integratedassessment

Stakeholder Perspective Evaluation Guide
Graham Institute

The Graham Institute addresses real-world sustainability problems by using the Integrated Assessment (IA) approach to attack complex issues. In addition to its dedicated support of IA efforts, Graham is also committed to the improvement of IA practices. Accordingly, the Graham Institute has developed this IA evaluation guide to assist in the structuring and implementation of IA evaluation efforts – particularly the perspective of stakeholders involved in assessment. This guide is modeled after the evaluation that was conducted for the Campus Sustainability Integrated Assessment (CSIA) and is intended to be used as a reference by other Graham sponsored initiatives seeking to evaluate an Integrated Assessment. (The results of the CSIA evaluation and other information regarding the CSIA can be found at http://graham.umich.edu/ia/campus.php.)

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Contents

Why evaluate: The Graham Institute is committed to excellence and continually seeks to improve its processes, including the processes related to stakeholder involvement in Integrated Assessments (IA). One way in which Graham aims to do so is through consistent and useful project evaluation and reflection. Evaluations help Graham staff identify the IA methods and strategies that are most effective and what areas need the most improvement. In their paper on evaluating collaborating natural resource management, Conley and Moote state that evaluations "can help: (1) determine when the idealized narrative used to justify collaborative [efforts] holds true, (2) address criticism of these efforts, and (3) assess and refine efforts to institutionalize a movement that has developed largely at the grassroots level."[1] It is because of these reasons that Graham is committed to useful IA project evaluations and has created this guide for the various IAs the Graham Institute supports.

Who should conduct an evaluation: Evaluations should be conducted by someone who has a solid understanding of the process employed and the project overall. This may be someone directly involved with an assessment or someone brought in after the project is complete. Objectivity and understanding should be considered closely as plans are developed and evaluators are identified.

When to evaluate: Plans for evaluating a project should be considered as the overall project plan is developed. Don't wait until after an assessment has been completed to think about evaluation. In general, if the focus on the evaluation is on stakeholder perspectives it is ideal for the evaluation to be completed in the year following the assessment. There should be some time between the conclusion of the assessment to provide perspective but waiting too long may impact being able to contact stakeholders and their recollections of the process.

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[1] p373: Conley, A., Moote, M.A., 2003. Evaluating collaborative natural resource management.Society and Natural Resources 16 (5), 371-386

Graham Institute
Integrated Assessment: Stakeholder Perspective Evaluation Guide

What to evaluate: For Integrated Assessments, it is important to evaluate both the outcomes and the process itself. However, this guide is specifically intended to be used for the evaluation of the process itself. *Tackling Wicked Problems through Integrated Assessment* – a publication of Michigan Sea Grant and the Graham Environmental Sustainability Institute (2009) offers some general criteria for ensuring an effective IA as well as evaluating success.

How to conduct an evaluation: Below are some suggested steps to take when conducting an IA evaluation. It is important to keep in mind that every IA is different and thus not all recommendations can or do apply.

1. ***Establish a Framework:*** A crucial first step to an evaluation is establishing a framework. The framework can be used as a guide for focusing the evaluation on the essential points you are seeking to asses. Key components for a framework are the overall objectives, goals, criteria, indicators, and the method(s) and measurement you will use to you will use evaluate each indicator. The framework components are described in more detail below:

Broad ↓ **Specific**	*Objectives*	These are the broad themes the evaluation seeks to assess. These larger themes should be limited to only a few. (Example: "Did the IA process produce intangible benefits?")
	Goals	These should add more specificity to the objectives. They should be clearly related to the intentions of the IA you are evaluating and may even specifically restate some original goals of the IA. (Example from the CSIA evaluation: "Did the CSIA foster a campus-wide culture of sustainability?")
	Criteria	These should describe what areas you will assess to determine whether or not the goals were reached. (Examples from CSIA evaluation: "Partnership Development" and "Knowledge of Sustainability" under the goal "Did the CSIA foster a campus-wide culture of sustainability?")
	Indicators	These should specify what questions you will ask to evaluate each criteria area. These are later translated into survey and/or interview questions. (Example from CSIA: Did the CSIA result in new and sustained partnerships/collaboration efforts between groups?")
	Methods	If you are planning to use multiple methods (interview, survey, etc.), it is good to identify which method will be used for each indicator you create.

