# National Estuary Program

## Program Evaluation Guidance

**Final**

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# National Estuary Program
# Program Evaluation Guidance

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# National Estuary Program
# Program Evaluation Guidance

## Section I: Purpose, Background, Goals, and Framework

### A. Purpose

The primary purpose of the Program Evaluation (PE) process is to help the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) assess how the implementation of Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plans (CCMPs) by the 28 programs included in the National Estuary Program (NEP) are making adequate progress in achieving programmatic and environmental results. Documented progress merits continued funding under §320 of the Clean Water Act (CWA). Continued funding for each NEP under §320 of the CWA is contingent upon Congress appropriating sufficient funds to the EPA for the purpose of supporting the NEPs and their CCMP implementation.

The PE process is also useful for:

- providing case studies of NEP leadership in collaborative and adaptive management;
- documenting the value added to environmental management by the national program and individual NEPs, including their role in convening stakeholders and interpreting science for management;
- demonstrating continued stakeholder commitment;
- assessing the progress of the NEP as a national program; and
- transferring lessons learned within EPA, among NEPs, and with other watershed programs.

### B. Background

The EPA began a NEP Implementation Review (IR) process in 1997 to determine which NEPs with approved CCMPs qualified for continued funding. The IR process was initially conducted every two years. In 2000, the process was streamlined and the review cycle was extended from every two to every three years for those programs that had already undergone the biennial review. In 2003, the IR process was revised with the intent to make IRs less burdensome to the NEPs while still collecting sufficient information to evaluate NEP progress and technical transfer. The IR cycle remained a three year cycle.

In 2006, the IR process was reevaluated due to increased federal program accountability, e.g., the Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART). An IR Reassessment Team composed of EPA Headquarters (HQ) staff, EPA NEP Regional Coordinators, and NEP Directors participated in the reevaluation process that led to the *2007 NEP Program Evaluation*



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*Guidance*. In 2011, the PE process was reassessed to identify further streamlining opportunities. The PE framework laid out in the 2007 PE Guidance was maintained, but the Tracking/Reporting sub-element under the Program Management element was eliminated with the exception of two of the criteria that were transferred to the Outreach and Public Involvement sub-element. The PE cycle was also changed from a three year cycle to a five year cycle (four consecutive years with the fifth year to be spent producing a findings report).

In 2016, the PE process was reassessed again to identify opportunities for improvement. The changes are describe below:

- More specific guidance has been added regarding the format of the documentation for the PE package. Specifically, the work plan summary elements and EPA's expectations are better defined.

- As such, a number of items have been deleted, added, or clarified. NEPs no longer need to re-submit work plans with the PE package. Electronic NEP work plans submitted annually to EPA HQ will be use for the NEP PE.

- The element *Tools* from the work plan core elements is eliminated because EPA has is already collecting such information through the element *Direct Assistance* based on reviews of past PE letters.

- NEPs will no longer be required to report on CWA implementation. Instead EPA will extract information on use of CWA tools through the work plan summary itself.

- For the years covered in the PE cycle, the EPA HQ will provide *cumulative* report on habitat restored and protected and leveraged funds data (*primary* and *significant* role) using NEPORT. For PE purposes only, reporting on leveraging *support* role was eliminated. This data (*support* role) will continue to be collected in NEPORT and Regions will have access to it.

- More emphasis on Management Conference engagement during on-site visit has been added as a means to foster greater understanding of the NEP and its particular challenges by both HQ and Management Conference members.

- The role of an ex-officio NEP Director volunteering to serve on the PE team has been better defined and clarified to respond to comments from the NEPs and EPA Regions.

- Updated timeline for on-site visit and final PE letter to expedite communication of PE findings to the NEP Director.

- The due date for PE submittal package is extended to March 15.



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The PE cycle remains a five year cycle. Four consecutive years followed by one year off to prepare a PE finding report of all 28 NEPs.

## C. Goals

The goals of this PE Guidance are to:

- ensure objective and consistent PEs among the different NEPs;
- further align the PEs with individual NEP CCMP priorities and related NEP annual work plans; and
- measure progress in achieving programmatic and environmental results over the short-term, intermediate, and long-term, including documenting NEP contributions to improving or reducing pressures on coastal watersheds.

## D. Framework

This PE Guidance is based on a NEP Program Evaluation Logic Model Framework (NEP PE logic model) which incorporates the Pressure-State-Response (PSR) model (see **Attachment 1**). The NEP PE logic model is designed to help guide reporting on stages of NEP progress (otherwise referred to as environmental milestones and targets) toward restoring and maintaining the ecological integrity of each nationally designated estuary. The NEP PE logic model shows causal links among pressures, activities, partnerships, outputs, and short-term, intermediate, and long-term outcomes. It is being used to help the NEPs address the challenges of accounting for external factors such as changes in social and economic norms. The NEP PE logic model allows the NEPs to be recognized for their activities toward improving conditions or reducing pressures in their estuary since a connection between the NEP activities and ultimate environmental change might be difficult to establish.

# Section II: Scope and Format of Documentation

The PE consists of several phases: A) development and submission of a package of required information, B) PE team site visit to each NEP under evaluation, and C) documentation of PE findings via formal letter from EPA HQ.

## A. Program Evaluation Package

### 1) Standardized Performance Measures Responses

For the years covered within the PE cycle, the NEP should assess its performance against the standardized measures laid out in **Attachment 2. This assessment must be substantiated by supporting documentation** (e.g., State of the Bay Reports, finance plan, adaptive management strategies, etc).

The standardized performance measures address program management practices common to all NEPs and cover the following elements:



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- Financial Management
- Program Planning and Administration
- Outreach and Public Involvement
- Reporting
- Assessment and Monitoring
- Research (optional)

*In many instances, the standardized performance measures will reflect work plan activities and therefore should also be described further in the NEP work plan narrative summary described below.*

**2) NEP Work plan Narrative Summary**

**The EPA is not specifying a page limit for the NEP work plan narrative summary.** The document should be concise and fully address each topic listed below with supporting documentation. For the years covered within the PE cycle, **the NEP should summarize the following:**

- **Key** NEP work plan goals and activities, stages of progress toward achieving the NEP's environmental milestones and targets, and role of key stakeholders supporting the activities. The following elements describe **generally** what is in an NEP work plan to achieve CCMP goals:
    1) Habitat
    2) Water Quality
    3) Living Resources
    4) Healthy Communities
    5) Trainings
    6) Direct Assistance

To the extent you are able, use these elements to organize your NEP's *key* work plan goals and activities by using the logic model components; if correlation is not possible, use your existing work plan structure.
*Note: NEP outcomes are understood to be sensitive to changes in climate. Reports on relevant climate change activities should be incorporated in these narratives.*

- A brief summary of how **each challenge** identified in the previous PE has been addressed.

