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December 2009

Evaluation of the Service Canada Community Offices Service Model

Final Report
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Final Report

***Evaluation Directorate
Strategic Policy and Research Branch
Human Resources and Skills Development Canada***

December 2009

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List of Acronyms

CSB	Citizen Service Branch
HRSDC	Human Resources and Skills Development Canada
SCC	Service Canada Centre(s)
SCCO	Service Canada Community Office(s)

Executive Summary

Introduction

Service Canada Community Offices (SCCO) Service Model was one of four categories of points of service developed to provide service to Canadians; the other three being Service Canada Centres (SCC), Scheduled Outreach Sites and Mobile Outreach Sites. SCCO were points of service, usually in rural or remote locations, that were managed through a contract for services with community partners, or through a collaborative arrangement between Service Canada and a province or territory. The objective of the SCCO Service Model was to provide a service delivery experience for the residents of small and/or rural communities that was nationally consistent, direct, and yet flexibly tailored to the local environment.

Evaluation

In accordance with the evaluation framework and the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat Policy on Evaluation implemented on April 1, 2009, the evaluation addressed the following core evaluation issues: relevance and performance (effectiveness, efficiency and economy) as well as design and delivery issues. As well, lessons learned were examined during the design and implementation of the SCCO Service Model. The evaluation took place between April 2008 and March 2009. The scope of the evaluation covered the implementation period of the SCCO Service Model of 2007-08. The evaluation included National Headquarters (NHQ), and the provinces and territory where the SCCO Service Model had been implemented (Alberta, Ontario, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador and the Yukon).

The Evaluation Framework, which included a logic model and an evaluation matrix, was used to guide the evaluation of the SCCO Service Model. The evaluation utilized five main lines of evidence, integrating results from: a literature and document review; key informant interviews; a client satisfaction survey; site visits; and an operational cost analysis.

Key Findings

Relevance

In that the majority of people that visited a SCCO was very satisfied with their experience and was able to obtain the information they were seeking, this Service Model was deemed to be responsive to the needs of Canadians. Furthermore, the SCCO Service Model was found to align with federal government priorities in that it improved service delivery through community partnerships and increased federal presence. Hence, the Service Model further contributed to the Service Canada strategic outcome of *Service Excellence for Canadians* by improving services to Canadians.

Performance (Efficiency, Effectiveness and Economy)

The evaluation found that a number of SCCO locations did not meet the minimum location criteria set out in either the Point of Service Strategy or the Community Partner Service Delivery Strategy. The limited financial resources available to the SCCO Service Model were being used to fund locations that should be served by another service model or to fund locations that are already served by full-service offices.

The evaluation concluded that the SCCO Service Model provided convenient service in the locations where it was offered as well as increased access to self-serve tools and information services in those locations. Although access to SCCO points of service was not consistently available across the country, SCCO met the minimum level of service set out in the generic Statement of Work (SOW) for Click-Call-Visit.

The evaluation found many of the activities and outputs identified in the SCCO Logic Model were used to support the Service Model. However, performance measurement, monitoring and communications practices could be improved to better demonstrate the linkages between activities, outputs and outcomes.

The evaluation found that the SCCO Service Model was an affordable method of providing service to remote and rural communities. Although the Outreach Service Model was less expensive to operate in Alberta and Nova Scotia, it would result in a reduction in the total hours of service being provided to these communities.

Design and Delivery

The SCCO Service Model was deemed to be functioning as designed and was found to be flexible enough to accommodate the needs of the communities being served. The evaluation found that although the design of the SCCO Service Model was suitable with supporting tools and administrative systems, the delivery was characterized by considerable variability. There was a sense that the SCCO Service Model had been “neglected” and suffered from insufficient monitoring and communication.

Lessons Learned

From a lessons learned perspective, training and communication were important to ensure that: community partners and 1 800 O-Canada operators were knowledgeable about the various service models, especially SCC and SCCO; and that all had access to current and approved documentation.

Conclusions

The findings indicate that the SCCO Service Model is making progress towards achievement of expected results and outcomes, and that the outcomes were derived through reasonable means. Additionally, the SCCO Service Model was viewed as a pertinent investment for Service Canada due to its alignment with the Government of Canada priorities.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Service Canada Citizen Service Branch:

1. review and harmonize the categories of points of service and the location selection criteria across regions to ensure national consistency on SCCO Service Model policy and procedures including the identification of service gaps in rural and remote areas and solutions to address these gaps;
2. define roles and responsibilities between NHQ and regions with respect to the management of SCCO including the implementation of a clear reporting structure; and
3. develop and implement a comprehensive performance monitoring system to track the achievement of outcomes to support decision-making on whether individual SCCO should be continued, closed or transitioned into another points of service category.

Management Response

Overall Comments on Evaluation Report

The Citizen Service Branch welcomes this evaluation as part of our commitment to demonstrate accountable and responsible government. This is our first attempt at measuring the relevance, the performance, the design and delivery of a component of the In-Person Services Delivery Model.

We are pleased that the Evaluation concludes that the SCCO category is:

- 1) “Responsive to the needs of Canadians”;
- 2) “Aligned with Service Canada’s strategic outcome of *Service Excellence for Canadians* and federal government priorities”; and
- 3) “An economical method of providing service to remote and rural communities”.

We also take note of the different challenges identified in this report regarding the implementation and management of this site category. However, many improvements have been made since 2007-08 to the SCCO category and there has been progress in the delivery of other categories in the overall In-Person model, most importantly in the use of Scheduled Outreach services. Research has demonstrated that in-person service delivery was seen by Canadians to be: “... good for general and personal information, specific questions, serious or complex issues, applications, making payments, seeking guidance/advice, dealing with issues as a last resort, and dealing with all aspects of an issue” (COMPAS Inc. Multi Channel Service Delivery Focus Group Research, 2003). We are currently exploring options to increase services in Scheduled Outreach Sites to meet the expectations of our clients in rural and remote areas for services beyond basic information and pathfinding, while providing optimal balance between affordability, safety and security.

Recommendations	Management Response	Planned Completion Date	Responsibility
<p>It is recommended that Service Canada Citizen Service Branch (CSB):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Review and harmonize the categories of points of service and the location selection criteria across regions to ensure national consistency on SCCO Service Model policy and procedures including the identification of service gaps in rural and remote areas and solutions to address these gaps. 	<p>Management Response: We agree.</p> <p>The current site categories were introduced at the launch of Service Canada when the network of SCC was expanded to include scheduled outreach, mobile outreach and SCCO. After four (4) years of experience, lessons learned and feedback received from Canadians, it is time to review the Service Delivery Model to see if we can improve our network to better respond to Canadians needs and expectations regarding In-Person Service.</p> <p>Service Canada has made a commitment to serve at least 90% of the Canadian population within 50 kilometres driving distance of a point of service. To meet this service standard, Service Canada uses a Point of Service Strategy which identifies service gaps across the country, ensures a nationally consistent location criteria for all site categories, and provides strategic direction for the evolution of the overall In-Person Service Delivery Network.</p> <p>Action to be taken:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1 Conduct a review of our current suite of site categories to ensure that they respond to the service needs of Canadians, to reflect the evolution of our network in the last four years and, if applicable, to incorporate best practices from other jurisdictions. 1.2 To support Action 1.1, begin to develop transition strategies for identified points of service in each category, starting with the SCCO category. 1.3 Update the Point of Service Strategy to rationalise the location criteria for all recommended site categories. 	<p>March 2010</p> <p>December 2009</p> <p>September 2010</p>	<p>CSB</p> <p>CSB</p> <p>CSB</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Define roles and responsibilities between NHQ and regions with respect to the management of SCCO including the implementation of a clear reporting structure. 	<p>Management Response: We agree.</p> <p>Since the creation of the SCCO category, we have improved our practices by developing a Cost Pool Framework and a database for the monitoring of the SCCO contracts. We also analyse financial documents for forecasting purposes and maintain dialogue with regional staff.</p> <p>Although we are reviewing this category it will continue to require sound governance in its operation for the near future.</p>		

Recommendations	Management Response	Planned Completion Date	Responsibility
	<p>Action to be taken:</p> <p>2.1 Update information management to improve the monitoring of SCCO contracts and the forecasting of SCCO costs.</p> <p>2.2 Update the SCCO Cost Pool Management Framework to clarify roles and responsibilities and implement a reporting structure.</p> <p>2.3 In addition to sending the SCCO Cost Pool Management Framework to our regional contacts, we will publish it on the Intranet to ensure wider communication to all internal stakeholders.</p>	<p>September 2009</p> <p>October 2009</p> <p>January 2010</p>	<p>CSB</p> <p>CSB</p> <p>CSB</p>
<p>3. Develop and implement a comprehensive performance monitoring system to track the achievement of outcomes to support decision-making on whether individual SCCO should be continued, closed or transitioned into another points of service category.</p>	<p>Management Response: We partly agree. As presented in Recommendation 1, after four (4) years of experience, lessons learned and feedback received from Canadians, it is time to review the model before developing a performance monitoring system for a category that may be transitioned in the near future. We recognise that the monthly reporting done by the SCCO can be minimal. Senior management approved this approach to lessen the administrative burden on small organizations and to minimize costs. We believe that the current reporting is sufficient for a category developed to deliver only basic information and pathfinding services to hard to reach communities.</p> <p>Action to be taken:</p> <p>3.1 Develop a Performance Management Framework for the In-Person channel. This would include performance tracking systems based on existing or improved metrics for all site categories of service identified in Action 1.1, including SCCO if applicable, updating monthly report to NHQ and ongoing analysis of performance of each category against desired outcomes.</p>	<p>Fiscal Year 2010-11</p>	<p>CSB</p>

Introduction

This report presents the results of the evaluation of the implementation of the Service Canada Community Offices (SCCO) Service Model. The evaluation was undertaken to examine such issues as relevance, the extent to which the SCCO Service Model was on track to meeting its stated objectives, and design and delivery.

