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May 2012

# Summative Evaluation of the Adult Learning, Literacy and Essential Skills Program

*Final Report*  
**May 2012**



# ***Summative Evaluation of the Adult Learning, Literacy and Essential Skills Program***

**Final Report**

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

***May 2012***

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## *List of Abbreviations*

ALLESP	Adult Learning, Literacy and Essential Skills Program
F-P/T	Federal, provincial and territorial
HRSDC	Human Resources and Skills Development Canada
OLES	Office of Literacy and Essential Skills
P/T	Provincial and territorial



# *Executive Summary*

## **Introduction**

The Adult Learning, Literacy and Essential Skills Program (ALLESP) is a Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) program established on April 1, 2006 as a result of integrating three former federal programs.<sup>1</sup> The program is managed by the Office of Literacy and Essential Skills (OLES) in the Skills and Employment Branch. OLES is responsible for the program's overall direction, policy, planning and accountability, as well as the management of agreements for funded projects.

At the time of this evaluation, ALLESP's objectives were 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<sup>2</sup> they need to participate in a knowledge-based economy and society. Thus the creation of ALLESP embodied a change in program direction towards a greater focus on developing essential skills in the workplace. ALLESP's focus is on 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.

The delivery of training programs and services directly to adult learners is a core provincial and territorial responsibility. OLES' premise is to step in where the decentralized learning systems may precipitate a need for efficient mechanisms for generating and exchanging knowledge related to adult learning, literacy and essential skills. Therefore, ALLESP plays an indirect role rather than a direct role in attempting to improve Canadians' skills and does so by 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 and Methodology**

The main objective of the summative evaluation was to measure program relevance and performance, in terms of its effectiveness at achieving intended program outcomes and assessing costs to operate the program. It was conducted between November 2010 and June 2011 and covered a period of programming that spanned the 2006-2007 to 2010-2011 fiscal years. The evaluation also examined whether areas for improvement identified in the formative evaluation, completed in May 2009, were addressed. In all, the evaluation aimed to answer the ten specific evaluation questions below.

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<sup>1</sup> These programs include the National Literacy Program, the Office of Learning Technologies, and the Learning Initiatives Program.

<sup>2</sup> Literacy includes the following four skills: reading, writing, document use and numeracy. Essential skills are the skills needed for the workplace, and include the four key skills associated with literacy, as well as the following five skills: computer use (digital technology skills), thinking, oral communication, working with others and continuous learning.

## **Evaluation Questions**

- Is there a demonstrated need for ALLESP?
- Is ALLESP duplicating or complementing efforts of federal, provincial and territorial departments, the not-for-profit sector or non-governmental organizations?
- Does ALLESP contribute to the dissemination, transfer, and application of adult learning, literacy and essential skills knowledge and information?
- To what extent does ALLESP contribute to the capacity of funding recipients?
- Has ALLESP increased learner awareness of the benefits of and opportunities for adult learning, literacy and essential skills?
- Does ALLESP lead to improved programming, services, and policies for funding recipients in adult learning, literacy and essential skills?
- To what extent does ALLESP reduce non-financial barriers to, and enhance opportunities for, adult learning, literacy, and essential skills?
- To what extent does ALLESP lead to increased participation and improved literacy and essential skills for Canadians? To what extent has ALLESP reached learner target groups?
- What is the percentage of operations and maintenance costs relative to ALLESP's annual budget?
- What progress has been made with regards to addressing ALLESP formative evaluation recommendations?

The results are based on multiple lines of evidence, using qualitative and quantitative data collection methods, from primary and secondary data sources. These consisted of the following:

- Literature review;
- Administrative data and file review;
- Key informant interviews;
- Survey of ALLESP funding recipients;
- Provincial and territorial case studies; and
- Project case studies.

## **Methodological Challenges and Limitations**

As with any evaluation, there are challenges encountered in implementing the methodologies which result in limitations for the findings. The main challenges and limitations encountered with the present evaluation included:

- ***Limited awareness of the ALLESP among some respondents*** – Awareness of the Program varied amongst external key informants and project and provincial and territorial case study interviewees. The result is that some respondents were unable to provide an opinion on several of the evaluation questions and indicators related specifically to ALLESP.

- ***The size of the survey sample of unsuccessful applicants was small*** – There were 30 funding recipients in the sampling frame who also submitted unsuccessful applications. Although the response rate was high (21 respondents total), the final sample is small. This limited the evaluation's ability to use unfunded applicants and projects as a comparison group with any statistical significance.
- ***Limited number of project case studies conducted*** – While the evaluation design called for 12 project case studies, only seven were conducted. This was not the result of any potential bias on the part of non-participants. Rather, the time of year, i.e. summer, meant many of the funded organizations were shutting down temporarily and did not have the staffing resources available to participate in a labour-intensive project case study. While the results of case studies are not generalizable across all funded projects, an increase in the number of case studies would have allowed for a greater cross section of regions, funding mechanisms, year of funding and amount of funding.
- ***Potential bias in the selection of provincial and territorial case studies*** – OLES personnel were responsible for identifying the key contact in each of the provinces or territories selected for provincial and territorial case studies. To reduce the potential for bias, they were asked to identify two key contacts per province or territory from which one would be selected. It was the responsibility of the key contact to identify additional case study interviewees within their respective jurisdiction, thereby reducing the potential for bias by OLES in the selection of provincial or territorial personnel.

## Key Findings and Conclusions

### **RELEVANCE**

Evidence from the literature review and provincial and territorial case studies suggest that current levels of adult literacy and essential skills in Canada are low among several sub-groups and therefore there is a need for support in this regard. The sub-groups at risk consist of the unemployed or individuals not in the labour force, individuals with lower educational attainment, Aboriginal Canadians, Francophones, immigrants and older Canadians.

Despite the important economic and social benefits of literacy and essential skills identified in the literature review, Canada faces various challenges in its efforts to increase adult literacy and essential skills. These challenges include the existence of a variety of non-financial barriers faced by adults with low skills in this regard, e.g. stigma; inability to navigate the learning, literacy and essential skills system; and, a lack of access to opportunities, in addition to the lack of a systematic national approach with respect to the delivery of adult learning. Unlike various countries examined as part of the literature review, whose coordinated approach towards adult learning, literacy and essential skills allow for nationally recognized agencies, strategies or qualifications, Canada's approach is uncoordinated, fragmented and disconnected. This is despite similar views amongst provinces and territories regarding the need for improved adult learning, literacy, and essential skills in order to foster continued growth and prosperity.

With regards to the first challenge, ALLESP is relevant in that it addresses many non-financial barriers identified above. With regards to the second challenge, the Program is relevant in that it acts as a catalyst in developing a pan-Canadian partnership in an effort to achieve increased levels of adult literacy and essential skills.

Close to 75% of funding recipients surveyed who also submitted an unsuccessful application reported that without ALLESP funding, that project was cancelled, which can be considered an indication of need for the Program. Based on the review of program administrative data, ALLESP funded projects receive on average 94% of their total funding from the ALLESP program. This may speak to relevance in that few other alternate sources of funding for ALLESP type activities is available.

### ***Duplication versus Complementarity***

From a federal standpoint, there are a few programs that support adult literacy and essential skills but have different target populations. ALLESP's focus is on adults already employed or preparing to enter the workforce, families and communities. The Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development has programming directed to Aboriginal persons. There is also support for adult training under HRSDC's Labour Market Agreements and Labour Market Development Agreements. Labour Market Development Agreements are generally limited to individuals eligible for Employment Insurance Benefits, while Labour Market Agreements fund literacy and essential skills supports to similar types of populations as ALLESP. Both Agreements were perceived by all program and external key informants, and the majority of provincial and territorial case study respondents, to be different from ALLESP in that they primarily support the delivery of programs. However, provincial and territorial case study respondents acknowledged that Labour Market Agreements in particular were a potential area of duplication given the fact that, like ALLESP, it also supports the development of programs, curriculums and assessment tools.

There are several mechanisms in place to minimize duplication of learning, literacy and essential skills programming within Canada. These include meetings between ALLESP and provincial and territorial government representatives and national literacy organizations, as well as ALLESP partnerships with sector councils, national and provincial and territorial coalitions, and Aboriginal organizations. However, the evaluation found more could be done by OLES to coordinate with provinces and territories regarding projects within their jurisdiction funded by ALLESP, as well as sharing project results, which can also be used to minimize duplication and facilitate the full utilization of the tools and resources developed.

## **EFFECTIVENESS**

### ***Intended immediate program outcomes***

#### ***Improved dissemination, transfer and application of knowledge and information***

ALLESP contributes to the dissemination, transfer, and application of adult learning, literacy and essential skills knowledge and information. Outputs of funded projects are disseminated by funding recipients mainly in passive ways, e.g., via websites and attendance at conferences. Dissemination remains insular in that it is limited to organizations in existing networks. The evaluation learned the larger the ALLESP funded organization, and the longer it has been in operation, the more they reported using another organization's website as a method of disseminating project results. Also, the OLES-ALLESP website lists all ALLESP funded projects accompanied by a project description. It does not include the results of these funded projects.

Overall awareness of ALLESP funded products/resources was mixed among evaluation respondents, with a majority of survey respondents and a sizeable portion of external experts interviewed, reporting some knowledge of ALLESP funded resources developed by other organizations. Provincial and territorial representatives and non-funded learning, literacy and essential skills experts interviewed, as well as project case study respondents, had more limited awareness. It should be noted, however, it is possible evaluation respondents were aware of and using ALLESP funded resources without knowing they were funded by ALLESP. Therefore, it is not possible to conclude low awareness of ALLESP funded products is due to poor dissemination and transfer of knowledge, but rather could be due to poor branding of outputs developed with the assistance of ALLESP funding.

#### ***Contribution to the capacity of funding recipients***

A large majority of funded organizations surveyed, as well as organizations participating in the project case studies, reported increasing their organizational capacity with the assistance of ALLESP funding. In particular, they were able to develop the skills of their own professional staff, thereby enhancing the learning, literacy and essential skills programming they offer.

#### ***Increasing learner awareness***

Of the surveyed respondents who reported disseminating ALLESP funded products, tools and resources directly to learners, three-quarters believed learners increased their awareness of the benefits and opportunities for adult learning, literacy and essential skills as a result. While the evidence gathered directly from the learners themselves is somewhat limited due to the limited number of project case studies conducted, i.e. seven, the majority of learners and end-users consulted reported the project in which they participated resulted in their increased awareness of the benefits of ongoing learning, and the value of literacy programming in general.

### ***Intended intermediate program outcomes***

#### ***Improved programs, services and policies***

ALLESF contributed to the improvement of funded organizations' programs, services and, to a lesser extent, policies. Evidence of new, enhanced or accessible learning, literacy and essential skills programs and services include training tools – including assessment tools, models and materials, research studies, action or strategic plans, and Internet content or a website. Survey respondents who reported disseminating ALLESF funded products and resources to other organizations were of the belief these are being used to implement training in learning, literacy and essential skills; to develop a better understanding of the needs of their clients; and to inform the design and delivery of programs and services. Improvements in organizational policies and the development of policy documents were reported least often by survey respondents.

#### ***Reduced non-financial barriers and enhanced opportunities for adult learning, literacy and essential skills***

ALLESF was successful in addressing various non-financial barriers to adult learning, literacy and essential skills, particularly related to the following: previous negative experiences with educational systems; a lack of understanding on the part of adults with low learning, literacy and essential skills as to its importance and of lifelong learning; a lack of learning opportunities; a lack of awareness of own skills deficits; and a lack of awareness of services available. The ability of provincial and territorial case study respondents to comment on the extent to which ALLESF funded projects addressed these non-financial barriers was limited, due to a lack of knowledge of the results of funded projects.

Among the various non-financial barriers, ALLESF was less successful in addressing those related to accessibility, such as a lack of time to attend learning, literacy and essential skills offerings due to multiple responsibilities, including child care and a lack of transportation. In this regard, the survey of funding recipients found statistically significant differences amongst the regions. Specifically, Quebec was least likely to report this as a barrier (59% compared to 100% in the Prairies, 82% in Ontario, 71% in Atlantic Canada and 70% in British Columbia).

Insofar as the program is expected to facilitate the creation of opportunities through the reduction of non-financial barriers and the development of capacity among learning, literacy and essential skills practitioners, the evaluation found this is being achieved. However, confusion remains amongst provincial and territorial representatives as to whether ALLESF should have a role in creating opportunities per se in this regard.

### ***Intended longer-term program outcomes***

#### ***Increased participation and improved literacy and essential skills for Canadians***

ALLESF contributed to this intended longer-term outcome in an indirect way. ALLESF funding is provided to organizations which develop products, resources, tools, research and/or services, which are in turn used at different stages on the learning continuum chain.

As such, the end-user may be an organization along this continuum which provides services to other intermediaries along the chain, who in turn provide services to learners, or in some cases the first-line end-user may be a learner. As most ALLESP-funded projects do not fund individual learners, it is not possible to ascertain the exact number of Canadians whose skills improved as a result of ALLESP programming. As such, there is no baseline data, nor current data, against which to determine whether ALLESP contributed to an overall increase in the participation in learning, literacy and essential skills activities. However, evidence from the survey of funding recipients and the views of project representatives and end-users interviewed as part of the seven project case studies some of which were learners, suggests ALLESP funded products and services were, in the end, directed towards a large number of learners, including a range of vulnerable populations. These included low skilled workers and the unemployed, individuals in rural and remote areas, immigrants and new Canadians, Aboriginal Canadians, youth, families, and seniors. The majority of surveyed funding recipients who reported delivering ALLESP funded outputs directly to learners indicated that as a result, these learners acquired the learning, literacy and essential skills they needed to participate in a knowledge-based economy and society. Evidence from the seven project case studies echoed this view, with organizational representatives, as well as the learners themselves, reporting ALLESP funded products and services contributed to improving their learning, literacy and essential skills.

The number of learners served by organizations receiving ALLESP funding whose projects were included in the case studies varied. The Ontario Literacy Coalition delivered essential skills training to more than 600 workers via its ALLESP funded Workplace Literacy and Essential Skills initiative. Quebec's Centre de documentation sur l'éducation des adultes et la condition féminine trained close to 400 educators over the course of their three and a half year ALLESP funded project. In Alberta's Bow Valley College ALLESP funded essential skills training program for immigrants (*Success in the Workplace*), 300 immigrant professionals participated. Similarly, in the Halifax Immigrant English as a Second Language Society's ALLESP funded project, 29 learners completed the online training program for English as a Second Language instructors. In the case of Project Literacy Victoria, 500 people attended various programs such as a tutoring program for inmates and a computer workshop for homeless persons.

### **Operational Costs**

A separate analysis of OLES' operating costs (Vote 1) relative to the amount of ALLESP grants and contributions (Vote 5) funding delivered could not be completed, as Vote 1 monies serve to support the delivery of both ALLESP grants and contributions and Employment Insurance Part II funding which was beyond the scope of this evaluation<sup>3</sup>. Based on the review of the combined operating costs of these two funding components, operating costs ranged between 14% to 18.4% of total spending. Based on the views of a majority of program staff, the current program administrative costs for ALLESP are

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<sup>3</sup> The total envelope for OLES funding includes Employment Insurance Part II funding. While these funds are subject to the terms and conditions for Employment Benefit and Support Measures, the funds themselves are distributed under the OLES umbrella.

reasonable, with all program respondents stating the program is operated in a cost-efficient manner, while citing several efforts designed to keep costs down. OLES is planning to monitor the operating costs for each funding stream separately starting in 2012-13.

An analysis of actual ALLESP grants and contributions spending compared to the forecasted amounts resulted in differences, sometimes significant. In the fiscal years 2006-07, 2007-08 and 2010-11, the difference between forecasted grants and contributions spending and actual grants and contributions spending was limited, with variances within +/- 6.5%. However, in the years 2008-09 and 2009-10, the variances increased significantly to -43% and -26% respectively.

Overall, key informants found the amount of ALLESP funding available is most likely appropriate. Only non-funded external key informants felt the funding was not sufficient. The evaluation could not adequately explore whether the program is cost-efficient, due to a lack of administrative data from comparable programs.

## ***PROGRESS AGAINST ALLESP FORMATIVE EVALUATION RECOMMENDATIONS***

The program made significant progress implementing the recommendations in the formative evaluation conducted between November 2008 to May 2009. However, the evaluation found several areas where continued improvement is still required.

### ***Clarifying Program Objectives and Activities***

According to the formative evaluation, the program's shift from a family and community literacy focus, towards an emphasis on learning, literacy and essential skills in the workplace, was met with resistance at the community level. In an effort to address this issue, key informants from the program cited ongoing efforts towards ensuring a logical link exists between program activities, outputs and intended outcomes, with a focus on the development of workplace literacy and essential skills. They also indicated efforts are ongoing to communicate this shift, namely through enhanced communications and partnerships with key stakeholders.

Based on the review of administrative data, as of 2009-10, the percentage of total funding directed towards the "workplace" funding stream, as coded in the Departmental Common System for Grants and Contributions database, was 48%, compared to 37% directed towards the "community" funding stream (the other categories of funding streams were "Families" and "Educational Institutions" at 13% and 2% respectively of total funding). The percentage of projects in this funding stream increased from 13% of all projects in 2007-08 to 38% in 2009-10<sup>4</sup>. In addition, in 2009-10, the percentage of total ALLESP funding directed towards projects coded as "essential skills" under the "issue" field in the database was 55%. This allocation of funding would indicate the program is focusing to some extent on

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<sup>4</sup> In 2007-08 a high percentage of funded projects (22%) in the Departmental database (Common System for Grants and Contributions) were unspecified, i.e. the "funding stream" field was blank. Therefore the 2007-08 funding figures should be interpreted with some caution. This data tracking issue was identified in the ALLESP formative evaluation where improvements in this regard have since been made.

workplace literacy and essential skills. It is interesting to note however that total ALLESP funding directed towards projects coded in the database as “workplace” under the “issue” field was 1.5%. This may indicate while essential skills may be the current focus of the program, the workplace itself may not be directly involved in the development of ALLESP funded projects. This makes sense as employers are not eligible for funding under the program’s current eligibility criteria. The survey of funding recipients would support this, as when asked about their organization type, 5.6% of respondents stated “associations of workers and/or of employers.”

Program key informants and project case study respondents cited the Call for Concepts application process as a positive development in the clarification of program objectives, as it requires organizations to succinctly, but comprehensively, focus on what they want to accomplish. Although it did have a negative impact on the time required to process applications.

### ***Ensuring Openness and Transparency with Priority-Setting and Decision-Making***

Program and provincial and territorial key informants, and a majority of provincial and territorial case studies, indicated OLES made improvements with respect to openness and transparency, especially with regards to its funding decisions, through the sharing of funding proposals with the provinces and territories. Concerns remain, however, that OLES is not sharing all the proposals originating from each jurisdiction with respective jurisdictions. Provincial and territorial, as well as program key informants also cited OLES’ efforts to ensure frequent dialogue with the provinces and territories through the formation of the Federal, Provincial and Territorial Literacy and Essential Skills Working Group and various OLES-sponsored regional and national conferences. However, many provincial and territorial stakeholders still felt their role was diminished under ALLESP, when compared to their previous roles under the National Literacy Secretariat. It was felt, under the latter, decisions related to program and funding priorities were made collaboratively. Under ALLESP, provincial and territorial representatives now feel their role is simply to provide opinions on proposals submitted from within their jurisdictions.

### ***Improving Data Collection and Tracking***

OLES made some significant improvements to the data collection and tracking conducted by the Program in recent years. In particular, considerable progress was made in improving data tracking on projects entered in the Departmental Common System for Grants and Contributions database. The issue related to missing data was eliminated for key measures identified as problematic in the formative evaluation. In an effort to streamline reporting requirements and track funding outcomes, OLES developed the Project Results Report and the Annual Performance Report templates, which the recipients of funding are required to complete following the completion of their projects. In 2009-10, 22 of 23 core funded organizations completed an Annual Performance Report, and in 2010-11, all 22 core funded organizations completed these required reports. Also, since October 2008, Project Results Reports are being completed and submitted by recipients of project funding.

