

**Evaluation of the
Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency
Community Investment,
Community Development Resources,
Official Language Minority Communities and
Aboriginal Communities
Program Sub-Activities**

- Final Report -

Evaluation Unit

Finance and Corporate Services

Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency

December 3, 2009

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Glossary of Acronyms

AC	Aboriginal Communities
ACOA	Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency
AIP	Atlantic Investment Partnership
APC	Atlantic Policy Congress
BDP	Business Development Program
BMTS	Benefits Monitoring Tracking System
CB	Cape Breton
CBDC	Community Business Development Centre
CD	Community Development
CDR	Community Development Resources
CED	Community Economic Development
CEDA	Community Economic Development Agency
CEDC	Community Economic Development Corporation
CED-Q	Canada Economic Development for the Regions of Quebec
CFDC	Community Futures Development Corporation
CI	Community Investment
DFO	Department of Fisheries and Oceans
EDO	Economic development officer
FedNor	Federal Economic Development Initiative of Northern Ontario
FEDO	Francophone Economic Development Organizations
FLMC	French language minority community
FTE	Full-time equivalent
GsandCs	Grants and Contributions
HO	Head Office
HRSDC	Human Resources and Skills Development Canada
IC	Industry Canada
ICF	Innovative Communities Fund
INAC	Indian and Northern Affairs Canada
IT	Information technology

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MOU	Memorandum of understanding
NB	New Brunswick
NFP	Not-for-profit
NL	Newfoundland and Labrador
NS	Nova Scotia
NODF	Northern Ontario Development Fund
OECD	Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development
OGD	Other government department
OLA	<i>Official Languages Act</i>
OLMC	Official Language Minority Community
PAA	Program Activity Architecture
PCH	Canadian Heritage
PEI	Prince Edward Island
PSA	Program Sub-Activity
RDA	Regional Development Authority
RDÉE	Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité du Canada
REDB	Regional Economic Development Board
REDO	Regional Economic Development Organization
RFP	Request for proposals
RPP	Report on Plans and Priorities
SCIF	Strategic Community Investment Fund
SEP	Strategic economic plan
SMART	Specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time bound
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprise
TB	Treasury Board
UDG	Ulnooweg Development Group
WD	Western Economic Diversification
WEICan	Wind Energy Institute of Canada

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Executive Summary

Introduction

The purpose of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency Community Investment, Community Development Resources, Official Language Minority Communities and Aboriginal Communities Program Sub-activities evaluation is to assess the extent to which the Program Sub-activities (PSAs) support the development of “dynamic and sustainable communities for Atlantic Canada”. The evaluation examined the relevance and ongoing need of the four PSAs and their fit with current Government of Canada priorities; determined the extent to which each PSA is meeting its intended objectives and achieving desired outcomes; and assessed the effectiveness and efficiency of the PSAs in meeting government-wide economic objectives.

The evaluation was conducted in accordance with the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency's (ACOA) approved evaluation plan for 2008-2013, and focused on not-for-profit clients and projects that received funds from ACOA since the 2005-2006 fiscal year through the Business Development Program (BDP) and Innovative Communities Fund (ICF). For the purposes of assessing longer-term impacts, it also examined projects that occurred prior to those dates, and projects funded through the Strategic Communities Investment Fund (SCIF), through case studies.

This strategic evaluation provides recommendations for the future direction of the PSAs within the context of ACOA's operations. Its main audience is therefore ACOA senior management, in particular, Community Development management in Head Office and the regional offices.

The evaluation methodologies included a document and literature review; secondary data analysis; 85 in-depth interviews; telephone surveys of 340 funding recipients; 84 withdrawn applicants and 151 project collaborators; and 10 case studies. While the overall methodology is strong in providing the evidence required to reach credible conclusions, based on multiple lines of evidence, there are limitations. The most important limitations are associated with the large scope and complexity of the evaluation. In addition, the evaluation resulted in relatively limited coverage of the Official Language Minority Communities (OLMC) and Aboriginal Communities (AC) PSAs because there were few projects and knowledgeable respondents which caused significant data limitations.

Profile of Funding Mechanisms

The ICF takes a comprehensive approach to working with communities at various stages along the economic development continuum, in order to ensure sustainable economic benefits. It seeks to diversify and enhance the economies of Atlantic communities and focuses on the long-term sustainable development of communities in Atlantic Canada. The ICF is comprised of two components: the Strategic Community Capacity component, which supports non-commercial or not-for-profit strategic initiatives and the Pro-active Investments component which supports pro-active identification and implementation of strategic opportunities with local partners.

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The BDP's broad goal is to stimulate stronger economic growth in Atlantic Canada. The BDP's Business Support Element is primarily used to fund projects related to the PSAs that are the objective of this evaluation. The main objectives of this BDP component are to strategically assist not-for-profit operations to provide specialized services and infrastructure in support of entrepreneurship and small and medium-sized business, or in support of local economic development.

The Strategic Communities Investment Fund (SCIF) was a five-year initiative launched in June 2001. It involved non-repayable contributions to support strategic initiatives that responded to the economic development needs of Atlantic Canada. These initiatives were intended to help communities strengthen their economic base by supporting projects that aid in the development of strategic sectors, the adjustment to the knowledge-based economy, and the enhancement of their competitiveness in the global economy.

Community Development Resources Program Sub-Activity

Profile

ACOA, in co-operation with other levels of government, facilitates the development of community capacity by supporting 52 Regional Economic Development Organizations (REDOs) through the BDP. ACOA also provides financial and technical support to other stakeholders, such as sector groups, to facilitate economic growth within targeted communities of interest. The expected result of the Community Development Resources (CDR) PSA is: "improved community capacity to identify economic development needs and opportunities".¹

Key Findings

The relevance of ACOA's CDR PSA was examined in the context of its ongoing need, fit within ACOA, and alignment with government-wide priorities. The documents, interviews and surveys supported the ongoing involvement of ACOA in this PSA. For example, government-wide initiatives stemming from Canada's Economic Action Plan (March 2009)² are aimed at supporting businesses and communities. ACOA's role in improving community capacity to identify economic development needs and opportunities is important to help ensure Atlantic Canadian communities are well placed to take advantage of these initiatives. Interviewees also confirmed the importance of ACOA's involvement, and noted that there was no duplication with provincial and other programs. However, it was noted that in New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island, it was more challenging to avoid overlap given the number of economic development officers and other economic development players. Surveyed recipients also noted that it was very important for ACOA to build community development capacity, invest in

¹ Source: ACOA, Performance Measurement Framework, 2007-2008.

² Department of Finance Canada, *Canada's Economic Action Plan, A First Report to Canadians* (March 2009).

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helping communities develop strategic sectors, and support Regional Economic Development Organization (REDOs) in this endeavour.

ACOA's approach to CDR includes the provision of local support through 36 regional and field offices and 52 REDOs. This approach is well aligned with the community-based process to community development outlined in *The Community Development Handbook* developed by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC).³ Through almost 90 points of contact, ACOA directly reach 73 communities, and REDOs provide services to almost 1,200 geographic locations. As such, almost all communities in Atlantic Canada have benefited from ACOA's CDR PSA either directly or indirectly (through REDOs). ACOA management and staff, and surveyed CDR recipients indicated that they were satisfied with ACOA's current model, including the range of programs and services offered and access to these programs and services.

For REDOs, ACOA's approach varies across provinces in terms of its funding proportion. In addition, the REDOs' services are notably different in some provinces. For instance, in PEI, ACOA funds 100% of the operating costs of the three REDOs whereas in Nova Scotia, ACOA, the province and municipalities each provide one-third of the funding. In the services offered, Memoranda of understanding (MOU) exist in NS to clarify roles and responsibilities between REDOs and CBDCs. On the other hand, several NB REDOs have a much stronger emphasis on business development activities than REDOs in other regions, leading to confusion cited by interviewees about roles and responsibilities between the province, municipalities, Local Service Districts, economic development officers, REDOs and CBDCs.

In spite of some of the concerns with the approach, ACOA's CDR PSA is successful in building the capacity of communities throughout Atlantic Canada through its direct (i.e. ACOA funding to communities) and indirect (i.e. REDOs' funding) approach. Interviewees noted that ACOA has been instrumental in building capacity of REDOs and the communities they serve by requiring that REDOs develop Strategic Economic Plans (SEP) and annual business plans. In addition, REDOs provide support to communities in their planning, development of project proposals and sometimes project management. As a result of its direct support, funding recipients surveyed indicated that ACOA and REDOs had helped build their capacity.

ACOA's CDR PSA has also contributed to improving collaborations in several ways. The evaluation results indicate that all surveyed CDR recipients had collaborators on their ACOA CDR project(s). In addition, REDOs also contribute to improved collaborations through the work they do (e.g. bringing together communities for the development of economic development plans).

ACOA's CDR PSA is cost-effective. According to interviewees it does not overlap with other programs but rather complements them. However, the concern over possible duplication of

³ Frank, Flo and Anne Smith, *The Community Development Handbook, A Tool to Build Community Capacity*, Human Resources Development Canada (1999).

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REDOs and CBDCs in NB and of REDOs, CBDCs and provincial rural development officers in PEI is important to note. On the other hand, REDOs are a low-cost method of reaching a large number of communities and leveraging the resources of a large number of volunteer board members. For less than an average of \$200,000 per REDO per year, ACOA is reaching almost all communities in Atlantic Canada through REDOs which provide services through close to 1,000 staff and volunteers. In addition, for every \$1.00 invested by ACOA in REDOs, other stakeholders are investing, on average, another \$0.68. Through its direct funding, ACOA is also leveraging, on average, \$1.26 for every \$1.00 it invests in CDR projects.

Conclusions

1. It is relevant for ACOA to be responsible for the CDR Program Sub-Activity. CDR continues to be well aligned with government-wide priorities.
2. ACOA's overall approach to CDR is providing the required flexibility to help a wide range of communities across Atlantic Canada identify their economic development needs. The flexible approach is evident as a result of a blend of direct and indirect ACOA assistance, as well as through flexible funding arrangements in each of the four Atlantic provinces. ACOA is reaching a large number of communities through its CDR PSA. Through a decentralized approach with 36 regional and field offices and 52 REDOs, communities throughout Atlantic Canada have access to ACOA's CDR programming.
3. An identified best practice to financing community-based development is performance-based multi-year or permanent core funding for community economic development organizations. This is a practice that is not fully used by ACOA in funding REDOs. While one-year funding agreements are warranted in some cases, particularly where the performance of the REDO needs to be monitored, broader use of multi-year agreements would be useful in reducing the burden associated with applications and approval for both ACOA and REDOs. Additionally, one-year funding has a negative effect on the ability of REDOs to attract and retain qualified personnel. The cost-effectiveness of REDOs could be enhanced with multi-year funding agreements, where single-year agreements are currently in place.
4. ACOA's CDR PSA's internal costs are proportionate to the corresponding level of funding involved and the Program Sub-Activity is effective in achieving its intended results. In addition, ACOA's funding is helping leverage more than the value of its funding (\$1.26 for every ACOA \$1.00). ACOA's CDR PSA is therefore cost-effective. However, there is some evidence of overlap between REDOs, CBDCs and other economic development organizations, particularly in NB and PEI. There should be a clearer delineation of roles and responsibilities between the REDOs and the CBDCs, and a better approach to the reporting of their performance and contribution to the overall objectives of the program.

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5. ACOA has been successful in improving community capacity related to economic development planning and project management. ACOA and REDOs complement each other. The role of ACOA in building capacity extends beyond the mandate and capacity of the individual REDOs, particularly since ACOA builds capacity in sectoral communities and communities of interest, in addition to geographic communities (where REDOs play a more direct role). As such, ACOA's CDR PSA is achieving its intended results to improve community capacity to identify economic development needs and opportunities, either directly through the funded projects or indirectly through REDOs. However, REDOs in New Brunswick are less focused on supporting community development due to their emphasis on business development.
6. Through the CDR PSA, ACOA is influencing a range of collaborators to work together. In fact, many would not participate in the projects without ACOA's involvement. REDOs are also playing an important role in bringing communities together and getting them to collaborate. The PSA is therefore enhancing community collaborations in Atlantic Canada.

Recommendations

1. While ACOA should continue to invest in community-based organizations such as REDOs, the Agency needs to clarify the delineation of roles and responsibilities of REDOs or other organizations of this nature regarding the ACOA contributions. In recognition of the different needs and opportunities across and within regions, ACOA needs to ensure that, by clarifying the roles and responsibilities of REDOs, it does not negatively affect regional flexibility, as this is an important aspect of the Agency's programming. ACOA needs to ensure that there is a clear delineation between its current Community Mobilization and Community Based Business Development PSAs, and thus between REDOs and CBDCs.
2. ACOA to consider performance-based multi-year funding agreements where they currently do not exist.

For more details on the CDR PSA, please refer to Section 2.0 of the report.

Community Investment Program Sub-Activity

Profile

Through its CI PSA, ACOA works in co-operation with communities to make investments required to capitalize on the capacity, strengths and opportunities present in the community as identified in community economic development plans and strategies. Funding is provided through the ICF, BDP and, before the inception of the ICF, SCIF. The expected result for the CI

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PSA is: "improved community capacity to address economic development needs and opportunities".⁴

Key Findings

For the same reasons as noted for CDR, documents, interviews and surveys supported the ongoing involvement of ACOA in CI. Canada's Economic Action Plan (March 2009)⁵ and Advantage Canada (2006)⁶ support the importance of investing in critical economic development infrastructure in communities. For example, the four key principles of Canada's Economic Action Plan are:

- focusing government;
- creating new opportunities and choices for people;
- investing for sustainable growth; and
- freeing businesses to grow and succeed.

