



Our Rural Landscape:

End-of-Program Evaluation

June 2007

(Generic Presentation)

About ORL

- **Vision:** *Sustainable development through innovation: thriving agribusiness, cohesive rural communities and healthy ecosystems*
- \$107m (incl. 50% co-investment), 4 yrs to June 2007, 15 projects, ~ 50 sub projects, ~ 120 staff, wide collaboration
- Part of the \$230m Science, Technology & Innovation Initiative Program, Phase 2 (STI2).

ORL: Diverse Projects

- *Natural resource management (reduced inputs) - Enhanced understanding of the environment – Practice Change*
- *Access to new markets*
- *Bio-security*
- *Food safety*
- *Scientific discovery – Contribution to Scientific Knowledge*
- *Market/Product Development*
- *Market research*
- *Productivity Improvements*
- *Commercialisation (IP outcomes)*
- *Social Policy – Demographic changes in Agricultural communities – Community engagement*

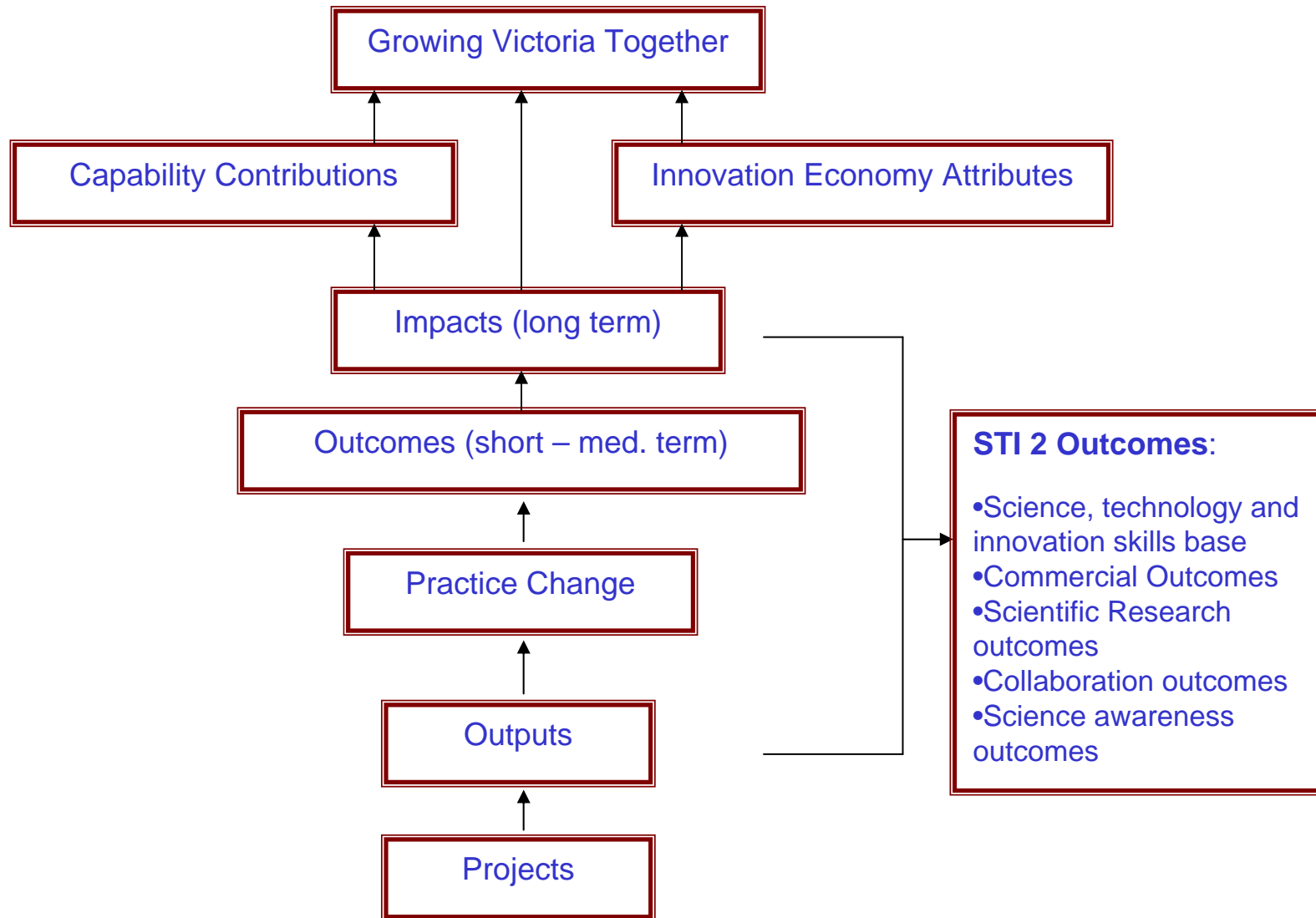
ORL Stakeholders

- Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development (DIIRD) – Office of Science and Technology - STI second generation
- Agriculture Development – DPI
- Primary Industry Research Victoria (PIRVic) – DPI
- Catchment and Agricultural Services (CAS) – DPI
- Food Science Australia (FSA)
- Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE)
- Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs)
- Co investors and Collaborators – Research Organisations, CRCs, Universities, Industry (incl. farmers)

