

**Environmental Evaluators
Networking Forum
June 22-23, Washington, DC**

Brief Summary of Participant Registration Survey Findings

Matt Birnbaum

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation



Methodology

- Online survey design administered over past several weeks.
 - 10 questionnaire items
 - 8 sets of closed and/or mixed-ended questions
 - 2 open-ended questions
- 86 total respondents (i.e., forum registrants as of June 19).
- Method of analysis:
 - Closed-ended questions = descriptive statistics (principally frequencies)
 - Open-ended questions = content analysis



Overview of Discussion

- Key Themes
 - Diversity among Participants
 - Variations in Participants' Connection to Evaluation
 - Commonalities of Views in Issues of Concern
 - Initial Themes Emerging for Short-Term Priorities



Diversity Among Participants

- Snapshot based on Three Variables:
 1. Geographic Area
 2. Organizational Affiliation
 3. Educational Training



Diversity of Respondents: Organizational Type

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Academic	10	11.6	11.6
Federal	38	44.2	55.8
Foundation	17	19.8	75.6
Non-Profit	3	3.5	79.1
Private Sector	17	19.8	98.8
Regional	1	1.2	100.0
Total	86	100.0	

Diversity of Respondents: Geographic Area

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
DC Metro Area	53	61.6	61.6
Northeast US	10	11.6	73.3
Southeast US	6	7.0	80.2
Midwest US	5	5.8	86.0
Mountain West US	1	1.2	87.2
Pacific US	8	9.3	96.5
International	3	3.5	100.0
Total	86	100.0	

Diversity of Respondents: Education Level

	N	%	Cum. %
Undergrad Degree	10	12.8	12.8
Masters Degree	39	50.0	62.8
Ph.D	25	32.1	94.9
JD	4	5.1	100.0
Total	78	100.0	

1. At Master's Level:

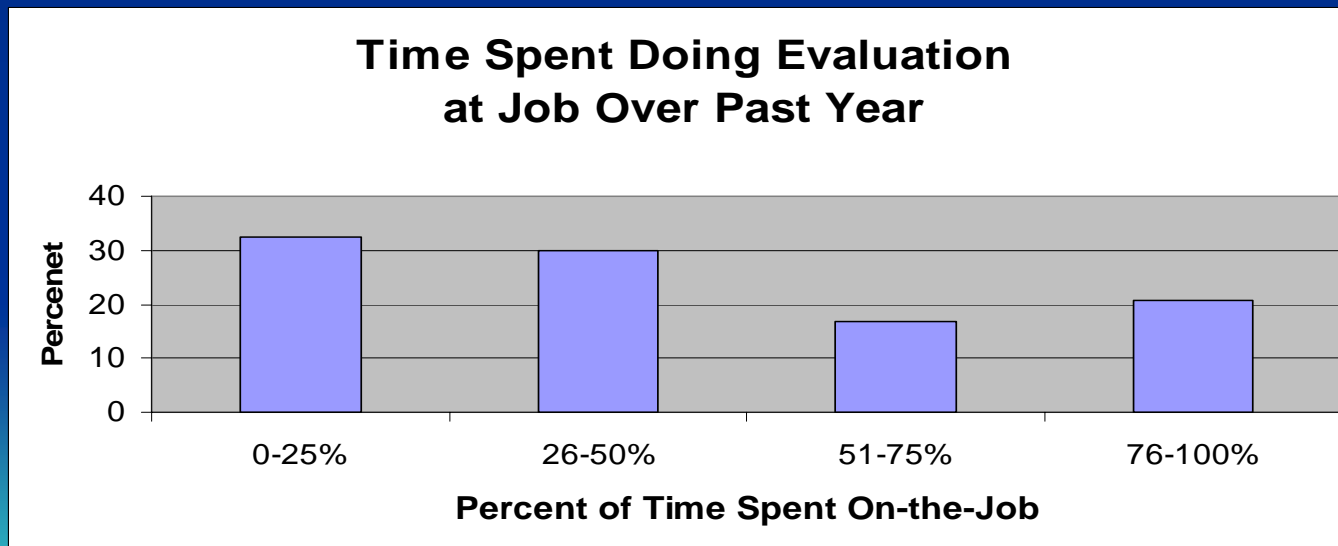
- 36% had a professional degree (e.g., public policy, urban and regional planning)
- Remainder were about equally distributed in social sciences, natural sciences, and environmental interdisciplinary fields.
- 9 persons had multiple graduate degrees.

2. At Doctoral Level:

- Most were in social sciences, natural sciences and professional disciplines
- Four have a PhD. in an environment-specific field.
- Only one has a doctorate in evaluation.

Participants' Connection to Evaluation

- Length of On-the-Job Experience with Evaluation:
 1. On average, people worked 9.3 years with evaluation (median=6 years) with an upwardly skewed distribution with wide variation overall.
 2. *This trend closely parallels how long they have worked in their current organization.*
- Percent of Current Work Time Spent on Evaluation Varies:



Primary Involvement with Evaluation

1. Program evaluation at the *national* level (25%)
2. National, *cross-program* level (22%)
3. Performance management (20%)
4. Evaluation at the **local/project level** (19%)
5. Evaluation at the *regional* level (12%)



Experience with Various Evaluation Methods

1. Interviews and Focus Groups (63%)
2. Qualitative Methods (61%)
3. Quantitative Methods (57%)
 - a) Multivariate Statistics (17%)
 - b) Cost-effectiveness/cost –benefit analysis (17%)
4. Case Studies (54%)
5. Survey Methods (44%)



Experience with Evaluation Approaches

1. Logic Modeling (55%)
2. Performance Measurement (52%)
3. Needs assessments (35%)
4. Participatory Evaluation (35%)
5. Multi-site/Multi-Project Evaluation (35%)
 - a) Cluster/Meta-Evaluation (15%)
6. Auditing (17%)
7. Process/Implementation (31%)



Primary Evaluation Issues of Concern:

- **Evaluation designs and methods** reported by 38 (72%) of 52 respondents:
 1. Standardizing methods
 2. Realistic variables
 3. Rigorous methods (frequently statistically defined)
 4. Complexities of scale
 5. Confounding variables
- **Assessing performance of intervention** reported by 10 (19%) of 52 respondents:
 - E.g., “Finding credible means to fairly gauge conservation investments vs. outcomes.”
- **Future project/program improvement** reported by 6 (11%) of 52 respondents.
 - E.g., “...learn what works and what could be improved in the usually really complex interactions between societies and the environment”
- Other prominent themes identified include *influencing policy* and *improving resource constraints*.



Primary Motives for Attending Forum

1. Learning new methods and approaches (61%)
2. Networking (41%)
3. Getting feedback on evaluation (13%)



Initial Themes Emerging for Short-Term Priorities

- We asked:
 - “What are the 1-2 highest priorities that environmental evaluators need to address over the next couple of years?”
- You responded:
 1. Improve state of evaluation theory, design and methods (25 of 51 responses)
 - a. Linkages between conservation activities and outcomes
 - b. Quality of quasi-experimental designs
 - c. “Stronger methods so 'success' is not just a matter of achieving goals but also a matter of performing better than the alternative(s)”
 2. Standardizing methods (11 of 52 responses), including comments about definitions and measurements of terms.
 3. Other themes noted by a substantial minority include *project/program improvement* and *improved collaboration*.