Interviewees also confirmed the importance of ACOA's involvement and noted that there was no duplication with provincial and other programs. Surveyed recipients and collaborators also noted that it was very important that ACOA make strategic investments to help communities capitalize on opportunities for sustainable economic growth.

Interviewees and surveyed CI recipients indicated that they were satisfied with ACOA's approach to CI. Interviewees believed the appropriate target groups were reached whereas recipients were satisfied with the services provided by staff, access to programs and services, and range of programs. It is also noteworthy that ACOA's approach is essentially the same as that of the other regional development agencies in Canada.

The evaluation results demonstrate that ACOA funding is highly incremental to the ability of funded recipients to undertake their projects. Based on the survey results, 69% of funded recipients would not have been able to undertake the project at all without ACOA funding, whereas another 30% would have been negatively affected. The case studies similarly showed that projects would either not occur or would be negatively affected. This means that the results and impacts of the projects are highly attributable to ACOA's CI PSA.

In that respect, the evaluation findings show that ACOA has been instrumental in contributing to the following CI intended results:

- community capacity building (e.g. 76% of surveyed CI recipients as well as in several case studies);

⁴ Source: ACOA, Performance Measurement Framework, 2008-2009.

⁵ Department of Finance Canada, *Canada's Economic Action Plan, A First Report to Canadians* (March 2009).

⁶ Department of Finance Canada, *Advantage Canada Building a Strong Economy for Canadians* (2006).

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- improving collaborations (e.g. high number of projects with collaborators and 75% of collaborators aware of ACOA's participation on the project were highly influenced to participate on projects as a result of ACOA's participation);
- critical economic infrastructure (e.g. annual hockey tournament in Glace Bay attracts 3,000 visitors from off Cape Breton and involves more than 250 volunteers, resulting in \$5.2 million in economic benefits to the region. The Newfoundland and Labrador cranberry industry projects will support the creation of an economically important new agricultural crop in that province. The CI recipient survey results show, for example, that community building⁷ projects are highly likely to result in new businesses created, business survival and increased business revenues); and
- economic impacts (e.g. 300 additional jobs in the Yarmouth area with an annual net payroll of \$8 million as a result of the Hebron Industrial Park project).

ACOA's CI PSA is cost-effective. According to interviewees it does not overlap with other programs, but rather complements them. Over a six-year period, ACOA funded more than \$370 million for close to 1,200 projects. These projects were successful (average survey rating of 9.0 out of 10) and achieved their intended outcomes, as noted above. In addition, for every \$1.00 invested by ACOA in CI, others are investing, on average, another \$0.95. The annual leveraging targets identified in ACOA's Performance Measurement Framework (PMF) were exceeded. As collaborators are influenced by ACOA's participation on the projects to also contribute, this leveraging is attributable to ACOA's involvement in CI. It is also unlikely that ACOA could have funded a lesser amount without negatively affecting the success of the projects

Conclusions

7. It is relevant for ACOA to be responsible for the CI PSA, which continues to be well aligned with government-wide priorities without duplicating or overlapping other programs.
8. The overall approach to CI is adequate in providing ACOA with the required flexibility to address the wide ranging economic development needs of communities across Atlantic Canada. In addition, clients are satisfied with ACOA's approach.
9. ACOA has been successful in improving community capacity related to economic development planning and project management through its CI PSA.
10. Through the funded projects, the CI PSA has brought together a large number and wide range of collaborators, including other federal government departments and agencies, provincial governments, municipal governments and non-governmental organizations. ACOA is having influence in initially bringing these collaborators on board. In fact,

⁷ Based on the 12 project categories used for ICF which include broadband or technology, community building, industry or business development, marine infrastructure, marketing, recreation facility, research and development, skills development, strategic planning, tourism infrastructure, waterfront or streetscape development and other.

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many would not participate in the projects without ACOA's involvement. To a large extent, these collaborations are sustainable and continue even after the ACOA projects are completed. The PSA is therefore enhancing community collaborations in Atlantic Canada.

11. The CI PSA has contributed to the development of critical economic infrastructure in the communities assisted. The range of types of "bricks and mortar" and "non bricks and mortar" projects have generated economic activity. This includes economic activity through enhanced business environments, job creation, tourism, and many others. Different types of projects generate different types of economic activity in the communities. It is therefore essential that ACOA continue to fund a variety of critical economic infrastructure in order to be able to address the wide range of needs of Atlantic Canadian communities.
12. The CI PSA has contributed to enhancing the business environment in communities across Atlantic Canada. The benefits to the businesses and communities include jobs created or maintained, increased sales or revenues, survival of existing businesses and creation of new ones, and many other direct and indirect benefits to Atlantic Canada.
13. ACOA's CI assistance is critical to providing communities with the ability to undertake the funded projects. Incrementality is high. In fact, in a significant proportion of the cases, ACOA's assistance is essential for the projects to go ahead. As such, the project results are highly attributable to ACOA's involvement. Since the projects have resulted in building the capacity of communities, improving collaborations, improving infrastructure and/or in positive economic impacts in the communities, the CI PSA is successful in achieving its intended results and impacts.
14. The CI PSA does not overlap with other programs within ACOA, nor does it overlap with other federal and provincial programs. Rather, the CI PSA complements other existing programs.
15. ACOA's CI PSA's internal costs are proportionate to the corresponding level of funding involved, even though community development projects require more internal resources because they generally require more involvement from ACOA staff to help build the capacity of communities. This PSA is effective in achieving its intended results. In addition, ACOA's funding is helping leverage an almost equal amount (\$0.95 for every ACOA \$1.00) to its investment, exceeding the leveraging targets identified in ACOA's Performance Measurement Framework (PMF). ACOA's CI PSA is therefore cost-effective.

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Recommendations

Notwithstanding recommendations in other parts of this report which pertain to the CI PSA, no specific recommendation is required based on the conclusions identified above.

For more details on the CI PSA, please refer to Section 3.0 of the report.

Official Language Minority Communities and Aboriginal Communities Program Sub-Activities⁸

Profile

ACOA collaborates with several Acadian and francophone organizations across the region whose activities encompass social, political, commercial and economic interests. While the Agency partners primarily with other federal departments from a financial perspective, it also collaborates with provincial and municipal governments to achieve its objectives. It is important to note that other federal departments, such as Canadian Heritage (PCH) and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC), who have a strong national mandate for coordinating the provision of programming targeted at OLMCs. These departments have more resources and programming specifically targeted to OLMCs. Beyond fulfilling the basic requirement of ensuring services to its francophone clientele, ACOA uses the BDP and ICF funding programs, along with funds accessed through its partnerships, to enable the official language minority communities to engage in activities of an incremental nature, fostering the sustainable community infrastructure necessary for its success. The expected result of the Official Languages Minority Communities Program Sub-Activity is: "Increased capacity of the Official Language Minority Community (OLMC) in Atlantic Canada to reach its potential".⁹

ACOA works through a number of coordinating mechanisms which are tripartite in nature involving Aboriginals and federal and provincial authorities in developing a coordinated approach to address Aboriginal economic development issues and needs. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) is the lead department with respect to economic development of ACs. ACOA uses the flexibility within its existing programs (BDP and ICF) to invest in priority areas jointly identified by governments, Aboriginal businesses and communities. The expected result of the AC PSA is: "increased community economic development in Aboriginal communities within Atlantic Canada".¹⁰

⁸ In the context of the evaluation of these PSAs, ACOA's inputs, outputs, services and results were limited to those of the OLMC and AC PSA based on projects coded as OLMC and AC PSA projects in QAccess. Other OLMC and AC projects undertaken as part of other ACOA PAs were not included in this evaluation. In summary, this is not an assessment of all of ACOA's impacts on OLMCs and ACs, but rather of the impacts of the two PSA projects.

⁹ Source: ACOA, Performance Measurement Framework, 2007-2008.

¹⁰ Source: ACOA, Performance Measurement Framework 2007-2008.

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In the context of this evaluation, ACOA's AC and OLMC outputs and results were limited to those of projects coded to the PSAs and the section is therefore not an assessment of all of ACOA's AC and OLMC resources, activities and results.

Key Findings

Services are delivered to OLMCs and ACs as part of all program activities and through BDP and ICF funding programs. There is no special programming or budget separate from its regular funding program allocations (BDP, ICF), and therefore no particular established performance targets, for OLMCs and ACs. This is not significantly different from the approach used by other regional development agencies across the country as reported by the representatives interviewed from these other development agencies.

The evaluation results demonstrate that ACOA funding is highly incremental to the ability of funded recipients to undertake their projects. This means that the results and impacts of the projects are highly attributable to the OLMC and AC PSAs. In that respect, the evaluation findings show that ACOA has been instrumental in contributing to OLMCs for:

- community capacity building (67% of surveyed OLMC recipients);
- improving collaborations (90% of surveyed OLMC indicated their projects had collaborators);
- critical economic infrastructure (the OLMC recipient survey results show that projects have resulted in business survival and tourism impacts); and
- economic impacts (52% of surveyed OLMC recipients indicated their project had resulted in new jobs created).

ACOA's OLMC PSA did not overlap with other programs. OLMC projects were successful (average survey rating of 8.0 out of 10) and achieved their intended outcomes, as noted above.

While the survey results are based on a limited number of AC PSA projects, they provide some indication that they are contributing to:

- community capacity building (80% of surveyed AC recipients);
- improving collaborations (80% of surveyed AC indicated their projects had collaborators);
- critical economic infrastructure (the AC recipient survey results show that projects have had an impact on the businesses in the community and on tourism); and
- economic impacts (70% of surveyed AC recipients indicated their project had resulted in new jobs created).

ACOA's AC PSA did not overlap with other programs. AC projects were successful (average survey rating of 8.8 out of 10) and achieved their intended outcomes, as noted above.

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Conclusions

16. It is relevant for ACOA to provide community development programming to OLMCs, particularly in light of ACOA's legislative requirement under Section 41 of the *Official Languages Act*.
17. It is relevant for ACOA to provide community development programming to ACs, albeit to a limited extent since other organizations such as INAC have a stronger mandate for assisting ACs in their community development endeavours.
18. ACOA provides services to OLMCs and ACs through all its Program Activities and, as such, the OLMC and AC PSAs which were part of the Community Development Program Activity did not adequately reflect the efforts of the Agency with respect to these target communities. OLMCs and ACs are influenced by all aspects of ACOA's PAA. The 2009-2010 change to ACOA's PAA which imbeds OLMCs and ACs as target groups in all Program Sub-activities is therefore logical.
19. There is a need to clarify the roles and responsibilities of ACOA versus INAC. The revised Aboriginal economic development framework should help define the role ACOA can play to help fill the economic development gaps of Aboriginal communities in Atlantic Canada. The framework should also help determine the extent to which ACOA needs to partner or work with INAC.

Recommendations

3. In order to ensure that the results of ACOA's OLMC and AC efforts are monitored, it is critical that OLMC and AC projects be captured as a separate reach field in ACOA's information management system, thereby providing the Agency with accurate information on all OLMC and AC project inputs, outputs and outcomes. It is also important to define OLMCs and ACs for the purposes of entering data in this separate field, to ensure the data is complete and reliable.
4. Upon the finalization of the Aboriginal Economic Development Framework, ACOA to review the framework to determine how the Agency best fits within the framework. As required, programming elements and/or the Program Activity performance measurement framework should then be adjusted, updated or revised.

For more details on the OLMC and AC PSA, please refer to Section 4.0 of the report.

Other Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

20. Performance measurement has improved over time. However, improvements are still required before the indicators can be considered specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound (SMART) and the data collected for performance measurement purposes deemed complete, accurate, reliable and timely. The new project performance tracking system could help address some of the weaknesses (e.g. poor project-specific outcomes information) and inconsistencies (e.g. poor coding) in the existing system. In addition, the new tracking system should help ensure that performance measurement for Community Development projects, including for CDR, CI, OLMC and AC projects, is more relevant to the nature of the projects and that Benefits Monitoring and Tracking System (BMTS) concerns are alleviated.
21. Having two funding mechanisms (ICF and BDP) to deliver programming that is relevant to several PA and PSAs presents a challenge in planning and budgeting according to the PAA and thus federal government requirements. In addition, the results of the projects funded through ICF and BDP are comparable.
22. While the CDR PSA's intended outcomes are limited to building capacity and developing collaborations, the CI PSA's intended results are also to build capacity and develop collaborations, in addition to other economic outcomes. With the upcoming changes to the Agency's performance measurement system that links projects to outcomes, the overlap in outcomes across PSAs may increase confusion on how to categorize projects according to the CDR or CI PSAs.

Recommendations

5. ACOA to monitor the effectiveness of the new performance measurement system in providing timely and accurate results information that can be used for management monitoring and future evaluations of its Community Development PA and PSAs. Adjustments to be made to the logic models, performance indicators and system choices when required. Logic models and PSA definitions should also be reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure the outcomes that are captured in ACOA's information management system are unique. This will result in less overlap in performance measurement and reporting (i.e. similar project outcomes reported for two PSAs). It will be important to address the specific data quality issues discussed in this report.
6. ACOA to explore the possibility of having only one Community Development Fund which integrates the ICF and the elements of the non-commercial BDP related to community development. This will help facilitate planning, budgeting, measurement and reporting according to ACOA's PAA. This could be timely, in light of ACOA's upcoming program renewal and strategic review.