ORL Complexity

- Size
- Multi-level
- Multi-site
- Multi-component
- Open system
- Science, Technology & Innovation domain
- Variation in research type
- Aggregation

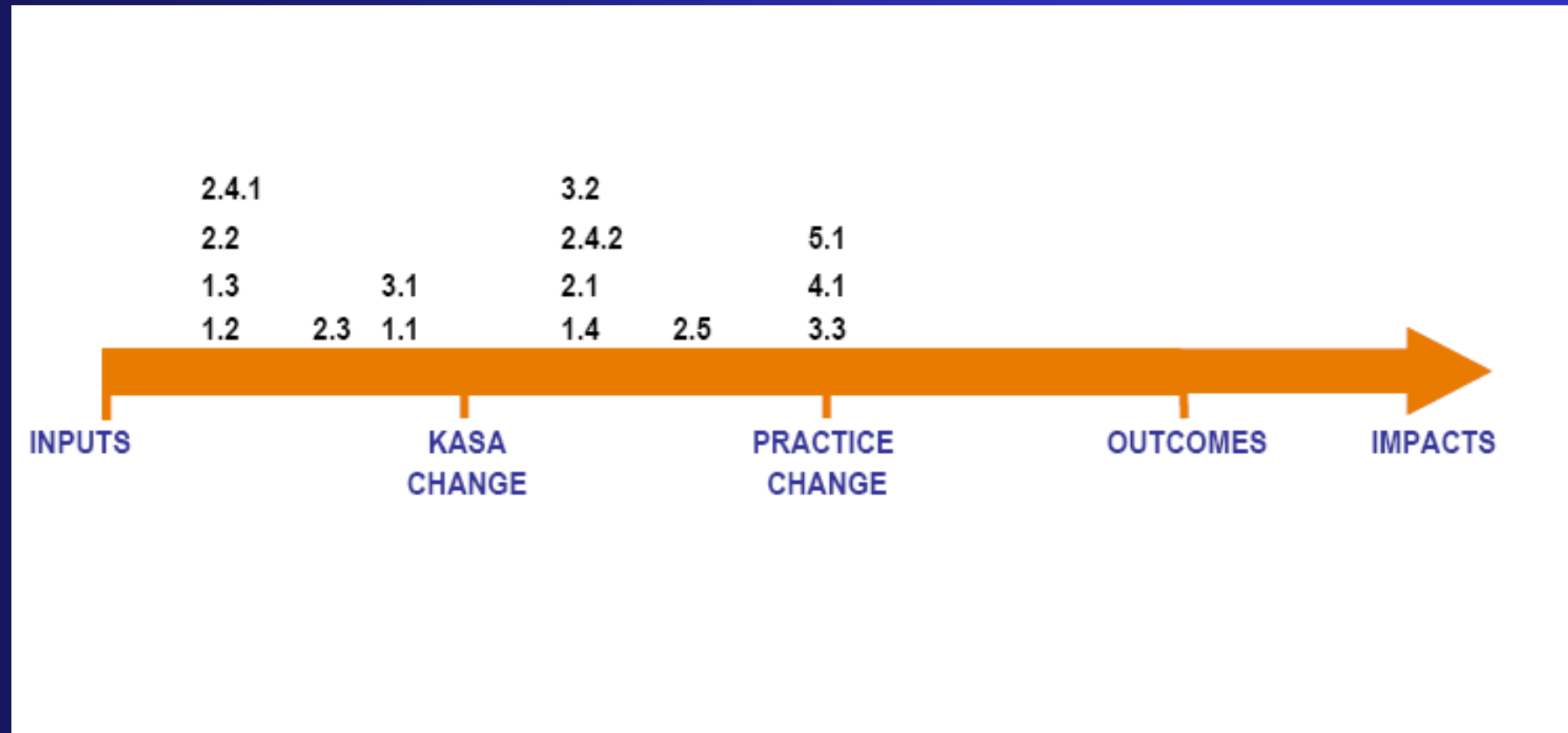
ORL - Outcomes Hierarchy



ORL Outcomes Hierarchy

Long term impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Profitable and innovative agri-food industries, stimulating rural economies and creating jobs• Innovative and capable communities actively involved in managing the rural landscape• Enhanced environmental, cultural and amenity value across rural and regional communities
Medium term outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dramatic improvements in the efficient use of natural resources• Integrated outcomes from agriculture and ecosystem services• Enhanced culture of innovation• Confident, capable people in the landscape
Immediate outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Science, technology and innovation skills base• Commercial outcomes• Scientific research outcomes• Collaboration outcomes• Science awareness outcomes
Practice Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A systems approach to managing landscapes• Adoption of new, efficient and ecologically sustainable agri-food systems• People motivated to think creatively• Increased community and stakeholder participation in rural landscape management
Outputs	
Inputs	

