Evaluation Use at Environment Canada

ADMN 598: Master’s Project

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Ryan Brown
School of Public Administration
University of Victoria
Executive Summary

The Evaluation Division, a division of the Audit and Evaluation Branch at Environment Canada (EC), is responsible for producing evaluations of programs that provide information on the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and economy of departmental policies, programs, and initiatives.

Environment Canada’s Evaluation Division currently monitors and reports on the implementation of the programs’ management response to the recommendations contained in the evaluation reports. The client, the Director of the Evaluation Division, expressed interest in examining the broader use of evaluations beyond what was known regarding the implementation of the management response. To address this issue the author of this Master’s Project was hired to a co-op work term to spend a portion of his time at work conducting research and interviews on the use of evaluations at Environment Canada.

The main focus of this project was to examine the extent to which the four uses of evaluations discussed in the academic literature, namely: instrumental; conceptual; symbolic; and process uses, apply to the use of evaluations by program managers and staff at Environment Canada. This report presents the background, research, methodology, findings, and conclusions of this project.

In total 24 Directors General, Directors, program managers, and staff were interviewed, which covered 17 different evaluations of programs approved from the 2006-2007 fiscal year to the 2010-2011 fiscal year. Two-thirds of the interviewees were program managers, Directors, or Directors General, with the remaining third being senior program staff. The report examines the uses of these 17 evaluations by the EC officials interviewed.

### Number of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Count</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program managers</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directors</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directors General/Executive Directors</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>24</td>
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This project examined the uses of evaluation results, which includes the following types of uses:

1. **Instrumental use**: use of evaluation findings for decision making, usually based on the report’s findings and/or recommendations.
2. **Conceptual use**: information learned about the program, its staff, its operations, or outcomes.
3. **Symbolic use**: use of findings to support a position, justify action or inaction, enhance a manager’s reputation, or act as a status symbol.
4. *Process use*: uses that result from participation in the evaluation, instead of from the results of the evaluation (Henry and Mark, 2003).

This project also reviewed the literature to examine the factors most likely to influence the use of program evaluations and solicited feedback on factors influencing the use of evaluations by managers and staff.

The results of the project are summarized below, with the number of interviewees expressing a view indicated in parentheses.

**Instrumental uses**

Internal documentation, including follow-ups of the management response to the reports’ recommendations, shows that a substantial amount of instrumental use of evaluations has occurred at Environment Canada through implementation of the programs’ management responses to the reports’ recommendations. The interviews showed that there were few direct instrumental uses outside of those that occurred through the management response to the recommendations.

- There were a few instances in which additional changes were made to the programs (3) or improvements were made to efficiency (4).
- Only one instance was noted in which the results were used to reorient the program (1).
- A minority of interviewees received lessons learned (8) and a few used them to make instrumental changes to their program (2).

**Conceptual uses**

Overall, the majority of interviewees already had a strong understanding of program activities/achievements, problems/issues, and the program’s role in the department. However, the evaluations did serve to confirm, in a formal manner, the program’s problems, issues, and achievements. The evaluations were also useful as input to improve other programs and as input to reports, policy documents, and other studies.

- A minority of respondents applied findings to similar program(s) (6) and one respondent applied findings to the development of a new program.
- A minority of interviewees felt that the program evaluation improved their awareness or understanding of activities or achievements (8), including an improved knowledge of stakeholders’ opinions (2), a broader picture of the program’s performance (2), and a detailed outline of its achievements and problems (2).
- The majority indicated that the evaluations stimulated discussions and debates (14), mostly surrounding the management response (9) or informing other debates after the evaluation was completed (9).
- A minority of individuals learned about problems or issues that they were previously unaware of (6), while others indicated that the evaluation validated existing concerns (8), prioritized problems (3), or provided insight to address the problems (2).
- The reports were broadly shared by most respondents (21).
The evaluations contributed to Treasury Board Submissions (18), Departmental Performance Reports (6), Strategic Reviews (7), Office of the Auditor General/Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development Audits (8), and other studies (16).

- A few managers and staff experienced an increased awareness or understanding of the program’s role in the department (5).

**Symbolic uses**

The evaluations served several symbolic functions. The evaluations were used as evidence to support and/or legitimize making changes to programs and in a few instances were used to justify or support a proposed initiative or policy. The evaluations also served as a useful tool to demonstrate the value of the programs to senior managers and helped validate the program’s relevance, and to a lesser extent, improve the program’s credibility.

- Most of the respondents noted that the evaluation was used to support or justify program decisions (18), with some noting its value in justifying the need to make changes to the program (5) and in garnering management support for the program (3). It also served some use in justifying/rationalizing new programs or initiatives (3).
- Approximately half of the respondents felt the evaluation helped them become better advocates for the program (11). These individuals noted that the evaluations helped them demonstrate the program’s achievements to senior managers and stakeholders (8), promote and defend the program (2), or show the program’s achievements (3).
- Half of the respondents (12) noted that the evaluation affected their program’s credibility by maintaining (7) or increasing (4) credibility.

**Process uses**

The most common process use of evaluation is with respect to clarification of thinking and concepts, mostly related to learning to view the program through the eyes of an evaluator and understanding the evaluation process. The main benefit that the evaluations provided with respect to performance measurement was to generate minor or major changes to the program logic model that had been developed as a part of the program’s Risk-based Management and Accountability Framework and to a lesser extent to increase awareness and understanding of the importance of performance measurement and its use in measuring program results.

- The majority of interviewees felt that the evaluation clarified thinking or concepts (13). These respondents noted that it helped them to view the program through the evaluator’s lens (5) and increased their understanding of evaluation (5) and the evaluation process (3).
- A few developed new skills (8), such as setting up contracts and improved management and performance measurement skills.
- Some respondents indicated that the evaluation process led to major or minor revisions to the program logic model (6) or the development of a new logic model (2).
- Some of the participants indicated that the evaluation process led to improvements in the program’s Performance Measurement Strategy (7).
The evaluation helped improve collection and reporting of performance information by demonstrating its importance (3), encouraging more strategic measurement of outcomes (3), and providing an improved understanding of how to measure program outcomes (2).

Factors influencing evaluation use

The majority of interviewees had an overall positive opinion of evaluations and noted that they were useful, with only three respondents who felt that they were not useful. Factors related to time spent on evaluations were the most frequently occurring theme noted by interviewees. The most frequently noted concern was that too much time was being spent by the evaluators learning about the program and its activities (10). A few noted similar concerns that the evaluation took too long to complete (2) and to post online (2). A few also felt that poor timing of evaluations with respect to other studies or reports reduced their usefulness. Other issues discussed included the scope and depth of evaluations (2), the balance in the reporting of positive and negative results (3), the degree of notification and assistance provided to programs in advance of the evaluations (2), and the amount of communication with senior managers during and after completion of the evaluation (2).

- The most frequently cited issue was that too much time was spent by evaluators trying to understand the program (10).
- A few interviewees were concerned that the length of time required to complete evaluations (2) and post the report online (2) reduced their usefulness.
- The timing of some of the evaluations with respect to other studies and potential inputs of evaluation results (e.g. for TB submissions) reduced their usefulness (3).
- A few interviewees felt that the evaluation was less useful because of its broad scope which did not allow for an examination of any of the program’s issues in-depth (2).
- Concerns were expressed regarding the balance in the reporting of the findings of evaluations, in which it was felt that there was too much emphasis on the programs’ problems relative to the programs’ achievements (3).
- A few expressed a need for more interaction with evaluators, particularly with respect to having more advanced notification and assistance in preparing the program for the evaluation (2).
- A few emphasized the importance of ongoing communication with senior management during and after the completion of the evaluation (2).
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Introduction

Environment Canada (EC) is a federal government department that serves to protect the environment, conserve the country’s natural heritage, and provide weather and meteorological information through scientific research, development and enforcement of regulations and legislation, delivery of grants and contributions, and delivery of services (Environment Canada, 2011a).

The Evaluation Division, a division of the department, is responsible for producing evaluations of programs that provide timely, strategically focused, objective and evidence-based information on the relevance and performance (effectiveness, efficiency and economy) of departmental policies, programs, and initiatives. The division also provides expert advice and advisory services related to evaluation; reviews Performance Measurement Strategies to ensure performance measurement supports evaluation; and reviews Treasury Board submissions and Memoranda to Cabinet (Environment Canada, 2011b). The 2009 Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS) Policy on Evaluation requires the Evaluation Division to evaluate all direct program spending every five years.

Environment Canada’s Evaluation Division currently monitors and reports on the implementation of the programs’ management response to the recommendations contained in the evaluation reports. Program managers are responsible for developing and implementing a management response and action plan for all evaluations reports (TBS, 2009c). The Evaluation Division conducts follow-ups periodically to assess the progress made on implementation of the management responses. The client, the Director of the Evaluation Division, expressed interest in examining the broader use of evaluations beyond what was known regarding the implementation of the management response.

To address this issue a University of Victoria MPA Candidate was hired to a co-op work term to spend a portion of his time at work conducting research and interviews on the use of evaluations at Environment Canada.

The main focus of this project was to examine the extent to which the four uses of evaluations discussed in the academic literature, namely: instrumental; conceptual; symbolic; and process uses, applied to program managers and staff. The Evaluation Division requested a report on the findings of this research project.

The deliverable requested for this project was as follows:

1. A project report to the Director of Evaluation, including an assessment of how evaluations are being used by Directors General, Directors, program managers, and staff.

The following actions were taken to develop and complete the requested deliverable:

1. A review of the literature on evaluation use, including factors that influence use.
2. Planning and conducting interviews with Directors General, Directors, program managers, and staff, including development of the interview guides and coordination of interviews.

3. Analysis of relevant internal documents.

4. Analysis and synthesis of interview findings.

5. Preparation of this report.

This report presents the background, research, methodology, findings, discussion, and conclusions of this project. The background describes the intended use of evaluations, as set out in the Treasury Board standard, directive, and policy on evaluation and as set out in EC’s Departmental Policy on Evaluation. The literature review assesses the findings from the research on evaluation use, the factors that increase use, and Government of Canada evaluation use. The methodology section outlines the development of the research instruments, the planning of the interviews, and the collection and analysis of the data. Based on the interview findings and a review of internal documents, the findings section outlines the instrumental, conceptual, symbolic, and process use of evaluations at EC. This section concludes with a discussion of some of the factors that may influence the use of evaluations at EC. The discussion section provides a summary of the results of this project. The conclusion assesses the similarities and differences between the findings from this project and the findings from the evaluation use literature.
Background

Government of Canada Evaluation Policy

The TBS Policy on Evaluation (2009a) states that in the Government of Canada evaluation is “the systematic collection and analysis of program outcomes to make judgments about their relevance, performance and alternative ways to deliver them or to achieve the same results,” (section 3.1) which:

a) Supports accountability to Parliament and Canadians by helping the government to credibly report on the results achieved with resources invested in programs.

b) Informs government decisions on resource allocation and reallocation.

c) Supports deputy heads in managing for results by informing them about whether their programs are producing the outcomes that they were designed to produce, at an affordable cost.

d) Supports policy and program improvements by helping to identify lessons learned and best practices (section 3.2).

This policy, and the TBS Standard on Evaluation (2009b), set out how evaluations are to be used by departments and agencies. The objective of the Policy on Evaluation is “to create a comprehensive and reliable base of evaluation evidence that is used to support policy and program improvement, expenditure management, Cabinet decision making, and public reporting” (section 5.1). The policy notes that evaluation provides:

Credible, timely and neutral information on the ongoing relevance and performance of direct program spending [that is]

a. Available to Ministers, central agencies and deputy heads and used to support evidence-based decision making on policy, expenditure management and program improvements.

b. Available to Parliament and Canadians to support government accountability for results achieved by policies and programs (section 5.2).

The TBS Directive on the Evaluation Function (2009c) states under section 6.2.2 that the responsibilities of program managers with respect to evaluation use is to “develop and implement a management response and action plan for all evaluation reports in a timely and effective manner.” Further, the departmental evaluation functions are required to “produce appropriate information to support decision making and public reporting, in a timely manner” (section 5.2.3).

Environment Canada Evaluation Policy

Environment Canada’s 2009 Evaluation Policy sets out the specific details of the department’s evaluation function:
Environment Canada will maintain an effective and independent evaluation capacity for the purpose of providing the Deputy Minister and senior management with credible, timely and neutral information on the ongoing relevance and performance of direct program spending in order to support evidence-based decision-making on policy, expenditure management and program improvements and to support government accountability for results achieved by policies and programs (2009, section B.1).

The Policy establishes a Departmental Evaluation Committee (DEC) composed of senior departmental officials, who have the “responsibility for advising the Deputy Minister on all evaluation and evaluation-related activities of the department” (section E.1.6). The committee is chaired by the Deputy Minister or Associate Deputy Minister, and includes three Assistant Deputy Ministers and two Regional Directors General. In addition to the Departmental Evaluation Committee, a committee composed of evaluators and program staff is established for each evaluation.

With respect to the uses of evaluations, under section E.1.8, the policy notes that the deputy is responsible for “using evaluation findings to inform program, policy, resource allocation and reallocation decisions.” A key tool used to assess the instrumental use of evaluation findings is the Management Action Plan. These plans are developed by managers as a response to evaluation recommendations and conclusions. The action plans outline how and when the managers will address the recommendations.

Assistant Deputy Ministers (ADMs) bear the responsibility for “preparing and approving the management response and action plan to address the recommendations of the evaluation” (section E.3.5). The ADM also has ultimate responsibility for “monitoring the implementation of management responses and action plans and providing update reports to the Evaluation Division for purposes of advising DEC” (section E.3.7). The plans are approved and monitored by the Evaluation Division through management response follow-ups. The Evaluation Division conducts follow-ups with managers and collects documentation as evidence in order to assess whether the plans have been implemented.

