

# NATURE BASED SOLUTIONS

## TASK FORCE MEETING 3

APRIL 2026

# Background & Purpose

## Nature-based Solutions Task Force “NbS Task Force” goals:

Champion the implementation of NbS to improve the health of communities and ecosystems throughout Los Angeles County by:

- 1 Developing a countywide definition and standard for Nature-based Solutions
- 2 Creating a framework to more effectively prioritize Nature-based Solutions in stormwater capture projects, and
- 3 Building upon the LA County Safe, Clean Water Program’s (SCWP) Metrics & Monitoring Study and 2025 Interim Guidance.

## Phase 2 Purpose

**Recommend metrics tied to the Task Force's proposed Definition, Standard, and Criteria**, ensuring they are measurable, tangible, and rooted in ecological and social outcomes.

- **Frame metrics to encourage comprehensive, systems-based assessment of Nature-based Solutions**, capturing benefits across hydrology, soil health, vegetation, climate resilience, and long-term functionality.

**Discuss the integration of these metrics into the Safe, Clean Water Program**, including Watershed Area reporting, tracking progress, and longer-term program evaluation.

**Explore approaches for Countywide Application**, exploring how Nature-based Solutions metrics may be adopted or adapted across planning processes, departmental initiatives, and multi-agency collaborations beyond SCWP.

# Meeting Objectives

- Discuss the NbS Metrics Survey
- Review proposed models for the Working Metric Design
  - Pre-Implementation and Post-Implementation
  - NbS Assessment
  - Design Intent

# Introductions

## Please Share:

- Name, pronouns, affiliation.
- Icebreaker: Share a hike or area nearby you've been curious to explore, but haven't made time for yet?



**Draft NbS Task Force  
Recommendations Report**



**Visual 2-page Summary**

# NbS Definition(s)

**NbS Definition:** Nature-based Solutions address societal challenges through **sustainable actions** that **protect and restore living ecosystems and their functions** to ensure **human well-being** and benefit **biodiversity** by meeting the established NbS standard and associated criteria.

**Water-specific Definition:** Nature-based Solutions address **water quality, water supply and stormwater challenges** through **sustainable actions** that **protect and restore living ecosystems and their functions** to ensure **human well-being** and benefit **biodiversity** by meeting the established NbS standard and associated criteria.

# NbS Standard:

**NbS Standard:** Nature-based Solutions must implement **place-appropriate** and **evidence-backed living processes and infrastructure**, such as soil and vegetation, to improve **long-term ecosystem function, habitat connectivity, and community health and well-being**. Success of Nature-based Solutions should be **qualitatively and quantitatively evaluated** using the following criteria and indicators (full set of criteria outlined in the Standard, to be read as an integrated framework, can be found in the report).