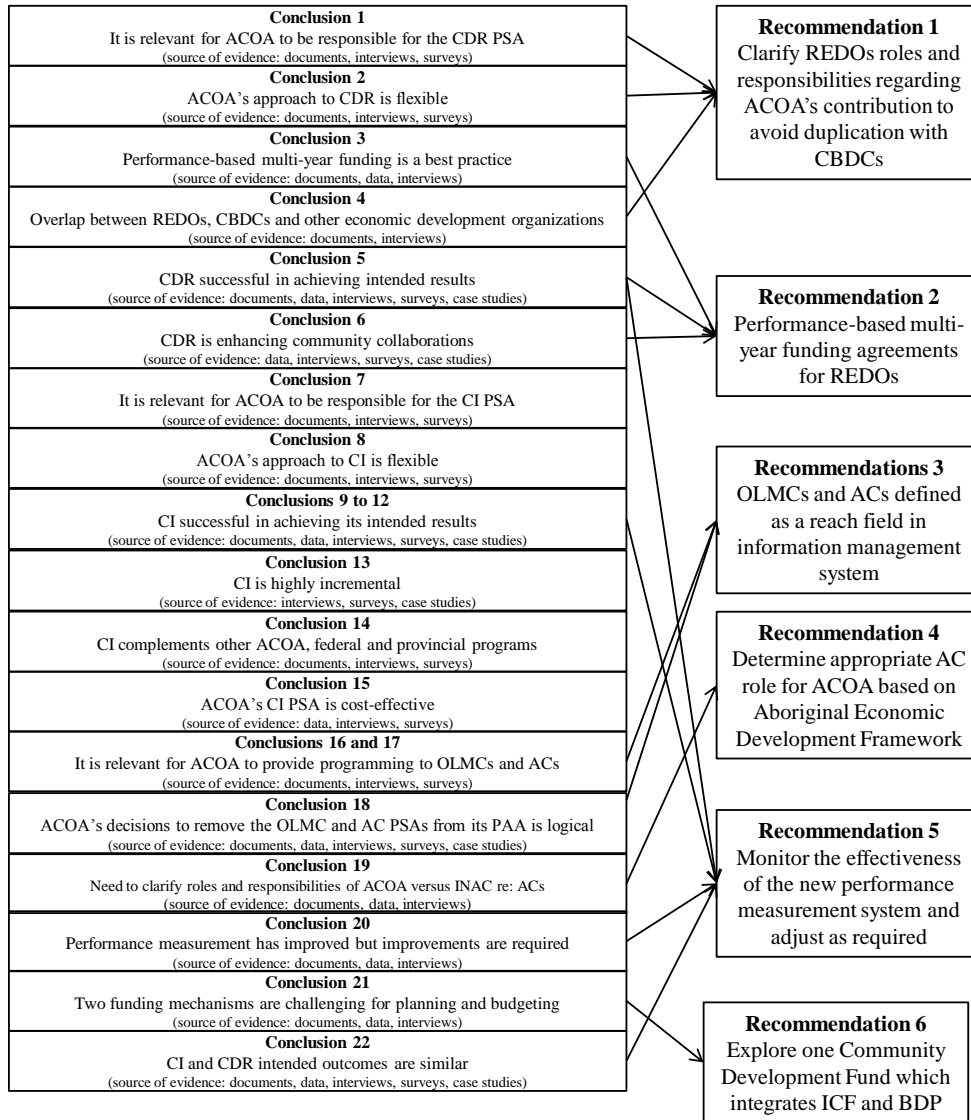
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For more details on other findings, conclusions and recommendations, please refer to Section 5.0 of the report.

The linkage between the conclusions and recommendations are as shown on the following chart.

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Linkage between Conclusions and Recommendations



ACOA's Community Investment, Community Development Resources, Official Language Minority Communities and Aboriginal Communities Program Sub-Activities Evaluation

1.0 Introduction

Atlantic Canada's unique characteristics and economic conditions create a challenging operating environment for ACOA. The Agency's recent *Report on Plans and Priorities*¹¹ highlights the economic challenges, risks and opportunities facing the Atlantic Canada economy. Uncertainty from the global economic downturn, tighter credit conditions, and reduced demand for consumer goods are creating difficulties for several sectors. Rural communities within the region are still experiencing weakness due to a continued dependency on resource-based industries. In addition, outward migration, a shortage of skilled labour, and decreasing population continue to be ongoing challenges. In June 2008, the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry published a comprehensive report entitled *Beyond Freefall: Halting Rural Poverty*.¹² The report discusses rural decline and poverty, stating that "very little of the vast wealth produced in rural Canada through agricultural, mineral, forestry, fisheries and energy flows back to rural Canada". The Senate committee argues that "it is time to put rural Canada on top of the national policy agenda". The rural and remote nature of the Atlantic region is a key factor in the design and delivery of ACOA programs that feature a community-based approach to economic development. The federal government's long-term economic plan, *Advantage Canada*¹³, provides guidance to the Agency in the delivery of its programs and services.

1.1 Evaluation Context

This report presents the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA) evaluation of Community Investment (CI), Community Development Resources (CDR), Official Language Minority Communities (OLMC) and Aboriginal Communities (AC) Program Sub-activities (PSA), referred to as the CI or CDR evaluation from this point forward throughout this report. The evaluation was conducted by the ACOA evaluation unit and independent consulting firm Performance Management Network.

The purpose of the evaluation is to assess the extent to which the CI, CDR, OLMC and AC PSAs support the development of "dynamic and sustainable communities for Atlantic Canada". The evaluation examined the relevance of the programming and its fit with current Government of Canada priorities. It also determined the extent to which each PSA is meeting its intended objectives and achieving desired outcomes. The evaluation focused on the results achieved through the Innovative Communities Fund (ICF), the Business Development Program (BDP) and the Strategic Communities Investment Fund (SCIF) funding vehicles, and assessed the effectiveness and efficiency of the PSAs in meeting government-wide economic objectives. The recommendations provide the basis for the future direction of the four previously mentioned PSAs.

¹¹ Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, *Report on Plans and Priorities, 2009-2010 Estimates* (2009).

¹² Senate of Canada, *Beyond Freefall: Halting Rural Poverty, Final Report of the Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry*, (June 2008).

¹³ Department of Finance, *Advantage Canada Building a Strong Economy for Canadians* (2006).

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The evaluation started in December 2008, and the findings presented are limited to data and documents available by May 2009. The evaluation focused on not-for-profit clients and projects that received funds from ACOA between the 2005-2006 and 2008-2009 fiscal years through the BDP and ICF funding programs. The evaluation also examined projects that occurred prior to those dates and under other programs (e.g. SCIF) in cases where such inclusion enabled capturing long-term results.

The four PSAs have never been evaluated at the strategic level, however elements of the PSAs were included in previous evaluations or reviews of the BDP¹⁴, ICF¹⁵ and SCIF¹⁶.

1.2 ACOA's PAA and Funding Mechanisms

ACOA's 2007-2008 to 2008-2009 Program Activity Architecture (PAA)¹⁷ is comprised of three Strategic Outcomes, seven Program Activities and 27 Program Sub-activities. Of relevance to this evaluation, ACOA's "Dynamic and Sustainable Communities for Atlantic Canada"¹⁸ Strategic Outcome is structured as shown in Figure 1. The shaded boxes represent the Program Sub-activities which are included in the scope of this evaluation.

¹⁴ 2004 evaluation of BDP, which in part focused on the BDP Business Support elements.

¹⁵ Mid-term Assessment of the Performance Measurement Strategy of ICF implementation in 2007.

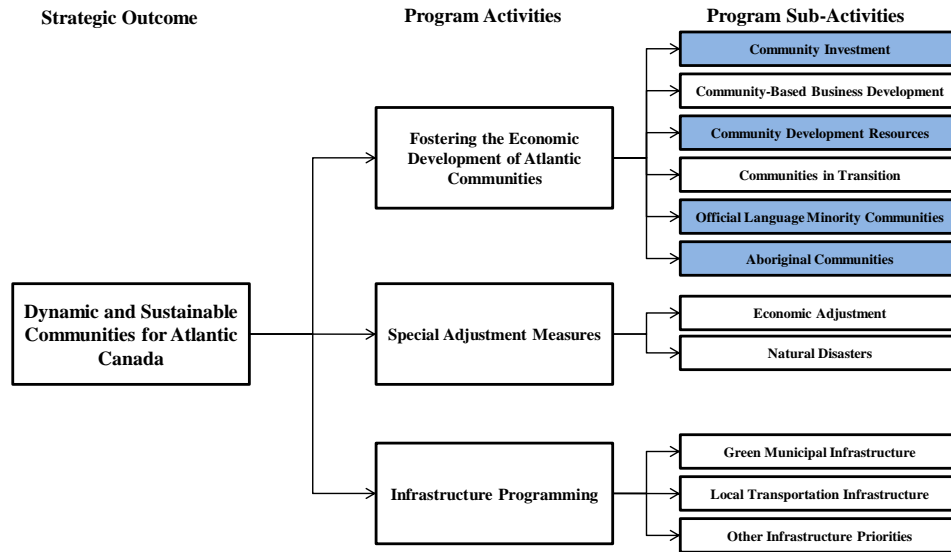
¹⁶ Impact evaluation in 2008.

¹⁷ ACOA, Program Activity Architecture, 2007-2008 and 2008-2009.

¹⁸ Source: ACOA, Performance Measurement Framework 2007-2008.

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Figure 1: ACOA’s 2007-2008 to 2008-2009 Program Activity Architecture Community Development Strategic Outcome



ACOA’s PAA was revised effective April 1, 2009¹⁹. While this change took effect after the end of the period covered by this evaluation, some of the findings, conclusions and recommendations presented in this report refer to the changes made to the PAA. Figure 2 depicts the Community Development aspects of ACOA’s 2009-2010 PAA.

Figure 2: ACOA’s 2009-2010 Program Activity Architecture Community Development Program Activity

Strategic Outcome	Program Activities	Program Sub-activities
A competitive Atlantic Canadian economy (1.0)	Community Development (1.2)	Community Mobilization (1.2.1) Community-based Business Development (1.2.2) Community Investment (1.2.3) Infrastructure Programming (1.2.4)

The 2009-2010 PAA now integrates the PSAs from the 2007-2008 to 2008-2009 PAA as shown in Table 1.

¹⁹ ACOA, Program Activity Architecture, 2009-2010.

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Table 1: Changes to PAA

2009-2010	2007-2008 to 2008-2009
Community-based business development	Community-based business development Aboriginal communities (Ulnooweg Development Group Inc. operations and capital funding)
Community Mobilization	Community development resources Official language minority communities (strategic planning) Aboriginal communities (strategic planning) Communities in transition (strategic planning) Economic adjustments (strategic planning) Natural Disasters (strategic planning)
Community Investment	Community investment Official language minority communities (Investments) Aboriginal communities (Investments) Communities in transition (Investments) Economic adjustments (Investments) Natural disasters (Investments)
Infrastructure	Green municipal infrastructure Local transportation infrastructure Other priorities

The CI, CDR, OLMC and AC PSAs are mainly supported through the ICF, the BDP and SCIF. A brief profile of these funding programs is provided below. More details on the financial resources and governance of the ICF and the BDP are included in Annex B.

1.2.1 Innovative Communities Fund

To effectively address the Atlantic regions', communities' and sectors' wide range of challenges and opportunities, the Innovation Communities Fund (ICF) takes a comprehensive approach to working with communities at various stages along the economic development continuum in order to ensure sustainable economic outcomes. There are two distinct components of the ICF.

The first component (strategic community capacity) is designed to support non-commercial or not-for-profit strategic initiatives that target the economic development needs of rural communities. The ICF supports strategic initiatives identified by communities, community groups or networks of groups and/or industry sector associations. These initiatives help communities strengthen their capacity and economic base, aid in the development of strategic sectors, and stimulate economic development.

The second component (pro-active investments) supports proactive identification and implementation of strategic opportunities with local partners (e.g. Regional Economic Development Organizations, and local or municipal leaders). These projects capitalize on the capacity, strengths and opportunities present in the community. Emphasis is placed on investments that lead to sustainable employment.

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In summary, the ICF seeks to diversify and enhance the economies of Atlantic communities. It focuses on the long-term sustainable economic development of communities in Atlantic Canada. Given this context, the objectives of the ICF are to:

- Enhance community or regional capacity through the development of competitive, productive, strategic industry sectors;
- Strengthen community infrastructure in rural communities to improve their economic development capacity; and
- Support initiatives that enhance communities' capacity to overcome economic development challenges and take advantage of their strengths, assets and opportunities presented.

1.2.2 Business Development Program

The Business Development Program (BDP) is the Agency's principal funding program for providing direct financial assistance to Atlantic Canada small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Its broad goal is to stimulate stronger economic growth in Atlantic Canada. More specifically the BDP objectives are:

- To increase the number of successful business start-ups;
- To increase the successful expansion and modernization of SMEs; and
- To enhance the business environment in Atlantic Canada.

The BDP's Business Support Element is primarily used to fund the Program Sub-activities that are the object of this evaluation (CI, CDR, OLMC and AC). The main objectives of this BDP component are:

- To strategically assist not-for-profit operations to provide specialized services and infrastructure in support of entrepreneurship and small and medium-sized business, or
- To strategically assist not-for-profit operations to provide specialized services and infrastructure in support of local economic development that further advance the Agency's strategic priorities and the federal government's regional development policies.

Not-for-profit organizations, associations and institutions do not repay contributions under the Business Support Element of the BDP unless initiatives become profitable, in which case an agreement to repay such contribution may be negotiated.

1.2.3 Strategic Communities Investment Fund

In June 2000, the Atlantic Investment Partnership (AIP), a five-year \$700 million program, was launched as a renewed approach to federal economic development efforts in Atlantic Canada.

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The AIP focused its investment in four areas: innovation; community economic development; trade and investment; and entrepreneurship and skills development. In June 2001, ACOA launched the Strategic Community Investment Fund (SCIF) to address the community economic development component of AIP. SCIF was originally a \$135 million, five-year initiative, but additional funds were allocated over the years. Between fiscal years 2001-2002 and 2006-2007, SCIF, including the SCIF-STAI component, provided \$212 million in funding.

