

National Education Council

Education Evaluation Coordination Team



Servicewide Interpretation and Education Evaluation Strategy

Volume One: The Strategy
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INTRODUCTION

Enjoyment and stewardship of park resources and values is part of the fundamental purpose of parks and are integral to the National Park Service (NPS) mission. The National Education Council (NEC), established in 2004, helps renew and encourage the National Park Service's education mission. In order to build and sustain high-quality educational work, the NEC assigned the task of developing an evaluation strategy to its Education Evaluation Coordination Team (ECCT). The following presents an in-depth outline of the proposed evaluation strategy. Implementation of this strategy will result in an Interpretation and Education (I & E) Renaissance with the approaching centennial of the National Park System.

As part of the focus on renewing and fulfilling the education mission of the NPS, the EECT developed the Servicewide Interpretation and Education Evaluation Strategy (SIEES), which recognizes the importance of using the evaluation throughout the NPS. Encompassing a wide range of I & E programs, the strategy uses evaluation as a tool to ensure programs are continuously effective. The programs addressed in this strategy encompass a wide variety of place-based learning techniques including interpretation curriculum-based education, and information delivered through personal services and media. Outlined within the strategy are a series of action steps designed to achieve four identified objectives. Thus, when implemented, improvements in communication, training, knowledge, and information management will strengthen evaluation practices at all levels of the NPS. The strategy incorporates substantial input from education, interpretation, and evaluation experts and practitioners and is based on a review of current practices, evaluation literature, and case studies.

Evaluation as a Tool for Achieving Relevancy in the 21st Century

21st Century Relevancy - *The NPS mission will be relevant to contemporary America through engaging the public, developing a seamless network of parks, and protecting America's cultural heritage.*

- *NPS Director's Legacy Goals 2005*

*The Legacy Goals for 21st Century Relevancy, the *Renewing our Education Mission* document, and the NEC's *NPS Interpretation and Education Business Plan for Fiscal Year 2004* identified a need to evaluate interpretation and education programs. When applied strategically, evaluation improves the design and implementation of NPS programs, ensuring that they remain effective, relevant, and meaningful. Through evaluation, the NPS can substantiate the value of financial investments, helping to accomplish the Legacy Goals of Management Excellence, Sustainability, and 21st Century Relevancy. Furthermore, the NEC's *Interpretation and Education Business Plan for Fiscal Year 2004* identified a need to evaluate I & E programs. SIEES presents a framework for filling that need.*

What is meant by "education" in this document?

"In this context, education means all kinds of learning opportunities for all people of all ages including formal and informal programs, volunteer programs, life-long learning, publications, exhibits, films, the Internet, public outreach, and research."

- *Renewing Our Education Mission, p.2*

In 2003-04, the National Park Foundation conducted an extensive investigation into the best practices and biggest gaps in the arena of NPS I & E programming. Two recommendations that emerged from that investigation were:

1. Conduct and provide access to research, and
2. Integrate evaluation into all aspects of program development and delivery.

These recommendations further contribute to the identified need for the creation of a national evaluation strategy for NPS I & E programs.

Regulatory Requirements

NPS policies assert the need to evaluate the success of activities and programs. In particular, the policies state that levels of visitor satisfaction, understanding, and appreciation will be measured in order to quantify the visitor experience and to comply with requirements of the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA).

The Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART) assesses whether federal programs use evaluation for program improvement and strategic planning. In 2005,

a PART review of the NPS Visitor Services Program was unable to provide evidence of the impact of evaluations. This deficiency can be corrected by implementing a servicewide strategy that fosters a culture of evaluation. Ongoing evaluation of the I & E program can help the NPS accomplish its mission and can support the NPS scorecard process and core operations analysis.

Are independent evaluations of sufficient scope and quality conducted on a regular basis or as needed to support program improvements and evaluate effectiveness and relevance to the problem, interest, or need?

-- Question 2.6, OMB's Program Assessment Rating Tool

Practical Application

A systematic evaluation process makes good sense in the face of ever-increasing fiscal challenges. Program evaluation can help NPS staff improve efficiency and effectiveness at all levels of the Service:

- Field staff gain access to valuable tools to help them identify and share best practices, including mechanisms for the study of current and potential audiences and innovative use of technology to maximize visitor experience and employee effectiveness.
- Managers learn how best to invest funds and to apply rigorous accountability measures that support continual program improvement.
- Meanwhile, internal and external stakeholders develop an enriched understanding of the impact of I & E in achieving the NPS mission, thus helping to advance the work of the NPS on the local, regional, and national level.

Why Do Organizations Invest in Evaluation?

Evaluation is an important strategy of effective organizations because it delivers sound feedback on program effectiveness and impact. Evaluation builds organizational capacity to make decisions based on data collection and analysis. As such, it is a valuable tool for ensuring accountability and conducting performance assessment, budget prioritization, and strategic planning.

Of equal importance, conducting program evaluations helps organizations encourage a more reflective practice that leads to stronger programs, documents accomplishments, and justifies investments. A culture of evaluation encourages staff to combine their intuition and experience with data collection, analysis, and use of results. Essentially, a culture of evaluation demands that people ask both formally and informally: How does my program work? What impacts are we having? What elements are most and least effective? What can I do better? What will be most effective for our audiences? What strategies will be most likely to help us reach our goals in the most cost efficient way?

Definition of Evaluation

Evaluation is the “systematic collection of information about the activities, characteristics, and outcomes of programs to make judgments about the program, improve program effectiveness, and/or inform decisions about future programming” (Patton, 1997).

