Plenary Speaker : Madeleine McKinnon

Director, Impact and Learning – Paul G. Allen Philanthropies

Evidence synthesis in a sea of complexity

Global policy agendas and institutional strategies of international organizations increasingly seek to both improve human livelihoods while ensuring environmental sustainability. Efforts to generate and synthesize evidence on what works have had to move in step with this coupled agenda. The consequence is an intersection of disciplines, new collaborations and often competing opinions. Researchers in synthesis must become fluent in a wide array of ontologies, methods and institutional contexts in an ever expanding sea of complexity. Drawing from her experience leading a multi-year effort to systematically map evidence documenting the effects of conservation on human well-being, Dr McKinnon shares challenges, opportunities and a few successful tactics for navigating these waters. She will also reflect on the potential for algorithms, interactive platforms, and other technology-based solutions to deal with complexity in the synthesis and use of evidence.