**Government users of evaluations**

The users of evaluation include department and agency deputy heads, who use evaluations to assess program relevance, performance, and results. Evaluations serve as the deputy’s monitoring tool to ensure that the organization is able to deliver results for Canadians. The Treasury Board and the Expenditure Review Committee also use evaluation findings to make decisions regarding continuation of program support and to address questions related to the expenditure review process. Program managers (Directors General, Directors, and “program managers”) use evaluation findings to make adjustments to program delivery so as to maximize
the program’s impact. Program stakeholders and beneficiaries use findings to influence design and delivery, and ensure the programs meet their needs (TBS, 2004b).

Directors General, Directors, program managers, and staff are not specifically identified as users in the Evaluation Policy, although the TBS Directive on the Evaluation Function (2009c) does recognize them as implementers of the management response. In addition, a TBS (2004b) study found that these employees were users of evaluations. The evaluation function currently monitors the implementation of the management response, but does not examine other ways in which these groups have used the evaluation reports and therefore expressed interest in examining how they used evaluations. Further, their involvement with programs on a daily basis means that they may be important users of evaluations. Thus, this report examines the extent and manner to which these employees use evaluations at Environment Canada.
Literature Review

A literature review was undertaken to inform the design of research instruments by providing a theoretical framework with which to focus and develop the interview questions that were directed towards the program managers and staff. It was recognized that there are a variety of ways in which evaluation use has been examined and that there have been recent developments in the field of evaluation theory, including the development of the concept of evaluation influence. It was also recognized that there has been substantial research on how evaluations are used and the factors that facilitate their use. As a consequence, the literature review was also used to supplement and compare with the findings that arose out of the interviews.

Anatomy of evaluation use

Evaluation seeks to “judge the worth, merit, or quality” of the organization, program, policy, or initiative being evaluated and to impart this knowledge to users (Alkin and Taut, 2003, p. 3). According to the utilization-focused evaluation viewpoint frequently advocated by Patton (1997), evaluation knowledge is “knowledge that is applicable only within a particular setting at a particular point in time, and intended for use by a particular group of people” (p. 3).

There are two main types of evaluations, formative and summative. A formative evaluation “is designed to provide feedback and advice for improving a program” (McDavid & Hawthorn, 2006, p. 440). A summative evaluation “is designed to provide feedback and advice about whether or not a program should be continued, expanded, or contracted” (McDavid & Hawthorn, 2006, p. 450).

Use of evaluation results is an important outcome of program evaluation, such that it has been argued that the success of evaluations can be judged based on their utility. According to surveys, most evaluators agree that the purpose of evaluation is to provide information for decision making and to improve programs (Henry and Mark, 2003). It has been argued that if there is no potential for management to use the evaluation to improve the program, then it should not be conducted (Johnson, 1998, p. 96).

The most frequently researched types of evaluation use are instrumental, conceptual, symbolic, process, and misuse. This project does not examine misuse, which is “the intentional (and even malicious) manipulation of some aspect of an evaluation in order to gain something” (Alkin and Coyle, 1988, pp. 333-334), such as changing conclusions, selective reporting, falsifying findings, oversimplifying results, or accentuating results (Shulha and Cousins, 1997, p. 202). Misuse of evaluations was out of the scope of this project, because the client was only interested in examining their use.

Although the theory of use has expanded in recent years to include the concept of influence, the majority of research has focused and continues to focus on these uses. Weiss, Murphy-Graham, and Birkeland (2005) argue for the continued relevance of three of these forms of use, noting that “for all the multifold elaborations of evaluation use, the three constructs of instrumental, conceptual, and political [i.e., symbolic] use appear to capture much of the experience in the empirical literature and practical experience” (p. 14). Thus, this project focuses primarily on
these three types of evaluation use – instrumental, conceptual, and symbolic. Process use is also examined in this project due to the large amount of attention it has received in the literature within the last decade (Amo and Cousins, 2007; Taut, 2007) and its importance as a form of use, as noted by Forss, Rebien, and Carlsson (2002), among others.

According to Henry and Mark (2003) “these categories of use are distinguished by qualitatively different attributes” (p. 36). **Instrumental use** is program change that results from the evaluation and leads to specific actions (Henry and Mark, 2003). It involves the use of evaluation findings for decision making, usually based on the report’s findings and/or recommendations (Johnson, 1998). Instrumental use involves influencing policy and program decisions in order to “end a program, extend it, modify its activities, or change the training of staff” (Weiss, 1998, p. 23).

It has been suggested that instrumental use is uncommon, while conceptual use is the most common form of use (Johnson, 1998). Weiss, Murphy-Graham, and Birkeland (2005) note that:

> Pure instrumental use is not common. Most studies are not used as the direct basis for decisions. Decision makers pay attention to many things other than the evaluation of program effectiveness. They are interested in the desires of program participants and staff, the support of constituents, the claims of powerful people, the costs of change, the availability of staff with necessary capacities, and so on. Expectations for immediate and direct influence on the policy and program are often frustrated (pp. 13-14).

**Conceptual use**, also known as enlightenment use, refers to information learned about the program, its staff, its operations, or outcomes. Conceptual use generates changes to the thoughts and feelings of program managers (Henry and Mark, 2003). Conceptual use is a prerequisite for behavioural use, and includes “awareness of an evaluation, thinking about a program or evaluation, and the development of attitudes, beliefs, and opinions about a program as a result of an evaluation and participation in it” (Johnson, 1998, p. 103).

It is also thought that conceptual use can lead to program changes (i.e. instrumental use) through the cumulative effect of multiple evaluations, which may result in decision accretion, whereby experience with and thinking about past evaluations has an impact on current decision making (Johnson, 1998), such that the body of evaluation evidence has a cumulative impact (Feinstein, 2002). In addition to these aspects of conceptual use, this project found that conceptual use can also include applying the knowledge gained from an evaluation to a different program, particularly in instances where the program has a similar structure and/or outcomes to the program that was evaluated.

**Symbolic use** refers to the use of findings to support a position or the use of findings to justify action or inaction (Henry and Mark, 2003), enhance a manager’s reputation, or act as a status symbol (Alkin and Taut, 2003). Symbolic use is not an effect of an evaluation, but the “intent, real or perceived, of an actor or organization” (Henry and Mark, 2003, p. 36). Symbolic use is sometimes described in less positive terms. Johnson (1998) describes it as the “use of evaluation information for political self-interest” (p. 94). This implies that the user has ulterior motives, which has led some to refer to it as conspiratorial use.
The use of evaluation results to justify decisions has also been referred to by some scholars as legitimization (Cummings, 2002), while persuasive use has been described as the use of results to persuade individuals to take certain actions, usually by advocates of a particular issue (Johnson, 1998). Although symbolic use is sometimes considered misuse, Weiss, Murphy-Graham, and Birkeland (2005) note that “there does not seem to be anything wrong with using evaluation evidence to strengthen the case. Only when decision makers distort the evidence or omit significant elements of the findings does it appear that evaluation is being misused” (pp. 13-14).

**Process use** is characterized by its source of influence, as it results from participation in the evaluation, as opposed to the results of the evaluation (Henry and Mark, 2003). Process use is thought to create an enabling environment for results-based use (Johnson, 1998). Process use can occur during the evaluation or at its conclusion, the latter referring to the “net result and impact of the participation in the complete evaluation process” (Forss, Rebien, and Carlsson, 2002, p. 8).

Process use involves “learning to think like an evaluator and it may have long term payoff through improved skills, improved communication, improved decision making, increased use of evaluation procedures, changes in the organization, and increased confidence and sense of ownership of evaluation products” (Johnson, 1998, p. 94) as well as “increased ownership of the evaluation findings, increased evaluative thinking and skills, and also program-related outcomes such as improved clarity on program logic and increased commitment to program goals” (Taut, 2007, p. 2).

Stakeholders benefit from learning more about their work, the program, and the organization and they learn more about evaluation (Taut, 2007). Forss, Rebien, and Carlsson (2002) argue that “evaluation commissioners and evaluators should work explicitly to increase process use as the most cost-effective way of strengthening the overall utility of an evaluation” (p. 29). The authors suggest that even if the final report is not used, the evaluation may still have been effective, as it “may change management thinking about future options; mobilize staff around a course of action; or reinforce the impact of a programme of social change” (p. 30).

Based on the findings in the literature review, the following definitions of use apply to this project and its findings. Instrumental use is defined as the use of evaluation for decision making, to extend or cancel a program, expand its size, or make changes to its activities or design (Henry and Mark, 2003; Weiss, 1998). Conceptual use is defined as changes in attitudes, beliefs, or opinions, or the generation of learning and knowledge, which may be used to improve other programs (Henry and Mark, 2003; Johnson, 1998). Symbolic use is defined as the use of evaluation results to justify decisions, support action/inaction, or enhance the reputation or credibility of a manager or their program (Alkin and Taut, 2003; Henry and Mark, 2003). Process use is defined as “learning to think like an evaluator” (Johnson, 1998, p. 94), “increased evaluative thinking and skills, and also program-related outcomes such as improved clarity on program logic and increased commitment to program goals” (Taut, 2007, p. 2).
Changing conceptions of use: Utilization, use, and influence

Weiss (1981) advocated the abandonment of the term utilization in favour of use, as it was argued that utilization suggested instrumental and episodic application of evaluations through tools and implements. Similarly, Kirkhart (2000) argues that “use is an awkward, inadequate, and imprecise fit with non-results-based applications, the production of unintended effects, and the gradual emergence of impact over time” (p. 6) and non-instrumental uses are treated as secondary.

Kirkhart advocates the use of the term evaluation influence for assessing evaluation’s broader impacts. Evaluation influence is the capacity or power to produce effects on others by intangible or indirect means, and leads to “a framework with which to examine the effects that are multidirectional, incremental, unintentional, and non-instrumental, alongside those that are unidirectional, episodic, intended, and instrumental” (Kirkhart, 2000, p. 7). Cummings (2002) suggests that influence is a more subtle concept, but also more deliberate, as it portrays evaluators as encouraging stakeholders in a direction rather than expecting them to just accept results. Kirkhart’s (2000) theory includes three building blocks:

- **Source of influence**: results-based use (symbolic, conceptual, and instrumental) and process-based use.
- **Intention**: “the extent to which evaluation influence is purposefully directed, consciously recognized, and planfully anticipated” (p. 11). The intended influence is the individual or organization the evaluation is directed towards. Unintended influence involves “influencing programs and systems in ways that were not anticipated, through paths unforeseen” (p. 12).
- **Time**: “the developmental periods in which evaluation influence emerges, exists, and continues” (p. 14), including immediate, end-of-cycle, and long term, which involves the planning and implementation, dissemination of the findings, and effects that occur over time or are extensions of existing effects.

Henry and Mark (2003) described three levels of evaluation influence, because “current models of use are generally silent on the range of underlying mechanisms through which evaluation may have its effects” (p. 37). Individual change occurs when someone changes their beliefs and opinions. Interpersonal change refers to effects on the interactions between individuals. Collective change refers to the “influence of evaluation on the decisions and practices of organizations” (p. 298). The authors argue that there are multiple pathways of influence, which “allows an opportunity to understand and study when and why some end-state use occurs and when and why it does not” (p. 306).

Mark and Henry (2004) further elaborate by developing a pathway model. The authors describe four influence mechanisms that work at these three levels. General influence involves activities such as thinking about an issue systematically or acquiring skills. General influence may lead to cognitive and affective processes, which correspond to conceptual use and involve shifts in thoughts and feelings. Motivational processes refer to responses to perceived rewards and punishments as well as goals and aspirations. Behavioural processes, which correspond to instrumental use, involve changes in actions, and are the ultimate outcome of the evaluation.
The continued usefulness of use

Despite these arguments and theoretical frameworks put forward for evaluation influence, Alkin and Taut (2003) argue that Kirkhart did not intend to replace the notion of evaluation use. Kirkhart’s intention was to better assess how evaluations “shape, affect, support, and change persons and systems” (p. 7), which can only be adequately accomplished by broadening the understanding of the impact of evaluation. The authors agree that influence addresses a broader range of evaluation impacts, but “the question of how and to what extent the processes and findings of an evaluation lead to intended use by intended users is a more narrow, yet equally important question” (p. 8).

Influence is a narrow spectrum of use which involves unaware/unintended impacts (Alkin and Taut, 2003), where “intention comprises three aspects – the type of influence, the target of the influence, and the sources (people, processes and findings) of the influence” (Cummings, 2002, p. 4). Unintended influence is of less interest because “evaluators can only try to achieve those impacts that can be addressed and discussed together with potential users, at any point in time during the evaluation process” (Alkin and Taut, 2003, p. 10).

Use of evaluations: Instrumental or conceptual

Several studies reaffirm the observation that most use is conceptual as opposed to instrumental. Peck and Gorzalski (2009) examined 16 evaluations from a variety of organizations and found that the main use of evaluations was conceptual, although most of the recommended changes were to rules and structure, which tend to suppress use. The recommendations were viewed as nice ideas or something to implement if there were more resources, but were not viewed as something that urgently needed to be implemented. Generally, interviewees felt that the evaluations were a learning exercise as opposed to something that could lead to program change. Russ-Eft, Atwood, and Egherman (2002) also found that instrumental use did not occur, as the program they examined was cancelled without regard to the evaluation’s results. The authors only found examples of conceptual use, such as enhanced communication and discussion among stakeholders, increased engagement, self-determination, ownership, and program and organizational development.

