



Now and Tomorrow
Excellence in Everything We Do



Summative Evaluation of the Enabling Accessibility Fund Grants – 2007-2008 to 2009-2010

Final Report
November 2012

***Summative Evaluation of the Enabling
Accessibility Fund Grants –
2007-2008 to 2009-2010***

Final Report

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

November 2012

**SP-1046-04-13E
(également disponible en français)**

You can download this publication by going online: <http://www12.hrsdc.gc.ca>

This document is available on demand in multiple formats (large print, Braille, audio cassette, audio CD, e-text diskette, e-text CD, or DAISY), by contacting 1 800 O-Canada (1-800-622-6232). If you use a teletypewriter (TTY), call 1-800-926-9105.

© Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada, 2013

For information regarding reproduction rights, please contact Public Works and Government Services Canada at: 613-996-6886 or copyright.droitdauteur@pwgsc-tpsgc.gc.ca

PDF

Cat. No.: HS28-214/2013E-PDF

ISBN: 978-1-100-22154-0

HRSDC

Cat. No. : SP-1046-04-13E

Table of Contents

List of Abbreviations	i
Executive Summary	iii
Management Response	xi
1. Introduction.....	1
1.1 Program Background.....	1
1.1.1 Program Objectives	1
1.1.2 Delivery Partners, Stakeholders, and Beneficiaries	2
1.1.3 Program Funding and Administration	2
1.1.4 Program Logic Model.....	4
2. Evaluation Context	7
2.1 Evaluation Objectives.....	7
2.2 Evaluation Questions.....	7
2.3 Evaluation Approach and Methodology.....	7
2.3.1 Literature Review	8
2.3.2 Document Review	8
2.3.3 Administrative Data and File Review	9
2.3.4 Key Informant Interviews	10
2.3.5 Case Studies	12
2.4 Analysis and Reporting	14
2.5 Challenges and Limitations	15
3. Key Findings.....	17
3.1 Relevance	17
3.1.1 Continued Need for the Program.....	17
3.1.2 Alignment with Government Priorities	19
3.1.3 Alignment with Federal Roles and Responsibilities.....	21
3.2 Performance.....	25
3.2.1 Achievement of Expected Outcomes	26
3.2.2 Demonstration of Efficiency and Economy	37
4. Summary of Key Findings and Conclusions	41
5. Recommendations	43
Annex 1: Evaluation Matrix	45

List of Tables

Table 1	Enabling Accessibility Fund Funding – 2007-2008 to 2009-2010.....	2
Table 2	Enabling Accessibility Fund Funding – 2010-2011 to 2012-2013.....	3
Table 3	Enabling Accessibility Fund Calls for Proposals.....	4
Table 4	Key Informant Interview Distribution	11
Table 5	Case Study Regional Distribution.....	13
Table 6	Applications and Funded Projects by Province and Territory	28
Table 7	Types of Funded Projects.....	33
Table 8	Types of Applications	34
Table 9	Enabling Accessibility Fund Operating Cost per Application.....	40

List of Figures

Figure 1	Enabling Accessibility Fund Program Logic Model	5
----------	---	---

List of Abbreviations

CFP	Call for Proposals
EAF	Enabling Accessibility Fund
HRSDC	Human Resources and Skills Development Canada
ISSDB	Income Security and Social Development Branch
ODI	Office for Disability Issues
PASRB	Public Affairs and Stakeholders Relations Branch
POB	Program Operations Branch

Executive Summary

This report presents findings from the Summative Evaluation of the Enabling Accessibility Fund (EAF) Grants – 2007-2008 to 2009-2010. All activities undertaken as part of the evaluation took place between November 2010 and September 2011.

Background

Delivered by the Office for Disability Issues within HRSDC, the EAF is a federal initiative oriented toward Canadians with disabilities. The EAF was announced in Budget 2007 as a three-year, \$45-million nationally delivered program. Budget 2010 announced the extension of the program by providing an additional \$45 million over the next three years.

The EAF provides direct funding for community-based renovation and retrofit projects. It is designed to contribute to the capital costs of construction for participatory abilities centres, construction and renovations to buildings, modification to vehicles, and information and communication technologies related to improving accessibility for people with disabilities. Organizations that were eligible for funding include:

- Non-governmental such as community based groups and not-for-profit organizations;
- Small municipalities;
- Small private sector organizations;
- Abilities Centre Durham;¹
- Colleges and universities;²
- Aboriginal governments and organizations; and
- Territorial governments.

By supporting community-based projects across Canada, the EAF is meant to improve accessibility, reduce barriers, and enable Canadians – regardless of physical ability – to participate in and contribute to their community and the economy. While doing so, it is also meant to encourage community groups and partners to work together in the design and implementation of projects.

Funded projects under the EAF fall into four broad categories:

- Small projects;
- Mid-sized projects;
- Major projects; and
- Abilities Centre Durham.

¹ Abilities Centre Durham was eligible for funding under the EAF during the 2007-2010 funding period only under the Abilities Centre Durham Terms and Conditions.

² Colleges and universities are eligible for funding under the EAF during the 2010-2013 funding period only.

Projects in these categories are distinguished by the level of EAF funding provided, the type of agreement governing the funding, and the nature of the projects.

Evaluation

The main objective of the evaluation was to examine issues of relevance and performance of the EAF, including effectiveness, efficiency, and economy³ of the grant-funded small EAF projects (under \$50,000) component over 2007-2008 to 2009-2010. In keeping with the Treasury Board Policy on Evaluation, the following core evaluation issues were identified:

Relevance:

- The continued need of the EAF;
- Its alignment with government priorities; and
- Its alignment with federal roles and responsibilities.

Performance:

- The EAF's achievement of expected outcomes (immediate intended EAF outcome, and to the extent possible, intermediate outcome); and
- Its demonstration of efficiency and economy.

The evaluation examined the EAF's relevance and performance generally, and then looked at the effectiveness of the grant-funded small projects funded during the 2007-2010 period for which self-reported project performance information was available at the time of the evaluation.

Methodology

The evaluation framework, which included a logic model and an evaluation matrix, was used to guide the summative evaluation. The evaluation approach used a variety of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods developed early in the evaluation. Five main lines of evidence were used as sources of information; together, these made it possible to address each of the evaluation core issues noted above. In most cases, more than one data collection method or line of evidence is associated with each question.

The lines of evidence consisted of:

- Literature review;
- Document review;
- Administrative data and file review;
- Key informant interviews; and
- Case studies.

³ The Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat's Policy on Evaluation defines effectiveness as "the extent to which a program is achieving expected outcomes." It defines efficiency as "the extent to which resources are used such that a greater level of output is produced with the same level of input or, a lower level of input is used to produce the same level of output." Finally it defines economy as "minimizing the use of resources." See <http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pol/doc-eng.aspx?section=text&id=15024> for these definitions and additional information on the policy.

These lines of evidence were selected as they were most likely to provide the required and relevant information for determining relevance and performance.

Despite the overall success of the implementation and analysis, it was not without its challenges. One such challenge involved securing the participation of key informants. While this resulted in a lower than expected number of interviews, it did not compromise the findings of the work because the withdrawal of less knowledgeable key informants strengthened the evaluation findings by focusing interviews on individuals who were most knowledgeable about the program. There were also logistical and conceptual difficulties related to EAF's expected outcomes. Measuring an increase in participation in community life was difficult because many organizations only notionally tracked the number of people with disabilities who used the facilities while others suggested that an increase in use was not the intent of their renovation, but rather an improvement in the quality of participation for people with disabilities. Finally, this challenge to the measurement of outcomes was evident by the identification of a number of broader benefits from EAF-supported renovation work including improved safety.

Key Findings and Conclusions

The evaluation identified a number of key findings under each of the main evaluation issues of relevance and performance.

Relevance

There is a clear need for the programming offered under the EAF.

The literature and document reviews undertaken as part of the evaluation suggested a general need for disability-related programming in Canada. At the same time, the administrative data and file review noted a high demand for the specific forms of support offered under the EAF. This need for the programming offered under the EAF was substantiated during the evaluation's case study visits, when all participating organizational representatives articulated the need for accessibility-related renovation work at their facility. They further stressed the difficulty they faced undertaking renovations that would address these needs.

EAF program objectives align with federal government and departmental priorities and strategic outcomes.

Government documents such as Vision Papers and Speeches from the Throne explicitly refer to the full participation of Canadians with disabilities as an important federal objective. Further, continued and expanded federal investments in recent Budgets for programming intended for people with disabilities, including the EAF, suggest that addressing disability issues is a key federal government priority. As a program that clearly addresses disability and accessibility-related barriers, the EAF aligns with federal priorities. Program documentation reviewed as part of the evaluation also indicates that the EAF aligns with departmental priorities.

The delivery of the EAF aligns with the federal government's roles and responsibilities.

Reviewed documents suggest there is a role for all orders of government in enabling people with disabilities to participate fully in Canadian society. The federal government's role concerning the creation of a barrier-free Canada for people with disabilities are described in various Acts, charters, and conventions. The *Constitution Act, 1982* and the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms (hereafter the Charter)* define a statement of political and civil rights for people living in Canada. Among many other rights, the *Charter* articulates rights for individuals with disabilities, emphasizing equality and mobility rights, and full participation in Canadian society. In addition, the federal government has been exercising and continues to exercise its discretionary spending power under Canada's constitution to support people with disabilities and address accessibility issues through a number of its programs, of which the EAF is a more recent example.

Although there are a few other sources of funding similar to the EAF, the demand for capital investment funding for accessibility-related renovations exceeds the total available supply funds.

The evaluation found that the Government of Canada currently offers a wide range of benefits and programming for people with disabilities. Other programs exist where funding may be accessed for similar purposes, such as the Social Development Partnerships Program – Disability Component, which supports initiatives to remove barriers to accessibility. The New Horizons for Seniors Program supports community-based projects, which allow seniors to benefit from and participate in their communities. Nevertheless, these programs do not target exclusively physical barriers for persons with disabilities. Discussions with organizational representatives during the case studies provided some insight into the practical realities of program overlap in the areas of disability- and accessibility-related capital funding. Most of the organizations stated that, to their knowledge, there were no other orders of government or organizations that ran programs similar to the EAF. In addition, representatives emphasized that despite these other sources of funding, the demand for accessibility-related renovations exceeded the funding supply. Some key informants indicated that similar programs that fund accessibility infrastructure, like the Trillium Foundation and the New Horizons for Seniors Program, have a limited amount of funding available and the demand for resources is high. The remaining respondents were unaware of other available programs that duplicated EAF.

Performance

A clear link exists between the EAF's activities and its anticipated outcomes.

The EAF's anticipated outcomes are feasible, given that environmental factors influence the capacity of people with disabilities to participate as members of Canadian society. Improving accessibility through environmental modifications would therefore be expected to improve and increase their ability to contribute to their communities and to the economy.

There are issues related to the EAF's application and selection process identified by both non-funded and funded applicants to the program.

Many government representatives and non-funded applicants indicated that, while strictly speaking, all organizations have an equal opportunity to apply to the EAF, the application and approval process may limit the ability of certain organizations to submit successful applications and by extension reduce the number of applications from these organizations. This is especially true of those with less grant application experience. The limited amount of time available for completing applications along with the need for three contractor quotes may point to a systematic advantage for organizations that have renovation projects planned in advance. Many individuals suggested that the requirement for three contractor quotes was problematic, despite the provision for an exemption under the EAF, and provided a variety of reasons why. Both government representatives and non-funded applicants cited the lack of opportunity for applicants to correct or supplement their proposals with additional information following submission as a problem.

In addition, a number of less frequently identified issues were raised. These included, but were not limited to, the requirement for certain application attachments, including the environmental questionnaire, the difficulty applying with an atypical property ownership or tenure agreement, the perception of uneven application of the program's selection criteria, and the time required for the EAF to review applications.

The EAF operates a performance management system, but issues related to the definition of its outcomes and organizations' understanding of them limit its value in assessing the EAF's performance.

EAF administrative data are capturing some of the necessary information to support the EAF's performance measurement framework, with regards to the small projects component. Although strong measures of program outputs exist, measures of outcomes are more problematic, and as discussed below, may not be consistently interpreted by organizations reporting on their projects. In addition, despite the existence of this administrative data, government representatives interviewed during the evaluation have little knowledge of the monitoring systems in place for the EAF. Most government representatives did not know or did not provide an answer concerning what tools the EAF is using to monitor, track, and report on program performance.

The difficulty with the monitoring system appears to mainly involve the outcomes that it tries to track. Many of these are difficult to measure in a consistent way, making quantitative analysis problematic. Government representatives who were aware of the EAF's data collection helped identify that the stated goals of the EAF are difficult to measure because they are not tangible. For example, interpretation of the number of people benefiting from the renovation – which is asked about in the final report – is unclear and answered inconsistently by proponents. These difficulties of interpretation were confirmed during the case studies.

The EAF is successful at supporting the installation of functioning accessibility structures.

While the administrative data did not include confirmation of whether projects were completed as reported by funding recipients, not a single case study organization failed to complete their renovation work.

There is evidence to suggest that the EAF increases accessibility to facilities, programs, and services among people with disabilities.

Most government representatives, disability experts, and disability organization representatives interviewed as part of the EAF evaluation agreed that EAF funding increases access for people with disabilities by making the projects a reality. Individuals from these same groups indicated that a majority of the projects would not go ahead without EAF funding and, if they did, the projects would take much longer to complete as the organizations would need to raise the necessary funds.

The administrative data suggest that many projects increased access to and therefore use of facilities by people with disabilities. Among some funded organizations, it was clearly difficult to quantify the extent that accessibility had improved. For others, improved accessibility meant changes in the way facilities were used rather than in the number of people using them – effectively noting a qualitative change among their regular users.

There is evidence to support the notion that the EAF has contributed to increased participation opportunities in community life by people with disabilities.

Based on EAF administrative data, almost one-third of the completed EAF projects (31.6%) reported some improvement in programming, service, or activity accessibility. Since the final reports did not specifically ask for comments on improvements in participation, it is possible that funding recipients did not include this information. This could result in under-reporting of these community life benefits. Improved opportunities for participation in community life were also mentioned in case studies conducted of funded organizations such as churches, where community interactions involved many social and recreational events, as well as by organizations that supported other social interactions such as labour market participation and work. Individuals also noted unintended positive effects following the renovation work such as: improved facility access for people with children in strollers; improved safety; and, an improved view of the organization by the community.

To improve program efficiency, there were some suggestions during the evaluation on changes to the delivery of the EAF.

Most government representatives interviewed as part of the EAF evaluation stated that the EAF is delivered efficiently, given the nature of the program with relatively small dollar value grants and the short time frame of the program. About half of these respondents provided suggestions of alternative mechanisms for delivering the program such as delivering the program regionally through the Service Canada offices because they are more familiar with the needs of the communities. The evaluation case studies suggested that grant funding was the best mechanism for the EAF small projects component.

While there are few points of comparison to assess the efficiency of the EAF program delivery, funded organizations noted that the current structure of the program provides a strong incentive for recipients to use renovation funding in the most efficient way possible.

There is little information from the evaluation to assess the efficiency of the EAF in the production of its outputs. This is, in part, a result of the limited cost information for alternative forms of program delivery. Cost-effectiveness generally requires a benchmark or alternative against which to measure the cost of producing outputs or outcomes. This alternative or benchmark is not clear in the case of the EAF.

Operational costs (salary and non-salary) for the EAF represent 23.3% of the total small projects component grant funds spent in the period 2007-2008 to 2009-2010. This is similar to the ratio for the Community Participation and Leadership component of the New Horizons for Seniors Program (22.5%) also delivered by HRSDC.⁴ However, in both cases operational costs included spending for the administration of other components or categories of funding.⁵ Determining the exact ratio of operational costs for each component of the EAF is challenging as operational costs are not accounted for separately.

