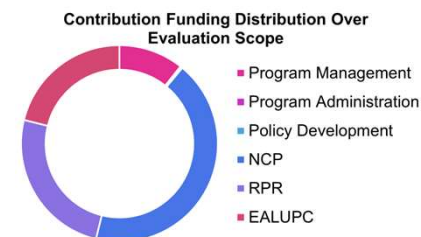
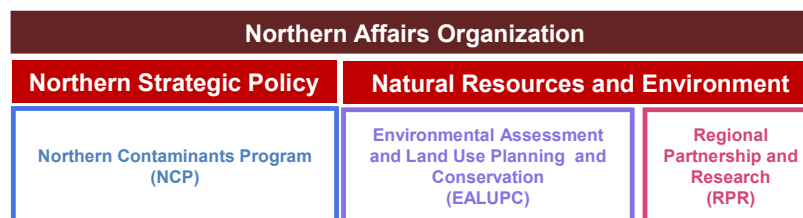




## EVALUATION OF NORTHERN AND ARCTIC ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAM

### PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Northern and Arctic Environmental Sustainability (NAES) Program contributes to CIRNAC's core responsibility of Northern Affairs and is delivered and managed by the Northern Affairs Organization (NAO). The program activities contribute to NAO's work in monitoring, environmental assessment, and sustainable management of land and resources in the North and Arctic.



### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

There is a clear and ongoing need for NAES given the realities of climate change, the need for food security in the North, and fulfilling the commitment to reconciliation. The Program is committed to engaging with Indigenous communities. Some design elements could be improved to address capacity issues and support more effective performance measurement.

#### Relevance

- ✓ There is a clear alignment between NAES initiatives, and the needs of the groups served. NAES remains relevant and responsive to departmental objectives, national commitments to reconciliation and Indigenous sovereignty, as well as international commitments to data collection for environmental monitoring.

#### Design and Delivery

- ✓ Program delivery is hindered by delays in communication of approvals and delivery of funding, posing challenges to researchers that make some projects infeasible. Program funding has remained static while the scope of responsibilities has increased, as new contaminants of concern are identified year over year, stretching the Program's resources.
- ✓ Involving community members in leadership positions, such as the NCP's Inuit Research Advisors and contaminants researchers, was noted to have a significant positive impact on research. Research practices that are adaptable and responsive to community feedback and engage with youth and elders have been successful.
- ✓ NAES is successful in meeting its existing performance measurement targets. However, it was identified that the full scope of NAES activities do not align with the performance indicators and important functions of the Program are unrecognized by the performance measurement framework. Opportunities for consideration include identifying areas for cross-initiative collaboration and capacity sharing so that Indigenous organizations could share capacity and maximize the benefit of each initiative. Further, within NAES, areas could be identified for cross-initiative collaboration to support streamlining of communications, and to reduce burden on Indigenous organizations.

#### Effectiveness, Efficiency and Economy

- ✓ EALUPC and NPFP have been successful in engaging Indigenous communities and informing decision making about land-use planning and environmental assessment. While important in the short-term, the case-by-case funding structure does not support long-term capacity development by Indigenous parties.
- ✓ NCP has been successful in monitoring and reporting on contaminants of concern and environmental health issues. However, the initiative's reduced capacity impacted its ability to produce reports, summaries, and website updates.
- ✓ RPR has successfully funded research on environmental sustainability. Its project design for the Baffin Bay and Davis Strait Strategic Environmental Assessment received strong support from Indigenous partners and was highlighted as a model for successful engagement.
- ✓ Communities and organizations are under high demand, and this can limit the extent to which they can engage with the Program. While increased consultation is positively received, it can further strain capacity. Program partners are supportive of strategies such as multi-year funding and a flexible reporting processes that accommodate Indigenous parties' needs and support long-term planning. NAES supports long-term capacity building through its regional boards and locally based positions. Opportunities for consideration include: recognizing contributions of Indigenous Knowledge at the project and international levels; and, increasing flexibility in contaminants research to include locally sourced pollutants of interest to Indigenous communities.



## RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS

1

Address inefficiencies in processes for approval and distribution of funding, including refining internal funding processes, improving communication of funding timelines, and mechanisms to move toward multi-year funding.

NAES will continue to work with financial administration to streamline the funding process and implement multi-year funding when possible. NCP will shift program funding timelines and seek to gain efficiency from a new online application system. NPFP is working to increase awareness of its funding and ensure calls for proposals can be made in a timely manner.

2

Improve existing processes and opportunities for supporting Indigenous organizations' long-term capacity to participate in NAES funded research by: (1) expanding research advisor and contaminants research positions; (2) furthering locally-led engagement on research results; and (3) engaging youth, elders, and other knowledge holders.

NCP will continue to explore partnerships to improve engagement and communications with local communities. RPR will seek further financial contributions to ensure locally-led engagement on research results can be broadened. NPFP will use the results from the recipients' survey it undertakes to identify opportunities for further engaging underrepresented groups. These areas can also be used as themes for capacity building funding.

3

Consider approaches to address program capacity shortages resulting from a growing list of contaminants of concern that require additional research, monitoring and assessment capacity.

NCP will continue to work to identify available sources of internal funding. NCP will also work to explore new, additional or in-kind budget sources with partner organizations for its core work, as well as ongoing funds for plastics monitoring and research. As well, NCP will evaluate the sampling and analysis schedule of its core monitoring activities to identify possible cost savings.

4

Review and update the Program's logic model and performance measurement strategy to better articulate the existing connectivity between initiatives and to better measure shared outcomes

The PIP is being updated to reflect new TB sub outcomes and indicators, and will have updated sections on Risks, Evaluation, GBA+. Further updates will look at restructuring the NAES PIP with the cooperation of CFRDO and FMAs.

## ABOUT THE EVALUATION

In accordance with CIRNAC's Five-Year Evaluation Plan 2020-21 to 2024-25, an evaluation of NAES was undertaken for fiscal years 2013-2014 to 2022-2023. NAES is one of 8 programs under CIRNAC's Core Responsibility of Northern Affairs. The NAES initiatives that were assessed include: the Northern Contaminants Program (NCP), Regional Partnerships and Research (RPR), and Environmental Assessment, Land Use Planning and Conservation (EALUPC), which contains the Northern Participant Funding Program (NPFP). Given its fiscal scope and size, the NCP is the primary focus of this evaluation.

## METHODS



Document and  
Literature Review

31

Key Informant  
Interviews



Program Data  
Review

7

Case Studies

## KEY INFORMANTS

CIRNAC Officials	First Nations and Inuit Partners	Territorial Gov
		Other