



2008 CANADA ENVIRONMENTAL EVALUATORS NETWORKING FORUM

what

The purpose of the Environmental Evaluators Network is to advance the field of environmental evaluation through more systematic and collective learning. The annual EEN forum provides an opportunity for evaluators and users of evaluation from the diversity of environmental organizations and disciplines to exchange knowledge and experiences related to the practice, theory and policy of environmental evaluation as well as collaboratively to identify and develop products that further the field. Ultimately, the aim of the EEN and the events and products that it supports is to improve the environmental community's capacity to demonstrate effectiveness and efficiency, particularly in terms of environmental outcomes.

history

The first Canadian EEN Forum was held on September 25 and 26, 2008, at the Government Conference Centre in Ottawa, Ontario. The forum 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, and Parks Canada). Fifty people attended the event, which included a cross section of evaluators and program managers in federal, provincial, municipal, academic, non-profit foundation sectors, as well as representation from the United States.

The goal of the forum was to extend the building of the Environmental Evaluators Network to Canada, in order to include Canadian colleagues in the network of individuals collaborating to improve the field of environmental evaluation.

themes

1. *Environment and decision-making*
2. *Changing behavior through results in "on the ground" delivery*

working sessions

In addition, a working session on the Environmental Evaluators Network and Forum was held to discuss the management of and goals for the initial launch of EEN in Canada. The working session developed a list of topics of interest for future EEN forums, additional types of events that may interest EEN participants, possible structures for the EEN in Canada, and suggestions on how to best extend the network to others.

key findings

1. **The purpose of environmental evaluations:**
 - Measure environmental progress, provide an impetus for change and enhance accountability
 - Help with "course corrections" and be used to demonstrate ongoing value and relevance
2. **Factors that may distinguish environmental evaluations from other evaluations:**
 - Subject matter expertise is important for the evaluation team
 - Multiple partners and jurisdictions are usually involved
 - Environmental results that a long time to be realized (time scale is an issue)
3. **Key components required to plan and prepare an environmental evaluation:**
 - Clearly defining long term outcomes to be achieved
 - Developing a logic model/outcome map
 - Setting measurable interim benchmarks or indicators
 - Establishing clear accountabilities
 - Engaging all partners
4. **Key components required throughout the evaluation:**
 - Systems need to be put in place with resources
 - Management needs to be both convinced and served
 - Partners need to be actively engaged in both performance monitoring and evaluation
 - Proxy indicators (e.g., increased awareness, behaviour changes) can be used to assess progress along the way to outcomes
 - Transparency and credibility (e.g., science-basis) are important
5. **Key challenges to environmental evaluation:**
 - Measuring "on the ground" environmental impacts (moving from assessing "process" to "impact")
 - Attribution and determining cause-effect relationships
 - Reconciling priorities across partners
 - Affecting decision-making
 - Affecting organizational change



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presentations

1. Environment and decision-making:

- **Launch of Environmental Evaluators Network** - V. Neimanis. This presentation introduces the inaugural Canadian EEN event and its objective of extending the network of individuals interested in actively participating in and profiting from the Environmental Evaluators Network.
- **Building Evaluative Capacity in Conservation and Environment: Challenges to the Evaluation Profession** - Matt Birnbaum, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. The presentation establishes basic working assumptions with regards to natural resource program evaluation, which are followed by key technical and institutional barriers and principles for improving evaluative capacity. An overview of key findings from the three previous EEN forums suggests five-year goals and action items for the Network.
- **Counting Trees: Evaluation of the Conserving Canada's Forest Program** - Lara Ellis, IVEY Foundation. The Conserving Canada's Forest Program seeks to increase the amount of protected forest ecosystem and expand the adoption of sustainable forest practices in Canada. This presentation details a recent evaluation of the program, emphasizing the distinctions between grant, cluster, and program level evaluation.
- **Evaluating Conservation Efforts: Lessons from the Canadian Boreal Initiative** - Cathy Wilkinson. The Canadian Boreal Initiative has incorporated planning and evaluation as a core element of its approach from the beginning. The Initiative's 2006 mid-term evaluation showed that the commitment to upfront evaluation planning was time-consuming but invaluable.
- **Evaluating Environmental Programs** - Shelley Borys, Environment Canada. This presentation provides an overview of evaluation at Environment Canada. Although many evaluations are management-focused with outcomes only inferred, the gains in measuring environmental outcomes include added confidence in management decisions and credibility for the program.
- **Setting the Conditions for Environmental Evaluation** - Helena Olivas, The Delphi Group. The Clean Development Mechanism, set in place as part of the Kyoto Protocol, was founded to promote sustainable development and emission reductions in developing countries and allow industrialized countries some flexibility in meeting their emission reduction commitments. The presentation outlines the success CDM has experienced in the process for evaluating GHG emission reductions, as well as the challenges faced in meeting Sustainable Development criteria.
- **Contribution of Evaluation to Improved Environmental Programming** - David Fairbairn, Fairbairn Environmental. The presentation utilizes program examples to identify factors that could increase evaluation effectiveness and address key challenges and constraints. The collective lessons learned show that program evaluations do provide a strong framework for understanding how well programs are working, yet linking activities to results continues to be challenging.

2. Changing behavior through results in "on the ground" delivery:

- **Behaviour Changes as Development Results in NRM: An Introduction to Outcome Mapping** - Kaia Ambrose, CARE Canada. Outcome mapping is a methodology for planning and assessing the social effects and internal performance of projects, programs, and organizations. Outcome mapping focuses on behavior change, which is useful in the field of natural resource management because human behavior (specifically the way people treat each other and the environment) has a central role in the development process.
- **Towards Sustainable Mining: A Catalyst for Change** - Stephanie Meyer, The Mining Association of Canada. This presentation introduces the Towards Sustainable Mining program along with its self-assessment and verification system. The system shows how TSM has improved member company performance across the protocols for tailings management, external outreach, crisis communications, and energy and GHG emissions management.
- **Management Effectiveness Reporting in Parks Canada: Assessing Ecological Integrity** - Stephen Woodley, Parks Canada. Parks Canada measures outcomes focused on its mandate of ecological integrity, commemorative integrity, visitor experience, and public education. The presentation uses case studies to show how ecological integrity monitoring provides Parks Canada with essential information for management and visitor education, and allows the Agency to deal with stakeholders and partners from a knowledge perspective that is credible, science-based, efficient, and effective.