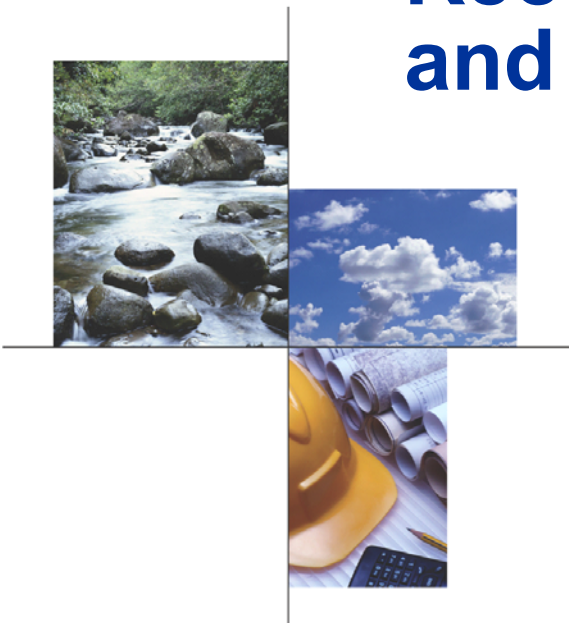




Recent Developments and Future Directions



The Evolution of Strategic
Environmental Assessment (SEA)
in Federal Decision Making in
Canada, 1990-2004

