2008 ENVIRONMENTAL EVALUATORS NETWORKING FORUM

WORKING STRATEGICALLY TO SUPPORT CHANGE AND EFFECTIVENESS

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 third EEN forum was co-hosted by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) in Washington, DC on June 12 and 13, 2008. More than 130 participants were in attendance from federal government agencies, foundations, private evaluation firms, academia, and other organizations.

themes

1. **Attribution:** Program evaluation as a means of assigning change in environmental condition to a particular program or policy.
2. **Management:** The connections between performance measurement and program evaluation that are key to accountable, adaptive, outcome-based management.
3. **Communication:** Distributing the results and learning from evaluations across stakeholders with different roles, responsibilities, values and perspectives.

presentations

1. **Attributing Change to Our Programs:**
   - **Applying Program Evaluation Methods to Natural Resource Policy** - David Butry, National Institute of Standards and Technology. Although program evaluation methods are rarely applied to natural resource policy, this presentation employs them to assess the effectiveness of current wildfire mitigation programs. The study finds that wildfire management has a significant impact on wildfire behavior.
   - **Results Chains: A Tool for Measuring Effectiveness and Attributing Change to Conservation Programs** - Marcia Brown, Foundations of Success. Foundations of Success seeks to improve the practice of conservation through adaptive management, which entails working with practitioners to systematically test assumptions, adapt, and learn. Results chains are a useful tool in adaptive management as they clarify assumptions about how conservation strategies contribute to reducing threats and achieving the conservation of targets, and can be used to attribute change to programs.
   - **DataCr edibility** - Andrew Pullin, Bangor University (Wales) and Center for Evidence-Based Conservation. The confidence with which data can be interpreted in the evaluation context depends upon the quality of the data and the strength of the evidence that they provide. Methods to improve data credibility include developing a methodology that is controlled, randomized, and replicable; involving multiple stakeholders in the design process; ensuring that the method is transparent; and making data accessible.
   - **Moving Toward a Scale Independent Approach to Monitoring Status and Trends in Biodiversity** - Elizabeth Kennedy, Conservation International. Conservation International's approach to monitoring biodiversity includes both status monitoring of broad scale trends in biodiversity threats and conservation responses, as well as intervention monitoring which measures the results of conservation actions in a local context. By linking these monitoring scales, local information can be scaled up to inform adaptive management and broad trends can be refined to direct local conservation tactics.
   - **Educational Evaluation as Adaptive Management** - Daniel T. Blumstein, UCLA. The goals of effectively optimizing both education and conservation can be pursued jointly by conducting educational evaluations to inform adaptive management plans. This approach optimizes environmental education, as it teaches citizenship, awareness, and sustainability through "learning experiments" that allow students to make sustainable decisions with real-world data.
   - **Casual Attribution in Environmental Program Evaluation** - Gary Henry, University of North Carolina. The presentation revisits causal attribution in environmental program evaluations, using Rubin's Causal Model to show how evaluators can develop an unbiased estimate of the program effects. Remaining challenges include data collection, resource constraints, and extrapolating effects to a target population.
   - **Implications of Climate Change for Evaluation** - Per Mickwitz, Finnish Environment Institute. Although evaluation has not yet become a central issue in climate policy and the evaluation community has yet to discuss climate issues in depth, it is clear that climate change will have implications for evaluations of both climate and "non-climate" programs and policies. These implications, which include side-effects, attribution, and uncertainty, can best be addressed through an evaluation methodology perspective.

presentations cont.

- Evaluating Collaborative Environmental Programs - Lou Nadeau, Eastern Research Group. Collaborative environmental programs provide unique challenges to evaluators, as they are often vaguely defined and can be approached from a variety of perspectives. Evaluators of collaborative programs should consider the following types of questions: process (focused inward on the collaboration itself), outcome-oriented (relate the collaboration to results), and "big picture" (overall assessment of the collaboration).