- A **budget summary** (pie charts or other graphics are acceptable) with an accompanying brief narrative showing funding use during the PE cycle; summary should include a breakdown of funds used for program staff as well as funds spent on specific projects and other activities.

- A description of **external factors** (e.g., institutional barriers, emerging issues) affecting the NEP work plan goals and/or progress, and related



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adaptive management strategies. Indicate ways EPA can support efforts to address these factors.

**The EPA HQ will provide to the PE team leader the following information from NEPORT to further demonstrate accomplishments to work plan goals and activities for the PE cycle:**

- A *cumulative* total of the funds leveraged for the years covered in the PE cycle, and breakdown by primary and significant leveraging roles (see **Attachment 3**).

- A c*umulative* total of the acres protected and restored, and breakdown by habitat type for the years covered in the PE cycle.

If there insufficient information in the PE package, the NEP will be required to provide supplemental documentation addressing questions or information gaps identified by the PE team.

## B. On-Site Visit

After the PE package is submitted, the PE team will plan and schedule an on-site visit. The on-site visits are typically one to three days in length. The intent of the visit is to foster greater understanding of the NEP and its particular challenges by both EPA HQ and Management Conference members and to share initial evaluation findings with the NEP and its key members. On-site visits also provide opportunities for the PE team to view on-the-ground projects. The PE team will work with the NEP Directors to determine the best time to schedule the visit.

The NEP should use the PE on-site visit to:

- demonstrate successes and accomplishments, especially those that are innovative and have technical transfer possibilities;
- expand upon work plan progress summarized in the work plan narrative summary; and
- demonstrate how external factors may be influencing progress toward environmental milestones and targets.

The PE team members should use the on-site visit to:

- meet and build relationships among EPA and NEP partners;
- discuss any questions or issues with submission of PE materials;
- discuss preliminary findings (strengths and challenges); and
- identify and discuss potential program recommendations with NEP, if feasible.

## C. PE Findings

Each NEP will receive a final PE letter with a determination of *"pass," "conditional*



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*pass*," or *"fail"* (see **Figure 1**). The letter from EPA will formally document the determination based on the standardized performance measures responses, work plan narrative summary, and information provided by the NEP through discussion and site visit. The letter will include details about program strengths, challenges, and recommendations for improvements, including timeframes, as needed. In the case that an NEP "*fails*" the evaluation review, EPA will work closely with the NEP to improve its performance. The EPA will decide on a case-by-case basis the status of the annual §320 allocations for any NEP that does not merit continued funding.

**Figure 1: Thresholds for Final Determination**

| *Pass* | *Conditional Pass* | *Fail* |
|---|---|---|
| The Program:<br>✓ shows progress toward environmental milestones and targets;<br>**and**<br>✓ meets all baseline expectations for *Fully Performing* in all sub-elements. | The Program:<br>✓ does not show progress toward environmental milestones and targets, but meets all baseline expectations for *Fully Performing* in all sub-elements;<br>**or**<br>✓ does not show progress toward environmental milestones and targets, and has not met all baseline expectations for *Fully Performing* in up to three sub- elements;<br>**or**<br>✓ shows progress toward environmental milestones and targets, but has not met all baseline expectations for *Fully Performing* in up to three sub-elements. | The Program:<br>✓ does not show progress toward environmental milestones and targets;<br>**and, either:**<br>✓ is at the level of *Minimally Performing* in three or more sub-elements;<br>**or**<br>✓ receives repeated "*conditional passes*" on the same challenge(s). |

# Section III: Program Evaluation Process

## A. Program Evaluation Team Structure

The PE teams for each NEP will include the EPA HQ NEP coordinator (PE team leader), the EPA Regional NEP coordinator, and if possible an ex-officio NEP Director. The purpose of the NEP ex-officio Director in the PE process is to allow an exchange or sharing of information from one NEP to another (e.g., provide technical transfer assistance to the NEP undergoing the PE and take lessons learned back to their own NEP). Although, the ex-officio NEP Director is expected to review and comment on the draft PE letter, he/she cannot be involved in EPA's final determination. Responsibilities



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for the PE team members are outlined in Section III.B. below and in **Attachment 5**.

The EPA HQ and Regional Coordinators are expected to include PE on-site visits for their NEPs in their annual travel budget plans; however, travel for on-site visits is dependent on the availability of funds. Alternative arrangements in the absence of travel funds include webinars or video-conferences. The schedule and groupings for upcoming PEs and their associated on-site visits is presented in **Attachment 4.**

## B. Program Evaluation Team Responsibilities

The PE team is responsible for reviewing materials and their consistency with this guidance, planning the site visits, and developing initial findings, ideally to present to the NEP during the site visit; evaluations will be based on the following.

- ***Responses and supporting documentation related to standardized performance measures*** (see **Attachment 2**). The PE team will use the standardized performance measures as a tool to objectively identify a program's strengths, challenges, and areas for improvement in the program management area. The standardized performance measures are based on a descriptive scoring system of four levels: *Excellent, Good, Fully Performing,* and/or *Minimally Performing*. All the core elements will have the same weight of importance in terms of overall evaluation conclusions.

- ***Work plan narrative summary related to NEP specific work plan goals and activities*** (see **Attachment 1**). A qualitative assessment will be done on the work plan narrative summary that includes discussion of *key* NEP work plan goals and activities as they implement the CCMP and contribute to environmental improvements. This assessment will include attention to the details as described in Section II. A.2. above.

- ***Observations made during the on-site visit, and team discussions with NEP staff, Management Conference, stakeholders and partners.*** The on-site visit will be used to discuss any questions or issues with the PE submission, discuss preliminary findings, and explore possible recommendations. It is a chance to visit project sites and meet with NEP Policy and/or Management Conference members, stakeholders and partners to listen to their insights and concerns about CCMP implementation.

The PE team will document its findings in writing based on comments provided by each PE team member (electronic comments will be submitted to the PE team leader by each PE team member). The findings will reflect the PE package, the on-site visit, and discussions with the NEP. The PE team will develop a final PE letter for EPA management based on the PE team's documented findings as described in Section II.C. above.