## ***Supporting Knowledge Transfer***

The evaluation found evidence of improved knowledge transfer since the formative evaluation, with program and external key informants and case study respondents citing OLES's improved website, and OLES-sponsored conferences and meetings, as improvements to the way the program disseminates project results. Despite these efforts, some external key informants and the majority of provincial and territorial case study respondents indicated the dissemination of project results did not improve, noting there remains a lack of systematic communication from OLES on the research, tools and resources developed with ALLESP funding.

## **Recommendations**

- 1. OLES should continue to improve coordination between the federal government and provincial and territorial government representatives with respect to adult learning, literacy and essential skills, as well as improve transparency regarding its decisions in relation to priority-setting for the program and the funding of individual projects.***

This recommendation stems from the fact that Canada lacks a coordinated approach to adult learning, literacy and essential skills where such a coordinated approach is used in other countries. This recommendation is also driven by the fact that, while OLES bears ultimate responsibility for its own policy direction, representatives from the provinces and territories do not feel they are adequately engaged in priority-setting, program-related decision-making and the dissemination of ALLESP funded tools and products, nor do provincial and territorial representatives appear to fully understand ALLESP's objectives, in particular with regards to its role in creating learning, literacy and essential skills opportunities.

- 2. To more fully develop into a Centre of Expertise, OLES should be more proactive in the dissemination of ALLESP funded research, resources and tools.***

OLES should make improvements to its website to ensure it is up-to-date and contains items that would offer additional value to potential users. For example, OLES could add features to the website that would encourage stakeholders to visit the website more regularly. These features could include a highlighted project or particular resource that was recently developed by a funded organization, interesting policy or program-related changes at OLES-ALLESP, announcements regarding upcoming conferences, workshops or meetings, or the innovative idea of the month. Moreover, OLES could provide learning, literacy and essential skills organizations with the option to sign up to a mailing list that would provide regular electronic updates regarding ALLESP funded products and resources, as well as success stories. Further, all funding proposals should include an "active" dissemination plan of their results against which progress should be reported in project final reports. Finally, organizations who develop materials and host events with ALLESP funding should be expected to identify them as ALLESP-supported in order to allow OLES to better track the awareness of learning, literacy and essential skills stakeholders of ALLESP funded project outputs.

# *Management Response*

## **Introduction**

The Office of Literacy and Essential Skills (OLES) welcomes the contribution of the summative evaluation and its value to program policy development. The management response provides the opportunity to respond to the evaluation recommendations. It also provides information on improvements already made and outlines plans for further action.

Following Budget 2012 and as part of the Government's deficit reduction plan, OLES will reduce its annual funding by approximately \$10 million by 2013-14. ALLESP will focus its project funding on labour-market oriented, transformative projects that address fundamental gaps in Canada's approach to adult literacy and essential skills and that lead to institutional change. The Government of Canada's investments will focus on creating tools, information sharing and fostering partnerships.

## **Recommendation**

OLES should continue to improve coordination between the federal government and provincial and territorial government representatives with respect to adult learning, literacy and essential skills, as well as improve transparency regarding its decisions in relation to priority-setting for the program and the funding of individual projects.

## **Response**

OLES agrees with the recommendation. During the period of the evaluation OLES has worked to clarify the role of the Government of Canada in the field of adult literacy and essential skills. The increased emphasis on labour market outcomes has shifted the focus more towards the literacy and essential skills of adult Canadians already employed or preparing to enter the workplace and led to an accompanying nuancing of the ALLESP objective.

OLES' key goals are to play a leadership role, by sharing information and best practices across the country; support institutional changes through knowledge, tools, and partnerships; and invest in larger transformative projects which will have the ability to influence systems change.

OLES is taking proactive steps to lever resources and minimize duplication by working closely with provincial and territorial (P/T) governments, industry, educational institutions, other federal departments, and non-for-profit organizations to apply and better integrate literacy and essential skills into their programs and activities. For example:

- OLES is seeking to influence broader Labour Market Agreements (LMAs) and Labour Market Development Agreements (LMDAs), and recently supported the integration of specific literacy and essential skills language into both the Group Skills Development

Benefit and into the overall renewed Terms and Conditions for Employment Insurance (EI) Part II Employment Benefits and Supports Measures (EBSM) delivered through LMDAs.

- OLES is drawing on expertise and leadership from across the country working with the Canadian Council of Directors of Apprenticeship and P/T's to integrate essential skills into apprenticeship programs, trades training and other services. This initiative supports a collaborative approach to help improve the essential skills of apprentices, trade qualifiers, and tradespeople.
- OLES has partnered with HRSDC's Aboriginal Program Operations Directorate and Service Canada to develop literacy and essential skills resources to support the 84 Aboriginal Skills Employment and Training Strategy agreement holders and 335 sub-agreement holders across the country to help support literacy and essential skills development of their 50,000 Aboriginal clients and increase the capacity of frontline service providers.
- OLES has planned and implemented a new, more formal F-P/T Literacy and Essential Skills Working Group which is co-chaired by the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC). The F-P/T literacy and essential skills Working Group is a senior level committee and a key mechanism for direct engagement with P/Ts across educational and labour market functions to: facilitate enhanced inter- and intra- P/T cooperation and collaboration on adult literacy and essential skills issues; share best practices and project results; and improve transparency regarding its decisions in relation to priority-setting for the program and the funding of individual projects. The first F-P/T literacy and essential skills Working Group in-person meeting with CMEC was held on January 17-18, 2012.

## **Actions planned**

The annual in-person F-P/T literacy and essential skills Working Group meetings will be augmented by regular multilateral conference calls and on-going bilateral work. A second meeting (conference call) of the F-P/T literacy and essential skills Working Group was held on April 30, 2012.

OLES has developed a new consultation framework to better engage P/Ts on OLES projects, where P/Ts would be part of the review process and their input would be sought at all stages of the project life cycle. OLES has directly engaged P/Ts at different stages in its February 2012 Call for Concepts, including an initial email sent to all P/Ts (February 22) and a discussion at the recent January 2012 F-P/T literacy and essential skills Working Group meeting. OLES has also suggested a review committee of P/T representatives to provide advice on concepts received. Emails were sent to P/Ts on the engagement process (June 1), feedback on requests (June 18) and status of concepts (August 16). The review committee is tentatively planned for fall 2012.

These actions should lead to better coordination, greater P/T involvement, improved funding decisions to address key gaps, and overall better communication and engagement with P/Ts. The findings from the research activities to be funded under ALLESP will inform literacy and essential skills policy developments for both OLES and P/T literacy and essential skills programming. Additionally, input will be solicited from P/Ts on any concepts from their jurisdiction.

## Recommendation

To more fully develop into a Centre of Expertise, OLES should be more proactive in the dissemination of ALLESP funded research, resources and tools.

## Response

OLES agrees with the recommendation. It is acknowledged that as a Centre of Expertise (building awareness and capacity in “what works”), it is imperative that OLES continue to be more proactive in the dissemination of ALLESP funded material/products. During the past several months, OLES has been exploring various forms of social media, e.g. webinars, podcasts, blogs, and updating the website to make it more dynamic.

The funding provided by ALLESP to the pan-Canadian network of literacy and essential skills organizations for expertise building events such as the “Spotlight on Learning” (where participants from across Canada share project results on ALLESP funded activities), and the upcoming Pan Territorial Event (involving literacy and essential skills stakeholders in Nunavut, Northwest Territories and the Yukon), will contribute to improved dissemination of ALLESP funded research, resources and tools.

## Actions planned

OLES has a number of planned actions to be more proactive in the dissemination of ALLESP funded research, resources and tools. These include:

- Posting results of ALLESP funded projects on the OLES website (April 2012).
- Creating and supporting the growth of a number of Communities of Practice targeting intermediaries who work with Canadians with low literacy and essential skills. This is achieved by partnering with various levels of government, members of industry and the non-profit sector to host a series of webinars and podcasts (quarterly) to share expertise; improve stakeholder access to literacy and essential skills tools and resources; and increase awareness of projects and program priorities (e.g., a webinar was held in November 2011 and P/Ts were invited to learn more about emerging practices in New Brunswick, related to the embedding of literacy and essential skills into provincial programs and services).
- Circulating quarterly e-bulletins highlighting literacy and essential skills research, resources and tools to over 400 stakeholder organizations, including training service providers, educators, human resources providers, literacy practitioners, employer associations, coalitions, newcomer organizations, P/T governments, etc. (launched in September 2011).
- Distributing e-copies of the “Insights” newsletter to literacy and essential skills stakeholders, including P/Ts, the pan-Canadian network of literacy and essential skills organizations, and employer associations (last mail out of this thematic newsletter was spring 2011, the next mail out is planned for calendar year 2013).

- Communicating with P/T representatives to receive input on concepts received from the new call of concepts (launched February 23, 2012), and advising when approvals are received and when results of investments are available.
- Distributing hardcopies of the “Annual Performance Summary Review” (last two copies summary reports from the multi-year funding organizations were fall 2010 and 2011; the next summary is expected in spring 2012).
- Promoting literacy and essential skills workplace videos through OLES website and through linkages with other organizations (e.g., Industry Canada Business Service Centres).
- Repurposing the Project Results Report (PRR). All ALLESP agreements contain a clause related to the requirement to disseminate results. The PRR, part of the program administration for all projects, has been redesigned and will be used to better capture and disseminate results in fiscal 2012-13.
- Supporting “Expertise Building Events” such as the Central and Eastern Canada “Spotlight on Learning” event which took place in 2011, and the Pan Territorial Event planned for fall 2012.
- Investigating the options available for acknowledgments of funding to be more directly linked to ALLESP. Under the Federal Identity Program, all projects are required to publicly acknowledge the funding received from the Government of Canada. Further to the recommendation provided, OLES will investigate these options.

# ***1. Introduction***

## **1.1 Overview of the Adult Learning, Literacy and Essential Skills Program**

The Adult Learning, Literacy and Essential Skills Program (ALLESP) is a Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) program managed and administered from the Office of Literacy and Essential Skills (OLES) within the Department's Skills and Employment Branch. OLES is responsible for the program's overall direction, policy, planning and accountability, as well as the management of agreements for funded projects. On April 1, 2006, three federal literacy programs: the National Literacy Program, the Office of Learning Technologies and the Learning Initiatives Program, were merged into one thereby creating ALLESP in order to harmonize the objectives and outcomes of federal adult learning programs. At the time of this evaluation, ALLESP's objectives were 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. ALLESP is intended to ultimately benefit 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.

The delivery of training programs and services directly to adult learners is a core provincial and territorial responsibility. Where these decentralized learning systems may precipitate a need for efficient mechanisms for generating and exchanging knowledge related to adult learning, literacy and essential skills, OLES plays an indirect role as a national Centre of Expertise in attempting to improve Canadians' skills by funding national research and tools and by supporting pilot testing and 'best' or innovative practices of knowledge dissemination. This involves 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. A key feature of OLES is providing support towards the development of networks between funded organizations across Canada who would not normally have the capacity to network and form partnerships on a regular basis.

OLES functions on the premise that adult skills and learning within the work context has not been well explored in Canada wherein a need exists for better coordination. It positions itself as a leader in emphasizing this as a key priority and action area for collaboration. The creation of ALLESP embodied a change in program direction towards a greater focus on developing essential skills in the workplace. This was accompanied by a shift in both the number of projects coded in the Departmental Common System for Grants and Contributions database under the "workplace" funding stream and the amount of funding for these projects. The percentage of projects in this funding stream increased from 13%

of all projects in 2007-08 to 38% in 2009-10.<sup>5</sup> In 2009-10, the percentage of total ALLESP funding directed towards this funding stream was 48%, compared to 37% directed towards projects coded under the “community” funding stream (the other categories of funding streams were “Families” and “Educational Institutions” at 13% and 2% respectively).

At the time of the evaluation, the long term objective of the ALLESP was to:

- Increase participation by Canadians in adult learning, literacy and essential skills

The Program’s more immediate objectives were to:

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

The above immediate outcomes were expected to lead to the following intermediate outcomes:

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

The above objectives were intended to be accomplished through the following four eligible funding activities:

1. *Generation, transfer and application of knowledge*: identifying opportunities to increase knowledge on adult learning, literacy and essential skills to inform policy and program development and achieve results.
2. *Support innovative approaches*: Support innovative adult learning, literacy and essential skills initiatives that bridge skills and their use in the workplace and community, and support or promote the use of technology to develop literacy skills.
3. *Strengthening the capacity of the adult learning and literacy sectors and those involved in essential skills*: Provide strategic investments to build capacity of the sector and enable the provision of high quality services for prevention, remediation and accommodation or accessibility for people with low literacy and essential skills and, support the effective participation of organizations in public policy dialogue.
4. *Adult learning, literacy and essential skills promotion*: Foster greater understanding among Canadians of the importance of lifelong learning, the expanded definition of literacy and the essential skills that are required to participate fully in the knowledge-based economy and society, and to encourage all Canadians to develop and practise high levels of literacy and essential skills.

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<sup>5</sup> In 2007-08 a high percentage of funded projects (22%) in the Departmental database (Common System for Grants and Contributions) were unspecified, i.e. the “funding stream” field was blank. Therefore the 2007-08 funding figures should be interpreted with some caution. This data tracking issue was identified in the ALLESP formative evaluation where improvements in this regard have since been made

The ALLESP logic model, presented in Appendix A, presents the links between the ALLESP's activities, outputs and intended outcomes.

### **ALLESP Funding**

The mechanisms to deliver ALLESP funding are grants and contributions, in addition to core funding. Core funding was introduced in the fall of 2007 and is provided to 22 national, provincial and territorial literacy coalitions. It is intended to assist organizations with their administrative costs to enable them to meet their mandate and the needs of the literacy and essential skills field. Table 1.1 illustrates the total actual amount of ALLESP Vote 5 expenditures by fiscal year. Table 1.2 provides a breakdown of the percentage of ALLESP funding by fiscal year in the form of grants versus contributions. Table 1.3 shows the number of projects funded in each category. These two tables illustrate a shift from grants as a funding mechanism towards a greater use of contribution agreements. This responds to recommendations in previous evaluations of the program and its precursor which recommended there be greater use of contribution agreements. There is more leeway for increased accountability with this funding mechanism which results from greater reporting requirements vis-à-vis project results in order to determine whether they, and in turn, the program, are meeting intended goals.

<b>Table 1.1</b>					
<b>Total ALLESP Grants and Contributions (Vote 5) Expenditures by Fiscal Year</b>					
	<b>Fiscal Year</b>				
	<b>2006-2007</b>	<b>2007-2008</b>	<b>2008-2009</b>	<b>2009-2010</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Vote 5 Spending</b>	\$25.1M	\$23.2M	\$16.5M	\$19.6M	\$84.4M
Source: Chief Financial Officer Branch, HRSDC					

<b>Table 1.2</b>					
<b>Percentage of ALLESP Funding by Grant versus Contribution by Fiscal Year</b>					
	<b>Fiscal Year</b>				
<b>Funding Mechanism</b>	<b>2006-2007</b>	<b>2007-2008</b>	<b>2008-2009</b>	<b>2009-2010</b>	<b>Total</b>
Grant	77%	68%	15%	11%	37,072,637 (35%)
Contribution	23%	32%	85%	89%	65%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Source: Common System for Grants and Contributions					

<b>Table 1.3</b>					
<b>Number of Approved Projects by Grant versus Contribution and Fiscal Year</b>					
	<b>Fiscal Year</b>				
<b>Funding Mechanism</b>	<b>2006-2007</b>	<b>2007-2008</b>	<b>2008-2009</b>	<b>2009-2010*</b>	<b>Total</b>
Grant	179	98	23	25	325
Contribution	14	16	47	66	143
Total	193	114	70	91	468
* Common System for Grants and Contributions					

During the period under review, ALLESP grants and contributions were delivered primarily through a Call for Proposals process. In fiscal year 2010-11, OLES replaced the Call for Proposals process with a Call for Concepts. Rather than complete a full proposal, organizations now submit a concept paper that outlines the issue the project will address and which objective(s) it will meet. Further, organizations must provide information on how they are partnership-based, will share results, measure outcomes and are national in scope. If a concept is accepted, OLES works with the organization to develop the full proposal. OLES also solicits proposals and accepts a small number of unsolicited proposals outside the formal Call for Proposals process for projects that fill an identified gap or need from organizations on the basis of their capacity, networks, activities, and expertise.

Between 2006-07 and 2009-10, total ALLESP spending consisted of \$84.4 million. The funding envelope for OLES includes \$11.2 million annually in funds from Employment Insurance Part II subject to approval of the Employment Insurance Part II Expenditure Plan. These resources are subject to the terms and conditions for the Employment Benefit and Support Measures and operate in complementarity with the ALLESP. Projects funded through Employment Insurance Part II were not subject to this evaluation as they operate under a different set of terms of conditions with a different class of eligible recipients, i.e. persons eligible for Employment Insurance or employers participating in programs related to persons eligible for Employment Insurance. Under the ALLESP terms and conditions, individuals and employers are not included under the class of eligible recipients. Starting in 2008-09, OLES was to receive \$7.5 million over five years through the Roadmap on Official Languages. Currently, Heritage Canada is conducting a separate evaluation of the Roadmap on Official Languages in conjunction with other government departments.

## 1.2 Report Structure

This report presents the findings from the evaluation, conducted between November 2010 and June 2011. The evaluation covered the period from 2006-07 to 2010-2011. The report contains the following sections:

- **Section One:** presents a brief overview of ALLESP and the evaluation objectives and questions;
- **Section Two:** presents the data collection methods used in the evaluation and key methodological limitations;
- **Section Three:** presents the evaluation findings relating to program relevance;
- **Section Four:** presents the evaluation findings relating to program performance, in terms of effectiveness;
- **Section Five:** presents the evaluation findings relating to the performance, in terms of operational costs;
- **Section Six:** presents the evaluation findings relating to “other issues”, specifically the degree to which formative evaluation recommendations have been addressed;
- **Appendix:** provides the program logic model.

## 1.3 Evaluation Objectives, Issues, and Questions

The main objective of the summative evaluation was to measure program relevance and performance, in terms of its effectiveness achieving intended program outcomes and assessing costs to operate the program, as per the requirements of the Treasury Board's Evaluation Policy (April 2009). In addition, the evaluation examined whether areas for improvement identified in the formative evaluation, completed in May 2009, were addressed. From these evaluation issues, ten specific evaluation questions were developed (see Table 1.4).

<b>Table 1.4 Evaluation Questions</b>	
<b>Issue Area 1: Relevance</b>	
1.1 Continued Need	1.1.1 Is there a demonstrated need for ALLESP?
1.2 Alignment with Federal Roles and Responsibilities	1.2.1 Is the ALLESP duplicating or complementing efforts of federal, provincial and territorial departments, the not-for-profit sector or non-governmental organizations?
<b>Issue Area 2: Performance (Effectiveness)</b>	
2.1 Achievement of Expected Immediate Outcomes	2.1.1 Does ALLESP contribute to the dissemination, transfer, and application of adult learning, literacy and essential skills knowledge and information?
	2.1.2 To what extent does ALLESP contribute to the capacity of funding recipients?
	2.1.3 Has ALLESP increased learner awareness of the benefits of and opportunities for adult learning, literacy and essential skills?
2.2 Achievement of Expected Intermediate Outcomes	2.2.1 Does ALLESP lead to improved programming, services, and policies for funding recipients in adult learning, literacy and essential skills?
	2.2.2 To what extent does ALLESP reduce non-financial barriers to, and enhance opportunities for, adult learning, literacy, and essential skills?
2.3 Achievement of Expected Longer-term Outcomes	2.3.1 To what extent does ALLESP lead to increased participation and improved literacy and essential skills for Canadians? To what extent has ALLESP reached learner target groups?
<b>Issue Area 3: Operational Costs</b>	
3.1 What are the operational costs to run the program?	3.1.1 What is the percentage of Operations and Maintenance costs relative to ALLESP's annual budget?
<b>Issue Area 4: Other Issues</b>	
4.1 Implementation of Formative Evaluation Recommendations	4.1.1 What progress has been made with regards to addressing ALLESP formative evaluation recommendations?