Although few key informants were able to speak directly to the efficient use of EAF resources, details of the application and selection process suggest efficiencies. For example, the two-staged selection process – where projects are first screened for compliance with the EAF eligibility criteria and those that remain are then examined in more detail – appears to be an efficient way of dealing with a high volume of applications. The suggestion from some key informant interviewees and case study participants was that being allowed to revise their applications if they are missing information after submission would surely increase the time and costs associated with the selection of projects.

While case study participants had only limited information about HRSDC's internal management of the EAF, some spoke to the efficient use of resources at the recipient organization level. One noted that all organizations have a strong incentive to use any funding provided in the most efficient way possible. They also stated that an extensive list of possible renovation projects means that any savings resulting from efficiencies may be applied directly to other work. For example, if an organization is able to complete their original project using only 80% of their EAF funding, they can expand the scope of the project or move on to other work. This creates a strong incentive for efficient resource use by funded organizations, with the case studies providing examples of exactly this type of surplus resources use.

⁴ Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC). (2010). *Summative Evaluation New Horizons for Seniors Program Community Participation and Leadership Component – August 2010*. Retrieved from http://www.rhdcc-hrsc.gc.ca/eng/publications_resources/evaluation/2010/sp_988_03_11_eng/page10.shtml.

⁵ Operational budget covered the three categories of projects funded in the 2007-2008 to 2009-2010 funding period (small projects, major projects, and Abilities Centre Durham).

Recommendations

Recommendations coming out of the Summative Evaluation of the EAF Grants – 2007-2008 to 2009-2010 include:

1. In response to concerns raised regarding effectiveness of the EAF application and selection processes, the program should:
 - Review the need for three contractor quotes, its exemption provision under the program, and how using this exemption affects project selection.
 - Consider extending the amount of time between future Call for Proposals (CFPs) and application submission dates.
 - Increase communication between the EAF program staff and applicants between CFPs and project selection.
 - Review the EAF's project selection process and its effect on the types of projects selected.
2. Expand information about the program and the funding available through it to ensure that all regions of the country are equally informed about the EAF.
3. Review the types of quantitative outcome measures used in final project reports to ensure there is clarity around the type of accessibility change recorded and consider using qualitative data measures to assess the nature of accessibility change among funded organizations.

Management Response

Introduction

The Enabling Accessibility Fund (EAF) was announced in Budget 2007 as a three-year, \$45-million program. Budget 2010 announced the extension of the program by providing an additional \$45 million over the next three years. The program is scheduled to sunset on March 31, 2013. All future planned activities proposed in the Management Response are subject to program renewal.

The Office for Disability Issues of the Income Security and Social Development Branch (ISSDB) is the lead on the policy development of the EAF, while as of July 2012, the National Delivery Centre on Grants and Contributions, within the Program Operations Branch (POB), is responsible for the delivery of the program.

The Summative Evaluation of the EAF Grants – 2007-2008 to 2009-2010 was undertaken from November 2010 to September 2011. The evaluation was designed to examine the small projects component (under \$50,000) of the EAF from 2007-2008 to 2009-2010. The evaluation examined the EAF's relevance and performance generally, and then looked at the effectiveness of the small projects funded through grants during the 2007-2008 to 2009-2010 period for which self-reported project performance information was available at the time of the evaluation. The Management Response describes the Department of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada's (HRSDC) approach to addressing each recommendation and is structured as follows: key findings, Department's responses to recommendations, actions taken and planned activities.

Key Findings

In terms of the program's relevance, the evaluation found that there is a clear need for the program. The literature and document reviews undertaken during the evaluation suggested a need for disability-related programming in Canada and the administrative data and file review noted a high demand for the specific forms of support offered under the EAF. In addition, all participating organizational representatives articulated the need for accessibility-related renovation work at their facility and the data collected from Calls for Proposals (CFPs) held by EAF between 2007 and 2010 indicated that the need for capital investment for accessibility related renovations across Canada far exceeds the available funds. The evaluation also found that the program objectives aligned with federal government and departmental priorities and strategic outcomes concerning the creation of a barrier free Canada for people with disabilities.

As for the program's performance, while the evaluation concluded that a clear link exists between the EAF's activities and its anticipated outcomes, a number of issues related to the EAF's application and selection process were identified. To improve program efficiency, there were some suggestions during the evaluation on changes to the delivery of the EAF.

In addition, the evaluation demonstrated that there is evidence that the EAF is successful at supporting the installation of functioning accessibility structures, and that, in turn, it increases accessibility to facilities, programs and services among people with disabilities. However, issues related to the definition of the program's outcomes and organizations' understanding of them has presented some challenges in assessing the EAF's performance.

The evaluation recommendations deal primarily with the application and selection process and the challenge of measuring outcomes and thereby quantifying the impact of the program. The Management Response will be implemented collaboratively by three Branches: Income Security and Social Development Branch (ISSDB), Program Operations Branch (POB), and for communication and outreach related responses, Public Affairs and Stakeholders Relations Branch (PASRB).

Recommendations

1. *In response to concerns raised regarding effectiveness of the EAF application and selection processes, the program should:*
 - a. *Review the need for three contractor quotes, its exemption provision under the program, and how using this exemption affects project selection.*

The evaluation noted that almost all organizations consulted commented on how the requirement for three contractor quotes was problematic. Some said it was difficult to acquire three quotes in rural communities while larger organizations indicated they have preferred contractors and getting additional quotes put them in an awkward position as the other two had no chance of securing the work. While the program permits fewer quotes if a reasonable justification is provided, some applicants claimed they submitted a justification but were nevertheless rejected for funding on these grounds. The evaluation indicated a possibility that applicants are systematically misunderstanding the provision for an exemption from the three contractor quote requirement in the application package.

The Department agrees with the recommendation. The Department has reviewed the foundation for the requirement for the three quotes and determined that, while the possibility of exemption to this requirement may need clarification, the requirement is a valid one. A single contractor quote is not deemed satisfactory because in construction there is often a large variance in quotes. One quote does not provide reliable evidence that the recipient and program are getting value for money. Further, program experience has shown that when only two quotes are provided there is sometimes a large difference between them. The advantage of three quotes is that if two of the three quotes are substantially different, the third quote can determine which of the other two is more reasonable. It is understood that some applicants may find this requirement challenging, although data shows that 77% of applicants from the 2011 CFP were able to provide the three quotes, or an acceptable justification.

The Department realizes the importance of the exemption in circumstances where obtaining three contractor quotes is not a reasonable expectation and will ensure that applicants are more aware of the possibility of an exemption from the three contractor quote requirement, and ensure that those cases will be carefully considered by Program Operations Branch (POB) staff during the assessment process.

Actions Taken

- The 2012 Application Guidelines have clarified the possibility of an exemption to the three contractor quotes requirement by providing examples of non-acceptable rationales.
- For the 2012 Small Project CFP, a process has been introduced that will notify applicants when their application is missing required information, including three contractor quotes or an acceptable justification for an exemption, after the CFP closes. The applicant will be required to submit the missing information within a specified time frame.

Planned Activities

- A study will be undertaken in 2013-2014 by Income Security and Social Development Branch (ISSDB) to examine a sample of applications from the 2012 CFP in which exemptions were requested. The study will consider under what circumstances the practice of exemptions could be expanded.

- b. Consider extending the amount of time between future Call for Proposals (CFPs) and application submission dates.*

The evaluation stated that non-funded applicants noted the short time frame between the launching of CFPs and the due date for the proposal makes it difficult to ensure that all areas of the application are complete. It was also noted that the limited amount of time gave an advantage to organizations that have renovation projects planned in advance.

The Department agrees with the recommendation. In the past, the duration for which CFPs were open was limited by the fact that CFPs took place in the same fiscal year in which projects were funded. This meant that, within a one year time frame proposals needed to be submitted, a large volume of proposals needed to be assessed, and the projects themselves had to be finished. This tight schedule naturally limited the amount of time that the Department could give to applicants to submit their proposals.

Actions Taken

- The Department recognizes that some potential recipients may have difficulties with the time frame for the CFPs. When permitted, more time has been provided for the duration of CFPs beyond the minimum of 30 calendar days as set out in the Directive on Calls for Proposals. For example, the 2012 CFP was opened for 45 calendar days, from August 21, 2012 to October 5, 2012.

Planned Activities

- Income Security and Social Development Branch (ISSDB) will seek ministerial approval to release CFPs in the fiscal year preceding the year in which projects will be funded. Therefore, the plan would be that a CFP would be released in 2013-2014 for a project starting in 2014-2015. This would enable the CFP to be open for a longer period.
- c. *Increase communication between the EAF program staff and applicants between CFPs and project selection.*

All groups interviewed as part of the evaluation noted that EAF staff should be more available for personal contact during the application phase so that they can complete their form properly and can determine their eligibility for EAF funding before going through the whole application process. The evaluation also found that staff were available during the application process, particularly via email. A suggestion that there should be more contact between HRSDC and organizations during the selection process was also made.

The Department agrees with the recommendation. As the program is currently structured, the Department cannot provide status updates to applicants because the assessment process involves multiple stages over a period of a few months. Adding to the complexity of the assessment process, the final funding decisions and approvals remain with the Minister, which means that the status of applications cannot be disclosed to applicants during the assessment process and until final decisions are made for all applications submitted for a specific Call for proposals. Program Operations Branch (POB) will take measures to make this clearer to applicants. In cases where applicants have not supplied required information in their original submission, POB will communicate with the applicants to give them with another opportunity to provide the missing information within a specified timeframe.

Actions Taken

- As of the 2012 CFP, the process referred to in 1a) will permit applicants to submit information missing from their original applications after the close of the CFP. Whereas before applications missing mandatory documentation were automatically rejected, POB is testing new mechanisms and has introduced new measures so that the applicant will now be given a second chance to supply the missing information, or a reasonable justification for it not being submitted, within a specified timeframe.

Planned Activities

- The Communications Team (Public Affairs and Stakeholders Relations Branch) of the Department, in collaboration with POB, will post a notification on the program's HRSDC web page at the close of CFPs to notify applicants that the Department may not provide them with status updates while the assessment and approval process is ongoing.

- d. *Review the EAF's project selection process and its effect on the types of projects selected.*

The Department agrees with the recommendation. The evaluation indicated that some aspects of the application and approval process may limit the ability of certain organizations (especially those with less grant application experience) to submit successful applications and by extension reduce the number of applications from these types of organizations. Several requirements are pointed out as possible obstacles, including items already singled out in the recommendations, such as the need for three contractor quotes (recommendation 1a) and the limited amount of time to complete applications (recommendation 1b).

Other challenges noted by applicants included: the lack of opportunity to correct or supplement their applications following their original submission; the requirement for certain attachments such as the need to complete an environmental questionnaire; the difficulty in receiving EAF funding in situations where an atypical property ownership exists; and, the perception of uneven application of the program's selection criteria.

Actions Taken

- As of the 2012 CFP, the process referred to in 1a) will permit applicants to submit information missing from their original applications after the close of the CFP. Whereas before applications missing mandatory documentation were automatically rejected, now the applicant will be given a "second chance" to supply the missing information, or a reasonable justification for it not being submitted, within a specified timeframe. This addresses two concerns noted in the evaluation: the ability to provide supplementary information after the original application was submitted, and the related concern that some organizations had the opportunity to provide the supplementary information while others did not.
- In 2010, the program introduced a standard assessment tool, as well as training on how to use the tool for those involved in the review of applications, and a quality control function that ensures that applications are assessed according to a consistent standard.

Planned Activities

- Program Operations Branch (POB), through its National Grants and Contributions Delivery Centre created in July 2012 in an effort to increase the efficiency of nationally delivered programs, will develop and implement clear, transparent and consistent assessment protocols for applications submitted during CFPs (standardized assessment process with objective and fair elements).

2. *Expand information about the program and the funding available through it to ensure that all regions of the country are equally informed about the EAF.*

The Department agrees with the recommendation. The evaluation found that the distribution of funded projects was not aligned with the distribution of the Canadian population throughout the provinces and territories, and given that the number of approved projects was roughly proportionate to the number of applications received, this suggested that information about the program may not be uniform across all regions. The case studies revealed that information about the program was at times limited and that organizations that already had a close connection with HRSDC, and those with close connections to disability and service delivery networks in their regions, were most readily aware of the program. The uneven awareness of EAF across the country may mean that many potentially valuable projects would not be receiving EAF funding.

Income Security and Social Development Branch (ISSDB) will continue to utilize the current mechanisms in place, in addition to investigating other possible avenues, for the dissemination of information on the program to increase participation in the EAF application processes, particularly in areas that are under-represented.

Actions Taken

- An ever-growing email database containing over 4,000 email addresses has been used by the Department to send out notifications of CFPs to potential applicants. The database was initially created in 2008 and is continuously updated with new email addresses based on inquiries received through the program's website. This addresses a suggestion noted in the evaluation to develop and maintain a list of potential applicants to email about future CFPs.
- National news releases are published every time there is a new CFP launched.
- Information kits are developed by the Communications Team (Public Affairs and Stakeholders Relations Branch) of the Department and sent to Members of Parliament to inform them of CFPs every time a new CFP is launched. The information kits include information pertaining to the duration of the CFPs, eligible project activities, eligible recipients and information on the program to share with the community.
- EAF webpage and Funding Program webpage on HRSDC's internet site have been created and are updated by the Communications Team (Public Affairs and Stakeholders Relations Branch) of the Department.
- Although EAF is not part of the National Mobile Outreach Priority Plan for 2012-2013, Service Canada representatives have provided community outreach sessions early in the fiscal year during which they have provided information about departmental programs, including EAF. These information sessions are sporadic, narrow in scope, and either target an identified client segment, promote a specific service or program, or respond to an urgent need.

Planned Activities

- The Communications Team (Public Affairs and Stakeholders Relations Branch) of the Department will use approved departmental social media (e.g., Twitter) to promote awareness of the program's CFPs to groups and areas designated or targeted in CFPs.
 - Income Security and Social Development Branch (ISSDB), in collaboration with the Communications Team (Public Affairs and Stakeholders Relations Branch) of the Department, will make arrangements to promote the next CFP through Service Canada community outreach events in order to reach new applicants, groups, and areas designated or targeted in CFPs.
 - ISSDB will utilize the existing Federal/Provincial/Territorial committees and networks to share information about future CFPs as approved.
3. *Review the types of quantitative outcome measures used in the final project reports to ensure there is clarity around the type of accessibility change recorded and consider using qualitative data measure to assess the nature of accessibility change among funded organizations.*

The evaluation found two related problems when it came to quantitative measures. First, the case studies showed conceptual difficulties with the measurement of increases in accessibility and EAF outcomes generally, which were seen as being intangible. Contributing to this was that sometimes imprecise language led to different interpretations. For example, when reporting on “benefit to the community” applicants interpreted “community” differently; some saw it as the community of people with disabilities and other as the community at large that used the facility. This called into question the accuracy of the data collected.

Secondly, the evaluation found that the quantitative measures used in the project final report did not assess the full range of ways in which an increase in accessibility could be measured. Other potential measures included an increase in the frequency of use of the facility, as well as the qualitative change of the experience of using the facility.

Suggestions to improve performance measurement include: developing more tangible indicators (for example, one difficult to measure indicator asked applicants to measure the viability or vibrancy of the community); conducting longer-term follow-ups with the projects a year to a year-and-a-half after project completion; and, conducting site visits on a sample of projects to witness the impact.