# NbS Criteria

## Key NbS Criteria

*Foundational for any project to qualify as a Nature-based Solution*

**Criterion 1:** NbS result in a benefit to biodiversity and ecosystem integrity.

**Criterion 2:** Design of NbS is informed by scale.

**Criterion 3:** NbS effectively respond to societal and communal challenges.

**Criterion 4:** NbS are a communal asset cared for through adaptive management and stewardship.

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## Project-Level Guidance

***Criteria for application across all projects including NbS***

**Criterion 5:** Economic viability over time.

**Criterion 6:** Projects balance trade-offs and ensure equitable outcomes.

## Program-Level Guidance

***Criteria for broader policy and governance structures that enable NbS***

**Criterion 7:** Inclusive, transparent, and empowering governance.

**Criterion 8:** Alignment across jurisdictions and agencies.

# Metrics and Indicators

## Measures

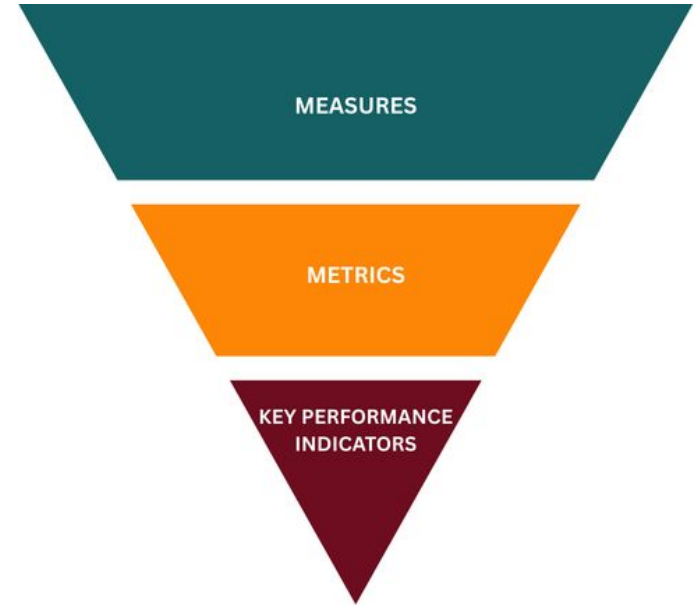
Measures are raw pieces of data that quantify a specific attribute or condition (e.g., square feet of permeable surface installed, number of trees planted, gallons of stormwater captured).

## Metrics (PMs)

Metrics, referred to interchangeably in the SCWP as **Performance Measures (PMs)**, are standardized values derived from one or more measures. **Metrics quantify benefits provided by individual projects or programs and may express relationships among data points** (e.g., gallons captured per acre, trees planted per project). While metrics are measurable and used for analysis, they do not necessarily correspond directly to a target or objective.

## Indicators (Key Performance Indicators)

Indicators (or KPIs) are a subset of metrics that measure progress toward defined goals or targets. In the context of the Safe, Clean Water Program, indicators aggregate or summarize Metrics (PMs) at the Watershed Area scale and at the SCWP-wide scale. Indicators are used to quantify cumulative benefits of SCWP-funded projects and to communicate and track progress toward Watershed and Program goals.



# What Are Indicators? *(and Why They Matter)*

- Indicators are a subset metrics that measure progress toward goals or targets
- They provide insight into:
  - Current progress
  - Trends over time
  - Effectiveness of strategies and actions
- Indicators translate complex goals into trackable, communicable metrics

(source: Results Based Accountability & USEPA Handbook for Watershed Planning)

