Sustainability-inclusive evaluation: Why we need it and how to do it

A Footprint Evaluation Guide

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This guidance

This guidance aims to support those who are doing or overseeing evaluations to include environmental sustainability in ways that are feasible and useful.

This guidance has been produced by the Footprint Evaluation Initiative, with support from the Global Evaluation Initiative.

It draws on our work on this issue over the past three years, including proof-of-concept evaluations that have been undertaken.

It also draws on insights, tools and examples from others' work. Full acknowledgements are at the end.

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Purpose of the guidance

The guidance is intended to support people who are planning, managing or conducting evaluations, especially within national and sub-national governments, to include environmental sustainability, even when this is not a stated objective of the program or policy. Environmental sustainability includes consideration of climate change, biodiversity, pollution, over-exploitation of natural resources, invasive species, and deforestation.

The guidance sets out ways to embed environmental sustainability in evaluation in ways that are feasible and useful. Usefulness includes direct, instrumental use, to inform specific decisions and actions. It also includes wider conceptual use - understanding the value of natural systems, and the coupling between environment and equity.

The guidance is intended to be further developed as more organizations take on this challenge and share their learnings and examples. Feedback on this document is welcome and can be sent to hello@betterevaluation.org

Structure of the guidance

The guidance begins by explaining why environmental sustainability needs to be included in all evaluations, and ways to get it on the agenda for evaluation. It then steps through the usual processes of planning, managing and conducting an evaluation. These processes might not be undertaken in this linear order and might involve iterations. Sources and examples are included throughout. Additional resources are listed at the end, including links to networks and organizations working on these issues.

Footprint Evaluation Initiative

The Footprint Evaluation initiative aims to embed consideration of environmental sustainability in all evaluations and monitoring systems, not only those with explicit environmental objectives.

The Footprint Evaluation Initiative is working with organisations to develop guidance, tools, processes, examples, curated resources and workshops for evaluators and those who commission evaluations so that all evaluations are 'sustainability-inclusive' – include environmental sustainability systematically, every time.

The Footprint Evaluation Initiative is not developing a specific methodology or a tightly prescribed approach but an emerging set of practices and principles developed through ongoing international collaboration and adaptation to suit different contexts.

The Footprint Evaluation Initiative team – (alphabetically): Jane Davidson, Alice Macfarlan, Patricia Rogers, Andy Rowe and Kaye Stevens

The challenge that evaluation needs to respond to

2030 is looming.

The clock is ticking for critical tipping points in coupled human and natural systems.

Governments and other organisations already recognise this

This is why all countries have signed up to Sustainable Development Goals, which include attention to the health of natural systems, why international commitments have been developed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, reduce pollution and protect biodiversity, and why national and organisational policies, commitments and targets focus on ecosystems health, pollution, biodiversity and green growth.

But environmental sustainability is not yet embedded into most evaluations

Evaluations still mostly focus on planned activities and intended outcomes and impacts. Human actions including development initiatives often systematically harm natural systems. Evaluations sometimes consider human systems side effects but typically ignore or sideline the significant environmental impacts of non-environmental programs and policies.

By providing incomplete evidence to inform decisions, evaluation inadvertently contributes to the ongoing destruction of natural systems, rather than supporting their protection and recovery.

Some organisations already recognise this and are moving for evaluations of all programs to include environmental sustainability. But there is little guidance on how to do this in ways that are useful and feasible.

Nature is in danger, and this puts coupled human systems in danger too

Nature faces urgent risks in terms of climate change, biodiversity decline, pollution, deforestation, over-exploitation of water, and invasive species. These threaten the natural systems which underpin human well-being. Without healthy natural systems, poverty, hunger, and violence will increase.

Making sustainability-inclusive evaluation feasible and useful

Evaluation practices and methods need to move beyond an intervention-centric focus where projects are evaluated in isolation against their internal logic without considering the environmental.

"Adapting evaluation to a systems orientation that considers human and natural systems as actively and dynamically coupled is a significant challenge that will transform evaluation and can position it to be a useful contributor to thought and action in sustaining life on Earth."

(Rowe, 2019)

Emphasize up-front evaluative activity

Focus more resources and attention to 'good enough' evaluation before and during programs and less on end-of-program evaluations.

Address environmental sustainability in framing all evaluations

Include direct references in Terms of Reference, evaluation criteria, and key evaluation questions.

Identify nexus connections among human and natural systems

To help to identify relevant interests, potential impacts and possible evidence sources.

Engage relevant interests and natural systems knowledges

Support this with good interdisciplinary processes and boundary spanners to inform decisions about the evaluation focus, methods and conclusions.

Focus on a small number of key environmental issues

Agree on a few key environmental issues and address them well, rather than seeking to include everything and measure everything.

When time is of the essence, extrapolate from existing knowledge bases to develop estimated and projected impacts

This can help ensure that evaluations are feasible and produce credible, valid conclusions about projected impacts early enough to inform action.

Draw clear, valid evaluative conclusions to evaluate environmental sustainability and equity together

Clearly communicating how beneficial or detrimental environmental impacts are helps convey seriousness and urgency and galvanize action.

Do what you can with the resources you have and can get

Political, community and popular awareness of sustainability and climate crises is now pervasive and strong. Evaluation needs to catch up.

Connect with other evaluators

Footprint Evaluation discussion group

Blue Marble discussion group

Some evaluation associations have environmental interest groups, or individual members, that can provide peer support.

There is an urgent need for evaluators to address environmental sustainability in all evaluations.

Every single policy, programme, project, and intervention couples with natural systems in some way.

Everything we do has to help restore the natural environment and put systems and structures in place that stop harm from occurring.

You don't have to be an environmental expert or have done a course on how to do this, you will learn through doing. Over time your knowledge and networks will grow.

It's important to start - and to keep going.

It may not always be possible to follow all the processes suggested in this guide, but this doesn't mean that you can't include environmental sustainability in your evaluation. For example, the evaluation of a National Private Sector Development Case Study conducted by the Footprint Evaluation Initiative team during the Covid-19 pandemic was limited by time and resources.

It was not possible to physically visit the place, to engage with relevant interests, to consider all elements of the strategy, or to collect primary data. Despite these limitations, including environmental sustainability in the mid-term review raised awareness of environmental issues and informed decisions about revisions to the strategy. As your networks and knowledge grow, you will have better access to ways of addressing sustainability in all evaluations.

Make a start and build on it

Footprint Evaluation
Thought experiments

Thinking through how to embed environmental concerns into evaluation.

April 2022 | E. Jane Davidson, Dugan Fraser, Patricia Rogers, Andy Rowe, Kaye Stevens

BetterEvaluation   GEI

Thought experiments can be a useful starting point

This involves revisiting a completed evaluation and thinking through how it might have included environmental sustainability – and whether this might have added value. See the Footprint Evaluation Thought Experiments report for ideas about how to do this.

Learn more

Follow up additional resources at the end of this guidance. Join in online discussions about sustainability-inclusive evaluation.

Try it out

Make sure the stated purposes, Key Evaluation Questions and evaluation criteria include environmental sustainability.

Identify nexus between human and natural systems. Identify and engage relevant interests, expertise and knowledge. Identify a few big issues.

Draw on relevant evidence to identify potential, estimated and projected impacts. Develop clear evaluative conclusions using the typology and/or the equity-sustainability matrix.

Take it further

Review the feasibility and utility of the evaluation and identify how the process can be improved next time.

www.betterevaluation.org/tools-resources/footprint-evaluation-thought-experiments
www.betterevaluation.org/tools-resources/key-evaluation-questions-keqs-guide-footprint-evaluations

Document and share what you have learned

We are all building knowledge together about how to do this in different contexts; there is no One Right Way!

Share examples of evaluations where you have included environmental sustainability – document them, present them at evaluation conferences, discuss them with colleagues and in virtual discussion groups.

Together we can learn more about how to do this for different types of evaluations, of different types of programs and policies, and in different contexts.

While the principles outlined in this guidance are intended to apply to all evaluations, how they will be operationalized will depend on the particular situation, including the time and other resources available for the evaluation, and the level of existing evidence that can be drawn on. It is therefore important for everyone to share examples of how they have included environmental sustainability in evaluations to support ongoing learning.

We invite you to engage and share what you learn about making evaluation sustainability inclusive by connecting through www.betterevaluation.org/footprint-evaluation

2. Why it matters

Why environmental sustainability is critical and urgent

What we mean by environmental sustainability

The ethics and validity of including environmental sustainability in all evaluations

Sustainability and equity are coupled

Why environmental sustainability is critical and urgent

"Rising temperatures are fueling environmental degradation, natural disasters, weather extremes, food and water insecurity, economic disruption, conflict, and terrorism. Sea levels are rising, the Arctic is melting, coral reefs are dying, oceans are acidifying, and forests are burning. It is clear that business as usual is not good enough. As the infinite cost of climate change reaches irreversible highs, now is the time for bold collective action."

(UN Secretary-General 2020)

Code red for the planet (and humanity)

"…the planet is in the midst of a biodiversity and climate crisis, and that **we have a last chance to act**. This goes beyond conservation. A nature-positive future needs transformative - game changing - shifts in how we produce, how we consume, how we govern, and what we finance."

(Marco Lambertini, Director General, WWF International)

The state of the planet is broken

"**Humanity is waging war on nature**. Nature always strikes back – and it is already doing so with growing force and fury. The fallout of the assault on our planet is impeding our efforts to eliminate poverty and imperiling food security. And it is making our work for peace even more difficult, as the disruptions drive instability, displacement and conflict."

