



Behavioural Insights in Practice

A guide and workbook for applying
behavioural insights to agricultural practice
change projects in Reef catchments

Prepared by: Office of the Great Barrier Reef and World Heritage,
Department of the Environment, Tourism
Science and Innovation.

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July 2026

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Citation

Office of the Great Barrier Reef and World Heritage 2026. Behavioural Insights in Practice: a guide and workbook for applying behavioural insights to agricultural practice change projects in Reef catchments. Brisbane: Department of Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation, Queensland Government.

Acknowledgements

The Office of the Great Barrier Reef and World Heritage sincerely thank Dr Tracy Schultz from the University of Queensland for her support in the development of this guide. We would also like to thank Dr Robyn Gulliver (University of Queensland) for her extensive support in the development of the Social Monitoring Survey Data Dashboard, which will play a pivotal role in the use of this guide.

We also acknowledge and thank the agricultural producers who have participated in social monitoring surveys as part of the Paddock to Reef program, as well as the program delivery staff who have delivered surveys to producers since 2019.

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Behavioural Insights

What are behavioural insights?

Behavioural insights involve understanding how people perceive, make decisions and behave in the world around them. Behavioural insights enable us to identify and reduce barriers to change, and can be used to design better communications, services and programs.

Why are behavioural insights important?

The need for people to change their behaviour is at the core of the environmental challenges faced around the world. A major focus for improving the health of the Great Barrier Reef is to support and enable landholders and communities to be active stewards of the Reef and their catchment areas. The Queensland Government's Queensland Reef and Catchment Water Quality Program and the Australian Government's Reef Trust provide support to agricultural industries to change their practices to reduce their impact on water quality and benefit their farming enterprise.

This guide introduces key behavioural insights considerations you can apply when designing or delivering a project that supports agricultural practice change within the context of Reef catchments. The behavioural insights template towards the end of the guide steps out these key considerations to help you design a project that is more likely to encourage and deliver enduring practice change. This guide is not intended to be comprehensive but rather to introduce some of the key behavioural insights considerations for designing, implementing and evaluating behaviour change projects. A brief resources list is provided at the end of the guide for further information.

How to use this guide

This guide can be used when designing a new agricultural practice change project, reviewing an existing project, or identifying ways to strengthen delivery and engagement. If the target practice has already been selected, start by identifying the relevant behaviours in **Identifying the Practice**, then use the **Identifying the Influences** and **Encouraging the Practice** sections to identify relevant influences and strategies.

If the project is already underway, the activities can be used as a review tool to check whether current strategies are addressing the main behavioural influences and whether monitoring data suggests changes are needed. Throughout the guide, there are several activity sections where this can be applied on your own project. The activities have also been combined into the Appendix for ease of printing, should you wish to work through the activities on paper but reduce the amount of printing required.

1. Identifying the Practice

A key element in any behaviour change strategy is to identify specific behaviours that are likely to be meaningfully associated with the target outcome and are likely to be adopted by the community.

In this guide, the terms 'practice' and 'behaviour' are used closely together. A practice is often made up of one or more specific behaviours, so the aim is to define the particular action that producers need to take targeting specific behaviours.

1.1 Consider impact and likely adoption

An important issue to consider when identifying a practice is its **likely impact** on improving Reef water quality. It is also important to choose a practice that is **feasible and acceptable** to producers. The impact will be minimal if the target behaviour is too difficult or unacceptable to adopt.

The Adoption and Diffusion Outcome Prediction Tool ([ADOPT](#))¹ provides a framework which aids support identifying agricultural practices that are specific and are likely to be adopted by more people. The ADOPT model was used to determine specific practices for all Reef regions and commodities as part of the [review of land management targets](#). The [Review of Land Management Targets Summary Report](#)² identifies the likely impact and adoption for various practices by commodity and region using the ADOPT tool. However, it is important to note that even if a practice is generally deemed to have low adoption, it may still be a worthwhile practice to encourage if the correct support is in place.

An [Impact Likelihood Matrix](#)³ can help prioritise practices to target based on how effective they are at addressing the problem (e.g. reducing nitrogen loss) and how likely they are to be adopted by the target population (e.g. sugarcane growers). The matrix below can be used to prioritise practices based on likely impact and likely adoption.

Likely impact	High	Hard but effective Medium priority	Easy and effective High priority
	Low	Hard and ineffective Low priority	Easy but ineffective Medium priority
		Low	High
		Likely adoption	

¹ CSIRO (2026). ADOPT: The Adoption & Diffusion Outcome Prediction Tool. www.adopt.csiro.au

² Queensland Department of Primary Industries (2025). Review of Land Management Targets: Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan: Summary Report. www.era.dpi.qld.gov.au/id/eprint/15360/

³ BehaviourWorks Australia (2026). Behavioural Prioritisation: What it is and how to do it. www.behaviourworksaustralia.org/blog/behavioural-prioritisation-what-and-how

**In practice**

A sugarcane project focuses on assisting growers to optimise their chemical use and application to improve efficacy and reduce unnecessary losses to waterways. One specific practice identified through the ADOPT model is: 'Reduce water quality risk from pesticides through focus on product selection, rate and timing of application'.

Using the Impact Likelihood Matrix, the practice is plotted as *High Impact* and *Low Adoption*, as the practice will have a high impact on chemical run-off, but requires upfront financial investment and a change in habits by the grower. The practice can therefore be labelled as *Hard but effective* or *Medium priority*. In this case, consideration should be taken on whether additional support may be required to increase likelihood of adoption.

**Consider the impact and likely adoption****Activity 1**

Choose relevant practices from the [Review of Land Management Targets Summary Report](#) and plot them onto the *Impact Likelihood Matrix*.

Likely impact	High		
	Low		
		Low	High
		Likely adoption	

1.2 Make it specific

The next step is to define the specific behaviour the project will encourage. The more specific the behaviour is, the easier it is to identify suitable strategies. The practice or behaviour should be:

- Observable (the practice can be physically observed)
- An end-state behaviour (or the final behaviour that solves the problem, not a chain of behaviours or an earlier step)
- Solution focused and desirable (positively framed behaviours are more effective than negatively framed, e.g. 'don't overgraze paddocks' vs 'implement a rotational grazing system to reduce overgrazing')

Some practices may need to be broken down into smaller actions before they can be behaviourally defined. For example, a broad practice such as 'improve nutrient management' may involve several behaviours, such as completing soil tests, calculating appropriate rates, calibrating equipment, applying fertiliser at the right time, and keeping records.

