Evaluation of the Voluntary Sector Strategy: Fostering Innovations Pillar

Final Report
October 2012
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Final Report

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

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<tr>
<td>CDPD</td>
<td>Community Development and Partnership Directorate</td>
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<td>HRSDC</td>
<td>Human Resources and Skills Development Canada</td>
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<td>SDPP</td>
<td>Social Development Partnerships Program</td>
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<td>VSI</td>
<td>Voluntary Sector Initiative</td>
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<td>VSS</td>
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Executive Summary

The Voluntary Sector Strategy’s Fostering Innovations Pillar

The Voluntary Sector Strategy (VSS) was a four year (2005-2006 to 2008-2009) $12 million Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) initiative. It was a collaborative effort between the federal government and the voluntary sector with the goal to “lay the groundwork for a new framework of community-based collaboration and innovation with the non-profit sector to improve the economic and social well-being of Canadians.”

The four strategic priority areas of the VSS were:

- **Fostering Innovations in Voluntary Sector Organizations** – Funding for projects to increase community non-profit organizations’ efficiency and effectiveness by allowing them to develop, test, and share socially innovative practices.

- **Policy Dialogue** - Continuing where the Voluntary Sector Initiative (VSI) left off, this strategic priority aimed to promote policy dialogue on issues relevant to the voluntary sector.

- **Voluntary Sector Initiative Legacy** – Building on the legacy of the VSI, the VSS was to continue with developing the capacity of the sector, enabling legislative and policy frameworks, and strengthening the sector-government partnership.

- **Horizontal Collaboration** – Making connections between federal government departments and the voluntary sector.

Social partnerships and social innovations, which were key components of the Fostering Innovations Pillar, continue to be priority areas for HRSDC. In addition, the majority of grant and contribution funding was directed to the Fostering Innovations Pillar. Therefore, the focus of this evaluation is on the Fostering Innovations priority area of VSS.

The objectives of the Fostering Innovations priority were 1) to promote innovation in the voluntary sector; and 2) to produce tools for sustainability and self-sufficiency. The objectives were to have been achieved through funding 14 Innovation projects in addition to other supporting activities such as conducting community consultations and developing tools and resources to assist in the implementation of best practices.

Purpose of this Evaluation

The VSS was a time limited strategy that sunset in 2009. Given that the strategy was not under consideration for renewal, this evaluation report is framed in terms of findings and lessons learned which can be considered by HRSDC in other activities related to knowledge sharing and the voluntary sector.

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2 Innovation is generally defined as developing a new idea or applying old ideas in new ways.
3 HRSDC. (undated) The Voluntary Sector Strategy.
The purpose of this evaluation is:

• To determine if there was a need for the strategy and the Fostering Innovations Pillar in particular;
• To determine what could have been done differently in order to leverage the expertise and knowledge of the voluntary, government and business sectors and support their working together collaboratively;
• To assess the extent to which the VSS’s strategic priority of Fostering Innovations achieved its intended outcomes; and
• To determine what worked well in terms of innovative approaches.

Data Collection Methods

Data collection methods included:

• A document review;
• Seven key informant interviews;
• A survey of applicants (both funded and unfunded applications);
• Seven case studies of funded applicants; and
• An expert panel with three leading members of voluntary sector umbrella organisations.

This evaluation is subject to several limitations. The evaluation was conducted approximately two years after the completion of the VSS. As a result, not all relevant project documents and files were available, and some key individuals associated with VSS were not available to participate in the evaluation. The participation rates for the case studies and key informant interviews were lower than had been planned. The only source of information about impact on partner organisations was obtained from the project leads meaning that other key participants’ views were not accessed.

Funded applicants may have presented a positive bias in order to show that funding was needed and a wise investment. Also, individuals may have interpreted certain constructs in different ways, making some information incomparable across projects. Where possible, inconsistent interpretations have been explored and explained.

Key Findings

Need for the Strategy’s Fostering Innovations Priority

Available data\(^4\)\(^5\) suggest that, at the time of the VSS, there was a need for a strategy focusing on innovation, communication and information sharing, and capacity building within the voluntary sector. The VSS Innovations Pillar, as a small scope contribution project, was designed to fill certain aspects of this need. These included sharing of innovations

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\(^5\) HRSDC. (undated) The Voluntary Sector Strategy.
and best practices, developing and sharing tools for sustainability and self-sufficiency. However, given that the sector faces an ongoing need for resources, some sector stakeholders may have misinterpreted the intent behind the VSS or not fully appreciated the importance of these goals.

When the VSS was created there was a gap in available funding for innovative projects, building capacity to undertake innovations and communicating innovations. Stakeholders felt that there was a need for the federal government to fill that funding opportunity. However, the extent to which respondents perceived the federal government as supportive was mixed, with funded programs indicating that the VSS had addressed the innovation need while most of the unfunded programs felt the VSS had not addressed the need. The expert panel suggested a need for provincial governments to become more involved in funding innovations.

Alignment and Consistency with Government Priorities

The articulated goals of the VSS Innovations were consistent with some of HRSDC’s strategic outcomes since the Social Development Partnerships Program (SDPP)\(^6\) and subsequently the VSS addresses the priority of “Enhanced income security, access to opportunities and well-being for individuals, families and communities.” In addition, the federal government’s involvement in the Accord Between the Government of Canada and the Voluntary Sector and the two codes of practice suggest some level of alignment.

Consistency with Federal Roles and Responsibilities

The federal government relates to the voluntary sector on a pan-Canadian basis, which is different from how provincial or municipal governments relate to the sector or how the federal government or provincial or municipal governments relate to foundations. Thus, the federal government is uniquely positioned to support a strategy like the VSS. It is difficult to know from the information available the degree to which there is overlap with other funding sources although 45% of the unfunded survey respondents did secure funding from other sources, leaving the remaining 55% unable to secure funding from other sources.

The Voluntary Sector Strategy Performance

Available information indicates that the Call for Proposals was clear to most applicants. The review of the applications indicated that applicants understood the purpose of the VSS Innovations Pillar and that the call for proposals was in line with the intended recipient population group. Funded projects focused on the key issues, themes and strategic priorities of the strategy.

\(^6\) The VSS was one component of the SDPP.

Representatives from all of the 14 funded projects felt that their project activities had been implemented as planned to a great extent. These funded projects were able to produce and disseminate (to varying extents) a range of outputs including:

- Documentation of innovative practices that were identified and explored throughout each project;
- Tools and resources to assist with the implementation of best practices, including online tools and websites;
- A variety of events, including conferences, workshops, community forums, for knowledge sharing, including training on specific best practices; and
- A policy monitoring process and associated tools.

Some of the challenges faced by funded projects included delays in activities including funding approval, lack of financial resources, lack of human resources and time, low participation by intended users, and lack of flexibility including the restrictions on use of funding and project timelines.

Eleven of the fourteen projects found some ways to be sustainable and were able to continue project activities or use project resources beyond the VSS. The key component in increasing sustainability was the ability to secure ongoing funding from other sources. For example, funding was obtained in both cash and in-kind or services from several other sources including private foundations and other partners including an anonymous donor in one case.

**Strategic Priorities: Fostering Innovation in Sector Organizations**

Sources indicated increases in networking and communication with project partners and beyond. Expert panelists cautioned that communication beyond project partners was not as extensive as it might otherwise have been because of the emphasis placed on relationships with the direct partners.

Representatives from most funded projects believed that there was an increase in knowledge and use of innovative best practices and resources as a result of their projects. Depending on the project this may have included:

- Increased uptake and awareness of existing tools or models;

**Example: The Leveraging Success – Sharing Strengths: No Community Left Behind** project developed tools to share a model for community development that linked community partners in addressing community issues in a holistic and integrated manner and enhancing community capacity. Materials produced contained lessons learned from partners and provided guidance and templates for replicating the model. These materials continue to be an important source of guidance and information for the partners. The model has been adopted by the City of Ottawa which has since piloted it in four priority communities. The city plans to roll out this framework more widely in the future.
• Development of new tools or models; and

**Example:** The Shared Services: Adding Value to Non-Profit Organizations project was intended to grow the knowledge and understanding of practical methods for non-profit organizations to work together. Examples of shared services include pooled bank accounts and pooling telephone accounts to get lower long distance rates and pooled technical services. Materials that were developed by the individual partners (and which could be used to support implementation of future shared services) include Better Together: A Shared HR Services Framework for Non-profit Organizations which continues to be accessed by non-profit organizations beyond this project. Although it was not possible to determine the exact extent of its use, the national partner commented that several organizations have used the framework after the project ended.

• Improved subject matter knowledge.

**Example:** The Applied Promising Practices Project, through a partnership with the Federation of Child and Family Services of British Columbia, established working groups around service delivery to children and families. The purposes of the project included considering evidence from both ongoing agency practice and academic research. A Research to Practice Network was set up with academics who regularly prepared articles on subjects in their area of specialization, in a manner that is accessible and useful to front-line practitioners and managers. The findings and resources were disseminated online and through educational presentations. Information collected during the project was used to create a best practices guide which was developed after the completion of the project. This last initiative will be entering a third cycle of practice evaluation that examines youth transition into adulthood.

**Overall Assessment of Outcomes**

Despite the challenges mentioned, the cumulative evidence indicates that the expected results were achieved at the project level as projects achieved the majority of their individual objectives. In addition, the review of files from funded projects indicate that:

• All projects had some aspect of knowledge sharing;
• Innovations and best practices were shared although the level of uptake was unclear; and
• Organizations increased their use of specific tools.

Perhaps one of the more significant outcomes is that the VSS funds were used to leverage other funds. Representatives from several projects indicated that the VSS funding allowed them to take the first step towards a project which was later funded through other sources.

The expert panelists, however, expressed the concern that while projects were individually successful, the overall impact of the VSS Innovations funding may not have been as extensive as possible. Projects may have been successful in disseminating best practices to their project partners, but expert panelists questioned the macro impact of any spill-over to the sector as a whole.
Efficiency and Economy

The VSS was a $12 million project, of which $3.9 million was spent on the Fostering Innovations priority. Approximately 64% of Innovations funding was awarded in contributions and the remaining 36% was spent on salaries and operating costs.

For the most part, respondents felt that the resources were well used and spent efficiently to produce outcomes valuable to the funded projects. However, it was noted by most sources that these resources were quite limited considering the intended outcomes. According to expert panelists and project leads there were also opportunities to enhance the efficiency of similar projects moving forward such as minimizing the resources expended in project management and reporting.

Lessons Learned

Although the VSS has sunset, the findings in this evaluation are relevant for HRSDC as it thinks about the means for synthesizing and sharing the learning for similarly-styled future programs. Some specific lessons include:

1. It is important to ensure that all stakeholders are clear on the intent and scope of an initiative, including the experimentation of new ideas and innovative best practices. Mechanisms were used to enhance communication and understanding between HRSDC, the funded applicants, and the sector as a whole. However, the voluntary sector as a whole could have benefitted from the additional clarification of the specific goals of the innovation pillar.

2. It would have been helpful to have built evaluation and performance monitoring into the Innovations Pillar at the project level as well as at the initiative level in order to better capture the learning as it occurred. This would have provided greater certainty and clarity regarding outcomes, such as with the scope of measuring project dissemination, and would have provided further opportunities for ongoing adjustment and improvement.

3. When working with the voluntary sector it is important to carefully balance accountability needs with the burden of additional administrative tasks. As such, because grants have less onerous reporting requirements, it may also be advisable to consider the use of grants versus contributions for projects awarded relatively small amounts of funding. It also may be advisable to implement a two stage call for proposals so that organizations proposing initiatives that are not sufficiently aligned with a call for proposals, do not expend excessive resources on developing a full proposal.

To support the implementation of these lessons learned, HRSDC may want to look for further lessons from other sectors, such as the health care field, where knowledge transfer and collaboration have now become an important aspect that supports evidence-based practice.
Management Response

Introduction

Human Resources and Skills Development (HRSDC), and the Community Development Partnership Directorate (CDPD) which administered the VSS Innovation pillar in particular, values the contribution that the voluntary sector has made to communities and individuals. As such, many of HRSDC’s programs and initiatives have supported and been influenced by the voluntary sector. Following the release of the Voluntary Sector’s Roundtable (VSR) report in 1991 entitled, Building on Strength: Improving Governance and Accountability in Canada’s Voluntary Sector the Government of Canada invested $94.6M in the joint (voluntary sector and Government of Canada), five-year Voluntary Sector Initiative (VSI) which aimed to improve the working relationship between the Government of Canada and the sector. Following the VSI, which sunset in 2005, HRSDC invested $12M in the Voluntary Sector Strategy (VSS) from 2005-2009.