(UN Secretary-General 2022)

Act with urgency – and hope

"This is a moment of truth for people and planet alike. … We cannot go back to the old normal of inequality, injustice and heedless dominion over the Earth. Instead we must step towards a safer, more sustainable and equitable path. The door is open; the solutions are there. **Now is the time to transform humankind's relationship with the natural world – and with each other**. And we must do so together. Solidarity is humanity. Solidarity is survival."

(UN Secretary-General 2022)

https://www.un.org/en/un75/climate-crisis-race-we-can-win
https://www.wwf.org.uk/our-reports/living-planet-report-2022
https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/un-secretary-general-speaks-state-planet

What we mean by environmental sustainability

Environmental sustainability is not just about preserving the natural environment and minimising any further harm.

We now have extremely damaged natural systems that need to be restored - everything we do has to help restore the natural environment and put the systems and structures in place that stop the harm from occurring.

"Sustainable" development means development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

IPCC (2018) defines sustainability as a dynamic process that guarantees the persistence of natural and human systems in an equitable manner.

In other words, sustainability is about pursuing goals for human systems (such as equity, food security) while preserving (or restoring degraded) natural systems.

Climate change is a major threat to environmental sustainability. However environmental sustainability is also threatened by human actions that have depleted resources, destroyed habitats, disrupted ecosystems, reduced biodiversity and polluted the atmosphere, oceans and rivers.

The ethics and validity of including environmental sustainability in all evaluations

Evaluation's role is to inform sound, evidence-based decision making. Decisions that deliver value for human systems but result in damage to natural systems (or vice versa) are not good decisions.

For evaluation to be relevant and useful (and get people's attention), it must inform decisions that take account both human and natural systems.

Most evaluations of environmental programs don't look at the human systems at all and most evaluations of human systems change efforts don't consider the natural system.

We need decision makers to take account of human and natural systems in every decision they make. Our role as evaluators is to help them do that.

Many evaluation associations and organizations have adopted evaluation principles and standards which explicitly refer to environmental sustainability and/or equity. For example:

Canadian Evaluation Society:

"Sustainability: We take a leader role in sustainability, building opportunities to align work in diverse sectors in support of sustainability, and incorporating increasingly sustainable practices as an organization. Common Good and Equity: Evaluators strive to contribute to the common good and advancement of an equitable and just society." (one of three guiding principles embedded across CES strategic priorities)

African Evaluation Principles:

"Foster the evaluation of sustainability in keeping with key international agreements and the need for stewardship of nature. Consider whether and if so, how the evaluation can support global priorities such as the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; help prepare Africa for disruptions such as the Covid-19 pandemic, climate change, the negative effects of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, and many others. Strive to balance the wellbeing of communities and societies with the wellbeing of nature."
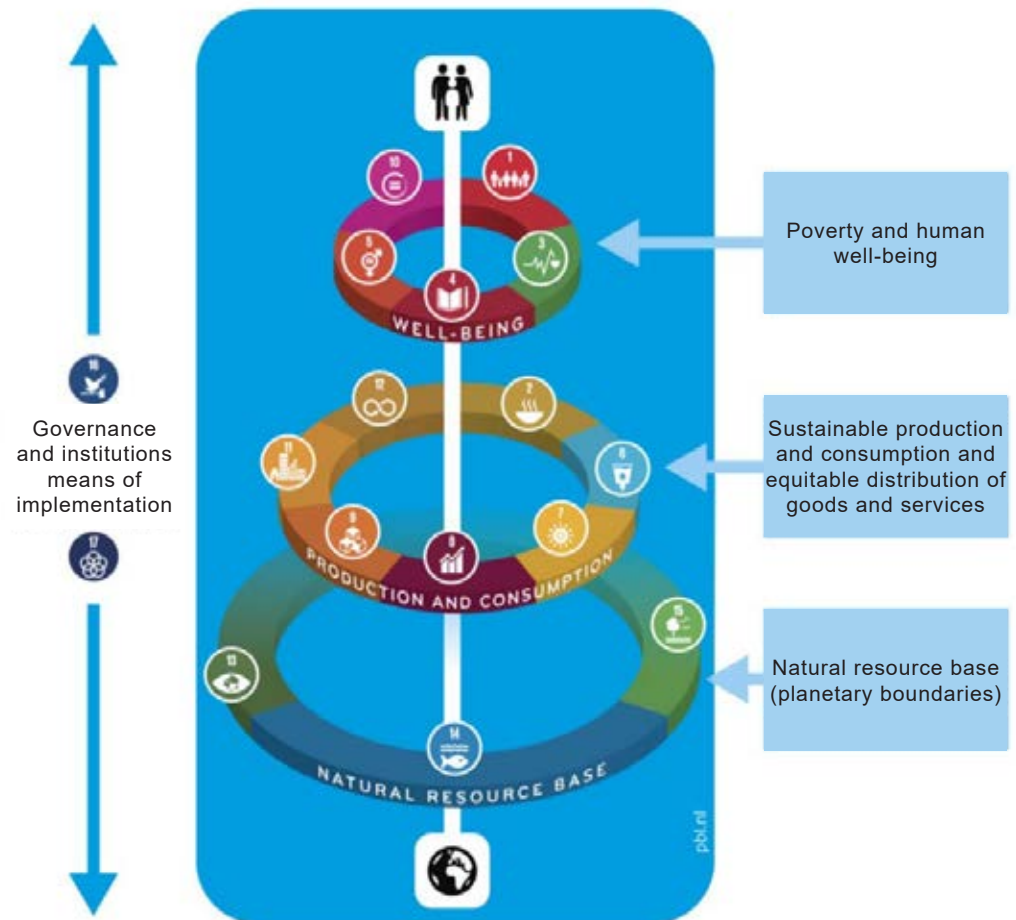
https://www.eval.org/About/Guiding-Principles
https://afrea.org/AEP/new/The-African-Evaluation-Principles.pdf

Sustainability and equity are coupled

It is not a choice between achieving economic and social goals and protecting nature – we must find ways of doing both and move from a mindset of 'either/or' to 'both/and'.

Evidence points to the many ways equity and environmental sustainability are intertwined (for example, the 2014 IPCC report on Sustainable Development and Equity; the 2022 IPCC Summary for Policymakers). The consequences of environmental harm, such as pollution and climate change or losing access to traditional territories, disproportionately affect people who are marginalised and disadvantaged.

Nature is essential for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. However ⋯ current negative trends in biodiversity and ecosystems will undermine progress towards 80 per cent of the assessed targets of goals related to poverty, hunger, health, water, cities, climate, oceans and land (IPBES, 2019).

Classification and clustering of SDGs

Governance and institutions means of implementation

Poverty and human well-being

Sustainable production and consumption and equitable distribution of goods and services

Natural resource base (planetary boundaries)

Source: PBL

Source: Adapted from PBL (2017) and Lucas et al. (2016)

UNDP (2023) From cacophony to harmony: The world has a new framework to restore nature. It's time to put the agreement into action. https://www.undp.org/from-cacophony-to-harmony
IPBES (2019): https://www.ipbes.net/global-assessment
Diagram: Stockholm Resilience Centre

3. Connect evaluation to action

Address environmental sustainability in all types of evaluation and evaluative processes

Embed in evaluation processes and decision points

Connect to key decisions points in the program cycle

Promote conceptual use of evaluation

Address environmental sustainability in all types of evaluation and evaluative processes

It is not enough to include environmental sustainability in end of project evaluations.

It needs to be included in earlier decisions and actions – many of which may not involve evaluators – especially choosing and designing projects and programs and informing how they are implemented.

Every type of monitoring and evaluation can inform important decisions and actions by including consideration of environmental sustainability. There is a need to prioritise timely evaluations and rapid use of evaluation findings (ex ante evaluation, evaluative monitoring, real-time evaluation) given the urgency of current environmental crises and evaluation and project lead-times.

It will often be evident that a proposed intervention is highly likely to do harm to the environment.

Timely, good enough advice is more important than advice that is detailed and precise but too late to prevent further harm.

Type of evaluative activity	Informing
Before implementation: Ex ante impact evaluation; Design evaluation	• Choice between options • Decision whether or not to invest/proceed/adapt • Design of intervention to achieve objectives and manage risks
During implementation: Monitoring systems; Process evaluation Real-time evaluation; Evaluative inquiry as part of implementation; Developmental evaluation	• Responsive management if inadequate compliance with risk mitigation processes or lack of effectiveness • Adaptive management to address emerging risks or opportunities
After implementation: Impact evaluation; Systematic review	• Decisions about continuation or scaling up; • Design of further interventions

Embed in evaluation processes and decision points

Environmental sustainability needs to be explicitly included in whatever processes and structures are used for evaluations.

Terms of Reference

Include reference to environmental sustainability in the purposes of the evaluation.

Incorporate sustainability in evaluation criteria.

Include reference to environmental sustainability in Key Evaluation Questions.

Request for Proposal

In selection criteria for evaluation teams include reference to:

- environmental technical expertise and experience or capacity to work with diverse knowledges
- expertise and experience in synthesising diverse evidence
- expertise and evidence in facilitating consensual win-win recommendations for action

Evaluation governance

Include interests relevant to environmental sustainability, including Indigenous and local communities, in steering committees and/or advisory groups.