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# Section IV: NEP Groups and Program Evaluation Schedule

## A. NEP Groups

NEPs are distributed in four groups (A, B, C, and D) as shown in **Figure 2**. The PE Schedule for each group is shown in **Attachment 4**. If there are any changes to this schedule, the EPA will notify the NEPs in a timely manner.

**Figure 2: PE Groups A-B-C-D**

| PE Group A<br>PE: 2017<br>(7 Programs) | PE Group B<br>PE: 2018<br>(6 Programs) | PE Group C<br>PE: 2019<br>(8 Programs) | PE Group D<br>PE: 2020<br>(7 Programs) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Barataria-Terrebonne | Tampa Bay | Buzzards Bay | Charlotte Harbor |
| Casco Bay | Coastal Bend Bays | Partnership for the Delaware Estuary | Morro Bay |
| Indian River Lagoon | Albemarle-Pamlico Sounds | Long Island Sound | Columbia River |
| Massachusetts Bay | Delaware Inland Bays | Santa Monica Bay | Barnegat Bay |
| Peconic Bay | Narragansett Bay | New York /New Jersey Harbor | Piscataqua Region Estuaries Partnership |
| San Juan Bay | Sarasota Bay | Puget Sound | San Francisco Bay |
| Tillamook Bay | | Maryland Coastal Bays | Mobile Bay |
| | | Galveston Bay* | |

*Galveston Bay will have its PE one year later.

## B. Program Evaluation Schedule

1) The PE team leader should hold a conference call with members of the team and the NEP Director undergoing the PE at least three months prior to the deadline for submitting the PE package. The purpose of the conference call will be to discuss logistics on the preparation and submission of the PE package. Discuss process timeline and clarify roles and responsibilities. The NEP Director may choose to include Management Conference members or other stakeholders.

2) **Program Evaluation packages will be due to EPA HQ PE team leader on March 15. The PE team leader will see that electronic copies of NEP work plans for the years covered within the PE cycle** (see **Attachments 5**) are sent **to the ex-officio NEP Director by March 15**. If March 15 falls on a weekend, the packages will be due on the following Monday.



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**3)** The PE team members should review the PE package and submit written electronic comments to the PE team leader within three weeks after receiving the PE package.

**4)** The PE team leader should hold a conference call with the PE team members one week after receiving comments from the PE team. The purpose of this conference call is to:
- discuss the PE findings; and
- identify follow-up questions or information gaps requiring the NEP to submit additional documentation.

**5)** The PE team leader should schedule a conference call between the NEP Director and the PE team within two weeks after conducting the PE team conference call. The purpose of this conference call is to:
- discuss strengths and challenges of the NEP;
- discuss additional documentation needed to address any information gaps identified by the PE team. Such documentation should be provided for EPA review prior to the on-site visit or demonstrated during the on-site visit; and
- schedule and discuss the agenda for the on-site visit.

**6)** Conduct on-site visits within two months after receiving the PE package.

**7)** The PE team should hold a conference call with the NEP Director within two weeks after the on-site visit to allow the NEP Director the opportunity to address any concerns raised during the on-site visit.

**8)** The PE team should prepare a final draft PE letter within six weeks after the on-site visit and should provide the NEP Director an opportunity to review the letter before it is finalized.

**9)** The PE Team will finalize the formal findings letter for signing by the NEP HQ Branch Chief.

**10)** The HQ NEP Branch Chief will review and sign the PE letters within three weeks of receipt from the PE team leader.

**11)** If the NEP Director request the PE team can discuss the final PE letter with the Management Conference in order to discuss and/or clarify findings.



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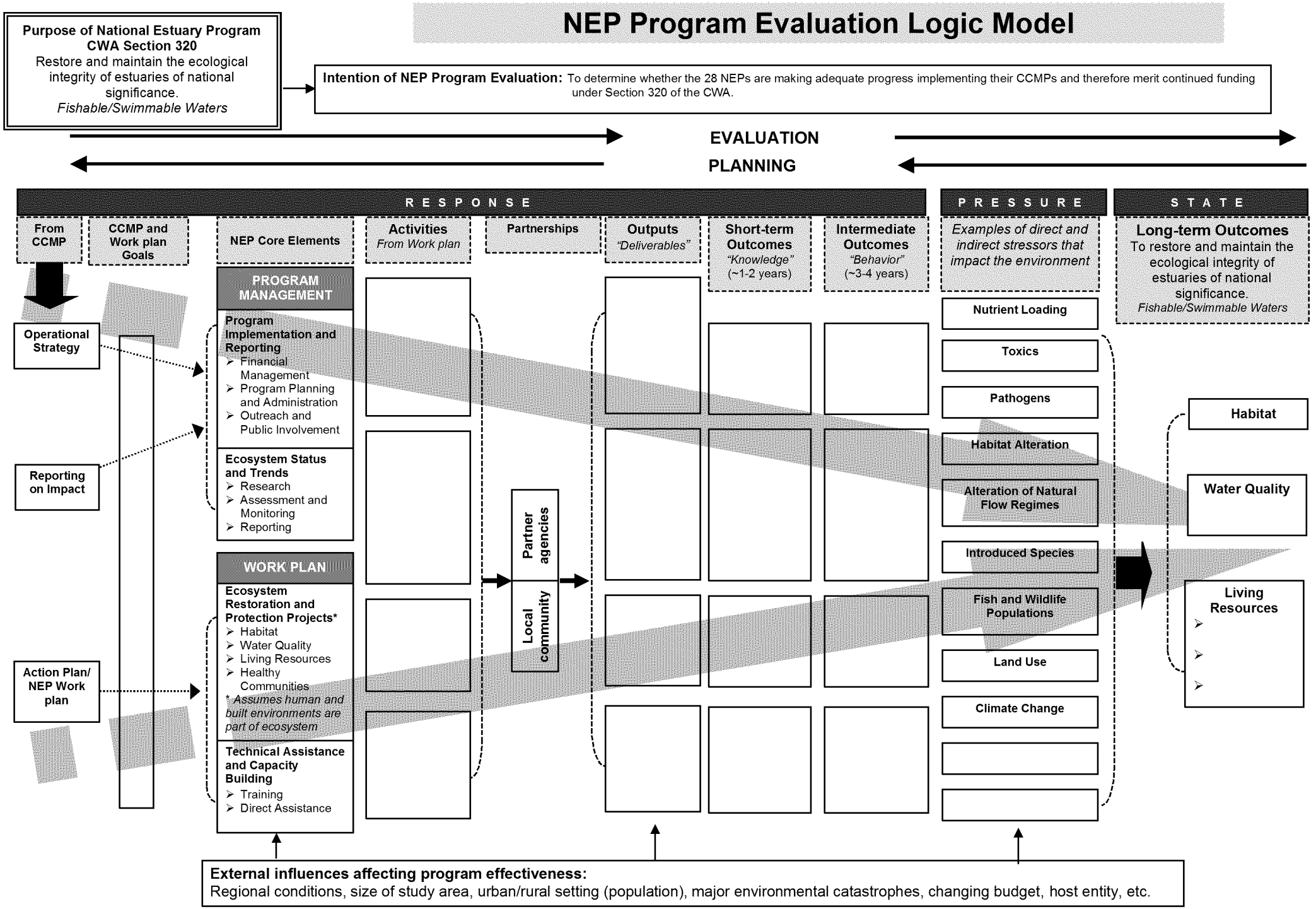
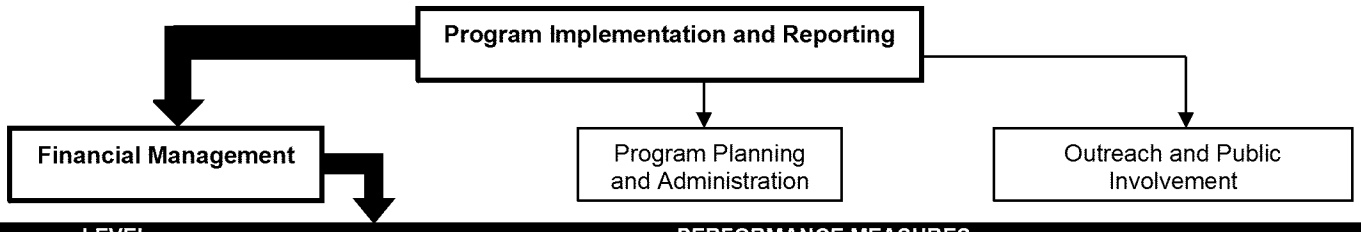
**Attachment 1: The NEP Program Evaluation Logic Model**