HRSDC continues to support activities of the not-for-profit sector through a range of social programs and initiatives such as the Social Development Partnership Program (SDPP); the Prime Minister’s Volunteer Award (PMVA); the New Horizon’s for Seniors Program (NHSP) and the Canadian Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participating (CSGVP).

HRSDC will, through the “Social Partnership Strategy” encourage individuals, businesses and organizations to partner with not-for-profit organizations and social enterprises to enable communities to tackle local challenges and test out new approaches to improve community outcomes. As part of this Strategy, HRSDC is modernizing how grants and contribution programs are designed, administered and delivered, thus achieving noticeable improvements for stakeholders who apply and obtain program funding. In summary, lessons learned through dialogue with the voluntary sector and from evaluations findings such as the VSS continue to shape our involvement with the sector and the communities they serve.

HRSDC had responsibility for the VSS, including the Innovations pillar, the focus of this evaluation. The VSS evaluation identified three lessons learned which can be applied to the work the Government of Canada (GoC) is currently undertaking as it relates to fostering social partnerships within communities via the voluntary sector and in particular, the transformation of HRSDC’s SDPP.

Lessons Learned 1. It is important to ensure that all stakeholders are clear on the intent and scope of an initiative, including the experimentation of new ideas and innovative best practices. Mechanisms were used to enhance communication and understanding between HRSDC, the funded applicants, and the sector as a whole. However, the voluntary sector as a whole could have benefitted from the additional clarification of the specific goals of the innovation pillar.

Response: HRSDC agrees that all stakeholders should be clear on the intent and scope of an initiative, including the experimentation of new ideas or the adaptation of proven innovative best practices.
HRSDC recognizes that under the broader VSS, the extent to which “innovations” could transform the sector may have been overly optimistic. While it was understood that under the broader VSS, the original intent was to develop entirely new practices and ideas, the 2006 community consultations and sector feedback indicated that there was in fact a greater interest and need within the voluntary sector to have existing innovative practices and tools shared, adopted and tailored to meet their organizational needs.

These consultations led HRSDC to focus the call for proposal on the “sharing” aspect of innovations in such areas as governance, service delivery and collaboration; and emphasize the replication of existing practices and not necessarily the development and testing of new practices. This approach was consistent with the feedback obtained from the sector, prior to the call for proposal.

In future instances where modifications to an initiative affect its scope and anticipated outcomes, HRSDC will ensure that all stakeholders are informed of these changes.

**Lessons Learned 2.** It would have been helpful to have built evaluation and performance monitoring into the Innovations Pillar at the project level as well as at the initiative level in order to better capture the learning as it occurred. This would have provided greater certainty and clarity regarding outcomes, such as with the scope of measuring project dissemination, and would have provided further opportunities for ongoing adjustment and improvement.

**Response:** Although some projects did include evaluation and monitoring as part of their on-going project activities and captured their lessons as they occurred, it is recognized that the primary data collection and evaluation efforts were linked to having the funded recipients submit their final reports.

On-going learning was embedded at the program level to a certain degree, by hosting a series of monthly teleconference meetings whereby lessons from individual projects were regularly exchanged, openly discussed and shared with other project partners.

Similarly, HRSDC did collect and analyse best practices and tools produced along with other key lessons that stemmed from each of the fourteen projects. These lessons were synthesized in a summary report entitled “Sharing Innovations in the Community Not-For-Profit Sector.” This report was shared with all of the participating organizations and subsequently posted on HRSDC’s website.

For future programming of similarly styled initiatives HRSDC will examine opportunities to ensure ongoing collection of good quality performance measurement data at program inception to track, monitor and report on achievements on an on-going basis and to support departmental evaluations and evidence-based decision making processes. For example by applying theory-based evaluation approaches, we can have clear performance indicators related to the scope and impact of a project dissemination plan, which would ensure clarity of expectations and could have resulted in the sharing of knowledge more extensively across the sector. As another example, CDPD is currently promulgating best practices of Pan-Canadian projects funded under the elder abuse objective of the New Horizon’s for
Seniors Program (NHSP). Also, HRSDC intends to determine as part of the upcoming NHSP 2014 evaluation, the lessons learned at the community level that can be shared nationally as best practices and the mechanisms used for information sharing.

While a framework should be in place to gather and collect performance measurement data to better allow for evaluation and performance monitoring activities to take place at the initiative and project level, the department also recognizes that such collection efforts should not be administratively onerous and remain sufficiently flexible to allow for developmental changes and learning.

In 2011 CDPD initiated the development of various Social Partnership pilot projects, to test out approaches to leverage investments from various partners, which is part of the Department’s larger Social Partnership pilot projects. CDPD developed an overall evaluation framework for these pilots prior to the implementation of the individual pilot projects and will use a developmental evaluation approach to support learning from pilot projects as they progress.

**Lessons Learned 3.** When working with the voluntary sector it is important to carefully balance accountability needs with the burden of additional administrative tasks. As such, because grants have less onerous reporting requirements, it may also be advisable to consider the use of grants versus contributions for projects awarded relatively small amounts of funding. It also may be advisable to implement a two stage call for proposals so that organizations proposing initiatives that are not sufficiently aligned with a call for proposals, do not expend excessive resources on developing a full proposal.

**Response:** HRSDC agrees to consider as part of its Grants and Contributions Modernization efforts, use of grants as a funding mechanism in circumstances where the eligible funding is meant for a limited period, and where the assessed risk is low. However, the Directorate recognizes that a balance will have to be struck between ensuring a less onerous reporting burden that is often associated with grants, to that of also ensuring sufficient performance measurement data be provided to support the overall evaluation framework.

HRSDC also agrees that a two-stage process as part of the call for proposal may have helped to reduce the administrative burden of those Not-For-Pros that submitted full proposals and were not successful. This two-step process could include submitting an initial “letter of intent” whereby a short description of the proposed project is received to quickly assess if the project and applicant would be eligible, prior to having applicants submit a “full” proposal. This suggestion will certainly be considered in future program design options as a possible mechanism to ensure that the applications and proposals received are aligned with the program’s objectives. In fact, in Spring 2012, CDPD employed the use of a this process, by issuing a call for letters of intent from organizations interested in reviewing and analysing new data related to the Canadian Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating (CSGVP). An alternative approach could also be to ensure that the application guidelines clearly reflect the program’s objectives and project eligibility criteria.
1. Program Profile

1.1 Voluntary Sector in Canada

Canada has one of the world’s largest voluntary sectors. There are over 161,000 charities and non-profit organizations in Canada, about half of which are registered charities. Voluntary sector organizations play a key role in enhancing the lives of individuals and communities. They promote civic engagement and provide services or products to the general public and vulnerable populations.

Government funding accounted for about half (49%) of organizations’ income in 2003. Other sources of income included earned revenue from goods and services along with gifts and donations. In addition, voluntary organizations also receive support in terms of in-kind contributions of volunteer time and support. According to the Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating, almost 12.5 million Canadians volunteered in 2007 for a total of over 2.1 billion hours.

Many sector organizations engage in work that supports HRSDC’s mission “to build a stronger and more competitive Canada, to support Canadians in making choices that help them live productive and rewarding lives, and to improve Canadians’ quality of life.”

1.2 Voluntary Sector Strategy Profile

The Voluntary Sector Strategy (VSS) was a four year (2005-2006 to 2008-2009) $12 million HRSDC initiative. It was a collaborative effort between the federal government and the voluntary sector with the goal to “lay the groundwork for a new framework of community-based collaboration and innovation with the non-profit sector to improve the economic and social well-being of Canadians.” The VSS call for proposals indicated that projects could be short-term or multi-year, but could not go beyond March 31, 2009. Proposals needed to indicate five (5) partners with which the innovation was to be shared.

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8 Imagine Canada. (August 2010). Sector Monitor. 1, 2.
12 Ibid.
1.2.1 History

The VSS was preceded by the Voluntary Sector Initiative (VSI), a five year $95 million initiative that ended in 2005. The VSI was intended to strengthen the relationship between the voluntary sector and the government, as well as enhance the capacity of the voluntary sector.15

The first phase of the VSI featured seven joint tables with equal representation from the voluntary sector and the federal government.16 The focus of these joint tables included enhancing the voluntary sector’s capacity, developing a framework to guide how the government and sector would work together, and supporting and promoting volunteerism. This included the development of the Accord Between the Government of Canada and the Voluntary Sector, which was a framework that set out a commitment from the federal government to work with the Voluntary Sector.17 A Code of Good Practice on Funding and a Code of Good Practice on Policy Dialogue were developed as tools to help implement the Accord in practice.18 The second phase built upon what was learned from the tables, focusing on implementing recommendations, new research actions, and achievements.19

While the federal government continued to see value in supporting the voluntary sector, it decided to take a different approach when the VSI came to an end. The early findings of the VSI Impact Evaluation (2009) contributed to the development of the VSS. Some learnings from the VSI that were key in developing the VSS included:

- The importance of any initiative following in the wake of the VSI to avoid “goal overload” (i.e., unrealistically high expectations) by restricting its objectives and mandate;
- Engagement of the entire voluntary sector is unrealistic;
- It is important that the government clarify its view of the Sector for these types of initiatives; and
- The process around funding allocation for the sectoral involvement in departmental policy development resulted in low engagement of the whole sector, lack of a clear reporting and accountability framework, and the lack of a strategy to facilitate knowledge transfers.20

In comparison to the VSI, the VSS had a narrower scope, with one federal department (HRSDC) taking a lead role instead of involving multiple departments. As well, the VSS had fewer linkages with other initiatives than did the VSI.21

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116 Ibid.
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid.
19 Ibid.
1.2.2 Drivers behind the Voluntary Sector Strategy

The 2004 federal budget indicated that the government had an interest in providing ongoing support for the voluntary sector, building on the accomplishments of the VSI.\(^{22}\) While both the VSS and the VSI focused on the voluntary sector, the VSS was an HRSDC-led initiative (compared to a joint federal government and voluntary sector led VSI) with a much narrower scope and reduced budget ($12 million over four years (VSS) compared with $95 million over five years (VSI)).\(^{23}\)

The VSS was intended to be transitional and to inform decisions about future federal government involvement in the voluntary sector. It was hoped that it would “lay the groundwork for a new framework of community-based collaboration and innovation with the non-profit sector to improve the economic and social well-being of Canadians.”\(^{24}\) In summary, the VSS was based on the following drivers:

- The important role played by voluntary sector in Canada’s social infrastructure.
- The progress achieved by the VSI, during 2000 to 2005.
- The need to address specific issues facing the sector.”\(^{25}\)

1.2.3 Oversight and Management

During its existence, the VSS was under the authority of the Social Development Partnerships Program (SDPP) under the responsibility of the HRSDC’s Community Development and Partnerships Directorate (CDPD) in the Income Security and Social Development Branch.

The SDPP works in partnership with social not-for-profit organizations to help improve life outcomes for people with disabilities, children and families and other vulnerable populations.


1.2.4 The Voluntary Sector Strategy Objectives and Strategic Priority Areas

A logic model for the VSS, developed in consultation with key sector stakeholders, is available in Appendix B.

The VSS had three strategic objectives:

- To support a horizontal Government of Canada approach across federal departments and agencies in order to work with community non-profit sector stakeholders in a manner that is consistent with the Accord and Codes, and that provides a more consistent, holistic approach to community-based investments and initiatives.
- To build the capacity of community-based voluntary sector organizations to engage in “bottom-up” policy dialogue with federal partners, on a range of social issues, through pan-Canadian networks.
- To support conditions for innovation, partnerships and strategic alliances within the community non-profit sector to share and leverage resources, reduce inefficiencies, and maximize reach.\(^{26}\)

The four strategic priority areas of the VSS were:

- **Fostering Innovations in Sector Organizations** – Funding for projects to increase community non-profit organizations’ efficiency and effectiveness by allowing them to develop, test, and share socially innovative\(^{27}\) practices.
- **Policy Dialogue** – Continuing where the VSI left off, this strategic priority aimed to promote policy dialogue on issues relevant to the voluntary sector.
- **Voluntary Sector Initiative Legacy** – Building on the legacy of the VSI, the VSS was to continue with developing the capacity of the sector, enabling legislative/policy frameworks, and strengthening the sector/government partnership.
- **Horizontal Collaboration** – Making connections between federal government departments and the voluntary sector.\(^{28}\)

This evaluation focussed on the first strategic priority area i.e. Fostering Innovations in sector organizations. The objectives of the Fostering Innovations priority were 1) to promote innovation in the voluntary sector; and, 2) to produce tools for sustainability and self-sufficiency. The objectives were to be achieved through the funding projects and other supporting activities that contributed to this strategic priority.

\(^{26}\) HRSDC. (undated) *Summary of the VSS Implementation Strategy*.