Include expertise related to environmental knowledge, including where applicable Indigenous and local knowledge, in advisory groups.

Connect to key decision points in the program cycle

It is important that evidence about environmental sustainability is formally included in decision making processes.

Reviewing budget proposals

Processes used to review, screen and prioritise proposals for new investments need to draw on early evaluative evidence that includes environmental sustainability.

Designing programs

Evaluative evidence needs to be used to inform design choices, especially in terms of construction and location of new facilities, as well as operation choices.

For example, strategies to manage identified environmental risks such as soil and water pollution, need to be built into how facilities are designed and constructed.

Monitoring and implementation

Evaluative evidence early in the program cycle needs to be used to inform the design of monitoring systems and management of implementation.

Strategies to manage identified environmental risks need to be monitored for compliance and for effectiveness in reducing or removing these risks and averting environmental harm.

Promote conceptual use of evaluation

Evaluations need to promote transformations in the way people think about the environment and its importance for decisions.

In addition to instrumental use, which informs specific decisions and actions about the current evaluand, evaluations can have important conceptual use – changing thinking which will inform future decisions about this and other evaluands.

Sustainability-inclusive evaluation needs to help decision makers understand and adopt the worldview and mindsets they will need to lead their organizations and sectors away from socially and ecologically harmful practices and to repair past harm to people and nature.

Conceptual use is crucial for both immediate and enduring changes in the ways things are done.

We need decision makers to have "light bulb moments" which mean they will never again design or lead initiatives that fail to consider coupled human and natural systems.

4. Get environmental sustainability on the agenda for evaluation

OECD-DAC criteria

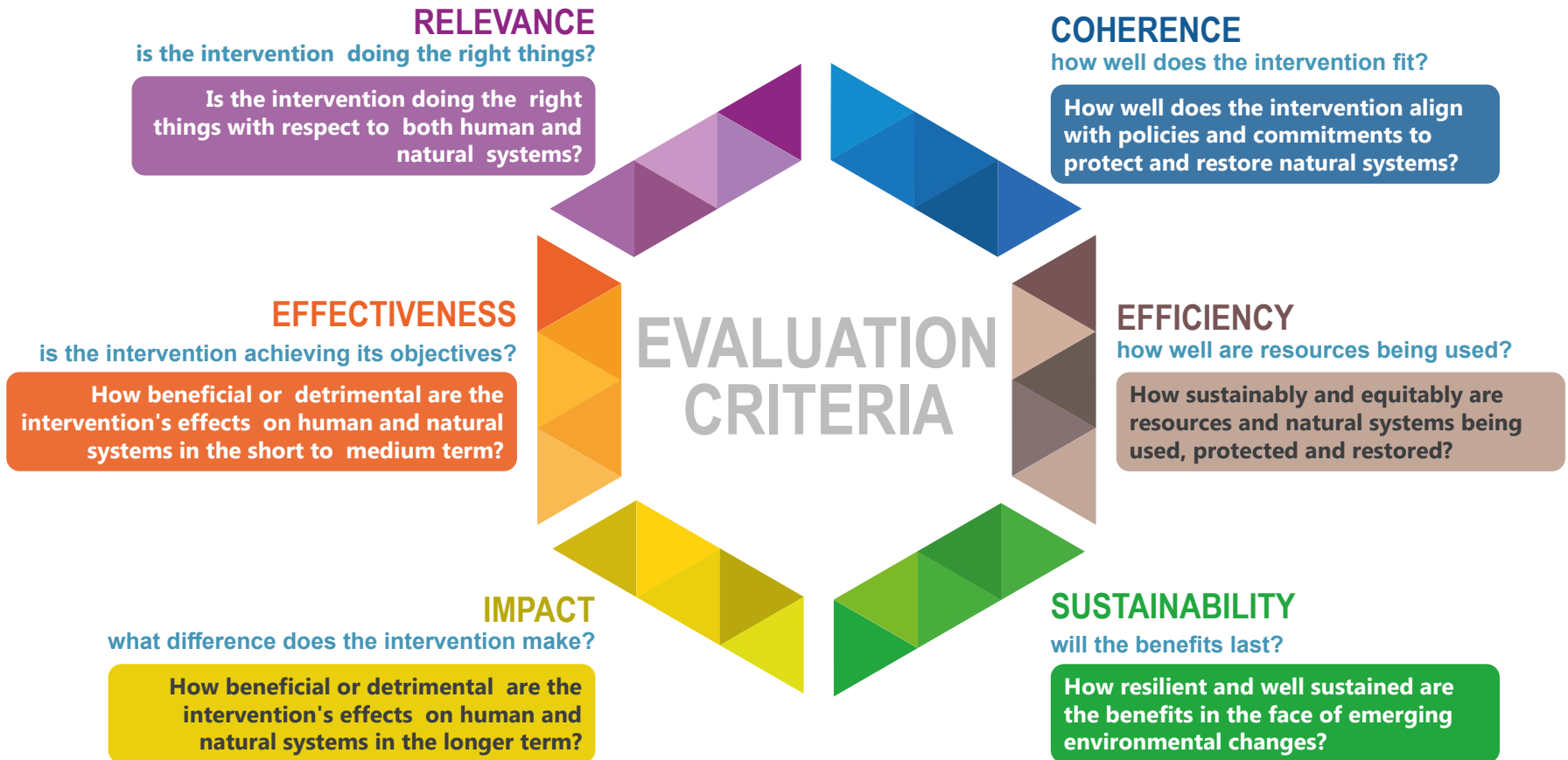Existing environmental policies and commitments

Specific criteria (SAMEA)

Key Evaluation Questions (KEQs)

OECD DAC criteria

The OECD DAC criteria each include consideration of environmental sustainability and can provide a useful rationale for including it in the scope of an evaluation.

The Footprint Evaluation guide Addressing environmental sustainability through the OECD DAC Criteria for Evaluation of Development Assistance is based on existing guidance produced by OECD DAC (OECD, 2021) with additional commentary from the members of the Footprint Evaluation Initiative. The guide discusses how the six evaluation criteria of the OECD DAC can be used to get environmental sustainability on the agenda for evaluations and monitoring.

RELEVANCE
is the intervention doing the right things?

Is the intervention doing the right things with respect to both human and natural systems?

COHERENCE
how well does the intervention fit?

How well does the intervention align with policies and commitments to protect and restore natural systems?

EFFECTIVENESS
is the intervention achieving its objectives?

How beneficial or detrimental are the intervention's effects on human and natural systems in the short to medium term?

EVALUATION CRITERIA

EFFICIENCY
how well are resources being used?

How sustainably and equitably are resources and natural systems being used, protected and restored?

IMPACT
what difference does the intervention make?

How beneficial or detrimental are the intervention's effects on human and natural systems in the longer term?

SUSTAINABILITY
will the benefits last?

How resilient and well sustained are the benefits in the face of emerging environmental changes?

Diagram: Footprint Evaluation Initiative 2022
www.betterevaluation.org/tools-resources/addressing-environmental-sustainability-through-oecd-dac-criteria-for-evaluation-development

Existing environmental policies and commitments

Coherence, a newer criterion in the OECD DAC framework, refers to the alignment of an intervention with existing policies and programs.

Consider how well the intervention aligns with policies and commitments to protect and restore natural systems.

International commitments

Countries have committed to multiple international environmental agreements such as: Biodiversity, Climate Change, Desertification, Endangered Species, Hazardous Wastes, Marine Life Conservation, Ozone Layer Protection, Wetlands and many others.

Resource: The World Factbook lists the international environmental agreements and conventions that a country is a party to or has signed up to but not yet ratified. Use this simple step by step guide to using The World Fact Book to identify environmental commitments.

National and sub-national policies and commitments

National policies and strategies often include environmental commitments, especially:

- National Development Plans
- Green Growth Strategies

Regional or local governments also make environmental commitments in areas such as land use, waste management, transport

Organisational commitments

Organisational strategic plans are likely to include environmental targets and risk management plans.

www.betterevaluation.org/tools-resources/guide-using-world-factbook-find-countrys-international-environmental-agreements

Specific criteria (SAMEA)

Some governments and organisations have introduced guidelines for the inclusion of environmental sustainability in evaluations.

Example: The South African government has introduced a new evaluation criterion of climate and ecosystems health and guidance that explains why this is necessary and how to address it in commissioning, designing and undertaking evaluations.

planning, monitoring & evaluation
Department:
Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DPME Evaluation Guideline 2.2.22

Guidelines for applying the climate and ecosystems health criterion in the commissioning, design and implementation of evaluations

Created: 19 July 2022

Contents

https://www.samea.org.za/summernotefile/dump?summernotefile_id=229

Key Evaluation Questions (KEQs)

The Footprint Evaluation Initiative's key evaluation questions (KEQs) are designed to support the inclusion of environmental sustainability by embedding consideration of the environment in each evaluation question rather than adding environmental considerations as a standalone question.

Resource: Key Evaluation Questions to guide footprint evaluations is a guide to embedding environmental sustainability in evaluation KEQs.

This list of KEQs has been designed so that it can apply in any sector, type of evaluand, level of analysis, etc.

The list is deliberately generic; each evaluation team should rewrite/interpret the questions for the particular sector, context, culture, population/community, evaluand, and evaluation audience, using wording that makes sense for that application.