The report consists of five sections.

- **Section 1: Profile of the SCCO Service Model** provides a description of the SCCO Service Model Profile including the rationale for the Service Model, its objectives, services, beneficiaries, governance and eligibility criteria.
- **Section 2: Evaluation Context** describes the evaluation approach and methodology used as well as a discussion on methodological strengths and limitations.
- **Section 3: Key Findings** summarizes the main results of the evaluation organized by evaluation issue.
- **Section 4: Conclusions** based on the key findings.
- **Section 5: Recommendations** made on the basis of the evaluation evidence and conclusions.

1. Profile of the SCCO Service Model

The intent of the SCCO Service Model was to establish a community partner service delivery approach that: provided a consistent, national service experience for clients who are accessing Service Canada through community partner sites; ensured equitable treatment of community partner organizations; and mitigated the risk of establishing an employer-employee relationship with community partner employees¹.

1.1 Rationale

The creation of a Community Partner Service Delivery Model was mandated by the Deputy Head of Service Canada in 2005 and the Community Partner Service Delivery Working Group was created under the direction of two Assistant Deputy Ministers. The working group, comprised of representatives from the regions and National Headquarters, established a framework for the delivery of services by community partner organizations in response to the variety of approaches proposed by the regions on how to expand the Government of Canada's (GC) presence in smaller centers and rural communities.

The Community Partner Service Delivery Strategy was approved by the Service Canada Management Board in February 2006 and the first 12 SCCO commenced operations in March 2006. The Community Partner Service Delivery Strategy contained the following elements: a generic SCCO Statement of Work (SOW) that detailed the roles and responsibilities of service providers and Service Canada; the scope of work for deliverers; and the reporting requirements of service providers to Service Canada. The SOW also contained specific protocols on the posting of Service Canada signage, record keeping and reporting.

1.2 Description and Objectives

As stipulated in the operational policies for the in-person channel, there were four categories of points of service, including the SCCO Service Model.

- ***Service Canada Community Offices*** (SCCO) facilitated access to basic information services in communities that could not otherwise be reached by Service Canada staff. Unlike the other service types listed, SCCO were not staffed by government personnel, though the services being delivered supported the policies of Service Canada. In December 2008, there were 64 SCCO operating across Canada.
- ***Service Canada Centres*** (SCC) offered a mix of information and transactional services primarily located in urban centres. They operated either as stand-alone sites or were co-located with other organizations. SCC were managed and staffed by Service Canada employees. In December 2008, there were 330 SCC in Canada.

¹ Community Partner Service Delivery Strategy

- ***Scheduled Outreach Sites*** involved Service Canada staff traveling to pre-determined locations on a regular basis (e.g. one day per week) to provide services that were tailored to the needs of the community (mainly information and transaction support). Of the 212 service points established in December 2008, the majority were located in rural areas.
- ***Mobile Outreach Sites*** were usually in rural or remote areas and involved mobile Service Canada staff providing services tailored to the needs of the community (mainly information and transaction support). Service Canada staff traveled to different locations, as requested or as deemed necessary and, if required, their services were communicated via local media.

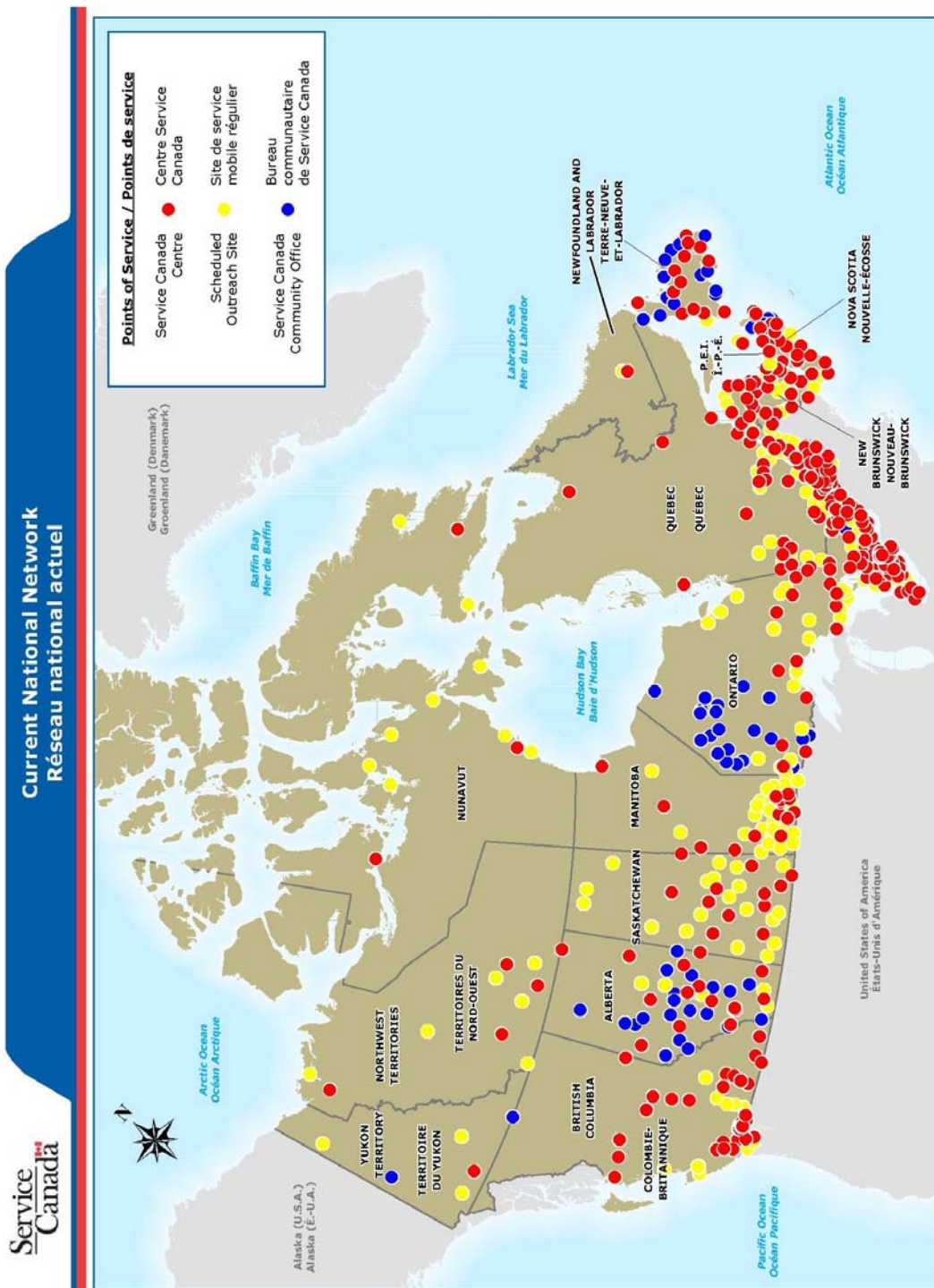
By December 2008, the SCCO, SCC, and Scheduled Outreach Sites provided 606 points of service to Canadians. The geographical distribution of these points of service throughout Canada is depicted in Map 1.

Service Canada Community Offices (SCCO) were points of service, usually in rural or remote locations, that were managed through a contract for services with community partners, or through a collaborative arrangement between Service Canada and another government entity such as a province or territory. SCCO service delivery involved the following elements:

- service that was provided by persons other than Government of Canada (GC) employees;
- a contractual or collaborative partnership relationship with a non-GC entity; and
- the direct delivery of basic information and referral or pathfinding services to the public.

