

# Strategic Plan

2013-2023



Collaboration for  
Environmental  
Evidence

This strategic plan was formed by the CEE Board, CEE Centres and other CEE contributors, and approved by the Board in 2013. The plan was updated in May 2019.

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## **CEE Mission**

**To effectively promote an evidence based approach to environmental management by facilitating the conduct and dissemination of high quality syntheses of evidence that will inform decision making and better conserve biodiversity and ecosystem services for global benefit.**

## **CEE Vision**

**Effective environmental management resulting from policy and management decisions that are informed by the best available evidence on questions of concern.**

**A culture of scientific evaluation of environmental management through objective assessment and synthesis of available evidence.**

**A society that appreciates and is supportive of the role of science in informing decisions that affect the environment and human wellbeing.**

## **1.0 Purpose of this Strategic Plan**

Development of the Collaboration for Environmental Evidence (CEE) strategic plan is essential for the future of CEE. The strategic plan aims to:

- Provide clarity of the direction of CEE in the short to medium term
- Define the goals for CEE
- Articulate and communicate the activities that CEE will undertake in order to achieve its organisational goals and key foci
- Provide a framework from which CEE can measure and report on its progress

## 2.0 Organisational values

- ✓ Human well-being depends on the maintenance of biodiversity, including functional ecosystems and the services they provide.
- ✓ Science is critical for understanding how the natural world operates, how human actions affect the environment and how biodiversity, including ecosystem functions and services, might be maintained most effectively.
- ✓ Collaboration among scientists, managers, and policy-makers is vital to establish and maintain a shared scientific evidence-base.
- ✓ Developing an evidence base will improve capacity to inform decisions on policy, management and research affecting the environment.
- ✓ If evidence synthesis is to inform decision making in environmental management, then objectivity, rigour and transparency in critical thinking and enquiry into the priorities, experiences, processes, actions and outcomes of that management, is essential.

## 3.0 Theory of change

The Theory of Change (ToC) model provides a visual ‘roadmap’ from CEE activities, shown at the bottom of the model, towards the desired outcomes at the top. The three and five year intermediate outcomes shown in the model act as ‘stepping stones’ for achievement of the CEE vision. A range of inputs, including staff, funding and other resources, enable CEE to undertake activities that build the capacity of the organisation.

The model is used within this strategic plan to:

- ✓ Set short and medium term outcomes that contribute to the CEE vision
- ✓ Provide a visual map of the contribution of CEE activities to desired outcomes
- ✓ Define and test assumptions within the model
- ✓ Develop targets for outcomes
- ✓ Define measures of success of achievement of the strategic plan
- ✓ Assist with reporting on progress in the CEE Annual Report

## Assumptions

There are a number of assumptions that underpin the validity of the ToC model. Many of these assumptions can be tested over the life of the strategic plan and used to refine the model. These assumptions include:

- That an increased number of evidence syntheses<sup>1</sup> being undertaken with increased geographical and subject scope will lead to policy and management decisions that are informed by the best available evidence.
- That the CEE community will continue to contribute on a voluntary basis.
- That the funding available for evidence synthesis will increase.
- That funding for core CEE activities will be obtained.
- That authors will submit their evidence syntheses to the CEE journal Environmental Evidence for publication/registration as a CEE evidence synthesis.
- That increasing the advocacy of evidence synthesis will lead to increased adoption of evidence synthesis in decision making.
- That it will be possible to demonstrate the contribution of evidence synthesis to improved decision making.

## Continuous improvement of the plan

It is important to be able to monitor, evaluate and report on achievements of the CEE strategic plan. The ToC model provides the basis for developing measures of success of achievement and through iterative improvements to the model itself to demonstrate continuous improvement. The model can be used as a tool to demonstrate active adaptive management by showing refinements in the model based on a more sophisticated understanding of the theory of change over the life of the strategic plan.

<sup>1</sup>Evidence synthesis can take many forms but in the CEE context we use it to mean synthesis of scientific research using rigorous, systematic methods (systematic review and systematic mapping).

# CEE Strategic Plan - Theory of Change

VISION - 2023

Improved environmental outcomes. A culture of scientific evaluation and a society that appreciates and is supportive of the role of science in informing decisions that affect the environment and human wellbeing.

5 Year outcomes

- Increased number of SR being undertaken with increase geographical and subject scope
- High standing of guidelines and journal and impact of scientific output
- Policy and management decisions that are informed by the best available evidence
- CEE recognised as a global leader in conducting environmental SR and setting standards

3 Year outcomes

- Cohort of capable leaders and SR authors built
- Raised awareness of the utility of systematic reviews
- Continuous improvement in quality and scope of CEE SRs
- Well functioning CEE organisational structure
- Sustainable funding sources established
- Sustainable international network of CEE centres
- Positive impact of SRs demonstrated
- Increased recognition and credibility of SR and related products as a change mechanism
- Increased recognition of the role of SR along side other factors in decision making

