



# Why Use Tools?

Gathering data to use in technology tools and using them in an effective manner can be difficult and time consuming. It is important to understand what EBM tools can and can't do for your project, what your project wants to get out of tool use, and how to use tools effectively before initiating tool use. For more information on using EBM tools effectively, go to [www.ebmtools.org/using\\_tools.html](http://www.ebmtools.org/using_tools.html).

## What tools **CAN** do when used in an effective process:

- Help you incorporate a wider array of ecosystem and human considerations into decision making.
- Help you build on (rather than repeat) other's work by using parameter databases, algorithms, and analyses built into tools.
- Help guide you through processes so you can move from data to decision making more quickly.
- Save you time and help you explore a wider range of alternatives by automating analyses or processes that occur repeatedly.
- Help you document what inputs and parameters were used in analyses and reasons that decisions were made.
- Help build collaboration among diverse project participants by creating a forum where stakeholder groups learn about and need to account for each others' goals and concerns.

## What tools do **NOT** do:

- Provide answers or decisions. They can provide quantitative results and visualization to help make decisions, however.
- Eliminate need for analyses specific to your project. In fact, it may not be optimal to use an analytical tool if a project has highly constrained management options or analyses only need to be done a few times.
- Come with all the data they need. Projects considering using a tool should examine whether the data to use the tool already exists, and if it doesn't, whether there is sufficient time and resources to gather the necessary data.
- Eliminate the need to make tradeoffs between competing objectives. They may be able to help identify solutions that reduce negative impacts, however.
- Replace the need for intensive human interaction and collaboration or eliminate conflict. Poor incorporation of tools into an EBM process can actually increase conflict.