GOALS

INDICATORS

TARGETS

STRATEGIES

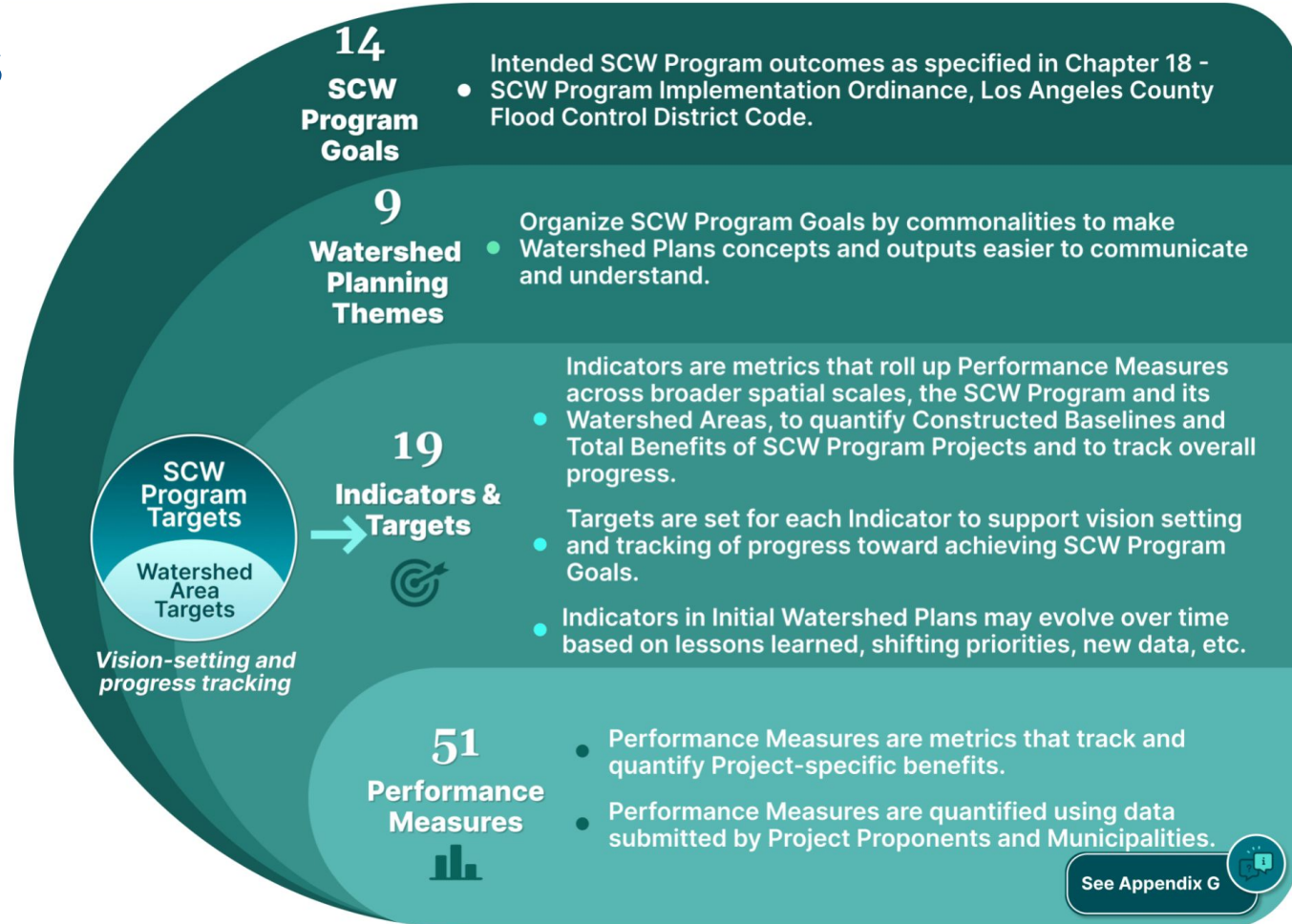
# How to Pick Useful Metrics

The key to ensuring the usefulness of metrics is to limit the number used. In most cases, select 3 to 5 metrics from the list of candidate metrics based on the following criteria:

- 1 Communication Power.** Does this metric communicate to a broad range of audiences? Would those who pay attention to your work (e.g., voters, legislators, agency program officers) understand what this metrics means? Communication power means that the data must have clarity with diverse audiences.
- 2 Proxy Power.** Does the metric say something of central importance about the result? (Or is it peripheral?) Can this metric stand as a proxy for the plain English statement of well-being? What pieces of data really get at the heart of the matter?
- 3 Data Power.** Do we have quality data on a timely basis? We need data which is reliable and consistent. And we need timely data so we can see progress, or the lack thereof.

Rate each candidate metric “high,” “medium,” or “low” for each criterion. Metrics that have high ratings for all three criteria are good choices for metrics.