Weiss, Murphy-Graham, and Birkeland (2005) found that the evaluations of the Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.) program were only used instrumentally when they were given de-facto imposed use. Initially most schools were still using the D.A.R.E. program, despite evaluations showing that the program was ineffective, with the main use being conceptual, “through a gradual percolation of findings into the consciousness of local people” (p. 25). A requirement imposed later on, that funding be based on “Principles of Effectiveness,” resulted in de-facto imposed use, since the evaluations found the program to be ineffective. As a result, many schools reduced the size of or eliminated D.A.R.E shortly thereafter over fears that they would lose funding. Based on these findings, the authors argue that “it seems very probable that imposed use will become more common, [because] government agencies want to see that their funds are used wisely” (p. 27) (Weiss, Murphy-Graham, and Birkeland, 2005).
Surveys of evaluators also tend to show that conceptual use is more common than instrumental use, although the dichotomy is not as severe as has been argued by Weiss, Murphy-Graham, and Birkeland (2005). A study by Shea and Towson (1993) of Canadian Evaluation Society (CES) members found that conceptual use was cited the most frequently (63.6%), followed by instrumental use (57.5%) and persuasive use (40.7%). A survey of U.S. American Evaluation Association members found that conceptual uses such as contributing to organizational learning (84%) and enhancement of individual (66%) and group learning (69%) were considered to be influenced by evaluation by a larger percent of evaluators than were instrumental related outcomes such as transforming organizations (45%) and changing organizational methods (38%) (Fleischer and Christie, 2009).

Similarly, Cousins, Amo, Bourgeois, Chouinard, Goh, Lahey (2008) surveyed 340 evaluators, with approximately half from the public sector (federal, provincial, and municipal) and half from the non-profit sector. In contrast to the findings from other studies, the authors found that the two most frequently cited uses were symbolic uses to meet external accountability requirements and to report to boards. The third and fourth most common uses were conceptual and instrumental uses: learning about program functioning and making changes to programs (p. 21). The most frequently cited process related use was to gain “a better understanding of the program/policy/intervention being evaluated,” followed by “developing knowledge about evaluation logic, methods, and technical skills” (p. 26).

In contrast, some studies, such as a study of several universities’ use of evaluations by Bober and Bartlett (2004) and a study of the use of evaluations in the European Commission by the European Policy Evaluation Consortium (2005) have found instrumental use to be very prevalent, even though it was not imposed as a mandatory requirement.

**Previous research on evaluation use in the Government of Canada**

There have been several other studies that have examined the use of evaluations within the Government of Canada. These studies also tend to show that evaluations are being used instrumentally. Leclerc (1992) examined the use of around 200 evaluation reports and found that 45% of evaluations were used for operational improvements; 10% for program design; 8% for confirmation of the program’s current status; 3% for termination of the program; 26% for improvements to the understanding of cost-effectiveness and monitoring; and 4% had no impact. Another study conducted in the same year noted that 17% of federal government evaluations resulted in changes to the design or structure of the program, 50% led to enhancement in program operations, and 34% resulted in conceptual use of the reports (Leclerc, 1992 and McQueen, 1992 as cited by Segsworth, 2005).

A report by the TBS Centre of Excellence for Evaluation (CEE) (2005) assessed the use and drivers of effective evaluations in the Government of Canada by examining the use of 15 evaluations from several departments. Interviews were conducted with evaluation managers, program managers, and senior managers. The report found that the evaluations were used by “program managers, senior departmental managers, central agencies, Ministers and program stakeholders” (para. 5). A key instrumental use of the findings was “to support expenditure and resource management decisions,” (para. 5) with two cases in which evaluation results were used
to support Expenditure Review Committee decisions. Management used evaluations to improve program design, delivery, accountability and reporting (roles, responsibilities, allocation of funds, etc.), support resource allocation decisions, and identify cost saving opportunities.

The report also noted several instances of conceptual and process uses. The evaluation led to improved morale and motivation of program staff and improvement of management skills through the transference of knowledge from evaluation staff to program staff. The evaluations provided contextual information to senior managers, highlighted issues relevant to future program policy decisions, and in a few cases were used as “best practices.” The evaluations also provided feedback on stakeholder needs through interviews and surveys. Externally, the evaluations increased clients’, third party deliverers’, and parliamentarians’ awareness and understanding of the programs by providing evidence that the programs were achieving intended results and providing value for money. Overall, it was noted that the evaluations “create[d] positive impacts across a broad range of areas that ultimately benefit not only the program that was evaluated but the department responsible for its delivery, the federal government and the Canadian public” (para. 10) (TBS CEE, 2005).

Some studies have found problems with the current use of evaluations in the Government of Canada. Breem et al. (2005) interviewed Deputy Ministers and found that evaluation was not well integrated with senior management decision-making. The authors found that Deputy Ministers felt that there was a lack of “a feedback loop between evaluation findings and policy/program development and management” (as cited by Cousins, Goh, and Elliott, 2007, p. 5). The Deputies also expressed concern over the impact that a lack of resources and the resultant contracting out of evaluation had on the ability of evaluators to provide advice and knowledge to program staff.

**Factors influencing use**

Many factors have been claimed to influence evaluation use, including “(a) relevance; (b) credibility; (c) user involvement; (d) communication effectiveness; (e) potential for information processing; (f) clients’ need for information; (g) anticipated degree of program change; (h) perceived value of evaluation as a management tool; (i) quality of evaluation implementation; and (j) contextual characteristics of the decision or policy setting” (Shulha and Cousins, 1997, p. 196).

In an earlier review of the evaluation literature that attempted to sift out the factors that had the greatest influence on use, Cousins and Leithwood (1986) used a “prevalence of relationship” index that identified evaluation quality as the most important characteristic, as well as “decision characteristics, receptiveness to evaluation, findings, and relevance” (p. 379).

Using a similar framework, Johnson, Greenseid, Toal, King, Lawrenz, and Volkov (2009) reviewed the empirical literature on evaluation use produced from 1986 to 2005. By narrowing the review to literature supported by sound empirical evidence, the authors found stakeholder involvement to be one of the most important factors, because it facilitates “those aspects of an evaluation’s process or setting that lead to greater use” (p. 389). The authors further conclude “that engagement, interaction, and communication between evaluation clients and evaluators is
key to maximizing use of the evaluations in the long run” (p. 389). Patton emphasizes the importance of many of these communication and interaction factors, by noting that “many of the problems encountered by evaluators, much of the resistance to evaluation, and many failures of use occur because of misunderstandings and communication problems” (Patton, 1997 as cited in Taut and Alkin, 2003, p. 263).

A review of evaluation models by Burke (1993) also found stakeholder involvement to be important, as well as organizational process and communication, feedback, politics and self-interested decision making, and use management (evaluability assessment, management support, and quality). The effectiveness of stakeholder involvement depends on the type of involvement (democratic versus autocratic); the amount of involvement; the quality, timeliness, and direction of communication (vertical, horizontal, or diagonal); and the form of dissemination (during or after the evaluation) (Burke, 1993). To increase use through stakeholder involvement, Weiss (1998) argues that evaluators should involve potential users in defining the study and helping to interpret results, including regular reporting of results while the evaluation is underway and follow-up for a long period after the evaluation has been completed.

Burke found that participation will be higher in an organic organization (vertical and horizontal communication, where power is gained through ideas and performance) as opposed to a mechanistic organization (classical Weberian bureaucracy where communication is downward and power is gained through one’s position), with change oriented individuals, and person-focused evaluators. This will improve dissemination of results, because organic organizations disseminate results through informal networks, person-focused evaluators communicate with the users before, during, and after the evaluation, and change oriented individuals share the results to generate positive changes (Burke, 1993, p. 24). The importance of dissemination has also been noted by Lawrenz, Gullickson, and Toal (2007), who found that to maximize use, the scope, sequence, timing, and presentation format should be tailored to the audience, particularly if the audience is diverse.

A review of evaluation models by Johnson (1998) had similar results, whereby contact and involvement were found to be the most important factors in promoting evaluation use, including the type and quantity of participation by program evaluators, practitioners, and participants. Organizational processes and ongoing communication were also important, including the quality, openness of the organization to communication and change, timeliness of communication, dissemination, type and direction of communication, and distribution of power. Johnson summarized these observations by noting that:

Evaluation utilization is a continual and diffuse process that is interdependent with local contextual organizational political dimensions. Participation by program stakeholders is essential and continual (multi-way) dissemination, communication and feedback of information and results to evaluators and users (during and after a program evaluation) help increase use by increasing evaluation relevance, program modification and stakeholder ownership of results. Evaluators, managers, and other key stakeholders should collaboratively employ organizational design and development principles to help increase the amount and quality of participation, dissemination, utilization and organizational learning (p. 104).
Weiss (1998) discusses elements outside of the evaluator’s control, arguing that evaluators should not necessarily be held accountable for a failure to use results. These elements include conflicting beliefs within the program and an inability to agree on the issues; conflicting interests between programs, and resultant resource conflicts; new staff, who have different priorities than staff who participated in the evaluation; rigid rules and operating procedures that prevent implementation of the recommendations; and shifts in external conditions, such as budget cuts, that inhibit the ability to respond to the evaluation (p. 22). Accordingly, if the implications of the findings are not controversial, the changes are small and within the organization’s existing mandate, and the program’s environment is stable, use is more likely to occur.

The type of changes recommended may also influence the use of evaluations. Changes to behaviour are more likely to be implemented than changes to the purpose/mandate (Peck and Gorzalski, 2009). Johnston (1988) found that over 80% of behavioural recommendations made by the U.S. Government Accountability Office had a high probability of being implemented (as cited in Johnson, 1998). Similarly, if the results are in line with an organization’s behaviours and beliefs, they are more likely to be accepted, as some research has found that consideration of context is an important factor that contributes to use (Peck and Gorzalski, 2009; Shulha and Cousins, 1997). By taking context into account, the evaluation findings will be more in line with how managers and staff view the program (Leviton, 2003).

Factors influencing use in the Government of Canada

There have been several studies that have examined factors motivating evaluation use in the Government of Canada. The findings from the study by Cousins et al. (2008) that was discussed earlier were similar to those in the literature discussed above, with evaluation quality, credibility, involvement of users, and timeliness found to be important predictors of use. In a study that involved interviewing two dozen evaluation heads and users, the TBS CEE (2004b) found that evaluation’s influence on decision making was greatest if senior managers were consulted during the planning stage; evaluation steering committees were formed; there were methods to fast-track reporting (short reports for delivering results, report templates, results outlines, etc.); and there were smaller studies and quick contracting processes for urgent matters. A more comprehensive study by the TBS CEE (2005) found credibility, quality, and participation, among other factors, to be important drivers of evaluation use by federal departments and agencies:

- Senior management support of the process and evaluation results.
- Participatory relationship between evaluation and program staff, including agreement on terms of reference and objectives, open and rapid communication, program participation, and manager involvement in preparing the management response.
- Highly skilled and experienced evaluation staff (internal or external).
- Methodology that includes multiple lines of evidence, has a broad representation of interviewees, data integrity, and uses peer reviews.
- High level of independence/objectivity in the evaluation results.
- Focused and well-balanced recommendations.
- Stakeholder buy-in/involvement through participation in the evaluation governance mechanisms, consultation, and sharing of results in a timely manner (para. 9).
Methodology

Development of research instruments

Key informant interviews were used as the main method for this research project. Based on the literature review, including other studies that examined the use of evaluations, as well as discussions with the client, the interview questions that would be given to the program managers and staff were developed. These included questions aimed at eliciting information about the four types of uses of evaluation results – instrumental, conceptual, symbolic, and process uses – as well as two additional questions, included upon request from the client, aimed at eliciting suggestions for improvement to the evaluation function. There were several considerations and limitations with respect to designing the research instruments and conducting the interviews:

- **Number and types of participants**: The number and types of interviewees were limited to Directors General, Directors, managers, and senior staff involved in the process of conducting the evaluation, including developing the evaluation plan, conducting the evaluation, and developing and/or implementing the management response. These individuals were those most likely to have been users of the evaluation findings. Since the evaluations went back as far as the 2006-2007 reporting period, staff turnover hampered the ability to find interview subjects for some of the program evaluations.

- **Approach to conducting interviews**: Due to the number of interviews initially planned (as many as 36), the time constraints for conducting the interviews, and the location of interviewees throughout the Ottawa region, with some located in other cities, the majority of interviews were conducted over the phone. Four interviews were also conducted with two people doing the interviews: the author of this report and an evaluation manager (the author’s supervisor for his co-op work term), upon request of the Director of Evaluation. This was done because it is considered standard procedure within the Evaluation Division to have two evaluators conduct interviews. Although no bias was detected when the interview findings were analyzed, it is possible that the presence of a second interviewer representing the Evaluation Division may have influenced the results of these four interviews to some degree.

- **Participant characteristics**: Not all of the interview questions applied to each participant. Although the questions applied to a majority of the participants, a number of interviewees were not able to answer process use questions, because they had minimal involvement in the evaluation process, with most of their involvement stemming from the management response and other post-evaluation uses of the reports. In addition, a slightly different interview guide was developed for those who had been identified as being familiar with multiple evaluations. Also, some participants could only answer a sub-set of interview questions, because they were either not directly involved in the program (e.g. they only prepared a TB Submission), the evaluation did not focus on a program per se (such as an initiative or consultation process), or the program had ended.

Two interview guides were developed and used: one set of interview questions that asked about a single evaluation and one set of interview questions that asked about multiple evaluations (see
Appendix D and Appendix E). The interview guides were semi-structured and were organized into groups of questions based on the four types of use examined for this project: instrumental, conceptual, symbolic, and process use. The questions on instrumental use were aimed at examining uses outside of those that the program had committed to through its management response. The interview guides also included background questions and two questions aimed at identifying ways that the Evaluation Division could make evaluations more useful for program managers and staff. Interviewees were also asked to rate the overall usefulness of the evaluation using a five-point Likert scale.

Planning interviews

Based on names elicited from evaluation managers involved in the evaluations examined in this project, and names listed in each evaluation committee’s Terms of Reference, a list of 36 potential participants were identified. Participants were selected based on their involvement in the evaluation process and/or implementation of recommendations for one or more evaluations. The objective was to interview program representatives involved in the evaluations that had a high probability of having used the evaluation reports/results.

Prior to sending a formal invitation, a notice was sent from the Audit and Evaluation Branch Director General’s Office to notify the potential participants that they would be contacted for an interview for a project examining their use of evaluations (Appendix A). Shortly thereafter, an “Invitation to Participate” email (Appendix B) was sent to all participants. Attached to the emails were a Participant Consent Form (Appendix C) and the interview questions, as appropriate, depending on the interviewee subject (Appendix D and Appendix E). Participants were informed that they were being asked to participate due to their involvement in a particular evaluation or evaluations. Interested participants were asked to sign and return the consent form via facsimile or indicate their consent in an email response.