**Attachment 2: Standardized Performance Measures for Program Management Core Elements**

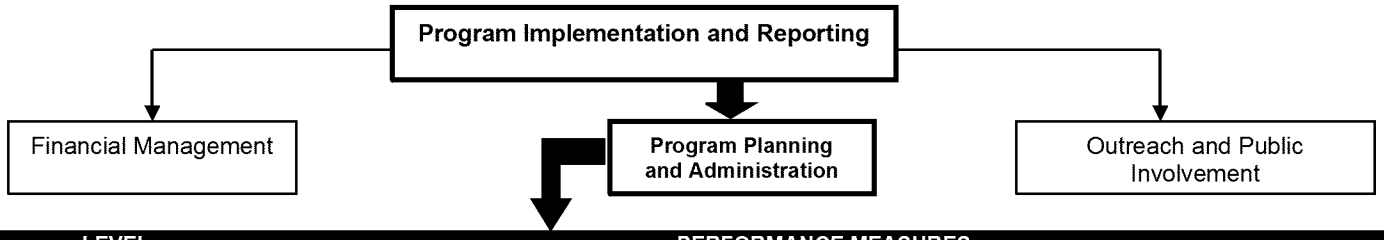
Core Element: Program Implementation and Reporting
Sub-element: **Financial Management**




| LEVEL | PERFORMANCE MEASURES |
|---|---|
| **Excellent** | The Program demonstrates *Excellent* performance because:<br>○ The Program researches, identifies, and tracks prospective donors and funding opportunities (applicable for non-profit organizations).<br>○ Program staff, Management Conference members, and volunteers have received finance/fundraising training if appropriate.<br>○ The majority of the Program's outreach materials contain funding information (e.g., thanking donors, acknowledging project funding, including a membership form, etc.). |
| **Good** | The Program demonstrates *Good* performance because:<br>○ The Program has a current finance plan (approved by the Management Conference within the past six years) that includes estimated costs, funding sources, goals, responsibilities, and milestones.<br>○ The Program integrates finance planning into its annual workplan (i.e., an assessment of funding obtained in the previous year, current funding, and funding to be pursued in the coming year).<br>○ The Program has a monthly revenue and expenditure tracking system.<br>○ The Program has a case statement (a brief statement outlining accomplishments and results that could occur with additional resources). |
| **Fully Performing** | ***Baseline expectations***:<br>○ The Program meets its non-federal match obligation and provides detail in the annual workplan submittal to the EPA about match funding sources and uses (e.g., workplan tasks).<br>○ The Program has a plan for diversifying and augmenting funding sources that is approved by the Management Conference and includes estimated costs, goals, responsibilities, and milestones.<br>○ The Program has the partnerships and strategic alliances to identify and secure resources to implement its CCMP. |
| **Minimally Performing** | The Program does not meet **all** of the performance measures in the *Fully Performing* level. |

**The EPA expects that, in order to be a *Fully Performing* Program, all baseline expectations are met. Performance measures in the *Good* and *Excellent* levels are not required. They are benchmarks for what the Program can do to improve performance given the Program's priorities and organizational capacity.**

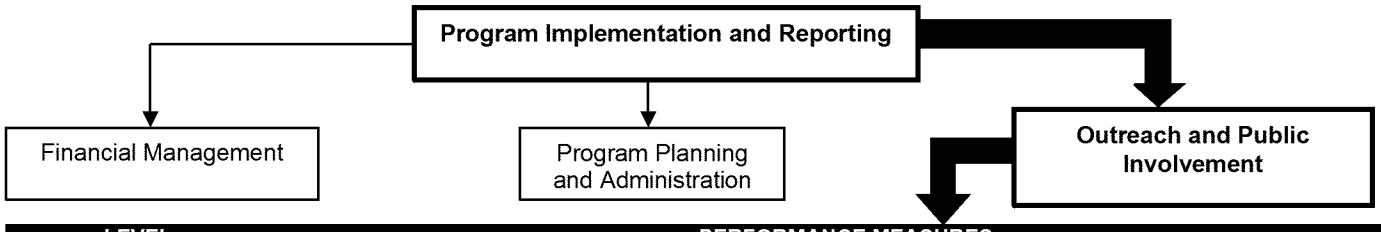
Core Element: Program Implementation and Reporting
Sub-element: **Program Planning and Administration**




