RMCG

Appendix 4

Regional Land Partnerships Evaluation Plan: Outcome 4

Outcome 4: By 2023, the implementation of priority actions is leading to an improvement in the condition of EPBC Act listed Threatened Ecological Communities

June 2018

1 Introduction

The purpose of this evaluation plan is to provide advice on how to prepare to evaluate the Regional Land Partnerships (RLP) program. This plan is tailored specifically to Outcome 4.

The evaluation plan is presented in three main components:

- Program logic
- Program and outcome specific Key Evaluation Questions
- Monitoring plan.

2 Evaluation plan

2.1 PROGRAM LOGIC

The Outcome 4 program logic forms the basis of this evaluation plan (see Figure 2-1). The purpose of program logic is to describe the anticipated cause-and-effect relationships between project activities, outputs and outcomes or its 'theory of change'. Program logic also documents the **assumptions** that are critical to the transition from one level of the logic to the next and **indicators** that can be used to measure progress against each level of the logic over time. These two important elements of a logic are explained further below.

ASSUMPTIONS

Between each level of the logic, assumptions are specified. Assumptions help explain how one level of the logic links to the next. There are generally two types of assumptions:

i. Knowledge-based assumptions that draw on research, literature or previous experience to describe expected changes (e.g. completing management actions in line with best-practice as described in a Threat Abatement Plan will result in a reduction of a given threat).
ii. Assumptions that relate to conditions or circumstances that are beyond the control or influence of the project or program (e.g. rainfall is within long-term seasonal averages).

Identifying these assumptions ensures the logic provides a more complete picture of how the actions in a project are expected to contribute to outcomes.

INDICATORS

Indicators have been identified at each level of the program logic. They provide the evidence-base for project teams and the program as a whole, to demonstrate progress. Indicators can include both quantitative and qualitative measures. The timing and frequency of measuring the indicators is specific to each indicator (see monitoring plan). Some indicators might only be measured at the beginning and end of the project, while others are measured annually, or at multiple points in the delivery of the project (e.g. beginning, mid-point and end). It is important that no single indicator is considered in isolation of others. They should be recorded and reported together in order to give a clear illustration of the extent of project progress.

KEY FEATURES OF OUTCOME 4

Specific characteristics of the Outcome 4 program logic include:

- At the 'Short Term Outcome level, measures and indicators aim to demonstrate that management actions have resulted in positive biophysical changes within the project area. If there is a reasonable expectation that a bio-physical change can be detected within the life of the project, that change should be measured directly.

- At the 'Medium Term Outcome level, measures and indicators aim to demonstrate that those biophysical changes (measured within the life of the project) have contributed to the condition of Threatened Ecological Communities (TECs) being maintain or improved. There are two tiers of measures/indicators at this level:
  - The Service Provider is expected to report on project-level indicators of TEC condition, within the boundaries of their projects – and might expect to see positive changes in one or more of these indicators.
  - The RLP Program lead is expected to report on program-level indicators of the condition of TECs. This would include: the number (or proportion) of Outcome 4 projects demonstrating positive indicators; and the area (or ideally the proportion of the TECs distribution) covered by RLP projects. Taken together, these two measures will provide an indication of the overall impact of the RLP program on the condition of TECs within the areas it is investing resources.
- The difference between the measures at the 'Medium Term Outcome level and the 'Long-Term Outcome' level is that the 'Long-term' measures ask what contribution the RLP program made to the condition of TECs overall. This requires the RLP program to look beyond the direct investment and measure (via indicators) TEC condition more widely (e.g. in sites outside the RLP program, or through wider systematic monitoring). Knowing the overall condition of a TEC enables contribution analysis i.e. what difference has the RLP investment made to the condition of these assets through its investment.

2.2 KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS

Key Evaluation Questions (KEQs) represent high-level lines of enquiry to guide an evaluation. KEQs have been prepared for the whole RLP program, across five evaluation themes (effectiveness, appropriateness, impact, efficiency and legacy). Definitions for each of these evaluation criteria are provided in Table 2-1.

Table 2-1: RLP program evaluation themes

EVALUATION THEMES	DEFINITION
Effectiveness	A measure of the extent to which a program, project or initiative has attained, or is expected to attain, its relevant objectives efficiently and in a sustainable way
Appropriateness	A determination made through comparing the program with the needs of the intended beneficiaries using any of the techniques of needs analysis. alternatively, the program could be evaluated in terms of its compliance with process
Impact	A change in the condition of biophysical, social, economic and/or institutional assets. an impact may be positive or negative, primary or secondary, short term or long term, direct or indirect, and/or intended or unintended. Impacts are sometimes realised after the formal project is completed
Efficiency	The notion of getting the highest value out of program or project resources
Legacy	The enduring consequences of past investments, policies or actions that can be captured and/or bequeathed

KEQS FOR EACH OUTCOME

To effectively guide monitoring and evaluation approaches for each of the six RLP outcomes, each KEQ has also been broken down into a series of sub-questions relevant to that outcome. Information and data can be collected specific to the KEQs for each outcome using various monitoring and evaluation methods. The RLP program and Outcome 4-specific Key Evaluation Questions are outlined in Table 2-2.