Tips for building framework:
- *Start broad then move on to specifics:* When constructing the framework, it is best to start with the broadest category (the objectives) and work down to the specifics (indicators and methods)
- *Use the same language as the IA:* Particularly when creating the goals and criteria, it is important to use the same language that was used in the IA. This adds consistency and clarity to what will be evaluated.
- *Define key terms and concepts:* It is important to define key terms and concepts, especially those that are used several times and/or are jargon words that are not well known outside of

the IA. This helps ensure clarity during the evaluation and makes the evaluation more accessible to a broader audience.

RESOURCE: *Sample CSIA Framework Matrix (Appendix A)*

2. ***Choose and design the appropriate method for your evaluation:*** Two common methods for measuring participants perceptions are using surveys and conducting semi-structured interviews.[2]

   o *Survey:* Surveys are a useful way to reach a large audience and are an especially good approach for evaluations that are constrained by time, cost, or both. They are also a useful method for gathering quantifiable data that either support or opposes a theme you are seeking to address in your evaluation.

      The design of survey questions should not be taken lightly. In general, surveys should be as concise and specific as possible. The longer a survey is, the fewer people will finish it. The types of questions that are asked should be appropriate for the intended audience. More tips for designing questions can be found below.

   o *Interview:* Interviews can be very time-consuming and costly. However they are a valuable method for gathering insightful feedback from stakeholders. Interviews should be carefully crafted ahead of time so not to waste the interviewee's time. (A reasonable amount of time for an interview is one hour or less.) Given the time and cost involved in interviewing, it is best to only interview those participants that played a significant role or you think can offer insightful and helpful feedback, either positive or negative.

   o ***Designing questions:*** Well-designed questions (for both surveys and interviews) are a key element to producing a useful evaluation report. Below are a few suggestions for creating your questions.

      ▪ *Be Simple, Straightforward, and Specific:* After writing questions for the first time, you should revisit them and edit them down to their most simple and straightforward form. Questions should be clearly stated and specific so that participants know exactly what you are asking. The clearer and more direct your questions are worded, the clearer and more specific responses will be.

      ▪ *Avoid redundancy:* Also revisit questions to make sure you are not asking participants the same question more than once. This will help keep surveys and interviews as short as possible. Also, you may notice that two questions appear to be the same but are intended to ask different things. This is an example of when you should be more specific and direct in your questions so that the participant understands that they are two separate questions.

      ▪ *Use Consistent Formatting:* It is important to keep the formatting of your questions consistent so not to confuse the participant. This is especially important for survey questions. For instance, if you use a ranking scale in a survey, make sure that one side is always positive and other is always negative, do not switch them back in forth throughout the survey – you may confuse the

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[2] Conley, p 380

respondent, especially one who is in a rush, resulting in information that may not truly reflect how they feel. Similarly, wording should be consistent.

- *Avoid leading questions:* When designing questions, avoid using phrases that guide respondents in a positive or negative direction, such as "How strongly do you agree with…?" Attempt to be as neutral as possible, instead phrasing questions such as "Do you agree or disagree with…?"
- Test questions on sample audience first: Always test your questions out with a sample audience. They will help identify questions that are confusing and will also provide good feedback on whether the survey is too lengthy or not.
- Do your research: There are many resources that exist for how to craft good questions. We have provided a few in the resource section but encourage you to find further examples specifically related to your integrated assessment topic.

o *Privacy:* For most evaluations, respondent's personal information can be kept anonymous. This means that direct quotes will not be linked with any personal information and that respondents are referred to as "s/he" in the report. Whatever you decide for your privacy policy, it is important that you tell respondents at the beginning of the survey or before an interview what your privacy policy is. Below is an example of a privacy statement from the CSIA evaluation:

> **"Privacy:** Responses to surveys and questions will be kept anonymous. Responses will be used to produce the final evaluation report. Any direct quotes from interviewees or surveys will not be linked with any personal information in the report."

