enables the outcomes to be realised which over time will lead to the impacts. Achieving the impacts results in the vision being met.

The components of the ToC are defined as follows:

- **Vision:** the overall goal that is the intention of the intervention.
- **Impacts:** the longer-term changes that ensure the vision is achieved often identified as the benefits of the intervention.
- **Outcomes:** the early or medium-term changes that arise from the outputs and which enable the longer-term impacts to be realised. They can include skill development, uptake of tools, use of plans and behavioural change.
- **Outputs:** the things that the intervention is delivering or producing. These are often easily countable things such as the number of reports or attendance logs produced.
- **Activities:** the planned actions undertaken to deliver the intervention, often including services, methods, collaboration, and research.
- **Inputs:** the resources committed to the intervention including time, people, money, and existing knowledge.

3. Our approach to developing the ToC

3.1 Overview

Task 2 consisted of the development of a ToC to understand how the establishment and operation of the RFGs will impact on the role and participation of local fishers in fisheries management. It identifies inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, impacts, and stakeholders for future evaluation. An initial draft ToC was prepared by RPA based on data identified at the inception meeting and further data gathered by RPA in a literature review exercise. This was then followed by an online workshop with the MMO to ensure that the ToC accurately captures the objectives of the RFGs and their operation. A final version, as presented in [Section 4](#), has then been developed by RPA based on discussions at the workshop.

3.2 Developing the first draft ToC

A draft ToC was developed by RPA as a nominal starting point for comment and revision. This draft ToC was built upon using a literature review and was then developed further through an internal team workshop and followed the guidance in HM Treasury Magenta Book (HM Treasury, 2020).

Table 1: Data reviewed to inform the draft ToC

Source title	Details
RFG Delivery Plan	In place since Nov 2022, including a plan for 2023 (and provisional plans for 2024-25) and Regional Delivery Plans. Delivery plans also include vision/strategy documentation. For all regions the vision/strategy is the same. Implementation only differs by location dependent on the needs of the area
Attendance logs	For forums and other engagement activities. Logs include the organisation name/stakeholder type attending
RFG membership data	High level information, without personal information
Plans and debriefs	Issues identified at ports captured in logs/plans, with actions to remedy (from June 2022)
Survey data	Survey on stakeholder interaction with RFG activities (2022)
Feedback documentation	From Defra and Arms Length Bodies (ALBs)

3.3 The co-design workshop

The draft ToC was presented at a workshop with the MMO (held 9:30-11:00am on 15 December 2023). The workshop was hosted by RPA via Microsoft Teams and used Mural to facilitate the testing and refinement of the draft ToC. Mural is an interactive digital whiteboard which allows multiple users to collaborate on visual activities.

This workshop provided the MMO with the opportunity to help redevelop the ToC, with staff from the MMO able to comment further if desired until the end of 20 December 2023.

Nine people attended the workshop (4 from MMO and 5 from RPA) which included a presentation from RPA on the ToC process, its individual components and how they link with each other. There was then a brief discussion on the problem of fisher participation in fisheries management being addressed by RFGs, with MMO recognising that the RFGs were created during the Future of our Inshore Fisheries Conference in 2019 to address the desire to involve smaller operators in discussions and decisions on a wider range of topics. The need to break down barriers between the authorities and fishers was highlighted, with the need to dispel the impression that authorities only paid lip-service to fishers. The desire to solve issues at the regional level was also stressed.

The draft version of the ToC developed by the RPA team was presented in Mural for discussion and amendments by the participants. Various suggestions for revision were made at all levels of the ToC, including assumptions and external factors, and these were incorporated into the Mural diagram.

4. The ToC

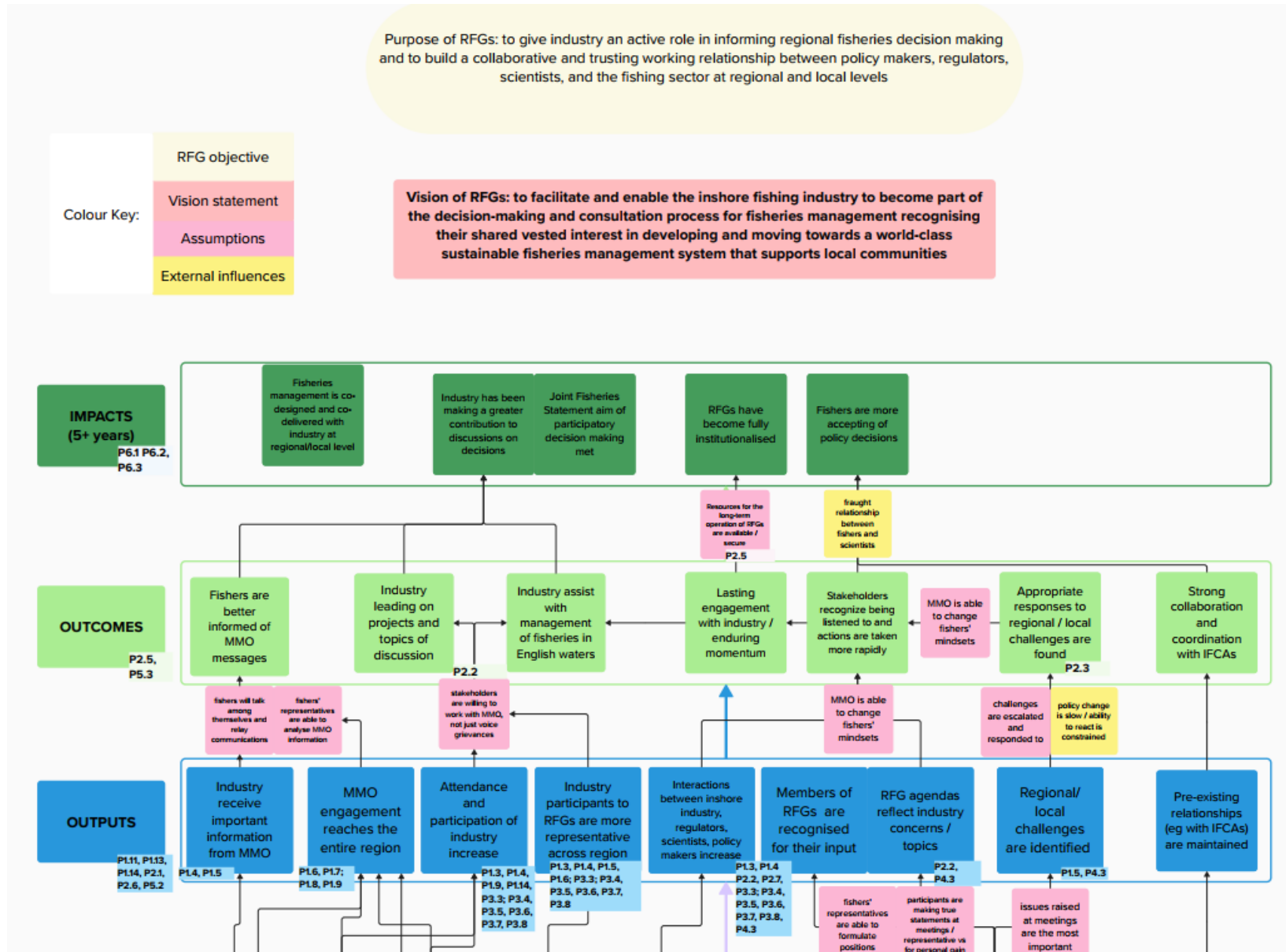
4.1 Overview

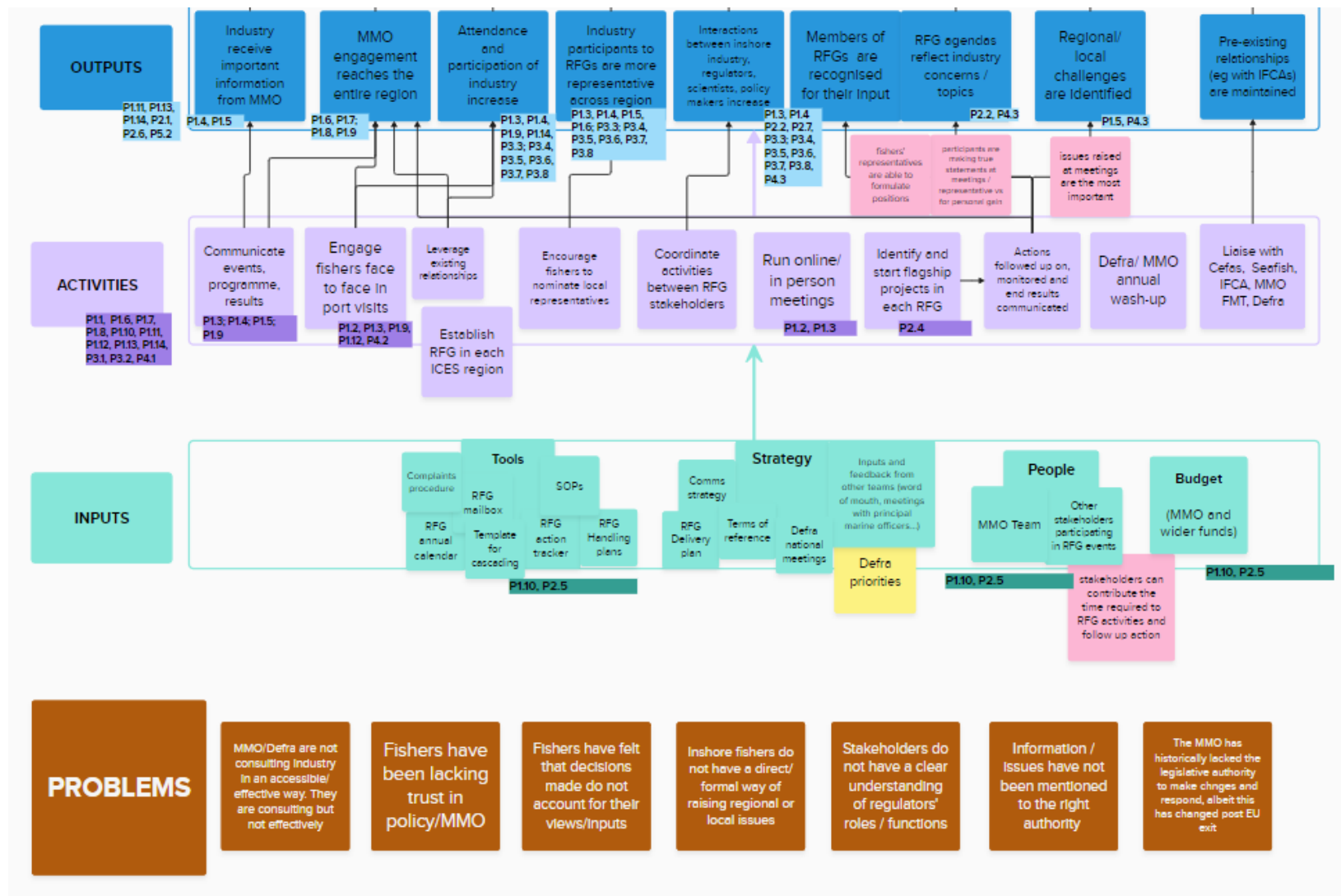
This document contains the latest version of the ToC (drafted 22 December 2023), incorporating all further comments received after the workshop with the MMO.

4.2 The ToC diagram

Figure 1 (overleaf) presents the ToC as refined during the co-design workshop.

Figure 1: The ToC for the RFGs





4.3 Inputs

The establishment of 5 RFGs is enabled by dedicating MMO staff and resources drawn from the MMO's overall budget. The intervention also requires the participation of fishers and their representatives, and those of other stakeholders (including other authorities such as IFCAs). The strategy for developing and running the RFGs is driven by statements of objectives and priorities set out in Terms of Reference and communicated to the MMO by Defra. Various inputs from other stakeholders, including those of principal marine officers, also contribute to adjusting the strategy for the RFGs. A suite of tools has been developed and honed to implement the strategy, including procedures, mailbox, templates, plans, calendar.

4.4 Activities

The MMO has established 5 RFGs, allocating roles, and developing and implementing a programme of activities. Besides communicating information (including about forthcoming events), the main activities are meetings, both online and in person at ports, and informal visits to ports. These meetings bring the MMO in direct contact with the industry and other relevant organisations and authorities. To encourage participation, the MMO leverages existing relationships, such as those between coastal officers and fishers. MMO coordinates interactions between participants and collects statements on challenges and opportunities experienced by the inshore fishing sector for consideration and action. These meetings are used to identify the most important issues and concerns of the industry in the area. When relevant, these issues become projects that are carried forward, monitored, and when finished, communicated to the industry. The MMO RFG team liaises with Cefas, Seafish, IFCAs, MMO Fisheries Management Teams, and Defra, throughout, to ensure coordination and cooperation, including through an annual meeting with Defra to review progress and achievements.

4.5 Outputs

The RFGs' activities contribute to increasing fishers' attendance to and participation in meetings and projects. The MMO's engagement reaches the entire region in scope of each RFG and connects the MMO with a more representative group of fishers, thereby enabling the consideration of the circumstances, views, and inputs of a wider range of local fishers. Important MMO information reaches fishers through their representatives and through a mailing list which any fisher or industry member can join, however some areas also have informally nominated representatives. The agendas of RFGs increasingly reflect the concerns and issues of local fishers and enable the MMO to identify them. Pre-existing relationships with other organisations, such as IFCAs, are maintained throughout.

4.6 Outcomes

Fishers recognise being listened to and actions that matter to them being taken more rapidly because of their participation in the RFGs. This contributes to maintaining momentum, and a lasting engagement from industry with the RFGs. Fishers take a growing role in shaping fisheries management, and lead on projects and topics of

discussion at RFGs, with more appropriate responses to regional issues being developed and greater co-ordination with others such as IFCAs. As a whole, fishers are better informed of MMO messages and vice versa.

4.7 Impacts

In the long-term, fishers have become participants in the design and delivery of fisheries management, making greater contributions to discussions and decisions than before the RFGs were created. As a result, the RFGs have become a stable, living part of fisheries management at regional and local levels. This has contributed to addressing the lack of trust that fishers had in policy decisions.

4.8 Assumptions

The theory of change relies on several assumptions being true. At the core of the RFGs is the assumption that fishers can commit the time and are able to contribute meaningfully to RFGs. In other words, their playing an active part in the management of fisheries depends on their capacity to do so, which is not the object of any intervention. The RFGs' ability to become "echo chambers" for local and regional fisher communities also depends on these communities' ability to coordinate and nominate representatives they consider legitimate: their "social capital". These representatives should also be capable of making sense of MMO information, and sufficiently active to disseminate broadly that information to other fishers. The strength of the RFGs as tools for identifying the most relevant local/regional challenges depends on whether the fishers who contribute to them do so truthfully and with a clear sense of priorities. Ultimately, achieving fishers' participation in fisheries management assumes that they are willing to work in collaboration with the MMO to achieve joint outcomes. The overall long-term operation of RFGs assumes that the resources to keep the RFGs running will remain secure.

4.9 External influences

Several factors outside of the MMO's control may interact with the intervention and contribute to shape its inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts. Defra's priorities may change, which may then influence the RFGs' strategy. The MMO's ability to demonstrate results to fishers will depend on the broader policy process, which can be slow. This could affect fishers' perception of how effective RFGs are. More broadly, fishers' attitudes towards fisheries management are informed by different factors, not all of which the MMO can influence. That includes fishers' perception of and relationship with scientists, which can colour their perception of policy decisions informed by scientific findings and advice. There is also the potential for other factors (social, cultural, economic) specific to a port or a local area, to shape fishers' responses to the MMO's activities there.

5. Evaluation Framework

An evaluation framework is developed to clarify the objectives of the study, guide the evaluation itself, and to provide a transparent methodology which can be replicated, or adjusted in the future if needed. To undertake a process evaluation of the RFGs, RPA has constructed the evaluation framework presented in this section which includes:

- A process evaluation matrix (setting out what is to be evaluated and how)
 - Evaluation (sub)questions
 - Evaluation indicators
 - Metrics
 - Indicator data sources
- A data analysis and management plan (identifying data needs and setting out the approach to data management and analysis for the evaluation)
 - Data sources and gap identification
 - Data management
 - Data analysis
- An engagement plan (setting out where the data will be obtained from, and how data gaps will be filled)
 - Stakeholder mapping
 - Approach to stakeholder engagement.

5.1 Evaluation matrix

5.1.1 Overview

The purpose of an evaluation matrix is to align the overall objectives of the evaluation (specifically, the evaluation questions) against specific measures and activities that allow RPA to assess the effectiveness of the intervention. The matrix provides the evaluation team with a clear outline of which data are required to answer each question, and by extent provides an efficient route to fulfilling the evaluation needs. That is, the matrix sets out what is to be evaluated and how it shall be performed.

In this study, the process evaluation questions examine the type and effectiveness of engagement techniques used by the RFG team, the extent to which bespoke regional arrangements used are appropriate, and lessons that can be extrapolated. The aim is to evaluate the approaches used to engage stakeholders, the form those approaches took, how they were delivered, how they compare regionally, and how they were experienced by the end-users and those who deliver them.

5.1.2 Approach

The first step to developing the evaluation matrix involved unpacking and understanding the 6 evaluation questions provided by the MMO. The subsequent development of sub-questions and data collection required to answer these questions is underpinned by an adequate understanding of the questions. A summary of our interpretation of the objectives is provided below:

- **P1. What communication channels and strategies have been most effective for engaging stakeholders outside of formal arrangements, how can they be improved, and to what extent is engagement transparent and accountable?** This question is interpreted as relating to approaches that have been used by both MMO and stakeholders to enable and enhance communications, with the evaluation focusing on use and experience of the different channels, drawing on the evidence regarding the extent of involvement, including who, where and how stakeholders have participated.
- **P2. How do stakeholders perceive the effectiveness of engagement activities implemented by the RFG team, and what factors contribute to their assessments?** This question is interpreted as relating to how engagement activities have enabled the aims of the RFGs to be met from both the perspective of the RFGs but also the stakeholders involved in the engagement activities. This draws on evidence from the RFG teams, utilising secondary sources to the extent possible.
- **P3. How does the representation of fishing and other marine sectors in formal meetings align with principles of equity and inclusivity?** This question is interpreted as capturing representativeness of the formal meetings including which sectors have and have not been represented, but also their ability to contribute equally. This draws on evidence around attendance records but will also need information on sectors locally to form the baseline for comparison.
- **P4. How have different engagement methods and processes been received by fisheries stakeholders, are they perceived to be fair and feasible?** This question is interpreted as assessing the engagement methods being used and how they are perceived as operating by stakeholders. The evaluation focuses around views on process, frequency, participation, access and information provided pre- and post-engagement, e.g. records. This draws on evidence such as port visit and drop-in summaries, and the handling plans.
- **P5. Are stakeholders satisfied with the current arrangements and do they perceive that their input is making a meaningful impact?** This question is interpreted as the current arrangement being the RFG engagement approaches, but here the focus is on how input made through those approaches has been used, and whether this has been seen by stakeholders as resulting in action by the MMO. This draws on evidence from the summaries from the engagement events and handling plans, with focus on what inputs have been provided.
- **P6. Which engagement activities have worked best to support different requirements across the MMO's core service areas (in particular, from working with the fisheries management team, marine conservation team and other activities related to Goal 4 and 6)?** This question relates to improving self-regulation and a culture of compliance (Goal 4) and ensuring a transparent management to achieve a resilient and increasingly viable fishing

sector (Goal 6). This question will largely draw on evidence from answers to the previous five evaluation questions.

5.1.3 Process evaluation matrix

Based on the above understandings, RPA has designed a process evaluation matrix comprising of evaluation questions, sub-questions, indicators for analysis, metrics against which to measure the indicators, and the source of data, as displayed in Table 2. The data sources are focused on findings from secondary literature only, with gaps identified and to be filled (see [Section 5.2.2](#)).

The evaluation matrix has been mapped against the ToC in [Section 4.2](#) with numbering to illustrate where evaluation questions focus on specific elements of the ToC. This means the matrix is a broad reflection of the ToC, and the matrix and ToC should be read in parallel to understand how the evaluation questions focus on individual elements of the RFGs. Sub-evaluation questions were then drafted against these causal pathways where relevant to the six evaluation questions. Further refinement of questions was informed by the [Magenta Book](#) (HM Treasury, 2020).

The evaluation matrix below (Table 2) should be read horizontally (row-by-row from the first column to the last). The first column outlines the 6 high-level evaluation questions set out by the MMO. RPA has broken these questions down into more focussed sub-questions. This approach enables the evaluation team to identify and capture specific data against the varying nuances that relate to a single evaluation question as there are a lot of different factors which may affect it. To answer each sub-question, a list of indicators (based on available literature) has been identified. The indicators refer to what can be measured to answer the corresponding sub-question (to the left of the indicator cell). Metrics are also provided, similarly to indicators these refer to the specific measurement of data used to assess the corresponding indicator (to the left of the metrics cell). Finally, the data source outlines where RPA will obtain the data from for the corresponding row of the table.

Each evaluation question and sub-question has been numbered with the following system:

- P: refers to 'process'
- #: refers to evaluation question number
- #.#: refers to the evaluation sub-question where the first number relates to the wider evaluation question, and the second number is sequential.

For consistency and clarity, the same numbering has been used in the ToC.

Table 2: Process evaluation questions

Evaluation questions	Sub-questions	Indicator	Metrics	Data source
<p>P1. What communication channels and strategies have been most effective for engaging stakeholders outside of formal arrangements, how can they be improved, and to what extent is engagement transparent and accountable?</p>	<p>P1.1 Which channels and strategies have been used to communicate with stakeholders (e.g. government website, social media, word of mouth, printed media)? P1.2 What regional differences are there in terms of communications channels used?</p>	<p>List of communication channels and strategies (e.g. mobile port visits, social media posts, comms messaging, posters) Number/type of communication from MMO</p>	<p>Number and type, by region</p>	<p>Port visits/drop-in summaries Handling plans Communication strategy</p>
	<p>P1.3 What strategies and communication channels have been more effective in engaging with stakeholders and why? P1.4 What strategies and communication channels have been less effective and why? P1.5 What are the regional differences in engagement levels across communication channels used?</p>	<p>Number of stakeholders engaged Qualitative indicators of successful / unsuccessful engagement (e.g. commentary)</p>	<p>Number of stakeholder attendees during formal/informal meetings by region Stakeholder perceptions</p>	<p>Port visits/drop-in summaries Handling plans Interviews</p>
	<p>P1.6 To what extent have communication channels and strategies targeted and engaged with the intended audience? P1.7 How do targets, and depth of engagement vary regionally by communication channel? P1.8 Are there any gaps in the target audience?</p>	<p>Target audience Type of stakeholder engaged</p>	<p>Number and type of stakeholders by region Number of stakeholder attendees during formal/informal meetings by region.</p>	<p>Handling plans Communication strategy Port visits/drop-in summaries One off RFG survey Interviews</p>

Evaluation questions	Sub-questions	Indicator	Metrics	Data source
	P1.9 How do the locations of engagement activities influence their effectiveness? (both within a region and between regions)	Target audience Type of stakeholder engaged	Number and type of stakeholders by region Number of stakeholder attendees during formal/informal meetings by region Type of locations of engagement activities	Handling plans Communication strategy Port visits/drop-in summaries Interviews
	P1.10 Have resources (tools, people, budget) been sufficient for engagement activities to be undertaken as intended?	Type of engagement methods Allocated budget; MMO perceptions	Number / type of engagement methods Cost of engagement activities in GB Stakeholder perceptions	Handling plans Interviews
	P1.11 What lessons have been learnt from engaging with stakeholders so far? For whom and why?	Noted observations Indications of change of strategy/channel	Stakeholder perceptions.	Port visits/drop-in summaries Handling plans Interviews

Evaluation questions	Sub-questions	Indicator	Metrics	Data source
	P1.12 How systematically/transparently have instances of informal engagement been recorded?	Records of informal engagement (compared)	Number of informal engagement activities recorded	Port visits/drop-in summaries Handling plans
	P1.13 How systematically/transparently have any follow-up actions to engagement been recorded?	Records of informal engagement (compared)	Number of recorded follow-up actions	Port visits/drop-in summaries Handling plans Interviews
	P1.14 What features of the more effective strategies and channels could advance the achievement of outcomes?	-	Stakeholder perception	Responses to other P1 sub-questions Interviews
P2. How do stakeholders perceive the effectiveness of engagement activities implemented by the RFG team, and what factors contribute to their assessments?	P2.1 How have engagement activities influenced stakeholders' understanding of regulators' roles / functions?	Stakeholder perceptions on changed understanding Record of MMO communication towards fishers	Stakeholder perceptions Number of MMO communication towards fishers.	Handling plans Interviews
	P2.2 To what extent are insights/issues brought to the relevant authority as a result of RFG engagement?	Records of industry assistance with management of fisheries in English waters MMO perceptions on cross-organisational working	Number of records of industry assistance MMO perception.	Action tracker Interviews
	P2.3 To what extent do stakeholders feel their issues/challenges are taken forward as a	Records of industry contribution to discussions on decisions	Number of records of industry contributions	Handling plans Interviews

Evaluation questions	Sub-questions	Indicator	Metrics	Data source
	result of their involvement in RFG activities? What factors contribute to this feeling?	Stakeholder perceptions on effectiveness	Stakeholder perception	
	P2.4 How did engagement activities enable flagship projects to be identified and started?	Records of industry led projects and topics of discussion	Number of flagship projects	Action tracker
	P2.5 Have resources (tools, people, budget) been sufficient to enable the outcomes of engagement activities to be followed up as intended?	Type of engagement methods Allocated budget	Number/type of engagement methods Cots of engagement activities in GBP/attending MMO team members/platforms etc.	Handling plans Action trackers Interviews
	P2.6 How have programme feedback loops and timeframes for actions occurred? To what extent has this affected stakeholder perceptions on the effectiveness of RFG activities?	MMO perceptions	Stakeholder perception	Interviews
	P2.7 How do formal meetings influence the number of interactions between inshore industry, regulators, scientist, policy makers?	Records of lasting engagement with industry / enduring momentum	Number of records of lasting engagement with industry / enduring momentum	Action tracker Interviews
P3. How does the representation of fishing and	P3.1 Are formal engagement activities reaching the people they were intended to?	Attendance records (change in attendance over time) Attendance commentary	Number and type of stakeholders by region	Port visits/drop-in summaries Handling plans

Evaluation questions	Sub-questions	Indicator	Metrics	Data source
other marine sectors in formal meetings align with principles of equity and inclusivity?	P3.2 Which marine sectors have not been represented in formal meetings at each RFG and why?		Number of stakeholders attending formal meetings by marine sector and by region	Interviews
	P3.3 How representative of the fishing sector/region are attendees to formal meetings? P3.4 Do specific sectors, stakeholders, or ports have better representation at formal meetings?	Attendance records Attendance commentary Local marine sectors' make-up	Number / type of attendees at formal meetings Stakeholder perception	Handling plans Interviews
	P3.5 Have the different sectors / groups represented been able to contribute equally? How can this be improved?	Records of industry attendance at RFG meetings / port visits or drop-ins	Number / type of attendees at formal / informal meetings.	Handling plans Interviews
	P3.6 Are the selected representatives considered to reflect wider views of the sector/stakeholder type/region?	Attendance commentary	Stakeholder perception	Handling plans Interviews
	P3.7 What could explain higher/lower inclusivity observed at RFG meetings?	-	Stakeholder perception	Responses to other P3 sub-questions
	P3.8 How feasible would it be for RFGs to be more inclusive of the different marine sectors?	-	Stakeholder perception	Responses to other P3 sub-questions

Evaluation questions	Sub-questions	Indicator	Metrics	Data source
P4. How have different engagement methods and processes been received by fisheries stakeholders, are they perceived to be fair and feasible?	P4.1 Are stakeholders satisfied with the RFG meetings (process, frequency, participation, time of access, records)?	Commentary on relevant stakeholders' comments/feedback	Stakeholder perception	Port visits/drop-in summaries Handling plans Interviews
	P4.2 To what extent do stakeholders approve of drop-in/port visits (process, frequency, participation, access, records)?	Commentary on relevant stakeholders' comments/feedback	Stakeholder perception Number of records of responses to sessions.	Port visits/drop-in summaries Handling plans Interviews
	P4.3 To what extent can fishers formally/directly raise regional/local concerns regarding fishing-related issues?	Commentary on relevant stakeholders' comments/feedback	Number / type of issues raised by region.	Port visits/drop-in summaries Handling plans Interviews
P5. Are stakeholders satisfied with the current arrangements and do they perceive that their input is making a	P5.1: See P2.3	See P2.3	See P2.3	See P2.3
	P5.2 What inputs have stakeholders made to RFGs? What has been done with their inputs (feedback loop)?	Record of issues raised by stakeholders at meetings	Number of issues raised by stakeholders	Port visits/drop-in summaries Handling plans Interviews

Evaluation questions	Sub-questions	Indicator	Metrics	Data source
meaningful impact?	P5.3 To what extent have current engagement arrangements improved stakeholders' trust in the MMO?	<p>Records of recognition of input from members</p> <p>Records of organisation activities being actively maintained</p> <p>Records of stakeholders expressing a willingness to collaborate with MMO, rather than solely voicing grievances</p> <p>Records of fishers demonstrating a higher level of acceptance towards policy options</p>	<p>Number of records on input from members</p> <p>Number / type of organisational activities</p> <p>Stakeholder perception</p>	<p>Port visits/drop-in summaries</p> <p>Handling plans</p> <p>Interviews</p>
P6. Which engagement activities have worked best to support different	P6.1 Are engagement activities with MMO supporting to achieve Goal 4 by improving relations and increasing trust and so helping to improve compliance and self-regulations?	-	-	Responses to earlier questions, especially P1, P2, P3, P4 and P5

Evaluation questions	Sub-questions	Indicator	Metrics	Data source
requirements across the MMO's core service areas (in particular, from working with the fisheries management team, marine conservation team and other activities related to Goal 4 and 6)?	P6.2 Are engagement activities with MMO supporting to achieve Goal 6 by helping to enhance sustainable and transparent management of fishing opportunities and so working to deliver a more resilient and viable fishing sector?	-	-	Responses to earlier questions, especially P2, P4

5.2 Data analysis and management strategy

5.2.1 Overview

The aim of this section is to set out RPA's approach to the collection and use of data throughout the baseline assessment of the RFGs (Task 5). This covers the types of data required to investigate the indicators and by extent answer the evaluation questions. It also outlines RPA's approach toward managing, storing, and protecting data, as well as the method of analysis. This could easily be replicated for future evaluation rounds.