The participant consent form and email clearly indicated to the potential participant that their participation was voluntary and also specified the approximate amount of time that would be required to conduct the interview. Candidates were informed that the email would be followed up with a telephone call. These phone calls followed an existing template provided by the Evaluation Division. Those who did not respond immediately by email received a follow-up phone call to elicit their interest in participating as well as their consent to the interview via email or facsimile. The research methods, interview questions, email invitations, and consent form were subject to, and received approval from the University of Victoria Ethics Committee.

Data collection

A time and location (when conducted in-person) were arranged with participants who agreed to participate in an in-person or telephone interview. The few in-person interviews that were conducted were either held in a boardroom or in the participant’s office. The interviewer asked the semi-structured questions that were provided in the interview guide, with the occasional probe to elicit examples or additional details from the interview subject.
Interviews were recorded using a digital recorder and stored securely on the researcher’s computer. The audio recordings were later transcribed verbatim. Minor notes were also taken during interviews in order to facilitate probing for examples and/or additional details from the interviewees. The data collection process took slightly over one month from the date that the initial invitation to participate was sent to candidates to the completion of all interviews.

The duration of the interviews averaged slightly less than 30 minutes. In total 24 managers and staff members were interviewed. The interviews examined the use of the following 17 evaluations:

- Wildlife Habitat Canada Conservation Stamp Program (WHC)
- National Air Quality Health Index Program (NAQHI)
- Improved Climate Change Scenarios Program (ICCS)
- Enforcement Program
- Environment Canada's Invasive Alien Species Partnership Program (IASPP)
- Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk (HSP)
- Environmental Damages Fund (EDF)
- EcoAction Community Funding Program
- Environment Canada's Class Grants and Contributions (CGs&Cs)
- National Agri-Environmental Standards Initiative (NAESI)
- Canadian Environmental Sustainability Indicators (CESI) Initiative
- Environment Canada’s Aboriginal Consultations on Wastewater
- Meteorological Service of Canada (MSC) Transition Project
- Regulation of Smog-Causing Emissions from the Transportation Sector
- Federal Contaminated Sites Action Plan
- Environmental Emergencies Program
- Environment Canada's Bilateral Cooperation Program under the Multilateral Fund of the Montreal Protocol

Analysis of interview data

The transcripts of the interviewees’ responses were reviewed in order to extract the pertinent information. Common themes among interviewees were noted for each question, along with the frequency with which the commentary was made by the interview subjects. Specifically, common uses and benefits of evaluations as well as areas for improvement were noted and extracted for use in the final report.

This present report was developed with Evaluation Division staff and managers as the target audience. This report is presented in plain-language, provides specific examples of uses, and provides generalizations as to how evaluations were used. The Executive Summary provides a brief snapshot of the report’s findings and methodology, while the report provides a detailed presentation and analysis of the interview findings.
Document review

The documentation on the management response follow-ups was the main internal document reviewed. Environment Canada tracks the progress of the management response to the evaluation recommendations a few times per year through management response follow-up reports. The follow-up reports were reviewed to extract information on the progress with the implementation of the management responses. These documents were supplemented by another internal document that grouped the recommendations into several categories. The Evaluation Division’s follow-up surveys and Management Accountability Framework (MAF) Assessments were also reviewed. The information collected from these internal documents was used to supplement the information elicited from the interviews, where appropriate.
Findings

Background on Participants

In total 24 Directors General, Directors, program managers, and staff were interviewed. Two-thirds of the interviewees were program managers, Directors, or Directors General, while the remaining third were senior staff, as shown in Table 1. Four of the participants were familiar with two or more evaluations. The interview analysis guidelines of Environment Canada’s Evaluation Division, contained in Appendix F, were used to express the degree of consensus among interviewees, with the specific number of interviewees noted in brackets.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program role</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program managers</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directors</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directors General/Executive Directors</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>24</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most interviewees (22) were familiar with the management response and recommendations and a majority (15) were familiar with the whole evaluation process. A minority of interviewees (11) had been on the committee that oversaw the evaluation, while those not on the committee were mostly familiar with the management response and final report (8). There was substantial variation in the frequency of use of the reports, such as once per month, 5 times per month, twice in total, and 20 times in total, with many indicating that they used the report frequently (7) and only a few (4) indicating that they sometimes or never referred to the report.

Half (12) explicitly noted that the recommendations and the management response were the most useful part of the evaluation, with a minority (7) mentioning that these were the only parts of the report that they referenced. A majority (14) felt that the evaluation findings were useful, although not as useful as the recommendations and management response. A few (5) noted that lessons learned were a useful component of the evaluation report. Only one interviewee noted that the logic model was useful, although a few (3) noted the findings were used to change the logic model.
Instrumental Use of the Evaluations’ Management Response

Summary: The data demonstrates that there is a substantial amount of instrumental use of the evaluations at Environment Canada. The most frequently occurring recommendations were focused on program design/operational changes. Based on the results from evaluation follow-ups conducted by evaluation managers at Environment Canada, the majority of the recommendations made in the evaluation reports have been implemented (approximately 76%).

The Evaluation Division’s management response follow-up documentation was reviewed to assess the instrumental use of evaluations. The programs create management response and action plans in response to the recommendations made in the evaluation reports. The Division follows up 2-3 times per year to assess the programs’ progress in implementing the action plans. The degree to which the management response has been implemented is assessed by an evaluation manager on a six-point scale, ranging from “no documentation” to “complete.” The follow-ups are conducted until the actions are complete or the follow-up is closed due to a change in policy or other factor that makes implementation unnecessary/irrelevant. The follow-ups allow for a rough count of how many recommendations have been implemented (Environment Canada, 2010g).

The data were not detailed and consistent enough for a thorough analysis to assess, for example, which types of recommendations take the longest or are the most difficult to implement. There was nevertheless enough information available to demonstrate the degree to which the recommendations have been implemented and to show the types of changes that have been made to the programs.

Since the start of the division’s evaluation follow-up process in 2005, 232 management responses, from 41 evaluations, had been assessed by the Audit and Evaluation Branch covering fiscal year 1999-2000 up to the November 2010 follow-up. At that time all programs had developed a management action plan in response to the evaluation recommendations (Environment Canada, 2010g). As of November 2010, 73 of the management responses to these recommendations had not been fully implemented. Of these management responses, 23 had not yet been assessed by the Evaluation Division, because the recommendations from five evaluations were not yet scheduled to be implemented. Thus, for the management responses that had been assessed by evaluation managers, approximately 76% (159/209) had been implemented. The majority of the unimplemented responses that had been assessed in the November 2010 follow-up had significant progress (64%) and most of the other responses had moderate progress (33%).
Table 2: Fall 2010 Management Response Follow-up Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Evaluations</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Recommendations</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Recommendations Completed</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Environment Canada, 2010e.

Table 2 shows the most recent management response follow-up results. The table demonstrates that most of these recommendations were from evaluations completed within the last three years, with only two reports with outstanding recommendations from 2006 and 2007 (Environment Canada, 2010e). This indicates that most of the unimplemented recommendations will likely be implemented.

Table 3: Management Response Follow-up Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Percent (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Evaluations</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little or No Progress</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some Progress</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate Progress</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significant Progress</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>22.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>45.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Number of Recommendations</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Environment Canada, 2009b; Environment Canada, 2009c; Environment Canada, 2009d; Environment Canada, 2010b; Environment Canada, 2010d; Environment Canada, 2010e.

Table 3 is a summary of the results from the three assessments of management responses that evaluation managers conducted in 2009 and the three assessments that evaluation managers conducted in 2010. Table 2 shows all of the unimplemented management responses as of the most recent follow-up, including those that had not yet been assessed, while Table 3 shows the status of the management responses that had been assessed in 2009 and 2010, excluding those that had not yet been assessed. Thus, the data for 2010 in Table 3 excludes the 23 management responses from the five evaluations that were included in Table 2. Table 3 indicates that almost

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1 This figure includes five evaluations that were not yet scheduled for implementation and follow-up by an evaluation manager.
2 This figure includes 23 management responses that were not yet scheduled for implementation and follow-up by an evaluation manager.
3 Table 2 includes management responses that were followed-up and those that have not yet been followed-up by the Evaluation Division (i.e. planned for future follow-up).
4 The three assessments that were aggregated in 2009 and the three assessments that were aggregated in 2010 had some management response action plans that were assessed twice in the same year. In these instances only the most recent assessment for that evaluation was used in the calculation in order to avoid double counting. Several evaluations that were followed-up in 2009 were also followed-up in 2010, which results in some overlap between the two years. Thus, the sum of the evaluations followed-up in 2009 and 2010 is greater than the number of evaluations conducted from 2006-2007 to 2009-2010 shown in Table 4.
half of the management responses examined in 2009 had been completed and slightly over two-fifths of those examined in 2010 had been completed. The number of responses that had moderate progress or less was roughly the same for both years.

An internal AEB document provides a useful categorization of the recommendations. The document assessed evaluations from the 2006-2007 to the 2009-2010 fiscal period, during which the Evaluation Division made a total of 158 recommendations from 29 evaluations. The analysis categorized the types of recommendations that had been made by the AEB (Environment Canada, 2010c). Table 4 shows the categorization of the recommendations that were made during each fiscal year, while the previous two tables showed the assessment of the implementation of these recommendations.

Table 4 shows that the most frequently occurring recommendation was with respect to changes to program design/operational changes, which made up about 30% of the recommendations and/or lessons learned. Program design/operational changes largely consisted of recommendations to clarify objectives, goals, etc.; develop new program instruments/approaches; improve frameworks and processes; reassess roles and approaches; and streamline processes. The second most frequently occurring type of recommendation concerned changes to the program’s communication (11%), consultation (6%), engagement (2%), and coordination (1%) approaches, closely followed by changes to the program’s financial and performance measurement and reporting approaches (20%). Together, these three types of recommendations accounted for approximately 70% of the recommendations that were made (Environment Canada, 2010c). The most cited reason for delays in implementation was noted as being the result of financial and human resource constraints, followed by delays resulting from the need for interdepartmental agreement or coordination (Environment Canada, 2010g).

### Table 4: Distribution of Evaluation Recommendations Typologies (% of recommendations)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Evaluations</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program design/operational changes</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>29.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication/consultation/engagement/coordination</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>20.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial/performance measurement &amp; reporting</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program delivery/capacity/resources</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governance structures &amp; strategies</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roles &amp; responsibilities</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>40.5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Environment Canada, 2010c.

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5 Some of the reports, mostly for programs that were terminating at a set end-date, have “lessons learned” in the evaluation report, but do not have recommendations.
**Instrumental Use of the Evaluation Findings beyond the Management Response**

**Summary:** There were few direct instrumental changes to the program that did not arise from the management response to the recommendations. The responses to questions about other uses of evaluations indicate that the management response is the most dominant form of instrumental use, because respondents frequently referred back to these uses when asked about “other uses beyond the management response.”

**Instrumental changes to the program:** There were only a few interviewees (3) that noted changes to the program that did not arise out of the management response.

*For EcoAction we used the Lessons Learned to make changes to the notional allocation of funds within the regions. The Lessons Learned stated that we were not funding the best projects.*

*For Habitat Stewardship Program the evaluation led to a requirement that regions identify a priority set of species.*

*The Improved Climate Change Scenarios evaluation contributed to the momentum and justification for developing climate services within the department.*

Similarly, only a few interviewees (4) noted that the evaluation led to improvements in efficiency or effectiveness that did not arise out of the management response.

*For EcoAction, we have done some discussions about the report’s observation that the program is "staff heavy" and ways we can improve this to make it more efficient.*

*For the Federal Contaminated Sites Action plan, we have made modifications to the program to address the evaluation finding which indicated that the program had an administrative burden.*

*For the Habitat Stewardship Program, we are putting more emphasis on multi-year projects, which allows us to make fewer, larger investments.*

*For the Invasive Alien Species Partnership Program, we redeveloped the description of our program based on some of the evaluation findings. In addition, we reaffirmed our support for the councils based on the evaluation findings.*

No one indicated any changes to program size as a result of the evaluation and only one interviewee indicated using the evaluation to reorient the program.

*The evaluation supported the reorientation of the program to be more in line as a clear policy driver for the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy (FSDS).*
Use of Lessons Learned (LL) documents: A minority of interviewees (8) recalled receiving a LL document from the Audit and Evaluation Branch. Of those who received a LL document, the majority (5) only received the LL for their program. Two individuals made changes to their own program using the program’s own LL document and one individual used the LL documents to make changes to a different program. Two interviewees noted that issues surrounding potential biases in funding were raised primarily in the EcoAction LL, because regions were receiving a different number and/or quality of proposals. As a result, the program is looking into a new formula for regional distribution of funds.

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6 At the end of each evaluation, the Evaluation Division sends out a brief Lessons Learned document to similar/related program areas so that they may benefit from the lessons learned in the evaluation (e.g., effective program delivery approaches).
Conceptual Use of the Evaluations

Summary: There were instances in which evaluation findings were applied to other programs, most of which were to similar programs that contributed to the same outcomes and were in the same Directorate and/or Branch. Similarly, the reports were used to contribute to TB submissions, Strategic Reviews, Office of the Auditor General (OAG)/Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development (CESD) Audits, and other studies. There were also a few conceptual uses of the Lessons Learned documents. However, most interviewees felt that they had a strong understanding of program activities/achievements, problems/issues, and the program’s role in the department prior to the evaluation. With respect to these areas of program learning, the evaluations mostly served to confirm, in a formal manner, the program’s problems, issues, and achievements.

Development of new programs or changes to existing programs: Only one respondent noted that the evaluation contributed to the development of a new program. In this instance, the initiative undertaken was already planned prior to the evaluation. The evaluation was used as a piece of evidence that supported the need to undertake the new initiative.