# Existing Metrics



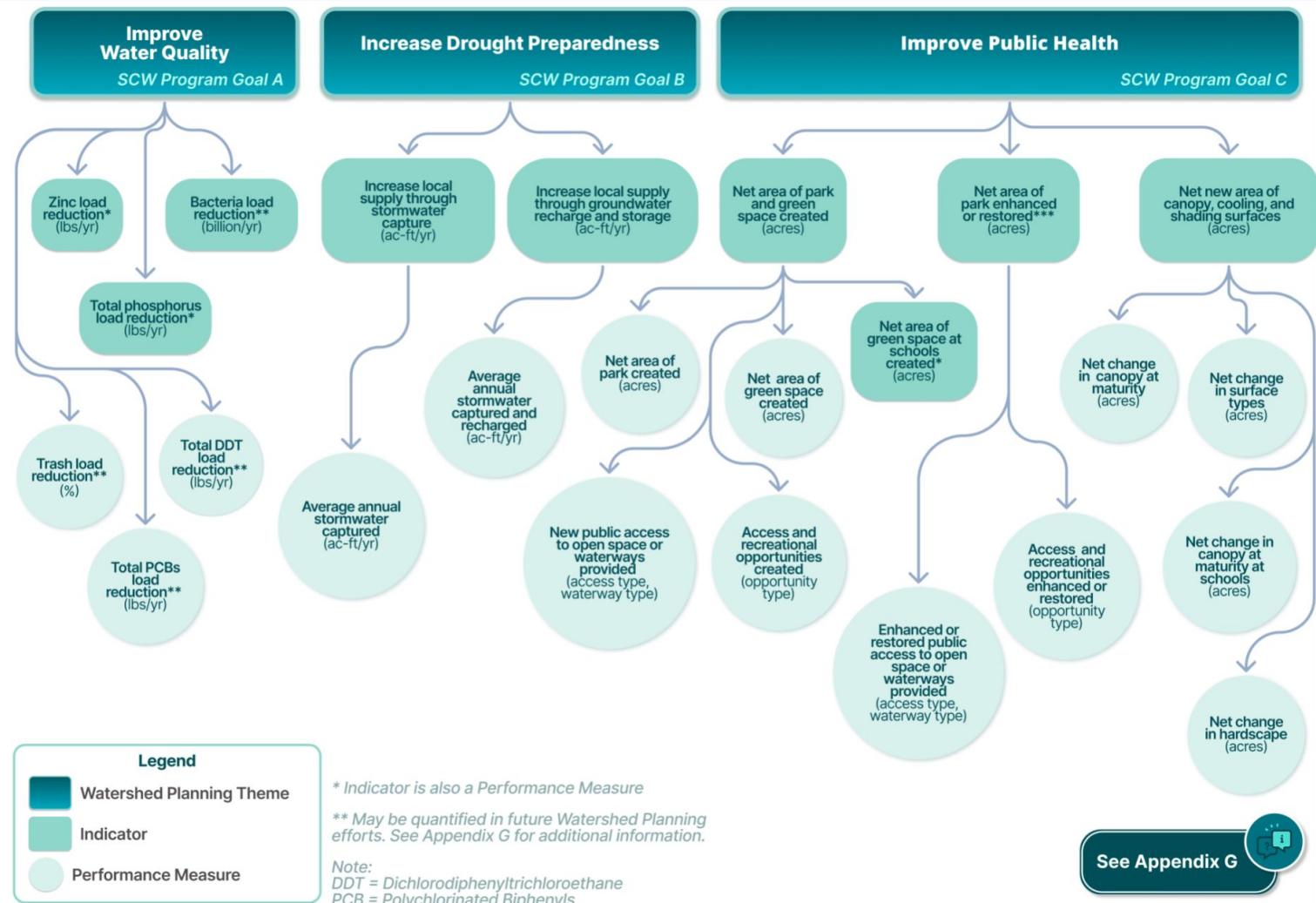
