

***Evaluation
of the
Replication of
Lessons Learned Project
(ROLL)***

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The following evaluation reviews implementation of the Replication of Lessons Learned program (ROLL). The ROLL program is implemented under a four-year cooperative agreement entered into in 1996 between the Institute for Sustainable Communities (ISC) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The ROLL activity was designed as an outgrowth of the 1992 Environmental Policy and Technology Project (EPT), a large, high profile, multi-faceted set of sub-projects involving almost a dozen U.S. organizations implementing activities throughout the Russian Federation.

The principal objective of the ROLL program is to support the replication of successful environmental activities developed during implementation of the earlier EPT project. A subsequent initiative is to serve as a vehicle for directing USAID resources to respond to global climate change concerns in Siberia and the Russian Far East and to address other priority issues, pollution reduction and health improvement, gas emissions trading.

In addition to requirements set forth in the scope of work, the evaluation team tried to answer the following questions that grew out of discussions with USAID personnel: Was the project well designed? Was it well implemented? Did it achieve most of its objectives? Is it deserving of continued support? To all these questions the team's response is varying degrees of yes. Although that may be the bottom line, it is important that the evaluation team share with the reader how we arrived at such conclusions.

Perhaps no country faces more difficult environmental challenges than Russia. Only a few years before the project was designed, the Russian Federation inherited an enormously costly environmental legacy, the result of decades of inefficient economic activities and outdated production technologies. Today, Russia faces onerous health and financial burdens created by widespread environmental contamination, especially in the industrial heartland, and by serious mismanagement of natural resources. Principal environmental threats to public health are air and water pollution, solid waste disposal and toxic and hazardous wastes. These are linked to threats to sustainable development and threats to the global commons, especially global climate change.

The evaluation team finds the program structurally sound with no significant conceptual weaknesses. Staff capabilities of implementing entities -- ISC/Moscow, the Regional Centers (RCs), and the Coordinating Council -- are generally excellent. Project staff and cooperating institutions are professionally competent, open-minded and highly motivated. Relations among those entities are strong. Program operations function smoothly and work plans are generally adhered to. Both training of RC staff and training provided by RC staff to grantees seem well organized and appropriate. Reporting is timely, both from field operations to ISC and from ISC to USAID. The key entities all appear to work well with each other and with USAID/Russia staff. No obvious problem areas were encountered.

A significant strength of the project is the fact that all but one of ISC's staff is Russian, meaning that Russians primarily interface with other Russians. That has created

numerous advantages for the program – greater professional contacts, language facility in dealings with the Coordinating Council, with Regional Center staffs and with grantee partners, and cultural sensitivity. Furthermore, it contributes to the program's cost-effectiveness.

In addition to the strengths mentioned above, there are others worth noting:

- The network of Russian environmental NGOs is being strengthened, expanded and exposed to new ideas.
- An excellent, transparent process for selecting grant recipients is in place and over 135 such grants have been made. More importantly, the grant making process appears to be quality driven.
- ISC has gradually increased the responsibilities assigned to the Regional Centers (RCs). Having RCs host regional conferences involving both private and public entities to develop regional environmental priorities is an excellent example.
- The Coordinating Council provides and increasingly useful interface among NGOs and between NGOs and government organizations
- The Coordinating Council is expanding its interest in establishing criteria for measuring project impact, reducing the current focus on inputs and outputs..
- All of the grant projects that the team visited appeared well designed, responsive to local needs, and well implemented by committed, talented individuals and groups.
- ROLL seems to be an effective vehicle (through targeted grants) for addressing priority areas under the Gore-Chernomyrdin agreements.

The team also notes three significant areas of concern below. Discussion and recommendations on other areas of concern are included within the text.

- Financial self-sufficiency for most grantees is still an elusive target. To date, the project has largely ignored this issue. With little experience in fund-raising and Russia's current financial crisis, the survival of many of the organizations that have benefited from project grants remains in doubt.

Recommendation: That ISC speed up its efforts to develop a strategy and action plan for providing grant recipients with the tools to improve their access to non-ROLL resources. Fund raising is critical to their survival and having appropriate information and skills is a necessary first step.

- Data to judge the effectiveness and impact of this program are not readily available. (See Section II.B.3.)

Recommendation: That ISC and USAID/Russia jointly develop appropriate impact indicators so that the effectiveness of the program can be more readily assessed, even if this is limited to the results of individual sub-grants

- The future of the current administrative arrangements that support replication activities (the ROLL structure) is unclear.

Recommendation: That a joint USAID-Russian working group be to examine the desirability and the feasibility of sustaining the replication model, to explore alternatives sources of financial support, and to provide USAID and the Coordinating Council with recommendations for dealing with the issue.

In looking toward the future, the evaluation team strongly supports a continuation of this program. There are several key factors behind this conclusion. First, environmental conditions in the Russian Federation remain extremely serious, affecting both the health and the economic livelihood of tens of millions of Russians. If anything, these have become more acute in some areas. Second, the response of the government to those threats has been slow and/or uneven, and the lingering financial turmoil has affected the availability of funds to tackle these issues at all levels. Third, the ROLL program is a proven winner; it provides a model for working with local stakeholders and environmental groups to develop effective grassroots activities.

The team's recommendations to USAID for consideration in the planning of a follow-on project are provided in Annex A.

ACRONYMS

CC	Coordinating Council
EPT	Environmental Policy and Technology project
GOs	Government organizations
ISC	Institute for Sustainable Communities
ISC/Vermont	Institute for Sustainable Communities, Vermont USA
ISC/Moscow	Institute for Sustainable Communities, Moscow Office
IR	Intermediate Results
NGOs	Non-government organizations
R1-5	Round 1 through 5
RC	Regional Center
RF	Russian Federation
ROLL	Replication of Lessons Learned project
SCEP	State Committee for Environmental Protection
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USEPA	United States Environmental Protection Agency

I. INTRODUCTION AND PROJECT BACKGROUND

This document presents the findings and recommendations from an evaluation of the Replication of Lessons Learned (ROLL) project. The Institute for Sustainable Communities (ISC) is implementing this project under USAID cooperative agreement 118-A-00-96-90177-00. The project began in August 1996 as a four-year program. It was recently extended by six months to February 2001, for a total of 4.5 years. USAID funding totals US \$11.6 million.

The objective of the ROLL project is to disseminate and replicate environmental technologies that were proven to be effective under the USAID-financed Environmental Policy and Technology (EPT) initiative, a Russian/American environmental cooperation program begun in 1992. That objective has now been broadened somewhat, and the ROLL program may also replicate technologies proven under programs other than EPT. ROLL is thus designed to encourage the sharing of proven environmental approaches and to provide opportunities for expanding their impact beyond the original "pilot" sites. Further, as a result of the Gore-Chernomyrdin agreements (Bilateral Commission), USAID and the Russian Government utilize ROLL to administer "targeted" grants to organizations that carry out programs in support of U.S. and Russian commitments in global climate change and other priority environmental issues. In addition to expanding the knowledge about and use of proven environmental technologies, the ROLL program seeks to expand and strengthen the network of public and private organizations working to improve Russia's physical environment. The program thus places a high value on working with many organizations and improving the level of communications and cooperation among them.

To achieve these objectives, ROLL administers a competitive program of small grants to private and public sector entities that seek to replicate proven environmental improvement activities. ROLL also administers directed or targeted grants to organizations to address concerns about climate change and other global issues. The majority of ROLL grants last no more than one year. To date, the project has awarded 119 competitive and 18 targeted grants. Competitive grant awards average approximately \$28,000; direct grant awards average \$44,000. Competitive grants have resulted from four completed rounds of competition; a fifth round of competition (R5) will be completed shortly. (For a more complete discussion of ROLL objectives, see also II.A, below.)

A. Evaluation Objectives and Methodology

The purpose of this evaluation is to assess the overall performance of the ROLL project. More specifically, the team was expected to assess ROLL's implementation mechanisms, document best practices, identify major constraints, identify project impact, and make recommendations to improve its implementation procedures. The scope of work for the evaluation is provided in Appendix A.

The evaluation focuses on the role played by and the relationships among the five major actors in ROLL: USAID/Russia, ISC, ROLL's Coordinating Council, the six ROLL Regional Centers (RCs) and the grantees. It focuses as well on major stages of program operations: the pre-grant period, the grant selection and approval process, and technical and financial monitoring during the period of grant implementation.

The CARANA Corporation conducted this evaluation for USAID/Russia. CARANA utilized a team of four experts, consisting of two Americans, Laurence Hausman (team leader) and Christine Bernardeau, and two Russians, Nikolai Mugue and Yevgeny Prudnikov. The team initiated its work on July 15, 1999. Fieldwork in Russia started July 26 and was completed with the team leaving its draft report with the Evaluation Office of USAID/Russia on August 20. The team incorporated USAID and ISC comments in its draft report, as appropriate, and submitted the final report to USAID/Russia on September 7.

The evaluation team's methodology reflects the large number of competitive and directed grants and the broad geographical extent of the ROLL projects (grantees are located in 70 of the 89 Oblasts and Republics of the Russian Federation). The evaluation team's activities to gather information included:

- A review of all documents available (Appendix G);
- Interviews with ISC/Vermont and ISC/Moscow staff;
- Interviews with appropriate USAID/Russia evaluation and technical staff and USAID/Washington technical personnel;
- A survey of all ROLL grantees from which it received 68 responses¹ (see sample questionnaire, Appendix B, and quantifiable results, Appendix C);
- A survey sent to all Coordinating Council members (see sample questionnaire, Appendix D, and quantifiable results, Appendix E);
- Interviews with individuals representing 29 grantees, eight Coordinating Council members, and staff from four Regional Centers. These included:
 - Moscow Region: 10 grantees, three Coordinating Council members, and one Regional Center Director and staff;
 - Nizhni Novgorod Region: six grantees, one Coordinating Council member, and one Regional Center Director and staff;
 - Ekaterinburg Region: five grantees, two Coordinating Council members, and one Regional Center Director and staff;
 - Far East Region: nine grantees, two Coordinating Council members, and one Regional Center Director and staff.

In sum, the evaluation team interviewed roughly 20 percent of all competitive and targeted grantees, and one-fourth of the Coordinating Council members. It visited four of the six Regional Centers. The evaluation team chose organizations and individuals to be interviewed with the advice of ISC and USAID.

¹ The survey instrument was developed, translated and field-tested by the evaluation team during its Moscow interviews. ISC then distributed the instrument to grantees through the Regional Centers. Grantees returned the questionnaires directly to the team at CARANA/Moscow.

B. Project Summary/Current Status

To date, the following grants were awarded:

- Round 1: 15 competitive
- Round 2: 22 competitive
- Round 3: 37 competitive
- Round 4: 45 competitive
- Directed grants: 18

All Round 1 and 2 grants have been successfully completed, even though some of the final reports of Round 2 have not yet been submitted to ISC. The total amount of competitive grants awarded to this date is US\$ 3,208,000.² The 18 directed grants total US\$ 792,000.³ The project has one more Round (Round 5) of grants to be awarded.

II. EVALUATION FOCUS AREAS

A. Goals and Objectives

1. ROLL's Fit within USAID/Russia's Environmental Assistance Program

The ROLL program is clearly responsive to and supportive of the Mission's Strategic Objective 1.6, Increased environmental capacity to support sustainable economic growth. Project activities are contributing to the corresponding intermediate results (IRs) of:

- increased capacity to deal with environmental pollution as a threat to human health;
- improved management of natural resources and biodiversity protection; and
- improved economic mechanisms for natural resources management and environmental protection.
-

Although the team saw considerable anecdotal evidence that ROLL is contributing to the achievement of these desired results, measuring progress towards the IRs is problematic. The evaluation team's discussion of this subject can be found in Section III.B, Project Impact.

In addition to the environmental considerations above, and perhaps more important in some ways, are the significant contributions that ROLL has made to USAID/Russia's

² Sources: ROLL Statistics, Competitive Grants, Round 1: US\$ 397,245; Round 2: US\$ 606,528, Round 3: US\$ 997,252, Round 4: US\$ 1,207,117.