\(^{27}\) Innovation is defined by the VSS as being more effective and efficient in providing goods and services and about finding creative ways to address social and economic problems faced by individuals and communities.

\(^{28}\) HRSDC. (undated) *The Voluntary Sector Strategy*. 
The activities to support the Fostering Innovations priority included:

- **Community consultations** – In 2006, a consultation process took place with voluntary sector representatives to obtain their perspectives on innovation in the not-for-profit sector.\(^{29}\) This consultation process found that while the sector was involved in innovative practices, activities or techniques, the capacity to share them across organizations was a major challenge. A report produced in July 2007 summarized the findings from the consultation processes. Sector organizations were also involved in developing a logic model for the VSS and reviewing Fostering Innovations project proposals.

- **Background research to produce tools and reports** – Research (e.g., surveys, literature review) was conducted into the requirements for financial accountability and financial success. The *Financial Fitness Handbooks*\(^{30}\) were produced, outlining the requirements for financial accountability and providing tips for financial success.

- **Analysis and sharing of innovative best practices and tools** – Best practices and tools that were produced as a result of the funding projects were to be shared through forums, workshops and training sessions.

- **Funding through the *Sharing Innovations in the Non-Profit Sector* project funding program** – In all, 137 non-profit organizations applied for the *Sharing Innovations* funding and 14 projects were successful in receiving contribution funding. The 14 funded projects represent a small proportion of the organizations in the voluntary sector. They were organizations based across Canada with project activities occurring either within a specific geographic region or occurring nationally. Based on their applications, all funded projects intended to involve at least 6 partners.\(^{31}\) Project activities and intended results varied widely by project. A more detailed overview of funded applicant characteristics, containing both planned activities and results, is available in Appendix A.

Given that one of the key objectives of the Innovations Pillar was supporting partnerships and strategic alliances to share and leverage knowledge and resources, project partners played an integral role in Fostering Innovations projects. To be eligible for consideration, each funding applicant was required to provide evidence of support from at least five project partners. Partners were expected to support projects through funding (financial or in kind), as well as by involvement in projects. The extent and type of partner involvement varied by project.

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\(^{29}\) HRSDC. (July, 2007.) *Innovation in the Community-Not-for-Profit Sector Consultation Report.*


\(^{31}\) It was required to have at least 6 partners per funded project including the funding recipients. Appendix A lists a total number of 95 partners for the 14 funded projects as some funded projects had more than the required number of 6 partners per funded project.
1.2.5 **Budget: Innovations Pillars**

The VSS had a $12 million budget over the course of four years (2005-2006 to 2008-2009) and spread over four different pillars – VSI Legacy ($2.3 million), Policy Dialogue ($3.5 million), Horizontal Collaboration ($2.2 million) and Fostering Innovations ($3.9 million) (see Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VSS Pillar</th>
<th>VSI Legacy</th>
<th>Policy Dialogue</th>
<th>Horizontal Collaboration</th>
<th>Fostering Innovations</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Budget</td>
<td>$2.3 Million</td>
<td>$3.5 Million</td>
<td>$2.2 Million</td>
<td>$3.9 Million</td>
<td>$12.0 Million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: HRSDC’s Common System of Grants and Contributions.

Within the Fostering Innovations pillar, approximately $2.5 million was invested in Innovations grants and contributions. Table 2 shows actual expenditures for the Fostering Innovations priority for each fiscal year from 2005-06 through 2008-09. It should be noted that projects were funded, starting in the fiscal year 2007/08 with the majority of funding provided in fiscal year 2008/09.

Salaries are estimated based on the number of staff engaged in the VSS activities and salary level for each position. Operations and maintenance costs are estimated based on system information for discrete activities in each fiscal year (e.g., Innovations set up, equipment and travel).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expense Type</th>
<th>VSS Activity</th>
<th>2005-06</th>
<th>2006-07</th>
<th>2007-08</th>
<th>2008-09</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>Salaries</td>
<td>$162,900</td>
<td>$252,500</td>
<td>$280,700</td>
<td>$474,100</td>
<td>$1,170,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Operations &amp; Maintenance</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
<td>$115,000</td>
<td>$40,000</td>
<td>$72,000</td>
<td>$237,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External</td>
<td>G&amp;C</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>$94,700</td>
<td>$2,428,100</td>
<td>$2,522,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>$172,900</td>
<td>$367,500</td>
<td>$415,400</td>
<td>$2,974,200</td>
<td>$3,930,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: HRSDC’s Common System of Grants and Contributions.
2. **Overview of Evaluation Methodology**

2.1  **Purpose of the Evaluation**

The purpose of this evaluation is:

- To determine if there was a need for the strategy and the Fostering Innovations Pillar in particular;
- To determine what could have been done differently in order to leverage the expertise and knowledge of the voluntary, government and business sectors and support their working together collaboratively;
- To assess the extent to which the VSS’s strategic priority of Fostering Innovations achieved its intended outcomes; and
- To determine what has worked well in terms of innovative approaches for engaging communities.

The findings of the evaluation are intended to be used to help inform future policy decisions in relation to the voluntary sector. Exploration of the extent to which the activities took place as planned, was used to gain a better understanding of the factors that contributed to or detracted from achievement of the intended outcomes.

2.2  **Focus of the Evaluation**

The evaluation of the VSS focused on the contribution agreement component of the Fostering Innovations strategic priority which was comprised of 14 *Sharing Innovations* funded projects. This evaluation focus was determined because:

- Social partnerships and social innovations remain a key priority for HRSDC; and
- The majority of the VSS grants and contributions funding was awarded under the *Sharing Innovations in the Non-Profit Sector* project funding program (approximately $2.5 million of a total of approximately $3.4 million in approved contributions was Innovations).

While the strategy’s logic model (*Appendix B*) identifies immediate, medium-term and long-term outcomes, the evaluation focused on the immediate outcomes as they were most likely to have been achieved by the time this evaluation commenced. These immediate outcomes were:

- Increased knowledge and use of innovative best practices and tools; and
- Increased communication and networking across the sector.
It is important to note that the medium-term outcome of “efficient and effective community sector organizations that respond to the needs of Canadians” and the long-term outcome of “a vibrant community non-profit sector for a stronger better Canada” were intended to be achieved in conjunction with the other strategic priorities. As such, these outcomes were explored only indirectly.

2.3 Evaluation Questions

The following evaluation questions were established by the Evaluation Directorate in consultation with CDPD staff.

**Need for the Strategy’s Fostering Innovations Priority**

1. Did the Voluntary Sector Strategy (VSS) and Innovations, a pillar of the VSS in particular, address an actual need?
   
a. Was there a need for the federal government to be involved in Innovations within the voluntary not-for-profit sector?
   
b. Was there support for federal government delivery of Innovations as part of the VSS?

**Alignment and Consistency with Government Priorities**

2. Was fostering Innovations as part of the Voluntary Sector Strategy aligned with government priorities?

3. To what extent were the objectives of Innovations, a pillar of the VSS, consistent with departmental strategic outcomes?

**Consistency with Federal Roles and Responsibilities**

4. Was there evidence of overlap and duplication or complementarity with similar programs or strategies delivered by other orders of government or stakeholders?

**The VSS Performance Targets**

5. To what extent were Innovations expected results achieved, that is, the building of partnerships and strategic alliances to share and leverage knowledge and resources with the social partners who participated in the Innovations demonstration projects?

6. Did activities take place as planned and were obstacles encountered during the implementation phase of the Innovations projects?

7. Was the purpose of the Call for (Innovations) Proposals clear and the target audience in line with the intended recipient population group?
8. To what extent and in what ways were innovations and best practices fostered, shared with Innovations partners and implemented in sector organizations (i.e., in terms of adapting to targeted users, networking, and reach)?
   
a. To what extent and in what ways were Innovations projects consistent with key issues, themes, strategic priorities of the strategy and directly related to fostering social innovation and entrepreneurship?
   
b. To what extent did the tools (e.g., financial fitness and best practices) promote and support sustainability and self-sufficiency in the funded recipients and the 84 organizations that partnered in Innovations demonstration projects?

**Strategic Priorities: Fostering Innovations in Sector Organizations**

9. Is there evidence of increased knowledge and use of innovative best practices and tools as supported by Innovations projects within the group of funded recipients and their partners?
   
a. Is there evidence of increased communication and networking within the funded recipient group and their partners as a result of the Innovations demonstration projects?
   
b. To what extent is there evidence that there was increased communication and networking beyond the immediate target of the Innovations partners?

**Overall Assessment of Outcomes**

10. Is there evidence of improved networking and cooperation on the part of the recipients funded and the partners involved?
   
a. Has there been improved efficiency or capability within the organizations involved in Innovations to respond to the needs of communities and Canadians?
   
b. To what extent has there been strategic collaboration among the organizations that participated in the Innovations projects for working with other organizations in the sector?

**Efficiency and Economy**

11. What was the overall expenditure of resources on Innovations in relation to the perceived outputs and outcomes of the process?
   
a. Were the Innovations expenditures reasonable in consideration of the outcomes produced?
   
b. Were Innovations projects (contribution program) a cost effective way of achieving the objectives? What alternatives existed? (e.g., is a grant program preferable to a contribution program? Is a social marketing approach preferable?)


2.4 Data Collection

Each of the evaluation questions was answered using data from more than one source so that factual information could be cross-checked using the process of triangulation.\(^{32}\)

The following section describes each line of inquiry used.

Document and File Review

Data sources for this line of inquiry included:

- Background documents, studies, and reports on the Canadian voluntary sector\(^{33}\);
- The VSS-related documents;
- VSI evaluation documents; and
- The VSS files (all funded applicant files and a sample of unfunded applicant files).\(^{34}\)

In addition, as part of the document and file review, necessary VSS data were extracted from the Common System for Grants and Contributions database.

Key Informant Interviews

A list of 18 potential key informants comprising individuals who were Community Development and Partnership Directorate (CDPD) staff at the time of the VSS was prepared. Nine of these key informants were identified as those most likely to have the most pertinent information regarding the strategy.

All 18 members of the list were contacted to participate in the key informant interviews. Nine informants who were identified to have the most pertinent information were contacted multiple times until they either agreed to participate or declined. Other remaining informants were contacted at least three times before being considered non-responsive. In total, six of the nine informants with the most pertinent information and one of the other informants participated in interviews.

Telephone Survey

The sample frame included 14 funded VSS applicants and 123 unfunded applicants. Given the relatively small number of funded applicants, it was decided that a census approach should be used and all 14 respondents were asked to complete the telephone survey. As all funded applicants completed a survey, there is no potential for non-response bias.

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\(^{32}\) Triangulation is looking at the findings from more than two sources in order to cross-check the results. If there is divergence, that needs to be explained. If there is agreement, one can have greater confidence in the findings.


\(^{34}\) It was decided at the methodology stage to add nine randomly selected unfunded projects for this purpose.
A sample of approximately one half of the unfunded applicants was determined to be sufficient to illustrate the views and general perspective of unfunded applicants. The final number of unfunded applicants surveyed was 62, which is about 50% of the total sample. Analysis of the geographic and linguistic breakdown of respondents compared to the total sample frame suggests that there are no significant differences with regard to either language of application or location of applicant.

Several of the unfunded applicants originally selected, declined participation because they could not recall the proposal in enough detail to respond to the survey. Also, in some organizations, the key players in proposal development had moved to different organizations or retired and could not be contacted. Remaining organization staff had little to no information on the proposal and decided not to participate. These situations were primarily due to the length of time between projects ending and when the survey was conducted. It is unknown whether these organizations are unique in any way that would impact the survey findings.

It should be noted that some respondents declined to answer specific questions and, for many questions, respondents who could not remember or did not feel they had enough information to answer were excluded.

**Case Studies**

Plans were made to conduct a case study of every VSS project. Time constraints for completion of the work, as well as the inability of several projects to participate, resulted in case studies being conducted with 7 out of the 14 funded projects. Despite the fact that these projects were selected on the basis of availability, they represent the breadth and depth of the VSS projects well in terms of the focus of projects, cross-Canada representation, and varying levels of success in the achievement of goals.

**Expert Panel**

An expert panel was used to assist with the interpretation of evaluation findings. The panel was comprised of three leading members of voluntary sector umbrella organisations who had wide experience working with regional and national non-profit organisations. The experts were selected based on their depth of knowledge and experience in consultation with HRSDC staff. Expert panelists were not directly involved in any of the funded projects.