| LEVEL | PERFORMANCE MEASURES |
|---|---|
| **Excellent** | The Program demonstrates *Excellent* performance because:<br>○ The Program encourages professional development opportunities for staff members.<br>○ The Program is a leader in the transfer of lessons learned in watershed management. |
| **Good** | The Program demonstrates *Good* performance because:<br>○ The Program has a Management Conference that:<br>▪ has a written vision statement and/or mission and goals;<br>▪ is fully engaged in developing and implementing the workplan;<br>▪ assists in building active partnerships;<br>▪ ensures broad stakeholder representation in priority setting and Program oversight;<br>▪ provides a clear and transparent decision-making process that includes the public (e.g., operating procedures, agreements and/or bylaws for committees, etc.); and<br>▪ has a mechanism for identifying existing and emerging issues.<br>○ The Program is seen as a leader in watershed management. |
| **Fully Performing** | ***Baseline expectations***:<br>○ The Program has a Management Conference that:<br>▪ is fully staffed;<br>▪ provides Program direction;<br>▪ oversees development and approves annual budget and workplan;<br>▪ ensures sufficient Program resources;<br>▪ sets a framework for bringing together diverse interests in a collaborative fashion (e.g., develop synergy among various organizations);<br>▪ ensures communication between Program committees;<br>▪ ensures Program actions are based on both stakeholder priorities and good science;<br>▪ communicates about and supports the Program; and<br>▪ has a process for reevaluating its priorities.<br>○ The Program staff coordinates and supports Management Conference responsibilities.<br>○ The Program has human resources principles in place (e.g., staff members have position descriptions and periodic performance reviews).<br>○ The Program office has autonomy with regard to the host entity (e.g., sets and follows its own priorities, exhibits visibility in the watershed, etc.). |
| **Minimally Performing** | The Program does not meet **all** of the performance measures in the *Fully Performing* level. |

**The EPA expects that, in order to be a *Fully Performing* Program, all baseline expectations are met. Performance measures in the *Good* and *Excellent* levels are not required. They are benchmarks for what the Program can do to improve performance given the Program's priorities and organizational capacity.**

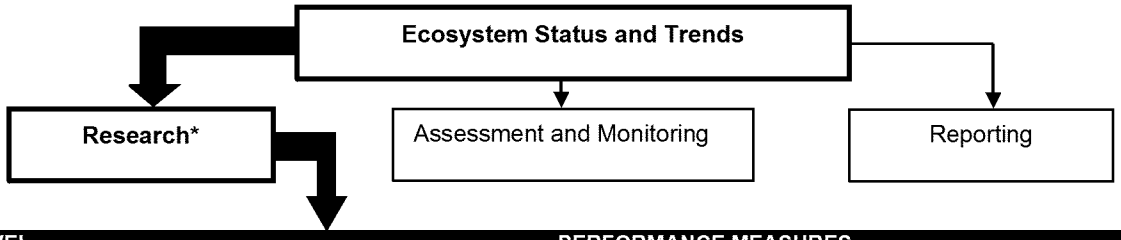
Core Element: Program Implementation and Reporting
Sub-element: **Outreach and Public Involvement**




| LEVEL | PERFORMANCE MEASURES |
|---|---|
| **Excellent** | The Program demonstrates *Excellent* performance because:<br>○ The Program supports citizen recommendations by implementing/supporting priority projects via the annual workplan.<br>○ The Program has a media/marketing campaign underway, such as a social marketing campaign, with a specific behavior change message related to a CCMP priority issue(s).<br>○ The Program has a brand/image and related graphics, tag lines, etc. that effectively promote and create widespread recognition of the Program.<br>○ The Program has socio-economic indicators to monitor and report on the impact of outreach and public involvement activities.<br>○ Efforts exist to achieve and document behavior change. |
| **Good** | The Program demonstrates *Good* performance because:<br>○ The Program has an active CAC or analogous structure that proposes workplan projects and is represented during Management Conference or executive committee meetings.<br>○ The Program, through the communication plan, actively conducts outreach through such things as signage, radio/TV spots, special events, public presentations, topic-specific workshops, etc.<br>○ The Program supports efforts to develop and implement such things as environmental education curricula, teacher training, ecotourism programs, small grant programs, estuary celebrations, and/or citizen recognition programs.<br>○ The Program shares innovations and lessons learned at regional and national meetings (e.g., Estuarine Research Federation (ERF) biennial meeting, The Coastal Society (TCS) biennial meeting, Coastal Zone (CZ) biennial meeting, NEP national meeting, etc.).<br>○ The Program reports annually programmatic results to the public and stakeholders (via the Program's website, public database, hard copies, and/or other media) as specified in the NEP Funding Guidance and describes progress linked towards annual workplan goals and milestones. |
| **Fully Performing** | ***Baseline expectations***:<br>○ Citizens are involved in Program decision-making and implementation (e.g., Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) or analogous structure, system for public input, open meetings, public notice of meetings and events, and/or opportunities for reviewing and prioritizing outreach and public involvement projects, etc.).<br>○ The Program has a multi-year, strategic communication plan that includes needs, target audience(s), objectives, project descriptions, deliverables, and deadlines.<br>○ The Program has multi-media communication tools (e.g., newsletters, annual reports, fact sheets, website, listserves, and/or videos/CDs, etc.) that are updated as needed.<br>○ The Program reports programmatic results to the public and stakeholders (via the Program's website, public database, hard copies, and/or other media) as specified in the NEP Funding Guidance. |
| **Minimally Performing** | The Program does not meet **all** of the performance measures in the *Fully Performing* level. |

**The EPA expects that, in order to be a *Fully Performing* Program, all baseline expectations are met. Performance measures in the *Good* and *Excellent* levels are not required. They are benchmarks for what the Program can do to improve performance given the Program's priorities and organizational capacity.**