³ ISC staff.

strategic focus on democratic initiatives and market-style reforms. The program has made important contributions towards facilitating the exchange of ideas between public and private sector representatives on environmental issues, most notably on how resources for dealing with environmental issues should be spent. Suggestions on expanding this effort in the future are offered in Annex A., Future Program Considerations.

The current focus of the Mission's environmental cooperation program is twofold. The first is strengthening partnerships among institutions throughout Russia to promote the exchange of practical lessons gathered from ground-breaking work in pollution prevention, risk assessment, land-use planning, environmental education, and other successful activities. The second is reducing the negative impacts of global climate change through programs targeted at fire prevention, pest control, reforestation, forest policy, protected areas management, sustainable use of timber and non-timber products, and the phase-out of ozone depleting substances production.

The ROLL program directly responds to both of the above objectives. Its grant program is doing a very effective job at stimulating exchanges of information, ideas and good environmental practices among Russian public and NGO entities and private citizens. And its targeted grants have helped support Russian efforts to deal both directly and indirectly with global climate change and several other priority issues. Additionally, USAID environmental staff has done a fine job of keeping the program focused on its objectives and creating excellent working relationships with the principal program partners, the State Committee on Environmental Protection (SCEP) and ISC.

2. Clarity and Soundness of Project Objectives

The principal objective of the ROLL program is to support the replication of successful environmental lessons and practices. The initial pool of lessons learned included only technologies tested and proven to be effective in Russia under EPT. However, this limitation has been gradually eased to permit technologies proven under other programs. Beginning with the upcoming round of grants (R-5), ROLL will be fully open to replication of any successful project in each of its six priority technical areas.

A second objective of the program is to strengthen environmental networks and build coalitions of professionals and citizen groups interested and willing to address the country's environmental concerns. The team concluded that over the long term this objective is as or more important than the project's grant-funded environmental activities.

The evaluation team's extensive interviews showed that the project's emphases on disseminating and employing proven technologies through small scale replication efforts and on strengthening the network of Russian environmental organizations are well understood and accepted by project managers and participants. Further, these emphases seem entirely appropriate, given the high level of Russian human resources and the limited USAID financial resources available to invest directly in environmental protection or clean-up activities.

However, the team also believes that this focus on spreading technology to many organizations and on building networks necessitates an active project effort to foster the sustainability of the organizations participating in that network. Many of those organizations, particularly those in the private sector, are young and operate on very small budgets -- a situation only worsened by Russia's current financial crisis. If the project fails to address this sustainability issue, there is a considerable risk, perhaps a likelihood, that many of the "replicators" and much of the network that the project has fostered will not survive.

(A discussion of these questions and recommended actions are provided below. See particularly Section III. A., Financial Sustainability.)

A second albeit less critical sustainability issue centers on what becomes of the ROLL structure itself. Should it continue, and if so in what form? There would appear to be a number of options (e.g., continuation with financing from other donors, spinning off the Regional Centers, closing down) that USAID and its partners might consider. (These are discussed in Section III.A., Financial Sustainability.)

3. *ISC Adherence to ROLL Principles*

There are four principles or factors upon which the ROLL program has been built. These include:

- Active participation by Russian partners;
- Open and participatory processes;
- Common vision of "success;" and
- Concrete results.

The evaluation team saw considerable evidence of particularly strong performance in the first two areas, Russian participation and open processes. The program is essentially a 'Russian-to-Russian' program with USAID funding and oversight. The ISC/Moscow program is staffed entirely by Russians, with the exception of the largely full-time participation by the ISC/Russia expatriate country director. The priorities and areas of interest increasingly reflect Russian ideas, as articulated by the numerous participating grantees, Russian technical staff and the Coordinating Council. Also, the recent series of conferences around the country exemplify ROLL's efforts to tailor project activities to the environmental problems of each region.

As regards open and participatory processes, the team was very impressed with the transparency of the key programmatic activity -- selection of grant recipients. ROLL has moved adroitly to protect the program from unwanted political interference, no easy task. ISC/ROLL is also proceeding with its plan to devolve some heretofore-centralized activities to its Regional Centers.

With respect to a common vision of "success" regarding the project's strategic objectives, the key actors -- ISC/ROLL and USAID, the SCEP and the Coordinating Council, all

expressed similar views about the process of replication and network building that the project is intended to foster. We have seen no evidence that any of those groups is working at cross-purposes with the project. Although the project's efforts to measure success have been limited, the Coordinating Council's recent initiative to develop criteria of success is heartening. Finally, at the level of individual grantees, the vision of what constitutes "success" appears to be more narrowly defined, i.e., successful replication of a good environmental process or technique. Linkage to any higher goal seems to be a somewhat fuzzier concept.

The last principle, producing and measuring *concrete results*, is one that seems to have caused the project some difficulty. The results identified to date have been outputs (e.g., the number of seminars conducted, environmental analyses completed, plans developed). There appears to have been little effort to answer the "So what?" question that this list of outputs implies.

After visiting numerous grant sites, the evaluation team is convinced that this question could be answered more effectively. Without exception, the grant projects visited appeared to be well designed, responsive to local needs, well implemented by talented and committed individuals and groups, and "successful" in producing the outputs expected. However, the team was able at most to see only sporadic, anecdotal evidence that environmental analyses had led to corrective actions, that training had resulted in changed behavior, or that plans developed had been successfully implemented. Indeed, responses to the team's questions seemed to indicate that grantees had given little thought or attention to results beyond the implementation of their analyses, assessments, and training programs.

The evaluation team believes that with some additional effort, USAID and ISC could develop a system of assessment and reporting that does a better job of capturing the positive results of the program. Both ISC and USAID would seem to have strong interests for developing such a system. Additionally, the Russians involved with the project – on the Coordinating Council, on ROLL's staff and among ROLL grantees – will benefit greatly from a process that offers a better understanding of the distinction between outputs and results. (This subject is further discussed in Section III.B.)

Finding better measures of project success is neither simple nor without cost. A project that encompasses such a disparate set of activities as ROLL mitigates against a common definition of success. Some activities have narrow, measurable outcomes and objectives (publish a code, develop a land use plan, perform an environmental audit). Others aim for more abstract results (introduce concern for the environment among schoolchildren, support environment camps for students, broaden the role of an NGO). These cannot be measured with the same *concrete results* yardstick. Further, determining whether programs really had an impact often can only be assessed a year or two after the activity ends. For example, the project would need to wait a year or longer to determine whether people trained how to run environmental tourism programs actually were able to start and operate such enterprises and to attract and educate clientele.

Clearly, there are costs associated with such assessments. The team believes that USAID and ISC need to focus more attention and resources on success indicators that better demonstrate the project's impact and that reflect USAID's strategic objectives.

1. Grant Implementation and Monitoring

This section discusses ROLL's management structure, the grant application process, the grant monitoring process, the measurement of ISC management achievements, and the measurement of the impact of the grants.

1. *ROLL Management Structure in Russia*

ISC/ROLL. The ISC/ROLL management team is headquartered in Moscow. The Moscow staff is comprised of the ISC/Russia Country Director (approximately three-quarters time), the ROLL Project Manager, three other environmental project managers, a project assistant, a communications manager, a chief financial officer, a grants administrator and additional support staff. All ROLL staff except the ISC Country Director are Russian. ROLL's management structure centralizes program planning, proposal review and grant approval functions, liaison with and reporting to USAID and coordination with the ROLL Coordinating Council (CC) in Moscow.

The reliance on a largely Russian staff has several noteworthy advantages. First, there are major cost savings, since local experts typically receive lower salaries and fewer benefits than expatriates. Russian experts also have excellent professional contacts, inherent cultural and political sensitivity, and an understanding of the issues and conditions with which their partner organizations must work. These factors are important contributions to the cost effectiveness of this program.

Regional Centers. In addition to the Moscow office, ROLL has established six Regional Centers. The RCs are staffed by NGOs that were competitively selected from among those operating in the targeted regions. The six Regional Centers perform services spelled out in contracts with ISC/Moscow. Although there is some variation in staffing, most of the Regional Centers have a Director, an accountant (part-time), and one or two staff members. In the current year, the average cost of a Regional Center was approximately US\$ 30,000.⁴

The RCs provide the program with a regional presence and greatly enhance the program's capacity to provide selected services at the local level around this vast country. RC services include managing the local dissemination of information about the ROLL program, handling the basic processing of grant applications, conducting both pre-grant and post-grant training seminars, organizing regional conferences and workshops, and providing day-to-day follow-up with grantees. In accordance with ROLL work plans, several other services are being or will soon be delegated to the RCs on a selective basis. These include preliminary screening of grant applications and some grant monitoring. A

⁴ Quarterly Report for Russia, Third Quarter, FY99, page 10. The Moscow RC is not included in this estimate.

conference involving all RCs will be held shortly to determine whether there are ways of sharing more of the workload expected for Round 5 without altering the integrity of the processes that have been so successfully implemented to date.

2. *Grant Approval Process*

The grant approval process starts with dissemination of information about the program, principally through newspapers, radio and email. In the early rounds, the Moscow office carried out this information function. However, once RCs were established, they took it over. The communication network that ROLL has fostered is itself becoming an important channel for disseminating program information. The dissemination activities direct interested organizations to seek additional information about the application process from the RCs.

In addition to providing applications and other print materials, RCs organize monthly pre-grant seminars in various cities within each region. Grantee interviews survey responses indicate that the pre-grant seminars played an important role in explaining ROLL's objectives and policies as well as walking prospective grantees through the rather complex application process. Sixty-one of 68 survey respondents had attended one or more pre-grant seminars. Respondents rated the quality of ISC pre-grant information services as 8.2 on a ten point scale.

Despite this help, many grantees indicated that they found completing the application, particularly the financial part, difficult and time consuming. Respondents ranked the degree of difficulty of the application as 7.7 on a 10 point scale; the average length of time to fill out the questionnaire and provide all supporting data was 6.5 weeks. (See discussion below and in Appendix C.)

Applications for grants are generally submitted to the Regional Centers. The RCs check each application for completeness and for eligibility under ROLL policies. The RCs forward acceptable applications to ROLL's Moscow office for technical and financial review.

ROLL's Moscow headquarters utilizes four technical experts (two external and two internal) to review applications. The two external experts conduct a technical, financial and organizational review of each application. The experts are selected from a revolving ROLL roster of 55 independent environmental specialists with expertise in a wide range of skills. Applicants' names are deleted from the application so reviewers are not tempted to give high scores to favored organizations or individuals. Similarly, the identity of the reviewers is a closely guarded secret, shared neither with the applicants nor with the Coordinating Council, to ensure that neither the applicants nor their supporters can exert influence and that there are no recriminations against reviewers. The independent experts review and grade each application. Two ROLL project managers conduct a similar review. Grades are averaged and a final score is calculated. The Chief Financial Officer then reviews the application for financial soundness.

Once all applications are reviewed and ranked, ISC/Moscow determines how many grants can be awarded given the financial resources available for that Round. The list of recommended applicants plus several of the next ranked alternatives is sent to ISC/Vermont and USAID/Russia for approval. Once approval is received, ISC/Moscow sends the list to each Coordinating Council member along with relevant background information. This typically occurs about one month before the Council meets to discuss and approve grants for the next round.

During the last two rounds of competition, the Council approved the prioritized lists with only one change each time. This is in stark contrast to the lengthy discussions that characterized the first two rounds. This change reflects a shift in the CC away from micro-managing the grant selection process and reduces the risk that the grant selection process will be politicized. It also gives ISC staff more responsibility for managing the process.

Following CC approval, ISC prepares contractual agreements setting out the responsibilities of the grantees and ROLL. Once agreements are signed, grantees are required to participate in a post-grant seminar to learn about the program's administrative procedures and reporting requirements (each grantee is required to send quarterly technical and financial reports to ISC/Moscow). Each RC holds one or more of these post-grant training seminars.

