

# Environmental Evaluators

## Network [Canada]:

Post-forum survey results

Ottawa, Ontario

September 25-26

**November 26, 2008**

*EEN[Canada] Organizing Committee*

## **Executive Summary**

On September 25-26, 2008, the inaugural Environmental Evaluators Network (EEN)[Canada] Forum was held at the Government Conference Centre in Ottawa Ontario. Invitations were targeted to a cross section of evaluators, and program managers in the federal, provincial, municipal, academic, non profit foundation sectors including representation from counterparts in the United States. Some fifty registrants attended this two day forum. The event and its follow-up survey was conducted by the EEN[Canada] organizing committee composed of federal and private sector representatives. This event was supported by Environment Canada as well as by financial contributions from six federal organizations with environmental portfolio interests (Agriculture Canada, Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Health Canada, Natural Resources Canada, Parks Canada).

This report outlines the feedback received from the participants that chose to respond to the evaluation survey. The findings show a great degree of satisfaction from the attendees and a keen interest that similar such initiatives such as a forum be undertaken in the future to meet their professional interests and needs.

## **Context**

The mission of the EEN is to enable the conduct of more effective environmental program evaluations and analyses that inform management decisions to foster positive environmental results. This inaugural Canadian event was held to extend the building of the network of environmental evaluators started three years ago in the United States (yearly events in June in Washington). The specific objective of this forum was to extend the network of individuals in Canada interested to actively participate in and profit from the Environmental Evaluators Network.

The specific theme of this EEN[Canada] forum was two fold: environment and decision-making and; changing behaviour through results in "on the ground" delivery.

All attendees were asked to respond to the post-forum evaluation survey which was e-mailed to them in the week following the forum in September and was followed up by second reminder requesting input by November 17, 2008. The results that follow are based on the 22 responses received. They represent some 22 of the 50 forum attendees or 44%.

## **The Survey Responses**

Below is a summary of the findings. The detailed questions and responses are outlined in Annex A.

### Positive findings

#### Forum organization & content

1. All of respondents (22) found the forum as either very or somewhat valuable.
2. All of the respondents (22) either agreed or strongly agreed that there was sufficient networking time
3. Seventy-eight percent of respondents learned new approaches or methods
4. The selected venue of the Government Conference Centre was deemed as a suitable location by all but one who remained neutral.

#### Future forum & events

5. All but one of the respondents would attend a future forum; one declined.
6. Overwhelmingly 21 of the 22 respondents wanted the forum to be held annually; one suggested a biennial event.
7. The majority (86%) were now also interested in the EEN [Washington] and its events.
8. The majority (86%) wanted to maintain contact with forum participants using an e-Community.
9. In answering what kind of events besides a forum would be of interest, multiple responses were possible; 19 selected periodic professional seminars, 13 opted for specialty high profile speakers and 13 chose breakfast sessions.

#### Future EEN [Canada]forum governance

10. Of the 20 who responded to this question the responses were evenly split with one half saying that the current ad hoc

arrangement is fine and the other half vying for a more formal structure.

11. Asked if individuals wish to actively participate in the planning of future events, of the 17 respondents to this question, 9 said yes to future participation and 8 declined.

☺ Logistical improvements

*A) What did you like most about the forum?*

This was an open question which generated a range of responses and these are listed below:

- Participation by a variety of individuals. It was really good to have the American colleagues' perspective on environmental evaluations.
- Meeting so many like-minded individuals
- Opportunity to network, dinner cruise was very conducive to this, but with a bias towards foreign or other groups that were willing do an evening activity.
- The broad range of participants. The themes covered by the forum. The summary remarks from the facilitators.
- The chance to meet like-minded individuals and to get a feel for the state of environmental evaluation both in Canada and abroad.
- The forum was a rich blend of relevant speakers, different perspectives on the related theme. I enjoyed also the networking opportunities provided.
- The range of evaluation examples and variety built into the session agenda.
- Liked opportunity of hearing from Americans.
- I'm new to this area of work and so hearing from a variety of individuals and organizations who are facing similar challenges was very valuable.
- Topic was well focussed. Future looking perspective of creating something that is needed.
- Speakers.
- Many relevant and thought-provoking presentations.
- The honesty of experience shared.
- Diversity of presenters/perspectives.