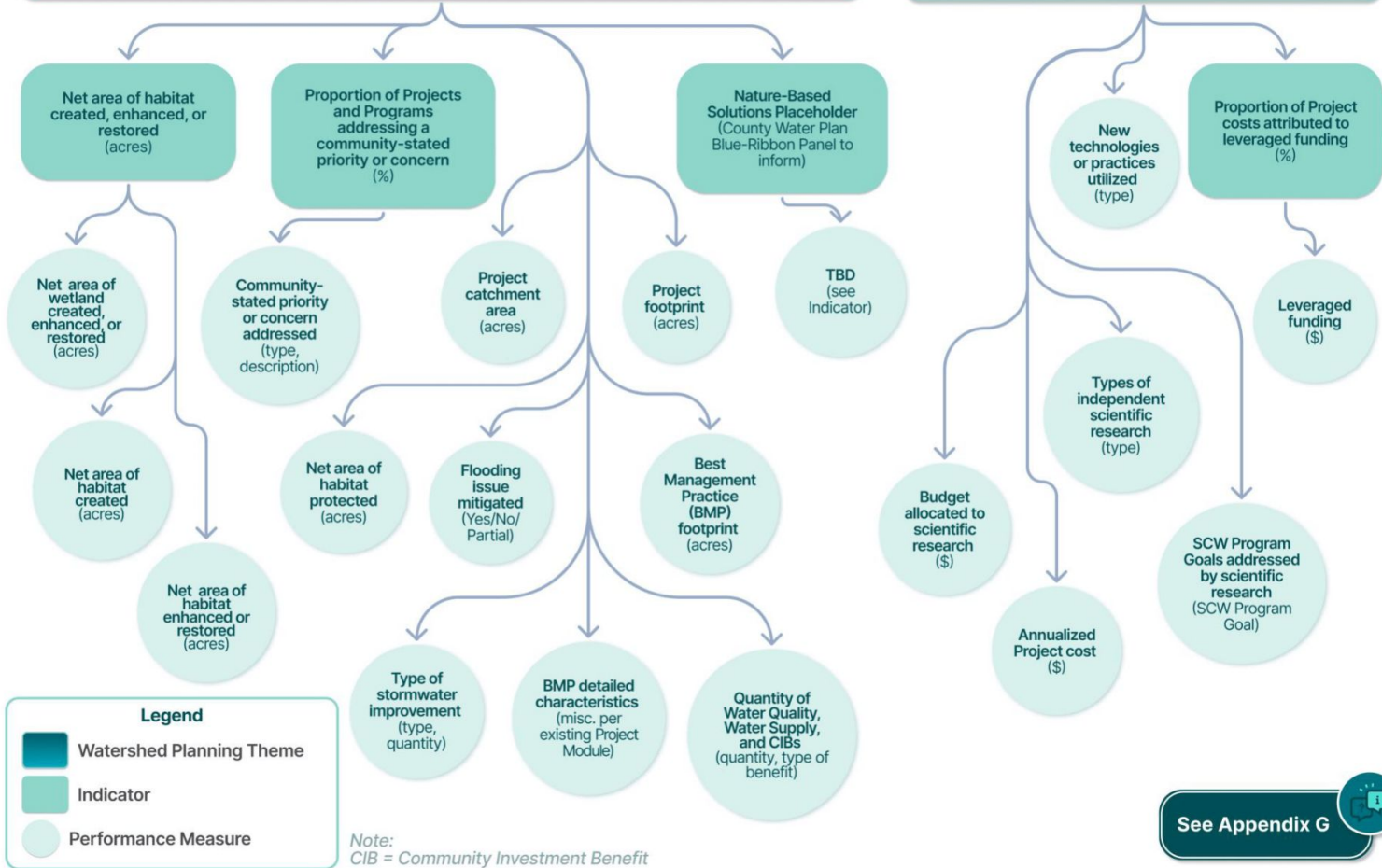