The evaluation team found that the process leading to grant awards is transparent, technically sound and fair. The fact that in successive rounds the program has been able to attract a growing number of applicants (from 73 in Round 1 to 261 in Round 4) is indicative of success in publicizing the program and in maintaining public confidence in the integrity of the review process. The various steps that ISC takes to protect the review and decision-making process from favoritism are laudable.

Application Form

The evaluation team found that many grantees had encountered difficulty in completing the application form. However, most grantees interviewed acknowledged that the arduous process also had helped them to understand their projects better. The financial part, so difficult for most of the grantees,⁵ forced them to think hard about costs and scheduling. In the end, it seems that the application form, so decried by some, is well formulated and helps weed out weaker potential grantees. Nonetheless, the evaluation team suggests that ISC staff review the application form, especially the financial part, to see whether it can be simplified without losing its positive aspects.

The Grantee Manual

ROLL's Grantee Manual, still in draft at this writing, spells out the administrative requirements to be followed by grantees. The evaluation team found the 50-page document daunting, although the team understands that much of the content of this manual stems from the numerous USAID rules governing grants and sub-grants. If it has

⁵ Over one-half of survey respondents found the information required for the financial section to be difficult or excessive.

not already done so, the team suggests that ISC consult with other USAID grantees and contractors that have established small grants programs to see if simplified rules are possible.

Recommendation: That ISC speed-up the completion and dissemination of the Grantee Manual.

Reports from the Expert Reviewers

The experts reviewing grant proposals provide their comments on a four-page worksheet and a one-page summary sheet. A number of CC members and grantees criticized the experts' review reports, both suggesting that reviewers' comments that they receive need to be more detailed.

For applications forwarded for approval to the CC, the one-page summary sheets from all four experts are once again summarized into a single, one-paragraph statement.

Interviews and survey results suggest that CC members would like to have more information than is currently provided so as to be able to make more informed decisions about applications. CC members did acknowledge that additional information can now be obtained from ISC staff who are available for oral briefings. CC members may also visit the ISC office to review all supporting material. That few members do so is not surprising, given the effort required and the limited time most CC members have to devote to CC activities. (See Appendix D, CC Member Questionnaire).

The second criticism about the reports from expert reviewers concerns the technical feedback that ROLL provides to organizations whose grant applications are rejected. Several grant applicants indicated that more detailed comments would have helped them to strengthen their proposals to gain approval. The evaluation team believes that the provision of a detailed critique would also help to preserve the project's reputation for transparency and objectivity.

The evaluation team is uncertain whether the problem here is caused by reviewers writing too little or by someone summarizing their comments in a too abbreviated form. In either case, it should not be too difficult or expensive for ISC to provide fuller technical analyses to these two interested groups.

Recommendation: That ISC require detailed analyses from its experts and that it make much of that information available both to CC members and to unsuccessful applicants.

3. Grant Monitoring Process

Grantees send quarterly technical and financial reports to ISC/Moscow. ISC staff, particularly the project managers, financial staff, and grants administrator, are expected to carefully review these reports since disbursement of funds is conditioned on information they contain. Grantees can address questions at any time to their backstops and/or to the Grants Administrator. Such communications occur frequently by fax, phone, or email.

ISC/Moscow coordinators and regional center staff also make periodic site visits to carry out financial and/or technical reviews. On occasion, a CC member accompanies staff on these visits. Site visits, financial and program reviews are also performed at each Regional Center.⁶

When work under a grant is completed, the grantee is required to prepare a final report. Later, the grantee is encouraged to participate in ISC-organized workshops (held approximately every six months) so that those who worked on completed grants can meet and exchange information and experiences. Participation in these workshops contributes to the dissemination of information about successful environmental technologies and practices and to the establishment of an expanded Russian environmental network.

To keep USAID informed about its program, ISC/Moscow prepares an annual work plan and Quarterly Reports. Quarterly Reports cover completed programs and planned activities for the following quarter. These are prepared and transmitted to USAID in a timely manner. ISC also prepares a brief, annual report to the Coordinating Council on fulfillment of annual work plans.

Although the evaluation team did note several small problems or irritants (discussed in the following paragraphs), the grant monitoring process seems to be well thought out and working effectively. The evaluation team judged ROLL's system for monitoring the project's extensive field activities to be very good. The considerable familiarity that project staff exhibited with the on-going field activities suggests that monitoring responsibilities are carried out in a conscientious and effective manner. The director of one of the Regional Centers stated that ROLL's intensive monitoring sets it apart from other grant programs and is a major factor in the success of the program.

Funds Transfer

Evaluation team interviews revealed that a number of grantees have experienced difficulties in obtaining timely funds transfers, particularly for their first tranche of funds. (See Appendix C, questions # 11 and #12.) These delays were apparently the result at least in part of the Russian financial crisis in August 1998, which interfered with transfers to R2 and R3 grantees. Although the team lacked sufficient time to investigate this matter adequately, interviews suggest that difficulties within ISC may also have contributed to the delays.

Recommendation: That ISC take steps to speed up the transfer of the first tranche of funds so as to make their release correspond to the project starting date.

Management of Site Visits and Monitoring

The team noted that ISC plans to transfer increasing responsibility for conducting site visit and monitoring of grantees from Moscow to the Regional Centers. ISC will proceed with this delegation of responsibility on a case by case basis, depending on the technical and managerial capacity of each Regional Center to take on added responsibilities. ISC/Moscow staff would then concentrate more on Regional Center site visits, checking

⁶ See the ISC Quarterly reports to USAID for a list of all the site visits per quarter.

the monitoring effectiveness of those Centers rather than focusing on individual grantees. The evaluation team agrees that this management change will help strengthen the Regional Centers while at the same time reduce the travel time and expenses of the ISC project managers.

4. Measurement of Project Impact

The evaluation team found that there is a lack of clear environmental achievement indicators such as appears to have been anticipated in the initial Request for Applications. Although the team believes that progress can be made in this area (and recommends more effort to do so), one should not underestimate the inherent difficulties of demonstrating environmental impact (e.g., reduced water or air pollution, increased reforestation) in a project of this nature. It is unrealistic, we believe, to expect to see measurable environmental impacts from most projects that are completed in less than a year and have an average cost under \$30,000. And, to the extent that measurable environmental impacts do result and can be measured, they are very likely to be discernable only a year or two after the completion of these small grant activities. Environmental indicators, to make sense at all, would need to be tailored to individual grants and pertain to very localized environmental conditions; expectations of measures of environmental impact across the broad spectrum of ROLL activities is an admirable but unrealistic goal.

Perhaps the most significant impact of many ROLL activities is their contribution to building a stronger environmental movement in Russia. The evaluation team believes that this is an important result worthy of measurement. Environmental groups in other countries have certainly experimented (we believe successfully) with indicators of the growth and strength of environmental networks; similar efforts should be possible in Russia. (A further discussion is offered in Annex A, Future Program Considerations.)

Although expectations about demonstrating results must be limited, the evaluation team believes that the focus on outputs that has typified project reporting to date and that is exemplified in the 'posters' circulated to the Coordinating Council and others is inadequate. A better job can be done to demonstrate that important results *are* being achieved. Doing so would allow USAID and ISC to more effectively demonstrate the value of their efforts and would help to reorient the focus of participating Russian institutions away from planned outputs (the traditional measure of success in Soviet days) to desired impact.

Recommendation: That ISC and USAID/Russia collaborate in the development of indicators that will allow some assessment of impact on the environment and on the strength of the environmental movement, even if this is limited to measures of the localized impact of individual sub-grants.

C. Building Institutional Capacity

ROLL has contributed to building institutional capacity at several levels, including in ISC/Moscow, in Regional Centers, and in grantees.

1. ISC/ROLL

As indicated in section II.A.3. above, the ROLL program is managed primarily by Russians for Russians, with only a minimal in-country American presence. ISC deserves credit for recruiting and/or training a competent and effective Russian staff and for building them into an effective team to implement this project.

Tools that the project has developed for capacity-building include the recently completed database of EPT technologies and institutions, a partner matching service, an information dissemination program that publicizes best practices, and the development of the ISC/Moscow Web site.

2. Regional Centers

ISC has carried out a variety of activities to strengthen the capacity of its Regional Centers. Initially, ISC provided training to RC staff on program operations (procedural matters, program operations, etc.). ISC augmented that basic training through frequent workshops, regular meetings and visits from ISC/Moscow staff. Workshops brought together the staff of the various RCs so that they could learn from one another by sharing their experiences and problems. More recently, ISC/Moscow has provided additional training in monitoring techniques. The capacity of the NGO staff that carry out Regional Center functions is also enhanced by participation in non-ROLL programs, e.g. a fund-raising seminar organized by the World Learning Center.

The RCs recently organized regional workshops to define regional environmental priorities. Some RCs have also developed a database of environmental NGOs active in their region. These activities will contribute to the strength of the growing environmental network and to “partner matching” in the future ROLL activities. Survey respondents indicated that partner matching is an increasingly important ROLL activity. (See Appendix C, Quantifiable Results.)

Regional Centers have begun the difficult process of defining regional environmental priorities. The task is complex and involves numerous, often painful decisions on how best to respond to competing political, economic and social demands. It also involves many trade-offs between the public and private good. The environmental priorities list that the evaluation team examined appeared to be more a listing of environmental problems than an actionable, priority setting document. Not surprisingly, this priority setting exercise will require much more than a single workshop per region to produce useful results. But this important process has begun, and the RCs can continue to play a valuable role by hosting follow-on workshops, by continuing to promote and publicize efforts to move to the next stage in this process, and by encouraging the exchange of ideas between the private and public sectors.

Recommendation: That the Regional Centers continue and strengthen their efforts to promote a dialogue between the private and public sectors on the issue of setting environmental priorities within regions.

3. *Implementing Partners (Grantees)*

ROLL grants help recipient organizations not only by providing financial resources, but also by strengthening their technical knowledge, and administrative and financial capacity. Assistance with and practice in preparing proposals, work plans and budgets, monitoring and progress reporting are skills that will enable them to deal more effectively with other funding agencies. ROLL also helps them to develop ties with a large number of similar-minded organizations throughout the country.

Despite these advances, many of the implementing partners remain weak. Their ability to survive over the longer term without an improved capacity for resource generation is uncertain. (See Section III.A. below.)

D. Cooperation/Coordination and Outreach

1. *Coordination Within the project*

ISC – USAID

Relations between ISC and USAID are positive and supportive. USAID/Russia actively monitors the progress of the project not only through reviews of quarterly progress reports and annual work plans but also by participating in ISC site visits to monitor the implementation phase of ROLL projects. All proposals selected by ISC for funding require USAID approval before ISC brings them before a Coordinating Council meeting. Further, three representatives from USAID are permanent, voting members of the ROLL Coordinating Council.

Although USAID monitors closely, it rarely intervenes. Rather, it treats ISC, the CC, RCs and grantees as mature partners. The evaluation team believes that USAID's management of this project reflects current Agency management policies and is appropriate to the institutional, political and cultural context.

ISC – CC

CC meetings are held regularly, twice a year. Materials related to CC meetings are sent to CC members well ahead of time (interviewed CC members gave estimates ranging from two to six weeks). A day before the CC meeting many participants (except ones from Moscow) gather together and with ISC staff to examine applications and supporting material of the projects to be considered for approval. A very small number of CC members visit the ISC office before the meeting to learn more about specific applications.

The majority of CC members are not generally involved in ISC activities between meetings. However, several regional members are regularly in touch with the staff at the RCs, and one CC member holds weekly meetings with the RC Director. As noted elsewhere in this report, several CC members have participated in ISC staff site visits to evaluate grantee activities. Lastly, some CC members actively participated in the RC-organized conferences to establish environmental priorities for each region.

Results of the evaluation team's survey of CC members indicate that most members are pleased with the effectiveness of the ISC, both as the ROLL program manager and as the secretariat for CC meetings. All respondents rated the quality of ISC staff between "good" and "outstanding" (Appendix D). The only criticism expressed related to the limited information provided to members as part of the application review and approval process, as noted above.