The objective of the SCCO Service Model was to provide a service delivery experience for the residents of small and/or rural communities in a manner that was nationally consistent, direct, and yet flexibly tailored to the local environment. In doing so, each SCCO established its own hours of operation to best suit the needs of its clientele which enabled Service Canada to partner with service providers that were well-connected and/or well-known in their communities. The generic SOW was developed to ensure that each SCCO provided services in a nationally consistent manner.

Map 1
Geographical Distribution of the 606 Points of Service to Canadians represented by
SCCO, SCC, and Scheduled Outreach Sites



Actuarial and Geomatics Directorate, SEB, HRSDC, March 2008.
 Direction de l'actuariat et de la géomatique, DGCE, RHDS, mars 2008.

1.3 Services provided by SCCO

Although the partners differed for each SCCO, the services provided to citizens included all of the following:

- access to information via the internet, telephone, printed publications and from trained staff;
- Internet navigation assistance across departments and jurisdictions to GC services and benefits;
- referral to specialized expertise as required and/or to SCC for services not provided at the SCCO; and
- coaching on the use of self-serve tools such as 1 800 O-Canada and the Service Canada Internet site.

1.4 Beneficiaries and Partnerships

The main SCCO Service Model beneficiaries were clients seeking personal assistance in obtaining information on government services and programs in the communities where funded SCCO operate. Secondary beneficiaries of the Service Model were the partnering organizations that received service delivery funds enabling them to build their service delivery capacity. The objectives of sustainability, flexibility and development of long-term capacity applied to all potential contractors and community partners, including the voluntary sector.

To enter into a partnership with a community partner, a Request for Proposal was open to all community organizations or private contractors. Partners differed based on the demographics of the community in which SCCO were situated. The SCCO Service Model offered regions the flexibility to choose the most suitable partner. Examples of community partners included Public Library Boards, the municipality, Band Councils in Aboriginal communities, Community Access Program sites and other regional service offerings centers.

1.5 Governance

SCCO were managed through a procurement contract for services or a collaborative arrangement with a community partner. Service or procurement contracts were employed in cases where the partners were non-governmental organizations. These involved payment for services provided and the partner was responsible for all operating costs.

Collaborative partnership agreements, employed in cases where the partnering organization was a provincial government or a Band Council, involved funding transfers and/or in-kind resources. The development of the Community Partner Service Delivery Strategy involved a review of the Treasury Board Alternate Service Delivery (ASD) Guidelines and determined that procurement contracts were the most appropriate mechanism for funding contractors and community partners to deliver Service Canada services.

1.5.1 Role of Service Canada

The *Service Canada Service Charter* committed Service Canada to provide easy access to government services. To fulfil this commitment, Service Canada developed various Service Delivery models, which include Service Canada Centers (SCC), Scheduled Outreach, Mobile Outreach and Service Canada Community Offices (SCCO).

To enable partners to fulfill their responsibilities under the SCCO Service Model, Service Canada provided one initial training session to SCCO staff at the beginning of the service contract on how to navigate government Web sites and direct clients to information on government programs and services. In addition, signage bearing the Service Canada brand and a supply of GC core documents and forms were provided.

1.5.2 Role of Partnering Organizations

The generic SCCO statement of work stipulated that delivery organizations were responsible for:

- ensuring that SCCO staff have the knowledge, skills and experience required to provide services to clients including navigating Web sites, referring clients to services and programs, coaching clients to use self-serve tools and protecting clients' privacy;
- providing tools and resources to clients such as a list of core government documents and forms, public access computers, telephones and furniture;
- overseeing operating costs, staffing and other capital expenditures; and
- developing a Business Continuity Plan and monthly Client Activity Reports.

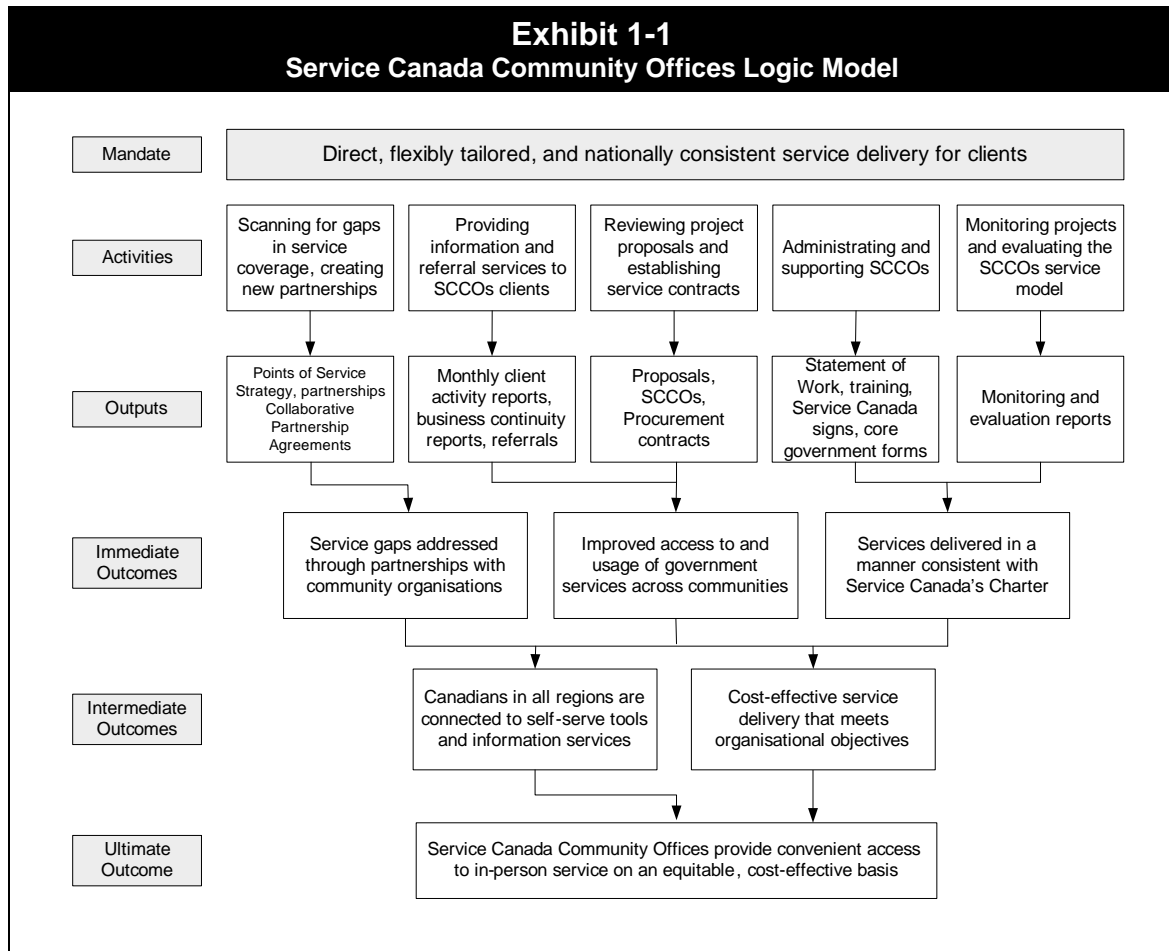
1.6 Eligibility Criteria

In March 2007, the Service Canada Management Board approved the principles of an overarching Point of Service Strategy that included baseline criteria for choosing or renewing a SCCO location.

In order to establish a SCCO in a community or to renew an existing SCCO partnership for another term, regions had to meet two key criteria. The first criterion for renewal was related to the location and approval as a point of service based on strategic objectives and a commitment to community presence. The second criterion required that sufficient funds were available within the centrally-managed cost pool. Once these two key criteria had been satisfied, the approved funds were transferred to the region from the In-Person Channel office at National Headquarters.

1.7 Logic Model

The following exhibit presents a draft of the SCCO Logic Model with its associated activities, outputs and outcomes. The SCCO Logic Model was jointly developed by In-Person Channel Business Integration staff within the Citizen Service Branch and Service Canada Evaluation. It was designed to illustrate the results chain or how the activities and outputs of the SCCO Service Model are expected to lead to the achievement of the immediate, intermediate and final or ultimate outcomes. The logic model is presented in Exhibit 1-1.



2. Evaluation Context

The Evaluation of the SCCO Service Model was included in the Service Canada Evaluation Division's 2007-08 Evaluation Plan approved by the Audit and Evaluation Committee in November 2007.

2.1 Purpose of the Evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation was to examine major evaluation issues such as relevance, the extent to which the SCCO Service Model was on track to meeting its stated objectives and outcomes with respect to performance targets, efficiency, economy as well as design and delivery. The evaluation took place between April 2008 and March 2009.

