Alliance for Water Stewardship

ISEAL M&E Public System Report 2016

Introduction to the Public System Reports

ISEAL members must produce and annually update a Public System Report for each of the ISEAL Codes. The main goal of the Public System Reports is to provide a simplified overview of the key aspects of the organisation’s associated system to stakeholders, e.g. Standard-setting, Assurance or Monitoring & Evaluation. For the Impacts Code, standards systems should prepare a narrative report that describes the various aspects of the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system and how they are interlinked. Reports must provide brief descriptions for all topic areas listed below.

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1. Scope and Boundaries of the M&E System

AWS’s M&E program is designed to:

- **Assess** the impact of implementing the AWS International Water Stewardship Standard v1.0 (AWS Standard)

- **Understand** how the AWS Standard, regional guidance and programmatic offerings could improve

- Enable a learning environment where gathered M&E data on water stewardship can contribute to the effective dissemination of knowledge amongst interested parties, in particular AWS members

- **Propel** water stewardship’s effectiveness in driving change
The AWS M&E program is organized around the AWS draft theory of change. The theory of change hypothesizes that successful water stewardship will only be achieved through actions at both the site and catchment levels. The AWS Standard will certify at the site level only, but also requires actions at the catchment level. The theory of change also outlines how water stewards are affected by and can affect the larger socio-economic context in which they operate. AWS’s supporting strategies will enable a step-wise approach to engaging in water stewardship, aid collective action at the catchment level, promote uptake of the Standard at the site level, and encourage connections to areas outside the traditional water space. To such ends, AWS must monitor and evaluate progress at three levels:

1) The Site
   - The Site level monitors water stewardship actions from the perspective of a site and evaluates what effect implementation of the Standard has had on site’s resiliency to water risk and opportunities to create shared benefits with others in the catchment.

2) The Catchment
   - The Catchment level monitors how collective water stewardship actions (or a lack thereof) translate into improved catchment health and evaluates where additional strategies should be leveraged to increase positive impact.

3) The AWS System
   - The System level monitors how effective AWS strategies are in specific contexts and evaluates how and where they can be improved.

AWS anticipates data monitoring at all sites for the first year with in-depth (long term focused) monitoring in at least one sub-catchment to begin early 2015. For the first catchment level monitoring program aimed at long term impact, AWS anticipates the need for a catchment that has several enabling conditions (data availability, willing catchment authority, and multiple sites engaged in water stewardship).

2. Roles and Responsibilities

AWS is currently transitioning its governance, membership and programmatic structure from one of standards development to one that is a standards-holding, membership-based and fully operational with a suit of supporting systems. Until the reorganized AWS is ‘launched’ in late 2016, responsibility for overall development and management of the M&E program, data collection, reporting and analysis currently lies with the current Secretariat and Standards Board Committee.

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The M&E program will be coordinated at an international secretariat level, where one Full-Time-Equivalent will focus on the larger M&E program. This FTE will serve as M&E manager and will operationalize the stakeholder-vetted M&E plan, create RFPs for learning opportunities, and will be responsible for initial knowledge management.

Ideally, M&E staff will expand to 3-5 in 5 years to facilitate long term impact evaluations in multiple catchments.
3. Defining the Intended Change

AWS has developed a draft theory of change (ToC) for successful water stewardship (Appendix B Figure 1). This draft ToC nestles water stewardship within the larger social, economic and political environment. AWS recognizes that in order to maximize water stewardship benefits for stakeholders, additional supporting strategies or programs are necessary to create an enabling environment. Additionally, this outline helps show the role that successful water stewardship actions can plan in providing benefits and opportunities so that larger social, economic and political environment.

4. Performance Monitoring

Currently, draft indicators to measure impact are under discussion within the AWS Standard Board Committee and an outside stakeholder-reference group prior to stakeholder consultation on the larger M&E program. Overall, the indicators are divided into three sections: indicators at the AWS Standard-Site level, indicators at the AWS Standard-Catchment level, and then at the AWS System level (includes all strategies together).

5. Outcome and impact evaluation

The desired outcomes of water stewardship are four-fold: good water governance, sustainable water balance, good water quality status and healthy important water-related areas. These four outcomes deliver proximate benefits for the environment and ultimately, deliver on social and economic impacts.

It is important to note that these four outcomes are most sustainable when achieved collectively. Sites are expected to contribute to these outcomes via on-site management, engagement with others and collective action, but are not responsible for achieving them through individual efforts. Nevertheless, these outcomes underpin the Standard and sites’ actions when implementing it.

Outcomes are not intended to be audited within the AWS Standard per se; rather, they are broad, fundamental tenets of water stewardship. The criteria in the Standard are designed to help sites to strive for these outcomes and are verifiable through the indicators.

Impact evaluation is still in development.

6. Improving the Effectiveness of the M&E system

The remainder of the M&E Program, still in development, will expand on the information included in this System Report as well as include information on:
- plans and systems for outcome and impact evaluations
- how evaluations will be used for internal discussion, learning and capacity building
- plans and systems for transparency and stakeholder involvement
- indicators and data sources

7. Opportunities for engagement

Please contact Richard Robertson, Technical Manager richard@allianceforwaterstewardship.org for submission of any comments, questions or complaints about the M&E System.