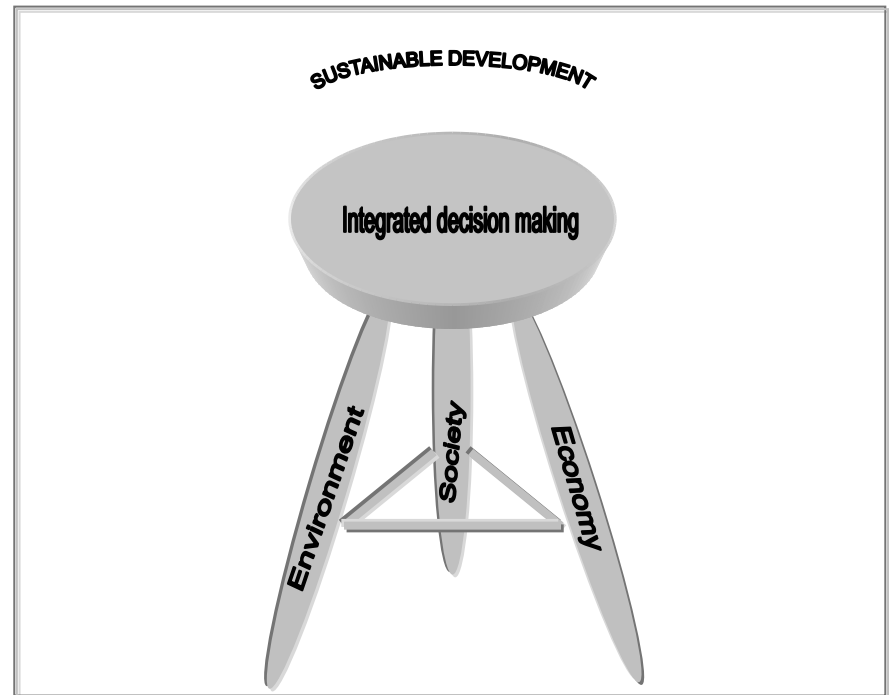


Current Requirements

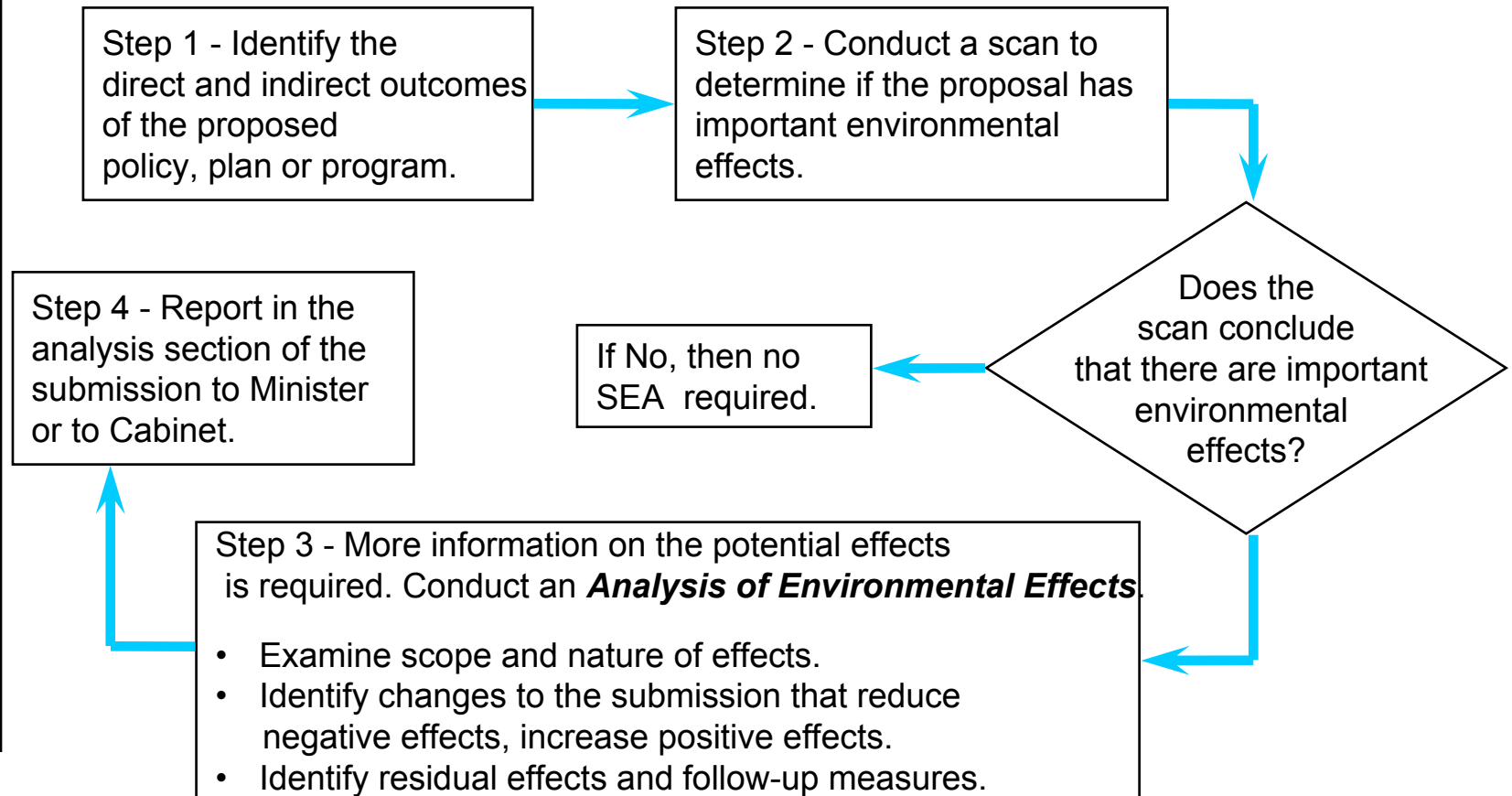
- Ministers *expect* SEAs to be completed when two conditions are met:
 1. a proposal is submitted to an individual Minister or Cabinet for approval; and
 2. implementing the proposal may result in important environmental effects, positive or negative.
- SEAs are encouraged when circumstances warrant (such as significant public concern).
- In Canada, SEA applies to the highest order of decision making (federal Cabinet).

Integrated Decision Making

- Decision makers at all levels must be able to integrate economic, social and environmental imperatives.
- EA & SEA are important tools to ensure environmental considerations are addressed in the same way as economic and social issues.



Process





Recent Developments

- Standing Committee on Environment and Development Report (June '03)
- Amendments to the Cabinet Directive to improve transparency (October '03)
- Federal SEA Workshop (March '04)
- Review by Minister's Regulatory Advisory Committee (Upcoming)
- Audit by Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development (September '04)





Federal Workshop

- Focused on four issues:
 - Best Practices
 - Challenges to Overcome
 - Standards for Evaluation
 - Conditions to Support Strategic Environmental Assessment



Best Practices for SEA Analysis

- Appropriate scoping/definitions
- Clear roles and responsibilities
- Internal regular reporting processes for SEA
- Intra and inter-organizational cooperation
- The need for established guidelines
- Integration into existing policy process
- Allocation of appropriate resources for analysis
- Make linkages among SEA and subsequent project-level assessments
- Departmental centres of expertise (where possible)
- The need for public and stakeholder engagement
- Linkages to existing environmental objectives and obligations
- Appropriate level of detail/appropriate level of effort

Problems to Overcome

- Lack of understanding of SEA's relationship to project level assessments
- Lack of awareness
- Challenges making SEA meaningful to decision makers
- Confusion about timing
- Absence of departmental guidelines
- Lack of standards to support consistency

Standards for Evaluation

- Tracking systems
- Clarity and precision
- Formal departmental guidelines/tools
- Organizational structures must be in place and supportive
- Consistent practice
- Level of effort should be reasonable/guidance to support decisions about level of effort should be in place
- Links to broader environment/sustainability priorities
- Use of environmental indicators
- Environmental criteria/clear limits
- Cooperation among federal organizations

Conditions to Support SEA

- Participants noted the following conditions that would support the practice of SEA in government:
 - Cooperation among stakeholders
 - Linkages to government/departmental priorities
 - Impartiality/objectivity
 - Support from senior managers
 - Linkages to risk management
 - Clearly expressed rationales
 - Guidance/support
 - Early integration
 - Resources
 - Good rationale for the utility of SEA



Planning for Progress - Federally

- Improving the linkages among strategic environmental assessment and other federal management initiatives.
- Improving information on the relationship of strategic environmental assessment to sustainable development.
- Development of best practices for internal SEA procedures and in respect of individual assessments.
- Improving information on the potential relationship of project environmental assessment to strategic environmental assessment.
- Developing generic guidance on the conduct of preliminary scans.
- Additional efforts to raise awareness.
- Research into benefits of starting SEA work early vs. the potential benefit of post facto assessments.