SCIF involved non-repayable contributions to support strategic initiatives that responded to the economic development needs of Atlantic Canada. These initiatives were intended to help communities strengthen their economic base by supporting projects that aid in the development of strategic sectors, the adjustment to the knowledge-based economy, and the enhancement of their competitiveness in the global economy. Eligible recipients were non-commercial or not-for-profit organizations such as universities, local development associations, municipalities, business and technology institutes.

In May 2003, SCIF was revised through a Treasury Board submission to add the Short-Term Adjustment Initiative (STAI), a new program element aimed at mitigating the short-term impact of the cod stock closures in the Atlantic Ocean and Gulf of St. Lawrence (mainly in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador). SCIF STAI was originally a \$30 million initiative. Due to the demand, additional funds were allocated bringing the total to \$31.6 million.

1.3 Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation methodology was designed to ensure multiple lines of evidence were used for all evaluation issues and questions (see Annex C for the evaluation question framework). The specific methodologies used included:

- a document and literature review;
- secondary data analysis which included QAccess data on all 11,406 approved ACOA projects between 2003-2004 and 2008-2009, (of which 235 were CDR-coded projects, 1,172 were CI-coded, 51 were OLMC-coded and 35 were AC-coded) and salary data extracted from the salary forecasting module of GX;
- secondary data analysis from Statistics Canada sources (e.g. community profiles);
- 85 in-depth interviews;
- telephone surveys of 349 funding recipients, 84 withdrawn applicants, and 151 project collaborators; and
- 10 case studies.

More details on the methodology are provided in Annex D.

1.3.1 Limitations of Methodology

The overall evaluation methodology is strong in providing the evidence required to reach credible conclusions on the evaluation issues and questions. Nevertheless, there are some limitations that are important to note, including:

- The most important limitation is associated with the scope of the evaluation. This was a complex evaluation, involving four Program Sub-activities with three funding mechanisms and covering a period of more than five years. In addition, the evaluation addressed a wide range of questions. This resulted in longer than expected consultations with stakeholders and other evaluation participants (in-depth interviews of up to two hours and survey interviews of up to one hour). Consequently, interviewee fatigue may have resulted in less detailed responses near the end of the interviews.
- Another issue concerns the relatively limited coverage of OLMC and AC PSAs, largely because there were few respondents knowledgeable enough about ACOA's OLMC and AC PSAs to answer the questions on the relevance, design and delivery, success and cost-effectiveness of the PSAs. This was also complicated by project coding issues (a project may have taken place in an OLMC and benefited the community, but it would not be counted as "OLMC" unless officially coded as such in the QAccess database). Nevertheless, the evaluation was able to gather credible evidence to conclude on the relevance, design and delivery, success and cost-effectiveness of these two PSAs.
- Again given the scope of the study, the number of case studies completed is fairly small, particularly in light of the variables to consider (e.g. four Program Sub-activities, three grants and contributions programs and five regions plus HO). The case studies therefore did not provide sufficient coverage of the different program elements to provide the basis for comparing different cases against each other. However, the case studies provided qualitative and quantitative complementary information to other lines of evidence.
- The study methodology was mostly limited to people who are directly involved in specific aspects of the Program Sub-activities, such as recipients, collaborators and staff. It did not include people who are not associated with the programming elements because these people (e.g. non-recipients) are difficult to identify, and they would be able to provide limited input into most evaluation questions. However, questions pertaining to relevance, incrementality and reach could have benefited from the perspective of individuals not directly involved with the programming elements, particularly non-recipients.
- Some individuals could provide a range of perspective for this study. For example, some clients are also collaborators on other projects and/or potential interviewees. In order to reach as many people as possible, while reducing the burden on interviewees, each person can only be selected as one type of respondent. Otherwise, the interviews would be too long and the quality of the responses may diminish by the end of the interviews.

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The time required to analyze the results would also be excessive. Therefore, anyone identified as a potential interviewee in more than one category was only selected for one of them.

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2.0 Community Development Resources

2.1 Profile

In order to take responsibility for their own economic development, communities must have the necessary capacity and resources. Communities must plan and implement development strategies. ACOA, in co-operation with other levels of government, facilitates the development of community capacity by supporting 52 Regional Economic Development Organizations (REDOs). Each REDO is led by a volunteer community-based board of directors, which is responsible for the planning, coordinating and implementing strategic economic plans at the municipal and provincial levels.

REDOs operate under the following names in the five ACOA jurisdictions throughout Atlantic Canada:

- Newfoundland and Labrador: 20 Regional Economic Development Boards (REDBs);
- Prince Edward Island: 4 Community Economic Development Corporations (CEDCs);
- Cape Breton: 2 Regional Development Authorities (RDAs);
- Nova Scotia mainland: 11 Regional Development Authorities (RDAs);
- New Brunswick: 15 Community Economic Development Agencies (CEDAs);

ACOA also provides financial and technical support to other stakeholders such as sector groups (associations that represent an industry) to facilitate economic growth within targeted communities of interest. The Agency acts as a guide and promoter to help stakeholders formulate their own vision for sustainability, and to access the resources and expertise required to make their vision a reality. This bottom-up approach is built on co-operation and collaboration among the communities themselves and with the various levels of government.

Between 2003-2004 and 2008-2009, ACOA approved funding for 235 CDR projects totalling \$49.1 million distributed as shown in Table 2.²⁰

Table 2: CDR Funding

Fiscal Year of Approval	Number of Projects	ACOA \$ Approved
2003-2004	14	\$928,335
2004-2005	34	\$3,762,380
2005-2006	71	\$28,297,444
2006-2007	22	\$4,098,720
2007-2008	41	\$5,553,923

²⁰ The disproportionately higher amount of approved funding for 2005-2006 can be partially explained by the fact that multi-year funding agreements were approved with several NB REDOs in 2005-2006. The relatively higher number of projects in the same year could be due to discrepancies resulting from the start of coding of projects under the PAA.

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Table 2: CDR Funding

Fiscal Year of Approval	Number of Projects	ACOA \$ Approved
2008-2009	53	\$6,415,372
Total	235	\$49,056,174

The expected result of the Community Development Resources (CDR) PSA is: “improved community capacity to identify economic development needs and opportunities”.²¹

2.2 Relevance

In 2006, the Canadian Council on Social Development produced a research paper entitled *Pan-Canadian Funding Practices in Communities: Challenges and Opportunities for the Government of Canada*. The recommendations speak to the need for government involvement in CDR. The report suggests that the federal government is uniquely positioned to take the lead on “developing funding programs and practices to support a vibrant and financially sustainable not-for-profit sector”. The recommendations call for flexible and effective funding mechanisms that reflect local, sectoral and pan-Canadian realities.

“This means devolving decisions closer to where the knowledge is – in the community, as well as developing the ability to work with non-profits in their communities, drawing on their knowledge and experience in the design and implementation of community investments. ...All funders need to provide ongoing opportunities for stakeholders to bring their unique bodies of knowledge together to learn, identify challenges, problem solve and take action...Departments with funding programs need to have the capacity to build relationships with recipients that are appropriate to the type of funding offered.”²²

ACOA's Policy Unit conducted a research study in 2006 entitled *CED Capacity Gaps in Atlantic Canada: Towards a strategic approach for ACOA*. The study was based on 12 Atlantic Canadian communities that included rural or remote communities, rural areas adjacent to an urban centre, as well as francophone and aboriginal communities. Based on interviews with community groups and REDOs, the report identified a number of CED gaps. The most common CED capacity gaps found were communication; co-operation and coordination between different community groups and between community groups and REDOs; planning courses of action for CED initiatives; understanding the funding process; limited volunteers; and skills development. The report recommended community capacity should be assessed using a model that would allow for a more systematic approach for the measurement of CED capacity (this could help focus on strengths, identify gaps, and tailor approaches to communities’ specific needs). It was

²¹ Source: ACOA, Performance Measurement Framework, 2007-2008.

²² Canadian Council on Social Development, *Pan-Canadian Funding Practices in Communities: Challenges and Opportunities for the Government of Canada*, pages 70-73 (June 2006).

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also recommended that REDOs require a more clearly defined role for CED capacity within Atlantic Canada.²³

The ACOA role in improving community capacity to identify economic development needs and opportunities is important to help ensure Atlantic Canadian communities are well placed to take advantage of funds of this nature.

All ACOA management, staff and other interviewees agreed that ACOA has an important role in helping communities, and that ACOA has made a significant contribution to achieving the Community Development (CD) strategic outcome: *dynamic and sustainable communities for Atlantic Canada*.²⁴ There was also agreement that CDR is well aligned with government-wide priorities and strategies. It was noted that networks exist in NL, NS and NB to help avoid duplication with provincial and other programs. However, in NB and PEI interviewees expressed some concern that, given the number of provincial economic development officers (EDO) and other economic development players, it can be challenging to ensure there is no overlap.

Surveyed recipients believed it is very important that ACOA: build community development capacity (average importance of 8.7 out of 10); invest in helping communities develop strategic sectors (8.7 out of 10); and support REDOs (8.3 out of 10).

2.3 Design and Delivery

In *The Community Development Handbook*²⁵ developed in 1999 by the then Human Resources Development Canada (now Human Resources and Skills Development Canada), community development is identified as a community-based process by which communities:

- become more responsible;
- organize and plan together;
- develop healthy options;
- empower themselves;
- reduce ignorance, poverty and suffering;
- create employment and economic opportunities; and
- achieve social, economic, cultural and environment goals.

ACOA's approach to CDR, which includes indirect support through REDOs as well as direct support for other projects, is well aligned with these concepts. ACOA provides local support through 36 regional and field offices located throughout Atlantic Canada and 52 REDOs.

²³ Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, *Community Economic Development Capacity Gaps in Atlantic Canada: Towards a strategic approach for ACOA*, pages 2-3 (2006).

²⁴ Source: ACOA, Performance Measurement Framework 2007-2008.

²⁵ Frank, Flo and Anne Smith, *The Community Development Handbook, A Tool to Build Community Capacity*, Human Resources Development Canada (1999).

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This decentralized approach provides close to 90 points of contact, and helps ACOA reach its target groups. Based on QAccess data, 73 communities have received direct ACOA CDR funding. According to information on their websites, REDOs provide services to almost 1,200 geographic communities²⁶ across the Atlantic region. Through this direct and indirect approach, almost all communities in Atlantic Canada have benefited from ACOA's CDR PSA, either through the services provided by REDOs to their community and/or through direct ACOA CDR funding.

ACOA management and staff are generally satisfied with the current model. Interviewees indicated that they like the flexibility of the current model, as it allows the REDOs to play a different role depending on factors within a particular geographic region (e.g. size and resources of municipalities, provincial support, and capacity of communities).

The CDR recipients surveyed were also satisfied with the range of programs offered (average rating of 7.0 out of 10), the services provided by ACOA staff (7.7 out of 10), and the access to ACOA's programs and services in general (7.2 out of 10).

The 52 REDOs located across Atlantic Canada bring communities together to plan, develop and implement economic development efforts. REDO interviewees noted that this community-based approach is a key success factor. Interviewees noted that REDOs are staffed by individuals with local knowledge, and the volunteer boards of directors provide community-based oversight on plans, priorities and community development activities.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, the REDOs (or REDBs) are funded 75% from ACOA and 25% from the province. REDBs were described by interviewees as being community-based organizations. Seven or eight years ago, changes were made within the province to permit municipalities to become involved in community development. ACOA has provided professional support to municipalities to increase their economic development capacity (e.g. training, regional workshops, survey of municipalities to identify areas for improvement). The REDBs were consolidated from 59 to 20 zone boards. There is some variation in the level of service provided by various REDBs.

In Prince Edward Island, ACOA funds 100% of the operating costs for three REDOs (or CEDCs). Interviewees mentioned that a review of the service delivery model is currently underway by ACOA, the province and REDOs. One interviewee commented that there may be opportunities for streamlining economic development activities, and consideration will be given to co-locating not-for-profit community economic development organizations groups together. It was noted that PEI requires more regional planning to avoid communities competing with one another. The importance of sustainability was stressed, as some facilities that were constructed are under-utilized and ACOA does not have the funds to support operational resources. It was

²⁶ Some REDOs report the number of "places" they serve which include a large number of unincorporated communities.

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suggested that the province should have the right to reject large capital expenditures if the cost for operations cannot be funded through ongoing operations (e.g. Evangeline Go-land Centre, a million dollar building funded federally, cannot maintain its ongoing operational costs after less than a year).

In Nova Scotia, ACOA, the province and municipalities each contribute one third of the operating funds for the REDOs (or RDAs). With the exception of one or two REDOs, all other interviewees reported a high level of satisfaction with the current model. Memoranda of understanding (MOU) exist to clarify roles and responsibilities between REDOs and CBDCs, and some are co-located. NS has a community development policy that guides the relationship of various economic development players; as a result, federal and provincial programs and services are complementary. Most RDAs are incorporated under the *Regional Community Development Act*, while the others are in the process of incorporating. With one exception, interviewees are very satisfied with the RDA system in NS and have observed increased capacity within communities in recent years. In 1999, an association of RDAs within the province was formed, allowing RDAs to work together on common issues. An International Standards Organisation (ISO) certification has been implemented. In 2007, an operational and structural review was conducted of NS RDAs. As a result, a performance-based funding model was introduced on a pilot basis. The approach links RDA performance to funding, and includes incentives based on whether expectations have been met, exceeded, or if improvements are required. The approach has been designed to balance the desire to reward individual RDAs for performance, while at the same time encouraging a high degree of co-operation and coordination between and among RDAs. This model is still in the early stages of implementation. The effectiveness of this approach will be monitored over time and lessons learned incorporated into the process as appropriate.