## **2. Methodology**

### **2.1 Overview of the Approach**

The evaluation was designed and structured to collect information on each of the evaluation issues using multiple lines of evidence, including quantitative and qualitative data collection methods using both primary and secondary data. In all, six methods were used.

Secondary data collection:

- Literature review; and
- Administrative data and file review.

Primary data collection:

- Key informant interviews (n=19; including interviews with program informants such as HRSDC program staff, and external informants including funded and unfunded literacy and essential skills experts and provincial and territorial representatives);
- Survey of ALLESP funding recipients from 2006-07 to 2010-11;
- Provincial and territorial case studies (n=6); and
- Project case studies (n=7).

### **2.2 Literature Review**

The main purpose of the literature review was to address the evaluation issue of relevance. It was also used to develop an understanding of adult learning, literacy and essential skills programs in various provincial and territorial jurisdictions as well as international jurisdictions including, but not limited to, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Australia and the United States, to glean best practices from these programs.

### **2.3 Administrative Data and File Review**

#### ***Administrative Data Review***

The objective of the administrative data review was to gather evidence to ascertain the continuing need for ALLESP, operational costs associated with the program, and the extent to which the formative evaluation recommendations with regards to data tracking were implemented. The administrative data was also used to develop lists of ALLESP applicants for the survey of funding recipients, and to establish a list of potential projects case study participants.

Two potential administrative data sources were identified: the Departmental Common System for Grants and Contributions and a stand-alone Access database used by the Program. The Common System for Grants and Contributions is a HRSDC database that supports financial accountability requirements for grants and contributions. It includes

project tombstone data, such as contact information, project descriptions, funding amounts, as well as information under the following categories: project activities, funding stream, literacy and essential skills issues, project outputs and target audience.

Following a review of both databases, it was determined the Access program database was used by OLES for reporting purposes only and did not contain information beyond what was contained in the Common System for Grants and Contributions . Given this was the official program database, the evaluation reviewed this database for purposes of the administrative data analysis.

### **Selection**

A database extract consisting of 468<sup>6</sup> approved proposals from 2006-07 to 2010-11 was reviewed and analyzed to determine evidence of continued need for the program (Table 2.1 shows breakdown by year). This involved examining the extent to which available program funding was spent and the proportion of funded projects' budgets covered by ALLESP.

<b>Table 2.1</b>					
<b>Number of Approved Projects Fiscal Year</b>					
<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>2006-2007</b>	<b>2007-2008</b>	<b>2008-2009</b>	<b>2009-2010<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>Total</b>
Total	193	114	70	91	468
<sup>a</sup> As the number of approved projects in 2010-11 was 11, for analysis purposes the projects from 2010-11 were combined with those from 2009-10 for a total of 91 that year.					
Source: Common System for Grants and Contributions data					

In addition, the administrative data was examined to determine the extent to which improvements to data tracking were made in response to recommendations in the formative evaluation. The Common System for Grants and Contributions database was converted into a Statistical Package for the Social Sciences file for the purposes of this analysis.

### **File Review**

The file review provided an additional line of evidence to assess achievement of intended program outcomes. Each funded project must submit a project final report to the ALLESP program explaining if, and how, results were achieved with ALLESP funding. A small sample of 15 projects was selected for review to complement the larger survey of funding recipients and the seven case studies, which were the primary data collection methods to assess program results. The file review also contributed to the assessment of the need for the program through a review of the content of project proposals in the sample and was also used to assess progress towards implementing the formative evaluation recommendations.

### **Selection**

Based on the criteria listed below from the evaluation methodology report, all possible projects were identified, from which two sets of 15 projects were randomly selected. This was to ensure a back-up file would be available in the event a file could not be located in the time allotted. The two sets of files met the same criteria. In total, 15 projects were reviewed, including:

<sup>6</sup> This includes more than one accepted project proposal by singular organizations.

- 4 with core-funded organizations and 11 with project funding;
  - Of the 11 that receive project funding, 4 projects funded in 2006, 2 projects funded in 2007, 3 projects funded in 2008 and 4 projects funded in 2009;
  - Of the 11 that are project-funded, 8 projects that are complete and 3 that were ongoing;
- 2 in each of Ontario, Quebec, British Columbia; 1 in each of the Northwest Territories or Yukon or Nunavut, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island.
- 3 of the 15 files with organizations in Official Language Minority Communities;
- 4 small budget (i.e., less than \$25K), 3 medium budget (i.e., \$25K to \$100K) and 8 large budget (i.e., over \$100K);
- 11 grants and 4 contribution agreements.

## 2.4 Key Informant Interviews

The objective of the key informant interviews was to gather in-depth information, including views, perceptions, explanations, examples and factual information that addressed all the evaluation questions.

### **Selection**

A list of potential program and external key informants was developed, based on a preliminary review of literacy and essential skills literature and in consultation with OLES research personnel. External informants were selected to ensure a good mix of regions, types of experts, e.g., academics and practitioners, and subject-matter knowledge. As it was expected individuals with expertise in the field of literacy and essential skills may have worked with organizations that received ALLESP funding in the past, no attempt was made to exclude these “funded” experts from consideration, unless they were identified as the primary applicant or project manager.

In total, 26 individuals were identified as potential respondents from which a maximum of 20 were targeted, with a total of 19 key informant interviews completed. The interviews were divided among the following groups (Table 2.2 and 2.3 summarizes the allocation of interviews):

- **Internal Program Informants** – (n=6 completed), consisting of HSRDC ALLESP personnel at national headquarters. The program interviewees were selected based on their seniority, experience and knowledge of the program and/or its databases. These interviewees were asked questions relating to the relevance, performance in terms of operational costs, and progress toward addressing formative evaluation recommendations. Interviewees included OLES program staff and senior managers;
- **External Informants** – (13 completed), including experts in the areas of literacy, essential skills and learning for adults. These interviewees were asked questions relating to all evaluation issues, including relevance, performance in terms of effectiveness and operational costs, and progress toward addressing formative evaluation recommendations.

Experts included academics, literacy and essential skills practitioners and domestic and international literacy and essential skills experts, as well as of non-governmental organizations. The perspective of Aboriginal peoples and Official Language and Minority Communities were obtained through the participation of two key informant interviews of persons directly involved in the provision of learning, literacy and essential skills for adults within those communities. Provincial and territorial government representatives were also interviewed for their literacy and essential skills expertise, as well as their knowledge of literacy and essential skills programming and services within their jurisdictions.

**Table 2.2**  
**Summary of Interviews**

<b>Key Informant Type</b>	<b>Targeted</b>	<b>Completed</b>
HRSDC ALLESP Personnel at National Headquarters	6 to 8	6
Experts in the area of Learning, Literacy and Essential Skills		
• Provincial and Territorial Representatives	4 to 6	4
• Funded Experts	7 to 9	5
• Non-funded Experts	4	4
<b>Total</b>		<b>19</b>

**Table 2.3**  
**Key Informant Breakdown**

<b>Key informant (not mutually exclusive categories)</b>	<b>HRSDC</b>	<b>Provincial and Territorial Experts</b>	<b>External Experts</b>
<i>Organization</i>			
• Academic			1
• Business			2
• Non-governmental organization			6
• Federal government	6		
• Provincial and Territorial governments		4	
<i>Area of Expertise</i>			
• Literacy		2	2
• Essential Skills		1	3
• Both Literacy and Essential Skills		1	4
<i>Region</i>			
• Alberta		1	
• British Columbia			3
• Manitoba		2	
• New Brunswick			1
• Ontario			3
• Quebec			1
• Nunavut		1	
• National	6		1
<i>Official Language Minority Community</i>			3
<i>Demographic knowledge</i>			
• Aboriginal		1	1

The following quantitative scale was used in reporting to indicate the relative weight of the responses for each of the respondent groups.

- **“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; and
- **“A few”** – findings reflect the views and opinions of at least two respondents but less than 25% of key informants in the group.

## 2.5 Survey of Funding Recipients

The primary purpose of the survey was to examine the impacts and effects of all funded projects since the program’s inception on April 1, 2006 in relation to ALLESP’s intended program outcomes. Respondents were also asked to provide input on their awareness and opinions of ALLESP funded products and tools produced by other funded organizations. The survey also included questions directed specifically at funding recipients who also submitted an unsuccessful application relating to whether the project for which they requested and were denied ALLESP funding proceeded in the absence of that funding. The purpose was to use these organizations as a comparison group by learning whether projects declined for ALLESP funding nonetheless were able to continue with their project, and if so, whether these projects achieved outcomes similar to ALLESP intended program outcomes. This would help determine the incremental impacts of ALLESP.

The total number of approved applications from 2006-07 to 2010-11 was 468. Many organizations submitted and received funding for more than one application. Therefore the total number of unique organizations was 280. The sample was sufficiently small to allow for the use of a census survey. The census sample used the most recent project per funded organization. This number was further reduced by 28, to 252, to exclude funded recipients contacted for participation in the project case study methodology. There were 30 funded recipients who also submitted an unsuccessful application, comprising a subset of the sample, who were asked questions related to their rejected applications submitted in fiscal years 2008-09 and/or 2009-10.<sup>7</sup> While the response rate for these organizations was quite high (21), only five proceeded with their projects. Given this small number, no statistically significant comparisons could be made.

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<sup>7</sup> Unsuccessful applications prior to fiscal years 2008-09 and 2009-10 were not included in this survey as they were already included in the survey of applicants conducted as part of the recent ALLESP formative evaluation, in which applicants were also asked about the effect not receiving ALLESP funding had on their proposed projects. The results were almost identical to the current summative evaluation in that 74% of unsuccessful applicants reported they had to cancel their project or defer it until other funding could be found.

The survey took place over a four week period from June 8 to July 4, 2011. The response rate (60%) and how it was calculated is presented below in Table 2.4.

<b>Table 2.4 Survey Response Rate</b>	
	<b>Number</b>
<b>Total organizations contacted</b>	<b>252</b>
Organisation no longer exists	5
<b>Total participants contacted</b>	<b>247</b>
<b>Response code</b>	
Key project contact away during time of study (11) or does not remember receiving funding (5) or Person in charge of project no longer at organisation (1)	17
Refused	4
No Response	78
Sub-total who did not complete survey	99
<b>Completed survey</b>	<b>148</b>
<b>Response rate calculation (148/247)</b>	<b>60%</b>

### **Analysis**

The results of the survey were compared across different respondent groups on variables related to evaluation questions using frequency tables and cross-tabulations. The following groupings were compared:

- Region;
- Sector of operation of organisation, i.e. public or not-for-profit sector;
- Years of operation of organisation;
- Estimated annual budget of organisation; and

Response tables for the organization-specific variables identified above are provided below.<sup>8</sup>

<b>Table 2.5 Regional Representation of Organizations</b>			
<b>Respondents</b>			<b>Overall Population*</b>
<b>Region</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Ontario	35	24.5%	23.4%
Quebec	32	22.4%	29.5% <sup>a</sup>
Prairies	26	18.2%	15.1%
British Columbia	24	16.8%	14.0%
Atlantic	20	14.0%	12.9%
North	6	4.2%	5.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<sup>a</sup> The difference between Common System for Grants and Contributions data and the survey respondent breakdown for this region is due to a large number of small projects originating from Quebec during the first two years of ALLESP due to the existence of the "Protocole d'entente relative à l'alphabétisation".			
* Common System for Grants and Contributions			

<sup>8</sup> These tables compare organizations on key characteristics and will provide different results than the administrative data review since the comparisons for the latter review were based on project level data.

**Table 2.6**  
**Sector of Operation of Organizations**

Respondents' Sector of Operation			Population's Sector of Operation*	
Sector	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Public Sector	16	11.2%	29	10.4%
Not-for-Profit Sector	127	88.8%	249	89.6%
Total	143	100%	278	100%

\* Common System for Grants and Contributions

**Table 2.7**  
**Type of Organization**

	Respondents		Overall Population*	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Local community, charitable, voluntary organisation	90	62.9%	182	65.5%
National non-governmental organizations	15	10.5%	28	10.1%
Provincial non-governmental organizations	10	7.0%	18	6.5%
Associations of workers and/or of employers	8	5.6%	11	4.0%
Aboriginal not-for-profit groups	4	2.8%	7	2.5%
Public degree-granting universities	4	2.8%	6	2.2%
Municipal governments and agencies	3	2.1%	3	1.1%
Public Sector (Including University / College/Vocational)	3	2.1%	7	2.5%
Provincial governments and agencies	2	1.4%	2	0.7%
Public community colleges and vocational school	2	1.4%	7	2.5%
Public degree-granting colleges	2	1.4%	4	1.4%
Unions	0	0%	2	0.7%
Not-for-profit Band Councils	0	0%	1	0.4%
Total	143	100%	278	100%

\* Common System for Grants and Contributions

Table 2.8 Years of Operation		
Years of Operation	Frequency	Percent
16+ years	105	73.4%
11 to 15 years	25	17.5%
7 to 10 years	8	5.6%
4 to 6 years	3	2.1%
Less than 4 years	2	1.4%
Total	143	100%

Table 2.9 Estimated Total Annual Budget		
Total Annual Budget	Frequency	Percent
More than \$5 million	20	14.1%
\$1 million to \$5 million	34	23.8%
\$500,000 to \$999,999	17	11.9%
\$100,000 to \$499,999	48	33.6%
\$50,000 to \$99,999	9	6.3%
Less than \$50,000	4	2.8%
Prefer not to answer	8	5.6%
Don't know	3	2.1%
Total	143	100%

Where there was a greater than a 5% difference on any one category for these variables, weights were developed to bring the sample distribution close to the population distribution. As a result, the evaluation found two instances where it was necessary to apply weights. Respondents from Quebec were less likely to respond to the survey (refer to table 2.5 above), as were those who indicated French as their preferred language of correspondence. As a result, weights were calculated based on region and language of correspondence. Unless otherwise stated, all percentages in this report for the survey findings are based on the weighted data.

Due to the small sample size, some of the categories in the variables above were merged together to create bigger comparison groups for statistical purposes. For example, estimated annual budget was recoded into two categories: \$500,000 or more per year versus less than \$500,000 per year. Years of operation was also recoded into two categories: 16 or more years of operation and less than 16 years of operation. In the case of the Region variable, given the small number of respondents in the North, no analyses were run for this category.

Most survey questions were analyzed using basic frequencies for the above-noted variables and cross-tabulations with a focus on comparing responses across variables. Throughout the text of the evaluation, where significant differences were found based on an analysis of these variables, these are highlighted in the report. Statistical testing using chi-square was performed when appropriate to assess differences between these variables as they were categorical. A p level of 0.01 was set for all analyses, a priori. Where statistical significance emerged, percentages were examined to identify where differences lay and examine

individual confidence intervals. In some cases, non-significant differences were also described where the reader might expect there to be some differences but extreme caution should be used when interpreting these results since they are not statistically significant.

## 2.6 Case Studies

### ***a) Provincial case studies***

The goal of the provincial and territorial case studies was to provide the evaluation with in-depth information related to program relevance and performance and effectiveness, as well to provide the evaluation with some context regarding the regional environments in which the ALLESP is delivered. This line of evidence utilized two forms of data collection: i) interviews with provincial and territorial government representatives and ii) a review of provincial and territorial Ministry documents and websites.

A total of six provinces and territories were selected for the case studies, based on the following criteria:

- at least one province or territory from each major region in Canada, loosely defined as eastern, central, western and northern; and
- exclusion of provinces and territories who were included as part of this evaluation's key informant interview data collection method, i.e. Alberta, Manitoba, and Nunavut.

Two key contacts were identified by staff of HRSDC's Office of Literacy and Essential Skills (OLES) for each selected Province and Territory. It was important to select key contacts based on their working relationship with, and level of awareness of, ALLESP or OLES, as well as knowledge of their own organizations in order to identify other potential provincial and territorial key informants as up to five interviews were to be conducted for each provincial and territorial case study.

The selection of the provinces and territories and associated key contacts was made in collaboration with the Project Authority and included:

- Nova Scotia (Department of Labour and Advanced Education)
- New Brunswick (Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour)
- Ontario (Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities)
- Saskatchewan (Ministry of Education)
- British Columbia (Ministry of Regional Economic and Skills Development)
- Northwest Territories (Department of Education, Culture and Employment)

A total of 20 interviews were conducted with two to five separate interviews administered per Province and Territory. A breakdown of the number of interviews per Province and Territory is provided in Table 2.10 below:

<b>Table 2.10</b> <b>Number of Key Informants per Province and Territory</b>		
	<b>Province/Territory</b>	<b>Total KIs interviewed</b>
Eastern	Nova Scotia	4
Eastern	New Brunswick	5
Central	Ontario	4
Western	Saskatchewan	2
Western	British Columbia	3
Northern	Northwest Territories	2
TOTAL		20

These interviews were conducted by telephone and lasted from one hour to 1.5 hours. During the interviews, key informants were asked if there were any additional documents that should be reviewed and arrangements were made to obtain these via email or through the provincial or territorial website. These documents were reviewed, as were additional provincial and territorial literacy and essential skills policy and program documents. The documents included: provincial and territorial adult education action plans; strategies and frameworks; Ministerial websites; annual reports; and labour market agreement documents. Once completed, each participant received a letter thanking them for their participation.

### ***b) Project Case Studies***

The purpose of the case studies of funded projects was to provide the evaluation with in-depth information related to performance and effectiveness, by examining a small number of funded projects in-depth and their outcomes. Program relevance was also assessed using this methodology. This line of evidence utilized three forms of data collection:

- Interviews:
  - with project representatives, including the project lead, a member of the organization's board of directors, and/or a project volunteer;
  - with project partners, including representatives of project partner organizations; and
  - with project stakeholders, including local learning and essential skills community representatives.
- Focus groups with end-users, i.e. service delivery organizations or adult learners who used the products or services developed with the assistance of ALLESP funding. In the event focus groups were not possible, interviews were conducted.
- A document and website review.

### ***Selection***

The evaluation methodology initially included a target number of 12 project case studies, based on the criteria in Table 2.11.

**Table 2.11**  
**Project Case Study Criteria**

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Target for Selection</b>
Funding Mechanism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 core-funded organizations (contribution agreements)</li> <li>• 9 project funding (grants)</li> </ul>
Regional distribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 in each of Ontario and Quebec (totalling 4)</li> <li>• 1 in each in the following (totalling 7): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– North West Territories or Yukon or Nunavut</li> <li>– British Columbia</li> <li>– Alberta</li> <li>– Saskatchewan or Manitoba</li> <li>– New Brunswick</li> <li>– Nova Scotia</li> <li>– Newfoundland or Prince Edward Island</li> </ul> </li> <li>• 1 national level organization</li> </ul>
Official Language Minority Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 in Official Language Minority Communities (in two of the provinces and territories identified in regional distribution)</li> </ul>
Funding amount	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 small size (i.e., less than \$25K)</li> <li>• 5 medium size (i.e., \$25K to \$100K)</li> <li>• 3 large size (i.e., over \$100K)</li> </ul>
Period Funded	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4 funded in 2006</li> <li>• 4 funded in 2007</li> <li>• 2 funded in 2008</li> <li>• 2 funded in 2009 (all projects must have been completed)</li> </ul>

The Common System for Grants and Contributions, the ACCESS database and documents were used to obtain project information for selection purposes. For each case study selected as part of the sample, one project was identified as a back-up, for a total of 24 possible projects. It subsequently became necessary to refer to a third back-up list as many organizations were unable to participate.

Thirty-three organizations were contacted in an attempt to solicit the participation of twelve organizations, of which seven organizations agreed to participate. The reasons provided by organizations for not participating are outlined below:

- One organization felt the project would not make a good case study (a research project with no participants).
- Eighteen organizations felt they could not devote the time required to contact individuals and assist with the case study, given the time of year. The case studies took place during June, July and August, at a time when organizations were shutting down activities or scaling down staffing prior to the summer period.
- Four organizations expressed some interest but were not able to commit to a site visit prior to the end of the evaluation's data collection period.
- Three of the organizations identified were no longer operating.

Project case studies were launched in May 2011 and data collection was completed in July 2011. Table 2.12 lists the seven projects reviewed as part of the project case studies.