We can use the **ATACT framework**³ to help describe a specific behaviour:

- **Actor:** WHO we want to perform the behaviour
- **Target:** WHAT is the subject of the behaviour
- **Action:** WHAT is done to the target
- **Context:** WHERE the behaviour takes place
- **Time:** WHEN the behaviour occurs

Ask yourself WHO needs to do WHAT to WHAT, WHERE and WHEN, to address the problem?



In practice

Example: A sugarcane project in the Wet Tropics focuses on the practice 'Reduce water quality risk from fertilisers through focus on product selection, rate and timing of application' and chooses to encourage growers to calibrate fertiliser boxes to ensure accuracy in application rates.

A calibration should be taken at the start of each season every year as a minimum. Since fertiliser flow rates differ between products and sometimes from batch to batch, a calibration should be carried out when different fertilisers are used.

- **Actor:** Sugarcane growers in the Wet Tropics
- **Target:** Fertiliser box
- **Action:** Calibrate
- **Context:** Applying fertiliser to sugarcane crops
- **Time:** At the start of every season or each time a different fertiliser is used

Now we can put these together into a specific practice:

Sugarcane growers in the Wet Tropics calibrate their fertiliser boxes at the start of the season or each time a new fertiliser is used.



Be as specific as possible

Activity 2

Fill out the table below and use the ATACT framework to make the practice more specific. Repeat this process for as many practices as relevant to your project.

Commodity (e.g. cane): _____

The Problem (e.g. reduce nitrogen loss): _____

	<i>To address the problem, WHO needs to do WHAT to WHAT, WHEN and WHERE?</i>
Actor (<i>WHO we want to perform the behaviour</i>)	
Target (<i>WHAT is the subject of the behaviour</i>)	
Action (<i>WHAT is done to the target</i>)	
Context (<i>WHERE the behaviour takes place</i>)	
Time (<i>WHEN the behaviour occurs</i>)	
Your specific practice (<i>put it all together!</i>)	

2. Identifying the Influences

2.1 The COM-B Model of Behaviour Change

Now that our target practice(s) has been identified, it is important to understand what can influence or drive practice change. The [COM-B model](#)⁴ (see Figure 1 below) simplifies the many influencers of Behaviour to Capability, Opportunity and Motivation.

- **Capability** refers to whether we have the knowledge and confidence (*Psychological Capability*), and skills and ability (*Physical Capability*) to engage in a particular behaviour.
- **Opportunity** refers to how external factors such as one's environment/context (*Physical Opportunity*) or social/cultural environment (*Social Opportunity*) make a behaviour possible (or difficult) to engage in.
- **Motivation** refers to the internal processes that influence our decision making and actions. It includes reflective processes such as attitudes, beliefs and expectations (*Reflective Motivation*), and automatic processes such as biases, emotions and habits (*Automatic Motivation*).

In other words, we can think of capability as the 'know how', opportunity as the 'can do' and motivations as the 'want to' of practice change. The model suggests that practice change is most likely to occur when producers have the 'know how', the 'can do', and the 'want to'.

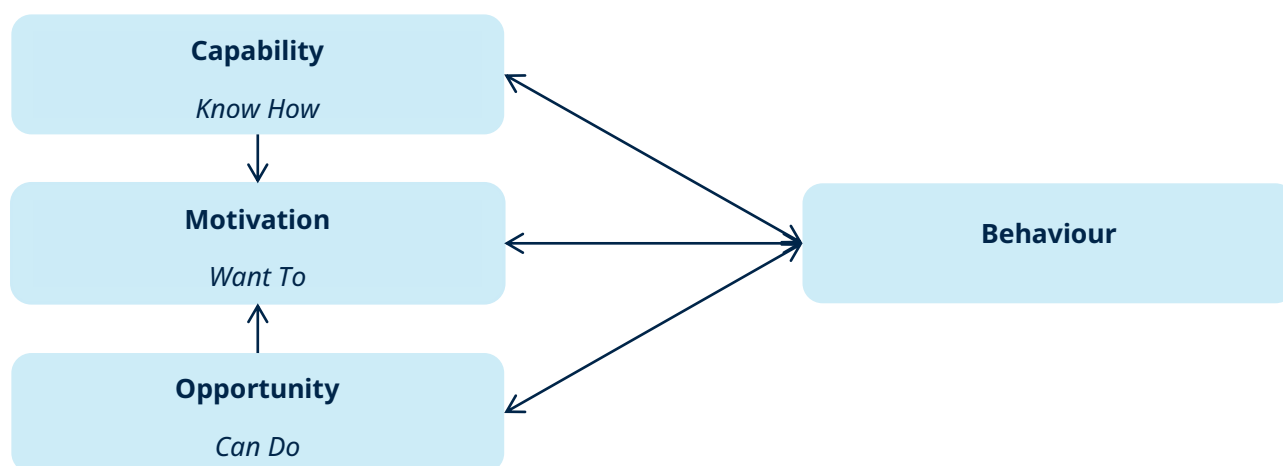


Figure 1. The COM-B model

⁴ Michie, S., Van Stralen, M. M., & West, R. (2011). The behaviour change wheel: a new method for characterising and designing behaviour change interventions. *Implementation science*, 6(1), 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1748-5908-6-42>

2.2 The influences of behaviour

Different behavioural influences can be mapped onto the COM-B model to identify whether an individual has the capability, opportunity and motivation to engage in practice change. The below section shows how a subset of different behavioural influences can be used to explain Capability, Opportunity and Motivation.

Capability

Capability refers to a producer's knowledge, skills and confidence to adopt and maintain a practice. People need to understand what to do and feel able to do it correctly in their farming context.

Key question: *Do they know how, and are they capable of doing it?*

Knowledge	Knowledge refers to whether a producer understands why a practice matters and how to implement it in their system. • 'Why' knowledge includes understanding the benefits, risks, and relevance (e.g. improved soil health, productivity, compliance, or long-term profitability). • 'How' knowledge includes practical steps, requirements, and decision points (e.g. when to apply, what inputs are needed, how to adjust for different conditions). In agricultural contexts, knowledge needs to be locally relevant, credible, and tailored to production systems and conditions.
Confidence (Self-efficacy)	Confidence refers to a producer's belief that they can successfully implement the practice, even when challenges arise. Producers with low confidence may: • Avoid trying new practices • Delay adoption • Revert to familiar approaches under pressure In agriculture, confidence is especially important where uncertainty, variability (e.g. weather), or perceived risk are high.
Skills and ability	Skills and ability refer to the practical and technical capability required to carry out a behaviour. This includes: • Physical skills (e.g. operating equipment, applying treatments) • Cognitive skills (e.g. interpreting data, making management decisions) • Planning and management skills (e.g. integrating a new practice into existing systems) In agricultural settings, even if knowledge exists, a practice may not be adopted if:

	• It is too complex • It requires new or specialised skills • It does not align with current workflows
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Opportunity

Opportunity refers to the external factors that enable or constrain behaviour, including physical resources, environmental conditions, and social influences.

