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May 2010

Formative Evaluation of the Adult Learning, Literacy and Essential Skills Program

Final Report
May 2010

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Final Report

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

May 2010

**SP-965-08-10E
(également disponible en français)**

Note: the departmental catalogue number is placed on the front cover, bottom left hand side.

You can order this publication by contacting:

Publications Services
Human Resources and Skills Development Canada
140, promenade du Portage
Phase IV, 12th Floor
Gatineau (Quebec)
K1A 0J9

Fax: 819-953-7260

Online: <http://www12.hrsdc.gc.ca>

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Paper

ISBN: 978-1-100-16622-3

Cat. No.: HS28-182/2010E

PDF

ISBN: 978-1-100-16623-0

Cat. No.: HS28-182/2010E

Table of Contents

List of abbreviations	i
Executive Summary	iii
Management Response/Action Plan.....	xi
1. Introduction and Context.....	1
1.1 Program Background	1
1.2 Adult Learning Literacy and Essential Skills Program	2
1.2.1 Program Description	2
1.2.2 Program Objectives and Activities.....	3
1.2.3 Program Governance.....	5
1.2.4 Program Funding.....	5
1.2.5 Grants and Contributions Funding	5
1.2.6 Distribution of Funding.....	6
1.3 Evaluation Objectives and Scope.....	7
2. Approach and Methodology.....	9
2.1 Key Lines of Evidence.....	9
2.1.1 Document Review	9
2.1.2 Key Informant Interviews	9
2.1.3 Administrative Data Analysis	10
2.1.4 Performance Measurement Systems and Mechanisms Review	11
2.1.5 File Review	11
2.1.6 Survey.....	12
2.2 Methodological Limitations	15
2.2.1 Missing Data	15
2.2.2 Survey Data Interpretation Limitations.....	17
3. Key Evaluation Findings	19
3.1 Evaluation Issue: Program Design and Delivery	19
3.2 Evaluation Issue: Performance Monitoring and Measurement.....	38
3.3 Evaluation Issue: Preliminary Findings – outputs oriented	45
4. Key Conclusions and Recommendations	51
4.1 Evaluation Issue: Program Design and Delivery	51
4.2 Evaluation Issue: Performance Monitoring and Measurement.....	54
4.3 Evaluation Issue: Preliminary Findings – outputs oriented	56
Appendix A – Program Logic Model	59
Appendix B – Evaluation Issues and Questions Matrix.....	61

List of Tables

Table 1	ALLESP Original Budget by Vote.....	5
Table 2	Size of funding allocation by Province	6
Table 3	Number of Files and HRSDC Contributions.....	12
Table 4	Survey Data Collection and Response Rate	14
Table 5	Data Monitoring and Distribution of Respondents by Region.....	15
Table 6	Distribution of Project Funding by Province by Fiscal Year	30
Table 7	Grants and Contribution Recipients	30
Table 8	Profile of Target Audience or Group.....	31
Table 9	Total Project Funding (All Sources) by Fiscal Year	45
Table 10	Distribution of Projects by Stream Code by Fiscal Year	46
Table 11	Distribution of Projects by Activity Code by Fiscal Year.....	46
Table 12	Distribution of Projects by Issue Code by Fiscal Year.....	47
Table 13	Distribution of Projects by Venture Code by Fiscal Year.....	48

List of Figures

Figure 1	Overall Satisfaction	34
Figure 2	Satisfaction with Specific Aspects of ALLESP Application and Administration Process – Overall Applicants	35

List of abbreviations

ALLESP	Adult Learning, Literacy and Essential Skills Program
CFP	Call for Proposals
CSGC	Common System for Grants and Contributions
HRSDC	Human Resources and Skills Development Canada
LIP	Learning Initiatives Program
LES	Literacy and Essential Skills
MÉLS	Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NLP	National Literacy Program
NLS	National Literacy Secretariat
OLT	Office of Learning Technologies
OLES	Office of Literacy and Essential Skills
RBAF	Risk-Based Audit Framework
RMAF	Results-Based Management and Accountability Framework
RPP	Report on Plans and Priorities
ToR	Terms of Reference

Executive Summary

This report presents the results of the formative evaluation of the Adult Learning, Literacy and Essential Skills Program (ALLESP). Data collection related to this evaluation took place between November 2008 and May 2009.

Program Background

Program Description

On April 1, 2006, the Terms and Conditions of three main Programs (the National Literacy Program (NLP), the Office of Learning Technologies (OLT) and Learning Initiatives Program (LIP), formerly the Learning Initiatives Fund), were merged into one, ALLESP, in order to harmonize the objectives and outcomes from federal adult learning programs.

The financial resources available to the Program total \$155.6M between 2006-07 and 2010-11. As of April 1, 2007, the Office of Literacy and Essential Skills (OLES) under the Skills and Employment Branch is responsible for the implementation of ALLESP.

Objectives and Activities

The key objectives of the ALLESP are to promote lifelong learning by reducing non-financial barriers to adult learning and to facilitate the creation of opportunities for Canadians to acquire the learning, literacy and essential skills they need to participate fully in a knowledge-based economy and society.

These objectives are accomplished by providing funding to eligible organizations to conduct the following four activities:

- Knowledge generation, transfer and application;
- Promotion of innovation: provision of targeted investments using innovative approaches;
- Capacity-building: strengthening the capacity of adult learning and literacy sector and those involved in essential skills; and
- Increasing awareness: adult learning, literacy and essential skills promotion.

ALLESP targets adults already employed or preparing to enter the workforce, families and communities with a particular emphasis on Aboriginal Canadians, immigrants, lower-skilled workers, and official language minority communities. ALLESP plays an indirect role rather than a direct role in improving Canadians' skills, leveraging the activities of others through building on existing relationships and developing new partnerships with federal government departments, provinces, territories, business associations, labour and other stakeholders.

Evaluation Scope, Objectives and Methodology

The evaluation covered the period from April 1, 2006 until March 31, 2008. The overall objective of the formative evaluation of ALLESP was to examine a number of key issues and questions pertaining to program design and delivery, performance monitoring and measurement and short-term outcomes.

The formative evaluation was based on multiple lines of evidence, including the following methods:

- A document review;
- Key informant interviews with 10 internal representatives from among ALLESP management and program analysts, 10 external stakeholders comprised of six experts in the literacy and essential skills (LES) field who represent non-governmental organizations, and four other bodies representing provincial governments;
- A review of administrative data;
- A review of 15 project files;
- A review of performance measurement systems and mechanisms; and
- A survey of all ALLESP funding applicants (n=252), including funded applicants (n=145) and unfunded applicants (n= 107).

Key Findings and Conclusions

Program Design and Delivery

Are ALLESP's objectives and expected results clear? Is the logic model still valid?

Validity and clarity of Program objectives and expected results, and consistency with current needs and priorities: The large majority of key informants viewed the overall objective of ALLESP to be valid, clear and appropriate, but perhaps too broad, far reaching and not as targeted as it could be. Meanwhile, some external informants were of the view that ALLESP's focus was on LES as it relates to labour force participation, and this has come at the expense of overall social inclusion. This view appears to be shared by community representatives who, according to some internal informants, have resisted the shift from literacy as a single priority, to the new focus on linking LES and labour market participation.

With respect to ALLESP's consistency with current needs and priorities, interviews with key informants, as well as the review of documents revealed that ALLESP objectives are compatible with the needs of federal and departmental, OLES, and LES stakeholders. Some key informants raised concerns that perhaps the Program's ability to respond to

regional priorities has been somewhat compromised, given the perceived lack of consultation with the Provinces and Territories (PTs), and the cancellation of the local and regional funding stream in 2006.

Level of external awareness of ALLESP and its key activities: Overall, familiarity with the ALLESP and its key activities was low amongst external key informants, with OLES and the former National Literacy Secretariat (NLS) receiving the most recognition. When asked to identify the primary activities of ALLESP, the majority of funding applicants who responded to the survey were able to provide an answer. Among those who were able to, some believed ALLESP funds training, an activity not supported by the Program. It is also worth noting that 9% of funded respondents and 20% of unfunded respondents were unable to identify ALLESP's key activities.

The extent to which ALLESP activities, outputs and outcomes seem appropriately identified, defined and logically linked; extent to which they can be achieved: While the logic model was acknowledged by internal informants to be a “work in progress”, in their view, there was a logical link between Program activities and outputs. External informants raised concerns regarding these linkages. In particular, while these informants believed that the activities themselves were appropriate, they questioned how they would lead to the development of the outputs and eventual outcomes.

Program outcomes, as evidenced by most key informant interviews are appropriate and clear. Questions were raised as to whether the intermediate and longer-term outcomes could be achieved, given the limited size, resources and reach of the Program, as well as the challenges in tracking results.

Extent to which partnership-based, multi-sectoral approach to improving LES, such as ALLESP, is the most effective way to achieve objectives: Developing sustainable partnerships with various partners and stakeholders within the LES community is seen as a key factor for successful Program delivery, especially given the Program's small size. However, relationships between ALLESP and social partners (i.e., NGOs, not-for profit organizations) as well as economic partners (e.g. employers, sector councils, unions etc.) appear to have suffered since program integration, with external informants noting that there was a stronger and more equitable partnership orientation under NLS. Internal key informants reported that they were aware of these challenges and efforts by OLES to re-build these partnerships were ongoing.

Is ALLESP being implemented as intended?

Extent to which the initiative is implemented as intended: ALLESP implementation has undergone a number of changes in order to support revisions in Program direction, in particular with the introduction of essential skills as a key policy and program focus, and the subsequent emphasis on LES in the workplace. Despite these challenges, internal key informants reported that funded projects are aligned with the Program's ultimate outcome of enabling Canadians to participate in the knowledge economy and society. The evaluation was unable to determine the extent to which funded projects are aligned with the Program's activity areas due to reporting challenges identified in the CSGC.

Has the Program re-alignment under ALLESP led to effective Program integration, co-ordination and coherence?

Extent to which the Program re-alignment under ALLESP has led to the effective integration of these previous Programs, as well as improved value, co-ordination and coherence: Overall, the findings from the key informant interviews, as well as the applicant survey, suggest that the re-alignment has yet to improve Program application and administration efficiency, with applicants reporting a decline in service when compared to the three previous programs. In addition, concerns were voiced by a large majority of external informants that the re-alignment had resulted in the loss of some of the most important aspects of the three previous programs, including NLP's partnership approach with provinces and territories, OLT's community networks, as well as research and innovation (e.g., action research).

Clarity of new Program mandate, effectiveness of Program co-ordination, more effective programming, level of Program coherence: Evidence reveals a great deal of resistance at the community level towards shifting from literacy as a singular priority, to the additional focus on LES and labour market participation. As a result, there is the perception within the LES community that literacy is not an important issue for the Federal government and that it has lost its profile within the Department.

In terms of the effectiveness of program co-ordination and programming, a few internal key informants recognized that there were ongoing organizational and cultural issues related to the integration of LES that may have impacted program co-ordination. Efforts are ongoing to integrate these areas under one organizational framework and address issues with the Program.

Who are the recipients of ALLESP funding?

Recipients of ALLESP funding: During the two year period covered by the evaluation, 792 proposals were submitted. Of these, just under half (327 or 46%) of the proposals were rejected¹ and 116 or 15% were withdrawn. Quebec had the highest number of projects funded overall, followed by Ontario. In terms of the total amount of funding received, this was reversed with Ontario receiving the most project funding and Quebec second. Despite efforts to broaden the scope of organizations to include other eligible recipient groups including employers, academia, unions, etc., a large portion of ALLESP funding continues to be allocated to the not-for-profit sector.

Target Groups of ALLESP-funded Projects: With approximately 69% of the information related to "Target Audience or Group" missing or blank, it is not possible to determine the target groups of ALLESP-funded projects based on the Common System for Grants and Contributions (CSGC). In addition, for those projects where information was available, the majority of target groups are referred to in general terms (classified as "adult learners", or "other"), making it difficult to discern the specific groups targeted by these funded

¹ Rejected projects are classified in the CSGC as "Assessment – Rejected"; "Project Set-up – Rejected" or "Recommendation and Approval – Rejected"

projects. Survey findings indicate that projects tend to target multiple types of target groups, with the most common including low income households, the unemployed, families and Canadians in rural and remote areas.

Key organizations, groups and initiatives that are missing or underrepresented i.e. not being funded and the impact on improvement of adult learning, literacy and development of essential skills: There is the belief amongst internal key informants that no key organizations, groups or initiatives are missing or underrepresented i.e., not being funded under ALLESP. This is contrast to evidence noted previously that the Program continues to overwhelmingly support the non-profit sector. In addition, a few external key informants indicated that smaller provinces and organizations may experience difficulties in obtaining funding, an issue that may be compounded by the cancellation of the local and regional funding stream in 2006.

Are there adequate management and administrative systems in place for effective and efficient Program delivery? Could delivery be improved?

Extent to which the current approach to determining priorities and distributing funding is the most efficient and effective way for ALLESP to achieve its objectives and consistency with the needs of the sector: Determining priorities as described by a few internal key informants is a multi-faceted process involving both research and consultation with external stakeholders. This process may have suffered due to the Program shifting ‘too far’ away from a shared decision-making process with the Provinces and Territories. As previously noted, efforts are ongoing to re-build these partnerships.

Extent to which eligibility criteria and application process for funding is clear and well understood: Program eligibility criteria and guidelines for the application process, as outlined in the various documents available to funding applicants, are generally clear and well understood as evidenced by the documentation review, key informant interviews, and the completeness of project files. In addition, 89% of funded applicants who responded to the survey found that ALLESP eligibility criteria and guidelines were clear and well understood. This is compared to 52% of unfunded respondents.

Satisfaction with the Call for Proposal and Administration Process: Forty-nine percent of survey respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the ALLESP application and administration process overall, including 71% of funded respondents, and 28% of unfunded respondents. However, this level of satisfaction amongst funded respondents drops to 63% if they reported previous experience with the three previous programs. When asked to rate specific aspects of the ALLESP application and administration process, the survey found that respondents were less than satisfied with several areas. These include: the perceived lack of transparency surrounding the proposal review process (47% of funded respondents and 19% of unfunded respondents were satisfied or very satisfied); timeliness of funding decisions (43% of funded respondents and 17% of unfunded respondents were satisfied or very satisfied); and explanations provided for not receiving funding (only 18% of unfunded respondents were satisfied or very satisfied).

Satisfaction with ALLESP Reporting Requirements: According to most key informant interviews, the need for Program accountability requirements are recognized within the LES community, and according to survey results, funded applicants are by and large satisfied with the ALLESP project reporting requirements.

Adequacy of management and administrative systems in place, and extent to which the Program is delivered efficiently and effectively: Evidence collected through the document review, those informants currently involved with OLES, and the survey indicates that overall, most of the systems are in place to adequately manage and administer ALLESP. Several areas for improvement were suggested, including the need to: better communicate with applicants on application process changes and delays; promote proposal innovation and creativity by further encouraging funding applicants to view their proposals within the broader framework of LES; and improve horizontal coordination, information sharing and CSGC data tracking and extraction.

Performance Monitoring and Measurement

Is an adequate performance measurement mechanism and system in place? How could performance measurement be improved?

Adequacy of performance measurement mechanism and systems: While a performance measurement strategy and indicators were identified for the Program at inception, efforts have been ongoing to further revise, validate and update the performance measurement and evaluation frameworks for OLES (which includes the component for ALLESP), as well as its reporting regime to more effectively capture data that can measure success of funded projects.

To this end, OLES has developed two performance measurement templates for funded organizations. The first, designed for organizations who receive core funding, is the Performance Report and Environmental Scan Template (APR), which also includes a template for conducting an environmental scan. The second template, the Project Results Report (PRR), is designed for those organizations receiving project funding.

Both templates capture a significant amount of performance information. As such, OLES will need to ensure that smaller organizations with limited resources are able to collect the information. In addition, given the difficulties in fully tracking project administrative data in the CSGC identified below, there is some question as to whether the internal capacity exists to compile, review and report on the data provided through these templates.

Ways in which the performance measurement mechanism and systems could be improved: It was acknowledged by internal key informants that more work needs to be done to ensure effective accountability for results, including: developing meaningful targets for results; improved monitoring and reporting i.e. follow up at the end of funded projects to support outcome monitoring; and an active business plan. As previously noted, work is ongoing to develop a performance measurement framework that will take a number of the above issues into account.

Is the basic information necessary for the summative evaluation being collected?

Information on funding applicants and recipients: Tombstone data captured on funded applicants and recipients appears to be 100% complete in the CSGC. This information includes: Organization name and mandate; Organizational Type or Category (i.e. not-for-profit, public or private sector); Mailing Address (including city, province, postal code); and other contact details.

Information on project activities and outputs: While four streams of activity (research and knowledge; capacity building; innovative tools and practices; and promotion and awareness) are identified for the program in the 2006 ALLESP logic model, the CSGC has difficulty tracking these activities. What information is available regarding funded activities suggests that the majority of ALLESP-funded projects are focused on “strengthening capacity.” In terms of outputs, the CSGC identifies 19 “Venture” codes that capture the outputs of funded projects. These range from best practices, to educational and resource material, to research studies, to volunteer development. While organizations are providing this information, a review of the CSGC reveals that a high proportion of data is not being inputted into the system. It is worth noting that improvements in data entry are evident from 2006-07 to 2007-08 i.e. less blanks and missing information.

Information on project outcomes: While the Program’s new PRR template provides funded organizations the opportunity to report on a project’s direct impacts (and thus the ALLESP’s immediate outcomes), as is the case with most partnership-based funding programs, the ALLESP does not collect information on the ultimate users (i.e. learners) of funded projects. This, coupled with the fact that intermediate and ultimate outcomes by their very nature are acted upon by more than one player, make it difficult for the Program to determine whether or not it has achieved its intermediate and longer-term objectives. This will be dependent on the data collected by funding recipients themselves.

Preliminary Findings – outputs oriented

What type of Funding Agreements have been entered into under ALLESP?

Type of funding agreements: Despite commitments made after the NLS evaluation to move away from grants, ALLESP evaluation findings indicate the Program is still heavily grant-focused. Over 266 (92%) of projects funded over the 2006-07 and 2007-08 fiscal years were grant-based², with the remaining funding source being contribution-based, with 22 projects funded (8%). In terms of the types of activities, streams and issues covered by funded projects, the CSGC database is incomplete, or lacks the necessary details to draw definitive conclusions. What information is available suggests that during the evaluation period, projects tended to focus more on literacy, rather than essential skills, and that there is a need to place more emphasis on LES as it related to labour market participation.

² The breakdown is as follows: 145 (94 %) for 2006-07; 121 (90%) for 2007/08.

Extent to which the development of literacy & essential skills research, tools and supports through ALLESP funding as well as the Program's support of provincial and territorial coalitions and national organizations, contributed to, or is expected to contribute to ALLESP's immediate outcomes: This evaluation noted that it is too early in the Program lifecycle to answer the full extent to which results have been achieved. Nevertheless, a number of ongoing issues were identified that may affect the development and achievement of ALLESP results. These include passive dissemination of project outputs (i.e., through websites) as opposed to targeted outreach; the need for additional resources for research and development; the sustainability of projects after funding ends; and the need to increase LES awareness, particularly in the workplace.

Recommendations

The evaluation resulted in the following four recommendations:

1. It is recommended that Program objectives and activities should be revised to more accurately reflect the direction and scope of the Program and to ensure outcomes are achievable and measurable.
2. It is recommended that the Program continue its efforts to communicate, support and consult with stakeholders and funding applicants in order to ensure openness and transparency with regards to its priority setting and decision-making.
3. It is recommended that OLES continue with its commitment to improve its data collection systems so that sufficient and complete information is collected for monitoring and reporting purposes. In conjunction, it is recommended that proposal and reporting forms be updated to better reflect the CSGC codes and categories, thereby easing the burden on Program officers. Finally, recent revisions to the Program's reporting templates will require ongoing communication and support for funding recipients.
4. It is recommended that the Program investigate various ways of supporting the transfer of the knowledge regarding funded projects and their results.