RESOURCE: *Sample Interview & Survey Questions for CSIA Evaluation (Appendix B & C)*

Writing the report: Once the interviews are conducted and/or surveys returned, a report should be written shortly after to summarize the findings. The report should be concise yet informative. It should briefly discuss the intentions of the evaluation, and the methods used. The body of the paper should highlight the common themes that emerged during the evaluation, including both strengths and areas for improvement, and the conclusion should discuss some of the major take-aways and lessons learned. The interview questions and survey results may be included as appendices.

RESOURCE: *Sample Outline of CSIA Evaluation Report (Appendix D)*

Further Resources:
The following is a list of related articles and resources that may be helpful in preparing for an IA evaluation.

- Charnley, S., Engelbert, B., 2005. Evaluating public participation in environmental decision making: EPA's superfund community involvement program. Journal of Environmental Planning and Management 77, 165-182
- Chess, C., 2000. Evaluating environmental public participation: Methodological questions. Journal of Environmental Planning and Management 43 (6), 769–784.
- Chess, C., Purcell, K., 1999. Public participation and the environment – do we know what works. Environmental Science and Technology 33, 2685–2692.

- Conley, A., Moote, M.A., 2003. Evaluating collaborative natural resource management. Society and Natural Resources 16 (5), 371-386
- Lund, K., Dinse, K., Callewaert, J. and Scavia, D. 2011. The benefits of using integrated assessment to address sustainability challenges. Journal of Environmental Studies and Science 1 (4) , pp 289-295.
- Michigan Sea Grant and Graham Environmental Sustainability Institute. (2009). Tackling Wicked Problems through Integrated Assessment. [MICHU-09-506] University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI.
- Ness, B., Urbel-Pirsalu, E., Anderberg, S., Olsen, L. 2006. Categorising tools for sustainability assessment. Ecological Economics 60, 498-508

APPENDIX A: *Sample of Objectives and Goals Matrix*

The following is an example of an objective/goal matrix that can be used as a framework for an evaluation. It is taken from the 2012 CSIA evaluation. The example only shows parts of the matrix, not the matrix in its entirety.

OBJECTIVE: Identify and evaluate the outcomes of the CSIA process from the perspective of stakeholder groups (#1. decision makers/leadership; #2. Integration team; #3. Analysis Team -faculty and students; #4. Staff consulted/engaged; #5. Engaged campus community members)			
Goal	Criteria	Indicator	Method
GOAL #1: Did the CSIA foster campus-wide culture of sustainability	Partnership Development	New and sustained partnerships/collaboration efforts between groups	-Survey -Interviews with #3 (Analysis Team) -Interviews with #4 (Staff) -Scan Planet Blue for university news stories/checking new projects
		Strengthened and sustained partnerships/collaboration efforts between groups	-Survey -Interviews with #3 (Analysis Team) -Interviews with #4 (Staff)
	Influence conversation around assessment areas	Perceived avg. number of "sustainability" conversations taking place (Less, Same, More, A Lot More)	-Survey -Interview with #1 (Decision Makers) -Interview with #2 (Integration Team) -Interview with #3 (Analysis Team) -Interview with #4 (Staff)
	Sustainability knowledge	Did the process of integrated assessment give you a broader understanding of sustainability (help advance your knowledge of sustainability)? How/how not?	-Survey -Interview with #1 (Decision Makers) -Interview with #2 (Integration Team) -Interview with #3 (Analysis Team) -Interview with #4 (Staff)
GOAL #2: Did the CSIA framework significantly advances sustainable operations at the University of Michigan	Sustainability initiatives given higher priority	Did assessment give sustainability initiatives higher priority? How/how not?	-Interviews with #1 (Decision Makers)