Key question: *Do the circumstances allow them to do it?*

Barriers	Barriers are the practical and contextual factors that make a behaviour difficult, costly, or inconvenient. Common barriers include: • Financial costs (equipment, inputs, labour) • Time constraints, especially during peak periods • Physical or environmental conditions (e.g. terrain, climate variability) • Access to services, advice, or infrastructure • Competing priorities on farm Barriers may also include mental effort, such as remembering, monitoring, or changing established routines, particularly when there are competing priorities.
Social norms	Social norms refer to the influence of peers, industry expectations, and trusted networks on behaviour. • Descriptive norms: What producers believe others like them are doing (<i>"Most farmers in my area are using this practice"</i>) • Injunctive norms: What producers believe others approve of (<i>"Good farmers should be doing this"</i>) In agricultural communities, norms are powerful because: • Producers often learn from and compare themselves to peers • Reputation and identity (e.g. being a 'good farmer') matter • Trusted relationships influence credibility more than external messaging Leveraging norms can help normalise new practices and reduce perceived risk.

Motivation

Motivation refers to the internal drivers that influence behaviour, including beliefs, values, emotions, habits, and expectations.

Key question: *Do they want to do it?*

Values	Values are the deeply held priorities and principles that guide decision-making, and may include: • Stewardship of land and environment • Productivity and profitability • Family legacy and long-term viability • Animal welfare Practices are more likely to be adopted when they align with what producers care about most.
Attitudes	Attitudes refer to how positively or negatively a producer evaluates a practice. This includes: • Perceived benefits vs drawbacks • Perceived effort or inconvenience • Perceived fit with existing systems Attitudes are often shaped by experience, peer views, and past outcomes.
Beliefs	Beliefs are the assumptions and perceptions producers hold about how the world works. These may include beliefs about: • Effectiveness of a practice • Risks and unintended consequences • Compatibility with their farm system • Trust in information sources Beliefs can include misconceptions or outdated information, which may act as barriers to adoption.
Biases and heuristics	Biases and heuristics are the mental shortcuts people use to make decisions quickly, especially under uncertainty. Common examples in agricultural decision-making may include: • Status quo bias – preference for current practices • Loss aversion – avoiding changes that might result in losses

	• Availability bias – relying on memorable events (e.g. a failed trial) • Social proof – following what others are seen to be doing These can lead to resistance to change or over- or under-estimation of risks and benefits.
Emotions	Emotions refer to the feelings associated with a behaviour, which can strongly influence decisions. Relevant emotions in agricultural practice change may include: • Fear of failure or financial loss • Pride in land stewardship or innovation • Hope for improved outcomes • Frustration with existing practices
Habits	Habits are behaviours that are performed automatically with little conscious thought, often as part of established routines. In agriculture: • Many practices are deeply embedded in seasonal and operational routines • Habits can reinforce existing behaviours and resist change
Outcome expectancy	Outcome expectancy refers to what a producer believes will happen as a result of adopting a practice. This includes expectations about: • Economic outcomes (costs, returns, productivity) • Environmental outcomes (soil health, water quality) • Risk reduction or resilience • Effort required vs benefit gained If expected outcomes are: • Clear, credible, and positive adoption is more likely • Uncertain or negative adoption is less likely

2.3 Identify the influences for your audience

Whether producers engage in practice change can depend on many different factors and often requires tailored strategies to encourage practice change. However, before we can develop appropriate strategies, we need to gather data and insights from our target group or producers (or our 'WHO' from Activity 1).

Seeking information and engaging with producers prior to project design and implementation is crucial when designing behaviour change programs. Engaging with producers can provide valuable insights and perspectives on the issue, the practices, barriers to implementation and potential solutions. Ensuring that the project aligns with producers' values can increase the effectiveness of the project.

Some ways to gather data and insights can include either quantitative or qualitative methodologies, often involving methods such as surveys, interviews, workshops or focus groups. There are several existing sources of data managed by the Queensland Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation's Behavioural Insights team that have been designed to gather behavioural insights on practice change. These include:

- Paddock to Reef program Social Monitoring Survey (2019 – 2025)
- [Paddock to Reef program Perceptions of Practice \(PoP\) Survey](#) (2023 – ongoing)
- [Social Monitoring Benchmarking Survey](#) (2023 and 2025)

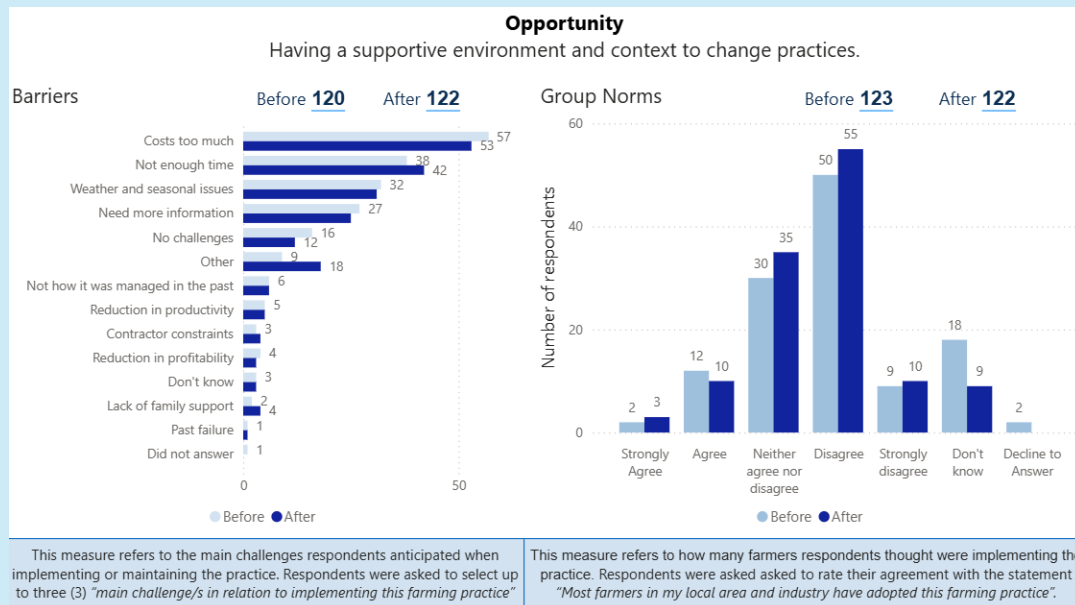
Insights from the Paddock to Reef program Social Monitoring Survey can be viewed [here](#) in an interactive dashboard. The dashboard is designed to make the data and insights collected as part of the Paddock to Reef Human Dimensions Program available to anyone looking to inform better project design and delivery. Data for different behavioural influences can be viewed at the commodity, practice, and region level, mapped to the COM-B model. Data available from the current Paddock to Reef program Perceptions of Practices survey is reported to project delivery partners or can be made available by emailing the [Behavioural Insights team](#).