- Presentation from Parks Canada.
- Excellent people and opportunity to network and learn.
- Many things - great networking and I was happy to meet the Americans. I liked the presentations in the afternoon in particular - very practical and interesting. I learned a lot. (I was only able to be there on day 1).
- Networking with international evaluation community members.
- The people who came were very engaged and so there were great discussions during the Q&A periods and during the breaks.

*B) What did you like least about the forum?*

This was an open question which generated a range of responses and these are listed below:

- Inconvenient parking
- In general the presentations were well suited to the EEN. However, a couple of them were more appropriate for a general audience or to newcomers to evaluation.
- I would have enjoyed more discussion surrounding methods targeting environmental evaluation and the specific issues tied to it.
- That I was unable to attend all aspects of the forum due to other pressures and I am not sure that we addressed the big picture role opportunity for evaluation in describing the cumulative effects of human activities and how the proposed network could push this forward - an appropriate topic for later, when/if the Canadian environmental evaluation network proceeds and links in with others.
- Maybe too rooted in classical program evaluation. Not enough people with real environmental backgrounds.
- Would have liked to see a broader cross section of people interested in environmental evaluation.
- Room temperature was a little cool at times.
- Boat cruise was poorly attended and did not allow for much networking as a result.
- We ran out of time for a couple of key discussions
- No opportunity to workshop.
- Nothing in particular.
- Would have liked more tools, solutions, practices.

- Maybe a little too focused on the federal bureaucracy - would like to have seen more foundations, corporations and consultants and various provincial levels.
- Too much detail regarding evaluation presentations.
- Focused primarily on challenges. Would like the next one to focus on methods and measuring impact.

*C) What suggestions do you have for improving a future forum?*

This was an open question which generated a range of responses and these are listed below:

- Broadening the attendance to all those interested.
- Clear distinction in program re practice topics vs. theoretical/broader discussions - both important, would be great to have this highlighted though
- None.
- It will be difficult to improve on this forum, its success was built on Environment Canada's sponsorship and the exceptional leadership of V Neimanis and the teamwork of the organizing committee.
- I think that the effort and results for this forum were phenomenal - no suggestions at this time.
- More emphasis on practical on-the-ground experience and more emphasis on the underlying science. Parks Canada presentation was great in this regard.
- Try to hold it in conjunction with a complimentary organization (environmental or evaluation oriented).
- Keep up the good work.
- Hold a cocktail hour after the conference instead of a boat cruise; this might boost attendance.
- Involving scientific side of what we do.
- Include breakout sessions that include interactive work-shopping.
- Invite more people to attend, especially a bigger contingent of people involved in implementing (and not necessarily evaluating) environmental programs. This should be done to help bridge the understanding gap between implementers and evaluators. Have a free-form discussion at some point on the agenda to allow participants to ask various questions they may have on their mind about environmental evaluation.

- None.
- Other than broadening the invite list, nothing. You've done a very good job of getting an interesting network started.
- Nothing--it was great.

## **EEN[Canada] Forum presentations**

All presentations have been posted and are available at the EEN web site [http://www.nfwf.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Environmental\\_Evaluators\\_Network](http://www.nfwf.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Environmental_Evaluators_Network)

At this same site one can register for participation on the e-Community.

## **Conclusion**

The post-forum survey findings indicate a great degree of satisfaction from the attendees and a keen interest another forum be held in one year.

## **Future Contact**

This forum was organized by an ad hoc committee with federal and private sector representatives.

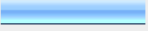
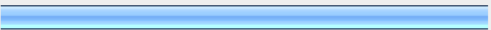
Communication about EEN[Canada] be made by contacting the EEN[Canada] chair - V. Neimanis by e-mail at [neimanis@magma.ca](mailto:neimanis@magma.ca)

The members of this event's organizing committee included:

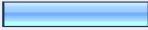
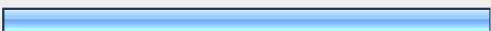
Michael Gullo, Stratos  
Ramona Helm Fisheries and Oceans Canada  
Alison Kerry, Environmental Management Consultant  
Karine Kisilenko, Environment Canada  
Christine Milton-Feasby, Parks Canada  
John Morris, Environment Canada, now Infrastructure Canada  
V. Neimanis, Environment Canada, now retired but will chair EEN[Canada]

## Annex A: Post EEN[Canada] Forum Detailed Survey Results

### How valuable did you find the EEN [Canada] Forum?


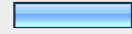
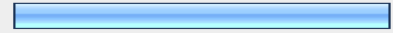

