Environmental Evaluators Network [Canada]:

Post-forum survey results

Ottawa, Ontario

September 22-23, 2009

November 15, 2009

Draft

EEN[Canada] Organizing Committee

Executive Summary

On September 22-23, 2009, the second Environmental Evaluators Network (EEN)[Canada] Forum was held at the Government Conference Centre in Ottawa Ontario. Invitations were targeted to a cross section of evaluators, and program managers in the federal, provincial, municipal, academic, non profit foundation sectors including representation from counterparts in the United States. Some fifty-one registrants attended this two day forum. The event and its follow-up survey was conducted by the EEN[Canada] organizing committee composed of federal and private sector representatives. This event was supported by Environment Canada as well as by financial by contributions from seven federal organizations with environmental portfolio interests (Agriculture, Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, Fisheries and Oceans, Indian and Northern Affairs, Natural Resources, Parks, Public Works and Government Services).

This report outlines the feedback received from the participants that chose to respond to the evaluation survey. For a second consecutive year the findings show a great degree of satisfaction from the attendees and a keen interest that similar such initiatives such as a forum be undertaken in the future to meet their professional interests and needs.

Context

The mission of the EEN is to enable the conduct of more effective environmental program evaluations and analyses that inform management decisions to foster positive environmental results. This second Canadian event was held to extend the building of the network of environmental evaluators started four years ago in the United States (yearly events in June in Washington). The specific objective of this forum was to extend the network of individuals in Canada interested to actively participate in and profit from the Environmental Evaluators Network.

The specific theme of this EEN[Canada] forum was on tools used in environmental evaluation.

All attendees were asked to respond to the post-forum evaluation survey which was e-mailed to them following the forum in September and was

followed up by second reminder requesting input by October 23, 2009. The results that follow are based on the 26 responses received. They represent some 26 of the 50 forum attendees (excluding the chair) or 52%. Last year's response rate was 44%.

The Survey Responses

Below is a summary of the findings. The detailed questions and responses are outlined in Annex A.

☺Positive findings

Forum organization & content

1. All of respondents (26) found the forum as either very or somewhat valuable.
2. All but one of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that there was sufficient networking time
3. Over 80% said they agreed or strong agreed they learned new approaches or methods; only 2 disagreed
4. The selected venue of the Government Conference Centre was deemed as a suitable location by all.

Future forum & events

5. The vast majority (92%) said that they would attend a future forum; 2 were unsure; those nearly everyone preferred an annual event
6. The majority (70%) were now also interested in the EEN [Washington] and its events.
7. The majority (73%) wanted to maintain contact with forum participants using a list serve.
8. In answering what approaches to delivering presentations and or participation engagement would you like to see at a future EEN – lecture style presentations were favoured by 62.5%; facilitated panel discussions by 66.7%; small group discussions and exercises by 70.8%;with the highest response for technical workshops which were favoured by 79.2%. (This was a multiple response question thus numbers exceed 100%)

Future EEN [Canada] forum governance

9. Of the 23 who responded to this question the majority or 65% did not see any need for increased formality in the governance of this forum; they would retain its current volunteer nature.
10. Asked if individuals wish to actively participate in the planning of future events, 45% of the participants were interested in helping plan a future event.

😐 Logistical improvements

A) What did you like most about the forum?

This was an open question which generated a range of responses and these are listed below:

- U.S., Fed/Prov, and municipal perspectives.
- Great variety of presentations/topics, all interesting, most were great quality.
- I liked that there were international lead thinkers and clearly top ranking Canadians there.
- Presentations were very informative.
- Very interesting presentations and the diversity of topics covered during the whole event.
- Presentations were engaging and meaningful.
- The information sharing between various practionners.
- The high quality and diversity of presentations. Providing the opportunity to continue the discussion over supper. Meeting and learning from forum participants. The event was very well organized.
- Opportunity to meet people I wouldn't normally meet.
- Presentations on second day.
- Learning about environmental evaluation in sectors other than the federal government.
- Dr. McLellan's presentation and the opportunity to talk to people who work in fields similar to mine but at the same time very different.
- The more practical presentations (eg., Dawes, Borys).
- Cross disciplinary approaches were shared and are helpful for understanding the scope and breadth of evaluation services and applications.

- US methodologies information.
- Presentations related to general approaches to addressing performance measurement and evaluation challenges that can be applied more broadly.
- Presentations were excellent.
- The number and diversity of backgrounds of the participants.
- I was happy to hear about the latest ideas in environmental evaluation.
- Presentations by M. Birnbaum and E. McAllister.
- The diversity of speakers. The capability and experience of the speakers. The size of the group.
- Opportunity to meet other practitioners.
- Finding out what others were doing.
- Exposure to different aspects of evaluation.
- The enthusiasm and collegiality of the folks attending.