5.2.2 Data sources and gap identification

To inform what secondary data exists and what is suitable to answer the evaluation questions, RPA has conducted a desk review of existing strategic and monitoring documents. This included a total of 27 documents, outlining the approach to delivering the RFGs, as well as plans and records of activities undertaken in the first years of their operation. RPA scraped the documents for data relevant to each of the indicators and outlined where suitable data were available (or not). Table 3 outlines the type of sources analysed in the scraping exercise.

Table 3: Sources analysed

Type of document analysed
Port visit debriefs
Drop-in meeting debriefs
Regional handling plans
Communications strategies
RFG delivery plan
RFG engagement calendar
RFG meeting attendance log
RFG Communications strategy and Gantt chart
RFG Actions tracker
One-off RFG Survey

As a consequence of the data scraping exercise, RPA identified data gaps (in terms of low-quality or absent data) which prevent the evaluation questions from being fully answered using secondary data alone. This exercise included the assessment of data against each evaluation question for its ability to comprehensively answer evaluation questions and identified three scenarios:

- **Red:** data is absent or incomplete to the extent that the question could not be answered using the available data
- **Yellow:** exists to the extent that the question can be partially answered; and
- **Green:** sufficient data are available to fully answer the evaluation questions.

Table 4 outlines the identified data gaps and forms the basis of a primary data collection plan.

Table 4: Process evaluation gap analysis

Evaluation questions	Sub-questions	Indicator	Gap (secondary data)
<p>P1. What communication channels and strategies have been most effective for engaging stakeholders outside of formal arrangements, how can they be improved, and to what extent is engagement transparent and accountable?</p>	<p>P1.1 Which channels and strategies have been used to communicate with stakeholders (e.g. government website, social media, word of mouth, printed media)?</p>	<p>List of communication channels and strategies (e.g. mobile port visits, social media posts, comms messaging, posters)</p>	<p>List available – question can be answered using secondary data</p>
	<p>P1.2 What regional differences are there in terms of communications channels used?</p>	<p>Number/type of communication from MMO</p>	<p>Number and type of communication is available – question can be answered using secondary data</p>
	<p>P1.3 What strategies and communication channels have been more effective in engaging with stakeholders and why?</p>	<p>Number of stakeholders engaged</p>	<p>Number of stakeholders engaged available in formal meetings; some information available on stakeholder engagement of informal meetings – question can be partly answered using secondary data</p>
	<p>P1.4 What strategies and communication channels have been less effective and why?</p>	<p>Qualitative indicators of successful / unsuccessful engagement (e.g. commentary)</p>	<p>Good level of commentary available on qualitative indicators – questions can be answered using secondary data</p>
	<p>P1.5 What are the regional differences in engagement levels across communication channels used?</p>		
	<p>P1.6 To what extent have communication channels and strategies targeted and engaged with the intended audience?</p>	<p>Target audience</p>	<p>Good level of quantitative and qualitative data on stakeholders on a regional level; some/no information available on a smaller scale (e.g. port level) – questions can be partly answered using secondary data</p>

Evaluation questions	Sub-questions	Indicator	Gap (secondary data)
	P1.7 How do targets, and depth of engagement vary regionally by communication channel? P1.8 Are there any gaps in the target audience?	Type of stakeholder engaged	List of number of stakeholders engaged on a regional level with some commentary on type; varying level of quantitative and qualitative data on stakeholders engaged on smaller scale – questions can be partly answered using secondary data
		Target audience	Lists and commentaries available on target audience – question can be answered based on secondary data
	P1.9 How do the locations of engagement activities influence their effectiveness? (both within a region and between regions)	Type of stakeholder engaged	Good commentary on type of stakeholders engaged during formal meetings, some commentary during informal engagement (e.g. port visits) – question can be partially answered
		Type of engagement methods	Lists available on the types of engagement methods
	P1.10 Have resources (tools, people, budget) been sufficient for engagement activities to be undertaken as intended?	Allocated budget	Limited information on allocated budget for formal/informal meetings; some information on overall budget allocated for all RFG engagement – question can be partly answered using secondary data
		MMO perceptions	No information available – question cannot be answered using secondary data
		Noted observations	Good level of noted observations on stakeholder engagement – question can be answered using secondary data
	P1.11 What lessons have been learnt from engaging with		

Evaluation questions	Sub-questions	Indicator	Gap (secondary data)
	stakeholders so far? For whom and why?	Indications of change of strategy/channel	Some indication of change of strategy/channel on a regional level – questions can be partly answered using secondary data
	P1.12 How systematically/transparently have instances of informal engagement been recorded?	Records of informal engagement (compared)	Good level of available summaries of port visits/drop-ins – question can be answered based on secondary data
	P1.13 How systematically/transparently have any follow-up actions to engagement been recorded?	Records of informal engagement (compared)	Good level of commentary on intended actions; some information available on follow-up actions that have been carried out
	P1.14 What features of the more effective strategies and channels could advance the achievement of outcomes?	(Informed from previous questions)	Some commentary available on stakeholders' feedback regarding their perceptions – question can be partly answered using secondary data
P2. How do stakeholders perceive the effectiveness of engagement activities implemented by the RFG team, and what factors contribute to	P2.1 How have engagement activities influenced stakeholders' understanding of regulators' roles / functions?	Stakeholder perceptions on changed understanding	Limited information on stakeholder perception is available – questions cannot be answered based on secondary data
		Record of MMO communication towards fishers	No information available on MMO communication on regulators' roles and functions – question cannot be answered using secondary data
	P2.2 To what extent are insights/issues brought to the relevant authority as a result of RFG engagement?	Records of industry assistance with management of fisheries in English waters	No information on stakeholder perception is available – questions cannot be answered based on secondary data

Evaluation questions	Sub-questions	Indicator	Gap (secondary data)
their assessments?		MMO perceptions on cross-organisational working	No information on stakeholder perception is available – questions cannot be answered based on secondary data
	P2.3 To what extent do stakeholders feel their issues/challenges are taken forward as a result of their involvement in RFG activities? What factors contribute to this feeling?	Records of industry contribution to discussions on decisions	Good level of information on issues/challenges raised – questions can be partly answered based on secondary data
		Stakeholder perceptions on effectiveness	No information on stakeholder perception is available – questions cannot be answered based on secondary data
	P2.4 How did engagement activities enable flagship projects to be identified and started?	Records of industry led projects and topics of discussion	Good level of information is available - question can be answered using secondary data
	P2.5 Have resources (tools, people, budget) been sufficient to enable the outcomes of engagement activities to be followed up as intended?	Type of engagement methods	Good level of information on engagement methods – question can be answered using secondary data
		Allocated budget	Limited information on allocated budget for formal/informal meetings; some information on overall budget allocated for all RFG engagement – question can be partly answered using secondary data
	P2.6 How have programme feedback loops and timeframes for actions occurred? To what extent has this affected stakeholder perceptions on the effectiveness of RFG activities?	MMO perceptions	Information not available – questions cannot be answered using secondary data

Evaluation questions	Sub-questions	Indicator	Gap (secondary data)
	P2.7 How do formal meetings influence the number of interactions between inshore industry, regulators, scientist, policy makers?	Records of lasting engagement with industry / enduring momentum	Information not available – question cannot be answered using secondary data
P3. How does the representation of fishing and other marine sectors in formal meetings align with principles of equity and inclusivity?	P3.1 Are formal engagement activities reaching the people they were intended to? P3.2 Which marine sectors have not been represented in formal meetings at each RFG and why?	Attendance records (change in attendance over time)	Data on who has attended and where but may require further analysis to assess change - question can be partly answered using secondary data
		Attendance commentary	Good commentary of attendance but may requires further analysis to identify who has not attended (referencing local marine sector makeup) – question can be partly answered using secondary data
	P3.3 How representative of the fishing sector/region are attendees to formal meetings? P3.4 Do specific sectors, stakeholders, or ports have better representation at formal meetings?	Attendance records	Some data from records although they do not reference stakeholder types attending – question can be partly answered using secondary data
		Attendance commentary	Good information on attendees and views on representativeness – question can be answered using secondary data
		Local marine sectors' make-up	Some data available, but limited - question can be partly answered using secondary data
P3.5 Have the different sectors / groups represented been able to contribute equally? How can this be improved?	Records of industry attendance at RFG meetings / port visits or drop-ins	Some information on attendance/attendees but limited - question can be partly answered using secondary data	

Evaluation questions	Sub-questions	Indicator	Gap (secondary data)
	P3.6 Are the selected representatives considered to reflect wider views of the sector/stakeholder type/region?	Attendance commentary	Some examples but limited - question can be partly answered using secondary data
	P3.7 What could explain higher/lower inclusivity observed at RFG meetings?	(Informed from previous questions)	Limited comments on meeting format - question can be partly answered using secondary data
	P3.8 How feasible would it be for RFGs to be more inclusive of the different marine sectors?	(Informed from previous questions)	Some but limited observations - question can be partly answered using secondary data
P4. How have different engagement methods and processes been received by fisheries stakeholders, are they perceived to be fair and feasible?	P4.1 Are stakeholders satisfied with the RFG meetings (process, frequency, participation, time of access, records)?	Commentary on relevant stakeholders' comments/feedback	Limited information on perspective of RFGs - question can be partly answered using secondary data
	P4.2 To what extent do stakeholders approve of drop-in/port visits (process, frequency, participation, access, records)?	Commentary on relevant stakeholders' comments/feedback	Some information on responses to sessions - question can be partly answered using secondary data
	P4.3 To what extent can fishers formally/directly raise regional/local concerns regarding fishing-related issues?	Commentary on relevant stakeholders' comments/feedback	Have information on number of issues/actions raised by region, status of actions (resolved or not) – question can be answered using secondary data
P5. Are stakeholders satisfied with the current arrangements and do they perceive that	P5.1: See P2.3	See P2.3	-
	P5.2 What inputs have stakeholders made to RFGs? What has been done with their inputs (feedback loop)?	Record of points raised by stakeholders at meetings	Data on issues raised but not on what has been done as a result - question can be partly answered using secondary data

Evaluation questions	Sub-questions	Indicator	Gap (secondary data)
their input is making a meaningful impact?	P5.3 To what extent have current engagement arrangements improved stakeholders' trust in the MMO?	Records of recognition of input from members	Some data on relationships and attendance but does not specifically relate to input from members - question can be partly answered using secondary data
		Records of organisation activities being actively maintained	Information not available – question cannot be answered using secondary data
		Records of stakeholders expressing a willingness to collaborate with MMO, rather than solely voicing grievances	Information not available – question cannot be answered using secondary data
		Records of fishers demonstrating a higher level of acceptance towards policy options	Information not available – question cannot be answered using secondary data
P6. Which engagement activities have worked best to support different	P6.1 Are engagement activities with MMO supporting to achieve Goal 4 by improving relations and increasing trust and so helping to improve compliance and self-regulations?	(Informed from previous questions)	-

Evaluation questions	Sub-questions	Indicator	Gap (secondary data)
requirements across the MMO's core service areas (in particular, from working with the fisheries management team, marine conservation team and other activities related to Goal 4 and 6)?	P6.2 Are engagement activities with MMO supporting to achieve Goal 6 by helping to enhance sustainable and transparent management of fishing opportunities and so working to deliver a more resilient and viable fishing sector?	(Informed from previous questions)	-
	P6.3 How did engagement activities influence liaison between MMO and other organisations (Cefas, Seafish, IFCA, Defra)?	(Informed from previous questions)	-

Notes: Green = sufficient data from secondary sources. Orange = some data from secondary sources, additional data needed. Red = no data from secondary sources. White = not relevant.

The gap analysis above has been used in conjunction with the evaluation matrix to inform where data can be obtained from existing secondary sources or may need to be filled through stakeholder engagement (interviews) or other forms of data collection.

5.2.3 Data management

Overview

This section provides an overview of the data management processes applied by RPA in the assessment of baseline data. This process could also be easily adopted by future evaluation teams.

Data storage

Using the indicators outlined in the evaluation matrix, RPA has extracted all relevant data from RFG literature into a Microsoft Excel database which acts as the primary register for all baseline data. This database provides a clear and auditable path through the data used in the evaluation to ensure robustness and repeatability of the approach. All additional data retrieved from gap filling exercises have been processed in the same way.

The database contains secondary data extracted from RFG literature as well as primary data obtained from stakeholder interviews. Data has been extracted and stored against each of the indicators outlined in the evaluation framework. Both quantitative and qualitative data have been stored in this database. All files shared with RPA and those used by RPA for analysis are stored on a secure site with access only provided to team members. RPA was also aware that the sensitive nature of the documentation requires anonymisation and careful treatment of data and findings in all reporting.

Data quality assessment

All data collated has been assessed for quality using RPA's data quality assurance protocol. All future data collection and monitoring efforts should consider these elements when retrieving and processing indicator data. This protocol includes assessing all data for:

- validity: the data measure what they are intended to measure
- reliability: the data have been collected consistently and collated in a uniform manner
- completeness: there are no missing data
- precision: data are of sufficient detail
- integrity: bias or manipulation of data has been avoided
- availability: data are accessible and can be validated and the purposes for which they may be used are clear
- timeliness: data consistently reflect the most up to date situation at the time of monitoring.

Future rounds of monitoring and evaluation should also ensure consistency between the types of data obtained and analysed in this report and those applied by the evaluating body to ensure comparability of findings.

5.2.4 Data analysis

Data analysis varies according to the data gathered for each indicator and involved the assessment of both primary (for example, interview data) and secondary evidence (for example, data from literature) collected against each evaluation question.

RPA performed a critical desk review of both primary and secondary data in the Excel database, comparatively assessing indicator data from multiple sources to construct a narrative on the performance for each question. Quantitative data from multiple sources have been compiled in the database and assessed for comparability. These data have been analysed using simple descriptive statistics to summarise the levels of engagement achieved. Qualitative data has been used to provide context to quantitative results and provide an indication of the effectiveness of the process more generally. Where qualitative data provided contrary perspectives, RPA has transparently reported all perspectives.

Extracted data has been critically reviewed and cross-examined to identify consistencies or divergences across similar evaluation questions as a form of sense checking the results (semi-triangulation). The results of all analysis have been compared back against the ToC to assess the effectiveness of the RFGs delivery. All analysis has been reported with stakeholder anonymity and sensitive information to be treated as confidential.

Overall, the analysis of each evaluation question has been performed holistically using the findings from the assessment of sub-questions. Reporting of the results has been presented with headings for each evaluation question/sub-question with a critical narrative, and where suitable, graphs reflecting quantitative results in [Section 6](#).

5.3 Stakeholder engagement strategy

5.3.1 Overview

The section provides an overview of RPA's approach to collecting primary data to fill gaps identified in [Section 5.2](#). It also identifies and maps all stakeholders relevant to the RFGs to support future evaluations. Please note that due to project constraints, this mapping has not been used by RPA to support its approach to stakeholder interviews to fill data gaps.

5.3.2 Stakeholder mapping

As per the terms of reference, RPA and the MMO have worked together to identify and map the stakeholders involved in the delivery of the RFGs. Stakeholders primarily include those that operate the RFGs (specifically, the RFG programme and regional leads), supported by wider MMO and MMO-Fisheries Management Team (FMT) colleagues in terms of skills, knowledge and capacity support, and a wide array of advisory stakeholders who are relied upon to help resolve issues raised by the RFGs and their end-users. The end-users consist of the inshore fleets and their

representatives. Table 5 lists all stakeholders involved in the delivery of the RFGs and provides a definition of their role.

Table 5: Stakeholder list

Organisation	Stakeholder type	RFG role definition
Cefas	Scientists (advisory and research)	Cefas representatives (regional) whose role is to provide advice and contribute to projects where required
Defra	Policy leads (executive)	Defra policy leads work in the Fisheries and Marine Directorate and are responsible for policy making
Producer Organisations	Target group (representatives)	Representative of a Producer Organisation who represents member vessels who operate inshore
Inshore fleets	Target group (inshore fleet)	Inshore fleet are the end user/target group of the RFGs. Fishers working inside the 12nm, generally under 10m vessels in English waters and non-sector vessels
	Target group (Individuals)	Individual fishers representing themselves, both commercial and recreational
	Target group (representatives)	Representative of a port, gear type, Community Interest Company, association
Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (IFCAs)	Regulatory/ advisory	IFCAs attend meetings, give relevant updates, share knowledge and work with the RFGs to coordinate on port visits. There are 10 Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities in England. The 10 IFCAs are committees or joint committees of local government. The principal objective of the association of IFCAs (AIFCA) is to carry on business of providing representation and support for the inshore fisheries and conservation authorities
Marine and Coastguard Agency (MCA)	Advisory	The MCA provide an advisory role in that they participate in meetings to answer questions from fleets when required
MMO	Communications	The communications team contributes to building and maintaining a positive public image, supporting transparency, and ensuring effective communication both internally and externally. They are responsible for the upkeep and

Organisation	Stakeholder type	RFG role definition
		dissemination .gov website, stakeholder bulletins, and social media
	Statistics	The statistics team process and analyse MMO data (from Catch app, sales notes etc) they write reports, publish and pull data at the request of teams internally
	Coastal officers	Marine Officers have a role monitoring, compliance and enforcement role. As well as an education and outreach role with stakeholders
	Grants	The grants team are responsible for various funds which are available to stakeholders. They also provide administrative support to stakeholders in their applications
	Marine licencing	The marine licencing team ensure that economic activities such as aggregate dredging, wind farms, renewables, and other activities in the in English waters are conducted responsibly
	Coastal team	Coastal teams are based around coastal areas and consist of Marine Officers who work on and offshore. They work with closely with fishers. Fishing communities and industry representatives
MMO-Fisheries Management Team (operations)	Quota management	The quota team are a sub team within the FMT who manage quota, swaps, trades and the non-sector catch-limits
	FMP implementation	This is a sub team of the FMT who manage non-quota stocks such as crab, cuttle, lobster etc.
MMO-RFG (operations)	Programme lead	Provides programme level management and coordination of all regional leads
	Regional leads	RFG managers who manage a region each by International Council for the Exploration of the Seas (ICES) areas
Seafish	Regulatory/advisory	Providing data and information when required. Working on projects and other relevant policy

Table 6 provides a mapping of the stakeholders based on the definitions outlined above. The purpose of this mapping is to support future evaluation teams to understand where stakeholders will be able to provide more useful information to support their study. For example, this mapping has been performed on the basis of stakeholder 'knowledge of processes' and their 'level of involvement' in the RFGs. These scales were selected based on the need to identify stakeholders who are more involved in the procedural/internal delivery of the RFGs, versus those who are

more involved in non-procedural elements such as the end-users who have a fundamental interest in participating.

The mapping should be read from low-low (bottom left) to high-high (top right) to understand the type of knowledge and involvement each stakeholder type has in the RFGs. As shown in Table 6, MMO-Fisheries Management Team (FMT) team members, who provide wider support to the RFGs, are primarily involved in the delivery/operational side of the intervention and have less involvement in the day-to-day interaction with the RFG end-users. Conversely, advisory and end-user stakeholders have been mapped as having a high level of involvement in the RFGs (in terms of their interaction in the groups) but less knowledge of the operational side of the intervention. Those at Defra and MMO responsible for oversight and the overall delivery of the RFGs have a high level of knowledge and involvement and are mapped as high priority stakeholders.

Please note that all identified stakeholders have a high level of knowledge or involvement, and none are considered to be low-low.

Table 6: Stakeholder mapping

Knowledge of processes ↑ High Low	High	MMO/MMO-FMT - quota and non-quota teams	Defra policy leads MMO-RFG leads
	Low		Cefas scientists MCA IFCAs Seafish Inshore fleets Producer organisations
		Low	High
		→ Level of involvement	

[Appendix B.3](#) provides a draft survey guide with a provisional mapping of stakeholder types/groups mapped against individual evaluation questions. This mapping complements Table 6 by estimating which stakeholders can provide insights to answer the evaluation questions.

5.3.3 Approach to stakeholder engagement (interviews)

To fill the data gaps identified in [Section 5.2.2](#), RPA suggests collecting data via telephone and digital interviews with stakeholders. This is due to highly perception-based data gaps which require personal insights.

For the purposes of the baseline analysis (see [Section 6](#)), RPA undertook 6 semi-structured interviews with relevant members of the RFG Delivery Team and received one set of written answers.

Semi-structured interviews seek to provide a flexible and 'open' conversational approach to obtain data. This is useful where the subject matter may not have a simple answer and requires multiple facets to be discussed to derive an appropriate response. To ensure interviews stayed on track in providing information relevant to the data gaps outlined in [Section 5.2.2](#), an interview guide (containing questions) was used to steer conversations. Due to the number of data gaps identified in the gap analysis, not all interviewees were asked the same questions. This was to ensure that questions were tailored to stakeholders knowledge/involvement to address the most relevant data gaps. Interviewees were provided the opportunity to provide written feedback on questions unable to be discussed during the interviews.

Interviewees were offered the opportunity to hold calls using Microsoft Teams or via telephone. Interviews were undertaken with 5 RFG Delivery Team members, and one RFG member from Defra. The RFG Delivery Team members include representatives from the north west, north east, south west, and south regions. Representatives from the east RFGs were not available to participate.

It was recognised by both RPA and the MMO that data obtained from one specific audience produces a general perspective to fill the data gaps and did not provide fully representative nor robust findings. This approach was agreed due to the time and budget constraints of the study.

RPA's interview period spanned from 28 February until 13 March 2024. RPA requested written feedback from interviewees within one week of the interview taking place.

RPA adheres to an ethical protocol for all projects which include engagement. This involves providing participants in interviews with clear information on how their provided information will be used. We also highlight that all the points made in interviews will be aggregated and anonymised.

All of those involved in an interview were provided with an interview pack. This explained:

- the aims of the interview
- the aims of the research
- the rights of the interviewee
- how the information they provide will be used.

The pack also included a consent form to be signed and returned. This provided contact details for our team and a series of statements for them to agree with (or not). Once signed, this form provides our 'contract' with the interviewee. The interviewee was provided with a copy of the interview questions prior to the call to allow time for preparation.

6. Evaluation of RFG first years (baseline assessment)

This section provides an initial evaluation of the RFGs early years of operation, hereto referred to as the baseline assessment. As outlined in the evaluation matrix, each evaluation question has been broken down into sub-questions that are used to holistically build an answer to the overarching question.

P1. What communication channels and strategies have been most effective for engaging stakeholders outside of formal arrangements, how can they be improved, and to what extent is engagement transparent and accountable?

P1.1 Which channels and strategies have been used to communicate with stakeholders (e.g. government website, social media, word of mouth, printed media)?

Table 7 illustrates the types of communication channels and strategies primarily used to engage with the RFG intended audience (inshore fishery fleet and individual fishers). The main activities orient around in-person port and drop-in meetings, as well as formal and ad hoc meetings with industry and inshore fleet members, as well as ad hoc communications via telephone and email.