ISC - RCs

Communication between ISC/Moscow and the Regional Centers is well established and efficient. In addition to regular telephone, fax and e-mail communication, RCs provide monthly program reports and quarterly financial reports to ISC/Moscow. Program reports include detailed descriptions of activities undertaken -- pre-grant and post-grant training seminars, business trips, and information assistance provided to potential applicants (number of visitors, phone, mail and e-mail inquiries, etc.). The team is satisfied that the relationships are useful and effective.

ISC - Grantees

After applications are approved at a CC meeting, grantees are invited to "post-grant seminars." In these seminars grantees are instructed in program and finance administration and in the preparation of quarterly reports. Participation in this seminar is required and funding for attendance is included in the grant budget. After the seminar RC responsibilities for monitoring project implementation are minimal. ISC/Moscow largely carries these out, although some responsibilities may be transferred to the RCs in the near future, on a selective basis. All quarterly reports, including program and financial statements, are sent to ISC/Moscow and are reviewed by the project managers. RCs are not involved in grant monitoring on this regular basis, but are invited to participate with ISC/Moscow in site visits.

2. ISC Linkage to other Russian Organizations/External Donors

Coordination of ROLL activities between ISC and the State Committee for Environment Protection (SCEP) and other key state organizations (Forestry Service, Ministry of Natural Resources, Ministry of Education, Environmental protection Committee of State Duma) occurs within the framework of the CC. ISC coordination with the CC improved markedly during the past year.

Project linkages to other donor organizations are limited. Preliminary contacts were established between ISC and other international donor organizations such as the US-based Humane Society, Global Parks Program, World Bank, etc. However, it appears that contacts are infrequent and little real collaboration appears to have been achieved. Closer coordination with other external donors could contribute to the development of relationships that would enhance the prospects for the sustainability of ROLL grantees.

3. Promotion of ROLL Successes (in Russia and in the US)

Internet

ISC/Moscow established a WEB-site at URL www.iscmoscow.ru between February and May, 1999. Information about the ROLL program, contact information on regional centers, pre-grant statistics on R1-R3, a list of CC members (somewhat outdated) as well as application forms became widely accessible via Internet. The Partners Database on the EPT projects can also be downloaded from this site. All documents are in Russian, but English versions of some pages are available as well.

The WEB-site of the ISC Main Office (www.iscvt.org) also contains information on the ROLL project as well as other ISC activities throughout the world.

The evaluation team found that the Internet is not yet used efficiently. The WEB site was not established until more than two years into the project, and dissemination of information about the WEB site has been limited. Not all RCs and only some of the grantees have information about this site and its URL address. Despite limited use of Internet, electronic mail communication (mostly MS-DOS based) is well developed and actively used.

Publications and Video

A quarterly bulletin, "ROLL NEWS," has been printed since the end of 1997. ROLL NEWS contains information on the most important events of the program and is distributed as a paper copy or electronically in Russia and the US. Six issues have been published in Russian and English. Five previous issues can also be accessed through the WEB-site. ISC publishes an annual report (in English) that covers significant ISC activities in Russia, including the ROLL project. A videotape "ROLL – Ecological Partnership" was recently produced in two languages and distributed in Russia (via the RCs) and in the US. This 25-minute film provides information about ROLL's design, implementation, priorities, and major achievements. Several "success stories" illustrate the effectiveness of the ROLL project in Russia.

Mass-media coverage of ROLL

The evaluation team was pleased to see that information about the ROLL grant competitions is widely disseminated. Although there were no announcements of the ROLL grant rounds in central newspapers such as "Izvestia" and "Poisk," announcements are published in many local newspapers by the RCs. Significant ROLL events such as conferences have been extensively covered by local newspapers and local TV-stations. These local dissemination efforts have helped to insure that broad ranges of Russian environmental groups are knowledgeable about and can participate in the program.

4. ISC Responsiveness to Changing Circumstances.

Involvement of RCs in reviewing applications

The growth of the ROLL portfolio has placed considerable stress on ISC staff. To address this problem, ISC/Moscow recently experimented with delegating limited responsibility

for the evaluation of grant proposals to the RCs. In this experiment, RCs were asked to evaluate and rank a small number of proposals. Although the rankings did not count toward the formal point total, the evaluation results were reportedly very similar to those that were produced by ISC/Moscow's rigorous evaluation system, suggesting that at least some of the RCs could take on responsibility for evaluating proposals.

No final decision has yet been made on whether formally to change the existing application review process. A meeting to discuss this with all RCs will be held shortly. The evaluation team does believe that this devolution of authority may pose certain risks regarding technical capacity, credibility and regional bias. The team believes that responsibility for proposal evaluation should be retained at ISC/Moscow *until* equally rigorous safeguards to ensure objectivity and transparency can be established at the regional level.

Participation in regional priority-setting workshops

Different regions of Russia have to deal with different environmental problems, and CC requested that ISC organize a process to determine environmental priorities for each region. Lists were developed during RC-organized regional priority-setting workshops. These workshops benefitted from the active participation of CC members and key Russian experts from different fields of industry and natural sciences. In the fifth grant round ROLL will give priority to applications dealing with the highest environmental priorities in each region.

III. ADDITIONAL OBSERVATIONS

A. Financial Sustainability

Two aspects of financial sustainability are of particular importance to this program. The first involves the many grantee organizations that will hopefully continue to replicate successful lessons learned after the ROLL program is over. The second involves the ROLL structure that administers the grant-making program. Both are discussed below.

1. *'Replicator' Sustainability*

Improving Russia's environment requires not only good, practical technologies but financially secure organizations to implement them. The ability of ROLL grantees to continue to play a role in replicating environmental successes and in contributing more generally to a national environmental movement after the ROLL program is over is heavily contingent upon having adequate financial resources to do so. It would be regrettable for USAID to have made a large investment in facilitating the replication of good ideas and practices and then have the process stop or dramatically slow because the 'replicators' had not been assisted with techniques and skills to achieve financial viability. The evaluation team recognizes that this financial goal may be difficult to achieve given Russia's current economic situation. However, **the long-term benefits of**

this replication program are largely contingent upon having a reasonable number of grantees achieve the objective of financial sustainability.

ISC has recognized the need to address the question of financial sustainability, beginning with the submission of its first four-year action plan (4-Year Work Plan and Summary Budget, March 1997). That document stated,

“In conjunction with the work plan [for 1999], a project phase-out strategy will be developed which includes greater emphasis on receiving matching contributions from both local, regional, national or international funding to continue successful ROLL initiatives, with an emphasis on Russian sources to promote greater long-term impact.”

As promised, ISC turned to this issue in 1999. The “Year Three Implementation Plan, 1998-99” (March 1999) states (p.2), “Finally, ROLL will begin to explore new ways for sustaining environmental initiatives introduced by EPTs and replicated by the project. *ROLL intends to help its partners develop capabilities for tapping into new sources of funding at both the national and international level* (emphasis added).” In the same report (p.25), ISC indicated it would be working with its partners to develop a strategy for helping them to do their own fund-raising.

The evaluation team applauds that statement. However, the team saw no evidence of a set of planned activities and encountered a lack of awareness about such plans among RCs and grantees. Therefore, we urge that attention be placed on publicizing the issue and the proposed ISC response. More importantly, we encourage early completion of a strategy as well as initiation of an action plan (including specific training options). Until that is accomplished the team believes USAID/Russia should remain concerned about the financial sustainability of the “replicators.”

Achieving financial sustainability implies that resources would come from sources other than ROLL or other USAID projects. ISC acknowledges that grantees thus must become familiar with the myriad ways of raising financial resources, be they from marketing the organization’s services or information, local fund raising efforts, other international donors, private foundations, government budgetary resources, or local ECO funds. In assisting grantee organizations to learn fund raising techniques, ISC may wish to avail itself of the expertise and services of other organizations with special skills in this area. The team noted, for example, World Learning Center plans to run fund raising workshops in Moscow in the near future.

The target audience for this training would almost certainly include all NGOs. But educational groups, quasi state/private research institutions and even government agencies might also be encouraged to participate, absent legal restrictions. Funding is an issue across the board, and any advantage an organization can gain from such training should be encouraged. For many grantees, their participation in ISC’s rigorous grant application and expert review process and their participation in both pre- and post-grant seminars was an important first step; it should not be the last step in this learning process.

Innovative fund-raising techniques have been developed in many countries with financial conditions similar to that of Russia. With the emphasis that USAID has placed for many years on replicability of its NGO projects, the U.S. probably has a comparative advantage in this area of expertise. That expertise should be brought to bear on this program.

Recommendation: That ISC speed up the timetable of its efforts to develop both a strategy and an action plan for providing grant recipients with the tools to improve their access to non-ROLL resources.

2. Sustainability of the ROLL Grant Making Structure

USAID (with the technical assistance of ISC) has already expended substantial resources to create an essentially Russian structure for administering a competitive grants program. USAID is reportedly considering funding a second phase of the ROLL program. In that context, a question that USAID may already be considering is what will happen to that structure after all USAID funds are disbursed? A number of options appear to be open – disband the structure, look for other external sources of funding, look for internal sources of funding, change the nature and scale of the program and wait for the unexpected. Some options may be dismissed out of hand, while others deserve further consideration. Whatever option(s) are selected will represent USAID’s preference.

It is reasonable to expect that the SCEP and the ROLL Coordinating Council will also want to have inputs into that decision. The team suggests that these inputs be sought at an early stage. This will ensure that the outcome of any collaborative discussions among USAID, SCEP and the Coordinating Council could be incorporated into the RFA for a follow-on program. If, for example, the SCEP concluded that the program was politically attractive and that central or regional budgetary funds might become available to support maintenance of the ROLL structure after USAID funds were fully disbursed, such information could be usefully included in the RFA. Even if no early decision were reached, however, the joint discussions could examine the future program and explore possible options for sustaining it.

Recommendation: That a joint USAID-SCEP-Coordinating Council working group be established within the next three months to examine possible options for sustaining the ROLL grant making structure in the future, and to provide the principals with recommendations for dealing with this issue.

B. The ROLL Coordinating Council

The project established a voluntary Coordination Council (CC) to coordinate the ROLL project and to provide basic policy direction. The CC is headed by the Chairperson of the Russian Federation State Committee on Environmental Protection (SCEP), Mr. Danilov-Danilyan. Until recently, the CC was composed largely of government representatives with little representation from Russia’s non-governmental community (only three NGO representatives out of 27 members). In March 1999, eight new members were introduced

(all from NGOs) to replace those members who were not actively participating in CC meetings. Currently, the CC consists of nearly equal numbers of Russian government and Russian NGO representatives, 12 and 11 respectively. Four CC members with voting rights represent USG organizations (three from USAID and one from the Forestry Service). Several from ISC (the ISC/Russia Country Director, ROLL Program Manager and ROLL environmental managers) participate without voting rights. Six meetings have been conducted since the beginning of the ROLL program.

The evaluation team was impressed with the functioning of the Council. There has been an evolution in the Council's role that is particularly evident in the following areas:

1. *CC Participation in ROLL Project Policy Development and Grant Monitoring*

The Coordinating Council has recently become more involved in formulating ROLL policies and procedures. This is in marked contrast to the earlier role it played, which focused largely upon selection of grantees. Recently, for example, the CC decided to open up grant competition to the replication of non-EPT technologies. In R3, non-EPT technologies were permitted in two of ROLL's six technical areas; in R5, proposals will be able to focus on replicating non-EPT technologies in any of the six technical areas.

ISC has encouraged CC interest in project monitoring, inviting CC members to participate in field visits to review progress. The CC is also playing a constructive role in focusing attention on indicators of project achievement. This initiative led to the development of a paper entitled "Criteria of Success." Although that document needs to be further developed, it is a positive first step towards improving the monitoring of grants and assessing the best projects for future replication.