	Response Percent	Response Count
Not valuable	0.0%	0
Of Little Value	0.0%	0
Neutral	0.0%	0
Somewhat valuable 	22.7%	5
<b>Very Valuable</b> 	77.3%	17
Did not attend	0.0%	0
Other (please specify)		1
<i>answered question</i>		<b>22</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>1</b>

### The forum provided sufficient opportunity to network with others:




	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly disagree	0.0%	0
Disagree	0.0%	0
Neutral	0.0%	0
Agree 	22.7%	5
<b>Strongly Agree</b> 	77.3%	17
Not applicable	0.0%	0
Other (please specify)		2
<i>answered question</i>		<b>22</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>1</b>



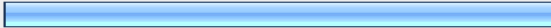

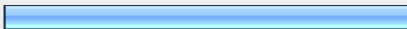
**I learned some new approaches or methods:**

		Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly disagree		0.0%	0
Disagree		4.5%	1
Neutral		18.2%	4
Agree		59.1%	13
Strongly Agree		18.2%	4
Not applicable		0.0%	0
Other (please specify)			2
		<i>answered question</i>	<b>22</b>
		<i>skipped question</i>	<b>1</b>

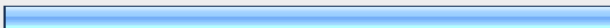

**The conference location (Ottawa Conference Centre) was suitable:**

		Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly disagree		0.0%	0
Disagree		0.0%	0
Neutral		4.5%	1
Agree		22.7%	5
Strongly Agree		72.7%	16
Not applicable		0.0%	0
		<i>answered question</i>	<b>22</b>
		<i>skipped question</i>	<b>1</b>

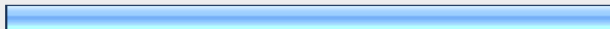

**What topics would you like to see discussed at future forum?**

		Response Percent	Response Count
Methodological issues related to evaluating environmental outcomes		86.4%	19
Evaluating environmental regulations		40.9%	9
Impact of environmental evaluations on decision-making		63.6%	14
Other (please specify)			11
		<i>answered question</i>	
			22
		<i>skipped question</i>	
			1



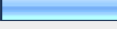
**Would you attend a future forum?**

		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		95.5%	21
No		4.5%	1
Unsure		0.0%	0
		<i>answered question</i>	
			22
		<i>skipped question</i>	
			1



**If yes, when would you like this forum to occur:**

		Response Percent	Response Count
Next year		95.5%	21
Once every two years		4.5%	1
Other		0.0%	0
		<i>answered question</i>	
			22
		<i>skipped question</i>	
			1

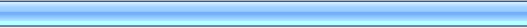

**What is your primary organization affiliation?**

		Response Percent	Response Count
Government		68.2%	15
Foundation/ non-profit		13.6%	3
Consulting		18.2%	4
Academia		0.0%	0
Other (please specify)			0
		<i>answered question</i>	22
		<i>skipped question</i>	1



**Do you wish to be actively connected with other forum participants by an electronic format such as a listserv?**

		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		86.4%	19
No		0.0%	0
Unsure		13.6%	3
		<i>answered question</i>	22
		<i>skipped question</i>	1

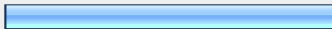

**After attending this event, are you interested in knowing more about the EEN[Washington] and its events?**

		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		86.4%	19
No		13.6%	3
Other (please specify)			0
		<i>answered question</i>	22
		<i>skipped question</i>	1

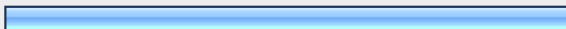
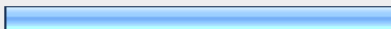
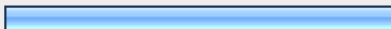
**Do you wish to see a permanent and greater formality of governance associated with environmental evaluators in Canada?**

		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		50.0%	10
No, ad hoc is fine		50.0%	10
Other (please specify)			6
		<i>answered question</i>	20
		<i>skipped question</i>	3

**Would you be interested in participating in the planning of future events/or a forum?**

		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		52.9%	9
No		47.1%	8
Other (please specify)			8
		<i>answered question</i>	17
		<i>skipped question</i>	6

**What kind of events besides a forum would be of interest?**

		Response Percent	Response Count
periodic professional seminars		90.5%	19
speciality high profile speakers		61.9%	13
breakfast sessions		61.9%	13
Other (please specify)			3
		<i>answered question</i>	21
		<i>skipped question</i>	2