2010 EEN Forum Notes

Session Name: Evaluation Policy in the Environmental Community

Speakers: Kristen Komives, ISEAL Alliance; Per Mickwitz, Finnish Environment Institute

Session Date/Time: 6/8/2010 11:00 AM

Notetaker: Sarah Wendel

Main Themes:
- This session will answer: Does general evaluation policy guidance provide a sufficient basis for environmental organizations to develop their own evaluation policies?
- Is there a need for a specific discussion about environmental evaluation policy?
    - A **new culture** characterized by more interactions and increased transparency with knowledge sharing is needed
- Evaluation policy should put less focus on data, measurement and indicators
- Evaluation policy should enhance understanding (and modeling) of content of specific processes

Detailed Notes:

Speaker #1: Evaluation Policy in the Environmental Community: Case Finland
Speaker: Research Professor Per Mickwitz

- What is Evaluation Policy?
    - Any rule or principle that a group or organization uses to guide its decisions and actions when doing evaluation
- Multi-Level Governance
    - A concept thus contained bother vertical and horizontal dimensions. Refers to the increasing interdependence of governments operating at different levels, while "governance" signaled the growing interdependence between policies, programs, and evaluation
- Working Group on: Developing the Effectiveness Evaluation of Policy Measures
    - Vision: from disconnectedness to an integrated model
    - Present state vs. future vision for evidence based policy making- integration needed, increased use of modeling and less focus on inventory indicators
- Challenges:
    - Supply- the focus of applied research and the availability and motivation of researchers and evaluators
    - Demand- information gets "lost" (one department does not know what another has produced)
    - Information is used tactically, without transparency
    - Lack of motivation by policy makers and high officials to obtain new knowledge
- A **new culture** characterized by more interactions and increased transparency with knowledge sharing is needed.
- Pilot Projects-
    - Rural Policy Program
    - Renewable of Waste Legislation
    - Gender Equality Program

- o Prolonging working lives
  - ▪ All have strong links to environmental issues
- View on Evaluation Policy in the Environmental Community- Need and Process
  - o Those environmental organizations, such as the Finnish Ministry of the Environment, that do not yet have an evaluation policy should develop one.
  - o The environmental community should get more involved in the development of "general" evaluation policies
- View of Evaluation Policy in the Environmental Community- Content
  - o Evaluation policy should put less focus on data, measurement and indicators
  - o Evaluation policy should enhance understanding (and modeling) of content of specific processes
  - o Evaluation policy with utilization as a starting point
  - o Evaluation policy that supports capacity building

Speaker #2 The Impacts of Color: Scaling up the Impacts of Social and Environmental Standard Systems Speaker: Kristen Komives, ISEAL Alliance

- ISEAL Alliance- voluntary social and environmental standards system members
- Why an Impacts Code for standards system?
  - o Credibility- openness and transparency
  - o Accountability- to donors, consumers, civil society and those affected by and meant to benefit from the activities of standards systems
  - o Learning and Improvement- deepening impacts, improving standards and processes
  - o Collective Contribution- assessing cumulative and collective impacts
- Code creation, implementation, and revision
  - o Multi-stakeholder process
  - o Steering committee with representation from member organizations
  - o Code to be revised through multi-stakeholder process
- Impacts Code as Evaluation Policy
  - o Evaluation goals policies
    - ▪ Room for organization to define scope but generally expected to assess and measure
  - o Short, medium, and long-term impacts
  - o Social, environmental, and economic impacts
  - o Intended and unintended consequences
- Evaluation participating policies
  - o Requires stakeholder input in M&E program, indicators
  - o Requires organization to make evaluation and impact assessment reports available to public and to facilitate stakeholder scrutiny and reaction to the reports
- Evaluation use policies
  - o No unsubstantiated claims made about information drawn from analysis of data
  - o Ensure use of M&E system
- Other areas of evaluation policy are required, but most details are left up to individual organizations
  - o Capacity building policies: budget, capacity and skills
  - o Management policies: both ongoing and monitoring and regular evaluations required
  - o Role policies: Roles must be defined

- - Process and methods policies: data collection protocols, disclosure of limitations, justification of methods
    - Evaluation of evaluation (meta-evaluation) policies: limited requirement of individual evaluations
- General evaluation policy enough or is there something special about environmental evaluation policy?
    - Almost all provisions are relevant for any organization
    - Most tensions are not specific to environmental evaluation
    - Specific challenges of environmental evaluation policy are yet to come
- Looking forward: evaluating evaluation policy
    - In 2012, Impacts Code will be revised through multi-stakeholder process
    - Ensure preparation to provide valuable input into revision process with:
        - Individual organizations
        - Stakeholders
        - Evaluation Community
        - ISEAL Alliance Secretariat