A minority of interviewees (6) indicated that they had used the evaluation results for the improvement of other programs that were not the subject of the evaluation. Most of these instances (5) involved program managers applying the results of the evaluation to similar programs that were in the same division/directorate and/or contributed to the same outcomes. For example, a few individuals noted applying findings from the evaluation of the Habitat Stewardship Program to other funding programs.

Use of HSP evaluation’s results to make changes to the evaluation of the Aboriginal Fund for Species at Risk and the Interdepartmental Recovery Fund.

The findings and recommendations around roles and responsibilities and client services and needs from the evaluations of EcoAction and HSP were shared between the two programs. For example, a new roles and responsibilities document was developed that applies to both programs.

EcoAction is often used to demonstrate best practices for other funding programs, because of the program’s structure and the longevity of the program, particularly with respect to the Environmental Damages Fund and to a lesser extent the Science Horizon program and other ecosystem initiatives that share resources with EcoAction.

For the Habitat Stewardship Program, the recommendation given to regions to have strategic plans/priority statements is also being applied to the Aboriginal Fund for Species at Risk and to a lesser degree the Interdepartmental Recovery Fund, in order to make the programs consistent in their funding approaches.

May have applied the governance structure of the National Agri-Environmental Standards Initiative to some aspects of other programs.
Made modifications to the Federal Contaminated Sites Inventory in response to a recommendation from the Federal Contaminated Sites Action Plan evaluation.

Use of Lessons Learned (LL) documents: One interviewee noted that they used the evaluation conceptually when they applied the evaluation findings to the development of a Performance Measurement Strategy and Evaluation Framework for the Pollution Prevention Planning Program. It was also noted that the LL provided a good opportunity to see what others are doing and to make sure that the program does not make the same mistakes. Similarly, one respondent indicated that the LL were useful in showing the areas of the program that needed improvement. The lessons learned were also used to keep one respondent informed of other programs’ problems so that they could share relevant tools and knowledge from their program if there was a need.

Improved awareness or understanding of program activities: A minority of interviewees (8) indicated that the evaluation improved their awareness or understanding of program activities or achievements, three of whom were new staff or were from outside the program. Those who did not gain an increased understanding noted that it was because they were already very familiar with the program, with a few (2) indicating that it was partly because the focus of the evaluation was too broad.

For program managers and staff, the evaluation increased their knowledge by providing them with a better understanding of stakeholders’ and clients’ opinion of the program (2); a national picture of the program’s long term performance and achievements; and an alternative/independent perspective on the program’s results and performance management efforts. For those new or external to the program, the evaluation served as an outline of program successes and problems (2) and provided a logical structure that was useful in framing the redesign of a program.

Improved knowledge of program problems/issues: A minority of interviewees (6) found that the evaluation increased their awareness or understanding of problems or issues related to the program, three of whom were new staff or were from outside the program. Thus, only three managers noted that the evaluation led to increased knowledge concerning the program’s problems or issues. For example, one of these respondents noted that the evaluation was:

*Useful as a credible independent reference to point to when trying to convince senior managers to make changes to the program by informing them of problems and providing direction towards correcting those problems.*

However, approximately half of the interviewees (13) whose awareness or understanding was not increased by the evaluation felt it still provided some value. A minority of interviewees (8) noted that the evaluation validated/reaffirmed/confirmed the importance of the program’s problems, noting for example:

*We were aware of these issues, but it was useful to get clear feedback from clients around the issues.*
In many ways, I see the evaluation more useful as a vehicle to articulate and justify concerns that most program partners are already aware of, but it is useful to be able to gather that information to say yes it is a concern, is it a priority concern?

The evaluation’s reaffirmation of the program’s problems enhanced the credibility of the issue because it came out of the evaluation process.

A few interviewees also noted that the evaluation added value by prioritizing the program’s problems (3) and by providing insight into how to address the problems (2), noting for example:

Great process to ensure that we are efficient and always improving the ways in which we operate. Lays out issues clearly and shows how you can address them. Forces you to do something about it. Gives push needed to address them and provides you with support, since the evaluation can be referred to as saying that a particular item needs to be done, even if you may have known it was already an issue.

Helped prioritize what we knew. Took the recommendations seriously and that helped us focus on those particular things. There were no light bulbs going off, as we knew the challenges we were facing in this particular evaluation. It helped us to prioritize what we should focus on.

A few interviewees (3) noted that the evaluation failed to provide sufficiently detailed or compelling recommendations to address the problems identified in the evaluation. It was noted that the evaluation did not provide concrete solutions to the program's problems, partly because it is "difficult to figure these programs out enough to make compelling recommendations."

Increased awareness or understanding of the program’s role in department: A few respondents (5) indicated that the evaluation increased their awareness or understanding of the program's role in the department, one of whom was a new employee and one of whom was from outside the program, thus serving more as an introduction to the program for these two respondents. The other respondents noted that the evaluation showed that there were issues with the program’s role in the department and showed “how the program should fit in within the international work of the department and how it should be integrated and inform other work.” The evaluation also “increased awareness of another department’s role for an interdepartmental program” and “increased our ability to frame the program’s role in the department.”

Sharing evaluation results: All staff (21), excluding three respondents that did not work within a specific program, shared the evaluation results. A minority of interviewees stated that they shared the web link to the report (6) or the whole report (8). A few shared the management response (2), executive summary (2), verbal results (2), lessons learned (4), or sections of the evaluation (3).

Respondents shared the results with program staff (7), other government departments (7), and EC staff outside of the program that was evaluated (6). A few shared the results with senior managers (5), committees/boards/working groups (4), TBS (3), regional program staff (3), OAG or the CESD (2), and other EC funding program managers and staff (2). Results were also shared
with stakeholder networks, stakeholders, provincial groups, the public, new employees, other programs involved in an evaluation, and risk managers.

There was a diversity of reasons that motivated interview subjects to share the evaluation findings. The most frequently cited reason for sharing the evaluation results was to allow program staff and senior managers to understand the program’s activities and successes and/or to increase their awareness of why changes were being made to the program (8), while others shared the results because it was a requirement (6). A few shared the results because another EC program was being evaluated (2), to ensure their staff used the results (3), or to provide an overview of the program (2). One interviewee shared the results to get buy-in from partners and stakeholders, while another respondent shared the results to get buy-in from regional staff.

Interviewees added that results were also shared because they were asked about their experience being evaluated; findings were relevant to the program’s mandate capacity review; they supported senior management decision-making; or they contributed to work on performance measurement.

**Stimulation of discussions and debate:** A majority of interviewees (14) felt that the evaluation stimulated or informed discussion or debate about key program issues/problems. A minority (9) noted that the debate concerned the management response to the report's recommendations. These respondents indicated that the evaluation stimulated discussion over how to address program problems; why the program needed to make changes; alignment of recommendations with the program’s direction; timing, articulation, and capacity to implement the management response; and whether the program could adhere to the recommendations.

A few (4) noted that the evaluation served as an impetus for discussing and dealing with program issues and problems and helped serve as a tool to alert senior managers to the existence of problems that needed to be addressed. The evaluation also generated a philosophical debate about the program’s role/mandate, sparked discussion about the role of another federal department, and highlighted concerns over the program’s inability to conduct public opinion research.

The evaluation also informed future discussions, including those about how to measure performance and collect the data (2); the Performance Measurement Strategy, including a two day workshop with regional managers (2); the program’s logic model (2); and program renewal (3). The evaluation also informed the program’s mandate capacity review and discussions of evaluation results between the Assistant Deputy Minister and the regional managers.

Some of the interviewees who did not feel that the evaluation stimulated discussion noted that the evaluation only served to validate ongoing discussions, other catalysts had been much more important in stimulating discussions, the debate was mostly at the Directors General level, or that there was no need for debate because the program was terminating.

**Contribution to reviews, reports, and departmental documents:** As shown in Table 5, a majority used evaluations as input to TB Submissions, while a minority used evaluations as input to Departmental Performance Reports (DPR), Strategic Reviews, and OAG/CESD audits.
Table 5: Contribution to reviews, reports, and departmental documents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TB Submissions</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAG/CESD Audits</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Reviews</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPRs</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The 2010-2011 Management Accountability Framework (MAF) Assessment also indicates that evaluations contributed to these documents. The evaluation division was consulted on all of the TB submissions and “almost all” (less than 80%) relevant results were considered. Consultation for Memoranda to Cabinet (MC) was less frequent (50-79%), with several relevant results considered (50-79%). For the DPR “almost all” relevant results were considered and evaluation was “almost always” consulted during the development of the DPR or RPP (Environment Canada, 2010a). Previous MAF Assessments also indicate that evaluation was “almost always” consulted on relevant evaluation findings for TB submissions, DPR, and RPP and was “frequently” consulted on findings relevant to MCs (Environment Canada, 2007; Environment, 2009a; Environment Canada, 2008).

A majority (16) of interviewees used the evaluations to contribute to other studies, plans, or reports. Specifically, the evaluations contributed to a number of frameworks policies, and other documents (7):

- EcoAction evaluation findings contributed to a Grants & Contributions Management Agreement, in which it was presented as the gold standard for the management of Gs&Cs.
- CESI evaluation results contributed to the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy Framework.
- NAESI evaluation results contributed to the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment Nutrient Strategic Policy.
- EDF evaluation results contributed to the program’s Mandate Capacity Review.
- The ICCS evaluation was used as a reference by United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Triple National Communication to describe Canada’s current activities.
- In response to a recommendation, the MSC Transition Plan evaluation results contributed to the MSC People Plan.
- In response to a recommendation, the Montreal Protocol evaluation results contributed to a study of its projects aimed at better assessing program results.

A few (3) indicated that the evaluation contributed to the program’s work plans and exercises, particularly with respect to planning and budgeting for the implementation of the programs’ management response. The ICCS evaluation contributed to the Science Program’s strategic planning process and the MSC Transition evaluation contributed the program’s strategic planning process. The evaluations were also used to develop a program description for the
second phase of IASPP and to write summary notes about the EcoAction program. Similarly, the NAESI evaluation contributed to summary/briefing material, which outlined that the next phase of the work (implementing the standards developed by EC) was the responsibility of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. The NAQHI evaluation informed the work of a performance management committee that works on evaluation and performance measurement issues for the NAQHI program.
Symbolic Use of the Evaluations

Summary: The evaluations served several symbolic functions, particularly with respect to their use as a tool or piece of evidence to support and/or legitimize making changes to the programs, including a few instances in which they were used to justify or support a proposed initiative or policy. The evaluations served as a useful tool to demonstrate the value of the programs to senior managers. Evaluations have also proved useful in validating the programs’ relevance and to a lesser extent improving the programs’ credibility.

Use of evaluation results to support/justify program decisions: The majority of interviewees (18) indicated that the evaluation helped support/justify decisions that were made prior to or after the completion of the evaluation. A few interviewees indicated that the evaluation helped support renewal/redesign of the program (3) and the changes that were made to the program through the management response (3), with another respondent noting that the program began to implement some changes to the program before receiving the management response. A minority of interviewees (5) indicated that the evaluation was used as a line of evidence/tool to support and/or justify the rationale for making planned changes to fix program problems of which they were previously aware, thus providing the impetus to make needed changes to the program. For example:

Device to point to in order to justify changes to the program that were planned/in progress before the evaluation was conducted.

Used report as a post facto justification for restructuring of the Branch. May agree with some conclusions, but arrived at those conclusions through different means due to program staff's depth of understanding of the program.

Tool to justify making changes through the management response to issues that the program had been aware of prior to the evaluation.

A few individuals noted the evaluation’s value in garnering management support for the program by having independent confirmation of results (4), justifying the development of or changes to the Performance Measurement Strategy (2), or when seeking approval, justifying positions, or requesting changes to the program when presenting to senior managers (3).

The evaluation was also used to help justify a few program related initiatives:

- The evaluation influenced the decision to go through with the mandate capacity review of the Environmental Damages Fund.
- The Enforcement evaluation was used to help justify/support the program’s Information Management and Technology Strategy.
- The evaluation was used to justify actions aimed at making regions more strategic in their use of funds that are delivered through the Habitat Stewardship Program.
The evaluations have also been used for contributing information to and providing a justification for business renewal, demonstrating the difficulties placed on the program due to the timing of G&C funding, justifying the program’s funding and activities, and countering criticism of the program raised in another document/review.

**Contribution to program advocacy:** Approximately half (11) of the interviewees indicated that the evaluation made them a better advocate for the program. The majority of these responses (8) noted that the evaluations were used to show senior managers and others that the programs were valuable, met/confirmed a need, had a business case, were important, should be continued, or validated the programs’ impacts/results. Some examples are shown below:

*Garner support from ADM and RDG by presenting to them on the Ecosystem Sustainability (ES) Board concerning the value of the program and its contribution to strategic outcomes.*

*Evaluation results were presented to senior management, which showed that there is a need for the program and that it is making a difference. Can point to need for program when senior managers are planning to make cuts to programs.*

*The language is useful for communicating with senior managers, because the language resonates with them in describing why the program is important/needs resources. Specifically, the evaluation allowed staff to demonstrate an important component of its relevance to the ADM. For example, an aspect of relevance addressed in the evaluation has been very useful in showing that the program is in line with the department's priorities.*

*Supported continuation of the program by showing how the program was contributing to department outcomes, despite its small size.*

*Provides independent confirmation of the program's results to garner political/senior manager support for the program.*

Similarly, a few (3) noted that the evaluation provided a piece of evidence to demonstrate the program’s achievements and that it can be used to help promote and defend the program (2). The evaluation created a formal process in which to garner the attention of senior managers regarding the program’s issues/problems and was used by a few (2) when making proposals to senior managers or seeking their approval. The evaluation was also used to communicate with the public, justify budget-based decisions, and respond to auditors.

