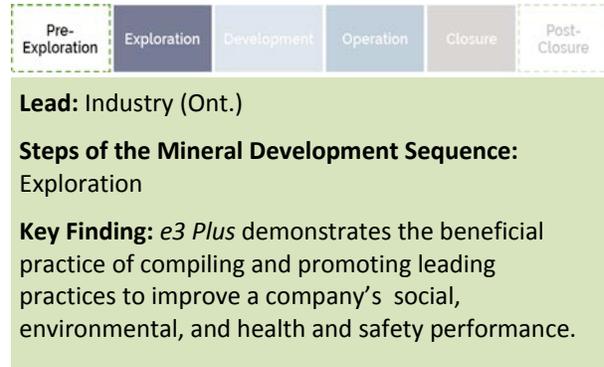


Prospectors & Developers Association of Canada's e3 Plus: A Framework for Responsible Exploration

Context

The Prospectors & Developers Association of Canada (PDAC) is a leading voice in the mineral exploration and development community. With over 8,000 members around the world, PDAC's mission is to promote a globally responsible, vibrant and sustainable minerals industry.

In 2009, PDAC developed e3 Plus: A Framework for Responsible Exploration as an information resource to help exploration companies voluntarily improve their social, environmental, and health and safety performance.¹ e3 Plus responded to an expressed interest by companies involved in mineral exploration and development in resources that could help them improve their sustainability performance. At the time, there was no sustainability guidance focused specifically on the mineral exploration industry. The Framework now offers practitioners principles, guidance notes and toolkits that provide detailed advice on the specific actions companies can take to optimize their social, environmental, and health and safety impacts. The information can be tailored to the size of the company, the stage of exploration being undertaken, the type and location of the project and the political and cultural milieu within which the company is operating.



Description of Measures Implemented

e3 Plus was launched by PDAC as the Association's signature corporate social responsibility initiative and represented the first time that comprehensive guidance on responsible exploration had ever been produced. e3 Plus expanded upon PDAC's initial resource, known as e3 – *Environmental Excellence in Exploration*, and now includes



- Principles for responsible exploration;
- Guidance notes that expound on the principles; and
- Three detailed toolkits covering areas such as social responsibility, environment, and health and safety, including a newly developed chapter on community engagement.

The e3 Plus Framework begins with eight principles, which all explorers should aspire to adopt and implement since they are relevant to all exploration contexts. The principles have equal weight and value; they are common to all situations and inform companies about what is expected from them. They should be considered essential components of corporate culture. For example, the principle "Adopt Responsible Governance and Management" provides information on meeting the objectives of sound management systems, professional excellence, the application of good practices, constructive interaction with stakeholders, and the principles of sustainable development.

¹ e3 Plus can be accessed and downloaded online through the PDAC website at www.pdac.ca/e3plus.

The *e3 Plus* Guidance Notes help practitioners convert the principles into action while recognizing that every project is unique and that exploration companies will implement the principles in response to the specific context encountered on the ground.

Finally, *e3 Plus* also includes three comprehensive toolkits that provide in-depth, practical information in the areas of environmental stewardship, social responsibility and health and safety. The toolkits offer specific details on how exploration companies can optimize the application of the Guidance Notes in order to meet project-specific circumstances. The vast amount of content available in these toolkits helps to guide exploration companies through project development from start to finish and ensures that companies are incorporating leading practices in various contexts.

Results

In 2013 and 2014, PDAC conducted a series of interviews with stakeholders and members to help inform the development of a “CSR roadmap” for the association. Community engagement was identified as a key area of interest. In response, PDAC developed and published new *e3 Plus* guidance in 2015 that covered this area. Titled *First Engagement: A Field Guide for Explorers*, the new document is a practical and straightforward resource to support geologists, project managers, or any site-level employees in establishing strong and positive company-community relationships. Moreover, in 2015, PDAC interviewed fifty companies conducting mineral exploration in Canada and around the world to learn more about their efforts to improve their social, environmental and health and safety performance.

The interviews revealed the significant extent to which *e3 Plus* is regarded as a key sustainability resource for the industry. They also provided insight into a number of other issues that could become focus areas for the development of new resources for companies, such as industry impacts on water use and quality.

e3 Plus has now been embraced by numerous companies who see it as a pivotal framework to adopt in order to follow industry best practices and improve company social, environmental, health and safety performance. For example, in 2006, Avalon Advanced Materials subscribed to the principles and practices of *e3 Plus* through the implementation of a formal company policy. Avalon now incorporates all eight *e3 Plus* principles into their business practices.

Lessons Learned

Good community engagement and environmental and social responsibility starts at the exploration stage. *e3 Plus* has provided the mineral exploration and development community with information and guidance on how to operate responsibly and voluntarily improve practices in relation to environmental stewardship, social responsibility, community engagement and health and safety. Such work demonstrates the beneficial practice of compiling and promoting leading practices to promote improved performance in areas such as the assessment and reduction of risks, the minimization of impacts (social and environmental), and the optimization of benefits to all involved – local communities, the host country, investors and the company

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