In New Brunswick, the funding model varies depending on the REDO (or CEDA). For example, in one case ACOA funds 66%, while the province funds 34%. In other cases, ACOA funds less than 35%. The division of roles and responsibilities between CEDAs and CBDCs was described as being less clear. A few interviewees mentioned the model is currently being reviewed, citing confusion about roles and responsibilities between the province, municipalities, local service districts, economic development officers, REDOs and CBDCs. Several NB REDOs are involved in business counselling for new start-ups and expansions, business plan development, provision of business information services (e.g. export development), coordination on training events, and youth entrepreneurship initiatives. In general, the NB REDOs have a much stronger emphasis on business development activities than those in other regions, as evidenced by the fact that a website analysis shows that 13 of 15 NB REDOs offer business counselling services. Additionally, the provincial department co-funding REDOs is Business New Brunswick, a department with a strong business development mandate. Also, the term "enterprise" is used in the name of REDOs. A major study on the future of local governance²⁷ highlights a number of issues related to overlap and duplication between the various levels of government, and includes

²⁷ Finn, Jean-Guy, Commissioner on the Future of Local Governance, *Building Stronger Local Governments and Regions: An Action Plan for the Future of Local Governance in New Brunswick*, pages 108-100 (November 2008).

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recommendations related to the future of economic development within the province. Section 8.2.5 of the report discusses economic development. The report includes some observations about the role of CEDAs within the province. On page 109, the report states that:

"in theory, CEDAs have common structures and mandates. In practice, however, their board representation varies greatly from region to region and collaboration efforts with other regional agencies depend largely on the leadership of the executive director. The absence of common boundary definitions between service sectors constitutes a barrier to collaboration ... Variable municipal funding translates into unequal intervention capacity for the different CEDAs ... Although one of the CEDAs assignments is to develop an economic development framework or plan for their respective region and to define strategic priorities and opportunities, this has not been their main focus. Much of their time and resources are devoted to business support: SME development, business counselling, management training for SME, investment support, identifying opportunities for investment and export. While services to business are necessary for regional economic development, that alone is not sufficient. Broad scale and region-wide collaboration among stakeholders is necessary. Interagency and inter-municipal duplication and competition represent significant barriers to regional economic development and well being."²⁸

The report recommends that community economic development become a function of the new regional governance structure that is proposed in the document. There is a recommendation to dissolve the current CEDAs, and that staff be assigned to regional service districts. It is also recommended that regional ED activities and programs be cost shared between municipalities, the Province and the federal government.

In addition, some interviewees noted that ACOA's CDR support through REDOs is not as relevant to OLMCs as the support from RDÉEs, which are funded by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC). The mandate of RDÉEs is quite similar to the mandate of REDOs;²⁹ however, the 19 RDÉEs in Atlantic Canada target only francophone and Acadian communities whereas the 52 REDOs target all communities. According to some key interviewees, the challenge is also magnified by the fact that REDOs serving francophone and Acadian communities often have limited francophone staff and board members, and therefore a more limited knowledge of the needs of these communities.

²⁸ Op. Cit.

²⁹ More precisely, RDÉEs are mandated to:

- Influence government policies, programs and services so that they more effectively meet the economic development and employability needs of the Francophone and Acadian communities.
- Contribute to Francophone and Acadian community economic development and employability.

While RDÉEs are prevented by their mandate from engaging in business development per se; they must restrict their activities to community development, in the context of this evaluation of four Community Development PSAs, this observation is relevant.

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In 2003, the Canadian Community Economic Development (CED) Network produced a research report entitled *Financing Community-based Rural Development*. The findings are based on a profile of 20 national and international programs and instruments. Some of the organizations profiled included the Business Retention and Expansion Initiative in Ontario, the European Union LEADER Program, the Rural Community Empowerment Program and the National Rural Development Partnership in the United States, and the Fondations Rues Principales in Quebec. The study identified enabling factors for best practices including:

- **Local strategic planning and control over implementation by individuals and organizations affected by the outcomes, working in partnership and supported by competent technical assistance and adequate financing** – ACOA's approach to REDOs is directly aligned with this identified best practice. However, the separation between REDOs and CBDCs results in two distinct networks that do not necessarily collaborate regarding planning and implementation. Nevertheless, as noted in the recent evaluation of the Community Futures Program (draft February 2009),

“there was general acknowledgement that REDOs lead the community strategic planning exercises (noted by 15 of 29 interviewees); and that the CBDCs are consulted or provide input into the exercise (12 of 29 interviewees). ... Only 6.7% of CBDC survey respondents indicated that CBDCs had no involvement in community strategic planning, although another 18.3% were not sure of the involvement of CBDCs. Almost three quarters (73.3%) indicated that they had consulted with REDOs or other CED planning organizations for community strategic planning. This percentage is even higher when looking only at CBDC staff responses (82.9%).”³⁰

- **Competitive application processes involving some degree of local partnerships at the outset coupled with technical assistance during the application process** – Although ACOA's approach would not be described as a competitive process, technical assistance in the development of project proposals is often provided to community or not-for-profit groups by ACOA staff and REDOs. The CDR project applications undergo a due diligence process and are individually assessed as they are submitted.
- **Medium and long-term commitment by funders for capacity-building programs in severely disenfranchised areas** – While ACOA requires medium and long-term planning from REDOs and assesses the value of projects against the REDO plans, medium and long-term funding commitment for capacity building programs is hindered because of limited multi-year funding.

³⁰ Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, *Evaluation of the Community Futures Program in Atlantic Canada – Final Report* (Draft February 2009).

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- Performance-based multi-year or permanent core financing for community economic development organizations or their equivalent to ensure ongoing facilitation of partnerships and competent technical assistance to local projects and entrepreneurs** – As noted above, ACOA has multi-year agreements with less than half the REDOs. An analysis of the most recent funding agreements with REDOs is shown in Table 3. Twenty-nine out of 52 do not have multi-year funding agreements (14 in NL, 2 in CB, 10 in NS, 3 in PEI) whereas the other 23 have agreements of two years (3 REDOs: 2 in NL and 1 in NS), three years (5 REDOs: 4 in NL and 1 in PEI) and four years (15 REDOs, all in NB).

**Table 3: Single and Multi-Year REDO Agreements
(Based on QAccess Data as of March 31, 2009)**

Region	One Year	Two Years	Three Years	Four Years	Total
NL	14	2	4	0	20
PEI	3	0	1	0	4
CB	2	0	0	0	2
NS Mainland	10	1	0	0	11
NB	0	0	0	15	15
Total	29	3	5	15	52

- Multi-level government collaboration, both in setting goals and program parameters and during the life of the supported projects** – As noted above, the approach to REDOs varies from one province to the next due to differing levels of provincial and municipal government involvement. In addition, as previously noted, REDOs and CBDCs do not necessarily collaborate in their activities. This can result in potential areas of duplication or overlap. By comparison, the other regional development agencies (Canada Economic Development for the Regions of Quebec [CED-Q], Federal Economic Development Initiative of Northern Ontario [FedNor] and Western Economic Diversification [WD]) have integrated REDO and CBDC networks, resulting in only one network of organizations with combined community and business development mandates.
- An expanded notion of development that includes social, cultural and environmental dimensions, including health and education issues** – A review of the 43 REDO strategic plans available for this study, shows that 18 have plans with an expanded notion of development to include more than a discussion of “economic” development, and to include all or some of these other dimensions (i.e. social, cultural and/or environmental).

2.4 Effectiveness or Success

The Treasury Board of Canada defines effectiveness as “the extent to which a program is achieving expected outcomes”. In 2006, ACOA undertook an exercise to develop logic models

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and performance measurement strategies for its PAA. At that time, a logic model was developed for the CD Strategic Outcome, but logic models were not developed for the individual PSAs. In 2008-2009, a similar exercise was undertaken, at which stage a logic model for the Community Mobilization Program Sub-Activity was developed.³¹ Based on the recent logic model, the expected outcomes for CDR are related to building capacity (as evidenced by sector development strategies, regional-based strategic plans, increased leadership capacity in communities, increased capacity of communities to reach their potential, and increased capacity of communities to respond to economic crises) and improving partnerships, networking and coordination (as evidenced by improved community collaboration).

2.4.1 Incrementality

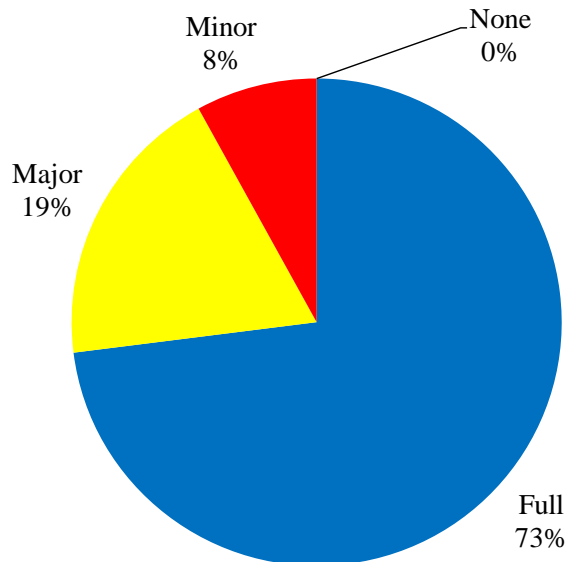
Before discussing the key results of CDR projects, it is important to establish the extent to which ACOA funding was incremental, and therefore if these results are attributable at least partially to ACOA's involvement. For the purpose of this evaluation, four incrementality ratings were developed, based on the recipient survey results:

- Full incrementality – the absence of ACOA funding would have had a major negative impact on the project as it could not have proceeded without ACOA funding;
- Major incrementality – the absence of ACOA funding would have had a major negative impact on the project but it could still have proceeded; however, its scope, quality, timing or other would have been negatively affected;
- Minor incrementality – the absence of ACOA funding would have only had a minor negative impact on the project; and
- No incrementality – the absence of ACOA funding would not have affected the project at all.

As shown in Figure 3, the survey results demonstrate that ACOA was highly incremental to the ability of the organization to undertake the project, at least within its existing scope, quality or timing. As such, the results discussed in the rest of this section are highly attributable to ACOA funding.

³¹ The Community Mobilization PSA replaced the CDR PSA.

Figure 3: CDR Incrementality



2.4.2 ACOA Direct Contribution in Building Capacity and Improving Collaborations

ACOA has been instrumental in contributing to community capacity building through the planning process. REDOs are required to develop strategic economic plans (SEP) and annual business plans. REDO interviewees indicated that ACOA's role is to advise on programs and criteria, provide expertise and resources, act as a sounding board and assist in leveraging project funds and collaboration with partners. On some of the larger projects, ACOA will also sit on a steering committee at the proposal stage. This is seen as very valuable. The REDOs have the frontline responsibility to develop SEPs, identify CED priorities and to work with community groups. Some REDOs provide direct support to community groups and not-for-profit (NFP) organizations in facilitating planning sessions, providing assistance with project proposals, and sometimes project management. The REDOs are often the ones that broker the deals and bring in additional partners. In terms of building partnerships, one REDO mentioned that they even facilitate joint meetings of area councils. Others indicated that they have worked directly with the historical society, multiculturalism organizations, organizers of local fairs, and other groups to explain government programs and how to apply for financial assistance. In some cases, REDO staff also sit on the boards of various community groups.

The great majority (81%) of CDR funding recipients surveyed indicated that ACOA had contributed to improving the capacity of their community or organization related to economic

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development planning and project management. More specifically, CDR recipients surveyed indicated that ACOA had helped in, for example:

- building the capacity to address economic development opportunities (65% of all CDR recipients surveyed);
- improving community or organization capacity for strategic planning (65%);
- increasing leadership capacity (65%); and/or
- improving collaboration within the community or organization (62%).

ACOA staff described their direct involvement in community capacity through helping to identify development opportunities (e.g. in NL economic development round tables were held to conduct research and analysis on various sectors such as agriculture and tourism, and to provide direct assistance to REDBs in the strategic planning process), through direct participation in REDO board meetings, and through the day-to-day advice provided to REDO staff and project proponents.

ACOA programs are described as being demand-driven. In some cases, ACOA initiates a project where a specific gap has been identified (e.g. Chaleur-Restigouche Initiative). In general, projects come to ACOA through its network of partners.

2.4.3 Contribution of REDOs to Building Capacity and Improving Collaborations

Interviewees noted that REDOs play an important role and are often underappreciated. Most municipalities do not have their own EDOs and as such rely on the expertise of REDO staff. REDOs also help build the capacity of ACOA clients. Close to two-thirds (63%) of all surveyed recipients (CDR, CI, OLMC and AC)³² indicated that they used the services of the REDO in their area, and that REDOs had helped in, for example:

- providing information (52% of all surveyed recipients);
- identifying potential partners or collaborators for projects (46%);
- building the capacity to identify economic development opportunities (44%);
- building the capacity to address economic development needs or opportunities (44%);
- improving collaboration with other communities or organizations (44%);
- accessing funds from other organizations (41%); and/or
- improving capacity for strategic planning (40%).

2.4.4 Overall Success of CDR Projects

Based on the survey results, the CDR recipients surveyed believed that their project was successful, as evidenced by an average rating of 8.7 out of 10, 10 being extremely successful (with 80% giving a success rating of 8 or more).

³² The total survey results were used here because CDR surveyed recipients were not more likely to report that they used and, or benefited from REDO services than non-CDR recipients.

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The critical success factors, as identified (unprompted) by the CDR recipients included, for example:

- the money (35%);
- the planning (22%);
- the collaboration, co-operation, and teamwork (22%);
- the funded organization's staff on the project (17%);
- the support provided by ACOA staff (17%); and
- the support provided by volunteers (17%).

