



**MVEIRB Strategic Plan
2005/06 to 2007/08**

July 30, 2004

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

The Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board is proud to present this strategic plan for 2005/06 to 2007/08. This plan is the result of the combined efforts of the Board members and staff and its development is based on the collective experiences of the past six years of operation.

It is significant that the Board has re-defined the Vision, Mission and Values of our organization. We have refined each of these three fundamental principles to focus on our primary line of business, that of conducting Environmental Impact Assessments for the residents of the Mackenzie Valley and all Canadians with the utmost integrity and balance.

As the organization continues to mature our processes are becoming more definitive resulting in an increase in the consistency of the conduct of our operations. Over the course of the next five years the Board anticipates that all parties to our process will come to share our values and help the Board achieve our vision of achieving excellence in environmental assessment for the benefit of all.

Todd Burlingame,
Chair

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The attached strategic plan builds on the Board's first strategic plan which guided the Board's work over the 2002/03 to 2004/05 period. Much has been accomplished to achieve the goals set out in that plan in addition to what is the core business of the Board; being to conduct good environmental impact assessment. It is now time to reflect on the past three years and take stock once again so that the Board can ensure its resources are aligned in the most strategic manner to address the priority needs for the next three years.

The 2005/06 to 2007/08 strategic plan has been the result of a comprehensive strategic planning process. The Board has been diligent in seeking out those areas in which improvements and priority attention is required. It has undertaken a thorough assessment of its internal and external operating environment. Input was received from representatives of Aboriginal governments and organizations, the federal and territorial government, municipalities, industry, environmental non-government organizations (NGOs) as well as from consultants and staff of the Board. Board members deliberated on the advice and comments provided as well as their own thoughts about what the needs and priorities of the Board were for the next three year period.

The Board has also reflected on its mission, vision and values based on the experience it has gained over the past three years. A significant result of this strategic planning process is a more succinct and clear statements of the Board's mission, vision and values to guide the development of strategic goals.

The Board's goals are now focused on three strategic areas. A first goal is to maintain leadership in environmental impact assessment, in particular, the continued improvement of the "Mackenzie Valley" environmental impact assessment process – one that addresses not only bio-physical, but also social, economic, and cultural impact assessment. The Board has also focused second and third goals on increasing stakeholder participation in its environmental impact assessment process and on capacity building to ensure good environmental impact assessment is achieved over the next three year period.

The next three year period will be an exciting period for the Review Board. We are confident that this Strategic Plan will ensure the Board is fit to face the future and can continue to improve and provide quality environmental impact assessment of proposed developments that have been referred to it.

