

HORIZONTAL EVALUATION OF THE OCEANS PROTECTION PLAN

Evaluation Summary, July 2023

- i** The first **Oceans Protection Plan (OPP)** was a comprehensive initiative to build a world-leading marine safety system and protect coastal ecosystems. It funded a diverse set of activities aimed at addressing environmental concerns, strengthening the evidence base, building public confidence, and increasing Indigenous participation in the marine sector.
- ?** The **Horizontal Evaluation of the OPP** assessed the initiative's relevance, design, federal collaboration, implementation factors, progress and results, Indigenous inclusion, stakeholder engagement, and best practices. Data collection methods included interviews, an internal survey, an environmental scan, a review of documents linked to Indigenous engagement, and financial analyses.

PROGRAM SNAPSHOT



FINDINGS

- The OPP successfully met several key needs among partner departments and agencies (PDAs), Indigenous groups, and stakeholders. The gaps that remain highlight the initiative's ongoing relevance.
- While the OPP's design was innovative and comprehensive, it lacked an overarching narrative linking its diverse initiatives together in pursuit of longer-term strategic outcomes.
- The OPP's strong focus on West Coast concerns and priorities was at odds with its comprehensive branding, contributing to dissatisfaction among some Indigenous groups and stakeholders.
- Internal services and Indigenous groups had limited opportunities to provide input into program planning and development, leading to underestimations of the time and resources required for some activities.
- Strong federal collaboration was critical for many OPP activities. While collaboration within PDAs was generally effective, horizontal dynamics were more challenging.
- There were issues coordinating and tracking engagement and partnership activities in a consistent and reliable manner, which placed strain on Indigenous groups and stakeholders. Many improvements to the engagement process occurred as the OPP matured, but opportunities for improvement remain.
- OPP staff were agile and effective in responding to significant changes over the course of the OPP implementation, reflecting the program's spirit of flexibility and experimentation.
- Despite the challenges associated with the early implementation and delays caused by the pandemic, the OPP had significant positive impacts and made tangible progress in key thematic areas.
- The OPP started an important foundation for longer-term work by building relationships, identifying gaps, developing skills, and strengthening scientific knowledge related to the marine sector.
- While performance information was helpful for project management and decision making, reporting requirements placed a significant burden on working-level OPP staff and did not always provide a meaningful assessment of strategic progress.
- Although Indigenous engagement was a key priority for many OPP initiatives, Indigenous groups were often seeking a deeper level of collaboration than PDAs were prepared to accommodate.

RECOMMENDATIONS

TC, in collaboration with OPP partner departments, should:

- Develop and implement a strategy/approach to **enhance the coordination and tracking of engagement sessions** with Indigenous groups and stakeholders.
- Ensure that a **comprehensive results chain and narrative** (which includes outcomes, performance indicators, targets, and a data strategy) for the renewed OPP is available and disseminated once the initiative is launched.
- Develop and/or enhance tools to **facilitate collaboration and communication between and within departments** to ensure that OPP staff are kept abreast of changes to the OPP organizational structure, changes in personnel, and key decisions taken by senior managers that could impact their work.

ACTIONS

TC, in collaboration with DFO-CCG, ECCC, NRCan, and HC (OPP 2.0 partner departments), will:

- Document its existing OPP engagement strategy for OPP 2.0. This strategy will be disseminated to all relevant internal (to TC) and external (other government departments) OPP Offices of Primary Interest (OPIs). - **Fall 2023**
- TC's OPP engagement team will track engagement activities internally through the innovative platform OPPSES, and work with the Digital Services and Transformation Office and Indigenous Relations branch to develop a TC-wide platform/tool – building on the existing platform. - **Completed**
- Interdepartmentally, engagement activities will be tracked through an evergreen engagement calendar and related documentation. - **Completed**
- Building on the Results Framework in the 2022 OPP Treasury Board Submission, develop a comprehensive results chain and narrative for discussion and dissemination across TC OPIs, and partner departments. The Fall 2023 target would allow for discussions at DG, ADM and DM level to finalize the common product and ensure broad awareness.
- The common unifying narrative linking the OPP's diverse initiatives together will build a broad understanding of how individual activities are connected to each other and/or to the OPP's high-level outcomes. - **Fall 2023**
- Building on the established interdepartmental governance mechanisms at the DG/ADM and DM levels, among others, TC will refine and develop a governance structure across departments to document accountabilities, interdependencies between initiatives, and information-sharing and decision-making protocols. - **Fall 2023**
- The OPP Secretariats will hold meetings on a biweekly basis (increasing frequency as needed). At these meetings, OPP Secretariat staff will be kept informed of any changes to the OPP organizational structure, changes in personnel, and key decisions taken by senior management. Secretariats will then disseminate this information within their respective departments. - **Completed**
- A quarterly Manager/Initiative lead level working group will be established at TC. This working group will act as the forum for the OPP Secretariat to provide updates on outcomes from ADM/DG and DM OPP committees, discuss cross-cutting issues, discuss any pertinent risks or mitigation strategies etc. DFO and ECCC already hold such meetings at their departments, and these will continue. - **Completed**
- The OPP Secretariat at TC will maintain an up-to-date contact list to be shared across departments. The Secretariat has developed a procedure to update the contact list on an ongoing basis. - **Completed**