In practice – an example of using the Paddock to Reef Social Monitoring survey data to identify key behavioural influences

Opportunity

Fitzroy graziers identified several key barriers to practice change, including financial costs, time constraints, and weather and seasonal issues. Most graziers disagreed that most other farmers in their local area and industry had adopted their practice.



These barriers show where opportunity is currently constrained (e.g. flexible timing around seasonal demands, cost support, and normalising the practice through local examples or peer to peer networking). Addressing them presents an opportunity for a project to enable change.



Understand your target audience

Activity 3

Use the data to identify key influences for your target group, filtering by the relevant commodity and region.

Capability

Capability refers to whether we have the knowledge and confidence (Psychological Capability), and skills and ability (Physical Capability) to engage in a particular behaviour.

*What does the data tell us about your target group's **capability** to engage in practice change? Note down some key findings below.*

For example, was knowledge low, medium or high? Were there any differences in knowledge level at different survey timepoints?

Opportunity

Opportunity refers to how external factors such as one's environment/context (*Physical Opportunity*) or social/cultural environment (*Social Opportunity*) make a behaviour possible to engage in.

*What does the data tell us about your target group's **opportunity** to engage in practice change? Note down some key findings below.*

For example, what were the key barriers identified? Were there any differences in type of barriers at different survey timepoints?

Motivation

Motivation refers to the internal processes that influence our decision making and actions. It includes reflective processes such as attitudes, beliefs and expectations (*Reflective Motivation*), and automatic processes such as biases, emotions and habits (*Automatic Motivation*).

*What does the data tell us about your target group's **motivation** to engage in practice change? Note down some key findings below.*

For example, what were the key motivations identified? Were there any differences in type of barriers at different survey timepoints? Did producers have high expectations of positive results from their practice change?

3. Encouraging the Practice

There are many different approaches to influencing behaviour, ranging from voluntary approaches and education through to market-based mechanisms and regulation. Behavioural strategies are most effective when used alongside these broader interventions to strengthen overall project outcomes.

Once the key influences on behaviour (Capability, Opportunity and Motivation) have been identified, the next step is to consider which approaches are most appropriate for the target audience and context. The following section outlines a range of practical strategies that can be used to encourage and support practice change.

These strategies are not exhaustive but are intended to help identify opportunities to apply behavioural insights in a targeted and effective way.

3.1 Capability

Capability refers to a producer's knowledge, skills, and confidence to adopt and maintain a practice. Even when producers are motivated and supported by their environment, behaviour change is unlikely if they do not know what to do, how to do it, or feel capable of doing it successfully.

When designing or reviewing a project, consider whether your approach is building both **understanding and practical capability**.

Building knowledge through education

Education is often a starting point for behaviour change, but it is most effective when it clearly addresses both:

- **Why the practice matters** (relevance to the producer)
- **How to implement it** (practical steps in their system)

For producers, 'why' is most compelling when it **connects directly to what motivates them**, for example increasing productivity or profitability, environmental benefits or soil health. Remember to always check the data to see what the top motivators are for your specific audience – don't make assumptions.

What works well:

- Locally relevant examples and data
- Clear, step-by-step guidance tailored to farming systems
- Translating technical recommendations into practical decisions

**In practice**

Rather than simply promoting best practice fertiliser rates, a sugarcane project might highlight that applying more fertiliser than the crop can take up is increasing input costs and could be reducing Commercial Cane Sugar (CCS). It can then position the SIX EASY STEPS® method as a way to apply fertiliser more efficiently to maintain or improve profitability.

**Address the 'why' and 'how'**

Tip: Information alone is rarely enough to drive behaviour change. Knowledge should be paired with opportunities to apply, test, and build confidence.

Building confidence through experience and reflection

Even when producers understand a practice, they may hesitate if they are unsure whether they can implement it successfully, particularly where there is **perceived risk or uncertainty**.

Confidence is often strengthened through:

- Seeing others successfully adopt the practice
- Trying it on a small scale
- Reflecting on how it might work in their own system

**In practice**

A horticulture project might include case studies of similar producers, or prompt participants to reflect on how a new practice could fit within their own farm conditions. Workshops or activities that allow producers to explore 'what if' scenarios can help reduce perceived risk.

**Build confidence through example**

Tip: Look for opportunities to include trial, demonstration, or hypothetical decision-making activities, rather than relying solely on information delivery.

Developing skills through tailored support

Many agricultural practices require specific **technical or management skills**, and these can vary depending on the production system. Providing **targeted, one-on-one support** can help identify and address gaps in skills or capability before implementation.

**In practice**

A grazing project might include one-on-one extension support for new producers to identify where knowledge or skills are limiting adoption, provide tailored advice aligned to the grazier's specific farming system, and support planning and decision-making during implementation through the development of a property plan.

**Provide tailored support**

Tip: If resourcing is limited, consider segmenting producers based on need and provide 'tiered' support where possible (e.g. one-on-one support + workshops for new growers vs only workshops for experienced growers).

Reducing cognitive load with tools and templates

Agricultural decision-making is often complex, with many competing priorities. Introducing a new practice can increase **cognitive load**, making it harder for producers to get started or follow through. Providing simple tools can make it easier for producers to take on a new practice by:

- Breaking complex actions into manageable steps
- Supporting planning and record keeping
- Reducing the mental effort required to take action

**In practice**

Early project engagement with cane growers might focus on providing an easy-to-use template for recording fertiliser application rates, helping producers take a first step without needing to redesign their whole system at once.

**Use tools and templates**

Tip: Tools and templates are most effective when they fit into existing workflows, are simple and intuitive to use, and support immediate action.