Management Response/Action Plan

Introduction

A formative evaluation of the Adult Learning, Literacy and Essential Skills Program (ALLESP) was conducted between November, 2008 and May 2009 and covered the period from April 1, 2006 to March 31, 2008. The objective of the evaluation was to examine a number of key issues and questions pertaining to program design and delivery, performance monitoring and measurement, and short term outcomes.

On April 1, 2006, the terms and conditions of the National Literacy Secretariat, the Office of Learning Technologies and the Learning Initiatives Program were integrated into one, ALLESP, in order to harmonize the objectives and outcomes of federal adult learning programs. As of 2007, the program has been administered by the Office of Literacy and Essential Skills (OLES).

As part of its goal to become a centre of expertise in matters related to literacy and essential skills, OLES uses the ALLESP terms and conditions through a grants and contributions model that funds projects intended to build knowledge and expertise; develop, adapt and disseminate tools, supports and best practices; and, sustain partnerships with literacy and essential skills (LES) stakeholders (e.g. provinces and territories, employers, unions and literacy organizations). LES programming uses this knowledge, expertise, tools and partnerships to leverage and influence skills investments by partners and to integrate and embed LES into existing training and skills development efforts. Project funding decisions are made by the department following a general call for proposals (CFPs) process as well as through strategic partnerships with key partners to identify and fill LES gaps.

The present terms and conditions for ALLESP will expire in March 2011. A full review of ALLESP objectives, activities and outcomes is underway and will include any necessary adjustments to ensure the program terms and conditions reflect what is needed going forward.

Summary – Key Findings and Conclusions

Overall, interviews and document reviews revealed that ALLESP objectives were compatible with the needs of federal and departmental, OLES and LES stakeholders. Interviews further revealed that the overall objective of ALLESP is valid, clear and appropriate, but perhaps too broad and not as targeted as it could be.

At the time of program integration in 2006, concerns were raised as to whether ALLESP would be in a position to provide adequate program service and administrative efficiency to clients. The overall findings concluded that program integration has yet to fully accomplish set goals around improved value, coordination and coherence. In addition, stakeholder maintained negative perceptions regarding the need for program realignment

and the shift from literacy as a singular priority to the focus on LES as it links to labour-force participation.

In evaluating performance monitoring and measurement, the development of two reporting templates for funded organizations were found to be a significant improvement over previous data collection templates and should allow for the collection of a significant amount of performance information. However, there are still questions as to whether the internal capacity exists to compile, review and report on the data provided by these templates. As well, the Common System for Grants and Contributions database was deemed as incomplete in reporting types of activities, streams and issues covered by funded projects.

Recommendations and Responses

- 1. It is recommended that Program objectives and activities should be revised to more accurately reflect the direction and scope of the Program and to ensure outcomes are achievable and measurable.**

OLES agrees with the recommendation as stated.

- During the evaluation period, OLES had instituted initiatives to address the perceptions of stakeholder groups on the scope of ALLESP funding opportunities. ALLESP's objectives were seen as overly ambitious and far-reaching for a relatively small funding program. Outreach measures were taken to reduce these types of expectations of ALLESP.
- Various definitions to the ALLESP Terms and Conditions were changed in 2008 to provide greater clarity and flexibility to project applicants. Specifically, eligible activities and costs were expanded to include essential skills-related activities being considered for grants as well as capital acquisitions related to leasing or purchasing equipment and supplies being approved as eligible costs.

Planned Activities

- ALLESP objectives and activities will be reviewed through a re-drafting of the program's Terms and Conditions set to expire on March 31, 2011.
- OLES has begun preliminary work on this process. Four key areas for review and revision to address a shift in scope and focus have been identified in this early stage: key objectives; expected outcomes; eligible activities; and, eligible costs.
- Early consultations took place in Spring 2010 with a first draft of the Terms and Conditions to be completed in Summer 2010.
- Four policy framework sessions are currently being held, the goals of which are to examine OLES' future directions in keeping with department and government priorities and objectives.

2. It is recommended that the Program continue its efforts to communicate support and consult with stakeholders and funding applicants in order to ensure openness and transparency with regards to its priority setting and decision-making.

OLES agrees with the recommendation as stated.

- During the evaluation period, OLES revised the CFP assessment process to include greater input from Provinces and Territories (PTs). The changes included providing PT representatives with executive summaries and budgets of proposed projects within their jurisdictions as well as conducting conference calls with each PT to garner feedback on each project. The calls are meant to provide for open and frank discussion of proposed projects given PTs knowledge of the regional situation.
- Upon OLES' creation in 2007, visits were made to inform PTs of its new strategic direction as well as garnering feedback in the planning towards the first CFP process that was to be launched.

Actions Taken

- A series of visits to ALLESP-funded project sites were undertaken in Fall, 2009. These visits included PT government partners and allowed OLES to get a better understanding of LES from the regional perspective.
- During 2009-2010, OLES convened three full-day meetings with National Literacy Organizations and PT Literacy Coalitions. Two of the meetings were of a general information sharing and consultative variety and included discussions on the ALLESP intake strategy and recent project results, and provided attendees with the opportunity to comment on the CFP process. The third meeting focused specifically on new performance measurement reporting processes instituted by OLES.

Planned Activities

- A strategic outreach plan is being developed to engage key stakeholders in discussions focused on OLES priorities, and assessment and decision-making processes. Stakeholders were solicited for feedback on the draft plan. It is anticipated that as a result of this plan, proposals will be more tailored towards ALLESP objectives. In addition, it is hoped that by engaging stakeholders in the development of the plan, OLES will be better informed as to their needs.
- The full implementation of the strategic outreach plan is scheduled for Fall 2010.

An additional issue was raised in the evaluation report, namely: **“Efforts need to continue to recapture the trust and partnerships, especially between the two levels of government, with more effective and open communication and outreach.”**

- Since September 2008, OLES has held three multilateral, ad hoc meetings with PTs with representatives from Ministries of Education and Labour actively participating. During recent multilateral meetings and bilateral discussions, PT representatives have

commented on how much they appreciate the openness shown by OLES officials and the increased transparency which contributes greatly to FPT collaboration.

- Beginning in 2009, OLES has actively pursued initiatives with specific PTs to develop and implement project activities outside of the CFP process via a ‘three-pronged approach’ to funding. Efforts to attract solicited and unsolicited project proposals are meant to complement the CFP process. These efforts are a product of ongoing bilateral discussions where shared priorities have been identified.
- 3. It is recommended that OLES continue with its commitment to improve its data collection systems so that sufficient and complete information is collected for monitoring and reporting purposes. In conjunction, it is recommended that proposal and reporting forms be updated to better reflect the CSGC codes and categories, thereby easing the burden on Program officers. Finally, recent revisions to the Program’s reporting templates will require ongoing communication and support for funding recipients.**

OLES agrees with the recommendation as stated.

Actions Taken

- OLES has also developed an ACCESS database, a major, technical undertaking, to ensure that projects are more closely and more effectively monitored as well as to report specifically on what is being funded. ACCESS was developed to complement the CSGC which could not provide the needed flexibility in reporting that ALLESP projects required. ACCESS allows project officers to retrieve data using any number of criteria while being able to produce instant, real-time reports.
- ACCESS also allows key groups that were targeted through our funding agreements to be more easily identified. Coding for thirteen specific categories allow OLES to know what has been funded for which groups. The key target groups include: Aboriginal Canadians; Apprenticeship; Employers; Immigrants; Linguistic minorities; Low skilled workers; Persons with disabilities; Practitioners; Sector councils; Seniors; Unemployed; Women; Youth.
- To ensure that outcomes are achievable and measurable, OLES developed and implemented a comprehensive Performance Measurement Framework (PMF). OLES is currently collecting baseline information on a number of performance indicators and also monitors progress made on indicators for which it already has benchmarks.
- As outlined in the Evaluation Report, the PMF requires new, more streamlined reporting from organizations receiving funding. Since April 2009, core funded organizations are required to complete an Annual Performance Report (APR), the objective of which is to better understand the organization’s overall performance by critically analyzing how well it is managed, its achievements and future plans. Concurrently, all other funded projects are required to complete a Project Results Report (PRR) that summarizes the outcomes of the project, the activities and outputs that will be carried out to achieve them, issues potentially affecting the project’s success and its current progress.

- In terms of uniformity:
 - OLES' proposals and reporting forms have been updated to better reflect the CSGC codes and categories.
 - OLES' monitoring reporting forms are the standardized ones used throughout the branch.
 - The proposals and concept paper templates being used have been adapted to the CSGC format and use the same core data items, as well as the same main categories (e.g. objectives, activities, budget).
- Ongoing communication occurs with partners. At the onset of each project, an initial meeting is organized to clarify, among other items, the reporting requirements and the appropriate templates to use. OLES is also maintaining open lines of communication throughout the projects including regularly informing P/T literacy coalitions and other key partners of all changes that occur in our processes and templates.

Planned Activities

- OLES will develop a catalogue of results for APR and PRR reports that will be used to report on progress in enhancing LES, gain a better understanding of organizations receiving OLES funding and help in developing future calls for project proposals. A catalogue will be developed to receive input from both report templates by Fall 2010.
- 4. It is recommended that the Program investigate various ways of supporting the transfer of the knowledge regarding funded projects and their results.**

OLES agrees with the recommendation as stated.

Actions Taken

- OLES has taken a proactive approach in furthering its knowledge transfer activities. In January 2010, OLES launched its new, re-designed website which includes a searchable project database. Stakeholders will now be able to use the website to gain knowledge about projects funded by OLES and can apply this knowledge to their particular situation. Comprehensive project results will also be provided online as they become available. The website also provides updated information on LES issues, resources, links and a special feature outlining specific, innovative items that represents the best of LES across the country.
- Beginning in 2009, OLES instituted a regular cycle of meetings with key stakeholders to disseminate information and consult on LES issues from across the country. These meetings occur at least twice per year. Regular meetings have been convened with National Literacy Organizations, PT Coalitions and PT government representatives.

Planned Activities

- OLES understands the importance of supporting the transfer of knowledge of funded project results. The APR and PRR reporting requirements will eventually produce a library of results data that will provide OLES with the requisite knowledge to help improve our programming.
- As results are received, OLES' will provide comprehensive, publicly-accessible project results on its website. For APRs, results will be posted by Fall 2010. For PRR results, results will be posted by Spring 2011.
- As part of the OLES 2009-2010 business planning exercise, one of the priorities identified was the development of dissemination events with the goal to encourage dissemination of expertise through core funded partners. Three expertise-building fora are planned: 1) for eastern Canada, led by the Ontario Literacy Coalition, in Fall 2010, 2) for western Canada, led by ABC Life Literacy Canada, in Spring 2011 and 3) for northern Canada, led by the Yukon Literacy Coalition, in Summer 2011.

1. Introduction and Context

This section provides a description of the context for the formative evaluation and brief overview of the Adult Learning Literacy and Essential Skills Program (ALLESP).

1.1 Program Background

Beginning in 1987, the National Literacy Program (NLP) worked to support activities that improve literacy skills in Canada using a partnership-based, multi-sectoral approach. The NLP worked with provinces and territories, businesses and labour organizations, the volunteer sector, universities and post-secondary institutions, provincial and territorial institutions and international non-profit institutions. NLP grants and contributions funded adult literacy and learning materials and models, public awareness, information coordination and dissemination, access and outreach, and applied research.

In 1996, the federal government established the Office of Learning Technologies (OLT) as a partner in building a culture of lifelong learning. Its purpose was to enable Canadians to develop new knowledge and improve skills through the use of e-learning by reducing barriers to the access and use of learning technologies. The four key activities of the OLT were: to promote and support the development and evolution of Community Learning Networks (CLNs); to help develop policies and strategies to guide the evolution and application of learning technologies and widely distribute the results; and to facilitate the sharing of information on Canadian initiatives, key players and significant developments in the application of learning technologies.

The Learning Initiatives Program (LIP), formerly the Learning Initiatives Fund, was a contribution program established in 1994 to encourage and support initiatives that contributed to the development of results-oriented, accessible, relevant and accountable adult learning system in Canada. Through the LIP, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) collaborated with key partners in the development and implementation of a wide array of national and international initiatives in support of lifelong learning.

The NLP, OLT and LIP all had their core interest in development, promotion and support of lifelong learning in Canada that worked to enable Canadians to participate fully in a democratic knowledge-based society, both socially and economically. This supported the HRSDC's mission, which at the time was to *“improve the standard of living and quality of life of all Canadians by promotion the development of a highly skilled and mobile labour force and an efficient and inclusive labour market”*.

1.2 Adult Learning Literacy and Essential Skills Program

1.2.1 Program Description

On April 1, 2006, the terms and conditions of three main Programs: NLP, OLT and LIP were merged into one, ALLESP, in order to harmonize the objectives and outcomes from federal adult learning programs. The strategic goals of re-aligning the three Programs into ALLESP were described as: (1) increasing the effectiveness of the adult learning, literacy and essential skills sector to address learning needs of Canadians³; (2) strengthening the operating base for monitoring projects, measuring, evaluating and reporting on results; and (3) maintaining and enhancing the Government of Canada's capacity to play a constructive, visible role in the areas of adult learning, literacy and essential skills.

More specifically, this realignment was expected to provide a cohesive and more solid Program for stakeholders and to further develop relationships around shared outcomes. In addition, while building on ongoing program successes, the program realignment was expected to address shortcomings that were identified in past evaluations of the former three programs such as enhancing research and information dissemination; increasing the targeting of particular groups⁴; improving program coordination, coherence and support to literacy and essential skills (LES) through the identification of strategic priorities; establishing better outcomes tracking; and increasing the measurability of results.

The ALLESP was initially designed to complement Learning Branch programs that addressed financial barriers to learning, such as the Canada Student Loans program and the Canada Education Savings Grant. This changed in September 2006 when, as part of the federal review of grants and contributions programs, federal resources for LES were re-targeted to focus on areas deemed to be in greatest national interest and core federal responsibilities while achieving concrete and measurable results for Canadians. As part of the re-targeting, the administration of the program fell under the newly created Office of Literacy and Essential Skills (OLES) under the Skills and Employment Branch in April 2007. Thus, under its four streams of activity (research and knowledge; capacity-building; innovative tools and practices; and promotion and awareness), organizations that apply for that funding would have to clearly demonstrate how their project proposals have a focus on the learner. This re-targeting resulted in a significant reduction of project funds (\$17.7 million over the two fiscal years under review which represented the federal-provincial-territorial partnership funding stream that supported community-based literacy projects). In response, the local-regional stream ended after the 2007-08 Call for Proposals (CFP). The national call remained in place and focused on LES in three areas: Business and Labour Partnerships and Workplace Literacy; Literacy and Learning Research; and

³ ESI Pan-Canadian Community Outreach provided funding to community-based organization to inform families about the saving incentives available to their children and to raise awareness of the importance of saving early for their children's post-secondary education. This involved partnering with ALLESP to provide contribution funds to not-for-profit community groups to reach out to their constituents and stakeholders. Essential Skills Initiative was a separate entity when ALLESP was developed.

⁴ The target groups of Aboriginal Canadians, immigrants, and low-skilled workers are in line with government priorities identified in the 2006 Speech from the Throne.

Integrating Literacy. With subsequent calls more emphasis was increasingly being placed on LES in the workplace as opposed to family and community literacy representing an important change for many in the LES community.

ALLESF is delivered primarily through a CFP process⁵ as well as core funding to over 22 literacy and essential skills organizations across the country (which was introduced in the Fall of 2007). OLES also solicits proposals and accepts a small number of unsolicited proposals (outside the formal CFP process) for projects that fill an identified gap or need from organizations on the basis of their capacity, networks, activities, and expertise. The Office works closely with these organizations to help them complete a concept paper template. These submissions are then discussed and carefully analyzed through the Internal Assessment Committee (IAC), which is the same committee that reviews CFPs. Once approved by OLES, the normal process is followed for recommending a project to the Minister.

In addition to the above-noted CFP process, in 2007-08, the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (MÉLS) and HRSDC signed a one-year "Protocole d'entente relative à l'alphabétisation", which provided Quebec with \$4.1M in ALLESF funding (\$2.8M in contributions and \$1.3M in grants) to fund province-based organizations to conduct literacy and essential skills projects for adult learners. This Protocole was signed following the 2002-03 to 2006-07 Protocole⁶ and was designed to allow the Federal government to contribute to various literacy initiatives carried out by school boards and recognized independent community action literacy organizations in Quebec.⁷ This resulted in an envelop of funds dedicated towards funding proposals submitted through the MÉLS and subsequently a large number of funded proposals originating from Quebec.

To address this unique funding relationship, the Initiative fédéral-provincial conjoint sur la matière d'alphabétisation (IFPCA) was a jointly managed body between Quebec and Canada. The IFPCA's funding for projects came from OLES via the ALLESF, with the MÉLS managing the project assessment process. This process involved a joint MÉLS-OLES staffed evaluation committee whereby recommended projects were sent to the Minister of HRSDC for final approval.

1.2.2 Program Objectives and Activities

According to Program documentation, ALLESF is expected to facilitate the creation of opportunities for Canadians to acquire the learning, literacy and essential skills they need

⁵ The current process for posting calls for proposals is through the HRSDC website and direct communications with national partners and provinces as well as coalitions who communicate directly with their partners and stakeholders.

⁶ Protocole agreements with provinces and territories were previously the norm, whereby there were clear funding envelopes that were spent by region. The final 5-year Protocole agreement with provinces and territories came following the 2002-03 to 2006-07 agreement. However, an agreement was reached with Quebec to continue the Protocole arrangement for 2007-08.

⁷ The *Act respecting the Ministère du Conseil exécutif* (M-30) dictates that any organization (e.g. municipal bodies, school bodies or public agencies) in Quebec whose operations are partially or fully funded by the province of Quebec must obtain approval before signing any agreement with the Government of Canada, its departments or agencies, or a federal public agency.

to participate fully in a knowledge-based economy and society and promote lifelong learning through the removal of non-financial barriers. In particular, the Program is intended to strengthen the ability of practitioners across a variety of settings to effectively manage, deliver and evaluate LES. Support will enable practitioners to develop assessment tools, curriculum, and teaching materials, bring together best practices and make them available for tailoring to particular needs (provinces, territories, rural, urban, north, Aboriginal, workplaces big and small, different sectors). The Program is also expected to support professional development to increase the overall numbers and capacity of practitioners in communities and workplaces.

Eligible recipients for contribution funding include⁸: non-profit organisations; professional associations; all organizations of the voluntary sector; provincial and territorial governments and their organizing bodies; provincial and territorial institutions including Crown corporations; universities, colleges and other educational and training bodies; workplace organizations, including sector councils, unions and business associations; international non-profit organizations (e.g. OECD); and, municipalities. Voluntary sector organizations are the only eligible recipients for grant funding⁹.

ALLESP funding is provided for the following categories of eligible activities:

- Knowledge generation, transfer and application;
- Promotion of innovation: Provision of targeted investments using innovative approaches;
- Capacity-building: Strengthening the capacity of adult learning and literacy sector and those involved in essential skills; and
- Increasing awareness: Adult learning, literacy and essential skills promotion.

The expected outputs and immediate outcomes of ALLESP correspond to the above categories of eligible activities (see logic model in **Appendix A**).

ALLESP project funding is targeted towards those organizations that develop and share expertise and tools, designed to assist specific target groups such as Aboriginal people, immigrants, low skilled learners, official language minority communities, the homeless and persons with disabilities who are facing learning and literacy barriers to their participation in a knowledge-based economy and society in an effort to raise their LES levels. Funding applicants, as part of their proposals, are asked to describe the target groups for the project (e.g. literacy practitioners, adult learners, women, aboriginal Canadians) and indicate how they will benefit. When possible, they are also asked to provide an estimate of how many people will benefit.