The intended outcomes of the EAF are as follows: a) immediate outcome: People with disabilities having access to community facilities, programs, or services; b) intermediate outcome; People with disabilities having opportunities to participate in community life; c) Long-term outcome: Communities benefiting from the participation of people with disabilities. The Department agrees with the recommendation and, upon program renewal, Income Security and Social Development Branch (ISSDB) will seek to address outstanding issues surrounding outcomes measurement through a two-step process. To begin with, ISSDB will first refine the program's evaluation

framework to develop more tangible and comprehensive outcomes; it will then develop a tool for applicants in order to clarify the expectations of the program in regard to performance measurement and data collection.

Longer term follow-ups a year or more after the project is completed would likely be a challenge as recipients of EAF grants are usually one-time recipients and therefore the incentive to report again long after the completion of the project may be diminished. In addition, any new program activities pertaining to longer term follow-ups could be challenging given current funding levels. Future evaluations such as this one will continue to provide valuable longer term information from recipients.

In addition, the evaluation noted that some applicants indicated that people with disabilities used their facility prior to EAF funding, but that the renovation qualitatively changed the way in which they were used. For example, in one case people with wheelchairs had been carried into the facility, but a ramp allowed them to enter independently. Words such as dignity and independence were regularly used to help staff involved in the evaluation understand the impacts of the various renovations. Therefore ISSDB will consider integrating more qualitative data collection methods in its ongoing reporting, like ease of use of the facility and ability to move without assistance.

Actions Taken

- The Application Guidelines for the 2012 CFP provides typical examples of both quantitative and qualitative indicators to guide applicants in developing indicators that measure progress towards their stated outcomes.

Planned Activities

- Information from funded projects resulting from the 2012 Small Project CFP will be collected in order for ISSDB to assess the tangible outcomes and impact of the projects and analyse this data for patterns and trends at the program level. A sample of data from the 2010 and 2011 Small Project CFPs will also be gathered for assessment by ISSDB.
- ISSDB will refine the program's intended outcomes and performance indicators, while keeping in mind the need for more tangible outcomes and related indicators.
- ISSDB will develop a tool for future CFPs that will articulate, in plain language, the program's expectations concerning tangible outcome measurement. The tool will further explore the use of qualitative indicators and provide examples to encourage recipients to measure the success of their project in various ways.

Conclusion

The findings of the evaluation were largely positive. It substantiated the need for the program, its success in supporting the installation of functioning accessibility structures, which in turn increases accessibility to facilities, programs and services among people with disabilities. The evaluation also found that the program objectives aligned with federal government and departmental priorities and strategic outcomes concerning the creation of a barrier free Canada for people with disabilities.

The recommendations offered by the evaluation provide valuable insight into improving the application and selection process and the challenge of measuring outcomes. The Department has already taken steps to address some of these issues, but the planned activities which have been described in this Management Response will be dependent on the program being renewed beyond 2012-2013.

1. Introduction

This report discusses the evaluation of EAF grants funded during the period of 2007-2008 to 2009-2010 and includes five sections. Section 1 presents the program background. Section 2 describes the evaluation context. Section 3 then discusses the main findings of the evaluation. Section 4 provides a final summary of these findings and includes concluding remarks. Section 5 presents a list of recommendations. All evaluation activities undertaken as part of the evaluation took place between November 2010 and September 2011.

1.1 Program Background

Delivered by the Office for Disability Issues within Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC), the EAF is a federal initiative oriented toward Canadians with disabilities. The EAF was announced in Budget 2007 as a three-year, \$45-million, nationally delivered program. Budget 2010 announced the extension of the program by providing an additional \$45 million over the next three years.

The EAF provides direct funding for community-based renovation and retrofit projects. It is designed to contribute to the capital costs of construction for participatory abilities centres, construction of and renovations to buildings, modification to vehicles, as well as information and communications technologies related to improving accessibility for people with disabilities. These projects vary considerably in size and characteristics, and fall into four categories that are discussed in more detail below.

1.1.1 Program Objectives

By supporting community-based projects across Canada, the EAF is meant to improve accessibility, reduce barriers, and enable Canadians – regardless of physical ability – to participate in and contribute to their community and the economy.

These objectives support the larger social agenda of the Government of Canada by:

- Ensuring that people with disabilities are able to benefit from, and contribute to, the quality of life in their community through social participation;
- Reducing the risk of social isolation for people with disabilities;
- Promoting the ongoing involvement of people with disabilities in their communities; and,
- Strengthening social foundations at the community level.

1.1.2 Delivery Partners, Stakeholders, and Beneficiaries

Although the EAF is administered through Office for Disability Issues within HRSDC, the successful completion of funded projects requires considerable work on the part of other organizations throughout Canada. Typically, organizations identify, design, and undertake project work with funds provided under the program. These include:

- Non-governmental such as community based groups and not-for-profit organizations;
- Small municipalities;
- Small private sector organizations;
- Abilities Centre Durham;⁶
- Colleges and universities;⁷
- Aboriginal governments organizations; and
- Territorial governments.

Although the main beneficiaries of the program include individuals with disabilities facing accessibility barriers in the community, a number of other beneficiaries also exist. These include friends and families of those with disabilities, along with the community at large.

1.1.3 Program Funding and Administration

Table 1 details the resources allocated to the EAF for fiscal years 2007-2008, 2008-2009, and 2009-2010. Of the \$41.5 million grants and contributions funding available, \$41.1 million will be spent.

Table 1 Enabling Accessibility Fund Funding – 2007-2008 to 2009-2010				
Funding Type	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	Total
Operations & maintenance / Full-time equivalents	\$0M	\$2.0M	\$1.5M	\$3.5M
Grants and contributions	\$10.0M	\$18.0M	\$13.5M	\$41.5M ⁸
Total	\$10.0M	\$20.0M	\$15.0M	\$45.0M

⁶ Abilities Centre Durham was eligible for funding under the EAF during the 2007-2008 to 2009-2010 funding period only under the Abilities Centre Durham Terms and Conditions.

⁷ Colleges and universities are eligible for funding under the EAF during the 2010-2011 to 2012-2013 funding period only.

⁸ As a result of targeted savings in 2009-2010, EAF was reduced by \$200,000 therefore, the total grants and contribution funding available was \$41.3M.

Table 2 details the resources allocated to the EAF in fiscal years 2010–2011, 2011–2012, and 2012–2013.

Table 2 Enabling Accessibility Fund Funding – 2010-2011 to 2012-2013				
Funding Type	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	Total
Operations & maintenance / Full-time equivalents	\$2.0M	\$1.6M	\$1.2M	\$4.9M
Grants and contributions	\$9.4M	\$13.0M	\$17.7M	\$40.1M
Total	\$11.4M	\$14.6M	\$18.9M	\$45.0M

The Grants and Contributions component of EAF funding goes directly to projects falling into four broad categories, including:

- Small projects;
- Mid-sized projects;
- Major projects; and
- Abilities Centre Durham.

Projects in these categories are distinguished by the level of EAF funding provided, the type of agreement governing the funding, and the nature of the projects. For example, from 2007-2008 to 2009-2010, small projects received, at most, \$50,000 in grant funding to renovate buildings, modify vehicles, and/or make information and communication technologies more accessible. This ceiling was subsequently increased to \$100,000 for the 2010-2011 to 2012-2013 period. Some examples of small projects include the installation and modification of wheelchair ramps, wheelchair lifts and platforms, accessible washrooms, automatic entryways, and elevators.

Mid-sized projects are the result of the EAF expansion announced in Budget 2010. For the 2010-2011 to 2012-2013 period, mid-sized projects support retrofits, renovations, or new construction of accessible facilities throughout Canada. Mid-sized projects take a holistic approach to the social and labour market integration of people with disabilities. Successful mid-sized project applicants may receive \$500,000 to \$3 million in contribution funding.

Major projects exclusively involve the development or expansion of participatory abilities centres. In the 2007-2008 to 2009-2010 period, the EAF provided \$15 million to an abilities centre through a contribution agreement. No major project funding is planned for the 2010-2011 to 2012-2013 period.

The Abilities Centre Durham falls into its own fourth category. While similar in scope to the major projects discussed above, it was included in the EAF as a model centre. The Abilities Centre Durham was to serve as an example of how to encourage the participation of all people regardless of physical ability, and inspire the creation of other similar centres across the country. In the 2007-2008 to 2009-2010 period, the EAF provided \$15 million to the Abilities Centre Durham through a contribution agreement. It represents a unique element of the EAF.

All EAF projects, except the Abilities Centre Durham, were identified through Calls for Proposals (CFPs) that ask organizations to submit funding requests for independently developed renovation, retrofit, or construction projects in the small, mid-sized or major projects categories. To date, the EAF has issued five CFPs:

Table 3 Enabling Accessibility Fund Calls for Proposals	
Project Component	CFP Closing Date
Small projects and major projects – CFP 1	April 2008
Small projects – CFP 2	May 2009
Small projects – CFP 3	September 2010
Mid-sized projects – CFP 4	January 2011
Small projects – CFP 5	September 2011

1.1.4 Program Logic Model

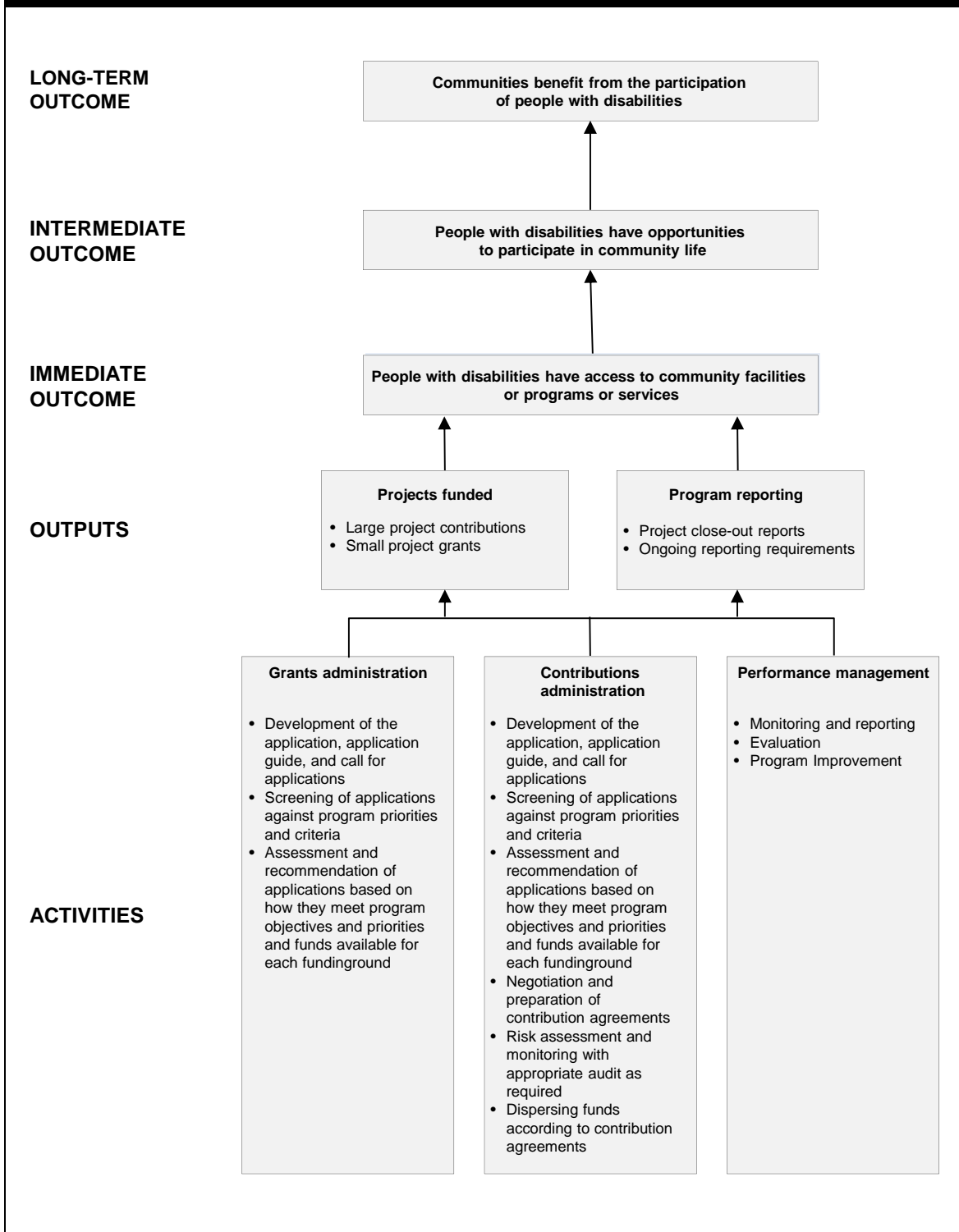
The program's activities are defined to include grants administration, contributions administration, and performance management. These activities are expected to produce two distinct outputs: funded projects and program reporting.

The logic model on the following page indicates the EAF achieves its main program objectives through the realization of three outcomes:

- Immediate outcome: People with disabilities having access to community facilities, programs, or services;
- Intermediate outcome: People with disabilities having opportunities to participate in community life; and
- Long-term outcome: Communities benefiting from the participation of people with disabilities.

Small, mid-sized, major projects and the Abilities Centre Durham are all intended to contribute to these outcomes. As the evaluation findings indicate, it becomes increasingly difficult to establish the impact of the EAF on outcomes in moving from the immediate to the long-term outcome.

Figure 1
Enabling Accessibility Fund Program Logic Model



2. Evaluation Context

The Summative Evaluation of the EAF Grants – 2007-2008 to 2009-2010 – examined the grant-funded small EAF projects (under \$50,000) component.

2.1 Evaluation Objectives

The main objective of this evaluation was to examine issues of relevance and performance of the EAF, including effectiveness, efficiency, and economy of the grant-funded small EAF projects (under \$50,000) component over 2007-2008 to 2009-2010. In keeping with the Treasury Board Policy on Evaluation, the following core evaluation issues were identified:

Relevance:

- The continued need of the EAF;
- Its alignment with government priorities; and
- Its alignment with federal roles and responsibilities.

Performance:

- The EAF's achievement of expected outcomes (immediate intended EAF outcome, and to the extent possible, intermediate outcome); and
- Its demonstration of efficiency and economy.

The evaluation examined EAF's relevance and performance generally, and then looked at the effectiveness of the grant-funded small projects for which performance information was available at the time of the evaluation.

2.2 Evaluation Questions

Based on the evaluation objectives and core issues identified above, 12 evaluation questions were developed. Annex 1 presents an evaluation matrix that includes each of these questions. Organized by core evaluation issue, this matrix aligns each evaluation question with their associated indicators, and the lines of evidence for each question.

2.3 Evaluation Approach and Methodology

The evaluation approach used a variety of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods developed early in the evaluation. A Methodology Report outlined the overall research strategies for the evaluation, along with the methodologies to be implemented. Five main lines of evidence were used as sources of information, and together, these made it possible to address each evaluation question. In most cases, more than one data collection method, or line of evidence, is associated with each question.

The lines of evidence consisted of:

- Literature review;
- Document review;
- Administrative data and file review;
- Key informant interviews; and
- Case studies.

The five lines of evidence noted above were deemed appropriate, by both HRSDC and the peer reviewers engaged for the evaluation, to provide the required information for determining the relevance and performance of the EAF.

2.3.1 Literature Review

The literature review was meant primarily to provide insight into the EAF's relevance – in particular, the continued need for the program. It began with an assessment and selection of key published works at the start of the evaluation. Selection was based on each document's relevance to the literature review questions noted in Annex 1. Since many of these documents were iterative – i.e., had an updated version for each year – the next step in the literature review process involved identifying the most recent version of each report. These were typically found on government websites or other publicly accessible locations.

Online search engines were then used to identify academic and professional literature. General searches using disability-related keywords identified relevant peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, and works produced by research institutes or other professional organizations. Further searches with subject areas identified in these documents helped identify additional sources. Finally, bibliographies from relevant literature added to the developing list of works. The literature review retained only those documents directly related to the evaluation questions noted in Annex 1.