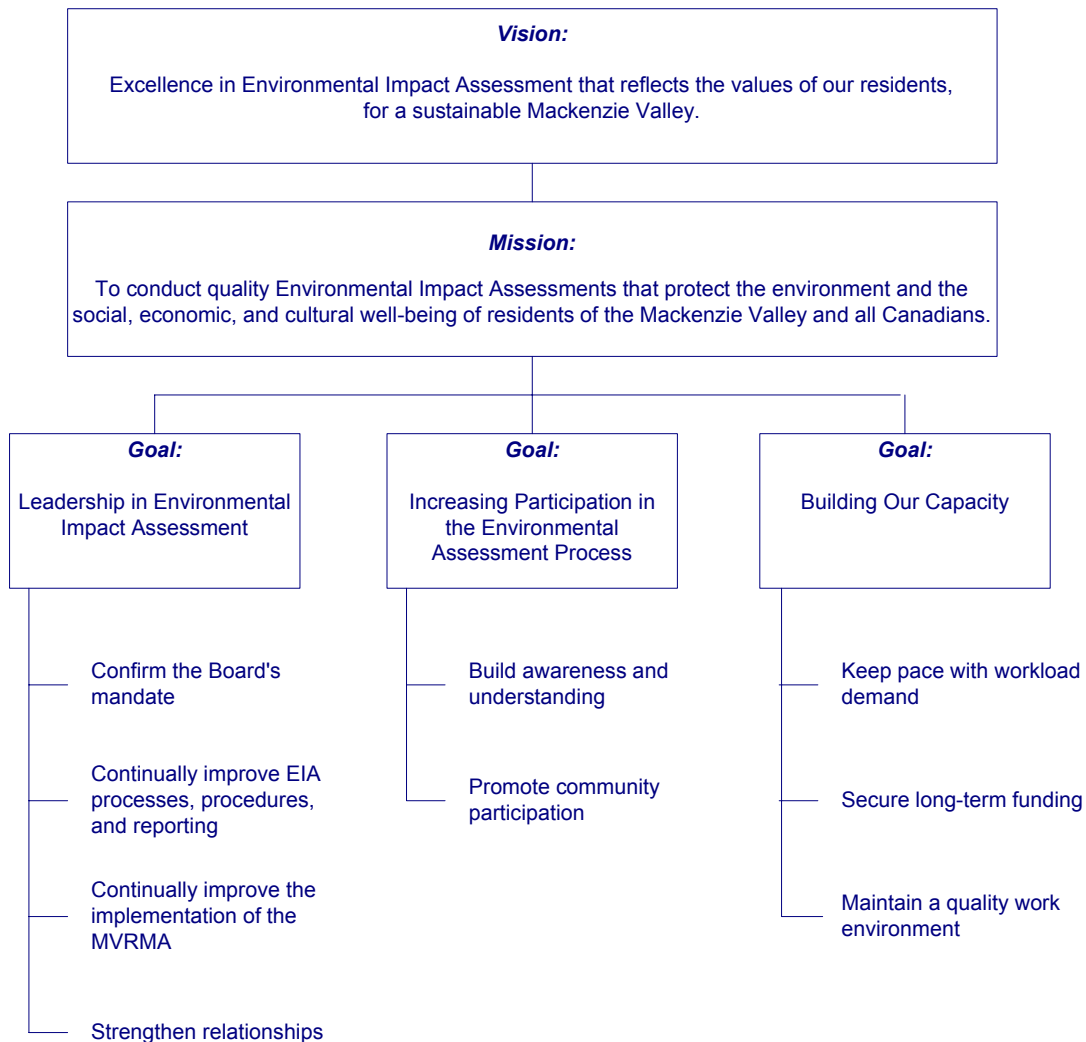
Vern Christensen
Executive Director

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board (MVEIRB) has developed a Strategic Plan for 2005/06 to 2007/08 that reflects the Board's understanding of the challenges and opportunities it faces in the coming years, including increasing workload and time pressures; questions of funding, mandate, and independence; stakeholder awareness and capacity issues; unsettled land claims; and devolution.

The Strategic Plan consists of a vision, mission, goals, and objectives (captured in the diagram below) and a statement of values. The Plan also identifies strategies associated with each goal and objective and the measures the Board will apply to review its performance in these areas over the next three fiscal years.

The MVEIRB's Strategic Plan



1 INTRODUCTION

The Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board (MVEIRB) has developed this Strategic Plan for 2005/06 to 2007/08 through a series of workshops with Board members and staff. It reflects the Board's understanding of the challenges and opportunities it faces in the coming years and its commitment to meeting those challenges and embracing those opportunities for the benefit of all its stakeholders.

Many individuals contributed to the development of this Strategic Plan by taking part in interviews and/or focus groups designed to gather information on the Board's successes and strengths, areas for improvement, challenges and opportunities, and on the components of the Board's previous Strategic Plan. In addition to Board members and Board staff, numerous representatives from the federal and territorial governments, Aboriginal organizations, municipalities, environmental non-government organizations, and industry associations provided the Board with valuable feedback. The Strategic Plan was developed with support from Terriplan Consultants.

The MVEIRB's Strategic Plan consists of the following components:

Section 2 – The Operating Context – A description of the key challenges and opportunities the Board seeks to address through its Strategic Plan.

Section 3 – The Strategic Plan – The Board's vision, mission, values, goals, and objectives.

Section 4 – Strategies – The strategies the Board has planned for the coming fiscal years in order to achieve its goals and objectives.

Section 5 – Performance Measures – The Board has identified performance measures associated with each strategy, to be used in measuring progress towards each objective.

More detailed information on the specific activities planned by the Board in support of the strategies outlined in this Strategic Plan will be provided in the Board's business plans, which are developed on an annual basis. Budget information is also presented in the Board's business plans.