Table 7: Type of communications channels and strategies used to communicate with stakeholders

Communication channel/strategy	Description of activities
Formal meetings (in person and virtual/hybrid)	Formal meetings facilitate both in person and virtual updates and discussions with industry stakeholders on a regular basis. Additionally, the Q&A initiative allows industry to form questions which are subsequently addressed by the RFG team. All questions and responses in either a video or written format are available on the RFG website.
Port visits	Visits to the ports are conducted over multiple days covering a range of ports within a specific RFG region, providing an opportunity for fishers and other stakeholders to raise local and regional issues for discussion. The visits are scheduled for workdays to ensure participation.
Drop-in meetings	Drop-in meetings are a distinct form of engagement compared to arranged port visits. During drop-in meetings, members of the RFG team may be accompanied by members of the MMO or other governmental bodies, usually Marine Enforcement Officers (MEOs). Otherwise the RFG team is invited directly by fishers to engage in a more informal, relaxed manner. These visits are typically conducted on an ad hoc basis, with the goal to follow up on actions discussed during formal meetings and port visits.
Hybrid-hubs	Hybrid hubs are in-person rooms set up by RFG team members with support from MEOs where fishers could join

Communication channel/strategy	Description of activities
	into meetings from ports. An optimal three locations are secured for a meeting with RFG team providing additional technological equipment.
Physical media	Physical media is utilised to advertise RFG meetings and port visits. Posters placed on notice boards and quays are used to provide additional information on these events and easy access to webpages and contact information; business cards are also handed out. Letters sent to each member also inform on the upcoming meeting and port visit dates.
Ad hoc calls, texts and emails	Ad hoc calls and emails are utilised to maintain regular communication with the industry. Ongoing efforts involve notifying the industry in advance of formal meeting dates to encourage attendance; prompting industry members to reach out to the RFG team between meetings; and sharing relevant information.
MEO direct advertisement	In addition to their duties, the MEOs undertake advertisement of the RFGs when interacting with industry and inshore fleet members as potential means of engaging with policy makers.
MMO website	The RFG website serves as a primary gateway for various stakeholders to access information via search engines. The purpose of the website is to provide comprehensive details about the RFGs including their overarching aims, previous meeting minutes, upcoming meetings, and essential contact information of MMO and Defra. Furthermore, it seeks to raise awareness for a diverse range of stakeholders (such as fishers, processors, markets/auctions, and merchants) by sharing meeting dates and times, topics of discussion, actions raised and updates on ongoing/completed projects.
Social media and video communications	Social media is employed to support collaborative working with industry, particularly targeting those who may be hesitant to engage. The utilisation of social media aims to enhance awareness of RFGs, increase engagement, cultivate loyalty, and develop the RFG brand. Regular video updates are provided to inform about drop-ins, meeting and visit summaries, and project updates.
Quarterly newsletters	The newsletter provides updates on RFG projects, drop-in meetings, and testimonials. Moving forward all posts should aim to include details such as times, location and agenda items where feasible. Additionally, media content from previous visits/meetings, concise agenda overview and a bulk update will be included.
Weekly bulletins	The MMO fortnightly bulletin posts align with content posted on social media, although with added depth and detail.

P1.2 What regional differences are there in terms of communications channels used?

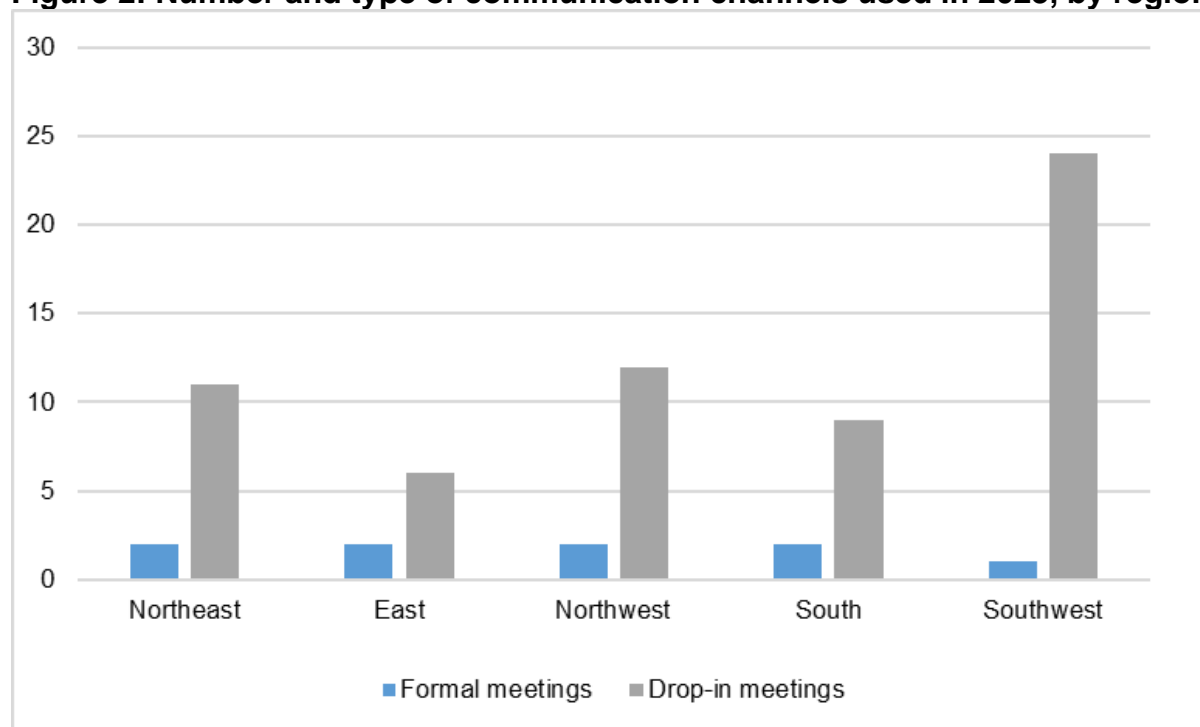
In Figure 2, regional differences in terms of communication channels used among the RFGs in 2022-23 are highlighted. These channels include formal RFG meetings, port visits/drop-ins and email correspondence. Figures relating to other engagement methods outlined in [P1.1](#) were not available at the time of analysis.

As Figure 2 shows, the Northeast, East, Northwest and South RFGs held two formal meetings in 2023, while Southwest RFG conducted one. The Northwest region opted for two formal meetings based on feedback from industry indicating a preference to avoid meetings during the summer months. Consequently, the Northwest was in the process of trialling this adjusted meeting frequency. Port visits / drop-ins were the primary means of reaching industry stakeholders in East RFG. Furthermore, there were eleven port visits / drop-ins in Northeast RFG, six in East RFG, twelve in Northwest RFG, nine in South RFG and twenty-four in Southwest RFG.

All RFGs shared four online newsletters (quarterly), fortnightly email communications (downloads) discussing non-time-sensitive topics and eight videos distributed via email and social media.

Additional figures outlining regional differences in communications channels (notably in-person, hybrid, or virtual meetings) can be found in response to question P1.5 below. Data on the frequency of other communications strategies and channels were not available at the time of writing.

Figure 2: Number and type of communication channels used in 2023, by region



Source: MMO engagement data

P1.3 What strategies and communication channels have been more effective in engaging with stakeholders and why?

The RFG team has made several observations regarding the effectiveness of future engagement across all RFGs:

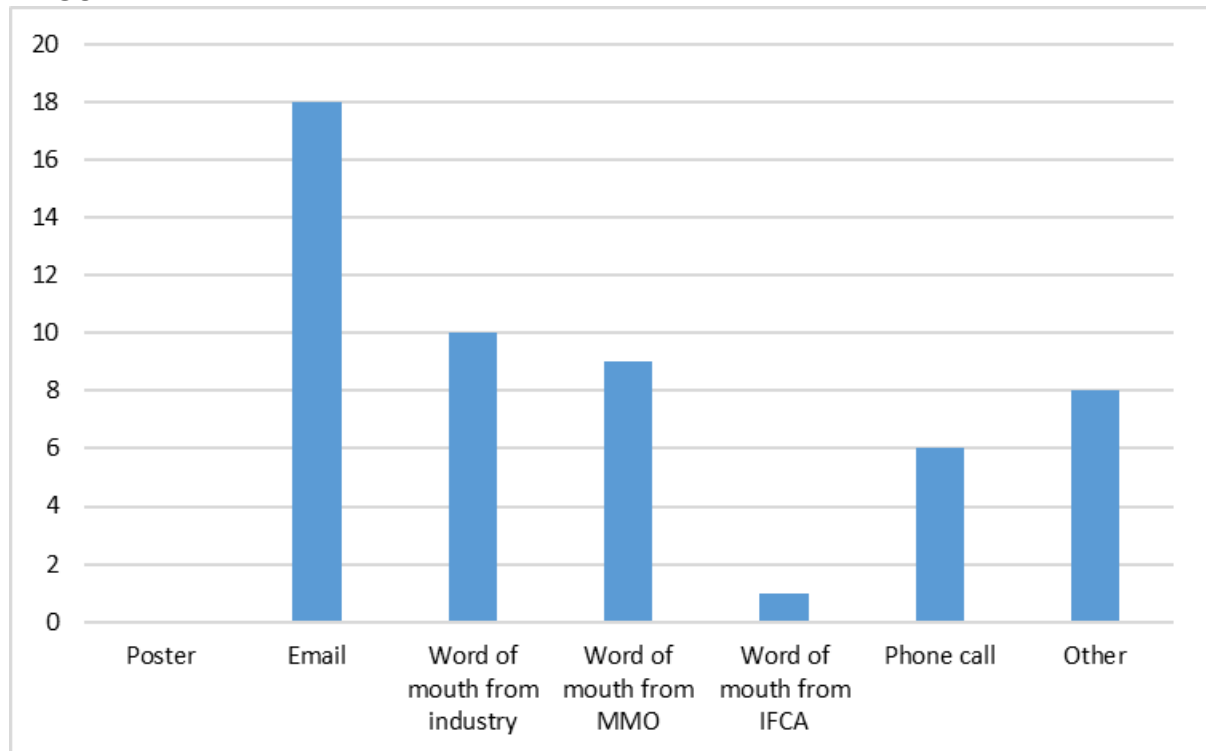
- Industry stakeholders have expressed a preference for face-to-face engagement in all RFGs, although commentary from South RFG suggests a positive reception to online engagement. Respondents to the 2022 one-off RFG survey were asked their preferences regarding how RFG meetings should be held and whether they would attend in-person meetings. The survey also revealed a strong preference towards holding meetings in person or in a hybrid format. However, in one survey specifically targeting industry in the Southwest RFG, in-person meetings were not selected when respondents were asked about their preferred meeting formats. It should be acknowledged that, due to low survey response rates, this is not a representative view.
- It was also noted by a Defra Policy Lead that individual in-person engagement is generally viewed as more effective. They elaborated that fishers are hesitant to raise multiple issues in a meeting room due to concerns about disclosing their fishing habits (targets, areas, etc.) to competitors. Moreover, they avoid arguing topics that could impact their relationship with merchants or auctioneers, fearing potential repercussion on future sales. They added that drop-in meetings tend to be particularly effective as they provide fishers with an opportunity to express themselves openly. The RFG Delivery Team stated that fishers' have a preference towards in-person engagement, although no further reasoning was provided regarding the rationale behind this. The RFG Delivery Team also stated that meetings were more effective where they were scheduled at a time and place that was at the convenience of the member of the fishing industry. Furthermore, feedback suggests that engagement has been more effective where the RFG Delivery Team considered how accessible the meeting would be for the inshore fleet stakeholder. For example, the RFG Delivery Team further emphasised that in-person port visits appear to yield the most results (e.g. actions) and help the RFG Delivery Team to interact with those who are not able to do so online/digitally or have not engaged with the RFGs for various other accessibility reasons.
- Online Question and Answer (Q&A) sessions have proven beneficial in supporting RFG meetings. As industry has an opportunity to pre-submit questions prior to the meeting, the RFG team can invite the appropriate authorities associated with the RFGs to address these inquiries.
- The Defra Policy Lead explained that email engagement has proven to be constructive. They elaborated that when industry is contacted through email conversations this is effective with stakeholders often outlining the needs of the industry and offering opinions on existing and potential policy options. However, the RFG Delivery Team added that even though emails seem to be effective, responses tend to be received from the same individuals each time. This suggests that maintaining effective personal relationships amongst the RFG leads and industry stakeholders is a main consideration to keep engagement levels strong.
- Online meetings offer the advantage of accommodating larger groups and with advancing technology, individuals have improved access to communicate with

regulators. Whilst this approach is more effective in terms of facilitation, it is noted in the proceeding section that this means of reaching stakeholders is limited due to the lack of ability for some stakeholders to access online sources.

- Port visit and drop-ins are most effective when mobile, particularly during landing times, as this facilitates engagement.
- Contacting members of ports directly via emails or phone calls has helped to obtain suitable times and locations for engagement activities which boost the level of engagement at each port visit, as explained by the RFG Delivery Team.
- In the Northwest RFG, the RFG Delivery Team noted that direct advertisement from MEOs has helped to bolster participation and the reach of the RFG, while utilising advertisement from coastal colleagues, MEOs and IFCA's has been more beneficial in the Northeast RFG.

In addition to the findings presented above, Figure 3 illustrates the responses to a question posed in the 2022 one-off RFG survey, asking participants “How did you hear about the RFGs?”. The majority of industry respondents indicated that they have become familiar with the RFGs through email, while the second and third most common responses were “word of mouth from industry” and “word of mouth from MMO”. Conversely, among those who responded, none indicated that they became aware of the RFGs through posters, while only one respondent mentioned hearing about the RFGs through the IFCA's. However, it should be noted that survey response rates were low, and these results may not accurately reflect the effectiveness of outreach efforts with all stakeholders.

Figure 3: MMO survey results to the question “How did you hear about the RFGs?”



Source: 2022 one-off RFG survey

P1.4 What strategies and communication channels have been less effective and why?

Figure 3 illustrates that among respondents to the survey question, none indicated that they have heard about the RFGs through posters. However, it has been noted by the RFG Delivery Team that in regions where posters were available turnout at engagement events has increased. Additionally, only a few respondents selected “word of mouth from IFCA” or phone calls as their source of information regarding the RFGs. This may suggest there are additional benefits to be gained from working with IFCA's to promote RFG activities.

The RFG Delivery Team made several observations regarding engagement (in)efficiencies across all RFGs:

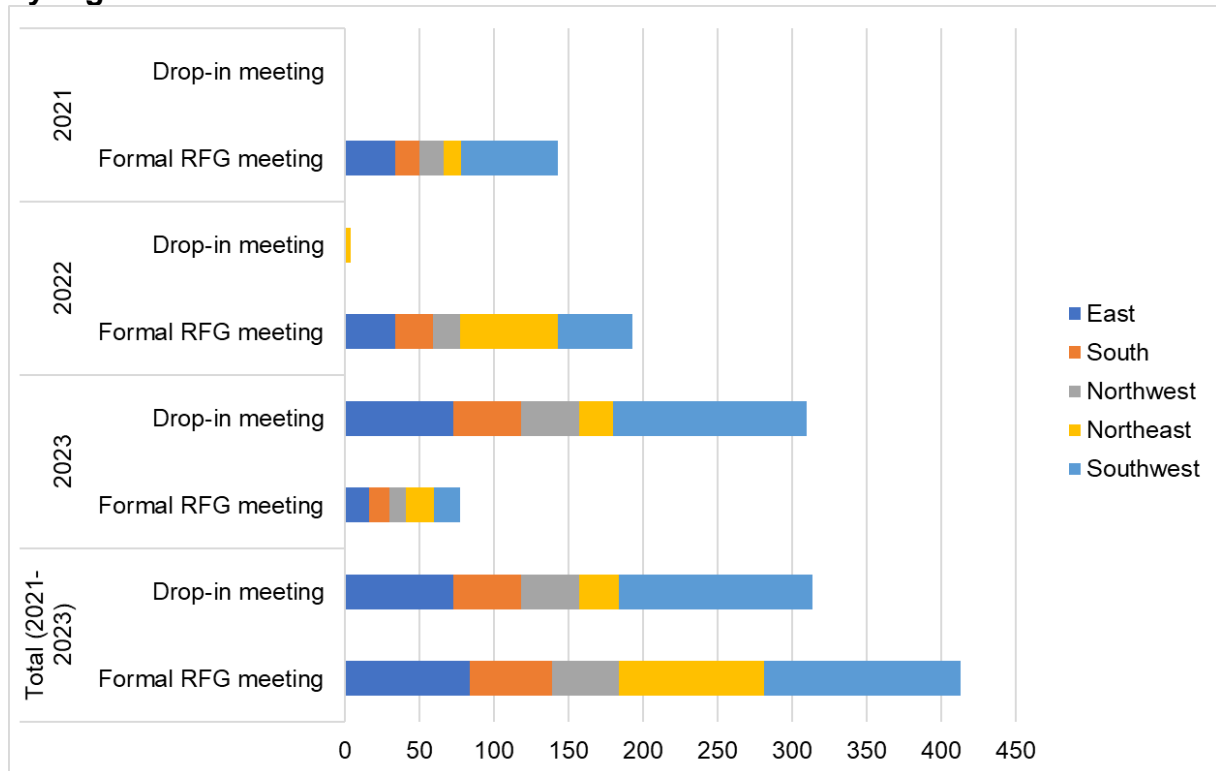
- Meetings coinciding with favourable weather conditions, resulting in reduced industry engagement.
- A considerable number of non-speaking attendees have contributed to an unwelcoming atmosphere during meetings, which has deterred participation and contribution.
- The MMO delivery team suggested that online engagement may be less effective due to limited technological proficiency. Many fishers have been struggling with the speed the MMO and Defra transition to online functions. Additionally, it has been noted that stakeholders online tend to participate less than in person, this is especially obvious when the meeting is held in a hybrid scenario. In-person engagement is considered to be more effective and well-received from inshore fleet stakeholders
- It was noted by the RFG Delivery Team that a shortage of compelling topics for discussion negatively influences the turnout of meetings.
- The RFG Delivery Team further added that newsletters seem to be the least effective for engaging with inshore fleet stakeholders, as evidence suggests they rarely interact with them. However, regulatory stakeholders often respond, suggesting the existence of stronger support from partner organisations.
- The effectiveness of social media varies by region, as explained by the RFG Delivery Team. Commentary suggested that the Southwest RFG is more engaged than Northwest/East on social media. Facebook appears to have a higher rate of interaction with stakeholders than X/Twitter based on the number of comments and interactions made.

P1.5 What are the regional differences in engagement levels across communication channels used?

Figure 4 demonstrates the number of stakeholders attending RFG meetings, by year and by region. Whilst the RFGs seek to target and engage with as many relevant stakeholders as possible, the intention of the groups is to enhance the interest and interaction of stakeholders with policy makers, and not to encourage arbitrary attendance at meetings. For this reason, the number of attendees at meetings should not be considered an indicator of their effectiveness. Similarly, a comparison of meeting attendance across regions should not be performed due to differences in populations relevant to RFG activities. It was also noted in stakeholder interviews

that turnout at meetings is often increased by stakeholders who wish to show solidarity on issues raised, but do not actively engage in the meetings. For this reason, the number of attendees at meetings may be inflated and is not a good measure of effective communication channels.

Figure 4: Number of industry stakeholders attending RFG meetings, by year, by region



Source: RPA analysis of meeting attendance logs

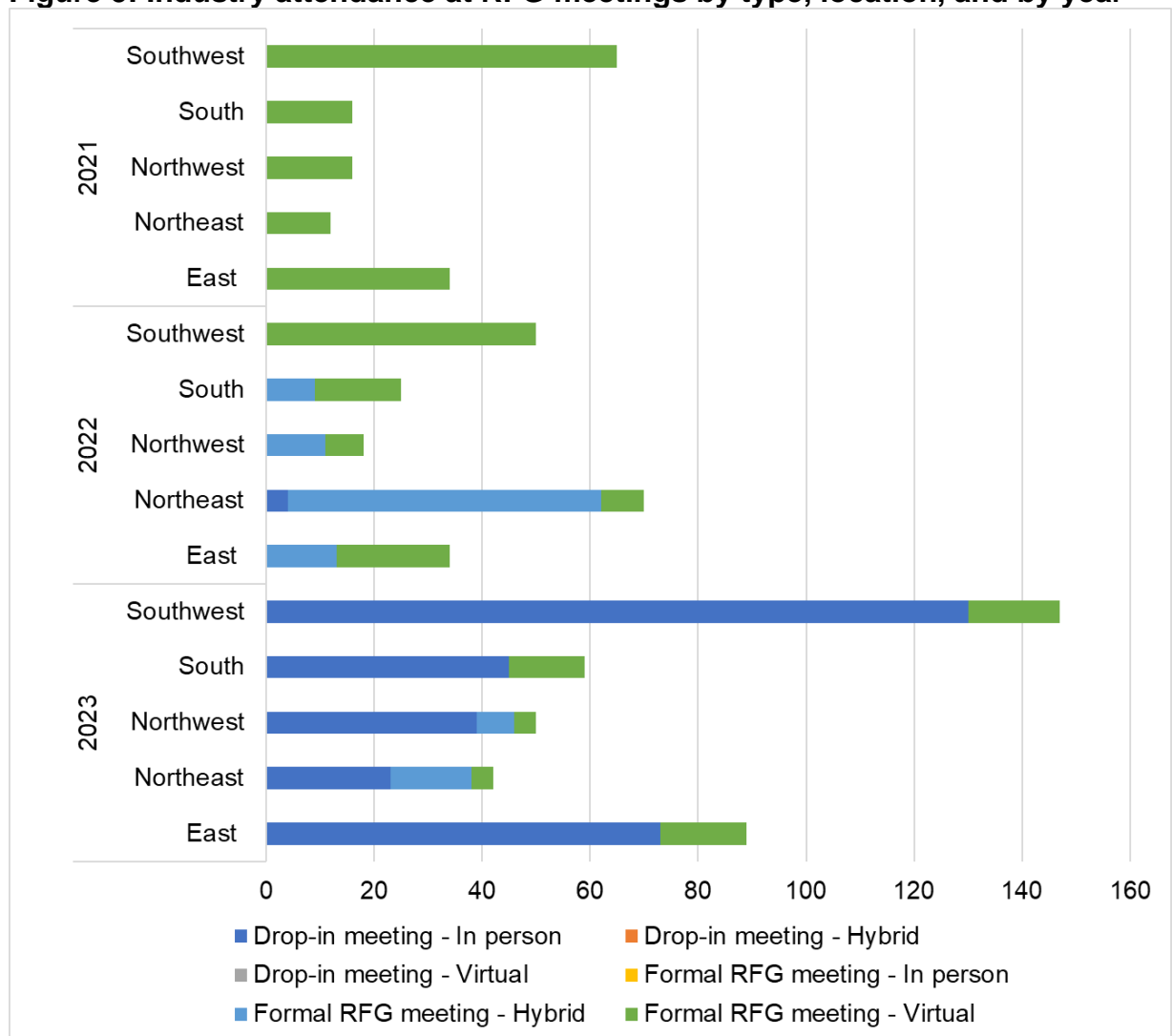
As shown in Figure 4, formal meetings were introduced in 2021; while informal engagement began in 2022. Formal RFG meetings have seen a gradual increase in the number of attendees, while drop-ins experienced a significant increase between 2022-2023. Between 2021 and 2022 the Northeast region experienced a significant increase in a number of attendees at meetings, while between 2022 and 2023 there was a significant decrease. The reasons for this change were due to the need for additional exceptional meetings between 2021-2022 that were not required in 2023. It is also important to note that meeting attendance is often driven by the nature of the published agenda. In this regard, attendance 2021-2022 may have had greater attendance due to stakeholders perceiving more relevant meeting agendas, particularly noting the impacts surrounding Covid-19 and support funding available at the time. The East RFG experienced stagnant meeting attendee numbers between 2021 and 2022. Both the Northwest RFG and the South RFG experienced similar levels of attendance on a yearly basis. While in the Southwest RFG number of attendees at meetings significantly decreased between 2021 and 2023. In 2023 attendance at drop-ins was five times greater than attendance at RFG meetings.

Figure 5 illustrates industry attendance at RFG meetings by year, type, and region. In 2022 in-person drop-in meetings were introduced in the Northeast region alongside hybrid formal RFG meetings. In 2023 in-person drop-ins and virtual formal

meetings took place across all regions. In 2023 drop-ins were most attended in the Southwest, while formal meetings similarly attended in the Southwest, South, and East RFGs. Generally, in 2023 across all regions drop-ins had a higher attendance than formal meetings. Furthermore, between 2021 and 2023 Southwest had the highest attendance of virtual formal and in-person informal meetings, while the Northeast had the highest attendance during hybrid formal meetings.

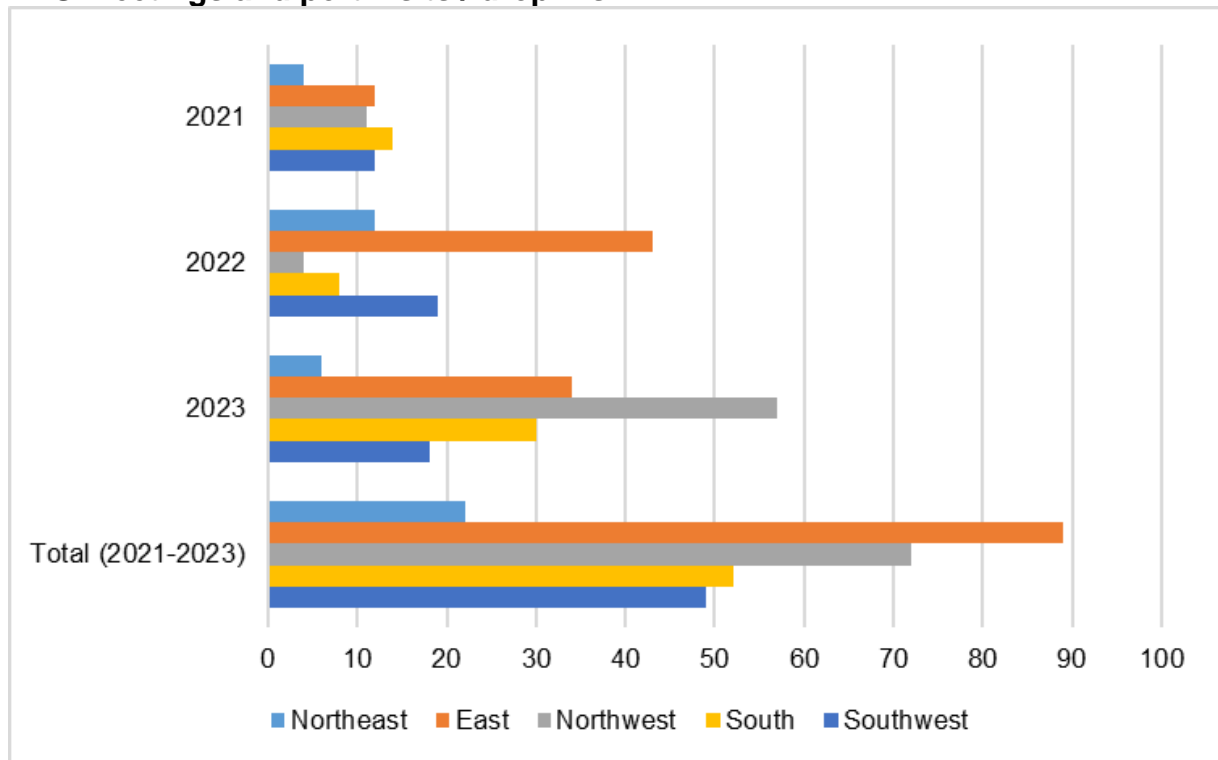
Figure 6 presents the number of actions raised as a result of RFG engagement between 2021 and 2023. Over this period there is a noticeable increase in actions raised. In 2023 the least number of actions were raised in the Northeast region.

Figure 5: Industry attendance at RFG meetings by type, location, and by year



Source: RPA analysis of meeting attendance logs

Figure 6: Number of actions raised by year and by region as a result of formal RFG meetings and port visits / drop-ins



Source: RFG actions tracker

P1.6 To what extent have communication channels and strategies targeted and engaged with the intended audience?

The RFG Delivery Team stated that engagement has progressed from broad approaches, such as social media to more tailored methods, such as individual in-person engagement. At the outset of the RFGs, the engagement focus was only on social media and posters, whereas stakeholders are now targeted through emails, phone calls and informal engagement which have an emphasis on personal interaction. Introduction of informal engagement at the port level has led to an increase in stakeholder engagement, however this did not translate to higher attendance at formal meetings. This shift can be attributed to the industry becoming acquainted with the RFG Delivery Team personally at a port level, hence they are more comfortable discussing topics and raising questions with delivery team members they have an effective relationship with. Port visits are therefore considered to be more effective in capturing the views of stakeholders who would not otherwise attend or provide in depth feedback on issues during formal engagement. As success is measured based on the level of discussions among industry stakeholders, having an increased attendance at informal meetings could be taken as an indicator of success. However, it is not possible to fully assess the extent of engagement with the intended audience through different communication channels and strategies. The target audience is the inshore fleet; the RFG delivery team shared that they believe they are targeted effectively. However, it was noted that engagement with recreational fishers, part time fishers and stakeholders from smaller ports has proven to be challenging.