2.2 Scope of the Evaluation

The scope of the evaluation covered the implementation and operational period of the SCCO Service Model of 2007-08. The evaluation included NHQ, and the provinces and territory where the SCCO Service Model had been implemented (Alberta, Ontario, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador and the Yukon). There were no community offices located in Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, Quebec, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, British Columbia, Northwest Territories and Nunavut.

2.3 Evaluation Issues

In accordance with the evaluation framework and the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (TBS) Policy on Evaluation implemented on April 1, 2009, the evaluation addressed value for money by examining the five core evaluation issues within relevance and performance (effectiveness, efficiency and economy) as well design and delivery. In addition, lessons learned were examined during the design and delivery of the SCCO Service Model. The questions grouped under each evaluation issue were developed by Service Canada Evaluation in consultation with In-Service Channel Business Integration. These questions, framed around outcomes identified in the logic model, were incorporated into the Evaluation Framework.

2.3.1 Relevance

Is there a continued need for the SCCO Service Model?

To what extent does the SCCO Service Model continue to address a demonstrable need and is responsive to the needs of Canadians.

Is the SCCO Service Model aligned with Government Priorities?

To what extent are the SCCO Service Model objectives linked to: (1) federal government priorities; and (2) departmental strategic outcomes.

Is the SCCO Service Model aligned with Federal Roles and Responsibilities?

Assessment of the role and responsibilities for the federal government in delivering the SCCO Service Model.

2.3.2 Performance (effectiveness, efficiency and economy)

To what extent has the SCCO Service Model achieved its Expected Outcomes?

To what extent has there been progress toward achievement of expected outcomes (including immediate, intermediate and ultimate outcomes) with reference to performance targets and program reach, program design, including the linkage and contribution of outputs to outcomes. (Effectiveness - Success).

- To what extent are SCCO providing convenient service across sites?
- To what extent are SCCO providing consistent service across sites?
- To what extent are performance management systems and monitoring strategies supporting the SCCO Service Model in achieving its outcomes?
- Were there any unintended impacts?

To what extent has the SCCO Service Model demonstrated efficiency and economy?

Assessment of resource utilization in relation to the production of outputs and progress toward expected outcomes.

- To what extent are the SCCO Service Model outcomes being achieved in an affordable manner?
- To what extent are the costs of achieving the program outcomes minimized?
- To what extent are some types of community partners providing better value than others?

2.3.3 Design and Delivery

- What are the variations in SCCO Service Model implementation? What were the challenges and benefits?
- Is the SCCO Service Model design flexible enough to accommodate the needs and socio-demographic profiles of communities being served?
- Are eligibility requirements appropriate and clear? Are eligibility requirements being applied consistently across provinces and territories?
- Is the partner selection process competitive?

- Are the roles and responsibilities between NHQ and the Regions well defined?
- To what extent are partner organizations delivering bilingual services in minority language communities.

2.4 Evaluation Approach and Methodology

The Evaluation Framework for the SCCO Service Model, including the above-mentioned SCCO Service Model logic model and an evaluation matrix, was used to guide the evaluation. The five main lines of inquiry used as sources of information were: a literature and document review; key informant interviews; a client satisfaction survey; site visits; and an operational cost analysis.

2.4.1 Document Review

One of five lines of evidence was the document review. The document review provided structure to the evaluation and background information to assist in the development of other components of the evaluation such as interview guides and cost-effectiveness analysis.

Documents reviewed were foundation pieces for the effective management and structure of the Service Model. They were also used to evaluate delivery and performance management. The document review consisted of, but was not limited to the following:

- Community Partners Service Delivery Strategy;
- Generic Service Canada Community Office SOW and individual SCCO contracts;
- Point of Service Strategy;
- Centrally-Managed Cost Pool Management Framework; and
- Financial and operational information.

2.4.2 Key Informant Interviews

Another line of evidence for this evaluation was key informant interviews. Key informants were selected on the basis of their knowledge and expertise relative to the range of activities associated with design, development, implementation, and monitoring of the SCCO Service Model.

Key informants were selected from three main groups which included: service managers and analysts at National Headquarters; regional coordinators; and SCCO staff. An interview guide was developed for each key informant group, and individuals were interviewed separately. Both in-person and telephone interviews were conducted in each of the key informant's preferred official language. The key informants provided explanations and other in-depth information that served to corroborate or clarify findings from other lines of evidence. Content analysis was undertaken by reviewing responses to each question with a

view to identifying areas of concurrence and areas of divergence within and across the three main groups. The interviews were conducted in November and December 2008 with a total of 27 key informants as planned.

2.4.3 Client Satisfaction Survey

Another source of evidence was the SCCO client satisfaction survey. This survey was conducted to determine user communities' satisfaction with the Service Model and to identify design and delivery features that were working particularly well. The following information was collected in the client satisfaction survey:

- number of visits to the SCCO;
- convenience of the location of the office;
- how clients became aware of the office;
- reasons for visiting the office;
- services clients used at the office;
- satisfaction with the assistance received from staff and the services; and
- over all satisfaction with the SCCO.

Clients accessing Service Canada information were invited to participate in the voluntary survey by SCCO staff. Follow-up telephone interviews were conducted with clients. All SCCO in Alberta, the Yukon, Newfoundland and Labrador, Ontario and Nova Scotia were to ask only clients that accessed the Service Canada information and services to participate. A client list was compiled from 27 SCCO. It should be noted that Service Canada Evaluation Division did not receive client names from any Ontario SCCO.

The original plan was to obtain a sample of at least 400 SCCO clients and to complete the survey shortly after individuals had visited the SCCO. However, because of the October 2008 federal election, the survey of individuals who had visited a SCCO in August 2008 did not begin until mid-November 2008. Due to this delay, coupled with a relatively small number of clients' names supplied by the SCCO, Service Canada Evaluation Division asked for another sample in December 2008; these clients were called in January 2009.

For telephone numbers for which there was no answer, several calls were made at different times of the day to reach potential shift workers and others who were not home during the evening. Up to 10 telephone attempts were made with each potential respondent. Interviewers conducted the surveys in either English or French, depending on the preference of the respondents.

2.4.4 Site Visits

Four SCCO were visited as part of the five lines of evidence. On-site observations allowed for in-person key informant interviews with project proponents. In addition, it provided the evaluation team an opportunity to observe the manner in which the services at the location were being delivered. A checklist was used to assess the SCCO and collect information on its facilities, usage, staff competence as well as general comments on the SCCO.

2.4.5 Cost Analysis

The purpose of the costing analysis as one of five lines of evidence was to determine the cost of operating SCCO. In addition to capturing existing differences in the cost of operating SCCO between regions, the cost analysis was also used to compare SCCO to other service models in order to identify advantages and disadvantages of small SCC and scheduled outreach services.

The analysis involved collecting data relating to cost, outputs (such as units of service), service point attributes (such as organization, hours of operation and types of services provided) and service area attributes (such as population served and distance to nearest SCC). Each of these was hypothesized to affect the cost of service delivery in a community, in addition to the Service Model employed there. The costing analysis drew on the following sources:

- monthly Service Canada activity reports;
- data pertaining to the value and length of contracts between Service Canada and each SCCO service provider;
- information relating to service point attributes and service area characteristics for each SCCO and for the community in which it was located;
- SCC annual cost data from fiscal year 2007-08, reporting costs related to salaries, non-salary expenses and rent for four SCC; and
- information relating to Outreach service provision, including accommodation allowances and kilometric rates from the TBS Travel Directive.

Two SCCO were excluded from the dataset used for the cost comparisons because one or more of their features were non-representative of the remaining SCCO. The inclusion of these SCCO was found to distort the results obtained from the costing analyses. The two SCCO excluded were the Calgary Centre for Newcomers and the Banff SCCO. The Calgary SCCO was excluded because the population within 50 km of that location, which included the entire city of Calgary, did not represent the clientele the office was expected to serve; moreover, it was in close proximity to numerous SCC. The Banff SCCO was excluded because client figures were unusually high, making it an atypical site.

2.4.6 Methodology Strengths and Limitations

Strengths

The approach used resulted in a reliable evaluation, which allowed for the provision of evidence to conclude on all issues. In addition, because multiple lines of evidence were used, as well as qualitative and quantitative data, the evaluation methodology was relatively strong. Other factors that contributed to the overall strength of the methodology were:

- the resources allocated to the evaluation were reasonable;
- the key informants and stakeholders contacted were instrumental in ensuring that the evaluation team had all of the information required in a timely manner; and
- individuals contacted were interested in the study and were agreeable to participating in the evaluation interviews and in providing information.

Limitations

Conclusions on the effectiveness of SCCO that provided basic service compared to service models providing full service should be drawn with caution because of factors such as the number of clients seen and served, and the location of the SCCO in regions.