2.3.2 Document Review

The document review also provided insight into the relevance of the EAF. However, unlike the literature review, it more closely focused on the program's alignment with federal priorities, roles, and responsibilities. In addition, rather than focusing on the academic, professional, and published reports, as was the case with the literature review, the document review collected information from policy documentation, Speeches from the Throne, internal documents, and other pertinent sources. The review employed a multi-step process to gather and analyze the documentary evidence. The process began with the development of a review template while drafting the Methodology Report. A review template was to be filled out for each document identified in the review to ensure that all information was gathered in a systematic and consistent way. Each completed review template listed the evaluation questions that the document reviewed was to address, and included associated areas to list aspects of the documents addressing each question.

The documents included a variety of EAF program documents, as well as links to information on programming and services related to the EAF. The completed review templates were used to gather information on each of these items and address a number of the evaluation questions. This process also identified those questions for which there was limited information.

The next step in the review process involved identifying and reviewing additional documentation. The identification focused on evaluation questions for which, in the previously mentioned set of documents, limited information existed. While some of these additional documents were publicly available – such as Speeches from the Throne – others were not. As with those documents initially provided for the evaluation, these were reviewed using the same review template.

The information from the completed review templates was then entered into NVivo, a software package used for qualitative data analysis. The information was coded in the program according to the evaluation questions, identifying groups of documents against each document. Examining these documents together allowed for the identification of key themes and building a body of evidence to address each question.

2.3.3 Administrative Data and File Review

The administrative data and file review profiled EAF applicants and funding recipients, as well as assessed outcomes measured by the program data. It began with a review of the 2008 and 2009 EAF Access databases. Two 2008 databases were provided by the EAF for the evaluation. One contained small project application data and the other contained performance indicator data from the final small project reports. The projects in these two 2008 databases were merged based on unique identifiers available in the datasets. The EAF provided one database with information from 2009. This contained all of the application and performance indicator data for projects in this year. It is important to note that several variables collected in the 2009 EAF database were not collected in 2008.

The administrative data and file review determined that the EAF databases included sufficient application and final project report information for nearly all evaluation questions identified in Annex 1. The main exception involved outcome information identifying the number of individuals benefiting from the projects. In both 2008 and 2009, the databases either inconsistently collected this information or did not collect it at all. Specifically, the number of community members, number of people with disabilities, and the overall number of people served by the facility before and after each project's renovation were not always recorded. This made it difficult if not impossible to make quantifiable before and after statements about the program's outcome measures.

From a file review of 166, 2008 EAF project files and 19, 2009 EAF final project files 55 had the information necessary to calculate the difference in the number of community members, number of people with disabilities, and the overall number of people served by the facility before and after each project's implementation.

The administrative databases included three verbatim variables. These included a project summary, a listing of benefits to people with disabilities, and a listing of benefits to the community. A coding exercise helped define category codes for each of these variables. Development of the codes followed an emergent coding process based on common descriptors found in each variable. All responses were then coded based on these categories.

A 20% sample of completed projects from the administrative databases was then drawn. The verbatim responses for this sample were independently recoded using the previously defined categories. Statistical testing on the two sets of coded variables for this 20% sample helped verify the accuracy of the original coding and the consistency of interpretation across the coders. This inter-coder reliability testing found considerable variation in results among two of the verbatim variables. As a result, the coding categories were redefined and the testing was repeated.

The redefined codes were far broader than previously identified. This was to ensure a more consistent interpretation. While the second round of testing did identify better consistency across both coders for one of the variables, it did not for the other. A review of the verbatim variables suggested that much of the original and remaining inconsistency might have resulted from question wording in the final project report, rather than the structure of the coding schemes.

Following the inter-coder reliability testing, SPSS, a statistical software program, was used to generate statistics, frequencies, and cross-tabulations of the data. Where possible, any obvious inconsistencies or data entry errors were corrected. When obvious solutions to these problems were not apparent, these data items were set to missing. Variables consistently recorded across the 2008 and 2009 databases were combined to calculate overall totals.

2.3.4 Key Informant Interviews

Key informant interviews involved a diverse group of individuals familiar with the EAF, and as such, directly addressed many of the evaluation questions. Important in this regard were those related to the need for the program and its outcomes. The inclusion of individuals from organizations who had applied to the EAF, but were not funded, provided important insight into the program's application process and project selection.

The key informant interview process began with the identification of potential key informants. Key informants fell into five categories:

- EAF managers, and officials within Office for Disability Issues – other than EAF direct delivery staff;
- Representatives of HRSDC and other federal departments and agencies active in related initiatives;
- Representatives from organizations that applied but did not receive grant funding from the EAF;

- Representatives of national and regional disability organizations; and
- Experts in disability issues.

A number of potential interviewees within four of these groups were identified. Representatives from organizations that applied to the EAF but did not receive funding were identified from the EAF databases provided at the start of the EAF evaluation.

A potential target population of 35 key informants was developed. As indicated in Table 4, 30 interviews were completed, yielding an 86% response rate. Since the number of key informants in most categories was limited, all individuals identified were invited to participate. The one exception was non-funded applicant organizations, which were selected from the full list of applicant organizations available at the time of the evaluation. These were selected in order to have a range of project types and budgets.

All individuals in the first category listed below, who were invited to participate, completed an interview. The same was not true of the other categories. Individuals in the second and fourth categories opted out of the interview process primarily due to limited information about the EAF. Those non-funded applicant organizations who were invited to participate, but that did not, often indicated that the individual who had applied to the EAF had moved on to another organization or simply did not respond to the request. Finally, of the disability experts invited to participate, some did not respond to the invitation, or suggest an alternative interviewee.

Table 4 Key Informant Interview Distribution		
Category	Number of Interviews Targeted	Number Interviewed
EAF managers/staff, and officials within Office for Disability Issues – other than EAF direct delivery staff	5	5
Representatives of HRSDC and other federal departments	8	6
Representatives from organizations that applied but did not receive grant funding	15	13
Representatives of national and regional disability organizations	4	3
Disability experts	3	3*
Total	35	30
* Includes the submission of written comments.		

Once identified, potential key informants were contacted by email to introduce the EAF evaluation and key informant interview process, and to solicit their participation in an interview. To facilitate this introduction process, each of the potential interviewees received a bilingual letter of introduction from HRSDC and a list of interview questions. Those individuals willing to participate in an interview received a follow-up call to schedule a date and time for their interview.

All interviews were structured and followed the key informant interview guides developed as part of the Methodology Report. These were available in both official languages and tailored to each group listed above. For example, interviews with failed applicants focused on the EAF application process and the rationale for the program. By contrast, interviews with government representatives were more far-reaching. Despite this tailoring, not all key informants could speak to every interview question.

All key informant interviews took place over the telephone in the official language of the interviewees' choice and lasted between 30 minutes and one hour. All interviews were audio recorded – with the consent of the interviewee – and interviewers took detailed notes. Once complete, these notes were returned to the interviewees for review and comment. After suggested revisions were accepted by the interviewer, these revised notes became the final versions used during the analysis. The analysis of the finalized key informant interview notes used NVivo. This software package helps identify and code themes within qualitative data. In this case, the evaluation questions guided the identification of these themes.

2.3.5 Case Studies

Case studies were conducted in order to gather information on the rationale for the EAF, its application process, its implementation, and its impacts. The case studies explored the factors that enabled success, as well as barriers in implementing projects or achieving success.

As established in the Methodology Report, the case study process involved in-person and supplementary data collection at 20 sites across Canada. Each case study differed based on the nature of the funded project and involved five main activities. These activities involved: initial contact and planning; document and administrative data review; key informant interviews; focus groups; and surveys.

The execution of the case study process required a number of distinct steps. The first involved the selection of 20 sites at which the case studies would take place. This selection was driven by two factors. First, sites were selected to support a logistically feasible, in-person data collection process, within the available evaluation budget. Second, sites were selected so as to gather information on EAF-funded projects with a mix of characteristics.

Four major centres were identified in five provinces including Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, and New Brunswick. Funded projects undertaken in four locations within, or proximate to each of these centres were then selected so as to get a mix of the following characteristics:

- Project budget
- Rural or urban location; and,
- The type of project undertaken.

Table 5 represents the distribution of case studies across Canada.

Table 5 Case Study Regional Distribution		
Provinces	Organizations Contacted	Case Studies Completed
Saskatchewan	4	4
Manitoba	7	4
Ontario	6	4
Quebec	5	4
New Brunswick	7	4
Total	29	20

Once the selection was complete, information from the EAF administrative database allowed initial contact with the organizations at each site. This initial contact consisted of a bilingual email of introduction with two attachments. The first was a bilingual letter from HRSDC introducing the evaluation, its scope, the voluntary nature of the organization's possible participation, and the privacy policies governing the evaluation work. The second was a bilingual version of the interview guides that would structure the organizational interviews during each visit. These interviews are discussed in more detail below.

Following this introductory email, research staff members contacted each organization to confirm their participation. While most agreed to participate in the case study process and proceeded to arrange a suitable time for a site visit, others were either uninterested or were unable to participate. For example, some organizations declined to participate since the individual who had applied to the EAF and overseen the associated renovation work had moved on to another job. These organizations were removed from the case study list and were subsequently replaced with another suitable organization in the same province.

During the site visit scheduling, members of the research team outlined four main data collection possibilities for the site visits:

- A document review involving the collection of application- and project-related information;
- A key informant interview process with representatives from the organization;
- A focus group process with clients of the organization facing accessibility limitations; and
- A survey with clients of the organization facing accessibility limitations.

Each of these activities were undertaken in the official language of choice of the organization.

All organizations agreed to provide documents related to their EAF-funded renovation work. In most cases, this included their completed applications and the required attachments. All organizations also agreed to have representatives participate in one or more key informant interviews.

Many of the organizations indicated that a focus group with clients was not a possibility. In some cases, this was because it was too difficult for the organization to recruit clients for the day of the planned site visit. In other cases, the organizations did not have an ongoing relationship with their clients and could not contact those with an accessibility limitation. For example, one organization renovated a theatre facility and did not know who among its users had a disability. This suggested that not all individuals with disabilities who used the facilities had strong ties to the organization itself.

In addition to conducting 12 focus groups across 11 sites, each of the 20 case study sites was sent a package of bilingual surveys for clients to complete. These surveys attempted to gather similar information to that gathered in the focus groups, and allowed for intermittent users of the facilities to provide feedback for the evaluation. Organizations were asked to make the survey questionnaires available during the weeks preceding and following the site visits so that clients could complete them at their convenience as they used the organization's facility. They were then asked to return them in the accompanying self-addressed, postage-paid envelopes.

The Methodology Report suggested that survey results would be incorporated into the case study reporting if a site completed and returned 25-50 questionnaires. Unfortunately, no organization was able to achieve this level of response. As such, the responses were analyzed qualitatively in much the same manner as the focus group data, rather than statistically, as is typical of survey results.

Those conducting the site visits integrated the data from the four case study activities and drafted site-specific profiles. These narrative profiles described the organization and its renovation work supported through the EAF, and discussed insights related to the evaluation questions above. These profiles were then inputted into NVivo – a qualitative analysis software package – and coded according to the evaluation questions.

2.4 Analysis and Reporting

Integrating the findings from each line of evidence was a critical part of the evaluation. The data analysis strategy involved the triangulation of multiple lines of evidence by extracting the results and cross-validating the findings. The process of triangulation⁹ was carried out systematically, again using NVivo, and with respect to each of the questions in Annex 1. As part of this approach, the strengths and limitations of each line of evidence were taken into consideration. This process supported the drafting of this report.

⁹ Bogdan, R. C. & Biklen, S. K. (2006). *Qualitative research in education: An introduction to theory and methods*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon Inc. defines triangulation as a powerful technique that facilitates validation of data through cross verification from more than two sources. In particular, it refers to the application and combination of several research methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon.

It is important to note that the degree of confidence regarding a specific evaluation finding is, in part, a function of the number of lines of evidence supporting that same finding. For example, when different lines of evidence produce a similar finding, this finding is assumed to have greater validity and, therefore, greater confidence in the finding is warranted. Conversely, findings generated by a single line of evidence should be treated with caution.

2.5 Challenges and Limitations

Despite the overall success of the implementation and analysis, it was not without its challenges. One such challenge was the limited number of focus groups and surveys conducted. Many of the organizations indicated that a focus group with clients was not a possibility and not enough surveys were completed for statistical analysis. Consequently, survey responses only provided qualitative information on the experiences of facility users and were analyzed in a similar way as focus groups. In effect, survey results helped strengthen the qualitative results obtained through focus groups by providing a broader set of user views.

There were logistical and conceptual difficulties related to EAF's expected outcomes. Measuring an increase in participation in community life was difficult. Many organizations only notionally tracked the number of people with disabilities who used their facilities. Others suggested that an increase in use was not the intent of their renovation, but rather an improvement in the quality of participation experienced by people with disabilities. In both cases, this made direct statements about EAF's stated goals challenging. This may suggest the need for more qualitative data collection as part of the EAF reporting, in order to capture the full extent of the program's impacts and the link between project work and specific outcomes.

This challenge to the measurement of outcomes was evident through the identification of a number of broader benefits from EAF-supported renovation work. Improvements, such as improved safety, are not necessarily included in the EAF's stated goals. However, during the evaluation, it became evident that these benefits were equally valuable to people with disabilities. To include these in the discussion that follows, the evaluation generally adopted a broader perspective on the EAF's outcomes.

3. Key Findings

This section summarizes the key findings of the evaluation gathered from the five lines of evidence noted in Section 2. These are grouped by evaluation issue and question.

3.1 Relevance

As suggested by the evaluation matrix in Annex 1, EAF program relevance relates to three main issues. The first is the continued need for the program, the second is its alignment with government priorities, and the third is its alignment with federal roles and responsibilities. In the subsection below, questions associated with each of these issues are answered based on the findings from each of the EAF evaluation lines of evidence.

3.1.1 Continued Need for the Program

Is there a demonstrated need for the EAF and is it responsive to these needs?

There is a clear need for the programming offered under the EAF.

The academic literature reviewed as part of the EAF evaluation suggests that approximately one out of every seven Canadians has at least one disability.¹⁰ It also states that these disabilities can have a significant impact on their social and economic inclusion in society.¹¹ Canadians with disabilities also face numerous accessibility challenges. Despite the fact that these figures include individuals with all types of disabilities, and the EAF typically addresses the accessibility needs of a subset of these, the figure none the less suggests a need for interventions like the EAF and support the relevance of the program.

Program documentation related to the EAF also points out that a growing proportion of the Canadian population has one or more disabilities. For example, whereas in 2001, 12.4% of the population (3.6 million) reported having at least one disability, by 2006, the disability rate had increased to 14.3% (4.4 million).¹² Part of this increase is attributable to an aging population, as people tend to experience more disability as they become older. Some documentation cites predictions that between 5.6 and 6.1 million Canadians will have a disability by 2026.¹³

¹⁰ Statistics Canada. (2007). *Participation and activity limitation survey 2006: Tables* (Catalogue no. 89-628-XIE). Published by authority of the Minister of Industry. pp. 3–4.

¹¹ Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC). (2009). *Federal disability report: Advancing the inclusion of people with disabilities*. pp. 5–6. Retrieved from http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/disability_issues/reports/fdr/2009/fdr_2009.pdf.

¹² Government of Canada & HRSDC. (2009). *Federal Disability Report 2009*. p. 6. Retrieved from http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/disability_issues/reports/fdr/2009/fdr_2009.pdf.

¹³ Office for Disability Issues. (2010, October 27). Office for Disability Issues. Retrieved from the Human Resources and Skills Development Canada website: http://www.rhdcc-hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/disability_issues/mandate/index.shtml.