Table 8 outlines the reach of the MMO’s social media platforms as of 2022. The number of followers at this point of time sets an estimated benchmark for the number of stakeholders that could have been reached by social media platforms. As these accounts refer to wider MMO social media platforms, not all followers will have an interest in RFG activities, nor will post impressions be made upon all followers, nor is it likely that the entirety of the intended audience has access to social media. Over time the number of followers will fluctuate (increase/decrease) throughout the year.

The precise number of posts relating to the RFGs, and the extent of the audience reached by each post is not known. However, figures in Table 8 (below) outline an estimated potential limit of those reached via social media.

Table 8: MMO social media platform reach

Platform	Audience	Reach
Facebook	Inshore fleet and non-sector stakeholders	3,300 followers
LinkedIn	Inshore fleet, non-sector stakeholders, wider industry	10,300 followers
Instagram	Inshore fleet and non-sector	1,400 followers
X/Twitter	Inshore fleet and non-sector	16,700 followers

Source: RFG delivery plan

P1.7 How do targets, and depth of engagement vary regionally by communication channel?

RFG records do not disaggregate engagement efforts by stakeholder type within those categorised as “industry”. For this reason, it is not possible to provide quantitative evidence on the extent to which engagement activities are capturing the target stakeholders: the inshore fleet. However, qualitative insights suggest the following nuances for regional target audiences.

Northeast RFG

The Northeast RFG region (ICES area 4b) covers 300 miles of a coastline from Berwick, Northumberland to Grimsby, Lincolnshire. The fishery is predominantly shellfish and demersal species dominated. That is reflected in gear used, which includes demersal trawls, seines, pot and traps. Other fisheries for the Northeast region are nephrops, crabs and lobsters. Overall, 65% of vessels fishing in the region were under 10 metres in 2021.

In the Northeast RFG low levels of industry attendance at formal meetings were documented. Furthermore, Scarborough port visit commentary suggests a need for additional encouragement of stakeholders south of Scarborough. As a result, port visits were held in these areas which points to the effectiveness of the Northeast RFG in drawing in and supporting stakeholders that many not otherwise been supported. Albeit the extent of the support provided is not known. RFG. The RFGs are open to all relevant stakeholders, and subsequently it is assumed the invitation is extended to these stakeholders. Furthermore, it was noted that the Northeast RFG lead regularly engages with the Northumberland IFCA alongside fishers in a coordinated approach.

East RFG

The East RFG region's (ICES area 4c) fishery is largely shellfish dominated, however there is a small amount of demersal fishing. Target finfish species include skate and ray, herring, sole, sprat, bass, smooth-hound, plaice, cod, lesser-spotted dogfish and flounder. Higher value landings include bass and sole. The majority of vessels fishing in the area are under 10 metres (73%), while 42% of all vessels have a shellfish licence.

In the East RFG during 2022, formal meetings were dominated by a few louder voices, so a 1-year long hiatus was proposed to reestablish trust. Informal engagement aims to engage with stakeholders at ports and also with fishers along the coast. After one year of standstill, the RFG Delivery Team changed their approach to engaging with stakeholders so it would be limited to ad hoc meetings. Feedback on the effectiveness of this change was not possible to obtain. This region utilises quarterly newsletters alongside regular email updates to ensure everyone receives information they are entitled to. Alongside this, visual aids are provided in a form of a short video to deliver points of information. When complex information needs to be distributed, video recording may be created and disseminated via a private YouTube link.

Northwest RFG

The Northwest RFG (ICES area 7a) covers the coast between Hoylake and Silloth. The value of landing is relatively low with many fishers only fishing part time. Again, the majority (77%) of vessels fishing in the area are under 10 metres. The dominant industry is shellfish. Most of the fishing is highly seasonal, therefore fishers in the under 10 metres fleet average between 50-80 days at sea per year.

In the Northwest region, there has been an overall increase in the number of stakeholders attending the meetings. Presently, attendance stands at 6% of the fishers in the region, however several attendees represent other fishers as well, not just themselves.

Given the dispersed nature of the region, hybrid hubs are being utilised. Furthermore, industry stakeholders indicated a preference for avoiding meetings in the summer months which coincide with the peak season for inshore fleet. Therefore, the Northwest will be trialling two meetings per year, with considering the potential scope for ad hoc meetings in the summer.

South RFG

The South RFG (ICES area 7d) covers from Dungeness to Swanage on the South coast. Almost all (92%) of vessels are under 10 metres. In total, 40% of vessels have a shellfish licence, while 4% have scallop licences. The South RFG is a mixed fishery region, with many vessels operating using mixed gears (fixed nets, demersal trawls, pots/traps and scallop dredges). The fishing activity is relatively consistent year-round, due to the range of fisheries available. However, smaller vessels may be affected by weather conditions over the winter months.

In the South RFG, formal meetings are mostly attended by merchants/auctioneers and exporters, while only a few fishers have been actively engaging. Informal meetings were also not proactively attended by fishers, engagement was managed by making the sessions mobile.

Southwest RFG

The Southwest RFG (ICES areas 7e, 7f and 7g (7efg)) covers the area from Kimmeridge, around Cornwall to the Bristol Channel. The majority of landings come from demersal species, followed by shellfish and pelagic. Vessels registered to 7efg is over triple of the number of vessels of any other RFG. Again the majority (80%) of vessels are under 10 metres, while 6% of vessels is 10-12 metres and 14% of vessels are over 12 metres.

In the Southwest RFG, a number of long-term members actively contribute to meetings. Furthermore, establishing hybrid hubs has the ability to counter the spatial dispersion of the group, recorded by the RFG Delivery Team. The region has a good relationship with MMO coastal offices.

P1.8 Are there any gaps in the target audience?

Figure 4 (see [P1.5](#)) illustrates the number of industry stakeholders attending meetings each year. However, records do not disaggregate the stakeholder type beyond the initial classification of industry. It is therefore not possible to quantify which industry stakeholders are attending and those who are not. Quantitative data related to attendance at other non-formal engagement activities are not available and therefore cannot be included in the analysis.

However, interviewees suggest the following points regarding gaps in the target audience.

In the Northeast RFG, certain ports are presently felt to be underrepresented in terms of the number and type of stakeholders engaged (as suggested by strategic documents). Furthermore, low levels of industry attendance at formal meetings have been recorded. RFG port visit observations indicate that fishers from the South areas of the Northeast RFG are not felt to be adequately included in discussions.

Strategic documents suggest that in the Northeast RFG and in the East RFG, recreational fishers have not attended meetings. This was further supported by qualitative evidence from a Defra policy lead and the RFG Delivery Team.

Similarly, to Northeast RFG, in Northwest RFG, some ports have minimal or no representation, while Southwest RFG lacks representation from the Isles of Scilly (suggested by strategic documents).

Overall, it has been noted by both a Defra policy lead and the RFG Delivery Team that there may be absence of participation from both some individual commercial fishers and recreational fishers across all RFGs. Furthermore, the RFG Delivery Team has added that part time-fishers are generally hard to engage with, due to their fishing activities occurring seasonally/infrequently. Therefore, they have less time to invest into formal/informal engagement. Finally, industry stakeholders with limited

technological access are challenging to reach as most communication methods rely on some kind of access to phones/laptops.

P1.9 How do the locations of engagement activities influence their effectiveness? (both within a region and between regions)

As per the previous question, Figure 4 (see [P1.5](#)) illustrates the number of industry stakeholders attending meetings each year by region, although this information is not disaggregated by stakeholder type.

Qualitative evidence derived from RFG strategic documents suggests that the effectiveness of engagement activities can be influenced by their respective locations. In the Northeast RFG the delivery team reported low industry attendance at meetings, attributed to industry stakeholders not being keen to engage virtually. In the East RFG there was no correlation identified between location and the level of industry attendance; however, stakeholder meetings were described as challenging and hostile. In the Northwest RFG, industry stakeholders expressed a preference for in-person meetings, yet hybrid meetings trialled in 2022 saw the highest number of industry attendance. Northwest port visit documentation highlighted the need for mobile sessions. In the South RFG there is no documentation on the effectiveness on the locations of meetings. During port visits it has been noted that audiences engage well with mobile sessions, however no fishers proactively attended the event. There is no commentary available for Southwest RFG.

P1.10 Have resources (tools, people, budget) been sufficient for engagement activities to be undertaken as intended?

The types of engagement activities funded under the RFGs (type of communications channels and strategies used to communicate with stakeholders) can be found in Table 7 (see [P1.1](#)). The approximate budget for the RFGs between 2022-2023 was estimated to be £33,000 (actual spend unknown, although RFG leads estimate that less than the available budget was spent), with additional sources of funding being available through procurement (eligibility dependent on the nature of the activity requiring funding). Feedback from the RFG Delivery Team suggests that resources have been fairly easy to access and did not suggest any alterations to the current process.

The extent to which these activities were adequately resourced are as follows:

Tools

The RFG Delivery Team has noted that there are training courses available for the RFG Delivery Team to support better meeting facilitation and for industry to better engage with regulators for change in legislation. One interviewee felt that undertaking these training sessions would be advantageous in improving the quality of engagement. The level of uptake of these training sessions is not known.

People

There are currently sufficient people to carry out smaller tasks, however larger-scale issues are more of a challenge. These often need to be escalated to other organisations, and therefore it is reliant on them to solve a potential issue. It can also be a challenge for the RFG Delivery Team to visit every port as regularly as they would like. There is one documented case where engagement activity could not be carried out because of resourcing. Furthermore, stakeholders prefer in-person engagement, but this is constrained by time and distance. RFG leads also need to spend a lot of their time on administrative tasks, which takes away the time they could spend to follow up on any issues raised by stakeholders. It was suggested that additional administrative personnel (at a lower job grade) would help free up time for RFG leads time to carry out more engagement.

Resources were felt to be adequate by a Defra Policy Lead for activities related to engagement, yet they raised concerns regarding their sustainability moving forward. Specifically, concerns were raised around sufficient backup for team members while they are unavailable (e.g. at sea for long periods of time). In the East and Northwestern RFGs, engagement activities were cancelled due to resource constraints within the team. The RFG Delivery Team highlighted that insufficient resourcing within the team was first recognised in 2022. Specific ports were targeted based on ongoing issues as there were only two Higher Executive Officers (HEOs) and a Senior Executive Officer (SEO). At present there is a resource of one HEO for each RFG with an SEO overseeing it all.

Budget

The RFG Delivery Team explained that budget appears to be sufficient for the intended RFG engagement activities and funding for specific activities was sourced through FaSS¹ for meeting equipment to host better hybrid meetings.

Further feedback stated that budgets may be an area for concern as numerous issues are beyond the scope of the RFGs and require inputs from other governmental departments or arm's length bodies (ALBs) to address. For example, if a fisheries trail is required to help solve an issue raised by a stakeholder, then that would need to also be a priority within the wider MMO where a budget would be available to carry this out. This means that often an issue can only be solved if it is the priority of another team.

P1.11 What lessons have been learnt from engaging with stakeholders so far? For whom and why?

In general, interviewees did not believe that the overall approach to delivering the RFGs has significantly deviated from the approach defined in the RFG delivery plan.

¹ FaSS (Fisheries and Seafood Scheme) provides financial assistance for projects that support the development of the catching, processing and aquaculture sectors, and for projects that enhance the marine environment. The conference speakers and microphones were funded through FaSS under measure 19 which is specifically for promoting skills, knowledge and networking in the sector.

However, one noted that the East RFG experienced a standstill period due to dwindling relationships with industry stakeholders and the frequent occurrence of unproductive and potentially obstructive meetings. After one year of standstill, the RFG Delivery Team changed their approach to engaging with stakeholders so it would be limited to ad hoc meetings. Feedback on the effectiveness of this change was not possible to obtain. Overall, this suggests that at the strategic level the RFG’s delivery approach is working somewhat effectively. Other lessons regarding the practicalities of undertaking activities are provided below. Lessons have been documented by both the RFG Delivery Team and RPA.

Table 9: Lessons learnt from RFG meetings:

Findings	Lessons
The RFG Delivery Team has observed a tendency for a small group of stakeholders to monopolise the conversation, often the most vocal individuals in the room.	Group meetings may become monopolised by the most vocal individuals. In these instances, it may be more productive to have a greater reliance on informal engagement methods.
There is a notable presence of passive attendees in certain regions, which can be intimidating for those who wish to participate actively.	RFG leads to be aware of this effect and offer stakeholders alternative means to communicate in closed settings.
According to internal documents some long-term members who contribute to the meetings regularly tend to form closed circles which may be discourage new members from engaging fully.	RFG leads to are aware of the need to facilitate inclusive meetings and offer quieter attendees the opportunity to speak or ensure stakeholders know how to speak with RFG leads privately.
Furthermore, a policy-lead highlighted the need to be less “background heavy” in meetings and to ensure more accessible language is used.	It is better to ensure meetings provide the means to have discussion as well as the opportunity to absorb important context.
The RFG Delivery Team has noted that stakeholders positively respond to receiving concise emails containing summaries of recent actions and offering general information in a fortnightly manner.	Leads to ensure summary emails are shared with all registered stakeholders
Attendance tends to increase when meetings and port visits / drop-ins are scheduled around pressing topics.	Meeting organisers should be aware of political decisions that are important to their regions and arrange meetings around policy making periods of interest (where possible).
Recording and transcribing sessions have been suggested for improved accessibility and documentation.	RFG meetings to have dedicated resources to take meeting transcriptions/notes. Stakeholders may not feel comfortable being recorded.

Findings	Lessons
If attendees do not receive an update on their feedback, they can become disheartened and less willing to engage in the future.	RFG leads to ensure that all interactions are logged and regular updates disseminated. Stakeholders may appreciate continuous updates on progress even if nothing has developed, or long timeframes are anticipated.
Feedback suggests stakeholders have sensitivities when speaking publicly. These include a reluctance of many fishers to raise issues in front of their direct competition. Similarly, they may be reluctant to raise issues that affect the confidence of their customers which may ultimately affect the viability of their business.	One-to-one or private discussions are useful to counteract this.
Stakeholders expressed frustration when they have contributed to FMP consultations but received no feedback. This proved to be difficult for the RFGs as the consultations were outside of the RFGs remit.	The RFGs should highlight the need for good standards to be upheld by government and arm's length bodies to meet their own consultation requirements regarding stakeholder feedback.

Table 10: Lessons learnt from port visits:

Findings	Lessons
Interviewees felt the Southwest RFG visits need to be in the evening and not held on not on Thursdays (this is typically the last day for fishing).	RFG meetings to consider the best timing for stakeholders.
In the Northeast RFG, during the Whitby and Seahouse port visits, there was no industry engagement, while during Scarborough and Holy Island, fishers needed to be actively engaged with.	More effort will be required in smaller ports to engage fishers actively. Additionally, there is a need for increased media coverage on the RFGs within these ports, potentially utilising methods other than posters.
Officials attending port visits often outweighed the number of stakeholders being interacted with. Whilst it shows willing on behalf of the MMO, the level of engagement may be excessive	RFG Delivery Team documents state that at South RFG port visits MMO attendance should be limited to 3-4 people. This may be reflected in all RFGs.
In the Northwest RFG industry prefers face-to-face engagement. Due to the region's demography hybrid hubs may be utilised.	Utilise face-to-face engagement and hybrid hubs in the Northwest RFG.
East RFG feedback suggests industry prefers in person/individual meetings.	Suggested use of in person meetings.

Findings	Lessons
The RFG Delivery Team added that working with trusted individuals in ports to promote individual engagement is appreciated by many individuals where resourcing allows.	RFG leads to maintain a focus on positive and lasting relationships with individuals (industry stakeholders)
Port visits receive higher levels of engagement with industry when the RFG deliver team first communicates (telephone or email) with potential stakeholders of their planned dates. Stakeholders will purposefully be present at ports or arrange to speak with RFG leads if they are aware of when the meeting is occurring in advance.	Prior to port visits, RFG leads to investigate issues/opinions of actively engaged stakeholders to tailor their approach and inform stakeholders of the planned visit. This may result in increased attendance due to stakeholders feeling the visit is more relevant and buy-in may increase through word of mouth.
Feedback on the Northeast RFG suggests that continued engagement with stakeholders via email, whether updating on actions undertaken or informing of no progress, has resulted in sustained stakeholder engagement. That is, stakeholders are more engaged when there is a continual stream of communication despite whether or not there is new information to share.	Maintained email engagement supports stronger stakeholder relationships.

P1.12 How systematically/transparently have instances of informal engagement been recorded?

Some informal engagement activities have systematic means of recording conversations and documenting actions. These typically include port visits and drop-in meeting summaries that capture where and when the discussion was held, who participated, the issues raised, and any potential solutions. These summaries are undertaken by the RFG lead after each activity is undertaken, with summaries provided to the participating stakeholder via email. Summaries are felt to have led to improved engagement in informal meetings as stakeholders are able to see actions being taken by the RFGs. These summaries are not openly accessible to other stakeholders.

Records of all engagement activities which produce actions are collected in an internal actions log. Engagement activities that do not result in an identified action (outside of port visits and drop-in meetings) do not appear to be systematically recorded, although it is the intent of the RFG leads to assign actions to resolve all issues raised. It is assumed that informal engagement actions are captured within the internal actions log, however records do not distinguish between actions originating from formal or informal activities.

Emails to stakeholders include the wider distribution of newsletters/bulletins informing local/regional stakeholders on the issues being raised, actions undertaken, and upcoming events in their area. Whilst newsletters are intended for a wider

audience, it is not known if access is based on individual subscription to the newsletter, through participation in the RFGs, or if the RFG Delivery Team is targeting local/regional stakeholders more specifically (or a mixture).

Other informal engagement activities do not appear to have systematic means of recording interaction. For example, social media, video, and newsletter engagement are primarily used to inform stakeholders, not begin open dialogue, and therefore may not warrant a formal system for record keeping. However, the RFG team leads stated that when stakeholders provide comments on social media or replies to newsletters/bulletins, they may follow-up with the stakeholder on a one-to-one basis. By their nature, social media and video commentary are transparent as they are publicly accessible, although further discussions are not transparent due to the sensitivity of the issues discussed and need to maintain stakeholder confidence in the RFGs.

In addition to the above, ad hoc calls and emails to the RFGs do not appear to have a systematic means of documentation beyond entry into the actions log (if an action is ascribed). At the very least, records are kept for all email conversations.

Feedback from informal engagement activities often inform discussions held during formal meetings. Formal meetings are documented via records of attendance (including who attended and how many), issues identified in a region, proposed actions and resolutions (“You said, we did”) since the last meeting are identified. Formal meeting records are publicly available via the RFG website. In this case, informal activities have a passive effect on framing formal meeting discussions and by extent are captured in formal meeting notes.

RFG leads believe formal meetings are far easier to record. For formal meetings it is easy to share an agenda in advance, collect attendance data, and take notes at the time. Furthermore, the agenda can be shared in a way that is suitable for all levels of literacy. For the smaller informal meetings that often take place in-person, it can be difficult to share meeting notes where records may identify local stakeholders (which is particularly problematic due to many stakeholders being competitors or wanting to remain anonymous more generally). However, if any issue is raised that could be a general issue for the sector, then this will be shared more widely.

P1.13 How systematically/transparently have any follow-up actions to engagement been recorded?

As outlined in [P1.12](#) above, all engagement activities that result in an action to be undertaken by the RFG Delivery Team or external partner are collated in a single ‘action tracker’. This tracker logs the region, time/date, a description of the action, who is responsible for overseeing the action, the stakeholder who raised the action, estimated timeframes for completion or review, indications on follow-up actions (i.e. chasing the original action), the status of the action, and a description of any results, notes, or ongoing actions undertaken. RPA noted differences in the action trackers for each of the RFGs in terms of format and some internal data types, although all RFGs broadly capture the same essential actions data. Table 11 below outlines the number of actions undertaken by the RFG Delivery Teams between 2021-2024. As shown records suggest that the RFGs have records of significant numbers of actions

undertaken, with most historic records being completed. It is not known whether the actions in the tracker provide a comprehensive list or whether additional actions are being undertaken (either recorded elsewhere or not recorded).

Records of follow-up actions do not indicate the origination of the action, and therefore it is not possible to distinguish between actions originating from formal or informal engagement activities.

The follow-up actions are not publicly available due to the sensitivity of the topics discussed. However, the RFGs disseminate summaries of actions in formal meetings notes most notably with the use of the “You said, we did” summaries (available online).

Table 11: Number of actions undertaken by the RFGs as of 2024

Year/location	Completed actions	Actions in progress	Actions halted
2021 (total)	47 (85%)	5 (9%)	3 (5%)
East	11 (85%)	1 (8%)	1 (8%)
Northeast	5 (100%)		
Northwest	9 (82%)	2 (18%)	
South	11 (79%)	1 (7%)	2 (14%)
Southwest	11 (92%)	1 (8%)	
2022 (total)	72 (78%)	15 (16%)	5 (5%)
East	33 (77%)	7 (16%)	3 (7%)
Northeast	9 (69%)	4 (31%)	
Northwest	3 (75%)	1 (25%)	
South	8 (100%)		
Southwest	19 (79%)	3 (13%)	2 (8%)
2023 (total)	76 (51%)	61 (41%)	13 (9%)
East	26 (76%)	4 (12%)	4 (12%)
Northeast		6 (100%)	
Northwest	31 (53%)	26 (45%)	1 (2%)
South	9 (26%)	17 (50%)	8 (24%)
Southwest	10 (56%)	8 (44%)	
2024 (total)	3 (75%)	1 (25%)	0 (0%)
East	2 (100%)		
Northeast			
Northwest	1 (100%)		
South			
Southwest		1 (100%)	

Source: RFG actions tracker (totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding)

P1.14 What features of the more effective strategies and channels could advance the achievement of outcomes?

Interview feedback identified several features that would increase the achievement of the RFGs desired outcomes. For example, feedback suggests that utilising hybrid hubs and recording meetings for sharing them via social media platforms may be efficient means of reaching a wider audience, and potentially capture previously disengaged stakeholders. However, this report section documents how many

stakeholders may find it difficult to access digital information, for example due to issues relating to technological literacy. Furthermore, it has also been observed that stakeholders repeatedly remark that in-person meetings are the most effective means to communicate with them, either in terms of arranged or ad hoc meetings. This would suggest that whilst digital engagement could widen the audience engaged with, it is unlikely to affect a large proportion of RFG stakeholders.

Furthermore, organising webinars in collaboration with Fishing into the Future² could prove advantageous, a Defra Policy Lead explained (further comment on what is successful about these webinars was not provided).

The RFG Delivery Team added that utilising people more and gathering opinions on bigger topics in preparation for engagement could advance the achievement of outcomes. Indeed, many of the delivery partners and stakeholders alike hold nuanced and expert perspectives that could benefit the RFGs if engagement efforts were better planned. Early engagement to collect perspectives has proven useful to inform subsequent discussions, actively works towards keeping discussions relevant to stakeholder interests, which ultimately results in more engaged stakeholders. In doing so, industry is better placed to lead on projects as they have had an active role in shaping discussions prior to flagship projects being established. It also ensures that industry stakeholders are actively assisting with the management of fisheries (depending on the discussions held).

No further features were identified.

P2. How do stakeholders perceive the effectiveness of engagement activities implemented by the RFG team, and what factors contribute to their assessments?

P2.1 How have engagement activities influenced stakeholders' understanding of regulators' roles / functions?

The RFG Delivery Team said that there is frequently confusion regarding the delineation of responsibilities among various regulatory groups, especially between IFCA and MMO jurisdictions, as well as wider organisational roles such as Defra, Natural England and JNCC. However, the RFG Delivery Team believe that there is a noted improvement within the industry in distinguishing between these bodies and contacting the appropriate group with their concerns. The RFG Delivery Team has further added that the biggest lack of understanding for stakeholders is between what is within the IFCA/MMO's remit and what is within Defra's, however increased engagement with the RFG's has helped clarify the different remits.

Members of the RFG Delivery Team said that they are trying to demonstrate to stakeholders that regulators are now more willing to hear from industry and value their expertise. This is to show growth from historic perceptions that industry's opinion was not valued or taken onboard by regulators or policy makers. However, this process takes time and that understanding of the regulator's role is mainly

² 'Fishing into the Future' is an independent UK based charity working with the fishing industry to support them.

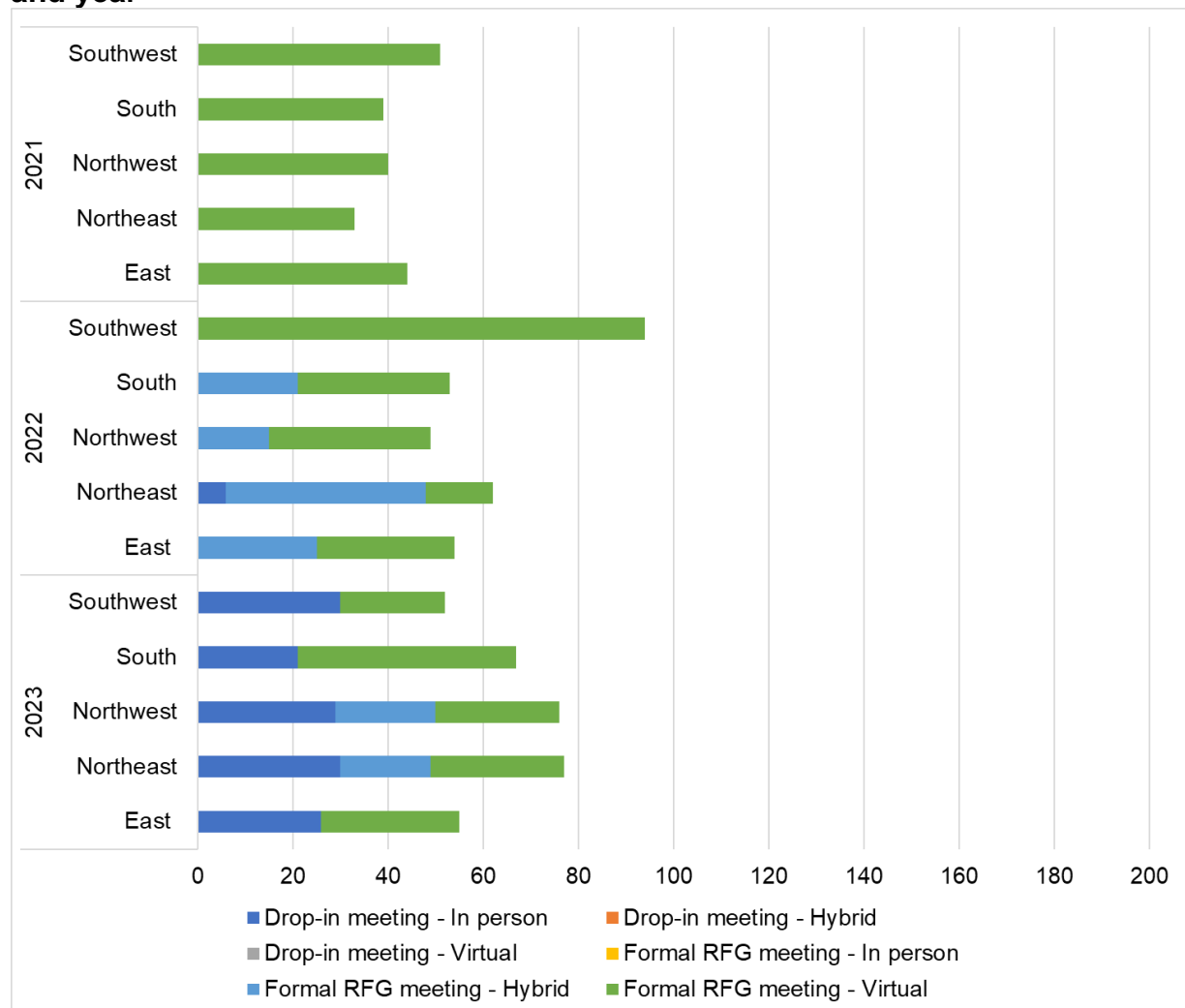
reinforced when stakeholders see change taking place. This is not a rapid process, but trust is gradually built over time as more “wins” are achieved by the team. The RFG Delivery Team noted that they do not want stakeholders to be surprised by any decisions that are made by the government, or the MMO more specifically, so regular communication is important.