Prior to the panel, experts were provided with preliminary findings and a short list of questions which they were asked to comment on. The expert panel was carefully facilitated in order to provide panelists with an opportunity to confirm or rebut each other’s opinions as appropriate. For the most part, panelists were able to come to a consensus perspective. In the event that panelists disagreed or were not able to comment on a particular topic, this was noted in the analysis.
2.5 Strengths and Limitations

Strengths

Information was collected for each of the evaluation questions through multiple lines of inquiry, including both qualitative and quantitative methods. This allowed for assessment of the consistency of information across the various sources and perspectives – HRSDC staff, funded and non-funded applicants, and partners. Where there is convergence, it supports greater confidence in the findings. Where differences emerge, it points to further exploration in order to understand the reasons for these differences.

Limitations

This evaluation largely relied on the knowledge and opinions of stakeholders involved in the VSS Innovations. As such it is subject to several limitations:

• Time lapse – The evaluation was conducted approximately two years after the completion of the VSS. As a result, many people directly involved in the VSS had moved on and were no longer available. In other cases, individuals’ recollection of the VSS had faded. As such, individuals provided varying levels of detail regarding the evaluation questions. Given the time since program sunset, some project documentation and files were lost or not available. In addition, the documents available provided information on the VSS projects in varying levels of detail. Very little information was available related to efficiency and economy, and the information available was not sufficient to allow for a full cost-effectiveness assessment.

• Participation rate and sample size – The participation rates for the Case Studies and Key Informant Interviews were lower than planned. Out of 14 projects only 7 agreed to participate in the case study process and of 9 key informants only 6 participated in the key informant interviews. The expert panel was also limited to three participants. Due to limited participation rates and small sample sizes, the interpretation of the true impacts of VSS and the generalization of the findings are not robust.

• Partners were not included as a source of information – The only source of information about impact on partner organizations was from the project leads. Partners would have been able to provide a more accurate picture of their contribution to the project and the impact of their involvement.

• Positive bias – Leads from funded projects may have presented a positive bias in order to show that the funding was needed and deserved. Applicants may have been reluctant to speak about challenges for fear of the VSS being seen as an unwise investment.

• Multiple interpretations of core concepts – Individuals interpreted certain constructs in different ways. For example, applicants defined “partnership” in varying ways ranging from consultation and collaboration to more formal alliances. As such, the information available was not always comparable across, or even within, projects. Where possible, reasons for inconsistencies have been explored and explained.
3. **Summary of Findings**

This section presents the findings for each of the evaluation questions and explores the implications in the context of the evaluation question. The consolidated implications are presented in the *Conclusions and Lessons Learned* section of this report.

3.1 **Need for the Strategy’s Fostering Innovations Priority**

| 1. *Did the Voluntary Sector Strategy (VSS) and Innovations, a pillar of the VSS in particular, address an actual need?* |

The Voluntary Sector Initiative concluded in 2005. Despite its many successes, there was still a need to continue to work towards achieving impacts, including: awareness and engagement, increased capacity for the sector as a whole and integration between government and the sector in undertaking policy development.³⁵ ³⁶ Available data³⁷ ³⁸ suggests that, at the time of the VSS, there was a need for a strategy focusing on innovations within the voluntary sector.

*The Voluntary Sector Strategy (2005/06-2008/09)* identified a number of key areas where activities were still needed, including:

- **Innovation** – Sector organizations had limited opportunities to explore and develop new approaches. The concept of innovation was also under development with varied understandings of what innovation within the sector could and should look like.

- **Communication and information sharing** – Respondents noted that sector organizations were in the early stages of information sharing and collaboration. Many sector organizations had limited capacity or opportunities to work together which may have resulted in duplication of activities or restricted dissemination of effective practices.

- **Capacity** – Sector organizations were relatively reliant on government funding and had limited opportunities for developing capacity and infrastructure. Given that the majority of funding available is allocated to service delivery, sector organizations needed an opportunity to develop their capacity including new or different ways of doing things.

Evidence on the extent to which the VSS realistically addressed these needs – innovation, communication, information sharing and capacity building – is mixed.


³⁷ Ibid.

The call for proposals was well received and resulted in an enthusiastic response from sector organizations with 137 proposals submitted and 14 funded due to a limited budget for proposal funding. Funded projects were able to produce and disseminate, to varying extents, a range of outputs including:

- Documentation of innovative practices that were identified and explored throughout each project;
- Tools and resources to assist with the implementation of best practices;
- Events such as conferences, workshops and community forums for sharing information, including training on specific best practices; and
- A policy monitoring process and associated tools.

All funded and most non-funded applicants agreed there was a need for the VSS. Applicants who received funding (see Figure 1) and key informants all agreed that the sector’s needs were addressed. However, only 25% of unfunded applicants felt that the need was addressed. The views of the unfunded applicants could be interpreted to reflect whether VSS addressed their needs rather than the need for the Innovation priority.

**Figure 1**
Applicant perceptions on the need for the Innovations Priority

The Percentage of funded versus unfunded applicants who either agree or strongly agree with the following statements: “There was a need for funding like the VSS” and “The VSS has realistically addressed this need”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Need for the Innovation Priority</th>
<th>% of respondents who agree or strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There was a need for funding like the VSS (n=14, N=62)</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The VSS has realistically addressed this need (n=13, N=52)</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Survey of Funded and Unfunded Applicants
The expert panel suggested that there may have been inconsistencies in the design of the Innovations’ call for proposals that inhibited the extent to which it was effective in meeting sector needs. While the demand in the sector emphasized the development of new approaches, the call for proposals asked for projects focusing on “shar[ing] proven innovative practices with other organizations in the sector.” Panel members felt that this may have resulted in a lack of clarity around the true purpose of the Innovations Pillar.

The existence of varying conceptions of which needs the VSS was attempting to address may explain some of the mixed responses from survey respondents. If one conceives of the Innovations’ funding as a mechanism for developing new innovations, it was not a realistic approach because the call for proposals indicated that funding was for supporting dissemination and uptake of existing innovations. If one conceives of the Innovations funding as a mechanism for addressing communication, information sharing, lessons learned and capacity building, the approach was consistent with the intent as outlined in the proposal call. This may speak to the broader issue that there is a general demand for funding in the sector and unfunded applicants may have been less informed regarding the targeted nature of the VSS.

**Need for Federal Involvement**

1a. *Was there a need for the federal government to be involved in Innovations within the voluntary not-for-profit sector?*

Data from funded and unfunded applicants indicates that there was a need for the federal government to be involved in Innovations within the voluntary not-for-profit sector.

Respondents commented that the federal government is uniquely positioned to bring together diverse players and support innovation and collaboration on a national basis; a scope which no other funding program addresses for these issues. Despite the relatively small size of funding, respondents also stated that the federal government may act as a trigger for other funders.

Respondents did, however, caution that the federal government is best suited to a role as an enabler and facilitator, providing the conditions for improved service delivery, as opposed to being a direct service delivery agent. Expert panel members added that, while the federal government has an important role to play in encouraging innovation in the voluntary sector, the involvement of provincial governments would contribute to enhanced outcomes as provincial governments are key players in many sector areas of focus including health, education, and social services.

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40 *Program Analysis: Social Development Partnerships Program.* (undated)
Support for Federal Government Delivery of Innovations

1b. Was there support for federal government delivery of Innovations as part of the VSS?

The level of interest in the Innovations Call for Proposals indicates that there was support for the VSS Innovations pillar. As indicated in the key informant interviews, and document and file review results, approximately $1 million was re-profiled from the VSS’ Policy Dialogue activities to Innovations funding in 2006 based on a consultative process. This suggests that, at least within HRSDC, there was ongoing support for the VSS’ Innovations Pillar.

Finally, key informants and funding applicants indicated positive support for federal involvement in innovations. It is shown in the previous question that the percentage of funded and unfunded applicants who either agreed or strongly agreed with the following two statements: “There was a need for federal involvement” and “There was support for federal delivery of the Innovations funding” was very high.

3.2 Alignment and Consistency with Government Priorities

Alignment with Government Priorities

2. Was Fostering Innovations as part of the Voluntary Sector Strategy aligned with government priorities?

An Accord between the Government of Canada and the Voluntary Sector\(^1\) and two codes of practice\(^2\) were signed by the Prime Minister and Sector representatives in 2002, indicating that the recommendations contained within these documents, and subsequently the VSS, were in line with government priorities at that time. The Accord included a Government of Canada commitment to “Recognize and consider… the importance of funding policies and practices for the further development of the relationship [between the government and the sector] and the strengthening of the voluntary sector’s capacity”\(^3\). The two codes on funding identify the value of innovation as a core principle shared by the federal government and the sector. Thus, the Accord and the two codes together indicate that the federal government could play a role by developing funding practices that encourage innovative policies and programs.


Review of the Government of Canada’s annual *Speech from the Throne* shows that fostering innovations in the voluntary sector was not an overarching priority in 2006 – 2009. However, the VSS was consistent with the 2004\(^44\) priority of strengthening Canada’s social foundations and the 2008 priority of helping Canadians participate in society.

Further information on the extent to which the Innovations Pillar aligned with government priorities from 2005/06 to 2008/09 was not available. While asked for their perspectives, key informants had difficulties remembering the priorities of the time and felt unable to comment.

**Alignment with HRSDC Priorities**

3. **To what extent were the objectives of Innovations, a pillar of the VSS, consistent with department strategic outcomes?**

The Innovations Pillar of the VSS was intended to “support conditions for innovation, partnerships and strategic alliances within the voluntary sector that would foster social innovation and entrepreneurship in a move towards greater sustainability and self-sufficiency in the longer-term.”\(^45\) These innovations were intended to address the challenges that impact the voluntary sector’s capacity to meet the demand for services.\(^46\)

In 2007/08 and 2008/09, HRSDC had five strategic outcomes, including:

1. Policies and programs that meet the human capital and social development needs of Canadians;
2. Enhanced Canadian productivity and participation through efficient and inclusive labour markets, competitive workplaces and access to learning;
3. Safe, healthy, fair, stable, cooperative, productive workplaces and effective international labour standards;
4. Enhanced income security, access to opportunities and well-being for individuals, families and communities; and
5. Achieve better outcomes for Canadians through service excellence.\(^47\) \(^48\)

The objectives of the Innovations Pillar of the VSS are consistent with HRSDC’s strategic outcome of ‘enhanced income security, access to opportunities and well-being for individuals, families and communities’. The SDPP is “concerned with advancing the

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\(^{44}\) This refers to the priority identified in the October 5, 2004 Speech from the Throne as there were two speeches in 2004 and none in 2005.


\(^{46}\) Ibid.


\(^{48}\) HRSDC strategic outcomes shifted in 2009/10 as some of the Innovations projects were wrapping up. Innovations now fall within strategic outcome #3 “Income security, access to opportunities and well-being for individuals, families and communities”.

*Evaluation of the Voluntary Sector Strategy: Forestering Innovations Pillar*
social development and inclusion of children, families, people with disabilities and other vulnerable populations. Through investments in the not-for-profit sector, the SDPP helps improve the life outcomes of Canadians.\textsuperscript{49}

It was also noted that HRSDC has a mandate to improve the relationship between communities and government and developing ways to work with the voluntary sector. In this sense, the overarching VSS aligned with the HRSDC mandate and Innovations was one strategy for achieving this mandate.

### 3.3 Consistency with Federal Roles and Responsibilities

\textbf{4. Was there evidence of overlap and duplication or complementarity with similar programs or strategies delivered by other orders of government or stakeholders?}

All lines of evidence agree that, while there were no funding sources with the same focus and scope as the VSS Innovations, additional sources did fund smaller pieces of similar projects. That is, the VSS Innovations was unique in that it was a national scope project providing funding devoted to fostering innovations and collaboration in the sector. However, other funding sources were available to support innovation and collaboration at a local level or to support other work that may have contributed to innovation and collaboration (i.e., funding of service delivery that may have required some degree of sharing innovative practices).\textsuperscript{50}

It should be noted that one of the unique aspects of the VSS was its focus on sharing knowledge and best practices. Some key informants noted that sharing lessons learned is a component of most federal funding and so many federal programs overlap with the VSS in that they too have a knowledge or best practices sharing activity or component. For example, at the time this report was being prepared, HRSDC had a call for proposals open for the Homelessness Partnering Strategy. One of the key goals was the identification and sharing of best practices (similar to the VSS) but this was restricted to best practices related to homelessness.\textsuperscript{51}

Applicants who were not successful in obtaining the VSS Innovations funding were successful in accessing funds from a range of other sources of funding. The survey of unfunded applicants showed that the following alternative sources of funding were accessed by unfunded applicants: 36% obtained non-VSS federal funding, 29% obtained provincial government funding, 7% obtained municipal government funding, 32% obtained funding from foundations, 25% received funding from other community or not-for-profit

\textsuperscript{49} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{50} This may have been facilitated by the emphasis on coordination between other departments and orders of government to coordinate their initiatives and avoid overlap with the VSS. (Program Analysis: Social Development Partnerships Program. [undated])

\textsuperscript{51} http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/homelessness/funding/knowledge_development/index.shtml
organisation and 21% obtained funds from other sources. Of the 62 respondents to the survey of unfunded applicants, 45% (28) reported being able to proceed with their projects despite not receiving the VSS Innovations funding. In addition, eight respondents indicated that, while they were able to proceed without the VSS funding, it was necessary to reduce the scope of their projects.