1.	**Relevance & coherence**	How relevant is the evaluand to the issues facing the population/sector and the natural environment? And how well does it complement other related efforts in the context?
2.	**Design & adaption**	How well does the design address the strengths, needs, and aspirations of both human and natural systems – in ways that are equitable, restorative, and enable both to thrive?
3.	**Implementation**	How well has the evaluand been implemented so that the right people and natural systems elements receive what is most needed at the right times and places and in the right ways?
4.	**Outcomes and impacts**	How good, valuable, and important are the outcomes and impacts on both human and natural systems, particularly where equity and/or previous harm needed to be addressed?
5.	**Patterns, outliers & links**	How did the evaluand influence change – and then how did that change continue to unfold – in the relevant coupled human systems? Where, when, for whom, and under what conditions did we see the most and least valuable outcomes? Why?
6.	**Durability**	How resilient and durable are the changes that the evaluand has contributed to, and how well are they likely to last in the face of emerging environmental and other changes?
7.	**Overall value**	How good, valuable, or worthwhile is the evaluand overall, given its relevance and coherence, design and implementation, the value of its outcomes and impacts, their durability, and what it cost to achieve them?

5. Know the place and nexus

Know the place

Understand nexus

Recognise different temporal and spatial scales

Strategies to know the place

Know the place

Understanding (or 'knowing') the place is essential - whether the 'place' is the site of a project, program, strategy or a policy. There are often strong advantages from going to the place during the evaluation design phase, as well as during data collection.

Place needs to be understood as more than a simple 'context' where influencing factors can be found. It is the connections between human and natural systems, and how these are affected by and affect the intervention, that provide the human and natural landscape for the intervention and evaluation.

A place is where the action is, where projects, plans, strategies, policies, or other types of interventions are put in motion. At those places human and natural systems will always couple because human systems draw from, deposit to, and rely upon natural systems; and because natural systems everywhere are affected by human actions.

Places are not just points on a map, they are locales made up of natural and social attributes as understood by the many interests in a place.

Social attributes are facets of a place shaped by human influence and interactions, including its culture, economic activities, traditions, governance structures, population dynamics, and issues surrounding equity, race, gender, and legal systems.

Natural attributes pertain to the environment and landscape of a place - such as climate, terrain, ecosystems, the variety of life forms present (biodiversity), physical properties such as soils, and whether the area is land-based (terrestrial) or water-based (marine) or atmospheric.

Nexus is where important social and natural attributes are shaped by the coupling of human and natural systems.

Understand Nexus

The concept of nexus is central to including environmental sustainability in evaluation.

Nexus refers to the causal connections from coupling of human and natural systems.

All interventions engage both human and natural systems.

Nexus couplings can include:

- Causal interactions where human actions affect natural systems

- Causal interactions where natural systems have impacts on human systems

- Interdependencies, where human and natural systems depend on and affect each other

An example of interdependencies is restoring wetlands, which benefits both natural systems (increased and improved wildlife habitat) and human systems (filtering, cleaning and storing water for use by urban human populations, flood reduction).

Benefits for one system can also come at the cost of the other, for example, extractive activities such as logging or mining damage natural systems but can benefit human systems, unless managed with a win-win mindset.

Nexus interactions between human and natural systems are often complex and dynamic, entangling systems with multiple nexus points, including reciprocal effects and feedback loops. Nexus relationships are often non-linear and can involve thresholds, surprises and legacy effects. The systems that come together at nexus will have different temporal and spatial scales.

Recognise different temporal and spatial scales

Perceptions of place shape the scope of an evaluation.

A concept of 'place', that includes physical and social attributes as well as differing temporal and spatial scales is crucial for ensuring our evaluations are relevant, valid and useful.

When conducting sustainability-inclusive evaluations, it's crucial to recognize the differing temporal and spatial scales of human and natural systems. If an evaluation only focuses on the human system's spatial boundaries and timeframes, it will overlook crucial processes and impacts within the natural system.

Temporal scales refer to the duration over which processes or events occur.

In human systems, this might be short-term, like the span of a project or a political term. In natural systems, it could range from events over a season, like annual migrations, to processes spanning decades or centuries, such as forest growth or glacier retreat.

Spatial scales refer to the physical space or area of interest.

Human-defined spatial scales often align with societal constructs and consider areas like neighborhoods, cities, or nations. Natural scales, on the other hand, might consider the expanse of a river, a mountain range, or an entire coastal area.

Human and natural systems can couple even if they are physically far apart. This is particularly true when elements like air and water, which can carry effects across large expanses, come into play. For example, the runoff from agriculture, laden with harmful elements like metals and nutrients, can create 'dead zones' or toxicity in distant water bodies. As with spatial scales, relevant temporal scales can range widely from very short to very long. However there will usually be solid relevant science knowledge to support evaluative judgements on longer term outcomes yet to take place.

Strategies to know the place

Going to the site allows direct observation of interactions between human and natural systems and engagement with different interests.

It also enables sharing stories and other ways of learning about the place from Indigenous and local communities and others.

How can we go to the place?

If it is not possible to physically go to the place, alternatives are to visit 'virtually' through a facilitated video call, creative use of GIS or by including interests with knowledge of the place in the evaluation team.

Whether physically or virtually, the place should be visited during the evaluation design phase to ensure the inclusion of nexus connections and the place in the evaluation.

For global, regional or national interventions, multi-site programs and policies, thoughtful sampling of 'places' is required to represent human and natural systems.

Work with relevant interests to know the place

As a simple test of our knowledge of place, all interests should recognise in the description of place the aspects of the place that to them are most critical – the non-negotiable elements of a place.

6. Identify and engage natural systems interests and knowledges

Identify and engage human systems and natural systems interests

Identify and engage boundary spanners

Involve relevant knowledge and perspectives in all stages of the evaluation

Respectfully manage different interests, knowledges and priorities

Learn from Indigenous and local knowledge

Access environmental technical knowledge

Make technical concepts accessible

Identify and engage human systems and natural systems interests

Sustainability-inclusive evaluations need to go beyond the usual processes of stakeholder engagement to identify and engage a wider range of interests, including both human and natural systems.

Most evaluations include a process of identifying interested parties and intended beneficiaries. These stakeholders are mainly representatives of interests in the human system.

Sustainability-inclusive evaluations need to include representatives of natural systems interests as well as human systems interests. An 'interest' is a representative of any aspect of natural or human systems that can affect success of the intervention or could be affected by the intervention.

Engagement in the evaluation needs to be widened to include interests who may not be strongly connected with the evaluated intervention, but have an interest in the place, which will be affected by the intervention or might affect it. These interests may not otherwise have a voice in the evaluation.

People with an interest in the evaluation are likely to come from diverse backgrounds and have different ways of understanding and talking about their interests, for example local communities, Indigenous people, people implementing programs, environmentalists and evaluators.

Identify and engage boundary spanners

Boundary spanners are individuals or organisations that can help evaluation teams "span" disciplines, types of knowledge (e.g., scientific, practical, and traditional), and the links between knowledge and action.

A function of boundary spanners is to identify, access, and translate needed knowledge and interests to help ensure that the evaluation remains credible and feasible.

A challenge is how to access the necessary knowledge of natural systems.

A boundary spanner will span the social and natural divide, bringing to the evaluation mature expertise from natural sciences and contributing to the design and implementation of the evaluation, for example through identification of nexus settings and of the character of these settings, suggesting appropriate technical literature and sources and assisting and facilitating the evaluators in accessing this knowledge.

Boundary spanners are a good way to address knowledge gaps such as nexus connections. Boundary spanners have relevant knowledge (e.g. of wetlands) and are able to connect the evaluation to sources and expertise.

Involve relevant knowledge and perspectives in all stages of the evaluation

Interests encompass both human and natural systems – sustainability-inclusive evaluations need to understand implications for both systems.

Relevant knowledge perspectives are important at all stages of the evaluation process:

- Framing the evaluation

- Evaluation planning – including identifying the big issues and understanding the place, choosing sampling methods

- Collecting evidence (from primary and/or secondary sources)

- Making sense of the evidence

- Communicating and responding to evidence

People representing different interests may have value to contribute to the evaluation design, be sources of evidence (for example, indigenous knowledge, local knowledge, environmental science expertise) and important in making sense of diverse evidence.

Support communication among people with different types of knowledge, expertise and interests when framing and conducting the evaluation and communicating findings.

The contributions of boundary spanners can be helpful in developing shared understanding about what matters to different interests.

This strong shared understanding is essential for the development of win-win responses to identified problems that are cognizant of natural systems as well as human systems.

Respectfully manage different interests, knowledges and priorities

All participants need to respect the purpose of the evaluation and the importance of collaboration in identifying and assessing environmental effects.

It is important to recognise in thought and practice that multiple knowledges will apply and contribute value to the evaluation. The knowledge sources are often associated with a particular interest, for example environmental organisations might prioritise conservation while for-profit interests prioritise rights to extract natural resources and minimize regulatory control, local community members might prioritise livelihoods or community access.

The methods and values of different interests are not necessarily shared nor respected by some of the other interests. In particular, the validity of local knowledge and Indigenous knowledge is often disputed without justification.

Sometimes there is very solid and accepted knowledge, for example about the settling of heavy metals from a tannery or the contribution of nitrates to eutrophication in water bodies. Other times there is validity to the priorities and knowledges of different interests, often about what is a tolerable level of effect.

It is important that evaluative assessments consider the relevant knowledge of all interests. This often requires a facilitative consensus-seeking process.

Agreement that the intervention must cause "no net harm" to the environment will move deliberations towards win-win solutions rather than past either/or rationales that supported the need for some harm to natural systems.