The RFG Delivery Team also noted that they often act as an entry point to other regulators. Therefore, if a stakeholder needs to contact a specific team within the relevant regulatory bodies, then their local RFG manager can act as liaison to ensure they are in contact with the right team in the MMO or in another of the regulatory bodies. For many stakeholders, their local RFG manager is the only person they will see in-person from the MMO so there is likely to be a higher level of trust and closer relationship. This has led to stakeholders having a better understanding of the regulator’s roles and who to go to with specific issues.

P2.2 To what extent are insights/issues brought to the relevant authority as a result of RFG engagement?

Figure 7 presents regulator attendance at RFG meetings categorised by meeting type, location, and year. Regulators include representatives from Defra, MMO, Cefas, IFCA and the MCA. Please note that drop-in meetings were not in place prior to 2023, and that attendance to in-person events between 2021-2022 are likely affected by Covid-19, although the extent to which attendance was affected is unknown. In 2022 when both formal and informal meetings occurred the Southwest had the highest regulator attendance during virtual formal meetings, while the Northeast region recorded the highest attendance during hybrid formal and in-person drop-ins. The Northeast was the only region attended by regulators in 2022 during informal engagement and hybrid formal engagement. In 2023 regulators attended both formal and informal meetings across all regions, with the Northeast and Northwest documenting the highest overall attendance. During 2023, the South RFG experienced the highest attendance during virtual formal meetings, while the Northeast and Southwest experienced the highest attendance during in-person drop-ins. Between 2021 and 2023 virtual formal meetings had an overall higher attendance, with the Southwest exhibiting the highest.

Figure 7: Regulator attendance at RFG meetings, by meeting type, location, and year



Source: RPA analysis of meeting attendance logs

Figure 7 (above) and Figure 8 (below) illustrate that regulators have a high level of attendance at formal and drop-in meetings. This suggests that should issues be raised at meetings they will be escalated to the appropriate body. It is also recognised that other informal forms of engagement result in issues being escalated to regulatory bodies in an ad hoc fashion.

During the formal RFG meetings, different bodies and agencies are involved, which means that concerns raised may be answered immediately. For example, Cefas are regularly involved in the formal meetings, and it is felt that they add a lot of value. Interviewees felt Cefas have been useful in explaining the fisheries science to stakeholders and demonstrating that industry's concerns are being listened to.

The RFGs can provide a safe space to bring issues to the relevant authorities. More examples of solutions that have been developed by the relevant authorities include:

- The development of the Fisheries Management Plans (FMP) presented opportunities for discussion with the fleet which helped shape the initial plans alongside industry;

- The Lyme Bay Sole fishery had a very direct impact of the RFGs and the work which can be done in a co-design; and
- There has been progress in better working relationships between the industry and the MCA through arranging discussions on “hot topics” such as the medicals.

The RFG Delivery Team did note some challenges, however. This included industry believing the MMO and Defra would be able to solve any issues that were raised to them, although it was recognised some of the issues that were raised are beyond the control of the present regulatory bodies. Such issues may need to be solved by national government or even at an international level. If this is the case, the RFG Delivery Team will still escalate the issue but also tell stakeholders it will take time to solve. There is also a reluctance from many fishers to raise issues in front of their competitors, as this may undermine their competitiveness. They also would not want to raise any issues with the people who may be buying their fish as they would not want to give the impression that they may not be able to fulfil their orders. These are particularly issues for formal meetings and are far less of an issue in informal meetings.

P2.3 To what extent do stakeholders feel their issues/challenges are taken forward as a result of their involvement in RFG activities? What factors contribute to this feeling?

The RFG Delivery Team believed that it can be difficult to maintain stakeholders’ enthusiasm if results are not achieved quickly. There is a general distrust from some stakeholders in the way in which legislation and regulations are determined. Some of the larger issues can take years to solve so stakeholders may get disheartened over time. This is difficult to overcome as in many cases you need to gather data, carry out legal checks, and conduct a consultation before anything can begin. Even after this process is complete it may still be decided in a manner that goes against the wishes of stakeholders who contributed to a consultation. To maintain buy-in, the RFG Delivery Team have regularly updated stakeholders on the progress and explained why specific issues take a while to solve. These larger issues mean that the RFG Delivery Team have often tried to focus more on the “small wins”, as these can be achieved far quicker. For example, grant application help and I-VMS workshops meant that stakeholders felt that their issues were solved quickly.

From a transparency and accessibility point of view, this often depends on the type of engagement that has been carried out by the RFG Delivery Team. For formal meetings it is straightforward to share an agenda in advance and take notes at the time. The agenda can be shared in a way that is suitable for all levels of literacy. However, some industry stakeholders according to the RFG Delivery Team have said they think that the government weighs the inputs of different groups, such as NGOs against industry (even though this is not the case). For the smaller informal meetings that often take place in-person, it can be more difficult to share meeting notes with the regional mailing list as it may be too easy to identify people especially if the visit was to a smaller port. However, if any issue is raised that could be a general issue for the sector, then this will be shared more widely through the regular regional newsletters.

Some stakeholders were also disheartened when they did not receive feedback or if they contributed to a consultation but resulting actions went against their feedback. For example, some stakeholders contributed to the FMPs but received no feedback. They were then not willing to contribute to the subsequent round. This was challenging for the RFG Delivery Team, as they are not responsible for the FMPs. Several stakeholders also contributed to a consultation that looked at lifting the licensing cap but ultimately it was kept in place, which disheartened some stakeholders who contributed.

P2.4 How did engagement activities enable flagship projects to be identified and started?

Flagship projects are defined as engagement actions that warrant the need for larger interventions (such as a scientific collaboration project) to be put in place. These are projects that span regional areas and are specific to regional or potentially national issues for industry. The selection of flagship projects results directly from all RFG engagement activities in a holistic manner. The escalation of regional issues to competent authorities and policy makers via RFG activities requires continuous engagement between industry and authorities to ensure the project's relevance and feasibility. This is particularly important given the RFGs objective to have industry lead on flagship projects, to ensure their sustainability into the future, and their ability to provide cost effective solutions to issues raised.

According to the RFG Delivery Team, when a project needs inputs from multiple organisations, the normal practice is to begin via identifying and liaising with the relevant people at the external body to discuss feasibilities.

Interviewees stated that the most common engagement activity leading to the identification of flagship projects were informal port visits. Generally, the RFG Delivery Team found that stakeholders were more comfortable sharing concerns in informal settings such as port visits.

In 2022, a total of 24 activities lines of work had been established. These include (sourced from RFG regional handling plans):

Northwest RFG (2):

- The Northwest Initiative
- The FaSS H&S Match Rates project

Southwest RFG (4):

- The Small-Eyed Ray project
- The Lyme Bay Sole project
- The Pollock project
- The Brown Crab project

South RFG (4):

- The Fly-Seining Consultation
- The Additional Quota 2021 project
- The Additional Quota 2022 project

- The Spider Crab project

East RFG (3):

- The Adult Fish Survey
- The NS Sole Survey
- The Viability of Razor Clam Fishery project

Northeast RDF (2):

- The Seal Deterrents project
- The Red Diesel project

Additional projects may have been identified or begun in 2023 and 2024, however at the time of writing the number and type of projects was not known.

It is noteworthy that some flagship projects relate to multiple regions, for example the Seal Deterrents project which covers both the East and Northeast RFGs. In these cases, there are opportunities for collaboration and lesson learning to be shared across the regions amongst RFG leads and with industry.

Other projects have a broad scope which may impact the whole of England, such as the need to bring in new entrants to the sector. This would require considerable coordination across relevant regulatory authorities to implement.

P2.5 Have resources (tools, people, budget) been sufficient to enable the outcomes of engagement activities to be followed up as intended?

The funding amounts available to facilitate follow up actions, ultimately resulting in the RFGs' intended outcomes, is not currently known. However, the extent to which resources were adequate for follow-up actions are as follows:

Tools

The RFG Delivery Team believed it was difficult to know yet if the correct tools for follow-up actions were currently available (tools are defined relating to coordination, facilitation, and record keeping). There are not currently structures in place for this as the regulatory landscape is still shifting post EU-exit. This means that the RFGs are often reliant on collaboration and partnerships to solve certain issues, but this relies on other organisations having overlapping priorities. It is not yet possible to ascertain how the availability of tools affects stakeholder perceptions on the delivery of the RFGs.

People

As noted in [P1.10](#), RFG Delivery Team leads stated that the role has considerable administrative burdens which detract their ability to undertake engagement activities and by extent, the ability to instigate follow-up actions with relevant regulatory bodies. Leads believe the provision of administrative support would benefit the delivery of the RFGs by enabling more engagement, and by extent, follow-up work to be conducted.

Also noted in [P1.10](#), resources may be constrained (re personnel) during periods of RFG lead absence (for example, due to lengthy periods at sea) which may result in a

slow-down of communication with stakeholders should appropriate cover not be put in place. This may result in increased frustrations for stakeholders if there are delays in replying to questions or comments, which in turn may result in reduced levels of engagement from stakeholders. Feedback from the RFG leads suggest they aim to provide appropriate cover in instances of absence although this is an additional resource burden that may not be supported by funding.

RFG outcomes are heavily dependent on strong working partnerships with external delivery partners (e.g. Cefas, the MCA, IFCA). Feedback suggests that these partner organisations have proven to be essential in the successful achievement of fulfilled actions (although the number of actions requiring external inputs is not known). Despite this, RFG leads believe that there could be more opportunities for delivery partners to participate in open discussions (rather than simply providing data or Q&A sessions). Furthermore, they believe that the partnerships would greatly benefit if partner organisations were able to share deliverables/documents relevant to the RFGs. They also continued to state that partnerships would benefit from more consistent IFCA working across the RFGs, further clarification was not provided.

Budget

Budgets were viewed as an area for concern by the RFG Delivery Team as numerous issues need to be solved by using another department's budget. For example, if further research is required to help solve an issue raised by a stakeholder (such as an invasive species in the area), then that would need to also be a priority within the wider MMO where a budget would be available to carry this out. This means that often an issue can only be solved if it is the priority of another team.

As noted in [P1.10](#), RFG leads suggest there are issues regarding the scope of some problems raised by industry, particularly the practical (in)ability for the RFGs to fund/resource potential solutions. Some issues raised are either out of scope for the RFGs or are simply so large in scope that they require interdepartmental resourcing. Where this is the case, stakeholders may feel frustrated at the pace or inability of the RFGs to deliver. However, it is recognised that the overall purpose of the RFGs is to identify these issues and support stakeholders in their ability to raise them at the policy maker level. Where occurring, this may result in the establishment of funded flagship projects. Overall, this reflects the realistic constraints of what the RFGs has set out to achieve and highlights that consideration of what is feasible (in terms of resourcing) for the RFGs is separate from potential budgetary support/initiated flagship projects resulting as an outcome of the RFGs. The implication is that stakeholders may feel frustrated at the (un)feasibility to resolve real-world issues in a quick manner, but the RFGs provide a means for stakeholders to support the development of policy agendas and by extent, available budgets.

P2.6 How have programme feedback loops and timeframes for actions occurred? To what extent has this affected stakeholder perceptions on the effectiveness of RFG activities?

Feedback loops are a common mechanism by which the RFGs interact with stakeholders. For each engagement activity, formal logs of issues are recorded, with actions formally logged by the delivery team. Communications on the escalation of

issues to policy makers are continuous and regularly occur via formal meetings, and in an ad hoc capacity between RFG leads and the primary stakeholder involved. However, depending on the nature of the issue being discussed, feedback loops require inputs from multiple organisations. This may lead to indecision or delayed responses on actions from policy makers depending on the scale and complexity of the issue being discussed. Feedback from Defra Policy Leads suggest that committing to deadlines for actions is not always feasible. At times this may lead to either continuous interaction without resolution or the stalling of engagement whilst actions are negotiated between organisations.

The RFG Delivery Team stated that the time taken to give feedback greatly affected stakeholders' perceptions of the effectiveness of the RFGs. As has already been noted, the longer it takes for an issue to be solved the more disheartened stakeholders will get. To overcome this the RFG Delivery Team said that they regularly send out updates even if there have been no changes to demonstrate that they were still aware of the issue and that there was work going on in the background. This is particularly useful if an issue takes several years to be solved.

P2.7 How do formal meetings influence the number of interactions between inshore industry, regulators, scientist, policy makers?

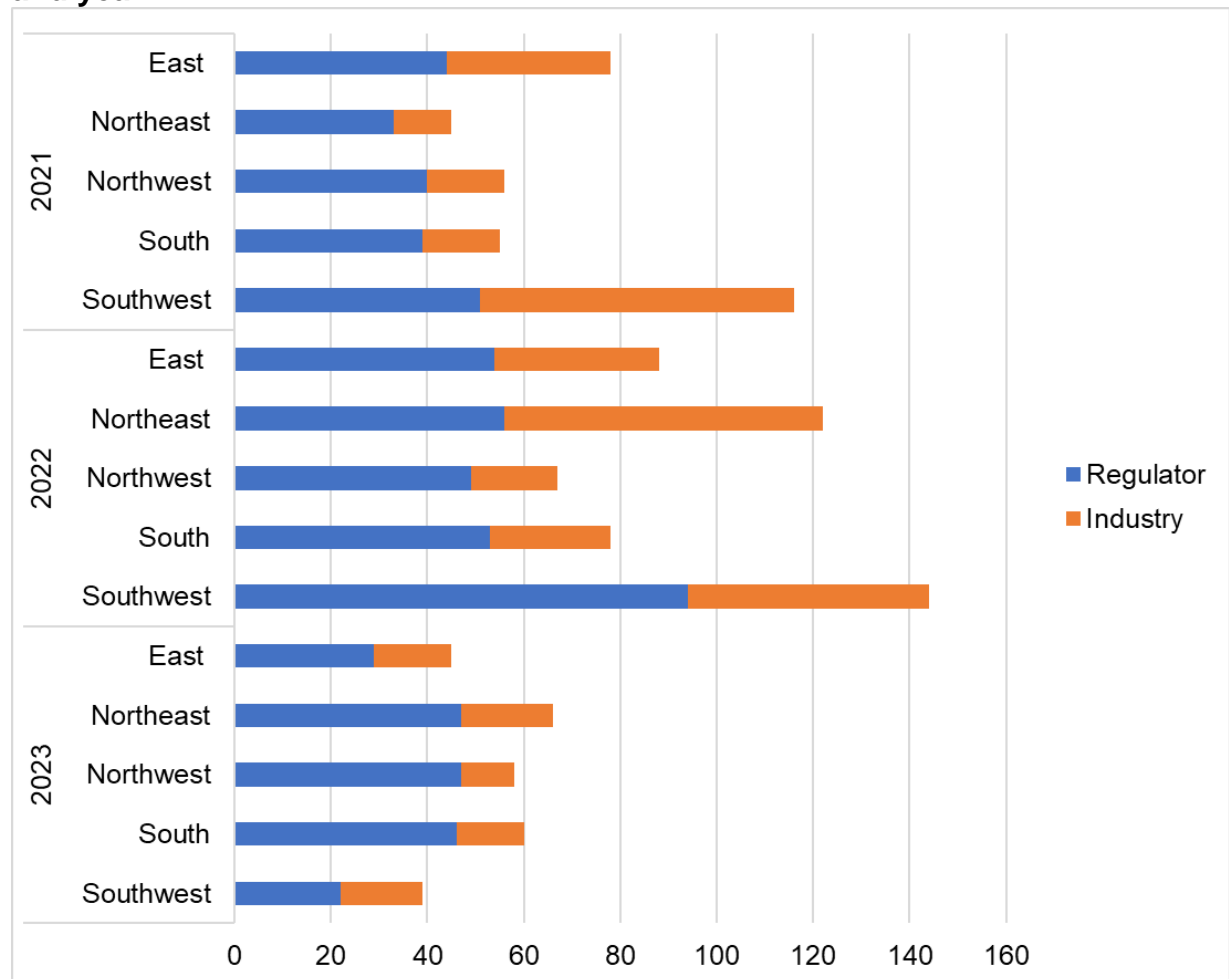
Observations from a Defra Policy Lead suggest that the inclusion of a broader array of participants, including industry, regulators, scientists and policymakers has contributed to the enhancement of relationships among these groups. This is also helped by Defra often announcing the upcoming opening of grants and policy changes that are imminent.

However, there are areas for improvement. Interviewees believe stakeholders feel formal meetings can take the form of an "information download" rather than an open discussion of the issues at hand. Although this is influenced by the attendees in terms of how engaged they are, some will be more willing to speak than others. The RFG Delivery Team try to resolve this by asking attendees to submit questions anonymously before the meeting to make sure the discussions are relevant. There has also been a call for more deliverables to be passed over to the attendees, so that they can see the results of what they have contributed to.

Figure 8 illustrates the attendance of industry and regulatory representatives at formal RFG meetings between 2021 and 2023. Regulatory attendance includes Defra, MMO, Cefas, IFCA's and the MCA. In 2021, the highest regulatory attendance was recorded in the Southwest. While the East and Southwest maintained an equal ratio of regulators and industry stakeholders, however, other regions were predominantly attended by regulators. In 2022 both industry and regulatory attendance increased, with the Southwest again having the highest regulatory attendance. Although the Northeast demonstrated a good balance between the number of different stakeholder attendees, other regions were had more attendance by regulatory attendees than industry. In 2023 there was a decline in stakeholder attendance compared to 2022, the reason for this decline is not known (possible reasons could be due to a lack of interest in agendas or stakeholder fatigue from other engagement efforts). Northwest and Northeast demonstrated the highest

regulatory attendance, but it should be noted that all regions experienced a downturn in industry attendance.

Figure 8: Industry and regulatory attendance at formal RFG meetings, location and year



Source: RPA analysis of meeting attendance logs

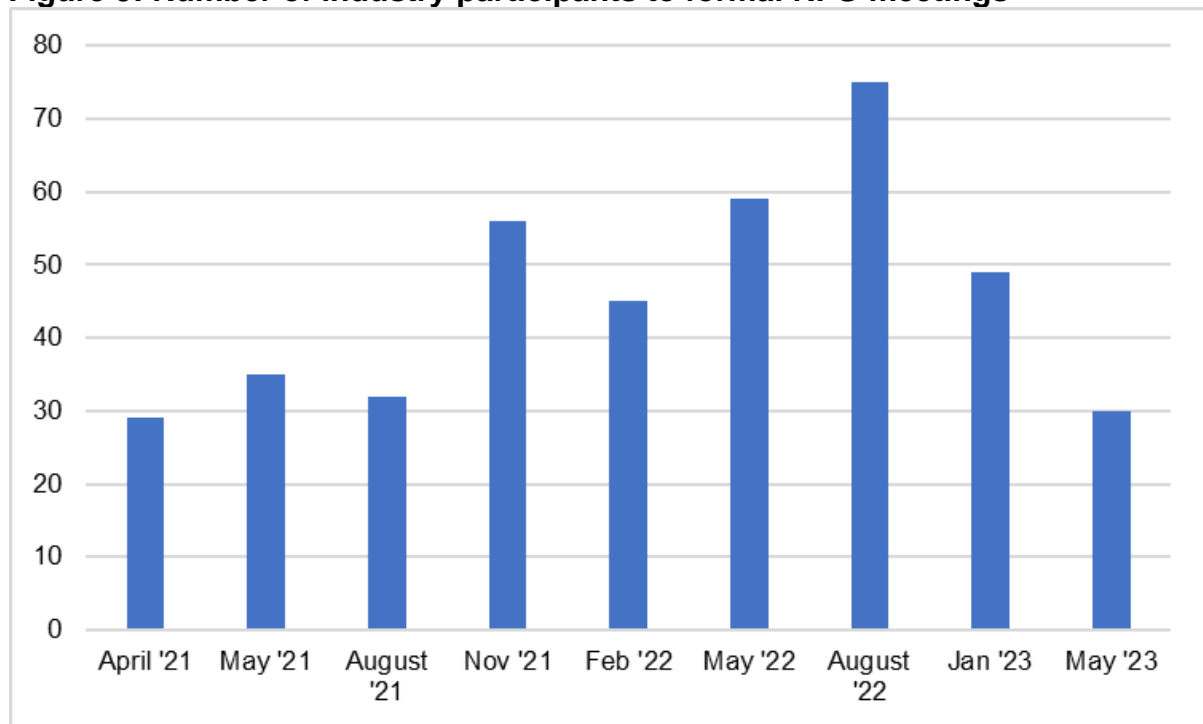
P3. How does the representation of fishing and other marine sectors in formal meetings align with principles of equity and inclusivity?

P3.1 Are formal engagement activities reaching the people they were intended to?

While invitations to RFG events have been sent to the intended audiences, participation has been uneven. Attendance of industry stakeholders at formal RFG meetings has fluctuated over time (see Figure 9) and from region to region. There has been a significantly bigger proportion of regulatory participants in comparison to industry attending formal RFG meetings in the Southwest (i.e., in several Southwest RFG meetings, more than half of all attendees were from regulators in 2022). In the other regions, industry participation has been comparatively small, with the notable exception of a very well attended meeting in the Northeast region focusing on Highly Protected Marine Areas.

The written evidence does not provide information on the breakdown of participation beyond the broad categories of “industry” and “non-industry”. Feedback from regional leads suggests that the strategic population of inshore fishers has been reached everywhere. However, “recruitment” of industry into formal meetings is an ongoing process, which has in places not yet achieved the intended outcome of a proportionate representation of non-sector fishers and industry.

Figure 9: Number of industry participants to formal RFG meetings



Source: RFG attendance logs

P3.2 Which marine sectors have not been represented in formal meetings at each RFG and why?

There has been significant variation in the representation of marine sectors in formal meetings, from RFG to RFG, and within RFGs from port to port. In several regions, there have been no representatives from certain ports. This means that the challenge of recruiting all relevant marine sectors into the RFG formal meetings is compounded by the challenge of recruiting from all ports in the region. The information available does not enable a systematic comparison across all RFGs: the precise make-up of the industry presence at formal meetings has not been recorded.

The evidence on the reasons for non- or poor attendance from certain marine sectors is too partial to be conclusive, although assumptions can be made:

- long-established patterns of representation, even if unsatisfactory, may be maintained and difficult to shed out of habit
- the size of the sectors in some regions, and the number of ports included, may be too large for all marine sectors to have been approached in a manner that will motivate them to join (i.e. beyond an email invitation).

P3.3 How representative of the fishing sector/region are attendees to formal meetings?

The information available to address this question is limited. However, qualitative evidence suggests, that participants to RFG formal meetings in the Southwest have been from a wide range of gear types, target stocks, and localities; in that respect it is internally diverse in a manner that reasonably well reflects the level of diversity seen in the region. By contrast, in other regions formal meetings may be dominated by a particular group, such as merchants and recreational fishers (in the South region). As noted earlier, some RFG meetings see no participation from some ports, for example in the Northeast.

P3.4 Do specific sectors, stakeholders, or ports have better representation at formal meetings?

The information available does not provide a systematic breakdown of sectors, stakeholders, or ports across all RFGs. However, the evidence hints at the occasional better representation of recreational fishers, merchants, and inshore fishers in some regions, and that of certain ports. Preparatory work and early engagement with fishers at some ports, where there have been positive responses, have led to well-attended meetings at those ports (e.g. Newhaven, Eastbourne).

P3.5 Have the different sectors / groups represented been able to contribute equally? How can this be improved?

Qualitative commentary provides evidence of the themes and questions raised at meetings, which suggests there have been many contributions from representatives of different groups and sectors during those meetings. However, there is too little information on how such contributions have been distributed between different sectors or groups, and why that may be so.

Assumptions on what may contribute to improvements can be drawn from anecdotal evidence. Equality of contributions from participants to meetings may depend on the strategy used in moderating them. Through written feedback (one-off RFG survey), some attendees at meetings have proposed that independent facilitators could address the problem of certain voices being dominant at meetings (especially national ones), to the detriment of other attendees and the range of topics discussed.

Individuals from certain sectors or groups may also feel uncomfortable to speak up at formal meetings (as reported by one RFG moderator), or to attend them at all, or they are unable to attend for various reasons. If that was the case for some sectors or groups, the possibility of alternative routes to contribute could then be explored.

P3.6 Are the selected representatives considered to reflect wider views of the sector/stakeholder type/region?

At the time of writing, the baseline assessment sector/stakeholder representatives had not been identified and implemented as part of the RFGs. These representatives are intended to be implemented in the future. Whilst this means that

evaluation of this question cannot be assessed at this stage, future evaluations should draw comparatively on the findings of other questions in this assessment to establish the additional (dis)benefits of having representatives.

P3.7 What could explain higher/lower inclusivity observed at RFG meetings?

There is limited evidence to draw from regarding the drivers of higher/lower inclusivity at RFG meetings. Future evaluations could seek to address this gap, by collecting demographic data on all invited stakeholders (age, port, target stock, gear type, group affiliation), data on the manner they have been approached in the past and explore whether there are notable differences between those who attend and those who do not. This would not only provide a clearer picture of how inclusive RFG meetings are in terms of their membership; it would also provide the basis for targeting future efforts to achieve higher inclusivity.

P3.8 How feasible would it be for RFGs to be more inclusive of the different marine sectors?

The feasibility of achieving greater inclusivity at RFGs depends on the scale of the obstacles that are hampering it, and whether it is in the power of the MMO to address them, while maintaining an open-door policy to RFGs. The latter implies that a given sector/group may show up in force, or not at all.

The evidence available suggests there is more than one obstacle to greater attendance and participation from targeted groups. There are indications of both capacity and motivation issues.

The data suggests that participation may be a function of location and preparation. Some ports may not be represented at RFG meetings because the MMO has not yet been able to directly engage with the fishers there. More port visits and preliminary face-to-face engagement with fishers may prepare the ground for subsequent RFG meetings taking place at these locations, which may progressively enrol those fishers into RFGs more generally, and therefore increase the representation of these ports at the meetings.