⁸ Sources: ALLESP Terms and Conditions for Class Contributions Consolidated Revenue Funds; Human Resources and Social Development – Adult Learning, Literacy and Essential Skills Program Applicant’s Guide (2006-2007); Terms and Conditions for Adult Learning, Literacy and Essential Skills; and, HRSDC website.

⁹ Sources: ALLESP Terms and Conditions for Class Grants Consolidated Revenue Funds; Human Resources and Social Development – Adult Learning, Literacy and Essential Skills Program Applicant’s Guide (2006-2007); Terms and Conditions for Adult Learning, Literacy and Essential Skills; and, HRSDC website.

1.2.3 Program Governance

The ALLESP is administered by the Office of Literacy and Essential Skills (OLES), of the Skills and Employment Branch¹⁰, HRSDC. Established in 2007, OLES' mission is to become an acknowledged centre of expertise on "what works" in increasing the literacy and essential skills of adult Canadians. Using this expertise, OLES will play an indirect role by influencing the policies and activities of others and leveraging funding to improve opportunities for adults to increase their LES. As such, the OLES focuses on understanding what works in terms of improving literacy and essential skills; developing practical tools and supports to improve the literacy and essential skills of adults; and providing employers, practitioners and trainers with these tools and supports.¹¹

1.2.4 Program Funding

Budget allocations at program inception for ALLESP amounted to \$31M in 2006-07 and \$32M in 2007-08. Of these amounts, \$24M was allocated to Grant and Contribution funding for 2006-07 and \$25.8M for 2007-08. The original budget breakdown over the five years is outlined in **Table 1** below.¹²

Table 1					
ALLESP Original Budget by Vote					
(In millions of \$)					
Fiscal year	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
HRSDC Vote 1 (operating and salary)	7.0	6.2	4.6	4.5	4.5
HRSDC Vote 5 (Grants & Contributions)	24.0	25.8	29.0	26.5	23.5
ALLESP Funding Total	31.0	32.0	33.6	31.0	28.0

Vote 1 funding covers resources required to administer grants and contributions funding under the Terms and Conditions for the Employment Benefits and Support Measures (EBSM) under the purview of OLES as well as those required for ALLESP funding.

1.2.5 Grants and Contributions Funding

Actual ALLESP grants and contributions budget for 2006-07 and 2007-08 after re-profiling and internal re-alignment amounted to \$24.9M and \$25.7M respectively. Actual grants and contributions spending amounted to \$24.8M and \$23.3M respectively for a total of \$48.1.¹³ Of this amount, the project database review conducted for the evaluation was able to identify only \$35.2M in ALLESP grants and contributions spending. As such,

¹⁰ During 2007–2008, the Department integrated the Programs under the labour market and workplace skills Program activities within the Skills and Employment Branch in order to more effectively promote a skilled, adaptable and inclusive labour force, and an efficient labour market.

¹¹ http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/workplaceskills/oles/olesindex_en.shtml

¹² Sources: Evaluation Terms of Reference

¹³ Chief Financial Officer Branch, HRSDC

analyses conducted in this evaluation of grants and contributions funding is limited to the projects included in the \$35.2M.¹⁴

Based on information contained within the Common System for Grants and Contributions (CSGC), between April 1, 2006 and March 31, 2008, a total of 288 projects were funded through the ALLESP. The vast majority (266 or 92%) of ALLESP projects were funded through grants. Only 8% of all ALLESP funded projects were based on contributions.

1.2.6 Distribution of Funding

Of the 154 projects funded in 2006-07, 84 (55%) received \$75K or more from ALLESP, with 70 (45%) receiving less than \$75K. In 2007-08, this was reversed, with the majority (52%) or 70 of the 134 projects funded receiving less than \$75K.

As a result of the Protocole with the Province of Quebec, Quebec accounted for the vast majority of smaller projects. Of the 140 projects receiving less than \$75K from ALLESP, 96 (69%) originated from Quebec. In addition, Quebec experienced a significant drop in the number of projects that received more than \$75K between the two fiscal years analyzed as part of this evaluation. In 2006-07, 16 Quebec projects received more than \$75K from ALLESP, a figure that dropped to four in 2007-08. It is interesting to note that if Quebec were to be removed from the analysis, of the remaining 172 projects funded during the evaluation period, approximately 70% would have received more than \$75K.

Table 2
Size of funding allocation by Province

	(2006-07)													Total
	AB	BC	MB	NB	NL	NWT	NS	NV	ON	PEI	PQ	SK	YK	
Under \$25,000	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	22	0	0	25
\$25,000 - \$74,999	1	2	1	2	6	0	0	0	8	1	21	2	1	45
\$75,000 - \$199,999	4	4	4	3	4	1	5	0	10	1	5	3	2	46
\$200,000 +	3	3	1	2	0	2	0	1	11	2	11	2	0	38
Total	8	9	6	7	10	4	6	1	29	5	59	7	3	154

	(2007-08)													Total
	AB	BC	MB	NB	NL	NWT	NS	NV	ON	PEI	PQ	SK	YK	
Under \$25,000	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	27	0	0	30
\$25,000 - \$74,999	1	3	0	1	2	0	0	0	4	0	26	3	0	40
\$75,000 - \$199,999	5	3	3	1	1	1	0	0	9	0	0	0	1	24
\$200,000 +	5	3	4	1	0	1	0	2	18	1	4	1	0	40
Total	11	9	7	3	3	3	1	2	32	1	57	4	1	134

¹⁴ The differences between departmental financial accounts and ALLESP projects database financial data could not be accounted for nor explained in the course of the evaluation and are still under review.

1.3 Evaluation Objectives and Scope

The evaluation covered the period from April 1, 2006 until March 31, 2008. The overall objective of the formative evaluation of ALLESP was to examine a number of key issues and questions pertaining to program design and delivery, performance monitoring and measurement and preliminary findings and short-term outcomes. These questions were developed by the Evaluation Directorate of HRSDC, in consultation with OLES, and are as follows¹⁵:

Evaluation Issue: Program Design and Delivery

Key Evaluation Questions:

- Are ALLESP's objectives and expected results clear? Is the logic model still valid?
- Is ALLESP being implemented as intended?
- Has the Program re-alignment under ALLESP led to effective Program integration, co-ordination and coherence?
- Who are the recipients of ALLESP funding?
- Are adequate management and administrative systems in place for effective and efficient Program delivery? Could delivery be improved?

Performance Monitoring and Measurement

Key Evaluation Questions:

- Is an adequate performance measurement mechanism and system in place? How could performance measurement be improved?
- Is the basic information necessary for the summative evaluation being collected?

Preliminary Findings – outputs oriented

Key Evaluation Questions:

- What type of Funding Agreements have been entered into under ALLESP? Do they include:
 - Multi-year funding of LES P/T coalitions and national organizations?
 - Projects that build knowledge about Canadians' LES needs?
 - Projects that develop practical tools and supports to respond to identified needs?

¹⁵ A complete description of the evaluation questions, indicators and methodologies used for this evaluation can be found in the Evaluation Matrix (Appendix B).

2. Approach and Methodology

The formative evaluation of the ALLESP was conducted using multiple lines of evidence. That is, more than one method was used to address each of the evaluation questions, thereby ensuring that the findings are corroborated. This section provides an overview of the main lines of evidence used to conduct the formative evaluation followed by a description of evaluation limitations.

2.1 Key Lines of Evidence

2.1.1 Document Review

A review of Program documents and reports was undertaken to develop a profile of the Program, inform development of the data collection instruments, and to gather information on the Program design, delivery, performance monitoring and measurement and preliminary findings. All available and relevant documents and reports identified by the Project Authority and Program representatives were reviewed. These included a range of government documents such as departmental Reports on Plans and Priorities and Performance Reports, Speeches from the Throne, as well as those specific to the Program such as Terms and Conditions, and those related to program operations including guides for funding applicants, performance measurement framework, previous program evaluations, etc.

2.1.2 Key Informant Interviews

A total of 20 key informant interviews were conducted between January 15, 2009 and February 13, 2009. Ten interviews were conducted with various representatives from among ALLESP management and Program analysts (herein noted as “internal” key informants) and ten were conducted with external stakeholders comprised of six experts in the LES field who represent non-governmental organizations and four other bodies representing provincial governments (herein noted as “external” key informants).

Introduction letters were sent to all key informants prior to the interviews. The majority of interviews were conducted by telephone (with some in-person) in the official language preferred by the interviewee. Findings from each key informant interview were captured through detailed note-taking performed simultaneously during the interview.

No information or findings has been attributed to any specific individual. Rather, all information provided was integrated with other interview results and presented in a summary format only using the following parameters:

"All or almost all"	findings reflect the views and opinions of 90% or more of the key informants in the group
"Large majority"	findings reflect the views and opinions of at least 75% but less than 90% of key informants in the group
"Majority or most"	findings reflect the views and opinions of at least 50% but less than 75% of key informants in the group
"Some"	findings reflect the views and opinions of at least 25% but less than 50% of key informants in the group
"A few"	findings reflect the views and opinions of at least two respondents but less than 25% of key informants in the group.
	If, however, the size of the respondent population is too small, reporting of results has been limited to "the majority" and "a few"

2.1.3 Administrative Data Analysis

The administrative database analysis was designed to review primarily quantitative evidence with basic frequency and cross tabular assessment. This component of the evaluation examined management information and administrative systems, namely the Common System for Grants and Contributions (CSGC), to determine their adequacy in supporting effective and efficient program delivery.

The CSGC database maintains information on funding applicants to the Program, tracking information related to the proposal review process and decisions taken, limited information on unfunded or unsuccessful applicants, as well as information related to funding provided by HRSDC and from other sources. Officers are responsible for entering this information in the system based on their interpretation of proposals received. The information contained in this database is intended to be used to develop a profile of funding applicants, compliance monitoring, management and reporting.

To the extent that data was available, the administrative database analysis provided data to support the review of Program activities, specifically:

- Types of organizations funded and unfunded;
- Types of projects funded;
- Target audiences of funded projects;
- Outputs from funded projects;
- Timelines related to proposal review and decision-making process;
- Distribution of funded projects by Region;
- Applicant and partner contribution versus Program contribution, including in-kind contribution;
- Key application process data; and
- Project status.

Information contained in the CSGC databases was also assessed to determine the extent to which it is sufficient to support a subsequent summative evaluation.

2.1.4 Performance Measurement Systems and Mechanisms Review

This component of the evaluation included an examination of the performance measurement systems and mechanisms (e.g. performance indicators, data collections procedures, data integrity and validity, reporting and use of results). The bulk of this review was undertaken as part of the documentation review and through the key informant interviews.

Part of the current review included a more detailed assessment of ALLESP's current performance measurement strategy as outlined in the Integrated Results-Based Management and Accountability Framework and Risk-Based Audit Framework for ALLESP (February 21, 2006) which outlined key performance indicators for monitoring; the approach used by the Program to support ongoing data collection and reporting was also assessed.

It is important to note that the efforts have been ongoing during the evaluation period to further revise, validate and update the performance measurement and evaluation frameworks for OLES (which includes the component for ALLESP), as well as its reporting regime to more effectively capture data that can measure success of funded projects. This includes the development of the Core Funded Organizations 2008-2009 Performance Report and Environmental Scan template (APR), and the Results Reporting templates (for both grant and contribution agreements) (PRR).

Work is ongoing to implement a new, comprehensive performance measurement and evaluation framework for OLES.

2.1.5 File Review

In order to assess the Program's performance management approach, 15 project files were randomly selected in order to review the information contained in relation to ALLESP and its key program areas and required file maintenance and reporting procedures. The quality of the following information was assessed, including:

- Compliance with the application process and requirements;
- Data contained in the file in contrast with the systems (e.g., appropriateness and accuracy of data input and capture); and
- Whether the project is in compliance with the monitoring, evaluation and reporting requirements.

The 15 project files were randomly selected based on a set of selection criteria¹⁶, and consisted of 11 grant projects and four contributions projects. These projects, ranging from \$3,000 to \$623,492 in HRSDC contribution, are broken down as follows across provinces and territories:

Table 3				
Number of Files and HRSDC Contributions				
Province/Territory	Grant	HRSDC contribution	Contribution	HRSDC Contribution
Alberta	1	\$53,791		
British Columbia	1	\$41,544		
New Brunswick	1	\$78,000		
Nova Scotia			2	\$6,000 \$80,748
Northwest Territories	1	\$85,292	1	\$3,000
Ontario	4	70,220 72,093 190,000 210,000	1	623,492
Quebec	2	12,111 17,000		
Saskatchewan	1	56,974		
Total	11	\$887,025	4	\$713,240

2.1.6 Survey

Contact Database Overview

The CSGC database was used to create a list of potential survey respondents by selecting all accepted, rejected or withdrawn funding applications submitted between April 1, 2006 to March 31, 2008. This resulted in 803 applications. This list was then purged to arrive at a list of potential survey respondents:

- Among **successful applicants**, organizations appearing more than once were flagged and their most recently funded project proposal was considered for purposes of the study. As well, 6 projects funded under the Education Savings Incentives Program were removed from the database. A total of 214 organizations were initially categorized as “successful applicants”.
- For the **unsuccessful applicants’ database**, all organizations having submitted at least one successful proposal were removed, ensuring that the unsuccessful database was composed uniquely of organizations having never received funding under ALLESP.

¹⁶ Selection criteria – project budget (based on project distribution as follows: 25% under \$25,000; 30% 25 but under \$75,000; 30 over \$75,000 but under \$200,000; 15 % over \$200,000); project was closed; and a representative sample of grants and contributions.

As well, 22 organizations appearing more than once were flagged and their most recent project proposal was considered for purposes of the study. As well, 64 projects that were classified as “other” were removed¹⁷. A total of 224 organizations were initially categorized as “unsuccessful applicants”.

This resulted in a total of 438 applicants, and the resulting database was then analyzed to assess the following: (1) **completeness**; (2) **accuracy**; and (3) **usability**. Given the small size of the survey population, the entire population of applicants was asked to participate in the survey.

Questionnaire and Question Design

An iterative process involving the Evaluation Working Group developed individually tailored versions of the survey questionnaires for both groups being surveyed as part of this evaluation (successful and unsuccessful applicants). Two versions of each questionnaire were prepared – one for administration for a telephone interview, and one slightly modified for online data collection.

Once finalized, the English and French telephone versions of the instrument were pre-tested with 9 applicants on April 2, 2009 for the purposes of quality control and finalized.

Data Collection Process

The process used for this specific study involved a variety of steps all aimed at ensuring the study was conducted with the appropriate individuals and ultimately to maximize response rates. First, on March 19, 2009, an advance letter, signed by senior HRSDC evaluation and ALLESP representatives, was sent by mail to potential respondents, informing them that they would be contacted shortly for the purpose of the survey. The letters were addressed to the “primary contact” as identified in ALLESP databases.

The actual survey data collection was conducted using a multi-modal approach. The first “live” contact with respondents was made by telephone and provided an opportunity to assess the completeness, accuracy and usability of the contact database. In the event of discrepancies in the database, the interviewer was able to update the current database with proper contact information. Respondents were offered the opportunity to complete the survey either on the phone or online. If it was not a convenient time, the respondent was asked if they would like to make an appointment.

As per industry standards, each valid telephone number was attempted up to 8 times before being considered “unusable.” To reach organizations that were considered “unreachable” by phone (e.g. answering machine, nobody answered the phone, etc.), a batch of emails inviting funding applicants to participate in the study was sent out on April 22, 2009. All respondents who were emailed an invitation to participate in the

¹⁷ These 64 projects were not formally abandoned, rejected or withdrawn from the ALLESP databases – given their uncertain status, they were excluded from the potential survey respondent database.

survey but had yet to complete the survey were sent one wave of follow up email reminders on April 29, 2009.

Data was collected over a one month period between April 6 and May 6, 2009. Ultimately, 252 surveys were completed (203 telephone surveys and 49 email surveys), of which 145 were completed with successful applicants and 107 were completed with unsuccessful applicants. This represents a “response rate” of 58% across all applicants. The survey took respondents on average 22 minutes to complete.

Table 4						
Survey Data Collection and Response Rate						
	Overall		Funded		Unfunded	
TOTAL Survey Frame	438 (100%)		214 (49%)		224 (51%)	
	#	Col. %	#	Col. %	#	Col. %
Completed interviews	252	58%	145	68%	107	48%
Nobody eligible to conduct survey	26	6%	6	3%	20	9%
Respondent not available / No answer	145	33%	62	29%	83	37%
Refusal / Termination	15	3%	1	<1%	14	6%
Column Totals	438	100%	214	100%	224	100%
Note: All percentages in this table are unweighted						

Analysis of the contact outcomes, as shown in **Table 4**, reveals that, while the overall response rate was 58%, this rate was higher among funded respondents (68%) compared to unfunded respondents (48%). Furthermore, unfunded respondents were three times more likely (9% versus 3%) than funded respondents to not have anyone at the organization qualified to participate in the survey (i.e. the primary contact was no longer with the organization). Unfunded organizations were generally harder to reach and less willing to participate, as seen by the 6% refusal rate among this group compared to less than 1% among funded respondents.

Data Monitoring and Representativeness Considerations

A census-type study of this nature with an overall response rate of 58% provided the research team a fair degree of confidence that the survey results reflect the opinions of the broader population. Both funded and unfunded applicants are also well represented. This confidence is further reinforced by the fact that the general profile of the respondents is very similar to that of the overall population across a variety of profiling information that was available in the CSGC, including by region, type of funding received, organization type, etc.

It is worth noting that, as demonstrated in **Table 5** below, there is a slight misalignment between funded and unfunded applicants overall. Specifically, funded applicants are over-represented – they represent 58% of respondents compared to 49% in the population. To adjust for the fact that funded organizations are over-represented, the applicant survey results are weighted to replicate actual population distributions by funding status

according to ALLESP population information. This weighting process will only have an impact on survey results presented for all applicants. Unless otherwise indicated in a note below a data table or figure, all percentages presented in this report are weighted.

Table 5		
Data Monitoring and Distribution of Respondents by Region		
	Population Distribution	Respondent Distribution
Funded	49%	58%
Atlantic Canada	7%	8%
Quebec	18%	23%
Ontario	11%	12%
Prairies	7%	6%
British Columbia/Territories	6%	8%
Unfunded	51%	42%
Atlantic Canada	8%	8%
Quebec	5%	4%
Ontario	11%	9%
Prairies	9%	7%
British Columbia/Territories	18%	14%
Total	100%	100%
Note: All percentages in this table are unweighted		

2.2 Methodological Limitations

As with any evaluation, there are a number of limitations to this study. The reader is encouraged to take these into account when reviewing the findings of this summary report. The main limitations associated with this evaluation are as follows.

2.2.1 Missing Data

Of note is the fact that CSGC data for key areas of project funding were missing, specifically – close to two thirds of the electronic data was missing from the following five categories:

Activity Area

Under this category, there are four activity areas that the ALLESP funds, based on the four logic model activities. These include:

- Knowledge
- Promotion
- Strengthen Capacity
- Innovative Approaches

Funding Streams

Under this category, the four funding streams identified below are based on the key settings in which funded activities will take place. These include:

- Communities
- Families
- Educational Institutions¹⁸
- Workplace

Issue Area

Under this category, there are 15 codes which capture the key issue area related to LES. These codes range from basic skills and literacy, to labour and business, rural and isolated.

Venture Code

There are 19 codes that capture the outputs of funded projects and which range from best practices, to educational and resource material, to research studies, to volunteer development. These are all critical data sources that provide key information regarding the type of project that has been funded including the area funded, the tools and outputs.

Target Audience

Within the eligible key setting(s) selected for a project, funding applicants as part of their proposals are asked to describe the target groups for the project and indicate how they will benefit. When possible, they are also asked to provide an estimate of how many people will benefit. There are 25 codes for target audiences, which range from adult learners, immigrants, colleges and universities, literacy experts and practitioners, and provincial and territorial governments.