Graham Institute
Integrated Assessment: Stakeholder Perspective Evaluation Guide

OBJECTIVE: Contribute to the larger field of assessment/evaluation practice from the perspective of four stakeholder groups (#1. decision makers/leadership; #2. Integration team; #3. Analysis Team -faculty and students; #4. Staff consulted/engaged; #5. Engaged campus community members)			
Goal	Criteria	Indicator	Method
GOAL #3: Did the CSIA establish a credible integrated assessment process/framework	Integrated Assessment Method	Appropriateness of integrated assessment method	-Survey -Interview with #1 (Decision Makers) -Interview with #2 (Integration Team)
	Bias	Perception of biased results due to FACILITATION, PROCESS, OR MANIPULATION	-Survey -Interview with #1 (Decision Makers) -Interview with #2 (Integration Team) -Interview with #3 (Analysis Team) -Interview with #4 (Staff)
		Perception of biased results due to CO-OPTION OF EXPERTS/LEADS	-Survey -Interview with #1 (Decision Makers) -Interview with #2 (Integration Team) -Interview with #3 (Analysis Team) -Interview with #4 (Staff)
		Perception of biased results due to CO-OPTION OF DECISION MAKERS	-Survey -Interview with #2 (Integration Team) -Interview with #3 (Analysis Team) -Interview with #4 (Staff)

APPENDIX B: Sample Interview Questions for CSIA Evaluation

The following are sample questions taken from the 2012 CSIA evaluation. Questions were developed from the matrix. Each stakeholder group had a slightly different set of interview questions, dependent on the type of involvement their stakeholder group had in the IA.

Interview Questions: Analysis Team

Did the CSIA foster campus-wide culture of sustainability?

1. Do you think the CSIA process resulted in new and sustained partnerships or collaborations between units (student groups, sustainability committees, etc.) and departments?
2. Do you think the CSIA process strengthened already existing partnership collaboration efforts between units and departments?
3. Have you noticed an increase in "sustainably" focused conversations around campus?
4. Did the overall process of the IA give you a broader understanding of sustainability? Did it advance your knowledge around the subject? How/how not?
5. Do you feel that the CSIA provided leverage to prioritize sustainability related action on campus?

Did the CSIA framework significantly advance sustainable operations at the University of Michigan?

6. Do you feel that the outcomes (2025 goals and guiding principles) have influenced sustainability decision making on campus? If so, how?
7. Do you think the CSIA framework created any opportunities for the University to participate in off-campus initiatives? (with the city of Ann Arbor, Detroit, other universities, etc). If yes, can you provide an example?

Did the CSIA facilitate effective coordination of sustainability efforts across UM Campus?

8. Compared to your original expectations when you first became involved with the CSIA, did the end results fall short, match up, or exceed expectations? How so?
9. Were expectations clearly and consistently communicated to and your team
10. Do you feel you were given adequate time to complete what was expected of you?
11. Do you feel you were under-compensated, adequately compensated, or over-compensated for the work that was expected of you?
12. In your opinion, was the assessment PROCESS (the work conducted by the analysis teams and the integration team) representative of multiple campus constituencies and their interests? How or how not?
13. In your opinion, were the assessment OUTCOMES (guiding principles and 2025 goals) representative of multiple campus constituencies and their interests? How or how not?
14. Do you feel there was a low, medium, or high level of consensus within your analysis team?
15. Was your team effective in completing the analysis assigned to you? Why or why not?

Did the CSIA establish a process/framework that is considered legitimate by stakeholders?

16. How would you describe the overall level of transparency of the process? (Open process with ample opportunity for feedback and input or very closed, etc)
    a. Do you feel there were adequate opportunities to provide input throughout the process?
    b. Do you feel you were heard and that your ideas and/or concerns were addressed appropriately?

17. What is your impression of the overall process's ability to encourage and support creative ideas and strategies? Were they welcomed?
18. Do you feel that the decision makers were committed to the process? How?
19. Did you/do you have trust that leadership would do something with the outcomes of the assessment?

Did the CSIA establish a credible integrated assessment process/framework?