The process of developing KEQs at both the program and outcome level was also critical in informing **indicators** (in addition to those identified during the program logic development) that are be included in the monitoring plan.

2.3 MONITORING PLAN

Monitoring is used to describe an ongoing process of routine data collection. Generating performance data at regular intervals throughout the life of a program is critical for adaptive management and continuous improvement. Monitoring also provides valuable data for evaluation, which can act as a portfolio of evidence to demonstrate a program's contribution to planned outcomes.

A monitoring plan for Outcome 4 has been prepared as a component of the evaluation plan. It is based on the **indicators** and **assumptions** identified during the program logic and KEQ development processes. The monitoring plan identifies the data that should be collected for each **indicator,** by whom and how often.

The aim of the monitoring plan is to provide clear guidance (timing, method) and accountability for monitoring at both the project and program scale over time. The Outcome 4 monitoring plan is provided in Table 2-3.

Program Logic – RLP Outcome 4: Threatened Ecological Communities

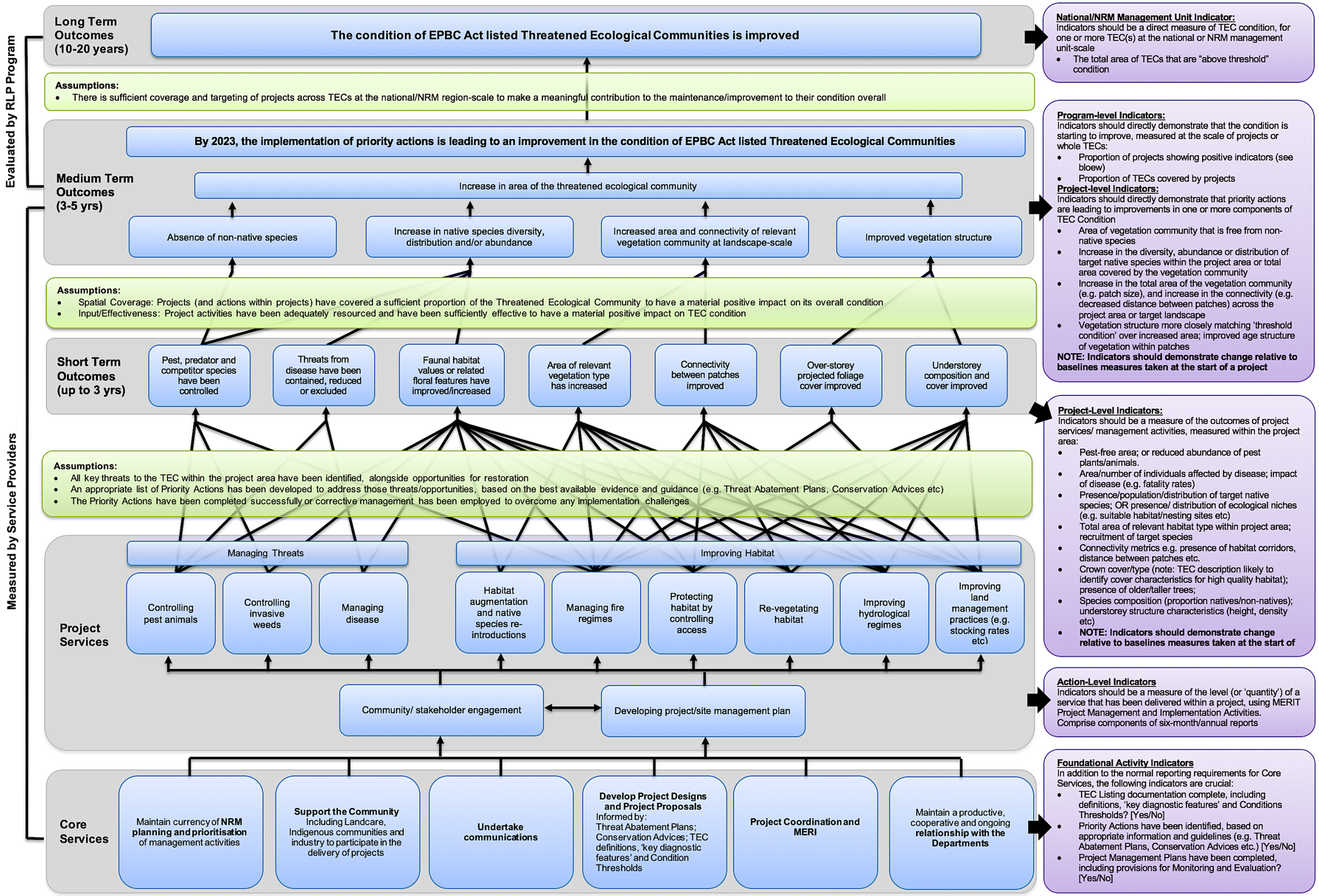

Figure 2-1: Outcome 4 Program Logic

Table 2-2: Outcome 4 Key Evaluation Questions

EVALUATION THEMES	PROGRAM KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS	OUTCOME SPECIFIC KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS	RELEVANT LEVEL OF THE PROGRAM LOGIC
Effectiveness	▪ To what extent have the planned outcomes and outputs been achieved? ▪ Are current delivery approaches and funding mechanisms the best way to maximise impact or are there other strategies that might be more effective? (addressed in appropriateness) ▪ To what extent is the programme attaining, or expected to attain, its objectives and outcomes efficiently and in a way that is sustainable? (addressed in efficiency)	To what extent have the **Core Services** (and any associated targets) been achieved? ▪ Maintain currency of NRM planning and prioritisation of management activities ▪ Support the Community including Landcare, Indigenous communities, industry and farmer/grower groups to participate in the delivery of projects ▪ Undertake communications ▪ Develop Project Designs and Project Proposals ▪ Project coordination and MERI ▪ Maintain a productive, cooperative and ongoing relationship with the Departments	Core Services