Without complete information on the above-noted codes, it is very difficult to complete a full analysis of the type of projects that are being funded (including the area funded, the tools and outputs). As such, CSGC data could not be used to fully evaluate the extent to which the Program is funding projects that are aligned with priorities (its own and those of government), meet the needs of the LES community, and will have the greatest impact on LES of individuals in Canada – particularly in relation to the Canadian workplace. In addition, the data that is available within these five categories is heavily weighted on the province of Quebec, in particular for the fiscal year 2007-2008 given the 1-year protocol agreement as discussed under Sub-section “1.2.1 Program Description”. As such,

¹⁸ While “Educational Institutions” is included as part of the original codes provided by the Program, it is not identified as a code within the CSGC. The assumption is that this code is no longer in the CSGC due to the shift to Workplace, Family and Community.

this data does not provide a representative picture of national efforts. It should be noted that marked improvements were observed from 2006-07 to 2007-08 in terms of the completeness of data for activity, stream, venture, target and issue. This could be partly attributable to the more rigorous funding application process, which gathers information from recipients in a more systematic way.

From a survey administration perspective and in terms of analyzing the results from the survey, the administrative database information shortcomings had a few noteworthy impacts.

- First, although the evaluation was able to conduct some comparative analysis (i.e. comparison of distributions) to gauge the extent to which the distribution of survey respondents reflects the distribution of the full population *among those for whom this information was available in the database*, it is impossible to determine whether the distribution of respondents **without** this information is as good. While other, more complete data fields can be used to establish how similar the distributions between the respondents and the population are, the ability to extend this across all variables is hampered.
- The gaps in the administrative data limited the consulting team's ability to conduct post-hoc analysis using these profiling variables. As such, *some* of the analysis was not possible because of the database gaps.

2.2.2 Survey Data Interpretation Limitations

Based on the comparative analysis presented in the previous section and an overall response rate of 58%, the results for funded and unfunded respondents are very representative of their respective populations. The most important considerations that might have an impact on the validity of the results are associated with the following:

- **The nature of the study itself** – the survey exercise by and large involves consulting individuals on an application and, in the case of funded applicants, an administration process that may have occurred a number of years ago. This study, and the confidence in the accuracy of the respondent's opinions, depends perhaps inordinately more on each respondent's ability to remember their experience than a typical research study would. At the same time, it is understood that given that amount of time that has elapsed, the possibility exists for hindsight bias on the part of respondents.
- **Halo-effect of unsuccessful proposals** – the manner in which the final contact list was created resulted in a specific selection based on historical funding with the ALLESP. Those who had received funding at one point, were asked to focus on that particular project for the purposes of the study. However, it is entirely possible that these opinions may have been influenced by applicants' other proposal submissions, which may not all have been successful. One cannot ignore that nearly one-third of funded applicants that participated in the study also submitted unsuccessful proposals since April 2006. While their opinions remain valid and valuable, caution must be exercised in trusting that these opinions are exclusively related to the project selected for the study.

Similarly, one might hypothesize that applicants who were successful would have a more positive opinion of the Program compared to those who submitted unsuccessful proposals.

Finally, organizations who did not apply for funding were not included as part of this survey. As such, it cannot be said with any certainty why some groups and organizations might be under-represented or are not applying for funding.

3. Key Evaluation Findings

Key evaluation findings are presented under each relevant evaluation issue and question.

3.1 Evaluation Issue: Program Design and Delivery

Are ALLESP's objectives and expected results clear? Is the logic model still valid?

Program Objectives

The stated objective of ALLESP, as outlined in a variety of Program documents that were reviewed is *“to promote lifelong learning by reducing non-financial barriers to adult learning and to facilitate the creation of opportunities for Canadians to acquire the learning, literacy and essential skills they need to participate in a knowledge based economy and society”*.¹⁹

Validity and clarity of Program objectives and expected results: Evidence collected through a large majority of the key informant interviews revealed that the objective of the Program is valid, clear and appropriate, but perhaps too high level. In general, it is viewed as being too broad, and perhaps not as targeted as it could be. Specifically, the Program's objective is viewed as too far reaching given its size and budget. A few internal key informant interviews also revealed that the word 'opportunities' may lead to the mistaken belief amongst funding applicants that the ALLESP is undertaking program delivery, when in fact this statement is viewed as being “more about leveraging opportunity” to support the development of more effective literacy and essential skills (LES) programs and tools and ultimately the increased acquisition of LES.

Conversely, the Program's focus of tying LES to economic objectives and labour force participation is viewed as too narrow by some external key informants who see the barriers to LES acquisition as more systemic – based on the notion of social inclusion. These external key informants noted that it is important to view LES not only as a means of enhancing productivity and facilitating labour force participation but also as a means for individuals to participate in society and enhance well-being. External key informants further emphasized this point by noting that there are a number of societal and contextual factors (e.g. poverty, ethnicity, education, belonging to a designated group) as well as language and cultural challenges impacting LES acquisition that are not addressed through a strict focus on LES in relation to labour force participation. Furthermore, there

¹⁹ Sources: Terms and Conditions for Adult Learning, Literacy and Essential Skills; Human Resources and Social Development – Adult Learning, Literacy and Essential Skills Program Applicant's Guide (2006-2007); 2006-2007 Call for Proposal documentation (Business/Labour Partnerships and Workplace Literacy, National Call for Proposals, and Local Regional Call for Proposal – this excludes the documentation reviewed on the 2006-2007 Call for Proposals: Essential Skills Initiative which was a separate entity when ALLESP was developed); ALLESP Terms and Conditions for Class Contributions Consolidated Revenue Funds; ALLESP Terms and Conditions for Class Grants Consolidated Revenue Funds; December 2006 Draft Performance Measurement and Evaluation Frameworks of the Adult Learning, Literacy and Essential Skills Program; as well as on the HRSDC website.

is uncertainty and complexity related to the integration between ‘literacy and essential skills’ and how literacy might be more closely tied to employment goals.

In terms of the Program’s aim to “*promote lifelong learning by reducing non-financial barriers to adult learning*”, a few internal key informants revealed that there is limited evidence that the Program is really reducing non-financial barriers. Rather it was noted that the objective or focus of the Program is about developing knowledge and building expertise as to what works in building LES for Canadians to participate in a knowledge-based economy and disseminating this knowledge so that it is replicated elsewhere. This objective or focus is linked to ALLESP’s strategic outcome to “*enhance Canadian productivity and participation through efficient and inclusive labour markets, competitive workplaces and access to learning*”. Furthermore, a few internal key informants noted that there is less emphasis on ‘adult learning’ (which is addressed under the Learning Branch) and more emphasis on building the LES that Canadian adults need for work, learning and life. As a result, these internal key informants question the use of “adult learning” in defining the Program objectives and furthermore in each of its key activities.

Consistency of ALLESP objectives with the current needs and priorities of the LES community: The review of Program documentation supplemented by internal key informant interviews revealed that, in general, Program objectives are compatible with varied needs of the LES community. At the same time, concerns were raised by a few external key informants that provincial and territorial input into ALLESP priority setting may have suffered as a result of program integration.²⁰

Furthermore, the majority of external key informants and a few internal key informants noted a number of LES community needs and priorities which may not be adequately addressed or supported by ALLESP funding. It should be noted that these recommendations need to be viewed in light of the fact that, due to jurisdictional authority, the ALLESP does not fund direct interventions or training in LES. With this in mind, key informants suggested the following:

- Flexible programs and services which respond to the varied needs of a variety of marginalized learners e.g. key sub-populations in provinces (i.e. those between the ages of 15 – 65 without grade 12), who are more likely to be ineligible for employability-based LES training opportunities.
- Access to (or the dissemination of) LES targeted materials and resources to: ensure that knowledge, tools and materials are being used to their full extent, and do not overlap or duplicate other efforts; support LES acquisition; and, foster a culture of learning. Tools and services must be developed to encourage individuals to view learning as an ongoing process. This is seen as an important way to address the psychological, emotional and social barriers that individuals face when trying to improve their LES.
- Additional research and understanding in the following areas:

²⁰ For further details on how the shift to ALLESP has led to changes in how partners are defined, consulted and engaged please refer to the evaluation indicator: “*Extent to which a partnership-based, multi-sectoral approach to LES promotion, such as the ALLESP, is the most effective way to achieve objectives*”.

- The contextual factors surrounding LES and the uniqueness of the Canadian context (e.g., isolated communities and the impact this has on literacy levels);
- The processes by which people attain essential skills, thereby assisting in determining which types of initiatives the ALLESP ought to fund;
- Tools and supports at the community-level to measure performance of ALLESP-funded research, programming and tools²¹;
- Strategies to support LES development in the workplace amongst those who are already employed; and
- Potential areas of collaboration (coordination between the federal, provincial and territorial governments) to support LES acquisition.

In light of the fact that the ALLESP does not support direct delivery, several external key informants suggested that alternative policy instruments (such as EI) ought to be developed instead to support Canadians who are interested in upgrading their knowledge and skills – particularly those who have been displaced from the labour market.

Some additional emerging challenges faced by the LES community were identified including:

- the replacement of an aging or retiring workforce in community-based programming;
- an increase in service demands on community-based programs as larger numbers of learners try to access these programs in today’s knowledge based economy; and
- the evolving needs of the LES community, which require access to ongoing practitioner training, and up-to-date curriculum.

Consistency of ALLESP objectives with current federal and community needs and priorities: Overall, the ALLESP was viewed as being consistent with federal and departmental priorities as evidenced by key informant interviews and the documentation review. In particular, key informants viewed the Program as being aligned with federal government priorities regarding the importance of addressing national skills and employment issues, supporting workforce entry, transitioning of employees from declining sectors and helping Canadians gain and improve upon the LES they need to participate fully in a knowledge-based economy, communities and families.

More specifically, the Program’s objectives, key activities, outputs and outcomes are consistent with departmental priorities in relation to LES as outlined in the Department’s 2008-2009 Report on Plans and Priorities (RPP). The 2008-2009 RPP states “[s]upport [for] workplace training for Canadians by working with provinces, territories and the private sector to make training and skills development more widely available to Canadian workers and better aligned with the needs of the economy. HRSDC will continue to encourage skills development and training in Canadian workplaces and to invest in the development of tools and other support mechanisms to raise LES of Canadians.” As part

²¹ The documentation review supported by key informant interviews revealed that a number of ongoing efforts have been undertaken by the Program to improve upon planning, performance information, measurement and reporting.

of its program activity architecture, one of HRSDC's strategic outcomes is to “*enhance Canadian productivity through an efficient and inclusive labour markets/competitive workplaces and access to learning achieved*”.

HRSDC's strategic outcome is further supported by a number of complementary ALLESP activities such as “Labour Market”, “Workplace Skills” (including LES), and “Learning”²². These complementary activities provide Canadians with the opportunities and choices to participate in an array of programs. Although these program activities have distinct roles and responsibilities, they have common elements that contribute to the Department's support of lifelong learning and the development and use of skills to work in the current and future labour market.

In light of the above-findings, evidence from some of the key informant interviews revealed that there appears to be resistance at the community level (with smaller organizations and larger literacy organizations who have been leaders in the ‘literacy movement’) towards shifting from literacy as a single priority, to the new focus on LES directly linked to labour market participation. This resistance, as noted by a few internal key informants, may be the result of: 1) retargeting of federal investments and LES resources to meet national priorities (i.e., labour market participation) and 2) the lack of resources dedicated to the ALLESP²³. As a result, there is the perception amongst a few key informants that literacy is no longer a federal priority, but rather the priority is essential skills as it relates to labour force participation.

Consistency of ALLESP objectives with those of OLES: Evidence from the majority of internal key informant interviews noted that there is consistency between ALLESP and OLES (i.e. logic models including objectives) even though they may use different wording. A few internal key informants indicated a need to review the ALLESP logic model in light of the revised OLES logic model to ensure it is reflective of the direction of OLES and the federal government. As noted by a few internal key informants, the ALLESP logic model is a sub-component of the OLES logic model – specifically ALLESP falls under OLES's key activities of “Grant and Contribution” programming. The OLES logic model also includes other OLES activities such as partnership, labour market and analysis and dissemination.

²² As noted earlier, the Literacy and Essential Skills program was transferred to the Skills and Employment Branch during the year in recognition of the importance of such skills among adults striving to find and retain employment as well as to families and communities. While full reporting on results is included under the Learning program activity, the program was fully integrated into the Labour Market and Workplace Skills program activities during the 2007-2008 year. Source: Human Resources and Social Development Canada, 2007-2008 Estimates, A Departmental Performance Report.

²³ A review of Program documentation indicated ongoing funding cuts of \$17.7 million (\$5.8 million in 2006-2007 and \$11.9 million in 2007-2008) which represented the federal-provincial-territorial partnership funding stream that supported community-based literacy projects. ALLESP funds were reallocated to activities of national interest.

Program Activities and Outputs

ALLESP identifies activities along the following four streams²⁴:

1. Generation, transfer and application of knowledge;
2. Provision of targeted investments using innovative approaches;
3. Strengthening the capacity of the adult learning and literacy sectors and those involved in essential skills; and
4. Adult learning, literacy and essential skills promotion.

These activities are accomplished through: the administration of contribution projects for learning, literacy and essential skills; grants (and leveraged grants) projects for literacy; and support for the national coordination of learning, literacy and essential skills issues.

The outputs of these activities include:

- Research and knowledge;
- Pilot and demonstration projects ;
- Partnerships, networks, tools, materials and associated resources; and
- Public awareness products.

Level of external awareness of ALLESP and its key activities: The evaluation found that familiarity with the ALLESP and its key activities was relatively low amongst external key informants, with OLES becoming increasingly recognized as the federal “face” ‘on the ground’. Those with prior involvement with the previously merged programs (LIP, OLT and NLP), as well as NLS²⁵, were particularly critical of the level of ALLESP awareness within the LES community. According to these external key informants, there was a wider awareness of the NLS, and as a consequence, the federal government’s role and support in the LES community. In comparison, since the creation of ALLESP there is the perception within the LES community, according to a few external key informants, that efforts are no longer made to reach the broader LES community (e.g., the Program no longer advertises Calls for Proposals in newspapers, nor are press releases issued, both of which were standard practice under the NLS). Therefore, according to these key informants, there is a perception that only groups ‘in the know can apply’. This is a concern given that one of the re-alignment’s strategic goals

²⁴ Additional Sources:; Human Resources and Social Development – Adult Learning, Literacy and Essential Skills Program Applicant’s Guide (2006-2007); 2006-2007 Call for Proposal documentation (Business/Labour Partnerships and Workplace Literacy, National Call for Proposals, and Local Regional Call for Proposal – this excludes the documentation reviewed on the 2006-2007 Call for Proposals: Essential Skills Initiative which was a separate entity when ALLESP was developed); ALLESP Terms and Conditions for Class Contributions Consolidated Revenue Funds; ALLESP Terms and Conditions for Class Grants Consolidated Revenue Funds; December 2006 Draft Performance Measurement and Evaluation Frameworks of the Adult Learning, Literacy and Essential Skills Program; HRSDC website.

²⁵ The key focus of the NLS, as the secretariat, was the administration of the NLP. Through the NLP, the NLS worked to promote literacy as an essential component of a learning society and to make Canada’s social, economic and political life more accessible to people with weak literacy skills. It did this both through the NLP and also through research, outreach and working in partnership.

is to maintain or enhance the Federal Government's visibility in the areas of adult learning, literacy and essential skills.

In an attempt to evaluate the extent to which funding applicants are aware of and familiar with ALLESP, all survey respondents were asked what they believe to be the primary activities funded by ALLESP. Respondents were not provided with a specific list of responses from which they could choose. Rather this was an entirely open-ended exercise.

While most survey respondents were able to provide some sort of answer, it is worth noting that 9% of funded respondents and 20% of unfunded respondents were unable to provide an answer to the question. This proportion was higher in Atlantic Canada (20%) and in Western and Northern Canada (23%). Among those survey respondents who were able to provide an answer, over one-third believed ALLESP funds activities related to essential skills training specifically or essential skills in general and 3 in 10 believe ALLESP promotes literacy training or literacy in general. These results are noteworthy given the fact that ALLESP does not fund training, beyond a few projects associated with "training the trainer". This may be a further indication of the lack of familiarity among applicants for what ALLESP actually funds. Regarding other responses provided, approximately 20% believe ALLESP provides funding to conduct and develop literacy programs. In addition, fewer than 20% of survey respondents indicated that ALLESP provides employment-related skills, followed by the promotion and improvement of adult literacy and the production and distribution of LES materials and tools. Other than the proportion of respondents who were unable to provide a response, results between funded and unfunded respondents are quite similar.

Extent to which activities and outputs seem appropriately identified, defined and logically linked: Overall, evidence collected through internal key informant interviews suggests that there is a logical link between the Program activities and the outputs outlined in the ALLESP logic model²⁶. In addition, for those internal key informants familiar with subsequent versions and revisions of the ALLESP logic model, the original logic model was seen as superior when compared to subsequent versions, which were viewed as drifting too far from Program reach. However, the original ALLESP logic model was still acknowledged to be a "work in progress", something to be expected given that the ALLESP was trying to bring together three groups (NLP, OLT and LES) with a shared focus on literacy, but with different mandates, audiences, etc.

External key informant interviewed found the linkages between the activities and outputs to be less clear. In particular, while the activities are written at an appropriate high-level and flexible enough to include a variety of activities required at the community level, it is unclear how the activities lead to the development of the outputs and ultimately the expected outcomes. For example, a few external key informants noted that activities and outputs are based on "soft approaches" such as knowledge transfer, influencing, awareness raising, but due to jurisdictional authority, the ALLESP does not fund direct intervention, delivery or training in LES. As such, there is uncertainty as to whether or not the Program's outputs would actually lead to the expected outcomes.

²⁶ Developed as part of the Terms and Conditions in February 2006. Please see Appendix C for Program logic model.

Program Outcomes

Immediate Outcomes

ALLESP activities and outputs are expected to lead to the following immediate or short-term outcomes²⁷:

- Improved dissemination, transfer and application of knowledge and information;
- Increased capacity of funding recipients, other stakeholders and end-users or target groups; and
- Increased awareness of the benefits of and opportunities for adult learning, literacy and essential skills.

Intermediate Outcomes

The expected intermediate outcomes of ALLESP are:

- programming, services and policies that respond to evolving needs; and
- Enhanced opportunities for adult learning, literacy and essential skills.

Long-Term Outcomes

The re-alignment of adult learning, literacy and essential skills programming and services that provide enhanced opportunities with increased awareness of the benefits of and opportunities for such programming and services, is expected to result in a long-term outcome of increased participation by Canadians in adult learning, literacy and essential skills. This is fully in line with HRSDC's strategic outcome that *through access to learning opportunities, Canadians can participate more fully in a knowledge-based economy and society*. The latter would be the ultimate expected outcome of ALLESP.

Appropriateness and Clarity of ALLESP outcomes; extent to which they can be achieved:

Most key informant interviews found Program outcomes appropriate and clear. Similar to the predecessor programs, ALLESP is designed to achieve its objectives by working with and influencing organizations, groups and individuals to work in new ways to reach Canadians in order to improve overall LES. In light of its indirect role, it was questioned by a few key informants whether the Program's long-term outcome of increased participation in adult LES can be achieved. In fact, some key informants noted that it is impossible for the Program to demonstrate the achievement of its intermediate and long-term outcomes, given that the Program doesn't touch individual Canadians and there are too many extraneous factors at play that impact on LES levels among Canadians. This is partially

²⁷ Additional Sources: ALLESP Terms and Conditions for Class Contributions Consolidated Revenue Funds; ALLESP Terms and Conditions for Class Grants Consolidated Revenue Funds; December 2006 Draft Performance Measurement and Evaluation Frameworks of the Adult Learning, Literacy and Essential Skills Program; HRSDC website.

due to difficulties in measuring participation and tracking or measuring Program results, as well as difficulties in collecting data on target groups of the funded projects.²⁸

From the perspective of some of the external key informants, the long-term outcome of “*increased participation by Canadians in adult learning, literacy and essential skills*” should focus on the number of Canadians who have or could have real opportunity to increase their skill levels, or who have increased their skill levels because of ALLESP funding. Alternatively, some external key informants argued that what ALLESP is ultimately trying to improve is public awareness regarding LES and the quality and reach of LES programming. From these outcome perspectives, a few external key informants noted that the Program is far from achieving its stated long-term outcomes due to the challenges and limitations (as previously noted) imposed by the limited size, resources and reach of the Program.