Putting it together

Projects are more likely to build capability when they move beyond awareness-raising and instead:

- Connect information to real-world outcomes for producers
- Provide practical, system-relevant guidance
- Create opportunities to build confidence through experience
- Offer support and tools that reduce effort and complexity

Activity 4

For current/existing projects, reflect on what (if any) behavioural strategies are already in place to build capability. Does the data show this has been effective?

What behavioural strategies could be implemented to build capability? If capability is already high, what could help maintain it?

3.2 Opportunity

Opportunity refers to the external conditions that enable or constrain behaviour, including physical, social and environmental factors. Even when producers are willing and capable, change will not occur if their circumstances make the behaviour too difficult, costly or impractical. When designing or reviewing a project, consider how the environment can be adjusted to **make the behaviour easier, more normal, and more feasible**.

Using social norms and modelling to normalise behaviour

Producers are strongly influenced by what they see others doing and what is considered 'normal' or 'good practice' within their industry. Behaviour can be shaped through:

- **Descriptive norms** – what **most people do** in a particular context (common behaviour)
- **Injunctive norms** – what **ought to be done** in a particular context (what is socially or morally approved)
- **Dynamic norms** – how behaviours are **changing over time**

Dynamic norms are particularly useful where adoption is still emerging, as they signal that change is underway, even if it is not yet widespread.

Social modelling reinforces these norms by making the behaviour **visible and relatable**, particularly when demonstrated by:

- Trusted peers
- Similar farming systems
- Respected industry figures

What works well:

- Highlighting 'people like you' (same region, system or scale)
- Using local data or examples where possible
- Framing behaviour as both common and increasing
- Using normative messages in communications



In practice

A sugarcane project might communicate that many growers in a region are refining fertiliser rates, reinforcing that the practice is both common and accepted. They might use a descriptive norm in their messaging, such as 'Most sugarcane growers have reduced their fertiliser use in the last three years'. Or, an injunctive norm could be used, for example 'Most growers agree that reducing fertiliser rates is a good thing to do'. **Where uptake is still growing**, messaging might instead highlight that 'more and more growers are starting to match fertiliser to crop needs', signaling a shift in practice.

Using local case studies or showcasing producers implementing the SIX EASY STEPS[®] method can further reinforce that:

- The behaviour is desirable, and
- It is achievable in a real-world setting



Leverage the power of norms

Tip: Descriptive and injunctive norms used together must be aligned (i.e. most people are doing what 'ought' to be done). Avoid emphasising low uptake as this can discourage adoption. Instead, framing the behaviour as growing (dynamic norm) or expected (injunctive norm) is more effective.

Reducing barriers and making the behaviour easy

Practical barriers are one of the most common reasons practices are not adopted, even when motivation is high. These barriers can include:

- Time constraints and competing priorities
- Financial costs or perceived risks
- Access to equipment, services, or information
- Environmental conditions
- Effort required to change established routines
- Complexity in planning, tracking or decision-making

Effective projects go beyond identifying barriers – they actively work to **remove friction and simplify the behaviour**. This can involve:

- Adjusting delivery to better fit producers' schedules
- Reducing the number of steps required
- Providing tools that support decision-making or record keeping

**In practice**

A grazing project may schedule engagement activities in the evenings or on weekends after recognising that graziers are often too busy during standard working hours.

**Remove barriers and make it easy**

Tip: Avoid one-size-fits-all delivery approaches. Practical barriers can often vary by context – all the way from individual level barriers to structural or systemic barriers. Where barriers can't be avoided or removed completely, flexibility in timing, format, and support can significantly reduce friction for different producers.

Putting it together

Projects are more likely to create supportive opportunity when they:

- Make the behaviour visible, normal and increasingly common
- Leverage trusted peers and real-world examples
- Reduce practical barriers that limit participation
- Simplify processes to lower effort and complexity

Activity 5

For current/existing projects, reflect on what (if any) behavioural strategies are already in place to build opportunity. Does the data show this has been effective?

What behavioural strategies could be implemented to build opportunity? If opportunity is already high, what could help maintain it?

3.3 Motivation

Motivation refers to the internal drivers that influence behaviour, including beliefs, emotions, habits, and intentions. Even when producers are capable and have the opportunity, change is unlikely unless the practice **aligns with what matters to them and feels worthwhile to do**. When designing or reviewing a project, consider how your approach can **strengthen desire, relevance, and follow-through**.

Framing messages to align with what matters

The way a practice is presented can strongly influence whether producers engage with it. Framing involves aligning messages with producers':

- **Values** (e.g. stewardship, legacy, resilience, respect, etc.)
- **Beliefs** (e.g. what works on their farm, what is relevant)
- **Attitudes** (e.g. whether the practice is seen as worthwhile or not)
- **Motivators** (intrinsic e.g. environmental benefits, or extrinsic e.g. profitability. Strongly linked to values, beliefs and attitudes)
- **Emotions** (e.g. pride, fear, hope, frustration)

Effective framing connects the practice to what producers already care about and positions it as **personally meaningful and relevant**.



In practice

If a producer does not believe their practices impact Reef health or the general environment, a message focused only on environmental protection is unlikely to resonate. Instead, a project may frame practices in terms of improving farm business longevity, reducing costs, or increasing productivity/profitability.

Similarly, highlighting how a producer is making improvements on their farm to build a farm for the next generation can build a sense of pride and positivity, and link to any values or motivations for legacy or passing the farm on to their family. A project might share case studies or articles in the local newspaper or in video form with this type of framing.

What works well:

- Using language that reflects producers' priorities
- Connecting practices to multiple benefits (economic, environmental, operational)
- Reinforcing identity (e.g. 'Grazing families have looked after this land for generations – improving ground cover is part of making sure it remains productive for the next one')



Align with what matters to your producers

Tip: Messages that highlight avoiding losses (e.g. wasted inputs, lost yield) can be particularly motivating, as potential losses are often felt more strongly than equivalent gains.

Working with habits and routines

Many agricultural practices are habitual and embedded within daily and seasonal routines. These habits often run automatically, requiring little conscious decision-making. While this can reinforce current behaviours, it also provides a powerful pathway for change when new practices are introduced in a way that fits within existing routines.

Habits are typically triggered by cues – such as time of day, location, or a specific task – and followed by a consistent action. To shift a habit, it is often more effective to **change what happens at the cue point** rather than trying to create an entirely new routine. This means identifying where a behaviour already occurs and then **adding, substituting, or adapting** the action at that moment.

Behaviour change is also more likely when new practices are integrated into these existing cues and workflows, rather than requiring complete disruption or additional effort.