The interpretation of client satisfaction was limited to the sampling technique, its size and distribution. Though random sampling technique was used to collect feedback from SCCO clients, the number of potential respondents to the survey varied widely, with some SCCO providing no names and others providing many.²

In total, 203 out of the planned 400 clients completed the survey with a response rate slightly over 50%. The overall results can be considered to be accurate to $\pm 7\%$, 19 times out of 20. The interpretation was limited by the range of locations, difference in hours of operation and number of visitors served.

2.5 Out-of-Scope Issues

Although this evaluation addressed issues included in the evaluation framework and the TBS Policy on Evaluation (April 2009) it did not consider the following additional issues that surfaced during the evaluation.

- Although some key informants discussed the idea of expanding services offered by SCCO to include transactions such as Social Insurance Number, Employment Insurance or Canada Pension Plan applications, it was not included in the evaluation.

² In such cases, an over-representation of some SCCO or an under-representation of others may have resulted.

- Several regions have co-located SCCO in locations providing services under contribution agreements. The evaluation did not consider whether there were controls in place to identify the purposes and application of funds paid out under each instrument in accordance with all applicable policy requirements.
- SCCO locations were compared to the baseline criteria set out in the Point of Service Strategy. However, locations that could be potentially added to the network were not identified.

It is significant to note that, to avoid duplication, the evaluation did not follow-up on the CSB internal Community Partner Service Delivery Strategy study and its 17 recommendations contained therein. Nonetheless, many of the issues contained in this internal study were raised during the conduct of the evaluation. The status of the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Community Partner Service Delivery Strategy study was not considered as part of this evaluation.

3. Key Findings

3.1 Relevance

Overview

In this section, the evaluation assessed the relevance of the SCCO Service Model to the needs of Canadians, government priorities and Service Canada's mandate and strategic objectives. In addition, the role and responsibilities for the federal government in delivering the SCCO Service Model were also assessed.

Is there a continued need for the SCCO Service Model?

To what extent does the SCCO Service Model continue to address a demonstrable need and is responsive to the needs of Canadians.

The majority of key informants felt that the SCCO Service Model was a good method to expand service in underserved areas. For example, it provided cost effective service delivery in areas where demand was low and in areas that did not justify investment in a permanent SCC. It enabled Service Canada to provide services in remote communities where travel costs make scheduled outreach a prohibitively expensive alternative. Furthermore, the model enabled Service Canada to provide service to client segment groups, and as well, to provide temporary services as required.

Although not reflected in the Client Satisfaction Survey, some key informants nonetheless expressed the desire to expand the mandate of the SCCO Service Model to include transactional services such as Social Insurance Number, Employment Insurance and Canada Pension Plan. They suggested that pathfinding services could be augmented with Outreach Service, thereby enabling clients to complete transactions where they live. Also, it was thought that this proposed approach could enable Service Canada staff to monitor the SCCO and provide updates on service offerings without increasing the risk of establishing an employee-employer relationship.

Most respondents (88%) to the client satisfaction survey were very satisfied with their overall experience at the SCCO; with three-quarters (76%) saying they would be very likely to go back to the SCCO to use the services again. Even though close to half (48%) of respondents were referred to another location most (83%) reported being able to get all the information they were looking for. Of the 98 clients referred to other locations less than a third (28%) were referred to a full service SCC to find what they were looking for. Other than clients who were misdirected to a SCCO instead of a SCC by the 1 800 O-Canada number, key informants reported few complaints about SCCO.

These results for the SCCO compare favourably to the results of the Service Canada Client Satisfaction Research 2008 Baseline Survey that reported 88% of those who in-person visit expressed satisfaction with the overall quality of service received, with

over half (57%) expressing strong satisfaction. Very few (4%) expressed any degree of dissatisfaction with the service received.

Essentially all respondents (99%) indicated that they received assistance from on-site staff while they were visiting the SCCO. While at the SCCO, half indicated that they picked up Government of Canada brochures or published materials; while 48% said that they received a referral for the information that they needed; 41% said that they accessed the Internet at the SCCO for information on government services; and 10% indicated that they used the phone to call 1 800 O-Canada or some other Government of Canada call centre.

Is the SCCO Service Model aligned with Government Priorities?

To what extent are the SCCO Service Model objectives linked to: (1) federal government priorities; and (2) departmental strategic outcomes.

It was found that the SCCO Service Model supported objectives to make government more effective by improving service delivery and by building partnerships with third parties to deliver better services. The SCCO Service Model also served to increase the Federal presence through signage and local advertising.

There was general agreement amongst key informants that the SCCO Service Model contributed to Service Canada's strategic outcome of *Service Excellence for Canadians* by improving services to Canadians. The funding mechanism for the SCCO Service Model, which relied solely on contracts with third party deliverers, enabled the development of partnerships with community organizations, most of which were not-for-profit. It was found that the SCCO supported the Click-Call-Visit by providing a location where Canadians could access these services.

About two out of three (67%) respondents to the client satisfaction survey stated that they specifically visited a SCCO to get information about federal government programs and services. The most common reason given for visiting a SCCO was to apply for or find information about Employment Insurance (45%).

Relevance Conclusion

In that the majority of people that visited a SCCO was very satisfied with their experience and was able to obtain the information they were seeking, this Service Model was deemed to be responsive to the needs of Canadians. Furthermore, the SCCO Service Model was found to align with federal government priorities in that it improved service delivery through community partnerships and increased federal presence. Hence, the SCCO Service Model further contributed to the Service Canada strategic outcome of *Service Excellence for Canadians* by improving services to Canadians.

3.2 Performance (effectiveness, efficiency and economy)

Overview

The focus of this section was on the degree to which the expected outcomes of the SCCO Service Model were achieved. This was assessed by measuring the extent to which progress was made towards achieving immediate outcomes and what progress was being made towards the ultimate outcome of providing convenient access to in-person service on an equitable cost-effective basis as outlined in the SCCO Logic Model.

To what extent SCCO providing convenient and consistent service across sites?

More than half (53%) of the respondents to the client satisfaction survey said that they travelled less than five kilometres to visit the SCCO, including 1 in 5 (21%) who travelled less than one kilometre. About 3 in 10 (29%) said that they travelled more than 10 kilometres including 12% who said they travelled 26 kilometres or more. On average, respondents indicated that they travelled 12 kilometres to visit the SCCO.

The Community Partner Service Delivery Strategy suggested that geographic criteria be used to provide a degree of consistency for SCCO across the country. The Point of Service Strategy established baseline criteria for determining the location of SCC, Scheduled Outreach and SCCO. The criteria for determining the location of SCCO included the following: locations where less than 80% of the population of the Economic Region resided within 50 kilometres of another point of service; a minimum population to be served of 500 persons within 50 kilometres; and locations that were at least 50 kilometres from a SCC.

The analysis also showed that the addition of SCCO increased the percentage of the population served in a number of economic regions. In Banff - Jasper - Rocky Mountain House the population served rose to 83% from 38%, Wood Buffalo - Cold Lake to 82% from 55%, and the Yukon Territory to 82% from 73%. Some economic regions where SCCO were located still failed to meet the baseline criteria, but access in these economic regions has improved significantly.

At the time of the evaluation, SCCO were located in Alberta, Ontario, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia and the Yukon.

The evaluation showed that SCCO locations were characterized by considerable variability in terms of service point and service area characteristics, as well as client activity. As indicated in Table 3-1, on average, SCCO were located 239 kilometres from the nearest SCC, served a population of 7,255 and operated for 28 hours a week. However, their distance from the nearest SCC ranged from 27 to 850 kilometres, the population within a 50 kilometre distance varied between a low of 174 and a high of 88,774 and the number of clients served ranged from 17 to 1,305 in the three month period of April to June 2008.

Table 3-1 SCCO Variation in Service Point, Service Area Characteristics and Client Activity³				
	Number of SCCO	Mean	Minimum	Maximum
Service point and service area characteristics				
Distance to nearest SCC (km)	62	238.6	27	850
Population in 50 km radius	62	7 255	174	88 774
Weekly hours of operation	62	27.83	14	40
Activity measures				
Clients, April 2008–June 2008	62	290	17	1 305
Source: Service Canada Evaluation				

Key informants indicated that SCCO were providing consistent service regionally, but did not know whether there was consistency across regions. Each SCCO met the minimum facility requirements set out in the generic Statement of Work (SOW) and all but two sites were accessible by wheelchair. Furthermore, bilingual services were offered at eight out sixty-three locations

In that the SCCO Service Model was implemented differently in each region, the evaluation included a comparison of operating and the per client cost. The cost comparison was based on the three-month period of April to June 2008 as shown in Table 3-2. The comparison illustrated in Table 3-2 assumes that the model was implemented consistently within each jurisdiction. It presents the contract value, cost, number of clients and cost per client for SCCO in each region.