2. *Fairness and Transparency in Awarding of Grant Funds*

The participation on the CC of a wide range of representatives from federal, regional and local government organizations and from NGOs ensures that diverse environmental interests are represented and that the grant awarding process is fair. At the same time, the leadership of the distinguished SCEP Chairman and the participation of other agency representatives convey status to the project that helps to ensure cooperation between grantees and local authorities.

To reinforce the fairness of the grant awarding mechanism, special procedures were developed to insure that no conflicts of interest exist during CC voting on projects. Under no circumstances are CC members allowed to receive compensation from ROLL grants or other ROLL activities. CC members may not be board members, employees, or clients of the applying organizations.

Several CC members interviewed for this study spoke about the positive changes in the role of the Council and in the comportment of its members. The CC has evolved significantly and matured from the early days, when members attempted to support personally favored organizations or projects, to today's CC in which members generally evaluate projects by criteria in compliance with overall ROLL policy and priorities.

3. *Terms of reference*

To increase the effectiveness of ROLL meetings and to clarify its procedures and methods for setting the agenda of CC meetings, "Terms of Reference for the Coordinating Council" were developed, approved during the CC meeting in March 1999, and signed by the CC Chairman. This document defines:

- Rights and responsibilities
- Composition of the CC
- Meeting procedures
- Decision making
- The financial provision of council activities
- Conflict of interests
- Procedure for resignation

CC members have found that the introduction of the "Terms of Reference" increased the efficiency of meetings and diminished the time required for discussions on procedural matters.

4. *Rotation and Increased NGOs Representation*

The introduction of the Terms of Reference also led to changes in the membership of the CC. Several non-participating government members stepped down in May 1999 and new NGO representatives were named in their place. This rotation resulted in a better balance of government and NGO representatives. The first CC meeting after rotation took place in July, and all CC members interviewed gave a very positive appraisal of the Council's new composition.

5. *Involvement in Monitoring*

CC members have become more interested in participating in the grant monitoring process. At the beginning of the project, communication between ISC and council members was rather limited; now ISC/Moscow routinely informs the Deputy Chairman about ISC conferences and site visits. Participation of CC members (especially from regions) in site visits and ISC workshops and conferences has become more common.

6. *Building NGO-Government Networking*

An important role of CC meetings is to encourage direct communication among governmental bodies and between NGOs and federal officials. During Council meetings, representatives of NGOs and governmental entities have an opportunity to share concerns, approaches, and ideas. CC meetings also provide an opportunity for NGOs to communicate with other NGOs, especially those from different regions of the country.

C. Impact of the Internet

More than one-half the grantee survey respondents indicated they had Internet access (Appendix B), although the geographic distribution of Internet users is probably heavily skewed to groups located in larger cities because of comparative ease of access. For this segment of grantees Internet use is high. However, more widespread use of the Internet is unlikely for ROLL's daily technical, administrative and financial information gathering for several years. Many grantees have email addresses but do not yet regularly access the Web because costs are high. Many grantees reported that, if given the choice, they would utilize electronic mail to apply for grants, to conduct much of their business communications and to stay in touch with their ISC technical backstops. Email would also reduce the cost of applying for a grant (reduced reproduction and mailing costs).

In the next five years, Internet usage in Russia is likely to become as common as it is now in the EU countries. Web access, though still unreliable, will become better and cheaper, since access costs should fall. As Web traffic and home pages increase, networking between different organizations inside and outside Russia will increase as well, facilitating the spread of new ideas.

Recommendation: That consideration be given to including a small Internet budget in each approved grant to insure that all grantees, wherever appropriate, have access to the Internet at least during the grant period. This will permit better and faster communication, direct dissemination of information to all grantees, improved monitoring, and reduced ROLL communications costs.

IV. PRINCIPAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are the most significant recommendations for the current ROLL program. They are repeated here, but have been discussed in the body of the text:

Recommendation: That ISC speed up the timetable of its efforts to develop both a strategy and an action plan for providing grant recipients with the tools to improve their access to non-ROLL operating funds. Fund raising is critical to their survival and having appropriate information and skills is a necessary precondition.

Recommendation: That a joint USAID-SCEP-Coordinating Council working group be established within the next three months to examine possible options for sustaining the ROLL grant making structure in the future, and to provide the principals with recommendations for dealing with the issue.

Recommendation: That ISC/Moscow and USAID/Russia collaborate in the development of appropriate impact indicators so that the effectiveness of the program can be more readily assessed, even if this is limited to measures on individual sub-grants. Doing a better job on assessing impact will allow USAID and ISC to more effectively

demonstrate the value of their efforts and will help to reorient the focus of participating Russian institutions away from planned outputs (the traditional measure of success in Soviet days) to desired impact.

In addition, the evaluation team would like to offer several recommendations to USAID/Russia for consideration when developing a possible second phase of the ROLL program. At USAID/Russia's request, these recommendations have been included in a separate annex (Annex A).

APPENDICES

- A. Evaluation Scope of Work**
- B. Survey Questionnaire for ROLL Grant Recipients**
- C. Quantifiable Results (Questionnaire for Grantees)**
- D. Survey Questionnaire for ROLL Coordinating Council Members**
- E. Quantifiable Results (Questionnaire for CC Members)**
- F. Key Persons Contacted**
- G. Bibliography**

ANNEX

- A. Future Program Considerations**

Appendix A

SCOPE OF WORK MID TERM EVALUATION REPLICATION OF LESSONS LEARNED (ROLL) ISC-USAID COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT

A. ACTIVITY TO BE EVALUATED

The Replication of Lessons Learned (ROLL) Project is designed to provide a mechanism to replicate and disseminate the positive effects that have resulted from the Russian/American environmental cooperation program initiated in 1992 by USAID under the Environmental Policy and Technology (EPT) initiative. It is implemented by the Institute for Sustainable Communities (ISC) under USAID cooperative agreement 118-A-00-96-90177-00.

B. BACKGROUND

ROLL supports USAID/Russia's strategic objective 1.6, *Increased Environmental Management Capacity to Support Sustainable Economic Growth*. EPT projects reduced pollution as a means to improve public health, and supported more effective policies to manage natural resources. ROLL's goal is to broaden the impact of EPT experiences throughout the Russian Federation by providing a mechanism to share proven technologies, approaches and policies. To do so, ROLL provides grants to a wide range of governmental organizations, NGOs, and businesses to replicate activities aimed at improving environmental management.

Through a series of competitive solicitations for grants administered by the ISC office in Russia, ROLL finances replication projects undertaken by Russian partners to broaden impacts from existing project sites throughout the Russian Federation. Replication activities occur in the following topic areas:

- legal and legislative issues in the sphere of environmental protection;
- ecological aspects of natural resources planning and management;
- pollution prevention and reduction techniques;
- environmental education and public awareness;
- policy and environmental risk assessment; and
- broadening the role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in environmental and health decision-making.

Three competitive grant rounds have been completed. Grant rounds one and two resulted in awards to 38 organizations for a total of US\$1,052,943, which includes grants to government agencies, NGOs, businesses, and academic institutions throughout the Russian Federation. Thirty-seven grant awards were approved in October 1998 for grant round three for a total of US \$997,252.

In exceptional circumstances and with the agreement of USAID and the Russian Federation State Committee on Environmental Protection, ROLL grants are also provided on a directed basis. For example, to meet USAID's commitment for global climate change activities in Russia, resources have been provided to ISC for replication activities that support protection and expansion of Russia's carbon sink. Activities will build upon existing programs in forest fire prevention, forest policy, and reforestation. Three directed grants amounting to a total of US\$170,891 were awarded in fiscal year 1998. An additional 13 grants with a combined value of US\$614,698 were approved in October 1998.

Another vital element of the ROLL project is to disseminate the positive results of the EPT project and strengthen communications among environmental professionals. ROLL utilizes various media and techniques to establish networks and build coalitions. The project brings together institutions, groups, and professionals throughout the country who work on environmental improvements to provide a medium for exchanging information. This process helps stakeholder in the environmental movement to form alliances and coordinate activities.

Russian counterpart organizations play a vital role in providing overall policy direction and coordination for the project. This is accomplished through a multi-sectoral, voluntary Coordinating Council headed by the chair of the Russian Federation State Committee on Environmental Protection. The Council membership is drawn from federal and regional authorities, NGOs, and EPT project representatives.

C. EVALUATION PURPOSE

The purpose of this mid-term evaluation is to assess the overall performance of the ROLL project in resolving environmental and natural resources management problems. The evaluation should examine the project's implementation mechanisms and document best practices and major constraints, recommending remedial action where appropriate.

The evaluation must articulate the project's ability to respond to current economic changes and indicate whether the project's impact is cost effective compared to alternative approaches.

The evaluation results will be used by USAID/Russia and ISC to understand the progress and impact of the project to date. They are concerned about the permanence of the project's impact once funding ends and will, if necessary, initiate changes to improve the project's performance for the remainder of its implementation cycle.

D. TASK

The evaluation will focus on the identified recipients of the grants. The evaluation will assess, to the greatest extent possible, the significance of project activities on pollution reduction and the promotion of sustainable natural resources planning and management, concentrating on: the project goals and objectives; the grant implementation mechanism, the project's capacity building structure; and the project's cooperation and coordination efforts.

1. Goals and Objectives

In examining the goals and objectives, the evaluation will review the project design to ensure that objectives, indicators and outputs are clearly defined and attainable. It will consider the extent to which project activities lead to the intermediate results (IR) which measure advancement towards the principal objective of *Increased Environmental Management Capacity to Support Sustainable Economic Growth*. The intermediate results are: 1) *increased capacity to deal with environmental pollution as a threat to public health; and 2) improved management of natural resources and biodiversity protection, and 3) improved economic mechanisms for natural resources management, environmental protection, and emissions trading.*

2. Grant Implementation

The evaluation will examine the grant application and monitoring processes to determine whether the overall structure of the grants program is the appropriate delivery mechanism for counteracting environmental pollution and enhancing sound natural resources management.

3. Capacity Building

The evaluation will also examine the program's networking and public outreach with environmental organizations, substantiating successful linkages. It will review and document coordination and information dissemination efforts by the Regional Center as well as clarify the role of the Coordinating Council.

4. Cooperation/Coordination

An essential part of this evaluation is to assess participatory processes. The evaluation will determine to what extent the project secures maximum participation by the Russian partners, utilizing an open and participatory process which supports a common vision of success by project partners.

E. INFORMATION SOURCES

USAID Project staff, ISC project participants and staff as well as participating organizations and beneficiaries will be available to the evaluator as sources of information. The following documents will also be available for review:

- Replication of Lessons Learned Four-year Workplan
- Year One, Two, and Three Implementation Plans
- December 1996 Workshop Proceedings
- Quarterly Reports
- Proceedings of Coordinating Council Meetings
- ROLL Project Monitor System results
- ROLL Request for Proposals
- Grantee Quarterly and Final Reports
- ROLL News
- Grants Procedures Manual

F. EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The evaluation report must address the questions below:

1. Has ISC met its deliverables and achieved project objectives?
2. How specifically has ISC contributed to the process of counteracting environmental pollution and enhancing sound natural resources management?
3. What is ISC's management structure? What are the perceived and/or real advantages and disadvantages to its current structure?
4. What monitoring and reporting systems are in place for all aspects of the project?
5. What linkages does the program have with other activities/organizations engaged in addressing environmental pollution?
6. What cost effective/cost recovery methods is ISC employing in the project?
7. What if any approach is being taken towards sustainability and what level of sustainability is expected by project end?

The additional questions below are designed to assist the evaluator in formulating an evaluation methodology and are arranged by topic outlined in section D above.

Goals and Objectives

Extent to which there are clear statements about goals and intended results, and clear understanding on how the project fits into USAID's assistance strategy.

- Are the objectives of the project clearly stated and understood by participating organizations and, to what extent are they striving towards achieving the goals?
- Is ISC adhering to the principles of the ROLL project which are: active participation by Russian partners, the use of open and participatory processes, common vision of success by the State Committee on Environmental Protection (SCEP) and the Coordinating Council?
- What concrete results have been achieved and are the results measurably improving natural resources and environmental management throughout Russia?