Figure 4-2. Indicators and PMs

**Deliver Multi-Benefits with Nature-Based Solutions and Diverse Projects**  
SCW Program Goals E, F, G

**Leverage Funding & Invest in Research & Development**  
SCW Program Goals D, H, I



See Appendix G

Figure 4-2. Indicators and PMs (continued)

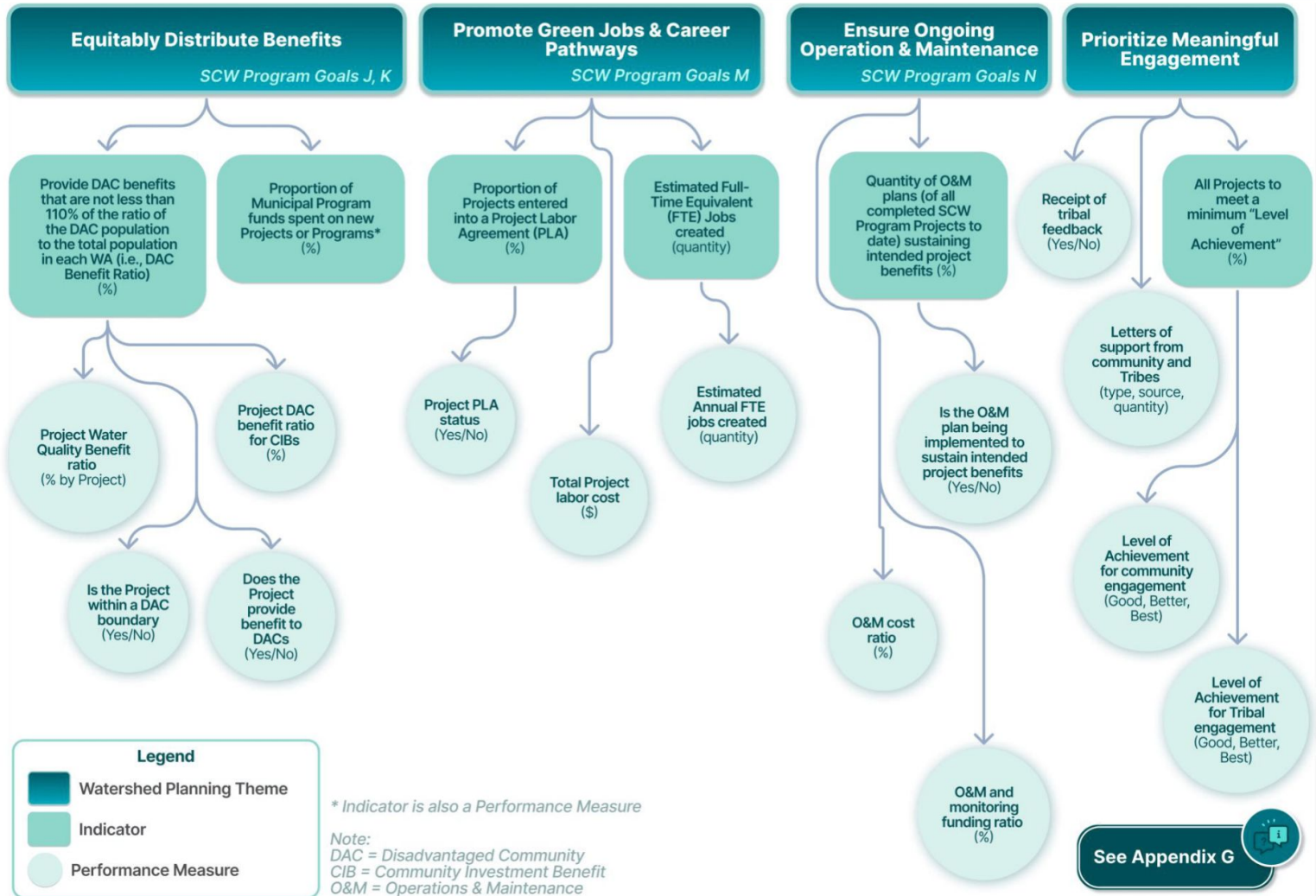


Figure 4-2. Indicators and PMs (continued)