There is widespread perception among RFG Delivery Team members that many fishers' lack of motivation to participate at the targeted groups results from their feeling that no changes will follow from it. This feeling appears rooted in their past experience of engaging with the MMO and not seeing the desired changes afterwards. There are some indications in written feedback (one-off RFG survey) that such a feeling may be encouraged or reinforced by one-way presentations given to attendees, with limited discussion afterwards. This dissatisfaction with the MMO may veer towards hostility in some places. Entrenched negative perceptions are inherently difficult to change. Tackling such an obstacle is unlikely to happen within a short period of time, nor without significant effort to engage with those stakeholders and repair relationships.

Inclusivity is also about participation, beyond attendance. The reluctance to speak up at meetings in front of peers and outsiders, reported in interviews with RFG Delivery Team members, can be addressed through efforts to grow the RFGs as "safe

spaces”, where comments shared are unlikely to be detrimental in any way to those who made them. Allowing for discussions to happen in smaller groups (e.g. in break out rooms), and providing sufficient time for them, could also contribute to addressing this issue. Furthermore, comfort in sharing views can grow if meetings recur frequently enough, and space and opportunities to build rapport between participants is provided. This can involve occasions for more informal exchanges before, within, or after formal meetings.

P4. How have different engagement methods and processes been received by fisheries stakeholders, are they perceived to be fair and feasible?

P4.1 Are stakeholders satisfied with the RFG meetings (process, frequency, participation, time of access, records)?

There is limited evidence to explain what features of RFG meetings are better or less appreciated. There is no data on views regarding frequency, time of access and records. However, qualitative evidence provides some indications of levels of satisfaction, which would need to be explored in future evaluation research.

Regarding process, formal and online meetings are not appreciated as much as informal meetings (as discussed under [P4.2](#)). The formal character of RFG meetings may be detrimental to the quality of the discussions. Attendees may feel that sharing information at such meetings could be, for one reason or another, perceived negatively by others in the room. This is supported by RFG Delivery Team Member remarks that they have experienced better exchanges with fishers in informal drop-in/port visits than in formal meetings (RFG Delivery Team interviews). The formality of the meetings is also noted in some feedback comments that members of the industry submitted in response to surveys, in relation to the space given to formal presentations at the meetings. Some attendees appear to feel that these presentations are not conducive to discussion; they also note that the meeting time thus spent could be used for discussions instead, which would be more beneficial to the participants.

A few incidental (rather than systematically collected) comments on participation, added to the one-off RFG survey responses, suggest that several stakeholders are not supportive of the people participating in the meetings, as representatives of the sector, and would rather see those meetings welcoming more active fishers rather than figures who have historically been speaking on their behalf.

P4.2 To what extent do stakeholders approve of drop-in/port visits (process, frequency, participation, access, records)?

Drop-in/port visits have been the preferred mode of interaction for the targeted groups, and particularly active fishers. The informal character of these encounters appears to explain their popularity among stakeholders. The MMO has noted how port visits have been the easiest way to meet fishers, and to see them repeatedly afterwards. After a first encounter, fishers have been coming back to meet the MMO when they are at port.

Some commentary suggests that drop-in/port visits have not been happening as frequently as might be needed or desired by fishers/industry, which reflects the MMO's own resource constraints.

Records produced by the MMO of drop-in and port visits have not been made publicly available to others. Interviews with RFG Deliver Team members indicate that "revealing" information – easily identifiable – has been shared with MMO during such encounters.

P4.3 To what extent can fishers formally/directly raise regional/local concerns regarding fishing-related issues?

Meeting notes strongly suggest that fishers have been able to raise regional and local concerns, regarding fishing related issues, through the various engagement opportunities (port visits, drop-ins, formal meetings) that RFGs have offered. RFG notes and interviews suggest that informal encounters have been preferred by many fishers as a mechanism to raise issues with the MMO. This is consistent with the broader literature on regulatory encounters, which has repeatedly noted how informal encounters (at the margins or outside formal meetings) have been conducive to greater information sharing between representatives of a public authority and regulatees/individuals³.

However, RFG Delivery Team commentary on the meetings suggests that some fishers have sometimes used these opportunities for raising national issues rather than regional/local ones, while others may have been reluctant to speak up. It is unclear whether reluctance to engage (which may be limited to the more formal meetings), or comments on national issues have been an obstacle to regional/local issues being raised.

P5. Are stakeholders satisfied with the current arrangements and do they perceive that their input is making a meaningful impact?

P5.1: To what extent do stakeholders feel their issues/challenges are taken forward as a result of their involvement in RFG activities? What factors contribute to this feeling?

As already mentioned under [P2.3](#), many stakeholders feel disheartened when they do not see rapid results. Some large issues may take years to solve and require numerous regulatory bodies and maybe even legislative changes. There are also some issues that need to be solved at an international level. This means that the RFG Delivery Team regularly pursue small wins. These includes helping stakeholders fill in funding forms and liaising with the relevant authorities. When the RFG Delivery Team are able to achieve these wins, they said that stakeholders are very satisfied and are appreciative of the help provided.

P5.2 What inputs have stakeholders made to RFGs? What has been done with their inputs (feedback loop)?

A variety of inputs have been provided to the RFGs. Amongst many others, these concern diverse issues, such as spatial squeeze (traditional fishing grounds under competition from other sectors in the marine environment), the creation of Marine Protected Areas, low fisheries stock levels, and the decline of local industry. Some issues are beyond the scope of the RFG to solve so the delivery team aim to communicate any changes related to the issue. For other matters, the delivery team have reacted to solve the issues almost immediately. For example, the RFG Delivery Team helped stakeholders apply for refunds for the roll-out of the I-VMS (Inshore vessel monitoring systems) in England. For this, the input was almost instantly dealt with. Other issues that can be dealt with quickly include providing feedback for consultations and for the FMPs.

Table 12 is an illustrative sample (e.g. Hawkins K, 2002, Hutter B, 1997, Etienne J, 2013) of stakeholder inputs and RFG resulting actions as published in the summer 2023 newsletters. Further inputs and actions have been published from Autumn 2022 to winter 2024.

Table 12: Sample newsletter “You said, we did” inputs/outputs (summer 2023)

You said (stakeholder issue)	We did (RFG action)
The catch app is not always practical to use	[The RFGs] spoke to the team responsible for the catch recording app and they are now looking for volunteers for a focus group to test functionality of the app and introduce new features for those that use it
Why does the fleet modernisation (or engine replacement) grant funding only apply to the coastal fleet using static gear and why does it not include trawl vessels?	Defra attended the Northeast Regional Fisheries Group online meeting in May to answer questions and explained that this round is a trial and further rounds may open up to trawl vessels
You wanted an opportunity to speak with the minister	[The RFGs] hosted a national meeting back in March. Thank you to all those who participated
Fishers asked for more information regarding potential grant funding and why the engine replacement scheme does not include bottom towed gear	[The RFGs] have been in discussion with Defra regarding available grant funding and brought the MMO and Defra Grants Teams along to the June 2023 RFG Meeting to answer your questions
The inshore fleet wanted an opportunity to speak with the minister	[The RFGs] hosted a national meeting back in March. Thank you to all those who participated. We are still working through the actions
Fishers in the Northwest RFG asked for an opportunity to meet members of the RFG Team to raise concerns and	[The RFGs] have conducted visits to Hoylake, Liverpool, Lytham St Annes and Fleetwood where we met with fishers across these ports. More meetings will

You said (stakeholder issue)	We did (RFG action)
discuss issues relating to all things fishing.	take place this year across the remaining ports in the Northwest and can also be arranged at the request of RFG members
Fishers asked for more information on IVMS rollout and updates	[The RFGs] have been in discussion with our IVMS Team, Senior Leadership Team and Defra, and brought Pete Clark and the IVMS Team along to the June 2023 RFG meeting to give updates and answer your questions
You would like opportunity to speak with the MCA regularly	The MCA have agreed to attend Q&A sessions in the triennial RFG meetings
That you would like more information and clarity on the Marine Protected Areas (MPA) consultation including information on stage 4	[The RFGs] arranged for the Marine Management Organisation (MMO), Marine Conservation Team (MCT) to come speak to those that requested
You would like MPA proposed areas to be overlaid onto nautical maps	At the MPA consultation drop-ins, we brought maps with the closest MPAs overlaid for the current round of stage 2 and stage 3 MPAs
You would like assistance in filling out a response to the MPA consultation	[The RFGs] team visited you at ports and transcribed those conversations into a consultation response on behalf of the ports
You would like assistance hearing about active marine licensing applications and filling out the consultation responses	[The RFGs] have begun a trial using the RFG mailing list to alert this group of new marine licence applications which may affect their fishing
You would like to understand how quota works and the graphs in the RFG meetings	[The RFGs] hosted a drop-in with the quota team at the request of the fishers to explain all things quota and how it can be used
For us to share any bass biomass data used in the old EU regulations as well as any current we hold	[The RFGs] sent the data to those that requested it
Told us lots of information and experiences about bass, and opinions on potential management measures for the FMP	[The RFGs] delivered the feedback we've received from all port visits to the bass FMP team to continue to feed into their work
You wanted to see a breakdown of bass entitlements, and what the uptake is of those	Those who asked received an email of breakdowns
You wanted access to Spurdog fishery	A Spurdog fishery has now opened as of 1st April 2023 in UK waters
You are experiencing gear conflict in Lyme Bay	MMO quota team has run a consultation to find out what the situation is and what management may or may not be needed

Source: RFG Newsletters (summer 2023)

Note: additional newsletters are available for years documenting additional inputs raised by stakeholders and actions made. This table only presents actions from one newsletter.

P5.3 To what extent have current engagement arrangements improved stakeholders' trust in the MMO?

The RFG Delivery Team believe that stakeholders' trust has improved with the MMO. Numerous stakeholders within industry do not agree with specific rules and regulations affecting their regions, albeit they appreciate the MMO's help in providing explanations and ensuring that they are complying. However, stakeholders have less trust in Defra as they feel they have been let down. In the wake of the EU-exit there were numerous promises made to the sector and it is felt that these promises have not been fulfilled. The Defra policy lead added that they believe the RFGs are helping to overcome this issue and to make sure that stakeholders have trust in all the regulatory agencies.

Concrete examples of improved trust were also given. The example of Lyme Bay, where there has been a lot of collaboration, was cited by numerous members of the delivery team as showing there has been an increase in stakeholders' trust. There has also been a general increase in attendance to informal meetings, which shows a greater level of enthusiasm. However, for formal meetings the pattern is more mixed, with fluctuating attendance. It was stressed that showing stakeholders that decisions were bottom-up and not top-down was important.

P6. Which engagement activities have worked best to support different requirements across the MMO's core service areas (in particular, from working with the fisheries management team, marine conservation team and other activities related to [Goal 4 and 6](#))?

P6.1 Are engagement activities with MMO supporting to achieve Goal 4 by improving relations and increasing trust and so helping to improve compliance and self-regulations?

The RFG Delivery Team believe that engagement activities have definitely improved relations and trust with the MMO. However, they believe it is more challenging to know if this is improving compliance. In the past, stakeholders have felt that decisions were top-down and that they were often surprised by the timing and content/direction of them. According to the RFG Delivery Team, this perception has now shifted in their regions and stakeholders feel that they have more input into decisions. However, it was noted that stakeholders may sometimes be caught by surprise if they are not very engaged.

One specific example where the RFGs have helped improve compliance is with the MCA medical exemptions. The RFG Delivery Team organised workshops and helped people to acquire the exemptions required for their vessel-size that was allowed in the regulations. This was viewed as positive by all involved as a "quick win" was delivered and stakeholders were able to solve an issue that would most

likely taken them longer to solve without help. Therefore, this helped to build trust with the MMO and also helped to build some personal relationships.

The RFG Delivery Team also noted that they regularly communicated the availability of grants funding to stakeholders. This was to help solve specific issues, such as the requirement for certain pieces of equipment, or more general timelines of different funds.

P6.2 Are engagement activities with MMO supporting to achieve Goal 6 by helping to enhance sustainable and transparent management of fishing opportunities and so working to deliver a more resilient and viable fishing sector?

The RFG Delivery Team noted that the formal meetings were particularly useful in demonstrating the transparency of fisheries management. As these meetings bring together representatives from industry, academia, and the public sector, they are valuable in sharing news. The role of academia (both from Cefas and outside of the organisation) was particularly mentioned, as they often present the findings of their studies and therefore demonstrate how fisheries are managed in a science-based manner. This helps demystify how certain decisions are made, making them seem less arbitrary than they would have appeared in the past.

The role of FMPs was particularly mentioned by the RFG Delivery Team. Specifically, the RFG Delivery Team's efforts at ensuring that stakeholders in their region can contribute to them, as stakeholders may not be aware of them otherwise. However, it was noted that in the first tranche of FMPs, some stakeholders did not receive any updates on their feedback, and so they were less willing to contribute to future tranches.

The RFG Delivery Team noted that they often have to provide more information to help explain certain projects areas that are aimed at increasing environmental sustainability. For example, MPAs are often a cause for concern for fishers as they believe this may restrict where they will be allowed to fish. The RFG Delivery Team have been important in explaining the potential consequences of an MPA and pointing the way to consultations. Similar concerns were raised when windfarms are suggested in coastal regions.

7. Evaluation implementation plan

Overview

The purpose of this section of the report is to provide practical guidance on how the RFG Delivery Team (and potential evaluation teams) may further implement this evaluation approach. In the previous sections of this report, RPA has provided a general outline of the steps and draft tools involved in conducting an evaluation, which can either be directly used by the RFG Delivery Team going forward or be amended to support future evaluation efforts. The emphasis of this section is on the updating of existing tools prior to data collection (should the evaluation be undertaken after one year of this report being written), and practical guidance on what current data collection methods could be refined to meet the needs of the evaluation more immediately.

Recommendations in this section are based on the findings and tools outlined in previous sections, as well as feedback to a stakeholder workshop discussing the practicalities of monitoring and data collection. This workshop was held on 12th March 2024 and provided RFG regional leads and management with the opportunity to feedback on the feasibility of undertaking future evaluations.

Due to time and resource constraints of the RFGs, the suggested evaluation methodology emphasises the use of data already being collected by the RFG Delivery Team with recommendations on how to refine existing monitoring processes. The aim is to reduce the need for additional work to be undertaken to fulfil the evaluations' needs, albeit as outline below, additional work may be required to fill data gaps (where our recommendations cannot feasibly fill gaps). In these cases, additional resources may be required to fulfil the data requirements of the evaluation approach.

RPA has provided a method and tools to undertake a process evaluation; however, future evaluation efforts could also consider evaluating the impact and value for money of the RFGs. Again, if this were undertaken additional resources would be required to amend the evaluation approach and collect additional data.

A summary of the evaluation tools provided by RPA and their purpose in implementing the evaluation can be found in Table 13 below.

Table 13: Evaluation tools developed by RPA in this report

Report section	Tool description	Tool, purpose, and recommendations
1.1	Problem definition	To establish the fundamentals of what the RFGs are attempting to undertake. This provides essential context for framing what the achievement of outcomes and impacts may include
1.2	Aims and objectives	To outline the specific path to addressing the problem definition. The aims and objectives are reflected in all

Report section	Tool description	Tool, purpose, and recommendations
		subsequent tools used to assess whether or not the aims and objectives are being achieved (or progressed toward)
4.2	Theory of Change (ToC)	The ToC provides an explicit mapping of the RFGs and allows the evaluation team to understand where each delivery element (inputs, activities, etc.) should produce each subsequent step. Together with the evaluation aims and objectives, the ToC defines what is to be evaluated
5	Evaluation framework	Outlines the exact questions, data, metrics and their sources to be used in the evaluation, all of which are mapped against the evaluation questions. This provides a clear and auditable path for future evaluation teams
5.2.2	Data gap analysis	Based on existing data collection methods (at the time of writing) this table illustrates which data already exist (and their source) to answer each evaluation question. Data gaps will need to be filled through either revised monitoring processes (based on recommendations in this section) or through stakeholder engagement. This allows future evaluation teams to plan their approach to data collection
5.3.2	Stakeholder mapping	Some evaluation questions require feedback from stakeholders on specific functions of their role or perceptions on RFG process performance. This mapping supports evaluation teams to understand which stakeholders are likely to possess knowledge of each type, thus ensuring the right questions are asked of the right people
5.3.3	Stakeholder engagement method	Feedback from RPA's study suggests stakeholders have a preference for 1-2-1 interaction and, therefore, personal in-depth interviews would be the most suitable means of gathering data from stakeholders
6	Baseline assessment	This assessment illustrates how the RFG processes have performed in their early years, to be applied for future operation. Future evaluation teams can also use this to assess change over time and draw trends
7	Data collection and recommendations	Based on the initial findings of the baseline assessment, this section outlines recommendations for the refinement of existing data collection methods
Appendix B	Draft stakeholder engagement material	This provides a sample set of interview questions suitable to collect primary data to answer most evaluation questions. Questions have been mapped against stakeholder type to illustrate who would likely possess relevant answers. This annex also provides important administrative documents (consent form and information sheet) which can expedite the administration of data collection with minor edits

The remainder of this section provides a step-by-step process to implementing the design for future evaluations as well as recommendations to refine existing data collection processes. This includes:

- Step 0: Business case considerations
- Step 1: Updating the aims and objectives of the evaluation
- Step 2: Updating the ToC
- Step 3: Updating the evaluation framework
- Step 4: Data collection
- Step 5: Evaluation assessment
- Step 6: Dissemination of results.

Steps 1-3 have been provided to support the implementation of this evaluation approach in future years. The emphasis of these steps being the need to ensure the relevance and accuracy of the tools should an evaluation be undertaken beyond one year of this report being written. In the event there are no changes to the delivery of the RFGs and objectives of the evaluation, the existing materials in this report do not require revision or duplication and can directly act as the basis for implementation.

Steps to implement the evaluation

The 7 steps outlined in this section are broadly categorised under 5 types of tasks. As Figure 10 illustrates, the overarching implementation steps include preparation, revision of existing tools (if applicable), data collection, evaluation assessment, and dissemination. Steps 1-5 also entail continuous communication with stakeholders (see communications and dissemination strategy).

Figure 10: Summary of steps to implement the evaluation



Step 0: Preparation

Prior to implementing the evaluation, it is assumed that the MMO will first prepare or amend a business case to ensure the delivery of further evaluations are feasible. As part of this assessment the following evaluation needs should be considered (not exhaustive):

Timeframes and frequency of future evaluations

Whilst the frequency of planned RFG evaluations is not known, it is common practice for evaluations to be undertaken on an annual basis to ensure the direction of the intervention (the RFGs) is being implemented as intended, with lessons identified, shared and actioned, and to ensure the effectiveness and relevance (or adjustment)

of data monitoring and collection methods. In iteratively undertaking evaluations, it is also possible to see how the intervention has progressed (or not) over time and understand what factors contribute to the gradual achievement of outcomes and impacts (notably where these are likely to be achieved in the future). If used, each evaluation round should be appropriately resourced.

However, it is recognised that annual evaluations of the RFGs may not be feasible due to resource and time constraints as well as implications for stakeholder fatigue. In this case, RPA recommends implementing an ex-post design. An ex-post evaluation includes the assessment of the RFG's delivery at its outset (e.g. the baseline assessment) and again within one year of the RFG's closure, or alternatively, at the closure of a pivotal stage of the intervention (e.g. every three years). The benefits of this approach are that the evaluation captures and critically compares the delivery at two points in time, illustrating what has worked well and less well. The main limitation of this method is that there are fewer opportunities to identify and implement lessons learnt and recommendations compared with annual evaluations. Noting that this report was undertaken over a period of 3-4 months, a similar timeframe is recommended for future process evaluations. RPA are unable to state the suitability of timeframes for future evaluations.

It is assumed that despite the timeframe of potential evaluations, data collection and monitoring will be completed on an ongoing basis for the immediate future. Whilst we have recommended specific means of collecting data (e.g. such as reinstating an RFG survey, or an interview period) further in this section, data collection may better suit the RFGs through continuous feedback retrieved after each formal/informal meeting via a feedback form. Any data gaps identified at the point of evaluation could then be filled through targeted engagement (e.g. interviews) with fewer people which would reduce the burden on stakeholders. Data collection methods should be factored into the MMOs decision of how often the RFGs should be evaluated.

Identification of an evaluation team and external stakeholder needs

The facilitation of evaluations requires time and resources of specific stakeholders involved in the delivery of RFGs. As outlined in this report, the RFG Delivery Team consists of programme management roles and regional leads, as supported by Defra Policy Leads. RFG Delivery Team members are best placed to participate in co-production meetings to update evaluation tools and undertake regular monitoring and data collection as part of their day-to-day management of the RFGs. However, Delivery Team members may not be best placed to lead or undertake future evaluations due to the increased resource burden on the team, potential for bias in analysis and reporting, and potential lack of expertise in evaluation methods. Internal teams evaluating the RFGs or external evaluation experts may be best placed to fulfil the evaluation.

External stakeholders will be pivotal for providing monitoring and perception-based data. These stakeholders are outlined in the stakeholder mapping. It is integral that future evaluations consider the availability and willingness of these stakeholders to participate in the evaluation, with either alternative stakeholders identified or limitations to answer evaluation questions defined.

Future evaluations may also consider where external delivery partners (e.g. Cefas/IFCAs) may be able to provide additional information to answer evaluation questions. For example, it may be possible to collect ad hoc feedback from partners regarding how they have communicated the RFGs and what has worked (less) well for them. However, it is recognised that additional collaboration for evaluation purposes may not be feasible within available resources or due to buy-in from partners, and subsequently should be considered a limitation of the available data.

Resourcing future evaluations and RFG data collection

As noted in [Section 6](#) of this report, RFG Delivery Team members often cited the need for additional resources to support their activities. Increased resourcing may be required to facilitate the evaluation more generally, which may include additional resources to undertake tool revision sessions (steps 1-3 below, if applicable), as well as external evaluation teams (if used). Furthermore, evaluations may require increased resourcing to facilitate stakeholder interviews to obtain data. Feedback also highlighted the willingness of the RFG Delivery Team to collect and use data on social media interaction. However, Delivery Team members stated that RFG social media is currently facilitated by wider MMO social media/communications teams. Previous attempts to obtain social media data have not been successful and Delivery Team members noted the need for additional resources to support information sharing across the MMO. Again, Delivery Team members noted the desire for additional administrative support to allow regional leads to focus on achieving the RFGs outcomes. During the Task 6 workshop, Delivery Team members agreed that there may be a need to undertake additional monitoring activities for the evaluation (such as developing an RFG survey which was used once in the past) although additional resources would be required, and consideration would need to be given to the additional burden placed on stakeholders associated with the need to provide their views through a survey. As with interview questions (discussed later in step 3) it may be more suitable to use a feedback form after meetings which include survey questions (this should reduce stakeholder fatigue but still produce additional data).

Finally, resourcing should also consider whether the evaluation approach should be widened to include impact and/or a value for money (VfM) assessment of the RFGs. If included, this would widen the scope of the evaluation, requiring significant changes to the evaluation framework, approach to monitoring and data collection, analysis and reporting. Subsequently this would require additional resources for the RFG Delivery Team and the RFG evaluation teams.

Step 1: Updating the aims and objectives of the evaluation

The first step in implementing the evaluation approach is to review and refine the aims and objectives of the evaluation. The current aims and objectives (outlined in [Section 1](#)) are not suitable for future evaluations without alteration. However, these aims and objectives underpin RPA's approach to this evaluation and any significant changes may require alteration of all evaluation tools provided in this report (listed in Table 13). The subsequent evaluation steps also require all evaluation tools to be reviewed and updated (if applicable).

The bullets below provide example revisions to the current aims and objectives which, if applied, would ensure the implementation of the evaluation in the future remains aligned with the approach in this report:

- Identify constructive and negative feedback on processes used to deliver the RFGs
- Assess work since the baseline assessment on how the RFG is supporting the participatory element of the Joint Fisheries Statement (2022) to be delivered. This includes through commitments beyond the Fisheries Act, and internal commitments set by the RFG team.

In the event that wider changes are made to the aims and objectives, RPA recommends a co-production approach between the project executive (Defra/MMO) and RFG Delivery Team to ensure any changes to the already defined aims and objectives are feasible. This may include meetings between the executive, and RFG Delivery Team to discuss the implications of any changes. This discussion may also consider the feasibility of evaluating impacts and value for money (assuming resourcing is provided).

Step 2: Updating the ToC

RPA has provided a ToC reflecting the RFG structure as of winter 2023 in [Section 4](#). ToCs are used in evaluations to frame and identify important elements of the delivery structure that need to be evaluated. As interventions often evolve from year to year, and therefore, questions surrounding its operation may also change, it is essential that the next step is for the evaluation team and RFG Delivery Team to co-produce a revised ToC that reflects how the RFG is being delivered at that point in time. [Section 3](#) provides an overview of how a ToC can be developed and the tools used to create the current version. [Section 4](#) outlines the output of a ToC which would need to be replicated for subsequent evaluations.

Recommendations for updating the current RFG ToC:

- Collectively the evaluation team and RFG Delivery Team, step through each element of the ToC and its causal pathways to check the relevance of each, as well as ensure all aspects of the RFG are covered
- Use interactive tools such as Mural to facilitate the meeting
- Consider ToC guidance provided in HM Treasury guidance in the Magenta Book.

Alternatively, if delivery of the RFGs has not changed since development of the winter 2023 ToC, then the current version ([Section 4](#)) can be used as the basis for future evaluations.

Step 3: Updating the evaluation framework

Reviewing and updating the evaluation matrix

Step 3 requires the review and potential revision of the existing evaluation matrix ([Section 5.1](#)) to ensure the relevance of the questions being asked, and data being collected. Based on the revised aims and objectives, and the revised ToC, the

evaluation team should consider whether the existing evaluation questions effectively address the aims and objectives, and whether the existing evaluation questions and sub-questions effectively capture all components of the ToC. Any changes to the ToC should be reflected in the rewording of existing evaluation questions or addition of new questions to be answered.

The RFG Delivery Team/evaluation team should then review and amend the indicators, metrics and data sources (evaluation matrix) to ensure they can be used to answer the evaluation questions, define what data already exists (e.g. through monitoring), and define what needs to be collected through stakeholder engagement (e.g. interviews). For reference, the purpose of an indicator is to define what information can be used to answer the corresponding question, metrics define what the specific measurement format of the indicator is, and the data source defines where this information can be obtained.

As part of our evaluation, RPA undertook a gap analysis of literature (see [Section 5.2.2](#)) to assess the quality of existing data. When updating the evaluation matrix, the evaluation team should incorporate the findings of the gap analysis (Table 4). This will help refine what data are already available and suitable to answer each evaluation question. It is recommended that the evaluation team comparatively assesses each of the matrix's evaluation questions, indicators, metrics, and data sources against the existing gap analysis and update the matrix based on the suitability of data for each question. This may also account for changes to data collection put in place by the RFG Delivery Team since this report was written (see Step 4). Any remaining gaps should be filled using stakeholder engagement (interviews). The end result of the matrix should explicitly define which data will be used to answer each question and where they are derived from.

Please note that the gap analysis performed in this report was for the purposes of the baseline assessment and may not need to be replicated for future evaluations (although it should be used to update the evaluation matrix; as above). This assumes that the design and approach to delivering the RFGs has not changed since the development of this report (e.g. the evaluation matrix is unchanged). It also assumes that the existing data collection methods continue (although they may be adjusted by the recommendations in Step 4 without the need for further gap analysis). In the event that the evaluation matrix is amended, further gap analysis on the changes may be required to identify the suitability of existing data to address the changes.

