

Measuring Progress and Impact of the Trails Strategy Coordinating Group (TSCG)

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How We Could Measure Progress and Impact

When thinking about how to evaluate or measure the work of the TSCG, there are many questions that arise:

- How do our decisions and actions guide implementing the Shared Trails Strategy?
- How will we know we are making collective progress on an issue?
- Are we a well functioning team?
- Where do we want changes to show?
- Are we being accountable to the right things?
- How can we show our progress to our stakeholders and the community we serve?
- Who has the time to take on measuring and monitoring these things?

The goal is to make great changes in systems that are stuck. Heavy, coordinated lifting is needed. The TSCG is just such a group. To add complexity, the changes we need to be evidence based over a longer term horizon.

Past experience in evaluating this kind of work typically follows a balance of:

- **process (how we function together)** and
- **activity (the things we work on).**

We want to have timely information to understand how we are working well. And, where we need to course adjust if we want to see positive changes in the Trails world. A guiding document to help with this focus is the Terms of Reference of the Trails Strategy Coordinating Group. The roles, responsibilities, and deliverables from this document are stated and provide a path with curbs to travel upon.

With the TOR in-hand and a long term view to the work, we think there are three phases to evaluating this work: Early Days (up to 1 year), Middle Days (1 to 3 years), and Later Days (3 to 5 years). Let's look at how these could be evaluated:

Early Days

If we have the right processes in place then we would expect the TSCG to conduct activities that guide the implementation of the Shared Trails Strategy. When the TSCG conducts several (or many) activities, then we would expect to see changes in the behaviours of the TSCG designates and impacts to the trails community from working better together. In the early days, we would be focusing the evaluation of the TSCG around:

PROCESSES & ACTIVITIES	Evidence	Potential Questions	Looking for...
Functionality of the TSCG	Working Agreements (Charters, TOR, Decision Making Framework)	What % of the working agreements are endorsed?	All agreements endorsed in a reasonable time frame.
	Communications Plan	What communications have been completed	Active communications between TSCG and stakeholders
Commitment	Seats are filled	Did ALL stakeholders provide a designate?	Fully engaged designates
	Attendance	What is the attendance recorded of stakeholders?	Fully participating designates
Decision Making	Prioritizing the STS Goals	Are there priorities identified for 2020 and 2021?	Ability to decide on early actions.
	Are the priorities being focused upon?	Are there focus groups/task teams?	Ability to develop smaller action teams to further priorities.

IMPACTS & CHANGES	Evidence	Potential Questions	Looking for...
Understanding & Knowledge	Understanding of the Shared Trails Strategy	To what degree are you more familiar with the STS?	Improved understanding of the STS content and goals.
	Understanding of TSCG designates/organizations	Rate your understanding of participants mandates?	Improved understanding of those around the table.
	Challenges and Opportunities Identified	To what degree is your understanding changed regarding challenges the trails sector faces?	Improved understanding of the complexity of the NS trails sector
Collaboration/ Networking & Partnerships	Shifts in Trust	How would you rate your trust of the designates now as compared to 3 months ago?	Higher degrees of trust in people and process.
	Shifts in Participation	Are you more engaged with TSCG designates?	Stories of working better together and working at the speed of trust
	Shifts in Ownership	Are you part of something larger now?	Using “we” instead of “I”.
Learning	Shifts in Attitude	What have you learned from working together?	Clarity of each other's roles, challenges, and how to work together.
Direction	Gut Instincts	Rating of “we are heading in the right direction”.	We are having the right conversations and heading the correct direction.

Middle Days

Have we designed a work plan that makes sense of the numerous goals in the Shared Trails Strategy? Are the Group Members demonstrating leadership and commitment? Are we seeing early changes in the trails community from these goals and actions?

We would be asking questions around:

- Group decision making.
- Members feeling understood - moving from “I” to “we”.
- Results of the Early Phase actions.
- Refining problem solving.
- Collaborations between members and across stakeholders.
- Opportunities for trail stakeholder groups to connect/align.
- Evidence of stakeholder planning and coordination.
- Communication/information on the challenges and opportunities.
- New actions or course changes.
- Overall gut-feeling on Momentum.

Mature Days

Are we seeing impact from the previous phases’s work?. What longer-term focus do we have now? What longer term changes can we see from implementing the Shared Trails Strategy?

- Goals with action plans that implement the strategy.
- Group’s ease of managing conflict.
- Deeper actions on more complex items.
- Partnerships between members.
- Policy shifts.
- Overall Gut Feeling on Impact.

Qualitative and Quantitative Measures

It is likely the evaluation will be a blend of qualitative and quantitative measures. Qualitative measures are based on opinion, observation and/or a ‘sense of feeling’ about something. These are typically recorded as stories and quotes from people participating or observing the work. Quantitative measures are more numeric or measurable with data.

We are already using a blend of both in our bi-weekly meeting evaluations: The rating scale of 1 to 5 gives us a quantitative answer (ie 100% of the group strongly agrees with...). The questions that are more open ended, such as, “what was the most helpful piece of the” give us qualitative answers.

Both quantitative and qualitative responses help us understand and shape the group's opinion of how we are working and what could change to make it better.