

Final Report

Biosecurity and sustainability in the banana industry

Project leader:

Jim Pekin/Leanne Erakovic

Delivery partner:

Australian Banana Growers' Council

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BA19005

Project:

Biosecurity and sustainability in the banana industry (BA19005)

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Level 7

141 Walker Street

North Sydney NSW 2060

Telephone: (02) 8295 2300

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Public summary

Governments as well as non-government stakeholders increasingly want to engage with industry in the development and implementation of policy and programs. It is reassuring that they are driven to have their policy settings derived from the real experiences of growers. However, it is critical that industries have the capacity to participate in this consultation or risk being left outside of the policy and program development process. The best way to ensure industry's needs are considered and incorporated into decisions is for industry to be present at the table – to influence policy with an evidence base from the ground up. An important outcome that dominated the work of this project was to provide a “voice” for the banana industry when it is invited to sit at these tables to discuss biosecurity and sustainability issues. The government has identified biosecurity and water quality/sustainability as two key priority areas. There is a close alignment between the government's priorities and the priority areas outlined in the *Banana Strategic Investment Plan 2022 – 2026 (BSIP)*. This project connected government and industry priorities and allowed the banana industry to proactively collate evidence and prepare responses to issues that ensure that growers and their environment and communities continue to prosper.

In addition to improving policy and program development, the BA19005 project has also successfully delivered on three other outcomes:

- Enabled the ABGC's Best Management Practice team (and other banana-related projects) to help growers make more informed decisions about biosecurity and sustainability, resulting in better environmental and productivity outcomes.
- Worked to provide an industry that is well regarded and recognized for its attitude and positive actions in relation to biosecurity and sustainability.
- Provided better alignment between banana related projects to leverage greater benefits for banana growers and funding bodies.

BA19005 was delivered by the Australian Banana Growers' Council through the employment of an Industry Strategy Manager (ISM). The ISM worked with important stakeholders to seek input in determining the priorities that need to be tackled to keep the industry profitable. This resulted in the banana industry's involvement in issues that include the:

- Co-development of environmental programs and regulations.
- transition of the TR4 Program from government to industry leadership.
- contribution to the national and Queensland biosecurity strategies.
- introduction of the biosecurity protection levy.
- water quality improvements.

The ISM has also successfully influenced and negotiated with the Australian and Queensland governments to fund water quality and biosecurity projects for the benefit of the banana industry. The total funding for these projects during BA19005 exceeds \$4.4m and will leave a legacy of improved capability across the industry.

The project was independently evaluated and found to be very effective in delivering on its purpose and desired outcomes. It had a significant impact. The key success factors were the ISM's existing relationships, background, knowledge, skill set and attitude. The report confirmed that stakeholders thought it was essential to have someone dedicated to strategy and looking to the horizon to identify, assess and take on emerging issues. It was recommended that this role continue to be funded after the end of the BA19005 project.

Technical summary

Not applicable.

Keywords

Banana; Practice change; Influence; Broker; Biosecurity; Sustainability; Environment; Best Management Practice; Strategy development; Representation.

Introduction

Governments as well as non-government stakeholders increasingly want to engage with industry in the development and implementation of policy and programs. It is reassuring that they are driven to have their policy settings derived from the real experiences of growers. However, it is critical that industries have the capacity to participate in this consultation or risk being left outside of the policy development process. The best way to ensure industry's needs are considered and incorporated into decisions is for industry to be present at the table – to influence policy. An important outcome that dominated the work of this project was to provide a “voice” for the banana industry when it is invited to sit at these tables to discuss biosecurity and sustainability issues. The government has identified biosecurity and water quality/sustainability as two key priority areas. There is a close alignment between the government's priorities and the priority areas outlined in the *Banana Strategic Investment Plan 2022 – 2026 (BSIP)*. This project connected government and industry priorities and allowed the banana industry to prepare responses to issues that may impact growers' future profitability.

In addition to influencing policy development, the BA19005 project has also delivered on three other outcomes:

- Enabled the ABGC's Best Management Practice team (and other banana-related projects) to help growers make more informed decisions about biosecurity and sustainability.
- Worked to provide an industry that is well regarded and recognized for its attitude and positive actions in relation to biosecurity and sustainability.
- Provided better alignment between banana related projects to leverage greater benefits for banana growers and funding bodies.

The banana industry has taken a long-term view to the benefit of influencing policy making and implementation. BA19005 is the third project of this nature that has been funded by Hort Innovation at the request of the Banana Industry Strategic Investment Advisory Panel. This ongoing investment by the industry combined with project delivery by the ABGC, has meant that robust and highly effective relationships have been formed between the ABGC and key stakeholders. 'Trust between the tribes' has been formed and this is vital for a strong and lasting foundation that delivers results for the banana industry that may not be able to be achieved by other industries that do not have this type of resource.

Based on conversations with a range of people from both Hort Innovation and other agricultural peak bodies, this type of project is unusual. It doesn't fit neatly into the R, D & E boxes that Research and Development Corporations traditionally fund. It doesn't involve research trials, direct extension activities or grants that can be counted and measured. It is also hard to separate the role of the ISM and the person delivering the role, Michelle McKinlay. However, as this final report and the independent evaluation demonstrates, the project has been an effective investment of industry funds that has delivered excellent outcomes for banana growers. The banana industry is reaping the benefits of nine years of continuous investment. The successes have been highlighted throughout this report.

“The ISM advocates for the industry every day of the week. A lot of the time, growers don't see what she does – but she goes into bat for industry all the time and gives us a seat at the decision-making table. It's very important that we have that seat at the table”. (quote from banana grower interviewed for project review).

Methodology

As a way to explain the methodology used for this project, the sections below will discuss the why, what, when, where and how of the project.

THE WHY

The Banana Strategic Investment Plan (BSIP) 2017-2021 was in place at the time BA19005 commenced. Outcome 2 was the most relevant of the four strategic outcomes - *increased adoption of the industry's BMP plan that improves industry sustainability, biosecurity and environmental stewardship*. During the life of BA19005, the BSIP was revised and an updated version was released to cover the years 2022 – 2026. Under this BSIP, two outcomes had relevance:

- Outcome 1 - Industry supply, productivity and sustainability
- Outcome 3 – Extension and capability

BA19005 has been able to deliver outcomes and outputs that are relevant to all three strategic outcomes however most focus is on the outcomes featured in the BSIP 2022 – 2026.

THE WHAT

The project's purpose was to interpret government biosecurity and environmental policy and facilitate the implementation of this policy to support the banana industry. During the life of this project there was a significant emphasis on regulatory policy in water quality improvement. Through this project, banana growers have had the opportunity to educate themselves about the impending biosecurity and environmental policy changes and be prepared for direct or indirect impacts to their business. Part of this preparedness strategy has been to highlight the need for BMP adoption - changes to farming practices that will deliver both improved water quality leaving farms, better on farm biosecurity and less risk to profitability. This project also provided relevant industry monitoring of emerging issues and technical banana farming advice to inform policy and Government committees. As elaborated on in other sections of this report, this project has successfully collaborated with several other projects to deliver more of a joined-up approach to service delivery for banana growers.

THE WHEN and THE WHERE

The project commenced in September 2020 and concluded in September 2023. During this time, Queensland and Australia experienced the covid pandemic. ABGC was well positioned to deal with the lockdowns that occurred over those years. Working from home was an easy transition with the technology and other support systems already in place and staff were trained. This meant that meetings with stakeholders that had previously been held face to face or by teleconference became video and phone calls. There were a few bi-annual interstate biosecurity meetings that were cancelled due to travel restrictions. As the project was based in Brisbane, the ISM was unable to travel to North Queensland to spend time with other staff and growers. The project's achievement of outcomes and outputs was not majorly impacted.

THE HOW

Appointment of Industry Strategy Manager

Jim Pekin, former CEO of the ABGC, was the original Project Leader. Since his retirement in October 2022, this role has been transferred to Leanne Erakovic, the current CEO. To deliver this three-year project, the ABGC reappointed Michelle McKinlay as the Project Manager. Within the ABGC organizational structure, Michelle's job title was Industry Strategy Manager. Michelle, as the ISM, had the appropriate skills, knowledge, background and relationships with growers and non-grower stakeholders, and was immediately effective in implementing the project. Information obtained from the internet suggests that it takes two years for a person to become efficient and effective in their job. Given the project length was three years, it was beneficial for banana growers and non-grower stakeholders that the ISM had experience and could hit the ground running with not a minute lost to project establishment. The Hort Innovation decision to award the project to the ABGC maximized the outcomes from the industry's investment in this project.

There was also benefit in having the ISM located in Brisbane as it is easy to access government policy makers who are also based in Brisbane. This makes relationship-building and maintenance a faster process delivering more effective outcomes faster. The ISM travelled to North Queensland on average 12 times per year to maintain links with staff, other North Queensland based projects and growers.

Setting priorities

The number of topics that the ISM could get involved in are limitless. But the resources of one person are very limited and as such, a process of priority setting is vital. The ISM developed annual workplans that are described in the governance section of the methodology. To determine priorities and feed into these workplans, the ISM sought advice from sources that are briefly described below.

Project Reference Committee

To support the priority setting for the project, a Project Reference Committee (PRC) was formed. Its membership included the Tegan Cavallaro leader of the National Extension Project, Rebecca Sapuppo a Biosecurity Queensland policy officer based at South Johnstone, Olive Hood and Sarah Strutt the R&D Managers from Hort Innovation and the ISM (project manager). These meetings were an opportunity to provide feedback and expert guidance to the ISM on both horizon issues as well as issues that might already be impacting the banana industry (particularly the north Queensland banana industry). In addition to the formal meetings, the ISM also maintained regular informal contact with individual PRC members (during trips to north Queensland, by phone and email). The ISM had scheduled monthly meetings with the leader of the National Extension Project and other DAF extension staff to look for opportunities to collaborate and to avoid overlap.

Throughout this project, the ISM was responsible for leading and managing the ABGC's Best Management Practice extension team based at South Johnstone. The team consisted of three extension officers who were funded by the Queensland and Australian Governments to deliver environmental extension to growers via six different projects (in the life of BA19005).

The ISM and the BMP team had a very constructive and productive relationship that provided an important alignment between strategy development and growers' lived experience. The organizational structure helped to facilitate the sharing of information both ways – from 'the top down' (government to growers via the ISM and extension team) and 'the bottom up' (from growers to government via the extension team and the ISM). The BMP teams' daily interaction with growers meant that the ISM was aware of issues impacting growers. The existence of the BMP team and the formal link to the ISM is a key success factor for the delivery of BA19005.

The ISM has also established her own relationships and networks of growers and regularly calls on these people to provide insight into the biosecurity and environmental issues that 'keep them awake at night'. This was an excellent source of intelligence for priority setting.

Industry leaders

The ISM had excellent insight into the issues impacting growers through frequent meetings with the ABGC Directors and other industry leaders. The Directors represent three banana growing states and would express concerns relating to each jurisdiction. The benefit of these meetings was that the ISM could understand issues impacting across Queensland, NSW and WA giving a more holistic picture of the national industry. Discussions with growers are always rich with learnings which help to set priorities.

Government and other non-grower stakeholders

The ISM has formed long-term relationships with senior departmental officers and this is an effective way of keeping informed about issues that are priorities for government. Government priorities can quickly become industry priorities and the environmental regulations are a clear example of this. There is strong trust between the ISM and stakeholders that often results in information being shared confidentially. These "heads ups" conversations can be invaluable to allow the ISM to work out how to best communicate issues with relevant stakeholders and work out the information needed to allow the banana industry to help shape the agenda.

Engagement processes

Hub and spoke delivery model

To deliver this project, the ISM has engaged with many project teams as part of network and knowledge building. This has resulted in a strategic understanding of the collaborative effort supporting banana industry-relevant biosecurity and environmental projects. In addition to the macro picture, the ISM has also enjoyed the opportunity take a deep dive into some projects to get a detailed understanding of how the project outcomes will benefit the industry and help shape outcomes. The ISM has linked similar projects, shared knowledge and learnings and reduced the chance of duplication.

Appendix 1 explains this role using a hub and spoke model. The ISM is the hub at the centre of the diagram. As the hub, the ISM gathered significant amounts of information about the industry, growers, emerging issues, production, economic factors, supply chain and the outcomes from a number of banana projects. The ISM digested this information, joined dots, created and extended networks and acted as a one stop shop for the many people trying to gain an insight and better understand of the banana industry.

As a result of this centralized knowledge bank, many project leaders, especially those who are new to the industry, gravitated towards the ISM as a source of reliable and trusted advice. These project teams became the spokes of the model with information travelling between the hub and the spokes to strengthen project outcomes. Due to the diversity and number of projects impacting the banana industry, the ISM successfully used this model across both the biosecurity and sustainability project areas.

The six primary roles of the ISM

At a project specific or initiative level, the ISM engaged with stakeholders using different skills, techniques and roles to move an issue forward. The mix of each role varied according to the nature and developmental stage of an initiative. The categorization of these roles came from conversations with the independent evaluator and helped to coherently articulate the way in which the ISM has achieved outcomes over three years. The six main roles are:

- **Broker** – A key function of this position was two-way knowledge translation and brokerage, including between growers, industry, government and scientists. The ISM also supported growers' awareness of their obligations and opportunities within the policy and regulatory environment.
- **Influencer** – This role gave growers a well-informed and experienced technical voice at a range of decision-making tables, negotiating and guiding the best possible outcomes for industry. This position also supported and influenced the thinking and decision-making process of the ABGC Board.
- **Designer** – The ISM identified, pursued, conceived and constructed new initiatives and projects to benefit industry.
- **Overseer** – The ISM oversaw and supported a team of BMP extension officers who delivered a suite of direct grower engagement projects.
- **Connector** – The ISM built beneficial partnerships, linked organisations, individuals and initiatives for shared learning, delivery efficiencies and mutually beneficial collaboration.
- **Mentor** – This role provided informal problem solving and creative thinking support and advice for BMP Team members, ABGC colleagues as well as partners.

Governance

Foundation project documentation

In line with the Milestone Achievement Criteria and Deliverables, all governance documents were prepared and submitted to Hort Innovation as part of Milestone 102. This included the Project Logic, M&E Plan, Risk Register, Stakeholder Engagement Plan. The PRC referred to these documents, particularly the Risk Register, throughout the life of the project.

All work completed as part of BA19005 aligned to the agreed outputs and outcomes of the project.

Project Reference Committee

The PRC (described above) met formally every six months except for one milestone period in the final year of the project. These meetings were designed as a touch base to monitor the project's progress and ensure risks were being adequately monitored and mitigated. Draft annual workplans were provided to the PRC members for discussion about the impending priorities, workload and sharing of experience in leading projects. These meetings, often reflective in nature, were valuable for the ISM in establishing a work plan for the next 6-12 months.

Annual workplans

An annual work plan outlined the ISM's proposed priority activities and outputs for the next 12 month period. This draft document was presented to the PRC each year for their input and when finalized, submitted to Hort Innovation as part of

a Milestone Report.

During these discussions, the PRC members provided advice about the feasibility of undertaking some projects – facilitating a discussion to make sure that the ISM attended to the highest industry priorities. Input from growers and other non-grower stakeholders also influenced the priorities in the annual work plan.

Milestone reports

Progress on the Milestone Achievement Criteria was submitted to Hort Innovation every six months. These reports mapped the progress of implementing the issues outlined in the Annual Work Plan. All milestone reports were accepted and approved by Hort Innovation.

Project review

An independent review of the project commenced in January 2023 and was completed in March 2023 (Appendix 3). A summary of the evaluation results is provided in the M&E section of this final report.

Project summary

An infographic depicting the impact of the project can be found at Appendix 4.

Results and discussion

The nature of this project means that it is difficult to quantifiably measure its benefits. The dataset is a record of conversations gained from the 35 interviews conducted by the independent evaluator. These are well recorded in the evaluation report. The evaluator has provided numerous quotes as evidence to support the benefits derived by a large number of stakeholders with whom the ISM has interacted. The evaluator also worked with the project leader (the ISM) to capture the key achievements of the three-year project.

The independent review dedicates 20 pages (page 10 – page 30) to discussing the achievements derived from this project and has structured them according to the four outcomes in the project logic. For the purposes of reporting on “results,” this final report will refer to the headline achievements. More details are contained in the evaluation report as well as the milestone reports that were submitted to Hort Innovation every six months.

Results from Outcome 1 – BMP/other project team’s support

The original project logic included the outcome *“Growers are better informed about biosecurity and environmental issues and policy and make better decisions to increase their profitability.”* In discussions with Hort Innovation and the ISM it became clear that this project contributes to grower awareness and decision making indirectly, primarily through supporting the ABGC Best Management Practice (BMP) team, and to a lesser extent, other project teams.

Tangible examples of this project’s direct achievements with regard to this outcome include:

- The ISM has been critical to the success of the BMP Team in a wide range of ways, including planning, priority setting, establishing a grower centric culture, team dynamics, mentoring, capacity building as well as providing general project oversight.
- The ISM’s leadership on the conceptualisation and planning for the BMP3 project, has resulted in a renewed focus and approach to the next phase of investment. As a lead negotiator of the BMP3 project with OGBR, the ISM was supported by the BMP Team to present a compelling case for funding, seeking investment totaling substantially higher than the original OGBR budget for bananas. The ISM (with the team) prosecuted the case effectively, securing the \$3.7m as requested, including \$1.5 million in direct grower grants.
- The ISM has secured additional investment to support Nutrient Management Planning in partnership with Innisfail CANEGROWERS, as well as funding from Terrain for a place-based water quality monitoring project. These projects (including the graduate project below) represent approximately \$800,000 in additional funding to *support growers to make better decisions and take positive action.*
- The ISM secured a new ABGC employee through the Queensland Farmers Federation (QFF) Graduate Program. This involved advocating to OGBR and QFF that the ABGC had reached a level of staffing where they could support a graduate. It also involved convincing the Board to fund 40% of the graduate salary. This officer is still

with ABGC and is implementing the ground cover and NMP projects, which now fully cover her salary. This move significantly added to the capacity to service the industry.

Results from Outcome 2 – Effective industry leadership and recognition.

This outcome was not included as part of the original project description and logic. Working with the evaluator, it became apparent that the extent to which this is a core part of the role the ISM plays in industry leadership. It has therefore been added to the revised Program Logic.

This outcome refers to the ISM's success to foster informed, rationale and forward-thinking industry leadership and build industry recognition and reputation. There is a clear link between industry reputation and the other outcomes of this project. The ISM was:

- appointed to the Biosecurity Queensland Ministerial Advisory Committee (BQMAC). The 9 member group *'comprises members with skillsets that demonstrate them as future leaders and influencers of biosecurity preparedness and response within Queensland'*. The ISM's membership of this and other policy committees puts her in a position to co-develop policies and programs that ensure growers and their environment and communities continue to prosper.
- initiated the Future Farming Awards, to recognise the environmental stewardship shown by banana growers in the Wet Tropics. This was presented at the National Banana Congress (2021 and 2023).
- invited to be a member of many committees and strategic planning initiatives including:
 - National Biosecurity Strategy Reference Group
 - Banana Industry Biosecurity Plan Technical Working Group
 - Wet Tropics Healthy Waterway Partnership
 - RP 191 Reference Group (Optimising nitrogen rates in the banana industry project)
 - Stakeholder Partnership Group for the Agricultural Management Practice Adoption Target
 - Ministerial Agricultural Stakeholder Advisory Group for water quality regulation
 - Smart Farms - Digital Technology reference group.

Results from Outcome 3- Government policy, program and investment

This outcome refers to a large proportion of the work completed by the Industry Strategy Manager across both biosecurity and the environment content areas. In relation to biosecurity, the major 'policy and program' initiative has been the TR4 transition from government to industry, to which the ISM has contributed considerable time and effort. In relation to water quality and the environment, the most significant initiative was the environmental regulation of the north Queensland banana industry.

Tangible examples of this project's direct contribution to the development of improved government policy and programs include:

- Critical thinking, planning, and logistics around the transition of TR4 from government to industry, that enabled smooth transition of a complex program, with no precedence. Respondents who had knowledge of the ISM's role were clear that ABGC would not be in a strong position to take on the program without the ISM's major contribution.
- Advocating to the Board for support and negotiated investment with DAF to fund a ground cover project to gather information about the potential sediment loss from banana farms. The project has shown that industry is performing much better than anticipated.
- During this phase of the BA19005 project, the ISM has successfully influenced to gain a second round of government investment for the RP191 project to fill critical knowledge gaps about nutrient application for banana growers.
- Provision of data (captured in the ABGC BMP database) to demonstrate the negative impact on industry growth and significant increase in cost of production that the proposed new reef regulations would have on the banana industry. The proposed changes would have tied banana growers with small farms up in "green tape" yet their

environmental impact would have been negligible given their size. The ISM was able to improve government policy outcomes through changes to the reef regulations on development of new land (permit process to apply to farms of 100 hectares and not 20 hectares as originally proposed).

- preventing a set of unrealistic land management targets from being included in the latest version of the Water Quality Improvement Plan. Lack of grower progress towards unrealistic targets would have reflected badly on industry in report cards, and potentially impacted on public perception and industry's social license to operate.

Results from Outcome 4 – Alignment between projects

This outcome refers to the ISM's role in identifying opportunities for alignment, efficiencies, sharing of project information, research and initiatives that support the banana industry in relation to biosecurity and sustainability.

Several examples provide evidence of the effectiveness of this role in increasing alignment, collaboration and integration, and the benefits this delivers for the banana industry.