Learn from local and Indigenous knowledge

Those who are indigenous to or have a long history with the area often have wisdom developed over many generations.

Indigenous data sovereignty and Indigenous data governance need to be respected.

Who knows the place well?

Often important features and implications of coupled systems are more apparent "close to the action": where adaptation occurs because of the specifics of ecosystems, how interventions are actually applied, and the way that these systems couple.

Local knowledge holders can be valuable. They are often involved with local community or conservation organisations, Indigenous Elders, local for-profit operators, government. There are usually multiple interests that can be relevant and beneficial to engage.

Resources:

Integrating Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge of land into land management through Indigenous-academic partnerships (Gordon, H. S. J., Ross, J. A., Bauer-Armstrong, C., Moreno, M., Byington, R., & Bowman, N., 2023)

- This resource explains how partnerships can integrate Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge (Indigenous TEK) with Western land management practices and how Indigenous land management partnerships address environmental justice issues and create meaningful opportunities to address historical inequities.

Bremner, L. and Lee, L. (2023) Knowing place through story.

- This BetterEvaluation blog focuses on the value of using stories to understand place, and explores a range of methods to do this.

www.researchgate.net/publication/365964253_Integrating_Indigenous_Traditional_Ecological_Knowledge_of_land_into_land_management_through_Indigenous-academic_partnerships
www.betterevaluation.org/blog/knowing-place-through-story

Access environmental technical knowledge

Evaluators of non-environmental programs don't need to become environmental experts – but they do need access to technical advice or review

Technical knowledge can be found in different forms such as people, organisations, or materials

It might be possible to create a formal structure to access technical knowledge. This might be in the form of including a person with environmental expertise as a member of the evaluation team, as a contributor, as an advisor directly to the team, or as a member of an advisory group who meets formally with the evaluation team and the evaluation commissioners.

Technical knowledge may be available from people in relevant government departments, researchers at universities and other research organisations, experts already engaged to provide advice to government, Elders or community science organisations.

These people might have expertise relating to understanding nexus and identified environmental risks or particular sectors involved in the evaluation

Advice can also come in the form of relevant guidance materials, project documents and completed environmental assessments., including formal environmental impact assessments.

Example:

The Uganda Mid-Term Review of the National Strategy for Private Sector Development drew on UNIDO guidelines for industrial parks and Environmental Impact Assessments that had been completed for specific industrial parks. These provided clear and evidence-based guidance on the sorts of structures and processes needed to manage environmental risks, These could have informed data collection and review of monitoring systems.

www.betterevaluation.org/tools-resources/footprint-evaluation-case-study-evaluation-environmental-sustainability-aspects-national-strategy

Make technical concepts accessible

As with evaluation in human systems, unfamiliar environmental terminology and a lack of understanding of key concepts can make it difficult for non-technical people to engage in the evaluation process or make use of the findings

Support learning during the evaluation process

This might include providing explanations of key terms and materials to participants during their engagement.

For example, some people think that because a difference of 1.5 degrees is trivial when comparing daily temperatures, it is also not important for projected changes to global average temperatures.

Ensure evaluation processes and reporting are accessible

This can include using non-specialist language, providing links to 'explainers' and terminology guides.

There are a number of glossaries of environmental sustainability, for example: Australia's State of the Environment 2021 report and a New Zealand Sustainable Business Network glossary.

https://soe.dcceew.gov.au/about-soe/glossary
https://sustainable.org.nz/learn/tools-resources/glossary-of-sustainability/

7. Expand the theory of change to include natural systems

Identify nexus couplings and potential effects

Questions to identify nexus issues

Expand theories of change to include natural systems

Use systems concepts

Choose a small number of key issues

Possible frameworks to help identify nexus and key issues

Resource: Planetary Boundaries

Resource: Ecosystem services

Resource: Lifecycle stages

Resource: Science Based Targets for Nature

Identify nexus couplings and potential effects

As nexus couplings are identified (through knowing the place and engaging diverse interests), the reach of the intervention expands to incorporate coupled systems that might be strongly impacted by the intervention. This requires updating theories of change.

This guidance directs evaluators to focus on the main natural systems issues so the evaluation does not become unwieldly.

When identifying nexus couplings (see 'Understand nexus' on page 28), it is important to look for temporal and spatial boundaries of natural systems rather than defaulting to geopolitical or administrative spatial boundaries and human time boundaries such as introduced by annual performance reporting.

For example, human systems might operate within administrative boundaries but effects on natural systems will usually be at least at the level of ecosystems and often broader.

Recognition of coupled effects will reveal the relevance of the evaluation for interests who might have been feeling excluded and encourage their engagement in the evaluation.

Knowing the place, engaging with diverse interests and identifying points of nexus are interrelated, iterative processes. As more is understood about the place and additional relevant interests are identified and engaged in the evaluation more will be learnt about potential impacts on human and natural systems.

Questions to identify nexus issues

This set of foundational questions is intended to help identify nexus issues - in particular those with the potential for strong environmental effects that should be considered in the evaluation.

Answering **"yes"** to any of these questions suggests that the intervention may have significant environmental effects, either positive or negative.

The suggested questions are a starting point for bringing sustainability into evaluation and will be enhanced over time. In addition, ask if other nexus issues have arisen and need to be attended to.

Construction and Renovation:

- Does the intervention involve building or renovating structures like buildings, roads, or shelters?

Product Procurement:

- Does the intervention require buying products (e.g., cleaning supplies, plastics, vehicles)?
- Do these products, from creation to disposal, pose any environmental risks (e.g., use of fossil fuels, pollution)?

Natural Resource Extraction:

- Is the intervention involved in taking resources directly from nature, such as fish, timber, minerals, or water?

Ecosystem Interaction:

- Does the intervention involve adding substances to natural systems (e.g., air quality, farming waste, tannery chemicals)?
- Does it alter the function of natural areas, like draining wetlands, or allowing ships to pass through critical waters, affect sequestration?
- Does it threaten biodiversity by reducing habitat or wildlife corridors?

Environmentally Risky Sectors:

- Does the intervention engage with industries or sectors that are commonly associated with environmental harm, such as agriculture?

Exports and Production:

- Is the intervention associated with producing or exporting goods that might have positive or negative environmental implications, like fast fashion, or importing country has higher environmental standards?

Other identified nexus issues

- Have any other nexus issues been identified?

Expand theories of change to include natural systems

The scope of the theory of change will usually need to be adapted to include natural systems.

The key to this is:

- Identifying where human and natural systems couple (nexus).

- Broadening the spatial framing of the TOC beyond a specific 'site' to the broader landscape..

- Broadening the temporal framing of the TOC to consider short and longer-term effects in natural systems and for future generations of humans.

- Extending the effects attributable to the intervention.

Consideration of long-term consequences can include:

- "the fix that fails" where an intervention that is effective in the short-term creates long term side effects,

- ripple effects, where an initial disruption to a system generates changes in a larger portion of the system or systems (like ripples expanding in water), and

- spillover effects where long-term impacts are not evident during the life of an intervention or evaluation.

Example

The scoping of a potential evaluation of the provision of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) during the Covid 19 pandemic illustrates the use of a lifecycle analysis to identify points of nexus, the identification of unintended effects for both human and natural systems and illustrates the need for an evaluation to ensure that the theory of change addresses unintended effects including:

- The environmental effects of all provisioning stages, including the emissions from increased petroleum needed for manufacturing, transporting, and disposing of PPE, and

- The connectivity and feedback loops between the various provisioning stages, i.e. manufacture, consumption, reuse, and disposal.

Use systems concepts

Systems concepts are central to understanding how human and natural systems couple, how human actions affect sustainability, and how changes in natural systems affect humans.

Useful systems concepts to apply to sustainability-inclusive evaluation include:

- Inter-relationships
- Multiple perspectives
- System boundaries
- Coupled systems
- Non-linear change
- Feedback loops
- Tipping points and thresholds

When addressing environmental sustainability in evaluation, systems thinking is necessary to identify how human actions couple with other systems and how natural systems couple with human systems. This is key to mapping the reach and relevant scales for an intervention.

It can be useful to think about systems in terms of: 1. Understanding interrelationships, 2. Engaging with multiple perspectives, and 3. Reflecting on boundary choices (Williams, 2022).

When approaching the task of incorporating environmental sustainability, these translate to:

1. **Interrelationships** - Understanding the existence, importance and character of relationships across and within natural and human systems, and identifying the most significant of these

2. **Perspectives** - Engaging all of the interests representing the various systems and entities – including human and non-human interests

3. **Boundaries** - Incorporating the systems' different spatial and temporal boundaries, including thinking beyond human boundaries (such as property or district borders or project timeframes). Also important are decisions about where to draw the boundaries for the evaluation and what to focus on, to ensure feasibility.

Williams, B (2022) What kind of Systemic Evaluator Are you?? American Evaluation Association 365 Blog https://aea365.org/blog/systems-and-complexity-informed-evaluation-week-what-kind-of-systemic-evaluator-are-you-by-bob-williams/

Choose a small number of key issues

To influence rather than overwhelm decision makers, it is better to pick two or three important environmental issues and explain them well.

Trying to cover every aspect relevant to sustainability will hinder use.

