

A Framework for Responsible Exploration: e3 Plus

Dennis Jones¹

The Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada (PDAC), an organization representing the interests of the Canadian mineral exploration and development industry across Canada and overseas and organizer of the world's largest mineral exploration convention, has developed internet-based guidelines to encourage improved corporate social responsibility (CSR) among exploration companies. This framework to promote responsible exploration is called e3 Plus (www.pdac.ca/e3plus).

Exploration teams are the ambassadors of the global mining community in the sense that they are often the first and the most highly visible representatives of an exploration project to come into contact with other stakeholders. Their performance in managing the environmental and socio-economic aspects of projects, particularly in the early stages when first impressions are so critical, will demonstrate the company's commitment to conducting environmentally and socially responsible exploration and mining.

PDAC's CSR initiative emerged from its active participation in the Canadian federal government's CSR Roundtables, held across Canada in 2006, and it reflects an increasing awareness in the exploration industry of the need to conduct business in an environmentally and socially responsible manner. The PDAC recognized the need for a more formal outlining of principles and guidelines for responsible exploration and decided that CSR would be an important element of PDAC's strategic plans. The PDAC's Framework for Responsible Exploration was developed through extensive multi-stakeholder consultations involving workshops and focus groups.

The framework provides eight high-level principles to which all explorers should aspire. They are: adopt responsible governance and management; apply ethical business practices; respect human rights; commit to project due diligence and risk assessment; engage host communities and other affected and interested parties; contribute to community development and social well being; protect the environment; and safeguard the health and safety of workers and the local population.

Accompanying the principles are guidance notes that assist practitioners to convert the principles into action. At the core of e3 Plus are three toolkits, which provide practical ways of achieving excellence in the areas of environmental stewardship, social responsibility and health and safety. Key to the framework is its flexibility, as its implementation will vary depending on individual project characteristics that will differ from place to place and might change as exploration advances. Access to e3 Plus is free of charge and it is intended for use by industry, civil society, governments, local communities, indigenous communities and all other interested stakeholders.

¹Director, Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada, 135 King St. East, Toronto, ON M5C 1G6