Extent to which a partnership-based, multi-sectoral approach to improving LES, such as ALLESP, is the most effective way to achieve objectives: Most key informants (internal and largely external) spoke of the weakness in the area of partnership since the creation of ALLESP especially with regards to communication and information sharing, when compared to the NLS. In particular, the reduced use of partners in defining priority areas of funding (particularly in the CFP and review process leading to funding decisions) and the communications and dissemination of information as to how funding is allocated.

Some external key informants noted that the shift to ALLESP has led to a definite change in how partners are defined, consulted and engaged. For example, the feeling of equality once felt by provinces in terms of the efforts to work together through the various decision-making processes (e.g. priority setting, calls for proposals, funding) seems to have been replaced with a ‘stakeholder’ label and thus impacts the cooperative relations between the two orders of government. There is a perceived ‘guardedness’ around ALLESP now in terms of the way in which consultations seem to be more directed and one way rather than being open.

Most external key informants noted that the NLS had a stronger and more equitable partnership orientation, with positive working relationships and coordination between the provincial, territorial and federal government, as well as practitioners. As such, these partnerships were viewed by some of the external key informants, as very effective and transparent, allowing the NLS to satisfy the unique needs of each of the provinces and territories by taking into account regional and contextual factors (e.g. population size, demographics, target groups).

Despite the above-noted, a few internal key informants viewed the partnership process under the NLS as not supporting the overriding federal government priorities. At the same time, these interviewees acknowledged that the re-targeting of federal resources for LES in 2006 to focus on areas deemed to be in greatest national interest and core federal responsibilities has created Program challenges in terms of getting lost partners ‘back on board’ and securing those connections that were once forged through the discussion of

²⁸ For further details please refer to evaluation indicator: “Extent to which the performance indicators accurately reflect outputs and results”.

ideas under previous programming structures. Some internal key informants noted that within the Program, efforts are ongoing to improve on and re-build partnerships and communications.

Is ALLESP being implemented as intended?

Extent to which the initiative is implemented as intended: Internal key informants had mixed views with regards to the implementation of ALLESP. While a few informants feel that funded projects are aligned with ALLESP objectives, other internal key informants stated that in their view ALLESP is a grants and contribution program under OLES and thus is simply a funding mechanism rather than a program that affects broader change. As such, Program implementation ought to be viewed as more indirect, with ALLESP playing a facilitation and enabling role by supporting projects that build partnerships and provide LES opportunities through the funding of research and tool development.

The implementation of ALLESP has been impacted by a number of factors, according to most internal key informants, including: the on-going nature of program implementation to support changes in program direction; a limited Program budget which has restricted funding opportunities; time delays in getting Program performance measurements in place, as well as difficulties measuring and attributing project success; and, strained relationships between the provinces and the federal government.

Has the Program re-alignment under ALLESP led to effective Program integration, co-ordination and coherence?

Extent to which the Program re-alignment under ALLESP has led to the effective integration of these previous Programs, as well as improved value, co-ordination and coherence: Overall, a large majority of external key informants and a few internal key informants were highly critical of the program re-alignment. According to these informants, it is unclear as to why a Program re-alignment was needed or how the content of the three previous programs was integrated. This has led to the belief that the creation of ALLESP has led to the loss of some of the best and most powerful elements of previous programming. This includes NLP's partnership approach with provinces and territories, OLT's community networks, as well as research and innovation (e.g., action research – such as being able to test something new, developing a new tool, conducting research on whether or not methodologies applied to particular clients, groups etc).

Another issue raised by those interviewed is the perceived decline in the 'field presence' of ALLESP in the regions, as a result of program realignment. For example, a few external key informants noted that under previous Program structures there was a greater connection and communications in the regions. This connection has greatly diminished as a result of the integration of the three previous programs in particular, the cancellation of

the local and regional funding stream in 2006²⁹ and a perceived weakening of partnership and overall collaboration.³⁰

Furthermore, findings from key informant interviews, as well as the survey, suggest that there is little evidence that such a re-alignment has improved efficiency. This was noted by delays in CFPs and funding decisions, diminished communications and connectedness in the regions as well as a perceived guardedness in which consultations seem fixed rather than being open, when compared to the three previous programs.

A review of the administrative data found that lag time between project application received date and project start date, exceeded 6 months in 2006/07; this average declined by 60 days in 2007/08. The delay appears to occur between the receipt of the application and when it is entered into the CSGC. This delay in the review process was also highlighted during the key informant interviews. At the time the interviews were conducted (January - February 2009), it was noted that organizations who applied for ALLESP funding in September 2008 were still waiting to hear if their proposal was successful.

Once a project is approved, funds on average, are released relatively quickly (15 days on average).

A few internal key informants recognized the issues noted above, and highlighted the fact that program re-alignment occurred only recently. As such, improvements were expected as the Program matured. In addition, some internal and external key informants noted that the re-alignment of the NLP, OLT and LIP programs into one program was necessary to reduce duplication of efforts. In addition, by merging these three Programs into one, it removed the perception, as highlighted in the previous program evaluations, that each on their own was too small to have a real impact on the LES of Canadians.

Clarity of new Program mandate, effectiveness of Program co-ordination, more effective programming, level of Program coherence: According to a majority of external key informants, there is a perception within the community that the ALLESP is focused on essential skills and employment, and that the community must ‘fight’ to keep a broader focus on literacy as a separate yet integrated issue. As such, there is the view within the LES community, according to a few internal and external key informants, that literacy is not an important issue and that it has lost its profile within the Department.

In terms of the effectiveness of program co-ordination and programming, a few internal key informants recognized that the Program has experienced ongoing issues with regards to the program integration process that may have impacted program co-ordination, including: organizational factors (e.g. the change to the name and structure, the addition

²⁹ In 2006, as part of the federal review of grants and contributions programs, federal resources for LES were re-targeted to focus on areas/programs deemed to be in greatest national interest and core federal responsibilities while achieving concrete and measurable results for Canadians i.e. learners. As a result of these changes, HRSDC reprioritized its resources to focus on its national ALLESP funding stream. In fact, the 2006-07 ALLESP local and regional call for proposal was cancelled after the local and regional stream of the ALLESP was eliminated. Accordingly, none of the proposals submitted under this call were funded. The national call remained in place.

³⁰ For further discussions regarding the perceived weakening of partnerships under the ALLESP, please refer to the evaluation indicator: “Extent to which a partnership-based, multi-sectoral approach to LES promotion, such as the ALLESP, is the most effective way to achieve objectives”.

of OLES later in the integration process, changing physical locations etc.) and cultural factors (bringing together three groups with a shared focus on literacy and learning, but with different mandates, audiences, etc., followed by the introduction and integration of essential skills with literacy as a key policy and program focus). Despite this, a few internal key informants noted that the programs are now becoming more integrated and while there appears to be separate cultures between essential skills and literacy, it is also clear from discussion with the majority of internal key informants that OLES is making a concerted effort to integrate these cultures under one organizational framework.

Who are the recipients of ALLESP funding?

Applicants and recipients of ALLESP funding: Evidence collected from the administrative data analysis (Table 6) noted that of the 288 projects funded between April 1, 2006 and March 31, 2008, Quebec and Ontario received the largest proportion – a total of 177 (62%) of all projects. Quebec accounted for the largest number of projects, with a total of 116, with Ontario accounting for a higher percentage (36% or \$12.5M) of the \$35.2M worth of HRSDC funding available during this timeframe. Quebec accounted for the second highest percentage with 21% (\$7.2M).

Only three other provinces (Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba) and one territory (Nunavut) maintained roughly the same number of projects over the two-year period. Only Manitoba, Alberta and Nunavut experienced an increase in ALLESP project funding during this time, increasing by roughly \$1.6M, \$1.1M and \$703,314 respectively.

While the distribution of projects funded within various provinces remained relatively stable from year to year, Atlantic Canada experienced a significant drop in the number of projects funded, as well as ALLESP funding received, between 2006-07 and 2007-08. Combined, Newfoundland and Labrador, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island received \$2.8M for 28 projects in 2006-07. The total number of projects decreased to eight in 2007-08, with the ALLESP funding totalling just \$962,948.

Table 6
Distribution of Project Funding by Province by Fiscal Year

Province	(2006-07)			(2007-08)		
	# of Projects	Total Project Funding Amount*	ALLESP Funding Amount	# of Projects	Total Project Funding Amount*	ALLESP Funding Amount
Alberta	8	\$1,518,956	\$1,012,837	11	\$2,259,725	\$2,144,025
British Columbia	9	\$1,608,663	\$960,309	9	\$1,453,960	\$1,099,251
Manitoba	6	\$889,023	\$681,363	7	\$2,480,486	\$2,332,986
New Brunswick	7	\$973,367	\$816,386	3	\$498,143	\$462,643
Newfoundland and Labrador	10	\$731,830	\$669,273	3	\$210,738	\$199,738
Northwest Territories	4	\$667,229	\$391,138	3	\$400,724	\$288,695
Nova Scotia	6	\$661,625	\$596,265	1	\$6,000	\$6,000
Nunavut	1	\$224,636	\$177,778	2	\$953,212	\$881,092
Ontario	29	\$8,127,306	\$5,821,605	32	\$7,783,681	\$6,689,883
Prince Edward Island	5	\$897,926	\$754,886	1	\$294,567	\$294,567
Quebec	59	\$7,171,975	\$4,599,374	57	\$3,103,869	\$2,639,611
Saskatchewan	7	\$1,003,110	\$921,925	4	\$450,833	\$434,839
Yukon Territory	3	\$318,630	\$286,937	1	\$75,191	\$75,191
Total	154	\$24,794,276	\$17,690,076	134	\$19,971,129	\$17,548,521

* Includes contributions from funding recipients and partners.

Internal key informants noted that efforts are being made to broaden the scope of funded organizations to include other eligible recipient groups (employers, academia, unions, etc.). Despite these efforts, evidence from key external key informants and the administrative data analysis indicate that a large portion (213 or 74%) of ALLESP funding applicants and recipients are from the not-for-profit sector (specifically local community, charitable, voluntary organizations), followed by national NGOs and provincial NGOs (Table 7).

Table 7
Grants and Contribution Recipients

Organization Category	(2006-07)	(2007-08)	Total
Aboriginal not-for-profit groups		1	1
Associations of workers and/or of employers	2	5	7
Local community, charitable, voluntary org.	117	96	213
National NGOs	14	11	25
Provincial governments and agencies		1	1
Provincial NGOs	12	11	23
Public community colleges and vocational schools	1	4	5
Public degree-granting colleges	2	1	3
Public degree-granting universities		2	2
Public Sector (Incl. Univ./College/Vocational)	5	2	7
Unions	1		1
Total	154	134	288

Number and profile of rejected applicants: Of the 792³¹ proposals submitted between April 1, 2006 and March 31, 2008, 46% (327) of proposals were rejected³² and 15% (116) were withdrawn.³³ Of the 327 proposals that were rejected, 85% (282) were within the not-for-profit sector, followed by 14% (46) in the public sector and only two projects within the private sector. Similarly, 87% (102) of withdrawn projects were within the not-for-profit sector, followed by 12% (14) in the public sector. No proposals were withdrawn from the private sector for either year. Only the Public Sector had more rejected proposals than approved proposals (of the 64 proposals submitted, only 17 were approved). Fewer rejected and withdrawn proposals were seen in 2007-08 compared to 2006-07.

Target Groups of ALLESP-funded Projects ALLESP continues to experience difficulties in its ability to identify and track information on target groups as well as with consistently capturing this data within the CSGC. These findings are consistent with evaluation findings of previous programs. In fact, over 69% of the information on the “Target Audience or Group” was missing or blank in the CSGC. For a further discussion on the collection of target group information, please see “*Is the basic information necessary for the summative evaluation being collected?*” i.e. Profiles of the Target Groups.

Of the 90 out of 288 projects for which information was available in the CSGC, 57% (51) targeted “adult learners” while 28% (25) were classified as “other” making it difficult to discern the specific target group of these funded projects.

Target Audience or Group	(2006-07)	(2007-08)³⁴	Total
Adult Learners	4	47	51
Community Capacity Building	1		1
Community Organization / Voluntary Sector	1	1	2
Educators / Trainers	1	6	7
Immigrants		1	1
Learners / Students		2	2
Other	5	20	25
Youth at Risk		1	1
(blank)	142	56	198
Total	154	134	288

³¹ This total includes 288 successful projects, 327 rejected, 116 withdrawn and 61 projects in the CSGC classified in the CSGC under a variety of categories such as “Recommendation and Approval - In-process”; “Project Set-up - In-process”; “Agreement Set-up – Cancelled”; “Agreement – Cancelled” Assessment – Abandoned”; “Agreement Set-up - In-process”; and “Commit - In-process”. It is important to note however that these 61 projects were not formally abandoned, rejected or withdrawn from the ALLESP databases - given their uncertain status, they were excluded from our analysis of rejected/withdrawn applicants.

³² Rejected projects are classified in the CSGC as “Assessment – Rejected”; “Project Set-up – Rejected” or “Recommendation and Approval – Rejected”

³³ Withdrawn projects in the CSGC are classified based on “Assessment – Withdrawn”; “Project Set-up – Withdrawn” or “Recommendation and Approval – Withdrawn”.

³⁴ Improvements have been noted for the 2007-08 in terms of more complete information i.e. less blanks over the 2006-07 fiscal year

Survey findings revealed that individual projects tend to target multiple types of groups rather than focusing on a single group. Generally, low income households, the unemployed, families and Canadians in rural and remote areas are considered the most common target groups among both funded and unfunded applicants. Youth, immigrants and seniors represent the next tier of target groups with visible minorities (who are not new Canadians), aboriginals and official language minority (OLM) communities are less targeted. Results among both funded and unfunded applicants are quite consistent with the exception of unemployed Canadians, youth and visible minorities (who are not new Canadians) who were all more likely to be targeted by unfunded applicants. Given this latter finding there may be some cause for concern that a large number of proposals remain unfunded for projects which are targeted towards key groups who are unemployed and/or who need learning and essential skills development the most.

Key organizations, groups and initiatives that are missing or underrepresented i.e. not being funded and the impact on improvement of adult learning, literacy and development of essential skills: Despite the views of internal key informants, who suggest that no key organizations, groups and initiatives are underrepresented under ALLESP, a review of the administrative data indicates that funding continues to be directed towards local community, charitable, voluntary organizations. This is despite efforts to target employers, academia, unions, etc. In addition, a few external key informants indicated that small regions (such as PEI) and smaller organizations (e.g. literacy-based) may experience difficulties in obtaining funding, an issue that may be exacerbated by the shift away from provincially designated funds under the ALLESP model, according to some external key informants. As previously noted, when compared to 2006-07, Ontario and Quebec combined experienced a 9% increase in the number of projects that received funding in 2007-08 (58% and 67% respectively). During the same period, the Atlantic provinces, which accounted for 17% of the funded projects in 2006-07, received only 6% in 2007-08 (see Table 6).

Are adequate management and administrative systems in place for effective and efficient Program delivery? Could delivery be improved?

Extent to which the current approach to determining priorities and distributing funding is the most efficient and effective way for ALLESP to achieve its objectives and consistency with the needs of the sector: Determining priorities, as described by a few internal key informants, is a multi-faceted process involving both research and consultation with external stakeholders. These consultations with external stakeholders, particularly the provinces and territories, appear to have suffered due to a shifting ‘too far’ away from a shared decision-making process. Despite this, most internal key informants discussed efforts the Program is making to continue to improve on and re-build partnerships and communications with provincial and territorial partners in the priority setting process to ensure the Program remains relevant to the LES community e.g. targeted calls for proposals.

Extent to which eligibility criteria and application process for funding is clear and well understood: Program eligibility criteria and guidelines³⁵ for the application process, as outlined in the various documents available to funding applicants, are generally clear and well understood as evidenced by the documentation review, key informant interviews, and the completeness of project files as part of the file review. Survey findings indicate that 62% of respondents overall were satisfied with the clarity of eligibility criteria (see Figure 2), including 84% of funded respondents. The level of satisfaction drops amongst unfunded applicants, with only 52% reporting being satisfied with program eligibility criteria.

In an effort to ease the application process, supports and tools were introduced in 2007 as part of the CFP Application Guide and Kit. These include checklists intended to ensure key forms, documents, and mandatory information requirements are provided and to certify that the information contained within the project proposal is an accurate description of the organization, their plans and activities. Despite these supports and tools, only 46% of all funding respondents (including 58% of funded respondents and 34% of unfunded respondents) are satisfied with the “ease of the funding application process” and 45% of all applicants (60% of funded respondents and 32% of unfunded respondents) are satisfied with the “assistance provided at the proposal development stage.”

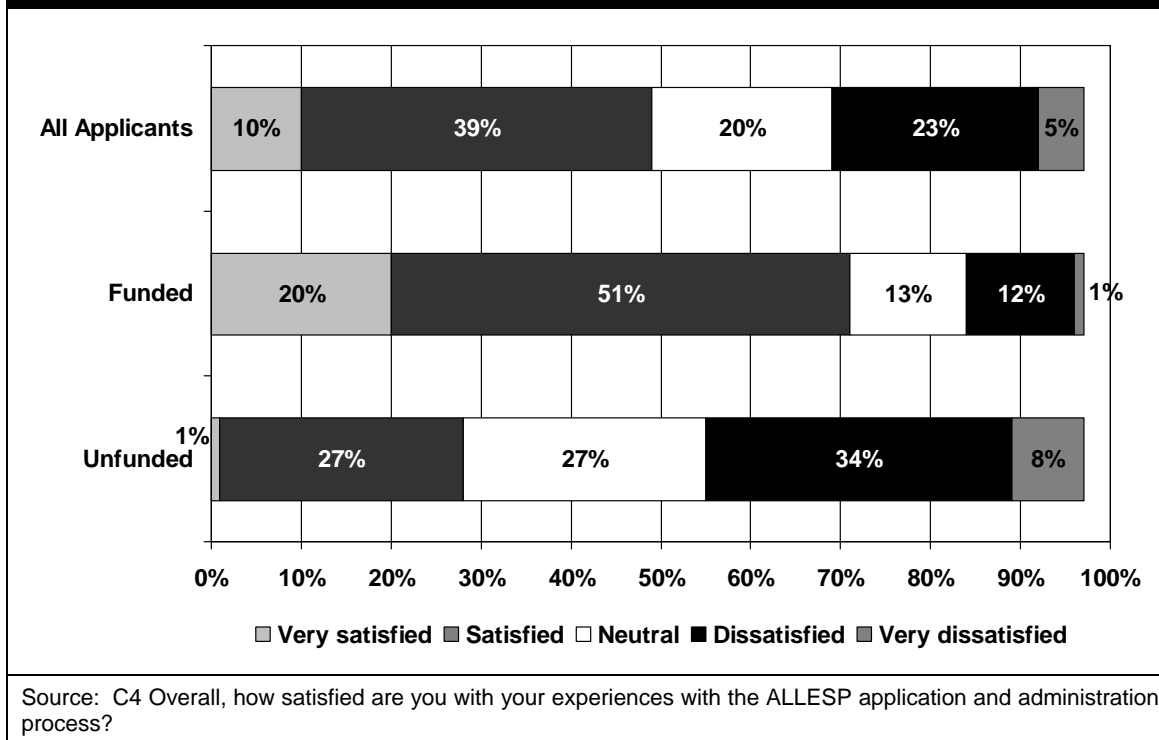
When asked to rate the assistance provide by ALLESP at the proposal development stage, some 17% responded don’t know/not applicable, suggesting that awareness and/or use of ALLESP assistance is not universal. This indicates that perhaps there is a lack of awareness of the available tools and supports amongst some funding applicants, or perhaps they may not be as effective and useful as is currently assumed.