In other words, the key success factors are the access to funding, good planning, and the people involved from all parties. The critical success factors identified from the case studies also support those identified in the survey.³³ In addition, while interviewees spoke to more general non-project-related success factors, they also relate to the contribution of the people involved (e.g. ACOA personnel and strong partnership arrangements). Interviewees also commented on the critical importance of ACOA's broad presence throughout Atlantic Canada through its offices, REDOs and CBDCs.

2.5 Cost-Effectiveness or Value for Money

Cost-effectiveness can be summarized as the achievement of good results or outcomes in light of the money spent. Cost-effectiveness analysis therefore examines whether the same results could have been attained through less financial outlay, or whether the money spent could have achieved better results if used more effectively.

The 2009 Treasury Board Policy on Evaluation defines value for money as “the extent to which a program demonstrates relevance and performance”, where performance is defined as “the extent to which effectiveness, efficiency and economy are achieved by a program”.³⁴

In Section 2.1, it was established that there is an ongoing need for CDR-related programming, and that it is relevant for ACOA to be responsible for this type of programming. Section 2.4 showed that ACOA's CDR PSA has been successful in achieving its intended outcomes.

Cost-effectiveness or value for money was therefore examined from the perspective of:

- uniqueness or overlap of ACOA's CDR and its elements with other available programming;

³³ Because the survey was long, respondents were either asked about critical success factors (if the project was assessed as being successful) or impediments to success (if the project was assessed as being unsuccessful). Since few respondents rated their projects as unsuccessful, too few impediments were identified to categorize them and include them in this report.

³⁴ Treasury Board Secretariat, *Evaluation Policy* (Revised April 1, 2009).

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- costs versus results of REDOs;
- costs versus results of ACOA's CDR in total;
- same results for less; and
- possible improvements.

2.5.1 Uniqueness or Overlap

None of the interviewees (from any categories) expressed significant concern with overlap or duplication with other federal or provincial programs. ACOA programs are described as being unique and complementary to other federal or provincial programs. However, particularly in NB, interviewees noted that there was a certain degree of overlap between REDOs and CBDCs³⁵, leading to tensions and conflicts among some of the organizations³⁶. For example, both REDOs and CBDCs offer training to new and existing businesses, which tends to create a certain amount of confusion between the roles and responsibilities of the two organizations. Further, REDOs tend to limit their role to coordination, and include the work of other players in their performance reports. In addition, in PEI, a review of potential overlaps between REDOs, CBDCs and the province's rural development officers is underway.³⁷

The surveyed CDR recipients were also asked if they were aware of other organizations that provide assistance to non-commercial organizations in Atlantic Canada which are similar to ACOA. Half (50%) indicated that they were not aware of comparable organizations.

2.5.2 Costs versus Results of REDOs

Based on QAccess data, recent³⁸ annual ACOA 2008-2009 funding to REDOs totals \$9.7 million, including some project-specific funding. As there are 52 REDOs, this represents an annual average of \$187,000 per REDO. The results of this funding include:

- building capacity in communities, as reported in Section 2.4;
- improving collaboration among communities, as also reported in Section 2.4;
- the contribution of a total of at least³⁹ 982 people consisting of 339 full-time staff, 7 part-time staff, 26 other staff and 678 volunteer board members;
- providing services to almost 1,200 communities⁴⁰ across Atlantic Canada which represent at least 99% of the entire Atlantic Canada population; and

³⁵ It was not within the scope of this study to undertake a thorough review of the overlap between REDOs and CBDCs, particularly since CBDCs were recently subject to a Community Futures evaluation. However, overlap was noted in the interviews and validated through documents.

³⁶ See Section 2.3 for a more detailed discussion of the identified overlap in NB.

³⁷ No additional information on this review is available at this time.

³⁸ Given the range of funding agreements with REDOs (some one-year, others multi-year funding), the most recent funding agreement for each REDO was used to reach this total.

³⁹ Information on staff was not available for some of the REDOs. The numbers presented are therefore minimums based on the data available.

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- leveraging of ACOA funding of \$6.6 million in total, or an additional \$0.68 for every \$1.00 invested by ACOA in the REDOs.⁴¹

Regional REDO costs and results are as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: REDO Cost-Effectiveness by Region⁴²

Costs or Leverage	NL	PEI ⁴³	CB	NS Mainland	NB	Total
Costs						
Total ACOA \$	\$2,707,502	\$880,000	\$300,000	\$1,865,493	\$2,966,136	\$9,719,131
Average ACOA \$	\$185,375	\$220,000	\$150,000	\$169,590	\$197,742	\$186,906
Leverage						
Total leveraged \$	\$920,550	\$0.00 ⁴⁴	\$300,000	\$3,283,268	\$3,381,395	\$6,609,009
Leveraged ratio (ACOA \$ to other \$)	\$1.00 to \$0.34	\$1.00 to \$0.00	\$1.00 to \$1.00	\$1.00 to \$1.76	\$1.00 to \$1.14	\$1.00 to \$0.68

2.5.3 Costs versus results of ACOA's CDR in total

Between 2003-2004 and 2008-2009, ACOA approved more than \$3 billion in total funding to commercial and non-commercial organizations, across all Program Sub-activities. Over that same period, the grants and contributions (Gs and Cs) for CDR projects totalled \$49.1 million (or 1.6% of total ACOA Gs and Cs). This involved a total of 235 projects (2.4% of all ACOA projects). The average project cost was therefore \$22,000.⁴⁵

Other costs related to the CDR PSAs are associated with its human resources. CDR salary dollars for the 2008-2009 fiscal-year totalled \$674,800 (or 2.2% of all ACOA salary dollars). This represents 8.65 FTEs (or 2.0% of all ACOA FTEs).⁴⁶

Internal resource allocations are therefore well aligned with Gs and Cs resource allocations.

⁴⁰ Information on the number of communities served could not be obtained for all REDOs. An accurate number is therefore not available.

⁴¹ It is important to note that leveraging with respect to REDOs is highly dependent on the involvement of the provincial government and therefore the provincial agreements in place. Low leveraging should therefore not necessarily be interpreted as a negative finding, as it could be due to the absence of other parties capable of providing additional funds, and hence the greater need for REDOs.

⁴² Source: QAccess.

⁴³ Most of the information for PEI was missing for two or more REDOs. Since there are only four, it is not reliable to provide any information where incomplete data is available.

⁴⁴ Since ACOA funds 100% of REDO operations in PEI, there is no funding leveraged from other organizations.

⁴⁵ Source: QAccess Pivot Table.xlsx provided by ACOA on February 3, 2009.

⁴⁶ Source: Data extracted from salary forecasting module of GX.

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Information on the projects funded indicated that for every \$1.00 invested by ACOA in projects, other organizations contributed \$1.26⁴⁷, distributed as follows:

- other federal department or agency – \$0.22
- provincial organizations – \$0.29
- other organizations – \$0.75

While it is not possible to determine exactly to what extent ACOA contributed to leveraging these additional funds, findings from other sources indicate that ACOA was important in bringing other contributors on board. For example, 74% of all collaborators⁴⁸ who are aware that ACOA is funding the project(s) indicated that they were highly influenced (i.e. a rating of 8 or more out of 10) by ACOA's participation to collaborate on the project. In addition, 50% of all collaborators surveyed indicated that, if ACOA assistance had not been available for the project, they would not have contributed.

In addition to the results presented in Section 2.4, CDR recipients were asked to identify a range of economic benefits resulting from the range of CDR (and possibly non-CDR) projects completed by their organization. The survey results showed that CDR recipients were statistically and significantly more likely than non-CDR recipients to indicate that their projects had resulted in:

- increased research opportunities;
- access to improved information;
- improved image of their organization, community or region;
- new businesses created; and/or
- existing businesses benefiting from increased revenues.

2.5.4 Same Results for Less

About one-third (31%) of surveyed CDR recipients indicated that they would have been able to proceed with the project if ACOA had provided less funding. None of the CDR recipients would have been able to contribute more themselves. Rather, they would have had to:

⁴⁷ ACOA has no specific targets for leveraging funds from other organizations for its CDR PSA. While leveraging is identified as a performance indicator of improved collaborations, specific targets have not been identified. It is therefore difficult to assess if current levels of leveraging for CDR projects are acceptable. It is also difficult to compare CDR leveraging to the leveraging achieved for other PSAs because of the nature of the CDR PSA. Caution should be exercised in favouring CDR projects with high leveraged funds to others where leveraging is lower for two key reasons. First, given that the CDR is intended to help communities identify their economic development needs and opportunities, the inability of certain communities to lever funds could be an indication of high need of those communities for assistance in building their capacity. Second, high leveraging may be achieved to the detriment of ACOA's incremental CDR role in the community.

⁴⁸ Note: this includes all collaborators. It was not possible to analyze the collaborator survey results by PSA because some collaborators were involved in a range of projects for several recipient organizations.

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- delay the start date (75% of those who could have proceeded or 23% of all surveyed CDR recipients);
- take more time to complete the project (75% and 23% respectively);
- reduce the scope of the project (100% and 31% respectively); and/or
- reduce the quality of the project (88% or 27% respectively).

In addition, only 2% of all surveyed collaborators indicated that, if ACOA funding had not been available, they would have contributed more. While this is based on the total absence of ACOA funding, not just a lower contribution, it is still indicative that it is unlikely the same results could have been achieved for less.

2.5.5 Possible Improvements

ACOA interviewees felt the overall approach is a very strong model and had few suggestions for improvements. However, in some cases, ACOA management and staff felt the performance of some REDOs is inconsistent, depending on the quality of hired staff and/or capacity of volunteer board members. The performance-based funding model recently introduced by the Nova Scotia Association of REDOs was described as an innovative approach to implementing results-based management practices. It was suggested that the effectiveness of this approach should be monitored carefully and introduced in other regions based on lessons learned.

The key concern expressed by the REDO interviewees related to the uncertainty surrounding funding. REDOs noted that they are the true link to the community, and are cost-effective due to their volunteer boards and low-cost labour. However, there was expressed concern that the lack of multi-year funding resulted in a lack of job security and limited employee benefits, and that it was therefore difficult to attract and retain qualified staff.

The CDR recipients had few suggestions for improvement (only 24% offered any suggestions). Those frequently noted were for ACOA to speed up the process (20%), provide more money (12%), and/or have more or better staff (12%).

Similarly, only 28% of the collaborators surveyed could offer any suggestions for improvement. Those frequently noted were for ACOA to provide more money (15%), have more flexible or less restrictive criteria (11%), and/or speed up the process (10%).

2.5.6 Best Practices

Various research studies have been conducted to examine lessons learned and best practices with respect to CED. A few are discussed below.

The OECD *Successful Partnerships: A Guide* is intended for practitioners and policy makers involved in partnership arrangements. The guide speaks to the challenges in bringing together a wide variety of relevant actors “around one table”, especially given there are often different levels of government, social partners, entrepreneurs, NGOs, specific sectoral interests and

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community groups. Each actor may come to the table with different financial resources, capabilities and vision of what needs to be achieved. The guide includes a discussion of the characteristics of good partnerships. For example, the partnership should have stability and permanence as well as flexibility and a certain degree of autonomy (i.e., freedom from political influence); partnerships need to develop a shared vision, long-term strategy and action plan to address short term priorities if they are to work effectively and have a lasting effect; shared risk, responsibility and accountability; equality of partners in decisionmaking even when some bring more resources and expertise; members who have the training and skills to identify issues and resolve problems; and lastly, members must declare any "hidden motivations" to all other partners.⁴⁹

Findings with respect to best practices in *Community Partnerships* conducted by the Rural Secretariat in 2005 are very similar. Lessons learned include:

- Establishing a form of agreement between partners on common goals and objectives can prevent problems from occurring in the future;
- Partnerships built between different sectors and stakeholders work when they are based on common values;
- Community projects and partnerships can continue into the future once federal funding has expired;
- All partners add value, whether monetary or non-monetary, to community projects;
- Partnerships built between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal entities can enhance community development within, and in regions adjacent to, reserves;
- Staying focused and committed to developing the first partnership often leads to others;
- Time spent on building the partnership relationship is worthwhile; and Shared accountability is an integral part of all partnerships.⁵⁰

In 2006, ACOAs Policy Unit prepared a discussion paper entitled^d *Community Development: An Overview of Models of Interest and Best Practices*⁵¹ on CED best practices, by examining five different models or new community concepts: LEADER program (Europe), Integrated Regionalization of Communities, Rural Partnerships and Rural Development Councils (US), Network Governance, and Corporate CED Partnerships. The discussion paper does not include specific recommendations for alternative delivery models, but rather it offers a number of ideas for consideration.

2.6 Conclusions and Recommendations

⁴⁹ Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), *Successful Partnerships: A Guide. Forum on Partnerships and Local Governance*, pages 3-11 (January 2006).

⁵⁰ Nicholls, Christopher, *Promising Practices in Community Partnerships: Lessons Learned from the Canadian Rural Partnerships* (October 2005).

⁵¹ Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, *Community Development: An Overview of Models of Interest and Best Practices* (Revised August 2006).

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The conclusions and recommendations outlined in this section are those resulting from the findings presented throughout Section 2.0 which are specific to ACOA's CDR PSA, including REDOs. They do not include conclusions and recommendations which are related to the other three PSAs within the scope of this study nor do they include recommendations of a general nature or those which cross the boundaries of one PSA.

2.6.1 Conclusions

Conclusion 1

It is relevant for ACOA to be responsible for the CDR Program Sub-Activity. CDR continues to be well aligned with government-wide priorities.

Conclusion 2

ACOA's overall approach to CDR is providing the required flexibility to help a wide range of communities across Atlantic Canada identify their economic development needs. The flexible approach is evident as a result of a blend of direct and indirect ACOA assistance, as well as through flexible funding arrangements in each of the four Atlantic provinces. ACOA is reaching a large number of communities through its CDR PSA. Through a decentralized approach with 36 regional and field offices and 52 REDOs, communities throughout Atlantic Canada have access to ACOA's CDR programming.