20. Do you feel that the integrated assessment method was the right choice for developing long-term stretch goals for campus sustainability at U-M? Why or why not?
21. Do you feel the outcomes (2025 goals and guiding principles) were biased in any way? How?
    a. Do you feel biased results may have occurred from process facilitation or manipulation?
22. In your opinion, did the CSIA process create:
    b. Social Capital (Meaningful connections were made around the subject of sustainability; big influence on the culture of sustainability?)
    c. Political Capital? (More campus decision making is involved/focused on sustainability on campus, etc)
    d. Creative Capital? (new, innovative ideas, ongoing sparks, etc)

Is there anything else you like to mention about the CSIA and the process?

APPENDIX C: *Sample Survey Questions for CSIA Evaluation*

Below are sample questions from the CSIA Evaluation survey which was sent out to all participants in the CSIA.

Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements:
(When asked to what extent participants agreed with a statement, their answer options were:
  ○ *Strongly Agree*   ○ *Agree*   ○ *Neutral*   ○ *Disagree*   ○ *Strongly Disagree*   ○ *Don't Know)*

1. The CSIA resulted in NEW partnerships or collaborative efforts between different campus groups (units, departments, etc.)
2. The CSIA strengthened EXISTING partnerships or collaborative efforts between different campus groups (units, departments, etc.)
3. Since the CSIA, there has been an increase in sustainability-related conversations on campus
4. The CSIA helped advance my overall knowledge and understanding of sustainability
5. Because of the CSIA, I feel empowered to support more sustainability related activity at the University of Michigan
6. The CSIA framework created opportunities to build connections to non University of Michigan (off-campus) sustainability initiatives.
7. My personal expectations of the CSIA outcomes matched the actual outcomes (2025 goals and guiding principles)
8. The CSIA PROCESS represented multiple campus constituents and their appropriate interests
9. The CSIA OUTCOMES (principles and goals) represent multiple campus constituents and their appropriate interests
10. There were adequate opportunities to provide input during the CSIA process
11. My concerns and ideas were heard and addressed during the CSIA process
12. The overall CSIA process was transparent (an open process with ample opportunity to be involved)
13. The assessment process encouraged and supported creative ideas
14. The integrated assessment method was the appropriate method for determining campus sustainability goals
15. The goals generated by the CSIA provide a useful guide for sustainable decision making on campus
16. The CSIA process advanced the university's ability to evaluate and report sustainability actions
17. I trust that the decision makers have done/will do something with the outcomes (goals and principles) of the assessment
18. Is there anything that you feel could have been done differently to either improve the process or the outcomes? *(Open-ended question)*

APPENDIX D: *Sample Outline of Evaluation Report*

The following is an example of what an evaluation report outline might look like.

Outline:

I. **Title page and abstract:** The abstract is a concise note to the reader about what the report contains.

II. **Executive Summary:** In one page or less, include a brief introduction of the report, highlight any high-level findings, and discuss the major and final take-aways.

III. **Report:** The body of the report.

   a. *Introduction:* The introduction should briefly remind the reader what integrated assessment you are evaluating and why are you evaluating it.

   b. *Methods:* Briefly describe what methods were used (survey or interview), who you reached out to and why (generally, no need for specific names, etc.), and what your response rates were (how many people you sent the survey to versus how many responded).

   c. *Findings:* This section should convey all the important findings from the evaluation, including relevant and specific feedback from respondents. This section should be comprehensive but not exhaustive of findings.

   d. *Conclusion:* The conclusion should discuss broad insights and themes that emerged as a result of the evaluation, including the processes strengths and areas for improvement.

   e. *General Thoughts on Integrated Assessments:* This is an opportunity for the author to reflect on the larger lessons that were revealed during the evaluation about how best to conduct an integrated assessment.

IV. **Note about the Author:** Include a brief paragraph that describes who the author(s) is(are) and particularly their relationship to the IA

V. **Works Cited***: A list of works used. The Graham Institute prefers using the Council of Science Editors (CSE) citation sequence system. The following link provides further information regarding this citation method: http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/resdoc5e/RES5e_ch11_o.html

VI. **Appendices***: These included any relevant and supporting material for the report, including the main goals and guiding principles of the integrated assessment, the entire results of the survey responses, and the interview questions used.