- The ISM has successfully influenced the OGBR for the BMP project to provide extension services and advice to other water quality projects. Without this alignment and integration there would have been insufficient funds available for the critical extension services that are required to deliver a local water quality monitoring project. The BMP Team are an invaluable source of knowledge and it is important that they be able to share their wisdom with other project leads.
- The BMP project is also closely aligned with other reef-related projects such as the Nutrient Management Planning and RP191 projects. This approach is based on the belief that working collaboratively – in particular around things like grower extension – is a more efficient and effective use of resources and provides a better experience for the grower. This alignment enabled the BMP team to be seen as a one-stop- shop.
- The ISM played a significant role in bringing people together across several projects delivered by other ABGC employees. Maximising internal alignment and sharing of information and expertise helps to reduce duplication and brings good governance and better value to growers.
- The ISM brought various scientists working in water quality monitoring in banana catchments together, facilitating sharing of knowledge and efficiencies – for example connecting the Smart Farms Project with the Terrain water quality project, the RP191 project and the DES water quality scientists. The aim was to share knowledge to build a community of practice for the banana industry in the area of nutrient management.

Outputs

Table 1. Output summary

Output	Description	Detail
Project governance documentation	M&E framework Stakeholder engagement plan Project logic Risk management plan and risk register	Lodged in the Hort Innovation portal
Project Reference Committee meetings	5 meetings held	Minutes/outcomes recorded. Hort Innovation representative in attendance.
3 annual work plans	One plan provided per year of project	Drafts provided to Project Reference Committee members and then final version provided to Hort Innovation (in milestone reports).
5 milestone reports – 2 per year	Two reports provided per year	Provided to Hort Innovation
Final report - 2023	Final report	Provided at the end of the project – Milestone 190
Independent Evaluation report 2023	Independent Evaluation report 2023	Delivered to Hort Innovation in April 2023
Magazine articles (written and/or edited) produced for: Australian Bananas magazine; and Reef to Rivers magazine	30 articles/stories 3 articles	MS102 & MS103 – 3 articles MS104 - 6 articles MS105 – 7 articles MS106 – 3 articles MS107 - 11 articles 2 stories June 2022. 2 stories for June 2023. Refer to complete list at Appendix 5 .
Technical reports	Information provided to inform decision making.	The intended audience for the majority of examples below were government decision-makers. The Discussion Paper listed below was written for growers. Regulations restricting farm design on land without a cropping history : The regulatory standards were modified so that they could be practically implemented and used by growers; Biosecurity protection levy : The levy submission was provided at the end of this project so its success to achieve change is not known. National Biosecurity Strategy : Submissions for the NBS development and implementation feedback were done using an online form (as well as during meetings) so the ISM does not have a record of the input. However many points raised by the ISM during feedback have been adopted by the Australian Government.

		<p>Land management targets: both written and verbal submissions were provided to the Alluvium Consulting group as part of their review of the land management targets (part of the Reef 2050 five-year review).</p> <p>Transition of TR4 program from government to industry leadership: Discussion Paper, written by ISM, was circulated and used to stimulate ideas and to inform growers of the challenges that lay ahead. It was a key engagement tool to kickstart the grower discussion.</p>
Pesticide management workshop (MS103)	Workshop to help educate all participants on the issues faced by government and industry on pesticide use and detection in waterways in the Wet Tropics.	Informal minutes were taken along with a list of follow up actions. Unfortunately several key government people changed roles in a short period of time and implementation momentum was lost. There remains a long term commitment to address some of these issues.
Grants program	The OGBR provided the industry with \$1m to spend on bringing the industry's practices to meet or exceed the water quality regulations.	The ISM was able to convince the OGBR that there was a strong appetite within the industry to utilize grants to improve both on-farm practices and water quality leaving farms. The OGBR committed more money to the grants program than initially planned based on the ISM's ability to influence their investment allocation through informed and evidence based discussions. The grants program forms part of the BMP project.
Community of Practice (CoP) for banana water quality projects	The CoP is an informal collection of R&D project partners (approx. 4 projects and growing) who have an interest in the quality of water leaving banana farms.	This group met approx. twice per year in the final year of BA19005 to discuss ideas and progress across the projects. This was an excellent opportunity for project leaders to problem solve and look to ways to improve efficiency and effectiveness of their operations. The ISM invited the initial group of participants to come together and will continue to look for new partners who can make a difference to the discussions.
Peer to peer extension group in water quality improvement.	This is a group of 13 banana farmers located in a banana sub catchment in the Johnstone basin.	The ISM used networks and industry's reputation to create a co-funded project with a focus on monitoring the water quality impacts of the farming practice of 13 farmers. A project of this style has not been done in the banana industry before. The execution of the ABGC work performed on farm and with growers is done by the AGBC extension team. The ISM's role was to ensure the interface between all parties including growers continues to be productive.
Creation of the ABGC's <i>Future Farming Award</i>	This award acknowledges the excellent environmental stewardship of a banana grower as nominated by their peers and voted by the ABGC Board.	The primary audience for this award is the banana industry however it also promoted the industry to consumers and other stakeholders that the industry is aware of and responding to the environmental risks of farming near the Great Barrier Reef. The ISM worked with the ABGC Board to develop an award, selection criteria, nomination and voting process.

Outcomes

The outcomes described below have been revised since the project was approved in 2020. This was done as part of a review process that included Hort Innovation representatives. The project intent did not change (ie no material difference to what how the project was originally described) but the language used to describe the outcomes has become crisper to help improve the clarity. An explanation about how the revised outcomes relate to those originally included in the Research Agreement can be found in the independent evaluation review Appendix 5.

There are four outcomes from this project and all map to Outcome 3 and to a lesser extent Outcome 1 of the BSIP. The relevant BSIP outcomes are:

- **BSIP Outcome 3:** Deliver communication and extension capacity to create positive change in the areas of biosecurity, environmentally sustainable production, pest and disease management and soil health.
- **BSIP Outcome 1:** Improve industry preparedness and resilience to biosecurity threats through better on-farm biosecurity practices, increased surveillance and improved diagnostics.

An independent review of the BA19005 used a survey to interview 32 stakeholders and this is the primary piece of evidence to support successful delivery of all four outcomes.

BA19005 Outcome 1: BMP and other project teams are enabled to support growers to make better decisions and take positive action in relation to biosecurity and sustainability.

Evidence: The stakeholder feedback included high levels of effectiveness and appropriateness in:

- Accumulating evidence of current and projected environmental performance of the Australian banana industry enabling the confident representation of growers' issues/interest at the policy and programs level. This will lead to more practical and informed outcomes for the industry and the communities that are tied economically to them;
- quality, relevance and digestibility of information provided by the project;
- delivering considerable investment from non-levy sources to build grower awareness, capacity and motivation in relation to biosecurity and sustainability.

BA19005 Outcome 2: The industry is well regarded and recognized for its attitude and positive actions in relation to biosecurity and sustainability.

Evidence: There were high levels of stakeholder confidence in this project's:

- **impact:** "pivotal role" in building and maintaining a positive industry reputation.
- **effectiveness:** being able to explain complex issues, risks and consequences for confident and strategic decision making.
- **appropriateness:** this project provided quality and accuracy when representing grower performance at the policy level.

BA19005 Outcome 3: Policies and programs are appropriate to industry needs and issues and enable growers to respond effectively to biosecurity and sustainability challenges.

Evidence: The stakeholder feedback included high satisfaction in the:

- **impact:** numerous examples of where the final policy framework was improved, generating better outcomes for industry the environment and society, to the original based on this project's involvement. For example, this project has also attracted at least \$4.8m of non-levy investment into the banana industry. ABGC is delivering these projects, so the value is known. There is other significant non-levy investment that the ISM has influenced that is delivered by other parties and this has not been costed but banana growers are the direct beneficiaries.
- **effectiveness:** government policy makers reported a solid understanding of industry needs and a high level of trust with the accuracy of the information provided.
- **appropriateness:** stakeholders reported a very high level of satisfaction in the services and support from this project.

BA19005 Outcome 4: Banana-related strategic biosecurity and environmental projects are aligned to leverage greater benefits for banana growers and funding bodies.

Evidence: The stakeholder feedback included:

- High impact for providing a better alignment of projects – particularly in areas where there would have been no alignment without this project.
- High stakeholder satisfaction with the support provided by the ISM when looking for alignment opportunities.
- Medium benefits identified by partners from connections made by the ISM. More monitoring of this indicator is required.

Monitoring and evaluation

An independent evaluation was conducted in the last year of this project to reflect on achievements, benefits to growers and non-grower stakeholders and to look for ways that future projects could be improved. The design of the evaluation included seeking feedback and input from both Hort Innovation and the Project Manager, through meetings and a workshop to gain a thorough understanding of the project intent, focus and approach. Wherever possible, empirical data and tangible examples were sought to demonstrate achievements and potential areas of improvement. Given the limited availability of quantitative project monitoring data, this evaluation drew heavily on a comprehensive set of interviews with a broad range of project stakeholders. In total, 35 people were interviewed, from 4 categories: Board members/growers, ABGC staff (including BMP Team members), Government partners and non-government partners (including Hort Innovation). Interviewing such diverse stakeholders provides confidence that the evaluation findings are accurate and valid. More information about the review can be found at Appendix 5.

Interview design

A semi-structured interview approach with largely open-ended questions was used by the evaluator. This enabled the respondent to bring forward their own personal perspectives and observations and highlight the aspects of the project that have been most valuable or challenging for them. Follow-up questions invited the respondents to comment on particular initiatives or aspects of the project that they were involved with or may have benefitted from. All interviews were confidential in nature, unless permission to share specific feedback was granted. Wherever possible, respondents were asked to provide tangible examples to illustrate project achievements.

Key Evaluation Criteria (KEQs)

The evaluation thoroughly explored the KEQs listed in the original M&E plan. The evaluator found that some of the original KEQs were not appropriate and repetitive. With Hort Innovation's permission, the evaluator refined the KEQs so that more useful data could be gathered during the evaluation and used to determine the benefit and impact of this project. To provide transparency of this process, the evaluator has prepared a table that aligns the original KEQs to the actual KEQs used in the independent review (page 42 of the evaluation report – Appendix 5). The review then assessed each of the revised KEQs against the four project outcomes to measure the impact, effectiveness, appropriateness, relevance and efficiency of the project.

Project Impact

As a way to provide a more detailed focus on some elements of the work undertaken, the evaluator also provided a focused analysis of the impact of the project. This provides a deeper dive into the detail of why this project has been a considered by stakeholders to be successful and a worthy investment. These impact insights and supporting quotes are aligned to the project outcomes and can be found in Section 2 of Appendix 5 (pages 10 – 30).

Results from a trial in data collection

Very late in the project, the ISM worked with the project evaluator to design a trial to attempt to capture practical examples of the project's impact. The intent of this data capture was to generate 'hard' data to complement the large amount of qualitative data that existed as a result of the stakeholder interviews. As part of this trial, the ISM has recorded the role, purpose and effectiveness of significant conversations, meetings, reports etc and this information has been inserted into a spreadsheet. This data has been collected over a six month period (May – October 2023) with the hope to capture the amount of time the ISM spends in each of the six roles identified in the independent evaluation and listed in the methodology. This attempt at data capture is very much in its infancy but if successful it may help to quantify other similar projects into the future. As a result of the six months of data, there is some preliminary data available (Appendix 6). A future step will be to align the nature of effort and the changes, adoption, influence etc that occur as a result.

Success factors

The evaluation report notes several factors that have underpinned the success of this project. These are outlined in the evaluation report (pages 31- 32). At a glance, these factors include:

- Trust capital – there is long standing trust between the ISM and the stakeholders and this enabled outcomes and

outputs that work for all parties.

- Background knowledge – understanding how government works, the issues facing banana growers and knowledge about biosecurity and sustainability issues as well as corporate history.
- Skill set –the right mix of skills is very important to deliver a project of this nature. Those identified by stakeholders to be important were – communication; questioning, negotiation; strategic thinking; creativity, planning and risk assessment. All of these were possessed by the ISM meaning the project could be delivered effectively and efficiently with impact.
- Attitude and approach – stakeholders identified that in addition to skills, attitude and approach were also very important to deliver a successful project. Stakeholders acknowledged that the ISM had the following attitude to build partnerships – honesty, humility, preparation, commitment to industry, make things happen, calming presence.
- Previous investment – many stakeholders pointed out that the benefits gained though this project were a result from foundations laid down in previous projects. This project has ensured the foundational relationships were protected and enriched.

Recommendations

The independent evaluation provided a number of recommendations that supported the continuation of this role (pages 35-40) and are summarized below.

Ongoing investment for the ISM function

It is clear from the evaluation that there is an enormous amount of work to be done in relation to policy and emerging regulations with more issues coming on the horizon. Without a seat at the table of decision makers, growers and industry in general will be unable to influence the policies and regulations that will have the greatest impact on them. While biosecurity and water quality related issues will only continue to increase in importance, there will be other significant issues that the banana industry will need to monitor and determine its involvement and opportunities.

It is recommended that funding for this function be made available through the SIAP prioritisation processes.

In relation to the implementation of the ISM role:

- Retain the flexibility in the project to respond to emerging issues and opportunities while noting that biosecurity water quality issues will continue to require close monitoring.
- Develop decision-making criteria to decide which emerging issues and opportunities to focus on. Criteria could include the anticipated level of impact of that issue on industry, the likely timeframes of this impact, potential for attracting resources for industry to take up the role of tackling the challenge.
- Continue the institutionalised connection between the BA19005 project and the BMP Project because it is extremely valuable and mutually beneficial. It provides the mechanism for the policy influence role to be extremely well grounded in the issues and realities of growers and provides a practical avenue for policy-related information to get to growers.
- Look for ways that a relationship, similar to that which exists for the BMP team, could be established in the biosecurity area to provide a link between growers and more strategic developments in biosecurity policy.
- Consider that future projects be for a 5-year term to take into account the longer timeline many issues take to resolve or advance.

Get the project foundations right

It became clear working with the project evaluator that the foundational design of this project – ie outcomes, KPIs, KEQs were not expressed clearly which impacted on the ‘neatness’ of the evaluation. Noting the complexity and adaptive nature of a project it is recommended that there be early engagement of an M&E expert to assist with designing these monitoring and evaluation tools. This includes:

- Articulating the outcomes clearly.
- Describing the roles required to measure project impact.
- Clarifying and prioritising the initiatives that the ISM gets involved in.
- Establishing relevant KEQs.

Monitoring system

This evaluation of BA19005 has relied almost entirely on the perspectives of interview respondents and in-depth discussions with the ISM. While this is valid data for the purposes of evaluation, opportunities to gather and/or collate alternative sources of data and evidence may have been missed during the life of the project. This is particularly important for a project which does not deliver tangible results on a regular basis, nor results that can be directly and empirically counted and deliverable achieved over a long time.

It recommended that for any future projects, attempts be made to develop a systematic and sortable monitoring system

that is informed by the project's logic and M&E Plan. This could consist of:

- a Data Collection Plan that records the roles regularly used by the ISM to achieve success – how many new projects or policies were influenced; how many opportunities to broker knowledge about the banana industry etc.
- simple annual reflection on the progress towards achieving the project's outcomes.
- collection quotes from stakeholders as evidence of success, progress or need for improvement.
- Simple survey (eg one or two standardized questions) conducted at the end of significant meetings, workshops etc.
- Record of policy outcomes that were successfully influenced by the ISM and the benefit to growers.

Promoting the project to growers

This project largely 'travels under the radar' of growers. They reap the benefits of the ISM's efforts, but they may not appreciate how the project has impacted their farming practice and profitability. It is recommended that consideration be given to promoting the work of the ISM to growers during the life of any similar future investments. The challenge will be for the information to have relevance to the daily life of a banana grower.

Continue to leverage projects

Banana growers have reaped the benefits from the outcomes and outputs derived from additional non-levy funding that the ISM has been able to attract and manage. It is recommended that this approach to leveraging other sources of funding continue and that the ISM continue to manage these projects where appropriate.

Refereed scientific publications

Not applicable

Journal article

Not applicable

Whole book

Not applicable

Chapter in a book or paper in conference proceedings

Not applicable

References

Not applicable.

Intellectual property

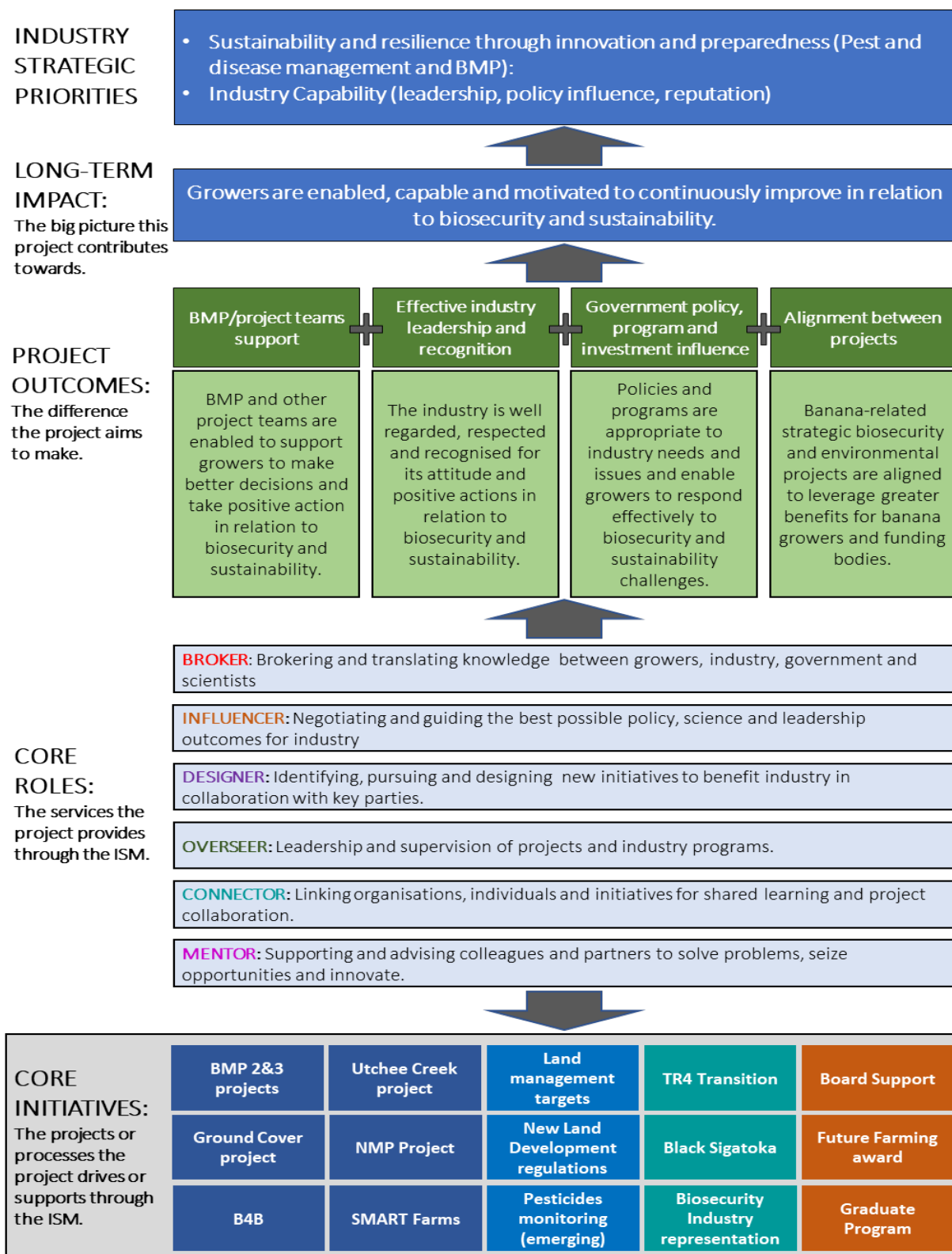
No project IP or commercialisation to report

