



SUMMARY OF THE EVALUATION OF THE NORTHERN PROJECTS MANAGEMENT OFFICE (NPMO)

July 2019

THE EVALUATION

The evaluation was conducted to assess the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the Northern Projects Management Office (NPMO) initiative over a three-year period (from 2016-17 to 2018-19). Overall, the goal of this evaluation is to better understand what works well and what could be improved in the NPMO's operations, and to make recommendations that can help the NPMO operate more effectively in fulfilling its mandate. In completing this process, this evaluation meets Government of Canada accountability requirements.

The evaluation consisted of three main lines of evidence: key informant interviews, document review and case studies. Data collection was carried out between November 2018 and early January 2019, including field visits to Iqaluit, Whitehorse and Yellowknife to interview NPMO staff and stakeholders.

Description of the NPMO

Headquartered in Yellowknife (Northwest Territories), with offices in Yukon and Nunavut, the Northern Projects Management Office (NPMO) has the mandate to improve the timeliness, predictability and transparency of northern regulatory processes to foster a more stable and attractive investment climate in the territories. NPMO key services include:

- Single window coordination of federal activities through the regulatory and environmental assessment process;
- Advice and issues management among federal and territorial governments, industry, regulatory and review boards, Indigenous organizations and communities;
- Pathfinder services (e.g. advice and referrals to navigate the northern regulatory processes) for project proponents and communities;
- Support for Crown consultation duties and keeping Crown consultation records;
- Technical expertise on socio-economic assessments; and
- Promoting investments in the North.

Budget: \$15.4M over four years (2016-17 to 2020-21) or \$3.86M per year (on average).

WHAT THE EVALUATION FOUND

- The NPMO is aligned with federal government and CanNor priorities related to advancing major project development in the North grounded in robust impact assessment processes.
- The NPMO delivers relevant and important services for the Government of Canada, especially in relation to the following core areas:
 - Federal government coordination;
 - Maintaining and monitoring the adequacy of the Crown consultation record; and
 - Providing support for issue management.
- As NPMO moves forward, it will be important to ensure the quality and consistency of service delivery to its Government of Canada stakeholders. To that effect, the evaluation noted the need for



an updated formalization of the relationships between NPMO and other federal departments, as well as enhanced consistency in NPMO service delivery.

- The NPMO role in direct consultation with Indigenous peoples and communities is limited, but it does contribute to the adequacy of the Crown consultation in terms of commitments associated with Section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*.
- To date, the most tangible benefit associated with the NPMO has been an absence of judicial review of project decisions in the last ten years, which can partially be attributed to NPMO and the fulfillment of Government of Canada duty to consult commitments. The evaluation noted that other important factors also contribute to the absence of judicial reviews, notably the northern environmental assessment system itself, in which Indigenous peoples are a key component of a co-management system they have created through their own land claims agreements.
- NPMO workplans for project specific working groups (jointly developed with other federal departments on review processes) and Indigenous consultation models and tools were singled out as being effective NPMO practices.
- The main areas for improvement for NPMO are:
 - A better articulation of the NPMO roles, responsibilities and services; as well as
 - The consistency of the delivery of its core services.

WHAT WAS RECOMMENDED

The evaluation findings led to specific recommendations for improvements:

1. In the short to medium-term, the NPMO should focus on strengthening delivery of the core services of federal government coordination, maintenance and monitoring of the adequacy of the Crown consultation record, and issue management.
2. NPMO should revise its logic model and corresponding performance measurement framework based on the results of the refocusing exercise conducted as part of Recommendation 1.
3. The NPMO should reassess its organizational design (positions and structure) to permit flexibility to respond to ebbs and flows of resource development projects in the North and maintain adequate management and performance monitoring of its staff and satellite offices.
4. NPMO should review specific aspects of its operations that require additional attention, including review of the NPMO website, information systems and Standard Operating Procedures.

WHAT WAS CANNOR'S RESPONSE

CanNor accepted all of the recommendations and developed a response that explains how these recommendations will be implemented. Additional details can be found at the following link:

[Management Response and Action Plan \(MRAP\)](#)