As with all tasks relating to updating existing tools, updates should be conducted in a co-production manner to ensure the perspectives of both evaluation teams and the delivery team are used as the basis for any final outputs. This will ensure that the revised evaluation matrix sets out a realistic and relevant/accurate path to undertake the evaluation.

If there are no significant changes to the aims, objectives and ToC, the existing evaluation matrix in this report ([Section 5.1](#)) can be duplicated for future evaluations without amendment.

Reviewing and updating the data analysis and management strategy

Should the evaluation be undertaken in future years it would also be important to review and update the data analysis and management strategy. RPA has provided a simple data management process (see [Section 5.2.3](#)) which could be replicated for future evaluations. It is important that the methods of collecting, storing, and processing all data are defined at the outset of the evaluation to ensure transparency and auditability. This process may be updated to match the official processes of the MMO/RFG Delivery Team/evaluation team. Again, RPA has also provided a simple analytical method (see [Section 5.2.4](#)) which can be replicated for the purposes of future evaluation. Should impact or value for money assessments be required, additional methodologies would need to be defined.

Reviewing, updating, and drafting the stakeholder engagement strategy

[Section 5.3.2](#) of this report provides a definition of all stakeholders involved in the RFGs and is complemented by a mapping of each stakeholder against their level of knowledge of delivery processes (internal delivery partners) and/or direct involvement in RFGs (e.g. as a beneficiary or external advisor)⁴. The next step for preparing and implementing an evaluation includes the review and updating of both the definitions and mapping in this section. This is because stakeholder roles may change as delivery of the RFGs progresses, with stakeholder types being added as potential new partnerships develop, or stakeholder types being removed where partnerships are no longer needed. This also reflects any changes made to the ToC as the stakeholder definition and mapping should reflect the period of time in which the evaluation is to occur. In addition to [Section 5.3.2](#), RPA has provided a mapping of stakeholder types/groups against relevant evaluation sub-questions in [Appendix B.3](#). This information would also require updating in the event of changes to the evaluation framework.

This information not only provides context as to who is involved in, and how, the RFGs are delivered, but it provides an outline as to who will possess the knowledge required to answer evaluation questions (where existing secondary data do not suffice).

If no changes are required, the mapping presented in [Section 5.3.2](#) and [Appendix B.3](#) should not require alteration.

Stakeholder interviews

Some data are not easily obtainable through revisions to existing data collection processes and can only be obtained through stakeholder engagement (i.e. where some secondary data are available via existing approaches, but the nature of the question requires qualitative feedback). This requires additional strategic planning regarding the practicalities of the RFG Delivery Team (or evaluation team) undertaking the interviews. This plan should be based on the materials provided in

⁴ Please note [Section 5.3.2](#) of this report outlines a mapping that was not used to collect data for the baseline analysis ([Section 6](#)) and has been included to support future evaluation teams. Subsequently, future evaluations may draw on feedback from a wider array of stakeholder types than were collected for [Section 6](#).

[Section 5.3](#) and [Appendix B.3](#) of this report. It should outline who should be contacted to retrieve information for each question, but should also outline timelines for interviews, and obtain specific contact information for relevant stakeholders. It is not within RPA's remit to advise on when this engagement should be planned to occur or who the specific stakeholders to be included are.

For interviews, RPA recommends using semi-structured approaches which can be undertaken in person, over the telephone, or online. An outline of this approach has been provided in [Section 5.3.3](#) (used by RPA to interview the RFG Delivery Team to inform the baseline assessment) and is complemented by [Appendix B](#) which provides draft interview materials. The materials in [Appendix B](#) could also easily be amended for alternative engagement methods (such as through questionnaires or workshops).

Due to size, scope, and regional nuance of the RFGs, statistical sampling would not be necessary. RPA recommends implementing a 'purposive sampling' approach which specifies which stakeholders should be interviewed based on their knowledge/perspectives needed to answer the evaluation questions. This approach does not place emphasis on the number of stakeholders interviewed, but the usefulness of content obtained from the interview. However, the sample questions in [Appendix B.3](#) include a large number of questions relevant to the evaluation questions, all of which would not be suitable to be discussed in a single interview. It is recommended that interviewers select the most appropriate questions to discuss and limit the number used.

It is recommended that all interviews are documented with written notes that are shared with stakeholders for approval and additional commentary.

It is within the prerogative of the RFG Delivery Team to decide whether to undertake stakeholder interviews on an ad hoc basis (or via a feedback form after each formal/informal meeting), or during a dedicated stakeholder engagement period at the point of the evaluation. The weakness of the interviews being on an ad hoc basis is that interview feedback represents stakeholder opinions at the time of the interview. Ad hoc interview feedback may not accurately reflect the opinions of the stakeholder at the time the evaluation is undertaken (i.e. the findings may not be accurate). Conversely the benefits of ad hoc interviews are that they may be more feasible for the Delivery Team to undertake and reduce stakeholder fatigue. Alternatively, undertaking a dedicated interview period at the time of evaluating will ensure data accurately reflects the status of the RFG at that point in time, albeit it will require dedicated resources.

Whilst the [Appendix B.3](#) questions have been worded to be relevant to stakeholder types, it is possible that some roles may have more nuanced involvement in the RFGs that are not reflected in the questions. For this reason, it is advised that the questions in [Appendix B.3](#) are reviewed and amended for each stakeholder to ensure their relevance. A semi-structured approach will also mean though that additional probing can be undertaken where wider or more nuanced involvement becomes apparent.

As per [Section 5.2](#) in this report, it is recommended that a secure database or spreadsheet is developed to document interview evidence against each evaluation question. This should include both data from existing monitoring sources as well as data obtained through interviews.

Further recommendations on scheduling and undertaking any stakeholder engagement can also be found in the communications and dissemination strategy.

Before using [Appendix B](#) materials, it is first necessary for their review and update to be undertaken based on any changes to the evaluation matrix and stakeholder mapping.

Stakeholder engagement log

RPA also recommends the creation of a spreadsheet to log stakeholder engagement activities to maintain clear records of stakeholder contact for the purposes of the evaluation. At minimum it is recommended this log contains:

- An assigned stakeholder identifying number
- The specific name of the stakeholder to be contacted
- The organisation name (if relevant)
- The stakeholder type (see [Appendix B](#))
- The type of engagement undertaken (interview or other)
- The date of scheduled engagement
- Indications of cancellations, etc.
- Indications of consent form being returned or not
- Indication of engagement being completed
- Any notes or observations.

This log will further elaborate on the individuals who will be/have been involved in the data collection phase and provides a track record for transparency.

Where possible, the evaluation team/RFG Delivery Team should use the materials in [Appendix B](#) to collect data from stakeholders during ongoing formal and informal meetings (if appropriate). This could include the use of a feedback form containing questions from the appendix (or survey if implemented). The use of a feedback form would also reduce the potential for responses being influenced by RFG lead presence. This would reduce the need for additional engagement to be undertaken and thus reduce stakeholder fatigue. [Appendix B.1](#) and [B.2](#) also provide statements relating to data protection and the respondent's rights under UK GDPR that could be amended and used for all interviews, or where relevant, ad hoc vision legislation and UK GDPR protocols.

Step 4: Data collection and recommendations

After the evaluation design has been updated (if relevant) it is possible for the RFG Delivery Team and evaluation teams to continue/begin the process of collecting primary data. Primary data refers to both the continued collection and collation of

data originating from existing formal and in-formal engagement methods, as well as additional data collected through stakeholder interviews (or other engagement methods).

Undertake indicator monitoring (existing data sources)

The collection of monitoring data is an iterative process which should occur continuously throughout the RFG's delivery by the Delivery Team. The collection of interview data could also occur throughout the RFG's delivery (by the Delivery Team) where possible/suitable. However, interviews may be better suited to be undertaken at the point of evaluation to consistently capture perspectives at that point in time. Alternatively, it may be suitable for data to be collected via feedback forms after formal/informal meetings which would reduce the burden on stakeholders resulting from other means (e.g. interviews/surveys).

As per the updated data analysis and management strategy, data collection should be systematically collected and entered into the relevant database/sources (outlined in the evaluation matrix).

As highlighted throughout this report, the intent of this study is not to increase the workload of the RFG Delivery Team to support future evaluations. As a result, the data collection processes have been oriented around processes already in place. Table 14 below provides a summary of the existing monitoring and data collection processes used by the RFG. This information has underpinned our approach to the evaluation and the methods and timeframes should continue as previously done by the RFG Delivery Team.

However, not all of the current data collection processes are collecting fully suitable data to answer the evaluation questions. Subsequently, RPA has identified a number of recommendations to refine the existing monitoring and data collection methods. These are presented below in Table 15. Should the RFG be able to implement these recommendations, fewer evaluation questions will require additional data from stakeholder interviews.

Table 14: Existing monitoring and data collection methods and sources

Activities	Record	Data collected	Timeframe of data collection
Port visits	Visit summaries	Dates of visits Issues raised	After each visit is conducted
Formal meetings Drop-in meetings	Meeting attendance log Drop-in meeting summary	Issues raised Total industry attendance (by date) Total drop-in meeting attendance (by date, and region) Total formal meeting attendance by date, region, industry and regulator attendance)	After each meeting is conducted
All RFG activities	Handling plan	Make-up of local industry Stakeholders Meeting attendance (previous years) Previous engagement Issues raised Planned engagement Project descriptions Opportunities and challenges	Annually / living document
All activities that produce an action	Actions tracker	Location Year Round Date Action description Timeframe Progress Results	Frequently, when an issue and action is raised

Activities	Record	Data collected	Timeframe of data collection
One-off RFG survey (regional)	RFG survey	Stakeholder perspectives on: Locations of fishing used Means of hearing about the RFGs (Non) Attendance of RFG meetings Useful and less useful agenda items at meetings Intent to attend meetings in the future, inc. reasons Preference of meeting format Suggestions for improving the RFGs Suggested agenda items Communications preferences	This was used once and has since been stopped. RFG Delivery Team keen on restarting the survey
Ad hoc calls and emails	No formal record – only where actions produced	Issues raised Ongoing discussion of initiatives/management	Frequently, when calls and emails are received
Social media and video engagement	Records held by MMO, not accessible	Impressions Interactions	Monthly
Physical media	No records	N/A	In-frequently used prior to meetings. Data not collected
Hybrid-hubs	No records	N/A	Ad hoc
MEO direct advertisement	No records	N/A	Data not collected
MMO website	No records	N/A	Data not collected
Quarterly newsletters	No formal record – only where actions produced	Email replies raising issues	Quarterly
Fortnightly bulletins	No formal record – only where actions produced	Email replies raising issues	Weekly

Table 15: Revised data collection recommendations

Data source to be revised	Recommendation	Why
<p>Handling plans, Port/drop-in meeting records, actions tracker, one-off RFG survey (if applicable), attendance logs</p>	<p>Capture more nuanced information on which stakeholders are participating in RFG activities. RFG leads to define a feasible list of stakeholder types to be used when collecting data. This should not result in a vast list of stakeholder types.</p> <p>Basic information is already being collected for activities which could be widened, but the definitions of stakeholder types should be limited to prevent stakeholders from becoming frustrated during data collection.</p> <p>This information should be consistent in all documents</p>	<p>RFG records currently use a homogenous definition of stakeholders as 'industry'. However, evaluation questions frequently focus on whether or not the RFGs are reaching and interacting with the intended audience. To understand this, it would be useful to collect more detailed information on what type of industry stakeholder is interacting. This could include information on vessel size, type of fisher, organisation type, etc.</p>
<p>Port/drop-in meeting records</p>	<p>Establish a common template of data required for visit records, to include information on the number of stakeholders interacted with, and detail on their stakeholder type (see first recommendation)</p>	<p>Documentation does not consistently collect information on who is being interacted with. It may not be possible to consistently collect this information depending on meeting type/attendance etc. Although where possible, the collection of this information (even if incomplete or non-representative) will provide qualitative perspectives on whether the intended audiences are being engaged with</p>
<p>Attendance logs</p>	<p>Attendance logs to collect information on how many regulators attend by type of regulator, or by specific regulatory bodies</p>	<p>Currently records collect the number of regulatory attendees at meetings, although it is not clear which organisations were present. This information is present in the meeting summaries published online, but it is beneficial for evaluation teams for this information to be collated</p>

Data source to be revised	Recommendation	Why
Attendance logs	Attendance logs to include attendance rates to hybrid-hubs, by region, stakeholder type and year, type of support needed/provided	To capture who is using this engagement type, to what extent, and why
Attendance logs	It would be beneficial for the attendance logs to record levels of engagement in each meeting, although 'levels of engagement' are not defined. RFG Delivery Team to discuss what this data may look like and how feasible it would be to collect the information	<p>Feedback suggests that footfall at meetings may not be a reliable indicator of effective meetings. Stakeholders often attend meetings to show solidarity and do not actively participate. Stakeholders may also not speak if another participant had already raised the same issue. Participation is also based on interest which results in stakeholders engaging in some meetings more than others.</p> <p>Capturing this information would allow evaluation teams to understand the extent that stakeholders participate in meetings as opposed to only attending</p>
Actions tracker	The tracker would benefit from additional columns outlining which engagement type the action originated from, as well as which partner organisations were included in the action	This will allow evaluation teams to quantitatively assess whether and which engagement types result in more or fewer actions. This allows evaluation teams to assess the effectiveness of engagement activities. It will also document the number of meaningful interactions between stakeholders and regulators
Actions tracker	The actions tracker may also benefit from records of any achieved outcomes resulting from the action, e.g. action A led to stakeholder B informing policy C. This would require additional resources	Records of action results and notes are currently being kept in the actions tracker. However, wider outcomes (i.e. how the action results are used to produce outcomes) do not appear to be explicitly documented. This information may be difficult to collect, but where possible, the tracker would benefit from an additional column to document this. This would allow evaluation teams to understand whether or not engagement efforts are producing the intended effects (i.e. the processes are fit for purpose)

Data source to be revised	Recommendation	Why
RFG survey (if applicable)	If reissued, the RFG survey could include additional questions related to how satisfied stakeholders are with the RFGs, as well as information on their stakeholder type (to be kept confidential). It is recommended that the questions previously asked in the one-off RFG survey are revised for relevance to the evaluation framework with additional questions from Appendix B.3 added where suitable. However, it is important that the number of questions asked are kept at a minimum to ensure stakeholders are not disinclined to reply	Surveys provide a good means to obtain high level perspectives from regional insights without requiring significant inputs. This engagement type can be used in addition to interviews to collect information from a wider audience. The survey may ask questions from Appendix B.3 that are not feasible to ask by other means of engagement
Physical media	Attendance logs to record whether or not physical media were used to publicise the meeting; including which and how many were used	This should provide data as to whether physical media have an impact in increasing attendance at meetings
Social media	If funding/cross-organisational data sharing is possible, it would be beneficial for the MMO to share social media engagement statistics on RFG posts. This can include the number of reactions, reshares, impressions, number of comments, locations/IP, etc.	To understand how much reach social media is having. It is not possible to know whether the interacting person is legitimately interested in the RFG activities; however, it is useful to understand the breadth of reach and interaction
Lessons log	The RFG Delivery Team and evaluation may benefit from developing a centralised lessons log to capture and share what has worked well and what could be improved	The RFG Delivery Team are not currently centrally collecting and sharing lessons. This occurs on a regional basis and is shared amongst team members when relevant and is occasionally collected in handling plans. However, this suggests there are no central records of how the RFG delivery approach has changed or could change. It would be beneficial to have this to understand whether or not the

Data source to be revised	Recommendation	Why
		processes in place are fit for purpose, and what has been done to rectify any problematic approaches
Ad hoc calls and emails	It is not feasible to formally document ad hoc calls and emails, although any call or email producing an action is logged in the actions tracker. It would be useful for the actions tracker to indicate whether the issue/action was raised by ad hoc calls or emails	To capture meaningful interactions resulting from this engagement type
MEO direct advertisement	It is not feasible to formally document MEO direct advertisement	N/A
MMO website	It is not feasible to formally document the reach of MMO website posts	N/A
Quarterly newsletters	RFG survey (if used) to ask stakeholders on whether or not they read newsletters and if they find the information useful (or what could be improved)	To capture meaningful interactions resulting from this engagement type
Fortnightly bulletins	RFG survey (if used) to ask stakeholders on whether or not they read weekly bulletins and if they find the information useful (or what could be improved)	To capture meaningful interactions resulting from this engagement type

Undertake stakeholder engagement (interviews)

The collection of additional primary data from stakeholders through interviews is outlined under Step 3. Step 4 simply implies the undertaking of interviews with selected stakeholders as per the engagement strategy.

Step 5: Evaluation assessment

[Section 5.2.4](#) provides a brief data analysis section which outlines how the data collected on the RFGs should be analysed. Should the evaluation matrix be updated to contain additional questions or cover impacts/VfM, this methodology should be updated to reflect those changes. If not, the method does not require updating and can be implemented as described.

In short, the data management and analysis methodology involve the collation of data collected from all sources outlined in the evaluation matrix. This may be collated via a spreadsheet with data mapped against each of the indicators and sub-questions. Based on the data analysis and management plan, all collated data should be assessed for quality and suitability in the evaluation. The analysis should review all data relevant to each question and should critically summarise all qualitative feedback, noting variations across regions, year and stakeholder type. Quantitative data should be summarised using descriptive statistics where suitable, using data visualisation to make the data for accessible. Each finding should be cross checked against the relevant elements of the ToC (the ToC has mapped relevant evaluation questions) to assess the wider implications of the finding on the causal pathway. This will reveal whether the findings act as enablers or obstacles, and whether or not the delivery process is working as intended (see delivery plan).

Communications and dissemination strategy

This section outlines a strategy covering the communications of the ongoing evaluation, and dissemination of the results from the evaluation. Naturally the former will occur at the outset and throughout the evaluation period. The latter should be performed throughout the evaluation period and at its culmination.

Communications of the ongoing evaluation

It is noted throughout this report that the RFGs have a challenge in ensuring that stakeholders understand the value the groups provide and ensure stakeholders are actively engaged in the subsequent activities. In part, this may be due to the level of interest or ambivalence of stakeholders toward the policy making process. However, it is for these reasons that it is essential the Delivery Team are able to effectively reach stakeholders and communicate the value of lesson learning (evaluations) to improve the RFGs. Furthermore, these stakeholders provide essential perspectives to answer the evaluation questions, without which the quality of evaluation may suffer.

The RFGs have already implemented a wide array of methods to reach and interact with stakeholders. These are outlined in detail in [Section 6 \(P1.1\)](#). In brief, they

include formal meetings, informal port visits and drop-in meetings, the use of physical media (posters, etc.), publication via the MMO's website, ad hoc calls and emails with stakeholders, direct advertisement from MEOs, social media and videos, quarterly newsletters (digital), and weekly bulletins (digital). The communication of the evaluation can easily be included in all existing engagement methods without requiring significant changes or additional resource requirements.

RPA recommends the following communication approaches:

- Use the existing communication methods to publicise the evaluation's existence to stakeholders at the outset of the evaluation (this will boost industry awareness of the evaluation and build confidence that the MMO is open to improving its services)
- Repeatedly use formal meetings, port visits, drop-in meetings, and ad hoc calls and emails to advertise the evaluation and gauge stakeholder interest in participating (these should spotlight the need for the evaluation team to collect valuable perspectives from industry)
- Use all engagement methods to advertise important dates for the evaluation (e.g. survey periods and how to participate, interview periods and how to participate, and the continued ability to provide feedback during formal and informal meetings)
- When publishing stakeholder engagement (e.g. surveys) RPA recommends:
 - Advertising via all existing engagement channels at least one month before publishing the survey
 - Ensuring the survey is open for a minimum of 12 weeks to give participants ample opportunity to reply
 - Undertake bi-weekly (every two weeks) checks on participation levels to gauge whether interaction is hitting the desired levels
 - If not, reach out to target stakeholders, delivery partners and relevant associations/local groups/representative bodies and ask to advertise the survey to its members
 - To support stakeholders that may struggle in completing a digital survey, RFG regional leads may benefit from carrying copies of the survey (paper or digital (e.g. tablet)) to all in-person meetings or undertake the survey as an in-person interview
- When possible, share any lessons learnt from the evaluation in newsletters and bulletins to keep awareness of the evaluation active and show progress
- Identify and target individuals at the outset of the evaluation (this pulls on the importance of positive one-to-one relationships between the RFG leads and stakeholders. These stakeholders are an important source of data and may be willing to provide data for the evaluation).

Dissemination of results

Following from the previous recommendations, the RFGs are well placed to use all existing engagement channels to disseminate the results of the evaluation. Recommendations on the dissemination of results orient toward the format of information shared rather than the means of communication.

It is commonplace for an evaluation to produce an in-depth report after its conclusion. This report could be uploaded to the MMO/RFG website as the main hub of its distribution. Existing email channels would also be able to publicise this report directly. However, this report is likely to be highly technical and may not be the best format to communicate with the RFG's stakeholders. Alternative outputs may also easily be produced from this in-depth report and shared via different means. For example:

- An executive summary of points, lessons and potential actions can be produced by the evaluator (based on the report) with the intent of sharing with a non-technical audience, and communicated via the same channels as the 'you said, we did' summaries, as well as newsletters and bulletins
- A coordinated campaign of sharing lesson summaries (or case studies) via social media
- Follow up emails to those who participated in the evaluation informing them of the results and any actions to be taken as a result
- If resources are available, it is also worth feeding back in one-to-one discussions of what outcomes the individual's feedback has contributed to (noting stakeholder frustration of not receiving feedback after previous consultation was undertaken).

Resources permitting, dissemination may also benefit from two additional engagement activities: a hybrid presentation of conclusions drawn from the evaluation to industry stakeholders, and a workshop with industry stakeholders to discuss the practicalities of taking lessons forward in the future. To ensure the relevance to industry stakeholders, these presentations should focus on the identified tangible results of the evaluation and activities related to the stakeholders.

A presentation is a cost-effective means of communicating important points with an intended audience (from the perspective of the MMO). It is also possible to record the presentation, which can be disseminated online (e.g. MMO/RFG website, social media, or emails).

Undertaking a workshop has the value of using co-production approaches, i.e. getting industry involved in the development of solutions and taking ownership of RFG-linked activities going forward. Workshops may also benefit from having facilitators and selected industry representatives in place to ensure smooth operation.

Finally, noting that not all stakeholders are able to access digital sources or are willing to attend in-person meetings, it may be beneficial for RFG leads to take printed summaries of important evaluation findings, lessons and actions to port visits and drop-in meetings to share with interested stakeholders.

8. Conclusions

RFGs have been set up to address a lack of effective communication between fishers and representatives of regulatory bodies at local and regional level. Inshore fishers often interact with several entities (Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (IFCAs), Marine Management Organisation (MMO), coastal officers, Centre of Environment Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (Cefas), etc.), to whom they would report concerns, or issues, although the entity thus informed might not have power or resources to address them. Historically there has not been a platform for the inshore fleet and non-sector to engage with government. The RFGs seek to address these problems by actively engaging with the inshore fishing industry by undertaking regular port visits, providing fishers with access to formal meetings/forums, as well as ad hoc telephone and email conversations to provide support and enable issues to be raised at the local/regional levels where they have not previously been effectively captured or communicated. Through these activities the RFGs seek to provide a platform for inshore fishers to better connect with regulatory bodies, collectively ask questions, raise issues, and work together to find solutions, where previously, this has not been possible. This platform should result in refreshed relationships between the inshore fishing industry and regulators, as well as the active participation and inclusion of the inshore fishing industry in the sustainable fisheries management decision making processes.

This evaluation has sought to:

- identify constructive and negative feedback on processes from both the early and current arrangement stages of the development of the RFGs
- assess early and ongoing work with a focus on how it is helping the participatory element of the Joint Fisheries Statement (2022) to be delivered. This includes through commitments beyond the Fisheries Act, and internal commitments set by the RFG team
- develop baseline data.

The below offers conclusions from the evaluation, set against the RFGs' vision, outcomes and impacts.

The vision underpinning the RFGs is as follows:

“The establishment and operation of RFGs will facilitate and enable the inshore fishing industry to become part of the decision-making and consultation process for fisheries management, recognising their shared vested interest in developing and moving towards a world-class sustainable fisheries management system that supports local communities.”

Accordingly, the RFGs' *impacts* include industry contributions to decisions and a collaborative mode of working across regulators and industry within a stable, institutionalised landscape of RFGs. It also includes fishers' support for the policy decisions made in relation to fisheries management.

The RFGs' vision implies developing collaborative relationships with industry, where there has been until recently a lack of interactions and trust. The evaluation has documented how the MMO has started the journey it hopes will turn that vision into reality, by engaging in new ways with inshore fishers. There has been very limited evidence on how the inshore fishing industry has perceived the MMO's efforts in setting up the RFGs and engaging the industry, however anecdotal evidence and the feedback from the RFG Delivery Team have been positive. The MMO is still at the early stages of turning the vision underpinning RFGs into a reality. Achieving co-management of fisheries between regulators and the inshore fishing industry calls for several step-changes that will take time to materialise.

Firstly, relationships – interpersonal and interorganisational – between the MMO and inshore fishers need to be established for the vision of co-decision to come true. There are signs of such relationships growing, thanks to the MMO's engagement efforts. However, there are ports in which no such relationships have been made yet. One of the key outcomes expected from the intervention - lasting engagement from industry – has therefore not been observed everywhere after three years of the RFGs programme. The level of information among fishers – another intended outcome from the intervention – has not been systematically measured. While not all target audiences have been reached equally, the MMO's communication efforts have expanded its reach among different categories of fishers. Building relationships with the inshore fishing industry across the regions and their ports will take time.

Secondly, the vision underpinning the RFGs and the intended impacts refer to the inshore industry's participation in consultation and decision-making. Records show that industry attendance at RFG events has grown, and has varied greatly from place to place. Anecdotal evidence also points to variations in the level and nature of industry's participation at those events. There is only partial evidence on what drives attendance and participation, but it points to the role of capacity and motivation among inshore fishers. Making the vision behind the RFGs reality thus implies that the MMO adapts its engagement to the capacity constraints of the industry, in the manner and the time it approaches its members. The success of informal drop-in sessions and port visits appears to reflect in part how convenient they are to fishers. The RFGs' vision implies also giving inshore fishers a reason to engage with the MMO beyond the occasional urgent request. The evidence suggests that some inshore fishers still have doubts and feel distrust towards the MMO, but there are promising signs of improvement that have been detected by members of the RFG team. It is too soon to observe two key intended outcomes from the intervention: the industry leading on projects raised within RFGs, and the industry assisting with the management of fisheries.

This evaluation has pointed to the ways the MMO has sought to demonstrate to inshore fishers how their input is considered and informs fisheries management decisions. It was not possible to verify whether stakeholders recognise being listened to by regulators (one of the intervention's intended outcomes), although members of

the RFG team have reported hearing stakeholders expressing greater satisfaction with the MMO over time. The evaluation has also noted how decisions on matters inshore fishers raise are not all in the MMO's capacity to make. They may lie with other regulators, or with several regulators having to work in concert. It can also take a long time for decisions to be made after the issues have been raised, and the decision may not go the way inshore fishers wished it to go. Those factors are, largely, beyond the MMO's control, which makes the prospect of achieving one of the intended outcomes of RFGs – the production of appropriate responses to regional/local issues – uncertain. The evaluation's findings thus point to what may be an ambiguity in the vision underpinning the RFGs: an aspiration to co-management of fisheries by industry and regulators, in a landscape of institutions and decision-makers that may not yet be structured for co-management.