# Additional Categories of Metrics

Suggested **Additional Categories of Metrics** were suggested including

- **Improved Soil Health**
  - **Suggested metrics include:** Soil Biodiversity or other Bioindicators, Soil Structure and Aggregate Stability, Soil Infiltration Rate, Soil Organic Matter, Absorption Rate, Soil Temperature, Water Holding Capacity, and Cooling Air Time.
- **Functional flows Metrics**
  - **Suggested metrics include:** Streamflow Regimes, Base Flow Maintenance, Floodplain Connectivity, Sediment Transport, Biodiversity Indicators, and Ecosystem Resilience.
- **Tree Canopy**
  - **Suggested metrics include:** Percentage of the site covered by Tree Canopy, Projected Mature Tree Canopy, Net Change in Tree Canopy on Project Site (based on projected tree maturity), Net New Tree Canopy.
- **Biodiversity**
  - **Suggested Project Design Metrics:** % of Existing Habitat Restored, % Increase in Native Plant Cover, Number of Culturally Significant Species Expected to Return, Target Species Return/Increase, Indicator Species designed for
  - **Additional Post-Project Implementation Metrics:** Macroinvertebrate Pollinator Presence/Diversity, Habitat Complexity Index, Presence of Bird or Amphibian Indicator Species.
- **Ecosystem Health and Function**
  - **Suggested Ecosystem Health and Function Metrics Include:** Acres of Riparian or Wetland Habitat Restored/Created, Species Composition, Habitat Structure, and Ecosystem Processes, Diversity of Species Richness, Resilience Measured by Recovery Time, Species Richness and Functional Diversity, Habitat Structure and Vegetation Arrangement, Habitat Connectivity Index, Connectivity Across Edge Zones (ecotones)

# Metrics Workshop

**Step 1:** Review the full metric list organized by criterion.

**Step 2:** Break into groups.

- For your assigned criterion, identify what must be measurably demonstrate for a project to meet that criterion.
- Identify an ideal project that meets this criterion.

**Step 3:** Review and expand the metric list. Add missing metrics and confirm which metrics help demonstrate the criterion. Do not remove metrics at this stage.

**Step 4:** Report back. Identify gaps and confirm a comprehensive metric set for each criterion.

**Step 5:** Confirm the approach for narrowing metrics at the next meeting.

# Metrics Survey Intent

## Purpose of the Survey

- The survey, completed by 8 respondents, aimed to narrow the refined list of metrics proposed during the previous workshop.
- Questions were based on the **NbS Metrics Spreadsheet with NbS edits**.
- Respondents were asked:
  - Which metrics were most crucial for demonstrating each of the four NbS Criteria
  - How site assessment questions should be refined
  - Which five cumulative metrics best represent the NbS Criteria

*While the survey did not fully resolve the metrics question, it provided enough direction to shift toward a more promising framework.*

# Metrics Survey Results

## Key Survey Feedback

- Metrics are too narrow, with too many metrics creating barriers
- Aspirational metrics (i.e. biodiversity outcomes, soil microbial diversity, bird species abundance, etc.) are difficult to measure at the design phase or post implementation, and will require long term monitoring.
- Suggested structure to move to a more qualitative set of questions that folds in the metrics/design guidance we are offering
- Need to focus on O+M Plans, post-implementation considerations, vegetation survival rate, and long-term stewardship

# Working Metric Design Considerations

*Initial Framing: Metrics were initially being asked to do three things at once:*

- Serve as metrics to meet NbS Criteria
- Provide design guidance to ensure a systems approach
- Create a roadmap for post-implementation monitoring in NbS projects

## Challenge

- The need for design guidance feels especially urgent because project proponents often design to scoring, and scoring structure is TBD.

## Key Recommendations

- **Countywide NbS Design guidance should be developed in collaboration with**
  - a. **Expertise: Ecologists, Biologists, Landscape Architects, etc.**
- **Ongoing expert review is needed to improve consistency, standardization, and legibility in NbS project assessment.**

## Key Question:

- Is there appetite for NbS design guidance in future phases?