Evaluation provides information for decision making, allowing evidence-based decisions about program design and improvement, and the evidence needed to make strategic decisions about program investments.

Organization of this Report

The remainder of this document is comprised of two sections:

Part 1: Servicewide Interpretation and Education Evaluation Strategy addresses the question, “What are the Vision, Goals, and Objectives of the SIEES?” It describes the framework of the strategy in terms of the vision, goals, and objectives developed by the EECT based on the foundational dialogue and information compilation.

Part 2: Planning for Strategy Development and Implementation addresses the question, “How will the strategy work?” It describes the action steps and timeframe recommended for successful development and implementation of the strategy. The development and implementation of the strategy has been organized into three phases: Foundation, Integration, and Utilization.

See the companion document, *Servicewide Interpretation and Education Evaluation Strategy~ Volume Two: The Foundations*, for the following information:

Part 3: Foundations for Developing a Servicewide Interpretation and Education Evaluation Strategy addresses the question “How was the strategy developed?” It describes the role of the EECT and presents four areas of foundational information that were investigated in developing the strategy: involving internal and external stakeholders and experts, creating a comprehensive program model, conducting a literature review, and analyzing existing evaluation projects.

Appendix which includes the comprehensive program model, five case studies of past NPS evaluation projects, a glossary of terms, and other details.

PART ONE:

***SERVICEWIDE INTERPRETATION AND
EDUCATION EVALUATION STRATEGY***

***“What are the Vision, Goals, and
Objectives of the strategy?”***

DRAFT

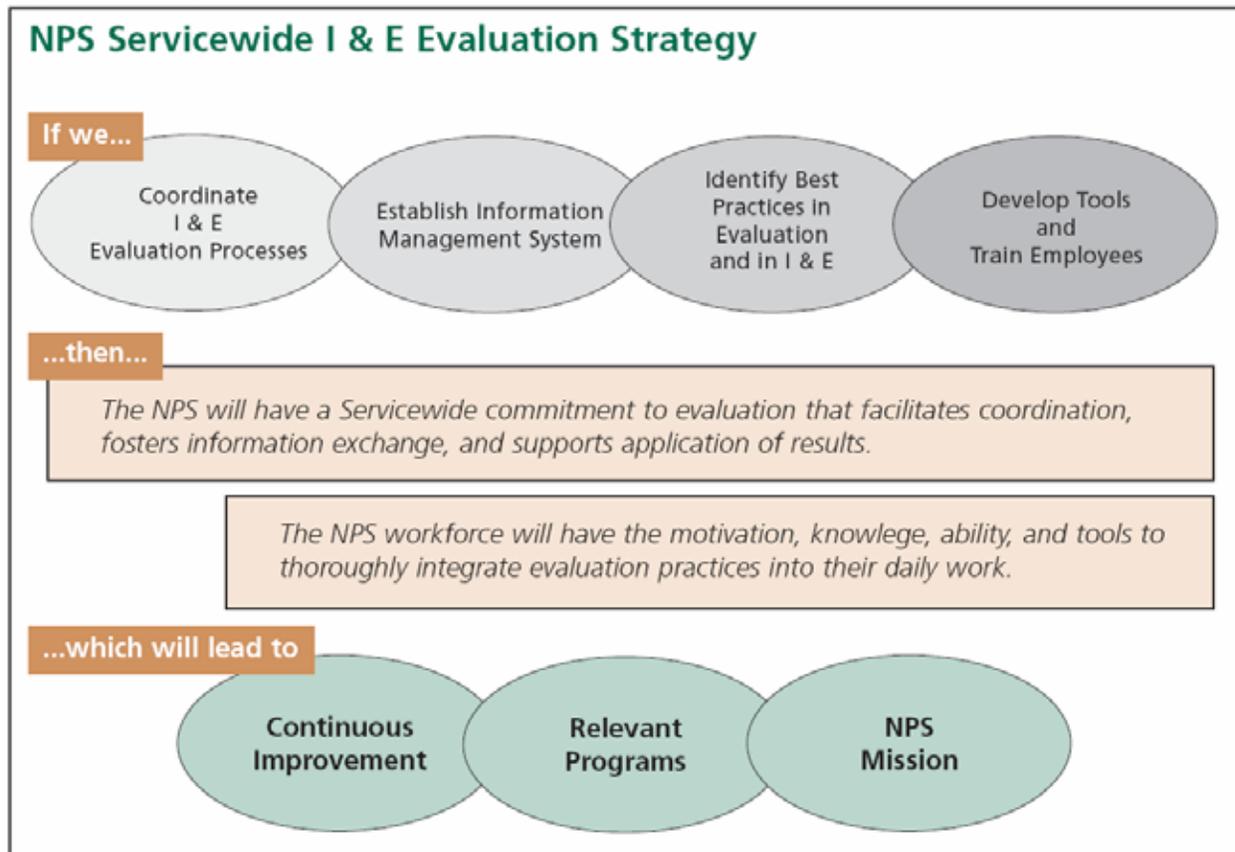
The Visions, Goals, and Objectives of SIEES

“The National Park Service will bring strategic leadership to an organization-wide approach to education that results in renewed vigor, dialogue, and scholarship that embodies the principles of a learning organization.”

--Renewing Our Education Mission

The vision, goals, and objectives of the SIEES are presented in Figure 1.1: Objectives, Goals, and Vision of SIEES. Following Figure 1.1, the vision, goals and objectives are outlined in more detail.

Figure 1.1: Objectives, Goals, and Vision of SIEES



Vision

Resource stewardship and visitor enjoyment are enhanced by the NPS embracing evaluation.

