

Enhancing the evaluation ethos in Government Departments



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ECol – a brief history

Late 1990's – DPI Evaluation Support Unit established

Evaluation capacity building of staff vs capacity building of evaluation staff

Foster knowledge between Victorian Government Departments

The early ECol

Quarterly events, full days

Guest speakers

Topics of interest

Host Departments

Held on outskirts of Melbourne

The ECol now

ECol held in Melbourne CBD – increased attendance

Nearly 200 members

15 Departments and Authorities represented

(DPC, DEECD, DHS, DIIRD, DoJ, DPCD, DPI, DSE, DoT, DTF, SSA, CFA, Police, EPA, VicRoads)



How is the ECol different to other evaluation forums?

Based on Communities of Practice theoretical framework.

Chose to be a Col rather than a CoP to include evaluation practitioners as well as interested staff.

“I became involved as a funder of community programs that would like to support them [community project teams] in their planning and evaluation processes”

Why is it only VPS staff?

Involvement is limited to public sector staff for 4 key reasons:

1. To enhance rather than compete against the AES regional activities.
2. Opportunity to share ideas from within the various departments, learn how others manage government challenges, and to promote collaboration between agencies.
3. Open environment promoting discussions without fear or conflict or confidentiality issues.
4. Networking for staff not able to participate in other evaluation forums.

What do our members say?

Key reasons for participation:

- Exchange ideas formally and informally
- Networking, contacts and peer support
- Exposure to evaluation theories and methods
- Understand challenges in Govt. evaluation
- Build a culture within departments and across the VPS.

ECol – valuable for new staff

“Just wanted to say thanks very much for an enjoyable and informative evaluation community of interest session last week. I am a new member and have found it to be a great resource already”

“For me, the ECol has a training aspect as I am new to evaluation and still learning. I really like hearing people from other departments present - what they are doing that is great(e.g. the presentation by DPCD last time about their website) or lessons learnt & sharing that experience.”

Project Forum

The screenshot shows a Microsoft Internet Explorer browser window with the address bar set to <http://dpi.projectforum.com/ecoi/11>. The page title is "Evaluation Community of Interest: Home - Microsoft Internet Explorer". The browser interface includes a menu bar (File, Edit, View, Favorites, Tools, Help), a toolbar with navigation buttons (Back, Forward, Stop, Home, Search, Favorites, Print, Stop, Refresh), and a search box.

The main content area of the browser displays the following text:

Home

Evaluation Community of Interest

Welcome to the Evaluation Community of Interest (ECOI) Project Forum.

The ECOI is open to all Victorian Public Service staff to:

- provide peer support to fellow practitioners involved in the theory and discipline of evaluation, in a sharing and non-threatening environment
- discuss, consider and explore new knowledge and approaches
- extend our skills and understanding of evaluation issues

This Project Forum is moderated by Kirsty Fenton and Heidi Lindner, Dept. of Primary Industries.

The aim of the forum is to provide an online central point for information exchange, help us retain some of the knowledge that has built up over the history of the ECOI, and put an end to trawling through endless emails to find 'that document/presentation' you know was covered at a meeting. This is a fluid, work in progress so if you've got anything to add, or need a bit of help, feel free to contact Heidi or Kirsty, or better - post a message on the discussion forum, OR add in a evaluation resource or conference/ seminar you would like to share with EcoI members.

For further information on the ECOI please see the attached overview document: [Overview of the ECOI.doc](#)

OR contact Kirsty Fenton on (02) 6043 7935; kirsty.fenton@dpi.vic.gov.au

Current Announcements

Posted at Mar 19/2008 12:20PM:
Kirsty Fenton: Participants discussed at the February meeting what topics we could cover in 2008, and the best format for ECOI meetings.

It was suggested that meetings should be 'themed', with 1-2 key speakers and more time for discussion around certain topics.

Themes suggested were:

- How to evaluate community capacity building (a Whole of Government approach?)
- Disseminating/ finding evaluations that are 'grey literature'. DHS offered to ask their librarians to present as they have a good

The browser's taskbar at the bottom shows several open applications: Start, Internet Explorer, Microsoft PowerPoint, and a document titled "Evaluation Commu...". The system clock indicates the time is 10:28 AM.

Tips for establishing a successful Col

Have a clear purpose

Secure a sponsor

Central coordination

Mix of topics and presentation methods

Allow time for reflection

Evaluate!