Indicators Discussion Takeaways

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Summary:

1. The Chesapeake Bay Program's indicators framework includes influencing factors, outputs, and performance indicators to track implementation and progress toward Watershed Agreement outcomes. However, there is general interest in redefining Indicators.

2. There is a need for supplemental, more relatable metrics to enhance understanding and engagement.

3. Using AI to develop consistent vocabulary for potential factors and mapping their relevance across the outcomes to improve cross-outcome analysis.

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Redefining Indicators

Indicators should capture not just environmental metrics but also reflect the ecosystem response and how program actions and external factors influence progress.

We should consider having internal indicators (not public-facing) for performance and more contextual factors affecting success. This could support a more holistic assessment. Differentiating between "Big I" indicators vs "little I" indicators.

Aligning Indicators with public Communication

It's important to make indicators not only scientifically valid but also clear, relatable and capable of telling a story. Indicators should be used to build narratives that resonate with diverse audiences.

Indicators should help both policymakers and the public understand whether we are making meaningful progress. Efforts to communicate success should consider that maintaining conditions or slowing decline is often a victory, even if harder to explain.

Developing Consistent Vocabulary

John Wolf helped us in identifying consistent vocabulary for potential factors and mapping their relevance across the outcomes to improve cross-outcome analysis, support geographic targeting and enhance future management strategies.

Hershner et al. (2007) used a taxonomy for environmental indicators to evaluate how well CBP indicators function as meaningful indicators. The 30 indicators identified as "true indicators" were classified into 5 different functions: Condition, Evaluate, Diagnose, Communicate, and Futures.