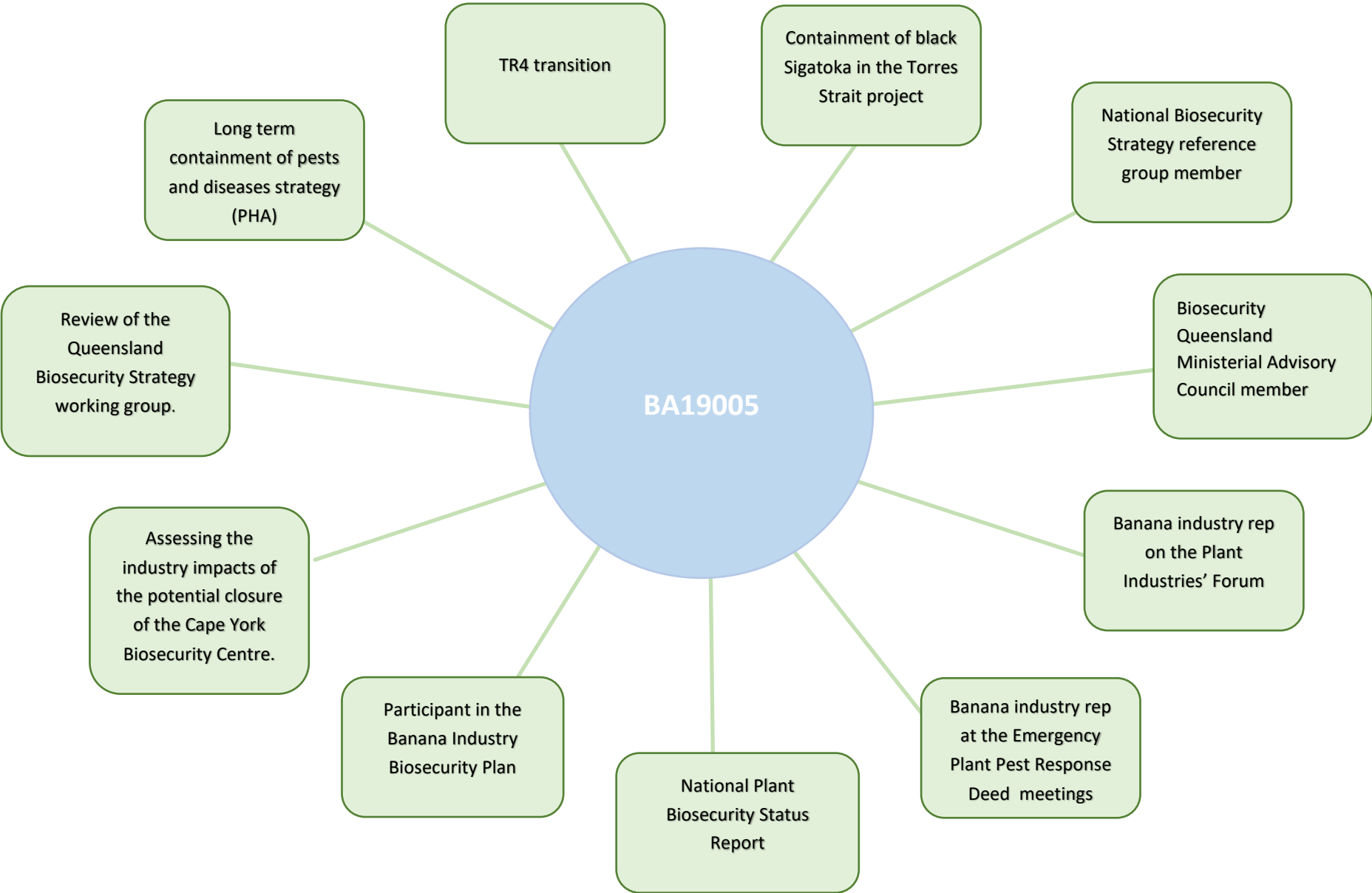
Acknowledgements

Not applicable

Appendices

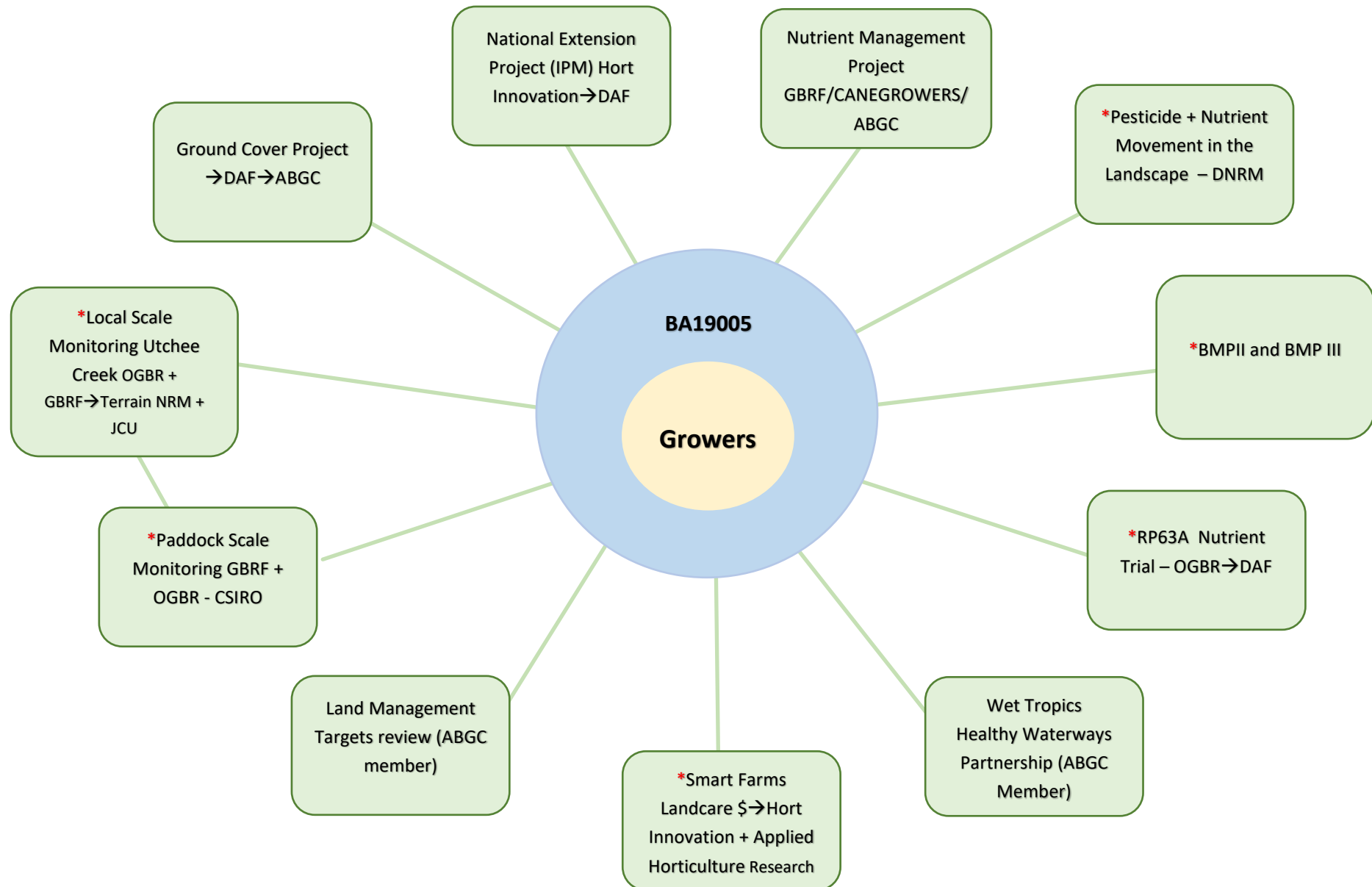
1. Project Logic BA19005
2. Hub and Spoke Model – Water quality and Biosecurity.
3. Infographic depiction of BA19005.
4. List of articles written or edited by the ISM as part of BA19005.
5. BA19005 – Biosecurity and sustainability in the banana industry – project evaluation by Penny Scott Consulting. March 2023.
6. Impact data generated from May – October 2023.





ISM - Hub and spoke model for sustainability projects and initiatives

Appendix 2



Articles published in the Australian Bananas magazine during the life of BA 19005

ISM contributions (either writing, editing, brainstorming or approving) to the articles listed below include:

December 2020

- *Smart Farming* page 10
- *Best Practice grants* page 10
- *It pays to be strategic about our future*, page 35
- *Banana growers dig into soil health* page 36
- *Reef Reg Ready* page 36.

April 2021

- *End of an era – Darryl Evans retires*, page 36.
- *Latest report card results*, page 38
- *New Strategic Project*, page 38.
- *More Growers Doing Their Best*, page 39.

August 2021

- *Reef Hearing* page 6
- *Pest and Disease Prevention in the Torres Strait*, page 14
- *Freshcare Ticks Reef Reg Boxes*, page 25
- *Productivity vs Environment? Is it one or the other?*, page 26
- *Hayden's soil to be secure*, Page 27
- *Getting it right from the Start*, page 28

The ISM also liaised with the RP191 project leader to provide feedback on the draft story to ensure the material was presented in a grower-friendly manner. (Article title: "Update on the RP191 Banana Nutrient Rates Trials" p 29).

December 2021

- *Grower Celebrated on World Stage* pages 24-25.
- *Best Practice Progress* page 29.
- *Discussion Paper Seeks Grower Input into TR4 Management Transition* page 32
- *Trial Testing Nitrogen Fertilizer Rate Effect on Fruit Ripening* page 38
- *Now, That's a Great Drain* page 44
- *Prepping for the Wet* page 45
- *Soil Support for Growers* page 45

April 2022

- *Eyes in the skies*, page 7
- *BetterBunch* page 8.
- *Compliance visits for the reef regs explained* page 18.
- *A straight aim to the target*, page 19.
- *Growers collaborate on water quality*, page 21.

August 2022

- *OGBR Work on Next Phase of BMP, page 32*
- *It's Action on Nutrient Management Planning, page 41*

December 2022

- *Abbotts take home reef award, page 7.*
- *Reef Regs update, page 8.*
- *Banana growers invest in practice change, page 12.*
- *Biggest changes, page 13.*
- *Grower testimonials, page 14.*
- *New Water Quality project, page 18.*

April 2023

- *Reducing Future Risks, page 4*
- *BMP moves forward with funding, page 36.*
- *Award puts spotlight on environmental stewardship, page 37.*
- *Fund supports growers to continue to improve water quality, page 37.*
- *10 Years of BMP, page 38.*
- *Right time for earthworks, page 39.*
- *Set sights on better nutrient management through project, page 39.*

August 2023

- *Front cover celebrating BMP turns 10 – A decade of positive change.*
- *Future Farming Award, page 30*
- *BMP fund makes decisions easier, p34*
- *Freshcare Environmental, p34*
- *Tap into nutrient planning and assistance, page 35*
- *Proof is in the Paddock, page 37.*

Rivers to Reef magazine produced by Wet Tropics Healthy Waterways Partnership, Terrain NRM.

ISM contributions (either writing, editing, brainstorming or approving) to the Reef and Rivers magazine include:

- "Farmer Innovation", Issue 1 (2021) page 12.
- "Extending a Hand", Issue 2 (2022) page 10.
- "Stablising Stream Banks", Issue 2 (2022) page 14.
- "Proud of our Land and Waterways", Issue 2 (2022) page 23 (advertisement).
- "BMP Turns 10", Issue 3 (2023) p18 (advertisement).
- "Award winning banana farmers", Issue 3 (2023) page 19.
- "Reef Champions (Matt and Ben Abbott)", Issue 3 (2023) page 41.



Project Evaluation

BA19005 – Biosecurity and sustainability

in the banana industry project

"[The Industry Strategy Manager] has put us in their corner. Rather than setting up a situation where we are adversaries, we are on the same page, in the same place, so we are in a position where we can advocate internally FOR the industry, rather than being at loggerheads." (Government officer)

Prepared for Hort Innovation by Penny Scott
Principal Consultant – Penny Scott Consulting
March 2023



(Photos: Banana Strategic Investment Plan 2022-2026; Hort Innovation)



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Executive Summary

This report presents evaluation findings in relation to the Hort Innovation funded BA19005 – Biosecurity and sustainability in the banana industry project, delivered by the Australian Banana Growers' Council (ABGC), and delivered through an Industry Strategy Manager (ISM). The findings are summarised against the 4 project outcomes.

Outcome 1: Support to BMP/other project teams

The project was found to be highly successful in supporting industry and growers. The ISM has:

- Attracted/been instrumental in attracting ca. **\$4,800,000** to support growers understand issues, make better decisions and take positive actions, including BMP3, Nutrient Management Planning, local water quality monitoring, ground cover monitoring and securing a graduate extension officer.
- Effectively **brokered biosecurity and reef policy-related information** to the BMP and other project teams.
- **Enhanced the capacity, cohesion and strategic visioning of the BMP team** and has been fundamental to the existence, success, growth and maturity of the Banana BMP project in general.

Outcome 2: Industry leadership and recognition

The project was found to be highly successful in enhancing industry reputation and leadership. The ISM has:

- Effectively **represented the banana industry** on a wide range of State and National committees and strategic planning initiatives, with her participation reported as reflecting extremely positively on the industry.
- **Influenced and supported the ABGC Board**, ensuring decisions and actions about water quality and biosecurity are evidence based, rational and grounded in an understanding of options, risks and consequences. All partners/stakeholders report the banana industry as being proactive, collaborative and forward thinking.
- Established the inaugural **Future Farming Awards**, recognising the environmental stewardship shown by banana growers in the Wet Tropics, and enhancing a culture of valuing positive environmental performance.

Outcome 3: Government policy, program and investment influence

The project was found to be highly successful in influencing policy to benefit growers and industry. The ISM has:

- Negotiated workable outcomes in relation to the reef regulations on **New Land Development, resulting in revised thresholds** for the costly site-specific process from 30+ ha to 100+ ha, as well as successfully arguing for a **risk-assessment approach** rather than a one-size-fits all prescriptive approach to the standards.
- Prevented the endorsement of unrealistic reef-related **Land Management Targets** which would have set industry up to fail on future Reef Report Cards. Instigated negotiations with government on realistic targets.
- Been instrumental in the success of the **transition of TR4 to industry**. Respondents note that without the support of the ISM, ABGC would not be in a strong position to take on the program as of July 1st.

Outcome 4: Alignment between projects

The project was found to be successful in initiating/supporting beneficial alignment between projects. The ISM has:

- Negotiated **alignment between the BMP and other water-quality related projects**, in cases including the BMP team delivering extension services for a more streamlined grower experience.
- **Brought water quality scientists together** to share knowledge, identify efficiencies and collaborate on approaches, including supporting the Smart Farms Project, and saving them time and money.
- **Actively collaborated within ABGC**, sharing information and breaking down silos between project teams.

All 35 interview respondents reported a **very high level of satisfaction in the quality, relevance and timeliness** of the project's services, and recognised the pivotal role that this project has played in building and maintaining a positive industry reputation. All government respondents in particular report **very productive and trusting relationships with the ISM and industry** in general, and claim a solid understanding of the complexities/issues facing the banana industry.

Key success factors include the ISM's existing relationships, background, extensive knowledge, skill set and attitude. Areas of improvement include addressing workload, improved collection of monitoring and evaluation data and better communication of the difference the project makes, in particular to growers. This evaluation confirms the critical importance of industry having a seat at the tables of decision makers, to influence the policies and regulations that will have the greatest impact on them. It also confirms the value of having someone dedicated to strategy, and looking to the horizon to identify, assess and take action on key emerging issues. Ongoing funding is recommended.

1 Introduction

1.1 BA19005 – Biosecurity and sustainability in the banana industry - project summary

The original documentation in relation to the “Biosecurity and sustainability in the banana industry” project (referred to as “the project” in this report) states the following overarching objectives:

*...to give banana growers a mechanism to **provide technical input** into biosecurity and sustainability policy development and project design to **ensure that Government investment is directed** into programs that are practical, relevant and that will **deliver long term benefits** for growers, the industry, the environment and the community.*

*It will provide a resource to **interpret biosecurity and environmental policy** across government and **determine industry capacity building requirements**, to drive the **adoption of BMP** in the banana industry. This project will also provide banana industry’s experience and underpinning research and development to **inform Government technical committees** on water quality and biosecurity matters.*

*The project will **place the industry in a strong position** to confidently deal with current and emerging issues thereby maintaining the industry’s social licences to farm bananas in the Great Barrier Reef catchment.*

The project primarily funds an Industry Strategy Manager (ISM) employed by the Australian Banana Growers Council (ABGC). This position acts as a strategic conduit between growers and non-grower stakeholders, including government and the scientific community. The position delivers on the outcomes of this project through fulfilling a number of core roles, the appropriate mix of which will vary, ebb and wane according to the nature and developmental stage of an initiative. The roles include:

- **Broker** – A key function of this position is two-way knowledge translation and brokerage, including between growers, industry, government and scientists. The ISM also supports growers’ awareness of their obligations and opportunities within the policy and regulatory environment.
- **Influencer** – This project gives growers a well-informed and experienced technical voice at a range of decision-making tables, negotiating and guiding the best possible outcomes for industry. This position also supports and influences the thinking and decision-making process of the ABGC Board.
- **Designer** – The ISM identifies, pursues, conceives and constructs new initiatives and projects to benefit industry. This is usually done in collaboration with colleagues and partners, and in many cases is not based on any precedence, requiring considerable innovation and creative thinking.
- **Overseer** – The ISM oversees and supports a team of BMP extension officers delivering a suite of direct grower engagement projects.
- **Connector** – The ISM builds beneficial partnerships, linking organisations, individuals and initiatives for shared learning, delivery efficiencies and mutually beneficial collaboration.
- **Mentor** – This project provides informal problem solving and creative thinking support and advice for BMP Team members, ABGC colleagues as well as partners.

The project allows sufficient flexibility for the ISM to pivot and respond to unexpected and emerging issues and opportunities. Importantly, the ISM is in a position to look strategically to the horizon, identify emerging issues, taking a proactive stance to addressing them and ensuring industry is on the front foot and wherever possible leading.

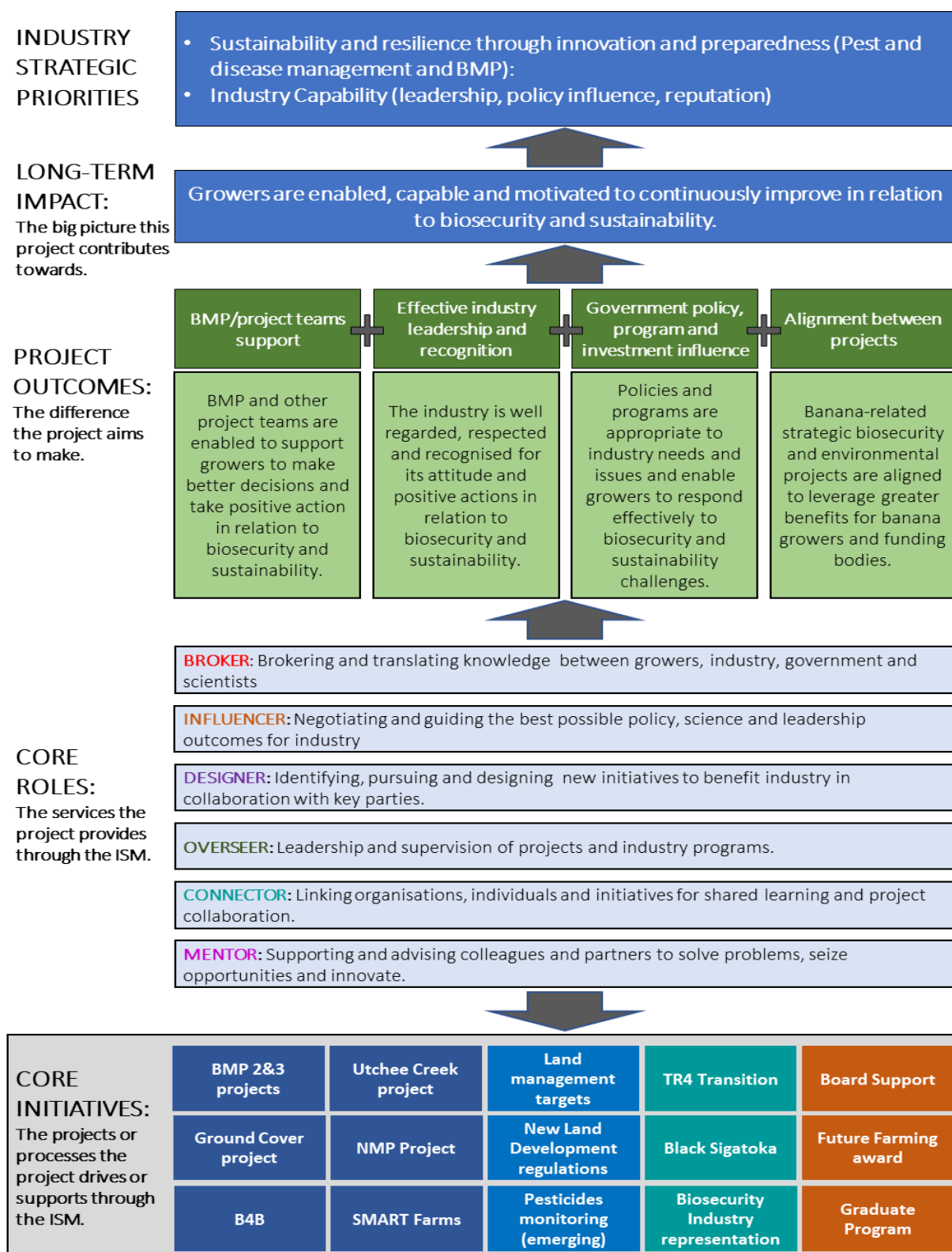
This flexibility, however, makes the project difficult to describe concisely, and the range of initiatives that the ISM is working on at any point in time will vary. Of note, less than half of the initiatives reflected in the Project Logic in Figure 1, and detailed through this report were not ‘known’ at the beginning of this project.

There is a strong relationship between this project and the grower-facing BMP project, grounding policy advice in grower realities, and ensuring this advice is truly in the best interests of industry. This connection is also the primary conduit for information from the policy level to growers, in a form that is digestible, relevant and useful.

Revised Project Logic



The documentation provided by Hort Innovation and ABGC provides information on the intent and approach of the project, and also contains an original Project Logic. However, early discussions with Hort Innovation and ABGC revealed that over the period of the project, the focus has shifted and been refined, based on both learnings during the project, as well as the emergence of unanticipated issues and opportunities. An initial workshop with Hort Innovation and ABGC provided greater clarity on the focus of the project, and a revised Project Logic has been developed, which includes slightly modified outcome statements and clarifies the core roles of the ISM as well as the initiatives the project is currently contributing towards (*Figure 1*). This logic forms the foundation of this evaluation.

Figure 1: Project Logic used as the basis for this evaluation



Project contribution to broader industry goals

This project is the only Hort Innovation investment in a dedicated industry strategy position. Nevertheless, this project demonstrates clear alignment and direct delivery on the Hort Innovation Banana Strategic Investment Plan 2022-2026 which guides Hort Innovation's oversight and management of the banana industry's investment programs. As importantly, this project delivers clearly on the ABGCs Strategic Plan 2021-2026. Direct alignment is shown in **Table 1**.

