

Evaluating the World Solar Program 1996 - 2005: Establishing an Evaluation Framework

Charles M. Gottschalk, Renewable Energy Consultant
Fred Sissine, Congressional Research Service

The World Solar Program 1996 - 2005 (WSP) was launched at the 1996 World Solar Summit, sponsored by a partnership of UN systems organizations, regional, national, international, non-governmental bodies, financial and donor institutions, professional, and trade groups, academia, and the private sector.

WSP responds to the 1992 Earth Summit challenge, among others. Its purpose is to mobilize multi-national cooperation to promote renewable energy and energy conservation worldwide, particularly in developing countries, and to activate new funding sources and coordinate existing or proposed ones.

The Program's overall goals focus on enhanced living conditions and human settlement sustainability. The key intermediate goal is securing WAP funding from bilateral and multilateral banks, national governments, and other sources such as foundations and industry.

WSP is a complex undertaking, encompassing about 300 energy projects in 70 countries. Project goals range broadly, covering education, training, institution-building, market assessment, market transformation, management techniques, technology transfer, technology development and demonstration, and equipment installation and testing. The projects propose a variety of equipment and energy resources, including alcohol/biofuels, geothermal, hydropower, photovoltaics, wind and wood/biomass. Lead organizations for the projects also take a variety of forms including national, state and provincial ministries, municipalities, villages, and schools. The projects span a range of locations and climates. Project duration ranges from one to ten years, and proposed project budgets range from thousands to several million dollars.

Development of an evaluation framework is timely because the program is just beginning and major funding is expected. To address the variation in levels at which projects will be managed and implemented, this study will draw from frameworks devised for evaluations at the national and multi-national levels.

Evaluation planning and implementation will use a collaborative approach that brings together key stakeholders. Project performance maps will outline the relationships of evaluation components, including activity groups and their outputs, progress outcomes, and measurable goals and impacts. Evaluation categories to be developed for assessing host country and local community involvement include: (1) the amount of funding committed, (2) adaptation of technology to local social, economic, cultural, physical, and institutional conditions, (3) the degree of local responsibility for project design, management and operation, (4) the amount of indigenous production of project equipment and services, and (5) the degree of local community satisfaction and involvement in the project. Further, evaluation measures will be designed to focus on broad indications, such as local capacity for market diffusion.