Table 2.12 Project Case Studies						
Provinces	Organization (and Type)	Project Name	Funding Amount (and Year)	Project Activity*	Project Issue* Addressed	Project Output*
Core Funded Organizations						
Ontario	Ontario Literacy Coalition (Provincial NGO)	Ontario Literacy Coalition Multi-Year Project 2007-2008	\$608,202 (2007-08)	Strengthen Capacity	Basic Skills / Literacy	N/A
Quebec	Centre de documentation sur l'éducation des adultes et la condition féminine (Local Community, Charitable, Voluntary Org.)	La cité de la diffusion des savoirs	\$835,226 (2006-07)		Resource Centre	Education/ Resource Material
New Brunswick	Literacy Coalition of New Brunswick Ltd. (Local Community, Charitable, Voluntary Org.)	Literacy Coalition of New Brunswick Multi-Year Funding	\$338,291 (2008-09)	Strengthen Capacity	Partnership Development	Partnership
Project Funded Organizations						
Prince Edward Island	Tough Challenges: Great Rewards Implementation Committee (Local Community, Charitable, Voluntary Org.)	Meeting the Challenge	\$173,000 (2006-07)		N/A	Evaluation
Alberta	Bow Valley College (Public Sector)	Success in the Workplace: Essential Skills Training for Immigrant Professionals	\$201,880 (2008-09)	Innovative Approaches	Essential Skills	Demonstration/ Pilot Project
Nova Scotia	Immigrant Settlement and Integration Services <sup>a</sup> (Local Community, Charitable, Voluntary Org.)	Building Blocks - Increasing the English as a Second Language Literacy/Essential Skills	\$89,552 (2009-10)	Innovative Approaches	Teaching / Practitioner Training	Training/Skills Development
British Columbia	Project Literacy Victoria (Local Community, Charitable, Voluntary Org.)	Community Literacy Support Project	\$163,408 (2007-08)		N/A	Demonstration/ Pilot Project
<sup>a</sup> Known as the Halifax Immigrant English as a Second Language Society when the organization applied for funding in 2009.						
* Fields in Common System for grants and Contributions						

A total of 66<sup>9</sup> interviews were conducted, broken down in Table 2.13.

<b>Table 2.13</b> <b>Project Case Study Interviews</b>	
<b>Category of Interviewee</b>	<b>Number of Interviews</b>
Project representatives	22
Project partners and literacy and essential skills community stakeholder organizations	23
Representatives of end-user organizations	10
Individual learners	11
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>66</b>

For each project case study, project documents were reviewed, including proposals, funding agreements, final reports, and other documents developed as a result of project funding, and interviews or focus groups conducted. As with the provincial and territorial case studies, the key informant interview responses were categorized based on the number of key informants for each project who gave a similar response to each evaluation question. Where individuals could not give an opinion, this was also noted.

## 2.7 Challenges and Limitations

As with any evaluation, there are challenges encountered in implementing the methodologies which result in limitations for the findings. The main challenges and limitations encountered with the present evaluation included:

- **Limited awareness of the ALLESP among some respondents** – Awareness of the Program varied amongst external key informants and project and provincial and territorial case study interviewees. A few respondents were unfamiliar with the Program or the ALLESP acronym, but were familiar with OLES. Furthermore, a few respondents were unsure if they had specifically received ALLESP funding versus OLES funding, which may have skewed responses. The result is that some respondents were unable to provide an opinion on several of the evaluation questions and indicators related specifically to ALLESP. As such, where applicable, these interviews focused on the general barriers faced by adults with low literacy and essential skills, the availability of alternate literacy and essential skills supports, and the results of funded projects. In cases where informants were asked to provide an opinion, but could not, only the views of those who provided an opinion are included in the evaluation report. In such cases, the proportion of respondents is adjusted to reflect the actual number of respondents who gave an opinion and is stated as such.
- **The size of the survey sample of unsuccessful applicants was small** – There were 30 funding recipients in the sampling frame who also submitted unsuccessful applications and although the response rate was high (21 respondents total), the final sample is small. Moreover, little to no data was provided by unfunded applicants other than whether they were able to proceed with their projects in the absence of ALLESP funding (in this regard, the evaluation found only 26% projects proceeded all with a smaller scope). This limited

<sup>9</sup> End-user organizations and individual adult learners may have been interviewed separately or as part of a focus group.

the evaluation's ability to use unfunded applicants and projects as a comparison group with any statistical significance. While the results were included in the report, appropriate caveats have been provided. Any analysis of this data should be reviewed with caution.

- ***Limited number of project case studies conducted*** – While the evaluation design called for 12 project case studies, only seven were conducted. This was not the result of any potential bias on the part of non-participants. Rather, the time of year, i.e. summer, meant many of the funded organizations were shutting down temporarily and did not have the staffing resources available to participate in a labour-intensive project case study. While the results of case studies are not generalizable across all funded projects, an increase in the number of case studies would have allowed for a greater cross-section of regions, funding mechanisms, year of funding and amount of funding. Moreover, project case studies were expected to provide the only opportunity for the evaluation to consult with end-users and learners. Therefore the evidence related to the longer-term outcomes is less strong than anticipated, and often had to rely on the opinion of survey respondents.
- ***Potential bias in the selection of provincial and territorial case studies*** – OLES personnel were responsible for identifying the key contact in each of the provinces and territories selected for the provincial and territorial case studies, as they were in the best position to identify provincial and territorial personnel who were aware of, and had a previously worked with, the program. Moreover, the evaluation sought to evaluate the level of engagement by OLES with the provinces and territories and therefore it was necessary to interview those at the provincial and territorial level who had a stakeholder relationship with OLES. In an effort to reduce the potential for bias, OLES was asked to identify two key contacts per Province and Territory from which one would be selected and it was the responsibility of the key contact to identify additional case study interviewees within their respective jurisdiction, thereby reducing the potential for bias in the selection provincial and territorial personnel by OLES.

### ***3. Findings Related to Program Relevance***

#### **3.1 Is there a demonstrated need for Adult Learning, Literacy and Essential Skills Program**

##### ***Overall Findings***

Evidence from the literature review, and documents and websites reviewed and interviews conducted as part of the provincial and territorial case studies would suggest that current levels of adult literacy and essential skills in Canada among several sub-groups are low and therefore there is a need for support in this regard. The sub-groups at risk consist of the unemployed or individuals not in the labour force, individuals with lower educational attainment, Aboriginal Canadians, Francophones, immigrants and older Canadians.

At the same time, Canada faces various challenges in its efforts to increase these levels. These challenges include a lack of coordination in Canada with respect to the development and delivery of adult learning, which becomes increasingly evident when compared to the nationally coordinated approaches in other countries, both federal and unitary states, and the fact that adults with low literacy levels and essential skills face a number of non-financial barriers to upgrading these skills.

With respect to the first challenge related to the lack of national coordination, ALLESP is relevant in that it acts as a catalyst in developing a pan-Canadian partnership in an effort to achieve increased levels of adult literacy and essential skills. With respect to the second challenge, ALLESP is also seen to be relevant to reduce the non-financial barriers faced by learners in Canada and to facilitate the creation of opportunities for learners to acquire literacy and essential skills. Most evaluation respondents across all lines of evidence indicated similar efforts are limited or non-existent, with survey and project case study respondents reporting that without ALLESP funding, funded projects would have not gone ahead, or would have had a more limited scope. Some organization would no longer have the funds to continue operations. Of those funded organizations surveyed who also reported submitting an unsuccessful application, close to 75% reported that in the absence of ALLESP funding, that project had to be cancelled.

##### ***Literacy***

The literature review found that strong literacy and essential skills levels play an important role in supporting individual and national economic and social success. At the national level, it affects productivity growth and social cohesion. For instance, the literature review found differences in average adult literacy levels explain as much as 55% of long-term differences in the long-term rate of gross domestic product per capita, thereby affecting a country's ability to compete on an international level.<sup>10</sup> At the individual level, low literacy and essential skills

<sup>10</sup> ABC Canada Literacy Foundation. 2008. *Canada's Literacy Challenge: A Market Segmentation Analysis*. ABC Canada Literacy Foundation.

affects employability, wage rates, income, and reliance on social assistance.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, low literacy levels have also been linked to the probability of experiencing illness and the length of recovery, the cost of treatment, and life expectancy for individuals.<sup>12</sup>

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development assessed literacy rates of select member countries through two international literacy surveys. While these surveys underwent various title changes, the same types of instruments were used to assess two of the survey's four literacy domains, i.e. prose literacy and document literacy.<sup>13</sup> In total, 22 countries participated in the two surveys.<sup>14</sup> The first survey took place between 1994 and 1998 and the second survey took place between 2003 and 2008.<sup>15</sup> The latter, and most recent, survey examined the proficiencies of adults aged 16 to 65, in the following four skill areas:<sup>16</sup>

- **Prose literacy** – the knowledge and skills needed to understand and use information from texts (editorials, news stories, instruction manuals, etc.);
- **Document literacy** – the knowledge and skills required to locate and use information contained in various formats (job applications, payroll forms, transportation schedules, maps, etc.);
- **Numeracy** – the knowledge and skills required to effectively manage mathematical demands; and
- **Problem Solving** – the ability to use goal-directed thinking and action in situations for which no routine solutions exist.

Proficiency in these skill areas was measured using a scale ranging from 0 to 500 points, with scores corresponding to one of five broad levels of difficulty (only four levels were defined for the Problem Solving component).<sup>17</sup> Individuals scoring at Levels 1 (0 – 225) and 2 (226 – 275) were considered to have difficulties coping with the demands of a knowledge and information-based economy. Level 3 (276 – 325) is the proficiency considered to be the ideal for the prose literacy, document literacy and numeracy domains in order to cope with these increasing skill demands.<sup>18</sup> Having skill proficiencies at Level 3, Level 4 (326 to 375)

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<sup>11</sup> Canadian Council on Learning. 2008. *State of Learning in Canada – Toward a Learning Future*. Ottawa: Canadian Council on Learning.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> The first survey (International Adult Literacy Survey) assessed three skill domains: prose literacy, document literacy and quantitative analysis. The second survey (Adult Literacy and Lifeskills Survey) assessed four skill domains: prose literacy, document literacy, numeracy (which replaced the quantitative analysis domain) and problem solving. Prose literacy and document literacy were measured in a similar way in both surveys and hence supported trend analysis in countries that participated in each survey. The modified numeracy instrument did not allow for direct comparison with the quantitative literacy scale fielded in the first survey.

<sup>14</sup> For the purposes of this report, Mexico is excluded as only the state of Nuevo Leon participated in this survey.

<sup>15</sup> Each survey was staggered wherein it was conducted in stages. The first survey assessed 8 countries in 1994, another 5 countries in 1996 and another 9 countries in 1998. The second survey assessed 6 countries in 2003, another country from 2005 to 2007, another from 2006 to 2007, and 2 other countries in 2007-2008.

<sup>16</sup> Canada also included in its survey respondents over the age of 65.

<sup>17</sup> Individuals were interviewed at their places of residence where they underwent a written assessment testing these four skill areas.

<sup>18</sup> Interpretation of the Problem Solving skill domain is more complex and no single “desirable” threshold was identified.

or Level 5 (376 to 500) was associated with a number of positive outcomes, including increased community participation, increased economic success and independence, and enhanced opportunities for lifelong learning and personal literacy.<sup>19</sup>

Canada participated in both the first and second international literacy surveys. In the first survey, in 1994, among eight countries, Canada ranked third in prose literacy, fourth in document literacy, and fifth in the quantitative analysis domain. In all three domains, a majority of respondents scored at Level 3 or higher. In the second survey, in 2003, among six countries, Canada ranked third in prose literacy, second in document literacy, and third in the numeracy domain. In all three domains, a majority of respondents scored at Level 3 or higher.

### ***Overall Findings of the Canadian Component of the 2003 International Literacy Survey***<sup>20</sup>

Forty-two percent of Canadian respondents between the ages of 16 to 65 scored below Level 3 in prose literacy, 43% below Level 3 in document literacy, and 49% scored below Level 3 in the numeracy domain.

### ***Provinces and Territories***

The survey found that proficiency scores varied across the provinces and territories. With respect to both prose and document literacy, a majority of respondents in Newfoundland and Labrador, New Brunswick, Quebec and Nunavut scored below Level 3. Whereas, the majority of respondents in the remainder of the provinces and territories scored at, or higher than, Level 3 in these skill domains.

With respect to the numeracy skill domain, respondents in all the Atlantic provinces, Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut scored below Level 3. Respondents in the remainder of the provinces and territories scored at, or higher than, Level 3.

Respondents in the Yukon were least likely to score below Level 3 across all three skill domains, whereas respondents in Nunavut were most likely to score below Level 3 in all three skill domains. The fact that 60% of respondents in Nunavut spoke Inuktitut as their mother tongue was cited as the main factor influencing the lower scores.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Statistics Canada, *Building on our Competencies: Canadian Results of the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey 2003*. Statistics Canada.

<sup>20</sup> Most of the findings associated with the Canadian component of the 2003 international literacy survey apply to respondents aged 16 to 65. In some cases, survey results for some sub-populations include responses for those over the age of 65 as well. In such cases, the report specifies that the results are for those 16 and up.

<sup>21</sup> The International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey did not offer the assessments in mother tongues other than English and French. As such, data from the Territories ought to be interpreted with caution.

### **Sub-Group Analysis**

As revealed by an analysis of various sub-groups, several were shown to be at greater risk of experiencing low literacy skills, including those unemployed or not in the labour force, individuals with lower educational attainment, Aboriginal Canadians, Francophones, immigrants and older Canadians.

### **Labour Force Participation**

Table 3.1 lists the results of the 2003 International Literacy Survey by labour force participation type (not in the labour force, unemployed, or employed).

<b>Table 3.1</b>					
<b>Literacy and Essential Skills Levels by Labour Force Participation Type</b>					
		<b>Level 1</b>	<b>Level 2</b>	<b>Level 3</b>	<b>Level 4/5</b>
Prose	Not in the labour force	23.0%	28.9%	33.2%	14.9%
	Unemployed	22.8%	30.6%	33.2%	13.5%
	Employed	11.5%	26.5%	40.6%	21.4%
Document	Not in the labour force	24.6%	29.6%	31.3%	14.4%
	Unemployed	24.1%	28.9%	33.2%	13.8%
	Employed	12.2%	26.1%	38.8%	22.9%
Numeracy	Not in the labour force	30.0%	31.4%	27.1%	11.5%
	Unemployed	28.5%	30.2%	29.4%	11.9%
	Employed	15.7%	30.0%	35.4%	18.9%

As demonstrated above, respondents between the ages of 16 to 65 who are either unemployed or not in the labour force (not actively seeking work) scored lower in all three skill domains than respondents who are employed, with 52% of respondents who are not in the labour force scoring below Level 3 in prose literacy and 53% of respondents who are unemployed scoring below Level 3, compared to 38% of respondents who are employed. For document literacy, 54% of respondents who are not in the labour force and 53% of respondents who are unemployed scored below Level 3, compared to 38% of employed respondents. For numeracy, 61% of respondents who are not in the labour force and 59% of respondents who are unemployed scored below Level 3, compared to 46% of employed respondents.

## Education

Table 3.2 illustrates the results of the 2003 International Literacy Survey by highest level of education achieved.

Table 3.2 Literacy and Essential Skills Levels by Education Level*					
		Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4/5
Prose	High school not completed	45.7%	32.0%	18.4%	3.9%
	High school	15.8%	31.9%	38.9%	13.4%
	Trade/Vocational	10.6%	29.0%	42.8%	17.6%
	Post-secondary (non-university)	8.9%	26.0%	42.4%	22.7%
	University	5.1%	17.1%	43.4%	34.5%
Document	High school not completed	48.7%	30.1%	17.1%	4.2%
	High school	17.0%	31.2%	37.8%	14.1%
	Trade/Vocational	13.8%	29.9%	41.4%	14.9%
	Post-secondary (non-university)	10.8%	25.6%	40.8%	22.7%
	University	4.9%	17.4%	39.4%	38.3%
Numeracy	High school not completed	53.8%	28.6%	14.1%	3.6%
	High school	21.9%	34.4%	32.7%	10.9%
	Trade/Vocational	19.2%	37.5%	32.9%	10.4%
	Post-secondary (non-university)	14.1%	29.7%	38.5%	17.7%
	University	6.3%	20.4%	39.7%	33.6%
* Aged 16 and up					

As one would expect, formal education plays an important role in the development of skills. Across all three skill domains examined, higher levels of education were associated with higher levels of proficiency. Respondents who did not complete high school scored below Level 3 for all three skill domains: prose literacy (78%); document literacy (79%); and numeracy (82%). This declined to 48% of respondents who completed high school who scored below Level 3 in prose literacy and 48% who scored below Level 3 in document literacy. In the numeracy domain, 56% scored below Level 3.

This declined even further with respondents who had trade or vocational training, where 40% scored below Level 3 in prose literacy and 44% scored below Level 3 in document literacy. In the numeracy domain, 57% scored below Level 3. For respondents with a college diploma, 35% scored below Level 3 in prose literacy and 36% scored below Level 3 in document literacy. In the numeracy domain, 44% scored below Level 3. Lastly, university graduates saw the lowest number of respondents scoring below Level 3, with only 22% below Level 3 in both prose and document literacy, and 27% below Level 3 in the numeracy domain.

## Aboriginals

Table 3.3 breaks down the results of the 2003 International Literacy Survey by Aboriginal status.

Table 3.3 Literacy and Essential Skills Levels by Aboriginal Status					
		Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4/5
Prose	Aboriginal	19.4%	38.2%	32.1%	10.4%
	Non-Aboriginal	14.5%	26.9%	38.8%	19.8%
Document	Aboriginal	21.8%	37.7%	30.1%	10.3%
	Non-Aboriginal	15.4%	26.7%	37.1%	20.8%
Numeracy	Aboriginal	31.3%	32.7%	27.8%	8.2%
	Non-Aboriginal	19.1%	30.2%	33.5%	17.2%

As demonstrated above, Aboriginal Canadians between the ages of 16 to 65 scored lower than the non-Aboriginal Canadian population in all three skill domains, with 58% of Aboriginal people scoring below Level 3 in prose literacy compared to 41% of non-Aboriginals; 60% in document literacy compared to 42% of non-Aboriginals; and 64% in numeracy compared to 49% of non-Aboriginals.

## Francophones

Table 3.4 lists the results of the 2003 International Literacy Survey by official language (English or French).

Table 3.4 Literacy and Essential Skills Levels by Language Type*					
		Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4/5
Prose	English	12.6%	25.9%	39.8%	21.7%
	French	21.7%	33.1%	33.1%	12.0%
Document	English	14.6%	25.0%	37.9%	22.6%
	French	24.9%	32.5%	30.5%	12.1%
Numeracy	English	19.3%	29.6%	33.4%	17.6%
	French	28.3%	31.4%	28.7%	11.6%

\* Aged 16 and up.

As indicated above, respondents who identified French as their mother tongue also demonstrated lower literacy proficiencies than respondents whose mother tongue was English. Francophones scored lower than the Anglophone population in all three skill domains, with 55% of Francophone respondents scoring below Level 3 in prose literacy compared to 39% of Anglophone respondents; 57% in document literacy compared to 40% of Anglophone respondents; and 60% in numeracy compared to 49% of Anglophone respondents.

This holds true for French Official Language Minority Communities for the prose literacy domain. As demonstrated in Table 3.5 below, the survey found that French-speaking populations in New Brunswick, Ontario and Manitoba had lower scores in prose literacy than Anglophones in the same provinces. The situation was different for the English-speaking population in Quebec, where 42% scored below Level 3 in prose literacy compared to almost 55% of French-speaking Quebecers.

<b>Table 3.5</b> <b>Prose Literacy Levels by Official Language Minority Community*</b>						
			Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4/5
Prose	New Brunswick	English	17.6%	32.0%	35.6%	14.7%
		French	31.8%	34.5%	24.9%	8.8%
	Quebec	English	15.9%	26.2%	38.4%	19.4%
		French	21.2%	33.5%	33.3%	12.0%
	Ontario	English	13.4%	26.9%	39.0%	20.7%
		French	24.8%	30.7%	31.9%	12.6%
	Manitoba	English	11.2%	27.8%	41.3%	19.8%
		French	21.1%	31.0%	34.5%	13.4%

\* Aged 16 and up.