It is also worth noting that evidence collected through a few internal key informant interviews suggests that the application process may not do enough to communicate to and encourage funding applicants to propose projects within the broader framework of LES. As a result, some organizations, particularly the smaller ones, tend to continue to submit proposals that look to address literacy and/or essential skills more narrowly and perhaps less innovatively. It was suggested that more could be done through the CFP process (i.e. communications, outreach and promotion) to encourage innovation and creativity.

Satisfaction with the Call for Proposal and Administration Process: Evidence collected through key informant interviews and the survey indicate a low level of satisfaction with the ALLESP application and administration process, especially amongst those organizations who did not receive funding. As demonstrated in Figure 1, only 28% of unfunded respondents were satisfied with the application and administration process overall, compared to 71% of funded respondents. This level of satisfaction drops to 63% amongst successful applicants who had previous experience with ALLESP’s predecessor programs (such as the NLP, OLT and LIP).

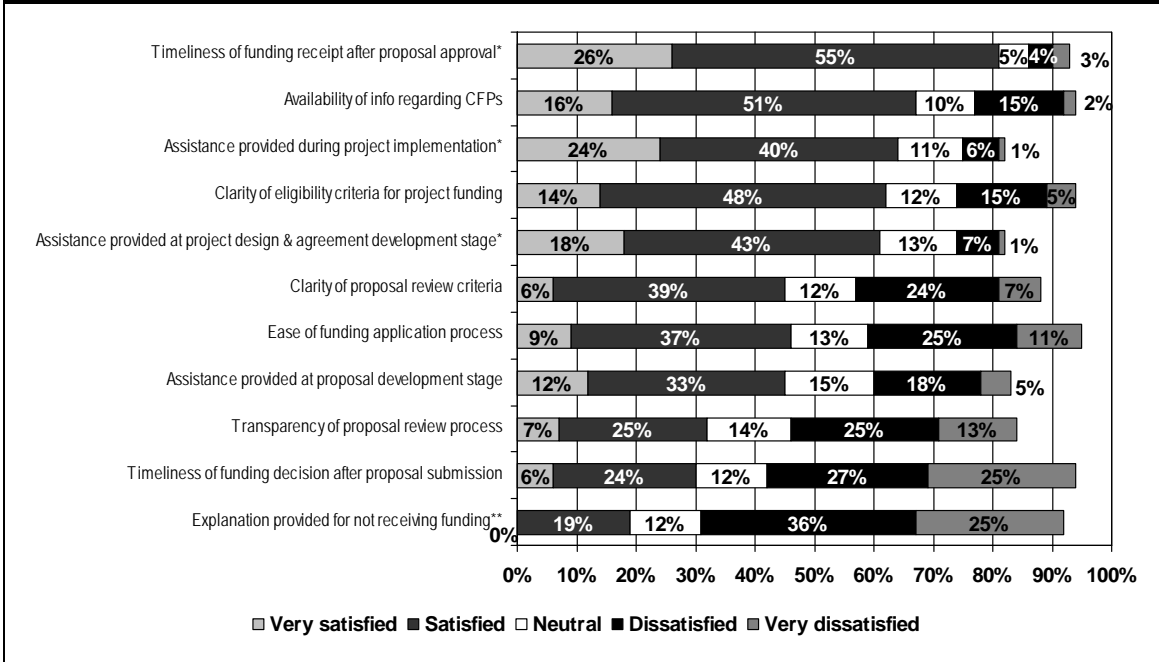
³⁵ Guidelines are consistent with eligibility criteria and the guidelines for the application process for funding outlined in a variety of Program documents including: the RMAF/RBAF, the ALLESP Terms and Conditions for Class Contributions Consolidated Revenue Funds, and Terms and Conditions for Class Grants Consolidated Revenue Funds.

Figure 1
Overall Satisfaction



Aspects of the application process that received the lowest scores (at or below 31% satisfaction overall) are all related to the post-submission phase of the process. Satisfaction levels for the “transparency of the proposal review process” and the “timeliness of funding decision after the proposal submission” were both below 50% for funded respondents and below 20% for unfunded respondents. In addition, only 19% of unfunded respondents were satisfied with the “explanation provided for not receiving funding.” It should be noted that organizations who were denied funding in 2007-08 were less satisfied with the explanation received than those who were denied funding in 2006-07 (only 12% were satisfied in 2007-08 compared to 26% in 2006-07). This is counter-intuitive, given that as part of the post-mortem that took place after the first CFP in 2006-07, it was decided that all future applicants who were not approved for funding would receive a personal call from a Program representative detailing why they did not receive funding, and what improvements could be made for future calls, in addition to a formal rejection letter. Given this decline, it would seem that Program efforts to follow up directly with unfunded applicants did not lead to an increase in the level of satisfaction with the reasons for not receiving funding.

Figure 2
Satisfaction with Specific Aspects of ALLESP Application and Administration Process – Overall Applicants



Source: C2 Please rate your level of satisfaction with regards to the following aspects of the ALLESP application and administration process.

* Only asked to Funded Applicants

** Only asked to Unfunded Applicants

The slow turn-around times related to the processing of applications on the part of OLES was a significant issue raised by survey respondents. It is interesting to note that applicants who received funding under the previous three programs were particularly frustrated with the application and administration process, which indicates that one of the main reasons for the Program’s creation (based on the integration of the three programs) has yet to be accomplished. This low level of satisfaction with the ALLESP application and administration process is supported by evidence collected through key internal and external key informant interviews and the administrative data analysis, which revealed delays in the CFP process and an overall decline in service.

Satisfaction with ALLESP Reporting Process: According to survey results, funded respondents are largely satisfied with the ALLESP project reporting requirements. Over three-quarters (78%), are either very satisfied or satisfied with these requirements while only 6% are dissatisfied. The remaining 12% expressed a neutral score on this matter. Among those who were dissatisfied, the most common complaint was that reporting requirements kept changing throughout the life cycle of the project, causing a number of resource and timing conflicts among funding recipients.

It is worth noting that the ALLESP funds the majority of its projects through grants, which involve fewer accountability and reporting requirements. According to a few internal and external key informants, contribution funding requirements have increased

the administrative and reporting burden for organizations, particularly for smaller organizations who do not have the same organizational structure and resources as larger organizations (e.g., a university). OLES will have to bear this in mind as it moves away from grant funding towards contributions.

In an effort to address the Blue Ribbon Panel on Grants and Contributions'³⁶ recommendations regarding the need to make the delivery of grant and contribution programs more efficient and less burdensome, while ensuring greater accountability, a number of improvements have been made to the Program's performance framework, planning and reporting regime since mid-2008.³⁷ These efforts are targeted towards improving accountability and performance reporting amongst funding recipients at the community level and consistency across regions while providing them with the necessary supports and tools to accurately measure performance of research, programming and tools that contribute to learner gains and outcomes. This includes the introduction of a Project Results Report (PRR) template (for both contribution and grant agreements) designed to streamline reporting while at the same time improving accountability. It also includes the Core Funded Organizations 2008-2009 Performance Report and Environmental Scan (APR) designed to assist core funded organizations in reporting overall performance.

Survey results indicate that over half of funded respondents are either not aware of ALLESP's previous performance measurement collection tools, or are not satisfied with the tools provided. With regards to the latter response, when asked what aspect of the performance measurement collection tools they were dissatisfied with, respondents reported that they were simply unaware of them. A key success factor for the above-noted improvements, as noted through survey findings, will be effective communication to funding applicants and recipients to increase awareness of these tools moving forward and to ensure the reporting process is simple and not overly onerous for them.

Adequacy of management and administrative systems in place; Extent to which the Program is delivered efficiently and effectively: Evidence collected through the survey and a few internal key informant interviews indicates that the management and administrative systems are adequate to meet most of the Program's needs. Despite this, a number of weaknesses and potential areas for improvement were identified through the key informant interviews and survey. These include the need to:

- Improve horizontal co-ordination, alignment, communication and information sharing across all Program areas to have, for example, a common understanding of OLES and how it sets out to achieve its outcomes while communicating a consistent message to the LES community.

³⁶ Through the *Federal Accountability Act* and its Action Plan, the Government of Canada is bringing forward specific measures to help strengthen accountability and increase transparency and oversight in government operations. The Action Plan aims to strike an appropriate balance between oversight and flexibility. The goal is to create a policy that helps ensure the achievement of desired outcomes, improves accountability, and encourages management efficiency. Accordingly, in June 2006, an independent blue ribbon panel was commissioned by the Government of Canada to recommend measures to make the delivery of grant and contribution Programs more efficient and less burdensome, while ensuring greater accountability. Sources: <http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/media/nr-cp/2006/0606-eng.asp#bk1>

³⁷ Sources: <http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/media/nr-cp/2006/0606-eng.asp#bk1>; and, Project Results Report template

- Systems could be put in place to better support the sharing of information within the Program and with key partners and stakeholders.
- Ensure project officers are experts in the subject matter area (i.e. understanding the recipient base and their achievements). This is hampered somewhat, as noted by a few key internal key informants, by the high level of project officer turnover.
 - Systems could be put in place to better support knowledge transfer within the Program.
- Address the limitations imposed by the CSGC with respect to the difficulties in data tracking and extraction³⁸ in terms of timeliness, completeness³⁹, usefulness and quality of the data.
- Enhance communications between the Program and funding applicants to ensure they are well informed (in a timely fashion) about modifications to the criteria, changes in proposal evaluation timelines and, in particular, of the reasons for funding being declined.
- Provide a stable, single point of contact to organizations that can provide support across all phases of the proposal development and for post-decision follow-up which would in turn help to address previously noted communications issues.

The documentation review, supported by some key internal informant interviews, noted that measures are being undertaken to address some of the areas identified above. This includes revisiting Program performance measurement systems, creating an Access database (under development) which will enable ongoing project status tracking, and (as noted earlier) trying to standardize reporting and making this reporting consistent across the regions while taking advantage of the Blue Ribbon panel initiative.

³⁸ When data is needed, managers make the formal request to CSGC Reports and Outputs, Grants, Contributions and Third Party Solutions Transaction Processing Portfolio of HRSDC. As such, it would appear that the Program is highly dependent on this Group to obtain data required to inform decision making and assist in program monitoring.

³⁹ Project officers are responsible for entering performance measurement information/monitoring data into the CSGC based on their interpretation of proposals received. While improvements have been noted from 2006-07 to 2007-08 in data entry i.e. less blanks/missing information (which could be partly attributable to the more rigorous application process in collecting such information from recipients in a more systematic way) data is not being collected/entered into the system consistently in key areas (“venture”, “issue”, “stream”, “activity” and “target audience”). These areas are critical to assessing the extent to which the Program is funding projects that are aligned with priorities (its own and those of government), meet the needs of the literacy and essential skills community, and will have the greatest impact on literacy and essential skills in Canada – particularly in relation to the Canadian workplace.

3.2 Evaluation Issue: Performance Monitoring and Measurement

Is an adequate performance measurement mechanism and system in place? How could performance measurement be improved?

Adequacy of performance measurement mechanism and systems: Efforts have been ongoing during the evaluation period to further revise, validate and update the performance measurement and evaluation frameworks for OLES (which includes the component for ALLESP) as well as its reporting regime to more effectively capture data that can measure success of funded projects.

To this end, the Core Funded Organizations 2008-2009 Performance Report and Environmental Scan template (APR) was finalized in December 2008 and provided to organizations. The Results Reporting templates (for both grant and contribution agreements) (PRR) were finalized and implemented as of April 2009. Work is ongoing to develop the performance measurement and evaluation frameworks for OLES. Both the APR and PRR templates are described in detail below.

Core Funding 2008-2009 Performance Report and Environmental Scan

To demonstrate accountability, core funded organizations are required to report on overall performance by critically analyzing how well the organization is managed, what it has achieved and plans to achieve based on detailed instructions outlined in the APR template. Within this document, core funded organizations are asked to provide the following information:

- Basic profile and budgetary information on the organization;
- A self-assessment of their performance in terms of how it is managed in the following seven areas:
 - Governance
 - Results and performance
 - Risk
 - People
 - Stewardship
 - Client-focused service
 - Accountability
- Actions to be taken to close gaps in performance among the seven areas noted above;
- A review of performance in terms of what it plans to achieve (outputs and outcomes);
- Human and financial resource issues, accommodations, infrastructure, etc.; and
- An environmental scan, which is expected to provide details on the state of LES in their particular jurisdiction or areas of expertise. The environmental scan will be used by OLES and will be shared with stakeholders to inform and focus policies and programs that better address the LES needs of Canadians.

The APR was developed in consultation with core funding organizations, national organizations and Anglophone and Francophone coalition groups, with revisions to the reporting requirements made based on suggested changes. In addition, organizations are free to contact OLES should they have any questions or concerns and are encouraged to submit the first draft of their reports for additional guidance.

A total of six national organizations and 16 provincial and territorial coalitions are currently required to complete the APR. The Program will work with core funded organizations for up to a year in advance of the end of their agreements to complete the APR in a way that accurately reflects their work. The information provided in the APR is then analyzed and discussed within the Performance Measurement and Intergovernmental Relations (PIR) and Program Operations group, and ultimately used as the basis for the negotiation of the next agreement with these organizations.

It is clear that the new reporting templates are improvements, especially when compared to the previous reporting regime, and will help to capture data and information that can measure success of funded projects. As OLES moves forward with this template, the evaluation team noted the following:

- A number of the questions asked of core funding recipients are quite detailed and labour intensive. Given that the APR is targeted towards all core funded organizations, irrespective of size, it is possible that smaller organizations (i.e. those with only a few core staff) may not have the resources or data collection capacity to follow through with the reporting requirements.
- The APR contains several double-barrelled questions (i.e. questions with more than one question embedded within) which may make it difficult for some organizations to ascertain which issue they ought to respond to.
- The APR contains “Yes” or “No” questions which do not provide adequate information on outcomes achieved.

Finally, given the administrative challenges already noted, questions arise as to whether the Program would have sufficient time or the capacity to compile, review and report on such broad and detailed data in order to successfully measure the performance of funded organizations.

Project Results Report / Project Results Report for Grant Agreements

The PRR has been designed to respond to the recommendations of the Blue Ribbon panel on Grants and Contributions, particularly to streamline reporting and improve accountability throughout the lifetime of a project. The PRR will replace the various reports currently used through the year and at project closure. As previously noted, only new projects and current grants and contribution recipients (those signed April 1, 2009 and later) have begun reporting via the PRR.

The PRRs were developed based on an examination of the different types of templates that recipients were previously asked to fill out throughout the life cycle of a project. They were streamlined to include a) those parts that are required to be reported on under grants and contributions and b) that help projects show results, rather than just their activities.

The objective of the new PRR is to provide an understanding of the project's overall performance by critically analyzing what is planned to be achieved and what has been achieved (monitoring and evaluation), rather than just describing the activities they are carrying out. The PRR summarizes:

- the expected and actual results of the project
- activities and outputs that will be carried out to achieve the results
- possible issues which could affect the success of the project, and
- the progress of the project.

In doing so, the funded applicants are expected to provide information on the quality of the project's outputs, the outputs' contributions to expected project results, the achievement of expected project results, lessons learned and success stories, the dissemination strategy, and project impacts. Results are reported based on the following timing schedule: quarterly updates (activity and output status); a review of project outputs; final project review (project closure); and project impact assessment (6 to 12 months after project closure). Funding recipients are expected to revise the PRR accordingly as the project progresses and any key factors change.

Given that the survey of funding applicants does not include organizations who applied for funding after the 2007-08 fiscal year, the evaluation was unable to gather the views of funding recipients regarding the new reporting requirements. However, it would be worth keeping in mind some of the issues raised by key informants and well as survey participants concerning the previous reporting requirements, as OLES moves forward with the new PRR. These issues include:

- The resource realities and limited data collection capacity which exists within many organizations, especially smaller ones. It is acknowledged that this ought to be less of a burden, considering that previously, OLES required monthly reports (as compared to the PRR's quarterly reports).
- While OLES held a full-day workshop to explain the new reporting tools to literacy coalitions and national organizations, current grant and contribution recipients who were not involved in this workshop may require ongoing efforts on the part of OLES to ensure buy-in.
- Again, while a great deal of project information will be collected, previous concerns raised by key informants, as well as the administrative data review, regarding OLES' ability to capture, roll-up and interpret the resulting data remain.

Accuracy:

Extent to which the performance indicators accurately reflect outputs and results:

From a review of the performance measurement strategy, there appears to be an appropriate balance between quantitative and qualitative indicators. However, a few internal key informants noted that the nature of monitoring at this time is solely based on ‘output monitoring’, particularly on the number, value and duration of grants and contributions projects distributed by province, stream, target group, activity area, issue area and venture i.e. outputs of funded projects. At the same time, information on the latter five codes is seriously incomplete within the CSGC, making it virtually impossible to assess the Program on these factors.

As evidenced by the administrative data analysis, data is not collected in enough detail within the CSGC to truly inform the Program in terms of achievement of expected outputs and outcomes. As previously noted, many of the fields of analysis and codes for “stream”, “activity”, “issue” etc. are very broad in scope and do not provide enough detail as to the nature of projects (e.g. one possibility for project activity was “knowledge”). At the same time, the data is not inputted consistently for these data categories and therefore this information is not available for the majority of projects funded. In addition, there is no evidence that the Program is collecting information to measure or monitor its own performance in terms of program and service delivery. It should be noted that additional data collection measures noted above are expected to ensure that performance information and data is collected and reported in a more consistent and complete fashion.

Availability:

Extent to which performance information and data can be collected: As evidenced by the file review, the *collection* of performance information and data is partially dependent upon the extent to which recipients include this information as part of proposals and reporting. As noted through the documentation review and file review findings, the preparation of proposals requires more supporting research and more detailed plans including action plans. The introduction of checklists, as part of the CFP Application Guide and Kit are expected to assist applicants in ensuring key forms, documents and mandatory information requirements are met as part of their proposals while providing guidance for future reporting. Finally, applicants are expected to include as part of their proposals a detailed evaluation framework. This framework must include information on the indicators and methodologies that will be used to evaluate the success of the project, the resources required, expected deliverables and target groups.

This, along with the introduction of the PRR are intended to assist funding recipients and thus the Program in ensuring performance information and data is collected and reported in a more consistent and complete fashion. In addition, the environmental scan will be used by the OLES, and will be shared with stakeholders, to inform and focus policies and programs that better address the LES needs of Canadians.

The survey of funding applicants reveals, while results monitoring or data collection is fairly pervasive among funded respondents (79% claim to undertake these types of

activities), any effort by ALLESP to gain a detailed understanding of the “users of material outputs” produced by the projects it funds would prove quite challenging. Half of funded respondents do not track who uses their material output and among those who do this activity, approaches are varied and in many cases very informal.

Quality:

Extent to which the performance data being collected is accurate and complete: Project officers are responsible for entering performance measurement information and monitoring data into the CSGC based on their interpretation of proposals received. While improvements have been noted from 2006-07 to 2007-08 in data entry i.e. less blanks or missing information, a high proportion of data is not being collected or entered consistently into the system i.e. fields are left blank, specifically for the following key areas: “stream”, “activity”, “issue”, “venture”, “activity” and “target audience” as evidenced through the administrative data analysis.⁴⁰ In addition, the information that is available is significantly weighted towards the province of Quebec. The one-year protocol agreement is a major factor behind this observation. The protocol agreement leaves the administration of project funding disbursement to Quebec, which is inclined to support much smaller projects than the ALLESP norm. Although Quebec administers the protocol, projects are still given final approval by the Minister of HRSDC. Therefore, data that is received for project funding is complete and up-to-date as it must first go through the approval process instituted in Quebec.