Those interviewed during the evaluation, as part of the key informant interviews and case studies, all agreed that there is a need for programming like that offered through the EAF. Government representatives, non-funded applicants, disability experts, and disability organization representatives listed a number of accessibility challenges faced by Canadians with disabilities of various types – including physical, hearing, visual, and developmental disabilities. They noted that the inability of people with disabilities to access restaurants, community centres, and other similar establishments affects their social inclusion in their communities. While this clearly limits individuals' choice regarding participation in the community, it may also lead to feelings of isolation, fostering even less desire to attend other social events, such as leisure and recreational activities.

The interview respondents also noted that Canadians with disabilities face economic challenges. Their disabilities and lack of accessibility options limit their ability to go for job training, get to job interviews, and obtain employment. One disability expert noted that there are many other factors contributing to the difficulty people with disabilities have in finding employment, and the EAF is a step in the right direction.

The need for programming offered under the EAF was substantiated during the evaluation's case study visits. All organizational representatives who participated in a case study were able to articulate the need for accessibility-related renovation work at their facility. Needs were diverse and included, for example:

- Lifts or elevators to allow individuals access to various facility levels;
- Ramps to improve access to buildings;
- Washroom renovations to allow access for those who use wheelchairs and other mobility devices; and
- Lighting improvements to provide those with low vision the ability to better navigate facilities.

All organizations argued that these renovations had the potential to improve access among their clients.

At the same time, organizations stressed the difficulty they faced undertaking renovations that would address these needs. Larger organizations, particularly those in urban centres who served a large client base, noted that they often have a list of renovations that require attention and funding constraints limit their ability to undertake them all. Some of the smaller organizations suggested that while they had a limited number of required renovations, they rarely had the ability to fully fund these. In all cases, organizations noted that without the EAF, their accessibility-related renovations would have been delayed, if not cancelled entirely.

While these lines of evidence suggest a general need for disability-related programming in Canada, the administrative data and file review undertaken as part of the evaluation notes a high demand for the specific forms of support offered under the EAF. The number of applications increased significantly in 2009 to 1,196 from 728 applications in 2008. Of the 1924 total applications received, 329 of those applications became projects, with about the

same number of projects approved each year. From these figures, it is clear that the demand for small-scale renovation work exceeds the resources available under the program.

3.1.2 Alignment with Government Priorities

Do the program objectives align with the federal government priorities and departmental strategic outcomes?

EAF program objectives align with federal government and departmental priorities and strategic outcomes.

Government documents such as Vision Papers and Speeches from the Throne explicitly refer to the full participation of Canadians with disabilities as an important objective. For example, *In Unison: A Canadian Approach to Disability Issues* articulates the vision that:

Persons with disabilities participate as full citizens in all aspects of Canadian society. The full participation of persons with disabilities requires the commitment of all segments of society. The realization of the vision will allow persons with disabilities to maximize their independence and enhance their well-being through access to required supports and the elimination of barriers that prevent their full participation.¹⁴

The 2008 Speech from the Throne emphasized:

Today, it is more important than ever to deliver on this promise [of opportunity], and ensure that all Canadians share in the promise of this land, regardless of cultural background, gender, age, disability or official language [and therefore] this Government will break down barriers that prevent Canadians from reaching their potential.¹⁵

Activities undertaken by the federal government, such as the recent introduction of new programs for people with disabilities or improvements to existing programs, suggest that addressing disability issues is a key federal government priority. For instance:

- Budget 2006 introduced changes that increased the size of and extended eligibility for disability-related tax benefits, including the Child Disability Benefit and the Refundable Medical Expense Supplement;¹⁶
- Budget 2007 introduced the EAF, the Registered Disability Savings Plan, and a Disability Supplement for the Working Tax Income Benefit;¹⁷

¹⁴ Government of Canada. (1998). *In unison: A Canadian approach to disability issues*. para. 1. Retrieved from http://www.unionsociale.gc.ca/pwd/unison/approach_e.html.

¹⁵ Governor General of Canada. (2008). Speech from the Throne 2008. Retrieved from <http://www.sft-ddt.gc.ca/eng/media.asp?id=1379>.

¹⁶ Department of Finance Canada. (2006). *The Budget Plan 2006 - Focusing on priorities*. Retrieved from <http://www.fin.gc.ca/budget06/pdf/bp2006e.pdf>.

¹⁷ Department of Finance Canada. (2007). *The Budget Plan 2007 - Aspire to a stronger, safer, better Canada*. Retrieved from <http://www.budget.gc.ca/2007/pdf/bp2007e.pdf>.

- Budget 2008 expanded the list of tax-free medical and assistive devices, and tax exemptions were introduced for specialized training for people with certain disorders or disabilities;¹⁸
- Budget 2009 included \$75 million over two years for the construction of social housing units for Canadians with disabilities,¹⁹ and \$40 million over two years to increase the accessibility of federally owned buildings;²⁰
- Budget 2010 introduced an extension to the EAF, including an additional \$45 million over three years and the incorporation of a mid-sized project component.²¹ Improvements to the Registered Disability Savings Plan, allowing a 10-year carry forward of Canada Disability Savings Grants and Canada Disability Savings Bonds; and
- Funding in the order of \$10 million to the Canadian Paralympic Committee and \$2 million to Special Olympics Canada to encourage Canadians with disabilities to participate in sport and competitions.²²

Similarly, Canada's ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in March 2010 suggests disability issues are a priority for the federal government.²³ As a program that clearly addresses disability and accessibility-related barriers, the EAF aligns with federal priorities.

Program documentation also indicates that the EAF aligns with departmental priorities. According to HRSDC's Program Activity Architecture, the EAF falls under Strategic Outcome 3 - Income security, access to opportunities and well-being for individuals, families and communities.²⁴ Within this Strategic Outcome, the EAF is associated with the Social Development Program Activity, the priority of which is "[to] support individuals, families, and communities in overcoming barriers to social/economic inclusion and well-being."²⁵ The EAF's objective of reducing barriers, thereby enabling Canadians, regardless of physical ability, to participate in and contribute to their community and the economy, appears to align closely with this Strategic Outcome and Program Activity.

Evidence from the implementation of the program further supports this alignment. For example, according to administrative program data available at the time of the evaluation, more than half of EAF projects have increased mobility/access within facilities (53.8%) and/or increased access to facilities (52.6%) for people with disabilities. In addition, nearly one-third of all completed projects (31.6%) explicitly recognized improved services for people with disabilities among their outcomes.

¹⁸ Department of Finance Canada. (2008). *The Budget Plan 2008 - Responsible leadership*. p. 15. Retrieved from <http://www.budget.gc.ca/2008/pdf/plan-eng.pdf>.

¹⁹ Department of Finance Canada. (2009). *The Budget Plan 2009 - Canada's Economic Action Plan*. p. 124. Retrieved from <http://www.budget.gc.ca/2009/pdf/budget-planbudgetaire-eng.pdf>.

²⁰ Ibid. p. 158.

²¹ Department of Finance Canada. (2010). *The Budget Plan 2010 - Canada's Economic Action Plan Year 2 - Leading the way on jobs and growth*. p. 131. Retrieved from <http://www.budget.gc.ca/2010/pdf/budget-planbudgetaire-eng.pdf>.

²² Ibid. p. 133.

²³ Government of Canada & HRSDC. (2010). *Federal Disability Report 2010*. p. i. Retrieved from http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/disability_issues/reports/fdr/2010/fdr_2010.pdf.

²⁴ HRSDC. (2010). *HRSDC 2010-2011 estimates: Reports on plans and priorities*. p. 11. Retrieved from <http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/rpp/2010-2011/inst/csd/csd-eng.pdf>.

²⁵ Ibid. p. 41.

3.1.3 Alignment with Federal Roles and Responsibilities

Does the delivery of the EAF align with the federal government's roles and responsibilities in relation to improving accessibility for people with disabilities?

The delivery of the EAF aligns with the federal government's roles and responsibilities.

Reviewed documents suggest that there is a role for all orders of government in enabling people with disabilities to participate fully in Canadian society. For example, the Federal Disability Report 2006 points out that “the three orders of government, working together and in collaboration with the non-profit and the private sectors, assume important and complementary roles in promoting and supporting the full participation of people with disabilities in all dimensions of Canadian society.”²⁶

The federal government's role concerning the creation of a barrier-free Canada for people with disabilities are described in various Acts, charters, and conventions. The *Constitution Act* of 1982 and the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (hereafter the *Charter*) define a statement of political and civil rights for people living in Canada. Among many other rights, the *Charter* articulates rights for individuals with disabilities, emphasizing equality and mobility rights, and full participation in Canadian society. A statement in section 15 of the *Charter* defines the social importance of ensuring full participation of people with disabilities in Canada. It also identifies the federal government as a key protector of the rights of individuals with disabilities through the application of the *Charter* to both Parliament and the Government of Canada.

In addition, the federal government has been exercising and continues to exercise its discretionary spending power under Canada's constitution to support people with disabilities and address accessibility issues through a number of its programs, of which the EAF is a more recent example.

The Office for Disability Issues' mandate is to:

- Foster coherent policies and programs in the federal jurisdiction and across all jurisdictions;
- Serve as a model for the federal government and provide leadership by example;
- Build the capacity of the voluntary sector and create cohesive networks of partners through strategic investment;
- Support the ongoing pursuit of knowledge to inform policy and program development; and

²⁶ Government of Canada & HRSDC. (2006). *Federal Disability Report 2006*, p. 6. Retrieved from http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/disability_issues/reports/fdr/2006/advancinginclusion.pdf.

- Reach out to Canadians to engage citizens on disability issues, increase awareness and create citizen consensus regarding full participation of people with disabilities in Canadian society.²⁷

To the extent that Office for Disability Issues' mandate drives policies and approaches at the federal level, alignment between the mandate and EAF objectives would suggest integration with Office for Disability Issues policies and approaches. However, Office for Disability Issues' mandate is outlined only in general terms and does not provide a direct link to EAF expected outcomes. This makes it difficult to assess the level of integration with EAF objectives and its delivery. Office for Disability Issues describes itself as "a focal point within the Government of Canada for key partners working to promote the full inclusion and participation of Canadians with disabilities in all aspects of society and community life," adding that "[it] strives to provide leadership and foster excellence for the Government of Canada in this area of shared responsibilities."²⁸

Interviews with Office for Disability Issues officials and EAF staff, however, pointed to some uncertainty about the appropriate role of the federal government with regard to disability-related issues, and by extension, the EAF. Most key informant interview respondents agreed that the federal government should have a role in improving accessibility for people with disabilities and the EAF is the proper mechanism for that federal involvement. Further, about half of the respondents suggested that the federal government needs to continue to take a leadership role in the area to encourage Canadians, other orders of government, private organizations, and the non-profit sector to make these accessibility improvements.

Yet, a few respondents mentioned that the federal government should also take a leadership role by introducing policies and legislation in this area. Some other respondents said that the federal government's role should focus on awareness, while some noted that improving accessibility for people with disabilities is not solely the role of the federal government. In addition, some non-funded applicants were not sure if improving accessibility for people with disabilities was the role of the federal government at all. A few other non-funded applicants simply stated that they did not know what the role of the federal government should be concerning accessibility.

²⁷ Office for Disability Issues. (2010, September 1). Mandate of the Office for Disability Issues. Retrieved from http://www.rhdcc-hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/disability_issues/mandate/mandate.shtml.

²⁸ Office for Disability Issues. (2011, January 17). Disability issues – Programs. Retrieved from the Human Resources and Skills Development Canada website: http://www.rhdcc-hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/disability_issues/index.shtml.

Is the EAF duplicating or complementing initiatives from other federal government departments and agencies, and/or provincial/territorial departments, the not-for-profit or private sectors, or other national disability-related organizations?

Although there are a few other sources of funding similar to the EAF, the demand for capital investment funding for accessibility-related renovations exceeds the total available supply of funds.

The evaluation found that the Government of Canada currently offers a wide range of benefits and programming for people with disabilities. The 2010 Federal Disability Report lists 62 disability-related programs and benefits administered by the federal government, including 25 related to inclusion and supports; 8 related to income supports; 12 related to learning, skills, and employment; 10 related to health and well-being; and, 7 related to tax measures. The Programs Division within Office for Disability Issues administers three of these programs, including not only the EAF, but also the Social Development Partnerships Program – Disability Component and the Registered Disability Savings Plan.²⁹

A key federal program dealing with accessibility is the Social Development Partnerships Program. The program provides funding to not-for-profit organizations to help improve the lives of children and families, people with disabilities and other vulnerable Canadians. The program has two funding components with one, Social Development Partnerships Program – Disability Component, providing funding to organizations to support projects intended to improve the participation and integration of people with disabilities in all aspects of Canadian society. More specifically, the program supports not-for-profit organizations across Canada in tackling barriers faced by people with disabilities with respect to social inclusion.³⁰ Both the EAF and Social Development Partnerships Program – Disability Component support initiatives to remove barriers to accessibility. In addition, both programs support not-for-profit organizations, although the EAF also provides funding for various other applicants, including small municipalities, small private sector organizations, colleges and universities, territorial governments, and Aboriginal communities. There are some significant differences between the programs; for example, part of the Social Development Partnerships Program – Disability Component coverage focuses on supporting the development of effective approaches to address social issues and challenges and fostering partnerships and networks to address them, rather than improving accessibility through environmental modifications. In this sense, EAF initiatives complement Social Development Partnerships Program – Disability Component initiatives.

Another key federal initiative is the New Horizons for Seniors Program. The New Horizons for Seniors Program supports community-based projects, which allow seniors to benefit from and participate in their communities. While the program does not focus exclusively

²⁹ Office for Disability Issues. (2010, September 1). Mandate of the Office for Disability Issues. Retrieved from http://www.rhdcc-hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/disability_issues/mandate/mandate.shtml.

³⁰ Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC). (2010a). *Social development partnerships program – disability (SDPP-D)*. Retrieved from http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/community_partnerships/sdpp/call/disability_component/page00.shtml, para.1-4.

on seniors with disabilities, it does provide some funding in this area. One stream directs funding to projects that decrease isolation and encourage seniors to contribute to and improve the well-being of their communities by sharing their wisdom, experience, and skills. Another stream funds projects that improve the facilities and equipment belonging to existing programs and initiatives for seniors. The last stream raises awareness of the abuse of older adults.³¹ The New Horizons for Seniors Program appears to complement the EAF by focusing on several related issues but not directly on accessibility.

In addition to federal programs, the document review noted several examples of initiatives undertaken at a provincial level, including:

- Assistive Devices Program (Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care) – The Assistive Devices Program provides financial support for over 8,000 pieces of equipment or supplies for Ontario residents with a physical disability;³²
- *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (Province of Ontario) – Involves the development of mandatory accessibility standards regarding “accessibility in all areas of daily life.”³³ According to the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services website, four standards are currently in place – the Customer Service Standard,³⁴ the Transportation Standard, the Employment Standard, and the Information and Communications Standard.³⁵ Work on a fifth standard, the Built Environment Standard, is ongoing.³⁶
- “Made in Manitoba” Accessibility Legislation (Province of Manitoba) – In November 2010, the Province of Manitoba released a Discussion Paper examining the possibility of following the lead of other jurisdictions in introducing legislation to “advance the inclusion of persons with disabilities into all facets of society.”³⁷
- Regional Operations and Community Development Branch Funding (Province of New Brunswick) – Through the Regional Operations and Community Development Branch, the Ministry of Wellness, Culture and Sport offers grant funding to improve accessibility of facilities for people with disabilities in recreation programs.³⁸

³¹ Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC). (2008). *Federal disability report: Advancing the inclusion of people with disabilities*. Government of Canada. Retrieved from http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/disability_issues/reports/fdr/2008/fdr_2008.pdf. p.45.

³² Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (OMHLTC). (2010, December 8). Assistive Devices Program. Retrieved from http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/program/adp/adp_mn.html.

³³ Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services. (2011). About the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*, 2005. Retrieved from

http://www.mcscs.gov.on.ca/en/mcscs/programs/accessibility/understanding_accessibility/aoda.aspx
<http://www.mcscs.gov.on.ca/documents/en/mcscs/publications/accessibility/AboutAODAWeb20080311EN.pdf>.

³⁴ Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services. (2011). Customer Services Standards. Retrieved from <http://www.mcscs.gov.on.ca/en/mcscs/programs/accessibility/customerService/>.

³⁵ Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services. (2011). Other Standards. Retrieved from http://www.mcscs.gov.on.ca/en/mcscs/programs/accessibility/other_standards/index.aspx.

³⁶ Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services. (2011). Accessibility Standard for the Built Environment. Retrieved from

http://www.mcscs.gov.on.ca/en/mcscs/programs/accessibility/other_standards/builtenvironment/index.aspx.
³⁷ Province of Manitoba. (2010). Discussion paper for Made in Manitoba Accessibility Legislation. Retrieved from <http://www.gov.mb.ca/dio/discussionpaper/pdf/discussionpaper.pdf>.

³⁸ McColl, M. A., & Stephenson, R. (2008, December). *A scoping review of disability policy in Canada: Effects on community integration for people with spinal cord injuries*. Queen’s University. Retrieved from <http://dsp-psd.pwgsc.gc.ca/Collection/RH37-4-3-2003E.pdf>; Province of New Brunswick. (2011). Regional Operations & Community Development Branch.

However, discussions with organizational representatives during the case studies provided some insight into the practical realities of program overlap in the areas of disability- and accessibility-related capital funding. Most of the organizations stated that, to their knowledge, there were no other orders of government or organizations that ran programs similar to the EAF.

A few representatives with extensive experience in completing funding applications stated that, in their region, there were a limited number of other organizations that would fund similar capital projects. They provided examples such as the Trillium Foundation, the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services, and the Manitoba Department of Family Services and Consumer Affairs. Some organizations suggested that private funding from individuals or groups could also support capital expenditures. Further, it is important to note that any funding provided for general use by organizations could reasonably be applied to capital expenses. However, representatives emphasized that despite these other sources of funding, the demand for accessibility-related renovations exceeded the funding supply.

Most government representatives, disability experts, disability organization representatives, and non-funded applicants indicated there are no programs that duplicate EAF funding. While some respondents mentioned similar programs that fund accessibility infrastructure, like the Trillium Foundation and the New Horizons for Seniors Program, they noted that the amount of funding from these programs is limited and the demand for resources is high. The remaining respondents were unaware of other available programs that duplicated EAF.

3.2 Performance

Two main issues provide insight into the EAF's performance. The first involves its achievement of expected outcomes. A number of questions examine these expected outcomes from various perspectives. The second involves the demonstration of efficiency and economy in program delivery. Here, questions relate to the efficient use of program inputs in the production of program outputs.

It is important to note that as a renovation program funded through HRSDC, but reliant on the successful completion of projects by third-party organizations, different perspectives on the outputs of the EAF may exist. One may argue that the delivery of funding to recipients represents the main output of the program, and the successful completion of renovation projects by these recipients represents an outcome. This is the perspective represented in the EAF logic model above. However, the discussion below moves beyond this perspective, examining aspects of the efficient resource use during renovation work.

3.2.1 Achievement of Expected Outcomes

To what extent does a clear link exist between EAF activities and anticipated outcomes?

A clear link exists between the EAF's activities and its anticipated outcomes.

The main objective of the EAF is to “enable Canadians, regardless of physical ability, to participate in and contribute to their community and the economy.” The EAF logic model posits that funding accessibility-related infrastructure will improve and increase access by people with disabilities to community facilities, programs, or services (immediate outcome), thereby providing them with opportunities to participate in community life (intermediate outcome). This is expected to result in communities benefiting from the participation of people with disabilities (long-term outcome).

There are two main sources of evidence from the literature review to support the EAF logic model and the activities noted therein. The first is empirical evidence provided by Statistics Canada's 2001 and 2006 Participation and Activity Limitation Surveys – discussed in detail in federal documentation – suggesting that for some Canadians with disabilities, the inaccessibility of facilities, transportation, and equipment is a barrier to full participation in the economy and society.³⁹ The second involves theoretical support by the World Health Organization's International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health, which posits that “an individual's functioning...is an interaction or complex relationship between the health condition and contextual factors.”⁴⁰ From this perspective, environmental modifications, such as those funded by the EAF, would be expected to improve an individual's participation as a member of society.

Based on this perspective on disability, the EAF's anticipated outcomes are feasible. Environmental factors influence the capacity of people with disabilities to participate as members of Canadian society. Improving accessibility through environmental modifications would therefore be expected to improve and increase their ability to contribute to their communities and to the economy.

This theoretical link is not front-of-mind among those in receipt of EAF funding and charged with completing the associated renovation work. However, representatives were able to clearly identify barriers to accessibility at their organizations – for example, people who use wheelchairs cannot use the stairs. Further, they clearly understood how to address this barrier and the main impact it would have on those in need – for example, building a ramp would allow those using wheelchairs to access the building. In this context, a theoretical discussion of the link between the renovation work and its intended outcome would have been redundant.

³⁹ Government of Canada & HRSDC. (2009). *Federal Disability Report 2009*. pp. 29–60. Retrieved from http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/disability_issues/reports/fdr/2009/fdr_2009.pdf.

⁴⁰ World Health Organization. (2001). *International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health*. Geneva: WHO Publications. p. 19.

That said, specific unintended secondary benefits were not always anticipated. These broader benefits to clients often came to the organizations' attention only when clients were asked to speak about their experiences after the renovation. For example, individuals identified improved safety while using facilities. Other organizations noted that while their renovations addressed an immediate need, in hindsight, a slight change to the renovation would have provided even more benefits.

Overall, there is a clear link between EAF activities and its anticipated outcomes. However, these remain quite general in the EAF program documentation. More specific outcomes, in particular those that indirectly result from funded renovations, are less well anticipated among funding recipients.

Is the EAF application and approval process equitable and timely and is there wide awareness of the existence of the EAF?

There are issues related to the EAF's application and selection process identified by both non-funded and funded applicants to the program.

The EAF administrative data suggest a distribution of program funding across urban and rural areas with a clear focus on non-governmental and not-for-profit organizations, as well as municipalities. More than half of the projects were undertaken in urban centres (57.1%) and the rest were completed in rural communities (42.9%). The majority of the organizations that had undertaken EAF-funded projects in 2008 and 2009 were non-governmental or not-for-profit organizations (72.5%) and municipalities (23.4%). Other organizations that undertook EAF projects included the private sector (2.7%), Aboriginal governments (1.0%), and territorial governments (0.3%).

Although funded projects were located throughout the country, the distribution of these projects was not aligned with the distribution of the Canadian population throughout the provinces. For example, almost half of the 2008 and 2009 EAF projects were executed in Ontario (46.8%). At the same time, approximately a quarter were completed in the Prairie provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta (22.5%). A total of 12.2% of the projects were completed in British Columbia, 9.1% in Quebec, 8.4% in the Maritime provinces, and less than 1% in the territories. This, combined with the fact that the distribution of projects aligns closely with the distribution of applications nationally, suggests that information about the program, or organizations' capacities to successfully apply, may not be uniform across all regions.

Three notable exceptions to the alignment between applications and funded projects are found in British Columbia, Saskatchewan, and Ontario. As Table 6 notes, the proportion of funded projects in British Columbia and Saskatchewan is higher than the proportion of applicants. The opposite is true in Ontario. With that said, it is difficult to judge the relevance of these differences in project funding without fully understanding the nature of other disability programming in each province and territory, as well as the disabilities rates among groups aided through the EAF.

Table 6
Applications and Funded Projects by Province and Territory

Application Type	Applications		Funded Projects		Total Funding	
	#	%	#	%	\$	%
Alberta	91	4.7	15	4.6	\$654,000	5.6
British Columbia	142	7.4	40	12.2	\$1,331,000	11.4
Saskatchewan	136	7.1	35	10.6	\$1,314,000	11.3
Manitoba	134	7.0	24	7.3	\$509,000	4.4
Ontario	1,066	55.4	154	46.8	\$5,657,000	48.4
Quebec	175	9.1	30	9.1	\$937,000	8.0
Newfoundland and Labrador	11	0.6	2	0.6	\$99,000	0.8
New Brunswick	61	3.2	10	3.0	\$393,000	3.4
Nova Scotia	56	2.9	10	3.0	\$422,000	3.6
Prince Edward Island	31	1.6	6	1.8	\$219,000	1.9
Northwest Territories	16	0.8	2	0.6	\$96,000	0.8
Nunavut	3	0.2	0	0.0	\$0	0.0
Yukon	2	0.1	1	0.3	\$45,000	0.4
Total	1,924	100.1	329	99.9	\$11,676,000	100.0
Note: Totals may not sum to 100.0% due to rounding. Total funding figures combine the most closely aligned funding figures available for 2008 and 2009, exclude projects with missing funding data, and adjust 2008 figures in excess of \$50,000 down to the \$50,000 small project funding maximum. Some 2008 figures appear to include additional sources of funding, in rare cases, resulting in figures exceeding the \$50,000 program limit.						

Further to this point, many government representatives and non-funded applicants indicated that, while strictly speaking, all organizations have an equal opportunity to apply to the EAF, the application and approval process may limit the ability of certain organizations to submit successful applications. They noted that since the application process is long and demanding, it may be more difficult for small organizations. This is particularly true when they do not have an individual to devote solely to the application process and have many other jobs to fulfill. For all organizations, application to the EAF requires time and resources. If these organizations do not believe they have a reasonable chance of success, it is unlikely that they will devote the necessary resources and apply at all.

Non-funded applicants also provided specific examples of difficulties with the application process. For example, the requirement of three quotes per proposal. Interviewees stated this can be difficult in rural towns where there is only one contractor. While the application guidelines and form indicate that proponents can provide a justification for not having three estimates, some of the failed applicants noted that they had provided such a justification but were still rejected on these grounds, making this a pertinent issue for these respondents. However, since these comments were made in the context of individual interviews, it is not possible to confidently suggest the rate at which these types of rejections occur.

Non-funded applicants also noted that the short time frame between issuing Call for Proposals (CFPs) and the due date of the proposal makes it difficult to apply to the program and ensure all areas of the application are complete. Many non-funded applicants indicated their proposals were rejected because they were missing pieces of information,

such as the three quotes, letters of support from local organizations, and signatures in various areas of the proposal.

Both government representatives and non-funded applicants cited the lack of opportunity for applicants to correct or supplement their proposals with additional information following submission as a problem. This is particularly problematic given the nature of the EAF funding approval process. The EAF screens out applications immediately once a piece of information is missing and then assesses projects that have all required information. This potentially eliminates many worthwhile projects that could receive funding with the opportunity to supplement their application.

However, a few government representatives noted that the EAF does this because they receive such a high volume of applications. Others also indicated that the selection process is lengthy because of this volume. However, they noted that EAF staff are quick at going through all of the submitted applications and that although it may seem like a long time for proponents waiting to hear back from the program, the applications are processed quickly considering the volume submitted.

Overall, the main suggestions coming out of the key informant interview process for how to improve the application and approval process and make it more equitable for smaller organizations included:

- Making the application process less demanding;⁴¹
- Reducing the length of the application;
- Providing a longer amount of time between the CFPs' launch and the proposal due date;
- Allowing applicants the opportunity to fix any missing information after the proposal is submitted; and
- Redefining some of the eligibility criteria for the program – for example, what constitutes a public access building.

The evaluation case studies supported some of the observations about the application process coming out of the key informant interviews. For example, many funded organizations expressed difficulty in submitting an application due to the limited amount of time between their awareness of the EAF and having to submit a proposal.

Almost universally, organizations commented on the need for three contractor quotes. While a couple of representatives implied that they understood why HRSDC would ask for this, nearly all stated this requirement was problematic. Some said it was difficult to get three quotes in rural communities where there are few contractors. Other larger organizations noted that they have preferred contractors and getting additional quotes was a waste of time. Among those with a preferred contractor, some suggested getting additional quotes put them in an awkward situation since the remaining two had no chance of securing the work. Organizations noted that getting quotes takes time, especially when contractors

⁴¹ Examples of how the application process could be made simpler include the elimination of the requirement for three quotes and a reduction in the number of mandatory attachments. These and other issues related to the application process are discussed in more detail below.

want to see the site, and this may not be possible in the time allotted to complete and submit an application.

It is important to highlight that the comments among case study participants regarding the need for three quotes persist despite provisions under the EAF for providing fewer in an application. It is possible that applicants are systematically misunderstanding this provision in the application package. However, it is also reasonable to suggest that organizations are uncertain about how not providing all three quotes will affect their application's success. As the discussion below notes, most applicants have no contact with HRSDC from the point of application submission to the point of project selection. Without a clear understanding of the selection process undertaken by HRSDC – and the impact of not providing all three quotes – most applicants will logically opt for providing the required three.

Further, a program representative noted that the requirement itself seemed odd, given that most organizations have a strong incentive to get the best value for their dollar. They noted that inefficient spending of EAF funds made little sense, especially because organizations usually have a number of other projects that could benefit from any leftover funding when efficiencies are found. In fact, a couple of organizations that did have remaining grant funding used it to expand their renovation work.

The limited amount of time available for completing applications along with the need for three contractor quotes may point to a systematic advantage for those organizations that have renovation projects planned in advance. In fact, a number of organizations noted they were only able to complete their applications because they had already secured quotes as a result of advanced planning. In other cases, while not planned in advance, EAF renovations were piggybacked on other ongoing work, making the application simpler than it would have been otherwise. For those starting their renovation planning at the time of the EAF proposal calls, there may have been insufficient time to complete an application.

The complexity of the EAF application itself seems in line with other grant applications. Those organizations with no experience with grant applications at times found it difficult, complex, or daunting. However, those who had applied to other organizations for funding stated that the EAF application was on par with applications they had seen in the past. The main exception involved the number of attachments required in the EAF application, including the contractor quotes noted above. Some organizations noted that these attachments were stumbling blocks in and of themselves. For example, one organization did not understand the need for an environmental questionnaire for a lift installation. Another believed that much of the required information was repetitive. Another noted that their atypical facility ownership situation resulted in a subsequent application rejection.

The atypical facility ownership situation also made the representative from this organization question the EAF project selection process. Their and other organizations' subsequent application rejections based on what they would identify as technicalities were not well received. One individual also implied that these technical criteria were not universally applied. They noted that in a subsequent EAF Call for Proposals's (CFP), their organization submitted three identical proposals for three different locations. While one was accepted, the other two were rejected based on missing attachment information. This led them to

believe that not all those reviewing proposals were doing so in the same way. The consistency of the process was also brought into question by another organization who said that they were contacted by HRSDC to get more information about them while assessing their application. This was atypical of all other organizations participating in case studies.

Individuals stated there should be more contact between HRSDC and organizations during the selection process. Some suggested that applications should be reviewed based on merit first and on technical details second; thus allowing organizations with credible projects to provide additional information after their initial submission. Some representatives noted that the considerable amount of time between their submission and a decision on funding was a problem. This caused work delays, invalidated contractor quotes, and resulted in poorly timed renovation work once approval was granted. Some suggested that even knowing the length of time HRSDC would take to review applications would help them plan.