		To what extent have the **Project Services** (and any associated targets) been achieved? ▪ Foundational activities: Community/stakeholder engagement; Developing project/site management plan ▪ Managing threats: e.g. Controlling pest animals; controlling invasive weeds; managing disease ▪ Improving habitat: habitat augmentation; managing fire regimes; protecting habitat by controlling access; re-vegetating habitat; improving hydrological regimes; improving land management practices	Project Services
		To what extent have the **Short Term Outcomes** (and any associated targets) been achieved? ▪ Pest, predator and competitor species have been controlled ▪ Threats from disease have been contained, reduced or excluded ▪ Faunal habitat values or related floral features have improved/increased ▪ Area of relevant vegetation type has increased ▪ Connectivity between patches has improved ▪ Over-storey project foliage cover has improved ▪ Undertsorey composition and cover has improved	Short Term Outcomes
Appropriateness	▪ To what extent is the programme aligned with the needs of the intended beneficiaries? ▪ To what extent is the programme compliant with recognised best practice processes in the field—e.g. the type, level and context of investment and associated activities?	As a delivery approach, were the foundational activities and management actions to manage threats and improve habitat an appropriate way to: ▪ Align project delivery with community needs and expectations ▪ Tailor the project to the environmental conditions of each project site, and ▪ Achieve the Medium Term Outcomes?	Short Term Outcomes Medium Term Outcomes
		To what extent were the on-ground management actions adopted informed by/consistent with: ▪ Species Recovery Plans ▪ Threat Abatement Plans ▪ Conservation Advices ▪ TEC definitions, key diagnostic features and ‘condition thresholds’	Short Term Outcomes Medium Term Outcomes
		Are there any other methods that should/could have been used?	Short Term Outcomes Medium Term Outcomes
Impact	▪ In what ways and to what extent has the programme contributed to changing asset condition, management practices, and / or effectiveness of delivery? ▪ What, if any, unanticipated positive or negative changes or other outcomes have resulted? ▪ To what extent were the changes directly or indirectly produced by the programme interventions?	To what extent have the core and project services and short and medium-term outcomes contributed to improvements in the condition of Threatened Ecological Communities?	Medium Term Outcomes
		To what extent has the End of Project outcome contributed to the condition of Threatened Ecological Communities being improved?	Medium Term Outcomes Long Term Outcomes
		What, if any, unanticipated positive or negative changes or other outcomes have resulted?	Medium Term Outcomes
		To what extent were the changes directly or indirectly produced by the programme interventions?	Medium Term Outcomes