Table 3-2 SCCO Cost Comparison (April – June 2008) by Province and Territory⁴					
Province/Territory	Alta.	N.L.	N.S.	Ont.	Y.T.
Number of offices	20	13	5	22	2
Contract values in FY 2008/09 (\$)	743,446	325,000	219,134	480,442	104,710
Service point and service area characteristics					
Total Cost, April–June, 2008 (\$)	185,862	81,250	54,784	120,110	26,178
Average monthly cost (\$)	3,097	2,083	3,652	1,820	4,362
Weekly hours of operation	35	21	39	24	20
Activity measures					
# of clients, April 2008-June 2008	10,816	2,573	2,290	1,654	646
# of requests, April 2008-June 2008	13,029	3,084	2,419	1,693	827
Outcome measures					
Cost per client (\$)	17.17	31.58	23.92	72.62	40.52
Cost per request (\$)	14.27	26.35	22.65	70.95	31.65
Source: Service Canada					

³ Two SCCO were excluded from the dataset used for the cost comparisons because one or more of their features were non-representative of the remaining SCCO: Calgary Centre for Newcomers and the Banff SCCO.

⁴ Two SCCO were excluded from the dataset used for the cost comparisons because one or more of their features were non-representative of the remaining SCCO: Calgary Centre for Newcomers and the Banff SCCO.

Four site visits provided favourable reports that the contract conditions related to signage, hours of operation, facilities and equipment were being met.

The evaluation found that the SCCO Service Model was providing convenient service in the locations where it was offered and provided increased access to self-serve tools and information services in those locations. Although access to SCCO points of service was not consistent across the country, where they were located, SCCO met the minimum level of service set out in the generic SOW for Click-Call-Visit.

To what extent are performance management systems and monitoring strategies supporting the SCCO Service Model in achieving its outcomes?

There are three expected immediate outcomes in the Logic Model that the SCCO Service Model was intended to demonstrate progress towards achievement. These are:

- Service gaps are addressed through partnerships with community organizations;
- Improved access to and usage of government services across communities; and
- Services delivered in a manner consistent with the Service Canada Charter.

Performance measurement of individual SCCO was found to be very basic, consisting of monthly activity reports on the number of clients and requests submitted to the appropriate regional office. Although service providers were clear on the reporting requirements, they found it challenging to undertake monitoring during busy periods. Furthermore, systems had not been implemented to monitor SCCO activity such as telephone or internet activity originating from individual offices.

The Community Partner Service Delivery Strategy included protocols on: how sites should post Service Canada signs; how regions should choose a community partner; and how to introduce new services. These protocols aided in ensuring consistency and equality among the services offered across community offices.

A generic SOW detailing the roles and responsibilities of service providers and Service Canada, the scope of work for deliverers, and the reporting requirements of service providers to Service Canada was used with all community partners. Key informants felt it reduced the workload associated with contracting.

Key informants representing Service Canada raised concerns about SCCO staff exceeding their pathfinding role and providing more assistance to clients. They also mentioned striving to avoid creating an employer-employee relationship but being unclear on what can and cannot be asked of the service provider. Some key informants mentioned a desire for a sharing of best practices to support and monitor performance of SCCO.

Although the Office of Client Satisfaction did not capture information on complaints related to the SCCO, most respondents to the client survey conducted as part of the subject evaluation were very satisfied with their overall experience at the SCCO, with many saying they would likely to go back to the SCCO to use the services again. Other

than clients who were misdirected to a SCCO rather than to a SCC by 1 800 O-Canada, key informants reported few complaints about SCCO.

The study found many of the activities and outputs identified in the SCCO logic model were used to support the service model. However, monitoring and communications practices could be improved.

To what extent has the SCCO Service Model demonstrated efficiency and economy?

Assessment of resource utilization in relation to the production of outputs and progress toward expected outcomes.

The SCCO Service Model used a generic SOW to detail the roles and responsibilities of service providers and Service Canada; the scope of work for deliverers; and the reporting requirements of service providers to Service Canada. The SOW also contained specific protocols on the posting of Service Canada signage, record keeping and reporting.

The evaluation found that the SCCO Service Model improved the level of service in a number of regions but it also found that there were a number of SCCO funded using the cost-pool that did not meet the criteria set out in the Point of Service Strategy.

To what extent are the SCCO Service Model outcomes being achieved in an affordable manner?

One weakness identified during the course of the evaluation was the accessibility of financial data. It took considerable time and effort to collect financial data for the SCCO partnership contracts. However, a Centrally-Managed Cost Pool Management Framework was approved in 2007 to monitor the total funds expended and permit accurate forecasting. Furthermore, a cost-pool manager, appointed in July 2008, has improved financial reporting for SCCO.

In addition, cost data related to the provision of Outreach was not available to complete a cost comparison of the Outreach and SCCO Service Models. In this case, a quantitative model was constructed during the evaluation to estimate the hypothetical cost to Service Canada if Outreach were provided to communities which currently have SCCO.

In conducting the document review, it was found that the budgetary needs of the SCCO Service Model were greater than funds available (\$1.7 million). The additional funding provided in 2008-09 increased the total funding to \$1.9 million. However, this was only sufficient to cover escalating contract costs, not for the addition of new SCCO locations.

Key informants felt SCCO provided services in an affordable manner in remote or difficult to reach locations. The budget of \$1.9 million supported 64 SCCO (including the 2 offices that were not part of the evaluation).

The evaluation included a cost analysis to compare the cost of the SCCO, Outreach and SCC Service Models. The basis of comparison was the cost per client for each model. SCCO provided basic pathfinding service while the other service models provided full service.

SCC offered a mix of information and transactional services such as taking payments and validating documents. Scheduled Outreach Sites involved Service Canada staff traveling to pre-determined locations on a regular basis (such as one day per week) to provide services that were tailored to the needs of the community (mainly information and transaction support).

The cost per client comparison for SCCO and a SCC Service Models in each province are shown in Table 3-3. The total number of clients and total cost were used to calculate cost per client value. SCC costs included rent, salary and non-salary expenditures. SCC selected for use in the comparison were located in relatively small communities. When financial data for the most appropriate office were not available, an alternative was chosen. A representative SCC was selected from each region except the Yukon where financial data were not available.

The results showed that the cost per client for SCC ranged from \$18.28 to \$171.27 and from \$17.18 to \$72.62 for SCCO. Generally, the cost per client was higher for SCC than SCCO.

Table 3-3 Cost Per Client Cost Comparison between SCCO and SCC Service Models				
	Number of Offices	Total Clients*	Total Cost * (\$)	Cost per Client (\$)
Alberta				
SCC (2007-08)	1	6,961	238,713	34.29
SCCO (Apr-June 2008)	20	10,816	185,862	17.18
Newfoundland and Labrador				
SCC (2007/8)	1	2,124	363,864	171.27
SCCO (Apr-June 2008)	13	2,573	81,250	31.58
Nova Scotia				
SCC (2007-08)	1	3,607	102,804	28.50
CCO (Apr-June 2008)	5	2,290	54,784	23.92
Ontario				
SCC (2007-08)	1	8,235	150,501	18.28
SCCO (Apr-June 2008)	22	1,650	120,110	72.62
Total				
SCC (2007-08)	4	20,928	855,863	40.90
SCCO (Apr-June 2008)	60	17,979	486,184	26.04
* SCC data is for the 2007-08 fiscal year and SCCO data are for the first quarter of 2008-09 fiscal year. To compare activity levels and cost for the different service models a standardized reporting period would have to be used.				

Since cost data related to the provision of Scheduled Outreach Service were not available to the evaluation team, a quantitative model was constructed in order to conduct a cost comparison of the Outreach and SCCO Service Models. The quantitative model estimated the hypothetical cost to Service Canada to replace existing SCCO with Outreach. For the purpose of the evaluation, the model used the set of assumptions described below. However, the model can be used also with different assumptions and parameters for specific locations.

The model included two categories of costs related to the provision of Outreach service. One category related to compensation for Service Canada personnel who would provide Outreach service. The second cost category included costs related to travel, meals, accommodation, and the rental of facilities from which services would be provided during visits. The model did not incorporate capital costs and thus excluded the purchase of computer equipment. Similarly, the model did not include any applicable communications or advertising costs. Where travel by car was feasible, the mileage charge paid to employees reflected compensation for operating and capital costs.

Compensation consisted of salary and benefits that would be paid to workers if they were compensated hourly. On the basis of consultations with Service Canada, it was determined that the annual salary of Outreach personnel was \$52,000, and benefits accruing to these workers were approximately 20% of their salary (\$10,400). It was further assumed that the working day was 7.5 hours, and that there were 250 working days in a year. On the basis of this information and set of assumptions, Outreach workers were compensated at the rate of \$33.28 per hour (any costs associated with overtime were not included).