CEE Activities

- CEE SCOPE AND APPLICATION ACTIVITIES: involvement with decision makers, researchers and scientists, SR advocacy and training, build capacity for SRs, journal and guidelines, Methods Groups, contribute and hold international meetings
- CEE ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITY ACTIVITIES: Board of Trustees and Executive office, CEE network, fundraising and marketing, Review Groups, Communication Strategy, volunteers and partners
- CEE MONITORING AND EVALUATION ACTIVITIES: Framework development, M&E Methods group & networks

Inputs to CEE

- Advisory Group
- Motivation and activity of CEE Centres and Group leaders
- Editorial Board
- Motivation and activity of CEE Trustees
- Motivation and activity of CEE SR authors
- Support from host institutions
- Resources to support the work of CEE Centres

Mutual understanding of the definition of science and evidence based practice by society

## Strategic Foci

On examination of the ToC model three foci for CEE activities become evident:

1. Increase the scope and application of evidence-based decision-making in environmental management through building capacity to commission and conduct evidence syntheses.
2. Build and maintain organisational capacity of CEE.
3. Demonstrate the value of systematic review as a gold standard methodology of evidence synthesis through monitoring and evaluation of the review impact and effectiveness.

The model shows how CEE activities are grouped within each of the strategic foci. The complete set of activities can be seen in Appendix 1.

### **1: Increase the scope and application of evidence-based decision-making in environmental management through building capacity to commission and conduct and disseminate findings of evidence syntheses**

#### ***Strategic goal:***

Establish and expand a shared evidence base on the environmental impacts of human activities and effectiveness of environmental management interventions and encourage and facilitate its use.

#### ***Rationale:***

The establishment and expansion of an evidence base for environmental management will improve the quality of decision making and ultimately lead to more cost-effective environmental management. Providing open access to an increasing number of syntheses of evidence, targeting a wide range of interventions, will facilitate evidence-informed decision-making.

#### ***Specific objectives:***

- 1.1 Increase the number of evidence syntheses being undertaken (and updated) by encouraging their conduct with greater geographical diversity and subject scope to cover the full breadth of environmental management (including agriculture and renewable energy sectors).
- 1.2 Improve the quality of evidence syntheses by continuing to raise standards of conduct and reporting through capacity building (building skills through training) and continued development and updating of CEE Guidelines.

- 1.3 Increase the use of evidence synthesis in decision-making by increased networking with science, policy and management communities and their representative organisations, to raise awareness of the utility of evidence syntheses.
- 1.4 Increase user-commissioning of evidence synthesis by increased networking with organisations that might benefit from such commissioning to meet their evidence needs.
- 1.5 Innovate to achieve the above objectives through CEE networks that work collaboratively to develop innovative methods for synthesising environmental data, conducting mixed methods reviews and disseminating results of evidence syntheses.
- 1.6 Build relationships with other key players in the global evidence synthesis community in order to pool expertise and undertake joint methods and capacity development.
- 1.7 Maintain and enhance the CEE Journal, *Environmental Evidence*, through maintaining an appropriate Editorial Board and relations with the publisher. Consider ways of increasing income from the journal whilst maintaining and enhancing its reputation and impact.
- 1.8 Establish an 'evidence service' that provides a database of evidence reviews and syntheses published across the environmental sector together with a critical assessment of their reliability (CEEDER).

## 2: Build and maintain organisational capacity of CEE.

### **Strategic Goal:**

Build and maintain the organisational capacity necessary to implement and sustain the delivery of objectives that advance our vision and mission.

### **Rationale:**

To achieve our strategic goals and objectives, CEE must establish good governance, professional staffing and achieve financial viability. CEE must have explicit plans to develop an open collaboration and network of contributors with a structure that allows full participation for all those who share the CEE vision and wish to contribute to its strategic objectives.

### **Specific objectives:**

- 2.1 Establish a staff appropriate to organisational function. Appoint staff at executive, managerial and administrative levels, to form an effective Executive Office.
- 2.2 Achieve sound governance by Trustees by increasing the number of Trustees to 10, appointing Trustees with financial, legal and fundraising experience, and establishing a fully functioning Board of Trustees with appropriate successional planning.

- 2.3 Hold a global CEE Conference at regular intervals determined by the Board. Use the conference to highlight and further the work of CEE and establish links with other evidence synthesis organisations, evidence users and donors.
- 2.4 Ensure effective leadership and management by formalising the relationship between Board and Executive Office and defining their respective roles.
- 2.5 Establish effective and productive Teams and Methods Groups, with clear aims and objectives, within the CEE structure.
- 2.6 Establish effective Thematic Groups, with clear aims and objectives, within the CEE structure.
- 2.7 Establish further effective CEE Centres, Associate Centres and other entities with clear aims and objectives, to form a CEE co-ordinated global network.
- 2.8 Establish working relationships with commissioning bodies, user organisations, scientific societies, and professional bodies (also relates to Strategic Focus 1 above).
- 2.9 Develop a strategy for fundraising and engage with potential donors.

