



# Evaluation of the Habitat Conservation and Protection Program

ECCC's participation in the Pathway initiative

At a glance

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# Overview

The Pathway initiative (Pathway) was launched in 2016. It stands as a partnership between federal, provincial, and territorial (FPT) departments responsible for parks, protected areas, conservation, wildlife and biodiversity, on one hand, and National Indigenous Organizations, municipal governments, environmental non-government organizations, and youth, on the other.

Pathway is not a program, nor is it a decision-making body on its own. The partnership creates a forum for collaborative work to advance shared pan-Canadian priorities for area-based conservation and safeguard Canada's biodiversity. More information on the history of Pathway can be found on [the Canada Conservation webpage](#).

ECCC's key roles under the Pathway Initiative are to:

- Exercise leadership as permanent co-chair of the NSC.
- Act as the Pathway Secretariat and provide administrative support.
- Provide expertise and participate in working groups to advance collaborative work on conservation priorities established by Pathway leadership.

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# Scope and Methodology

## Scope

The evaluation of ECCC's participation in the Pathway initiative covers the six-year period between 2018-2019 to 2023-2024. The evaluation focuses on the following theme of :

**Delivery and results**

## Methodology

A variety of sources were used, including:

### File review

More than 250 files including work plans, reports, records of decision, research papers, news releases, backgrounders, and literature reviews.

### Data analysis

Close to 100 data points of administrative and financial data.

### Interviews

4 interviews with National Steering Committee co-chairs and 3 interviews staff and ECCC program administrators and officials.

## Delivery and results

**Pan-Canadian collaboration on area-based conservation:** The Pathway initiative created a collaborative pan-Canadian forum for nature conservation, involving diverse partners and shifting towards a holistic approach to area-based conservation. Over the evaluated period, the Pathway initiative successfully advanced key priorities, including guidance and tools for the expansion of protected and conserved areas in jurisdictions, supporting Indigenous conservation efforts, and increasing conservation commitments across Canada.

**Indigenous leadership in conservation:** The Pathway initiative was designed to reflect renewed relationships that preserve the rights, responsibilities, and priorities of Indigenous Peoples, as well as to recognize and support their leadership in conservation, including through the establishment of Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas. Over the evaluated period, the Pathway initiative facilitated Indigenous engagement in conservation, promoting ethical space and “two-eyed seeing,” and there is an opportunity to increase Indigenous representation and participation.

**Ongoing national conservation challenges:** The Pathway Initiative embodies a collaborative approach to address key biodiversity conservation challenges in Canada, based on the recognized need to protect adequate habitats, create ecological networks, and manage areas cooperatively. Addressing climate change impacts on conservation values and implementing biodiversity-inclusive systematic national spatial planning are two related national conservation challenges that would benefit from pan-Canadian coordination and leadership, informed by a relationship-based approach similar to the Pathway Initiative.

# Conclusion

The Pathway initiative (Pathway) has successfully fostered collaboration among diverse stakeholders, advancing Canada's conservation goals through a holistic approach. Over the evaluated period, significant progress was made in expanding protected areas, supporting Indigenous conservation efforts, and increasing conservation commitments across Canada. The establishment of Pathway provided a pan-Canadian forum for area-based conservation and enhancing relationships and partnerships. While the initiative has promoted ethical space and two-eyed seeing, there are opportunities to increase Indigenous participation. Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) played a pivotal role as the permanent co-chair of the National Steering Committee,

providing leadership and administrative support. The department's expertise and active participation in working groups were crucial in advancing collaboration on conservation priorities. Pathway's innovative, relationship-based approach sets a strong foundation for future conservation efforts. A similar approach could be helpful in addressing ongoing conservation challenges of national scale which would benefit from pan-Canadian coordination and leadership, such as managing climate change impacts on biodiversity and moving towards biodiversity-inclusive spatial planning.

