

# State of the Environment Reporting in the Arctic - Lessons from the Northwest Territories, Canada

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The **goal** of the Northwest Territories (NWT) *State of the Environment Report* is to provide decision makers and the public with important information on our changing environment and to help make insightful decisions that will ensure a nurturing and dynamic environment for today, for 20 years, and beyond.

**People** — The “internal team” concept was used to achieve the work on time and on budget. A supervisory team composed of personnel with top management function provides decision-making power for the scope of the work, allocation of resources, final review of documents, and liaison with top levels (DM and Minister). A technical team composed of scientists, traditional knowledge experts, communication and policy specialists provides the resources, collect and collate data, find external experts, draft documents and peer-review.

**TIPS:**

- Add redundancy to the team to alleviate high turn-over rates
- Divide work equally among team members
- Assign clear responsibilities to each team member
- Terms-of-reference for the teams are not necessary if a “project description” is used to guide the SOE work.

**Prepare** — The team divided the work into 20 focal points and assigned each team member at least one focal point. We selected at least one indicator per focal point to track status and trends over time.

**TIPS:**

**INDICATOR TEMPLATES:** Keep simple and fun to help specialists draft SOE indicators and to streamline review. All information should be referenced. Send draft indicators to specialists to review: they are often busy or may have a hard time writing for the general public.

**LOG BOOK:** Keep the team on track by logging the work done for each indicator, sources used, and the timing of each future update.

**WEB INSTRUCTIONS:** Keep handy and clear. Do not underestimate the time and effort needed to update the information on the internet.

**Potential** – The team was kept interested by learning opportunities: peer-reviewing each other's indicators and reviewing external experts’ indicators. Link findings across focal points to find cumulative effects and early warnings of change. The team members’ tasks included to be on the look-out for any new indicators and new linkages.

**TIPS:**

- Be inclusive in your invitations to write indicators: knowledge come from many sources.
- Review all indicators annually and acknowledge all contributions!

## NORTHWEST TERRITORIES State of the Environment Report

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**Process** — The team selected a framework for reporting based on the *United Nation’s Cookbook for State of the Environment Reporting on the Internet*. ([www.grida.no/publications](http://www.grida.no/publications)). A process to update the report was established and is being integrated into annual work plans and governmental processes to, over time, adequately use the information in strategic planning of programs.

**TIPS:**

- Select a framework that has worked and been proven effective. Use tools already available to you to update the indicator data
- Keep things simple but effective.
- Be patient but work on integrating the SOE process in the organization – make it part of relevant programs.

The **objectives** are to provide an assessment of the status and trends of the environment in the NWT, provide data and information for territorial, national, and international initiatives, and provide for an early-warning system of impacts, such as climate change.

This poster is a summary of the lessons learned by the NWT Team in preparing the NWT State of Environment Report.

**Public** — The team considered the audience to be decision makers, researchers, environmental/land-water boards in the NWT, and the general public. Two types of reporting levels are accessible.

1. Web-based full report: referenced indicator-based descriptions of status and trends; updated annually.
2. Full colour printed Highlight reports : summaries of key findings with compelling graphics; published every election year.

**TIPS:**

- Use marketing practices to share information with the public. Do not expect people to read all publications. Share the very important new findings on various media: radio, newsletter, etc.
- Consider the use of social media.
- Share documents across departments in the Government; cross-feed information.
- Build credibility by providing fact-based information on the environment.

**Products** — The team used project-management techniques to deliver on a series of products: web-version full report, and colourful printed summary or “highlights” reports. Each highlight report is stand-alone printed summary of the full *State of the Environment Report* with enough information to encourage further investigations on the internet. Special edition summaries on specific subject are also possible, for example the *2010 Biodiversity Special Edition*.

**TIPS:**

- Each printed report should not be long (60 pages max.), printed on recycled paper, full colour, with visuals.
- Highlight new findings, and re-assert trends that are important for understanding what is changing in the environment.
- Develop a summary page: include fully quotable statements on key fact-based findings and on uncertainties
- Compare findings with other regions in the Arctic; partner with others to publish special reports or pamphlets.



**MORE INFORMATION ?** – Go to [www.enr.gov.nt.ca](http://www.enr.gov.nt.ca)  
E- MAIL the team at: [NWTSOER@gov.nt.ca](mailto:NWTSOER@gov.nt.ca)

E-copies of printed reports are also available on USB media.