Bennett's Hierarchy Progress



ORL – Program Evaluation

Effectiveness

- Contribution to STI and ORL impacts & outcomes
- Summary of project achievements
- Aggregated to program level
- Current and potential benefits
- Capabilities developed

Process

- Implementation
- Overall management processes
- Stakeholder satisfaction
- Integrated program management approach

Guide future programs

- Learn from Effectiveness & Process findings

Methodology

- Managed by a client Steering Group
 - Program Logframe (based on Theory of Action)
 - Eval templates: questionnaire, interviews
 - Document review
 - Consult (in-person and telephone) (121 individuals)
 - Questionnaires (60 replies)
 - Economic modeling of project case studies
 - Data analysis and brainstorming
 - Draft Report, feedback, Final Report,
 - Presentations
-
- A couple of challenges

ORL – Evaluation Questionnaire

- About consultee & their familiarity with ORL
- For those *directly* involved:
 - 1) Elaborate up to 3 outputs
 - 2) Achievement of STI2 Outcomes
 - 3) Relationships within ORL
 - 4) ORL program design & management
- For those only *indirectly* involved
 - 1) – 3) above
- Assessing achievement of ORL's Impacts, Outcomes & Practice Changes, *via Goal Attainment Scaling*

Goal Attainment Scaling

- Statements about ORL performance on 5-point scale from very low to very high
- 3 = “on track”
- Consultee selects the score which best agrees with their assessment – *can be a fraction (e.g. 3.5)*
- *See example, next slide ...*



Example of Goal Attainment Scale

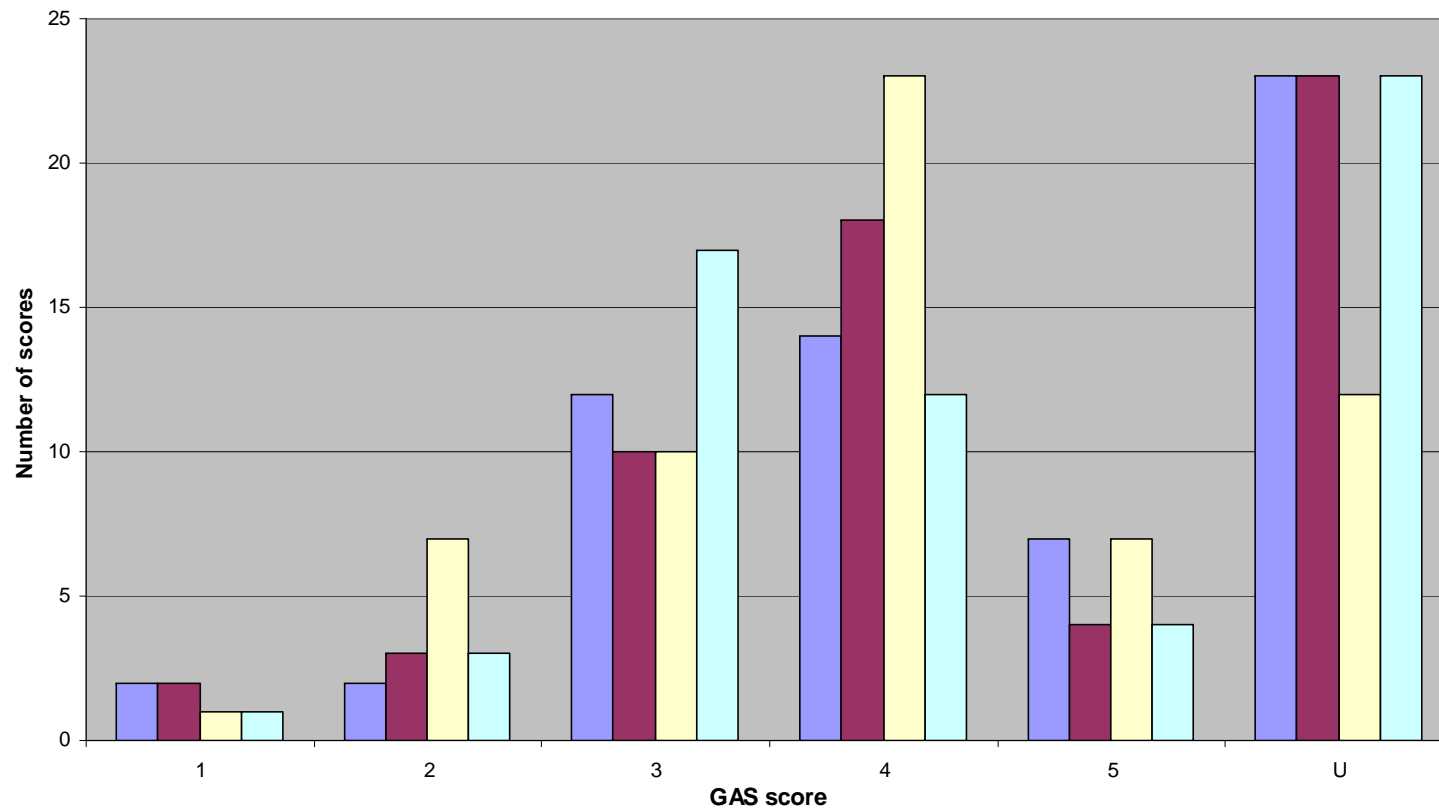
- **ORL Outcome #2: Integrated outcomes from agriculture and ecosystem services**
 - (i.e. services from the environment that generate food and fibre and that also contribute clean fresh water for use in domestic supplies)
- Taking into account the contributions of any other programs you are aware of, ORL has, is or will ...