In terms of information about the program, key informant opinion was mixed. Some respondents said awareness of the EAF was high, while the remaining respondents indicated it was low or moderate. A few government representatives and a disability expert pointed to the number of applications received for the EAF as an indicator of high awareness of the program. Other respondents noted regional and organizational differences in awareness. For example, a few government representatives noted the high awareness in Ontario due to recently passed legislation in the province, while a few government and disability organization representatives said awareness is low in Quebec. Also, a few government and disability organization representatives said that awareness of the EAF is high in the disability community and not-for-profit organizations, municipalities, universities, and colleges, while awareness is lower outside of the disability community, mainly in the private sector.

Case studies suggested that information about the program was at times limited. Organizations that had an ongoing relationship with HRSDC, and those with close connections to disability and service delivery networks in their regions, were most readily aware of the program when it was first implemented. Others, particularly in smaller communities, heard about the program through word of mouth. In some cases, individuals suggested that a more centralized information delivery approach would be beneficial, including developing and maintaining a list of potential applicants to email about future CFPs.

Many organizations noted that they heard about the program directly from their local politicians, MPs, members of provincial governments, and municipal officials. For the first EAF CFP, these information sources and word of mouth were not the most efficient forms of information dissemination.

According to government representatives participating in the key informant interview process, the EAF is undertaking a number of outreach activities to make the public aware of the program. Some of the more commonly mentioned activities included:

- Emails about upcoming CFPs, which are sent directly to an exhaustive list of organizations stored in an EAF database;
- News releases and information available on the website; and

- Information kits given to MPs to distribute to communities.

Does the EAF performance management system provide sufficient results-based information to monitor, track, and report program performance?

The EAF operates a performance management system, but issues related to the definition of its outcomes and organizations' understanding of them limit its value in assessing the EAF's performance.

EAF administrative data are capturing some of the necessary information to support the EAF's performance measurement framework, with regards to the small projects component. The final project reports collect data to support the immediate and intermediate EAF outcomes, but do not provide information on the achievement of its long-term outcome. The field, actual benefit to people with disabilities, captures self-reported verbatim responses that respond to the immediate EAF outcome of "people with disabilities have access to community facilities or programs or services." For example, more than half of the projects reported increased mobility/access within facilities (53.8%) and/or increased access to facilities (52.6%), while more than one-quarter of the projects reported increased access to programs, services, and activities (31.6%).

The field, benefit to the community, captures self-reported verbatim responses that respond to the intermediate EAF outcome of "people with disabilities have opportunities to participate in community life." However, there are clearly differences in the interpretation of these community outcomes among funding recipients. Many representatives completing the final reporting interpreted 'community' to include the people with disabilities discussed above. This meant that many of these verbatim responses mirrored those already noted. However, others implicitly defined 'community' as all other people and attempted to highlight more far-reaching benefits from their renovation project. This issue comes up again while addressing the additional evaluation questions below.

While much of the data included in the EAF databases were complete, there were examples of missing data. For example, while 19 final project reports were received and entered into the 2009 EAF database, only 5 had values entered for the actual number of people with disabilities affected/served field and only 3 had values entered for the actual number of people in the community affected/served field. In addition, the 2009 EAF administrative database does not record the number of pre-EAF project people served by the facilities, so no pre-post comparison could be conducted. Furthermore, the 2008 data included even less information on the number of people with disabilities served.

Despite the existence of this administrative data, government representatives interviewed during the evaluation have little knowledge of the monitoring systems in place for the EAF. Most government representatives did not know or did not provide an answer concerning what tools the EAF is using to monitor, track, and report on program performance. Some government representatives noted the final project reports delivered by proponents at the end of their projects and a few mentioned the applicant Access database. The respondents indicated that final project reports include the final budget, pictures, and overall statistics on people accessing the building before and after the

renovation. Additionally, a few noted the interpretation of the number of people benefiting from the renovations asked about on the final report is unclear and answered inconsistently by proponents.

Government representatives who did know about the EAF monitoring processes made the following suggestions for improving monitoring, tracking, and measuring program performance:

- Developing more tangible indicators – For example, how does one measure that a community is viable or vibrant?
- Conducting longer-term follow-ups with the projects a year to a year-and-a-half after completion to measure the results of the project (30, 60, or 90 days after completion is not always long enough to measure the impact of the project.)
- Conducting site visits to a sample of projects to witness the impact of the project – This would provide a more tangible sense of the projects.

Have EAF projects resulted in accessibility structures and tools that are in place and functioning?

The EAF is successful at supporting the installation of functioning accessibility structures.

While the administrative data did not include confirmation of whether projects were completed as reported by funding recipients, not a single case study organization failed to complete their renovation work. However, some did experience delays and other problems along the way. In a limited number of cases, this required additional funding to complete the project or changes in the nature of the work. This additional funding was not provided through the EAF, but rather came from the organizations' internal budgets. Conversely, there were organizations that completed their work under budget and were able to expand their accessibility renovations to include additional upgrades. Overall, it appears the EAF is successful at supporting the installation of functioning accessibility structures.

Although the EAF supported the development of information and communications projects, as well as vehicle renovations for people with disabilities, it is important to understand that these types of projects represent a small fraction of those supported through the program, as Table 7 demonstrates.

Table 7 Types of Funded Projects						
Project Type	2008		2009		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Renovation	162	97.6	147	90.2	309	93.9
Information and communication	14	8.4	26	16.0	40	12.2
Vehicle enhancement	2	1.2	2	1.2	4	1.2
Other	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Total	166	100.0	163	100.0	329	100.0
Note: Projects falling into more than one category counted multiple times.						

Further, as Table 8 implies, this is not a product of a biased project selection process but rather a reflection of the distribution of project types across all applicants.

Table 8 Types of Applications						
Application Type	2008		2009		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Renovation	659	91.7	1,109	92.8	1,768	92.4
Information and communication	68	9.5	162	13.6	230	12.0
Vehicle enhancement	18	2.5	27	2.3	45	2.4
Other	6	0.8	0	0.0	6	0.3
Total	719	100.0	1,195	100.0	1,914	100.0
No information on type	9	1.2	1	0.1	10	0.5
Note: Projects falling into more than one category counted multiple times.						

To what extent did the EAF increase access for people with disabilities to community facilities, programs, and services?

There is evidence to suggest that the EAF increases accessibility to facilities, programs, and services among people with disabilities.

Most government representatives, disability experts, and disability organization representatives interviewed as part of the EAF evaluation agreed that EAF funding increases access for people with disabilities by making the projects a reality. Individuals from these same groups indicated that a majority of the projects would not go ahead without EAF funding and, if they did, the projects would take much longer to complete as the organizations would need to raise the necessary funds.

The non-funded applicants interviewed, at the same time, supported these responses by indicating that about half of their projects have not been implemented and some of them have only partially been implemented. Non-funded applicants that were able to implement their projects fully or partially indicated they used their own funds (from surpluses in the previous year), fundraised in the community, or received federal transfer (e.g., Gas Tax Fund) or other program funding (e.g., Recreational Infrastructure Canada Program), and/or municipal (e.g., Parkland Reserve Fund) programs to fund their projects. A few government respondents mentioned that additional funding came from donations from individuals and companies and in-kind work.

Government representatives, disability experts, and disability organization representatives were asked what evidence they could provide that EAF-funded projects are leading to increased access for people with disabilities to community facilities, programs, and services. While about half of the government respondents could not provide an answer to the question, the other half pointed to the project final reports as evidence. However, they noted the statistics provided are self-reported and not very reliable.

These administrative data suggest that all project proponents indicated that the EAF increased access and therefore use of their facilities by people with disabilities. More than half of the proponents indicated increased/improved access to facilities (53.8%), while almost one-third said the projects increased access to programs, services, and activities (31.6%).

It was, however, not possible to measure the change in the number of people with disabilities accessing facilities from the information available in the EAF databases. The 2009 administrative database captures the actual number of people with disabilities served/affected after the implementation of EAF projects. However, it records them inconsistently. Of the 19 final project reports entered into the 2009 EAF database, only 5 recorded the actual number of people affected/served after the implementation of EAF projects. In addition, while the number of people accessing the facilities before the implementation of EAF projects is captured on the final project reports, they are not entered into the EAF database.

As a result, the evaluation conducted a file review of project final reports. The file review of a sample of 2008 and 2009 final project reports determined that, on average, 251 more people with disabilities are served following the implementation of EAF projects. However, with a median of 15 more people with disabilities served, it is evident that the average is being pulled upward by the five projects that reported a difference of 500 or more people, including values of 5,000 and 4,500 more people with disabilities served. In total, almost a quarter of the projects reported no increase in people with disabilities being serviced following the implementation of their EAF project.

The administrative data also suggest that the majority of projects that received EAF funding changed the accessibility to their facilities. For example, almost half of the projects installed new doors or renovated their entranceway (42.9%) and almost one-third installed ramps (30.2%). It is impossible to infer consistently from any of the project reporting whether increased facility use was the result of greater family member use driven by the improved accessibility for a relative.

The case studies revealed many conceptual difficulties with the measurement of increases in accessibility and EAF outcomes generally such as quantification and interpretation of impacts. This makes the measurement of outcomes particularly difficult. It also brings into question the accuracy of the data included in the EAF administrative databases. During both the application process and final project reporting, assessing the impact of EAF-funded renovations was difficult for organizations. It is clear from the discussions during the case studies that representatives had highly variable interpretations of impacts. This was especially true given the wording of the questions meant to capture this increase – on both the application and final reporting forms. Organizations often found them repetitive or difficult to understand in the context of their projects.

This was also true when organizations were asked to quantify them. Some individuals noted they did not track the number of people in their facility and so could only provide an estimate of how many more people with disabilities could now have access. Others stated that people with disabilities used their facility before, but that the renovation qualitatively changed the way they used it. For example, one individual noted that prior to the installation

of a ramp, people in wheelchairs were carried into their facility but now they could enter on their own.

While it is true that some representatives and clients noted an increase in facility use or expected use following their renovation work, others argued that increased participation should not be the goal. People suggested that a qualitative change in the way people access facilities was more important. Words like “dignity” and “independence” were regularly used to help research staff understand the impacts of the various renovations.

Perhaps the most important evidence of this comes from the statements of the organizational clients themselves. These people with disabilities were most likely to cite qualitative changes in facility use and changes in the nature of their participation as benefits of the EAF or its funded renovations. In these discussions, increased accessibility in the sense of accessing a building that was previously inaccessible was not the focus. In fact, in all cases, those clients who provided feedback during the evaluation had pre-existing relationships with the organizations in receipt of EAF funding, suggesting that despite difficulties, they had used the organizations’ facilities in the past.

To what extent has the EAF contributed to increased opportunities to participate in community life for people with disabilities?

There is evidence to support the notion that the EAF has contributed to increased participation opportunities in community life by people with disabilities.

Based on the EAF administrative data, almost one-third of the completed EAF projects (31.6%) reported some improvement in programming, service, or activity accessibility. However, this figure was derived from verbatim benefit responses in project final reports. Since the final reports did not specifically ask for comments on improvements in participation, it is possible that funding recipients did not voluntarily include this information. This would result in under-reporting of these community life benefits. This, along with the issues raised above suggests the need for a careful review of the EAF’s final reporting requirements. Despite these difficulties in reporting, and the conceptual issues noted in the questions directly above, both organizational representatives and clients interviewed during the case studies suggested that funded renovations improved opportunities for participation in community life. This was true for organizations such as churches, where community interaction involved many social and recreational events. However, it was also true among organizations that supported other social interactions such as labour market participation and work. Here, people argued that involvement by people with disabilities was equally important. One client noted that accessibility in buildings providing services to the broader community was especially important, since making only disability-oriented facilities accessible proposed a sense of isolation among people with disabilities.

There were a number of additional benefits that individuals noted following their renovation work. In some cases, these were anticipated, but in other cases, there were positive effects that were surprises to those involved. They included:

- Improved facility access for people with children in strollers;

- Decreased chance of future damage to the facility;
- Improved safety;
- Decreased liability concerns due to increased safety;
- More peace of mind regarding the safety of friends and family with accessibility limitations;
- Increased facility rental income because of the broad appeal of accessible facilities;
- Improved organization connections, as other groups use the newly accessible facilities; and
- Improved view of the organization by the community.

Each of these benefits was identified as very important among those who mentioned them.

3.2.2 Demonstration of Efficiency and Economy

Is the delivery mechanism of the EAF efficient and what are the factors that contribute to or impede it?

To improve program efficiency, there were some suggestions during the evaluation on changes to the delivery of the EAF.

Most government representatives interviewed as part of the EAF evaluation stated that the EAF is delivered efficiently, given the nature of the program with relatively small dollar value grants and the short time frame of the program.⁴² One of the reasons the EAF is efficient, as mentioned by government respondents, is the hiring of casual staff to review the high number of applications received following each Call for Proposals (CFP).

The evaluation also suggested some issues that potentially impede the efficiency of the EAF. For example, the short amount of time between issuing the CFP and the application due date means that not all organizations have time to complete the long application correctly. In addition, despite the fact that there are 52 weeks to complete funded small projects, the lengthy approval process can increase costs for applicants. If organizations apply for funding during one construction season, and do not receive funding until the following season, it is unlikely that their quoted prices for the work will be honoured. A few government representatives suggested having a continual intake process to avoid seasonality issues and short time frames to submit applications.

⁴² There were limited opportunities to quantify the efficiency of the EAF's delivery during the evaluation, in part due to the lack of a clear delivery counterfactual. Most key informants and case study interviewees spoke about efficiency in very general terms, at times opining as to whether the EAF was or was not efficient. Suggestions for improvement were normally presented as ways to possibly make marginal changes in the program's overall efficiency.

About half of respondents from all groups provided suggestions of alternative mechanisms for delivering the program. Their suggestions included the following:

- Delivering the program regionally through the Service Canada offices because they are more familiar with the needs of the communities.
- Making changes to the application and evaluation process such that less information is demanded up front and applications are judged on merit instead of on mistakes made in the application – then collecting the remaining pieces of information. This could involve providing a description of the planned project and its costs, which, if selected, would be followed by the provision of all remaining application information.
- Delivering the program through the provinces so they can provide greater funding to projects. This could perhaps combine provincial and federal funding rather than having organizations apply separately.
- Increasing the level of awareness of the program across Canada.
- Ensuring projects are completed in all regions and are not focused in specific areas of the country. This may require addressing underlying information or application issues that result in different numbers of applications from different regions.
- Making EAF staff more available for personal contact during the application phase so proponents can ensure they are completing the form properly and can determine their eligibility before going through the whole application process. With that said, it was noted that staff were available during the application process, particularly via email.

The remaining respondents either indicated there were no alternative mechanisms to deliver the program more efficiently or that they could not respond to the question.

Despite the many concerns voiced about the EAF application process, no organization raised major concerns about the administration of the program once funding was approved. Many representatives highlighted their good relationships with HRSDC officials. Some stated that although they were active in ensuring that projects stayed on track and on time, they were flexible when difficulties arose. One individual, for example, noted that they received two one-month extensions on their agreement to ensure their renovation was fully completed. While a case study participant suggested that more disability renovation standards information from HRSDC would be helpful, most were comfortable with the generally hands-off approach to management.

All case studies suggested that grant funding was the best mechanism for the EAF small projects component. Recipients appreciated that funding was provided in one payment at the start of the work, meaning that all renovation work could be paid for as needed. Some also suggested that the leveraging requirements under most hypothetical alternatives – such as a contribution agreement – are difficult for not-for-profit organizations to meet. These individuals suggested that from their experience, alternatives to grant funding, where leveraging requirements exist, complicate unforeseen construction difficulties leading to increased costs. This is because project budgets cannot be adjusted as easily as with grant funding.