Evaluation at all levels of the NPS leads to sound decision making that ensures cost effectiveness, financial accountability, and interpretation and education that meet or exceed rigorous standards.

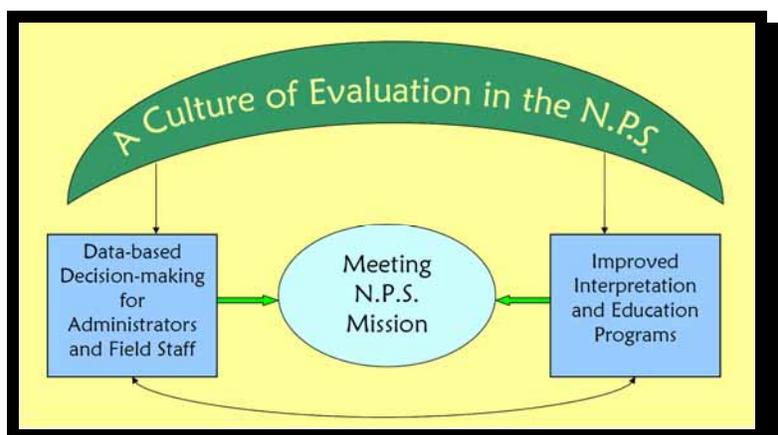
Within a culture of education, compelling evidence is used to continually improve programming and demonstrate that programs are relevant, engaging, and effective.

Goals

In order to realize this vision, the NPS must accomplish two goals:

1. The NPS will have a servicewide commitment to evaluation that facilitates coordination, fosters information exchange, and supports application of results.
2. The NPS workforce will have the motivation, knowledge, ability, and tools to thoroughly integrate evaluation practices into their daily work.

Figure 1.2: Culture of Evaluation



Objectives

These two goals can be achieved through the following four objectives. The objectives are listed below and then outlined in greater detail in the following section.

1. Establish a means for ongoing coordination of I & E evaluation processes and support for the application of results.
2. Develop an I & E evaluation information management system.
3. Use evaluation results to identify and disseminate best practices in evaluation and I & E.
4. Develop tools and products to support evaluation and ensure that employees have the ability to integrate evaluation practices into daily work. Provide training to motivate employees and enhance the agency's evaluation capacity.

Objective 1. Establish a means for ongoing coordination of I & E evaluation processes and support for the application of results.

This objective acknowledges a fundamental need to establish a mechanism for coordination and communication that includes local, regional, and national input into evaluation efforts. Recommendations to support this coordination function include:

- 1a. Establish and support an I&E Evaluation Coordinator or National Evaluation Facilitation Team (NEFT) to coordinate functions and sustain communication with other NPS offices.
- 1b. Engage the I & E networks at the park, regional, and national levels to implement the SIEES.
- 1c. Link on-going evaluation efforts with PART, GPRA, and other assessment tools and requirements.
- 1d. Identify and tap into existing mechanisms and offices for conducting evaluation.
- 1e. Review the SIEES annually.

Each of these elements is discussed below.

1a. Establish and support an I& E Coordinator or NEFT to coordinate functions and sustain communication with other NPS offices

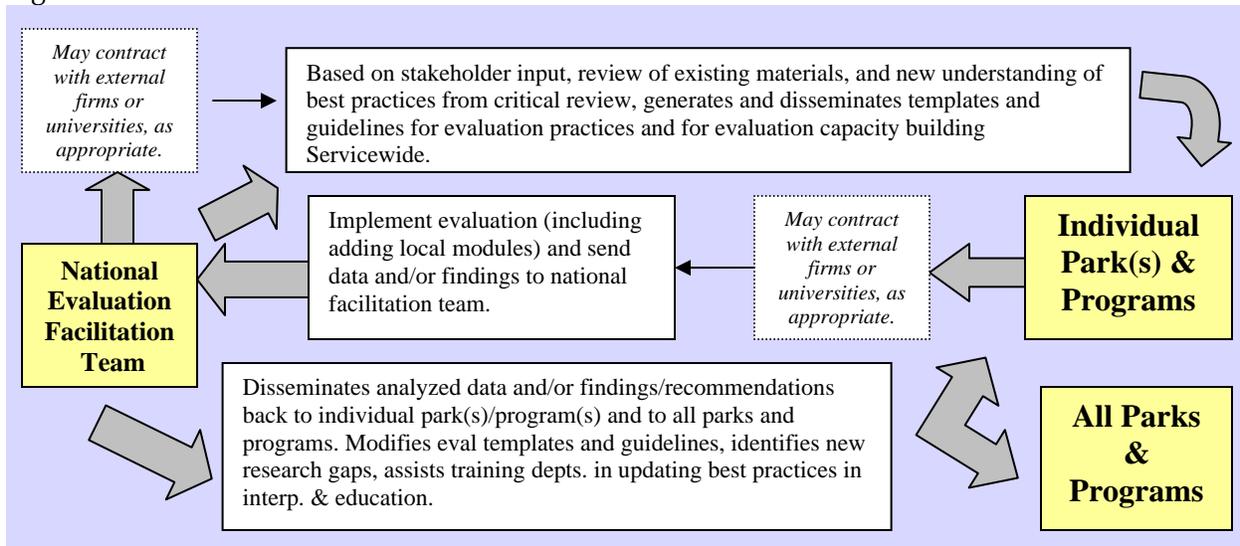
For the long term success of this evaluation strategy, the EECT will need to be supplemented or replaced by some type of national facilitation entity to provide support, coordination, communication, and clearinghouse services for the SIEES. The idea that this body could be a national team acknowledges the value of having a diverse representation of researchers and practitioners, both internal and external to the NPS, guiding the evaluation efforts. This national entity could be housed and potentially staffed by one of the NPS's existing programs with related functions such as the NPS Washington Office (for example, WASO Interpretation, Social Science Program, Mather Training Center, or Harpers Ferry Center), be field-based (for example, at the NPS Conservation Study Institute or the Northeast Center for Education Services); and/or be a cooperative venture among several of the programs working together. The EECT may continue to exist as an advisor to the NEC and to the national facilitation team.

