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Session 2: Integrating Evaluation into a Program's Design

Case Study of NFWF Keystone Initiatives

Christina Kakoyannis – talk about a new strategic initiative that incorporates evaluation principles into the design itself.

Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit. Match public funds with donations.

You often find that if evaluation has been incorporated into the initial design of a program there is limited data from which to draw conclusions about a program's impact.

The board gave them a mandate to develop a more strategic conservation portfolio that will let them measure their impact on the ground. Developed four focal areas for “strategic grantmaking”

How did they select initiatives to work on? They went through a four set filter process. What are the species of concern? What is driving species decline? (Species, Places, Issues). Then they looked at on a 10-year time frame, can they make a difference, with the ultimate metric being change in species population. Then they looked at cost-effectiveness

This is a new process, still figuring out as they go along. Want input from audience. This is an opportunity to share where they are heading.

Initiative Design & Implementation

1. Convene partners & stakeholders
2. Identify and prioritize key threats in the initiative. (ex: Sky Islands Grassland in AZ & NM. Asked stakeholders what their key threats were and what they wanted; then prioritized what is most critical in first 1 to 5 years of the initiative)
3. Define Conservation Targets (ex: Since species are the ultimate metric, which species would help address the key limiting threats; decided on a type of sparrow and frog)

Mapping the Logic for the Klamath Initiative – starting with farming practices finding ways to change practices (such as fencing for cattle) that ultimately improves water quality.

Risk Events: what is the probability it would occur? If it does occur what would the impacts be on our initiatives? They have some high-risk initiatives and they are trying to be aware of it, what are the risks, what do they need to measure and keep track of in case a high magnitude risk occurs, so what is the exit strategy? They want to invest conservation dollars where it will have the greatest impact.

2nd way for assessing risk: make sure they have appropriate strategies to achieve outcome. In the Klamath Basin they talked with stakeholders and learned that there is a fairly high risk that the

landowners think there are too many economic disincentives. Perceived disincentives. Speaking with stakeholders they come up with more strategies using an economic analysis with actual financial data. The results showed you might have fewer cattle but they put on more weight and it actually might be an economic gain.

They use risk to capture everything in the strategy that they need to.

4. Identify Priority Metrics

What is it about this initiative that you need to know 5 years from now? They try to figure out data they need to collect now. Talking with stakeholders about developing consistent monitoring protocols, what baseline data do they have, what baseline data are they missing.

5. Drafting Business Plans

Plans incorporate all of this. Directors take input from stakeholders, reciprocal process. These are supposed to be living documents that can be adapted over time. They put them on the website.

Challenges to Address

- Scale and Responsibilities
- Uncertainties of estimations (risk assessments)

Three initiatives that the board has approved: sea turtles, coral reef and river herring.

- The thing that works the best or was most challenging but is now most useful is setting the goals for each initiative. The ultimate metric they use is species. So a species-based metric for the initiatives. They find that this is very clarifying. It's restricting because you have to hold yourself accountable. So far there are no numbers they see at the moment because it's so new.
- The species-based role has directed grantmaking and the grantmaking community to establish those goals in the grants and they must define it. That's where the direct impact is coming from.
- Coral reefs are ecosystems, there are any number of metrics you could use, but they chose coral cover (which is pushing the envelope) but it makes it clear on what they will and will not invest.
- The River Herring, the biggest management challenge is that they are adopting a goal, a certain population level, that they want to achieve in 10 years with the investment.
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- They are not replacing management goals but this is a good interim step..

Things that haven't worked well: The risk assessment.

- It has limited value because the community is already addressing the risks that come up during the stakeholder negotiations.

People respond VERY well to logic models. Once they get over the initial (oh my god a really complex chart) then they enjoy it. If you make it fun it works out very well. This is very positive.

Also the boxes and arrows produced through Miradi. The language is very important, the wording can sometimes be so vague that people can read whatever they want into that wording.

Presentation 2: The Moore Foundation.

The Moore Foundation is a new foundation. Only 7 years old.

Anything they do they need to make sure they can make a difference and measure it. The founder is a scientist. They must measure: where do we stand? Will we make a difference?

Amazon Basin initiative was created a few years ago. They started a foundation and now they are figuring out how to do it. It's tough. The first time he was exposed to monitoring and evaluation he hated it. (Luis). It took 4 years to actually understand and really value what evaluation brings into execution. That's what's missing. We have all these plans, big plans. You see all these big NGOs trying to save the world. We get back very nice glossy beautiful powerpoints, but then when you try to see what you're doing with all your resources, it's hard to see. What does the investment deliver? It's hard to see. They don't want to be on that path.

The foundation has a strong commitment to bringing evaluation into the workplan because they want to be accountable for what they do.

Jared Hardner:

It is important to design for evaluation to eliminate the most commonly found problems we see in post hoc evaluations.

Interim measures of progress are important in evaluation because often you can't see the results of your work.

Counterfactual evaluation: what would the world look like in the absence of your initiative. Without this it's hard to tell if you have anything to do with that improvement.

Attribution: trying to figure out which part of the progress that the foundation contributed to.

Amazon Basin: manage for forest cover, 70% target

Amazon Basin: 50% of it is in protected areas but that doesn't mean that any of it is managed for conservation. This is an easy, important indicator that can be used for metrics.

- Broke up whole basin into eco regions.
- Can also look at the rate of loss and identify the areas that are going the fastest—they have areas where they know they must act quickly due to low options and high degradation.

- So all ecoregions can be broken up into four quadrants. This helps allocate investments.
- Then they can map it and see exactly where to target money.

Limiting Factors – a methodology developed when doing post hoc evaluations. Want to measure presence and absence of issues that threaten conservation.

- What you don't want to do is leave a weak link in the chain (do everything but one critical element). They see a lot of this in conservation work. It doesn't matter how good a job you do on a, b, and c, if D doesn't get done.
- Necessary/Sufficient analogies.

They have a whole range of limiting factors and they score it from negative 2 (meaning this factor prevents conservation from occurring) to limiting, to not limiting, to enabling.

- Limiting factors in several categories: stakeholder support, funding, politics, public policy, etc.

They can look at limiting factors, find the most important, and then look at who is addressing what. They can see where people aren't addressing specific issues.

- This allows them to look at the host of actors in the area and develop a theory of change.

Remote sensing allows them to look at outcomes. They have a baseline map, a counterfactual map (using complex models) and then attribution (because they know geographically where they invested and what they invested in).

We're here not to show you a cooked project but to have you throw some eggs at us to tell us how we could be doing this better.

Q&A Session

The purpose of the limiting factors analysis is to have a DASHBOARD to see WHAT IS GOING ON IN OUR UNIVERSE.

Limiting factors != to risk. Risk is part of limiting factors but the way we (NFWF) thought about risk is once we identify the limiting factors, we then did a risk analysis to see well, what if our strategies can't meet the expected goal? What is the risk of that?

Christina: we have to within each initiative assess where they are and whether they need more process-oriented work together or whether they are ready to hit the ground running.

Process: Moore Foundation is a funder with money so they bring people together and ask what to do going forward. When it's us asking a question they become more like a special interest. It's hard in terms of balancing a strategy to weigh what is someone trying to get into