Table 1: Alignment between Project outcomes and industry strategies				
Biosecurity and sustainability in the banana industry project Outcomes	Hort Innovation Banana Strategic Investment Plan (SIP)		Australian Banana Grower's Council Strategic Plan 20	
Outcome 1: BMP and other project teams are enabled to support growers to make better decisions and take positive action in relation to biosecurity and sustainability.	Outcome 1: Industry supply, productivity and sustainability. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improve industry preparedness and resilience to biosecurity threats through better on-farm biosecurity practices, increased surveillance and improved diagnostics Outcome 3: Extension and capability. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Deliver communication and extension capability to create positive change in the areas of biosecurity, environmentally sustainable production, pest and disease management and soil health 		Strategic Priority theme 1: Sustainability and resilience through innovation and preparedness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enhanced pest and disease management - An industry that farms to Best Management Practice. - Ensuring all industry-related matters are communicated to growers, stakeholders and the supply chain. 	
Outcome 2: The industry is well regarded, respected and recognised for its attitude and positive actions in relation to biosecurity and sustainability.	Outcome 3: Extension and capability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strengthen industry leadership through initiatives and training 		Strategic Priority theme 3: Develop Industry capability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maintaining and cultivating strong leadership - Telling the story of the banana industry to consumers 	
Outcome 3: Policies and programs are appropriate to industry needs and issues and enable growers to respond effectively to biosecurity and sustainability challenges.	Outcome 3: Extension and capability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strengthen industry leadership through initiatives and training 		Strategic Priority theme 3: Develop Industry capability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Providing advocacy and influencing policy 	
Outcome 4: Banana-related strategic biosecurity and environmental projects are aligned to leverage greater benefits for banana growers and funding bodies.	Outcome 3: Extension and capability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide opportunity for engagement between industry, and across industry and other stakeholders regionally, nationally, and internationally to innovate 			

1.2 Overview of the Evaluation

The Evaluation Purpose

The objective of this evaluation is to help Hort Innovation:

- Evaluate the **relevance and appropriateness** of project activities/outputs for intended beneficiaries and efficiency of their delivery.
- Evaluate the **effectiveness** of the project in achieving its intended outcomes.
- Support the project lead in **continuous improvement** of activities, outputs, monitoring and evaluation
- Assess the need for, potential value from and scope/design of **potential future investments** building on this project

Hort Innovation specified the following services be delivered as part of this evaluation.

- Review project outputs to address key evaluation questions.
- Review and evaluate the effectiveness of the outputs to determine to what extent the project has achieved the intended outcomes (as specified in the Project Logic above):
- In light of the evaluation of outputs and outcomes to-date, make recommendations to inform continuous project improvement; and
- Make recommendations to inform future investment proposals.

The full Statement of Work from the Hort Innovation Request for Quote is provided in **Appendix 1**.

The Evaluation Approach

The design of the evaluation was undertaken in a collaborative manner, seeking ongoing feedback and input from both Hort Innovation and the Project Lead, including several in-depth workshops to gain a thorough understanding of the project intent, focus and approach. Wherever possible, empirical data and tangible examples were sought to demonstrate achievements and potential areas of improvement. Given the limited availability of project monitoring data, this evaluation drew very heavily on a comprehensive set of interviews with a broad range of project stakeholders. In total, 35 people were interviewed, from 4 categories: Board members/growers, ABGC staff (including BMP Team members), Government partners and non-government partners (including Hort Innovation). Interviewing such a large number of diverse stakeholders provides confidence that the evaluation findings are accurate and valid.

A semi-structured approach to interviews was adopted, with discussions guided by key focus questions which related directly to the Key Evaluation Questions (see below). Questions were largely open ended, enabling the respondent to bring forward their own personal perspectives and observations, and highlight the aspects of the project that have been most valuable or challenging for them. Follow-up questions invited the respondents to comment on particular initiatives or aspects of the project that they were involved with or may have benefitted from. All interviews were confidential in nature, unless permission to share specific feedback was granted. Wherever possible, respondents were asked to provide tangible examples to illustrate project achievements. **Table 2** lists the interviewees.

Table 2: List of stakeholders interviewed according to category

Board member/growers (7)	ABGC staff (incl. BMP Team members) (9)	Government partners (9)	Non-government partners (10)
Stephen Lowe Andrew Serra Doriana Mangili Stephen Spear Leon Collins Paul Inderbitzen Doug Phillips	Amelia Foster Molly Blake Kathryn Dryden Leanne Erakavic Jim Pekin Geoff Wilson Rosie Godwin Sonia Campbell Lu Arcidiacono	Kev McKosker Chris Johnson Scott Robinson Jean Erbacher Alex Lindsay Tegan Kukulies Rhiannon Evans Dom Henderson Rebecca Sapupo	Sarah Strutt Tony Weber Trevor Dunmall Carole Sweatman Charles Hammond Jo Marano Liam Southam-Rogers Fiona Barron Alicia Buckle Deb Telford

The Evaluation Focus

The evaluation focus was defined through a set of Key Evaluation Questions (KEQs). The original project Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (M&E Plan), developed in the early phases of the project, proposed a suite of KEQ. In order to better target the evaluation, and to align more closely with the revised Project Logic included above, a refined set of KEQs was developed. These vary slightly from the original M&E Plan, but match it's intent. The revised KEQs are provided in **Table 3. Appendix 2** demonstrates alignment with the original KEQs.

Table 3: Key Evaluation questions as they relate to the revised project logic above

BMP/project teams support	Effective industry leadership and recognition	Government policy, program and investment influence	Alignment between projects
BMP and project teams are enabled to support growers to make better decisions and take positive action in relation to biosecurity and sustainability.	The industry is well regarded, respected and recognised for its attitude and positive actions in relation to biosecurity and sustainability.	Policies and programs are appropriate to industry needs and issues and enable growers to respond effectively to biosecurity and sustainability challenges.	Banana-related strategic biosecurity and environmental projects are aligned to leverage greater benefits for banana growers and funding bodies.
<p>OUTCOME: To what extent and in what ways are growers better informed about biosecurity and environmental issues and policy and motivated to consider it in decision making processes?</p> <p>EFFECTIVENESS: To what extent and in what ways are the BMP/project teams well equipped to build grower awareness, capacity and motivation in relation to biosecurity and sustainability.</p> <p>APPROPRIATENESS: How satisfied are the BMP/project teams with the relevance, digestibility and timeliness of the information and support provided through the project?</p> <p>To what extent are the BMP/project teams satisfied that growers issues/ interests have been represented effectively at the policy level through the project?</p> <p>IMPROVEMENTS: What challenges have hindered supporting growers better understand and make decisions around biosecurity and sustainability? In what ways could the project improve in the future?</p>	<p>OUTCOME: To what extent and in what ways have industry leaders taken the biosecurity and sustainability picture into account in making decisions/acting on behalf of the industry?</p> <p>EFFECTIVENESS: To what extent and in what ways do industry leaders better understand the policy context of the big picture and the risks and consequences of their actions/decisions as a result of this project?</p> <p>APPROPRIATENESS: How satisfied are industry leaders with the information and support that has been provided through the project?</p> <p>Are industry leaders/growers satisfied with the extent to which its issues/ interests have been represented effectively at the policy level through the project?</p> <p>IMPROVEMENTS: What challenges have hindered industry leaders/ growers better understand and make decisions taking into account biosecurity and sustainability? In what ways could the project improve in the future?</p>	<p>OUTCOME: To what extent and in what ways has policy/frameworks and project design and development been INFLUENCED by the project in ways that benefit growers/ industry?</p> <p>EFFECTIVENESS: To what extent and in what ways (how well) have GOVERNMENT STAKEHOLDERS BEEN ENGAGED?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have productive relationships and networks (trust) been maintained and expanded? • Has accurate and representative information been provided to policy makers? • Have policy makers understood and had trust in this information? <p>APPROPRIATENESS: How satisfied are policy/programmatic stakeholders with the services/support offered through this project?</p> <p>IMPROVEMENTS: What challenges have hindered policy influence? In what ways could the project improve in the future?</p>	<p>OUTCOME: To what extent and in what ways has alignment between banana-related biosecurity and sustainability projects increased as a result of the project?</p> <p>EFFECTIVENESS: To what extent do partners see benefits in alignment?</p> <p>APPROPRIATENESS: To what extent are partners satisfied with the efforts of the project to improve alignment?</p> <p>IMPROVEMENTS: What challenges have hindered alignment and what could be done better?</p>

The Evaluation Report

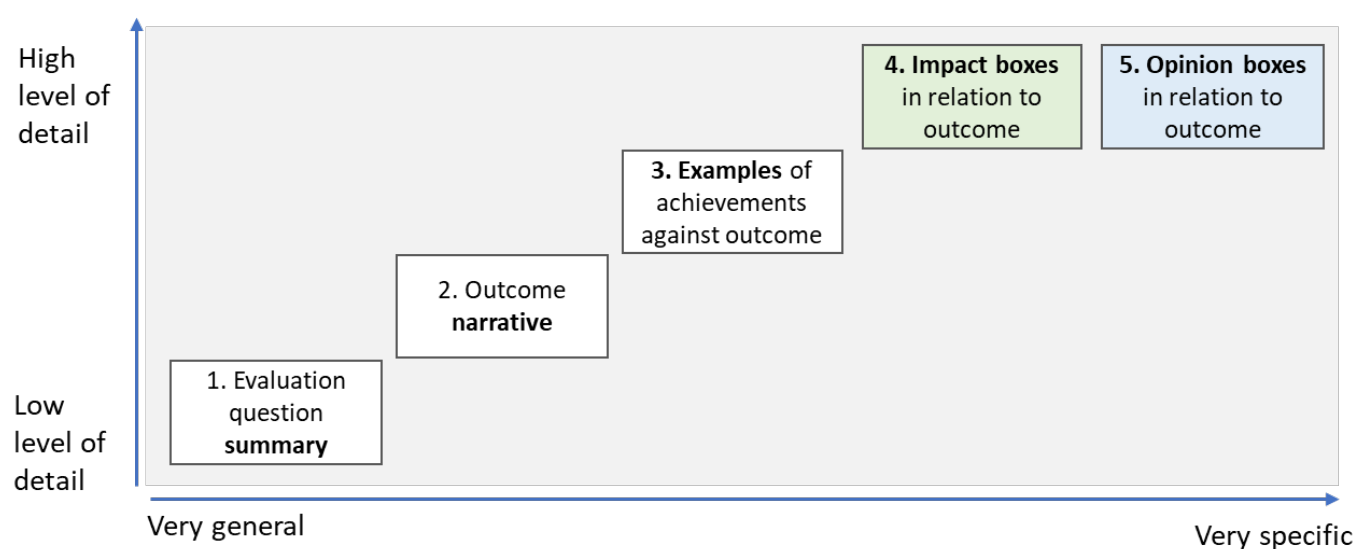
This evaluation report is comprehensive in nature, but is structured in a modular format to facilitate the extraction of information at a range of different levels for different audiences. It is structured according to the 4 project outcomes defined in the Project Logic, with the following components combining to tell a comprehensive story of the project's achievements:

1. **Evaluation question summary**, summarising the evaluation findings for each of the KEQs for each outcome (these are combined in a table in *Appendix 3* for ease of extraction).
2. **Outcome Narrative**, which briefly describes in words, the feedback from the interviewees in relation to that outcome.
3. **Examples of Achievements**, presented as a dot point list of practical and tangible examples of the difference the project has made in relation to each outcome.
4. **Impact Boxes** which provide more detail in relation to a selection of initiatives, the specific roles the ISM has played and the difference this has made, and in some cases, what may have resulted in the absence of this project.
5. **Opinion Boxes** which give voice to a particular respondent/s around a topic or result that may not otherwise be evident through the examples, or may be difficult to generalise across all interviewees. Where interviewees are named, they have been provided with the text and provided approval for this to be included in the report, and attributed to them as individuals.

The five components can be extracted individually for different purposes. They present different levels of detail and specificity, with impact and opinion boxes providing maximum detail about a specific topic or initiative. Readers who wish to skip the detail can ignore the boxes, or even ignore the narrative. Others that are more interested in the 'stories' of the project can pay more attention to the boxes which provide a more in-depth understanding of the project and its impact (*Figure 2*)

Quotes from individual respondents have been included throughout the report. Whenever multiple quotes are provided from one respondent type (e.g. government officer) within the same section, they will be from *different* respondents.

Figure 2: The five components of the Evaluation Report according to their level of detail and specificity



2 Project Achievements

2.1 Outcome 1: BMP/ other project teams' support

BMP and other project teams are enabled to support growers to make better decisions and take positive action in relation to biosecurity and sustainability.

Summary of Evaluation Findings

The original project logic included the outcome “Growers are better informed about biosecurity and environmental issues and policy and make better decisions to increase their profitability.” In discussions with Hort Innovation and the ISM it became clear that this project contributes to grower awareness and decision making indirectly, primarily through supporting the ABGC Best Management Practice (BMP) team, and less so, other project teams. It is challenging to evaluate the contribution of this project to the level of grower awareness and knowledge, in isolation from initiatives such as the BMP Project itself. For the purposes of this evaluation, a modified outcome statement has been proposed above to be explicit about this indirect role.

Due to the fact that empirical data was not available in relation to change in grower decision making, the evaluation findings are based solely on the results of the 35 interviews. Six growers who sit on the ABGC Board were interviewed directly for this evaluation, reflecting on both their own observations as well as their understanding of the perspectives of the broader grower community.

Table 3 summarises findings against the Key Evaluation questions.

Table 3: Outcome 1: BMP/project team support – summary in relation to KEQs		
Key Evaluation Question	Conf. level	Summary of findings
IMPACT: To what extent and in what ways are growers better informed about biosecurity and environmental issues and policy, and motivated to consider it in decision making processes?	Med	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is no direct empirical evidence that demonstrates the extent of improvement in grower understanding and motivation as a result of this project. Impact is assumed based on the level of investment that this project has secured for grower-facing projects, as well as support provided to the BMP Team to deliver these projects effectively.
EFFECTIVENESS: To what extent and in what ways are the BMP/other Project Teams well equipped to build grower awareness, capacity and motivation in relation to biosecurity and sustainability.	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project has delivered considerable investment through several projects to directly support the BMP Team and growers in these areas. - ISM has effectively brokered information to the BMP/other project teams to support their own understanding and grower extension. - ISM has enhanced the human resources and capacity of the BMP Team including securing a graduate officer, improving implementation planning, facilitating creative thinking and building team cohesion. - The ISM has brokered direct connections between the BMP Team and government officials and scientists, as well as other projects. - Other project teams regard the ISM highly, and value the information, capability and availability of this role. They have varied and generally limited interaction with the ISM compared to the BMP Team.
APPROPRIATENESS: How satisfied are the BMP/other project teams with the relevance, digestibility and timeliness of the information and support provided through the project?	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The BMP and other project teams report a high level of satisfaction in the quality, relevance and digestibility of information provided through the project. The ISM's excellent communication skills were highlighted. - Project team members have emphasised the capacity of the ISM to distil complex information into something digestible.
APPROPRIATENESS: To what extent are the BMP/other project teams satisfied that growers issues/ interests have been represented effectively at the policy level through the project?	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The BMP and other project teams report a very high level of satisfaction in the quality, accuracy and effectiveness of the ISM's representation of growers' issues/interests at the policy level.

Evaluation Narrative

The consistent message from interviewees across all categories, was that this project and the ISM role in particular, has been **fundamental to the existence, success, growth and maturity of the Banana BMP Project**. It has been instrumental in securing the current level of funding for BMP3, as well as other smaller projects to support growers. The evaluation of the BMP2 project found it to be highly successful in improving grower knowledge, motivation and practices, and this project has demonstrably contributed to this success.

The ISM has provided support to other project teams through communicating the big picture on policy issues, providing strategic, solutions-focused contributions to meetings, and connecting teams up with other initiatives occurring in the water quality or biosecurity area. Officers have drawn on Michelle's availability and skills as a mentor.

"I have reached out to Michelle for mentoring – seeking advice on how to broach topics with growers. She is a great sounding board that is independent of government." (Government officer)

There is also a strong sense from those respondents in a position to comment, that although the ISM is based in Brisbane, she is **well known and highly respected by growers**. Although direct empirical evidence is not available, many respondents (including growers on the Board) commented on the fact that many growers understood that it is better to be on the front foot and influencing reef-related regulations, and taking positive actions to demonstrate the industry's social licence to operate.

"Growers appear to know her, and have respect for her, despite the fact that she is in Brisbane and dealing with policy people. Growers listen to her, but she listens to them. She is very humble and down to earth." (BMP Team member)

"I've been in a room full of growers, and they looked at Michelle to figure out if what I am saying is reasonable and in line with their interests. There were some tense moments, but then Michelle will talk about the industry perspectives, which has allowed growers to relax a little. Growers 100% trust her guidance and judgement." (Government officer)

Examples of Achievements

Tangible examples of this project's direct achievements with regard to this outcome include:

- The ISM has been critical to the success of the **BMP Team** in a wide range of ways, including planning, team dynamics, mentoring, capacity building as well as providing general project oversight (**Box 1**).
- The ISM's leadership on the conceptualisation and planning for the **BMP3 project**, has resulted in a renewed focus and approach to the next phase of investment. As the lead negotiator of the BMP3 project with OGBR, the ISM supported the BMP Team to present a compelling case for funding, seeking investment totalling substantially higher than the original OGBR budget for bananas. They prosecuted their case effectively, securing the full \$4 million as requested, including \$1.5 million in direct grower grants.

"Compared to other industries, ABGC did the most thinking about the model they wanted, supplied it with evidence and had the most robust, collaborative discussion about the detail. They did more deep thinking about how they would implement the project...I was negotiating 4 contracts, and theirs has the most clarity." (Government officer)

- The ISM has secured additional investment to support **Nutrient Management Planning** in partnership with Innisfail CaneGrowers, in addition to funding from Terrain for a place-based water quality project in **Utchee Creek (Box 2)**. These projects (including the graduate project below) represent approximately \$800,000 in additional funding to *support growers to make better decisions and take positive action*.
- The ISM lead discussions at BMP Team, Board and government levels on the development of an industry-specific guide for nutrient management (**B4B**), with funding currently being negotiated with OGBR (**Box 3**).
- The ISM secured a new ABGC employee through the Queensland Farmers Federation **Graduate Program**. This involved advocating to OGBR that the banana industry had reached a level of maturity where they could take on a graduate. It also involved convincing the Board to fund 40% of the graduate salary. This officer is still with ABGC and is implementing the ground cover and NMP projects, which now fully cover her salary.
- The ISM has initiated a partnership with Terrain to secure government investment to fill a cross-industry **skills gap** for farm planning, layout and contouring expertise. The BMP2 evaluation found this gap in expertise to be a major limitation for industry in minimising sediment loss.

- The ISM has regularly provided timely and comprehensible information about the **biosecurity big picture** and issues and initiatives relevant to growers to the BMP and other project teams, in addition to supporting practical actions such as providing free **biosecurity signage** to growers.

“Our team would be without SO much information. There would be a big information gap.” (BMP Team member)

Impact and Opinion Boxes

Box 1: BMP – providing strategic and practical support from a range of angles

Overview

The ABGC BMP project (currently moving into its 3rd phase), supports growers to make better decisions and take positive action, moving towards industry best management practices for both water quality and productivity.

The role of the ISM: Broker; Influencer; Designer; Connector; Overseer; Mentor

As well as having overarching oversight of this project, the ISM plays a range of strategic and supportive roles to ensure that the project is on track and the team is cohesive. These areas of support provided include:

- **Strategy:** Facilitating the team in collective strategic thinking, planning and future visioning, resulting in a refreshed approach towards BMP3, which takes a grower-centric approach, rather than activities revolving around grants.
- **Ideas:** Working on the development of new ideas such as the new Farm Priority Plan – which is created from the growers’ BMP checklist and helps the grower plan for change over a short/medium term as well as provide industry wide information on what knowledge and support is required to support best practice.
- **Negotiation:** Leading the proactive negotiations of the BMP3 project, which involved initiating early meetings with OGBR to put forward the ABGC case for the project focus and approach, capitalising on a foundation of respect.
- **Implementation Planning:** Initiating and supporting the team to undertake detailed implementation planning, to ensure that everyone is clear on roles and responsibilities, and how they fit within the bigger project framework.
- **Extension Planning:** Supporting Extension planning to enable the team to be more purposeful about how and why they engage, before, during, and after a grant, and in some cases in the absence of a grant. This has given the team the tools to put the grower at the centre and turn grower-centric rhetoric into the key project driver.
- **Communications planning:** supporting the team to land on the right message, at the right time in the right format.
- **Staff satisfaction:** supporting staff retention through providing mentorship, tackling issues as soon as they arise, securing gap funding between BMP2 and 3, and proactively ensuring staff feel valued.
- **Integration:** Identifying opportunities to integrate messages and maximise interaction with growers (e.g. checking in on biosecurity knowledge and signage when on-farm for BMP-related activities).

The difference the ISM has made:

As it was already well established at the beginning of this round of Hort Innovation funding, the BMP Project would likely have continued without the ISM. However, it is unlikely that the project would have been as well considered and designed, nor would it have secured the level of funding (\$4 million – an increase on the previous phase). Other industries experienced a reduction in their project budgets.

Without the high-level planning and staff team-dynamics support, the team may not have continued to operate as cohesively, had a shared understanding of roles and responsibilities and been as connected to the big picture issues and opportunities as well as what is happening within ABGC as an organisation.

“The whole board has been surprised about the amount of grants that have come in. We thought the grants wouldn’t be available with the economy. We have ended up with 1.5M for grants. To get that money available to industry says a lot about Michelle.” (ABGC Board member/grower).

“I think it took clear ideas from both sides to come up with a solution/product that worked. I do feel like between BMP2 and 3 there was a maturing in skills and capability in ABGC and from that understanding a refinement of what they wanted to deliver...I think we have ended up with a more grower-centric service model that will help roll out the BMP.” (Government officer)

“She values people...I feel valued and she regularly talks to me about how she values the BMP Team. I’ve done an information flyer to send to her yesterday and she replied “It looks amazing. I am taking it to the Board today to show them the great stuff that is coming out of our team!” (BMP Team member)

Box 2: Utchee Creek – place-based water quality monitoring dedicated to the banana industry

Overview

Utchee Creek is the location of an integrated water quality monitoring project, supported through the extension services of the BMP Team. It is a place-based initiative that brings together growers and scientists to determine what is being put on, and coming off, banana farms. It responds to growers' questions *"What does this all mean, and what has it got to do with me?"*.

