The Impacts Code: Evaluation Policy for Voluntary Standards Systems

Kristin Komives

M&E Manager

ISEAL Alliance

Scaling up the impacts of social and environmental standards systems

Contents

> What is the ISEAL Alliance?

> Why an Impacts Code?

> The Impacts Code as Evaluation Policy

> Looking forward: Evaluating Evaluation Policy

Introducing the ISEAL Alliance

Our members: voluntary social and environmental standards systems

Our tools: ISEAL Codes of Good Practice (Standard-setting Code, new Impacts Code…)

Our focus: promoting and improving voluntary standards

Our strength: capacity building and coordination

Scaling up the impacts of social and environmental standards systems

Full members of the ISEAL Alliance

Full members are in compliance with existing ISEAL Codes of Good Practice and other internationally recognised guidance.

Why an Impacts Code for standards systems?

> Credibility
  – openness and transparency

> Accountability
  – to donors, consumers, civil society and those affected by and meant to benefit from the activities of standards systems

> Learning and improvement
  – deepening impacts, improving standards and processes

> Collective contribution
  – Assessing cumulative and collective impacts

Code creation, implementation, and revision

> Multi-stakeholder process, with multiple drafts and two open comment periods

> Steering committee with representation from member organizations

> Now waiting approval of ISEAL Board

> Members will have limited time to come into compliance

> Code to be revised through multi-stakeholder process in 2012

Impacts Code as evaluation policy
(following taxonomy inTrochim 2009)

> Evaluation goals policies

- Overarching goals described above
- Specific goal:

  Room for organization to define scope but generally expected to assess and measure…
  - short, medium, and long-term impacts
  - social, environmental, and economic impacts
  - intended and unintended consequences

> ## Evaluation participation policies

- – Requires stakeholder input in M&E program, indicators
- – 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

- – No unsubstantiated claims made about information drawn from analysis of data
- – Ensure use of M&E system and reports for organizational learning and for revision of standards and procedures

> Other areas of evaluation policy are required, but most details are left up to individual organizations

- Capacity building policies: budget, capacity and skills, plan for improvement

- Management policies: both ongoing monitoring and regular evaluations are required

- Roles 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 requirements at organizational level -- stakeholder scrutiny of evaluations

General evaluation policy 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
  – Meaningful, enforceable requirements vs. concern about costly, unnecessary procedures
  – Learning and improvement vs. public disclosure of results
  – Comparability vs. focus on individual missions

> Specific challenges of environmental evaluation policy are yet to come
  – M&E learning group in ISEAL Alliance and beyond

Looking forward: evaluating evaluation policy

> **In 2012, Impacts Code will be revised through multi-stakeholder process**

> **How can we ensure that we are prepared to provide valuable input into revision process?**

– Individual organizations: own experience with the Code

– Stakeholders: evolving expectations for evaluation and impact assessment

– Evaluation community: state of the art in evaluation policy

– ISEAL Alliance Secretariat (me!): results of monitoring and evaluation of the impact of the Impacts Code

Thank you

Kristin Komives

M&E Manager

kristin@isealalliance.org

www.isealalliance.org