Some case study respondents commented that they were able to use Innovations funding to start work that could later be funded through other sources. In addition, they felt that it would not have been possible to secure this additional funding without the support they received through the VSS. Therefore, these funding opportunities may represent potential complementarity or opportunities to leverage the VSS funding.

3.4 The Voluntary Sector Strategy Performance Targets

This section looks at the achievement of expected results, the extent to which intended activities occurred as planned, the clarity of the call for proposals and the ways in which innovations or best practices were fostered.

Achievement of Expected Results

\textit{5. To what extent were Innovations expected results achieved, that is, the building of partnerships and strategic alliances to share and leverage knowledge and resources with the social partners who participated in the Innovations demonstration projects?}

The cumulative evidence indicates that the expected results were achieved at the project level. Review of files from funded projects indicates that all but three projects achieved at least one of their objectives. Objectives that were not achieved were generally long term objectives or objectives that were challenging to measure within project constraints. For example, while projects had indicators to measure uptake with an innovation intended to bring about an improvement, they did not build in mechanisms to measure results such as “improved food security” or “improved literacy outcomes”, as these could not be readily measured at a community or population level. Three project files did not have sufficient information to determine whether or not any of the intended results were achieved.

\footnote{There were 28 unfunded applicants who responded to this question. The percentages add to more than 100% because several applicants received funding from multiple sources.}
Figure 2 shows survey respondents’ answers to the question “Do you think that your project’s intended results were achieved?” As seen in the graph, the majority of the respondents felt that their results were achieved at least to some extent. However, funded and unfunded applicants differed substantially in the extent to which they believed this to be true. All funded applicants felt their intended results were achieved to either a great or very great extent while just over one-third (37%) of unfunded respondents – those funded through sources other than the VSS – felt the same way.

53 Only funded applicants and unfunded applicants who were able to proceed with their projects were asked this question. In addition, the number of responses for this question is less than the total number of respondents to the survey as this question was added after the pilot test.

54 Totals may not equal exactly 100% due to rounding error.
Only funded applicants were asked about the extent to which their projects were successful in fostering innovation. As seen in Figure 3, all of the respondents felt their projects were at least somewhat successful in achieving this end and the majority felt that the project was successful in fostering innovation to a great or very great extent.

While project leads and partners felt that because they did not have an overview perspective that they were not in position to comment on the extent to which the Innovations Pillar succeeded in achieving its objectives, they provided anecdotal information indicating that their projects were successful in:

- **Building partnerships** – Each project involved opportunities for the development of partnerships and strategic alliances. The activities that supported this included in-person meetings, regular communication, and having a purpose or focus for communications. Some respondents commented that they are still in contact with project partners and engaging in collaborative activities allowing for ongoing sharing of information and knowledge. This was confirmed by the key informants who were able to provide information on this, noting that each of the projects formed at least five partnerships and that this was further supported by the project files. However, others felt that these

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55 Expert panelists commented that some funded applicants may have over reported successes. For additional information see Section 3.6.
relationships were not sustainable once the VSS concluded as partners no longer had a concrete reason to communicate, which calls into question how strong the partnerships were.

- **Sharing knowledge** – Each project involved some element of knowledge sharing. Key informants indicated that there were monthly teleconferences with the 14 projects in order to support sharing knowledge. Projects also engaged partners and local community organizations in a range of opportunities (e.g. forums, websites) to learn about their project or innovations. It was generally assumed that sharing this information resulted in improved knowledge retention and uptake of suggested strategies.

- **Fostering innovations** – Each project was different in the way that it fostered innovation. Some projects focused on the development of tools and mechanisms for sharing innovations and best practices. Other projects focused on developing, refining, and adapting innovative practices. There were also some projects which focused on enabling organizations and communities to implement a specific model.

- **Leveraging resources** – Some projects focused on leveraging existing resources in order to improve organizational or community efficiency. This was done quite differently in each project. For example, Tides Canada and Fraserside focused on strategies for leveraging human resources and organizational supports in order to make the most of available funds. The Victorian Order of Nurses focused on leveraging volunteer power in order to deliver services where service providers were not available.

### Activities Occurred as Planned

#### 6. Did activities take place as planned and were obstacles encountered during the implementation phase of the Innovations projects?

In the survey of funded and unfunded applicants, representatives from all of the 14 funded projects responded that their project activities had been implemented as planned to a great extent. Although expert panelists expected that some projects would present an overly positive picture, information obtained from files, the survey and case studies indicated that respondents were fairly open about some of the challenges they faced, how they addressed those challenges and the impact on the project.

*Figure 4* shows the challenges faced by each of the funded projects as reported in the survey. It should be noted that each project experienced different challenges and that none of these challenges were faced by all projects.
Information from the seven case studies and other lines of evidence adds further information on obstacles faced. It should be noted that, while these obstacles faced may have challenged project staff, there is no indication of the extent to which they inhibited projects from reaching their goals. Obstacles experienced included:

- **Delayed funding** – Some case study respondents mentioned that timelines were compressed due to HRSDC decisions or because the receipt of funding was delayed. In some cases, this resulted in scaling down project activities or scope. This challenge was also noted by key informants.

- **Limited resources** – Many project partners were participating on a voluntary basis and had limited time to devote to the project. This resulted in a lack of buy-in and subsequent challenges in connecting with the various partners. The lead from one project specifically noted that the various partners were able to devote different levels of resources to the project, which resulted in an uneven distribution of workload. Respondents noted that it was important to be accommodating, recognize the challenge, and use paid staff to the greatest extent possible.

- **Lack of flexibility** – Several project leads and partners indicated that there was limited flexibility in the project based on HRSDC’s strict accountability requirements. They commented that additional flexibility in use of funding and project duration would have improved the quality of the project. For example, if timelines had been more flexible, organizations could have leveraged additional resources and engaged in project activities during times when their staff could have devoted more attention to them. It was also
felt that, given the focus on innovation, projects should have been provided with more opportunity to explore alternative strategies for reaching results rather than being tied strictly to the deliverables outlined in their proposals. None of the respondents indicated that they had implemented successful solutions to this within the context of the VSS.

- **Regional differences** – As many of the projects were national in scope, some challenges emerged in regards to implementing a single strategy or approach in all sites. Some project leads and partners mentioned that it was challenging to identify terminology that would be recognized and accessible in all locations, even within English only or French only projects. Regional differences were addressed through ongoing conversation as well as the acknowledgement that a one size fits all approach could not be implemented nationally.

- **Challenges engaging with HRSDC representatives** – Some project leads indicated that employee turnover in their HRSDC contact inhibited the relationship and partnership building with the federal government."

Some project representatives also indicated, in response to other questions, that there had been minor shifts in project delivery due to implementation issues including:

- Changes in the number of individuals reached;
- Shifting workload across partners;
- Additional events;
- Less frequent meetings; and
- Inability to use materials due to low quality of work.

In the end, HRSDC made an effort to engage with funded organizations. Project officers conducted site visits to learn more about the funded projects and provided in-person support. HRSDC also organized regular conference calls to encourage and ensure that funded organizations learned from each other.

**Clarity of Purpose of Call for Innovations Proposals**

7. **Was the purpose of the Call for (Innovations) Proposals clear and the target audience in line with the intended recipient population group?**

The VSS issued a call for proposals in July 2007 requesting proposals for two streams: Innovations; and analysis of the Canadian Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating. The intent of the call for proposals was “to solicit project proposals which will help community not-for-profit organizations to be more effective and efficient and, ultimately, improve programs and services to Canadians.”

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56 It should be noted that other sites felt that HRSDC representatives were very responsive and accommodating. Some sites felt that the willingness of HRSDC representatives to collaborate was one of their success factors.

projects that shared proven innovative practices with other organizations in the sector in order to make the overall sector more effective and efficient in providing goods and services and to find creative ways to address social and economic problems.\textsuperscript{58}

As seen in Figure 5, the majority of respondents in both funded (57\%) and unfunded (67\%) categories indicated that the call for proposals was clear.\textsuperscript{59}

A review of the proposed project names for the 123 unfunded applicants suggests that these projects were in line with the purpose of the Call for Proposal. An in-depth review of a sample of unfunded applicant files indicates that unfunded project applicants did have a good understanding of the purpose. It is possible that experts noted this disconnect, while those applying for funding were able to glean an understanding of the purpose by participating in the application process. Key informants did emphasize that HRSDC provided applicants with support in understanding and responding to the call by:

- Conducting an extensive review of the original call;
- Responding to inquiries and working with applicants to understand the call; and
- Providing written instructions on the HRSDC website.

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{59} It should be noted that a fairly large proportion of funded respondents either didn’t know or could not recall the call for proposals.
Ways Innovations and Best Practices were Fostered

8. To what extent and in what ways were innovations and best practices fostered, shared with Innovations partners and implemented in sector organizations (i.e., in terms of adapting to targeted users, networking, and reach)?

All data sources indicated that innovations and best practices were shared with partners and beyond to a varying extent.

The HRSDC planning documents provided evidence that a core purpose of the Innovations Pillar was to share information and to foster the use of innovations and best practices. This was done through a range of vehicles such as forums, workshops, and training sessions based on the requirements of their individual projects. Unfortunately, the reach of this information is unclear as projects recorded varying levels of detail regarding event attendance. For example, in some projects, the exact number of attendees is available; in some projects the number of organizations present is available; and, other projects did not record this information at all.

There was also substantial variation in the ‘types’ of best practices shared. In some cases, best practices seem to refer to the project’s innovation, in other cases multiple best practices comprised the innovation and, in other situations respondents commented on best practices for implementing a collaboration or knowledge sharing project. Some projects explored the need to adapt or modify best practices for new applications. For example, Fraserside’s Shared Services project found that the shared services model they were using was not appropriate for all of their partner’s contexts (e.g., terminology was not understood in the same way, local economic context called for different solutions). As a result, they tasked each partner with finding a way to build on the core concept in a way that suited their local environment.

The range of ‘types of best practices’ became increasingly evident through case studies. As such, it may not be appropriate to quantify the number of best practices identified and shared. Instead, Table 3 outlines the best practices identified by projects that participated in a case study\(^60\) in order to illustrate the depth and breadth of best practices shared. It is notable that three projects did not indicate any best practices.

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\(^{60}\) Information for non case study projects was not available in sufficient detail and/or with sufficient confidence to be presented.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Best Practices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caledon Institute for Social Policy – Community-Government Collaboration Policy</td>
<td>This project’s innovation was a comprehensive strategy for monitoring government policy on an ongoing basis. The policy monitoring manual contained numerous strategies and suggestions (e.g., promising practices) for implementing a policy monitoring process. In addition, one partner noted that the gathering of people from different sectors is in itself a best practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canadian Outcomes Research Institute – Applied Best Practices in British Columbia Child and Family Services</td>
<td>This project did not identify best practices as such. Instead, it developed an innovative process for identifying best practices. The project involved conducting surveys and focus groups to assess/document the quality of practices in use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centre St-Pierre – Agir dans son milieu</td>
<td>This project identified 14 innovative practices and experiences related to citizen participation for urban renewal (2 per participant organization were identified), seven of these practices were adapted (one per organization), for a total of 21 best practices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fraserside Community Services Society – Shared Services</td>
<td>This project involved exploring opportunities to adapt components of a proven shared services model from the United Community Services Co-Op. Opportunities to adapt aspects of the United Community Services model (in addition to other shared services concepts were explored including: • Online marketplace for connecting organizations for the purposes of sharing staff or space; • Pooled access to healthcare benefits; • Sharing a revenue generation consultant; • Building a physical space to be shared; • Shared financial sustainability training; • Shared insurance services; and • Shared human resources experts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South-East Ottawa Centre for a Healthy Community – Leveraging Success</td>
<td>The project’s innovation was the “No Community Left Behind” Model, a social development initiative aimed at preventing crime and addressing social determinants of health through a collaborative approach and integration of services at the neighbourhood level. No specific best practices from within or regarding this model were mentioned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tides Canada – Dissemination of a New Charitable Shared Infrastructure Model</td>
<td>This project’s innovation was a Canadian adaptation of the “fiscal sponsorship” or “charitable home infrastructure model” imported from the United States. It is a shared platform for governance, administration, and financial support, backed up by coaching and mentoring for emerging charitable initiatives. No specific best practices from within or regarding this model were mentioned.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The project's innovation was the Neighbours Helping Neighbours concept, a model designed to mobilize communities to provide respite and caregiving support through informal networks. While no specific best practices from within or regarding this model were mentioned, respondents did indicate four lessons learned that impact the delivery of Neighbours Helping Neighbours training intended to:

- Increase the capacity of neighbours to help out other neighbours in need
- Increase neighbourhood respite options for caregivers through existing relationships and connections in their community
- Strengthen local Branches relationships and partnerships
- Build awareness of how a community can respond to an unmet need of caregivers for respite

Respondents in the case studies, excluding those who did not identify a best practice, felt that their projects had been successful in sharing their innovation, or best practices, or tools. In projects where event attendee feedback was collected, the majority of attendees provided positive feedback. No negative feedback from event attendees was recorded.