**Impact of evaluation on program credibility:** Half of the interviewees (12) indicated that the evaluation impacted the program’s credibility, a majority of whom (7) felt that it confirmed/maintained/reaffirmed the credibility of the program and a minority (4) of whom noted that the evaluation improved the program’s credibility. Among these respondents, it was noted that the evaluation helped confirm the utility of the program with stakeholders and senior managers and led to praise from the program’s Director General. Similarly, the evaluation helped garner support from the Assistant Deputy Minister and Regional Director General by
demonstrating the program’s value and the program’s contributions to strategic outcomes when
the evaluation results were presented to the Ecosystem Sustainability (ES) Board (i.e. a senior
management board).

A few (4) felt that the evaluation provided a credible, independent source to refer to when
discussing program successes and how program problems would be addressed. The evaluation
helped alleviate concerns over the program’s relevance/credibility when a program was moved to
another branch in the department. The evaluation also showed that some of the expectations
regarding one program’s ability to achieve its long-term outcomes were unrealistic. It was also
noted that one evaluation provided vindication for the performance measurement work that a
program had been conducting.
Process Use of the Evaluations

**Summary:** The most frequently occurring process use of evaluations was clarification of thinking and concepts, which mostly related to gaining an understanding of how to view a program through the eyes of an evaluator and gaining a better understanding of evaluation and the evaluation process. With respect to performance measurement, the main benefit of the evaluations was in generating minor or major changes to the program logic models and increasing respondents’ understanding of performance measurement.

**Benefits from involvement in the evaluation process**

**Clarification of thinking/concepts:** Almost one-third of interviewees (7) were unable to answer the questions on process use, because they had minor involvement or no involvement in the evaluation process. Of those who were able to discuss process related uses of the evaluations, a majority (13/17) indicated that the process clarified thinking or concepts.

A few respondents (5) benefited from gaining an understanding of how to view the program through the evaluator’s lens. These comments emphasized the importance of features such as the structure, rigor, and discipline of the evaluation process. It was noted that the management response provided a structured list of program improvements. Another interviewee felt that viewing the program through the evaluator’s lens improved their ability to manage the program, which in turn improved their competency with other aspects of their program. It was also noted that the evaluation matrix and evaluation questions helped clarify one respondents’ conceptualization of the program and that the evaluation process led one interviewee to gain a more holistic understanding of the program.

A few (3) interviewees also indicated that they gained a better understanding of the evaluation process, with one individual noting that participating in the evaluation gave them an enhanced understanding of the evaluation’s results and recommendations. A few (5) noted benefits related to an improved understanding of evaluation, including learning how much time and detail is required, learning how to develop a management response, understanding the importance of program representation on evaluation committees, and gaining an improved understanding of evaluation concepts and processes (evaluation design, details, resources, and performance measures). For example, one respondent noted that the:

*Evaluation of the Smog Causing Emissions for the Transportation Sector helped me to set up a process/template to assist the evaluation of the Pollution Prevention Planning program.*

**Development of new skills:** A minority of interviewees (4/17) indicated that they had developed new skills as a result of the evaluation, including skills related to setting up a contract for an evaluation, management of the program, preparation of TB submissions, development of logic models and performance plans, and improved ability to explain performance measurement to risk managers and scientists.
Other benefits: Approximately half of interviewees (8/17) indicated other benefits related to their participation in the evaluation process. A few (3) noted that they benefited from being able to shape the evaluation process and feed evaluators information by providing contextual information, influencing and shaping the evaluation questions and issues, and tailoring the evaluation approach to address the unique characteristics of their program. The evaluation also generated dialogue with the Deputy Minister and other senior managers; provided a logical structure, which made it easier to develop the management response; and provided staff with an opportunity to discuss their concerns regarding the program.

Improvements to performance measurement from involvement in evaluation process

Logic model: A majority of interviewees (9/17) indicated that the evaluation report and/or process provided some benefits or improvements to the program logic model, with approximately half (8) noting that the evaluation led to a major or minor revision of the logic model (6) or the development of a new logic model (2). For example, one respondent noted that:

HSP evaluation recommendations regarding the logic model have been applied to aid in the development of the logic model for the Aboriginal Fund for Species at Risk and the Invasive Alien Species Partnership Program.

A few (2) also noted that the evaluation gave them the skills/knowledge needed to help other programs revise their logic models. Similarly, evaluation results were used to make changes to the logic models of two other funding programs that were related to the program that was evaluated.

Performance measurement strategies: A minority of interviewees (7) indicated that participation in the evaluation process helped improve their performance measurement strategy, with most of those indicating that the evaluation process or the evaluation findings helped inform the revision or reinforce the importance of performance measurement strategies.

Collection and reporting of performance information: Approximately half of the interviewees (8) indicated that participation in the evaluation process helped improve collection and reporting of performance information. A few noted that the evaluation process demonstrated the importance of ongoing performance measurement (3), resulted in more strategic measurement of outcomes (3), and improved understanding of how to measure outcomes (2). Others noted that the evaluation validated the existence of serious issues with the program’s performance measurement system, validated the program’s data collection efforts, led to a full review of the program’s performance measures, enriched understanding of the program’s responsibilities, and demonstrated a need to tailor performance measures to meet the varied needs of stakeholders.
Usefulness of the Evaluations

The interviewees rated the evaluations as being useful. Figure 1 shows the ratings of the usefulness of the evaluations. Most individuals found the evaluation moderately useful, useful, or very useful, while only three interviewees did not find the report useful. Thus, the interview subjects’ overall opinion of the evaluations was positive, with a mean rating of 3.8 (out of 5).

Figure 1: “Overall, how useful did you find this evaluation?”

These survey results accord with the results from the surveys that are sent from the Evaluation Division to program managers after the completion of each evaluation. The surveys sent to program managers in the 2010-2011 fiscal year asked respondents to rate the level of agreement with the statement, “overall, the evaluation was useful.” As Figure 2 demonstrates, most agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, with a mean rating of 4.2, although there were only 9 respondents.

Figure 2: “Overall, the evaluation was useful.”

Source: Environment Canada, 2011c.
Potential Improvements to the Evaluation Function

Summary: The majority of interviewees (18) provided at least one factor that could enhance the usefulness of evaluations. Factors relating to the time spent on evaluations and their timing were the most frequently occurring theme that arose from the interviews. This included concerns that too much time was being spent by evaluators in understanding the program, conducting the evaluation, and reporting the results online. Concerns were also raised that the timing of evaluations was resulting in duplication of effort with other audits and reviews and/or reducing their usefulness for TB renewals and other potential inputs of evaluation results. Other themes included the need to provide a more appropriate scope and depth for evaluations, the need to balance the reporting of negative results with positive results, the need to better notify and assist programs in advance of the evaluations, and the need to provide more communication with senior managers during and after completion of the evaluation.

Time spent understanding the program: The most frequently mentioned factor (10) that respondents felt was affecting the usefulness of the evaluations and the evaluation process was the length of time evaluators spent familiarizing themselves with the program. It was felt that too much time was spent learning the program’s background and too much time was spent by program staff providing information and documents to evaluators.

In some cases evaluation spends too much time orienting themselves to the program. Time spent by evaluation orienting themselves to the program detracts from the usefulness of evaluations by creating a drag on everyone's time and detracting from time spent on analysis of the program's problems.

Spent too much time orienting evaluators to the program. Spent a lot of time revisiting basic information about the program.

A number of suggestions were provided to reduce the time spent by evaluators orienting themselves to the program. A few of these individuals (3) suggested that evaluation should keep itself appraised of program activities on an ongoing basis by bringing evaluators into the program temporarily to orient them to the program or by engaging in ongoing communication with staff to keep them appraised of program activities. Similarly, another respondent went further in this regard by suggesting that the Evaluation Division consider adopting the Health Canada approach of having embedded staff, noting that “Health Canada evaluation staff have an external (centralized) Health Canada evaluation group but they also have evaluation staff who are program staff.”

One person suggested that evaluation “should contract out less of the analysis function in order to increase the AEB's knowledge of the program,” with a few others (2) noting further concerns with the quality of the consultants’ work, including their understanding of the program. Another respondent commented that evaluators “could focus on fewer evaluations at any one time so they do not forget information during the evaluation.” It was also suggested that “evaluators focus less on becoming experts in the content of the program, especially for complex initiatives.”
Scope and depth of evaluations: A few interviewees (2) noted that the evaluation was less useful because it did not examine the program’s problems and solutions to those problems at a sufficient level to provide new insight to the program.

*Superficial depth of analysis did not reveal new insight regarding the program. The evaluation was less useful because it examined problems the program knew about at a superficial depth, but did not go into sufficient detail in providing solutions to the problems. Need lower level/less broad analysis to make more concrete recommendations about how to change the program.*

*Did not go into the problems into sufficient depth to outline the steps that the program needed to take. Need evaluators to understand program in more depth. Evaluation did not provide concrete solutions/recommendations to the problems identified.*

These comments suggest that when the challenge of adequately understanding a program is combined with an evaluation of a large, complex program it can be very difficult for evaluators to produce an evaluation that provides new insight to program managers. Further to these comments one of these respondents argued that the broad scope of the evaluation resulted in a large amount of information requests from the evaluators. The interviewee noted:

*Concerns over the program's reputation/credibility resulted in a large burden on management because they had to approve the release of each document/information. A more strategically focused evaluation on key areas that needed improvement would have reduced this burden.*

It was suggested that evaluators take a more strategic approach by “work[ing] as a partner of the program to provide solutions to problems that have been identified by accepting the program's diagnosis of their problems.” Another respondent suggested using a more strategic approach by only evaluating high risk programs, noting that evaluation should focus on whether “we have a sufficient level of evaluation that allows the department to identify where some of the risks or issues might be.” On the other hand it was also suggested that if an evaluation of a program only captures a portion of activities, it will be difficult to assess the success of the program, and in some cases broader evaluations of multiple programs may be needed to better assess outcomes.

Provide more balanced reports: A few interviewees (3) noted concerns regarding the evaluation report’s balance between showing areas for improvement and areas where the program has achieved success, while another interviewee similarly expressed concerns that there were negative consequences if the program’s performance is weak, but no positive consequences if the program’s performance is strong.

*Evaluation doesn't give enough of a focus on the program strengths. Evaluation should have a recommendation with a more positive message that says to continue doing something that is working. I would like the program's best practices acknowledged.*

*Needs to be more of a balance to show areas where the program is perforating strongly. Too much attention on the problems may cause you to lose sight of areas of the program...*
that are performing well. Evaluations need to show the overall performance of the program so that it is known whether the overall performance of the program is positive or negative.

Timing and length of evaluation process: A few (2) also noted that the length of time required to complete evaluations may reduce their usefulness, because the findings and recommendations may no longer be relevant or may have already been addressed by the program.

The evaluation focused on elements of the program that were too far in the past to be still relevant to the program. Because of the large amount of time required to complete the evaluation, many of the issues identified in the evaluation had already been addressed by the program or were no longer relevant. The evaluation was less useful because it was not very forward looking in its focus.

The length of time required to undertake an evaluation reduces the utility of the evaluation, particularly for programs undergoing substantial change. Need to address unique characteristics of programs that undergo substantial/continuous change.

Similarly, it was also noted by a few interviewees (2) that the length of time required to post the final evaluation reports reduced their usefulness to program stakeholders. One respondent noted that the evaluation “stayed on the Minister’s desk for months” and “the program had to do most of the pushing” to get the evaluation approved. The other respondent noted that “the length of time to publish the report online reduces the utility of the evaluation with respect to stakeholders.”

A few interviewees (3) also noted that the timing of evaluations could be better planned to maximize use of evaluations, particularly with respect to providing enough time between the evaluation and the TB renewal process. Similarly, a few (2) felt that the timing of evaluations should take into account the timing of other reviews (e.g. CESD/OAG Audits) to reduce the burden on program staff and minimize duplication of analysis.

Preparing for evaluations: It was also stated by a few (2) that evaluators needed to plan further ahead/discuss earlier with the program the types of questions/issues they are going to examine in the evaluation. Further to this, another interviewee noted that it would be useful to have a document/information on how to prepare for an evaluation and steps required in undertaking an evaluation. A few interviewees (2) also suggested periodically providing a list of when evaluations are planned and what evaluations are currently underway.

A few (4) also noted that they would like more interaction with evaluators in between evaluations, including educating program staff in how to prepare for an evaluation and collect the appropriate performance data. One interviewee suggested that evaluators should help the program conduct a small, mid-term formative evaluation for programs that sunset. Another individual expressed a need for more assistance from evaluators with performance measurement.

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7 At the start of each evaluation, the Evaluation Division does provide a brochure and Terms of Reference to evaluation committee members outlining their responsibilities and the steps involved in the evaluation process.
activities, such as participation on performance management committees, to be better prepared for evaluations.

**Communication with senior management:** A few (2) noted concerns regarding communication with senior managers, suggesting that evaluators should work on including more senior managers, particularly DGs, in the evaluation discussions. It was also suggested that more recommendations be directed to senior management to ensure the more important recommendations are implemented. One respondent was concerned that a lack of communication with senior management was resulting in gaps in the evaluators’ knowledge, such that:

> Collection of evaluation evidence is being hampered by a lack of ongoing discussion with DGs to ensure that all the relevant info has been collected. Should check with the DGs before developing recommendations/findings to address any outstanding problems/issues/concerns related to the program to make sure they are not the result of gaps in the evaluators’ knowledge base.

**Lessons learned documents:** There were a few criticisms of the Lessons Learned (LL) documents, including that they sometimes used obtuse, unclear terminology, contradicted each other, did not provide enough detail to be useful, or raised issues that were outside of the program’s control. It was suggested that the LL should be shared more broadly, use plain language, and provide more detail. It was also suggested that there should be a comprehensive LL based on the cumulative knowledge gained from all of the LL documents and a set of LL regarding the governance of interdepartmental programs.
Summary of Findings

Overall, the interview findings and document review have shown that there is a substantial amount of instrumental use of the evaluations occurring at Environment Canada, as the majority of the recommendations made in the evaluation reports have been implemented (approximately 76%). There were few direct instrumental changes to the programs that did not arise from the management response to the recommendations. There were some instances in which evaluation findings were conceptually applied to other similar programs. The evaluation reports were also used to contribute to a variety of reports, reviews, submissions, and studies. Most interviewees felt that the evaluations did not contribute to their understanding of the programs’ activities/achievements, problems/issues, or role within the department. The evaluations only confirmed or legitimized interviewees’ existing knowledge.