These findings relating to the vision, impacts and outcomes of the intervention can be explained further thanks to key observations on the MMO's resources and inputs.

Various methods of communication and engagement have been tried. As mentioned above, the benefits of informal, face-to-face meetings, noted by members of the RFG team and in anecdotal comments from fishers, suggest that they could play a crucial role in building rapport and progressively increasing participation from currently under-represented categories and ports. Existing data was not sufficient to assess whether the activities are effectively engaging all the intended stakeholders, however it was noted that more work can be conducted across all regions to increase the amount and type of stakeholders involved in the activities.

In the absence of systematic evidence, comments collected by the MMO on RFG meetings suggest that they could favour greater interaction between regulators and stakeholders, for instance by giving less space to one-way presentations, and more to discussion. Finally, the evaluation has noted that, while sufficient for the day-to-day work, the level of resourcing for RFG activities has been insufficient when certain issues have been raised by stakeholders that called for a greater level of effort to engage, investigate or resolve, than the RFG team could provide. Freeing up RFG resources from administrative tasks could contribute to addressing such an issue. Besides, some of the challenges raised in the course of RFG work call for the contribution of other teams within the MMO or more broadly: resources and priorities in other teams thus contribute also – either positively or negatively – to the RFGs' effectiveness.

Overall, the RFG Delivery Team's feedback suggested that stakeholders appear to be satisfied with RFG activities (although increased participation in RFG activities would be beneficial). Engagement is less successful where there is a lack of continuous communication, or where quick progress on issues raised is not feasible. Nevertheless, the feedback suggests the RFGs are effectively working toward improving the satisfaction and engagement of stakeholders, and effectively contribute toward the MMO's achievement of Goal 4 (transforming regulation) and 6 (assuring sustainable fisheries).

Implementing the evaluation going forward

Using all the tools developed as part of this study, insights gathered from the baseline analysis, and a workshop with RFG leads, RPA has drafted practical guidance on how to implement the evaluation going forward. This implementation plan contains advice on the evaluation processes (including updates to the tools developed in this study), considerations for resourcing, as well as an outline of existing data collecting processes, and how they could be refined to collect missing data for future evaluations. Finally, the implementation plan provides recommendations on how to best communicate with stakeholders throughout the evaluation, and advice of cost-effective solutions to disseminate its findings.

9. References

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Appendix A. RPA stakeholder engagement (interview) materials

Appendix A outlines the stakeholder engagement materials used by RPA to obtain primary data from stakeholders to support the baseline assessment.

A.1 Participant information sheet

Interview for the Evaluation of the Regional Fisheries Groups (RFGs): Participant information sheet

Risk & Policy Analysts Ltd (RPA) (www.rpaltd.co.uk) has been contracted by the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) to develop a methodology to support future evaluations of the RFGs. Specifically, RPA has been contracted to:

- Establish an evaluation framework which provides an approach to evaluate the effectiveness of RFG's processes, including: evaluation questions to be researched, relevant indicators and data sources identified, a method for indicator analysis, and a plan for evaluations to take place in the future; and
- An initial evaluation of RFG processes and activities undertaken in its first years of operation to act as a baseline for future evaluations to compare against.

Aims of the interview:

The aim of this interview is to gather feedback from RFG regional and delivery team leads on the effectiveness of approaches used to engage with RFG stakeholders. These stakeholders include both those who are internal/external to the RFG's delivery (i.e. delivery partners) as well as inshore fleet members (i.e. as the end beneficiary of the RFGs). Feedback provided in this interview will be used to supplement our baseline analysis and will be integral to understanding the effectiveness of processes, the identification of early lessons learnt, and ability to draw meaningful conclusions from future evaluations.

Personal data processed and the legal basis for this:

- The personal data used to arrange and hold interviews will include your name, occupation, email address and telephone number.
- The lawful basis for processing the data under Article 6 of UK GDPR / Data Protection Act 2018 is (e) Public task, "processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest or in the exercise of official authority vested in the controller".

Interview details:

- The interview will be conducted by phone or Microsoft Teams, as agreed with you.
- At the start of the interview, the interviewer will check whether you have any questions. They will then ask for your consent to proceed. Following the interview, we request that you provide a signed copy of the consent form.
- You will be asked to kindly grant permission for the interviewer to record/and or automatically transcribe the interview for accuracy and to help our note taking. If you are interviewed over Microsoft Teams, you will be free to respond with your camera turned off or on.
- Participation in this study is voluntary. You can withdraw your consent to be interviewed, and for the interview to be recorded and/or transcribed, at any point. You can choose to respond with video or audio recording or transcription turned off, or choose not to answer certain questions.
- You can choose not to take part in this study and are free to withdraw by informing the person who interviewed you or by informing our Project Director/Manager at any time after the interview has been completed (see contact details below).

Use of your data

- Your individual responses to the interview questions will be kept confidential. Your responses will only be used to produce the evaluation report and for no other purposes.
- None of your personal data will be shared outside of the RPA research team.
- Reporting of feedback obtained in the interview will be done so anonymously, however due to the fact that interviews are to be undertaken with specific RFG roles within specific locations it is possible that feedback may be identifiable. RPA will endeavour to make sure that no sensitive information is published, and the MMO will be provided the opportunity to review and redact final reports before being made publicly available.
- RPA may request to record the interview for the purposes of improving notes and further analysis. If undertaken, any recording, transcript, or notes will be stored securely on RPA's computer systems (in line with our Cyber Essentials Plus certification) and managed in accordance with our confidentiality and UK GDPR protocols. The recording and your contact details will be deleted once the study is complete (23rd April 2024). Under UK GDPR provisions you have the right to request access to your information and for it be deleted at any time. Your rights are listed in full on the Information Commissioner's website:

[\(https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-data-protection/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr/individual-rights/\)](https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-data-protection/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr/individual-rights/)

If you have any queries or concerns, please contact RPA at:

- Teresa Fenn, Project Director
Email: teresa.fenn@rpald.co.uk
Telephone: 01603 558531
- Samuel Webb, Project Manager
Email: sam.webb@rpald.co.uk
Telephone: 01603 558524

Thank you for your time and input in our study.

A.2 Participant consent form

RPA Interview for the Evaluation of the Regional Fisheries Groups (RFGs) on behalf of the Marine Management Organisation (MMO)

Consent Form

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this interview, carried out by Risk & Policy Analysts Ltd. Please ensure you have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet before completing this form. If you have any queries or concerns, please contact [RPA email address]. Participation in this study is entirely voluntary.

Please **mark Yes or No** as appropriate to each statement below and sign/date below.

		Yes	No
1	I have received and read a copy of the Participant Information Sheet		
2	I have had the opportunity to ask any questions regarding the study		
3	I understand that my participation is voluntary, and I have the right to withdraw from participation at any time without giving a reason		
4	I know how to withdraw from the study		
5	I agree that my anonymised data will be used to produce research outputs (reports)		
6	I understand that my input and any information used in the research outputs may be identifiable on the grounds of regional involvement and RFG role, but any sensitive information will be redacted by the MMO before being published		
7	I understand that none of my personal data (e.g. name or contact information) will be shared or made public		
8	I agree to the researchers, Risk & Policy Analysts Ltd, holding my personal data (name and contact details) for the purpose of this interview		
9	I understand that I can request at any time for my personal data to be deleted, by contacting Risk & Policy Analysts Ltd		
10	I have given my permission for the interview to be recorded and transcribed to ensure that the notes provide an accurate record of what has been discussed. It has been confirmed that the recording, transcription and notes will be confidential		

If you have read and understood this form, please sign below to provide informed consent to participate in the study entitled: RFG Evaluation (typing your name will be taken as a signature)

Signed (participant)

Date

A.3 RPA Interview guide

RFG Evaluation: interview questions

This document outlines the questions to be discussed during interviews for the evaluation of the Regional Fisheries Groups (RFGs). Interviewees are not required to answer all questions, although we would appreciate as much feedback as possible.

Please note that interviewees are not required to provide written feedback. Although we have provided the option in this document should not all questions be discussed in the interview. If you would like to provide written feedback, please provide responses to the questions below and send a copy of this file to [RPA email address] by the **[deadline]**.

Table 16: Interview questions

Question	Answer
1. Outside of formal meetings, what communication strategies and channels have been <u>more effective</u> in engaging with stakeholders and why? (By stakeholder we refer to external stakeholders (i.e. inshore fleets as end beneficiaries)	
2. Outside of formal meetings, what communication strategies and channels have been <u>less effective</u> in engaging with stakeholders and why? (By stakeholder we refer to both external stakeholders (i.e. inshore fleets as end beneficiaries)	
3. To what extent do you feel communication strategies and channels have effectively targeted and engaged with the intended audience (e.g. at the local/port level)?	
4. Are there any stakeholders who you feel are not being targeted by the RFGs? Or are not being effectively engaged with (e.g. at the local/port level)?	
5. Why do you think they are not effectively targeted/engaged with? What could be done to improve this?	
6. In your opinion, have resources (such as tools, people, budget) been sufficient for engagement activities to be undertaken as planned?	

Question	Answer
7. Are the resources easy to access? Is there anything you would change about the resourcing available for engagement activities?	
8. What lessons have you learnt in how best to reach and engage with stakeholders?	
9. Have you had to change strategy to keep stakeholders engaged? For whom and why did you have to do this?	
10. How are actions resulting from RFG engagement documented and shared with stakeholders? What could be done to improve this?	
11. Are there any elements of the more effective communication methods that should be adopted by wider activities to support the RFGs delivery	
12. Do you believe RFG engagement activities have changed stakeholder understandings of regulators' roles/functions? To what extent has this occurred?	
13. To what extent do you believe issues/insights are brought to the attention of relevant authorities as a result of RFG engagement?	
14. To what extent do you think there is effective cross-working/collaboration between the RFGs and wider delivery partners? What works well and what could be improved?	
15. In your opinion, to what extent do stakeholders feel discussions on the issues/challenges raised are transparent and accessible?	
16. To what extent do stakeholders feel their issues/challenges are taken forward as a result of their involvement in RFG activities? What factors contribute to this feeling?	
17. In your opinion are resources (tools, people, budgets) sufficient to create follow-up actions on the issues/challenges raised by stakeholders?	

Question	Answer
18. In general, are stakeholders satisfied with the actions put in place as a result of their involvement in the RFGs?	
19. To what extent have programme feedback loops and timeframes affected stakeholder perceptions on the effectiveness of the RFG activities? (i.e. have feedback loops slowed actions from being undertaken)	
20. To what extent do formal meetings influence the number of interactions between inshore industry, regulators, scientists, and policy makers?	
21. In your opinion are formal engagement activities (i.e. meetings) reaching the intended audience? Who are the intended audience?	
22. Are there any marine and fishery sector stakeholders you feel are underrepresented in formal meetings? In your opinion, why are they underrepresented and what could be done to improve this?	
23. Please could you provide us a brief description of the marine and fisheries sector in your region? (i.e. What types of stakeholders exist, what issues are faced etc.?)	
24. Are stakeholders satisfied with the RFG meetings (process, frequency, participation, time of access, records)?	
25. To what extent do stakeholders approve of drop-in/port visits (process, frequency, participation, access, records)?	
26. To what extent have current engagement arrangements improved stakeholders' trust in the MMO?	
27. To what extent is there a greater willingness for stakeholders to collaborate with the MMO as opposed to solely voicing grievances?	
28. To what extent do you think the RFG has result in a greater level of	

Question	Answer
acceptance for policy options amongst stakeholders?	
Do you have any other comments you would like to make about the RFGs?	

Appendix B. MMO stakeholder engagement materials (supporting future evaluations)

Table 18 outlines a sample survey script to support the future evaluation of the RFG programme. This survey script has been aligned with the evaluation matrix to ensure data gathering is aligned with the baseline assessment undertaken above. It has also been mapped against stakeholder mapping to ensure the right stakeholders are asked relevant questions. Future evaluations should make sure comparable data is obtained as those identified in the baseline assessment. This survey script includes questions that cover all identified indicators, albeit not all questions may be necessary to ask stakeholders where alternative means of data gathering are available. The use of the sample survey script may be accompanied by the use of the participant information sheet (see [Appendix B.1](#)) and participant consent form (see [Appendix B.2](#)).

Please note that not all evaluation questions are suitable to be included in the survey script as some evaluations are analytical by nature.

B.1 Participant information sheet (template)

[Insert: about the organisation and study]

Aims of the interview:

The aim of this interview is to gather feedback from [stakeholder type] on the effectiveness of approaches used to engage with RFG stakeholders. These stakeholders include both those who are internal/external to the RFG's delivery (i.e. delivery partners) as well as inshore fleet members (i.e. as the end beneficiary of the RFGs). Feedback provided in this interview will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of RFG processes, the identification and implementation of lessons learnt, and underpin the ability to contrast meaningful progress from in evaluations.

Personal data processed and the legal basis for this:

- The personal data used to arrange and hold interviews will include your name, occupation, email address and telephone number.
- The lawful basis for processing the data under Article 6 of UK GDPR / Data Protection Act 2018 is (e) Public task, "processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest or in the exercise of official authority vested in the controller".

Interview details:

- The interview will be conducted by phone or Microsoft Teams, as agreed with you.
- At the start of the interview, the interviewer will check whether you have any questions. They will then ask for your consent to proceed. Following the interview, we request that you provide a signed copy of the consent form.
- You will be asked to kindly grant permission for the interviewer to record/and or automatically transcribe the interview for accuracy and to help our note taking. If you are interviewed over Microsoft Teams, you will be free to respond with your camera turned off or on.
- Participation in this study is voluntary. You can withdraw your consent to be interviewed, and for the interview to be recorded and/or transcribed, at any point. You can choose to respond with video or audio recording or transcription turned off, or choose not to answer certain questions.
- You can choose not to take part in this study and are free to withdraw by informing the person who interviewed you or by informing our Project Director/Manager at any time after the interview has been completed (see contact details below).

Use of your data

- Your individual responses to the interview questions will be kept confidential. Your responses will only be used to produce the evaluation report and for no other purposes.
- None of your personal data will be shared outside of the research team.
- Reporting of feedback obtained in the interview will be done so anonymously, however due to the fact that interviews are to be undertaken with specific RFG roles within specific locations it is possible that feedback may be identifiable. The study team will endeavour to make sure that no sensitive information is published.
- The study team may request to record the interview for the purposes of improving notes and further analysis. If undertaken, any recording, transcript, or notes will be stored securely on the MMO's computer systems and managed in accordance with confidentiality and UK GDPR protocols. The recording and your contact details will be deleted once the study is complete (DATE). Under UK GDPR provisions you have the right to request access to your information and for it be deleted at any time. Your rights are listed in full on the Information Commissioner's website:

[\(https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-data-protection/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr/individual-rights/\)](https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-data-protection/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr/individual-rights/)

If you have any queries or concerns, please contact RPA at:

- [NAME, ROLE]
Email:
Telephone:

- [NAME, ROLE]
Email:
Telephone:

Thank you for your time and input into the evaluation process.

B.2 Participant consent form (template)

Interview for the Evaluation of the Regional Fisheries Groups (RFGs)

Consent Form

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this interview, carried out by [ORGANISATION]. Please ensure you have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet before completing this form. If you have any queries or concerns, please contact [EMAIL ADDRESS]. Participation in this study is entirely voluntary.

Please **mark Yes or No** as appropriate to each statement below and sign/date below.

		Yes	No
1	I have received and read a copy of the Participant Information Sheet		
2	I have had the opportunity to ask any questions regarding the study		
3	I understand that my participation is voluntary, and I have the right to withdraw from participation at any time without giving a reason		
4	I know how to withdraw from the study		
5	I agree that my anonymised data will be used to produce research outputs (reports)		
6	I understand that my input and any information used in the research outputs may be identifiable on the grounds of regional involvement in the RFG, but any sensitive information will be kept confidential.		
7	I understand that none of my personal data (e.g. name or contact information) will be shared or made public		
8	I agree to the researchers, [ORGANISATION], holding my personal data (name and contact details) for the purpose of this interview		
9	I understand that I can request at any time for my personal data to be deleted, by contacting [ORGANISATION]		
10	I have given my permission for the interview to be recorded and transcribed to ensure that the notes provide an accurate record of what has been discussed. It has been confirmed that the recording, transcription and notes will be confidential		

If you have read and understood this form, please sign below to provide informed consent to participate in the study entitled: RFG Evaluation (typing your name will be taken as a signature)

Signed (participant)

Date

B.3 Supporting survey script

Table 18 overleaf provides a sample set of interview questions that would be suitable for gathering data from stakeholders to answer the evaluation questions. This set of questions has been based on the set developed and used by RPA in Annex A, with additional questions being added to ensure ample coverage. Not all evaluation questions are covered in this script as some are analytical by nature and do not warrant interviews.

The questions have been mapped against the stakeholder mapping outlined in Section 5.3.2. This is to illustrate which stakeholders may possess knowledge relevant to each question, and by extent, refine the approach to primary data collection for future evaluations. The mapping used in this section (relevant stakeholders' column) differs from the stakeholder mapping in that RPA has grouped stakeholders according to their type of knowledge/experience of the RFGs. The grouping is as in Table 17 below:

Table 17: Stakeholder grouping

Stakeholder type	Stakeholder grouping
Defra Policy Leads MMO RFG Regional Leads MMO RFG Management	RFG Delivery Team
Inshore fleet Producer organisations Other beneficiaries	RFG end-users
Marine and Coastguard Agency Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities Cefas Seafish	RFG supporting organisations
MMO/MMO Fisheries Management Team: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Communications - Statistics - Coastal officers - Grants - Marine licencing - Quota and non-quota teams - Quota management - Legal - Intelligence - Marine conservation 	MMO - Fishery Management Team

Table 18: Survey script

Relevant evaluation question	Question	Relevant stakeholder groups
<p>P1.1 Which channels and strategies have been used to communicate with stakeholders (e.g. government website, social media, word of mouth, printed media)?</p>	<p>Which channels and strategies have been used to communicate with stakeholders (e.g. government website, social media, word of mouth, printed media)?</p>	<p>RFG Delivery Team MMO - Fishery Management Team</p>
	<p>For each type of channels/strategies used, how many times has this been used during the evaluation period?</p>	<p>RFG Delivery Team MMO - Fishery Management Team</p>
	<p>To what extent has RFG social media posts reached/had impressions on the intended audience?</p>	<p>MMO - Fishery Management Team</p>
	<p>To what extent have the intended audience interacted with social media posts?</p>	<p>RFG Delivery Team MMO - Fishery Management Team</p>
<p>P1.3 What strategies and communication channels have been more effective in engaging with stakeholders and why?</p>	<p>Outside of formal meetings, what communication strategies and channels have been more effective in engaging with stakeholders and why? (By stakeholder we refer to external stakeholders)</p>	<p>RFG Delivery Team RFG end-users RFG supporting organisations MMO - Fishery Management Team</p>
	<p>How many stakeholders have been engaged through each channels/strategies? What type of stakeholder are they? (i.e. inshore fleets as end beneficiaries)</p>	<p>RFG Delivery Team MMO - Fishery Management Team</p>
<p>P1.4 What strategies and communication channels have been less effective and why?</p>	<p>Outside of formal meetings, what communication</p>	<p>RFG Delivery Team RFG end-users</p>

Relevant evaluation question	Question	Relevant stakeholder groups
	strategies and channels have been less effective in engaging with stakeholders and why? (By stakeholder we refer to both external stakeholders (i.e. inshore fleets as end beneficiaries)	RFG supporting organisations MMO - Fishery Management Team
P1.6 To what extent have communication channels and strategies targeted and engaged with the intended audience?	To what extent do you feel communication strategies and channels have effectively targeted and engaged with the intended audience (e.g. at the local/port level)?	RFG Delivery Team
	Who are the target audience in your region? Has this changed in during the evaluation period? If so, how and why?	RFG Delivery Team
P1.8 Are there any gaps in the target audience?	Are there any stakeholders who you feel are not being targeted by the RFGs? Or are not being effectively engaged with (e.g. at the local/port level)?	RFG Delivery Team RFG end-users RFG supporting organisations
	Why do you think they are not effectively targeted/engaged with? What could be done to improve this?	
P1.10 Have resources (tools, people, budget) been sufficient for engagement activities to be undertaken as intended? - allocated budget and MMO perceptions	In your opinion, have resources (such as tools, people, budget) been sufficient for engagement activities to be undertaken as planned?	RFG Delivery Team

Relevant evaluation question	Question	Relevant stakeholder groups
	What could make the use of resources be made more efficient?	
	Are the resources easy to access? Is there anything you would change about the resourcing available for engagement activities?	
P1.11 What lessons have been learnt from engaging with stakeholders so far? For whom and why? - Indications of change of strategy/channel	What lessons have you learnt in how best to reach and engage with stakeholders?	RFG Delivery Team RFG supporting organisations
	Have you had to change strategy to keep stakeholders engaged? For whom and why did you have to do this?	
P1.12 How systematically/transparently have instances of informal engagement been recorded?	How systematically have instances of informal engagement been recorded? To what extent are stakeholders able to access this information (transparency)?	RFG Delivery Team
P1.13 How systematically/transparently have any follow-up actions to engagement been recorded?	How are actions resulting from RFG engagement documented and shared with stakeholders? What could be done to improve this?	RFG Delivery Team
P1.14 What features of the more effective strategies and channels could advance the achievement of outcomes?	Are there any elements of the more effective communication methods that should be adopted by wider activities to support the RFGs delivery	RFG Delivery Team MMO - Fishery Management Team
P2.1 How have engagement activities influenced stakeholders' understanding of	Do you believe RFG engagement activities have changed	RFG Delivery Team RFG supporting organisations

Relevant evaluation question	Question	Relevant stakeholder groups
regulators' roles / functions? - Stakeholder perceptions on changed understanding - Record of MMO communication towards fishers	stakeholder understandings of regulators' roles/functions? To what extent has this occurred?	
P2.2 To what extent are insights/issues brought to the relevant authority as a result of RFG engagement? - Records of industry assistance with management of fisheries in English waters - MMO perceptions on cross-organisational working	To what extent do you believe issues/insights are brought to the attention of relevant authorities as a result of RFG engagement?	RFG Delivery Team RFG supporting organisations
	To what extent do you think there is effective cross-working/collaboration between the RFGs and wider delivery partners? What works well and what could be improved?	
P2.3 To what extent do stakeholders feel their issues/challenges are taken forward as a result of their involvement in RFG activities? What factors contribute to this feeling? - Records of industry contribution to discussions on decisions - Stakeholder perceptions on effectiveness	In your opinion, to what extent do stakeholders feel discussions on the issues/challenges raised are transparent and accessible?	RFG Delivery Team RFG supporting organisations
	To what extent do stakeholders feel their issues/challenges are taken forward as a result of their involvement in RFG activities? What factors contribute to this feeling?	
P2.4 How did engagement activities enable flagship projects to be identified and started?	How are flagship projects selected? Are there any criteria to be met? Is there anything that could be improved in the selection process?	RFG Delivery Team
P2.5 Have resources (tools, people, budget) been sufficient to enable the outcomes of engagement activities to be	In your opinion are resources (tools, people, budgets) sufficient to create	RFG Delivery Team

Relevant evaluation question	Question	Relevant stakeholder groups
followed up as intended? - Allocated budget	follow-up actions on the issues/challenges raised by stakeholders?	
	What could make the use of resources be made more efficient?	
P2.6 How have programme feedback loops and timeframes for actions occurred? To what extent has this affected stakeholder perceptions on the effectiveness of RFG activities?	To what extent have programme feedback loops and timeframes affected stakeholder perceptions on the effectiveness of the RFG activities? (i.e. have feedback loops slowed actions from being undertaken)	RFG Delivery Team RFG end-users
P2.7 How do formal meetings influence the number of interactions between inshore industry, regulators, scientist, policy makers?	To what extent do formal meetings influence the number of interactions between inshore industry, regulators, scientists, and policy makers	RFG Delivery Team RFG supporting organisations
P3.1 Are formal engagement activities reaching the people they were intended to? - Attendance records (change in attendance over time)	In your opinion are formal engagement activities (i.e. meetings) reaching the intended audience? Who are the intended audience? How many stakeholders attend these meetings (by stakeholder type)?	RFG Delivery Team RFG end-users
		RFG Delivery Team
P3.2 Which marine sectors have not been represented in formal meetings at each RFG and why? - Attendance commentary	Are there any marine and fishery sector stakeholders you feel are underrepresented in formal meetings? In your opinion, why are they underrepresented and what could be done to improve this?	RFG Delivery Team RFG supporting organisations
P3.4 Do specific sectors, stakeholders, or ports have better representation at formal	Please could you provide us a brief description of the	RFG Delivery Team RFG end-users

Relevant evaluation question	Question	Relevant stakeholder groups
meetings? - Local marine sectors' make-up	marine and fisheries sector in your region? (I.e. What types of stakeholders exist, what issues are faced etc.?)	
P3.5 Have the different sectors / groups represented been able to contribute equally? How can this be improved?	To what extent have different sectors/groups been able to contribute equally in formal meetings? How can this be improved?	RFG Delivery Team RFG end-users RFG supporting organisations
P3.6 Are the selected representatives considered to reflect wider views of the sector/stakeholder type/region?	To what extent are the selected representatives considered to reflect wider views of the sector/stakeholder type/region?	RFG Delivery Team RFG end-users
	How effective is the representatives model? What could be changed to make the model more effective (if needed)?	RFG Delivery Team RFG end-users
P3.7 What could explain higher/lower inclusivity observed at RFG meetings?	What could explain higher/lower inclusivity observed at RFG meetings?	RFG Delivery Team RFG end-users
P3.8 How feasible would it be for RFGs to be more inclusive of the different marine sectors?	How feasible would it be for RFGs to be more inclusive of the different marine sectors?	RFG Delivery Team RFG end-users
P4.1 Are stakeholders satisfied with the RFG meetings (process, frequency, participation, time of access, records)? - Commentary on relevant stakeholders' comments/feedback	Are stakeholders satisfied with the RFG meetings (process, frequency, participation, time of access, records)?	RFG Delivery Team RFG end-users RFG supporting organisations
P4.2 To what extent do stakeholders approve of drop-in/port visits (process,	To what extent do stakeholders approve of drop-in/port visits	RFG Delivery Team RFG end-users

Relevant evaluation question	Question	Relevant stakeholder groups
frequency, participation, access, records)? - Commentary on relevant stakeholders' comments/feedback	(process, frequency, participation, access, records)?	
P4.3 To what extent can fishers formally/directly raise regional/local concerns regarding fishing-related issues?	To what extent are fishers formally/directly raising regional/local concerns regarding fishing-related issues?	RFG Delivery Team RFG supporting organisations
P5.2 What inputs have stakeholders made to RFGs? What has been done with their inputs (feedback loop)?	What inputs have stakeholders made to RFGs? What has been done with their inputs (feedback loop)?	RFG Delivery Team RFG end-users RFG supporting organisations
	In general, are stakeholders satisfied with the actions put in place as a result of their involvement in the RFGs?	RFG Delivery Team RFG end-users
P5.3 To what extent have current engagement arrangements improved stakeholders' trust in the MMO?	To what extent have current engagement arrangements improved stakeholders' trust in the MMO?	RFG Delivery Team RFG end-users
	To what extent is there a greater willingness for stakeholders to collaborate with the MMO as opposed to solely voicing grievances?	
	To what extent do you think the RFG has result in a greater level of acceptance for policy options amongst stakeholders?	