**Extent and Ways Projects Were Related to Key Issues, Themes and Strategies**

8a. To what extent and in what ways were Innovations projects funded consistent with key issues, themes, strategic priorities of the strategy and directly related to fostering social innovation and entrepreneurship?

The extent to which projects were consistent with VSS priorities was explored through the file review and case studies which found that each project was consistent with the key issues, themes, and strategic priorities of the VSS but in a different manner.

It was acknowledged that the VSS had multiple goals, and project leads interpreted the primary focus of the VSS differently. Consequently, projects were developed in accordance with these varying interpretations. For example, four of the seven case study projects focused on sharing best practices, while all seven focused on sharing innovative approaches. Overall, the case study projects focused on:

- Sharing existing best practices or innovative approaches;
- Adapting or expanding innovative practices;
- Building capacity to work more efficiently; and
- Developing new tools and processes.

Project leads saw the building of partnerships/collaborations as a beneficial bi-product of engaging in these projects.
Extent to Which Tools Promoted Sustainability and Self-sufficiency

8b. To what extent did the tools (e.g., financial fitness and best practices) promote and support sustainability and self-sufficiency in the funded recipients and the organizations that partnered in Innovations demonstration projects?

While most of the projects continued past the VSS funding, it is not clear whether the VSS made a significant contribution to the sustainability of the project. Funded applicants were asked if their project had continued past the VSS funding, as well as requesting that they describe what made it sustainable. As seen in Figure 6, 11 out of 14 funded projects did find a way to continue past the VSS funding, indicating that sustainability occurred with close to 80% of the projects.

Figure 6
Sustainability of projects

Has your project continued past the VSS funding?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Has your project continued past the VSS funding?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n=14

Source: Survey of Funded and Unfunded Applicants

When asked to explain what made their project sustainable, respondents provided the following feedback:

- Funding received from other sources (7);
- Building on existing work; materials, and momentum (5);
- Collaborating with other organizations (2);
- There is an ongoing need and interest (2);
- The idea has taken root in the sector (1); and
- Implementing a low cost program (1).
While the most common sustainability factor was finding a way to ensure ongoing funding, organizations differed substantially in how funds were generated. Some organizations sought funding through other grants and contributions, some relied on partners to provide financial or in kind support, and others set up “fee for service” models with the intent of hosting self-sustaining activities. All three organizations that were not able to sustain their projects indicated that this was due to their inability to attract outside funding.

While HRSDC did provide tools to assist with planning for sustainability (e.g., Financial Fitness Handbooks), case study respondents either did not recall receiving tools from HRSDC or did not feel able to comment on the impact that these tools had on their organizations. Consequently it is not possible to comment on the extent to which VSS tools promoted and supported sustainability and self-sufficiency. Respondents were, however, more able to comment on the extent to which tools developed through their Innovations projects were able to support sustainability and self-sufficiency in their organizations and the partner organizations.

Table 4 provides examples of increased sustainability or self-sufficiency within each project as well as respondent perceptions on these issues. As shown, some of the tools and processes developed through Innovations projects are still in use or available for use by interested parties.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Examples of Sustainability/ Self-Sufficiency</th>
<th>Respondent Perceptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caledon Institute for Social Policy – Community-Government Collaboration Policy</td>
<td>• Policy monitoring tools are still being used for ongoing monitoring&lt;br&gt;• Lead organization continues learning about community-government collaboration informally</td>
<td>• Tools have been useful in the sustainability of the ongoing policy monitoring process for lead organization&lt;br&gt;• Partners feel that the tools did not promote sustainability and that they were already self-sufficient. However, these tools are perceived as enhancing capacity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canadian Outcomes Research Institute – Applied Best Practices in BC Child and Family Services</td>
<td>• Anonymous private donor funded continuation of project as a series of small projects&lt;br&gt;• Group meetings still occur to support discussion on service delivery</td>
<td>• Sustainability is a challenge due to lack of funding&lt;br&gt;• Lead organization no longer exists</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Project Examples of Sustainability/ Self-Sufficiency  
**Centre St-Pierre – Agir dans son milieu**  
- Website is still operating and materials are available online  
- Lead organization continues to facilitate sessions on collaboration  
- Project was a “one-time occurrence” and will not be continued  
- Process experience is useful for other projects  
- Increased awareness and knowledge helped to improve initiatives  
- Partners are now aware that they have best practices worth sharing  

**Fraserside Community Services Society – Shared Services**  
- Several of the original partners are engaged in a new project focusing on strategies for connecting non-profits  
- Some partners found additional funding to implement the ideas they had developed  
- Shared Services Manual is available for use  
- Some partners felt that it was not possible to continue this work due to lack of resources  
- Some partners felt that the materials were not useful due to contextual differences, others felt that they were very helpful and adaptable in local contexts  

**South-East Ottawa Centre for a Healthy Community – Leveraging Success**  
- The No Community Left Behind model has been adopted by the City of Ottawa as part of their Community Development Framework. The model is being replicated in four high priority neighbourhoods\(^{61}\)  
- Project increased the organization’s evaluation capacity by providing a model of practices that work  

**Tides Canada – Dissemination of a New Charitable Shared Infrastructure Model**  
- Resources are still available online  
- Experience positioned partners to: engage local organizations, leverage resources, and build community capacity  
- Tools provided clarity and direction in determining how the model should be implemented  
- Partner capacity was enhanced by increasing the available information and resources  

**Victorian Order of Nurses – Mobilizing Communities**  
- Materials are available online  
- Modified tool is being used in other settings / contexts  
- Components of the manual are being used by partners and other agencies  
- Sustainability requires funding and continuity of staff, which has not been the case  

### 3.5 Strategic Priorities: Fostering Innovations in Sector Organizations

#### 9. Is there evidence of increased knowledge and use of innovative best practices and tools as supported by Innovations projects within the group of funded recipients and their partners?  

The evidence indicates that most funding applicants believed there was an increase in knowledge and use of innovative best practices and resources as a result of their projects.

\(^{61}\) High priority neighbourhoods were identified by the City of Ottawa.  
See [www.ottawa.ca/residents/cdf/index_en.html](http://www.ottawa.ca/residents/cdf/index_en.html) for further information.
Figure 7
Respondent perceptions of the extent to which knowledge/resources were disseminated and used\textsuperscript{62}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use and dissemination of knowledge/resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There was effective dissemination of knowledge and resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=14, N=28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of respondents who agree to a (very) great extent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funded applicants (n)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge and resources were used by others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=13, N=25)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Survey of Funded and Unfunded Applicants

As seen in Figure 7, most funded applicants felt that dissemination of knowledge occurred to a great or very great extent and that this dissemination was effective in causing knowledge and resources to be used.

All of the case study respondents indicated that their VSS project resulted in some increase in knowledge or the use of best practices and tools. For the most part, respondents felt that increased knowledge was a \textit{de facto} result of knowledge sharing activities that engaged project partners or local community organizations.

The type of change in use of knowledge, best practices, or tools was different for each project based on the project’s main activities or goals. Overall, three types of change were seen:

- **Uptake and awareness of existing tools or models** – Some projects focused on disseminating existing tools or models. They were not able to provide concrete information on the extent to which these tools and models were being used, so it was not possible to conclude that project activities led to increased awareness of these tools and models resulting from these project activities.

\textsuperscript{62} Only funded applicants and unfunded applicants who proceeded with their projects were asked to comment. Survey respondents who reported not knowing or remembering were excluded.
• **Development of new tools or models** – These included mechanisms for assessing and sharing promising practices in addition to tools necessary for the implementation of specific promising practices.

• **Improved subject matter knowledge** – Some organizations also hosted learning opportunities meant to increase organization’s knowledge of specific subjects.

Some respondents indicated that the lead organization was already quite knowledgeable about the subject and was already using the best practice, model, or tool. As such, the lead organization did not experience any change but was instead a facilitator for sharing information, with the expectation that change would occur in the partner organizations. Although, some case study respondents did indicate that their tools or models are currently in use by either their organization or external organizations, they were not able to comment reliably on the extent to which change occurred in their partner organizations.

### Increased Communication and Networking Among Funding Recipients

**9a. Is there evidence of increased communication and networking within the funded recipient group and their partners as a result of the Innovations demonstration projects?**

While some projects focused more directly on communication and networking, all project files identified some extent of increased networking and communication. Some examples of increased communication and networking with project partners include:

- Exchange of knowledge such as trauma-informed practice and specific population needs;
- Workshops, symposia, meetings and presentations allowing information exchange and networking;
- Use of other communication tools such as flyers, newsletters and media releases;
- Development of a community of practice;
- Training across branches of a national organization;
- Development of a promising practices clearinghouse on a website; and
- On-line platform for sharing information.

A number of project representatives indicated networking and communication was enhanced by the use of technology.

Applicants were asked to identify the types of collaborative and communicative activities that occurred as part of their project activities. Projects used a wide range of strategies to collaborate with their project partners and intended users. The differences in strategies used by funded versus unfunded applicants appears to be minimal.
However, it does seem that funded applicants were somewhat ‘more creative’ in their engagement as 64% used other strategies, as opposed to approximately 39% of applicants that did not receive the VSS funding. Examples of other strategies used by these applicants include story writing, data centres, round tables and webinars.

The case studies provided insights into factors that can enhance improved communication and networking. They indicated that having in person meetings with partners, or HRSDC representatives, early on in the process was an important success factor for relationship building. These meetings provided partners with an opportunity to learn each other’s personalities and ‘put a face to the voice’ which ultimately left them feeling more comfortable with each other. Overall, improved communication and networking did occur for those projects that did not already have strong networks established.

**Increased Communication and Networking Beyond Funding Recipients**

9b. *To what extent is there evidence that there was increased communication and networking beyond the immediate target of the Innovations partners?*

The project files indicate that there was increased communication and networking beyond the initial Innovations partners, including:

- Emerging partnerships with agencies that were partners of project partners;
- Additional partnerships developed to assist with specific projects;
- Use of technology to bring together service deliverers from different sites;
- Knowledge shared on a website;
- Community forums providing opportunities for networking;
- Best and promising practices clearinghouse on a website;
- Partners sharing information with other organizations in their communities; and
- Discussion papers, workshops, symposia and training sessions provided beyond the partnership networks.

All of the case studies were able to provide some examples of how their participation in an Innovations project had increased their communication and networking beyond the project partners. Some examples included:

- **Communication hub** – In several of the cases, project partners served as “communication hubs” responsible for developing additional local partnerships or relationships. Depending on the project’s objectives, project partners were responsible for consulting with or providing information or training to these local partners;

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63 Webinars are a real-time training opportunities provided on-line through website that permits display of materials as well as discussion.
• **Presentations** – Many project leads and partners presented project tools, concepts, or information at symposiums or other community events;

• **Use of materials** – Some respondents commented that their project materials, or aspects of the project materials, have been taken up by other sector organizations and that they are in touch regarding the use of those tools; and

• **Increasing visibility** – Some partners indicated that their participation in this project has increased their visibility and credibility within their fields. This has led to improved communication with other organizations and provincial and regional governments.

It should be noted, however, that expert panel members felt the emphasis placed on building relationships with the five direct project partners may have limited the reach of the Innovations projects. They expressed the opinion that developing these relationships took substantial time and energy that might have been better spent on more wide scale dissemination.

### 3.6 Overall Assessment of Outcomes

#### 10. Is there evidence of improved networking and cooperation on the part of the recipients funded and the partners involved?

The review of project files as well as the survey of funded applicants indicated that each of the Innovations projects addressed one or more of the VSS goals of increased knowledge, increased use of best practices and increased use of tools. This section provides information on the extent to which the projects achieved these outcomes. However, it should be noted that the level of detail available varied greatly from project to project with some projects collecting detailed feedback in a consistent manner while others were only able to provide anecdotal information.

**Increased Knowledge**

All of the projects had some aspect of knowledge sharing with project partners and other community organizations. Examples of activities aimed at increasing knowledge included:

• Synthesizing existing research into a useable format for practitioners;

• Disseminating information through a variety of media (e.g., flash presentations, video documentary, training manuals, community forums; tele-learning sessions); and

• Gaining knowledge through exposure to new programming.