# Working Metric Design Reframe

*Proposed Reframe: Rather than asking metrics to do everything, the framework can be organized into three components:*

1. **Site Context**
  - Establishes site conditions
  - Helps project proponents begin from an NbS mindset
2. **Pre- and Post-Implementation Assessment**
  - Complements the initial site assessment
  - Produces more consistent measures
  - Easier to roll up into dashboard metrics
  - Can be modeled on existing ecosystem assessment methods
3. **Design Intent + Qualitative NbS Evaluation**
  - Captures the bulk of the NbS criteria
  - Houses the main content and feedback generated through this process

*A handout has been prepared that details this working model for review and markup.*

# Working Metric Design Reframe

## Working NbS Evaluation Framework

1. Site Context
2. Design Intent
3. NbS Assessment
4. Pre- and Post-Implementation Assessment

## *Why this structure*

- *Separates design from metrics*
- *Supports site-specific flexibility*
- *Preserves the integrity of NbS as a design approach*
- *Creates a path for future dashboard alignment without compromising project design*

# 1. Site Context

*Establish site-specific baseline conditions and grounds project review in place-based ecological and social context and the NbS Criteria.*

## Core Components

- Location
- Habitat Type / Ecotone
- Baseline Ecological Condition
- Baseline Social Context
- Public Health + Environmental Justice Considerations
- Expected Post-Project Ecological Condition
- Off-Site Implementation Impacts

## 2. Design Intent

*Helps guide projects toward key ecological functions and conditions*

- Project proponents select **Design Intent categories** the project is designed to advance
- Projects should address a **minimum number of design intents**
- Each selected category includes **examples of potential functional objectives** for guidance
- These examples are **not prescriptive, required, or design-phase metrics**
- Proponents provide a **short narrative** describing how selected design intents work together to create **ecological uplift**

### Example Design Intent Categories

- Hydrology & Water Systems
- Soil Health
- Biodiversity
- Habitat
- Connectivity
- Tree Canopy & Vegetation
- Remediation & Water Quality
- Climate Resilience

# 3. NbS Assessment

*Project's alignment with the NbS Criteria is most clearly evaluated*

## **NbS Assessment Includes:**

- Area of functional NbS created or restored
- What problem is being solved
- Whether the project is solving that problem through nature
- Tribal consultation and community engagement
- Care plan / stewardship approach
- Narrative describing the project's systems approach

## 4. Pre + Post Implementation

### Proposal

Use an established assessment model for pre- and post-implementation evaluation, such as:

- *5-point assessment method*
- *CRAM*
- *Envision*
- *Sustainable Sites SITES Rating System and Scorecard*
- *NatureServe's Ecological Integrity Assessment Method (pg. 20)*

# Break-out Groups

To continue iterating on the framework, break into smaller groups focused on:

## Design Intent

- Refine and confirm Design Intent categories
- Clarify scope and definitions for each category

## NbS Assessment

- Refine and rephrase assessment questions
- Reorganize question order for clarity and flow
- Identify and incorporate additional considerations

## Pre- and Post-Implementation Criteria / Assessment Models

- Review available assessment models (e.g., CRAM, 5-point assessment, ARTC)
- Suggest additional approaches
- Pick a favorite and provide feedback on its applicability to NbS + any necessary adjustments

*Site Context appears relatively well established through the last meeting and survey*

# Group Discussion

## Breakout Group Reflections

- How are all the pieces of the framework coming together?
- What considerations may still be missing?
- What additional input or information is needed?

## Next Steps:

- Tanishka + Rebecca to translate feedback into a draft project portal page

# Phase 2 Anticipated Schedule

~~Jan. 20, 2026 | Kick-off Meeting~~

~~Feb. 10, 2026 | In-person Task Force Meeting 1~~

~~Mar. 10, 2026 | In-person Task Force Meeting 2~~

~~Mar. 20, 2026 | Virtual Report Out 1~~

~~Apr. 7, 2026 | In-person Task Force Meeting 3~~

May 5, 2026 | In-person Task Force Meeting 4

Late May, 2026 | Virtual Report Out 2

June 2, 2026 | In-person Task Force Meeting 5