It was assumed that Outreach was provided from facilities which were rented for that purpose by Service Canada, at a rate of \$150 per day. The rental fee was assumed to incorporate the cost of Internet access. It should be noted that Service Canada may in many cases be able to rent local government offices or other public facilities for a nominal rate.

The cost comparison involved two scenarios. Each community fell into one of the scenarios depending on its distance from the nearest SCC. If the distance from a community to the nearest Centre was greater than the average for all communities with an SCCO (239 km), it was assumed that Outreach workers would generally travel to that community by airplane. Otherwise, it was assumed that the employee would travel by car, using their own vehicle. Exceptions were made in a handful of cases where this assumption was not realistic. For example, the SCCO in Forteau, Labrador is located relatively near a number of SCC but these are all in Newfoundland, across the Strait of Belle Isle. In this case, it was assumed that Service Canada employees would fly rather than drive to provide Outreach service in Forteau.

To simplify the model, three further assumptions were imposed. First, while the number of days spent by an Outreach worker in a community may vary, it was assumed that s/he returns home on the last day. For example, if a Service Canada employee provides three days of Outreach service in the community, s/he would find accommodation in the community after the first and second days of service, but would return home after the third. The second assumption was that however many days of service an Outreach worker provided in a community, s/he would spend half that amount of time in transit to and from the site. For instance, if a Service Canada employee provided two days of Outreach service in a community, it was assumed that s/he spent an additional day traveling to and from that community, irrespective of the mode of transit. The third assumption was that the employee provides 7.5 hours of work each day s/he supplies Outreach services in the community.

If the worker traveled by car, s/he would be reimbursed at the province-specific mileage rates supplied by the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat in its Travel Directive. If the worker traveled by airplane, s/he would be reimbursed for airfare. Travel time was considered part of the work day, and therefore salary and benefits accrued to Service Canada employees above and beyond reimbursement for mileage or airfare. Irrespective of whether time was spent in transit or in the provision of Outreach service, personnel would be reimbursed for meals and incidentals at the daily rates specified by the Treasury Board Secretariat. In addition, employees would be reimbursed for accommodation at a fixed daily rate for each night they spent in the community they were serving.

For the purpose of the study, it was assumed that irrespective of the mode of transit used to reach each community, one Service Canada employee would visit a location, twice a month for two days. The results for communities to which Service Canada employees would be expected to travel by car; hence the hypothetical cost per month for communities within driving distance of a SCC is shown in Table 3-4. Under the baseline assumptions, Outreach service was estimated to be less expensive than operating an SCCO in Alberta and Nova Scotia, but more expensive in Newfoundland and Labrador and Ontario. It should be noted however, that the average hours of operation for SCCO in these regions was 35 per week, whereas the average hours of operation for the Outreach model would be 7.5 hours per week.

Table 3-4 SCCO and Outreach Service Model Cost Comparison – Car Travel (N = 42)*				
	AB (N = 18)	NL (N = 12)	NS (N = 5)	ON (N = 7)
Average cost per month for SCCO	\$3,303.92	\$2,083.33	\$3,652.23	\$1,980.61
Average cost per month for Outreach	\$2,791.04	\$2,781.51	\$2,673.99	\$2,807.74
* Note that neither of the two SCCO located in Yukon were included in the scenario as the driving distance to a SCC exceeded the maximum set out in the assumptions.				

The cost comparison results for communities to which Service Canada employees would be expected to travel by airplane from both outside and within the Yukon are shown in Tables 3-5 and 3-6 respectively. The monthly average cost of Outreach was higher than the cost of an SCCO under all assumptions about the cost of airfare. Locations in the Yukon were the exception, as the monthly average cost of Outreach was lower when airfare was relatively inexpensive. To provide some perspective, on August 11, 2009, the lowest one-way airfare to an SCCO in the Yukon from Whitehorse was \$140.

Table 3-5 Cost Comparison of SCCO and Outreach Service Models for fly-in Communities excluding the Yukon			
SCCO/Outreach Service Model cost comparison – airplane travel, communities outside Yukon (N = 18)*			
Airfare, one-way	Average cost per month of SCCO service	Estimated cost per month of Outreach service	% Difference between Service Models
\$100.00	\$1,765.05	\$3,023.80	71%
\$200.00		\$3,423.80	94%
\$300.00		\$3,823.80	117%
\$400.00		\$4,223.80	139%
\$500.00		\$4,623.80	162%
\$600.00		\$5,023.80	185%
\$700.00		\$5,423.80	207%
\$800.00		\$5,823.80	230%
* Note that the baseline results assume two trips to each Outreach Site per month			

Table 3-6 Cost Comparison of SCCO and Outreach Service Models for fly-in Communities in the Yukon			
SCCO/Outreach Service Model cost comparison – airplane travel, Yukon communities (N = 2)*			
Airfare, one-way	Average cost per month of SCCO service	Estimated cost per month of Outreach service	% Difference between Service Models
\$100.00	\$4,362.92	\$3,078.80	-29%
\$200.00		\$3,478.80	-20%
\$300.00		\$3,878.80	-11%
\$400.00		\$4,278.80	-2%
\$500.00		\$4,678.80	7%
\$600.00		\$5,078.80	16%
\$700.00		\$5,478.80	26%
\$800.00		\$5,878.80	35%
* Note that the baseline results assume two trips to each Outreach Site per month			

Note: Fly-in communities are defined as those further than the average distance to an SCC of all SCCO (239 km). This definition includes 20 SCCO; 2 in the Yukon, 3 in Alberta and 15 in Ontario.

Based on feedback from key informants and the cost analysis, SCCO was an efficient service model for remote or difficult to reach locations. Some key informants indicated that the SCC Service Model was too expensive to implement in these locations and when servicing the locations using the outreach model, there were a number of human resource issues to overcome. For example, it might be difficult to find staff willing to travel and to stay in remote locations where short-term rental accommodations were not available. Employee safety was also mentioned by one key informant.

The evaluation found that the SCCO Service Model was an affordable method of providing service to remote and rural communities. Although the Outreach Service Model would be less expensive to operate in Alberta and Nova Scotia, it would result in a reduction in the hours of service.

To what extent are the costs of achieving the program outcomes minimized?

As shown in Table 3-2 above, the 22 SCCO in Ontario had the lowest average monthly operating cost of \$1,820 for an average of 24 hours of operation per week. For the 13 SCCO in Newfoundland and Labrador, the average monthly operating cost was \$2,083 for 21 hours of operation per week. The five SCCO in Nova Scotia had an average monthly operating cost of \$3,652 for 39 hours of operation per week. For Alberta, the average monthly operating cost was \$3,097 for 35 hours of operation per week. The two SCCO in the Yukon had the highest average monthly operating cost at \$4,362 for 20 hours of operation per week.

The Alberta SCCO cost per client was the lowest of any province/territory (\$17.17) while Ontario had the highest cost per client (\$72.62). The variations in per client costs can be explained in part by large differences in activity in each province and territory. For example, in 2008 between April and June, the 22 SCCO in Alberta experienced more than six times the number of clients as the 20 SCCO in Ontario SCCO (10,816 versus 1,654).

Differences in per unit costs between Ontario and other provinces and the Yukon may be explained by differences in the implementation of the SCCO Service Model in each jurisdiction. SCCO in Ontario are generally located in small, remote Aboriginal communities. The size of these communities would be expected to limit the demand for service in each location, with the effect of increasing cost per unit of service provided.

Although not formally documented, some key informants expressed the opinion that costs had increased due the procurement process and that multi-year contracts awarded through Public Works and Government Services Canada were not negotiated as aggressively as they would be by local offices. Although this was an unintended impact, the overall view remained that multi-year contracts reduced the amount of time devoted to the procurement process.

Performance Conclusion

The evaluation determined that a number of SCCO locations did not meet the minimum location criteria set out in either the Point of Service Strategy or the Community Partner Service Delivery Strategy. The limited financial resources available to the SCCO Service Model were being used to fund locations that ought to have been served by another service model or to fund locations that were already being served by full-service offices.

The evaluation concluded that the SCCO Service Model was providing convenient service in the locations where it was offered and had increased access to self-serve tools and information services in those locations. Although access to SCCO points of service was not consistently available across the country, where located, SCCO met the minimum level of service set out in the generic SOW for Click-Call-Visit.

The evaluation found many of the activities and outputs identified in the SCCO logic model were used to support the Service Model. However, monitoring and communications practices could be improved to better demonstrate the linkages between activities, outputs and outcomes. There could be a greater opportunity for individual SCCO to tell their performance story and thereby add to the refinement of the Service Canada Point of Service Strategy.

The evaluation found that the SCCO Service Model was an affordable method of providing service to remote and rural communities. Although the Outreach Service Model would be less expensive to operate than a SCCO in Alberta and Nova Scotia, it would result in a reduction in the total hours of service.