The following are the roles that a coordinator or NEFT could play in working with parks and NPS programs to develop effective evaluation projects:

- Act as a national coordinating mechanism and clearinghouse for evaluation endeavors servicewide in order to make evaluation efficient and to capitalize on opportunities for shared learning.
- Centralize the analysis process such that findings are distributed to and considered by a wider audience than the park(s) being evaluated.
- Conduct large-scale evaluation projects.
- Utilize OMB's PART review expectations to inform work with parks and programs that are being evaluated by external sources or evaluating themselves internally.
- Work with I & E staff members to understand findings and integrate recommendations into their program work and decision making.
- Maintain the on-line evaluation library.
- Support pilot and individual evaluation projects, specific to the needs of each project.
- Conduct training events for park and program staff members focusing on conducting evaluations, making the most of the process, and utilizing results.
- Develop, disseminate, and periodically refine a National Toolkit of evaluation methods, which encompasses the need for site-specific information and generalizable national findings.

In outlining the roles of a national facilitation entity, Figure 1.3 depicts a possible flow of evaluation activities between the coordinator or NEFT and NPS parks and programs.

Figure 1.3: Evaluation Information Flow Model



1b. Engage I&E networks at the park, regional, and national levels to implement the SIEES. Design a system for regional and local coordination.

In order to build evaluation capacity, and thus enhance I & E programs servicewide, an appropriate mechanism for coordination between the NEFT and regional and local coordinators should be designed. For example, appoint a designated evaluation liaison at each site or within each region. These would be the “on-the-ground” individuals upon which implementation, dissemination, and utilization of evaluation processes and findings would hinge.

The United States Forest Service (USFS) provided one example of establishing a multi-tiered evaluation system throughout the agency. This report, “Implementation of Multi-party Monitoring and Evaluation: The USDA Forest Service Stewardship Contracting Pilot Projects FY 2001”, prepared by The Pinchot Institute for Conservation, details its evaluation strategy including establishing regional evaluation networks and convening periodic regional symposia to discuss evaluation processes and findings. In a nutshell, the USFS’s strategy for conducting a participatory national evaluation included the following components:

1. Introductory workshops to familiarize pilot participants with the evaluation framework and requirements.
2. Development and distribution of electronic evaluation criteria packages which form the foundation for assessing the accomplishments and lessons learned from on the ground projects. The USFS versions of these packages are provided in the report (see URL below).
3. Establishment and meeting of local, regional, and national teams intended to ensure participation and consistency. The teams are intended to be “...collaborative units in which all participants have equal standing and equal weight in decision making.... This inclusiveness will hopefully enhance learning and build trust within the community, as well as between communities and the Forest Service, thereby fostering collaborative learning and adaptive management.”

4. Outreach sessions to inform and engage national interest and stakeholder groups in evaluation efforts.
5. Development of two new evaluation-oriented internet resources (an on-line listserv and a comprehensive Web site).

This report may be worth exploring in greater detail when the design of the NPS coordinator or NEFT's role is underway. A PDF of this report is available on-line at the following URL: http://www.fs.fed.us/forestmanagement/projects/stewardship/pilots/fy2002_report/fy2002_stewardship_contracting_report.pdf

1c. Link on-going evaluation efforts with PART, GPRA, and other assessment tools and requirements

It is important to ensure that existing and future DOI and NPS guidelines and assessment processes are heeded when implementing new evaluation projects. New and existing evaluation and assessment tools should be enhanced and aligned as part of the evaluation strategy.

A coordinating body would ensure that the evaluation strategy is aligned with I & E program requirements and management guidelines. These are outlined in a wide range of laws and policies including *The Organic Act of 1916*, *NPS Management Polices 2006* (particularly Chapter 7), *Directors Order 6*, and the statement of policy contained in *Renewing Our Education Mission*. Strategies are outlined in the *NPS Strategic Plan*, the draft *Interpretation and Education Program Business Plan and Action Plan*, as well as plans and strategies at the regional and park level.

A coordinating body would also capitalize on existing evaluation tools including the Visitor Survey Card, and annual visitor survey used to measure accomplishment of Mission Goals IIa and IIb of the *NPS Strategic Plan* as required by the GPRA; the NPS Scorecard, a tool to assist managers in diagnosing the financial, organization, and operational health of our National Parks; and a variety of information gathering systems including the Servicewide Interpretive Report, Annual Interpretive Plans, and budget tracking software.

Of special note, the 2005 OMB PART review of NPS Visitor Services recommendations (August 2005) identified two areas for strengthening in 2005:

1. More external, independent evaluation. Concern was that NPS evaluation has been mostly internal or too closely associated with researchers who are linked the parks; according to OMB, independent evaluation entails an external evaluator writing the criteria for effectiveness, and then, the NPS conducting most or some of the evaluation.
2. Conduct evaluations with "sufficient scope." Concern was that NPS evaluation has been too piecemeal in the past; thus, more of a servicewide focus is needed.