### **Immigrants**

The immigrant status of respondents also played a role. As demonstrated in Table 3.6 below, both recent immigrants (in Canada for less than 10 years) and established immigrants (in Canada for 10+ years) between the ages of 16 to 65 performed lower in all three skill domains when compared to the Canadian-born population between the ages of 16 to 65. When examining these results by recent and established immigrants, the duration of residence in Canada had no impact on their performance in any of the three skill domains.

<b>Table 3.6</b> <b>Literacy and Essential Skills Levels by Immigrant Status</b>					
		Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4/5
Prose	Canadian born	10.1%	27.1%	41.1%	21.7%
	Recent immigrants < = 10 years	30.5%	29.3%	32.1%	8.1%
	Est. immigrants > 10 years	32.6%	27.6%	28.0%	11.7%
Document	Canadian born	11.7%	26.9%	39.0%	22.5%
	Recent immigrants < = 10 years	28.7%	26.7%	32.2%	12.4%
	Est. immigrants > 10 years	31.3%	27.9%	27.5%	13.3%
Numeracy	Canadian born	15.8%	30.6%	35.4%	18.2%
	Recent immigrants < = 10 years	30.4%	29.7%	27.7%	12.2%
	Est. immigrants > 10 years	34.9%	28.9%	24.6%	11.6%

In prose literacy, 60% of both recent and established immigrants scored below Level 3, whereas 37% of Canadian-born respondents scored below Level 3. For document literacy, 59% of established immigrants and 55% of recent immigrants scored below Level 3, whereas 39% of Canadian-born respondents scored below Level 3. For numeracy, 64% of established immigrants and 60% of recent immigrants scored below Level 3, whereas 46% of Canadian-born respondents scored below Level 3.

## Older Canadians

As shown by Table 3.7 below, the age of respondents also had an impact on literacy scores.

Table 3.7 Literacy and Essential Skills Levels by Age Group					
		Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4/5
Prose	16 to 25	9.5%	28.3%	40.6%	21.6%
	26 to 35	9.5%	24.0%	41.9%	24.6%
	36 to 45	14.7%	26.7%	38.2%	20.3%
	46 to 55	15.9%	27.8%	38.7%	17.6%
	56 to 65	26.9%	30.9%	31.8%	10.4%
	66 and over	51.5%	30.6%	15.7%	2.2%
Document	16 to 25	9.5%	25.4%	42.1%	23.0%
	26 to 35	9.6%	23.0%	39.8%	27.7%
	36 to 45	15.8%	26.8%	35.5%	21.8%
	46 to 55	17.2%	29.2%	36.6%	17.0%
	56 to 65	29.6%	32.2%	28.5%	9.7%
	66 and over	57.3%	27.8%	13.0%	1.9%
Numeracy	16 to 25	14.3%	30.5%	36.7%	18.5%
	26 to 35	13.0%	26.6%	37.9%	22.5%
	36 to 45	20.1%	29.4%	32.0%	18.5%
	46 to 55	20.0%	32.9%	33.1%	14.0%
	56 to 65	34.0%	32.9%	25.0%	8.1%
	66 and over	62.1%	25.7%	10.7%	1.5%

For youth between the ages of 16-25, the survey found that 38% scored below Level 3 in prose literacy. Similarly, less than half these respondents had document literacy and numeracy scores below Level 3 (35% and 45% respectively). Low literacy scores increased considerably when respondents reached the age of 55 and above, with 58% of respondents between 56 and 65 years of age scoring below Level 3 in prose literacy; 62% scoring below Level 3 in document literacy; and 67% scoring below Level 3 in numeracy. These low scores amongst older Canadians were predicted to have a negative impact on the quality of life of respondents, by increasing their need for outside support and posing a risk to their health and safety.<sup>22</sup>

## Evidence from Provincial and Territorial Case Studies

Evidence of the need to support improvements to adult literacy and essential skills in Canada was found in all six provincial and territorial case studies, based on a review of provincial and territorial documents and websites, and interviews with government representatives. According to the views of government representatives, provincial and territorial policy with respect to adult literacy and essential skills were similar, in that it was recognized that improvements were necessary in order to ensure continued economic growth, prosperity, and competitiveness. These views were further supported by Ministry policy documents, literature and websites reviewed as part of the provincial and territorial case studies, which

<sup>22</sup> Statistics Canada, *Building on our Competencies: Canadian Results of the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey 2003*. Statistics Canada.

demonstrated that improving adult literacy and essential skills remains a high priority in all jurisdictions examined. For instance, New Brunswick's *Working Together for Adult Literacy: An Adult Literacy Strategy for New Brunswick – Action Plan 2010-2013* was designed with the recognition that addressing adult literacy skills is a crucial component of facilitating growth and prosperity in the province. The strategy shares many of ALLESP's objectives, such as focusing on reducing barriers and strengthening partnerships to develop a strong adult literacy system. Saskatchewan's approach to adult literacy and essential skills was similar, as indicated by the release of the Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour's *2009-2010 Annual Report*, which saw improved adult learning and literacy systems as necessary in order to realize that government's vision of a secure and prosperous province.

Despite these shared priorities, the literature review found a lack of coordination in Canada with respect to the development and delivery of adult learning, with each Province and Territory having developed their own objectives, goals and approaches towards delivering adult literacy and essential skills programming.

### ***Literacy and Essentials Skills Programming – the International Experience***

In consulting a study of international programs, e.g., the Republic of Ireland, New Zealand, the United States of America, the United Kingdom, and Australia, as part of the literature review, the evaluation found that a national coordinated approach to delivering adult learning, literacy and essential skills programming exists in most other countries, compared to Canada. Whereas the countries examined have national agencies, national strategies, nationally recognized literacy and essential skills qualifications, standards, and curriculum for employers and employees, Canada's approach is uncoordinated, fragmented, and disconnected, with a proliferation of learning models and practices responding to local and provincial/territorial needs. This emphasizes the need for a program like ALLESP that employs a coordinated approach to the design, delivery, and sharing of adult literacy and essential skills information and programming.

In unitary states such as the United Kingdom and New Zealand, the existence of a centralized government authority allows for a more coordinated approach towards adult literacy and essential skills. In the United Kingdom, for instance, *Skills for Life* was established as the national strategy for improving adult literacy, English as a second language and numeracy skills. This strategy involved the creation of national core curricula for language, literacy and numeracy skills, as well as standardized training or qualifications for adult literacy and essential skills instructors. In New Zealand, the Tertiary Education Commission was established to fund all post-compulsory education provided by universities and colleges, private trainers, not-for-profit agencies, community providers, and industry training organizations. In addition, the Commission created an interdepartmental committee on adult literacy, with the responsibility of ensuring a coordinated approach amongst departments interested in adult literacy.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Rosa Fitzpatrick and Rosa McKenna, 2004. *Building a Sustainable Adult Literacy Provision: A Review of International Trends in Adult Literacy Policy and Programs*. Department of Education, Science and Training.

While federal states, such as Australia and the United States, are more limited in terms of their ability to develop a national standardized system of adult literacy and essential skills regulations and infrastructure, they achieved some level of consistency, especially when compared to Canada. For example, in Australia, adult literacy was integrated within the vocational education and training services provided by registered training organizations. These organizations operate within national qualifications and quality assurance frameworks. For quality assurance purposes, a National Reporting System was developed for educators, which provides a uniform, national framework for reporting on the language, literacy and numeracy outcomes of students. In the United States, the National Institute for Literacy federal agency provides national leadership for private and public agencies with regards to adult literacy. The Institute coordinates literacy services and policies, technical assistance to states and education providers, and serves as a national resource for adult education and literacy programs.<sup>24</sup>

Supporting this idea of a coordinated approach towards adult literacy and essential skills in Canada, OLES and ALLESP are viewed by the vast majority of program key informants as a federal Centre of Expertise in adult literacy and essential skills, with both program and external key informants citing the importance of both in the development of a national picture of the skills gaps and labour force issues. In addition, both program and external informants cited OLES and ALLESP's role as a partnership catalyst, linking provinces, regions, and smaller community organizations.

### ***Non-Financial Barriers***

The evaluation evidence indicates adults with low literacy and essential skills face a number of non-financial barriers to upgrading their literacy levels and essentials skills, including stigma, inability to navigate the literacy and essential skills system, and a lack of accessibility to learning opportunities (this is discussed in greater detail in Section 4.2 of the report). Respondents to the program and external key informant interviews, and the project and provincial and territorial case studies, were of the view there is a need for ALLESP funding to reduce these non-financial barriers and that it could be addressed via ALLESP funded activities through:

- the provision of core funding to organizations, to support their capacity to deliver services to the literacy and essential skills community and adults with low literacy and essential skills;
- the development of research, pilot projects, tools and resources, thereby increasing the availability of innovative literacy and essential skills programs, supports and services available for adults with low literacy and essential skills; and
- the promotion of the need for literacy and essential skills amongst adults with low literacy and essential skills, as well as an awareness of programming and services available.

Views as to whether a program like ALLESP was needed to create opportunities for learners to acquire literacy and essential skills were more mixed. The majority of program and external key informants agreed federal funding was required to facilitate the creation

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

of opportunities. Similarly, all project case study respondents reported that ALLESP helped to create opportunities for Canadians to acquire literacy and essential skills. However, the opposite view was held by the majority of provincial and territorial case study respondents. These respondents argued ALLESP was less relevant to the creation of opportunities, which they interpreted to mean the delivery of programs directly to learners, which is not the focus of ALLESP. This may speak to a need for OLES to clarify ALLESP's objectives, which in the case of the creation of opportunities, is related to the removal of non-financial barriers and the development of capacity among literacy and essential skills practitioners, not to the delivery of programming to learners.

Some provincial and territorial case study interviewees see ALLESP funding as complementary to their own efforts in addressing barriers to learners, but felt the national approach offered by ALLESP is more cost-effective for vulnerable populations, including individuals in federal prisons, Aboriginal persons, persons with disabilities and persons in remote communities (e.g., high speed Internet access in these communities). It was noted that "literacy is such a huge issue that no one level of government can do all that needs to be done alone." Other provincial and territorial representatives interviewed for provincial and territorial case studies also spoke of the federal government's role in funding programs for groups experiencing barriers to full participation in the labour market more broadly, such as through other funding transfers including Labour Market Agreements that fund services to facilitate access to the labour market. The federal role in these funding programs, according to some provincial and territorial respondents, is an indicator of the relevance of the federal role in addressing the labour market barriers faced by adults with low literacy.

### ***ALLESP as a Funding Source***

The evaluation explored the importance of ALLESP as a funding source, relative to other funding sources, to the organizations that received ALLESP funding. The administrative data review found the proportion of total funding for projects which ALLESP funding comprised rose from 87% in 2006-07 to 94% in 2009-10. Based on the survey data, the number of ALLESP funded projects was split almost evenly between organizations with budgets above and below \$500,000. Also, organizations in operation for 16 or more years received the largest proportion of funded projects (73.4%).

The evaluation also looked at the extent to which the program spent its forecasted budget. The administrative data review revealed there was some lapsing from fiscal years 2007-08 through 2009-10, with the largest variances in fiscal years 2008-09 (-43.1%) and 2009-10 (-26%).

The administrative data review also found the approach to project funding shifted substantially in recent years, as ALLESP moved away from funding smaller project grants, and towards multi-year contribution agreements, as per the recommendations in previous evaluations of the program and its precursor programs. ALLESP is now funding fewer projects overall and those that are being funded are funded for larger amounts. The mean ALLESP funding per project increased from \$124K in 2007-08 to \$448K in 2009-10.

The previous three evaluations recommended there be greater use of contribution agreements as a funding mechanism rather than grants, as there is more leeway or increased accountability with the former as a result of greater reporting requirements vis-a-vis project results in order to determine whether they, and in turn, the program, are meeting intended goals.

Funding recipients surveyed who also submitted an unsuccessful application were asked if their project proceeded without ALLESP funding, 74% reported that without ALLESP funding the project was cancelled. Of the 26% that went ahead, 14% secured alternate sources of funding whereas 12% used internal resources such as volunteers to carry out their projects. Unsuccessful applicants with smaller annual budgets, i.e., under \$500,000, were more likely to report they were unable to proceed with their project in the absence of ALLESP funding, compared to unsuccessful applicants with annual budgets of \$500,000 or more (77% compared to 71%). However the results were based on a small sample size and were not statistically significant. Similarly, all seven organizations who participated in the project case studies believed that without ALLESP-funding, their activities and projects would not have gone ahead, as project representatives believed that other federal or provincial/territorial funding does not exist to any real extent for these purposes. As a result, in their view, without ALLESP funding, many important literacy and essential skills supports would have gone undeveloped, or would have had a much more limited scope, including workplace programming, curriculum and instruction materials, as well as literacy and essential skills knowledge and research. In addition, many literacy organizations and associations could not continue to exist.

## 3.2 Duplication or Complementarity of ALLESP Funding

### ***Overall Findings***

Based on the literature review, there are a several programs that support adult literacy and essential skills. Those identified include programming offered through the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, directed to Aboriginal persons, as well as support offered under HRSDC's Labour Market Development Agreements and Labour Market Agreements. Labour Market Development Agreements are limited to individuals eligible for Employment Insurance Benefits, while Labour Market Agreements fund literacy and essential skills supports to similar types of populations as ALLESP. Both Agreements were perceived by all program and external key informants, and the majority of provincial and territorial case study respondents, to be different from ALLESP in that they primarily support the delivery of programs. However, provincial and territorial case study respondents acknowledged that Labour Market Agreements in particular were a potential area of duplication given the fact that, like ALLESP, it also supports the development of programs, curriculums and assessment tools.

There was also evidence in the provincial and territorial case studies of funding for operational capacity and research programming. However the amount of funding provided by these programs is very limited. As such, these respondents were of the opinion that the programs were complementary to ALLESP.

Provincial and territorial case study respondents cited a lack of coordination between OLES and the provinces and territories with respect to funding priorities as well as the lack of systematic communications from OLES on project results, as a concern. In their view, this limits the awareness of the resources and tools that are being developed and disseminated within provincial and territorial jurisdictions, thus creating a potential risk of duplication. Provincial and territorial case study respondents generally preferred the joint proposal review process that existed under the previous National Literacy Secretariat, as it was felt this did a better job ensuring duplication was avoided.

### ***Federal Level***

Findings from the large majority of program and external key informants, the document review and interviews conducted as part of the Provincial and Territorial case studies, as well as the literature review, indicate that at the federal level, there are several federal programs that support adult literacy and essential skills. Those identified include programming offered through the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, as well as support offered under HRSDC's Labour Market Development Agreements and Labour Market Agreements.

The Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development funds adult literacy programming, as does HRSDC's Labour Market Development Agreements with the provinces and territories. However, both these programs differ in terms of the types of learners they serve, in comparison to ALLESP. For instance, the focus of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development adult literacy funding is solely on Aboriginal persons. Meanwhile, funding

provided to the provinces and territories through the Labour Market Development Agreements is intended to support the design, delivery and management of a broad spectrum of skills and employment programs for those individuals eligible for Employment Insurance benefits. The scope of literacy and essential skills learners served through ALLESP is much more broad, and includes adults already employed or preparing to enter the workforce, families and communities, with a particular emphasis on a variety of vulnerable populations.

HRSDC's Labour Market Agreements complement the Labour Market Development Agreements in that they provide the provinces and territories with funding to support labour market programs and services mostly for persons who are unemployed but not eligible for Employment Insurance benefits. These include groups targeted by ALLESP funding, such as low-skilled workers, and vulnerable populations such as persons with disabilities, Aboriginals, and immigrants. Labour Market Agreements were perceived by all program and external key informants and government respondents in the majority of provincial and territorial case studies to be different from ALLESP, in that they were viewed as primarily supporting the delivery of programs that offer direct supports to learners and, unlike ALLESP, offered no capacity-building funds for literacy and essential skills organizations. However, provincial and territorial case study government representatives acknowledged that Labour Market Agreements were a potential area of duplication. Like the funding offered through ALLESP, they also support the development of resources, including the development of programs, curriculums and assessment tools designed to improve adult literacy and essential skills levels of populations targeted by ALLESP.

### ***Provincial and Territorial Level***

Evidence from the literature review, all key informants, and project case study respondents identified the provinces and territories as the most frequently cited source of adult literacy and essential skills funding outside that offered by ALLESP. However, significant differences between these two funding sources were identified.

The literature review found most literacy and essential skills programming delivered at the provincial and territorial, community and workplace levels offers direct literacy and essential skills support through training and service delivery, whereas ALLESP plays a more indirect role. Cognisant of provincial and territorial jurisdiction with regards to education, program key informants reported provincial and territorial programs often provide literacy and essential skills services directly to learners, while ALLESP complements this responsibility by supporting pan-Canadian research, concept or pilot projects, information and best practice sharing, and capacity building for organizations. Similar views were held by external key informants, including provincial and territorial key informants, as well as provincial and territorial and project case study respondents, who also noted the existence of alternative sources of literacy and essential skills funding, some of which were also supported through Labour Market Agreements and Labour Market Development Agreements. These respondents indicated that these provincial and territorial and not-for-profit non-governmental programs generally involved the delivery of programs, training and services directly to learners via post-secondary institutions and community based organizations. These include, but are not limited to: General Education Development preparation courses, employability training courses, language training for newcomers, and various Federal-Provincial Labour Market Development Agreements.

Evidence from all provincial and territorial case studies found similarities between ALLESP core funding and the funding offered by the respective provinces and territories to regional literacy and essential skills support organizations. However, the amount of funding offered by these provinces and territories was viewed as not fully meeting the capacity-building needs of the literacy sector. As a project case study respondent opined, “ALLESP is in a world of its own in terms of what it will fund.” Finally, while British Columbia, Saskatchewan, and Ontario provide funds to support research and development activities similar to those funded by ALLESP, the amount of funding provided is very limited. As such, as there is a coordinated approach to providing this funding, the ALLESP is viewed as complementary rather than duplicative.

Respondents to the survey of funding recipients reported their organizations received support from a variety of sources, with a large majority (79%) of those who received support from other sources indicating a provincial and territorial government provided that other financial support. This was followed by support from foundations (33%) and other federal departments (23%).<sup>25</sup> It should be noted statistically significant differences were found amongst regions in terms of the support received from other sources. Specifically, organizations in Ontario and Quebec were less likely to report they received funding from another federal government department, compared to the other regions. In addition, while not statistically significant, organizations from the Prairie provinces were more likely to report they received provincial government funding (90% indicated this), followed closely by organizations from the Atlantic provinces (89% indicated this) and Quebec (88% indicated this). Organizations located in British Columbia and Ontario were least likely to report receiving provincial government funding (63% and 65% respectively).

### ***Complementary Funding***

Key informants, survey, provincial and territorial and project case study respondents were asked whether the alternate sources of adult literacy and essential skills funding they identified duplicated, complemented or were completely different when compared to ALLESP. Amongst respondents, there was the view that there were significant differences between the type of funding offered by ALLESP, and that offered by other sources.

Of those surveyed organizations who reported receiving provincial and territorial funding, for instance, 79% indicated the provincial and territorial funding was complementary or completely different from what ALLESP offers. Similarly, of those surveyed organizations who reported receiving financial support from foundations or the federal government, 86% and 80% respectively thought this funding was complementary or completely different when compared to ALLESP.

Project case study respondents, as well as the large majority of key informants interviewed, felt that ALLESP is complementary rather than duplicating the other adult literacy and essential skills programming they identified. Whereas provincial and territorial and non-governmental organization funding was viewed as supporting the delivery of literacy

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<sup>25</sup> 36% of survey respondents also reported receiving support from individual donors.

and essential skills programming directly to learners, ALLESP complements this aim by focusing on supporting the development and sharing of national information, best practices, learning materials, research, and pilot projects.