Conclusion 3

An identified best practice to financing community-based development is multi-year or a permanent core funding for community economic development organizations. This practice is not fully used by ACOA in funding REDOs. While one-year funding agreements are warranted in some cases, particularly where the performance of the REDO needs to be monitored, broader use of multi-year agreements would be useful in reducing the burden associated with applications and approval for both ACOA and REDOs. Additionally, one-year funding has a negative effect on the ability of REDOs to attract and retain qualified personnel. The cost-effectiveness of REDOs could be enhanced with multi-year funding agreements, where single-year agreements are currently in place.

Conclusion 4

ACOA's CDR PSA's internal costs are proportionate to the corresponding level of funding involved and the Program Sub-Activity is effective in achieving its intended results. In addition, ACOA's funding is helping leverage more than the value of its funding (\$1.26 for every ACOA \$1.00). ACOA's CDR PSA is therefore cost-effective. However, there is some evidence of overlap between REDOs, CBDCs and other economic development organizations, particularly in NB and PEI. There should be a clearer delineation of roles and responsibilities between the

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REDOs and the CBDCs, and a better approach to the reporting of their performance and contribution to the overall objectives of the program.

Conclusion 5

ACOA has been successful in improving community capacity related to economic development planning and project management. ACOA and REDOs complement each other. The role of ACOA in building capacity extends beyond the mandate and capacity of the individual REDOs, particularly since ACOA builds capacity in sectoral communities and communities of interest, in addition to geographic communities (where REDOs play a more important direct role). As such, ACOA's CDR PSA is achieving its intended results to improve community capacity to identify economic development needs and opportunities, either directly through the funded projects or indirectly through REDOs. However, REDOs in New Brunswick are less focused on supporting community development due to their emphasis on business development.

Conclusion 6

Through the CDR PSA, ACOA is having influence in bringing a range of collaborators together. In fact, many would not participate in the projects without ACOA's involvement. REDOs are also playing an important role in bringing communities together and getting them to collaborate. The PSA is therefore enhancing community collaborations in Atlantic Canada.

2.6.2 Recommendations

Recommendation 1

1. While ACOA should continue to invest in community-based organizations such as REDOs, ACOA needs to clarify the delineation of roles and responsibilities of REDOs or other organizations of this nature regarding the ACOA contributions. In recognition of the different needs and opportunities across and within regions, the Agency needs to ensure that, by clarifying the roles and responsibilities of REDOs, it does not negatively affect regional flexibility, as this is an important aspect of ACOA's programming. ACOA needs to ensure that there is a clear delineation between its current Community Mobilization and Community Based Business Development PSAs, and thus between REDOs and CBDCs.

Recommendation 2

2. ACOA to consider performance-based multi-year funding agreements where they currently do not exist.

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3.0 Community Investment

3.1 Profile

To be sustainable and grow, communities must invest in those initiatives that show the potential to stimulate economic development. ACOA works in co-operation with communities, making strategic investments to capitalize on opportunities for sustainable economic growth and to build community development capacity. These investments capitalize on the capacity, strengths and opportunities present in the community as identified in community economic development plans and strategies. ACOA's main funding programs used for Community Investment types of activities are the Innovative Communities Fund (ICF) and the Business Development Program (BDP). Before the inception of the ICF, the Strategic Communities Investment Fund (SCIF) also provided funding for CI projects.

The expected result of the Community Investment Program Sub-Activity is: "Improved community capacity to address economic development needs and opportunities."⁵²

3.2 Relevance

The evidence presented in Section 2.2 regarding the alignment of the CDR PSA with government priorities is also applicable to CI.

In recent years, ACOA's plans, priorities, programs and services have been guided by the federal government's comprehensive long-term economic plan, *Advantage Canada: Building a Strong Economy for Canadians* (2006). The four key principles of the plan are:

- focusing government;
- creating new opportunities and choices for people;
- investing for sustainable growth; and
- freeing businesses to grow and succeed.

Since the introduction of *Advantage Canada*, subsequent budget speeches have placed an increased focus on supporting the development of infrastructure as a means of economic stimulus. Budget 2009 also makes a commitment to continue to foster economic development in the regions of Canada most vulnerable to any downturn, and to increase funding to regional development bodies for Atlantic Canada, Quebec, northern and eastern Ontario, and Western Canada, as well as additional support for a new Southern Ontario Development Agency and in Canada's North. Canada's Economic Action Plan supports the need for infrastructure and actions to help businesses and communities.

All ACOA management, staff and other interviewees agree that ACOA has an important role in the CI PSA, and that there is an ongoing need for ACOA's involvement. They agreed that

⁵² Source: ACOA, Performance Measurement Framework 2007-2008.

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ACOA has made a significant contribution to the CD strategic outcome (dynamic and sustainable communities) through this PSA. There was also agreement that the CI PSA is aligned with government-wide priorities and strategies. A few stakeholders expressed some confusion over the linkages between the various suites of federal and provincial programs. For example, in discussing infrastructure expenditures, some municipalities and stakeholders were unclear if the funds were made available through ICF or specific infrastructure programs of other departments such as Infrastructure Canada. However, ACOA interviewees noted that the flexibility of having two programs (ICF and BDP) to address the CI needs of Atlantic Canadian communities was important. Additionally, interviewees noted that it was important for ACOA regions be able to fund CI projects based on the priority needs in each region.

Interviewees (ACOA, REDOs, and other stakeholders) also mentioned that other players such as the provinces and municipalities do not have the same level of resources to support projects of the nature undertaken through ACOA's CI PSA. In addition to financial support, ACOA brings expertise, skills, and competence to the review and oversight of projects. Stakeholders noted that without ACOA as a committed partner in community development projects, it would be virtually impossible to attract funding from other partners.

Surveyed CI recipients believed (average rating of 7.5 out of 10) that ACOA was relevant in supporting the economic development opportunities or challenges of their communities, which include:

- employment opportunities (21%);
- access to funding (19%);
- distance to markets or isolation (16%);
- outmigration (15%);
- infrastructure issues (13%);
- industry or company closures (13%); and
- demographic issues, such as an aging population (12%).

In addition, CI recipients and project collaborators believed it is extremely important for ACOA to make strategic investments to help communities capitalize on opportunities for sustainable economic growth (average rating of 9.2 out of 10 for recipients; 9.3 for collaborators).

3.3 Design and Delivery

As previously noted, ACOA's CI PSA is delivered through ICF (and SCIF) and BDP non-commercial. Between 2003-2004 and 2008-2009, ACOA provided funding for 1,172 CI projects through ICF (483 projects), the BDP (443 projects), and SCIF (244 projects).⁵³

⁵³The two other projects were funded through Entrepreneurship and Skills Development, and Trade, Tourism and Investment. It is therefore possible they were misclassified.

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Interviewees (ACOA, REDOs, and other stakeholders) were satisfied with ACOA's approach to CI. They felt the appropriate target groups are reached through CI PSA. Some interviewees felt that other sectors should also be targeted. It was mentioned that there may be a large number of tourism-related projects because this sector tends to be more organized than other sectors such as manufacturing, minerals and environment.

The QAccess data outlined in Table 5 shows the sectoral distribution of CI projects based on North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) categories.

Table 5: Sectoral Distribution of CI Projects (2003-2004 to 2008-2009)⁵⁴

Sector	Number of Projects	Per cent of Total
Public administration	587	50.1
Other services (except public administration)	333	28.4
Arts, entertainment and recreation	134	11.4
Educational services	47	4.0
Transportation and warehousing	19	1.6
Professional, scientific and technical services	10	0.9
Information and cultural industries	9	0.8
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	9	0.8
Health care and social assistance	5	0.4
Construction	3	0.3
Retail trade	3	0.3
Manufacturing	3	0.3
Management of companies and enterprises	1	0.1
Accommodation and food services	1	0.1
Finance and insurance	1	0.1
Unspecified	7	0.6
Total	1,172	100.0

The surveyed CI recipients were also satisfied with the services provided by ACOA staff (rating of 8.2 out of 10), the access to ACOA's programs and services (rating of 7.6 out of 10), and the range of programs offered (rating of 7.1 out of 10).

The approach used by other regional development agencies is essentially the same as that of ACOA. CED-Q has 14 regional offices that offer financial and non-financial support services to communities. Its approach is essentially the same as ACOA's, but not with the same intensity as

⁵⁴ Source: QAccess data including all CI non-commercial projects between 2003-2004 and 2008-2009.

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it has less funds available. FedNor's approach is also the same but also with less funds available. WD's approach is also similar in its support for urban and rural centres through various initiatives and through its role as the western delivery agent for national programs, such as Infrastructure Canada.

3.4 Effectiveness or Success

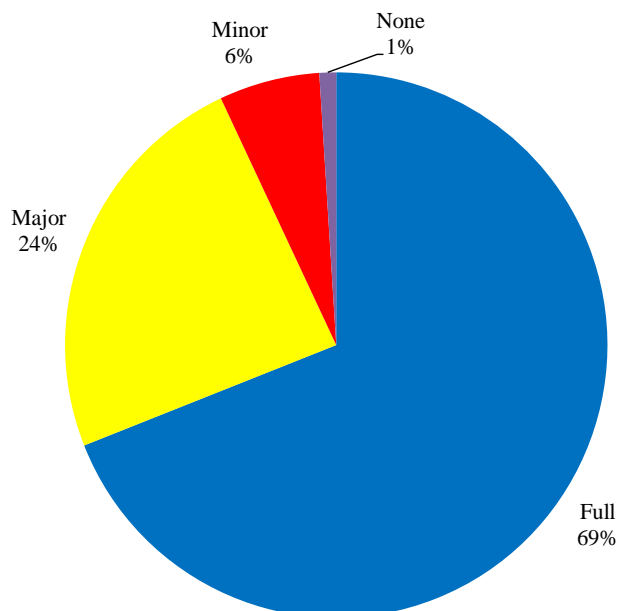
The most recent version of the logic model for the CI PSA identifies expected outcomes that are related to building capacity (i.e. increased capacity of communities to identify opportunities and reach their potential), improving partnerships, networking and coordination (i.e. community level partnerships and greater degree of integrated community-based decisionmaking), improved infrastructure (i.e. development of critical economic development infrastructure, including non-physical infrastructure) and businesses created or strengthened (i.e. increased employment and economic opportunities).

This section discusses the effectiveness or success of the CI PSA with respect to its intended results.

3.4.1 Incrementality

As noted in Section 2.4, before discussing the key results of CI projects, it is important to establish if ACOA funding was incremental and thus if results are attributable to ACOA. Using the same incrementality ratings as for CDR, Figure 4 shows that ACOA was highly incremental to the ability of the organization to undertake the project or to do so within the same scope, quality or timing. In fact, based on the recipient survey, 69% of the projects would not have occurred at all without ACOA CI assistance through ICF or the BDP, and 24% indicated that the absence of ACOA funding would have had a major negative impact on the projects; they would have proceeded but with a decrease in scope, quality and timing.

Figure 4: CI Incrementality



The case studies also confirm that most CI projects would not have occurred without ACOA funding, e.g. cranberry industry (NL), Celtic Colours (CB), Wind Energy Institute of Canada (PEI), some of the Gros Morne Co-operative Association projects (NL), Hebron Industrial Park (NS), Yarmouth waterfront development (NS), Port Hawkesbury Civic Centre (CB), Wellington Barlow's Pond and Park area (PEI), and the Atlantic Policy Congress projects. Some of the Gros Morne projects for which ACOA provided a small share in the funding would have occurred, but at a reduced scope.

3.4.2 Building Capacity

As noted in Section 2.4, ACOA has been instrumental in contributing to community capacity building. This has not only been as a result of its CDR assistance, but also as a result of funding CI projects. For example, 76% of the surveyed CI recipients indicated that ACOA had contributed to improving the capacity of their community or organization. This includes help in:

- building capacity to address economic development needs or opportunities (62%);
- improving collaboration within the community or organization (58%);
- building capacity to identify economic development opportunities (57%);
- preparing proposals to access ICF or BDP funding (55%);
- improving project management skills (47%);
- increasing leadership capacity (47%);
- improving capacity for strategic planning (48%);

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- developing a sector strategy (47%);
- improving collaboration with other communities or organizations (47%);
- identifying potential partners or collaborators for projects (46%);
- accessing funds from other organizations (42%); and
- responding to economic crises such as plant closures or natural disasters (12%).

CI recipients have also benefited from the services of the REDO in their area (64% have used a REDO).

Case studies also provide evidence of communities or organizations that have built their capacity. For example, after completing several projects, the Gros Morne Co-operative Association has gained experience and is now viewed as the organization with the best project management capability in the area; it is being asked to write proposals for other organizations and to lead a variety of other projects. In the case of the Town of Port Hawkesbury (CB), before contributing to funding the construction of the civic centre, ACOA funded a feasibility study. This provided Town Council with the knowledge required to make an informed decision and provided guidance for the development of detailed plans.

3.4.3 Improving Collaborations

One of the databases provided for this study identified the collaborators involved on the projects. This database included 1,315 CI projects, of which 355 (or 27%) involved collaborators. While it is likely that information on collaborators was not included for all projects involving collaborators, summary information on the 355 projects is as follows:

- the projects involved between 1 and 25 collaborators;
- about half (49%) of the projects involved only one collaborator (in addition to ACOA);
- the projects involved a total of 953 collaborators (not necessarily unique across projects); and
- the projects involved, on average, 2.7 collaborators (in addition to ACOA).

Interviewees referred to several projects as examples of enhanced community collaborations in Atlantic Canada including:

- Celtic Colours International Festival (CB) (which is also a case study);
- Torrent River Salmon and Interpretation Centre in Hawke's Bay (NL) which involved ACOA, the town, two REDOs, the province, Fisheries and Oceans Canada and Service Canada;
- Cabot Trail Working Association (CB); and
- Lower River Passage managed by St. John River Society (NB).