2. **Performance management and adaptive management:**

- *If You Love Your Program, Change Your Organization* - Brett Jenks, Rare. Rare is an organization that trains local conservationists in threatened natural areas to employ a systematic method (Pride campaigns) to induce human behavior change, reduce environmental threats, and conserve the earth's natural resources. The presentation describes Rare's strategy to continuously improve its program operations, driven by both "adaptive" and "adoptive" management.
- *Evaluation's Role in Public Management* - Michael Jacobson, King County, WA. The presentation discusses how increasing the role of information can help the public sector meet changing expectations for evaluation results, formalization, accountability, and transparency. Potential responses to these expectations are presented with examples from King County's experience.
- *Evaluation the Performance of Collaborative Environmental Governance* - Tomas M. Koontz, Ohio State University. This presentation asks whether collaborative governance, in which multiple governmental and nongovernmental stakeholders work together to advance a shared vision, truly produces good environmental outcomes. The authors review the feasibility of various research designs and experimental methods, and describe their own current and future research agenda.
- *Environmental Evaluation in the Age of an Uncertain Climate* - Diane Lane, Stratus Consultants. This presentation addresses the climate change impacts that evaluators should be take into account when assessing the long-term sustainability and success of their programs. Evaluators are asked to consider the ways that an altered climate might affect their program's theory of change, outcome targets, and program goals.
- *Evaluation of Environmental Conflict Resolution* - Susan Goodwin, U.S. Department of the Interior. Environmental Conflict Resolution (ECR) cases utilize third-party mediators to seek agreement on environmental, natural resource, or public lands issues. The Systematic Evaluation of Environmental and Economic Results (SEEER) method provides a useful framework to summarize cases, assess effects, and evaluate the results of ECR decisions.
- *The Golden Lion Tamarin Conservation Program* - Devra G. Kleiman, Zoo-Logic LLC. The presentation describes the activities and successes of the Golden Lion Tamarin Conservation Program, a flagship species program that aims to protect, restore, and expand the Brazilian rainforest and its biodiversity. The program's efforts include local capacity building, conservation education, outreach, and social marketing.
- *Influential Evaluation: Not as Evident as it Seems* - Hans Bruyninckx, Catholic University (Belgium). This presentation asks what makes an evaluation influential, what parties want influential evaluations, under what conditions are evaluations influential, and whether these considerations should change what evaluators do. The authors find that institutionalization is a critical condition for evaluations to become an integral part, norm and standard of environmental policy interventions.
- *Observations on Making Evaluations Effective* - Jared Hardner, Hardner and Gullison Ltd. Evaluations that are performed to inform decision making must be effective in answering the key questions of decision makers. To accomplish this, evaluators must be relevant, work with the data available, involve stakeholders, and deliver actionable recommendations.

3. **Communication:**

- *Knowledge to Action* - Protecting Ocean Life through Marine Science - Angela Bednarek, Pew Charitable Trusts. The Lenfest Ocean Program funds policy-relevant science through a variety of research efforts. The presentation exhibits the program's efforts to address challenges in moving from knowledge to action through five steps that make scientific research relevant to policy.
- *Another Point of View: Monitoring and Evaluation from a Donor Perspective* - Cynthia Gill, U.S. AID. The presentation highlights the weaknesses of reports typically required by donors, which are often qualitative and provide generic, "rolled-up" indicators with little management value. An alternative is proposed in which managers focus on practical, strategic monitoring combined with targeted participatory evaluations.
- *An Online Course to Build Evaluation Capacity* - Lynette Fleming, Research, Evaluation & Development Services. This presentation profiles the development of an Applied Environmental Education Program Evaluation course in evaluation capacity building. The course, piloted in 2004, seeks to equip students with the skills to conduct rigorous evaluations and ensure routine practice.
- *My Environmental Education Evaluation Resource Assistant (MEERA)* - Michaela Zint, University of Michigan. The development and use of MEERA, a web-based resource for increasing environmental educators' evaluation capacity, is described in this presentation. MEERA can help evaluators to learn about evaluation and its importance, move through the evaluation process step-by-step, obtain suggestions on related evaluation topics, search through sample environmental education evaluations, and review additional evaluation resources.
- *Evaluating Climate Change and Development* - Rob van den Berg, The Global Environment Facility. Forums such as the International Conference on Evaluating Climate Change and Development are one means to promote discussion about the implications of climate change for environmental evaluators. Information-sharing of this kind can assist evaluators' efforts to support capacity development, mitigation efforts, and adaptation strategies in developing countries.