

RESULTS AT A GLANCE

Evaluation of the Northern Contaminated Sites Program

Introduction

- Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNAC) is the custodian of 167 of the 2,644 northern contaminated sites in the Federal Contaminated Sites Inventory, which pose risks to the environment and human health.
- CIRNAC's Northern Contaminated Sites Program (NCSP) manages these contaminated sites, using the National Classification System for Contaminated Sites while promoting socio-economic benefits to Northerners, particularly Indigenous peoples.
- NCSP is primarily funded through the Federal Contaminated Sites Action Plan.

Program Resources

- Expenditures for NCSP were approximately \$653.35 million over the evaluation period.

Expected Results and Outcomes

- Northern contaminated sites are managed to protect human health, safety and the environment for all Northerners by assessing and remediating contaminated sites, and supporting employment and training. The program contributes to the core departmental responsibility of Community and Regional Development.

What the evaluation found

- NCSP is relevant as a means of addressing needs and priorities related to contaminated site remediation, reconciliation, and socio-economic development in the North.
- There was broad endorsement that reconciliation is the lens through which NCSP should be designed and delivered.

- NCSP's project management approach is generally viewed as sound, robust and flexible.
- Contaminated site remediation can contribute to socio-economic development in the North, however, the evidence indicates that this has not been realized.
- There is limited incorporation of Indigenous guidance and Traditional Knowledge into environmental monitoring and risk assessment.
- The risks to human health and the environment from northern contaminated sites were addressed during the evaluation period.
- The target of 95 percent for expenditures that are liability reducing were exceeded during the evaluation period.

Recommendations and Responses

It is recommended that:

1. **NCSP should be recalibrated using the lens of reconciliation. From the outset, all stakeholders should be jointly involved in the development of "NCSP of the future," from conceptualization and design, through to implementation, ongoing management, and monitoring and evaluation. Recommendations two and three, derive from this overarching recommendation.**

Response: NCSP projects have co-developed governance agreements and socio-economic strategies with Indigenous and territorial partners that promote the full project lifecycle involvement of Indigenous communities and Northerners. The program is finalizing a NCSP Socio-economic Strategy as well as developing an updated Northern Procurement Guidance.

2. **NCSP should strive to better understand the socio-economic needs of Indigenous and northern communities by working directly with**

communities at the project specification stage to ensure that the socio-economic opportunities flowing to Indigenous and northern communities and businesses are maximized. This should include understanding the local realities, including what is realistically achievable; and, adapting federal procurement to the local realities of the North to better enable Indigenous and northern communities and businesses to competitively bid on procurement opportunities.

Response: NCSP has co-developed a Socio-economic Strategy and Implementation Plan with Indigenous partners for the Giant Mine Remediation Project and a Project Governance Agreement with the Délı̄nɛ́ Got'ı̄nɛ́ Government for the Great Bear Lake Remediation Project. Work is underway on an overarching NCSP Socio-economic Strategy along with the update of the Northern Procurement Guidance.

3. **NCSP should ensure that remediation projects, currently largely driven by western scientific, engineering and technical requirements, emphasize a more people-centered, public participation process driven by reconciliation.**

Response: NCSP will continue to support greater inclusion of Traditional Knowledge from community members and elders into project planning and implementation as a best practice.

4. **NCSP should fully embrace common industry project management best practices of front-end loading, stage-gating and earned value project management.**

Response: NCSP has developed detailed regional and project-specific dashboards to highlight scope, schedule and budget changes and elevate developing problems, non-compliances and non-performance to senior management. The program has also developed and implemented requirements for the management of Northern Contaminated Sites.

5. **NCSP should review the program performance measurement framework, to address limitations such as sequencing of outputs and outcomes, adequacy of outcome definitions, indicators and strength of targets.**

Response: NCSP has committed to a new set of performance indicators and targets that will better represent the program's performance story.

About this evaluation

The evaluation examined the relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of the NCSP program from 2014-15 to 2019-20, and included 66 interviews, including 45 interviews with Indigenous government and Indigenous private sector personnel; non-Indigenous private sector personnel as part of site visits; a document and program file review; and analysis of data.