

## Discussion Notes: Outcomes and Outputs

March 5, 2025 Office Hours

### Some Collective Comfort Behind the Following Definitions

**Outcome:** The change in state we aim to influence or the future state we aspire to reach as a consequence of our actions and their outputs. “The difference made by outputs.”

- Long-term effects on complex systems or situations that have multiple variables impacting success.
- May be more general, directional, and aspirational, given the restored or sustained state we aim to reach.
- May or may not have a clear or closely-related indicator for tracking trends over time. But measurement can help assess whether our outputs are having the desired impact on the outcome.
- Reflects the purpose or the “why” of the activities we are undertaking and the outputs we are producing.

**Output:** The more direct products of the actions we plan for and take as partners.

- Shorter-term deliverables, and potentially tiered or interim steps toward an outcome.
- Potentially easier to make specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound.
- Measurement or tracking of outputs is more directly related to our work and activities, more indicative of whether the policies and resources we have in place are being effective.

### **Acknowledged:**

- Not all outcomes or outputs may have indicators, but it is important that for each topic, there is an outcome or an output being tracked to assess progress. If there is no way to track our work on a topic, there is no way to identify whether we are doing the work effectively or at all.
- There should be a group of partners working toward every outcome and output. This may not mean one workgroup for every outcome or output. A one-size-fits-all approach may not make sense. But an outcome and output without partners behind it has been set up to fail.
- Every outcome or output can be written as an outcome or an output of something else. Some outputs may contribute to the achievement of multiple outcomes. And every outcome is ultimately an output of a healthy Bay and watershed. There is no one right way to nest and distinguish this work. We need to settle on one common way for clarity.

### **Continuing questions:**

- Fundamentally, what does it mean to be an output? Does it have a workgroup? Is it written into the Agreement document?
- Should we aim to include within the refreshed Agreement “two sentence” outcomes that combine both the long-term change and the SMART short-term deliverable(s)? Or, should we retain the long-term outcome in the Agreement and capture the deliverable outputs in a separate document that can be updated with more ease and regularity?
  - What are the pros and cons of having outcomes and outputs in an “evergreen” Agreement? Do we have the ability to prepare “two sentence outcomes” by the end of 2025? What happens for those we cannot: are they included as is and updated or are they left out until finished? Would recommending outcomes by the end of 2025 and continuing to work on outputs give us time to be more thoughtful about our short-term deliverables? Do we lose the ability to drive attention and resources to outputs if they are in a different CBP partner document?

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- Are we structurally moving toward only outcomes having workgroups? Looking at the existing workgroups, is this possible or productive?
- Do the WIP outcomes become outputs?
- Goals, outcomes, and outputs make up only part of the logic model. At what time does it make sense for outcome partners to continue to build out the logic model with activities, resources/inputs?