2 THE OPERATING CONTEXT

While developing its Strategic Plan, the MVEIRB conducted an environmental scan to gather information on the Board's operating context, its strengths and weaknesses, and the challenges or opportunities the Board faces over the next three years. Information for the scan was gathered through a series of interviews with Board members, senior staff, and external stakeholders, and through a focus group with all Board staff (see Appendix A for a list of respondents by organization).

The results of the environmental scan were summarized and presented to the Board and staff during a strategic planning workshop. During the workshop, the Board focused on the key challenges and opportunities identified and used these to develop its goals and objectives for the next three years (Section 3). These challenges and opportunities (one issue often represented both, depending on the Board's approach or on other, external factors) are summarized here to provide a context for the Strategic Plan.

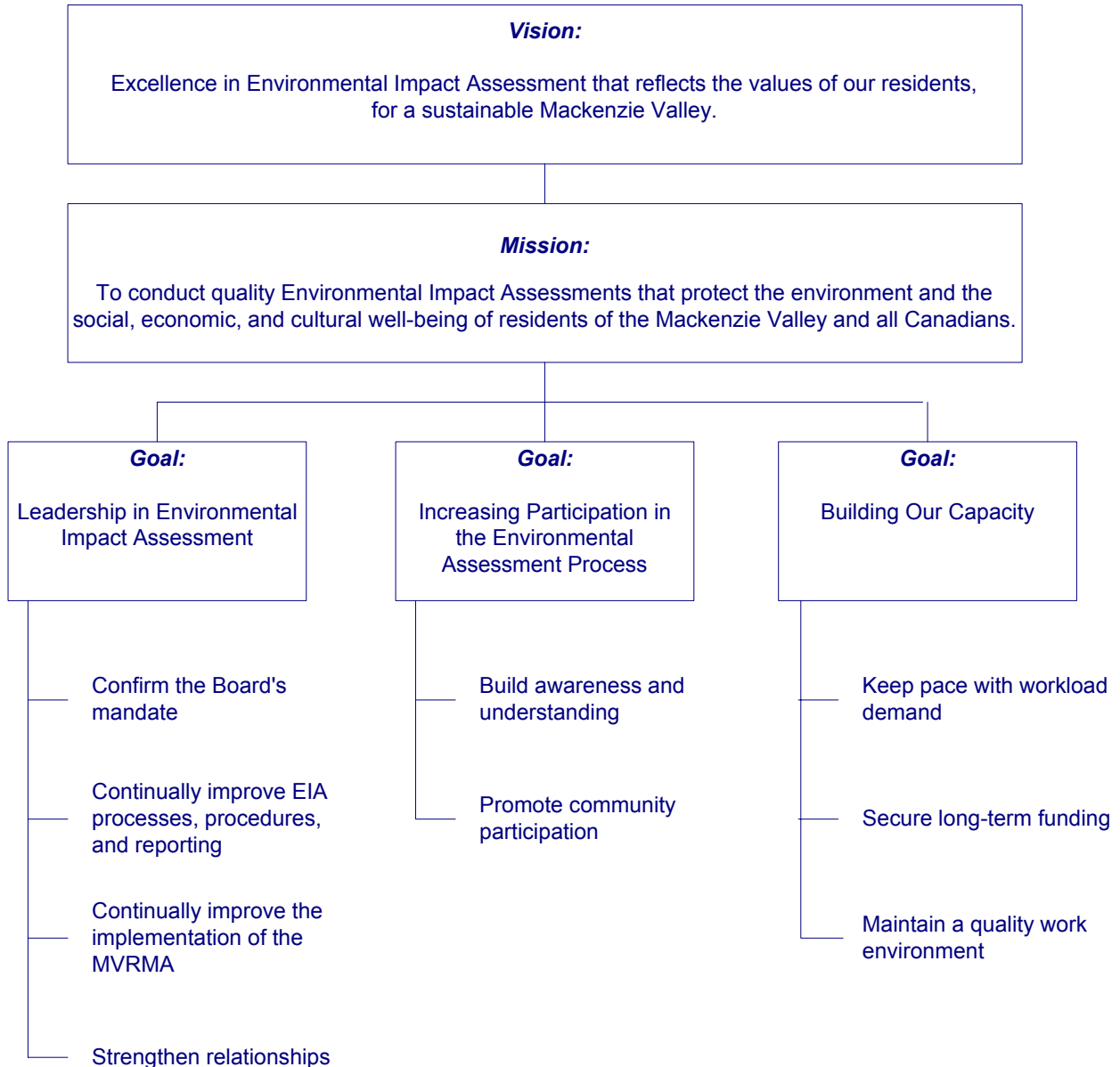
- *Workload and Time Pressures* – Both Board members and staff are experiencing high workloads and pressures on their time. This issue is closely tied to the increasing number of environmental impact assessments (EIAs) (see below), but also reflects the growing complexity of the projects being assessed by the Board. Projects such as the Mackenzie Gas Project are “world class” and require considerable time and expertise to assess. This represents a significant challenge for a part-time Board.
- *Increasing Number of EIAs* – The Board will experience an increase in the number of EIAs over the coming years due to on-going resource development, the oil and gas exploration and development associated with the Mackenzie Gas Project, the move towards metals mining (as opposed to diamond mining), and other infrastructure projects.
- *Funding, Mandate, and Independence* – The challenge of obtaining the level of funding required to maintain the Board's activities is tied to differences of opinion on the Board's mandate and stakeholders' perception of the Board's independence from the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND) (some stakeholders question the Board's independence since it receives funding from the same organization that receives its reports and recommendations). The environmental scan made it clear that these three, inter-related issues must be resolved if the Board is to meet its goals.
- *Capacity of Stakeholders to Participate in the Process* – Some stakeholders felt they lack the human and financial (in the form of intervener funding) resources to participate appropriately in the EIA process. The environmental scan specifically identified capacity issues at the community and environmental non-government organization levels. Traditional Knowledge and local economic and social impacts were areas where some stakeholders felt they could provide better information to the Board if they had additional resources.