When choosing the issues to focus on, consider:

- **The most important environmental effects** – large effects, or impacts on critical or threatened parts of the ecosystem and things of high importance to relevant interests

- **Issues where equity and sustainability are both at stake** (these are the issues that more people will care about)

- **Issues that have broad relevance**, not just for this initiative but for the sector or the country more generally (insights that can influence more widely)

- **Issues that are currently high on the radar in the sector or country** (they offer a higher influence opportunity due to their current salience)

- **Any consequences** of including or excluding particular issues

Possible frameworks to help identify nexus and key issues

The following four slides point to conceptual frameworks that can be useful for identifying the main environmental domains.

They provide a useful reminder of things to bear in mind when identifying nexus couplings and key issues.

The frameworks are:

1. **Planetary Boundaries**
2. **Ecosystem Services**
3. **Lifecycle Analysis**
4. **Science-Based Targets for Nature**

Resource for
Planetary boundaries

Planetary boundaries are a set of nine planetary boundaries that regulate the earth system.

Humanity can continue to develop and thrive for generations to come if the boundaries are not crossed. Crossing the boundaries risks large or irreversible environmental changes that threaten future generations.
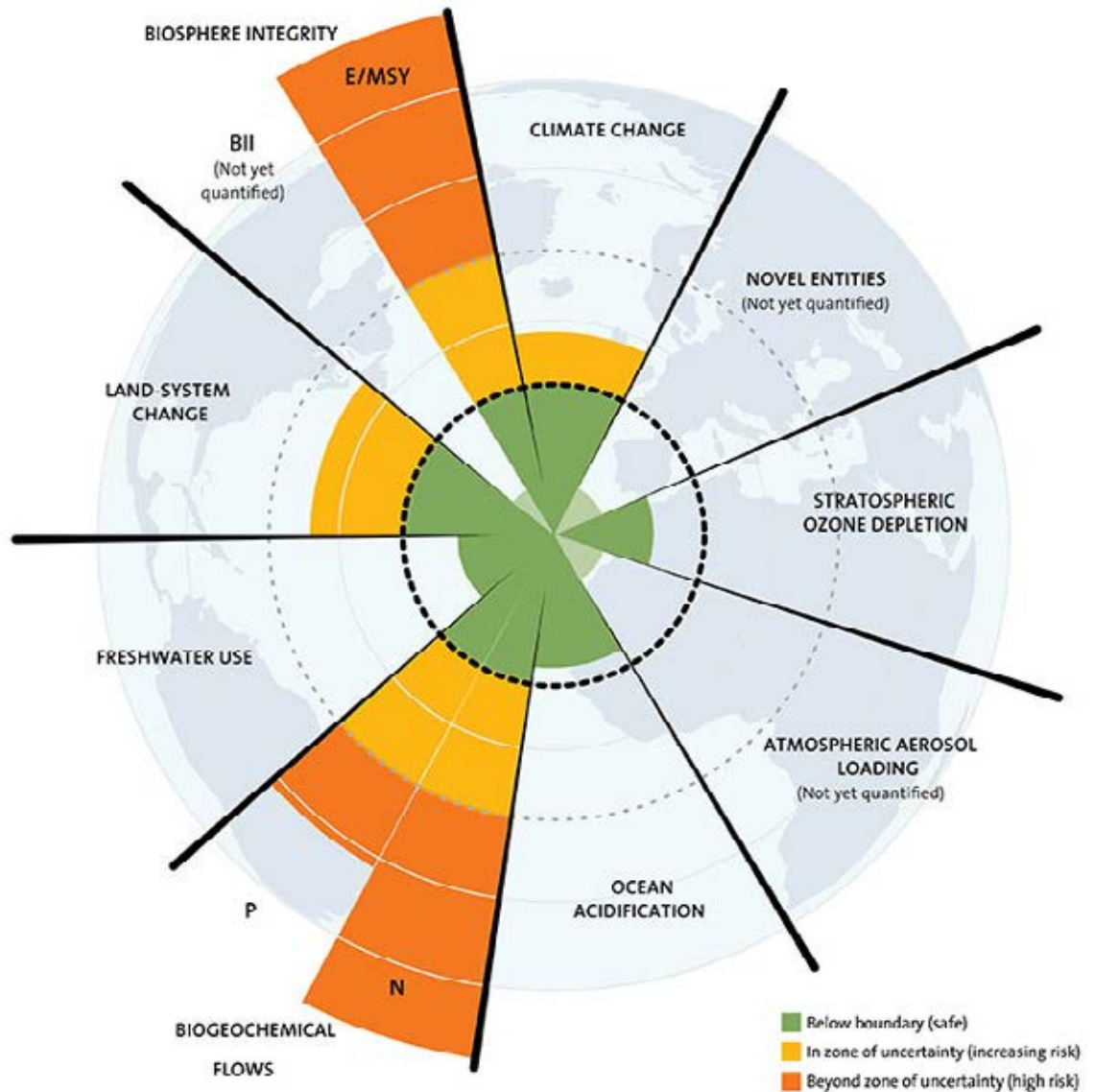

Illustration: "Azote for Stockholm Resilience Centre, based on analysis in Wang-Erlandsson et al 2022".
https://www.stockholmresilience.org/research/planetary-boundaries.html

Resource for
Ecosystem services

The term "ecosystem services' refers to the many and varied benefits to humans provided by the natural environment and healthy ecosystems.

For example, plants filter water, insects pollinate food crops, bacteria decompose waste. These can be used as useful reminder to identify potentially "key issues" to focus on. Valuing the services provided by ecosystems can help some recognise the contributions of these services to human wellbeing. Ecosystem services approach do not address services provided by nature to nature which are critically important to sustainability.

16 types of ecosystem services have been identified – ways that human systems draw from natural systems. Reviewing these can also help with nexus and theories of change and to identify different interests and what might need to be protected.
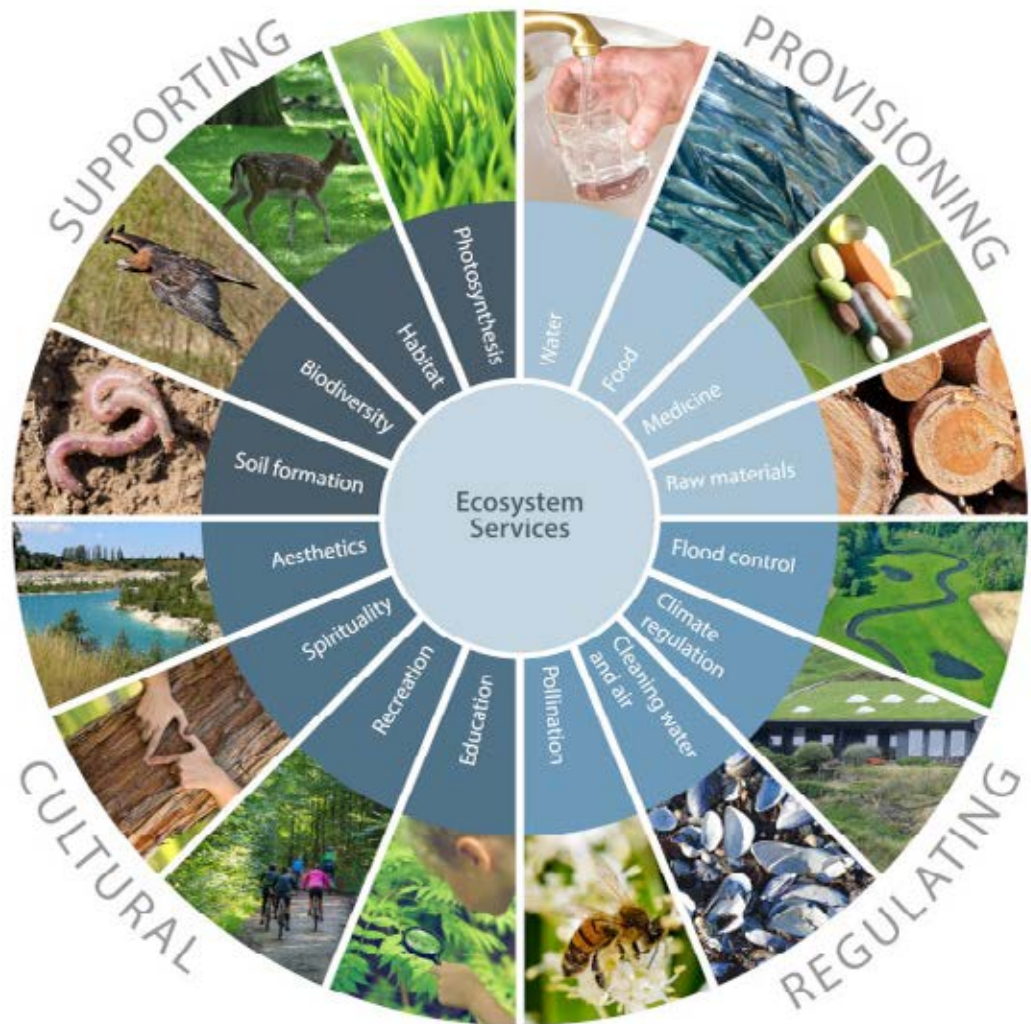
Resource for Lifecycle analysis

A lifecycle analysis measures the environmental impact of a product from production to disposal.

There is an extensive literature and many actual lifecycle calculations that are easily located through web searches, and a good supply of lifecycle analysis.

The International Standards Organisation (ISO) has sustainability standards. Existing lifecycle analyses can be drawn on – or the framework can be used to structure enquiry. These can be used as a checklist to consider potential "key issues" at different stages.