Of the seven projects that reported obtaining feedback from event participants, all noted that the feedback they received from event participants was positive. This feedback also suggested that there were increases in knowledge sharing and application. As indicated previously, most funded projects felt they were able to deliver new services or were more competent to deliver existing services.
Increased Use of Innovative Best Practices

All seven case study projects had activities intended to promote the use of best practices among project partners and other community organizations. Examples of those activities included:

• Sharing promising practices identified by partners and colleagues; and
• Reinforcing the importance of reflective practice.

However, three of the seven projects which participated in the case studies did not report identifying any best practices. Overall it was not clear whether or not the lead organisations achieved their objective to promote the use of best practices among project partners and beyond.

Increased Use of Tools

Eight of the funded projects indicated there was an increased use of tools as a result of their project. Some of the tools that were developed by funded projects included:

• Flash presentations;
• Video documentaries; and
• Training manual/guides.

Representatives from two of the projects provided information indicating that the tools were being used by the project partners. Tools were often made available on a website, making them accessible beyond the Innovation partners.

The expert panelists expressed concern regarding the overall impact of the VSS Innovations funding. Projects may have been successful in disseminating best practices to their project partners, but expert panelists questioned the macro impacts of any spill-over to the sector as a whole.\footnote{They identified the following potential factors as contributing to limit the efficacy of the Innovations Pillar:

• **Fear of failure**: Expert panelists agreed that projects may have over reported successes and underreported challenges.

• **Lack of a central dissemination vehicle**: Expert panelists felt that a central dissemination strategy should have been planned at the strategy’s outset, allowing funding organizations to pool their best practices in a useable format for access by the entire sector.

• **Capacity for partnering**: Expert panelists thought that the emphasis on formal project partners (i.e., the five partners required in the VSS Innovations call for proposals) may have contributed to the limited dissemination scope as developing these relationships took substantial time and energy that could have been devoted to more wide scale}

It should be noted that, as a funding initiative with a very limited scope, VSS was not necessarily intended to have a broad reach.
dissemination. In addition, expert panelists commented that the VSS may have had a broader impact if the funded organizations had been selected on the basis of their organizational capacity and national reach.

- **Lack of flexibility:** Expert panelists emphasized that true innovation requires flexibility and the opportunity to fail and learn from that failure. They felt that this was generally at odds with the VSS funding and reporting structure as projects had limited flexibility and were closely tied to a logic model developed prior to the project.

### Improved Efficiency/Capability within Organizations

#### 10a. Has there been improved efficiency or capability within the organizations involved in Innovations to respond to the needs of communities and Canadians?

Information for this question emerged primarily from the case studies. Representatives from each case study project identified some improvements in their efficiency or capability to respond to the needs of communities and Canadians.

The majority of funded projects identified increased capabilities as a result of the VSS funding, not increased efficiency (i.e., stakeholders did not believe they were able to deliver the same services under a smaller budget but they did feel that they were able to deliver new services or to be more competent to deliver existing services). Many respondents felt that their innovation project had improved their knowledge or access to resources which would, ultimately, enable them to provide better service. Some project leads noted that they were already quite efficient in their use of resources so this project had no impact on efficiency.

Some of the improvements in capability identified through the case studies included:

- Increased capacity to access academic resources including an understanding of where resources are;
- New ways of thinking about developing policy briefs and engaging with elected officials;
- Increased capacity to provide training sessions;
- Increased knowledge about how to support communities in a diverse setting;
- Improved ways to package tools and information;
- New strategies for sharing existing resources and creating efficiencies;
- Increased knowledge about how to prepare a business plan;
- Enhanced evaluation capacity; and
- Increased access to information in francophone communities.

The responses from the funded projects indicate that some increase in capability occurred.
Strategic Collaboration among Organizations

10b. To what extent has there been strategic collaboration among the organizations that participated in the Innovations projects for working with other organizations in the sector?

This question was addressed by asking survey respondents the number of intended partnerships, as per the proposal, and the number of actual partnerships. For funded applicants, the number of intended partners ranged from 5 – 13 and the number of actual partners ranged from 5 – 21. It should be noted that in order to obtain funding, applicants were required to have at least five partners. For unfunded applicants, the number of intended partners ranged from 1 – 200 and the number of actual partners ranged from 1 – 6000. It is difficult to interpret these figures because it is likely that some unfunded projects defined partnership differently than did the funded projects.

On average, funded applicants were able to increase the number of partners engaged throughout their projects, while unfunded applicants maintained a steady number of partners in the absence of VSS funding. This may indicate that involvement in the VSS increased projects’ reach.

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65 Only funded applicants and unfunded applicants who proceeded with the projects were asked this question.

66 There were also inconsistencies in the number of actual partners reported through various sources. The file review identified a total of 94 project partners. However, representatives from funded organizations responding to the survey identified a total of 119 partners for 11 organisations (not including the three organizations who could not recall their final number of partners). It is suspected that these inconsistencies are in part due to inconsistent definitions of ‘partnership’ and in part due to challenges in recalling information from several years back.
It should be noted that respondents appeared to have varying understandings of what the term “partnership” entails even within funded projects. Some organizations included local community organizations who benefited from their projects in the list of “partners” while others did not. A similar reason may be the cause of some of the extreme outliers which are excluded from Figure 8.

In addition, several of the project leads and partners reported collaboration or partnerships that they felt would be sustained beyond the VSS. The file review, based on self-reporting, indicates that the communication and networking has been sustained by partners in the following ways:

- Partners taking on management of project;
- Securing on-going funding;
- Partners requesting continuation of activities (i.e. presentations, workshops); and
- Partners indicating continuing project activities at their sites.

Averages exclude the extreme outliers of 200 and 6000. In addition, some respondents were not able to recall their number of anticipated and actual partners. These were excluded as well. The averages were reached by dividing the total number of partners by the number of projects in the respective funded and unfunded categories. See also note 75.
3.7 Efficiency and Economy

11. What was the overall expenditure of resources on Innovations in relation to the perceived outputs and outcomes of the process?

The VSS was a $12 million project with a $3 million budget per year. Of this amount, approximately $3.9 million was spent on the Fostering Innovations priority. Approximately $2.5 million of this Innovations funding was spent on Innovations contributions, which represents approximately 21% of the total VSS funds and approximately 64% of the total Innovations stream’s funding.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Salary %</th>
<th>Non-salary %</th>
<th>Grants and Contributions %</th>
<th>Total Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VSS (Innovations Activity)</td>
<td>29.8</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>64.2</td>
<td>$3,930,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding the Early Years</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>54.9</td>
<td>$27,725,330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homelessness Partnering Strategy</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>85.1</td>
<td>$509,822,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Program files and HRSDC’s Common System of Grants and Contributions.

Expenditures Compared to Outcomes

11a. Were the Innovations expenditures reasonable in consideration of the outcomes produced?

Table 5 compares the budget allocations for the VSS Innovations Activities and two other grants and contributions programs – Understanding the Early Years and Homelessness Partnering Strategy. In the case of VSS, 36% of the budget was devoted towards salary and operational costs. For comparison, 45% of the Understanding the Early Years Initiative’s budget was directed towards salary and operational costs while for the Homelessness Partnering Strategy the figure was 15%. Note that the Understanding the Early Years Initiative, also a time limited, innovative-styled grants and contributions, was more similar in nature to VSS than the Homelessness Partnering Strategy. Since many aspects of program design contribute to a program’s cost structure, direct comparisons are misleading without contextualization.

For the most part, respondents felt that the resources were well used and were spent efficiently to produce valuable outcomes. However, most sources commented that these resources were quite limited considering the intended outcomes. Expert panelists commented that the strategy may have been overly ambitious considering the available resources. However,
one project lead commented that the HRSDC funding was just enough to encourage the mobilization of other resources and representatives from a few projects felt that it was a rich source of funding.

Expert panelists believed that there were some inefficiencies in the way the program was managed. They indicated that the application and reporting requirements were excessive and demanded significant resources that could have been better spent on project activities. This included resources on the part of funded applicants, unfunded applicants and HRSDC staff. They were also concerned about the amount of money that stayed within HRSDC for project management indicating that it may have been excessive given the limited contributions funding.

The expert panelists made the following suggestions for improving the efficiency of future contribution strategies:

- **Call for proposals** – Expert panelists suggested that the call for proposals should be amended to include a two stage process. Potential applicants should initially submit a letter of intent. HRSDC would review the letter of intent and invite a short list of applicants to complete and submit a full evaluation. This would reduce the burden on the unfunded applicants since those who did not qualify after the first round would not have to spend resources to develop a full proposal. In addition, this would also reduce the burden on HRSDC since less time and resources would be required to review a smaller number of full proposals in the second stage.

- **Reporting and project management** – Expert panelists, as well as project leads, felt that excessive time and resources were spent on project management and reporting. They suggested that HRSDC explore less onerous reporting and management options. This may include the use of a balanced scorecard, the engagement of national partners with a greater capacity to manage projects or other options.

### Cost Effectiveness

11b. **Were Innovations projects (contribution program) a cost effective way of achieving the objectives? What alternatives existed?**
(e.g., *Is a grant program preferable to a contribution program? Is a social marketing approach preferable?*)

HRSDC awarded a total amount of $2,518,010 in Innovations funding with VSS project funding ranging from $140,000 to $200,000. In addition, most projects leveraged other resources in order to implement their planned activities. Based on information in the project files, on average, each VSS Innovations project leveraged about $57,000 from other

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68 Leveraged resources may have included in kind funding (i.e., staff time), overhead (i.e., space, office equipment, etc.) or financial resources. Where possible, these resources have been monetized and included in calculations of leveraged funding.
sources which represented an increase in each project’s available funds of about 32%. The majority of these leveraged funds were in-kind contributions of staff time either from internal sources or from partner organizations.

For the most part, key informants and case study respondents agreed that supporting the voluntary sector is an efficient use of funds as the sector is uniquely situated to provide supports in ways that the federal government cannot.

Key informants and case study respondents made the following suggestions for improving support to the voluntary sector:

- **Reduce reporting requirements** – Some informants commented that contributions have strict reporting requirements that take a substantial amount of time from sector organizations. They suggest using grants instead of contributions in order to reduce the reporting requirements.

- **Work with umbrella organizations** – One key informant commented that there may be opportunities to work with umbrella organizations with pre-existing expertise in the sector. In such a situation, the umbrella organization would be responsible for distributing funds to recipient organizations.

- **Amend proposal process** – Various stakeholders commented that the Request for Proposals process required excessive resources particularly for projects that did not succeed in obtaining funding. Alternatives suggested include:
  - Providing a larger number of smaller funding amounts with reduced application and reporting requirements; and
  - Eliminating the Request for Proposals model.

- **Increase flexibility** – Respondents commented that projects could have been more effective if there was increased flexibility in the delivery of the project. This may include the flexibility to carry funds across fiscal years, to reallocate funding as the process develops, or to fund a wider range of expenses. Specifically, one project noted that HRSDC funding was not permitted to be used for gift giving, a culturally important aspect of working in many Aboriginal communities.

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69 Some files contained inconsistent information regarding funding. In these cases, the narrowest known range was used for calculations.
4. Conclusion

The VSS was a time limited strategy which sunset in 2009. However, the findings in this evaluation are relevant for HRSDC as it considers various means for synthesizing and sharing the information and learning that are amassed through all of its research and grants and contributions programs. Some specific learning from the VSS that should be considered in designing similarly styled future programming includes:

1. It is important to ensure that all stakeholders are clear on the intent and scope of an initiative, including the experimentation of new ideas and innovative best practices. Mechanisms were used to enhance communication and understanding between HRSDC, the funded applicants, and the sector as a whole. However, the voluntary sector as a whole could have benefitted from the additional clarification of the specific goals of the innovation pillar.

2. It would have been helpful to have built evaluation and performance monitoring into the Innovations Pillar at the project level as well as at the initiative level in order to better capture the learning as it occurred. This would have provided greater certainty and clarity regarding outcomes, such as with the scope of measuring project dissemination, and would have provided further opportunities for ongoing adjustment and improvement.

3. When working with the voluntary sector it is important to carefully balance accountability needs with the burden of additional administrative tasks. As such, because grants have less onerous reporting requirements, it may also be advisable to consider the use of grants versus contributions for projects awarded relatively small amounts of funding. It also may be advisable to implement a two stage call for proposals so that organizations proposing initiatives that are not sufficiently aligned with a call for proposals, do not expend excessive resources on developing a full proposal.