Grant Monitoring and Implementation

Effectiveness of grant monitoring to assess results and impact.

- What grant monitoring/tracking system is in place, and how effective is it?
- How are achievements of the grants measured?
- What is the geographic reach of ROLL for grants, networks and partners?
- What is ISC's approach to cost effectiveness; what seems to be working best/worst?
- Is the review process for the grant proposals adequate?
- Does ISC ensure that true replication takes place? If so, how?
- How well has the office infrastructure supported the ROLL project in terms of staffing, staff training and overall satisfaction with the work of the ISC Moscow office?

Capacity Building

Extent to which capacity of project participants is increased.

- How has ROLL ensured that the proposals recommended to the Coordinating Council, SCEP and USAID are of the highest quality?
- How have the Regional Centers been strengthened?
- In what ways have the implementing partners been programmatically and administratively strengthened?
- What evidence is there that data bases and partner matching services are contributing towards the development of networks and cooperation?

Cooperation/Coordination and Outreach

Extent to which project draws on and engages others (partners, other donors, etc.)

- What are the concrete results of effective cooperation between ISC, USAID, SCEP and the Coordinating Council?
- What linkages has ISC formed with other organizations and international donors engaged in addressing environmental pollution?

Extent to which project disseminates and communicates information to those who need it.

- How is ISC promoting the successes of the ROLL project in Russia and the US?
- How responsive (timely) is ISC to the changing/diverse information needs its partners: ISC partners include participants of training seminars for pre and post award periods, grant

applicants, grantees, members of the Coordinating Council, Chair and Vice Chair of SCEP, Regional Centers, USAID Moscow, as well as other national and international partners.

G. EVALUATION METHODS

In order to remain within budgetary and time constraints, the evaluation team will take advantage of existing information and data. The project covers most of the Russian Federation with grants extending across seven time zones. Therefore, the evaluation design strategy will be negotiated between USAID and the evaluator. As part of the evaluation, the evaluator will be expected to:

1. Review documents and hold discussions with project staff in Washington (2 days)
2. Review documents and hold discussions with project staff and project participants and organizations in Russia at USAID/Moscow, ISC project office, regional and federal level sites, as well as visiting a representative number of the ROLL project sites. The evaluators will meet with all relevant representatives from environmental organizations. (17 days)
3. Draft report and provide preliminary debriefing of USAID (4 days)
4. USAID/Russia review of draft (2 days)
5. Final report (2 days)

H. TEAM COMPOSITION AND PARTICIPATION

Because of the breadth of this work, the evaluation may be carried out by a team of evaluators with one evaluator acting as the team leader. For example, a three-person team may be composed of two evaluators and one local administrative person.

The team leader will be responsible for coordinating and directing the preparation and submission of the draft and final report. The incumbent should have extensive overseas program evaluation experience, including USAID experience, preferably in the NIS region. He/She must be thoroughly familiar with the techniques of program appraisal. As team leader, the incumbent should possess excellent organizational and team building skills. He/She will also be responsible for ensuring that the team follows up with the reporting requirements. (Section J)

The three-member team should have a combination of consulting experience that includes a proficiency in Russian language, technical expertise in environmental pollution control and sustainable natural resources planning and management as well as a competence in environmental policy, legislation, and governmental institutions. Technical expertise in forestry would be helpful. The team should have some institutional and administrative experience in grants programs and some experience in Russia with an understanding of the social, economic and political conditions of the country would be a bonus.

USAID and ISC personnel involved in the ROLL project will actively participate in the evaluation. The Coordinating Council, Regional Center and some Grantees will also participate.

I. SCHEDULE AND LOGISTICS

If hired outside of Russia the evaluation team should arrive in Moscow no later than May 17, 1999 and complete its visit by June 19, 1999. The schedule below will be finalized after the evaluation team is selected. Available project documentation will be forwarded to the evaluation team members before the start date of the evaluation.

It is expected that the administrative person of the evaluation team will serve as an evaluation facilitator. He/she will be hired locally to provide logistical arrangements and interpret at meetings. The team members should bear in mind the difficult conditions for traveling in Russia and should come prepared to resolve bureaucratic and climate problems.

If the evaluation team is hired locally the trip to Washington will not be necessary. The evaluators can interview the project staff in the U.S. and receive the necessary documents through post.

ACTIVITY	DATES	NUMBER OF WORKING DAYS	LOCATION
Review documents and hold discussions with project staff in U.S.	May 13 – 14	2 days	Washington, D.C.
Review documents and hold discussions with project staff and project participants at USAID/Russia and ISC project office.	May 17 – 21	5 days	Moscow
Visit a representative number of the ROLL project sites.	May 24 – June 8	12 days	Tentative regional sites: Moscow oblast, Yekaterinburg, Far East (Khabarovsk, Vladivostok) To be finalized when the evaluation team is selected.
Draft report and provide preliminary debriefing of USAID. (USAID/Russia will review the draft and provide comments by COB June 16)	May 9 – 14	4 days	Moscow
Incorporate USAID's comments and submit the final report.	June 17 – 18	2 days	Moscow
TOTAL working days	5.5 weeks	25 days	

J. REPORTING

The final report format will be agreed upon by the evaluation team in consultation with USAID before beginning the evaluation. USAID and ISC Moscow will expect a briefing on the findings, conclusions and recommendations before the team's departure from Russia.

The final evaluation report must be submitted to USAID in English within one week of the conclusion of the evaluation. It should be submitted on diskette, in WordPerfect 6.1 for Windows, USAID will also require 10 hard copies of the report.

APPENDIX B
SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ROLL GRANT RECIPIENTS

Introduction. We are members of an independent American/Russian team conducting an evaluation of the ROLL program. Our task is to examine the effectiveness of the ROLL program – its objectives, processes, implementation and impact. In addition, we shall be making recommendations on ways of improving the program in the event of a possible second phase to the program. Our results will be reported directly to USAID/Russia. We ask for your help in making this evaluation a meaningful exercise, and request your cooperation by completing this questionnaire before August 12. Your frankness will be appreciated. Thank you.

Pre-grant Dealings with ISC

- 1 How did you first become aware of the ROLL program? (newspaper? contacts with other organizations? other?)
- 2 In which Round(s) did you apply? In which Round(s) were you successful?
- 3 If your grant was awarded during Rounds 2, 3 or 4, was your principal contact ISC/Moscow or Regional Center?
- 4 Did you attend a pre-grant seminar?
- 5 Rate the quality of ISC/ROLL staff support received before the grant was awarded [rate on a scale between 1 (lowest) and 10 (highest)]
- 6 Rate the difficulty of filling out the grant application [rate on a scale between 1 (easy) and 10 (difficult)]
- 7 How long did it take you to complete the grant application process, including the time required to obtain all supporting documents?
- 8 What was the most difficult section of the application to complete?
- 9 Did ISC assist you in finding partners for replication? If so, how?
- 10 How can we improve the grant application process?

Post-Grant Award Relations with ISC/ROLL

- 11 Did you receive the first tranche of funds before the starting date of your project? If not, how long after? If there was a significant delay, was the grant completion date adjusted accordingly?
- 12 Are you satisfied with the process/timing for disbursement of funds?
- 13 Have ISC staff members visited your project after grant funds were released? If yes, how often?
- 14 Has ISC (either the central office or the Regional Centers) provided you with any assistance or advice after the grant award?

- 15 Do you currently have ready access to the Internet? If yes, have you accessed the ISC/ROLL Internet page? Frequency? Is there information that you would find useful and like to see on the web site that is not currently there?
- 16 With what aspect of the ISC/ROLL program are you most satisfied?
- 17 Beyond the outputs you have reported, what has been the principal impact of your project – in other words, what has changed as a result of the work you have undertaken?
- 18 What are the two most significant accomplishments of your project? Were these accomplishments planned or unexpected (for example, changes in attitude)?
- 19 Have project results met your earlier expectations? Rate on a scale from 1 (did not meet expectations) to 10 (significantly exceeded expectations).
- 20 Have other organizations contacted you for information /assistance as a result of the work you carried out under the ROLL program? If yes, how many?
- 21 Do you intend to apply again under Round 5?
- 22 In the future, if you intend to continue to replicate the work you have undertaken under this program, where will the necessary funding come from? From what sources do you expect to receive funding to support future replication?
- 23 If there were a possible second phase of ROLL, what recommendations would you make about improving the design of such a program?

APPENDIX C QUANTIFIABLE RESULTS (QUESTIONNAIRE FOR GRANTEES)

MAIN RESULTS

ROUND 1

In the course of Round 1 of the ROLL program 15 competition grants were awarded. We interviewed in detail three grantees of Round 1 and received filled out questionnaires from another three organizations.

Most of the grantees of Round 1 had participated as contractors or subcontractors in EPT projects and therefore were “automatically” invited to the ISC pre-grant seminars. As a rule, their applications for grants were aimed at replicating their own experience gained in the course of implementing EPT projects. They estimated the quality of the ISC support at 8.2 (average).

All the projects of the Round 1 had been completed by early 1999. Four out of six organizations surveyed took part in Rounds 3 and 4 competitions. Their evaluation of the application procedure is likely to be based on the experience relating to participation in the latest Rounds. Among the problems they most often mention the complicated character of the application form and its financial part in particular.

The participants of Round 1 were not faced with the problem of delays in transferring funds, as their last tranches were received before the financial crisis in Russia or appeared to be insignificant for them.

The self-assessment of the results obtained by grantees of Round 1 was very high. Among the unexpected results all the organizations listed increasing interest in their experience and achievements, as well as a better reputation they acquired in the region.

However, most of the organizations link their future development with the international grant support, including the ROLL program (for example, 3 out of 6 organizations consider the financial support to be the most significant aspect of the ROLL program).

ROUND 2

In the course of Round 2 of the ROLL program 22 competition grants were financed. We have obtained information (mostly through interviews) from 18 grantees.

Most of the applicants for Round 2 became aware of the ROLL program from the very beginning of its implementation, mostly from EPT projects participants, with 4 organizations having applied for grants in the first Round of the ROLL program. Nine organizations have applied for grants in Rounds 3 and 4.

Grantees of Round 2 estimated the complexity of application procedure, on the average, by a lower point, in contrast to grantees of Round 1 (7.1 against 8.7). Yet, practically all of them considered the application form to be too complicated. Therefore, 11 out of 18 organizations suggested that either the application form on the whole or its financial part should be simplified.

There were also certain changes in the evaluation of advantages of the ROLL program: replication of successful experience rather than just financial support was mentioned more frequently.

The assessment of the results achieved in the course of projects implementation decreased by 1 point in comparison with Round 1. The sources of financing the continuation of the projects supported by ROLL list international donors, local environmental funds, the federal or local budget and commercial organizations.

ROUND 3

Under Round 3, 37 projects were financed. We interviewed 11 grantees and received filled out questionnaires from another 14 organizations.

The applicants for this Round were more diversified than for the previous two Rounds. They often mentioned as the source of information about the ROLL program their regional centers, which at this point joined in with ROLL and, besides disseminating the information about the program, effected the pre-grant support of applicants, including finding partners for replication. On this account the grantees under Round 3 rated higher the quality of ISC/ROLL staff support (up to 8.5 on the average). They rated the difficulty of filling out the grant application higher, up to 7.9 on the average against 7.1 under Round 2.

Over 50% of the grantees did not think it necessary to make any changes in the application form (somewhat modified by this grant Round) or in the application procedure. This is probably due to a lot of new participants in the program.

The main difference concerning grantees in Round 3 is that they are much less satisfied with the process and timing for disbursement of funds. This is due to the fact that the starting dates for their projects coincided with the financial crisis in Russia; however, in most cases, the final dates were extended.

Though most projects are not yet completed, the grantees rated the achieved or planned results of their projects at a high level (over 8 points), one of the major accomplishments, according to them, being the development of relations with partners or cooperation at the regional level.