Example: The scoping of a potential evaluation of the provision of Personal Protective Equipment during the Covid 19 pandemic illustrates the use of a lifecycle analysis to identify points of nexus.

Disposal: choice, location energy source of disposal methods and facilities; recycling capacity & practices; hazardous waste regulations; incineration temperature & harmful particle filtration; landfill management; capacity to keep PPE out of waterways

Preparedness: adequacy of PPE stockpile; local manufacturing capacity; procurement strategies that consider health, equity and environmental impacts

Consumption: policies & practices; capacity & incentives for reuse; user knowledge & attitudes; compliance; community expectations

Important drivers:
- Rapid onset of COVID
- Country preparedness
- Global supply chains
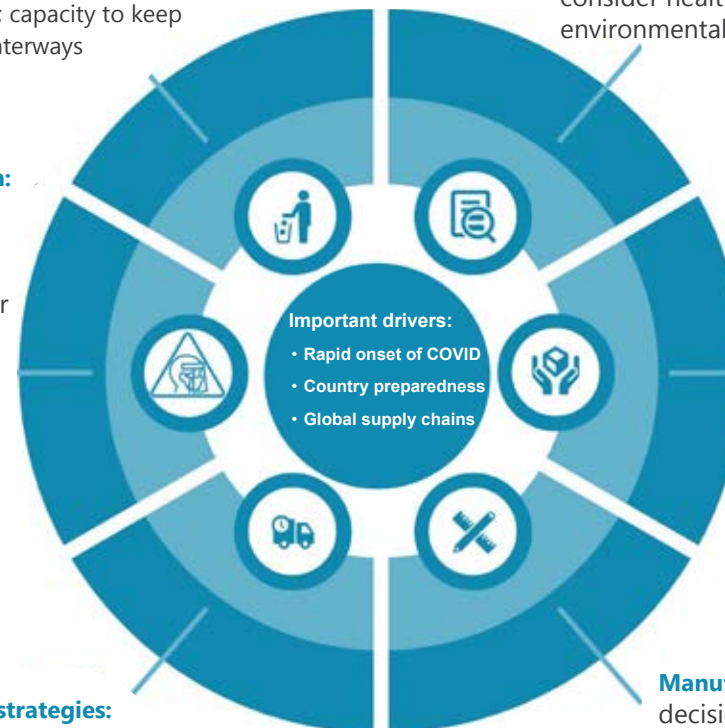
Procurement: priorities and decisions: availability of PPE; type of PPE prioritised (single use vs reusable) manufacturing capacity; procurement strategies that consider health, equity and environmental impacts

Distribution strategies: urgency; mode of transport; distance transported

Manufacture: decisions and product designs: Raw materials used; single use or reusable; compostable or persists in environment; ease of recycling
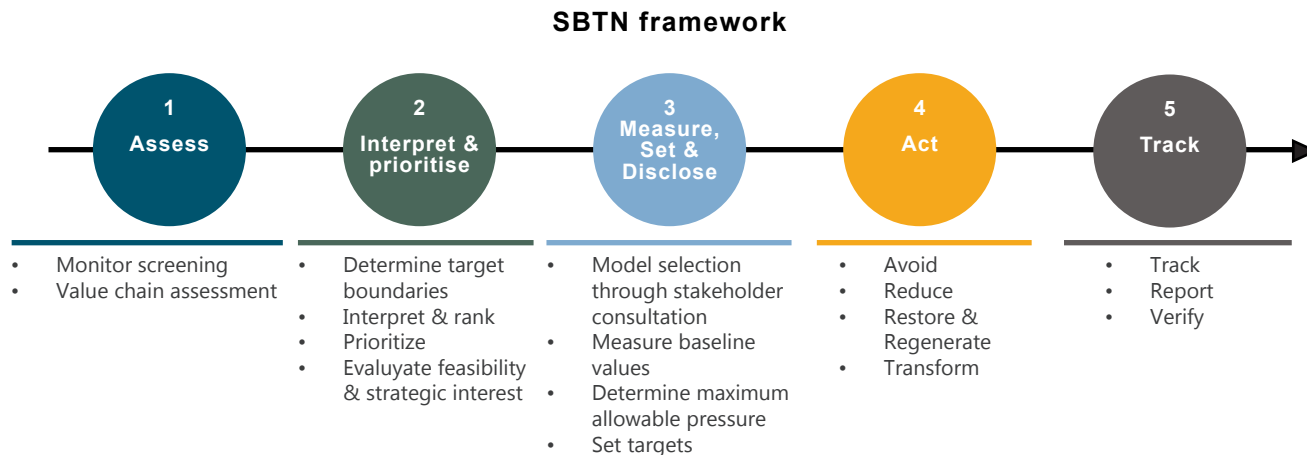
www.iso.org/standard/38498.html

www.betterevaluation.org/tools-resources/evaluating-environmental-impact-personal-protective-equipment-ppe-covid-19-pandemic
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Resource for
Science-Based Targets for Nature (SBTN)

SBTN has been recently developed to support organisations to use to identify and manage the major environmental risks of their activities.

The resources include information about the materiality of different risks in particular sectors, and links to ENCORE (Exploring Natural Capital Opportunities, Risks and Exposure). These can be used as a resource to assess the materiality of potential risks – and to inform possible actions and monitoring.

SBTN framework

1 Assess	2 Interpret & prioritise	3 Measure, Set & Disclose	4 Act	5 Track
• Monitor screening • Value chain assessment	• Determine target boundaries • Interpret & rank • Prioritize • Evaluyate feasibility & strategic interest	• Model selection through stakeholder consultation • Measure baseline values • Determine maximum allowable pressure • Set targets	• Avoid • Reduce • Restore & Regenerate • Transform	• Track • Report • Verify

https://sciencebasedtargetsnetwork.org/take-action-now/take-action-as-a-company/what-you-can-do-now/

https://encore.naturalcapital.finance/en

8. Use appropriate evidence, designs and reasoning to answer KEQs

Identify existing evidence that can be extrapolated to estimate impacts

Use appropriate sampling methods and reasoning

Use appropriate designs and reasoning for causal inference

Use collaborative analysis and action planning

Develop explicit evaluative conclusions

Identify existing knowledge that can be extrapolated to estimate impacts

Bring together knowledge and insights from different sources and disciplines such as local and Indigenous communities, natural systems scientists, project planners and managers and evaluators.

Draw on existing environmental monitoring and evidence syntheses

Previous research and evaluation evidence can identify potential impacts (and their precursors where these impacts are unlikely to be evident during the time period of the intervention) on natural systems that an evaluation could investigate.

Boundary spanners might provide specific expertise to undertake technical measurement and judgement of performance, facilitate access to datasets and to identify relevant existing research and evaluation findings.

Existing sources of knowledge might include:

- Environmental monitoring
- Stories, rich pictures, interviews
- Academic environmental research
- Environmental Impact Statements
- Planning documents, policies, legislation, regulations, contracts, enquiries, and reviews
- GIS data
- Credible news reports and investigative journalism
- Scenario planning and modelling

Example: UNEP Interactive Country Fiches provide a system of interactive and updatable environmental profiles for the analysis of environmental situations and performances of countries around the world. Covering eight environmental pillars, this online tool aims to provide information on key national policies and actions, and offers a single-entry point to over a hundred of up-to-date datasets.

Use appropriate sampling methods and reasoning

Evaluations often involve sampling individual people, households, project sites and organisations. Sustainability-inclusive evaluations need to also consider how to sample units related to natural systems and consider temporal and spatial aspects.

While many evaluations involve sampling related to human systems such as individual people, and projects, sustainability-inclusive evaluation might also involve sampling units related to natural systems such as plant, animal, fungus species; water, air and soil.

Sampling methods should be chosen to suit their purposes - to draw inferences about the larger population, provide illustrations, build or test theories about how things work, or guide further design of data collection and analysis. Sampling options should be chosen to suit the purpose.

Probability sampling options use statistical generalization to estimate population parameters. Purposeful sampling options such as indicator species use analytic generalization to draw conclusions about the wider ecosystem – for example using mayfly levels as an indicator of water quality.

Sampling in natural systems often needs to consider temporal and spatial aspects such as time of day, seasons, weather, time after an event, stage in breeding cycle.