The evaluations served several symbolic functions, including supporting or legitimizing program changes, initiatives, or policies, demonstrating the programs’ value to senior managers, and validating the programs’ relevance and credibility. The most frequently occurring process use was an increased understanding of evaluation skills and concepts. The evaluation process also helped respondents gain a better understanding of performance measurement and logic models. With respect to factors that could enhance the usefulness of evaluations, the most frequently cited concern was that too much time was being spent by evaluators to understand the program. Other similar factors that were noted include concerns that too much time was spent conducting the evaluation and reporting the results and that the timing of evaluations was resulting in duplication of effort.
Discussion

Analysis

The available data from the management response follow-ups demonstrates that there is a substantial amount of instrumental use of the evaluations that is occurring at Environment Canada. The majority of the recommendations given in the evaluation reports have been implemented. Based on a categorization of the types of recommendations that have been made in the evaluation reports, the most frequently occurring recommendations were program design/operational changes (29.7%), with another 15% of recommendations concerning program delivery. The second and third most common recommendations were related to the program’s communication/coordination/consultation and financial/performance measurement systems. These findings are similar to those of other studies of the federal government that found 40-50% of evaluation use was for operational changes and another 10-17% was for changes to program design (Segsworth, 2005), and the TBS CEE (2005) study which found that there were improvements to program design, delivery, accountability, and reporting.

The findings from the interviews have shown that there have been few instrumental uses of the evaluations outside of those uses that arose from the programs’ management responses to the evaluation recommendations, with only three such instrumental program/operational changes and four improvements to efficiency/effectiveness noted by program managers and staff.

Conceptual use (i.e. information learned about the program, its staff, operations, or outcomes, or the use of evaluation findings to make changes to other programs) was not particularly strong among managers and staff with respect to learning about the program and its problems. Overall, most interviewees already had a strong understanding of program activities/achievements, problems/issues, and the program’s role in the department and consequently felt that they did not learn anything new about the program as a result of the evaluation. However, the evaluation did serve to confirm, in a formal manner, the program’s problems, issues, achievements, and departmental role. It is also likely that the higher level senior managers that are not involved in the programs on a daily basis would have more conceptual use of the evaluations. Further, the evaluations were used conceptually by program managers and staff to demonstrate the programs' problems and achievements to senior managers.

Conceptually, the evaluations were also used as input to improve other evaluations and as input to reporting documents (TB submissions, MCs, DPRs, etc.) and studies. Some respondents noted that they had applied the knowledge learned from the evaluation to similar programs that contributed to the same outcomes, were in the same Directorate and/or Branch, and/or shared common resources. These results suggest that the evaluations are useful as input to other documents.

This project found that the evaluations served several symbolic functions, particularly with respect to the use of the evaluations as a tool or piece of evidence to support making changes to the programs. The term “legitimization” is the most apt description of the use of EC evaluations, since the evaluation reports served to formally legitimize the programs’ problems and successes so that they could be dealt with by the programs. To a lesser degree, the evaluations also served a
persuasive use, because they were referenced by interviewees when they were trying to persuade senior managers to approve program changes. In a few instances the evaluations were referenced to justify and support the rationale for new programs or initiatives.

Evaluations have also proved useful in validating the programs’ relevance and to a lesser extent improving the programs’ credibility. For some of the programs, the evaluations served as a tool to help program managers advocate for their programs, because they could point to the evaluations in order to demonstrate the programs’ value to senior managers. This also potentially serves another common symbolic use, because being able to demonstrate the program’s value may bolster the program manager’s reputation. Overall, then, the evaluations served several symbolic purposes by creating a formal process to legitimize the programs’ successes and problems.

The most common process use of the evaluations was clarification of thinking and concepts, by helping program managers/staff gain an understanding of how to view their programs through the eyes of an evaluator and gain a better understanding of the evaluation process; thus managers and staff “learn[ed] to think like an evaluator (Johnson, 1998, p. 94). Keeping in mind that some of the interviewees were referring to both results-based and process-based uses at times, the most frequently cited impact of the evaluation on performance measurement was minor and major changes to the programs’ logic models and an increased understanding of performance measurement. These findings are similar to those of Cousins et al. (2008) who found “developing knowledge about evaluation logic, methods, and technical skills” (p. 26) to be one of the most prevalent process related uses of evaluations among evaluators in governmental and non-governmental organizations.

Time related factors were the most frequently cited issues that were discussed by the interview subjects, including time spent on the evaluation, the length of time involved in reporting the results, and the timing with respect to other studies and reviews. The one time related factor found to be important in the literature, which partially accords with these findings, is the importance of timely communication. Another factor that a few respondents mentioned that has been found to influence use in the literature is tailoring the scope of evaluations to the audience, which interviewees noted as being too broad in a few cases and too narrow in one instance. The importance of senior management involvement was also noted by a few respondents, which is consistent with some of the findings from other reviews of evaluation use in federal departments (TBS CEE, 2004; TBS CEE 2004b).

Summary

Table 6: Summary of the Use of Evaluations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instrumental Use</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation results were used to:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make program changes</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make improvements to efficiency or effectiveness</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reorient the program</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conceptual Use of Recommendations</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Used to develop new programs</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used to make change to existing programs</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used lessons learned documents to make changes to programs</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overall, there was a diversity of examples of instrumental, conceptual, symbolic, and process use provided by interviewees, with consensus (i.e. the majority of respondents) not being particularly strong for many of the issues or examples provided by the respondents. In particular, Table 6 shows that only a few of the uses were applicable to a majority of the respondents. Based on internal documentation, the implementation of the management responses appear to have been fairly successful. The interviews show that there are only a few other instrumental uses of the evaluations beyond their use in the implementation of the management response to the evaluation reports’ recommendations.

To some extent, conceptual use of evaluation results was less prevalent than was expected based on the findings in the academic literature, with evaluations only being found to have reaffirmed and validated existing knowledge about program activities and problems. There was, however, conceptual use of the evaluations with respect to their contribution to TB submissions, Strategic Reviews, OAG/CESD Audits, other studies and reports, and other EC programs similar in structure to those that were evaluated. Many respondents also noted using the information and recommendations contained in the reports symbolically as a tool to justify the implementation of changes to programs and to demonstrate the program’s legitimacy to senior managers. The participation of managers and staff in the evaluation process also provided some respondents with insight into evaluations, the evaluation process, and how to view programs through the evaluators’ lens, while also increasing understanding of and improving performance measurement.
Conclusions

The main focus of this project was to examine the extent to which the four uses of evaluations discussed in the academic literature, namely: instrumental; conceptual; symbolic; and process uses, apply to the use of evaluations by program managers and staff at Environment Canada. This project also included an examination of factors that could influence evaluation use at Environment Canada.

The majority of interviewees had an overall positive opinion of evaluations and noted that they were useful, with only three respondents who felt that they were not useful. This project found that instrumental use of evaluations is prevalent and the programs’ response to the recommendations is likely the most common use. Internal documents show most of the management responses prepared to date have been implemented and interview respondents frequently alluded to or referenced the management response when responding to the interview questions. This finding contrasts with the literature, which has frequently found instrumental use of evaluations to be uncommon. This project’s contradictory findings likely occurred because departments have a mandatory requirement to implement their management response. In addition, the EC Evaluation Division follows-up with the programs 2-3 times per year to ensure that they have implemented these responses. As noted earlier in the Discussion, the types of changes made to EC’s programs and their frequency of occurrence was similar to the results from other studies on the use of evaluation in the Government of Canada.

However, uses outside of the mandatory management response to the evaluation reports’ recommendations were minimal. This may be partly due to this project’s reliance on interviews of program managers and staff. Program managers and staff may focus on the recommendations, which concern operational, design, and delivery issues, while more senior managers might make more general, overarching uses of the evaluations that go beyond the report’s recommendations. For example, the TBS (2005) study discussed earlier, which interviewed senior public servants (ADMs and Vice Presidents) as well as program managers (DGs, Directors, and managers), found that evaluation was used “to support expenditure and resource management decisions,” (para. 5) and Expenditure Review Committee Decisions.

The observation that there are few instrumental uses beyond those that are mandatory, supports other authors’ observations that there is a lack of instrumental use of program evaluations and validates the direction to which Weiss, Murphy-Graham, and Birkeland (2005) see evaluation heading with respect to “imposed use” (p. 27). To some extent this report has shown the value of the mandatory management response and the value of management response follow-ups. Judging by the relative dearth of other instrumental uses of the evaluation findings, without these tools for ensuring the evaluations are used, instrumental use of the evaluations could be substantially reduced. In the absence of the requirement to produce a management response, the frequency of instrumental uses may have been similar to the frequency found in much of the evaluation literature.

Overall, the paper found that conceptual use was fairly common, except with respect to improving interviewees’ knowledge of the programs’ problems/issues, and successes. Overall, though, instrumental use appears to have been more prevalent than conceptual use, depending on
the importance one gives to program related learning as a component of conceptual use. This is partly at odds with other studies, such as the surveys of evaluation association members conducted by Shea and Towson (1993) and Fleischer and Christie (2009), which found that conceptual use was more prevalent than instrumental use. Some of the concerns raised by those interviewed could partially explain why many respondents did not learn about the programs’ problems or issues. One such factor concerns the suggestion made by a few respondents that the broad scope that the evaluations cover made it difficult for evaluators to thoroughly understand the program or to evaluate it in sufficient detail. Another important factor to consider is that evaluations may play a more important conceptual purpose for senior managers and legislators, because of their greater distance from and lack of in-depth knowledge of program problems or achievements.

The formalized manner of the evaluation process, particularly the formalized (and mandatory) management response process, and the regular management response follow-up process, may explain why symbolic use of the evaluations was frequently noted by respondents. These processes serve to formally legitimize the observations concerning program successes and problems. This compels/authorizes the program to make these changes using an authoritative document that program managers can refer to when making changes to the program. Thus, evaluations were used symbolically to support positions, justify actions, or enhance the reputation of the program. These findings somewhat agree with those of Shea and Towson (1993), in which 41% of Canadian Evaluation Society members reported persuasive use of their evaluations.

Factors related to time spent on evaluations was the most frequently occurring theme noted by interviewees. Specifically, the most frequently noted concern was that too much time was being spent by the evaluators learning about the program and its activities. A few noted similar concerns that the evaluation took too long to complete and took too long to post online. A few also felt that poor timing of evaluations with respect to other studies or reports reduced their usefulness. As noted in the Discussion, the only findings of this project that were also mentioned as important factors in the literature were the need to tailor the scope of the evaluations to the audience and the need for timely communication of the evaluation results. In contrast, the literature found that stakeholder involvement and evaluation quality are two of the most effective methods to increase use (Cousins and Leithwood, 1986; Johnson, Greenseid, Toal, King, Lawrenz, and Volkov, 2009).

This project has shown that there have been a variety of diffuse uses of evaluation reports, some of which may warrant further exploration in future research, perhaps at a more senior management level to examine their conceptual and instrumental uses of evaluations in more depth.
References Cited


Appendix A – Advanced Email Notification

Appendix

1. Advanced Notification Email

Le français suit

Dear colleague,

A study on Evaluation Use at Environment Canada (EC) is currently underway. This study is being conducted by EC’s Audit and Evaluation Branch (AEB) (http://www.ec.gc.ca/ae-ve/). The study should help AEB to develop a better understanding of how evaluations are used at EC and how they could be more useful, so that the Branch can better meet the needs of senior management in the department.

Part of this study involves the conduct of interviews with key stakeholders. Ryan Brown, an AEB coop student from the University of Victoria’s School of Public Administration, is leading the project and will be conducting the interviews (accompanied by a senior AEB representative for some interviews). As one of these key stakeholders, you may be contacted in the following weeks by Mr. Brown and asked to participate in an interview. Your views would make a valuable contribution to this project.

The purpose of this interview is to obtain your views on the ways in which evaluation findings are used. An interview guide will be sent to you to assist you in preparing for the interview. These interviews are voluntary and will be scheduled at a time convenient for you. Please note that you will not be required to answer any questions you don’t feel able to address and that none of your responses will be linked to you in the subsequent report.

Thank you in advance for your participation in this process – it is very much appreciated. If you have any questions about this study, please do not hesitate to contact Ryan Brown at Ryan.Brown@ec.gc.ca or (819) 934 3589, or Michael Callahan, Evaluation Manager, AEB at Michael.Callahan@ec.gc.ca or (819) 953-0837.

Regards,

Carol Najm, CA, CISA, CISM
Director General
Audit and Evaluation Branch
Environment Canada
200 Sacré-Cœur, 12th floor
Gatineau QC K1A 0H3
Carol.Najm@ec.gc.ca
Telephone 819-953-4736
Facsimile 819-994-7321
Government of Canada
Website: www.ec.gc.ca
Appendix B – Follow-up Email Notification

Mr./Ms. _____:

As noted in an earlier email sent by Carol Najm, a study on Evaluation Use at Environment Canada (EC) is currently being conducted by EC’s Audit and Evaluation Branch (AEB) (http://www.ec.gc.ca/ae-ve/). The study should help AEB to develop a better understanding of how evaluations are used at EC and how they could be more useful, so that the Branch can better meet the needs of senior management in the department.

I would like to invite you to participate in an interview as part of this study. The interview should take approximately 45 to 60 minutes. The interview guide is provided below for your review. We are asking that you respond to the questions that you feel comfortable answering, based on your level of knowledge. We will skip the questions that you do not feel you can answer.

[Insert interview guide]

As this project is also being completed for academic purposes, as part of my MPA Master’s Project at the University of Victoria’s School of Public Administration, a participant consent form for the interview is provided below. Please read over this document. You may provide consent by sending an email that indicates your consent or by signing and returning the document by fax or at the time of the interview.