1d. Identify and tap into existing mechanisms and offices for conducting evaluation

By identifying and working through the Social Science Program, NPS Learning Centers, the Conservation Study Institute, CESU's, and other programs and organizations engaged in research, the NPS can make use of mechanisms that currently exist to facilitate evaluation.

Furthermore, one means of on-going evaluation for the NPS might include linking with the system of “indicator parks” to be identified, pending funding, by the NPS Visiting Chief Social Scientist. This endeavor could include, for instance, a rotating system of 20-70 parks designated to represent the range of the system so that the NPS has a way to gather information on a variety of topics that has local utility as well as servicewide applications. Samples of evaluation work being conducted at those indicator parks could, in a given evaluation cycle, indicate generally which types of I & E programs are most effective.

Also worth considering is the establishment of Indicator Activities. Evaluations could be conducted with a sample of programs falling under a particular activity heading, such as Junior Rangers, and used to extrapolate findings, best practices, and recommendations, for the activity as a whole. Perhaps a dual-pronged approach is possible, combining the indicator parks and indicator activities approaches.

1e. Review the Servicewide Interpretation and Education Evaluation Strategy annually

It will be necessary to conduct an annual review of the SIEES to ensure that it is functioning smoothly, share findings, identify challenges, set goals, and revise the strategy to maintain relevance as needed.

Objective 2. Develop an information management system.

This objective acknowledges the need for managing and sharing the vast body of information available to NPS employees and stakeholders. *Renewing Our Education Mission* stipulates that “The National Park Service will ensure that employees have access to the latest scholarship on preserving, managing, and interpreting natural and cultural resources as well as on educational methods and that this knowledge is reflected in its programs.” The two recommendations described below offer examples of how the NPS could enhance its ability to manage and make available information associated with evaluation and research pertaining to NPS I & E programs.

Recommendations in support of establishing this information management system include:

- 2a. Establish an on-line evaluation library.
- 2b. Inventory and catalogue existing NPS evaluation efforts.

2a. Create an on-line evaluation library

An on-line evaluation library could serve as a central repository for evaluations of NPS I & E programs. From the library, one can follow links to all available reports, and/or to abstracts and key findings of the reports. The Social Science Studies Collection is currently available on-line at <http://npsfocus.nps.gov/> and would be a logical location for the on-line evaluation library. The evaluation library could include an overall matrix of studies, which would be a working document, continuously updated as new studies are completed. The library and the matrix will help researchers and evaluators, both internal and external to the NPS, more efficiently identify existing evaluation research; thus focusing efforts on filling research gaps and completing complementary studies rather than repetitious ones.

2b. Inventory and catalogue existing NPS evaluation efforts

A literature review identifies, compiles, and summarizes relevant research within a topic area. As a companion to this document, *Volume Two: The Foundations* describes the literature reviews that have been accomplished to date. A comprehensive literature review should be developed to inventory and catalogue all past NPS I & E evaluation efforts. It would:

- Provide an overall picture of what has and has not been accomplished in NPS education evaluation.
- Illustrate the types of issues, methodologies, results, conclusions, and applications of various research projects.
- Help to identify gaps in research topics.
- Describe results that may be applied to similar situations, thus leading to cost efficiency.
- Introduce conceptual and logical frameworks being tested and applied.
- Help set priorities for future research needs.

Objective 3. Use of evaluation results to identify and disseminate best practices in evaluation and I & E.

Recommendations in support of best practices include:

- 3a. Identify and support a range of effective pilot evaluation projects.
- 3b. Review existing research to identify lessons learned, best practices, gaps, and evaluation needs.
- 3c. Design mechanisms to track utilization of results, and develop guidelines for generalizable results.
- 3d. Identify best practices in evaluation, interpretation, and education.

3a. Identify and support a range of effective pilot evaluation projects

At any given time, there are evaluation projects in progress throughout the NPS. This recommendation suggests capitalizing on existing and ongoing evaluation projects as a means of demonstrating the value of evaluation for program improvement and validation and as a means to explore what is known about how evaluation is conducted within the NPS. In addition, these projects could illustrate ways of sharing findings and tracking the impact of what is learned through evaluation.

The following steps are offered as an example of how the pilot could unfold:

1. Conduct a scan of current evaluation projects that may be suitable to serve as “pilots.”
Choose a suite of program evaluation projects that spans an array of:
 - a. I & E program types (i.e. curriculum-based, waysides, media, Junior Rangers, etc.)
 - b. Sites (i.e. regional variation, size of park, programs with partners, etc.)
 - c. Evaluation methodologies (i.e. qualitative, quantitative, etc.)

- d. Evaluation questions and theories within the NPS program model (i.e. input, output, outcome foci, etc.)
 - e. Evaluator compositions (i.e. internal, external, university, CESUs, private firm, etc.)
2. Identify several pilot projects in which the sites and the evaluators are eager to be active participants in evaluation at all stages and in demonstrating the approach within the SIEES. To begin the process of capacity building and stakeholder involvement discussed below, it is advisable to encourage evaluators and sites to work collaboratively from the start, with a focus on local utilization as well as broader dissemination. In the case of new projects, this collaboration may start at the design phase. For others, the collaboration could pick up at any stage of the process including instrument development, administration, analysis or reporting.
 3. An evaluation coordinator or national facilitation team (see Objective 1) can keep track of the projects as they progress, assist the projects in maintaining a focus on collaboration, utilization, and eventual dissemination throughout the process, and develop a process for analyzing and sharing the findings of the pilot studies once they are complete.
 4. Sample evaluation questions for this multi-project analysis might be:
 - a. What parts of the NPS I & E comprehensive program model have been addressed by these studies?
 - b. What common themes do we observe in the findings from these studies?
 - c. How is “effectiveness” defined and measured in each of these studies?
 - d. On the whole, were the programs being evaluated found to be effective?
 - e. What best practices in program delivery were identified during these evaluations?
 - f. What obstacles to the evaluation process were encountered?
 - g. How are the findings of these studies disseminated?
 - h. How are the findings of these studies used both on-site and more broadly?
 - i. What has been learned about evaluating NPS I & E programs?
 - j. What has been learned overall about the process and outcomes of NPS I & E programs?
 5. Write a final report answering the evaluation questions, and disseminate key findings via the web, in person, and on paper. The findings from this pilot could be useful in subsequent evaluation training sessions.

