

Building Evaluation Capacity (BEC) Project

Background:

The success of the 2006-2007 OTF-funded Greenest City – Clean Air Partnership Evaluation Project demonstrates the benefits of teaching NGOs how to plan and execute internal and participatory evaluations of their work. The positive response to our evaluation work from funders, NGOs, and evaluation experts has inspired us to roll out a two-year project that builds on what we've accomplished to-date by:

- Continuing to focus on and develop the BEC Collaborative's ability to deliver for-NGO, by-NGO evaluation capacity-building training.
- Expanding the NGO and community impact of our evaluation work by increasing the number of NGO Evaluation Partners we train in program planning and evaluation tools and techniques.
- Moving from a strict focus on environmental NGOs to include NGOs that do environmental work but also offer arts and culture, human/social services, and sports and recreation programming.
- Addressing specific evaluation learning needs as articulated by the NGOs we've served, including: one-on-one evaluation consultations, occasional group workshops featuring opportunities for peer exchange, and access to evaluation experts, tools, and resources.

BEC Project Overview:

The BEC Project seeks to improve the effectiveness and impact of the work of seven NGOs - whose audiences span the entire country - by providing them with the training and tools to evaluate their work. This project will increase the evaluation capacity of evaluation partner NGOs. Evaluation Partners will gain the capacity to execute internal and participatory evaluations of their work through their participation in a physical and virtual Evaluation Network, the completion of an internally-managed project evaluation, ongoing access to evaluation consultations, and the use of tools such as the Greenest City – Clean Air Partnership Evaluation Toolkit.

The BEC Project directly addresses needs expressed by NGOs.

Over 40 ENGOs reached through our research and subsequent workshops articulated the following needs to us:

- Instruction in evaluation that: flows throughout a project or program, is flexible and iterative, and helps them make important program planning decisions.
- Evaluation tools including step-by-step instructions, checklists, "cheat sheets", menus of evaluation options, annotated bibliographies, and creative evaluation options.
- One-on-one and individualized evaluation consultations with occasional access to group/peer learning opportunities.

External research confirms and builds on the above list. Evaluation needs¹ identified by NGOs include:

¹ (Hal et. al., ix.)

- Better access to evaluation resources and tools, particularly resources and templates that simplify and de-mystify evaluation.
- More staff training and education about evaluation.
- Better access to evaluation consultants.
- More advice from funders about how to do evaluation.
- Greater access to technology that will assist with evaluation.
- More financial resources for evaluation.
- An online evaluation clearinghouse or resource centre.

Goal of the BEC Project

The goal of the BEC Project is to embed evaluation practices in the workings of at least seven NGOs whose areas of work span from Toronto to across Canada. Through experiencing the evaluation process firsthand and participating in the physical and virtual Evaluation Networks, these NGOs will become adept at executing internally-managed evaluation projects. With one, two, or more staff members from each organization gaining the skills and knowledge to evaluate their work, the participating NGOs will ultimately save thousands of dollars in evaluation consulting costs. The benefits to internal evaluations surpass money-saving and include:

- Helping to build more effective projects and projects
- Articulating and effectively communicating project, project, and organizational goals
- Increasing funds raised for evaluation by providing NGOs with the tools to write evaluation budgets and plans
- Increasing core and project funds raised by teaching project planning techniques like setting goals, objectives, indicators of success etc.
- The creation of an informal network of Evaluation and Learning Partners that will likely be sustained beyond the completion of the project.
- We expect that the staff members representing each Evaluation Partner NGO will **share their learning** within and outside of their organizations, as happened following the Clean Air Partnership, Greenest City, and Earth Day Canada's evaluation capacity-building processes.