Core Element: Ecosystem Status and Trends
Sub-element: **Research***




| LEVEL | PERFORMANCE MEASURES |
|---|---|
| **Excellent** | The Program demonstrates *Excellent* performance because:<br>○ Research is used to change policy.<br>○ The Program shares its science and technology research and findings at regional and national meetings (e.g., Estuarine Research Federation (ERF) biennial meeting, The Coastal Society (TCS) biennial meeting, Coastal Zone (CZ) biennial meeting, NEP national meeting, etc.).<br>○ Scientific and technical reports produced by the NEP are peer reviewed.<br>○ Program staff sits on state and national science boards and committees. |
| **Good** | The Program demonstrates *Good* performance because:<br>○ Research is conducted by appropriate partners.<br>○ Research identifies significant, missing data that warrant additional monitoring or sampling.<br>○ The Program uses research results to develop management options and implement solutions.<br>○ Results from research are combined and translated into plain English for reporting to the public.<br>○ The Program or its partners have established a process to regularly reevaluate its research needs. |
| **Fully Performing** | ***Baseline expectations***:<br>○ The Program or its partners has a process to identify research needs.<br>○ The research needs are consistent with CCMP goals and actions.<br>○ The Program's research needs are approved by the Management Conference. |
| **Minimally Performing** | The Program does not meet **all** of the performance measures in the *Fully Performing* level. |

**The EPA expects that, in order to be a *Fully Performing* Program, all baseline expectations are met. Performance measures in the *Good* and *Excellent* levels are not required. They are benchmarks for what the Program can do to improve performance given the Program's priorities and organizational capacity.**

**The Program has the option to report a "not applicable" for the Research sub-element. However, if not applicable, the Program must include justification that either (1) research is not a priority for the Management Conference, or (2) lack of resources does not allow the Program to conduct or support research efforts.*



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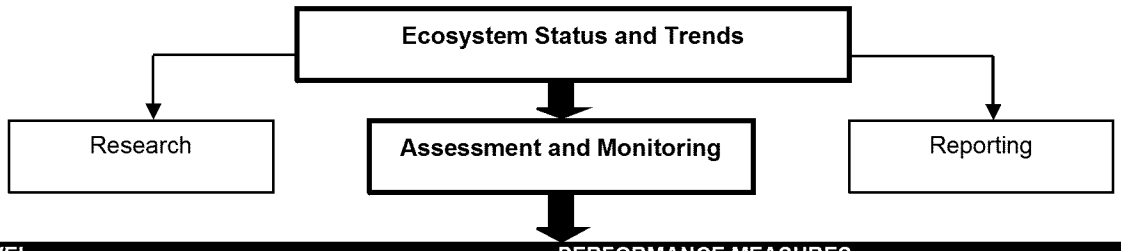
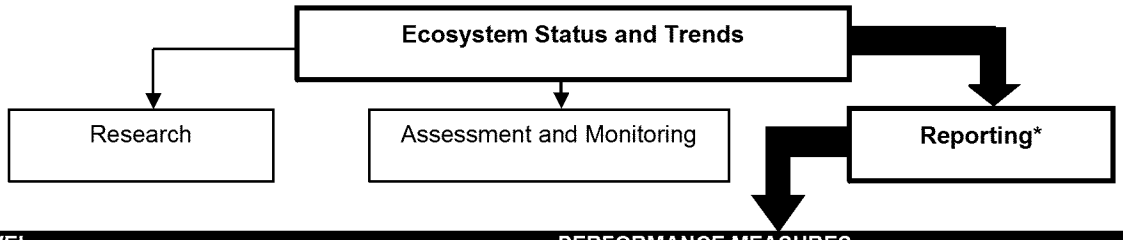
Core Element: Ecosystem Status and Trends
Sub-element: **Assessment and Monitoring**




| LEVEL | PERFORMANCE MEASURES |
|---|---|
| **Excellent** | The Program demonstrates *Excellent* performance because:<br>○ The monitoring plan produces sufficient data to support a comprehensive and integrated analysis of environmental conditions.<br>○ The Program or its partners seeks more efficient and cost-effective technologies for monitoring as appropriate.<br>○ The Program trains volunteer groups to improve the quality of data collection. |
| **Good** | The Program demonstrates *Good* performance because:<br>○ The Program uses monitoring data to assess and re-direct management actions and programs implemented under the CCMP as necessary.<br>○ The monitoring plan has a schedule for review/updates that is approved by the Management Conference.<br>○ The Program uses monitoring data to identify gaps in knowledge.<br>○ Available data is analyzed for ecosystem status and trends.<br>○ The Program promotes the establishment of volunteer monitoring groups to supplement NEP monitoring efforts. |
| **Fully Performing** | ***Baseline expectations***:<br>○ The Program has a Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) or analogous structure to ensure that Program decision-making is tied to good science.<br>○ The Program has indicators in use that are recognized by the Management Conference.<br>○ The Program has a monitoring plan in use that is recognized and/or approved by the Management Conference and:<br>▪ meets QA/QC requirements;<br>▪ identifies various parties' roles and responsibilities for monitoring;<br>▪ has a timetable for collecting and reporting on data; and<br>▪ identifies funding needs and/or commitments for the monitoring program.<br>○ The monitoring plan produces data to support an analysis of specific environmental conditions. |
| **Minimally Performing** | The Program does not meet **all** of the performance measures in the *Fully Performing* level. |

**The EPA expects that, in order to be a *Fully Performing* Program, all baseline expectations are met. Performance measures in the *Good* and *Excellent* levels are not required. They are benchmarks for what the Program can do to improve performance given the Program's priorities and organizational capacity.**

Core Element: Ecosystem Status and Trends
Sub-element: **Reporting***




| LEVEL | PERFORMANCE MEASURES |
|---|---|
| **Excellent** | The Program demonstrates *Excellent* performance because:<br>○ Reports discuss adaptive management strategies.<br>○ Reports recognize new and emerging issues to be considered in updates or revisions to the CCMP. |
| **Good** | The Program demonstrates *Good* performance because:<br>○ The Program has an environmental progress report that communicates ecosystem status and trends to the public every three to five years (e.g., "State of the Bay" report, Environmental Report Card, significant newspaper insert, newsletters, websites, etc.).<br>○ Major reports:<br>▪ discuss the Program's goals and priorities, indicators in use, ecosystem status and trends, and maps of study area;<br>▪ discuss the health of the estuary (i.e., habitat, water quality, and living resources); and<br>▪ include conceptual models that represent the best understanding of current ecosystem processes. |
| **Fully Performing** | ***Baseline expectations***:<br>○ The Program has an environmental progress report that communicates ecosystem status and trends to the public on a periodic basis (e.g., "State of the Bay" report, Environmental Report Card, significant newspaper insert, newsletters, websites, etc.).<br>○ Major reports:<br>▪ are linked to CCMP actions, goals, priorities, indicators, and monitoring systems;<br>▪ feature a narrative description of the Program's study area in plain English explaining the relationship between human activities and impacts on resources; and<br>▪ are approved by the Management Conference. |
| **Minimally Performing** | The Program does not meet **all** of the performance measures in the *Fully Performing* level. |

**Refers to Reporting of Ecosystem Status and Trends in the Program study area.*

**The EPA expects that, in order to be a *Fully Performing* Program, all baseline expectations are met. Performance measures in the *Good* and *Excellent* levels are not required. They are benchmarks for what the Program can do to improve performance given the Program's priorities and organizational capacity.**

**Attachment 3: Annual Funding Guidance Requirement for Leveraged Resources Report**

**WHAT**: As part of CCMP implementation, each NEP works to ensure its long-term financial sustainability by pursuing leveraging opportunities, i.e., financial or in-kind resources committed above and beyond the Federal funding provided under the Section 320 grant. Leveraged resources include resources that are administered by the NEP and those that are not.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**: Please contact Craig Alvord at (202) 566-1275.