“The National Park Service will establish a system of evaluation focused on continually improving programs and sharing lessons learned and best practices Servicewide.”

--Renewing Our Education Mission

3b. Review existing research to identify lessons learned, best practices, gaps, and evaluation needs

The following suggested steps and questions can help hone in on which evaluation methods and processes have been most and least effective, so that future evaluation efforts can capitalize on what has already been learned in the NPS evaluation realm.

1. Inventory all evaluation work that has been conducted in past ten years on NPS programs, per Objective 3, regarding information management. (The EECT has begun this work; See Literature Review section of *Volume Two: The Foundations*.)
2. From these, glean best practices in NPS-oriented evaluation. Determining the answer to these questions may involve follow-up with those involved in the study, in addition to reviewing the studies.
 - a. Which evaluation methods and approaches were most effective?
 - b. Which types of studies were most utilized?
 - c. Which means of dissemination were most effective?
3. Through the creation of a matrix, focus on what gaps exist in the studies.
 - a. What has been studied extensively? What has not been studied?
 - b. Which types of studies have made the most “splash” outside of the local context? Which studies have been useful to others as well as those being studied?
 - c. Which have gained national attention?
4. Compile and disseminate practical information on evaluation processes such as costs, consultants, etc.
5. Based on the inventory, narrow the field for types of evaluations that will be most likely to yield fruitful results.

While this activity focuses on gleaning best practices in evaluation, another parallel recommendation would be a synthesis of the findings of these reports to start establishing data on best practices in *I & E*, in addition to identified *evaluation* best practices. This is explored further in *Volume 2: The Foundations*.

3c. Design mechanisms to track utilization of results/Develop guidelines for generalizable results

While many evaluation endeavors currently exist in the NPS, many people feel that the results are not shared and used as widely as they could be to promote improvement of educational programs and evaluation processes.

1. Design a mechanism to track the results and utilization of evaluation findings. Rather than just summarizing lessons, the mechanism would include talking to the park and asking how they used the information, and what else could be done with it. (The EECT has begun this work by analyzing case studies; See Appendix B of *Volume 2: The Foundations*.)
2. Encourage internal and external evaluations to include recommendations for the individual park or program and recommendations for parks and programs generally. Guidelines may need to be developed to ensure that these studies are generalizable.

3d. Identify best practices in evaluation, interpretation, and education

Before one can demonstrate excellence in evaluation, it is necessary to have a clearly defined set of national standards that describe best practices. It is critical that the NPS establish professional and national standards for evaluation. These standards should be articulated in the form of knowledge, skills, abilities, and behaviors that demonstrate evaluation best practices. In addition, it is important

that a competency-based training program, accessible through on-line tutorials and project development modules, is developed as part of the Interpretive Development Program. These standards and training modules, along with associated policy, support, leadership, and creativity, will be a fundamental cornerstone of this strategy. (See Objective 4 for recommendations on conducting this training.)

One critical use of evaluation findings is to improve program functioning and effectiveness. Therefore, evaluation results should be analyzed to identify best practices in I & E. Through the enhanced evaluation systems described above, the NPS should capitalize on the opportunity to better understand, disseminate, and reward the use of best practices in I & E servicewide. NPS rangers should be the standard bearers for quality, ensuring that these best practices are met by all employees, volunteers, partners, and concessionaires who provide I & E services to park audiences.

Objective 4. Develop tools and products to support evaluation and ensure that employees have the ability to integrate evaluation practices into daily work. Provide training to motivate employees and enhance the agency's evaluation capacity.

Building evaluation capacity servicewide means developing a culture of evaluation. In alignment with Objective 1 (outlining the designation of a multi-tiered coordination system), a culture of evaluation will require engaging, educating, and seeking input from stakeholders at all levels of the NPS. Key to training and motivating employees will be utilizing the proposed information management systems (Objective 2), as well as providing regional symposia and training sessions in evaluation processes, methods, and best practices in I & E that emerge from ongoing evaluations.

Recommendations include:

- 4a. Link professional development opportunities (e.g. IDP, TelNet, and symposia) and reward systems to evaluation best practices
- 4b. Create an interpreters' and managers' toolkit of evaluation materials

4a. Link professional development opportunities (e.g. IDP, TelNet, symposia) and reward systems to evaluation best practices

The following professional development opportunities would help staff utilize evaluation processes and findings:

1. Use TELNET, professional conferences (George Wright, NAI, etc.), the Interpretive Development Program, other competency-based training, and other existing venues for professional development.
2. Host regional symposia for cross-fertilization on both the use of evaluation practices and findings about educational programs resulting from evaluation. (Reference information regarding USFS evaluation plan, outlined within Objective 1.)