B) *What did you like least about the forum?*

This was an open question which generated a range of responses and these are listed below:

- The Cads that failed to show!
- Several - room was much too cold; one - parking is inconvenient.
- It was a very long day of listening. A more action oriented agenda or even breakout groups would have allowed the audience to select presentations based upon keen interest or ability to engage.
- Too many presentations going over time made for burnout by the 2nd day.
- Some of the presentations were quite long and discussions groups were missing.
- No opportunity to 'workshop'.
- The volume of materials presented in the timeframe.
- While the location was suitable and easily accessible from the hotel, perhaps a more informal venue would be appropriate for ~50 participants.
- Felt rushed speakers had good content but not very dynamic.
- PowerPoint! but that is not specific to this meeting...!
- Some of the content dealt more with environmental assessment than environmental evaluation.

- That my schedule did not permit me to stay for the second day!
- The more theoretical presentations (eg., Birnbaum, Arsenault).
- I made my own problems - I come to Ottawa so rarely that I overbooked myself with other things and ended up speaking at another conference. I wish I'd had more time to connect to people.
- Strategic environmental assessment (SEA)presentation.
- Presentations concerning specific research results with few lessons that could be applied to my specific context.
- Not all presentations were relevant to my world of evaluation.
- I think a hands-on workshop on environmental evaluation would've been great.
- I thought it was a bit strange to have presentations on SEAs and ESAs.
- Lack of time for discussion and interchange among participants. I'd prefer to have had some small group interactions, instead of everything in plenary. Some of the presentations overlapped considerably with the 2008 forum, so perhaps we could have spent the time more profitably in other kinds of discussion. As often happens (and I appreciate it's hard to avoid) there was little thematic connection between the presentations in a panel, making it hard to figure out where to start a discussion on them.
- The lack of an agenda in advance. Wasn't sure how it was going to unfold, and didn't know, for example, about the networking session and group dinner until that day. The panel discussions didn't work as intended, it seemed.
- Some presentations were boring.
- General feeling that we have a good idea - but not sure where are we going with this over the next couple of years.

C) What suggestions do you have for improving a future forum?

This was an open question which generated a range of responses and these are listed below:

- I think the model for this year was fabulous, can't think of any suggestions for improvement!
- I could be dreaming in colour here but it would be great if more time was available for question and answer and if we could have a

compendium of articles upon which the presentations have been based before the forum so that we could read select documents before attending. This way, we could engage with presenters in a more informed way.
- More focused and expert speakers.
- Regrouping presentation per theme (e.g. morning: presentations on strategic environmental assessment).
- Mix up the type of presentation (not all panels)
- Smaller, directed discussions at tables - this would allow for more interaction between individuals and open dialogue.
- To supplement the presentations - more opportunities for interacting and learning from other participants.
- Several - more diversity of participants - more consultants, ENGOs
- Provide actual case studies with different stakeholders present discussing on a topic.
- An extra day with a hands on issue
- Provide actual case studies with different stakeholders present discussing on a topic.
- I like the format. I guess I think that less is more. The agenda doesn't have to be packed. I really like the small size - people will really get to know each other over the years. The priority should be on keeping the forum up-to-date and relevant for the senior government evaluators who can greatly contribute their experience and knowledge. Better to keep them happy, engaged and committed to the forum.

D) *What could be future forum topics?*

Participants were asked in an open ended question as to what topics would you like to see discussed at a future forum; the following suggestions were made:

- Valuing environmental outcomes developing/identifying intermediate outcomes (i.e., how to flesh out the logic model in the environmental context).
- Process is important and there is certainly a place for it in forums like this but I would be keen to learn about measurement and policy challenges related to environmental purity/ecological integrity.
- Dealing with long term environmental outcomes.

- Local government and environmental assessment. 2. Which approach evaluates best environmental benefits of local projects.
- Exploring further indicators for success (regarding environment).
- Evaluation versus valuation - establishing quantitative and qualitative metrics. Data sources - availability and applicability.
- 1) Everything you always wanted to know, or need to know, about logic models! - possibly with an interactive component. 2) Organizational aspects of evaluation such as: a description and comparison of evaluation systems; how does evaluation mature in an organization; how does/will evaluation evolve for government in a more networked and market based context; approaches to facilitating the uptake of evaluation within an organization when a legislative or policy directive is not in place (or the challenges even when there is an existing directive).
- Successful lessons learned and how those lessons changed action tools used both successfully and unsuccessfully
- More on environmental evaluation/capacity-building at provincial, municipal and non-profit sectors.
- Practical issues: borrowing from Dawes' presentation, expanding on subjects like effective performance management functions/regimes; orientations/approaches to evaluations.
- Determining and managing environmental outcome indicators More on performance measurement Practical exploration of promising practices and evaluations.
- Communicating evaluation results. Planning environmental evaluations
- Anything that focuses on lessons and strategies that are broadly applicable to challenges other network members might be experiencing.
- Building demand for quality environmental evaluation; I'd always appreciate more on innovative and practical methods.
- More on evaluation methods, especially on how to design studies so that you can isolate project/program impacts from other influences.
- Climate change - overview federal programs - performance/evaluation framework - preliminary discussion of where the evaluation community is and what is being done.
- 1) Establishing management thresholds for ecosystem monitoring 2) combining measures into indices

- Challenges and solutions to getting evaluations used by different stakeholders.
- Focused discussions about: a) introducing/integrating evaluation into organizations b) techniques on communicating results to senior managers c) more about technical methods (e.g. conducting interviews, document reviews, case studies, etc.)