ROUND 4

An essential difference of Round 4, which is at its early stage of implementation, seems to be the high percentage of organizations that participated in previous Rounds (12 out of 19 respondents). On the whole, 45 projects will be financed in Round 4.

Despite the fact that most organizations had some previous experience in filling out the grant application form for the ROLL program, they rated the difficulty of filling it out as quite high. They rated the quality of ISC/Regional Centers staff support as equally high.

Possibly on account of those reasons, most of the grantees in Round 4 could clearly define the priorities and the most important aspects of the ROLL program, as well as make a realistic evaluation of the expected accomplishment

EVALUATIONS

Availability of information about the ROLL program

On the whole, the survey we conducted among the grantees in the ROLL program is quite representative. We interviewed more than half of the organizations (63 out of 119) that were awarded grants in all the four Rounds of ROLL. In addition, we received answers from the organizations participating in the implementation of direct (target) grants. Therefore, the questionnaire evaluation is based on the answers of participants in 67 projects.

One of the advantages of the ROLL program is its information dissemination process. While the applicants in the first two grant Rounds learned mostly about ROLL directly from participants of EPT projects, in which they also often participated, the applicants in the following Rounds learned about the program from quite different sources and could make contact with ISC and RC ROLL without difficulty.

Eleven grantees applied in Round 1, 22 in Round 2, 27 in Round 3, and 25 in Round 4. Thirty organizations have the intention to apply in Round 5.

Thus, during the three years of its implementation in Russia the ROLL program became widely known and was able to involve a great number of organizations of different profiles throughout Russia. This is also confirmed by the statistics pointing to an increase in the number of applications from Round to Round.

Pre-grant support by ISC Moscow/ RC ROLL

Practically all the grantees rated highly the quality of pre-grant support they received from the program administration through seminars and personal consultations of ISC/RC staff. Some applicants even suggest increasing the number of regional centers of ROLL, on the basis of the fact that it is often difficult and expensive for organizations in remote areas of Russia to maintain operational contact both with ISC/Moscow and with the existing regional centers. Among the drawbacks of the application process the absolute majority of grantees named the excessively complicated character of the application form, particularly the inadequacy of its financial part to the actual situation in the Russian economy susceptible to frequent crises.

Difficulty of the application process

The question «How can we improve the grant application process?» was answered by 39 grantees. The quantitative evaluation of their suggestions is given in the following table.

	Responses	#
1.	NA OR NO	28
2.	Simplify the application form, Remove duplicated entries	15
3.	Simplify the financial part	12
4.	Simplify the limitation for attached documents (resumes, letters of support etc.), Decrease the number of obligatory letters of support, copies of the application form etc.	3
5.	Remove the limitation for accountant	1

6.	Enlarge the program description in application form Or Make the financial part in application form more detailed, like form for Round 2.	5
7.	Simplify the application procedure	1
8.	INFORM ABOUT RESULTS OF EXPERTISE FOR REJECTED APPLICATIONS	2
9.	Entrust the RC to hold competitions under the supervision of ISC	2

The absolute majority of suggestions (31) concerned the simplification of the application form overburdened, according to the grantees, with unnecessary repetitions and excessively detailed project budget (with quite rigid restrictions relating to the working load on the accountant in the project. The necessity to prepare and send to ISC six full copies of the application form seems excessive.

It should be pointed out, however, that some suggested that the restrictions on the formulation of the project title and objectives should be lifted.

Approximately the same number of suggestions concerned the application procedure itself. Though the percentage of concrete proposals to provide applicants with more detailed and substantial information about conclusions of experts is relatively small, in the course of interviews this theme was often raised within a context of problems relating the implementation of the ROLL program. In addition, the organizations which were eventually awarded grants expressed their doubts about the objectivity of the existing system of expertise.

Problems relating to the disbursement of funds

Most grantees, especially applicants in Rounds 2 and 3, were faced with delays in the quarterly disbursement of funds. Practically all the delays were linked with the consequences of the financial and banking crisis of 1998. The grantees, however, pointed to a high quality of management in ISC which allowed to make adequate changes both in the input pattern and in the project implementation terms.

Use of Internet

One of the points in the questionnaire concerned the use of Internet opportunities. The implementation of the ROLL program involved regional centers, applicants and grantees from most regions of Russia – it would be logical, therefore, to make wide use of modern information technologies for its management. However, 27 grantees do not currently have ready access to Internet and the majority of those who do became aware of the ISC Web site in the course of our interviews. Merely eight grantees expressed concrete proposals for the ISC Web site, half of them referring to the necessity of providing more detailed and timely information about the implementation of all the projects and half to increasing the access channel to the Web site.

Evaluation of project accomplishments by grantees

The grantees rated highly the results achieved in the course of their project implementation (question 19). All the answers were between 5 (results met expectations) and 10 (results exceeded expectations). The average was 8.5.

Among the most significant results most grantees named a better reputation of their organization in the region, a wide dissemination and development of their experience, establishment of business contacts with other organizations and local administrations, development of partnership relations with profile organizations from other areas of the country drawn to participation in the projects and their continuation.

For many grantees the financial and informational support provided by the ROLL projects served as an impetus to go on with the work in different organizational and financial environment. Due to the ROLL support these organizations were able to become aware of their potential and develop it, to find partners interested in making use of their experience and concrete accomplishments. Most of such organizations got access to the funds of local budgets, enterprises, local environmental funds, which provided for their sustainability and opportunity to develop independently, without relying on the support of international donors.

Evaluation of the ROLL project by grantees

To understand better the advantages and disadvantages of the ROLL project, we asked the grantees to answer two questions: (16) «**With what aspect of the ISC/ROLL program are you most satisfied?**» and (23) «**If there were a possible second phase of ROLL, what recommendations would you make about improving the design of such a program?**»

We obtained detailed answers from 56 grantees to the first question. All the project participants stress the vitality and importance of its implementation in Russia. Most grantees (20) think the most significant aspect of the program to be the financial and information support provided by ROLL for various environmental projects.

According to 16 grantees, the main advantage is a wide dissemination and implementation of the experience gained and concrete accomplishments.

Not the least important aspect is believed to be the development of extensive partnership relations and of actual coordination and cooperation among various research, governmental, commercial and non-governmental organizations. This aspect was rated as #1 by 10 grantees.

A unique character of this long-term project was stressed by 9 organizations. They singled out such characteristic features of the project as Stimulating of local community for solution of environmental problems; Usage of local equipment and facilities; Grants management and monitoring; Reasonable combination of all-Russian and regional approaches in identification of priorities.

Among the drawbacks of the project they often mentioned the excessively complicated application procedure, the abundance of formal restrictions, which often makes it difficult for small NGOs to participate in the project.

Though the grantees rated highly both the project on the whole and the quality of work in ISC Moscow / RC ROLL dealing with the management of the project implementation, most recommendations for its future development can be referred to the problems of improving the application process (see the table below).

Responses	#
To modify application process, including:	
To simplify the application form	5
To simplify document flow, less paper in application, wider use of Internet	5
To entitle RCs with wider rights to accept and evaluate application forms	3
To improve the quality of application expertise (number of experts, quality of their work)	3
To provide in time comprehensive and detailed information about application expertise	2
To provide expertise and development of completed projects	
To provide expertise (evaluation) of completed projects	4
To ensure obligatory development of replication results	4
To make it possible to replicate any successful project	2
To ensure that every new project adds some new ideas, approaches, and technical solutions to replicated one	2
To make available up to 10-15 % of project budget to be spent during the following year after closing the complete implementation of the project	2
To expand the list of project priorities, including:	
To pay more attention to concrete regional problems	5
To support complex projects, oriented on solving several closely related problems in one region	4
To support networking of professionals dealing with environment	1
To support the sharing of international (foreign) experience	1

Next, the grantees frequently mentioned problems of developing and supporting successfully completed projects, including the possibility of developing rather than merely replicating positive experience. This group of proposals is indirectly connected with the existing restrictions on replicating non-EPT projects and absence of any system of evaluating accomplishments of completed ROLL projects, which can also be referred to purely procedure (management) problems.

The principal proposals mostly concerned changes in the list of ROLL priorities, the importance of drawing closer attention to regional problems being most frequently mentioned.

Conclusions

On the whole, the survey enables us to claim that the ROLL project is successfully coping with the tasks it has undertaken. ISC is actually improving the system of project management making it more effective in comparison with analogous projects of other international donors. The ROLL project ensures the development of extensive cooperation and partnership relations among various Russian organizations involved in solving environmental problems. The project has a

particularly positive impact on establishing effective contacts among NGOs, governmental organizations and local authorities.

It is also important to stress that the ROLL project has a considerable potential for internal development which allows to introduce significant modifications both in project priorities and in implementation procedure without changing dramatically its structure.

Survey Questionnaire for ROLL Grant Recipients		Round 1			Round 2			Round 3			Round 4			Total		
		Average	Min	Max	Average	Min	Max	Average	Min	Max	Average	Min	Max	Average	Min	Max
		6 from 15			18 from 22			25 from 37			19 from 45			68 from 119		
1	How did you first become aware of the ROLL program? (newspaper? contacts with other organizations? other?)	EPT, ISAR, Other org.			EPT, USAID, ISAR, ISC, RC, Others			ISC, RC, EPT, Others, ISAR, WWF			RC, Others, ISC, EPT, HIID			EPT, RC, ISC, ISAR, Others		
2	In which Round(s) did you apply? In which Round(s) were you successful?	R3: 1; R4: 3			R1: 4; R3: 2; R4: 5			R1: 1; R2: 4			R1: 3; R2: 7; R3: 2			R1: 11; R2: 22; R3: 27; R4: 25		
3	If your grant was awarded during Rounds 2, 3 or 4, was your principal contact ISC/Moscow or Reg.Center?	ISC: 6			ISC: 17			RC: 15; ISC: 9			RC: 8; ISC: 11			RC: 23; ISC: 23		
4	Did you attend a pre-grant seminar?	Yes: 6			Yes: 18			Yes: 21 No: 4			Yes: 16 No: 3			Yes: 61 No: 7		
5	Rate the quality of ISC/ROLL staff support received before the grant was awarded [rate on a scale between 1 (lowest) and 10 (highest)]	8.2	6	10	7.9	5	10	8.5	1	10	8.1	3	10	8.2	1	10
6	Rate the difficulty of filling out the grant application [rate on a scale between 1 (easy) and 10 (difficult)]	8.7	6	10	7.5	6	10	7.9	5	10	7.5	5	10	7.7	5	10
7	How long did it take you to complete the grant application process, including the time required to obtain all supporting documents? (weeks)	8.2	6	12	5.9	3	18	7.0	2	30	5.9	2	12	6.5	2	30
8	What was the most difficult section of the application to complete?	Financial: 5; All parts: 1			Financial: 11; Program: 4; All parts: 2; No: 1			Financial: 14; Program: 3; All parts: 1; No: 7			Financial: 6; Program: 5; All parts: 2; No: 5			Financial: 36; Program: 12; All parts: 6; No: 13		
9	Did ISC assist you in finding partners for replication?	Yes: 2 No: 4			Yes: 1 No: 17			Yes: 12 No: 13			Yes: 10 No: 9			Yes: 25 No: 43		
10	How can we improve the grant application process?	NA: 2	Simplify the finance part: 2		NA: 5	Simplify the finance part: 7		NA: 13	Simplify the finance part: 3		NA: 8	Simplify the finance part: 1		NA: 28	Simplify the finance part: 13	
11	Did you receive the first tranche of funds before the starting date of your project? If not, how long after? If there was a significant delay, was the grant completion date adjusted accordingly?	No: 5	>3 weeks: 1		No: 4	< 3 month: 9; >3 months: 5		No: 2	< 3 months: 4; >3 months: 19		No: 11	< 3 months: 13; >3 months: 24				
12	Are you satisfied with the process/timing for disbursement of funds?	Yes				Yes: 12	No: 6		Yes: 15	No: 10				Yes: 28	No: 40	
13	Have ISC staff members visited your project after grant funds were released? If yes, how often?	Yes				Yes: 16	No: 2		Yes: 21	No: 4				Yes: 33	No: 18	
14	Has ISC (either the central office or the Regional Centers) provided you with any assistance or advice after the grant award?	Yes, ISC	NA: 1		Yes, ISC				Yes, ISC	NA: 1				Yes, ISC	NA: 2	