Efficiency	▪ To what extent has the programme attained the highest value out of available resources? ▪ How could resources be used more productively and efficiently? ▪ What could be done differently to improve implementation, and thereby maximise impact, at an acceptable and sustainable cost?	To what extent did Outcome 2 projects demonstrate 'value for money' through the: ▪ Implementation of a site selection process which considered the costs and anticipated benefits of works at potential sites ▪ Establishment of partnerships for delivering the project (pooling resources, using local knowledge and experience) ▪ Coordination of the delivery of activities/works (e.g. with other projects, in geographic locations) ▪ Implementation of procurement processes to ensure both quality and quantity from investment, and ▪ Leveraging investment from other sources?	Short Term Outcomes Medium Term Outcomes
		How could have resources been used more productively and efficiently?	Short Term Outcomes Medium Term Outcomes
		What could be done differently to improve implementation, and thereby maximise impact, at an acceptable and sustainable cost?	Short Term Outcomes Medium Term Outcomes
Legacy	▪ Will the programme's impacts continue over time and after the programme ceases? ▪ How should the legacy be managed and by whom?	What evidence is there that the work completed through Outcome 4 will continue to be maintained?	Medium Term Outcomes
		How likely is it that the outcomes achieved through Outcome 4 will be sustained?	Medium Term Outcomes

Table 2-3: Outcome 4 Monitoring Plan

Level	Outcome/Activity	Indicators	Indicative frequency of reporting	Who is responsible?
RLP Program Outcomes				
Long-term Program Outcomes (10-20 yrs)	The condition of EPBC Act listed Threatened Ecological Communities is improved	**National/NRM Management Unit Indicator:** Indicators should be a direct measure of TEC condition, for one or more TEC(s) at the national or NRM management unit-scale ▪ The total area of TECs that are "above threshold" condition	End of funding cycle and at 10-20 years	DoEE lead for this outcome
Medium Term Program Outcomes (3-5 yrs)	By 2023, the implementation of priority actions is leading to an improvement in the condition of EPBC Act listed Threatened Ecological Communities	**Program-level Indicators:** Indicators should directly demonstrate that the condition is starting to improve, measured at the scale of projects or whole TECs: ▪ Proportion of projects showing positive indicators ▪ Proportion of TECs covered by projects	End of funding cycle	DoEE lead for this outcome
Project Achievements and Progress				
Medium Term Outcomes (3-5 yrs) **Reported in: Outcome Report 2**	Indicators should directly demonstrate that priority actions are leading to improvements in one or more components of TEC Condition:			
	Increase in area of the TEC	▪ Area of the vegetation community that meets the definition of the TEC	At 3-5 years	Service Provider
	Absence of non-native species	▪ Area of vegetation community that is free from non-native species	At 3-5 years	Service Provider
	Increase in native species diversity, distribution and/or abundance	▪ Diversity, abundance or distribution of target native species within the project area or total area covered by the vegetation community	At 3-5 years	Service Provider
	Increased area and connectivity of relevant vegetation community at landscape-scale	▪ Total area of the vegetation community (e.g. patch size), and increase in the connectivity (e.g. decreased distance between patches) across the project area or target landscape	At 3-5 years	Service Provider
	Improved vegetation structure	▪ Vegetation structure more closely matching 'threshold condition' over increased area; improved age structure of vegetation within patches	At 3-5 years	Service Provider
Short Term Outcomes (1-3 yrs) **Reported in: Outcome Report 1**	Pest, predator and competitor species have been controlled	All short-term indicators should be measured within the project area: ▪ Pest-free area; ▪ Reduced abundance of pest plants/animals. Note: Area measures should be reported as a proportion of the total habitat/site/project area	At 2 – 3 years	Service Provider
	Threats from disease have been contained, reduced or excluded	▪ Decrease in area/number of individuals affected by disease; ▪ Change in impact of disease (e.g. fatality rates) Note: Area measures should be reported as a proportion of the total habitat/site/project area	At 2 – 3 years	Service Provider
	Faunal habitat values or related floral features have improved/increased	▪ Change in presence/population/distribution of target native species; OR ▪ Change in presence/ distribution of ecological niches (e.g. suitable habitat/nesting sites etc)	At 2 – 3 years	Service Provider
	Area of relevant vegetation type has increased	▪ Change in total area of relevant habitat type within project area; ▪ Change in recruitment of target species Note: Area measures should be reported as a proportion of the total habitat/site/project area	At 2 – 3 years	Service Provider
	Connectivity between patches improved	▪ Change in connectivity metrics e.g. presence of habitat corridors, distance between patches etc.	At 2 – 3 years	Service Provider
	Over-storey projected foliage cover improved	▪ Change in crown cover/type (note: TEC description likely to identify cover characteristics for high quality habitat); ▪ Change in projected presence of older/taller trees	At 2 – 3 years	Service Provider
	Understorey composition and cover improved	▪ Change in species composition (proportion natives/non-natives); ▪ Change in understorey structure characteristics (height, density etc)	At 2 – 3 years	Service Provider
MERIT services – as per contracts				
Services – project and core	Managing Threats: Controlling pest animals	▪ Treatment objective/s – eradication, control etc. ▪ Total treatment area (Ha) ▪ Type of treatment – baiting, exclusion fencing etc. ▪ Number of individuals OR colonies killed / removed	In line with Outputs Reporting requirements	Service Provider

