

MAINTAINING A COLLABORATIVE

IDENTIFY LESSONS LEARNED AND MEASURE PROGRESS

In the [Define Priority Outcomes](#) section, you read about how to set collaborative goals. How do you know if you're achieving those goals? Measuring your project outcomes will help you track progress, reinforce "best practices," and learn from possible mistakes.

MEASURING PROGRESS

Consider the diagram in an earlier toolkit section, [Set Specific Goals and Propose Initial Activities](#), that outlined the concerns and measures listed below. This table outlines ways you can consider objective measures of progress, and could be used as a framework to engage support for tracking progress. As you begin to notice results, collect information that aligns with your project benchmarks.

Concern	Measure	Initial Levels	Final Levels	Change	Notes/Methods
Nitrates in groundwater	Manure loading from CAFOs.	12 mg/L in-stream nitrate	7 mg/L in-stream nitrate	-5 mg/L in-stream nitrate	Concrete manure storage facility prevented nitrate leaching.
Acid mine drainage	Levels of heavy metals in source water monitoring stations.	150 lbs iron 45 lbs aluminum 8,000 lbs sulfates	30 lbs iron 0 lbs aluminum 500 lbs sulfates	-120 lbs iron -45 lbs aluminum -7,500 lbs sulfates	Passive treatment system with flushable toxic limestone drain effectively reduced metal discharge.
Permit violations	Number of facilities in violation and volumes discharged.	3 significant noncompliance- 4,500 tons/month	2 significant noncompliance- 2,350 tons/month	1 discharger reduced risk of emissions-2,150 tons/month	Public Advisory Group helped Acme Co. repair aboveground regulated substance storage units.
Assessment of drinking water sources to inform protection	Frequency of in-stream monitoring for regulated contaminants.	No data	12 stream gauges with weekly monitoring on 4 stream reaches.	Weekly contaminant levels reported	Worked with state Clean Water Act program to assess waters designated for drinking water uses.

From this sample basic framework, you can evaluate change relative to your overall project goals. This will help you define next steps.

IDENTIFY LESSONS LEARNED

As your projects advance, you may notice that some of your actions have greater impact than others. Carefully review outcomes of each activity and track results. In order to identify “lessons learned,” schedule a planning meeting to review these questions:

Was this project effective?
Did it create measurable change?
Did it instill practices or trends that will create change in the future?
Compared to my original plan, what went “right” with this activity? What went “wrong”?
How much did it cost (staff, dollars)? How strong was its impact relative to its cost?
What improvements might have contributed to additional success?

Will this project be effective in the future?
Is this activity sustainable? How much maintenance will it require? How many staff? Is there an organization that can assume long-term responsibility?
Can this activity be readily replicated and multiplied?
Did this activity build human or social capital? Positive team relationships?
Is this activity likely to be funded in the future?
What interim steps might help keep the activity on track based on what we’ve learned?

Why was this project effective, or why not?
Did this activity implement the right practice or combination of practices that show measurable improvement in water quality (over time)? Are any technical adjustments needed?
Did this activity create or solidify partnerships? Or was this activity led primarily by one collaborative member?
Did team members communicate effectively over the course of the project?
Did it achieve buy-in from non-traditional actors (industries, city planners, etc.)? Did these actors engage in planning and/or implementation?
Did it achieve buy-in from the local community? Did these actors engage in planning and/or implementation?
What other stakeholders were involved? Whom should the project engage in the future?
Did it leverage funding from multiple sources? One steady source?
Did this activity spread awareness about source water protection? Among how many people? In what community?
From the perspective of the local community, did this activity foster a strong value in source water protection?
Did this activity create community tension? Why, and how can this be avoided in the future?
Could this activity be replicated, downsized (made less expensive), or expanded (given broader scope)? Why/why not?

Consider answering these questions and recording your responses for future reference. Your answers will help you compare different types of projects, or pilot projects to larger-scale efforts.