In practice

A project may link the existing behaviour of timing irrigation based on weather forecasts with the new behaviour of using moisture probes to monitor soil moisture levels. Rather than asking producers to adopt a separate process, the new behaviour is introduced at the same decision point – when irrigation timing is being considered – and supported with tools that allow monitoring and record-keeping in the same place.

What works well:

- Identify when and where the current behaviour happens, and introduce the new practice at that same moment (e.g. during irrigation checks, during fertiliser application, at the start or end of a workday).
- Reduce effort by providing tools, templates or prompts that fit naturally into the workflow.
- Where possible, substitute the old behaviour with the new one, rather than asking producers to do both.
- Habits form through repetition, so early support (e.g. reminders, follow-up, or prompts) is important until the behaviour becomes routine.
- Showing immediate or short-term benefits helps reinforce the new habit (e.g. improved decision confidence, better records).



Work with routines

Tip: Moments of transition - such as entering a new enterprise, acquiring new equipment, or changing property management - are valuable opportunities to introduce new practices before routines become established.

Highlighting expected outcomes and benefits

Behaviour is strongly influenced by what producers expect will happen if they adopt a practice. Clearly communicating expected outcomes helps producers decide whether a behaviour is worthwhile and reduces uncertainty about potential risks or benefits. Effective approaches focus on making outcomes:

- **Clear and meaningful**
- **Credible and relevant** to the producer's system
- Directly linked to **what they value**

This may include economic (e.g. profitability), environmental (e.g. soil health), and operational (e.g. efficiency) outcomes.

**In practice**

An extension officer may highlight that improving ground cover and maintaining farm roads can reduce rutting and erosion, allowing banana producers to transport produce more efficiently and increase the proportion of marketable yield.

What works well:

- Using local examples and relatable case studies
- Highlighting multiple benefits (e.g. cost savings alongside environmental outcomes)
- Translating practices into tangible on-farm impacts

**Identify and communicate outcomes**

Tip: Producers are often more motivated by avoiding losses (e.g. wasted inputs, reduced yield) than achieving equivalent gains, so framing outcomes in terms of what can be lost as well as gained can strengthen motivation.

Prompting action and supporting follow-through

Even when intention is strong, behaviours can be overlooked or delayed in busy farm environments. Prompts and reminders help translate intention into action by cueing behaviour **at the right time and place**.

Effective prompts are:

- Timely (close to when the behaviour occurs)
- Visible and noticeable
- Located within the relevant context

**In practice**

Providing reminders to growers to apply their chemicals within the permitted windows via social media posts or newsletters, which can be reinforced by providing stickers, posters or magnets of product application requirements where chemicals are stored or mixed.

**Use reminders to support follow-through**

Tip: Prompts and reminders can be tangible materials (e.g. stickers or posters) placed where the behaviour is performed, or they can be in form of communication methods (e.g. text message reminders, posts/articles on social media or other channels, or phone call follow ups at key timepoints). It is important that prompts and reminders are used as close to the behaviour as possible (both physically and/or time-wise).

Supporting reflection, goal setting and commitment

Behaviour change is more likely when producers reflect on their current practices, define what they want to achieve, and commit to taking action. Reflection helps producers consider:

- What matters to them (e.g. profitability, sustainability, family goals)
- How their current practices align with these priorities
- Where there may be opportunities for improvement

This can create motivation to change, particularly where there is a gap between **values and current behaviour**.

Goal setting translates this into a clear plan, to **clarify and guide what the producer wants to achieve** within a particular timeframe. Goal setting programs may also ask people to keep a diary or record the behaviour to help track progress towards goals and encourage motivation.

Once a goal has been identified, gaining a commitment from the producer can help to **ensure the goal is reached**. Making a commitment to engage in the behaviour increases the likelihood of then performing the behaviour.

What works well:

- Facilitated reflection (e.g. discussions, planning tools)
- Clear, structured goals (e.g. SMART goals)
- Written or shared commitments
- Follow-up and accountability



In practice

An extension officer works with a cane grower to set a goal of improving Commercial Cane Sugar (CCS) by 0.5 within two years. Together, they identify the steps required, such as reducing fertiliser rates after mill mud and regularly testing their soil. These actions are documented in a property plan, which the grower commits to by signing the plan, with agreed timeframes and follow-up check-ins.



Use commitments to kick start action

Tips: Think SMART goals – Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time bound. Written or public commitments tend to be more effective than verbal ones (i.e., signing a pledge card displayed in a public space compared to saying to an extension officer that they will do something), but any commitment increases the likelihood of action.

Providing feedback and reinforcement

Once a behaviour has been adopted, feedback plays a critical role in sustaining motivation by showing producers the results of their actions and reinforcing progress over time. Feedback helps to:

- Build confidence that the practice is working
- Strengthen the link between behaviour and outcomes
- Encourage continuation and habit formation

Providing feedback about how well the behaviour was performed, or the **impact of the behaviour** can be important for motivating people to adopt and continue engagement with the behaviour. This can include:

- Performance feedback (e.g. input efficiency, yield changes)
- Outcome feedback (e.g. profitability, soil condition, environmental improvements)
- Reinforcement of effort through recognition or rewards



In practice

A project may support participants to track key outcomes before and after adopting a practice and compare results over time, such as NUE, crop yields or CCS and profitability.

Incorporating acknowledgement and reinforcement can also encourage continued engagement. If a producer records or submits data, reinforce and close the loop with positive messages. For example, 'your records show your NUE improved from X to Y this season', or a simple benchmark 'here's how your block compares with the regional average'. The reinforcement is that the effort paid off. Alternatively, small things like a property sign for program participants carry both reinforcement and norm-signalling.



Provide timely feedback and recognition

Tip: Feedback and rewards are most effective when they occur close to the behaviour, reinforcing the connection between action and outcome.

Putting it together

Projects are more likely to strengthen motivation when they:

- Frame practices in ways that align with what producers value and care about
- Tap into identity, beliefs and emotions to make change meaningful
- Work with existing routines rather than against them
- Highlight clear, relevant outcomes and support follow-through through prompts, goals, and feedback

Activity 6

For current/existing projects, reflect on what (if any) behavioural strategies are already in place to build motivation. Does the data show this has been effective?

What behavioural strategies could be implemented to build motivation? If motivation is already high, what could help maintain it?

3.4 Which approach should I use?

Use the COM-B influences identified earlier to guide which strategies are most appropriate, and consider combining strategies where more than one influence is limiting practice change. For example:

- Is the practice change easy? If so, low intensity interventions such as prompts combined with information and feedback might be suitable.
- Does the practice change require more effort? If so, consider social modelling, goal setting, commitments and rewards.
- Are there specific barriers to engaging in the behaviour? If so, think about ways to make it easier by reducing barriers in combination with information and prompts.