- *Lack of Community Level Awareness* – Stakeholders at the community level are not necessarily aware of the project-specific EIA issues facing their communities or about the EIA process in general. As a result, they do not contribute to the Board's knowledge base on a particular development and their concerns may not be captured in the Board's decision-making process
- *Unsettled Land Claims* – The Board faces the challenge of trying to keep all of the parties involved in the EIA process (whether from settled or unsettled land claims areas) working together, at least to the point where the Board can fulfill its responsibilities. As land claims are settled, they may result in changes to the *Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act* (MVRMA), which could also affect the Board.
- *Referral Powers* – The limitations on which communities can refer projects to the MVEIRB for review may disrupt the relationships of trust and understanding that the Board is trying to establish with communities through its planned outreach and communications activities.
- *Devolution* – The devolution of responsibility for resource management to the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) could represent an opportunity for the Board. The MVRMA might be re-opened, and could therefore be amended. Having the Board and the Minister receiving the Board's recommendations located in the same city could result in increased awareness of the Board's role and processes, and might enhance the Board/Minister relationship. On the other hand, devolution might be a challenge because of the GNWT's own funding issues (which might affect long-term funding for the Board) and opening up the MVRMA might result in changes to the Board's mandate.
- *The NWT Environmental Audit (Part 6 of the MVRMA)* – The audit is likely an opportunity for the MVEIRB to learn about areas for improvement and encourage the federal government to address some existing gaps or issues. It may also reveal areas for improvement within the Board's own processes that need to be addressed.
- *Implementation of the Board's Recommendations* – The Board has no means of ensuring that recommendations flowing from Part 5 of the MVRMA are implemented as the Board intended by regulatory agencies and Boards. Some respondents felt that a lack of clarity in the Board's recommendations sometimes contributes to issues with their implementation.
- *Improvements to EIA Processes* – Some respondents felt that the Board's processes favor industry, while others felt they favor communities or government. Other respondents indicated that certain aspects of the Board's processes (for example, consultation requirements) were unclear.

3 THE STRATEGIC PLAN

The MVEIRB's Strategic Plan consists of a vision, mission, values, goals and objectives, all of which are described in this section. The Strategic Plan components are captured in the diagram below and described in detail in the subsequent sections.

Figure 1: The MVEIRB's Strategic Plan



3.1 Vision, Mission, and Values

The MVEIRB's vision is:

Excellence in Environmental Impact Assessment that reflects the values of our residents, for a sustainable Mackenzie Valley.