The following reward systems would be useful in motivating staff to develop and refine programs based on research-backed best practices:

1. Develop ways to infuse evaluation into existing motivational reward systems for acknowledging best practices in education, such as the Freeman Tilden Award, at both the

- regional and national levels. Work with awards committees to ensure that specific evaluation criteria are considered when determining who is acknowledged as outstanding in the field.
2. Establish means of disseminating this information to the field.

4b. Create an interpreters' and managers' toolkit of evaluation materials

The *Renewing Our Education Mission* document calls for developing a National Toolkit of evaluation materials and tools. Part of this effort includes ensuring that staff throughout the service has access to existing tools, such as the University of Idaho Cooperative Park Studies Unit's *Focus Groups: A Tool for Evaluating Interpretive Services*, the NPS Social Science Program's *Social Science Surveys and Interviews in the National Parks and for the National Park Service: A Guide to NPS and OMB Approvals*, the USFS's *A Handbook for Evaluating Interpretive Services*, and other existing assessment tools described in Objective 1. Further, reference information, such as Harpers Ferry Center's *The Effectiveness of Nonpersonal Media Used in Interpretation and Informal Education: An Annotated Bibliography* and articles from the National Association for Interpretation's *Journal of Interpretation Research*, should be readily available. The on-line information system described in Objective 2 and professional development opportunities described in Objective 4 are possible ways that this information could be made available.

In addition, it will be necessary to create new tools that will efficiently help field staff and program managers integrate evaluation methods into program design. See the *Community Mapping Program National Toolkit* as one example. Training opportunities should be developed to ensure that the tools and an evaluation mindset are effectively integrated into daily work. Finally, it may be necessary to develop new evaluation policies and guidelines to enable and firmly establish a culture of evaluation servicewide.

PART TWO:

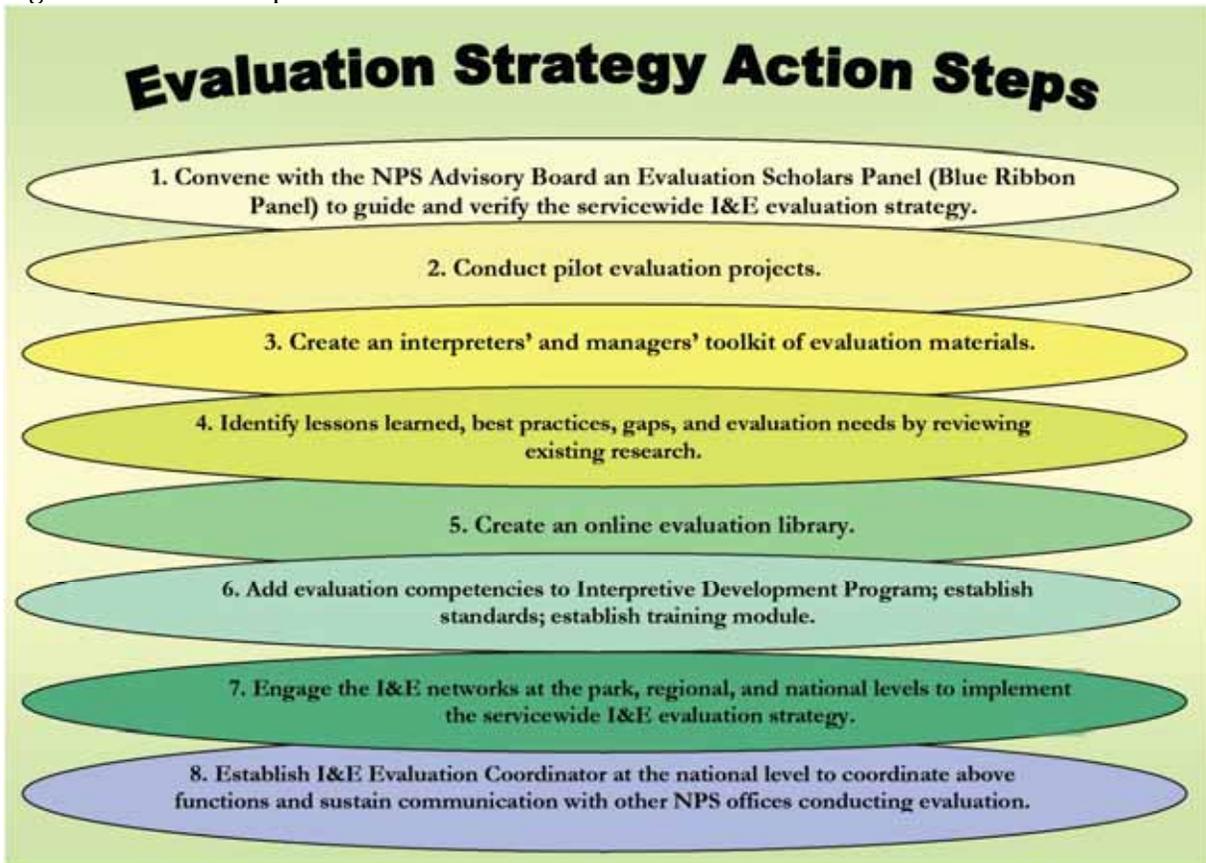
***PLANNING FOR STRATEGY
DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION***

“How will the strategy work?”

Key Recommended Actions

The suggested actions listed in the graphic below are key recommended actions to implement the strategy. The following sections describe how these actions should be sequenced and how they support the strategic goals and objectives.

Figure 2.1: Action Steps



Phased Development and Implementation of the Strategy

The development and implementation of the strategy has been organized into three phases (Foundation, Integration, and Utilization). These phases suggest the sequence in which the action steps should occur.