3.5 A simple check: The EAST framework

Where detailed data or insights about your target audience are limited, the **EAST framework**⁵ provides a simple and practical way to design behaviour change strategies. EAST focuses on making the desired behaviour:

- **Easy** – reduce effort, simplify processes, and remove barriers
- **Attractive** – draw attention and highlight key benefits
- **Social** – leverage norms, networks and peer influence
- **Timely** – prompt action at the right moment

Rather than requiring in-depth behavioural diagnosis, EAST offers a useful starting point for identifying opportunities to improve how a practice is communicated or delivered. Further information on the EAST framework and a detailed handbook [can be viewed here](#).



In practice

A project aiming to improve fertiliser practices might:

- Make it easy by providing simple templates or tools to calculate application rates
- Make it attractive by highlighting cost savings and productivity benefits
- Make it social by showcasing local growers adopting the practice
- Make it timely by prompting actions during key decision points in the season

Tip: EAST works best as a practical lens – review your project activities and ask: Are we making this behaviour easy, attractive, social and timely?

⁵ Behavioural Insights Team (2024). EAST Framework: Four simple ways to apply behavioural insights. www.bi.team/publications/east-four-simple-ways-to-apply-behavioural-insights/

4. Monitoring and Evaluating Behavioural Strategies

Monitoring and evaluation provide an important way to understand whether the behavioural strategies implemented within a project are working as intended. Using existing frameworks like the Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Improvement (MERI) Framework⁶ provides opportunities to improve project design and delivery at key decision points throughout the project, and can include a focus on broader processes, outcomes and impacts. Behavioural strategies should also be considered as part of existing project plans, program logics and MERI reporting.

The purpose is to ask a simple question: **Did the strategies we selected help address the behavioural influences we identified?**

For example, if low confidence was identified as a barrier and the project introduced demonstrations or one-on-one support, monitoring and evaluation should consider whether producers' confidence improved. If time or complexity was identified as a barrier and the project introduced a template or tool, evaluation should consider whether producers found the practice easier to understand, plan or implement.

Monitoring should occur throughout the project so that strategies can be adjusted if needed. Evaluation at the end of a project, test period or delivery phase can help assess whether the behavioural strategies contributed to practice change and identify what should be continued, changed or stopped in future projects.

4.1 Linking behavioural strategies to MERI

Most agricultural practice change projects already include MERI reporting. This provides an opportunity to capture evidence about whether behavioural strategies are influencing practice change, without creating a separate reporting process.

MERI reporting often considers broader project processes, outcomes and impacts. Behavioural strategies can be linked to these existing measures.

- **Process indicators** can show whether the strategy was delivered and reached the intended audience. For example, the number of producers involved, attendance at workshops, use of tools or templates, or participation in one-on-one extension.
- **Outcome indicators** can show whether the strategy influenced the behavioural factor it was designed to address. For example, changes in knowledge, confidence, attitudes, perceived barriers, intentions, social norms or adoption of the target practice.
- **Impact indicators** can show longer-term outcomes associated with practice change, such as improved water quality, productivity, profitability, soil health or business resilience.

⁶ Australian Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (2026). Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Improvement (MERI). <https://www.dcceew.gov.au/environment/land/natural-heritage-trust/monitoring-reporting/meri>

Where possible, use existing data sources such as MERI reports, project records, producer feedback, Paddock to Reef program PoP survey results, Paddock to Reef program Social Monitoring Survey Dashboard insights, workshop evaluations, extension officer observations, follow-up conversations or case studies.

The aim is not to measure everything, but rather to identify a small number of useful indicators that help project teams understand whether their behavioural strategies are supporting change.

Monitoring during delivery

Monitoring during delivery helps project teams check whether behavioural strategies are being implemented as intended and whether they are useful to producers. This can help identify whether:

- Producers are engaging with the strategy
- The strategy is reaching the intended audience
- The message, tool or activity is relevant and practical
- Barriers are still preventing producers from acting
- The strategy needs to be adjusted or combined with additional support

Monitoring does not need to be formal or time-consuming. It can include short feedback questions, extension officer observations, informal producer conversations, project meeting notes, participation records or simple follow-up checks.



In practice

For example, if a project introduces a record-keeping template but few producers use it, monitoring may identify that the template is too complex, not introduced at the right time, or not well integrated into existing workflows. The project can then simplify the template, provide additional support, or introduce it at a more relevant decision point.

Tip: Monitoring should help answer: Is this strategy being used, is it useful, and does anything need to change?

Evaluating at the end of a project or test period

Evaluation helps determine whether the behavioural strategies contributed to the intended change. This should include both whether the target practice changed and whether the behavioural influences shifted in the expected direction. For example:

- Did knowledge or confidence increase after education, demonstrations or one-on-one support?
- Were barriers reduced after simplifying a process or providing tools?

- Did producers report stronger intentions, more positive attitudes or clearer benefits after reframing messages?
- Did prompts, goal setting or feedback support follow-through?
- Did the project contribute to adoption or maintenance of the target practice?

Where possible, evaluation should compare information collected before and after the strategy was implemented. However, even where baseline data is limited, projects can still capture useful evidence through producer feedback, case studies, extension officer reflections, Before and After PoP survey results or available MERI data.

Evaluation should also consider what was learned. A strategy may not lead to the expected change, but it can still provide valuable insight into what producers need, what barriers remain, or how future delivery could be improved.

Tip: Evaluation is most useful when it captures not only whether change occurred, but also why the strategy did or did not work.

Putting it together

Monitoring and evaluation of behavioural strategies does not need to be complex. It should help project teams check whether selected strategies are addressing the behavioural influences identified earlier in the guide and whether any adjustments are needed.

Projects are more likely to learn from behavioural strategies when they:

- Link strategies to the specific COM-B influences they are designed to address
- Use existing MERI and project reporting processes where possible
- Monitor progress at the start, during delivery, and at the end
- Capture both practice change and changes in behavioural influences
- Use findings to improve future project design and delivery

Activity 7

Use the table below to identify how each chosen behavioural strategy will be monitored and evaluated. This activity can be used when designing a project, reviewing an existing project, or preparing MERI reporting. You do not need to complete every column in detail for every strategy; focus on the strategies that are most important, uncertain, or resource intensive.

When completing the activity, consider:

- What behavioural influence was the strategy designed to address?

- What would you expect to change if the strategy was effective?
- What information is already being collected through existing data sources or activities?
- What simple feedback or observation could be collected during delivery?
- How will findings be used to adapt the project or improve future delivery?