It is the first place-based, grower-focused local water quality monitoring project that has been carried out in a banana dominated sub-catchment. The data is collected with, and for the growers, to build understanding and support better decision making and positive action. The data is not shared and is under industry control.

The Utchee Creek project represents an investment of approximately **\$500,000** in water quality monitoring, supporting and complementing the extension work of the BMP Team in this sub-catchment.

The role of the ISM: **Broker; Influencer; Designer; Connector; Overseer**

This initiative builds on the involvement of the ISM in the Major Integrated Project (MIP) and the partnerships that were established through that project. The ISM witnessed the impact of the place-based model, and with her big-picture thinking, was able to see the benefits this could bring the banana industry and how it could engage growers in the science. The strong and trusted relationship the ISM had built with Terrain through the MIP enabled the strategic negotiation of a banana-focused local water quality monitoring site under their current OGBR-funded water quality monitoring project.

Water quality monitoring is a sensitive and risky activity given the current reef-related regulatory environment. Nevertheless, the ISM secured support from the Board with little pushback, due to their strong appreciation of the importance of quality data and industry leadership. Over many years, the ISM has cultivated an industry culture of *'better to be in the tent'* and *'best to be armed with the best-available data no matter what it tells us'*.

The ISM has also made connections between this project and the Smart Farms initiative, as well as the DES water quality monitoring team, to enable sharing of lessons and technical advice, without compromising the privacy of the Utchee Creek water quality results.

While retaining an oversight and strategic support role, the ISM has delegated the day-to-day running of the Utchee Creek project to the BMP Team, who provide extension support.

As an exciting knock-on result for the banana industry's reputation in the broader water quality scientific community, the BMP Team member responsible for the project and the Terrain OGBR project lead are hoping to jointly present at a scientific conference in Townsville on toxicology and chemistry, with this year's theme being *'engaging with stakeholders for protecting the environment'* – an opportunity to showcase industry's proactive attitude and contribution to the science of reef water quality.

The difference the ISM has made:

The Utchee Creek initiative – as a stand-alone banana industry, place-based initiative – would not have been conceptualised or realised without the long-standing partnerships of the ISM, her involvement in the MIP, her strategic vision for the banana industry and support of the Board's proactive leadership.

"ABGC is really great to work with. They are amazing – they want the data and want to know what is going on"
(Non-government partner)

"What she has done – behind the scenes – for growers, is the advocacy work around the place-based approach, based on learnings from the MIP model. I have been in a number of forums where Michelle has been a strong voice for place-based approaches to program design and development. Without her, I don't think we would have got to the point where the growers and industry would be as enthusiastic as they are in having [local water quality monitoring]." (Non-government partner)

Box 3: B4B – leading the way on best practice

Overview

As part of design of the BMP3 Project, the BMP Team identified the need for nutrient management guidelines for the banana industry, (akin to the cane industry's '6 Easy Steps'). B4B (Best 4 Bananas) is envisioned to capitalise on insights from the RP191 nutrient trials, but also address remaining knowledge gaps in nutrient practices, turning this knowledge into a practical tool to support improved and more informed grower decision making. The development of a B4B Guide was included in the BMP3 project proposal. In recognition of the scale of the job involved, OGBR proposed that it be removed from the BMP3 project, and that additional funding is sought. OGBR are currently looking into options.

The role of the ISM: **Broker**; **Influencer**; **Designer**;

- Facilitated strategic discussions in relation to the design of the BMP3 Project, giving the team the courage to put the proposal for B4B forward,
- Secured support for development of the B4B guide from the Board, including responding to concerns about the risk of such a product becoming the basis of legislation, arguing that it is better that the legislation is based on an industry-driven process rather than a government-driven one.
- Led the ongoing negotiations with OGBR on alternative sources of funding for developing B4B.

The difference the ISM has made:

The ISM has facilitated discussions at the BMP Team level which enable the team to lift their head's out of the BMP box and be ambitious – dream big! She has brought the discussions to the investor, supporting the team to argue the case and push for investment to make it happen as an industry-driven initiative, as well as providing a compelling case to the Board based on the importance of being proactive.

"I think there could be some really good outcomes from [B4B]. The Board endorsed me taking the next step and scoping out a project. The Chair said to me 'If you are involved in this...I am OK because you will see any risks for industry and deal with them'". (ISM direct quote)

"They came to us and said they wanted the B4B – it's a good idea and we are keen to talk. The reaction of the ABGC Board was OK – but we don't want it to be regulated like 6ES. There is still some level of watchfulness. But out of all the commodities there is a good working relationship, a good level of trust that allows for good engagement and projects to get up." (Government officer)

2.2 Outcome 2: Effective industry leadership and recognition

The industry is well regarded, respected and recognised for its attitude and positive actions in relation to biosecurity and sustainability.

Summary of Evaluation Findings

This outcome was not included as part of the original project description and logic. While it could have been reflected in a generic 'unanticipated outcomes' section, the extent to which this is a core part of the work the ISM does undervalues the purposeful nature of the role in the area of industry leadership. It has therefore been added to the revised Program Logic for the purposes of this evaluation.

This outcome refers to all aspects support to foster informed, rationale and forward-thinking leadership and build industry recognition and reputation, including direct representation of the industry at a range of levels, supporting the ABGC Board and promoting the profile of leading growers.

Table 4 summarises findings against the Key Evaluation questions.

Table 4: Outcome 2: Industry leadership and recognition – summary in relation to KEQs		
Key Evaluation Question	Conf. level	Summary of findings
IMPACT: To what extent and in what ways have industry leaders taken the biosecurity and sustainability picture into account in making decisions/acting on behalf of the industry?	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The evaluation has identified numerous examples of where industry leaders (including the ABGC Board and senior ABGC staff) have based their decisions and actions on a sound understanding of biosecurity or sustainability issues, options and consequences, raised, communicated and translated through this project.
IMPACT: How well is industry regarded by external parties (government, non-government, other industries)?	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Without exception, every non-industry respondent reported a high regard for the banana industry, in particular the mature, balanced and collaborative attitude of the Board. - All non-industry respondents recognised the pivotal role that this project has played in building and maintaining a positive industry reputation.
EFFECTIVENESS: To what extent and in what ways do industry leaders better understand the policy context of the big picture and the risks and consequences of their actions/decisions as a result of this project?	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The ISM has regularly presented information, issues, options and potential solutions on the policy context to the ABGC Board and internally within ABGC management. - Board members/growers and senior ABGC staff all report benefits in their understanding of a wide range of policy topics, issues, risks and consequences of actions as a direct and irrefutable result of this project.
APPROPRIATENESS: How satisfied are industry leaders with the information and support that has been provided through the project?	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Without exception, industry leadership (incl Board members/growers and senior ABGC staff) report a very high level of satisfaction in the quality of information and support provided by the project. - In particular, industry leadership have emphasised the value of this project in translating policy and 'government speak' into something that is understandable and meaningful for industry, including identifying the critical issues, risks, scenarios and opportunities in relation to this information.
APPROPRIATENESS: Are industry leaders/growers satisfied with the extent to which its issues/ interests have been represented effectively at the policy level through the project?	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Without exception, Board members and senior ABGC staff report a very high level of satisfaction in the quality, accuracy and effectiveness of the ISM's representation of growers' issues/interests at the policy level.

Evaluation Narrative

In virtually all interviews with parties external to ABGC, the ISM's exemplary industry representation was emphasized. This perspective was offered unsolicited for every interview. According to respondents, the ISM is very well regarded in government, non-government and broader industry circles. It was noted that every time she engages, she provides positive visibility of the industry at all levels, and this is reported as reflecting very well on the reputation of the banana industry in general.

Many respondents highlighted the unusual levels of trust that are evident between government and industry, and the value that both industry and government place on this trust (**Box 4**). She is influential at working through complex and difficult issues and is reported as regularly having a clear influence over the outcome, ensuring it is practical and workable for the industry and growers.

"The industry is getting credibility and effective representation. Having someone of Michelle's calibre working for your industry organisation, you are getting enormous bang for your buck... Industry is getting real traction...really good cut through in government circles." (Government officer)

"You have confidence that when [Michelle] is representing industry she is well respected, she is someone who has a high standard and a strong reputation and identity, and that gives us as an industry a lot of credibility when we are looking at pushing back on things". (ABGC officer)

"She has significantly advanced their reputation as an industry. And advanced their reputation as being willing to own up to, and confront the issue, and then do something about it." (Non-government partner)

"She advocates for the industry every day of the week. A lot of the time [growers] don't see what she does – but she goes into bat for industry all the time and gives us a seat at the decision-making table. It's very important that we have a seat at that table." (ABGC Board member/grower)

In addition to ensuring she herself contributes to a positive industry reputation, the ISM is purposeful about supporting the Board and other industry members to build and maintain a proactive, positive, solutions-focused culture. When asked, every Board member was clear that Michelle has had an influence over their attitude as individuals and a collective. Over many years, and through several Chairs and multiple Directors, this consistent approach has solidified and honed the Board's evidence-based and rational decision-making processes and attitude toward government and other industries (**Box 5**).

"I notice there are other industry groups that don't miss a chance to have a shot at each other. I don't get that with banana growers... I really notice it because I work across all of them. I like that about ABGC. They go about their business. I find them to be progressive, wanting to approach things strategically." (Government officer)

Examples of Achievements

Although the feedback from virtually all respondents is very clear about the quality of the ISM's industry representation, as well as her support for industry in developing and sustaining its leadership and reputation, it was more challenging for respondents to cite tangible examples of her achievements against this outcome and the difference this recognition has made for industry. However, several examples have been provided, and there is a clear link between industry reputation and the other outcomes of this project.

- The ISM nominated for, and was appointed to the **Biosecurity Queensland Ministerial Advisory Committee** (BQMAC) one of only 3 specific industries with a member. The 9-person prestigious group 'comprises members with skillsets that demonstrate them as future leaders and influencers of biosecurity preparedness and response within Queensland'. At the time of nomination, the Chief Biosecurity Officer specifically requested that a member of the group leading the appointment process make the ISM aware of this opportunity, which speaks volumes for her reputation. This recognition reflects well on the banana industry, and her membership of this and other policy committees puts her in a position to advocate for policies that will work for the banana industry.
- Through her strategic and reasoned approach, and as a result of her reputation as a clear thinker and communicator, the ISM was able to influence the **Plant Health Australia Board** to focus on refreshed messaging about the need to invest in plant biosecurity (**Box 6**).

- The ISM initiated the **Future Farming Awards**, to recognise the environmental stewardship shown by banana growers in the Wet Tropics. This is presented at the National Banana Congress. According to one Board member, as well as honouring the achievements of a grower, it normalises these practices and behaviours within the broader industry, having an influence over the culture in general.
- The ISM has been invited to be a member of many **committees and strategic planning initiatives** including:
 - National Biosecurity Strategy Reference Group
 - Biosecurity Queensland Ministerial Advisory Committee
 - Banana Industry Biosecurity Planning
 - Wet Tropics Healthy Waterway Partnership
 - RP 191 Reference Group (Optimising nitrogen rates in the banana industry project)
 - Stakeholder Partnership Group for the Agricultural Management Practice Adoption Target
 - Ministerial Agricultural Stakeholder Advisory Group.

“With Australian Government funding [PHA] are setting up a small working group to run 3 pilot projects looking at surveillance data and data sharing. We are working with Michelle now to see if the banana industry will be involved in this pilot project. The reasons we want bananas involved is we know they are dealing with biosecurity issues but also, we know we will get outcomes from the project. If we didn’t respect Michelle, we wouldn’t have asked them to participate.” (Non-government partner)

Impact and Opinion Boxes

Box 4: Trust Capital – a valuable commodity in the current environment

Industry and government are not usually happy ‘bed partners. However, many respondents – in particular government partners – have noted the unusual level of trust they feel has been built between government and the banana industry – particularly in the challenging area of reef water quality. There is a sense that this trust is mutual, and enables the parties to have open, frank conversations about issues that are, by nature, emotive.

It’s been noted that some of the Board members have looked over their shoulders at the “Green Shirt” approach, and perhaps at times have been tempted to go down that path, and put the energy into fighting and resisting. However, the consensus amongst Board members interviewed is that through this project, the ISM has steered and supported the Board to maintain a collaborative, proactive approach towards working with government, and this approach is delivering benefits, such as getting industry reef regulations that are workable, and ongoing funding for BMP and other initiatives.

The fact that we have been able to build good relationships and access the right people has laid this foundation for a much more productive relationship across the board. (ABGC Board member/grower)

“Industry has a trusted relationship with government. WE value that BIG TIME... its Trust capital. We are proud of the respect that we have with government. You put the effort in and you get reward...Michelle has particularly developed that.” (ABGC staff).

“The regs were a turning point and it was different to other industries because of the way Michelle’s input is provided – it was measured, understandable. There’s no chip on the banana industry shoulder. That makes negotiation much easier... We do have a high level of trust in ABGC and Michelle. And I would like to think that is reciprocated” (Government officer)

“Michelle goes in to bat for us, and has conversations with government, with industries best interest in mind. Government has their agenda to push but we work together on getting alignment. She meets government in the middle... and gets the best outcome for industry that we could hope for.” (ABGC Board member/grower)

“I trust Michelle. I can say what I’m really thinking. There have been tricky discussions where the Board has wanted more information... and she has got me in front of the board so they can ask me the questions directly. This ability to work really openly with industry gives me great comfort – we get results a lot more efficiently. Contrast that with other industry bodies... they would rather deny it, fight it, make a lot of noise. We can work with them, but we have to go through several rounds of being shouted at first. ABGC is not like that.” (Government officer)

Box 5: Supporting leadership and reputation of the ABGC Board

The role of the ISM: **Broker**; **Influencer**; **Mentor**

The ISM attends all Board meetings and presents on issues and opportunities with regard to sustainability (presently largely focused on reef water quality) and biosecurity.

The key services she provides to the Board include:

- **Translating** government reports, policies and statements and providing timely and comprehensive information when needed.
- Keeping her fingers on the pulse and bringing **emerging issues or opportunities** to the Board well in advance.
- **Presenting the facts** clearly and concisely, but also well considered scenarios, as well as risks and the implications of different decisions.
- **Brings government representatives** and specialists to the Board providing an opportunity for the Directors to speak directly with government decision makers or subject matter experts.
- **Guiding** the Directors through a rational decision-making process, as well as helping them think through the consequences of potential decisions, often through pointed questions rather than suggestions.
- Providing **one-on-one advice**, support and mentoring to Board members whenever required.

Respondents note that she is respectful of the Board's authority, but does not shy away from presenting all the facts – the good, the bad, the ugly – backing that up with options, associated risks and consequences, and usually a well-considered recommended path of action.

The difference the ISM has made from the perspective of Board members:

Every Board member made it clear that this role is essential to the effective functioning of the Board, the organisation and the industry as a whole, given the wide range of pressures industry faces from the policy perspective. In particular, many noted that if this role was not dealing with these complex issues, THEY would have to, and this would lead to poor and untimely decisions, possibly at times the wrong decisions, and Director burnout. Both Board members and senior ABGC staff pointed out that as growers, their comfort zone is in the here and now, dealing with things that have already arisen. *"If it's too far out we'll worry about it when we get to it But then it might be putting out fires"*.

The Board are unanimous in recognising the need to have someone with the background, relationships, knowledge (BOTH industry and policy knowledge) and skills to drive industry participation and ensure industry has a seat at the decision-making tables. This role is fundamental to industry's proactive and solutions-focused reputation.

"She has gone above and beyond in terms of mentoring members of the Board, especially when it comes to visits to Ministers, understanding government reports, there is a lot of one-on-one mentoring. Assisting with how to have constructive discussions with ministers or policy makers. Strategizing with regard to how to have the influence you want to have." (ABGC Board member/grower)

"She has guided the Board really well in an area that has developed really rapidly over the last ten years (with reef)". (ABGC Board member/grower)

"Not having an Industry Strategy Manager? That is a situation I wouldn't want to occur. Puts too much pressure on the CEO and Directors in NQ... Michelle is just so important because she does drive things like that... She has the link between the grower, through research and the government." (ABGC Board member/grower)

"We put a lot of faith in her... in what she does...in the information she brings. If she doesn't know, she'll say give me some time and I'll find out. She's made my life easier – someone has to do the stuff." (ABGC Board member/grower)

"With her, its great. Without her there would be a massive hole! Having her gives us a seat and a voice at the table of many discussions and decisions that we only know about peripherally. We are running our own business, and she is going in to bat for us on a lot of issues that we don't even know about." (ABGC Board member/grower)

"Yeah – she influences the board. She will guide and lead discussions. Normally she is working on a solution...99% of the time we agree with what she proposes. Without her, decisions would be getting made but more often than not, we would probably be making an ill-informed decision... they could be wrong." (ABGC Board member/grower)

Box 6: The subtleties of having an influence and representing industry

"I was recently at a Plant Health Australia board meeting. The board wanted to engage with the Queensland Government and industry representatives to talk about the Emergency Plant Deed and talk about what PHA could do in the future. One of the PHA directors is a grower and former ABGC Board member. He rang me in advance of the meeting, asking for information about the people that were coming to meet the PHA Board. I could give him the whole context of each person and what he could expect from the meeting. I could give him a sense of the issues that would be raised. He really appreciated being well informed before the meeting.

During the meeting, I challenged the defeated attitude held by some BQ officers that biosecurity for plant industries would never see an increase in funding. I said *"I take your point but we have to change the narrative here. If we've been saying this for 10 years and we're getting nowhere, then we have to do something different, we have to change the story, rather than asking for more money and getting rejected again."*

An "ally" in the room replied, *"I'm so glad you said that – I'm new to BQ, but my observation is that there is no strategy to create an influence to better market and sell the message that more funding is needed"*. That started a much broader conversation amongst the group about what the new narrative could be and how to have an influence over investment levels.

At the end of the meeting, we came up with 3 priorities that PHA could consider as part of their focus and function. The top one was *"To show leadership in trying to change the narrative on plant biosecurity – to get more funding, to get more activity, greater buy-in from stakeholders"*. Money just flows for animal biosecurity. It's not an equal playing field – so we have to redesign that playing field.

Who knows what is going to happen – it is a long term goal, but it feels good to have a positive influence over the conversation and agenda at that level." (Michelle McKinlay, ABGC Industry Strategy Manager).

2.3 Outcome 3: Government policy, program and investment influence

Policies and programs are appropriate to industry needs and issues and enable growers to respond effectively to biosecurity and sustainability challenges.

Summary of Evaluation Findings

This outcome refers to a large proportion of the work undertaken by the Industry Strategy Manager across both topics, and it is the outcome that is most self-explanatory specifically with regard to reef water quality regulations. In relation to biosecurity, the major ‘policy and program’ initiative has been the TR4 transition from government to industry, to which the ISM has contributed considerable time and effort.

Table 5 summarises findings against the Key Evaluation questions. Evidence and examples are provided in the following sections.

Table 5: Outcome 3: Policy, program and investment influence – summary in relation to KEQs		
Key Evaluation Question	Conf. level	Summary of findings
IMPACT: To what extent and in what ways has policy/frameworks and project design and development been INFLUENCED by the project in ways that benefit growers/ industry?	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The evaluation has identified numerous examples of policy frameworks and project design and development that are DIFFERENT to what they would otherwise have been because of this project. Respondents are clear of the influence that this project has had on these policies and projects. - Key examples include reef regulations in relation to the development of New Land and Land Management Targets, and the design and negotiation of the TR4 transition program. - In all instances, according to all respondents who had sufficient knowledge to comment, this has been demonstrably beneficial for growers and industry.
EFFECTIVENESS: To what extent and in what ways (how well) have GOVERNMENT STAKEHOLDERS BEEN ENGAGED? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have productive relationships and networks (trust) been maintained and expanded? • Has accurate and representative information been provided to policy makers? • Have policy makers understood and had trust in this information? 	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All government respondents report very productive and trusting relationships with industry, and the ISM in particular (as a representative and spokesperson for industry in many forums) - The evaluation has identified many examples of where information has been provided to policy makers. Respondents are very confident that this information has been accurate and representative. - In general, policy makers report a solid understanding of industry as a result of this project, and a high level of trust in the information that has been provided.
APPROPRIATENESS: How satisfied are policy/programmatic stakeholders with the services/support offered through this project?	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Without exception, policy and programmatic stakeholders, from both the water quality and biosecurity sectors, have reported a very high level of satisfaction in the services and support from this project, noting it has played a critical role in ensuring policy outcomes that deliver on both government and industry needs. - In particular, government partners have emphasised the collaborative, open, honest and solutions-focused approach taken by industry through this project.

“Michelle has put us in their corner. Rather than setting up a situation where we are adversaries, we are on the same page, in the same place, so we are in a position where we can advocate internally FOR the industry, rather than being at loggerheads.” (Government officer)

Evaluation Narrative

Many respondents – in particular from industry – spoke of the importance of building and maintaining a ‘social licence to operate’ through positive actions with regard to the environment. However, this is made much easier for growers if policies, programs and legislation are ‘fit-for-purpose’ and are designed with a clear understanding of industry issues, context, constraints and challenges.

All evaluation respondents – without exception – stressed how effectively the ISM has represented industry issues and context in relation to government policy and programs. The majority of respondents emphasised that the ISM has played a critical role as a well-regarded representative, at the right table, at the right time, with the right messages, and also with the confidence, skills and knowledge to influence decisions. This has been made possible by the trust that has been built between the ISM and key government agencies as well as the growing trust between government and industry in general (**Box 4**). Every respondent is also confident that this representation has had an **influence**, and **delivered tangible benefits for growers and industry** in general.

Respondents are confident that this role has provided a **critical brokerage link between growers, industry, science and government**, with the ability to translate policy into layman’s terms, and reflect industry perspectives within policy language. Industry respondents (including all Board members) are confident that the ISM accurately presents and defends the Board’s views, and that she is able to speak with authority because of that. Government respondents report they have gained a greater understanding of the banana industry and its challenges as a result of this project.