The MVEIRB's mission is:

To conduct quality Environmental Impact Assessments that protect the environment and the social, economic, and cultural well-being of residents of the Mackenzie Valley and all Canadians.

The MVEIRB has also established the following statement of values:

We value:

- *Relationships based on mutual respect, trust, and honesty.*
- *Acting with integrity, objectivity, and fairness.*
- *Accountability, quality, and efficiency in our work.*
- *Consensus decision-making.*
- *Transparency, accessibility, and openness in our processes.*
- *The diversity of the Mackenzie Valley.*

3.2 Goals and Objectives

The MVEIRB's goals and objectives for the coming three fiscal years have been established in response to the challenges and opportunities identified through the planning process (see Section 2). Each of the three goals and associated objectives is presented here with a brief explanation.

Goal 1 – Leadership in Environmental Impact Assessment

This goal has been carried over from the Board's previous strategic plan, as EIA is the Board's core business. The information gathered during the strategic planning process identified a number of areas where the Board might provide leadership in the EIA process and confirmed that many stakeholders expect the Board to be a moving force towards improvements in EIA in the NWT.

The Board identified four objectives to support the goal of leadership in EIA:

1. *Confirm the Board's mandate* – The strategic planning process clearly indicated that there is still a lack of consensus between various levels of government, industry, other stakeholders, and the Board itself with respect to its mandate. It is critical that this issue be resolved and that all groups involved have a common understanding of the Board's mandate. Confirming the Board's mandate will also address some of the concerns raised by stakeholders about the extent of the Board's decision-making independence from DIAND.
2. *Continually improve EIA processes, procedures, and reporting* – A number of potential improvements to processes, procedures, and reporting were identified during the development of the strategic plan. The Board is committed to identifying and promoting best practices in EIA, to ensuring the quality of the Board's reports and recommendations, and to establishing appropriate and responsive processes and procedures.
3. *Continually improve the implementation of the MVRMA* – The Board has amassed considerable experience in working with Part 5 of the MVRMA and is committed to sharing this experience with others as the opportunity arises. One specific opportunity identified during the strategic planning process is the NWT Environmental Audit (Part 6 of the MVRMA).
4. *Strengthen relationships* – The Board's relationships with other MVRMA boards and with all stakeholders are key to the success of the EIA process. These relationships also provide valuable feedback to the Board on its processes and procedures, as demonstrated through the strategic planning process.

Goal 2 – Increasing Participation in the Environmental Assessment Process

The strategic planning process brought participation in the environmental assessment process, particularly by communities, to the forefront as a challenge for the Board. Participation by all stakeholders is essential if the Board is to have a well-rounded and accurate base of information for decision-making.

The Board identified two objectives to support increased participation in the environmental assessment process:

1. *Build awareness and understanding* – The strategic planning process identified that some stakeholders may not be aware of their opportunities to participate in the EA process or may not understand how to exercise those opportunities. The Board intends to continue its efforts to clearly communicate its processes and the roles of all groups within those processes.
2. *Promote community participation* – Communities have raised a number of concerns with respect to their capacity to participate in the EA process. The strategic planning process also clearly identified intervener funding as an issue for many stakeholders and a limit to a successful EA process. The Board is committed to addressing these issues to the extent possible given its mandate and the roles and responsibilities of other organizations (for example, DIAND).

Goal 3 – Building Our Capacity

The information gathered during the strategic planning process clearly indicated that Board members and staff are already stretched in completing their duties and that the Board can expect a continued increase in its workload over the next three years. These challenges result in a continued emphasis on capacity building, administrative efficiency, and staff satisfaction.

The Board identified three objectives to support the goal of building its capacity:

1. *Keep pace with workload demand* – In order for the Board to fulfill its responsibilities for a timely and high quality EIA process, Board members must be readily available and appropriate staff resources must be in place. The assessment and allocation of existing resources is a key issue in efficiently meeting demand, as is the on-going improvement of the Board's internal administrative procedures.
2. *Secure long-term funding* – Having a reliable, long-term funding base is a key success factor for the Board, particularly given that the oil and gas funding which has supplemented the Board's budget over the last three years is coming to an end in the 2004/05 fiscal year. The Board recognizes its accountability for the funding received, and as a result is committed to establishing performance measures for its activities (see Section 5) and benchmarks. The Board seeks to maintain open communications with its funding groups and agencies to resolve outstanding funding issues.
3. *Maintain a quality work environment* – A work environment where all staff and Board members are empowered to contribute their skills and experience is key to meeting the Board's challenges with respect to workload and capacity. The strategic planning process identified some areas where the Board could do more to support staff and Board members. The Board will continue to work towards programs and policies that maintain the Board's competitiveness as an employer.