**Definitions of Leveraging Roles and Examples:**

**Primary role** indicates that the NEP played the central role in obtaining leveraged resources. For example, the NEP:

- convened a workgroup that created a stormwater utility;
- wrote a grant proposal that helped fund the implementation of a CCMP action;
- solicited funds and in-kind support for NEP operations (e.g., office space); or
- provided funds to partners for use as match for grants that fund CCMP implementation.

**Significant role** indicates that the NEP actively participated in, but did not lead the effort to obtain additional resources. For example, the NEP:

- wrote parts of a grant proposal or identified lands for habitat restoration;
- identified lands for habitat restoration that were restored using other sources of funding
- directed other non-NEP resources (e.g., SEP money) to projects;
- established a program such as a local land trust that raised money for CCMP implementation;
- convened or actively participated in a stormwater utility workgroup that subsequently raised funds for CCMP implementation; or
- provided seed money to support a larger project, e.g., a public event.



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**Attachment 4: Program Evaluation Schedules**

**2017: Group A (Period covered: July 1, 2011 – June 30, 2016)**
*Barataria-Terrebonne, Casco Bay, Indian River Lagoon, Massachusetts Bay, Peconic Bay, San Juan Bay, Tillamook Bay*

| | |
|---|---|
| **November 4, 2016** | NEP Directors should determine whether they can volunteer to serve on a PE team and notify to the PE Coordinator at EPA HQ. |
| **November 11, 2016** | EPA HQ will set up PE teams for Group A NEPs. |
| **December 15, 2016** | Deadline for PE team leader to hold a conference call with members of the team and the NEP Director to discuss logistics on the preparation and submission of the PE package among other issues. |
| **March 15, 2017** | Due date for PE submittal package. **A total of three electronic copies are needed** (one for each EPA members of the PE team and one for the ex-officio NEP Director). EPA HQ Coordinator is responsible for making a file copy.<br><br>The PE team leader sends electronic copies of NEP work plans for FYs 12, 13, 14, and 15 to the ex-officio NEP Director. |
| **April 14, 2017** | Deadline for PE team leaders to hold a conference call for the PE team members to compare notes after reviewing the PE package and submitting written comments to the PE team leader. |
| **May 12, 2017** | Deadline for PE team leaders to hold a conference call with the NEP Director and the PE team to discuss additional documentation needs, schedule the on-site visit, and identify issues that should be addressed during the on-site visit. |
| **May 15 - July 14, 2017** | Period for on-site visits. |

**LETTER DEVELOPMENT****

| | |
|---|---|
| **2 weeks after visit** | Period to resolve any concerns rose during the on-site visit.<br>Deadline for team leader to prepare draft letter documenting the PE team's findings, recommendations, and rating. |
| **4 weeks after visit** | Deadline for PE team (Regional Coordinator and ex-officio NEP Director) to review and provide comments on draft letter. |
| **6 weeks after visit** | Deadline for NEP Director to review and provide comments on draft letter. |
| **9 weeks after visit** | Deadline for concurrence and signature by CMB Branch Chief. |
| **September 29, 2017** | All seven PE letters should be signed and sent out to the respective NEPs. |

** The schedule for the PE letter development assumes no major issues arise from the PE that requires extensive consultation.



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**2018: Group B (Period covered: July 1, 2012 – June 30, 2017)**
*Tampa Bay, Coastal Bend Bays, Albemarle-Pamlico Sounds, Delaware Inland Bays, Narragansett Bay*, Sarasota Bay*

| | |
|---|---|
| **November 10, 2017** | NEP Directors should determine whether they can volunteer to serve on a PE team and notify to the PE Coordinator at EPA HQ. |
| **November 17, 2017** | EPA HQ will set up PE teams for Group B NEPs. |
| **December 15, 2017** | Deadline for PE team leader to hold a conference call with members of the team and the NEP Director to discuss logistics on the preparation and submission of the PE package among other issues. |
| **March 15, 2018** | Due date for PE submittal package. **A total of three electronic copies are needed** (one for each EPA members of the PE team and one for the ex-officio NEP Director). EPA HQ Coordinator is responsible for making a file copy.<br><br>The PE team leader sends electronic copies of NEP work plans for FYs 13, 14, 15, and 16 to the ex-officio NEP Director.<br><br>**EXEMPTION:**<br>*Narragansett Bay review period covered (July 1, 2013 – June 30, 2017). Work plans to be reviewed: FYs 14, 15, and 16. |
| **April 13, 2018** | Deadline for PE team leaders to hold a conference call for the PE team members to compare notes after reviewing the PE package and submitting written comments to the PE team leader. |
| **May 11, 2018** | Deadline for PE team leaders to hold a conference call with the NEP Director and the PE team to discuss additional documentation needs, schedule the on-site visit, and identify issues that should be addressed during the on-site visit. |
| **May 14 - July 13, 2018** | Period for on-site visits. |

**LETTER DEVELOPMENT****

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|---|---|
| **2 weeks after visit** | Period to resolve any concerns rose during the on-site visit.<br>Deadline for team leader to prepare draft letter documenting the PE team's findings, recommendations, and rating. |
| **4 weeks after visit** | Deadline for PE team (Regional Coordinator and ex-officio NEP Director) to review and provide comments on draft letter. |
| **6 weeks after visit** | Deadline for NEP Director to review and provide comments on draft letter. |
| **9 weeks after visit** | Deadline for concurrence and signature by CMB Branch Chief. |
| **September 28, 2018** | All six PE letters should be signed and sent out to the respective NEPs. |

** The schedule for the PE letter development assumes no major issues arise from the PE that requires extensive consultation.