Without a position dedicated to this role, respondents believe that industry would be in a worse position with regard to reef regulations in particular. They would have been told what to do with little or no input, and they would have had legislation imposed upon them that would have been more onerous and less tailored to the banana industry context. Many respondents pointed to what they have seen happen to other industries that either don’t have a representative sitting at the decision-making table, or that have taken an adversarial stance in their relationship with Government.

Many industry respondents consider a key achievement of this project is the organisation’s **demonstrated capacity to be prepared for the next challenge or opportunity** and on the front foot when it approaches. This project has resulted in proactive initiatives such as partnership research into ground cover and more recently discussions around the issue of pesticides. Respondents have stressed that the job is not ‘complete’, and that new policy-related challenges will come up unexpectedly. Without someone who can pivot and focus on that challenge, industry will find itself on the back foot and in reactive mode. The ISM has demonstrated time and again the importance of being able to see the issue coming, prepare and inform industry about the consequences and then build a case for negotiating with government and arriving at a workable solution.

“Without [the project], industry would have been in a much worse position. We would have been told what to do. I’ve seen what has happened in other industries. But they came to us with a starting point... and we were able to negotiate a much better and more reasonable result”. (ABGC Board member/grower).

Examples of Achievements

Tangible examples of this project’s direct influence over government policy and programs include:

- The ISM was able to successfully negotiate changes to the **reef regulations on development of new land**, strongly influencing the wording and definitions in the ‘standard’, negotiating a concession for farmers affected by TR4 and, most importantly, negotiating that the threshold for new farms that were required to undertake intensive site assessments as part of the permitting process be raised from 20 to 100 hectares (**Box 7**).
- The ISM has been instrumental in preventing a set of unworkable and unachievable **land management targets** from being included in the latest version of the Water Quality Improvement Plan. Lack of grower progress towards unrealistic targets would have reflected badly on industry in report cards, and potentially impacted on public perception and industry’s social licence to operate (**Box 8**).
- The ISM played a core role in the critical thinking, planning and logistics around the **transition of TR4** from government to industry, enabling a smooth transition of a massive program, with no precedence.

Respondents who had knowledge of the ISM's role were clear that ABGC would not be in a strong position to take on the program without the ISM's major contribution (*Box 9 and 10*).

"Come 1st July, ABGC are well prepared, effectively informed, have the right foundation practices in place, and will be able to lead it. Michelle has been doing a lot of the work which has led to the possibility of success." (Government officer)

- Based on the principle that if there are critical knowledge gaps, it is better to be in control of the science that is filling those gaps, the ISM has consistently promoted collaboration with government on science that informs decisions that impact industry. There is general agreement that the outcomes for industry are much better than they would be otherwise. (*Box 11*). The **ground cover project** (*Box 12*) is a clear example, where the ISM advocated to the Board for agreement and then negotiated investment with the government to fund a project to gather information about an aspect of banana farming that government was concerned about. The project has shown that the industry is performing much better than anticipated. The ISM is currently discussing collaboration opportunities for more investigation into pesticides – which is likely to be the next major reef-related challenge for the industry.
- In the previous phase of this project, the ISM was instrumental in securing government investment from OGBR for the **RP191 project** (totalling around \$4million, led by DAF), to fill a critical knowledge gap the Board had identified with regard to nutrients, and to gather evidence to support negotiations around nitrogen targets. During this phase of the project, the ISM has advocated heavily for a second round, which has been successful.
- The ISM intervened in relation to a **DES pesticide monitoring site** that had been installed without permission from the landholder, drawing government's attention to the fact that the site was inadvertently collecting data from a single banana farm, and securing government agreement that the data would not be made public. Any further pesticide monitoring will be discussed with ABGC first. This intervention has increased DES officers' understanding of banana practices. The ISM has also developed a full list of all current monitoring sites across multiple partners, as a tool for the BMP Team.
- Referred to against Outcome 1, the ISM has negotiated **considerable government investment** to support the banana industry over a number of programs. A government officer reported that the overall government investment in the banana industry per hectare (including financial and human resources) is greater than any other horticultural industry. Recently, the Paddock to Reef team travelled to South Johnstone to work with industry on reviewing practices that could be included in the P2R modelling as well as ensuring correlation between the modelling and the land management target practices.

"We invest money and our own human time into [the banana industry per hectare] at a higher rate than any other commodity. And that's fine. But it's the result of Michelle's work in that role. If you look at any other hort commodity, even group together every other hort commodity – we still spend more time and money on bananas. It's a high priority catchment they are growing in, but it's because of the partnership and relationships we have". (Government officer)

Impact Box 7: Reef Regulations – new land regulations

Overview

The Queensland Government was establishing new regulations about the cropping and horticultural development of 'new' land. The regulation aims to enable agriculture to expand while not worsening the reef water quality problem. The permit requirements relate to designing and setting up new farming areas to minimise nutrient and sediment loss. This was a highly controversial process with the banana industry, as these were regulations about 'people in Brisbane' telling farmers how to design and layout new farming area. Nevertheless, the regulation was happening, and there was the opportunity to influence it to be as workable as possible for growers.

The role of the ISM: **Broker; Influencer**

Leveraging off excellent working relationships with Government, and a high level of trust with key officers in OGBR, the ISM proactively engaged in the process at a range of levels:

- **Broker:** Providing OGBR and DES with evidence-based information about the industry.
- **Influencer:** Negotiating with government to arrive at something practical that could be implemented.

The difference the ISM has made:

The ISM, supported by the technical expertise of the BMP team, and backed with evidence from the ABGC databases, was able to deliver the following critical improvements in the regulations, delivering tangible benefits to industry.

From recipe to risk assessment: As a result of the intervention and advocacy from this project, the government moved from having regulation that was highly prescriptive (describing in detail what had to be done regardless of the circumstances) to a farm design based on risk assessment. This was a major shift in principle from a one-size-fits all 'recipe' approach to an approach which enables the grower to take location, rainfall, slope proximity to waterways etc. into account and determine the most appropriate mitigation measures. Moving to a risk based approach gave the grower the freedom to put in place whatever they thought would prevent the loss of soil and nutrients, which is then approved by the regulators. This was a big win for industry.

Reasonable thresholds: The permit applications under this regulation have different levels. The 'standard' level is a simplified self-assessment process which is relatively quick and low cost. The 'site-specific' level is more complex and costly, involving the engagement of a contractor for site design, as well as government officer site visits. The original thresholds being proposed were 2-30 hectares for the standard and 30+ requiring a site-specific application. The advocacy work of the ISM resulted in the thresholds being revised to 5-100 for standard and 100+ for the site-specific. Given that 100 hectares is a relatively large farm, fewer growers triggering this new regulation would be required to undergo the more onerous and costly site-specific application.

TR4 Concessions: The ISM was able to negotiate a concession for owners of TR4-infected farms who needed to relocate. They are exempted from the site-specific process regardless of the size of the new farm development. They will still need to complete a 'standard' application.

"She was very pivotal in keeping negotiations going and bridging the unhappiness and unpopular [Development of New Land] regs that were coming through and government realising that they had to come to the party and listen to the peak industry body and growers at the same time – to understand that the regs need to be tailored to the industry. She was really good at making sure that what was being said and done at grower land is being recognised in the rules. They did come to the party and designed regs that were half workable in reality. Her project was directly responsible..." (ABGC Board member/grower)

Impact Box 8: Reef Regulations – land management targets

Overview

OGBR contracted Alluvium to arrive at land management targets for the new Water Quality Improvement Plan. This process was to be done using modelling. The previous set of banana land management targets established 5 years ago were not appropriate for the banana industry and were not determined with industry input. Regardless, industry is held to account on progress towards these targets.

This new process was an opportunity to influence the process, and ensure that the industry context was well understood, and that any new data was included in the process. Progress towards unrealistic targets that can never be met by industry will not tell the right story about the positive actions being undertaken by growers, and will not support the industry's pursuit of a social licence to operate.

The role of the ISM: **Broker**; **Influencer**; **Designer**

The ISM proactively engaged in the process at a range of levels:

- Providing Alluvium with **evidence-based information** about the industry, including findings from the RP191 project and the results of crunching the current BMP and industry mapping data.
- **Advocating** directly to Alluvium for workable recommendations and **representing** the banana industry on the Stakeholder Reference Group (SHRG).
- **Rejecting the targets** proposed by Alluvium through the SHRG, but subsequently **collaborating with the P2R team** on the design of a revised risk framework based on industry knowledge, and workable and evidence-based targets in relation to practice change and land management – ensuring clear alignment with the BMP.

The difference the ISM has made:

This was a complex piece of policy work, and the ISM was well supported by the BMP Project Coordinator who was able to provide quality technical input, crunch the numbers and provide ABGC with evidence to back their position. The ISM's engagement and advice to Alluvium resulted in considerable changes to what was originally going to be proposed. For example, ABGC were able to have influence with regard to which practices to include, bringing this aspect of the recommended targets as close as possible to the BMP guidelines. However, they were also able to demonstrate with data that what was being proposed could not actually be physically achieved.

When asked to formally endorse the recommendations at the SHRG meeting, the ISM was able to endorse most recommendations with the exception of the actual practice change targets, which were still not realistic or achievable. She felt that they had given Alluvium a logical alternative, and could back up their reasoning with facts and figures.

At the formal meeting of the SHRG, given where ABGC falls in the alphabet, the ISM was the first representative asked to formally endorse the recommendations of the report. At such a forum, it takes courage to formally say 'no' to government and scientists, and to be the first one at the table to do so. The ISM formally rejected the recommendations, but importantly emphasised that industry was committed to continue to collaborate with government to find a workable solution. Since then, the ISM has progressed direct discussions with QDAF to arrive at a target that is realistic, achievable and that industry can accept, and work towards meeting.

Without the evidence-based, logical and courageous input of the ISM – both through direct dialogue with Alluvium and through the SHRG, the resulting targets would have been unachievable and would set industry up to fail from the beginning.

The ability to use BMP and GIS data to influence the decision about regulations had the knock-on effect of demonstrating clearly to the ABGC Board, the benefits of industry having good quality data. Furthermore, despite industry's formal rejection of the recommendation, Alluvium reports a positive, constructive and beneficial working relationship with the ISM.

"I think that what we would have come up with for bananas would have been generic, and not necessarily easily implementable...It would have given them something that would have caused them more grief. It was far easier to work with ABGC than the other industry groups simply because of Michelle's willingness to talk and listen. [She] was a passionate and strong advocate for the industry... There are not many people in this industry that are able to work at that level; deal with politics, be across the science, be across the realities and come up with a coherent outcome. It would be quite a different story if you didn't have that representation at a high level available." (Non-government partner)

Impact Box 9: TR4 transition

Overview

Over the past few years, ABGC has been working closely with Biosecurity Queensland to fully transition the oversight and management of the TR4 response from government to industry (ABGC). This involved a reduction in the total budget by more than half, challenging industry to be innovative in how it approached this responsibility. This transition is unprecedented and there was no blueprint to base the process and architecture on. It did, however, provide an opportunity for industry to forge its own grower-centred path, putting the grower at the centre rather than the disease.

The process of was long, complex and challenging, bringing to the forefront the culture differences between government and industry. However, all relevant interviewees were confident that industry is ready to take over the program on 1st July.

The role of the ISM: **Broker**; **Influencer**; **Designer**; **Mentor**

The role of the ISM has been largely behind the scenes, but has consumed around 40% of her time for the past few years. While the CEO and Chair, and more recently the TR4 Transition Manager, have been the main faces of the transition process, the ISM has been the primary engine making it happen. Specific roles included:

- **Strategic advice and communication** to both the Board and government (including discussion papers and briefing notes)
- **Active negotiation** with government of suitable mechanisms which will work best for growers, including new/modified approaches where necessary, but also arguing for avoiding change for change's sake.
- **Relationship building**, including addressing roadblocks in the negotiations with the Department and smoothing bumps with some government relationships.
- **Design, conceptual work and planning** for the transition arrangements, which required new thinking due the fact that this has not happened before at this scale and therefore there were no precedents to follow (costings, workforce planning, containment and management strategies, contracts and administration arrangements, policy and legislative framework that ABGC will operate under)
- **Mentoring** and supporting the new Transition Manager.
- Supporting the **communications planning** process for the transition.

"Michelle Played the inquisitor...I really appreciate her willingness to learn – the questions she asks... 'how does this work. What does this look like.' To really have an understanding as to how things can be massaged into industry delivery." (Government officer)

The difference the ISM has made:

If not for this project, an enormous workload would have fallen to the CEO, and/or ABGC would have needed to engage external resources to drive the initial discussions and planning. Anyone new coming into this role is unlikely to have had the background, content knowledge and relationships of the ISM. A number of ABGC staff, including the new TR4 Transition Manager himself, have emphasised how heavily they lean on the ISM for support and guidance, and how closely they work together on this enormous initiative.

During an early interview with the former ABGC CEO who was heavily involved in the transition process, 3 potential scenarios were put forward:

- **Scenario 1:** on July 1st TR4 is transitioned relatively smoothly and ABGC takes it on capably.
- **Scenario 2:** On July 1st, ABGC is not well prepared for the transition but it takes it on with serious pain.
- **Scenario 2:** On July 1st, ABGC is not well prepared and has to then negotiate for an extension to the timeframes.

In all relevant interviews (industry and government) after that, these scenarios were put forward in relation to where ABGC would have landed without the role of the ISM being in place from the beginning. Without exception, the responses were either 2 or 3. This strategic project has delivered industry and government Scenario 1.

"Her role with regard to the critical thinking and planning around the transition – a lot of people don't know about. This role has enabled a smooth transition of a massive program to industry. No precedence... every aspect had to be established. She could jump right on board with the process given her background and history, experience and relationships and knowledge of the policy environment" (ABGC officer)

"Her ability to negotiate and work through issues, and [be] a link between industry and government was fantastic. If that resource was not there, we would be in a different situation...there would have been things that slipped through the cracks that industry would still be dealing with it." (ABGC Board member/grower)

Opinion Box 10: From the perspective of the TR4 Transition Manager

"I joined ABGC under 2 years ago as the TR4 Transition Manager. When I joined, Michelle and Jim (former ABGC CEO) were the only people really looking after the transition process. I think my role would be really difficult to achieve in the timeframe if I didn't have Michelle to share the workload with and bounce ideas off. Her content knowledge, communication skills, and linkages with QDAF were so important, and she is a really effective collaborator. I greatly appreciate the way she works."

Michelle and I worked very closely on a number of things. We were involved in the transition workshops, determining strategies, the best way for ABGC to go forward, best agenda items to put in front of the ABGC and TR4 Boards. I valued her strategic input in terms of the best way to proceed on a number of items. Michelle and I have been working with the ABGC Board to discuss their acceptable level of risk moving forward. The Government says they can't risk any soil leaving the property. We've been suggesting "Can we transition from 'soil can't leave the property', to 'soil can't leave the property if there is risk pathway to another banana property'". This more equitably shares the responsibility for spread amongst growers, not just infected farms. Michelle is instrumental behind these strategic, forward-looking discussions."

Another example. I was tasked with putting together a discussion paper asking growers what they wanted to see in industry-led management of the disease...I wrote it out, it was way too wordy and government speak. Michelle re-wrote it... trimmed it back, turned it into a conversational language piece. When I looked at the 2 documents afterwards, I could see they were chalk and cheese. I always think the change in the tone in the paper contributed a lot to the success of the grower engagement process."

Without Michelle's involvement we wouldn't have progressed with the TR4 transition as well as we did. If I was just brought in as transition leader without someone like Michelle, I think the project would have been set up for failure... it would have been a huge ask." (Geoff Wilson, ABGC TR4 Transition Manager)

Opinion Box 11: To collaborate or not to collaborate – the knock-on effects

Several respondents mentioned the likely flow on effects of confrontation at the industry leadership level. One government officer has observed that word gets out to growers that leadership is taking an oppositional position, there is then reduced uptake of things like BMP or extension support, growers become more suspicious of government and less open to direct dialogue, sharing information or research/trials on their farms, new knowledge about industry is not forthcoming, policy and laws are developed in an information void and government rhetoric about industry can become increasingly negative, leading to further industry antagonism. In the end, the Government will impose its regulations in whatever way necessary – the 'big stick' becomes the instrument of necessity.

There was also mention of the fact that the banana industry may be seen by other industries as 'too soft', or working too closely with government. However, growers on the Board who were interviewed are all confident that their approach of 'being in the tent' and being constructive rather than confrontational, is beneficial for all growers, and has resulted in a much smoother and less painful result from the regulatory process.

The ISM has facilitated and enabled that approach by supporting the Board to make rational and evidence-based decisions, as well as working through the long-term consequences of decisions. One ABGC staff member respondent pointed out that the credibility they hold with government is most important when they *do* need to push back on things. Government knows that the push back has a valid reason, and is not just obstructive behaviour.

"You could criticise the banana industry for being too soft and compliant... our strategy has always been we have to work from inside the room with government. People don't like regs but at least we can continue farming." (ABGC Board member/grower)

Impact Box 12: Ground Cover Project – industry taking control of the science and the story

Overview

The traditional and more common stance of industries is not to trust the science, and particularly not to trust the science that government is using for its decisions. Furthermore, there is considerable risk in being actively involved in the science, as you are not in a strong position to dispute unpalatable results. Therefore disengaging in the science and disputing the results can be a delay tactic when faced with looming regulations.

ABGC and the banana industry in general, have taken a more proactive approach, preferring to partner in the science, have input into how it is conducted and have some level of control over how the results are shared and interpreted, as well as the messaging that accompanies them. This has led to active partnering in the Ground Cover Project to assess the extent of ground cover across the Banana industry in the Wet Tropics.

There was no data on ground cover, and therefore decision makers didn't know the contribution that the banana industry was making towards sediment in waterways, and were assuming the worst. There was an opportunity for industry to be on the front foot in sediment control, and understanding their impact on the environment was a critical first step.

The role of the ISM: **Broker**; **Influencer**; **Designer**; **Overseer**

- **Design** of the approach to the project (not the technical aspects) and the conceptual planning.
- **Negotiating** the project with government, including securing investment for ABGC to take the lead.
- **Securing Board commitment** to the project, including presenting the benefits and risks of being involved in science about a sensitive topic that could potentially paint the industry in an unfavourable light.
- **Managing the logistics** for ABGC to deliver the project (e.g. budget, project documentation etc.).
- Providing input and **advice on how to communicate** the project and how to initially engage with growers.
- **Overseeing** the project.

The difference the ISM has made:

In general, the ISM has been very supportive of tackling the science gaps head on, and is constantly surveying the horizon to see what the next challenge is likely to be, identify where the knowledge gaps are, and seek partnerships with government to address those gaps. The purpose is to ensure industry is armed with the best possible information to take to the negotiation table.

The government came to the ISM with a problem. In collaboration, they came up with the solution. When the Board was approached with the proposal for a 'quick and dirty' observation-based assessment, they responded that if it was going to be done, it needed to be done properly. This led to a much more comprehensive project involving drone footage.

The government is very happy with the project and has been forthcoming with additional resources that were not included in the initial budget. From a practical perspective, the government is satisfied that the data will enable industry to effectively target investment in problem areas, and track change over time. Growers are accepting of the results and love the drone technology and the resulting images. They trust the result and the ABGC process, and in particular, trust that the information is being kept confidential.

The project is unlikely to have occurred with industry in the driving seat without the ISM advocating with decision makers and the Board, as well as overseeing its design and establishment. The fact that the partnership project was developed collaboratively from first principles was primarily due to the trusted relationship between the ISM and QDAF.

"At every step of the way, they have been really open. Let's take a chance on this – there is the chance that it might make them look bad. Michelle suggested that industry needs to get on top of this, and it's a good opportunity for industry to be in the driver's seat... rather than just being the subject of the study, they are doing the subject themselves. Its early days. I think things will look very good – it will actually make the industry look better than they expected. In the areas that are not so good, we can now target the investment, in particular their own extension."
(Government officer)

2.4 Outcome 4: Alignment between projects

Banana-related strategic biosecurity and environmental projects are aligned to leverage greater benefits for banana growers and funding bodies.

Summary of Evaluation Findings

This outcome refers to this ISM's role in identifying opportunities for alignment, efficiencies, sharing of project information, research and initiatives that support the banana industry in relation to biosecurity and sustainability. A goal of the ISM is to develop a 'Community of Practice' around things like water quality monitoring for bananas, supporting greater sharing of knowledge, and integration of initiatives. The outcome statement specifies not only that the alignment occurs, but that there are benefits flowing to both growers and funders as a result of this alignment.

Table 6 summarises findings against the Key Evaluation questions. Evidence and examples are provided in the following sections.

Table 6: Outcome 4: Alignment between projects – summary in relation to KEQs		
Key Evaluation Question	Conf. level	Summary of findings
IMPACT: To what extent and in what ways has alignment between banana-related biosecurity and sustainability projects increased as a result of the project?	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The evaluation has identified examples of improved alignment – in some cases alignment where none would have existed without the project. - There has been a strong focus on ensuring that the BMP Project in particular is aligned to the greatest extent possible with other reef-related projects servicing growers, including providing extension services for projects such as RP191 and Utchee Creek. The principle is that the grower experience is integrated and straightforward.
EFFECTIVENESS: To what extent do partners see benefits in alignment?	Med	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Partners have reported clear benefits from the involvement of the ISM in their project, and in supporting the connections that have been made with other projects, stakeholders or scientific entities. - A limited number of examples have been identified where the benefits of alignment have been assessed by ABGC or alignment partners. Determining 'leverage' and quantifying benefits in detail was beyond the scope of this evaluation. This does not indicate that tangible and demonstrable benefits do not exist, and could be an area for improvement in monitoring in the future.
APPROPRIATENESS: To what extent are partners satisfied with the efforts of the project to improve alignment?	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All partners reported high levels of satisfaction with the support provided by the ISM in connecting with, and in some cases actively aligning with other projects. - It was noted by several respondents that the ISM is always seeking looking for, and actively pursuing, opportunities to collaborate and bring parties together to share information and align effort.