4 STRATEGIES

The MVEIRB has identified several strategies to be implemented in the coming three years in support of its goals and objectives. These strategies relate to the issues or challenges the Strategic Plan is intended to address and are the subject of performance measures (shown in Section 5). They, along with more detailed information on the resources required for their implementation, will be incorporated into the Board's business plans as appropriate.

The table below shows the strategies associated with each of the MVEIRB's goals and objectives, as described in Section 3.

Table 1: Strategies for 2005/06 – 2007/08

Goals	Objectives	Strategies
Leadership in EIA	Confirm the Board's mandate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resolve outstanding mandate issues • Confirm the importance of Board independence
	Continually improve EIA processes, procedures, and reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish EIA process protocols • Continue to develop EIA best practices guidelines • Ensure quality assurance and control (for example, with respect to recommendations)
	Improve the implementation of the MVRMA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage in potential amendments to the MVRMA, based on experience implementing Part 5 • Participate in the NWT Environmental Audit (Part 6 of the MVRMA)
	Strengthen relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with other MVRMA Boards • Build on our relationship with stakeholders
Increasing participation in the EA process	Build awareness and understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a communications program (including active Board member participation at community level) • Communicate EA results back to participants
	Promote community participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respond to community concerns with respect to capacity gaps and needs • Promote the need for intervener funding
Building our capacity	Keep pace with workload demand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase Board member availability • Increase staff resources • Assess and allocate resources (including outsourcing) • Improve Board administrative procedures
	Secure long-term funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish performance measures to show the impact of Board activities • Establish benchmarks to compare the cost of EIA delivery • Maintain communication with funding groups and agencies • Resolve outstanding funding issues
	Maintain a quality work environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a Human Resources framework and program (incorporating training, career development, compensation, etc) • Continue to develop the MVEIRB policy manual

5 PERFORMANCE MEASURES

The MVEIRB has identified desired outcomes and performance measures associated with each of the strategies outlined in Section 4. The outcomes relate to the challenges and opportunities identified through the strategic planning process. Each performance measure is quantifiable, for a clear understanding of the results achieved.

The following table shows the performance measures developed by the Board, by strategy.

Table 2: Performance Measures for 2005/06 – 2007/08

Strategies	Outcomes	Performance Measures
Leadership in EIA – Confirm the Board’s mandate		
Resolve outstanding mandate issues	Clarity on the Board’s mandate among all stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledgement of Board processes by all stakeholders
Confirm the importance of Board independence	All stakeholders see Board decision-making as independent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledgement of independence by all stakeholders
Leadership in EIA – Continually improve EIA processes, procedures, and reporting		
Establish EIA process protocols	EIA processes are appropriate to the project being assessed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A strategy is established for each EA • Processes for small, medium, and large-scale projects are established
Continue to develop EIA best practices guidelines	EIA best practices are reflected in the Board’s processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A reduction in the number of court challenges on Board processes
Ensure quality assurance and control	The Board’s recommendations are accepted by DIAND and designated responsible authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A reduction in the number of rejected recommendations • A reduction in the number of “consult to modify” requests • ISO 9000 certification obtained
Leadership in EIA – Improve the implementation of the MVRMA		
Engage in potential amendments to the MVRMA, based on experience implementing Part 5	The Board has input into any amendments to the MVRMA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amendments to the MVRMA reflect Board input
Participate in the NWT Environmental Audit (Part 6 of the MVRMA)	The Board has input into the NWT Environmental Audit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Audit report and recommendations reflect Board input

