## 2010 EEN Forum Notes

**Session Name**: Multi-Method Evaluation: Tools that Work and One's that Don't

**Session Date/Time**: Monday June 7, 2010; 2:45

**Notetaker**: Jeremy Schreiner

**Main Themes**:

- Multi-method Evaluation Plan for Determining Conference Effectiveness
- Evaluating Environmental Legislation in Canada

**Detailed Notes**:

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              Alison Kerry, Environmental and Management Consulting
              Michael Gullo, Stratos

- Scope of evaluation for conferences and legislation is much different.
        What connects the two?  Logic models and multi-method evaluation.

- Leopold Conference—100th Anniversary of Leopold's arrival in the Southwest.
        History: Leopold inspired much of what has evolved into modern environmentalism
        Started as an assistant forest ranger—where learned about wilderness, habitats,
        predators, etc. and the need to protect them.

- Conference Info
        3-parts:  Leopold, problems in the Southwest, local field trips
        Audience:  environmentalists, locals

- Logic Model—for conference evaluation
        High level goals—reduce environmental impact of activities in the Southwest.
        Outputs—provide a good time, increase in knowledge about Leopold, environmental
                awareness, increase motivation to create action.
        Activities—various activities of the conference, each one corresponding to a specific
                output.

- In order to measure the effectiveness of the conference, one must measure the participants':
        Enjoyment, engagement, change in knowledge, change in individual and group actions.

- To effectively evaluate, one needs:
        Multiple data collection points
        Both quantitative and qualitative data

- Characteristics of immediate evaluation at the conference:
        Open-ended questions inserted into survey
        Survey given at the end of conference (which was slightly problematic since some
                participants had already left)
        Direct observation was used to augment the survey
                Volunteer were asked to monitor the types of questions, discussion, comments
                that occurred (good idea but not realistic b/c of time management issues that left
                little time for questions, comments,etc.)
        A white board was provide for participant self-expression (not used very much).

- A follow-up survey was mailed to participants some time after the conference.
    - Insights:
        - Satisfaction was not related to learning which could be because participants were already quite knowledgeable; they belonged to lots of organizations; many participants worked in the environmental field.
    - Therefore the follow up survey was different from the initial survey to address these insights. Questions were changed to make questions clearer.

- Stakeholder interviews still to come.

- Lessons learned:
    - Can't control the weather (there was inclement weather on the days of the conference, and participants expressed their disappoint in the at-conference survey, but seemed to have forgotten their disappointment in the follow-up survey.)
    - More people responded to follow-up survey.

- Things not considered in the evaluation: synergy of speakers, particularly scholars.

- Evaluating Environmental Legislation in Canada

- 3 pieces of environmental legislation in Canada (all mandatory)
    - Evaluations were all complicated to deliver.
    - Evaluation design based on performance frameworks and legal requirements.
    - Process, progress, and outcome were all assessed

- What was evaluated?
    - CEPA—Canadian Environmental Protection Act
    - SARA—Species At Risk Act
    - CSSP—Canadian Shellfish Sanitation Program

- Logic Model--bottom-up; address: what should the legislation achieve?; combinations of previous work and evaluation planning (may be different from original)
    - final outcomes
    - intermediate (3-5 yrs.) outcome
    - immediate outcome
    - outputs/activities

- How are evaluations planned?
    - Come up with evaluation issues, assess sources of evidence, determine indicators—this allows you to collect data and analyze it later.

- Methodologies?
    - Document review –key for evidence base but has its fair share of problems (i.e., not everything is documented)
        - Lots of work but has a significant payoff
    - Interviews and surveys (with every stakeholder)—less "fact based"
    - Expenditure tracking vs. planned spending—this evaluates how well a project is being managed
    - Case studies/ expert focus groups—illustrate how programs work
    - Analytic Framework—easily communicated to managers

- Lessons learned:
    - Clear evaluation framework at the beginning is key to a successful evaluation
    - Focus on evidence

Must communicate with program experts
Can't forget to consider intermediate outcomes and likelihood of success (just because a final outcome hasn't been achieved, doesn't mean that we can't assess the likelihood of success)
Consider context for delivery and changes
Look for indication of future success

- People being evaluated can become very defensive.  It is crucial to make sure people understand that you understand that they are doing the right thing but they may be doing it the wrong way.