Evaluation Narrative

There was less feedback on this outcome through the interviews than the previous 3, most likely because it is a subtle role of the ISM, and it is challenging to think back over 3 years and recall when the role has greased the wheels of collaboration and resulted in active alignment and leverage.

Nevertheless, where examples were provided, respondents were clear that the role of the ISM has been effective in identifying opportunities for collaboration, and bringing people together.

Examples of Achievements

Several examples provide evidence of the effectiveness of this role in increasing alignment, collaboration and integration, and the benefits this delivers for the banana industry.

- The ISM has argued strongly (including to the OGBR) for the **BMP project to provide extension services** for other water quality projects such as Utchee Creek project (reported in section 2.1), which is a direct result of the ISM involvement in the MIP and the partnership established with Terrain. Without this alignment and integration of the Utchee Creek project with the BMP project, there would have been insufficient funds available for the critical extensions services that are required to deliver a local water quality monitoring project.
- The BMP project is also closely aligned with other reef-related projects such as the Nutrient Management Planning and RP191 projects. This approach is based on the belief that working collaboratively – in particular around things like grower extension – is a more efficient and effective use of resources, and provides a better experience for the grower. This alignment enables the BMP team to be seen as a one-stop- shop, **channelling growers to the NMP ‘project’**, particularly if the BMP checklist identifies the need to improve fertiliser application.
- ABGC staff report that the ISM plays a significant role in bringing people together internally, and **breaking down the silos within ABGC** between projects and teams.
- The ISM works closely with other **Hort Innovation projects delivered through ABGC** (e.g. Communications and R&D), maximising internal alignment and sharing of information and expertise, working towards minimal duplication, and good governance and delivering greatest value to growers.
- The ISM has brought various scientists working in water quality monitoring in banana catchments together, facilitating sharing of knowledge and efficiencies – for example connecting the **Smart Farms Project** with the Terrain water quality project, the RP191 project and the DES water quality scientists (*Box 13*). The aim is to build a **community of practice** for the banana industry in the area of nutrient management.
- Through attending monthly meetings of the **National Extension Project** (funded by Hort Innovation), the ISM has identified and progressed opportunities for collaboration on initiatives such as upcoming trials in the reduction of the use of chemicals that are starting to feature in water quality conversations at the policy level. The ISM is actively working to connect up current and future **pesticide monitoring initiatives** in banana catchments.
- Through representation on a range of **biosecurity committees and forums**, the ISM is constantly sharing cross-industry lessons and seeking opportunities to align effort. This includes lessons on how the industry has dealt with TR4 and in particular, the lessons from the transition process.

“Having Michelle involved in the MIP broke down a few barriers between industries. And she was a calming influence... her opinion was valued. I defend the banana farmers; we are all in this catchment and we all need to deal with [water quality challenges] together.” (Non-government partner).

“She is the link for different people researching similar things – she is constantly making connections, brokering partnerships, opening up channels of partnership and collaboration. She is constantly thinking about linkages that can be made, she can see them, but then she follows up and makes them happen”. (BMP Team member)

Opinion Box 13: Smart collaboration with Smart Farms

The Smart Farms Project is looking at how efficiency can be improved with high-end digital technology on farm, leading to improved water quality outcomes. The project is Australian Government funded through Hort Innovation, and is being rolled out across multiple horticultural industries.

"I've been working with Michelle for the last 2.5 years on the Smart Farms project. She is the lead liaison person for the banana industry. There are many ways that she has supported the project, resulting in time and cost efficiencies, and a smoother project roll-out. Examples of her involvement include:

- *Michelle identified the grower that we work with, as well as linking us with other local ABGC staff, OGBR and Will Darvenezia.*
- *She linked Smart Farms up with Alicia from Terrain who has extensive experience in water quality monitoring, and was able to advise on what will work and what won't in the Wet Tropics. Alicia's work also provided a baseline for our project to work from. She also connected us with the RP191 project.*
- *The ISM has encouraged the BMP extension team to ask growers questions about their level of knowledge, use and interest in technology to help us target the results from the Smart Farms project.*
- *Based on her understanding with other projects (in particular the Major Integrated Project), Michelle recommended upfront investment in a TRIOS for real time N monitoring – a wise investment.*
- *She helped to develop a set of standard grower questions to understand where industry is at with technology.*
- *As a member of the Project Panel, she value-adds to meetings, providing insights into grower situations and needs, identifying people we can get in touch with.*
- *She has provided guidance on messaging and communications, e.g. avoiding touchy subjects such as calculating N loads – we focus on concentrations.*

The Smart Farm project operates across a range of other horticultural industries, but we don't have a senior person to work with and it has been a different experience, more difficult to find the correct person to communicate with, more difficult to make connections with farmers, more difficult to understand industry needs. We are further advanced with the banana industry and Michelle is a big part of that. We probably don't even know the bullets that we have dodged due to Michelle's involvement."

(Liam Southam-Rogers; Applied Horticultural Research)

3 Reflections and learnings

3.1 Success factors

This project is unusual. It is largely the work of an individual and doesn't involve activities such as research trials, extension activities or grants which can be counted and their effectiveness determined objectively. For many respondents, it was difficult to distinguish between the **role of the Industry Strategy Manager** and Michelle McKinlay as an individual. When discussing success factors, in order to get beyond the answer "*the success factor is Michelle*" the evaluation question was two-fold:

What do you think has worked well? Specifically with regard to the Industry Strategy Manager, if recruiting for this position in the future, what qualities would you be looking for based on what you perceive has worked well?

Trust capital

The importance of the high level of trust between the ISM and all parties was mentioned by the majority of respondents. This 'trust capital' is hard earned, but can be easily lost, which means it needs to be constantly maintained. It is the long-standing trust that has been built by the ISM across all levels that is a key enabler for many of this project's achievements. The importance of trust in such a role is integrally related to the importance of continuity.

"I think she is well trusted – at so many levels, including with the growers." (ABGC staff)

"You feel like the future is in safe hands, as she is not going to allow anything to happen that is not workable. And government trust that if Michelle says something will work but something else won't, they will listen and take notice and adapt to get the best solution. (ABGC Board member/grower)

Background and knowledge

Numerous respondents credited a large part of the success of the project to the extensive and broad ranging knowledge of the ISM. While acknowledging that she is not a subject matter expert on specific things, the areas of background and knowledge that were considered most important to the success of the project were:

- Understanding **how government works**, in particular in relation to the policy development process, where to prod, where wins can be negotiated and where it is unlikely government can or will budge.
- A comprehensive understanding of **the banana industry**, including the multi-faceted issues impacting industry, the complexity of the geographical, demographical and social context.
- Knowledge of the **reef water quality and biosecurity agenda**, with enough technical expertise to be able to speak the language of these topics.
- **Corporate knowledge** and history, including longevity in the role and knowing who's who in the zoo at the policy, industry and scientific levels.

Importantly, many people mentioned that the ISM knows where her knowledge ends, is open about that and seeks the support she needs from technical experts. For example, if the Board wants more specific information about an issue, Michelle will endeavour to get the experts to a Board meeting so they can have a direct discussion.

Skill set

To complement the background and knowledge, consistent mention was made of the importance of the right skill set mix for this role, including:

- **Communication skills** – being able to talk across so many different levels and with so many different types of stakeholders, from Department heads to small family growers. A key part of this is being a good listener, and being open to taking on board others' opinions and perspectives. The strong communication skills enable the position to effectively translate between government and industry.
- **Questioning skills** – being able to ask very pointed questions which bring clarity to the discussion and help in unpacking complex issues is an important part of brokering and negotiating. Being able to ask the right

question (which could be provocative, challenging or ‘dumb’) at the right time is a skill that can go under recognised. Asking questions in rooms full of ‘learned’ people can be intimidating. There is a level of confidence required to ask someone to explain something or challenge a firmly held position with a question.

“Her ability to see the bigger picture in things... In meetings and conversations ... she will ask a question which makes me think WOW, she is thinking about this from a totally different perspective”. (BMP Team member)

- **Negotiation skills** – Applying both communication and questioning skills, being able to negotiate the best outcome for industry, which includes knowing how far you can push, where you need to give a little ground, and when you need to pull back and regroup with the Board or industry in general.
- **Strategic thinking skills** – being able to make sense out of complexity, connect the dots and identify the essence of an issue. Strategic thinking is a critical skill for this role, helping to bring to light a line of sight between the complexity of the regulatory environment and the grower’s day-to-day, and being able to see where action needs to be taken without getting buried in the detail. Having an eye to the future to spot the things that may well become an issue for industry, and proactively work on a solution.
- **Creativity and new ideas skills** – thinking outside of the box to find innovative solutions to complex problems, embracing challenges that have no precedent and working collaboratively to find new and creative ways of doing things.
- **Planning and risk assessment skills** – Bringing structure and clarity to a task, thinking logically about it and mapping out what needs to be done, when, by who and how. Key to good planning is having the right ‘risk radar’ – not being too risk averse, but being able to identify, unpack and discuss/explain the consequences of the various risks, and what the best mitigation actions might be.

“She has the best strategic mind of anyone that we have.” (ABGC Board member/grower)

“I’ve never had a grower say a bad word about her in the 7 years that I’ve worked for ABGC” (ABGC staff)

Attitude and approach

You can have all the knowledge and skills required to deliver this project, but lack the right attitude to build partnerships, be welcomed around the decision-making table and be taken seriously in negotiations and policy development processes. Respondents noted the following ‘attitude’ attributes as being critical success factors.

- **Honesty** – Although it seems very obvious, honesty and a willingness to share insights and operate with maximum transparency are not common attributes in partnerships between government and industry, and are often perceived to be highly risky for industry.
- **Humility** – Many respondents noted the importance of humility in the role, and the lack of egotistic and self-serving behaviour, which they noted can be common in relationships between government and industry.
- **Preparation** – Many respondents mentioned the fact that the ISM is always well prepared, having read the material, prepared a reasoned response, pulled the necessary information and data together, done the thinking and any consultations that are necessary. This places the ISM in a strong position to effectively and confidently argue the case for industry. It is also respectful of the processes of others.
- **Commitment to industry** – A common theme coming through – particularly from people that the ISM works closely with (including the Board) emphasised her genuine commitment to the industry and to getting the very best outcome she can for growers. The ISM’s commitment to industry includes valuing a ‘bottom-up’ approach and embracing its diversity. For example, tapping into the small and recently established growers – hearing from and supporting the people that might not be in the ‘in crowd’ of growers.
- **Makes things happen** – Critical to success is a commitment to making things happen, putting forward suggestions and making promises, but most importantly following up, taking action and getting traction.
- **Calming presence** – Many respondents – in particular government partners – noted the calming effect the ISM can have on discussions that could be turning heated or controversial, by bringing the focus back on finding the rational first step, or the opportunity to work towards a win-win outcome.

She is excellent... the function should continue. It is so important. If you have the right person in that role, it makes a whole lot of difference to everything that is going on. (ABGC Board member/grower)

3.2 Areas for Improvement

This section responds to the Evaluation Question *“In what ways could the project improve in the future?”*

Every respondent was asked to reflect on ways in which the project could be improved – any advice they might have for the future, or for another iteration of the project. What is presented here is a combination of respondent feedback and the observations and analysis of the evaluator.

Tracking the value of the project

Respondents mentioned how difficult it was to provide very specific and tangible examples of the impact of having an Industry Strategy Manager in place. Without question, every respondent reported how critical it was for both industry reputation and safeguarding the industry’s social licence to operate. It was pointed out that implications of not having such a position would be widely felt, and would undoubtedly be felt by growers with painful regulations, limited access to support such as grants, and the greater level of scrutiny that comes from a distrustful relationship with government. Although no-one had a solution to this problem per se, there was a strong message that collectively, industry and partners need to be able to articulate and provide evidence of the value of this type of role much more clearly. Some suggestions from the evaluator are provided in the section 4.

Communication internally of benefits and results of the project

Related to this, there was considerable feedback from respondents – particularly those within ABGC (including Board members) – on the need for clearer and more regular grower-focused communication of the activities and tangible benefits of this project. Communications is always important, but it is particularly important for a role that can seem far removed from the grower packing a box of bananas in the shed.

“Growers need to hear more of the difference that the role makes... some little stories – in each of the newsletters for example... Maybe something at the banana congress... “What does your industry strategy manager do for you???”
(ABGC Board member/grower)

Continuity and recognising the project is building on previous investment

It was pointed out by many respondents that the achievements of this project are not limited to, or defined by, the current project timeframes. Many of the achievements in the past 3 years are due to the years of partnership building, evidence building, on-going negotiations and knowledge built over many years. Achievements in any future phase of this project will benefit from activities undertaken over the past 3 years that may not have quite borne fruit. The work on pesticides is a great example. Discussions with government have been very active during this phase of the project, but have not yet resulted in a partnership monitoring program. Achieving this in the next phase of a project will be partially a result of the foundational work undertaken over the last year or so. The achievements in relation to reef regulations of this project are clearly built on the achievements of the previous project.

The importance of continuity in such a role cannot be over emphasised. This is common with almost all projects involving partnerships and it is challenging to overcome this problem with short-cycle funding. However, it is continuously raised in evaluations of projects of this nature.

“When she first came on board, industry didn’t know what was going on in Government. She has developed really good relationships with people outside of industry – those that are important to us and to guide us into the future.
(ABGC Board member/grower)

Cross-industry relationships

Feedback from other industries (primarily the cane industry) is that the relationship between the two industries is much improved, largely through the involvement of the banana industry in the MIP and the positive contribution the ISM made as a member of Project Panel. However, there is the perception that there is still work to be done and there could be closer communication around things like common messaging etc. This is challenging as the industries are very different culturally. But some growers farm both cane and bananas, and there are common issues around things such as regulations. This feedback is not just related to the strategic level, but also the field level.

It was acknowledged however, that working collaboratively and communicating regularly takes time, and this is often the one thing that policy officers *and* field staff have in short supply. The extent to which future collaboration occurs between industries at a range of levels will be likely driven by the practical opportunities that arise, and the value that can be gained from this collaboration.

Managing the workload and expectations

Quite a number of interviewees commented that their only advice would be to watch the workload. There was overwhelmingly positive feedback on the performance of the ISM, but some people are concerned that she may be taking on too much and spreading herself too thin. There is the sense that the workload will only increase with new issues and challenges coming onto the horizon.

Advice from respondents includes the need to determine which opportunities to pursue and issues to address, potentially based on some agreed criteria, but that the ISM also needs to be given licence and mandate to say “no”. Contingent on resources, having someone in a support role to take over some of the less strategic work (under the ISM’s guidance) may assist in freeing up the ISM to focus at the higher level (See section 4).

Other advice includes – for some things – be satisfied with 80%, rather than striving for 100% on everything. For some jobs, there is a diminishing return on investment between 80 and 100, and you have to settle with ‘good enough’.

“I think Michelle does prioritise things... but if anything she takes on too big a workload, she does achieve most of it – but it could be a bit stressful. She certainly does know what her major issues are, but the scope is getting wider and wider, and this might result in everything being spread a bit too thin.” (ABGC officer)

“Michelle is so totally smashed with work. She’s the ‘one stop shop’ for a broad range of things, and a broad range of people. I can’t think of an example where this has meant we have needed her and couldn’t get her, or she didn’t deliver. But I just know from what she has to cover, you might get better results out of a role if it wasn’t so stretched.” (Government officer)

Dependency on the capability of an individual

There is no question that the success of this project can be attributed to the skills, knowledge, background, relationships and approach of Michelle McKinlay. That has been reiterated time and time again in the interviews, almost without exception. As highlighted in the previous section, she is incredibly highly regarded and comes with the right mix of strategic and practical thinking, as well as excellent communication skills at all levels.

It does, however, mean that the critical service this position provides industry is somewhat tenuous. This is not an uncommon occurrence in organisations with high performing and well-connected individuals. While it is reported that Michelle is a very willing and capable mentor and generously donates her time to advise and guide others in the organisation, there could be value in having a strategic conversation about how to proactively and purposefully build ‘whole of organisation’ capacity in a range of areas that currently fall in Michelle’s lap. The question is how to institutionalise the strategic thinking and the exceptional negotiation and influencing skills.

“She is wonderful. There may be a little risk in that she has made the role the success that it is. Based on who she is as an operator and her resume. It is very much about Michelle. Whether you would be able to replace like for like, or could you even... is there a risk here?” (Government officer)

4 Recommendations

This section provides recommendations for future improvements or modifications to the project, based on both responses from respondents as well as observations of the evaluator. Given the timeframe of the current project, most of these recommendations are mostly valid for a follow-on phase.

Ongoing investment in the Strategy Manager function

It is clear from the evaluation – and was mentioned unsolicited by most respondents – that there is an enormous amount of work to be done in relation to policy and emerging regulations, and ‘the job is not done’ (**Box 14**). In fact, there are more issues coming on the horizon, including challenges such as carbon emissions and adaptation and mitigation for climate change. *Without a seat at the tables of decision makers, growers and industry in general will be ‘out at sea’, and unable to influence the policies and regulations that will have the greatest impact on them.* In short, there was unanimous support – including from all Board Directors/growers – for ongoing funding for this function within the industry.

“With all the changes that are coming with the social licence and environmental stuff, we are in a far better position having a strategy manager. If we didn’t have her, we might look like [other industries] ...where would we be then?”
(ABGC Board member/grower)

“She’s too important and valuable to lose in this space. There are not many people in our industry that are able to work at that level; deal with politics, be across the science, be across the realities and come up with a coherent policy outcome.” (Non-government partner)

Box 14: A Board member perspective on the value and future of the ISM role

“Recently, I went to a State Government conference on climate change, sustainability, circular economies, waste, etc. Some of the things that were spoken of were very unclear, and very frightening. But what was clear is that they could be very expensive for industry. I came away feeling depressed and scared. My first point of call was Michelle. This is really frightening! We are an industry that isn’t making a lot of money, and any costs are going to impact on profitability! As an industry how are we looking at this looming challenge?”

If we think reef regulations were impactful, what is coming next with net zero commitments is likely to be even worse. It feels too big. Farmers want to solve climate change. It is bad for us. Government wants to solve it. Consumers want to as well. But we are all looking at it from different angles. You need someone at the table who is having those discussions on your behalf. You need someone to be able to negotiate.

I unloaded on Michelle about my fears. We talked about this being our next big challenge and that we need to get on top of it now – be prepared. Michelle has already been talking to people about this, but she thinks it’s time to bring it to the Board for discussion. We need a project on this!

Being able to call and express my concerns to someone who listens and understands, and has the capacity to read and translate the complex government material, gives me a sense of calm. Knowledge that there is someone in there battling for the industry and helping to shape things is so reassuring. These things can be onerous and horrible, but they can also be positive and a win-win.

Its not just climate and carbon emissions. The next round of reef regulations will be coming. The job is not done. There will always be something coming on the horizon. As an industry you can’t sit on your laurels and do nothing. As growers – even a Board member – we can’t focus on this, we are too busy dealing with the day-to-day issues of farming. Having that strategic role means that as an industry, we are on the front foot, ahead of what’s coming before it hits us. You can start to engage with the process well before that ‘thing’ is legislated. It’s about rules and regulations, but it’s also about the social licence to operate. Things can turn against you very quickly if you are perceived to be doing something that is detrimental to the environment. This role is absolutely critical to the future of our industry.” (Dorianna Mangili. Board Director – WA)

Several general recommendations have emerged for consideration in a follow-on phase of this project.

- **Retain the flexibility** in the project to respond to emerging issues and opportunities. There is a fine balance between being too broad and not being able to track impact versus being too specific and shackling the ISM to narrow and specific outcomes. A key characteristic of the project is the ability of this position to look to the horizon, identify emerging issues, put some effort into understanding them and making the necessary connections, and then providing advice on options for industry. To enable this, flexibility in project design is essential.

“You need someone who can plan, anticipate, be able to pivot, be agile, because you just don’t know what is coming next. Michelle is alive to so many issues that are floating around out there. She’ll say, this is on the horizon, this might be coming up... I really question where we would be if we didn’t have someone who was constantly scanning the environment for emerging issues or opportunities.” (ABGC staff)

- Being able to respond to any emerging issues can, however, be challenging in terms of **workload and burnout**. While in the project planning, it won’t be possible to determine which specific initiatives should be prioritised and which should not (as many of them may not yet be known or may still be way off on the horizon), some clear decision-making criteria could be developed as a tool for the ISM – in collaboration with the CEO for example – to decide which emerging issues and opportunities to focus on. Criteria could include the anticipated level of impact of that issue on industry, the likely timeframes of this impact, potential for attracting resources for industry to take up the role of tackling the challenge (e.g. such as the BMP project). It will be important to prioritise the initiatives where the ISM can **add most value**. It is also important to consider the consequences for industry (and ABGC) if an issue does not make it to the ISM short list. Who else could take it on? If no-one does/can what are the implications for industry?

“It comes down to the organisational strategy not the individual... we have to either resource things effectively or make a decision about what not to do.” (ABGC officer)

- In relation to the above point, the next phase may provide an opportunity to **expand capacity** within the organisation for tackling these upcoming challenges. It may be worth considering investing in someone who can work with the ISM – an offsider. This would serve two purposes: to take on some of the current day-to-day workload and enable the ISM to focus on the existing and emerging strategic challenges; and to build capacity in the organisation beyond the ISM to support strategic policy influence. With new and emerging challenges on the horizon, there is undoubtedly enough work for more than one person. Naturally, resourcing will always be a challenge, and competing against projects that deliver outcomes for growers that are more directly and tangibly linked to productivity (e.g. new varieties) will remain a challenge.
- The **institutionalised connection between this project and the BMP Project** is extremely valuable and mutually beneficial. It provides the mechanism for the policy influence role to be extremely well grounded in the issues and realities of growers, and provides a practical avenue for policy-related information to get to growers. Maintaining this close link will clearly be a feature of the next project. It is important however, to distinguish between the impact of this project versus the impact of the BMP project for the purpose of M&E and reporting, and also to be clear about where the role of the ISM begins and ends with relation to BMP3 implementation. The ISM receives invaluable support from the BMP Team to support policy level work, and this is acknowledged. Equally important is to be able to clearly attribute the impact this project has on BMP3 achievements, including in relation to grower awareness, capacity and decision making.