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15	Do you currently have ready access to the Internet? If yes, have you accessed the ISC/ROLL Internet page? Frequency? Is there information that you would find useful and like to see on the web site that is not currently there?	No access: 1	Yes: 5	Not satisfied: 1	No access: 11	Yes: 3	Not satisfied: 2	No access: 10	Yes: 12	Not satisfied: 3	No access: 5	Yes: 12	Not satisfied: 2	No access: 27	Yes: 33	Not satisfied: 8	Appendix C p.7				
19	Have project results met your earlier expectations? Rate on a scale from 1 (did not meet expectations) to 10 (significantly exceeded expectations).	9.2	7	10	8.1	5	10	8.5	5	10				8.5	5	10					
20	Have other organizations contacted you for information/assistance as a result of the work you carried out under the ROLL program? If yes, how many?	from 3 to >20 org.			from 1 to >30 org.			from 1 to >10 org.						from 1 to >30 org.							
21	Do you intend to apply again under Round 5?	Yes: 4		No: 2		Yes: 10		No: 8		Yes: 13		No: 12		Yes: 3		No: 16		Yes: 30		No: 38	

APPENDIX D
QUESTIONS FOR ROLL COORDINATING COUNCIL MEMBERS

N	Questions	Summary
1	Please provide your general impressions of the ROLL program.	Vital, timely and efficient program.
2	What is your opinion of the effectiveness of the CC.	Above the average
	Rate between 1 and 10.	7,7
	Any noticeable differences between 18 months ago and today?	Yes, effectiveness increased
	Are there any written Council operating procedures/guidelines? Are they clear?	Yes, satisfactory
3	Some questions have been raised about the generally passive role played by the CC. Do you share those concerns?	No
4	Are there contacts among Council members outside of regular meetings?	Yes
	Do some Council members vote as members of a bloc?	No
5	What are your views about the role of the CC Chairman?	Effective
	Are meetings well run?	Yes
	Are decisions clear?	Yes, as a rule
	Do members have an input on the agenda?	Yes, frequently
6	Discuss your views of the effectiveness of ISC.	Adequate professional activity
	Have they managed the application process effectively?	Yes, satisfactory
	Have they done a good job of preparing summaries of the grant applications?	More detailed application summaries are necessary, including full commentaries of experts.
	How would you rate the quality of their staff?	Perfect (9-10): 2; Good (7-8): 8
7	Have you visited the ISC office(s) to obtain additional supporting data before voting on any applications?	No: 7; Yes: 3
8	Would the Internet be useful in accessing additional project application information?	Yes
	Do you have ready access to the Internet?	Yes
	Have you accessed the ISC/ROLL home page?	Yes: 4
9	Have there been any noticeable changes in the quality of applications between Rounds 1 and 2 and now?	Yes, increased
10	Do you think the process of ranking project applications is adequate?	Yes, as a rule
	Would you make any suggestions for improvements?	No: 8
11	Does the Council play any role once grants are approved? Should they?	No; Yes: 3 (in monitoring of grant implementations)
12	Sustainability of the ROLL concept – can it survive with domestic resources and without additional external resources?	No: 7

13	If there were to be a second phase of the ROLL program, what recommendations would you make to improve the program?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Evaluate the projects after their completion. 2. Broaden the list of projects to be replicated. 3. Focus more attention on regional priorities. 4. Improve the quality of expert evaluation of applications.
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Ten out of 26 actual members of the Coordinating Council were interviewed (2 out of 10 answered the questions in written form). Six out of 10 CC members had worked in the Council since the date of its foundation and the other 3 became CC members in the spring of 1999.

All the interviewed CC members expressed a unanimous positive opinion about the ROLL program, they all emphasized the timeliness and vitality of the program for Russia as well as its high effectiveness.

It should be mentioned that on the majority of issues the CC members had unanimous opinion, no matter whether they were representatives of governmental bodies or NGOs. The only difference was only in their recommendations concerning the second phase of the project implementation: the regional representatives put emphasis on development of regional priorities, while NGO representatives insisted on rendering greater support to non-governmental ecological organizations and movements.

The summary includes only the most frequently made recommendations (ranged by their frequency).

In general we believe that the ROLL Coordinating Council is an efficient body not only providing for the constructive dialogue between the governmental organizations and NGOs but also developing the ROLL strategy.

APPENDIX E
QUESTIONS FOR ROLL COORDINATING COUNCIL MEMBERS

N	Questions	Summary
1	Please provide your general impressions of the ROLL program.	Vital, timely and efficient program.
2	What is your opinion of the effectiveness of the CC.	Above the average
	Rate between 1 and 10.	7,7
	Any noticeable differences between 18 months ago and today?	Yes, effectiveness increased
	Are there any written Council operating procedures/guidelines? Are they clear?	Yes, satisfactory
3	Some questions have been raised about the generally passive role played by the CC. Do you share those concerns?	No
4	Are there contacts among Council members outside of regular meetings?	Yes
	Do some Council members vote as members of a bloc?	No
5	What are your views about the role of the CC Chairman?	Effective
	Are meetings well run?	Yes
	Are decisions clear?	Yes, as a rule
	Do members have an input on the agenda?	Yes, frequently
6	Discuss your views of the effectiveness of ISC.	Adequate professional activity
	Have they managed the application process effectively?	Yes, satisfactory
	Have they done a good job of preparing summaries of the grant applications?	More detailed application summaries are necessary, including full commentaries of experts.
	How would you rate the quality of their staff?	Perfect (9-10): 2; Good (7-8): 8
7	Have you visited the ISC office(s) to obtain additional supporting data before voting on any applications?	No: 7; Yes: 3
8	Would the Internet be useful in accessing additional project application information?	Yes
	Do you have ready access to the Internet?	Yes
	Have you accessed the ISC/ROLL home page?	Yes: 4
9	Have there been any noticeable changes in the quality of applications between Rounds 1 and 2 and now?	Yes, increased
10	Do you think the process of ranking project applications is adequate?	Yes, as a rule
	Would you make any suggestions for improvements?	No: 8
11	Does the Council play any role once grants are approved? Should they?	No; Yes: 3 (in monitoring of grant implementations)
12	Sustainability of the ROLL concept – can it survive with domestic resources and without additional external resources?	No: 7

13	If there were to be a second phase of the ROLL program, what recommendations would you make to improve the program?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Evaluate the projects after their completion. 4. Broaden the list of projects to be replicated. 5. Focus more attention on regional priorities. 6. Improve the quality of expert evaluation of applications.
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APPENDIX F

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**APPENDIX G
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ANNEX A: FUTURE PROGRAM CONSIDERATIONS

The evaluation team would like to offer several observations and recommendations to USAID/Russia for consideration when developing a possible future phase of the ROLL program. First and most importantly, we believe the concept underlying the current program is fundamentally sound – a focus on replication of good and best environmental practices is highly appropriate given the skill levels and technical talents evident in Russia.

We strongly recommend that one element of the current program that is showing good results, the information networking/sharing initiative, be substantially expanded to become a second, major objective of any follow-on effort. This program component would be additional to and closely linked with an extension of the grant-making program to finance the replication and adoption of successful policies, methodologies and techniques in six environmental focus areas. A number of good examples of information-sharing and environmental networking activities already exist as part of the current program. However, we believe that expanding the effort and giving it equal importance to the grant-making operation is in keeping with the lessons being learned under the current ROLL program.

- A networking and information-sharing initiative would build upon the intense interest already shown by many government, NGO and business organizations in accessing new, successful environmental practices and methodologies. It would further open the country to itself and to the global network of environmental organizations. It would not be a source of funding for specific activities, but rather a vehicle for facilitating the spread of new environmental ideas and technologies among interested, innovative and entrepreneurial entities. Examples of the kinds of activities that could be supported include: convening targeted workshops (e.g. all major industries that deal with issues surrounding sludge treatment or land reclamation, or all nature reserves in a region discussing the impacts of ecotourism),
- teleconferencing,
- establishing electronic bulletin boards,
- facilitating access to the Web,
- hosting information exchanges with preeminent specialists from nations facing similar environmental issues,
- facilitating site visits to successful ROLL, EPT or other activities, and
- helping with preparation and distribution of environmentally-focused written and video information.

Such an initiative would be an excellent catalyst for widespread dissemination of ‘best environmental practices’ uncovered during implementation of ROLL and EPT. In short, it would tap into the demonstrated interest of individuals and groups in Russia to obtain information and guidance about how to improve environmental conditions within the country.

In addition, the team has considered several other ideas related to a continuation of the existing grant activity; the most significant are offered here:

- *Priority Technical Areas.* Continue to fund replication activities in the current six priority areas. All have been confirmed as priority areas by USAID, the Coordinating Council and the regions. Varying degrees of progress *are* being made in addressing problems within each of those areas. However, the extent of the problems that Russia faces would rule out dropping any of the current priority areas.
- *Sustainability of Grantees.* Focus from the beginning of the new project on providing information and assistance on different fund raising approaches and techniques to all grantees, as discussed in Section III.A of the evaluation, above.
- *Measuring Results.* Devote attention to developing appropriate impact indicators so that the effectiveness of the program or at least its components can be more readily assessed, as discussed in Section II.B, above. Include funding for a specific evaluation component in any follow-on program so that anticipated (pre-grant) and realized (post-grant) outcomes may be assessed. Build in a follow-up effort as well to find out what the intended and unexpected impacts of the activity have been, particularly as the latter can sometimes have greater significance.
- *Grantee Selection.* Consider dropping or reducing the 5-point preference for applications involving former EPT partners. That preference made sense in the first years of ROLL. However, the time that will have elapsed between EPT and the start of a second phase of ROLL makes the rationale for such a preference questionable and unnecessarily restrictive.
- *Size of Grants.* Consider increasing the funding ceiling and period of implementation for certain kinds of activities. Resist the temptation to have ROLL undertake a mini-grants program. Although there may indeed be demand for such a program, we believe that administering such an effort will not be cost effective. However, if the pressures to do so are strong, we suggest that a very limited amount of funds be made available for that purpose and that it be granted to and administered by the Regional Centers. In that event, resolving such issues as the technical capacity of the Centers, the level of detail in the applications, the sub-grant approval process, and the monitoring and assessment of effectiveness must be resolved at the outset. On balance, however, our judgment is that such a program is best left to another donor or another program.
- *Expanding the Role of Regional Centers.* Follow the ISC work plan suggestions to assign increasing responsibility to ROLL Regional Centers, but do so on a case by case basis, depending upon technical capacity to undertake more demanding activities (a greater monitoring role, for example). This would help strengthen their post-ROLL role as NGOs with a capacity to assist in local or possibly regional environmental and health decision-making or information dissemination tasks. N.B. This NGO strengthening/broadening process also coincides with one of ROLL's six priority topic areas.

The evaluation team considered but rejected several other ideas. These included:

- focusing future grant-making rounds on two or more priority areas on a rotating basis until all six areas are covered (this had severe administrative implications for ISC);
- giving additional preferences in the grant selection process to “stars,” those applicants that had been the most successful at replication in earlier rounds (this would be ‘safer,’ but would narrow rather than enlarge the pool of potential projects to replicate);
- increasing the participation of the Regional Centers in the grant selection process (this would alter a process that currently works well; while this might benefit the RCs, it is not clear that the whole program would benefit equally).

The evaluation team understands that USAID/Russia is planning a follow-up project and is anticipating that the competitive process will be held early enough to avoid a hiatus in the program. The team applauds this USAID forward planning and commitment, as a significant hiatus would be highly disruptive to the Russian institutions involved in this program.