Level	Outcome/Activity	Indicators	Indicative frequency of reporting	Who is responsible?
	Managing Threats: Controlling invasive weeds	▪ Treatment objective/s – eradication, control etc. ▪ Total treatment area (Ha) ▪ Type of treatment	In line with Outputs Reporting requirements	Service Provider
	Managing Threats: Managing disease	▪ Treatment objective/s e.g. eradication, suppression, containment ▪ Area where disease threat is reduced	In line with Outputs Reporting requirements	Service Provider
	Improving habitat: Habitat augmentation (e.g. artificial nesting habitat)	▪ Type(s) and purpose of augmentation ▪ Number of structures or installations	In line with Outputs Reporting requirements	Service Provider
	Improving habitat: Managing fire regimes	▪ Treatment objective/s e.g. less frequent, cooler burns ▪ Area where fire regime has been changed	In line with Outputs Reporting requirements	Service Provider
	Improving habitat: Protecting habitat by controlling access	▪ Type of structure(s) installed ▪ Number of structures installed ▪ Access control method used (aim of structure) ▪ Area protected by access control structure	In line with Outputs Reporting requirements	Service Provider
	Improving habitat: Re-vegetating habitat	▪ Treatment objective/s e.g. increased understorey, increase in food sources ▪ Area of revegetation to improve habitat	In line with Outputs Reporting requirements	Service Provider
	Improving site condition: Improving hydrological regimes	**Water management** ▪ Hydrological regime changed from and to ▪ structures in place to manage water at this site ▪ Area of catchment in hectares being managed as a result of this management action	In line with Outputs Reporting requirements	Service Provider
	Improving habitat: Improving land management practices (e.g. stocking rates)	**Management practice change** ▪ Industry ▪ Area covered by practice change ▪ Number of farming entities adopting this practice change ▪ Area of land directly benefiting from the practice change ▪ Type of agreement mechanism ▪ Area under agreement (ha) **Livestock management** ▪ Land management issue being addressed via livestock management ▪ Area managed (ha) ▪ Grazing practice being used **Erosion management** ▪ Area (ha) or length of stream or coastline (km) eroding (in this project area) ▪ Area (ha) of erosion being treated ▪ Length of stream/coastline treated (km) ▪ Erosion treatment method **Fencing** ▪ Length of fence ▪ Area protected by erected fence ▪ Purpose of fence	In line with Outputs Reporting requirements	Service Provider
	Community / stakeholder engagement	▪ Communities or groups engaged ▪ Purpose of engagement (informing through to collaboration – IAP2)	Throughout project	Service Provider
	Developing project/site management plan	▪ Area covered by management plan ▪ Species included in management plan	On Commencement	Service Provider
Core services	Maintain currency of **NRM planning and prioritisation** of management activities	▪ TEC definitions, recovery plans and/or conservation advice is sufficiently up-to-date to inform the project	On commencement	Service Provider
	Support the Community Including Landcare, Indigenous communities and industry to participate in the delivery of projects	▪ Governance arrangements and structures engage community in the project delivery (e.g. stakeholder reference groups etc.)	Throughout project	Service Provider
	Undertake communications	▪ Communications plan for the project developed and implemented	Throughout project	Service Provider
	Develop Project Designs and Project Proposals Informed by:	▪ Baseline assessment of TEC completed [YES/NO] ▪ Key threats and restoration opportunities identified and documented? [Yes/No] ▪ Priority Actions have been identified and documented, based on appropriate information and guidelines (e.g. Threat Abatement Plans, Conservation Advices etc.)	On commencement	Service Provider

Level	Outcome/Activity	Indicators	Indicative frequency of reporting	Who is responsible?
	Threat Abatement Plans; Conservation Advices; TEC definitions, 'key diagnostic features' and Condition Thresholds			
	Project coordination and MERI	▪ MERI plan for the project developed (reflecting the program logic and delivery plans)	Throughout project	Service Provider
	Maintain a productive, cooperative and ongoing **relationship with the Departments**	▪ Briefings of Australian government officers with responsibility for this project	Throughout project	Service Provider