Revising the original project logic

At the onset of this evaluation, the ISM reflected on the challenge of explaining this project to people, and then ‘telling the story’ about the value and impacts generated through the project. For the purposes of evaluation, a framework was developed to describe the work of the project, and as a basis for illustrating the achievements. It could be a useful structure for a future phase. Unlike conventional program logics which have outcomes, outputs, activities etc. which show a clear and predictable line of sight between cause and effect, this structure has the following 3 components:

- **Clarifying the WHY:** It is critical to invest time and effort in **articulating the OUTCOMES** of the project as clearly as possible, including the key indicators (KPIs) that would show signs of progress. In doing this, it is important to be clear about the difference THIS project will make (as opposed to for example the BMP project, which delivers more grower-facing services). The outcomes for such a project will, however, be **broad in nature** (e.g. influencing policy) rather than very specific (e.g. which policy will be influenced and how). This is due to the adaptive nature of the project and the unknown opportunities, issues and initiatives that will arise. It is important to be comfortable with outcomes that are clear but non-specific in nature.
- **Clarifying the HOW:** At the onset of the evaluation, clarifying the **ROLES** that the ISM plays in delivering against the project outcomes was a useful way for the evaluator to gain an understanding of, and categorise, the work of the project. In future, being explicit about which role/roles are being undertaken in relation to a particular activity, and what the ISM hopes to achieve from playing that role, can help with articulating the project's work and impact. It can also help clarify the **purpose** of participating in workshops/meetings etc. While to a large extent the ISM already does this implicitly and potentially sometimes subconsciously, using categorical roles as a mechanism for organising monitoring data may be helpful, in the absence of other very clear categories of activities (e.g. run field day, provide grower extension). It is much more helpful than documenting "attended meeting/workshop" – it provides the 'why' of attending that meeting/workshop and the hook for reporting the difference that attendance made – even if seemingly small (the small things add up!).
- **Clarifying the WHAT:** The notion of 'INITIATIVES' was used to describe the target of the ISM's work. These could be policy initiatives, defined projects or capacity building initiatives such as supporting the Board. These initiatives provided the framework for distilling tangible examples of the difference the ISM has made, and in some cases, an informed speculation of where things are likely to have landed without this role.

Planning for a future project may result in slightly different or reworded outcomes, as well as adjusted roles. The initiatives will not all be clear in the project planning phase, but will emerge, ebb and wane during the project. However, having these 3 levels as a framework for organising project monitoring may help to tell a more coherent story with clear examples of impact. *Table 7* summarises how these three levels might be used as a framework for monitoring.

Table 7: Summary of the use of the 3 logic components in on-going monitoring

Component Description	Relevance for monitoring and evaluation
The WHY: Project Outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Summarises the difference the project is trying to make. - Often reflects WHO is being influenced/supported through the project. - With this sort of project, an 'outcome' is never 'complete' and it is not sensible to try and arrive at numerical targets. 	<p>For each outcome, Key Performance Indicators help describe the signs that you would look for to demonstrate achievements against the outcome. This guides the type of evidence/examples you would collect as part of ongoing monitoring. Examples could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Level of policy/program stakeholder access to accurate and representative information;</i> - <i>Evidence of uptake/influence of advice over policies and programs;</i> - <i>Level of industry leaders' understanding of risks and consequences of decisions and actions</i>
The HOW: ISM Roles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Categorises how the ISM aims to deliver against the outcomes. - Each role should be different, but there should not be too many. - You should be able to describe what success would look like for each role. It can help to use the statement "Through playing this role, I want ..." (e.g. people to know more about the industry; decisions to have been made that align with industry interests etc.) 	<p>Being clear about the difference you want as a result of each role can help with gathering structured monitoring data. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If you are aiming to increase people's knowledge about something through 'brokering', you could informally structure a question at the end of a meeting to check in on people's increased understanding of that topic and takes notes of the responses as evidence; - If you are trying to secure a particular outcome for industry from negotiations, you could record whether or not the resulting decisions of a process of negotiation reflect industry interests – or even some of the smaller 'wins' that indicate it is heading in the right direction.

<p>The WHAT: Initiatives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Describes the specific things (topics, projects etc.) that the ISM is working on. - For each of these, the SPECIFIC influence or impact can be defined in more detail, under one or more of the broader project outcomes. This helps to keep the signs of impact front of mind. - The different roles the ISM plays at a particular point in time may vary according to the nature and stage of the initiative. 	<p>It would be helpful to craft a specific outcome/s for an initiative, which describes concisely what ‘success’ looks like for that specific initiative, the roles you will play, and what you hope to achieve yourself through that/those role/s. These initiative-specific achievements <i>should</i> fall under one (or cut across a number) of your project outcomes and align with some of your KPIs. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Level of policy/program stakeholder access to accurate and representative information about ground cover;</i> - <i>Level of industry leaders’ understanding of risks and consequences of decisions and actions in relation to pesticides and water quality).</i> <p>This can help you gather evidence for that specific initiative, which will also contribute to monitoring for the project as a whole.</p>
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Gathering on-going monitoring ‘data’

This evaluation has relied almost entirely on the perspectives of interview respondents and in-depth discussions with the ISM herself. While this is valid data for the purposes of evaluation, opportunities to gather and/or collate alternative sources of data and evidence may have been missed during the life of the project. This is particularly important for a project which does not deliver very obvious and tangible results on a regular basis, nor results that can be directly and empirically counted.

As proposed above, the development of a systematic, ‘real-time’ monitoring system is best informed by the Project’s logic and M&E Plan where outcomes are clarified with explicit performance indicators – the ‘signs’ – of impact, and as suggested above, adapted for existing and emerging initiatives. This higher level plan can be supplemented with a Data Collection Plan, which specifies how and when different types of data can be collected, as well as how it will be used. If this process is done well at the beginning of the project/initiative, the job of systematically gathering evidence is much easier, and when reports or evaluations are undertaken, much of the work is done.

Monitoring ‘data’ does not have to be numerical. It can consist of qualitative data which is structured and organised in such a way as to tell a cohesive and compelling story. Practical examples of ways to gather qualitative evidence on an ongoing basis could include the following.

- Develop a **systematic evidence-keeping system** (in whatever software or analogue system best works for the user) for capturing practical examples of impact that may emerge opportunistically. It will be helpful to code evidence according to the outcome and initiative, and potentially how powerful it is so you can easily sort the data for the best examples. It is possible to include the role/roles the ISM in securing this result. Examples could include:
 - Meeting/workshop outcomes that were influenced by the input of the ISM, including potentially how they could have been different;
 - Policy documents that were different because of the advice provided by the ISM – including in what ways they were modified;
 - Communication products (from government, ABGC, scientists, others) that were modified/improved as a result of ISM advice;
 - Board responses to papers, and the outcome of that response (this could of course be found in Board papers, but that requires a lot of digging through wordy documents to find the gems). It might be possible to code the responses. Agreement without need for discussion; agreement reached after considerable discussion; Agreement not yet reached, but request for more information; Proposal rejected. It could be valuable to track in a systematic way, the quality of the discussion, and any ‘wins’, ‘lightbulb moments’ or ‘breakthroughs’;
 - Quotes from Board members or partners which provide evidence in relation to an outcome;
 - Quotes from a meeting where it is clear that the partner (e.g. government) has taken on board advice, or evidence that their understanding has shifted.
 - Requests for attendance at events which demonstrate industry reputation.

It's important not to get bogged down with having to record everything and spending unreasonable amounts of time documenting every last quote, but rather being discerning about recording/gathering evidence that is *worthy* of being part of an *impact story*. There is no right or wrong about 'how much' to collect. The important thing is collecting it *with clear purpose* and in a *systematic and sortable way*.

Box 15: The solid line and the dotted line... placing value on the journey as well as the destination

During the evaluation review workshop, the ISM pointed out that drawing a **solid and defensible line** between her involvement in a whole range of committees, workshops, meetings etc. and a tangible benefit for growers and industry can be challenging. Sometimes the real outcome is long-term, and might not be clearly evident for years. There may be effort invested in a direction that has promise, but that doesn't end up delivering.

The notion of a solid line and a dotted line may be useful in placing value on the somewhat amorphous life of being an Industry Strategy Manager. For example, the '**solid line**' may be legislation that is acceptable and workable for industry as a result of many discussions, workshops, provision of data on industry etc. This result delivers clearly on the Policy Influence outcome but may take several years of effort. Along the journey, there may however be some 'dotted lines' such as evidence that there is a greater level of policy-maker understanding of a particular issue. There could even be examples where, in the long-term pursuit of a great policy outcome, the ISM is delivering on the Industry Reputation outcome as part of the journey.

Harder still could be drawing a solid 'cause-effect' line between involvement in national biosecurity committees for example. What is really in it for industry? What will industry gain from the ISM involvement in such forums? Is it worth it? It's an important question to ask. And it is important to have some sense of what the longer-term benefits could be. If there is really nothing, then there is questionable value. However, if there is something that may well not come to fruition as a 'solid line' for many years (and may never in the end), then the notion of what the 'dotted lines' are along the way becomes more important and potentially useful for monitoring. Having thought about that helps keep the radar alive to 'dotted line evidence' as it emerges.

It would be hoped that over time, all of those dotted lines become heavier and more solid. If they remain very faint, and there appears to be little progress towards a worthwhile end point, then the question of value may need to be asked again.

- Consider seeking **planned and purposeful feedback** on a regular basis (the regularity would depend on the audience and topic – could just be once a year or it could be 'event' related). Having a few very short 'surveys' at hand that ask a couple of consistent questions which are directly related to the project outcomes and KPIs, provides considerable evidence around effectiveness, but may also raise some areas of potential improvement. The notion of a 'survey' can be formal or informal (just one or two consistent and purposeful 'back pocket' questions to ask if appropriate). If a Data Collection Plan is developed, this would provide guidance on the purpose and focus of such questions. Examples could include:
 - Instigating a short reflection session with the BMP Team after (some) meetings – including reflecting on the value of the information/support you have provided, what they might do with it, and how it could be useful for growers. Perhaps asking if there is anything else they would like to know or gaps that you could fill – and perhaps how this might help them in their extension work.
 - Designing some simple grower feedback mechanisms, to track whether there is cut through on issues and topics that they really need to be aware of, and that you provide support around. This has already begun with BMP extension team asking casually about understanding around biosecurity.
 - Do a short 'satisfaction' survey (could be online, or you could give them a call for an informal but purposeful feedback chat) of partners – potentially annually – which respond to the various performance indicators you have identified.

- At the end of a full day's workshop with partners such as government, do a quick 'round the table', posing one or two of the focus questions. These would be determined by your KPIs. For example, you might whip around the table after a workshop with OGBR asking whether they feel they have gained more insights into the banana industry as a result of the discussions.
- Turn your record of meetings etc. (which tracks activities... what you did) into a monitoring tool (which tracks what difference what you did made – even if just small). For example, if you DO already log significant meetings (not every meeting, but the major ones where you have a clear outcome you want to achieve), include in that log the topic, **YOUR** purpose (as opposed to the purpose of the meeting in general), and some form of 'code' for your success. This way, you can not only *count* the number of *significant* events that you have *purposefully* participated in, but you can allocate them to a particular outcome, role, and determine the level of success you had. Deciding on how to set up the coding is important and will be dependent on the project outcomes and performance indicators. If at all possible, try and be specific about exactly what difference this 'success' will make for growers and industry even if it appears to be a small difference, or it is very long-term). Once again, it's important that this doesn't become onerous work. Its not about documenting more, it's about documenting smarter.

The above suggestions are provided as examples only. There is some work to do in identifying and designing the most time effective monitoring data collection framework and systems, depending on where the Project Logic lands. The key is not to overdo it, but to do it consistently with clarity and purpose.

Critically thinking about the impact of one's work can feel like "blowing of your own trumpet" when the project is largely about that person's performance. However, it needs to be perceived as "blowing the trumpet of this type of investment". It is important to place value and invest some effort in the defence of such a role, if it in fact deserves defending. If not, the question becomes "why not" and "what could be done better".

5 Appendices

5.1 Appendix 1: Statement of work

The following is the 'Statement of Work' extract from the Request for Quote for this evaluation.

Statement of work

This section outlines the services we are looking for you to provide including the program objectives, overview of services sought and deliverables.

2.1 Objectives

The key objective of this RFQ is to help Hort Innovation:

- Evaluate the relevance and appropriateness of project activities/outputs for intended beneficiaries and efficiency of their delivery
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the project in achieving its intended outcomes
- Support the project lead in continuous improvement of activities, outputs, monitoring and evaluation
- Assess the need for, potential value from and scope/design of potential future investments building on this project.

2.2 Overview of services sought

We are seeking a suitably experienced and qualified service provider to provide a firm quotation for an independent review of project BA19005, Biosecurity and sustainability in the banana industry, to be completed by the following services:

- Review project outputs to address key evaluation questions:
 - How relevant was the project to the needs of banana growers?
 - How well have banana growers been engaged in the project?
 - How well have government stakeholders been engaged?
- Review and evaluate the effectiveness of the above outputs to determine to what extent the project has achieved the intended outcomes:
 - Growers are better informed about biosecurity and environmental issues and make better decisions to increase their profitability, including adoption of BMP.
 - Banana industry provides technical input that contributes to the development of informed biosecurity and environmental policy, documents, and frameworks.
 - Banana related strategic biosecurity and environmental projects are aligned to leverage greater benefits for banana growers and funding bodies.
- In light of the evaluation of outputs and outcomes to-date, comment / make recommendations to inform continuous improvement of:
 - Activities and outputs
 - Monitoring and evaluation
- Comment / make recommendations to inform future investment proposal/s:
 - Any identified deficiencies, gaps or opportunities
 - Relevant, realistic and measurable outcomes
 - Appropriate and effective methodology (activities/outputs)

Key elements of the mid-term evaluation would be:

- Analysis of secondary data to be provided by Hort Innovation and the delivery partner, Australian Banana Growers' Council (e.g., milestone reports and associated outputs and monitoring data)
- Interviews with the delivery partner to provide information and clarification to enable the evaluation
- Interviews with an appropriate sample of banana industry stakeholders, to be developed in consultation with ABGC and Hort Innovation. Hort Innovation and ABGC will provide contact details where necessary.

2.3 Deliverables

Below are the deliverables we envisage. You may identify additional deliverables.

- A start-up meeting with Hort Innovation and the project lead of BA19005 to discuss and agree on activities to be undertaken as part of the project
- A written report detailing the results of activities outlined under section 2.2, including an executive summary and list of growers, industry and project stakeholders consulted during the evaluation.
- Upon completion of the draft report, a meeting with Hort Innovation and the project lead of BA19005 (and potentially other relevant stakeholders) **to reflect on the findings.**

Where applicable, the deliverables are to be provided in both PDF and original software format.

5.2 Appendix 2: KEQ alignment

Alignment between original KEQs and revised Evaluation KEQs agreed as a result of the revised project logic		
	Original KEQs	Evaluation KEQs informed by the revised project logic.
Outcomes (effectiveness)	To what extent has the project achieved its outcome: Growers are better informed about biosecurity and environmental issues and make better decisions to increase their profitability inc adoption of BMP?	To what extent and in what ways are growers better informed about biosecurity and environmental issues and policy and motivated to consider it in decision making processes?
	To what extent has the project achieved its outcome: Banana industry provides technical input that contributes to the development of informed biosecurity and environmental policy, documents and frameworks.	To what extent and in what ways has policy/frameworks and project design and development been INFLUENCED by the project in ways that benefit growers/ industry? To what extent are industry leaders and the BMP/other project teams satisfied that growers issues/interests have been represented effectively at the policy level through the project?
	To what extent has the project achieved its outcome: Banana related strategic biosecurity and environmental projects are aligned to leverage greater benefits for banana growers and funding bodies.	To what extent and in what ways has alignment between banana-related biosecurity and sustainability projects increased as a result of the project? To what extent do partners see benefits in alignment? To what extent are partners satisfied with the efforts of the project to improve alignment?
Relevance	How relevant was the project to the needs of banana growers?	How satisfied are the BMP/ other project teams with the relevance, digestibility and timeliness of the information and support provided through the project?
Appropriateness	How well have banana growers been engaged in the project?	To what extent and in what ways are the BMP/ other project Teams well equipped to build grower awareness, capacity and motivation in relation to biosecurity and sustainability. How satisfied are the BMP/ other project teams with the relevance, digestibility and timeliness of the information and support provided through the project?
	How well have government stakeholders been engaged?	To what extent and in what ways (how well) have GOVERNMENT STAKEHOLDERS BEEN ENGAGED? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have productive relationships and networks (trust) been maintained and expanded? Has accurate and representative information been provided to policy makers? Have policy makers understood and had trust in this information? How satisfied are policy/programmatic stakeholders with the services/support offered through this project?
Efficiency (adaptive management)	What efforts did the project make to improve efficiency?	What efforts did the project make to improve efficiency? What challenges have hindered project delivery? In what ways could the project improve in the future?

5.3 Appendix 3: Additional quotes

ABGC Board members/growers

“It’s a really complicated space and really good that we have someone in that area owning it, doing it well.”

“Without the [strategy manager] role, it’s very possible that the regulations imposed on us would look different, and more unworkable. Maybe we would have just been put in a pile where we were told what to do... We are better off with that role in our camp than without it.”

“[The ISM is] able to make sure that the definitions that are being recorded mean what they say. She is also good at understanding who is pushing what wheelbarrow in either camp and why it is being pushed. Understanding the complicated WQ space, understanding which horse to back, which person is doing what where, understanding each different agency and what they are trying to achieve.”

“Need it in the comms stuff that goes out. So that growers can see what their levy money buys on an ongoing basis. Its not just about what the on-ground projects are doing. Extension Road show... every 2 years. Get her exposure to the role she does... put a face to a project... ”

ABGC staff

“Thinking about the future – of what could go wrong. If you are a CEO, you don’t have time to think about the future as much as you would like. You’re putting out fires much of the whole time. So having that position to do the critical thinking is essential.”

“We have been pretty lucky as an organisation and industry to have her – frankly!”

I’ve witnessed a couple of conversations that she was able to influence going in one direction into another one. I recall one day thinking to myself – well done!”

“Without Michelle [on TR4]? I feel like things may have just tracked along at a plodding place, things wouldn’t have been challenged, you might have just taken what government suggested, might have threatened the robustness of the program we ended up with”

“BQ [in relation to TR4] was proposing to develop a whole new legislative tool but for no real benefit. [The ISM] could bring them back to purpose. Really strip everything back and lay out exactly what practically needed to happen... she could look at it from a grower perspective.”

“Focus on strategy – where you can add most value. Less on delivery and implementation. Think about where to put your effort. It is hard for her because when you work only in the strategy level, it’s so esoteric – hard to demonstrate to industry your relevance. So you need to be on the ground as well, and meeting with [growers]. You do need to find that balance.”

Government partners

“It’s a WIN-WIN arrangement – that’s how we talk about the banana regs. Because industry got the point where they said to us, we are comfortable with these (not happy) but they are workable. One of the crucial things was that we were able to get past the trust issue – they took our word that this wasn’t the end of the story – we are happy to do more work... we have arrived at a point... the best place we can get to at the moment”

“The right level of detail, but at the same time having an eye on the strategic and the politics – the positions on either side are either too high (CEO) or too focused on ground (technical field teams)”

“She is very protective of industry time and space – I think she is an effective representative and advocate of her industry, and ABGC as well.”

“My observation is that they are a progressive group and Michelle is a big part of that. I can say with some confidence that it’s not easy to replicate what we have with ABGC.”

“Noting that the process of selection was open, fair and objective, Senior Biosecurity Queensland leadership wanted to make sure that Michelle McKinlay was aware of the opportunity to nominate... which speaks volumes for her reputation.”

“I would like to think that the productive relationship and trust that we (government) feel we have from our side, they (industry) also feel from their side. With that comes a willingness to be cooperative and do the right thing – aim for the same goals...its much nicer for us if we have a cooperative partner.”

“I think there is a level of trust that there is the ability to agree to disagree and come up with solutions... its harder with other industries...”

“In a forum, we were talking about how we manage Panama TR4 in the Biosecurity Act when industry is taking over. That was a complex discussion for both industry and government. There were a lot of moving parts. I saw Michelle in action during those discussions. Her interests were about sharing industry reality and concerns and holding people to account.”

“It is difficult being a ‘strategy manager’ and being able to explain to growers what benefits do they see day to day... If they are packing a carton and losing cents from the carton for this project, they need to have the visibility of this.”

Non-government partners

“Industry is entirely dependent on getting other people to work with to make things happen. They can’t do it on their own. All the initiatives Michelle is involved in are about working with others.”

“If Michelle is not there, that is when they will really notice how effective and valuable she is.”

“Michelle is going to keep the industry at the forefront – being responsive, being able to show that they are moving forward... She has even co-opted me to advocate for industry.”

Data capture and analysis

The graphs below reflect an analysis of a sample of the work completed by the ISM from May to October 2023. During this period, the ISM assessed the role she played during **significant** meetings or conversations as a way to attempt to track effort and align it to the four outcomes that guide all activity for this project. The content splits below do not reflect the entire workload of the ISM. This data gathering is very much a trial and further thought needs to be put into refining the information that is captured and determining its benefit.

