

NSW National Parks and Wildlife Services (NPWS) response to Natural Resources Commission (NRC) evaluation of the Nature-Based Tourism program – September 2024

#	Project	NRC recommendations	NPWS response
1	Nature-Based Tourism program	If Trust or NPWS designed a nature-based tourism program in the future, project development, monitoring and evaluation would be strengthened by establishing a program logic at the outset that maps links between project activities and program outcomes.	NPWS agreed with the recommendation.
2		If Trust or NPWS plan to invest in nature-based tourism projects that lead to environmental education outcomes in the future, it would be beneficial to draw on nature-based tourism definitions and resources to inform the program logic and guide project development.	NPWS agreed with the recommendation.
3	Brand Campaign	<p>If Trust or NPWS were to invest in a communication and marketing campaign in the future, Brand Campaign can provide valuable insights on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • effective project design and implementation • strategies to achieve a high level of engagement through social media tools and • marketing campaigns • young adults knowledge, perceptions, and motivations to experience national parks and get involved in nature and conservation • developing meaningful performance indicators for conservation and environmental education outcomes from nature-based tourism campaigns 	<p>Yes, the learnings from the Brand Campaign can be shared with future campaigns, as most of them relate to the use of various elements that would be relevant to similar campaigns.</p> <p>The Young Adults knowledge collected would probably need to be validated with some additional research, as young culture evolves very quickly and perceptions of nature and conservation evolve over time.</p>

4		<p>Trust administration and NPWS would strengthen future marketing campaign project design and implementation by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • establishing a program logic that maps links between project activities and program outcomes to support project design and monitoring and evaluation • for novel projects like Brand Campaign, consider capturing qualitative information about young adults' awareness and motivations to inform the development of meaningful performance indicator targets • allowing flexibility to adapt quantitative targets as new information comes to light • look for opportunities to reduce the number of performance indicators monitored if there are clear lines of evidence available for primary performance indicators (e.g. Park visitations versus frequency of visits), to reduce the reporting burden for grantees. 	<p>Responses for each point:</p> <p>Program logic was developed for this project and provided objectives, tasks KPIs and evaluation tools.</p> <p>Qualitative information was collected in the benchmark research done for the campaign. This informed the next stages of research, that is, quantitative analysis and tracking.</p> <p>Yes, it is important to be flexible with the targets, as the marketing ecosystem changes very rapidly, for example during the campaign period the Facebook algorithm changed, impacting engagement rates significantly.</p> <p>Yes, the number of KPIs can be optimised to reflect just the main objectives of the campaign.</p>
5	Commercial Tour Operators	<p>If Trust or NPWS were to invest in a small grants program for nature-based experiences run by commercial tour operators in the future, the CTO can provide valuable insights on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how to effectively support the capacity of small businesses like commercial tour operators to apply for and implement small grants • commercial tour operator insights on how small grants can enhance the number and quality of nature- 	NPWS agreed with the recommendation.

	based experiences in National Parks and support participant education	
6	<p>If Trust administration or NPWS were to oversee small grants for nature-based tourism in the future, project design would be strengthened by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • establishing a program logic that maps links between project activities and program outcomes to support project design and monitoring and evaluation given the complexity of monitoring environmental outcomes for nature-based experiences, drawing on CTO Project insights and nature-based tourism definitions and resources to support projects that can contribute to these outcomes; • given the CTO Small Grants were new for tour operators, consider allowing more time to establish and call for grant applications to support higher uptake. 	NPWS agreed with the recommendation.
7	<p>If NPWS were to design a small grants program for nature-based experiences run by commercial tour operators in the future, monitoring and evaluation could be strengthened by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • drawing on NSW Treasury Policy and Guidelines: Evaluation to support the design of outcomes monitoring • including a clear outline in the project logic that maps links between performance indicators and monitoring data to support meaningful reporting on and evaluation of project achievements • given the novelty of small grants in nature-based tourism, consider qualitative insights to measure 	NPWS agreed with the recommendation.

		<p>progress towards outcomes, alongside quantitative targets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • look for opportunities to simplify reporting processes for CTOs and participants to support higher response rates to support monitoring and reduce reporting burden for grantees • consider opportunities to make the timing of applications flexible to account for factors that can arise for small businesses like tour operators. 	
8	WilderQuest	<p>If Trust or NPWS were to invest in a learning portal and learning content for NSW schools in the future, WilderQuest can provide valuable insights on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • effective project design and implementation • strategies to achieve a high level of engagement with teachers and students through a portal and marketing and promotion • insights on the value of learning platforms and learning in nature and National Parks for students and teachers • understanding barriers to excursions to National Parks and alternatives for supporting outdoor education • an example of a nature-based project that contributes to conservation and environmental outcomes. 	NPWS will consider key lessons learned from the implementation of the WilderQuest program when planning or implementing future learning content.
9		<p>Trust administration and NPWS would strengthen project design and implementation of similar projects by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • establishing a program logic that maps links between project activities and program outcomes to support project design and monitoring and evaluation 	NPWS will consider establishing program logic to map links between project activities and outcomes for future, large scale programs. We will also consider and implement MERI recommendations and technological redundancy risks.

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- considering how to collect meaningful data on how students understand changed as a result of being involved alongside quantitative performance indicators
 - looking for opportunities to simplify how teacher feedback is collected to support higher response rates from teachers to support monitoring and evaluation
 - considering the risks of technological redundancy of platforms and the associated costs at the outset to build strategies to minimise this risk.
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