Evidence from the provincial and territorial case studies supports this view of the complementary nature of ALLESP when compared to the adult literacy and essential skills funding offered by the Provinces and Territories, with the latter viewed as primarily supporting the delivery of programming to learners. At the same time, however, the existence of provincial and territorial core funding to support regional literacy and essential skills organizations, as well as provincial and territorial funding for literacy and essential skills research and development was acknowledged as similar to that provided by ALLESP. However, the amount of funding provided by such supports was viewed by provincial and territorial case study respondents as extremely limited, and in the case of the core funding, does not meet the capacity-building needs of the literacy sector. Similar views were held by project case study respondents, who indicated that none of these programs provide the same level of support as ALLESP.

### ***Ensuring Duplication is Avoided***

Program key informants suggested the development of formal and informal mechanisms that exist such as partnerships with provincial and territorial governments, national and provincial and territorial coalitions, Aboriginal organizations, sector councils, and the new OLES website helps to avoid/minimize duplication. For instance, they were of the view partnerships and ongoing meetings with provincial and territorial government representatives, as well as provincial and territorial input into the proposal selection process, ensures coordination of objectives and knowledge sharing. In particular, all program key informants cited their consultations with appropriate provincial and territorial representatives as having ensured that overlap and duplication was avoided between ALLESP and provincial and territorial funding, including Labour Market Development Agreements and Labour Market Agreements. However, the literature review noted that, unlike these Agreements, ALLESP is not required to satisfy or follow provincial and territorial annual plans or agreements, which identify labour market characteristics and priorities, programs, services and activities for learners (including Employment Insurance beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries). Some of these formal and informal mechanisms were also acknowledged by a few external provincial and territorial key informants, who noted any potential for duplication was avoided as a result of the OLES website, ongoing meetings with OLES, and the collaborative proposal review process.

While a large majority of informants interviewed as part of the provincial and territorial case studies confirmed there was an informal process for coordinating provincial and territorial and ALLESP funding, none perceived this as a coordination process where the funding of one level of government would influence that of the other. According to the provincial and territorial case study interviews, the coordination process focused mainly on obtaining the opinions of the provinces and territories on at least some of the ALLESP-funding proposals within their respective jurisdiction. Provincial and territorial case study

respondents generally preferred the joint proposal review process that existed under the now defunct National Literacy Secretariat, as it was felt this did a better job in ensuring duplication was avoided.<sup>26</sup>

Most importantly, all provincial and territorial representatives involved in the case studies expressed concerns no process existed for coordination with OLES at the conclusion of ALLESP projects, in order to communicate results and to share the products of projects. In their view, this may contribute to the duplication of efforts by not fully ensuring project results are complementary and not duplicating efforts. It may also contribute, in their view, to the under-utilization of the ALLESP resources and tools developed, as provinces and territories are not sufficiently aware of these products to play a role in the dissemination within their jurisdictions. While a few of the provincial and territorial case study representatives were aware of some of the ALLESP funded projects within their jurisdiction, none were aware of the actual results of these funded projects. Despite these concerns, most provincial and territorial case study respondents felt the types of ALLESP projects funded, based on the list provided to them during the case study interviews, are for the most part complementary, when compared to their adult literacy and essential skills priorities.

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<sup>26</sup> The former National Literacy Secretariat administered the National Literacy Program. Through the National Literacy Program, the National Literacy Secretariat 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.



## 4. *Performance – Effectiveness*

ALLESF activities and their outputs are expected to contribute to achieving intended program outcomes, which vary depending on the timeframe in which they are expected to be achieved. They include immediate, medium-term and longer-term outcomes. Please refer to Appendix A (logic model) for a graphical depiction of these outcomes. Program effectiveness for each outcome level is discussed below.

### 4.1 Were Intended Immediate Outcomes Achieved?

The evaluation explored the performance of the program in terms of three intended immediate level outcomes:

- Dissemination, transfer and application of adult learning, literacy and essential skills knowledge and information;
- Contribution to the capacity of funding recipients; and
- Increasing learner awareness of the benefits and opportunities for adult learning, literacy and essential skills.

#### ***Dissemination, Transfer and Application of Knowledge and Information***

##### ***Overall Findings***

The results of the administrative data and file review, the project case studies, and the survey of funding recipients, found that ALLESF supported the development of a range of literacy and essential skills products, tools and resources. While these lines of evidence reveal these outputs were disseminated, this was done primarily in passive ways, including via an organization's own website and through networks and/or partnerships with organizations with similar mandates or clients. As a result, it is likely ALLESF outputs are localized within the funding recipients' own networks and organizations. The size of an organization, i.e., its annual budget, did not affect how ALLESF funded resources were disseminated, with the exception of using websites other than one's own organization to disseminate project results. The larger the organization the more this was reported as a method of disseminating project results. Respondents from organizations in operation for 16 years or more were also more likely to report using other websites.

The OLES-ALLESF website lists all ALLESF funded projects, accompanied by a project description. It does not include the results of these funded projects. When asked about their awareness of ALLESF funded resources developed by other organizations, the majority of survey respondents, and a sizeable proportion of funded literacy and essential skills experts interviewed, were at least somewhat aware of other ALLESF funded resources. Provincial and territorial and project case study respondents had more limited awareness, even within their own jurisdictions.

## **ALLESP Funded Projects**

Based on the program administrative data and file review, project case studies and the survey of funding recipients, the evaluation found various types of outputs were produced with ALLESP funding ranging from programs, tools and services and included: education or resource materials; training tools, models and materials, e.g. ‘train the trainer’ materials; awareness raising tools or promotional events; research studies and action or strategic plans; internet content or a website; and literacy, essential skills or adult learning assessment programs or services and tools.

For the most part, the types of ALLESP funded resources developed by not-for-profit and public sector organizations were similar, based on the analysis of the survey results. Some differences, while not statistically significant, include: research studies, which were developed by 64% of public sector organizations, compared to 45% of not-for-profit organizations. In addition, 100% of public sector organizations reported their funded project led to the development of training tools, models and materials, compared to 64% of not-for-profit organizations. It should be noted, however, this is likely due to the fact the majority of public sector organizations were educational institutions or groups.

## **Dissemination**

Organizations that participated in the survey of funding recipients and the project case studies, were asked to what extent, and in what manner, the above outputs were disseminated. The dissemination of outputs was also examined as part of the project file review included under the administrative data and file review.

According to the survey of applicants, a large majority (close to 95%) of funded organizations, and all seven organizations that participated in a project case study, reported having disseminated these resources. According to the survey, resources were mainly disseminated or delivered to other organisations with similar mandates or clients (68% of responses), or to individuals within their own organization (56% of responses<sup>27</sup>). Close to three-quarters of respondents (74%) reported using partnerships or networks for knowledge sharing to disseminate resources, followed by their organisation’s own website (73%). In addition, 27% of respondents reported using websites other than their own to disseminate project results. Other methods of dissemination used by 50% or more of surveyed organizations included publications (58% of responses) and conferences (52% of responses).

An analysis of the survey results based on organization size, i.e., above and below a \$500,000 budget, revealed an organization’s budget did not affect how an organization disseminated ALLESP funded resources in a statistically significant way, except in cases where respondents reported using websites other than their own to disseminate project results. In such cases, respondents from organisations with higher annual budgets, as well as organizations in operation for 16 years or more, were more likely to report using other websites.

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<sup>27</sup> Survey respondents listed all methods of dissemination. Therefore the responses are not mutually exclusive.

Based on all the above lines of evidence, the outputs of funded projects were disseminated in mainly passive ways, e.g., via websites, newsletters and brochures. Although some more active dissemination strategies such as workshops, conferences, presentations, and collaborations with stakeholders were noted from the file review, and were mentioned by those who participated in interviews as part of the project case studies, overall the dissemination of products and resources remained insular. This was evidenced by respondents participating in the survey and the project case studies, who reported that their primary audiences were existing networks, as well as organizations with similar mandates or clients, followed by provincial organizations.

The OLES-ALLESP website lists all ALLESP funded projects, accompanied by a project description. It does not include the results of these funded projects.

### ***Use of Information Disseminated***

Of those survey respondents who indicated they disseminated resources, almost three quarters believed these resources had been used or applied by other organizations, with the remaining respondents indicating they were unaware if the tools or resources developed were used.

### ***Awareness of ALLESP Funded Resources Developed by other Organizations***

Surveyed funding recipients, external key informants, and those interviewed as part of the provincial and territorial and project case studies were asked to what extent they were aware of ALLESP-funded resources developed by other organizations. Overall, the results were mixed, with survey respondents and previously funded external informants reporting higher degrees of awareness, as compared to other respondents.

When asked whether they were aware of ALLESP funded resources developed by organizations other than their own, 58% of surveyed respondents reported they were. While not statistically significant, organizations with smaller annual budgets, i.e., less than \$500,000, were less aware of ALLESP funded products and resources developed by other organizations (54% compared to 68% of organizations with annual budgets over \$500,000). The following ALLESP funded products and resources developed by other organizations were identified by survey respondents: training tools, models and materials; literacy and essential skills assessment tools; internet content and websites; and research reports. The large majority cited partnerships or networks (77%) as their source of awareness, followed by the OLES website (59%), conferences (58%) and publications (49%). Of these, between 62 to 65% of respondents reported using these resources, with the exception of the literacy and essential skills assessment tools, which were reportedly used by 53% of these respondents.

Those interviewed as part of the provincial and territorial and project case studies, as well as external key informants, reported varying degrees of awareness regarding ALLESP funded products. Those interviewed as part of the project case studies reported their familiarity with other ALLESP funded projects was limited. When asked to identify the sources of awareness of other ALLESP funded projects, they cited OLES conferences, OLES website, networking with other adult literacy and essential skills organizations, the National Adult Literacy Database, and the Canadian Literacy and Learning Network as the primary sources of information.

Awareness amongst external key informants interviewed was more mixed, with higher levels of awareness residing with those informants who had been involved with funded ALLESP projects in the past. Their knowledge resulted from their involvement in national literacy and essential skills networks and regular communication with OLES staff, as well as through the nature of their work. Other sources of awareness included the OLES website, and communications from other literacy organizations (including National Adult Literacy Database).

The majority of those interviewed as part of the provincial and territorial case studies indicated they were aware of some ALLESP funded projects, but only within their jurisdictions and not at the national level. Respondents cited the consultations as part of the ALLESP proposal process as their main source of awareness, with a few citing OLES conferences, ALLESP Federal/Provincial/Territorial meetings and the OLES website. Provincial and territorial case study respondents reported similar sources of awareness, but had a more limited awareness of funded projects overall, even within their own jurisdiction. In fact, representatives of two provinces and territories indicated they resorted to liaising directly with literacy organizations in order to keep informed of ALLESP projects and their results, as they felt this information was not routinely provided by OLES.

It should be cautioned it is possible evaluation respondents were aware of and using ALLESP funded resources without knowing they were funded by ALLESP. Thus, it is not possible to conclude that low awareness of ALLESP funded products is due to poor dissemination and transfer of knowledge, but rather could be due to poor branding of products and resources developed with ALLESP support.

### ***Contribution to the capacity of funding recipients***

#### ***Overall Findings***

Based on the review of program administrative data, among all activities that ALLESP funds, that of “strengthening capacity” had the largest share of projects as well as funding. Funded organizations surveyed reported increasing their organizational capacity with the assistance of ALLESP funding. Based on evidence gathered through the project file review, the project case studies, and according to the majority of survey respondents, ALLESP funding helped to develop or improve funded organizations’ capacity in a number of ways, including the development of a variety of resources, programs and services; improvements to the organization’s outreach; and the development of new partnerships. Survey respondents and those interviewed as part of the project case studies, reported that, as a result, funded organizations were able to develop the skills of their own professional staff, enhance the learning literacy and essential skills programming available, and develop new outreach and delivery channels, thereby increasing their capacity to serve the evolving needs of their clients.

Based on the review of administrative data, in 2009-10, 47% of projects and 58% of ALLESP funding was coded in the Departmental Grants and Contributions database under the activity of “strengthening capacity”. This comprised the largest percentage share of both projects and funding among all activities coded in the database.

According to survey respondents, ALLESP funding contributed to building capacity within their organizations, with the majority (more than 75%) indicating ALLESP funding helped to develop or improve program services in their organization. These improvements included: increased innovation, e.g., creation of new ideas, resources, programs, or research; increased outreach; new or improved partnerships; increased responsiveness to evolving needs of clients; improved programs or services, chiefly training including tools, models and materials; and increased organizational capacity to serve clients. These findings were consistent across the various variables examined, although it should be noted, while not statistically significant, organizations with higher annual budgets, i.e., \$500,000 or above, were more likely to report ALLESP funding contributed to improvements to programs or services (95%, compared to 85% of organizations with annual budgets less than \$500,000). ALLESP funding was less likely to contribute to the development or improvements to organizational policies, with 27% of respondents citing this as an outcome of ALLESP funding. While not statistically significant, organizations with higher annual budgets were more likely to report ALLESP funding contributed to the development of, or improvement to, organizational policies.

Based on a review of project files and the project case studies, the evaluation found evidence core-funded organizations leveraged ALLESP funding to build their capacity in three main areas:

1. *Internal administration and management capacity*, such as improving their governance, engaging in strategic planning, and hiring and training additional staff. For instance, core funding allowed the Literacy Coalition of New Brunswick to hire a new Executive Director, a new Project Coordinator and a Communications Officer, and develop an Employee Handbook. Similarly, the Ontario Literacy Coalition *Multi-Year Project 2007-2008* allowed the Coalition to hire a communications manager, research manager and support salaries of core staff. It was noted that core funding “gave the Ontario Literacy Coalition the stability an organization needs to build its expertise and capacity in house.”
2. *Communications activities and capacity*, including improvements to websites, organization of events and the strengthening of networks or partnerships, which then helped to facilitate the sharing of knowledge and resources, and to increase awareness of literacy issues. The Centre de documentation sur l’éducation des adultes et la condition féminine reported core funding provided through *La cité de la diffusion des savoirs* allowed their organization to greatly improve their outreach activities. Among the outputs developed were a collection of electronic francophone literature and adult learning documents, accessible via an online library; the development of the Centre de documentation sur l’éducation des adultes et la condition féminine’s website, to advertise services and resources across Canada and globally; the provision of mini-libraries to isolated communities; and the development of a bi-weekly newsletter for more than 6,000 subscribers. It was felt that the Centre undertook “more outreach activities for training and all our other services, and we now promote these services at the Canadian level, not only at the provincial level”.

3. *Advocacy capacity*, such as conducting research into public literacy and essential skills policies and organizing and attending events to influence government literacy and essential skills policy. For example, the Ontario Literacy Coalition built partnerships with business, labour and training representatives to further the development of workplace literacy and essential skills in Ontario. The partnership grew and developed into the Coalition's Provincial Advisory Committee for Workplace and Workforce Literacy, with members representing national, provincial and regional points of view from umbrella organizations representing business, labour, literacy, and training and adult education.

The survey of funding recipients, the file review and the project case studies all confirmed ALLESP funding allowed project-funded organizations to develop tools, e.g., training materials or programs, best practices documents, videos and databases, and host events, e.g., workshops and conferences, that helped their organizations develop their internal capacity in several ways. These included developing the skills of their own professional staff, enhancing the suite of literacy and essential skills programming they offer, and building new approaches, such as outreach and delivery channels, to increase their capacity to serve their clients. The projects examined as part of the case studies provide several examples of this capacity building. For instance, project funding allowed the Nova Scotia's Immigrant Settlement and Integration Services and Bow Valley College in Alberta to develop training programs for English as a Second Language literacy instructors and employed immigrant professionals. In addition, funding allowed the Tough Challenges: Great Rewards Implementation Committee to carry out research in four rural communities or regions in Prince Edward Island, in order to determine what literacy issues each currently face, thereby informing the development of community literacy action plans. Finally, Project Literacy Victoria in British Columbia established an outreach program focused on working with other community-based organizations that provide services to vulnerable, mainly homeless, individuals.

The survey and project case studies also spoke of increasing organizational capacity to serve clients through partnership development facilitated by the ALLESP funded project. For instance, several key informants interviewed as part of the *Community Literacy Support Project* case study cited the partnerships developed as having a positive influence on the level of awareness of the community's needs and the need for a change in approach when dealing with homeless individuals. It was felt that "board members eyes were opened as they did not see these groups as being their clients". Literacy outreach volunteers also now have a greater understanding of, and preparedness to, assist marginalized populations.

## **Increasing learner awareness**

### **Overall Findings**

This intended outcome was addressed with the survey of funding recipients and project case studies. ALLESP funded outputs are not typically delivered directly to learners but are used by other organizations who may provide services, in turn, to learners. Nevertheless, of the respondents to the survey of funding recipients who reported disseminating ALLESP funded products, tools and resources directly to learners, three-quarters believed the awareness of learners increased vis-à-vis the benefits and opportunities for adult literacy and essential skills. This view was echoed by the few learners who were interviewed as part of the project case studies who spoke to their experiences.

Based on evidence gathered from organizations through the survey of funding recipients and, in particular, through the views of end-users interviewed as part of the project case studies, including a limited number of learners, the evaluation found that learners had increased their awareness of the benefits of ongoing learning. For instance, according to funding recipients in the survey, of the 95% who reported disseminating ALLESP funded products and services, 44% indicated they delivered these outputs directly to learners. Of these, the majority (76%) believed, as a result, the awareness of learners increased somewhat or a lot vis-à-vis the benefits and opportunities for adult literacy and essential skills.

While the evidence gathered directly from learners and end-users as part of the project case study focus groups and/or interviews is limited, the majority reported the project with which they were associated increased their awareness of the benefits of learning and of the value of literacy programming in general. For example, immigrant professionals participating in Bow Valley College's *Success in the Workplace* project commented the training made them realize their language skills were not their only barrier to employment but that many other soft skills, such as understanding workplace culture and business writing, were important as well. Armed with this knowledge, a large majority of focus group participants for this project reported they wanted to continue with the essential skills training workshops. In addition, learners participating in the Adult Basic Education or General Education Development program developed as a result of *Meeting the Challenges* project in Prince Edward Island reported they now understood the value of continuing their literacy and essential skills studies in order to broaden their labour market possibilities. As an instructor noted: "The biggest obstacle they had was themselves. Their access to labour market information on the Internet reinforces there are a broad range of jobs open to them with a better education, which is a big motivator." In the case of the *Community Literacy Support Project* in British Columbia, project representatives were of the view the increased use of the organization's tutoring and other services by the homeless indicated an increased awareness of these services amongst potential learners. In addition, women in the shelter creative writing group who were interviewed as part of this case study felt the group made them realize they have writing abilities - it gave them confidence to keep writing.

## 4.2 Were Intended Intermediate Outcomes Achievement?

The evaluation explored the performance of the program in terms of two intended intermediate level outcomes:

- Improved programming, services, and/or policies for funding recipients in adult learning, literacy and essential skills; and
- Reduced non-financial barriers<sup>28</sup> to, and enhanced opportunities for, adult learning, literacy, and essential skills.

### ***Improved programming, services and/or policies***

#### ***Overall Findings***

Evidence from the administrative data and file review, the project case studies, and the survey of funding recipients found that ALLESP funding contributed to the development of a variety of literacy and essential skills outputs, including training tools (e.g. ‘train the trainer’ materials), literacy and essential skills assessment tools, programs, models and materials, research studies, action or strategic plans, and Internet content or a website.

According to the views of funding recipients surveyed, almost all external key informants, and the project case studies, these outputs contributed to the improved adult literacy and essential skills programs and services of funded organizations. However, views were mixed as to whether these outputs had contributed to improved organizational policies.

The administrative data and file review, the project case studies and survey found ALLESP funding led directly to the development of a variety of literacy and essential skills outputs. These included training tools, models and materials, e.g. ‘train the trainer’ materials; awareness raising tools or promotional events; research reports, action or strategic plans; internet content or a website; literacy, essential skills or adult learning assessment programs or services and tools; and promotional products. According to the survey of funding recipients, the views of almost all external key informants, and the views of project representatives and documents reviewed as part of the project case studies, these outputs contributed to improved adult literacy and essential skills programs and services, but views were mixed as to whether these outputs had contributed to improved policies.

