



Summary of the Evaluation of the Sustainable Development Goals Funding Program, 2025



About the Program

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Funding Program supports the United Nations 2030 Agenda for sustainable development, which aims to address critical challenges facing humanity and the planet by promoting peace, prosperity, and sustainability.

Through funding grants and contribution projects, the Program aims to increase public awareness of SDGs; support new partnerships to advance action; and identify and implement innovative initiatives to drive SDG progress.



Program investment

Between fiscal years 2018 to 2019 and 2023 to 2024, the Program allocated approximately \$22 million in funding to support 131 projects (118 grants and 13 contributions).

These projects were selected via three intake processes and their funding and activities have been completed at the time of the evaluation. Note: The most recent intake launched in November 2023 is outside the scope of this evaluation.



Evaluation approach

The evaluation used a **rapid format**, focusing on two qualitative lines of evidence:

- Key informant interviews with ESDC officials, federal partners from other Government of Canada departments and agencies, and grant and contribution funding recipients.
- Document review of 131 projects whose funding and activities were completed by the end of the fiscal year 2023 to 2024.



Key findings

- Most projects were found to be broadly focused rather than targeting specific SDGs, with a focus on awareness raising and partnership development.
- Most partnerships concluded at the end of the funding period, limiting long-term collaboration.
- 46% of grant projects and 92% of contribution projects reported exploring or promoting innovative approaches for responding to sustainable development issues.
- Approximately 56% of all grants and contribution projects targeted equity-deserving and vulnerable groups.





Lessons learned

The evaluation includes three lessons learned and one observation that relate to fostering knowledge sharing, project selection, and engagement with funded organizations:

- **Lesson learned 1:** Strategic selection of funded projects along the 17 SDGs is key to the Program's ability to reach its objectives and bring change. Within the mandate of the SDG funding program, the selection of complementary projects targeting specific SDGs are a promising approach to support Program's reach and reduce duplication of efforts.
- **Lesson learned 2:** Adapting SDG messaging to make it more relatable and engaging helps develop greater community acceptance. When funding recipients adapt SDG language to better reflect lived experiences, cultures, and everyday realities of the groups and communities that projects are trying to reach, community understanding and engagement is increased.
- **Lesson learned 3:** Building trust and strong relationships requires time and dedicated project resources. When funding recipients engage with Indigenous communities early and often during project development, it allows for deeper community involvement, leadership opportunities, and more meaningful integration of knowledge and teachings into SDG projects.

Observation

Foster knowledge sharing and collaboration among funding recipients to share best practices and lessons learned. The Program has the potential to strengthen connections among funding recipients working on related themes.