

Evaluation in the provinces and territories: Yukon

The Current Situation

A requirement to evaluate Yukon government programs, projects and initiatives on a systematic basis does not currently exist. Similarly, an evaluation policy intended to guide the conduct of evaluations in the Yukon has yet to be formulated.

The small volume of evaluation work that has been completed in recent years in Yukon has typically followed from requirements found in federal – territorial contribution agreements. For example, the Canada-Yukon Labour Market Agreement, signed in 2009, has spawned a series of evaluation frameworks, formative evaluations and summative evaluations. Thus, evaluation opportunities in Yukon have tended to appear in Yukon ministries party to contribution agreements with federal departments, namely, the Yukon departments of Education, Justice and Health & Social Services.

The low level of evaluation activity in Yukon can largely be explained by the fact that four-fifths of Yukon government revenues are received from the federal government the form of an *unconditional* grant via territorial formula financing arrangements. While the Auditor General for Canada does perform an annual financial audit of Yukon government operations, a requirement to examine the efficiency and effectiveness of Yukon government spending is absent from the current transfer arrangements.

With average growth in the federal transfer to Yukon of 5.8% *per year* between 2005 and 2017, the Yukon government has not faced a hard budget constraint in recent memory. In consequence, the Yukon government has not been compelled to introduce a requirement for the systematic examination of efficiency and effectiveness of Yukon government programs.

As capacity within the Yukon government to complete evaluations is limited, most evaluations are undertaken by external consultants. The external evaluation consultants include firms located outside the Yukon and a small cadre of Yukon-based consultants. The Yukon government has been working to build an internal ‘evaluation culture’ through delivery of the Canadian Evaluation Society’s Essential Skills Series course two to three times per year. The ESS course is delivered by faculty from Royal Roads University.

Looking Ahead: Challenges and Opportunities

The future for evaluation in the Yukon brightened considerably with the tabling of the 2017/18 Yukon Budget in April 2017 that included a commitment to modernize the government’s budgeting and reporting systems and to create a program evaluation unit in the Department of Finance. Establishment of the program evaluation unit will be accompanied by the drafting of an evaluation policy to guide the practice of evaluation within the Yukon government.

It is hoped that the new evaluation policy will be a made-in-Yukon solution that reflects actual Yukon circumstances, including:

- a legacy of territorial programs broad that are broad in scope and shallow in scale (a.k.a. the N < n paradigm) for which design documentation (e.g., logic models) is often missing and for which only sparse operations data are available for evaluation purposes; and,
- Yukon’s small population size, unique development history and prevalence of self-governing First Nations.