To support the implementation of these lessons learned, HRSDC may want to look for further lessons from other sectors, such as the health care field, where knowledge transfer and collaboration have now become an important aspect that supports evidence-based practice.
Appendix A: Characteristics of the Voluntary Sector Strategy Innovations Projects

The following table provides an overview of each Innovations project including information on:

- Date of funding;
- Value of HRSDC funding;
- Lead organization;
- Number of partner organizations;
- Primary location;
- Activities; and
- Intended results.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Dates of Funding</th>
<th>HRSDC Funding ($)</th>
<th>Lead Org.</th>
<th># of Partner Org.s</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Intended Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TIPS – Trauma-Informed Practice for Youth Serving Agencies</td>
<td>2008/03/5 to 2009/03/31</td>
<td>$104,652</td>
<td>Victoria Women’s Sexual Assault Centre Society</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Victoria, British Columbia</td>
<td>• Disseminate recent research and best practices on trauma-informed practice to youth workers&lt;br&gt;• Developed curricula for a series of 5 workshops&lt;br&gt;• Delivery of these workshops with 8 partner agencies&lt;br&gt;• Formative evaluation&lt;br&gt;• Three articles prepared to date&lt;br&gt;• Advisory Committee Meetings&lt;br&gt;• Literature Review [no information, assumed completed as this would be necessary to develop curricula]&lt;br&gt;• Additional knowledge sharing activities (workshops, key note presentations, etc.)</td>
<td>Primary Objective:&lt;br&gt;• disseminating recent trauma research and practices, developing skills and tools for managing post-trauma reactions within a context of non-trauma specific services for youth to front-line workers&lt;br&gt;Goal:&lt;br&gt;• increase capacity throughout the community to respond effectively and consistently to youth who are struggling with the impacts of trauma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Community Food Security with Bits and Bytes</td>
<td>2008/04/18 to 2009/03/31</td>
<td>$195,900</td>
<td>Interior Health Authority’s Community Food Action Initiative</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Kelowna, British Columbia (organization) Interior health region of British Columbia (location of activities)</td>
<td>Using a community development approach, to disseminate practices related to improving food security. This involves developing a collaborative network of food security organizations as well as an online resource bank.</td>
<td>• Share innovations in food security with communities throughout Canada&lt;br&gt;• Enhance collaboration among rural and remote, community-based food security organizations, technical and practical experts, government agencies, and national organizations&lt;br&gt;• Adapt private-sector innovations in communications technology to the community not-for-profit sector&lt;br&gt;• Evaluate the effectiveness of Web delivery of innovative practices&lt;br&gt;• Make the results of this pilot project available nationally, through collaboration with Food Secure Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leveraging Success – Sharing No Community Left Behind Strengths</td>
<td>2008/03/01 to 2009/04/31</td>
<td>$144,433</td>
<td>South East Ottawa Community Health Centre</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Ottawa, Ontario</td>
<td>Develop resources and share information on the No Community Left Behind strategy.</td>
<td>• Share lessons learned from implementation of the No Community Left Behind strategy with Community Health and Resource Centres and other organizations in Ottawa for replication according to their respective community needs and priorities&lt;br&gt;• Facilitate community capacity development in other parts of Ottawa by developing and sharing relevant tools, skills, information and knowledge from the No Community Left Behind model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project</td>
<td>Dates of Funding</td>
<td>HRSDC Funding ($)</td>
<td>Lead Org.</td>
<td># of Partner Org.s **</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>Intended Results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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| Dissemination of a New Charitable Shared Infrastructure Model | 2008/04/01 to 2009/03/31 | $189,062          | Tides Canada Initiatives Society (formerly Sage Centre) | 6                     | Across Canada, including British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario and Yukon                                                                  | Enable charitable activity through a shared platform of administrative and financial services.                                                                 | • Disseminate a proven model of housing and mentoring emerging charitable activities and assist partners interested in adapting the model to their community  
• Expand the knowledge base by documenting and sharing experiences in different community settings  
• Create materials employing web resources and tools that share knowledge nationally  
• Broader national dialogue on approaches and models for emerging non-profit organizations |
| Community-Government Collaboration on Policy       | 2008/03/01 to 2009/03/31 | $191,899          | Caledon Institute of Social Policy              | 5                     | Across Canada, including Ontario, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Newfoundland                                                        | Create a pan-Canadian community of practice with a primary interest in community-government collaboration around policy.                                              | • Creation of community of practice  
• Joint learning process  
• Community roles in application of community strategies  
• Government opportunities for collaborative work |
| Mobilizing Communities to Create Opportunities for Respite for Caregivers | 2008/03/01 to 2009/03/31 | 169,651 - $179,900* | Victorian Order of Nurses for Canada          | 5                     | Across Canada, including Ontario, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland, New Brunswick and Alberta                                        | Develop 5 Victorian Order of Nurses Branches to implement the Neighbours Helping Neighbours Program.                                                                | • Increase the capacity of neighbours to help out other neighbours in need  
• Increase appropriate neighbourhood based respite options for caregivers through existing relationships and connections in their community  
• Strengthen Victorian Order of Nurses Branches relationship and partnerships  
• Build awareness in at least 5 communities of how the community can respond to an unmet need of caregivers for respite |
| Applied Best Practices in British Columbia Child & Family Services Project | 2008/03/01 to 2009/03/31 | $175,208          | Canadian Outcomes Research Institute          | 10                    | British Columbia                                                                                                                        | Develop working groups of organizations engaged in delivering a like service within a specific geographic region.                                                  | • Increase organizational capacity to collect and analyze data from ongoing service delivery  
• Increase the use of quality improvement processes for ongoing enhancement of service delivery  
• Increase the adoption and integration of promising practices in child, youth and family organizations through the timely distribution of new and emerging knowledge to front line practitioners and program leaders |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Dates of Funding</th>
<th>HRSDC Funding ($)</th>
<th>Lead Org.</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Intended Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Fostering Innovations in Social Development: Health Meets Safety in Atlantic Canadian Communities | 2008/03/10 to 2009/03/31 | $148,100 - $150,100 | Atlantic Centre of Excellence for Women's Health, Dalhousie University                                     | Across Canada, including: Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland.     | Partnering with five community-based organizations to adapt and deliver the core curriculum of the Atlantic Summer Institute, referred to as the Foundations Stream | • Assist community organizations to acquire the understanding, tools and skills that will enable them to foster social development in their communities – of interest, location or identity – by addressing the root causes of crime and the determinants of health at the same time.  
Primary objectives:  
• Increase understanding of the linkages between social development, health promotion and crime prevention  
• Build community capacity for addressing these factors more efficiently and effectively  
• Encourage intersectoral and multidisciplinary partnerships that will foster social development at all levels, including sharing of expertise and resources  
• In sharing this innovative project to its partner organizations, help Canadian by improving the quality and effectiveness of the services they depend on in their communities. |
| Collaborating for Capacity: Towards an Integrated Approach to Episodic Disabilities | 2008/03/01 to 2009/03/31 | $200,000          | Canadian Working Group on HIV and Rehabilitation                                                        | Toronto, Ontario (organization), Across Canada (location of activities)                      | • Survey completed and discussion paper based on survey and consultations  
• Developed new and enhanced existing tools (templates for knowledge transfer, guidelines for collaborative research, sharing educational resources, website)  
• Developed and submitted proposal for regional episodic disabilities network  
• Evaluated processes, outcomes and outputs throughout | • Promote optimal care, support and inclusion of people with episodic disabilities. This will be done by:  
– Increasing capacity to share information/best practices  
– Leading to a foundation/framework for development of a national, integrated strategy on episodic disabilities to guide coordinate care/support |
| Reconciliation: Renovating Child Welfare to Improve Outcomes for Aboriginal Children | 2007/04/01 to 2009/03/31 | $199,240          | First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada                                                 | Ottawa, Ontario (organization) Across Canada (location of activities)                         | Provide educational material and workshops for child welfare leaders to support the renovation of child welfare. | Ensure that Aboriginal communities have the resources necessary to implement their own effective child safety solutions, ultimately, creating broad based and sustainable positive change within child welfare to improve the outcomes for Aboriginal children. |
| LINKS Children’s Literacy Program – Satellite Expansion                | 2008/03/01 to 2009/03/31 | $199,980          | Learning Disabilities Association of Nova Scotia                                                      | Across Canada, including: Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Manitoba.              | • Package all aspects of the LINKS program in such a way that it could be shared with the five participating sites  
• Provide sites with the resources and support necessary to successfully launch LINKS | • Mitigate long term negative effects of growing up with an untreated learning disability  
• Children with a learning disability problem will develop a positive attitude towards reading and literacy instruction  
• Increase capacity of chapters and affiliates of the Learning Disabilities Association of Nova Scotia to provide research-based early intervention program  
• Participants in LINKS will receive timely and appropriate treatment for their learning disabilities  
• Children will be introduced to and acquire reading and writing strategies |
### Evaluation of the Voluntary Sector Strategy: Forestering Innovations Pillar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Lead Org.</th>
<th>HRSDC Funding ($)</th>
<th>Dates of Funding</th>
<th># of Partner Org.s</th>
<th>Intended Results</th>
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<tr>
<td>Shared Services: Adding value to Non-Profit Organizations</td>
<td>Fraserside Community Services</td>
<td>$200,000</td>
<td>2008/03/01 to 2009/03/31</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>New Westminster, British Columbia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agir dans son milieu – partager et diffuser les savoirs et les pratiques novatrices de concertation</td>
<td>Centre Social</td>
<td>$199,892</td>
<td>2008/03/01 to 2009/03/31</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Montréal, Quebec</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Activities**

- **Shared Services:**
  - Adding value to Non-Profit Organizations
  - Stage 1: Information, knowledge gathering and dissemination for each participating region.
  - Stage 2: Sharing knowledge and practices between organizations.

- **Agir dans son milieu – partager et diffuser les savoirs et les pratiques novatrices de concertation:**
  - Stage 1: Information, knowledge gathering and dissemination activities that result in concept papers for each participating region.
  - Stage 2 and beyond: Unknown.

**Intended Results**

- **Shared Services:**
  - Organizations become aware of practices tested by other organizations in other settings, and be able to adapt the practices to the realities of their own setting before implementing them.
  - The community of practice will create a true network of organizations working towards integrated urban revitalization with strong community engagement and citizen participation.

- **Agir dans son milieu – partager et diffuser les savoirs et les pratiques novatrices de concertation:**
  - Fact sheets and videos will provide documentation on the practices available to French-language organizations in all regions.
  - A website will make content available to French-language organizations in all regions.
  - A website will make content available to French-language organizations in all regions.
  - Participation in various seminars in Québec and Canada will make it possible to broadly disseminate knowledge and practices.
  - Organizations become aware of practices tested by other organizations in other settings, and be able to adapt the practices to the realities of their own setting.
  - The community of practice will create a true network of organizations working towards integrated urban revitalization with strong community engagement and citizen participation.

**Locations**

- **Shared Services:**
  - New Westminster, British Columbia

- **Agir dans son milieu – partager et diffuser les savoirs et les pratiques novatrices de concertation:**
  - Montréal, Québec
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Dates of Funding</th>
<th>HRSDC Funding ($)</th>
<th>Lead Org.</th>
<th># of Partner Org.s</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Intended Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Chantier de l’économie sociale | 2007/12/01 to 2008/03/31  | $200,001           | Chantier de l’économie sociale     | 7                  | Montréal, Quebec      | • Transfer Quebec expertise in financial management, planning and analysis  
• Create training material (guides) for partners to use after the project  
• Train instructors using financial management, financial planning and project analysis tools (guides) tailored to Canada-wide realities  
• Transfer Quebec skills in financial tool creation  
• Increased ability of organizations to create partnerships with private businesses, financial institutions and other potential investors, to develop new funding tools for the non-profit sector  
• Access to training tools on planning, financial management and funding for community organization leaders who wish to diversify their revenue and carry out entrepreneurial initiatives either inside the organization or through new partnership enterprises. The tools will complete those developed by the Canadian Centre for Community Renewal and Entering Non-Profits  
• Access to financial analysis and social economy enterprise analysis tools tailored to the realities of non-profit organizations and partnership enterprises, to train analysts in financial institutions and investment funds  
• Training for instructors and multiplying agents who will work throughout Canada after the project |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
Appendix B: Strategy Logic Model

The strategy logic model describes the relationship between the VSS’ strategic priorities, activities, outputs and intended outcomes (immediate, medium and long term).
Appendix C: References


HRSDC. (July, 2007.) Innovation in the Community-Not-for-Profit Sector Consultation Report.


HRSDC. (n.d.) Summary of the VSS Implementation Strategy.

HRSDC. (n.d.) The Voluntary Sector Strategy.


Imagine Canada. (August 2010). Sector Monitor. 1, 2.


Program Analysis: Social Development Partnerships Program. (n.d.)


