The Evaluation Cycle

Stage A: What are you trying to achieve? Creating a Situation Map
- Step 1. What are your goals and objectives?
- Step 2. What threats and assets affect your project?
- Step 3. What strategies are needed to achieve objectives?
- Step 4. What are the relationships between your objectives, threats and assets, and strategies?
- Step 5. What process issues and concerns affect your project?

Stage B: How will you know you are making progress? Developing an Assessment Framework
- Step 1. What do you want to know?
- Step 2. What do you need to know?
- Step 3. What will you measure to answer your evaluation questions?
- Step 4. How might you use the information?

Stage C: How will you get the information you need? Preparing an Information Workplan
- Step 1. Does available information suit your needs, and, if not, how will you collect it?
- Step 2. What are your analysis needs?
- Step 3. How will the necessary activities be accomplished?

Stage D: How will you use the information in decision-making? Creating an Action Plan
- Step 1. What are your trigger points?
- Step 2. What actions will be taken in response to reaching a trigger point?
- Step 3. Who will respond?
- Step 4. How will you summarize and present your findings?

Material adapted from Yaffee, Schueller, Higgs, Dotzour and Wondolleck, Measuring Progress: An Evaluation Guide for Ecosystem and Community-Based Projects. Copyright © 2003 School of Natural Resources & Environment, University of Michigan. All rights reserved. www.snre.umich.edu/emi
What is the EMI Evaluation Cycle?

In **Stage A**, you get a clear picture of your project’s situation and define project success on multiple levels by addressing:

- What are the ecological, social and economic **goals** and **objectives** of my project? What do we aim to achieve or change?
- What are the **threats** and **assets** affecting my project? What is preventing progress and what is moving us forward?
- What are the **strategies** and **activities** of the project? What are our on-the-ground approaches and how are we implementing them?
- How do our strategies minimize threats and/or capitalize on assets to move us closer to our goals and objectives? That is, what is the **connected story** behind what we are doing and aiming to achieve within a complex system?
- What **organizational process issues**, such as leadership or communication, affect our project’s progress?

In **Stage B**, you use the situation map you created in Stage A to lay out a framework for measuring progress on multiple levels by answering:

- What do we want to know? That is, what **evaluation questions** do we want to ask about the impact, implementation or approach of our project or about the situation in which we work?
- What do we need to know? What are our **evaluation priorities**?
- What **indicators** will we measure and what will we compare these measures against to answer our questions and assess progress?
- How might you **use this information** to affect decision-making or communicate with stakeholders?

In **Stage C**, you prepare for the logistics of undertaking your evaluation plan. This includes thinking about:

- Where will **data** come from? Is it already available or will we collect it, and if so, how?
- How will we need to **process** or **analyze** the data to give us a clear answer to our evaluation question?
- **Who will be responsible** for these activities?

In **Stage D**, you consider ways to tie the evaluation back to decision-making by answering:

- What will be our **trigger points**? At what level, amount or rate of change of an indicator will we change course or reconsider our strategies?
- What possible **actions** might we take if a trigger point is reached?