Behavioural influence identified	Behavioural strategy selected	What should change if the strategy works?	How/when could this be monitored during delivery?	How could this be evaluated at the end?	Existing data source or MERI measure
<i>Example: Capability: Producers have low confidence to reduce fertiliser rates</i>	<i>Demonstrations and one-on-one support</i>	<i>Producers feel more confident to calculate and apply appropriate rates</i>	<i>Attendance at demonstrations; extension officer observations; short confidence check after support</i>	<i>Change in producer confidence; evidence of practice uptake; feedback on usefulness of support</i>	<i>PoP survey, workshop feedback, project records, extension notes</i>

5. Resources

ADOPT

- [ADOPT: The Adoption and Diffusion Outcome Prediction Tool – CSIRO](#)
- [Review of land management targets: Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan: summary report – Queensland Department of Primary Industries](#)

COM-B Model

- [The COM-B Website](#)
- [A guide on the COM-B model of behaviour – Social Change UK](#)
- [What is the COM-B model of behaviour? – Enablers of Change](#)

Designing Behaviour Change Projects

- [Behavioural Prioritisation – BehaviourWorks Australia](#)
- [The Behaviour Change Wheel](#)
- [Community-Based Social Marketing](#)
- [Behavior-centered design: An overview – rare Center for Behavior & the Environment](#)
- [Tips to bridge barriers – JCU TropWATER](#)
- [Tools of Change](#)
- [Guide to promoting water sensitive behaviours – Cooperative Research Centre for Water Sensitive Cities](#)

EAST framework

- [EAST Framework: four simple ways to apply behavioural insights](#)

Evaluating Behaviour Change Projects

- [Understanding the perceptions of producers: A tool for the extension toolbelt – DETSI](#)
- [Perceptions of Practices survey - DETSI](#)
- [A toolkit for measuring and monitoring Reef stewardship – University of Queensland and Great Barrier Reef Foundation](#)

Paddock to Reef Perceptions of Practice Survey

- [About the survey](#)

Reef Scientific Consensus Statement

- [2022 Scientific Consensus Statement – Australia and Queensland Government](#)
- [Human dimensions of water quality improvement and emerging science](#)

Reef Report Card

- [Reef Water Quality Report Card 2023 to 2025 – Australia and Queensland Government](#)

Social Monitoring Data Dashboard and Human Dimensions Program Information

- [Behavioural insights: supporting Reef stewardship](#)

Appendix

Activity 1 – Identifying the Practice

Choose relevant practices from the [Review of Land Management Targets Summary Report](#) and plot them onto the *Impact Likelihood Matrix*.

Likely impact	High		
	Low		
		Low	High
		Likely adoption	

Activity 2 – Identifying the Practice

Fill out the table below and use the ATACT framework to make the practice more specific. Repeat this process for as many practices as relevant to your project.

Commodity (e.g. cane): _____

The Problem (e.g. reduce nitrogen loss): _____

	<i>To address the problem, WHO needs to do WHAT to WHAT, WHEN and WHERE?</i>
Actor (WHO we want to perform the behaviour)	
Target (WHAT is the subject of the behaviour)	
Action (WHAT is done to the target)	
Context (WHERE the behaviour takes place)	
Time (WHEN the behaviour occurs)	
Your specific practice (put it all together!)	

Activity 3 – Identifying the Influences

Use the data to identify key influences for your target group, filtering by the relevant commodity and region.

Capability

Capability refers to whether we have the knowledge and confidence (Psychological Capability), and skills and ability (Physical Capability) to engage in a particular behaviour.

*What does the data tell us about your target group's **capability** to engage in practice change? Note down some key findings below.*

For example, was knowledge low, medium or high? Were there any differences in knowledge level at different survey timepoints?

Opportunity

Opportunity refers to how external factors such as one's environment/context (*Physical Opportunity*) or social/cultural environment (*Social Opportunity*) make a behaviour possible to engage in.

*What does the data tell us about your target group's **opportunity** to engage in practice change? Note down some key findings below.*

For example, what were the key barriers identified? Were there any differences in type of barriers at different survey timepoints?

Motivation

Motivation refers to the internal processes that influence our decision making and actions. It includes reflective processes such as attitudes, beliefs and expectations (*Reflective Motivation*), and automatic processes such as biases, emotions and habits (*Automatic Motivation*).

*What does the data tell us about your target group's **motivation** to engage in practice change? Note down some key findings below.*

For example, what were the key motivations identified? Were there any differences in type of barriers at different survey timepoints? Did producers have high expectations of positive results from their practice change?

Activity 4 – Encouraging the Practice: Capability

For current/existing projects, reflect on what (if any) behavioural strategies are already in place to build capability. Does the data show this has been effective?

What behavioural strategies could be implemented to build capability? If capability is already high, what could help maintain it?

Activity 5 – Encouraging the Practice: Opportunity

For current/existing projects, reflect on what (if any) behavioural strategies are already in place to build opportunity. Does the data show this has been effective?

What behavioural strategies could be implemented to build opportunity? If opportunity is already high, what could help maintain it?

Activity 6 – Encouraging the Practice: Motivation

For current/existing projects, reflect on what (if any) behavioural strategies are already in place to build motivation. Does the data show this has been effective?

What behavioural strategies could be implemented to build motivation? If motivation is already high, what could help maintain

Activity 7 – Monitoring and Evaluating Behavioural Strategies

Use the table below to identify how each chosen behavioural strategy will be monitored and evaluated. This activity can be used when designing a project, reviewing an existing project, or preparing MERI reporting. You do not need to complete every column in detail for every strategy; focus on the strategies that are most important, uncertain, or resource intensive.

When completing the activity, consider:

- What behavioural influence was the strategy designed to address?
- What would you expect to change if the strategy was effective?
- What information is already being collected through existing data sources or activities?
- What simple feedback or observation could be collected during delivery?
- How will findings be used to adapt the project or improve future delivery?

Behavioural influence identified	Behavioural strategy selected	What should change if the strategy works?	How/when could this be monitored during delivery?	How could this be evaluated at the end?	Existing data source or MERI measure
<i>Example: Capability: Producers have low confidence to reduce fertiliser rates</i>	<i>Demonstrations and one-on-one support</i>	<i>Producers feel more confident to calculate and apply appropriate rates</i>	<i>Attendance at demonstrations; extension officer observations; short confidence check after support</i>	<i>Change in producer confidence; evidence of practice uptake; feedback on usefulness of support</i>	<i>PoP survey, workshop feedback, project records, extension notes</i>

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