Based on the survey of funding recipients, some statistically significant differences between regions emerged in terms of the types of outputs organizations reported having developed using ALLESP funding. For instance, organizations located in British Columbia and the Prairies were more likely to have developed literacy, essential skills or adult learning assessment programs or services (60% and 50% respectively) compared to organizations in other regions (21% for Ontario, 23% for Quebec and 35% for Atlantic Canada). Fewer

<sup>28</sup> While not an intended intermediate outcome per se, reducing non-financial barriers to adult learning is one of the main objectives of the ALLESP program (at the time this evaluation was conducted – please refer to the logic model in Appendix A).

respondents from Quebec organisations reported having developed training tools, models and materials (47%) compared to organizations from other regions (90% in British Columbia, 77% in the Prairies, 72% in Ontario and 71% in Atlantic Canada). Respondents from Atlantic Canada (29%) were more likely to report having used ALLESP funding to develop policy documents than respondents from the other regions (where the percentages ranged from 2 to 5%).

The outputs produced were found to have improved the programming, policy and services for literacy and essential skills organizations reviewed as part of the project case studies. For instance, through its receipt of funding to develop an online workplace literacy and essential skills training curriculum for immigrant professionals (*Success in the Workplace*), representatives of Bow Valley College in Alberta reported the school had broadened its scope and reach to include a target population previously not served – employed immigrants. In addition, it was noted the project also expanded the mandate of the College to include essential skills in addition to literacy. In another case, the community needs assessment developed by the Tough Challenges: Great Rewards Implementation Committee (*Meeting the Challenges*) in Prince Edward Island, allowed the four communities examined to prioritize actions to address the needs of adults with low literacy and essential skills, develop an awareness campaign to recruit tutors, and to adapt existing Adult Basic Education or General Education Development programming to serve the literacy and essential skills needs of new target populations, such as Aboriginal communities. Finally, core funding provided to the Centre de documentation sur l'éducation des adultes et la condition féminine and the Literacy Coalition of New Brunswick allowed for significant improvements to their websites, databases and other online services, which allowed literacy and essential skills organizations, trainers, and learners to better access the literacy and essential skills supports available.

Three-quarters of surveyed funding recipients indicated ALLESP funding contributed to improved programs and services “somewhat” or “a lot”. Surveyed organizations located in British Columbia were most likely to report ALLESP funding contributed to this outcome “a lot” (68%), while Atlantic provinces were least likely to report this outcome “a lot” (33%). However, this difference was not statistically significant. Similarly, almost all external key informants reported ALLESP funding contributed to improved programs and services, with several provincial and territorial key informants citing the example of the support provided to Bow Valley College in Alberta to develop a learner assessment tool. In theory, this tool will assist the Alberta provincial government to more effectively assess adult learners, thereby placing learners into the most appropriate programming or training based on their needs. In turn, this supports a better return on the provincial literacy and essential skills training investment. Survey respondents who reported disseminating ALLESP funded products and resources to other organizations also believed they were used in several ways, mainly to: 1) implement training in literacy and essential skills; 2) develop a better understanding of the needs of their clients and to better understanding the trends in literacy and essential skills; and 3) inform the organization’s design and delivery of programs and services. About a quarter of organizations that responded to the survey reported they used resources developed by other organizations. Of these, 90% rated the quality and usefulness of the tools very highly.

Survey respondents were least likely to report their ALLESP funded activities contributed to improvements to organizational policies, with 27% citing this as an outcome and 8% citing policy documents as an output developed with the assistance of ALLESP funding. Organizations with larger annual budgets, i.e., over \$500,000, or those in operation for 16 years or more, were more likely to indicate ALLESP funding contributed to improvements to organizational policies, but these results were not statistically significant.

That being said, funded and unfunded external experts interviewed reported by shifting its focus away from community-based literacy and essential skills training, to workplace delivery of essential skills training, OLES has been able to redefine literacy and essential skills policy within the literacy and essential skills community. Based on the administrative data review, as of 2009-10, the percentage of funding directed towards workplace projects increased to 48%, compared to 37% for the community projects. In addition, core funding provided to the Ontario Literacy Coalition was cited during the project case studies as having supported the Coalition's efforts to influence Ontario government policy. Specifically, Ontario Literacy Coalition input influenced the development of the Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework, a competency-based framework designed to organize the full range of learning offered by Ontario's adult literacy system.

## ***Reduced non-financial barriers and enhanced opportunities***

### ***Overall Findings***

Based on the views of almost all external key informants, project case study participants and the majority of surveyed funding recipients, ALLESP funded projects addressed various non-financial barriers to adult learning, literacy and essential skills, particularly related to the following: previous negative experiences with educational systems; a lack of understanding on the part of adults with low learning, literacy and essential skills as to its importance and of lifelong learning; a lack of awareness of own skills deficits; and a lack of awareness of services available. The ability of provincial and territorial case study respondents to comment on the extent to which ALLESP funded projects addressed these non-financial barriers was limited, due to a lack of knowledge of the results of funded projects.

Among the various non-financial barriers, the survey of funding recipients was less likely to report that ALLESP-funded projects were successful in addressing barriers related to accessibility, such as a lack of time to attend learning, literacy and essential skills offerings due to multiple responsibilities, including child care and a lack of transportation. In this regard, the survey of funding recipients found statistically significant differences amongst the regions. Specifically, Quebec was least likely to report this as a barrier (59% compared to 100% in the Prairies, 82% in Ontario, 71% in Atlantic Canada and 70% in British Columbia).

Insofar as the program is expected to facilitate the creation of opportunities through the reduction of non-financial barriers and the development of capacity among learning, literacy and essential skills practitioners, the evaluation found this is being achieved. However, confusion remains amongst provincial and territorial representatives as to whether ALLESP should have a role in creating opportunities per se in this regard.

A number of non-financial barriers faced by adults with low literacy and essential skills were identified through project documents reviewed and interviews conducted as part of the project case studies, external key informants, survey respondents and the literature review. These included: accessibility, either literacy and essential skills programming did not exist or the programming itself was inaccessible due to a lack of child care, transportation or time; psychological, including low self-esteem and addictions, and systemic barriers, i.e., discrimination and stigma associated with illiteracy; a lack of awareness of the need to improve one's literacy and essential skills, as well as a lack of awareness regarding their own skills deficits; previous negative experiences with the educational system; and a lack of awareness of available programming, including an inability to navigate the literacy and essential skills system.

A large majority of survey respondents (84%)<sup>29</sup> cited previous negative experiences with the education system as the primary non-financial barrier faced by learners, followed by multiple responsibilities, e.g., family and work (77%), and a lack of access to supports

<sup>29</sup> Multiple responses were permitted therefore the percentages are not mutually exclusive.

needed to attend learning opportunities (75%). With regards to the barrier related to multiple responsibilities, e.g., family and/or work, the survey found statistically significant differences amongst the regions. Specifically, Quebec was least likely to report this as a barrier (59% compared to 100% in the Prairies, 82% in Ontario, 71% in Atlantic Canada and 70% in British Columbia). Meanwhile, the majority of provincial and territorial case study respondents argued poverty was the underlying condition that led to other barriers for individuals with low literacy.

When asked whether ALLESP contributed to the reduction of non-financial barriers faced by adult learners, 12 of the 13 external informants provided an opinion. Of these 12, all indicated that ALLESP succeeded in reducing non-financial barriers faced by learners. Specifically, they mentioned ALLESP allows for a more coordinated approach to the design, delivery, and sharing of literacy and essential skills information, the development and adaptation of literacy and essential skills materials to support marginalized populations, the development of programming and resources for literacy and essential skills practitioners, improved accessibility to literacy and essential skills by providing programming or services to vulnerable populations, e.g., immigrants, homeless, incarcerated individuals, developing local or online programming, and promoting awareness of existing literacy and essential skills opportunities and programs.

The majority of provincial and territorial case study respondents held similar views, but their ability to comment specifically on the impact of funded projects on the barriers faced by learners was somewhat limited by their lack of knowledge of the results of funded projects. In fact, respondents in two provincial and territorial case studies were unable to comment on the extent to which ALLESP helped reduce these barriers, as they were unaware of the impacts of funded projects in their jurisdiction. Evidence from five of the six provincial and territorial case studies suggests “opportunities for learning” is being interpreted by provincial and territorial respondents as the direct delivery of programs to adult learners. As such, it was argued ALLESP does not have any impact on creating learning opportunities – citing this as the responsibility of their provincial and territorial jurisdictions.<sup>30</sup>

Approximately 75% or more of surveyed respondents reported their own ALLESP funded activities helped learners by addressing the following barriers either “somewhat” or “a lot”: previous negative experiences with educational system; the lack of understanding or awareness regarding the availability of literacy and essential skills services, their own skills deficits and the importance of literacy and essential skills and of lifelong learning; a lack of learning opportunities; a lack of awareness of own skills deficits; and the availability of learning opportunities. However, the survey found ALLESP funding had less impact on barriers related to accessibility, including barriers related to a lack of time to attend learning opportunities, multiple responsibilities including family and/or work in addition to a lack of supports to enable individuals to attend learning opportunities, related to the

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<sup>30</sup> Note that the interpretation by provincial and territorial representatives consulted for provincial and territorial case studies that the creation of opportunities equates to the delivery of services is incorrect. The program is expected to facilitate the creation of opportunities through the removal of non-financial barriers and the development of capacity among literacy and essential skills practitioners.

lack of transportation and access to child care. This is despite the fact these barriers were amongst the most commonly reported barriers cited by evaluation respondents. It could be argued these factors relate to an individual's personal situation. However, the program does purport to address non-financial barriers and increase opportunities. The project case studies revealed several examples of projects designed to address these types of non-financial barriers (discussed below).

Funded survey respondents who also submitted an unsuccessful application who reported they were able to proceed with that project in the absence of ALLESP funding were asked whether their projects addressed the non-financial barriers previously identified above. However, as indicated in the Limitations section of this report, there were very few funding recipients in the survey frame who also submitted an unsuccessful proposal. Of the 21 who did and who responded to the survey, only five indicated they proceeded with their project in the absence of ALLESP funding for that project all of which were smaller in scope. As a result, no comparisons between funded and unfunded projects could be made.

The project case studies provided examples of how different barriers were addressed. For instance, the barrier related to lack of awareness of programs or services available was addressed through awareness campaigns promoting the need for literacy and essential skills, as well as promoting training programs to potential learners. Bow Valley College's *Success in the Workplace* project in particular focused on ensuring participants understood the need to, and improved their, workplace skills. As a project representative noted, the "biggest thing that learners get out of the program is the realization that they have to work on their essential skills and that they are important to move up in [one's] career. It helps immigrants to realize that no matter how many degrees they have, they have to have the communication skills to go along with it to move up in a company."

The lack of accessibility to literacy and essential skills training was addressed in a number of ways. For instance, lack of transportation and childcare were addressed by offering programs in small communities with flexible hours (*Meeting the Challenge*, Tough Challenges: Great Rewards Implementation Committee in Prince Edward Island). Accessibility was also addressed through online training programs and resources (*Immigrant Settlement and Integration Services Building Blocks*, Immigrant Settlement and Integration Services); flexible hours in programs (*Success in the Workplace*, Bow Valley College); and taking services to shelters and mobile libraries (*Community Literacy Support Project*, Literacy Victoria).

Personal barriers, e.g. shyness or fear of classroom possibly associated to previous negative experiences, were addressed by creating welcoming environments for such groups as homeless people, Aboriginals, and immigrant professionals. For instance, as a result of research conducted under the *Meeting the Challenges* project, the Adult Basic Education or General Education Development courses offered to a First Nation's community were delivered in a way, e.g. flexible hours and individual attention, that was responsive to the needs of learners who faced social and health issues, such as addictions. The Literacy Coalition of New Brunswick cited its efforts to enhance the availability of information

on literacy and essential skills programs and resources, i.e., through its website, the 1-800 referral service and its database of literacy and essential skills services, as having contributed to learners' understanding that "it is not so scary to go back to school."

### 4.3 Were Longer-Term Intended Outcomes Achieved?

As this was a summative evaluation of the program, this report also sought to determine the degree to which the longer-term intended outcome of increased participation by Canadians in adult learning, literacy and essential skills was addressed by ALLESP.

#### ***Increased participation of Canadians in literacy and essential skills programs***

##### ***Overall Findings***

ALLESP funding is provided to organizations which develop products, resources, tools, research and/or services, which are in turn used at different stages on the learning continuum chain. As such, ALLESP funding is positioned to contribute to this longer-term outcome in an indirect way. Further, as ALLESP-funded projects do not fund individual learners, there is no baseline data, nor current data, to ascertain the exact number of Canadians whose skills improved as a result of ALLESP programming. With this in mind, it is not possible to determine if ALLESP contributed to an overall increase in the participation in learning, literacy and essential skills activities.

However, evidence from the survey of funding recipients and the views of project representatives and end-users interviewed as part of the seven project case studies some of whom were learners, suggests ALLESP funded products and services were, in the end, directed towards a large number of learners, including a range of vulnerable populations. These included low skilled workers and the unemployed, individuals in rural and remote areas, immigrants and new Canadians, Aboriginal Canadians, youth, families and seniors.

Using the findings from the survey of recipients and the project case studies, the evaluation examined the number and types of learners reached by ALLESP funded projects. It should be noted, however, the extent to which organizations could identify actual learners varied depending on the nature of the project and the mandate of the organization. The ALLESP program does not provide programs or services directly to learners. It plays an indirect role by leveraging the activities of third party organizations which it funds, building on existing relationships and developing new partnerships. As a result, the program's administrative data does not track the number of learners served by each project. That being said, as previously indicated the survey of funding recipients found that 44% of funding recipients reported they delivered ALLESP-funded resources directly to learners. As a result, the evaluation relied on the project case studies, in particular the focus groups with first line end-users of funded projects. "First line end-users" in this case refers to either organizations or individual learners, depending on the project. While the evidence from the seven case study provides important evidence relating to the involvement of first line end-users, it was

not able to determine the extent to which overall literacy and essential skills participation was increased, due to the lack of a baseline data for the actual number of learners across all ALLESP funded projects.

Among project case study participants who received core funding (three of the seven project case study participants), the Centre de documentation sur l'éducation des adultes et la condition féminine reported producing training kits used by approximately 400 educators. In addition, their online library received 190,000 downloads, and their website was visited more than 17 million times. The Ontario Literacy Coalition, another organization involved in the project case studies that received core funding, was able to support employers through its Workplace Literacy and Essential Skills initiative to deliver essential skills training to more than 600 workers. It also allowed them to take the lead in developing a new curriculum framework on behalf of the provincial government that is used to teach 40,000 to 50,000 learners each year.

The number of learners served by organizations receiving ALLESP funding for projects that participated in the project case studies (four of the seven project case study participants), varied considerably. ALLESP project funding allowed Alberta's Bow Valley College to develop a 16-week curriculum called "*Success in the Workplace*" designed to develop the workplace essential skills of working immigrant professionals. This was delivered by Bow Valley College across Canada, resulting in some 300 immigrant professionals receiving essential skills training so far. This began as a pilot program in three delivery sites with 82 participants. In the case of Nova Scotia's Immigrant Settlement and Integration Services, ALLESP funding allowed for the development of a 10-week online course for English as second language instructors, covering the theory and practical strategies for teaching literacy and essential skills to immigrants whose native language was not English. So far, this electronic course has been piloted by the Immigrant Settlement and Integration Services, with seven instructors ultimately completing the online course. In the case of Project Literacy Victoria, the number of learners was much higher, with over 500 reportedly attending various programs such as a tutoring program for inmates, and a creative writing group and a computer workshop for the homeless. It was estimated over 7,000 accessed other services such as the mobile lending library.

### **Target Groups**

Evidence from the survey of funding recipients and the seven project case studies found that ALLESP funding focuses on a variety of target groups. According to the survey of funding recipients, the most popular target groups of ALLESP funded projects and activities were low skilled workers (77%), the unemployed (76%) and individuals about to enter the workforce (70%). The following target groups were also identified approximately 50% or more of the time: the employed, individuals living in remote or rural areas, immigrants or new Canadians, and Aboriginal Canadians. It should be noted even the least prevalent target group, i.e., official language minority communities, was still targeted by approximately 20% of the organizations responding to the survey.

There were no statistically significant differences in terms of specific target group, based on an organization's annual budget or years of operation. However, some regional variations did emerge. For instance, respondents from Ontario (15%), British Columbia (15%) and the Prairies (27%) were less likely to report having developed resources for which seniors were a target group (compared to 57% in Quebec and 44% in Atlantic Canada). On the other hand, organizations from Quebec were less likely to report having developed tools and resources for Aboriginal Canadians (21% compared to a range of 58 to 65% for other regions). Respondents from Quebec and British Columbia were also less likely to report having developed tools and resources targeted towards individuals living in rural and remote areas (37% and 45% respectively compared to 66% for Ontario and the Prairies and 82% for Atlantic Canada).

Among project case studies, learner target groups included Aboriginals in a First Nation community (Tough Challenges: Great Rewards Committee with the "*Prince Edward Island Meeting the Challenge*" project); individuals in francophone communities (Centre de documentation sur l'éducation des adultes et la condition féminine's project "*La cité de la diffusion des savoirs*"); immigrant professionals (Nova Scotia's Immigrant Settlement and Integration Services' "*Building Blocks*" project and Alberta's Bow Valley College's "*Success in the Workplace*" project); and people who experience homelessness as well as inmates in a correctional centre (Literacy Victoria's "*Community Literacy Support*" project).

## ***Improved Literacy and Essential Skills***

### ***Overall Findings***

Evidence from the survey of funding recipients, as well the opinions of project representatives, stakeholders, end-users and learners participating in the project case studies, indicated ALLESP-funded projects had positive impacts on the literacy and essential skills of adult learners. Of the organizations surveyed who reported delivering ALLESP-funded outputs directly to learners, over three-quarters were of the opinion these resources were used by learners to achieve their learning, literacy and essential skills goals. Project representatives and stakeholders participating in all seven project case studies held a similar view, citing a number of positive impacts their projects had on various vulnerable populations, including immigrants, aboriginals, single mothers and the homeless. The end-users and few learners interviewed as part of the project case studies also indicated ALLESP-funded programs and services led to improvements to their literacy and essential skills.

The evaluation examined to extent to which ALLESP funding had positive impacts on the literacy and essential skills of learners, based on evidence gathered through the survey of funding recipients and the project case studies, with detailed evidence gathered through the latter.

Of the 95% of surveyed respondents who reported disseminating the outputs of their projects, 44% reported they delivered tools, products, and resources directly to learners. Of these 44%, the majority believed these outputs and resources were used by learners to achieve their

learning, literacy or essential skills goals either somewhat (32%) or a lot (44%). As a result, three quarters of survey respondents were of the opinion learners acquired the learning, literacy and essential skills they needed to participate in a knowledge-based economy and society. A further 50% or more of these respondents reported learners recognized and made better use of these skills in their community, workplace and daily lives; and increased their ability to enter or re-enter, and participate in, the labour force.

Project representatives and stakeholders participating in the seven project case studies were of the opinion the greatest impact of ALLESP funded outputs and resources was in relation to the confidence and self-esteem of learners, in particular with regards to their own abilities to learn. As a result, it was felt it could have life-changing impacts for vulnerable individuals. Many specific examples of other impacts were cited, ranging from single moms being able to help their children read, Aboriginal high school drop outs who transitioned to post-secondary education, homeless people becoming regular users of a mobile library and improved atmosphere in a correctional centre.

Learners who participated in the project case studies also indicated ALLESP funded projects helped them to improve their literacy and essential skills. For instance, in the case study of the *Building Blocks – Increasing the English as a Second Language Literacy and Essential Skills* project in Nova Scotia, the two English as a Second Language instructors interviewed felt they had achieved their goal of “expanding and brushing up on their skills”, and indicated the online program provided them with better teaching strategies, such as breaking things down more for low level learners, having access to resources to use in developing lessons, and basing their teaching on a better theoretical framework, which they can use as a basis for English as a Second Language instruction. Both English as a Second Language instructors plan to continue with the self-study portion of the program.