In addition, a number of entries for “issue” and “venture” code over the two-year period were identified by ‘NA-not applicable’. The ‘NA-not applicable’ classification for projects, similar to previous years, seems to continue to be a ‘catch-all’ for those projects where project officers may have alternatively identified or chosen more than one issue category or venture code. This makes it extremely difficult to examine program-related data in any depth or how trends change over time.

Furthermore, a number of entries for “target audience” were identified as “other” making it difficult to fully articulate all targets groups of project funding.

Finally, the project database review conducted for the evaluation can account for only \$35,238,597 in ALLESP grants and contributions spending between 2006-07 and 2007-08, which is approximately \$13M less than \$48.1M spent according to the Chief Financial Officer Branch of HRSDC.

Usefulness:

Extent to which the performance data supports decision-making and departmental accountability requirements; Perceived usefulness of performance data and reporting: Other than informal management reviews, performance information does not appear to be used to inform management decision-making processes. As previously noted, limited project results and outcome information was collected during the period under evaluation

⁴⁰ Please refer to Tables 10 through 13 for a detailed breakdown.

and thus being analyzed to support decision-making (the CSGC is primarily a database driven to support financial accountability for grants and contributions and not outcomes assessment). It should be noted that the Program has demonstrated that it has been monitoring and assessing the CFP and decision-making processes and has attempted to make changes in order to ensure they are more efficient and effective.

Overall, the review of program documentation supported by some internal key informant interviews identified the need for more effective accountability for results and for a higher standard of planning and performance management. Key weaknesses identified include few meaningful targets against which to compare results achieved, inconsistent and decoupled planning, monitoring and reporting at all levels of OLES, no systematic processes or systems for gathering performance information, and the inability to link resources to results.

OLES has identified the need to develop an integrated framework to support its drive towards managing for results. This includes integrating planning and actions to achieve clearly-defined outcomes and establishing effective monitoring and reporting on performance. This reflects OLES', and more broadly the Branch's and Department's, integrated approach to planning, decision-making, activities and reporting to support more effective delivery on plans and priorities. An important part of this work is delivering on an effective performance measurement regime that supports internal decision-making while responding to a number of external reporting imperatives. To support this work, the OLES Management Team has dedicated resources to implement a comprehensive and structured plan to ensure the Program is "managing for results" (as discussed above).

Ways in which the performance measurement mechanism and systems could be improved: According to most internal key informants, an adequate performance system does not exist for collecting performance information, in particular, outcome information (i.e., intermediate and long-term) both on projects as well as the Program. A few internal key informants noted that these challenges are partly attributed to the fact that ALLESP has "inherited" three previous programs with their own respective procedures and systems for data collection. As such, it has taken some time to develop an integrated approach and means to better collect information for both projects and the overall Program.

As previously noted, the collection of performance information and data is highly dependent upon the extent to which recipients include this information as part of proposals and reporting; however, earlier findings from key informant interviews suggest that the nature of monitoring at this time is solely 'output monitoring'. During the evaluation period, limited performance information was being collected to support outcome monitoring due to limited follow up at the end of funded projects.

Additional ways in which performance measurement systems can be improved, as suggested by internal key informants, include the need for:

- better understanding and development of performance measures with staff at the beginning of the fiscal year to ensure data capture and refinement;

- outcomes-based focus to measurement and electronic reporting to decrease administrative burden and allow for better information integration;
- contact and communication with partners to identify gaps in information; and
- more rigour in the initial assessment of proposals and more openness and responsiveness about the changes that are needed to ensure eligibility.

Is the basic information necessary for the summative evaluation being collected?

Information on Funding Applicants and Recipients

As evidenced through the administrative data analysis, the tombstone data captured on funded applicants and recipients appears to be 100% complete in the CSGC. This includes:

- Organization name;
- Organizational Type or Category (i.e. not-for-profit, public or private sector);
- Mailing Address (including city, province, postal code);
- Other contact details such as organizational contact name, language, telephone number and e-mail where available; and
- Organizational mandate.

Conversely, the data captured on unfunded applicants is limited. Besides organization and primary decision maker contact information, ALLESP has little to no information on unfunded applicants and the projects for which they had applied for funding.

Information on Project Outputs

There are 19 Venture codes that capture the outputs of funded projects that range from best practices, to educational and resource material, to research studies, to volunteer development. As noted earlier a review of the CSGC reveals that, in general, a high proportion of data for “Venture” is not being inputted into the system i.e. either being left blank (106 of 288 entries or 37%) or identified by ‘NA-not applicable’ (36 of 288 entries or 12.5%).

Profiles of the Target Groups

As noted earlier in this report, ALLESP continues to experience difficulties in its ability to identify information on target groups, as well as consistently tracking this data as part of project reporting and within the CSGC. The CSGC currently allows for the tracking of 25 different “target groups”. Despite this capacity, over 69% of the information on the Target Audience or Group was missing or blank in the CSGC.

OLES does not collect detailed information on end-users or target groups (such as the profile of target groups; number of individuals having completed their learning activity; etc.) since, according to the evaluation of the OLT, the collection of such data was not

feasible. As such it was recommended that information on end-users be limited to tracking data for the purposes of generating a target group profile. This information is now expected to be provided by funding recipients as part of their closeout reports, the PRR and the APR.

3.3 Evaluation Issue: Preliminary Findings – outputs oriented

What type of Funding Agreements have been entered into under ALLESP?

Type of Funding Agreements entered into under ALLESP: Evidence collected through the large majority of internal key informants interviews and the administrative data analysis noted that the primary funding mechanism used under the Program is grants-based. Over 266 or 92% of projects funded over the 2006-07 and 2007-08 fiscal years were grant-based (145 or 94 % for 2006-07; 121 or 90% for 2007/08) with the remaining funding source being contribution-based (22 or 8%). As previously noted, one of the key recommendations of the previous NLS evaluation was to move away from grant-based funding.

Table 9				
Total Project Funding (All Sources) by Fiscal Year⁴¹				
Funding Type	(2006-07)		(2007-08)	
	# of projects	Funding Amount	# of projects	Funding Amount
ALLESP Contribution	9	\$6,089,698	13	\$5,850,210
ALLESP Grant	145	\$18,704,578	121	\$14,120,919
Total	154	\$24,794,276	134	\$19,971,129

Given the high proportion of data that is not being collected and/or entered consistently into the system it is difficult to complete a full analysis of the type of projects that are being funded (including the area funded, the tools and outputs). As such, it is difficult to fully evaluate the extent to which the Program is funding projects that are aligned with priorities (its own and those of government), meet the needs of the LES community, and will have the greatest impact on LES of individuals in Canada – particularly in relation to the Canadian workplace. In addition, as previously noted, the data that is available seems to be heavily weighted towards the province of Quebec. Nevertheless, of those 86 out of 288 projects for which information was available, 59 (68%) focused on communities, 15 (17%) on families and 12 (14%) on the workplace during the evaluation period.

⁴¹ An additional project was funded under the ALLESP, however the CSGC does not designate whether it is a grant or contribution. Program confirmation has noted that this project is a contribution.

Table 10
Distribution of Projects by Stream Code by Fiscal Year

Stream Code	(2006-07)	(2007-08)	Total
Communities	8	51	59
Families		15	15
Workplace	2	10	12
<i>(Blank)</i>	144	58	202
Total	154	134	288

Within the four key eligible areas of activity, the administrative data analysis indicates that of those 86 out of 288 projects for which information was available, 43 (50%) of the projects focused on addressing “strengthening capacity”, followed by 25 (29%) on “promotion”, 11 (13%) on “knowledge” and 7 (8%) on “innovative approaches”.

Table 11
Distribution of Projects by Activity Code by Fiscal Year

Activity Code	(2006-07)	(2007-08)	Total
Knowledge	1	10	11
Strengthen Capacity	7	36	43
Promotion	-	25	25
Innovative Approaches	2	5	7
<i>(Blank)</i>	144	58	202
Total	154	134	288

These findings would suggest that more work may be needed to increase awareness and understanding of the importance of LES, while issuing more calls relevant to the other three eligible activity areas, (in particular “knowledge” and “innovative approaches”) so as to remain relevant to the Program’s stated objectives and desired outcomes. These efforts in turn would help to address some of the key needs and priorities identified within the LES community to raise awareness and understanding, and increase research and innovation in the LES area.

Only 120 out of 288 projects in the CSGC contained information on the types of issues to be addressed. Of these, the largest proportion were identified as having addressed “basic skills and literacy”, particularly in 2007-08 despite the addition of a new category to the system for “essential skills”.⁴² While the addition of this new category may be reflective of Program directions to integrate LES, the high incidence of the use of “basic skills and literacy” to classify projects may indicate difficulties in data tracking (officers interpretation of proposals) or that, in fact, ALLESP has not significantly shifted funding towards LES in relation to labour market participation. This latter observation may reflect the Program’s continuing challenge to encourage applicant organizations to expand their work beyond literacy to include essential skills in relation to labour market participation.

⁴² Table 12: Distribution of Projects by Issue Code by Fiscal Year.

Table 12
Distribution of Projects by Issue Code by Fiscal Year

Issue Code	(2006-07)	(2007-08)	Total
Basic skills and literacy	2	49	51
Computer Assisted / Managed Instruction	5		5
Essential Skills		4	4
Family	6	3	9
Health Care	1	2	3
Labour / Business	2		2
Learning opportunities		1	1
Network development		2	2
Numeracy / Mathematic		1	1
Official Language Minority - French		7	7
Partnership development	2		2
Plain Language	1	1	2
Preventative	2		2
Resources Centres / Clearing Houses	1		1
Teaching Methods / Practitioner Training	7	12	19
Workplace	5	4	9
<i>Not Applicable</i>	43	14	57
<i>(blank)</i>	77	34	111
Total	154	134	288

Of those 146 out of 288 projects for which information was provided⁴³, key project outputs most frequently noted (i.e. 8 or more projects) and further displaying consistency over the two years, included Education and Resource Material; Promotions and Publications; Research and Studies; Training and Skills Development; Conferences, Meetings, Seminars and Workshops; and Demonstrations and Pilot projects.

Extent to which the development of literacy & essential skills research, tools and supports through ALLESP funding as well as the Program’s support of provincial and territorial coalitions & national organizations, contributed to, or is expected to contribute to ALLESP’s immediate outcomes: In terms of whether results will be achieved, a few internal key informants noted that it is too early in the Program lifecycle to answer this. This was impacted by the fact that there were some projects that had not yet ended, as well as the difficulties being experienced with measurement and attribution (i.e. demonstrating achievement of project results). Of the 288 funded projects (Table 13), 146 contained information on project outputs.⁴⁴ Of these, the most frequently identified (i.e. 8 or more projects) included Education and Resource Material; Promotions and Publications; Research and Studies; Training and Skills Development; Conferences, Meetings, Seminars and Workshops; and Demonstrations and Pilot projects.

⁴³ Of the 146 projects, 49 were for the province of Quebec

⁴⁴ Of the 146 projects, 49 were for the province of Quebec

Table 13
Distribution of Projects by Venture Code by Fiscal Year

Venture Code	(2006-07)	(2007-08)	Total
Best Practices		2	2
Conferences / Meetings / Seminars	1	2	3
Conferences / Meetings / Seminars / Workshops	12	6	18
Demonstration / Pilot Projects	8	10	18
Educational / Resource Material	18	9	27
Endowments	1	-	1
Evaluation	2	-	2
Film / Video	-	1	1
Innovation	-	1	1
Learning Events	-	1	1
Learning models	-	2	2
Partnership	1	2	3
Promotions	5	1	6
Promotions / publications	-	20	20
Publications	1	-	1
Research / Studies	8	11	19
Training / Skill Development	8	11	19
Volunteer Development	-	2	2
<i>NA – not applicable</i>	16	20	36
<i>Blank</i>	73	33	106
Total	154	134	288

Some internal and external key informants noted that without Program funding the LES community would not have the broad awareness it has of various LES issues, nor would it have been able to develop the products (i.e. programming, tools) supported by ALLESP-funding. This is also demonstrated by the results of the survey of applicants. While recognizing the possibility of bias on the part of respondents, the survey indicates that the vast majority of projects would not have been undertaken in the absence of ALLESP funding. When asked what effect not receiving ALLESP funding had on their proposed projects, nearly half (45%) of unfunded respondents cancelled the project and another 29% deferred the project until other funding could be found. Conversely, when funded respondents were asked what would have happened if they had not received ALLESP funding, nearly all believe their project would have either been cancelled outright (33%) or it would have been deferred until other funding could be found (60%).

The majority of funded respondents believe their project is, or will be “successful” (76%), or “somewhat successful” (21%) in achieving its objectives. When asked what factors contributed most to the success of their project, respondents most often reported that it was the receipt of ALLESP funding itself (93%). In addition, respondents reported that their projects will produce a wide variety of outputs, most often citing “awareness raising or promotional events” and “training tools, models and materials”, and that these outputs typically benefit a wide variety of organizations. Local organizations and non-profit service organizations are the most likely targets of material outputs produced by funding applicants.

In addition, the survey results do provide some insight into the perceived importance of ALLESP funding in terms of its contribution to certain key project outcomes and outputs, benefiting a wide array of organizations. In particular, funded respondents expected their projects to contribute to a wide host of possible outcomes, the most common consisting of “greater awareness of literacy and essential skills programs, services and/or issues” and to the “develop[ment] of best practices tailored to the particular needs of [their] target audience”.

The evaluation examined to what extent the ALLESP has achieved or will achieve its immediate outcomes. The results are as follows:

- improved dissemination, transfer and application of knowledge and information

At this time, according to a few external key informants, there is limited awareness as to what projects are being funded by ALLESP. In particular, given that OLES does not publish a list of projects that are funded, their outputs (i.e. tools, research, etc.) and outcomes, the quality of the work funded and the extent to which tools can be used more broadly in the LES community is unknown. While a few internal key informants noted that the Program hosts an ES website that is targeted towards key groups, it was acknowledged that it was difficult to determine who the research or documentation is targeted towards and how to inform these groups of this material. It is important to note that this website is not for ALLESP or OLES but rather for the Essential Skills Research project and ES Profiles. At the same time, a few internal key informants indicated that dissemination is a weak point of funded projects and is something done ‘after the fact’ and often undertaken in a passive way (i.e., through websites) as opposed to investing project resources in targeted outreach and distribution.

Without effective communication of project outputs and outcomes, and monitoring of dissemination and quality of outputs, the impact of the Program funded knowledge, tools and information cannot be assessed. As noted by a few internal key informants, the hope is that by funding literacy coalitions and organizations, they will be prompted to take some responsibility for dissemination, especially given their pre-existing networks with a variety of LES stakeholders.

In addition to difficulties with dissemination and transfer of knowledge noted above, some external key informants noted that Canada does not have enough research and development in the LES area (for example in areas such as literacy and the aging population, ESL/FSL, essential skills in the workplace). As a result, more resources (i.e. funding) are needed to support this type of research. In addition, it was noted that there is not enough comparative research between provinces and territories as well as linking to what’s happening internationally (such as the UK, US, Australia).

As such, Program efforts to improve the dissemination, transfer and application of knowledge and information seem limited at this time. According to a few internal key informants the new role for policy and planning is to gather and analyze information from funded projects on what has been learned, what is happening on the ground and determine where to focus next should help overcome some of these challenges. Furthermore, more rigorous requirements as part of the application process (i.e. funding proposal requirements

as well as the introduction of a Project Results Report template) should assist efforts to improve dissemination and transfer of knowledge from funded projects.

- increased capacity of funding recipients and other stakeholders

While it was recognized by a few internal and external key informants that the Program is helping to strengthen the means organizations have to do their work, it was noted that it is difficult to assess the extent to which the Program is successfully building capacity within the LES community based on the limited information available. In the short-term, according to a few internal key informants, Program funding is stretching the capacity of recipients; however, once funding stops the benefits and often the ability to continue the project stops. Funded organizations seem to have the continued need for funding to support ongoing delivery. Furthermore, given the transient nature of the LES community's workforce (voluntary-based), staff turnover tends to be high, impacting knowledge and expertise. It was suggested by one internal key informant that ALLESP should continue to work with funding applicants to examine the organization's own capacities to deliver on expected results and to determine the correct level of funding to support the proposed project's objectives.

Key informants provided limited feedback on the Program's support for provincial and territorial coalitions, other than to note that coalitions receive core-funding to carry out specific responsibilities. This funding provides these organizations with stability to carry out community work and also satisfy requirements from ALLESP/OLES (i.e. submit a proposal every couple of years). Furthermore, these key informants noted that uncertainties exist within the LES community around the amount of funding in national organizations and the extent to which it is getting to the people that need it most to increase their skill levels.

- increased awareness of the benefits of and opportunities for adult learning, literacy and essential skills

While there is a high level of acceptance of the context and challenges, a few key informants noted that more work needs to be done in this area to increase awareness and understanding of the importance of LES, particularly within the workplace. It was recommended by a few internal key informants that the federal government consider investing in a concerted media campaign similar to that which was developed for 'anti-smoking awareness'. Such a campaign would require national coordination amongst the various levels of government as well as with the LES community.

4. Key Conclusions and Recommendations

The overall objective of the formative evaluation of the Adult Learning Literacy and Essential Skills Program (ALLESP) was to examine a number of key issues and questions pertaining to program design and delivery, performance monitoring and measurement and preliminary findings.

This section contains the key conclusions developed from the findings of the formative evaluation of ALLESP followed by some recommendations for the Office of Literacy and Essential Skills (OLES) to consider.

4.1 Evaluation Issue: Program Design and Delivery

Program Objectives and Activities

While the objective of the ALLESP is considered valid at a high level, it is viewed as being too broad, far reaching and perhaps not as targeted as it could be. Specifically, the Program's ability to contribute to facilitating "*the creation of opportunities for Canadians to acquire the learning, literacy and essential skills they need to participate in a knowledge based economy and society*" is viewed as being hampered by a number of factors including the fact that the Program does not actually fund direct programming, limited Program funding relative to the size of the issue, and delayed funding decisions.

An assessment of the Program logic model⁴⁵ revealed a number of inconsistencies that may not reflect the current Program context or directions. In particular, the word '*opportunities*' may lead to the mistaken belief amongst funding applicants that ALLESP is undertaking program delivery, when in fact this statement is viewed as being "more about leveraging opportunity" to support the development of more effective LES programs and tools and ultimately the increased acquisition of LES. In terms of the Program's aim to "*promote lifelong learning by reducing non-financial barriers to adult learning*" this evaluation revealed that there is limited evidence that the Program is really '*reducing non-financial barriers*'. Rather it was noted that the objective or focus of the Program is about developing knowledge and building expertise as to what works in building LES for Canadians to participate in a knowledge-based economy. Critical to this development is the dissemination of knowledge, tools and research created from ALLESP-funded projects so that it can be shared, applied and replicated or adapted elsewhere. The evaluation also noted that there is less emphasis on '*adult learning*' and more emphasis on building the LES that Canadian adults need for work, learning and life. As a result, the name of the Program was questioned and the use of '*adult learning*' in defining the Program objectives and its use in each of its key activities.

⁴⁵ It should be noted that the logic model examined as part of this evaluation was deemed a "work in progress". A revised version is currently being developed for the Program based on the new model developed for OLES to ensure linkages between the two.

While four streams of activity (research and knowledge; capacity-building; innovative tools and practices; and promotion and awareness) are identified in the Program logic model, evaluation findings suggest that a large majority of Program resources are targeted towards funding projects aimed at ‘*strengthening capacity*’.⁴⁶

It is recommended that Program objectives and activities should be revised to more accurately reflect the direction and scope of the Program and to ensure outcomes are achievable and measurable.

These efforts should be undertaken with the recognition that intermediate and ultimate outcomes, by definition, are acted upon by multiple players and factors and that the Program is not involved in direct delivery. The Program should attempt to prioritize each of its key activities and determine the extent of resources to be dedicated to each. This should then be reflected in the Calls for Proposals (CFPs) to ensure that potential applicants understand the range of activities that ALLESP will fund.