The grant funding approach was also described as appropriate, given the amount of funding provided by the EAF's small projects component. Individuals mentioned that reporting and other administrative activities take time and organizational resources. If the requirements under the EAF were more extensive, like those under a contribution agreement, some organizations would not be able to meet the requirements. In addition, one organization noted they had requested the final reporting templates at the start of their project rather than simply relying on the description of the reporting requirements provided. This allowed them to focus their data collection and meet the EAF requirement more efficiently. They suggested this would be helpful for other organizations as well.

In Quebec, if an organization is more than 50% funded by the provincial government, receipt of the EAF grant requires approval by the province. It can take some time to secure this approval and it would be useful to inform potential EAF applicants of this in advance of the application process.

Are EAF resources used economically and efficiently to produce outputs?

While there are few points of comparison to assess the efficiency of the EAF program delivery, funded organizations noted that the current structure of the program provides a strong incentive for recipients to use renovation funding in the most efficient way possible.

There is little information from the evaluation to assess the efficiency of the EAF in the production of its outputs. This is in part a result of the limited cost information for alternative forms of program delivery. Although few key informants were able to speak directly to the efficient use of EAF resources, details of the application and selection process suggest some efficiency. Limited awareness of activities appears to generate sufficient demand for programming and the selection process is able to process a large number of applicants. Arguably, inefficiency occurs at the recipient level during the application phase, when organizations are asked to provide more information than they believe is necessary to assess their application. However, this cost is placed on the applicant rather than on the program or HRSDC generally.

To be clear, case study participants have only limited information about HRSDC's internal management of the EAF. However, some spoke to the efficient use of resources at the recipient organization level. One noted that all organizations have a strong incentive to use any funding provided in the most efficient way possible. Many are not-for-profit organizations and must use any funding to provide the best possible value. Often, this involves securing preferential pricing from contractors. At the same time, an extensive list of possible renovation projects means that any savings resulting from efficiencies may be applied directly to other work. This means there is a strong incentive to complete projects under budget so that other work may be started. The case studies provided examples of exactly that.

Program documents indicate that operational costs (salary and non-salary) for the EAF small project component represent 23.3% of the total allocation for this component.⁴³ Determining the exact ratio of operational costs for each component of the program is challenging as EAF does not differentiate between small projects, major projects, and the Abilities Centre Durham. However, this percentage is similar to the New Horizons for Seniors Program's Community Participation and Leadership Component. The operational costs for the Community Participation and Leadership Component of the New Horizons for Seniors Program represent 22.5% of the total allocation for the component.⁴⁴ Operational costs include spending for the administration of other components of the New Horizons for Seniors Program as well.

As shown in Table 9, the operating cost per application processed by the program is \$1,741.29.

Table 9 Enabling Accessibility Fund Operating Cost per Application⁴⁵	
	Total
Operating Expenditures	\$3,500,000
Number of Applications Received	2,010
Cost per Application Processed	\$1,741.29

⁴³ Operational budget covered the three categories of projects funded in the 2007-2008 to 2009-2010 funding period (small projects, major projects, and Abilities Centre Durham).

⁴⁴ Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC). (2010). *Summative Evaluation New Horizons for Seniors Program Community Participation and Leadership Component – August 2010*. Retrieved from http://www.rhdcc-hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/publications_resources/evaluation/2010/sp_988_03_11_eng/page10.shtml.

⁴⁵ The number of applications received includes the number of applications received for small and major projects.

4. Summary of Key Findings and Conclusions

The Summative Evaluation of the EAF Grants – 2007-2008 to 2009-2010 focused on the program's relevance and performance generally, and looked at the effectiveness of the grant-funded small projects. The evaluation found that:

1. There is a clear need for the programming offered under the EAF.
2. EAF program objectives align with federal government and departmental priorities and strategic outcomes.
3. The delivery of the EAF aligns with the federal government's roles and responsibilities.
4. Although there are a few other sources of funding similar to the EAF, the demand for capital investment funding for accessibility-related renovations exceeds the total available supply of funds.
5. A clear link exists between the EAF's activities and its anticipated outcomes.
6. There are issues related to the EAF's application and selection process identified by both non-funded and funded applicants to the program.
7. The EAF operates a performance management system, but issues related to the definition of its outcomes and organizations' understanding of them limit its value in assessing the EAF's performance.
8. The EAF is successful at supporting the installation of functioning accessibility structures.
9. There is evidence to suggest that the EAF increases accessibility to facilities, programs, and services among people with disabilities.
10. There is evidence to support the notion that the EAF has contributed to increased participation opportunities in community life by people with disabilities.
11. To improve program efficiency, there were some suggestions during the evaluation on changes to the delivery of the EAF.
12. While there are few points of comparison to assess the efficiency of the EAF program delivery, funded organizations noted that the current structure of the program provides a strong incentive for recipients to use renovation funding in the most efficient way possible.

These findings suggest that EAF continues to be relevant to the needs of people with disabilities and achieves its stated goals. However, there remains room for improvement in terms of program delivery, project selections, and the measurement of outcomes.

5. Recommendations

Findings from the Summative Evaluation of the EAF Grants – 2007-2008 to 2009-2010 suggest a number of recommendations regarding the program.

1. *In response to concerns raised regarding effectiveness of the EAF application and selection processes, the program should:*

- *Review the need for three contractor quotes, its exemption provision under the program, and how using this exemption affects project selection.*

The requirement to provide three contractor quotes is consistently raised as an issue by successful and unsuccessful applicants. The program should review this requirement in light of the strong incentive funding applicants have to make the most efficient use of their funding. Alternatively, more information may be provided to applicants about the need for three quotes, the exemption provisions under the program, and how not providing these will affect the treatment of their application. Once identified, this treatment should be universal across all applicants.

This suggestion is meant to address the possible effects that this requirement may have on the type of organizations submitting applications to the EAF. If certain organizations, including those in Canada's smallest communities, do not think that they can meet this requirement or receive an exemption, it is unlikely that they will apply to the program. This may affect the pool of applicants from which the EAF can select projects and, by extension, the distribution of funding nationally and regionally.

- *Consider extending the amount of time between future Call for Proposals (CFPs) and application submission dates.*

Extending the amount of time between future CFPs and application submission dates merits consideration. This will allow smaller organizations with less funding application experience and no preliminary renovation planning in place, particularly those in rural areas, to compete more evenly with other organizations for EAF funds.

- *Increase communication between the EAF program staff and applicants between CFPs and project selection.*

Communication between HRSDC and applicants appears to be an issue for some organizations. Allowing for more communication between EAF program staff and applicants between CFPs and project selection may provide valuable information. In particular, more communication between the CFPs and the application submission deadlines may help clarify application requirements and help organizations address application deficiencies. Providing opportunities for communication between the submission deadlines and project selection may help organizations know when they may hear about their possible receipt of funding, and support their internal planning.

- *Review the EAF's project selection process and its effect on the types of projects selected.*

Examining the EAF's project selection process bears consideration. Currently, projects are screened out based on missing application information and then decisions are made based on the nature of the projects. While this sequence allows for effectiveness in the review of projects, it is not well received by applicants and runs the risk of failing to fund worthwhile projects from organizations that are less familiar with the funding application process. This could then have an effect on the types of organizations that make it to the project assessment stage and receive eventual funding.

2. *Expand information about the program and the funding available through it to ensure that all regions of the country are equally informed about the EAF.*

The department should consider expanding its information provision about the availability of funding through the program. The distribution of projects across the country suggests that not all regions are equally informed about the program.

3. *Review the types of quantitative outcome measures used in final project reports to ensure there is clarity around the type of accessibility change recorded and consider using qualitative data measures to assess the nature of accessibility change among funded organizations.*

The most recent final reporting required under the EAF at the time of the evaluation asked about the number of people with varying abilities served by funded organizations, before and after their renovations. In addition, it asked about the number of individuals served in the community at large. While these measures seemingly provide a consistent means of assessing changes in accessibility across organizations, this is not necessarily the case. Individuals with disabilities will use facilities to varying degrees, meaning that the intensity of use can vary considerably across two projects that see a similar increase in people accessing their services. Similarly, an organization may see no change in the number of individuals using their facility but have their regular users significantly increase their use following a renovation. These and similar issues need to be addressed to have interpretable quantitative measures of accessibility change.

The evaluation also noted a number of positive outcomes that are difficult to measure quantitatively – for example, improved quality of facility use. To explicitly acknowledge these less tangible benefits, the EAF could consider integrating more qualitative data collection methods in their ongoing reporting like ease of use of the facility and ability to use without assistance.

Annex 1: Evaluation Matrix

Core Issue 1: Continued Need for Program						
Questions	Indicators	Literature Review	Document Review	Admin. Data and File Review	Key Informant Interviews	Case Studies
1.1. Is there a demonstrated need for the EAF and is it responsive to these needs?	Evidence of need for increased accessibility to Canadian facilities, as demonstrated by program documents and literature	X	X			
	Opinions of key informants and representatives of funded projects and their stakeholders concerning perceived need for increased accessibility to Canadian facilities				X	X
	Evidence of need for increased accessibility to Canadian facilities, as demonstrated by administrative data from the EAF (e.g., number of project applications received and approved)			X		
	Importance of the change in accessibility for EAF recipients, as reported in their funding applications and final project reports	X		X		
	Extent to which available funds are used as planned			X	X	X
	Extent to which stakeholders express support for the EAF				X	X

Core Issue 2: Alignment with Government Priorities						
Questions	Indicators	Literature Review	Document Review	Admin. Data and File Review	Key Informant Interviews	Case Studies
2.1. Do the program objectives align with the federal government priorities and departmental strategic outcomes?	Extent to which EAF objectives align with federal government priorities and departmental strategic outcomes	X	X	X		
	Extent to which federal government documents such as plans and priorities and Throne Speeches demonstrate that accessibility-related infrastructure is a priority		X			
	Extent to which EAF objectives are aligned with departmental strategic outcomes, or would be better aligned with the activities of others, such as Office for Disability Issues and Canada Strategic Infrastructure Fund		X			

Core Issue 3: Alignment with Federal Roles and Responsibilities						
Questions	Indicators	Literature Review	Document Review	Admin. Data and File Review	Key Informant Interviews	Case Studies
3.1. Does the delivery of the EAF align with the federal government's roles and responsibilities in relation to improving accessibility for people with disabilities?	Extent to which EAF, Office for Disability Issues, and Canada Strategic Infrastructure Fund documents demonstrate appropriate federal role for the EAF		X			
	Extent to which the EAF enables Canada to meet its international and domestic human rights commitments	X				
	Extent to which the federal government has a role and the responsibility to deliver the EAF, as supported by opinions of external key informants				X	
	Extent to which EAF and Office for Disability Issues documents demonstrate integration with Office for Disability Issues policies and approaches		X			
3.2. Is the EAF duplicating or complementing initiatives from other federal government departments and agencies, and/or provincial/territorial departments, the not-for-profit or private sectors, or other national disability-related organizations?	Number, characteristics, and size of initiatives from other federal government departments and agencies, provincial/territorial departments, the not-for-profit or private sectors, or other national disability-related organizations aimed at the same target groups of beneficiaries		X			
	Opinions of informed individuals on whether the EAF is duplicating initiatives from other federal government departments and agencies, provincial/territorial departments, the not-for-profit or private sectors, or other national disability-related organizations aimed at the same target groups of beneficiaries				X	X

Core Issue 4: Achievement of Expected Outcomes						
Questions	Indicators	Literature Review	Document Review	Admin. Data and File Review	Key Informant Interviews	Case Studies
4.1. To what extent does a clear and plausible link exist between EAF activities and anticipated outcomes?	Extent to which the EAF logic model demonstrates clear and plausible linkages	X	X		X	X
	Extent to which EAF outcomes are feasible and measurable	X	X		X	X
	Evidence and opinions of informed individuals that the program design (theory of change) is appropriate to fill the demonstrated need, as supported by the literature and opinions of knowledgeable individuals	X	X		X	X
4.2. Is the EAF application and approval process equitable and timely and is there wide awareness of the existence of the EAF?	Extent to which the target population and project selection criteria are clearly defined, as supported by EAF documents and opinions of stakeholders		X		X	X
	Extent to which the target population is aligned with demonstrated need			X	X	X
	Level of satisfaction of funded and non-funded applicants about the application and project selection process				X	
	Extent to which projects are funded, implemented, and completed on schedule			X	X	X
	Extent to which project agreements and outputs reflect EAF terms and conditions		X	X	X	X
	Extent to which administration of the Calls for Proposals (CFPs) and the project selection process was effective				X	
4.3. Does the EAF performance management system provide sufficient results-based information to monitor, track, and report program performance?	Extent to which the performance measurement framework is in place		X	X	X	
	Extent to which the performance measurement system is populated with valid, accurate, and reliable data			X		
	Extent to which the performance measurement system is used to report on program performance				X	
4.4. Have EAF projects resulted in accessibility structures and tools that are in place and functioning?	Extent to which projects are completed and functioning, as reported by project reports			X		
	Range and number of enhancements to facilities, vehicles, and communication systems realized through the grant-funded projects			X		

Core Issue 4: Achievement of Expected Outcomes						
Questions	Indicators	Literature Review	Document Review	Admin. Data and File Review	Key Informant Interviews	Case Studies
	Change in the number of barriers to accessibility, as reported by project proponents			X		
	Extent to which facility users report awareness of accessibility enhancements				X	X
	Extent to which project proponents, their stakeholders, and users report satisfaction with the enhancement				X	X
	Factors of success and barriers encountered by project proponents to implement their projects and achieve expected results				X	X
4.5. To what extent did the EAF increase access for people with disabilities to community facilities, programs, and services?	Extent to which facilities are reporting increased overall use, as supported by administrative data			X		X
	Extent to which staff/managers of facilities report increased use by people with disabilities and their families			X	X	X
	Change in the number of people with disabilities accessing facilities			X	X	X
	Number of people with disabilities, in facilities, that report increased use			X	X	X
	Change in accessibility to facilities that applied for project funding, as reported in their funding application and project results report			X	X	X
	Number of people who are now using facilities since accessibility was increased, as their family members are now able to access the facilities			X	X	X
	Number of and extent to which people with disabilities report increased quality of use since accessibility was enhanced				X	X
	Types of people with disabilities reporting increased use of facilities				X	X
	Extent to which project proponents, their stakeholders, and users report satisfaction with the enhancement				X	X

Core Issue 4: Achievement of Expected Outcomes						
Questions	Indicators	Literature Review	Document Review	Admin. Data and File Review	Key Informant Interviews	Case Studies
4.6. To what extent has the EAF contributed to increased opportunities to participate in community life for people with disabilities?	Extent of increased enrolment in programs/services offered at facilities by people with disabilities, as reported through administrative data of funded organizations and facilities management			X		X
	Extent of increased employment at facilities by people with disabilities, and other employment gained through programs/services at facilities					X
	Extent to which people with disabilities report increased opportunities to participate in community life resulting from increased access to community facilities, programs, and services					X

Core Issue 5: Demonstration of Efficiency and Economy						
Questions	Indicators	Literature Review	Document Review	Admin. Data and File Review	Key Informant Interviews	Case Studies
5.1. Is the delivery mechanism of the EAF efficient and what are the factors that contribute to or impede it?	Extent to which EAF documents and/or key informants identify success factors or barriers to the efficient delivery of the EAF	X	X		X	X
	Review of alternative delivery methods to assess the efficiency of the EAF delivery mechanism	X	X	X	X	
5.2. Are EAF resources used economically and efficiently to produce outputs?	Extent to which processes in place to administer the CFP, selection of projects, and management of agreements are based on grants and contributions best practices		X		X	
	Average funding for small projects			X		X
	Ratio of funds used for administration of the EAF are reasonable, as per HRSDC benchmarks for this type of program		X	X		
	The assignment of tasks and responsibilities to staff is efficient and economical, and ensures timely delivery		X		X	