3.3 Design and Delivery

Overview

Details regarding the design and delivery of the SCCO Service Model were examined in order to capture the challenges and successes experienced by those responsible for the implementation.

What are the variations in SCCO Service Model implementation? What were the challenges and benefits?

The document and literature review, as well as the key informant interviews confirmed that SCCO were characterized by considerable variability, including large provincial and territorial differences. There were differences noted in partner type, site selection criteria, proximity to SCC, service area population, operating hours and equipment, number of clients and requests per month.

In some cases, the SCCO were open on a part-time basis with one employee providing service. Usually, there were alternate employees available to fill in when required. Other regions had SCCO open full-time with a few staff trained to provide pathfinding services. Furthermore, SCCO were frequently co-located with other federal or provincial programs that were related to employment.

With regard to challenges, harmonizing location selection criteria and the categories of points of service across regions was identified. Also, a number of SCCO were located at sites that were established under previous programs or criteria while the SCCO Service Model policy and procedures were still being developed. The overall level of funding was also raised as an issue.

Community partners found that teaching clients how to use the Internet was very time consuming and not possible in high-volume locations.

Another challenge highlighted was that community partners had difficulty in explaining the difference between their SCCO service and that of a SCC. This was particularly true when the clients arrived at a SCCO expecting to make a payment or have documents validated because they have been referred to the location by the 1 800 number.

The increased accessibility to service in remote or rural communities was clearly found to be a benefit of the SCCO Service Model. Another benefit was that the SCCO provided facilities in locations where access to Click and Call options are challenged by infrastructure or cost. In addition, the community partners benefited from the increased visibility and ability to provide a richer service to their clients. Furthermore, application forms that were straight forward in design worked well in the SCCO Service Model.

Is the SCCO Service Model design flexible enough to accommodate the needs and socio-demographic profiles of communities being served?

The SCCO Service Model was deemed to be functioning as designed and was found to be flexible enough to accommodate the needs of the communities being served. The regions used the generic SOW with minimal alterations. One region expressed the desire to be able to offer the community partners the option of flexible payment schedules. In that the number of clients fluctuated throughout the year, partners wanted more flexibility to extend hours of service during peak times and reduce it during slower periods. Operating hours for all SCCO were between 8:00 am and 4:30 pm.

Key informants agreed that the generic SOW can be adapted to suit conditions in their specific region.

Are eligibility requirements appropriate and clear? Are eligibility requirements being applied consistently across provinces and territories?

The eligibility requirements were found to be appropriate and clear, but key informants suggested the information may not be widely available or consistently applied. The new sites in Ontario were specifically mentioned as being the least consistent with the intent of the SCCO Service Model.

Is the partner selection process competitive?

Overall, key informants indicated that the partner selection process was competitive because contracts were posted on the Canadian Public Tenders Service, MERX. Typically, they only received one bid and it was often from the existing contract holder. Given the limited number of potential partners in remote and small rural communities this was not surprising but it does mean the same contractor could provide service continuously for an extended period of time. This appeared to be the case for a number of locations inherited from other programs.

Are the roles and responsibilities between NHQ and the Regions well defined?

According to key informants, the SCCO Service Model has undergone some growing pains. The regions indicated that in the beginning, there was no or little support from NHQ. However, improvements were noted with the establishment of the central cost-pool. The generic SOW, contract templates and the Community Partners Service Delivery Strategy provide structure to the service model. However, key informants indicated that more work was needed to clarify and communicate the roles and responsibilities, particularly between NHQ and regions to establish points of contact and communication practices in order to better guide the management of the service model.

There was a sense that the SCCO Service Model had been “neglected” and had no clear direction. For example, there did not seem to be a clear understanding of who was responsible for monitoring the contracts. This raised concerns regarding NHQ and regional responsibilities for monitoring and ensuring goods and services were provided as per contractual agreement.

The central cost-pool was considered to be an appropriate funding mechanism to monitor the SCCO Service Model, but there were some challenges noted. For example, the level of funding only supported the existing SCCO and did not allow for contract escalation or expansion to other locations. There were instances of long delays in approval or finalizing of contracts. It was suggested that having a local manager or regular on-site visits would permit more direct monitoring.

To what extent are partner organizations delivering bilingual services in minority language communities?

At least eight SCCO provided services in English and French, but no information on the offices located in Nova Scotia and Ontario was available on the Service Canada Web site. However, key informants reported that several SCCO in Nova Scotia provided bilingual service and that SCCO in Ontario provided service in Aboriginal languages. In addition, the Calgary SCCO served newcomers to Canada in their mother tongue.

A number of other community offices appeared to be located in regions where the population of French speaking residents would likely meet the TBS definition of significant demand that requires bilingual services be provided by at least one government office in the community. However, it was beyond the scope of the evaluation to determine whether other federal departments were providing this service.

The evaluation concluded that the SCCO Service Model had made progress towards providing service in the official languages as well as improved access to government services and information that is easy to understand by offering service in other languages.

Design and Delivery Conclusion

The evaluation found that although the design of the SCCO Service Model was suitable with supporting tools and administrative systems, the delivery was characterized by considerable variability. There was a sense that the SCCO Service Model had been “neglected” and suffered from insufficient monitoring and communication.

4. Conclusions

The SCCO Service Model was created as one of four categories of points of service developed to improve service to Canadians by working with partners to provide access across multiple service delivery channels, including in person, by telephone, Internet or mail. In general, the SCCO Service Model was found to contribute to this objective by offering pathfinding assistance and access to call centres and the Internet in rural and remote communities.

In that the majority of people visiting a SCCO was very satisfied with their experience and was able to obtain the information they were seeking, the SCCO Service Model was deemed to be responsive to the needs of Canadians. Furthermore, the SCCO Service Model was found to align with federal government priorities in that it improved service delivery through community partnerships and increased federal presence. Overall, the SCCO Service Model contributed to the Service Canada strategic outcome of *Service Excellence for Canadians* by improving service delivery to Canadians.

On the whole, the evaluation found that progress was made towards achieving the immediate outcomes of the SCCO Service Model, specifically: addressing service gaps; improving access and use of government services across communities; and delivering service in a cost-effective manner.

The evaluation found that the SCCO Service Model provided convenient service in the locations where it was offered and increased access to self-serve tools and information services in those locations. Although access to SCCO points of service was not consistent across the country, where they were located, SCCO did meet the minimum level of service set out in the generic SOW for Click-Call-Visit. Progress was made towards providing service in the official languages and, further, towards improved access to government services and information that was easy to understand by offering service in other languages.

In general, access to SCCO points of service was not consistent across the country. The evaluation determined that a number of SCCO locations did not meet the minimum location criteria set out in the Point of Service Strategy. The limited financial resources available to the SCCO Service Model were being used to fund locations that ought to have been served by another service model or to fund locations that were already being served by full-service offices. Improvements in this area would result in increased effectiveness and efficiency and a more consistent level of service across service types.

The findings detailed above indicate that the SCCO Service Model was making progress towards achievement of expected results and outcomes, and that the outcomes were derived through reasonable means. Additionally, the SCCO Service Model can be viewed as a pertinent investment for Service Canada due to its alignment with the Government of Canada priorities.

5. Lessons Learned

The intent of the examination of lessons learned during the design and implementation of the SCCO Service Model was to highlight challenges and successes in order to inform the ongoing improvement process.

One challenge that was noted was confusion with regard to the various service models, especially between SCC and SCCO. In order to ensure that clients were not referred to a SCCO for a transactional service (such as Social Insurance Number) the 1 800 O-Canada operators need to be familiar with the differences between SCC and SCCO. Community partners also need to be trained on the different Service Models so that they can describe these differences to clients.

A generic SOW was found to be a very effective tool for streamlining the contracting process and communicating the minimum service requirements.

The evaluation was hampered to a degree by the difficulty in obtaining the most recent version of documents or approved activities. Having one source for and agreement on all approved documents would have enhanced comprehension especially during periods of high rate of staff turnover.

The evaluation was based on the assumption that consistent service refers to consistent service within the SCCO Service Model rather than across other service models.

Multi-year contracts were a more efficient approach to contracting as the cycle for a one year contract was reported to be just under a year.

6. Recommendations

It is recommended that Service Canada Citizen Service Branch:

1. review and harmonize the categories of points of service and the location selection criteria across regions to ensure national consistency on SCCO Service Model policy and procedures including the identification of service gaps in rural and remote areas and solutions to address these gaps;
2. define roles and responsibilities between NHQ and regions with respect to the management of SCCO including the implementation of a clear reporting structure; and
3. develop and implement a comprehensive performance monitoring system to track the achievement of outcomes to support decision-making on whether individual SCCO should be continued, closed or transitioned into another points of service category.