EEN[Canada] Forum presentations

All presentations have been posted and are available at the EEN web site

http://www.nfwf.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=2009_EEN_Canada&Template=/TaggedPage/TaggedPageDisplay.cfm&TPLID=63&ContentID=14131

Conclusion

The post-forum survey findings indicate show a great degree of satisfaction from the attendees and a keen interest another forum be held in one year.

Future Contact

This forum was organized by an ad hoc committee with federal and private sector representatives.

Communication about EEN[Canada] be made by contacting the EEN[Canada] chair – V. Neimanis by e-mail at neimanis@magma.ca

The members of this event's organizing committee included:

Samantha Burdett, Ontario Trillium Foundation
Erin Callaghan, Indian Affairs and Northern Development
David Fairbairn, Fairbairn Environmental
Michael Gullo, Stratos
Alison Kerry, Environmental Management Consultant
Karine Kisilenko, Environment Canada
Christine Milton-Feasby, Parks Canada
V. Neimanis, Neimanis Environmental Consultant
Éric Robard, Fisheries and Oceans Canada
Robert Tkaczyk, Environment Canada

Logistical support was supplied by:

Kelsey Benson, Environment
Mary Jane Shipman, Environment

Annex A: Post EEN[Canada] Forum Detailed Survey Results

2009 Environmental Evaluator's Networking (EEN) Forum Follow-up Survey

1. 1. How valuable did you find the EEN [Canada] Forum?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Not valuable	0.0%	0
Of little value	0.0%	0
Neutral	0.0%	0
Somewhat valuable	34.6%	9
Very valuable	**65.4%**	**17**
Did not attend	0.0%	0
Other (please specify)		1
answered question		**26**
skipped question		**0**

2. 2. The forum provided sufficient opportunity to network with others:

	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly disagree	0.0%	0
Disagree	3.8%	1
Neutral	0.0%	0
Agree	**53.8%**	**14**
Strongly agree	42.3%	11
Not applicable	0.0%	0
Other (please specify)		4
answered question		**26**
skipped question		**0**

3. 3. I learned some new approaches or methods:			
		Response Percent	**Response Count**
Strongly disagree		0.0%	0
Disagree		7.7%	2
Neutral		11.5%	3
Agree		**65.4%**	**17**
Strongly Agree		15.4%	4
Not applicable		0.0%	0
	Other (please specify)		1
	answered question		**26**
	skipped question		**0**

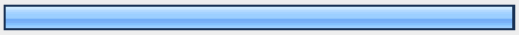
4. 4. The conference location (Ottawa Conference Centre) was suitable:			
		Response Percent	**Response Count**
Strongly disagree		0.0%	0
Disagree		0.0%	0
Neutral		15.4%	4
Agree		26.9%	7
Strongly Agree		**57.7%**	**15**
Not applicable		0.0%	0
	answered question		**26**
	skipped question		**0**

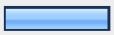
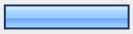
7. 6.1. What approaches to delivering presentations and or participation engagement would you like to see at EEN 2010? [Check all that apply]

	Response Percent	Response Count
Lecture style presentations	62.5%	15
Facilitated panel discussions	66.7%	16
Small group discussions and exercises	70.8%	17
Technical workshops	**79.2%**	**19**
Other (please specify)		8
answered question		**24**
skipped question		**2**

10. 8.1. Would you attend a future forum?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	**92.3%**	**24**
No	0.0%	0
Unsure	7.7%	2
answered question		**26**
skipped question		**0**

11. 8.2. If yes, when would you like this forum to occur:			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Next year		**91.7%**	**22**
Once every two years		8.3%	2
Other		0.0%	0
		answered question	**24**
		skipped question	**2**

12. 9. What is your primary organization affiliation?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Government		**53.8%**	**14**
Foundation/ non-profit		19.2%	5
Consulting		23.1%	6
Academia		3.8%	1
		Other (please specify)	1
		answered question	**26**
		skipped question	**0**

13. 10. Do you wish to be actively connected with other forum participants by an electronic format such as a listserv?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	**73.1%**	**19**
No	11.5%	3
Unsure	15.4%	4
answered question		**26**
skipped question		**0**

14. 11. After attending this event, are you interested in knowing more about the EEN[Washington] and its events?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	**70.8%**	**17**
No	29.2%	7
Other (please specify)		2
answered question		**24**
skipped question		**2**

15. 12. Do you wish to see a permanent and greater formality of governance associated with environmental evaluators in Canada?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	34.8%	8
No, ad hoc is fine	**65.2%**	**15**
Other (please specify)		3
answered question		**23**
skipped question		**3**

16. 13.1. Would you be interested in participating in the planning of future events/or a forum?		
	Response Percent	**Response Count**
Yes	45.5%	10
No	**54.5%**	**12**
Other (please specify)		3
answered question		**22**
skipped question		**4**