Preface

Who can benefit from this guide?

On a morning walk at your project site, you pause to notice the changes that have occurred around you. You and others have put a lot of time and effort into having a positive impact on this area. What effects have you had? Are you achieving the results you had hoped for? Would a different approach get you where you wanted to go more quickly or effectively? Anyone involved in ecosystem management or a community-based conservation project is faced with these questions. *Evaluation* is a powerful set of activities that can provide the answers and allow you to overcome some of the challenges of having a positive impact on the ground.

This guide provides a step-by-step process that allows projects of any size and at any phase to develop and implement evaluation. Whether you work for a small volunteer group or a government agency, whether you are doing community based conservation or ecosystem management, and whether the scale you are working on is a watershed or a forest preserve, using this guide can help improve the *effectiveness* of your project.

What's inside this guide?

This guide is a tool to help you tailor evaluation to your project's unique needs and characteristics. By completing the enclosed worksheets and checklists, you will create *products* that help you:

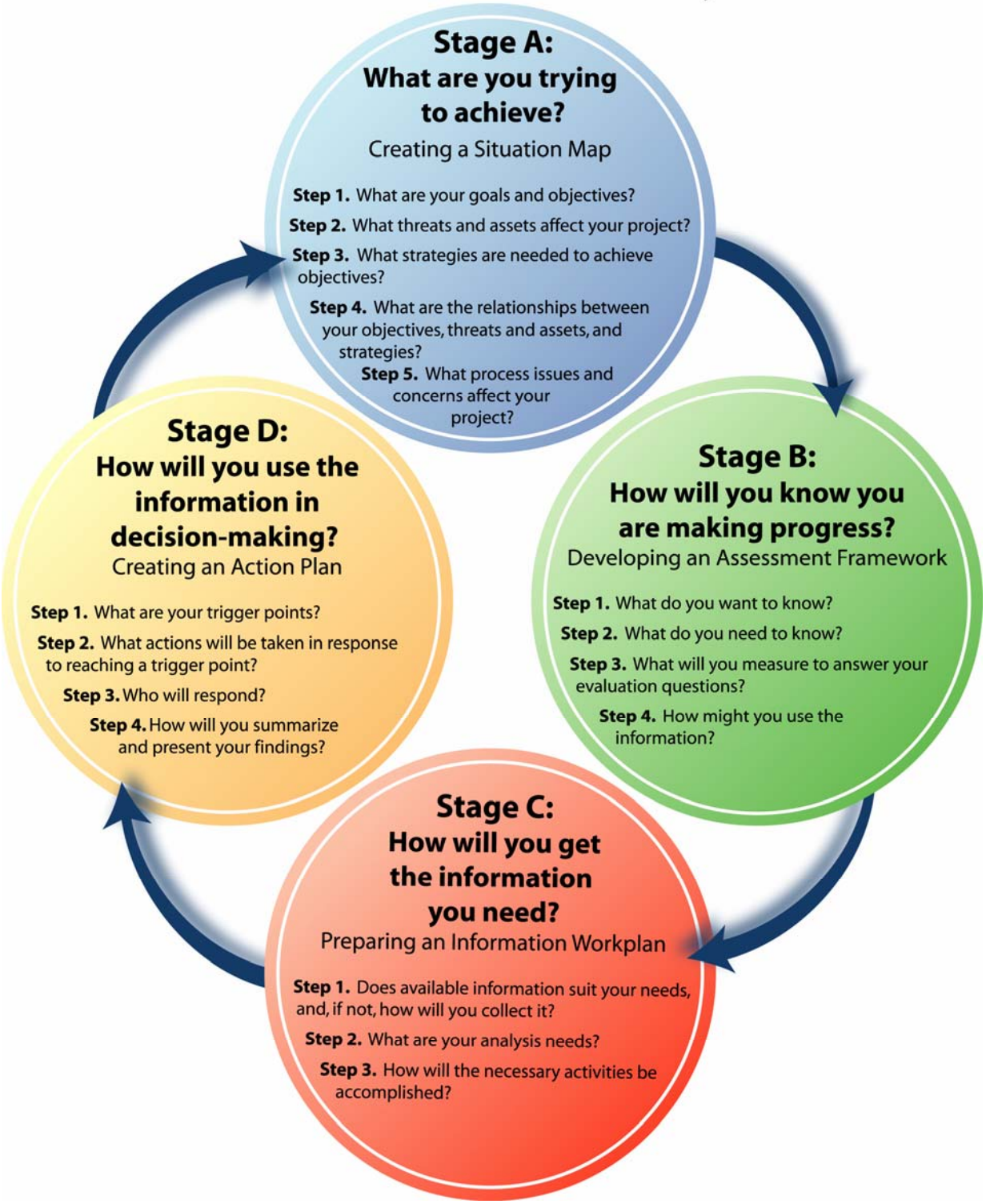
- **Identify and clarify your project's goals and the multiple factors that influence your ability to achieve them**
- **Determine useful and feasible measures or indicators of progress toward your goals**
- **Gather the information you need to measure progress**
- **Make use of the information you have gathered by linking it directly to decision-making**

Evaluation activities, such as those described in this guide, have been shown to improve a project's clarity of purpose, overall effectiveness and levels of

financial and public support. Ultimately, evaluation can increase needed on-the-ground change.

A companion publication, the ***Evaluation Sourcebook***, can support your use of this guide by providing tools and topic-specific evaluation information.

The Evaluation Cycle



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