Strategies	Outcomes	Performance Measures
Leadership in EIA – Strengthen relationships		
Work with other MVRMA Boards	Improved coordination and efficiency of the EIA process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledgement of Board processes by all stakeholders
Build on our relationship with stakeholders	Clear and open communications with stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through an annual survey, stakeholders describe the Board as accessible and responsive
Increasing participation in the EA process – Build awareness and understanding		
Develop a communications program	Increased awareness of opportunities to participate in the process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broader range of stakeholders participating in the EA process • Increase in number of elders participating in hearings • Increase in number of documents from communities in public registry • Increase in number and variety of users of public registry
Communicate EA results back to participants	Increased awareness and understanding of the impact of participation on the result of the EA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post-EA community visit scheduled in each work plan • Broader range of stakeholders participating in the EA process • Increase in number of elders participating in hearings • Increase in number of documents from communities in public registry • Increase in number and variety of users of public registry
Increasing participation in the EA process – Promote community participation		
Respond to community concerns with respect to capacity gaps and needs	Active and equal participation by communities in the EA process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in capacity-related complaints from communities
Promote the need for intervener funding	Intervener funding is made available for EAs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in amount of intervener funding available for EAs
Building our capacity – Keep pace with workload demands		
Increase Board member availability	EAs and other Board responsibilities completed in a timely manner and to quality standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EAs completed on schedule and to quality standards • Board and staff roles and responsibilities analysis completed
Increase staff resources	Staff are able to support the Board as required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EAs completed on schedule and to quality standards • Reduction in staff requests for additional resources
Assess and allocate resources	Resources are allocated efficiently	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board and staff roles and responsibilities analysis completed • Reduction in variance from established annual budgets

Strategies	Outcomes	Performance Measures
Improve Board administrative procedures	Administrative procedures are efficient, support the Board, and promote quality decision-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ISO 9000 certification obtained
Building our capacity – Secure long-term funding		
Establish performance measures to show the impact of Board activities	Impact of Board activities can be demonstrated to funding agencies and other stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance measures established and reported on annually
Establish benchmarks to compare the cost of EIA delivery	Board funding is put into the context of other approaches to delivering EIA and EIA delivery in other jurisdictions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment of funding benchmarks completed
Maintain communication with funding groups and agencies	Clear and open dialogue about funding needs and concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DIAND sign-off without modification on annual budgets
Resolve outstanding funding issues	The Board has the budget required to carry out its mission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DIAND sign-off without modification on annual budgets • Multi-year funding MOU with DIAND in place
Building our capacity – Maintain a quality work environment		
Develop a Human Resources framework and program	Staff have access to training, career development, etc. Clear procedures are in place for compensation, promotion, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career plan in place for all staff • Training plan in place for all staff • HR program in place
Continue to develop the MVEIRB policy manual	The Board's policy manual is up to date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HR Committee reviews and accepts amendments to the policy manual annually

APPENDIX A - RESPONDENTS

The following individuals contributed to the strategic planning process by participating in interviews or focus groups.

Table 3: Interview and Focus Group Respondents

Stakeholder Group	Organizations	Individual
Federal Government	DIAND NWT Region	David Livingstone
	DIAND NWT Region	Eric Yaxley
	DIAND	I. Tatar
	Environment Canada	Stephen Harbicht
	Parks Canada	Chuck Blythe
	CEAA	Steve Burgess
	NEB	M. Vandenboch
Territorial Government	RWED (in writing)	Doug Doan
	RWED	Gavin Moore
	ECE	Tom Andrews
	ECE	Courtney Wagner
	RWED	Emery Paquin
Local Government	Association of Municipalities	Blake Lyons
Aboriginal Organizations	Tlicho First Nation	John B. Zoe
	Sahtu Land Use Planning Board	Raymond Taniton
	DehCho First Nation (in writing)	Keyna Norwegian
Environmental NGOs	CARC	Shelagh Montgomery
Industry Organizations	CAPP	Ian Scott
	NWT & NU Chamber of Mines	Mike Vaydik
MVEIRB Members	MVEIRB	Jon Ondrack
	MVEIRB	Gabrielle Mackenzie-Scott
	MVEIRB	Todd Burlingame
	MVEIRB	John Stevenson
	MVEIRB	Percy Hardisty
	MVEIRB	Bernadette Stewart
MVEIRB Staff	MVEIRB (interview)	Alan Ehrlich
	MVEIRB (interview)	Bridgette Larocque
	MVEIRB (interview)	Roland Semjanovs
	MVEIRB (interview)	Vern Christensen
	MVEIRB (focus group)	All MVEIRB Staff