### **3: Demonstrate the value of evidence synthesis through monitoring and evaluation of impact, appropriateness and effectiveness.**

#### ***Strategic goal:***

Demonstrate the value of CEE evidence syntheses in informing environment management policy and practice.

#### ***Rationale:***

To achieve our strategic goals and objectives, CEE must seek to adaptively improve the quality and appropriateness and impact of reviews undertaken or commissioned. CEE must strive to be leaders in the conduct and quality of evidence syntheses.

#### ***Specific objectives:***

- 3.1 Establish and implement an effective monitoring and evaluation framework to demonstrate the impact of evidence syntheses and for adaptive improvement for CEE.
- 3.2 Disseminate news of CEE evidence syntheses being used by decision-makers.

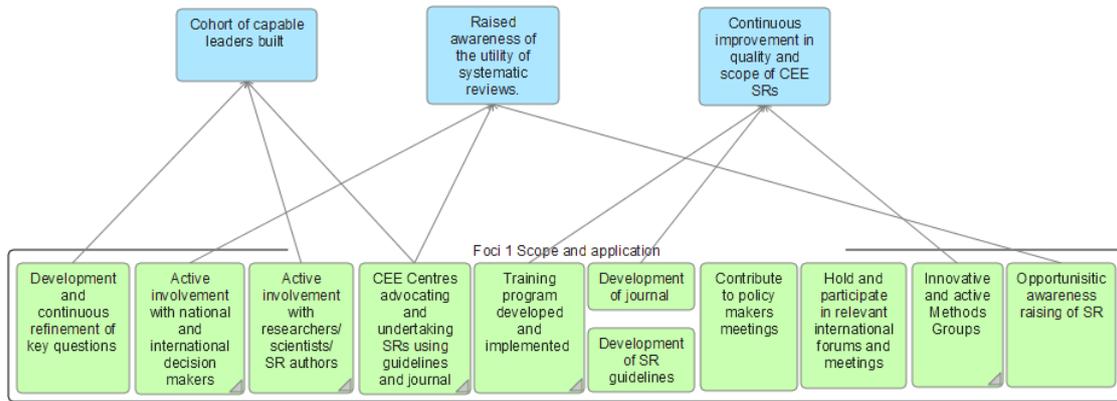
## **4.0 Executing the Plan**

In order to deliver the Strategic Plan, Implementation Plans will be developed for each year. Key evaluation questions and measures of success have been developed to enable tracking

of implementation of the strategic plan. Progress with implementation of the Strategic Plan will be reported within Annual Reports to the Board of Trustees and the Collaboration. The Strategic Plan will be reviewed and revised after 5 years.

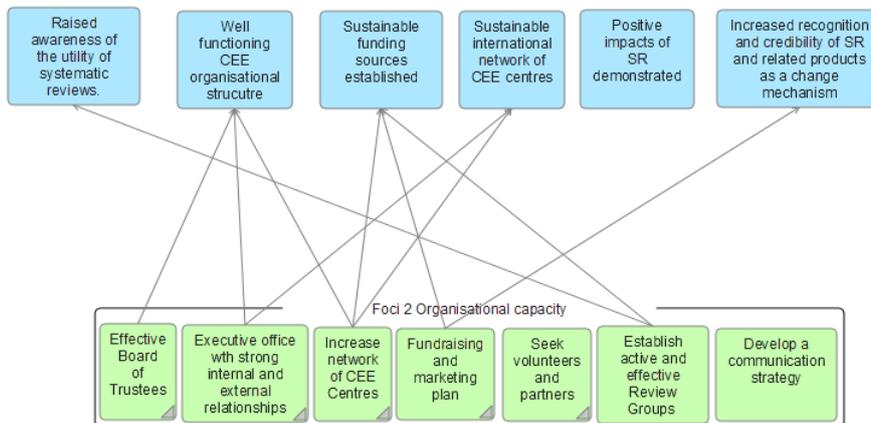
# Appendix 1 Detailed contribution of CEE activities to outcomes

## Activity contribution - CEE Scope and Application



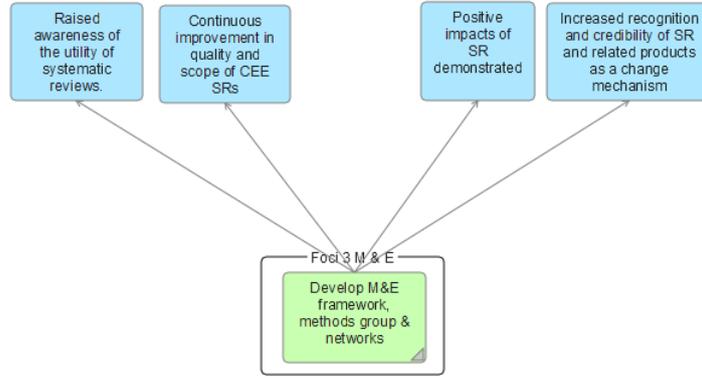
doveview.com model

## Activity contribution - CEE Organisational capacity



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## Activity contribution - Monitoring and evaluation



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