[Insert consent form]

I will follow up by telephone to see if you will be able to participate and, if so, to schedule a convenient time for an interview, or please feel free to contact me.

Thank you.

Ryan Brown
Agente de l'évaluation / Evaluation Officer
Direction générale de la vérification et de l'évaluation / Audit and Evaluation Branch
Environnement Canada / Environment Canada
200, Sacré-Cœur, 12ième étage / 200 Sacré-Cœur, 12th floor
Gatineau (Québec) K1A 0H3 / Gatineau (Quebec) K1A 0H3
ryan.brown@ec.gc.ca
Téléphone / Telephone 819-934-3589
Télécopieur | Facsimile 819-994-7321
Gouvernement du Canada | Government of Canada
Site Web | Website www.ec.gc.ca
Appendix C – Participant Consent Form

[Department letterhead]  

Participant Consent Form

Evaluation Use in Environment Canada

You are invited to participate in a study entitled “Evaluation Use in Environment Canada” that is being conducted by Ryan Brown.

Ryan Brown is a graduate student in the School of Public Administration at the University of Victoria and you may contact him if you have further questions by phone (819-934-3589) or email (Ryan.Brown@ec.gc.ca).

As a graduate student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a degree in Public Administration. It is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Jim McDavid. You may contact my supervisor by phone (250-472-4293) or email (jmedavid@uvic.ca).

Purpose and Objectives
The purpose of this research project is to assess the broader use of Environment Canada’s evaluation reports by program managers and decision makers. The Evaluation Division of Environment Canada currently tracks the implementation of evaluation recommendations. However, there is limited knowledge pertaining to other uses of evaluation findings. Thus, this research aims to expand the scope of knowledge with respect to evaluation use within Environment Canada.

Importance of this Research
Research of this type is important because it will fill a knowledge gap with respect to evaluation use in Environment Canada. Currently the department only knows whether evaluation report recommendations have been implemented, but does not track other means by which evaluation reports are being used. The research may also be of use to other federal government departments’ evaluation functions. By better understanding how and why evaluation reports are used in EC, the research may help to improve the usefulness of program evaluations for management. From an academic perspective, the use of evaluations is a key area of research in the academic literature and there is a growing body of literature that assesses the broader use of evaluations.

Participants Selection
You are being asked to participate in this study because you have been identified as a result of consultation with project managers of the Evaluation Division, for the purposes of providing information with respect to your use of evaluation findings.

What is involved?
If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research, your involvement will include an interview of approximately 45 minutes, which may be conducted in person or by phone, with the time and location at the participant’s convenience.
An audio-recording will be made and notes will be taken during the interview.

**Inconvenience**
Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you, in the form of the 45 minute time commitment, in addition to any preparation you may require before the interview.

**Risks**
There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research.

**Benefits**
The potential benefits of your participation in this research include enhanced knowledge pertaining to evaluation use. With a more robust understanding of how evaluations are used by managers, they can be better tailored towards their intended uses; thus enhancing the usefulness of evaluation reports to program managers and decision makers.

**Voluntary Participation**
Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the study your data will not be used.

**Anonymity**
In terms of protecting your anonymity, only the principal investigator, Ryan Brown, will be able to associate interview transcripts and audio-recordings to specific individuals.

**Confidentiality**
Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected by securely storing hard copy transcripts and by securely storing password protected files on the personal drive of the principal investigator, Ryan Brown.

**Dissemination of Results**
It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others in the following ways: a project report and PowerPoint presentation submitted to University of Victoria faculty and the Evaluation Division.

**Disposal of Data**
Data from this study will be disposed of in approximately 4 months when the report has been completed. Electronic data will be erased and hard copies will be shredded.

**Contacts**
Individuals that may be contacted regarding this study include
Ryan Brown (Principal Investigator)
Phone number: 819.934.3589
Email: Ryan.Brown@ec.gc.ca
William Blois (Director, Evaluation Division, Environment Canada)
Phone number: 819.934.5984
Email: William.Blois@ec.gc.ca

Jim McDavid (Faculty supervisor)
Phone number: 250.472.4293
Email: jmcdavid@uvic.ca

In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca).

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers.

Name of Participant ___________________________ Signature ___________________________ Date ____________

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.
Appendix D – Interview Guide (Single Evaluation)

EVALUATION USE AT ENVIRONMENT CANADA

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Introduction

A study on Evaluation Use at Environment Canada (EC) is currently being conducted by EC’s Audit and Evaluation Branch (AEB) (http://www.ec.gc.ca/ae-ve/). The study should help AEB to develop a better understanding of how evaluations are used at EC and how they could be more useful, so that the Branch can better meet the needs of senior management in the department. The study covers a five-year time frame from 2006-2007 to 2010-2011, with a particular focus on the evaluation(s) with which you are most familiar.

As one component of the research, interviews are being conducted in order to obtain a range of perspectives on evaluation use from key stakeholders. The questions below serve to guide this interview process. In answering these questions, please provide concrete examples to illustrate how you use evaluations where possible. If you are unable to answer a specific question or it does not apply to you, please tell the interviewer and we will skip that question.

Please note that none of your responses will be linked to you in the subsequent report, which will present the interview findings in aggregate form only. The interview is expected to take approximately 45 to 60 minutes.

Questions: If you have any questions about the project, please do not hesitate to contact Ryan Brown, Project Lead at (819) 934-3589 or Mike Callahan, Evaluation Manager at (819) 953-0837.

It would be greatly appreciated if you could review the questions in this guide prior to the interview.
**Background**

1. What aspect(s) of the evaluation are you most familiar with (e.g. the process of conducting the evaluation, the written report, and/or the management response)?

2. Since the completion of this evaluation, approximately how many times have you had occasion to refer to the evaluation report?

3. When you think back to that evaluation report, what parts of it have been most useful to you? For instance, the program profile, logic model, key findings, lessons learned or recommendations?

**Use of Evaluation Results to Improve Programs**

4. Other than through the Management Response Action Plan, have the evaluation results been used to:
   a. Make changes to the program?
   b. Improve efficiency or effectiveness?
   c. Reorient the program?
   d. Change its size?

5. Have the evaluation results been used for the development of new programs?

6. Have the evaluation results been used to inform the improvement of other existing programs that were not the subject of this evaluation?

7. Lessons Learned documents are distributed to various programs by the Audit and Evaluation Branch after the completion of each evaluation report:
   a. Have you received any of these Lessons Learned documents?
   b. If yes, have you used these Lessons Learned (e.g. to help inform program design and improvement activities, for other purposes)?

**Use of Evaluation Results to Enhance Program-Related Learning**

8. Did the evaluation increase your awareness and understanding of the program activities or achievements?

9. Did you learn about problems/issues related to the program about which you were previously unaware and possible ways to address them?

10. Did the evaluation increase your awareness and understanding of the program’s role in the department?
11. Have you shared the evaluation results with anyone else, such as coworkers, partners/stakeholders, or funding sources?

a. If yes, what have you shared, and how have you shared this information?

b. Why did you share the results and with whom did you share them?

12. Did the evaluation stimulate and inform discussions or debate about key program issues/problems?

13. Have you used findings from this evaluation, or other evaluations, as input to contribute to:
   a. Treasury Board Submissions?
   b. Departmental Performance Reports?
   c. Strategic Reviews?
   d. Reviews by the Office of the Auditor General of Canada or the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development?
   e. Other studies, reports or plans, etc.?

**Use of Evaluation to Support Program Decisions**

14. Did the evaluation help provide support/justification for decisions that were made prior to or after completion of the evaluation?

15. Did participation in the evaluation make you a better advocate for the program (e.g. by helping you publicize and build support for the program or its continuation)?

16. Did the evaluation have any impact on the credibility of your program or the division/directorate/department?

17. Did the evaluation validate the relevance of the program?

**Usefulness of Participation in the Evaluation Process**

18. Were there any benefits from your involvement in the evaluation process itself?
   a. Clarifying thinking/concepts?
   b. Development of new skills?
   c. Other benefits?

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8 The evaluation process refers to your involvement (e.g. on the Evaluation Committee) throughout the entire process, from planning and data collection through to reporting and preparing a management response to the recommendations in the evaluation report.
19. Did the evaluation process, through communication with and feedback from the Evaluation Division during the planning and conduct of the evaluation, contribute to improvements in the understanding and/or quality of performance measurement, including:
   a. Program logic model?
   b. Performance measurement strategy?
   c. Collection and reporting of performance information?

Conclusion

20. Has this evaluation been used in any other ways? If yes, please specify.

21. Overall, how useful did you find this evaluation?
   1 Not at all useful
   2
   3 Moderately useful
   4
   5 Very useful

22. Finally, we are interested in your views on how evaluations could be more useful.
   a. Can you identify any factors that enhance the usefulness of evaluations?
   b. Do you have any suggestions for how the Audit and Evaluation Branch could make evaluations or the evaluation process more useful for you and your colleagues?

Thank you for your cooperation.
Appendix E – Interview Guide (Multiple Evaluations)

EVALUATION USE AT ENVIRONMENT CANADA

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Introduction

A study on Evaluation Use at Environment Canada (EC) is currently being conducted by EC’s Audit and Evaluation Branch (AEB) (http://www.ec.gc.ca/ae-ve/). The study should help AEB to develop a better understanding of how evaluations are used at EC and how they could be more useful, so that the Branch can better meet the needs of senior management in the department. The study covers a five-year time frame from 2006-2007 to 2010-2011, with a particular focus on the evaluation(s) with which you are most familiar.

As one component of the research, interviews are being conducted in order to obtain a range of perspectives on evaluation use from key stakeholders. The questions below serve to guide this interview process. In answering these questions, please provide concrete examples to illustrate how you use evaluations where possible. If you are unable to answer a specific question or it does not apply to you, please tell the interviewer and we will skip that question.

Please note that none of your responses will be linked to you in the subsequent report, which will present the interview findings in aggregate form only. The interview is expected to take approximately 45 to 60 minutes.

Questions: If you have any questions about the project, please do not hesitate to contact Ryan Brown, Project Lead at (819) 934-3589 or Mike Callahan, Evaluation Manager at (819) 953-0837.

It would be greatly appreciated if you could review the questions in this guide prior to the interview.
Background

1. What aspect(s) of the evaluations are you most familiar with (e.g. the process of conducting the evaluation, the written report, and/or the management response)?

2. Since the completion of the evaluations, approximately how many times have you had occasion to refer to the evaluation reports?

3. When you think back to the evaluation reports, what parts have been most useful to you? For instance, the program profile, logic model, key findings, lessons learned or recommendations?

Use of Evaluation Results to Improve Programs

4. Other than through the Management Response and Action Plan, have the evaluation results been used to:
   a. Make changes to the programs?
   b. Improve efficiency or effectiveness?
   c. Reorient the programs?
   d. Change their size?

5. Have the evaluation results been used for the development of new programs?

6. Have the evaluation results been used to inform the improvement of other existing programs that were not the subject of the evaluations?

7. Have Lessons Learned documents, distributed to various programs by the Audit and Evaluation Branch after the completion of each evaluation report, been used to help inform program design and improvement activities?

Use of Evaluation Results to Enhance Program-Related Learning

8. Did the evaluations increase your awareness and understanding of the program activities or achievements?

9. Did you learn about problems/issues related to the programs about which you were previously unaware and possible ways to address them?

10. Did the evaluations increase your awareness and understanding of the role of the programs in the department?

11. Have you shared the evaluation results with anyone else, such as coworkers, partners/stakeholders, or funding sources?
   a. If yes, what have you shared, and how have you shared this information?
   b. Why did you share the results and with whom did you share them?
12. Did the evaluations stimulate and inform discussions or debate about key program issues/problems?

13. Have you used evaluation findings as input to contribute to:
   a. Treasury Board Submissions?
   b. Departmental Performance Reports?
   c. Strategic Reviews?
   d. Reviews by the Office of the Auditor General of Canada or the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development?
   e. Other studies, reports or plans, etc.?

**Use of Evaluation to Support Program Decisions**

14. Did the evaluations help provide support for decisions that were made prior to or after completion of the evaluation?

15. Did the evaluations make you a better advocate for the programs (e.g. by helping you publicize and build support for the programs or their continuation)?

16. Did the evaluations have any impact on the credibility of your programs or the division/directorate/department?

**Usefulness of Participation in the Evaluation Process**

17. Were there any benefits from your involvement in the evaluation process\(^9\) itself?
   a. Clarifying thinking/concepts?
   b. Development of new skills?
   c. Other benefits?

18. Did the evaluation process, through communication with and feedback from the Evaluation Division during the planning and conduct of the evaluation, contribute to improvements in the understanding and/or quality of performance measurement, including:
   a. Program logic model?
   b. Performance measurement strategy?
   c. Collection and reporting of performance information?

**Conclusion**

19. Have the evaluations been used in any other ways? If yes, please specify.

20. Overall, how useful did you find the evaluations?
   1. Not at all useful

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\(^9\) The evaluation process refers to your involvement (e.g. on the Evaluation Committee) throughout the entire process, from planning and data collection through to reporting and preparing a management response to the recommendations in the evaluation report.
2
3 Moderately useful
4
5 Very useful

21. Finally, we are interested in your views on how evaluations could be more useful.
   a. Can you identify any factors that enhance the usefulness of evaluations?
   b. Do you have any suggestions for how the Audit and Evaluation Branch could make
      evaluations or the evaluation process more useful for you and your colleagues?

   Thank you for your cooperation.
Appendix F – Environment Canada Evaluation Division Interview Analysis Guidelines

In summarizing the degree of consensus in key informant interview findings, use the following guidelines:

- “A few interviewees”: less than 25 per cent;
- “A minority of interviewees”: 25 to 44 per cent;
- “Approximately half of interviewees”: 45 to 55 per cent;
- “A majority of interviewees”: 56 to 75 per cent;
- “Most interviewees”: 76 per cent to 94 per cent; and
- “Almost all interviewees”: 95 per cent or more.