Respondents representing the *Success in the Workplace* project offered by Bow Valley College in Alberta, indicated most learners improved their literacy and essential skills throughout the course of the program, based on an assessment of participants’ essential skills at the beginning and end of the program. This view was echoed by learners participating in the focus group, who reported “at the end of the program they could communicate more clearly than before and were more comfortable talking to colleagues and supervisors in the workplace.”

Respondents representing Literacy Victoria for that case study cited a number of success stories as a result of the *Community Literacy Support Project*, including: individuals at shelters becoming regular users of the bookmobile; inmates learning to read their court documents to better participate in the judicial process; and the development of the Mizplaced zine magazine publication for women, which is now distributed among all shelters in the area.



## 5. *Performance – Operational Costs*

### **Overall Findings**

Based on the program administrative data available, an analysis of ALLESP operating costs, i.e., Vote 1, relative to total ALLESP funding, i.e., ALLESP Vote 1 operating costs and Vote 5 grants and contributions, could not be conducted, as Vote 1 monies serve to support the delivery of both ALLESP grants and contributions and Employment Insurance Part II funding. Based on a review of the operating costs of both these funding components over the five years since ALLESP began, these costs ranged between 14% to 18.4% of the total spending. Due to a lack of administrative data from comparable programs, the evaluation did not examine whether this is cost-efficient. Based on the views of program informants, ALLESP operates in a cost-efficient manner, with several respondents citing examples of ways in which the Program is being delivered efficiently.

Actual spending on ALLESP grants and contributions, i.e., Vote 5, compared to forecasted amounts differed over the five-year period, sometimes significantly. In fiscal years 2006-07, 2007-08 and 2010-11, the variance did not exceed +/- 6.5%. However, in the years 2008-09 and 2009-10, the variances increased significantly to -43.1% and -26.0% respectively.

When program and external key informants were asked whether the amount of ALLESP funding was appropriate, views were mixed, with only non-funded external experts reporting that the funding available was insufficient.

The envelope for OLES funding includes ALLESP grants and contributions funding, as well as Employment Insurance Part II funds, with the latter funding stream delivered using the same operating monies to deliver ALLESP grants and contributions funding. This makes it difficult to determine the operating costs spent solely on the delivery of ALLESP grants and contributions. OLES is planning to track and monitor the delivery costs of each funding stream separately starting in 2012-13.

Table 5.1 below illustrates these combined operating costs and program spending on both, between 2006-07 and 2010-11. Operating costs ranged between 14% and 18.4% of total spending over the five year period, and was at its highest in 2008-09 (18.4%), dropping to its lowest point in 2010-11, to 14%. A few OLES representatives responding to the key informant interviews acknowledged that ALLESP overhead costs were likely quite large compared to other grants and contribution programs of this type. However, the majority of program staff were in agreement that these administrative costs are reasonable, with all program respondents stating ALLESP is operated in a cost-efficient manner. These OLES respondents cited various efforts to ensure the program is delivered in the most efficient manner possible, including tightly negotiated budgets, a focus on results-based management, and the recent shift to the more rigorous “Call for Concepts” proposal selection process.

<b>Table 5.1</b> <b>Vote 1 (Operating Costs) Funding as a Percentage of</b> <b>Total Actual Spending 2006-07 to 2010-11<sup>a</sup></b>										
Fiscal Year	2006-2007		2007-2008		2008-2009		2009-2010		2010-2011	
	Actual	%	Actual	%	Actual	%	Actual	%	Actual	%
HRSDC Vote 1	5.6	14.1%	5.4	15.3%	5.2	18.4%	5.3	17.0%	5.9	14.0%
HRSDC Vote 5 and EI Part II	34.2	85.9%	29.9	84.7%	23.1	81.6%	25.8	83.0%	36.1	86.0%
Total Funding	39.8	100%	35.3	100%	28.3	100%	31.1	100%	42.0	100%
a. The total envelope for OLES funding includes Employment Insurance Part II funding. While these funds are subject to the terms and conditions for Employment Benefit and Support Measures, the funds themselves are distributed under the OLES umbrella.										

Table 5.2 below illustrates the difference between forecasted and actual spending on ALLESP grants and contributions, i.e., Vote 5, for the years 2006-07 to 2010-11, which differed, sometimes significantly. In fiscal years 2006-07, 2007-08 and 2010-11, the variance was limited to +4.6%, -6.5% and +4.7% respectively. However, variances increased significantly in the years 2008-09 (-43.1%) and 2009-10 (-26%).

<b>Table 5.2</b> <b>Forecasted vs. Actual ALLESP Grants and</b> <b>Contributions Vote 5 Spending – 2006-07 to 2010-11</b>		
		<b>ALLESP – Vote 5</b>
2006-07	Forecast (\$M)	24
	Actual (\$M)	25.1
	% Variance	+4.6%
2007-08	Forecast (\$M)	24.8
	Actual (\$M)	23.2
	% Variance	-6.5%
2008-09	Forecast (\$M)	29.0
	Actual (\$M)	16.5
	% Variance	-43.1%
2009-10	Forecast (\$M)	26.5
	Actual (\$M)	19.6
	% Variance	-26%
2010-11	Forecast (\$M)	23.5
	Actual (\$M)	24.6
	% Variance	+4.7%

Program key informants were also asked to comment on the appropriateness of the current level of funding. They were unanimous in stating the level is appropriate, as are the overall number of organizations and projects supported by the Program. Alternatively, external experts held mixed views on the extent to which ALLESP funding is appropriate. For example, of the three non-funded literacy and essential skills experts who could provide an opinion, the majority felt the current level of ALLESP funding is insufficient to meet the needs of improving essential skills of adult learners. Whereas the large majority of funded literacy and essential skills experts felt the level of funding is sufficient. Of the three provincial and territorial government representatives who could respond to this question, the majority felt that funding was appropriate.



## ***6. Progress Against Formative Evaluation Recommendations***

The formative evaluation was conducted between November, 2008 and May, 2009. The following four recommendations were made:

- 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.
- Program should continue its efforts to communicate, support and consult with stakeholders and funding recipients in order to ensure openness and transparency with regards to its priority setting and decision-making.
- OLES should 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, proposal and reporting forms should be updated to better reflect the Common System for Grants and Contributions 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.
- Program should investigate various ways of supporting the transfer of the knowledge regarding funded projects and their results.

### ***Overall Findings***

The summative evaluation found evidence OLES made significant progress towards implementing a number of the recommendations made as part of the formative evaluation, in particular with regards to clarifying ALLESP's objectives and activities, as well as eliminating the data gaps found in the Common System for Grants and Contributions database. However, while OLES took steps to improve its openness and transparency, especially with regards to its funding decisions, and made an effort to further disseminate products and resources produced with the assistance of ALLESP funding, a number of concerns remain. Namely, the majority of provincial and territorial key informants and case study participants cited a perceived lack of input to the program design and priorities as an issue. The evaluation found more work needs to be done to share ALLESP products and tools with provincial and territorial stakeholders and learning and literacy organizations, as there is a perceived lack of systematic communications from OLES in this regard.

### **6.1 Clarifying Program Objectives and Activities**

The previous formative evaluation of ALLESP found the program direction was moving away from family and community literacy as a focus, towards an emphasis on literacy and essential skills in the workplace, in particular with the introduction of essential skills as a key policy and program objective, as per the 2008-09 Departmental Report on Plans and Priorities. The previous evaluation found this new direction was met with resistance at the

community level. The current summative evaluation used the results of the administrative data review, as well as the views of program key informants and project case study representatives, to examine to what extent funded projects were aligned with this new objective, and whether stakeholders understood the program's new direction.

Program key informants noted efforts are ongoing to ensure ALLESP objectives are aligned with the Department's Program Activity Architecture and to ensure an alignment between program activities, outputs and intended outcomes. In particular, the program is now funding projects with a focus on the development of labour market literacy and essential skills, specifically within the workplace. Evidence of this was demonstrated through the administrative data which showed that, as of 2009-10, the percentage of total funding directed towards the "workplace" funding stream, as coded in the Departmental Common System for Grants and Contributions database, was 48%, compared to 37% directed towards the "community" funding stream (the other categories of funding streams were "Families" and "Educational Institutions" at 13% and 2% respectively of total funding). The percentage of projects in this funding stream increased from 13% of all projects in 2007-08 to 38% in 2009-10.<sup>31</sup> In addition, in 2009-10, the percentage of total ALLESP funding directed towards projects coded under the "essential skills" issue field in the database was 55%. On the other hand, total ALLESP funding directed towards projects coded as "workplace" under the "issue" field was 1.5%. This may indicate while essential skills may be the current focus of the program, the workplace itself may not be directly involved in the development of ALLESP funded projects. This makes sense as employers are not eligible for funding under the program's current eligibility criteria. The survey of funding recipients would support this, as when asked about their organization type, 5.6% of respondents stated "associations of workers and/or of employers."

In addition, all program key informants cited recent efforts on the part of OLES to inform stakeholders of the changes to program objectives and activities, i.e., shifting focus from literacy to essential skills, and shifting focus from family/community-based projects to workplace projects, namely by ensuring that the lines of communication are open with the provinces and territories and core funded organizations.

As previously indicated, however, there still appears to be some confusion on the part of government representatives interviewed as part of the provincial and territorial case studies with regards to the Program's intended intermediate outcome of enhanced opportunities for adult learning, literacy and essential skills. This is being interpreted by these respondents as the direct delivery of programs to adult learners, i.e., a provincial and territorial responsibility, rather than facilitating the creation of opportunities through the removal of non-financial barriers and the development of literacy and essential skills capacity.

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<sup>31</sup> In 2007-08 a high percentage of funded projects (22%) in the Departmental Common System for Grants and Contributions database were unspecified, i.e. the "funding stream" field was blank. Therefore the 2007-08 funding figures should be interpreted with some caution. This data tracking issue was identified in the ALLESP formative evaluation where improvements in this regard have since been made.

Program key informants and project sponsors interviewed as part of the project case studies also cited the revised approach to applying for ALLESP funding, i.e. shifting from a Call for Proposals to a Call for Concepts, as a positive development in this regard.<sup>32</sup> The new approach was viewed as forcing organizations to succinctly but comprehensively focus on what they wanted to accomplish, while reducing the proposal development burden on organization staff. It was noted that it was “more effective to write a short concept paper and find out if there is a possibility it will be funded, rather than writing a long proposal just to find out you are not going to be funded.” In addition, the Call for Concepts process was cited by program key informants as allowing provinces and territories the opportunity to provide input on proposals within their own jurisdiction, and thereby influence the priorities used in funding projects (refer to 6.2 below). While viewed positively, the two step process resulted in a more lengthy approval process. According to the administrative data review, the median time to approve projects was 1.6 months in 2007-08, 8.6 months in 2008-09 and 7.1 months in 2009-10. While project case study respondents reported the Call for Concepts allowed for a more collaborative approach in terms of proposal development, resulting in prompt feedback from OLES on the proposals themselves, the approval process overall is still lengthy.

The ALLESP formative evaluation also noted the program ALLESP did not implement the recommendations from the National Literacy Secretariat evaluation, including the need to move away from grants as a funding mechanism. Improved data tracking (refer to 6.3 below) revealed progress in the approach to, and types of, funding for ALLESP since its formative evaluation. Specifically, by 2009-2010 73% of all approved projects were contribution agreements, accounting for 89% of the ALLESP funding. By focussing on fewer projects, the mean funding for projects increased from a low of \$124K in 2007-08 to \$448K in 2009-10. Consistent with this finding, there were more multi-year projects funded since the formative evaluation, with the mean duration of projects increasing from 14 months during 2006-07 to 24 months in the 2009-10 fiscal year.

## **6.2 Ensuring Openness and Transparency with Priority-Setting and Decision-Making**

Program and provincial and territorial key informants, as well as provincial and territorial case study participants were asked to what extent the program increased its communication and consultations with stakeholders. According to all program and provincial and territorial key informants interviewed, partnerships were viewed as having improved since the formative evaluation, and are much more sustainable, as a result of OLES’ concerted effort to ensure frequent dialogue with provinces and territories via their inclusion in priority and decision-making meetings. The majority of provincial and territorial case studies echoed this view, with respondents citing the formation of the OLES Federal – Provincial/Territorial Literacy and Essential Skills Working Group, various OLES-sponsored regional and national conferences and the sharing of ALLESP funding proposals for input, as positive

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<sup>32</sup> Of the organizations examined as part of the project case studies, three had applied for ALLESP funding since the Call for Concepts process was implemented in 2010.

improvements. With regards to the latter, however, provincial and territorial representatives raised concerns they were not asked to provide input into all the proposals from their respective jurisdictions. There was a perception among some respondents that OLES only consults with provinces and territories on projects for which they are already considering to fund, and provinces and territories were not being asked for input on proposals for national projects that would have implications for them as well.

On a more fundamental level, concerns were raised regarding the perceived lack of provincial and territorial input to the program design and funding priorities, as was the case with the National Literacy Secretariat. Currently, provincial and territorial representatives feel their role is simply to provide opinions on specific ALLESP proposals, rather than providing input on the focus of the program and influencing funding priorities. As a result, these respondents felt the relationship was no longer collaborative, which gave the impression the federal government has an agenda into which the provinces and territories are expected to fit.

### **6.3 Improving Data Collection and Tracking**

OLES introduced the Project Results Report and the Annual Performance Report with a view to streamlining reporting requirements and ensuring reporting meets OLES' data tracking requirements, as per the logic model. The Project Results Report is intended for project-funded organizations to complete, in order to provide an understanding of their project's overall performance, by critically analyzing what was achieved against what was planned. The Annual Performance Report is intended for core-funded organizations to complete, in order to provide an understanding of the organization's overall performance, by critically analyzing how well it is managed, what it plans to achieve and what it has achieved.

The evaluation sought to examine the extent to which both these reporting templates were implemented. In 2009-10, 22 of 23 core funded organizations completed an Annual Performance Report. In 2010-11, all 22 core funded organizations completed this required report. Also, since October 2008, Project Results Reports are being completed and submitted by recipients of project funding.

The administrative data review did reveal significant progress was made in the improvement of data tracking on projects entered in the Common System for Grants and Contributions. Whereas the formative evaluation found approximately two-thirds of the project data under the fields of "activity", "funding stream", "issue" "venture" (output) codes and "target" groups were missing, the summative evaluation found the problem of missing data was virtually eliminated.

## 6.4 Supporting Knowledge Transfer

Program key informants identified the addition of a searchable project database on OLES' public Internet website, and improved communications and meetings with key stakeholders, as ways OLES or ALLESP improved the process for sharing project results. However, the projects listed on the OLES website do not provide the results of funded projects. Rather they provide a description of all funded projects.

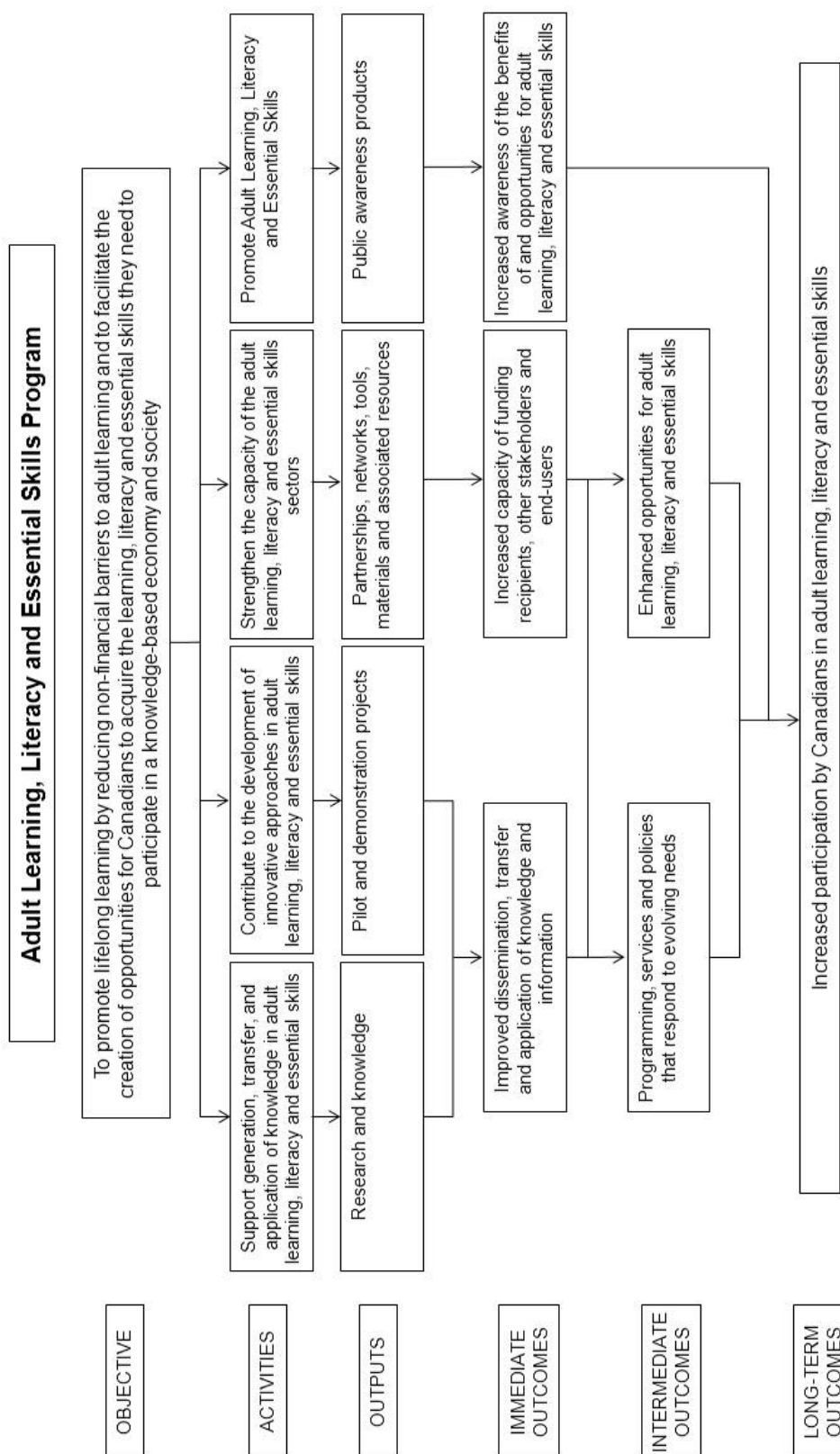
The evaluation examined to what extent external key informants and provincial and territorial and project case study representatives were aware of these improvements, as well as the extent to which these efforts enhanced the transfer of knowledge regarding funded projects and their results. For the most part, provincial and territorial case study representatives and the majority of external informants were aware of these efforts to improve the dissemination of information. Of the eight external informants who were able to cite specific areas of improvement, almost all (n=7) agreed that these efforts were an improvement, as did most provincial and territorial case study respondents. Despite these efforts, some external key informants and the majority of provincial and territorial case study respondents indicated that more could be done to share ALLESP-funded project results, with all provincial and territorial case studies indicating that there was a lack of communication from OLES at the conclusion of funded projects. This limited their awareness of the resources and tools being developed and disseminated within their jurisdiction, which in turn constrained their ability to facilitate the transfer of knowledge.

In project case studies, all core-funded organizations felt there were improvements in the sharing of ALLESP project results in recent years, including more sharing of research conducted in other Provinces and Territories. By contrast, none of the key informants in the four project-funded organizations felt there were improvements in the dissemination of ALLESP project results. It was observed that OLES has to do more in promoting awareness of, and access to, the tools and resources developed in order to minimize duplication and maximize complementarity of efforts among community-based literacy organizations, expressing concerns these efforts are being left to the community organizations themselves. It was also noted that information sharing is not occurring at the project level between coalitions, which may lead to potential duplication.

Two provincial and territorial case studies suggested OLES ought to do more to invite people to visit the website and to use this as a resource, while at the same time indicating it is difficult to check every day to see if there is anything new posted.



# Appendix A: Logic Model for ALLESP



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