Challenges of Program Realignment

The evaluation revealed that ongoing issues related to the program integration process have impacted program co-ordination and programming. From a departmental perspective, the alignment of the three previous programs under the ALLESP was necessary in order to improve program impacts on LES and to reduce duplication. External stakeholders overall were unclear as to why a Program re-alignment was needed. In fact, re-alignment was viewed as taking away from the effectiveness of previous programming, resulting in minimal improvements and a marked lack of ‘field presence’ of ALLESP in the regions. In addition, a weakening of partnerships and collaboration was noted as a result of program-re-alignment, particularly within the provinces and territories, who view themselves as being designated as “stakeholders” under the ALLESP, rather than full and equal partners as they felt they were treated under the National Literacy Secretariat (NLS).

This evaluation also found little evidence that such a re-alignment has improved efficiency in the overall administration of the Program as noted by delays in the CFP process, and the views of funding applicants, who were less than satisfied with a number of aspects of the application, administration and follow-up process. In particular, delays in CFPs and funding decisions have resulted in waning project momentum and also compressed timelines for project delivery, and ultimately frustration and declining interest among partners, sometimes resulting in partner drop out. Furthermore, program re-alignment has led to the impression of more insular approaches to Program delivery and an overall decline in service, especially amongst applicants who had experience with the three previous programs.

While efforts to broaden the scope of funding recipients to include employers, academia, unions, etc. have been noted, a large portion of ALLESP funding continues to be directed towards the not-for-profit sector. The evaluation also noted that the primary funding

⁴⁶ It should be cautioned that these findings may be reflective of challenges noted throughout this report with the tracking of this type of information in the Common System for Grants and Contributions (CSGC). Without a complete database it is difficult to draw any definitive conclusions in this area.

mechanism used under the Program continues to be grants-based. Given the recommendations of previous NLS evaluations to move away from grants, these findings would indicate that ALLESP has yet to achieve this objective.

Despite the above-noted challenges, evaluation evidence indicates that the programs are now becoming more integrated and while there appears to be separate cultures between essential skills and literacy, findings from a few key internal informant interviews note that OLES is making a concerted effort to integrate these cultures under one organizational framework. Progress has also been made in some areas including building awareness about ALLESP's focus on LES in relation to labour force participation and in rebuilding partnerships and communications with provincial and territorial partners in priority setting. More work is needed to ensure that the various components work together while improving openness, transparency and clarity in communications, re-building partnerships and collaboration and addressing administration efficiencies.

It is recommended that the Program continue its efforts to communicate, support and consult with stakeholders and funding applicants in order to ensure openness and transparency with regards to its priority setting and decision-making.

Moving forward it will be important for the Program to ease uncertainties within the LES community through ongoing communication and outreach on the benefits of aligning proposed project approaches with ALLESP's key priorities – in particular the importance of investing in LES within an economic context while not dispelling the importance of strengthening LES to support social inclusion. The Program should also continue to ensure clarity in communications and decision-making to eliminate any perceptions of an unwillingness to share information as well as confusion over how priorities are set.

Given the decline among smaller provinces (mostly Atlantic) and smaller organizations in the share of overall ALLESP funding and number of projects funded, efforts should be made to support those organizations with more limited capacity as compared to larger-scaled and national organizations. The Program may also wish to consult with representatives from the identified areas and organizations to determine if more supports and/or communications are required to help support their application process.

As part of the CFP process, the Program should improve communications and consultations with:

- ***unfunded applicants* regarding the CFP and decision-making process given that the changes the Program has implemented do not seem to have increased satisfaction with the process or the explanation given for the funding decision. As part of this process, the Program should review the effectiveness of its new approach to informing applicants when their proposal was not approved for funding and do more targeted follow up with clients to ensure that the changes are achieving their intended results or whether further improvements are required.**
- ***both funded and unfunded applicants* need to be engaged following each proposal process. Post-CFP satisfaction surveys could be conducted to discuss satisfaction**

with proposal process, the level of support provided and any suggestions for improvement. OLES may also wish to consider developing service standards for CFPs and grants and contributions administration.

It is widely recognized that governments alone cannot resolve a complex policy area such as LES which is influenced by a number of social, economic and political factors. Efforts need to continue to recapture the trust and partnerships, especially between the two orders of government with more effective and open communication and outreach. For example, it was suggested by a few internal and external key informants that ALLESP may want to consider re-instating the provincial review of proposals in order to provide provinces with an opportunity to read proposals and 'stay in the loop' or to consider re-instating an annual meeting of federal and provincial LES representatives.

4.2 Evaluation Issue: Performance Monitoring and Measurement

Performance Measurement and Data Collection

This evaluation has found that while a performance measurement strategy and indicators were identified for the Program, efforts have been ongoing during the evaluation period to further revise, validate and update the performance measurement and evaluation frameworks for OLES, as well as its reporting regime to more effectively capture data that can measure success of funded projects.

A number of reporting templates were introduced during the course of the evaluation. These templates are expected to improve the Program's ability to collect information with regards to the quality of project outputs, the achievement of expected outcomes, the reporting and dissemination of project results, as well as project impacts. Overall, the new reporting templates are improvements, especially when compared to the previous reporting requirements, and will help to capture data and information that has not been previously collected. As this process moves forward, OLES will have to keep in mind some of the issues raised concerning the previous reporting requirements. These issues include the possibility that, despite efforts to reduce the reporting requirements, some funding recipients, especially smaller organizations, may still perceive the new templates as complicated and time-consuming to finish. As such, OLES will have to confirm that funding recipients understand the new reporting requirements, while providing continuing support to ensure that they have the capacity to complete the templates. At the same time, experience with previous reporting has shown that OLES may lack the capacity to actually collect, monitor and analyze the data provided by these reports.

Challenges with the Common System for Grants and Contributions (CSGC)

Project officers are responsible for entering performance measurement information and monitoring data into the CSGC based on their interpretation of proposals received. The system is maintained by CSGC Reports and Outputs, Grants, Contributions and

Third Party Solutions Transaction Processing Portfolio of HRSDC. The information contained in this database is to be used to develop a profile of funding applicants and in reviewing program performance, compliance monitoring, management and reporting.

When examining the data provided in the CSGC, this evaluation revealed that while improvements to data entry were noticeable from 2006-07 to 2007-08, a large amount of missing data continued to be noted within various codes, including funding stream, activity, issue, venture and target audience and group codes. Without complete information on these codes, it is very difficult to fully analyze the types of projects that are being funded (eg: area funded, tools, outputs, etc.). Therefore, it is difficult to fully evaluate the extent to which the Program (1) is funding projects that are aligned with priorities (its own and those of government), and (2) meets the needs of the LES community, including how it will have the greatest impact on the LES of individuals in Canada, particularly in relation to the Canadian workplace.

It was noted that ALLESP is taking measures to address some of the key challenges related to the database including revisiting Program performance measurement systems and creating an Access database (under development) which will enable ongoing project status tracking. Caution is urged as the Program moves ahead with the two databases. This was previously done under the NLS and problems noted included program officers not sufficiently keeping up either database or critical variables for tracking Program performance, as well as outcomes not being captured.

It is recommended that OLES continue with its commitment to improve its data collection systems so that sufficient and complete information is collected for monitoring and reporting purposes. In conjunction, it is recommended that proposal and reporting forms be updated to better reflect the CSGC codes and categories, thereby easing the burden on Program officers. Finally, recent revisions to the Program's reporting templates will require ongoing communication and support for funding recipients.

Given the above factors, it is concluded that during the evaluation period of 2006-07 and 2007-08, information was not being collected, to sufficiently inform the upcoming summative evaluation in terms of completeness, quality and accuracy. With the development of the detailed templates, updated OLES logic model and associated indicators, efforts are underway to improve upon this. Given the current data tracking issues highlighted by the administrative data review, and the detailed nature of the new reporting templates, OLES will have to work to ensure that the information provided by funding recipients is tracked in a systematic manner so that it is useful for program performance review, compliance monitoring, management and reporting, as well as for the future summative evaluation.

As such, it is essential that the performance measurement data previously collected, including information on funding streams, project activities, issues, outputs, etc. be inputted into the CSGC, as well as the new Access database, in order to develop accurate profiles of funded projects and targets. The Program should also examine ways of refining proposal forms and reporting requirements in order to force funded applicants to make a choice among the various possible variables that reflect

what already exists in the CSGC. This would require the completion of all fields and eliminate the requirement for Program officers from having to interpret proposal submissions. At the same time, the Program should revise the database codes to ensure that they are relevant to ALLESP and not previous programs.

In addition, while the evaluation found that funding recipients were satisfied with the ALLESP's reporting requirements, with the introduction of the new APR and PRR templates, as well as the increase in use of contribution agreements, OLES will have to provide ongoing support to funded organizations to ensure that this trend continues. In particular, OLES will need to ensure that the type of engagement that is ongoing with organizations responsible for completing the APR templates is replicated for those organizations responsible for the PRR templates, while ensuring all funding recipients are aware of the related support tools. This will help to improve the buy-in for the new reporting requirements, especially amongst smaller organizations.

4.3 Evaluation Issue: Preliminary Findings – outputs oriented

Dissemination, transfer and application of knowledge and information

The findings of this evaluation confirm that dissemination and transfer of knowledge from funded projects is weak, pointing to a need to further improve the dissemination and transfer of information and results within the LES community. More specifically, this evaluation found that dissemination is something done 'after the fact' and often undertaken in a passive way (i.e., through websites) as opposed to organizations investing resources in targeted outreach. Conversely, there is limited awareness as to what projects are being funded by ALLESP given that OLES does not publish a list of projects that are funded (as was done under the NLP), what their outputs (tools etc.) and outcomes are, the quality of the work funded and the extent to which tools can be used more broadly in the LES community. The Program does not have a formal mechanism for rolling up the lessons learned and best practices developed by its funded projects for the benefit of all in the LES community.

Without effective communication of project outputs and outcomes and monitoring of dissemination, the impact of the knowledge, tools and information developed through funded projects is minimized. It was noted by a few internal key informants that the Program hopes or expects the core funded literacy coalitions and organizations will take some responsibility for the dissemination of the outputs from their funded projects as well as from their awareness of the activities and outputs being undertaken in their jurisdictions. Unfortunately, without direct accountability or funding to perform this activity, funded organizations do not seem to be pursuing this in a structured or effective manner.

It is recommended that the Program investigate various ways of supporting the transfer of the knowledge regarding funded projects and their results.

More effective and structured mechanisms should be developed and implemented to share information about funded projects. These include the identification of projects funded, their outputs (i.e. tools, research, etc.) and the outcomes and impacts from these outputs, the quality of the work funded (i.e. the degree to which findings can be replicated or adapted to different environments) and the extent to which tools can be used more broadly in the LES community. In addition, lessons learned could be identified to ensure that knowledge, tools and materials are being used to their full extent, and to avoid overlap and duplication. These efforts should include identifying what information should be disseminated, developing a common approach to the collection of the information from funded projects and determining the audiences and the method of information dissemination that is appropriate for each group.

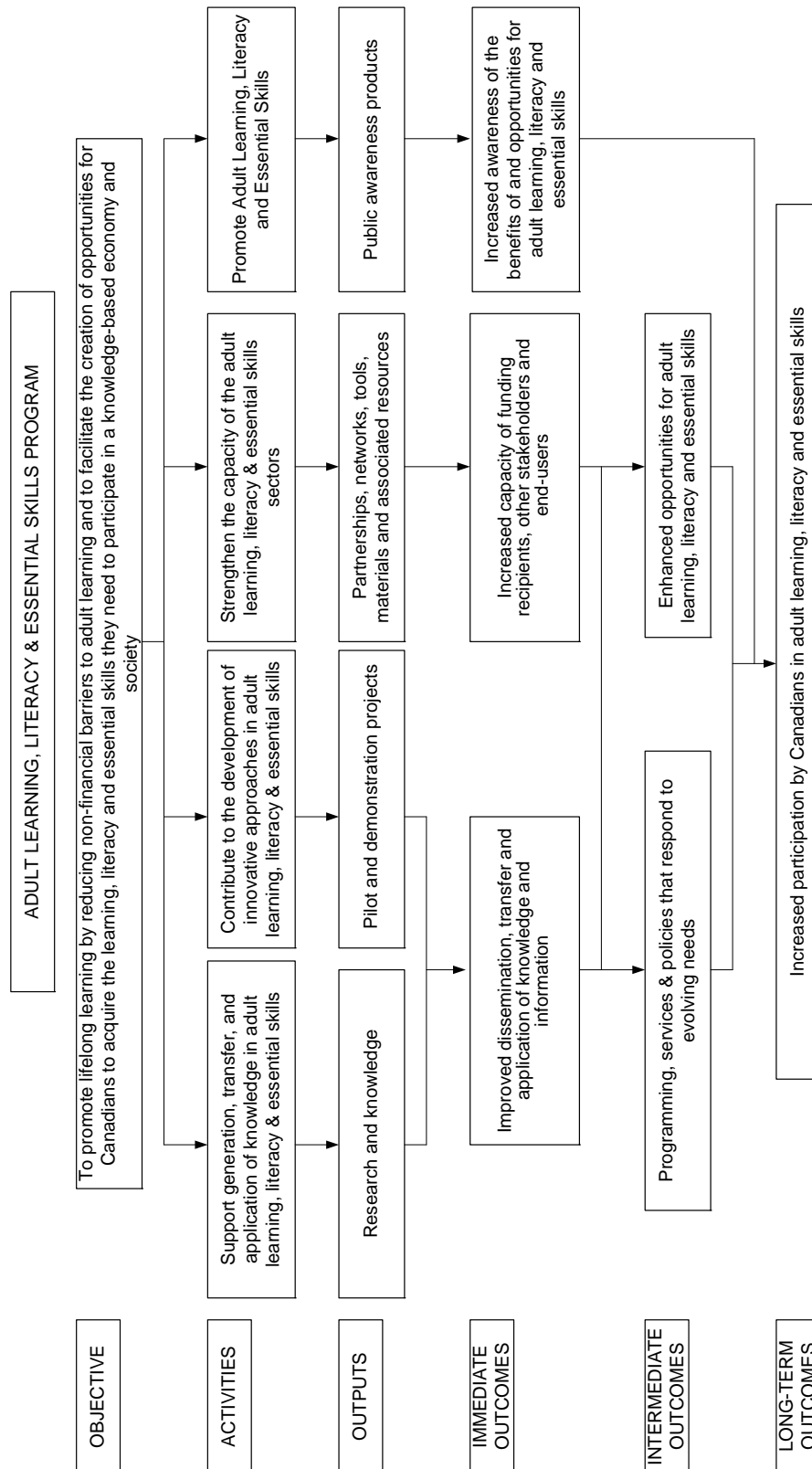
It is suggested that an LES community-based portal be developed where the outcomes from the funded projects are shared and community users are able to access the tools and research and comment on their relevance and applicability to different settings. This approach would be more community driven and allow for more disciplined review and dialogue on the quality and usefulness of ALLESP funded projects, beyond the self-reporting that will occur as part of the APR and PRR templates. The site could also be expanded to include other tools and research developed in the broader community.

Achievement of Immediate outcomes

This evaluation noted that it is too early in the Program lifecycle to answer the full extent to which results have been achieved. This ability was impacted by the fact that there were some projects that had not yet ended.

Nevertheless, this evaluation identified a number of unintended negative impacts that have emerged with the creation of ALLESP including: weakened collaboration and partnership and communications; ongoing program changes and limited awareness of the value of realignment within the LES community; perceived reduction in proposal submissions; delayed decision-making and funding approval; administrative burden and a reduction of proposal submissions. In many cases, program weaknesses identified in the predecessor organizations continue to exist – particularly in relation to database weakness, performance monitoring, dissemination of funded project research and tools and demonstrating reach or impact.

Appendix A – Program Logic Model



REACH: (1) families; (2) communities; (3) educational institutions; and (4) workplaces.

Appendix B – Evaluation Issues and Questions Matrix

Questions	Indicators	Methods ⁴⁷
1. Program Design and Delivery		
Are ALLESP's objectives and expected results clear? Is the logic model still valid?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent to which ALLESP activities, outputs and results are appropriately identified, defined and logically linked 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key Informant Interviews • Document Review
Is ALLESP being implemented as intended?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent to which the initiative is implemented as intended/ differences, etc 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key Informant Interviews • Document Review
Has the Program re-alignment under ALLESP led to effective Program integration, co-ordination and coherence?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent to which Program re-alignment led to Program integration, co-ordination and coherence including but not limited to views and documented evidence on : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the integration of the previous Programs under ALLESP ○ the clarity of the new Program mandate and orientation ○ the extent of shared vision on the Program by staff ○ the effectiveness of Program co-ordination ○ the level of Program coherence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key Informant Interviews • Document Review
Who are the recipients of ALLESP funding?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # and profile of grants and contributions applicants • # and profile of grants and contributions recipients • # and profile of core funding recipients • # and profile of rejected applicants • Profile of the end-users targeted by ALLESP funded projects and of outputs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of administrative files and data • Key Informant Interviews • Document review • Survey of Funding Applicants

⁴⁷ All personal information obtained in this evaluation, through key informant interviews and the survey, shall be gathered and protected in accordance with the *Privacy Act* and HRSDC's Privacy Management Framework, including the *Governance Protocol for Conducting Policy Analysis, Research and Evaluation Activities*.

Questions	Indicators	Methods ⁴⁷
<p>Are adequate management and administrative systems in place for effective and efficient Program delivery? Could delivery be improved?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequacy of management and administrative systems in place (based on opinions and documented evidence) • Extent to which the Program is delivered efficiently and effectively including but not limited to issues such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Satisfaction of applicants with application process and funding decision ○ Extent to which criteria and application process for funding are clear and well understood ○ Extent to which the information on ALLESP is available and accessible ○ Views of recipients on the management and reporting requirements (burden, capacity) ○ Turnaround time for processing applications (communication, decision, disbursement, etc.) • Views on potential improvements to delivery process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of administrative files and data • Key informant interviews • Document review • Survey of funding applicants
<p>2. Performance Monitoring and Measurement</p>		
<p>Is an adequate performance measurement mechanism and system in place? How could performance measurement be improved?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequacy of mechanism and system in place including but not limited to issues such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accuracy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Extent to which the performance indicators accurately reflect outputs and results ○ Extent to which ALLESP data capture and reporting capacity (including external measurement project reporting) correspond to expectations outlined in the performance measurement framework Quality: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Extent to which the performance data being collected is accurate and complete 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of administrative files and data • Key informant interviews • Document review

Questions	Indicators	Methods ⁴⁷
	<p>Availability:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Extent to which information and data can be collected <p>Usefulness:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Extent to which the performance data supports decision-making and departmental accountability requirements ○ Perceived usefulness of performance data and reporting <p>How Program performance measurement should be adjusted (based on opinions and analysis of documented evidence)</p>	
<p>Is the basic information necessary for the summative evaluation being collected?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Extent to which the data related to next evaluation is collected and available. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Information available and collected on applicants ○ Information available and collected on recipients ○ Information available on projects outputs ○ # of applicants in ALLESP administrative data with complete contact information (mail, telephone, e-mail) ○ # of recipients in ALLESP administrative data with complete contact information (mail, telephone, e-mail). ○ Etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Review of administrative files and data ● Key informant interviews ● Document review ● Survey of Funding Applicants

Questions	Indicators	Methods ⁴⁷
3. Preliminary Findings – output oriented		
What type of Funding Agreements has been entered into under ALLESP?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of agreements for (or by): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Multi-year funding of LES P/T coalitions and national organizations ○ Projects that build knowledge about Canadians' LES needs ○ Projects that develop practical tools and supports to respond to identified needs ○ stream (workplace/family-community) ○ provinces or territories ○ target group ○ etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key Informant Interviews • Review of administrative files and data • Survey of Funding Applicants