

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The William D. Ruckelshaus Center seeks to create a project evaluation instrument with which The Center can identify lessons learned, best practices, and foster process improvements.

This paper reviews *program evaluation principles and standards*, *relevant literature* pertaining to evaluating the types of projects The Center engages in, *provides a summary of semi-structured research interviews* of the same, presents analysis of *tradeoffs and benefits* of various evaluation options, *offers recommendations* to fill The Center's evaluation need, and *provides draft evaluation instruments* which The Center can use to evaluate its projects.

Literature and Interviews:

The literature and interviews validated the need for process evaluation. Facets of evaluation suggested include:

- Evaluating the agreements of outcomes of ADR and collaborative efforts,
- The procedural efficacy and participant satisfaction of those efforts,
- How the relationships of participants are altered,
- The nuts and bolts of process requirements in terms of time and cost,
- What other instruments are currently being used for evaluation,
- What formats of evaluation should be used.

Evaluative Options:

The main options identified for evaluating The Center's projects include:

- Surveying project participants both before and after a project,
- Using in person interviews as well as questionnaires,
- Using a neutral third party observer during project processes,
- Creating post project participant driven focus groups,
- Writing case studies,
- Creating a practitioner forum for professional reflection and sharing.

Criteria for Recommendations:

In order to create recommendations for The Center, options were appraised according to several criteria. These were:

- Compliance with program evaluation principles and theory (reliability, validity, survey construction, etc),
- The Transactional cost to The Center (the pain/gain ratio),
- The degree to which an option meets The Center's needs (lessons learned, best practices, process improvements).

Recommendations to The Center:

- Use a Pre-Post- survey evaluation design
- Use participant interviews
- Focus on four key evaluative elements

Substance – Procedures – Transformation - Outcomes

- Include both participants and practitioners in evaluation feedback

The Center should also consider:

- Gathering feedback from community members not involved in process decision making who are impacted by a project
- Reconvening past project participants into a feedback focus group
- Writing case studies