Score	Description
1	... generated few new relevant skills and knowledge , and these are / will not improve the integration of agriculture and ecological services
2	<i>Intermediate between 1 & 3</i>
3	... generated new relevant skills and knowledge that are resulting / will result in increased integrated outcomes from agriculture and ecological services
4	<i>Intermediate between 3 & 5</i>
5	... generated significant new skills and knowledge that are resulting / will result a large improvement in agricultural production hand-in-hand with greatly improved ecological services

ORL Outputs

- Products & papers
 - Wide range of kinds – hard to compare, e.g. bloat safe legume cf. Network Management Workbook
- Other achievements included:
 - Conferences & visitors
 - Collaborations
 - Major external funding
 - Networks
 - Techniques
 - Changed mindsets
 - Understandings
 - Recognition
- Good achievement of Key Project Goals

Outcomes



- Dramatic improvements in the efficient use of natural resources
- Integrated outcomes from agriculture and ecosystem services
- Enhanced culture of innovation
- Confident, capable people in the landscape

Economic benefits - method

- Case Studies
 - 5 case studies selected for assessment of economic benefits.
- Approach was to:
 - assess costs and benefits of research findings
 - model potential gross margin benefits/ha
 - assess, relative to cost of research
 - break-even analysis to determine the area of adoption required to cover research costs

Economic benefits - findings

- Overall potentially significant benefits compared with research investment.
- Potential gross benefits across Victoria ranged from \$5.6 – \$30 pa.
- Breakeven areas ranged from 5 – 27% of area under production.
- Process has been valuable – DPI research staff engaged with economists.

What difference has ORL made?

- ORL has undertaken R&D that is valuable:
 - Allowed DPI to achieve a better balance between applied externally funded R&D and State appropriations.
 - Extended the R&D horizon and underpinned future sustainability and prosperity via innovative research findings.
 - Has identified new policy issues related to the changing demography and socio-economic structure of rural Victoria.

Recommendations

- 13 recommendations:
 - Planning: Alignment with State TBL indicators; annual project planning forums
 - Implementation: Standardise IP-sharing arrangements; stakeholder register for long-term engagement
 - Assessment: Explicit collection of project cost, benefits and adoption rates
 - Follow-up: succession planning/retaining science capacity; engagement with external collaborators.

Learnings about the Evaluation Process

- Document review
- Outcomes hierarchy
- Consultation
- Questionnaire
- Economic analysis
- Role of Evaluation Officer
- Client reaction

AES Award of Excellent – Best Evaluation Study Awards Committee's comments

- *“... a complex and multi-level program which demanded a multi-level evaluation. The evaluation design and management were well considered and developed. Stakeholder involvement was a large component, and necessary for the evaluation to get traction. The strength of the nomination is around evaluation management aspects: the many activities and efforts required to keep the momentum of the evaluation, the ongoing communication of the evaluation findings; the client organisation harnessing the evaluation learnings, in terms of administering such a large programme and how to evaluate complex programs.*
- *The nominees have shown a great deal of foresight in conceptualising the project and have been honest and open about what worked and what did not. Whilst it is clear that some of the methodological issues had not been fully thought through at project conceptualisation, it is clear that the evaluators were faced with demanding client expectations – which, on the evidence presented (client feedback) have been achieved to the client's satisfaction.*
- *The evaluation also included several mechanisms for feedback on the evaluation, and the nomination is frank about the mixed responses regarding the usefulness of the evaluation, depending on the perspective of the varied stakeholders.”*