Phase I: Foundation

This first phase is currently underway by the ECCT through the financial support of the NEC. The EECT's work on the first phase has built a foundation for the strategy. Phase I is intended to be complete by December 2006 when the SIEES will be finalized.

Actions Completed in Phase I:

- Identification and compilation of foundational information. (This includes solicitation of input from a variety of NPS stakeholders, creation of a comprehensive program model, a review of related literature, and a compilation of NPS evaluation case studies.)
- Identification of vision, goals, and objectives of the strategy.
- Identification of action steps to achieve the objective (reference Figure B: Key Action Steps).

Phase II: Integration

The second phase builds the means for full implementation and establishes effective systems that support this work. Ideally, this phase will be complete by September 2007. The EECT could play a supporting role in carrying out Phase II in coordination with others.

Actions during phase II:

- *In conjunction with the National Park System Advisory Board, convene an Evaluation Summit to guide and verify the SIEES.
- *Identify and support pilot evaluation projects.
- *Work with the NPS Asset Management Program to develop criteria and methods that incorporate achievement of outcomes for I&E media.
- Review existing research to identify lessons learned, best practices, research gaps, and evaluation needs.
- Establish an I&E Evaluation Coordinator at the national level to coordinate functions and sustain communication with other NPS offices conducting evaluation.

*Actions are also on the National Education Council's Action Plan

Phase III: Utilization

This phase is the ongoing application of the evaluation strategy. Ideally this would be in place by September, 2008 and would continue into the future. The role of the EECT remains to be decided; it could continue to serve in an advisory capacity. As noted above, another team or entity would be needed to carry out the strategy.

Actions during phase III:

- Create an interpreters' and managers' toolkit of evaluation materials.
- Create an on-line evaluation library.
- Add evaluation competencies to Interpretive Development Program; establish standards and a training module for evaluation.
- Engage the I&E networks at the park, regional, and national levels to implement the SIEES.

Figure 2.2: Phased Implementation Matrix

Objective	Phase I Foundation**	Service-wide Education Evaluation Strategy document completed December 2006	Phase II Integration	Phase III Utilization
Coordinate I&E Evaluation Processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Solicit input from a variety of NPS stakeholders Convene with the NPSAB an Evaluation Summit to guide and verify the SIEES 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish an I&E Coordinator at the national level Identify and tap into existing evaluation mechanisms and offices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage the I&E networks at the park, regional, and national levels to implement the SIEES Link on-going evaluation efforts with other assessment tools and requirements Review the SIEES annually
Establish Information Management System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Compile NPS evaluation case studies *Review related literature 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inventory and catalogue existing evaluation efforts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create an on-line evaluation library
Establish Best Practices in Evaluation and in I&E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Create a comprehensive program model for I & E 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify pilot evaluation projects Review existing research to identify lessons learned, best practices, gaps, and evaluation needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support pilot evaluation projects to establish best practices; conduct evaluations Design mechanisms to track utilization of results and develop guidelines for generalizable results Establish criteria to assess condition of media
Train Employees and Develop Tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop Vision, Goals, Objectives, and Actions for the SIEES Seek employee feedback on SIEES 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roll out SIEES in the context of other NEC efforts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Link professional development opportunities and reward systems to evaluation best practices Create an interpreters' and managers' toolkit of evaluation materials

* These actions are described more fully in the companion document "Volume Two: The Foundations".

** All Phase 1 actions have been initiated by the ECCT.

Summary

In pulling the information from Part 1 and Part 2 together, the following Action Plan outlines how the goals and objectives of the SIEES are advanced through the recommended action steps.

Goal 1: The NPS will have a servicewide commitment to evaluation that facilitates coordination, fosters information exchange, and supports application of results.

Objective 1: Establish a means for ongoing coordination of I & E evaluation functions and processes, and support for application of results.

Action: Establish and support an I & E Coordinator or National Evaluation Facilitation Team to coordinate functions and sustain communication with other NPS offices.

Action: Engage the I & E networks at the park, regional, and national levels to implement the SIEES.

Action: Link on-going evaluation efforts with PART, GPRA, and other assessment tools and requirements

Action: Identify and tap into existing evaluation mechanisms and offices for conducting evaluation

Action: Review the SIEES Strategy annually.

Objective 2: Develop an I & E evaluation information management system.

Action: Create an on-line evaluation library.

Action: Inventory and catalogue existing evaluation efforts.

Objective 3: Use evaluation results to identify and disseminate best practices in evaluation and in I & E.

Action: Identify and support a range of effective pilot evaluation projects.

Action: Review existing research to identify lessons learned, best practices, gaps, and evaluation needs.

Action: Design mechanism to track utilization of results/Develop guidelines for generalizable results

Action: Establish best practices in evaluation, interpretation, and education.

Goal 2: The NPS workforce will have the motivation, knowledge, skill, and tools to thoroughly integrate evaluation practices into daily work.

Objective 4: Develop tools and products to support evaluation and ensure that employees have the ability to integrate evaluation practices into daily work. Provide training to motivate employees and enhance the agency's evaluation capacity.

Action: Create an interpreters' and managers' toolkit of evaluation materials.

Action: Link professional development opportunities (e.g. IDP, Tel Net, and symposia) and reward systems to evaluation best practices.

Through its pages, *Volume 1* has outlined a strategy that can be used to introduce a culture of evaluation into the NPS servicewide. In the companion document, *Volume 2: The Foundations*, information is presented regarding how the Servicewide Interpretation and Education Evaluation Strategy was developed, including a discussion of relevant literature, studies, and program models.