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**2019: Group C (Period covered: July 1, 2013 – June 30, 2018)**
*Buzzards Bay, Partnership for the Delaware Estuary, Long Island Sound, Santa Monica Bay, New York / New Jersey Harbor, Puget Sound, Maryland Coastal Bays, and Galveston Bay**

| | |
|---|---|
| **November 9, 2018** | NEP Directors should determine whether they can volunteer to serve on a PE team and notify to the PE Coordinator at EPA HQ. |
| **November 16, 2018** | EPA HQ will set up PE teams for Group C NEPs. |
| **December 17, 2018** | Deadline for PE team leader to hold a conference call with members of the team and the NEP Director to determine if existing reports fully address the PE questions and identify questions that call for additional documentation among other issues. |
| **March 15, 2019** | Due date for PE submittal package. **A total of three electronic copies are needed** (one for each EPA members of the PE team and one for the ex-officio NEP Director). EPA HQ Coordinator is responsible for making a file copy.<br>The PE team leader sends electronic copies of NEP work plans for FYs 14, 15, 16, and 17 to the ex-officio NEP Director.<br><br>**EXEMPTION:**<br>*Galveston Bay will have PE one year later than would have in the previous PE process. Therefore, its review period covered (July 1, 2012 – June 30, 2018). Work plans to be reviewed: FYs 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17. |
| **April 19, 2019** | Deadline for PE team leaders to hold a conference call for the PE team members to compare notes after reviewing the PE package and submitting written comments to the PE team leader. |
| **May 17, 2019** | Deadline for PE team leaders to hold a conference call with the NEP Director and the PE team to discuss additional documentation needs, schedule the on-site visit, and identify issues that should be addressed during the on-site visit. |
| **May 20 – July 19, 2019** | Period for on-site visits. |

**LETTER DEVELOPMENT****

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|---|---|
| **2 weeks after visit** | Period to resolve any concerns rose during the on-site visit.<br>Deadline for team leader to prepare draft letter documenting the PE team's findings, recommendations, and rating. |
| **4 weeks after visit** | Deadline for PE team (Regional Coordinator and ex-officio NEP Director) to review and provide comments on draft letter. |
| **6 weeks after visit** | Deadline for NEP Director to review and provide comments on draft letter. |
| **9 weeks after visit** | Deadline for concurrence and signature by CMB Branch Chief. |
| **September 30, 2019** | All eight PE letters should be signed and sent out to the respective NEPs. |

** The schedule for the PE letter development assumes no major issues arise from the PE that requires extensive consultation.



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**2020: Group D (Period covered: July 1, 2014 – June 30, 2019)**
*Charlotte Harbor, Morro Bay, Columbia River, Barnegat Bay, Piscataqua Region Estuaries, San Francisco Estuary, Mobile Bay*

| | |
|---|---|
| **November 8, 2019** | NEP Directors should determine whether they can volunteer to serve on a PE team and notify to the PE Coordinator at EPA HQ. |
| **November 15, 2019** | EPA HQ will set up PE teams for Group D NEPs. |
| **December 15, 2019** | Deadline for PE team leader to hold a conference call with members of the team and the NEP Director to determine if existing reports fully address the PE questions and identify questions that call for additional documentation among other issues. |
| **March 16, 2020** | Due date for PE submittal package. **A total of three electronic copies are needed** (one for each EPA members of the PE team and one for the ex-officio NEP Director). EPA HQ Coordinator is responsible for making a file copy.<br><br>The PE team leader sends electronic copies of NEP work plans for FYs 15, 16, 17, and 18 to the ex-officio NEP Director. |
| **April 13, 2020** | Deadline for PE team leaders to hold a conference call for the PE team members to compare notes after reviewing the PE package and submitting written comments to the PE team leader. |
| **May 15, 2020** | Deadline for PE team leaders to hold a conference call with the NEP Director and the PE team to discuss additional documentation needs, schedule the on-site visit, and identify issues that should be addressed during the on-site visit. |
| **May 18 – July 17, 2020** | Period for on-site visits. |

**LETTER DEVELOPMENT****

| | |
|---|---|
| **2 weeks after visit** | Period to resolve any concerns rose during the on-site visit.<br><br>Deadline for team leader to prepare draft letter documenting the PE team's findings, recommendations, and rating. |
| **4 weeks after visit** | Deadline for PE team (Regional Coordinator and ex-officio NEP Director) to review and provide comments on draft letter. |
| **6 weeks after visit** | Deadline for NEP Director to review and provide comments on draft letter. |
| **9 weeks after visit** | Deadline for concurrence and signature by CMB Branch Chief. |
| **September 30, 2020** | All seven PE letters should be signed and sent out to the respective NEPs. |

** The schedule for the PE letter development assumes no major issues arise from the PE that requires extensive consultation.



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**Attachment 5: <u>Responsibilities for the Parties involved in the Program Evaluation Process</u>**

**EPA HQ**:

- HQ Program Evaluation (PE) Program Manager
  - oversee PE process
  - set up PE teams
  - distribute NEP PE guidance
  - prepare PE finding report
- HQ NEP coordinators should provide assistance to NEPs, such as help interpreting the PE Guidance and/or feedback on the draft PE package, upon request
- PE team leader
  - schedule conference calls with members of the team and the NEP Director
  - send electronic copies of the NEP work plans for the years covered within the PE cycle to the members of the team
  - review and comment on the NEP PE package
  - collect electronic comments from members of the team
  - coordinate and conduct the on-site visit
  - draft the PE letter for review and signature by EPA management
  - send final PE letter to the NEP

**EPA Regions**:

- provide assistance to NEPs, such as help interpreting the PE Guidance and/or feedback on the draft PE package, upon request
- PE team member
  - participate on conference calls
  - review the NEP PE package
  - submit electronic comments to the PE team leader
  - participate in the on-site visit
  - help draft the PE letter
  - review, comment and concur with the final draft PE letter

**Ex-officio NEP Director**:

- participate on conference calls
- review the NEP PE package
- submit written comments to the PE team leader
- participate in the on-site visit
- provide technical transfer assistance to the NEP undergoing the PE
- review and comment on the draft PE letter

**NEPs undergoing the PE**:

- prepare and submit the PE package to EPA HQ and Regions by March 15
- participate on conference calls
- address the PE team comments and provide any additional information requested by the PE team
- host the NEP on-site visit



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