Example: The Footprint evaluation case study: Evaluation of environmental sustainability aspects of a national strategy used a purposeful sample of particular industries - electrification, industrial parks, tanneries- and particular sites. The issues raised by these industries could be credibly extrapolated to the wide range of areas covered by a private sector development strategy.

www.betterevaluation.org/tools-resources/footprint-evaluation-case-study-evaluation-environmental-sustainability-aspects-national-strategy
www.betterevaluation.org/frameworks-guides/rainbow-framework/describe/sample

Use appropriate designs and reasoning for causal inference

Evaluations need to use approaches to causal inference that are appropriate for landscape-wide impacts and different types of evaluation.
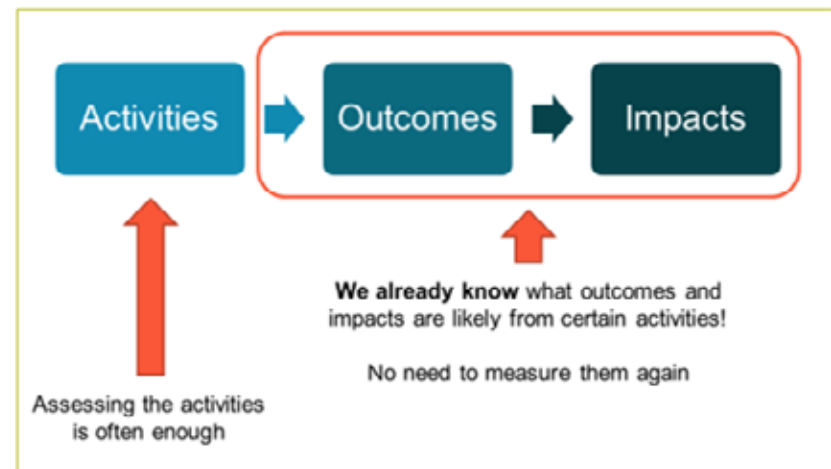
Some possible approaches to causal inference

Where there is no established evidence linking activities with outcomes and impacts or where obtaining direct evidence is not feasible or possible an evaluation therefore needs specific causal inference, designs given the landscape-wide impacts. There are many different approaches that might be relevant (see BetterEvaluation) including:

- Multiple Lines and Levels of Evidence

- Rapid Impact Evaluation

Understanding the causal inference task needed

Evaluations that include environmental sustainability are unlikely to be trying to test causal attribution.

They are far more likely to be drawing on established knowledge about causal relationships for many of the links in the causal chain and linking this to evidence about activities or planned activities.

www.betterevaluation.org/methods-approaches/methods/multiple-lines-levels-evidence
www.canada.ca/en/treasury-board-secretariat/services/audit-evaluation/centre-excellence-evaluation/guide-rapid-impact-evaluation.html

Use collaborative analysis and action planning

Evidence doesn't speak for itself; it needs to be meaningfully interpreted in order to be useful.

Evaluation in coupled human and natural systems requires a collaborative approach to sensemaking that involves multiple knowledges.

Highly inclusive engagement processes are essential here, as is the use of boundary spanners. This will draw on earlier efforts to engage diverse interests.

Boundary spanners help translate concepts from one discipline or context to another, so that all participants can engage.

Sensemaking leads naturally to collaborative action planning, which is often a better alternative to lists of recommendations developed by the evaluation team.

Those involved in the process will be more committed to follow through and take action.

Develop explicit evaluative conclusions

Environmental sustainability is not just about preserving the natural environment or minimizing any further harm. We now have extremely damaged natural systems that need to be restored.

To influence decision makers with the appropriate level of urgency, evaluations must be crystal clear about how beneficial or problematic the effects of an intervention are on both human and natural systems.

For effects on natural systems, a typology like this is useful to assess the evidence and draw clear, compelling, well-reasoned evaluative conclusions.

See the BetterEvaluation page on rubrics for examples and resources for developing and using rubrics.

Restorative
Repairs harm so natural systems thrive

No net harm to natural systems
Practices cause no harm OR restoration offsets any harm

Reduced damage to natural systems
Practices in place to limit environmental damage, but still harmful

Destructive/plundering natural systems
Extractive and damaging practices cause serious harm

beneficial

neutral

harmful

destructive
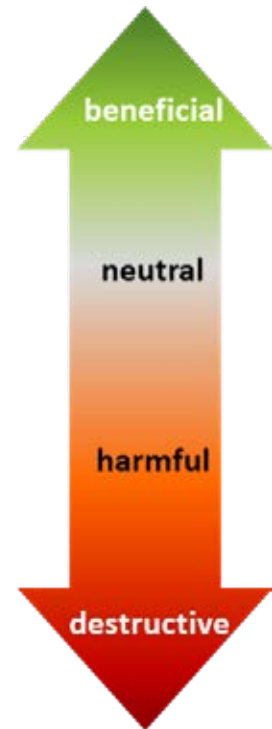
Develop explicit evaluative conclusions

This matrix combines evaluative conclusions about effects on both natural and human systems - ensuring that evaluation stays relevant by speaking to our two biggest crises.

Natural systems effects

	Destructive/ plundering natural systems	Reduced damage to natural systems but still harmful	No net harm to natural systems	Restorative – repairs harm so natural systems thrive
Exploitative of marginalised groups				
Reduced disparities but still inequitable				
Equitable systems – no disadvantage for marginalised groups				
Rebalancing of multi-generational disadvantages				

Human systems effects

Resources

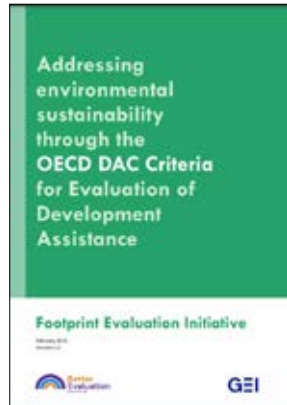**Tools from the Footprint Evaluation Initiative**

Examples from the Footprint Evaluation Initiative

Further resources - rationale

Further resources - tools, examples

Acknowledgements

Tools from the Footprint Evaluation Initiative

Addressing environmental sustainability through the OECD DAC Criteria for Evaluation of Developmental Assistance

This resource shows how the six OECD DAC evaluation criteria can be used to get environmental sustainability on the agenda for evaluations and monitoring.

Key Evaluation Questions to Guide Footprint Evaluations

The key evaluation questions (KEQs) are designed to support the inclusion of environmental sustainability by embedding consideration of the environment in each evaluation question rather than adding environmental considerations as a standalone question.

## Identifying environmental commitments

Step by step guide to using The World Fact book to identify international agreements to which countries are signatories.

www.betterevaluation.org/tools-resources/addressing-environmental-sustainability-through-oecd-dac-criteria-for-evaluation-development
www.betterevaluation.org/tools-resources/key-evaluation-questions-keqs-guide-footprint-evaluations
www.betterevaluation.org/tools-resources/guide-using-world-factbook-find-countrys-international-environmental-agreements

Tools from the Footprint Evaluation Initiative

Thought Experiments

Description, analysis and process of four examples which revisited completed evaluations to think through whether it would have been feasible and useful to include environmental sustainability.
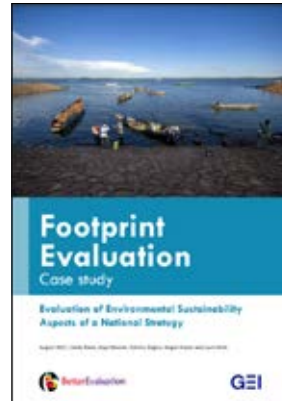
Evaluation of environmental sustainability aspects of a national strategy

Processes used to address environment as a cross-cutting issue despite constraints.

Evaluating the environmental impact of personal protective equipment (PPE) in the COVID-19 pandemic

Drawing on a range of evidence to illustrate how an evaluation of PPE might consider environmental impacts.

www.betterevaluation.org/tools-resources/footprint-evaluation-thought-experiments
www.betterevaluation.org/tools-resources/footprint-evaluation-case-study-evaluation-environmental-sustainability-aspects-national-strategy
www.betterevaluation.org/tools-resources/evaluating-environmental-impact-personal-protective-equipment-ppe-covid-19-pandemic

Further resources: Rationale

Some evaluations are done in organizational contexts where environmental sustainability is already on the agenda for all participants and stakeholders for the evaluation.

In other situations, it can be helpful to draw on informed and coherent explanations about the scale and urgency of the environmental challenges, such as the following resources.

IPBES (2019). Global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. Zenodo https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.5657041

Folke, C. et al. (2021) Our future in the Anthropocene biosphere. Ambio 50, 834–869. https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s13280-021-01544-8

IPCC (2022). Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/

Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, South Africa (2022) DPME Evaluation Guideline 2.2.22 Climate and Ecosystems Health. Pp 4-7. https://www.samea.org.za/summernotefile/dump?summernotefile_id=238

Uitto, J. I. (2019). Sustainable development evaluation: Understanding the nexus of natural and human systems. In G. Julnes (Ed.), Evaluating Sustainability: Evaluative Support for Managing Processes in the Public Interest. New Directions for Evaluation, 162, 49–67. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Juha-Uitto/publication/333615142_Sustainable_Development_Evaluation_Understanding_the_Nexus_of_Natural_and_Human_Systems/links/5e69424a458515c5de626659/Sustainable-Development-Evaluation-Understanding-the-Nexus-of-Natural-and-Human-Systems.pdf

Further resources: Tools and examples

Expand the theory of change

Brousselle, A., McDavid, J., Curren, M., Logtenberg, R., Dunbar, B., & Ney, T. (2022). A theory-based approach to designing interventions for Planetary Health. Evaluation, 28(3), 330–355. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/13563890221107044

- Summarises the evidence about the significance and urgency of environmental crises and the implications for equity and sets out how theories of change can be expanded to include environmental consequences including their implications for SDGs.

Terminology and technical terms

UNDP Climate Dictionary (Available in English, French, Spanish and Arabic): https://climatepromise.undp.org/news-and-stories/climate-dictionary-everyday-guide-climate-change

Other relevant initiatives

Blue Marble Evaluation, which focuses on evaluating global systems change initiatives: https://bluemarbleeval.org/

Environmental Social Governance indicators in impact investing: www.betterevaluation.org/themes/monitoring-and-evaluation-impact-investing

Global Footprint Network, who have developed the Ecological Footprint calculator: https://www.footprintnetwork.org/

CES Report on Stocktaking for Sustainability-Ready Evaluation: https://evaluationcanada.ca/client_assets/PDFs/StocktakingReport_2021.pdf

Acknowledgements