

IEA

Training Manual

*A training manual on
integrated environmental
assessment and reporting*

Training Module 3

*Developing an impact
strategy for your IEA*

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Module 3

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List of Acronyms

ASO	Affiliated scientific organizations
CWG	Conditions and Trends Working Group
DEAT	South Africa Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism
GEA	Global Environmental Assessment Project
GEO	Global Environment Outlook
IGOs	Intergovernmental organizations
IISD	International Institute for Sustainable Development
INC	International Negotiating Committee
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
MA	Millennium Ecosystem Assessment
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NSoER	National State of the Environment Report
RWG	Responses Working Group
SGAs	Sub-global assessments
SGAWG	Sub-global assessments working group
SoE	State of the Environment
SWG	Scenarios Working Group
WMO	World Meteorological Organization
WSSD	World Summit on Sustainable Development

Overview

This module will focus on methods to position and deliver a national IEA so that it can have real impact on environmental policy and practice at a series of levels, ranging from local to national.

Why bother with developing an impact strategy?

In 1997, David Shenk coined the phrase “data smog,” referring to the 3,000+ information messages that an average person in the United States received on a daily basis. Imagine now, ten years later, the volume of information the average person must process, and what decision-makers must sort through each day. Simply providing yet another report to your senior bureaucrats and political leaders won’t be enough to ensure that they read your findings, let alone act upon them.

We want to take you through the steps that will help you determine how to engage the right people to listen to you and respond to your work. This impact process takes time; and involves a real emphasis on being clear and strategic in identifying the changes that you want to see as a result of your assessment. The process focuses on building relationships with key people, finding out what they know already and what they need to know. With that understanding, you can then seek out and create the opportunities to get your messages across, to generate dialogue, and gain the attention and support of those who may have in the past appeared non-responsive to your work.

As those who have participated in previous impact strategy workshops have said, “You need to know the goals and understand the people” (IISD workshop, EMAN, 2006).

A portion of this training will be presentational in nature. However, most of your time will be spent in pairs or small groups to discuss local political and social factors that could affect whether and how your reports are used. Small groups also will be used to practise building the components for an impact strategy for your reports.

Outputs of this training module

- The primary output should be an outline of an impact strategy for your next state of the environment (SoE) or GEO-based national integrated environmental assessment (IEA) report.
- At the end of this module, we anticipate that you will see yourself as someone capable of having a real impact on decision-making.



Notes

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Course Materials

1. Introduction and learning objectives



This module will focus on methods to position and deliver a national IEA so that it can have real impact on environmental policy and practice at a series of levels, ranging from local to national.

At the end of this module, you should have increased your ability to ensure that an IEA has an impact.

1. You will be able to articulate reasons for doing an integrated environmental assessment that can cover but also go beyond mandated requirements.
2. You will have a greater understanding of the political context of what you are doing, such as how changes are made in policy and practice.
3. You will be able to develop effective strategies and communications tactics to achieve impact. You can explore how far you can go with achieving impact through your assessment, given your political and bureaucratic context, and given that the assessment will be only one of many tools needed to achieve change.
4. You will have a clearer recognition of who you want to reach, beyond your immediate departments, and how that will affect the way you undertake your work and what you will do with your outputs.
5. You will understand that achieving your desired impact requires more than the production of a report at the end of the assessment. Strategic positioning of your work and planned communications are essential components of your work that should be undertaken in parallel with all stages of the assessment.

2. Understanding impact

In this section you will learn:

- why it is important to have an impact strategy;
- how to understand the external environment (context) for an assessment; and
- how to recognize an issue cycle (using media, polling data, etc.)

2.1 What is an impact strategy?



An impact strategy consists of the steps you take to ensure that the work you do will lead to real progress on key issues or concerns. It is proactive in nature, and adaptive in a public policy environment where priorities of governments and citizens can shift and change.

2.2 When do you prepare an impact strategy and who is responsible for it?

An impact strategy should be prepared once you have initiated the process for an integrated environmental assessment. It is initiated as part of the “institutional setup” stage of a GEO-style IEA process. It is formalized in the “scoping and design” stage, implemented stages 4 through 6, and regularly monitored, assessed and improved (see Module 2). The manager, or management team, for the IEA process should be responsible for:

- developing the impact strategy, or ensuring that an impact strategy is developed;
- implementing the strategy; and
- monitoring performance on the strategy to ensure that it is achieving the results you are seeking, and modifying or adjusting it, if necessary.



2.3 Why do you need an impact strategy?

In many jurisdictions, SoE assessment or sustainable development reports are now mandated by statute and regulation. In others, there may be a strong policy context that has led to a government undertaking or participating in an assessment as a voluntary initiative. In some, the assessment/reporting programme may be part of a larger performance monitoring and evaluation programme for the government as a whole, across all departments. While such requirements may initiate the process for an assessment, you should also take a broader view. Begin to think about the potential uses for the assessment. What impact it might have on policy and planning, and what steps should be taken to ensure that the right people are willing to pay attention to the findings of the assessment.

By their nature, most SoE/integrated environmental assessments are not detailed scientific assessments. They may, however, lead to more attention being paid to problem areas, and they may recommend a more detailed scientific assessment of root causes and downstream effects. The result of an assessment can shift the mood of the public, and lead to political pressure. It may educate a wide range of audiences on key issues, and as a result it may trigger more detailed studies that are more directly linked to specific issues and decisions.

It is often an underlying assumption of reporting that good information will lead to good decisions. But while good information is necessary, it does not follow that decision-makers will act on it. Decision-makers are often quite well informed, but their priorities and intentions may be different from yours. The challenge is to take proactive steps to ensure that your assessment doesn't sit on a bookshelf once it is done, but that it provides good input to decision making. Your assessment will lead to recommendations for actions that may require changes in policy and practice by the government. Consider from the outset how the findings from your assessment might be used, and how the priorities you identify can become the priorities of your government and your country.

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