In total, 47% of surveyed CI recipients indicated that ACOA had helped improve collaboration with other communities or organizations, and 46% said it had helped identify potential partners

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or collaborator for projects. In addition, 91% of the surveyed CI recipients indicated that their project involved collaborators or partners. These collaborators were said to have made cash contributions (90% of those indicating the involvement of collaborators or partners), an in-kind contribution (79%), a human resource contribution (76%), and/or some other type of contribution (32%). In total, 96% of the CI recipients who indicated the project involved collaborators are still working with at least some if not all these collaborators.

Of the collaborators surveyed, 75% were aware that ACOA was funding the project when they agreed to collaborate on the project and, of those aware, 75% indicated that their organization's decision to also participate was highly (i.e. rating of 8 or more out of 10) influenced by ACOA's involvement.

All CI case studies showed evidence of ACOA's role in fostering collaborations. For example, the Gros Morne Co-operative Association's projects have involved collaborations with Parks Canada, Canadian Heritage, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, the Newfoundland Department of Education, local municipalities and local businesses. As another example, the Yarmouth waterfront development projects involved the Nova Scotia government, local municipalities and local not-for-profit corporations.

3.4.4 Critical Economic Infrastructure

In a study published by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Canada's definition of critical infrastructure was described as follows:

*"Canada's critical infrastructure consists of those physical and information technology facilities, networks, services and assets which, if disrupted or destroyed, would have a serious impact on the health, safety, security or economic well-being of Canadians or the effective functioning of governments in Canada."*⁵⁵

For the purposes of this study, the economic aspect of the definition was used. Therefore critical economic infrastructure includes physical and information technology facilities, networks, services and assets which are critical to the economic well-being of Atlantic Canadian communities. Interviewees identified some ACOA projects they believed involved critical economic infrastructure results.⁵⁶

The case studies also provided examples of critical economic infrastructure resulting from ACOA-funded projects, for example:

⁵⁵ OECD, *Protection of 'Critical Infrastructure' and the Role of Investment Policies Relating to National Security* (May 2008).

⁵⁶ Due to the information provided by the interviewees, it was not possible to validate if these were CI projects. The specific examples noted by interviewees are therefore not included in this report.

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- Cranberry industry (NL) – The project involves creating and planting cranberry-growing farmland that will produce revenue-generating crops and employ workers to maintain the fields and harvest the crops. The project will therefore support the creation of an economically important new agricultural crop in NL.
- Port Hawkesbury Civic Centre (CB) – The project involved the creation of a town civic centre that provides direct employment and attracts visitors to sports and other major events. Visitors’ spending supports local tourism and other businesses, particularly during the off-seasons of fall and winter.
- Yarmouth Waterfront Development (NS) – The establishment of a waterfront walkway and marina provides the foundation for increased tourism and local economic development. There is also some evidence of the creation of direct employment.

The survey of CI recipients is where the most information on critical economic infrastructure was obtained for this evaluation. Recipients were asked to identify the types of infrastructure projects undertaken by their organization with ACOA’s assistance over the past five years. The survey results indicate that CI recipients are most likely to have undertaken a project involving a community building (67% of all CI recipients surveyed), tourism infrastructure (60%); marketing (56%), industry or business development (55%) and/or strategic planning (53%). CI recipients were also asked to identify the results of their projects, particularly in terms of economic benefits. The survey results reveal that certain types of infrastructure projects are significantly more likely to contribute to certain economic results than others. The significant results from the most frequently mentioned types of infrastructure are highlighted in Table 7. The table illustrates that various types of infrastructure contribute to economic and other benefits in the communities, and that the range of ACOA CI project support is important to supporting the economic development needs of different communities.

**Table 6: Results by Infrastructure
(based on survey results)**

Type of Infrastructure	Significantly more likely to result in:
Community building (n=170)	Business creation, survival or growth Benefits to people in the community Increase the length of the tourism season Increased satisfaction of visitors
Tourism infrastructure (n=150)	Existing businesses benefiting from increased revenues New jobs created Benefits to people in the community Attraction of people to the community Impact on tourism
Marketing (n=141)	Business creation, survival or growth Attraction of new investments New jobs created or better jobs available Reduced outmigration Impact on tourism

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**Table 6: Results by Infrastructure
(based on survey results)**

Type of Infrastructure	Significantly more likely to result in:
Industry or business development (n=140)	Business creation, survival or growth Attraction of new investments New jobs created or better jobs available Benefits to people in the community Reduced outmigration Increase in the length of the tourism season
Strategic planning (n=133)	New businesses attracted to the community New businesses created Survival of existing businesses Existing businesses benefitting from the development or growth of export markets Attraction of new investments New jobs created Better jobs available More or better restaurants in the community More or better stores in the community Reduced outmigration Increase in the length of the tourism season

3.4.5 Businesses Created or Strengthened (Economic Impacts)

The case studies provide specific examples of businesses created or strengthened:

- Cranberry industry (NL) – For the four private partners involved in this project, the estimated level of employment for the land development related to this project is six to eight full-time positions for 18 months and an equal number of seasonal full-time for two summer seasons. It is estimated that the sale of cranberries on 52 acres of land will bring an estimated \$500,000 to \$750,000 in gross revenues to the four growers.
- Hebron Industrial Park (NS) – This has created 300 additional jobs in the Yarmouth area with an annual net payroll of \$8 million.
- Wind Energy Institute of Canada (WEICan) (PEI) – The institute has nine full-time employees with a payroll of over \$500,000. Over the past two years, visitors have spent an estimated 100 person days annually at the institute. At an estimated \$150 a day for accommodation and meals, this has translated into spending of approximately \$15,000 annually in the local community. WEICan also purchases supplies and services from the local community for things such as tower installation, welding, equipment repairs, and other items which total \$150,000 on average, annually.

3.4.6 Overall Success of CI Projects

Based on the survey results, the CI recipients surveyed believed that their project was successful as evidenced by an average rating of 9.0 out of 10, 10 being extremely successful (and 86%

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giving a success rating of 8 or more). A wide range of critical factors were noted by CI recipients to the success of the projects. Those most frequently mentioned were:

- the money (23%);
- the support provided by ACOA staff (21%);
- the collaboration, co-operation, and teamwork (19%); and
- the contributions or support of the board of directors or steering committee (17%).

In other words, again in addition to access to funding, the key success factors are associated with the people. As noted for CDR, the critical success factors from the case studies also support those identified in the survey. Additionally, as previously noted, interviewees identified people as key contributors to the success of the PSA in general.

As the projects were highly successful, impediments to success were not noted by survey respondents. Impediments were identified in some of the case studies, for example:

- Wind Energy Institute of Canada (PEI) – One factor impeding success is isolation of the Cape North location. Experience has shown that few people who are not local wish to live there for extended periods of time. This causes difficulty in recruiting employees.
- Celtic Colours (CB) – Impediments include the additional expenses generated by transportation to rural settings; the increasing costs of fuel and airfare; and the economic downturn.
- Port Hawkesbury Civic Centre, (CB) – The lack of sufficient quality accommodations in the area limits the ability of the Civic Centre to host large events.
- Hebron Industrial Park, (NS)– With the growth and change in business, the limited supply of people in the Yarmouth area with web-related skills has presented a difficulty for Rcom⁵⁷, particularly as the firm has migrated to lines of business requiring these skills. The local community college has some courses in this area, but the supply of trained people is limited. In addition, some of the young people coming to work at Rcom have stayed for a year or two to acquire skills and experience and then moved to a larger community. To overcome this difficulty, Rcom has opened a second call centre in Halifax, where it is easier to find and attract people with the required skills.

Interviewees commented on the critical success factors of the CI PSA in general terms rather than for specific projects. Some of the factors noted included the flexibility of the programs and funding criteria to support a wide range of eligible projects. Along the same line, interviewees commented positively on the capability of the programs to adjust over time to better suit the changing economic conditions and needs of communities. Few impediments were noted, but they are discussed in a later section.

⁵⁷ Rcom is the Canadian subsidiary of Register.com operating at the Hebron Industrial Park.

3.5 Cost-Effectiveness or Value for Money

3.5.1 Uniqueness or Overlap

None of the interviewees (all categories) expressed any concern with the possible overlap of the CI PSA with other federal or provincial programs. The ICF and BDP non-commercial are described as being unique and complementary to other federal or provincial programs. A few ACOA interviewees mentioned that ICF takes the strain off the BDP, and some also mentioned the possibility of moving non-commercial BDP into ICF.

Half (50%) of the CI recipients surveyed indicated that they were aware of organizations that provide assistance to non-commercial organizations in Atlantic Canada which are similar to ACOA. More than three-quarters of those aware mentioned provincial government organizations or programs (77% of those aware of other programs). The next most frequently mentioned organizations are Service Canada (18%) and Canadian Heritage (13%). Similarly, a little less than half (47%) of the collaborators surveyed were aware of comparable organizations. Collaborators also mentioned provincial government organizations or programs (69%), Service Canada (21%) and Canadian Heritage (13%) more frequently than any other organizations.

3.5.2 Costs versus Results

Of the \$3 billion in total ACOA funding approved between 2003-2004 and 2008-2009, the grants and contributions for CI projects totalled \$371.5 million (or 12.1% of total ACOA Gs and Cs). This involved a total of 1,172 projects (11.8% of all ACOA projects). The average CI project cost was therefore \$317,000.⁵⁸

Salary dollars for the CI PSA totalled \$3.8 million in 2008-2009 or 12.2% of all ACOA salary dollars. This represents 49.98 FTEs or 11.7% of all ACOA FTEs. CI internal resource allocations are therefore well-aligned with Gs and Cs resource allocations.⁵⁹ It is important to note that community development projects are FTE-intensive because they generally require more involvement on the part of the account manager due to the capacity building elements of many projects.

Information on the projects funded indicates that for every \$1.00 ACOA invested in projects, other organizations contributed an almost equal amount (\$0.95), distributed as follows:

- other federal department or agency – \$0.20
- provincial organizations – \$0.32
- other organizations – \$0.43

⁵⁸ Source: QAccess Pivot Table.xlsx provided by ACOA on February 3, 2009.

⁵⁹ Source: Data extracted from salary forecasting module of GX.

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The ACOA 2007-2008 to 2008-2009 PMF includes a leveraging target on investments of \$23.5 million per year for CI.⁶⁰ QAccess data shows that leveraging of \$367.2 million on projects approved in 2007-2008 and \$38.6 million on projects approved in 2008-2009. Targets were therefore exceeded both years. However, high leveraging should not be achieved to the detriment of incrementality because this would be reflective of the reduced need for ACOA assistance. In the case of ACOA's CI PSA, this is not the case since leveraging targets were exceeded yet high incrementality was also noted (see Figure 4).

As discussed in Section 2.5, it is not possible to determine the extent to which ACOA leveraged other funds. Nevertheless, based on the collaborator survey, there is strong indication that ACOA played a major role in the ability of CI recipients to obtain funds from other organizations and thus leverage funds.

In addition to the discussion on success in Section 3.4, the survey results show that, CI recipients were significantly more likely than non-CI recipients to indicate that their projects had resulted in, for example:

- Impact on people in the community (92% of CI recipients indicated that this had occurred, while 81% of non-CI recipients so indicated)⁶¹;
- Impact on businesses in the communities (82% for CI recipients versus 73% for non-CI recipients);
- Impact on tourism (74% for CI recipients versus 49% for non-CI recipients);
- Increased viability of a particular industry (70% for CI recipients versus 56% for non-CI recipients);
- Skills development (61% for CI recipients versus 49% for non-CI recipients); and
- International exposure (47% for CI recipients versus 34% for non-CI recipients).

3.5.3 Same Results for Less

About one-third (34%) of surveyed CI recipients indicated that they would have been able to proceed with the project if ACOA had funded a smaller amount. However, only 5% indicated that their organization would have been able to contribute more, whereas 11% of all CI recipients indicated that they would have been able to obtain funding from other sources. In addition, those who could have proceeded with a smaller amount indicated that they would have had to reduce the scope of the project (89% of those who could have proceeded), had a lower quality project (71%), taken more time to complete the project (68%), delayed the start of the project (66%), and/or other (25%). Given the impact of reduced funding, it is unlikely that the same results could have been achieved for less.

⁶⁰ Source: ACOA Performance Measurement Framework (PMF) dated December 2007.

⁶¹ While the percentages are high for both CI and non-CI recipients, the differences in percentages are statistically significant.

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In addition, as noted in Section 2.5, only 2% of all surveyed collaborators indicated that, if ACOA funding had not been available, they would have contributed more to the projects.

3.5.4 Possible Improvements

ACOA and REDO interviewees had few suggestions for improvements. Some interviewees noted the CI PSA could be improved if the requirement for ministerial approval was changed so that fewer projects need ministerial approval.

When asked for suggestions for improvements, 18% of CI recipients could not offer any. The most frequently mentioned suggestions were:

- faster processes (16%);⁶²
- more money (13%); and/or
- more flexible, less restrictive criteria (10%).

Similarly, as noted in Section 2.5, 28% of the collaborators surveyed could not offer any suggestions for improvement. Frequently noted suggestions were for ACOA to provide more money (15%), have more flexible or less restrictive criteria (11%), and/or speed up the process (10%).

3.6 Conclusions and Recommendations

3.6.1 Conclusions

Conclusion 7

It is relevant for ACOA to be responsible for the CI PSA, which continues to be well aligned with government-wide priorities without duplicating or overlapping other programs.

Conclusion 8

The overall approach to CI is adequate in providing ACOA with the required flexibility to address the wide ranging economic development needs of communities across Atlantic Canada. In addition, clients are satisfied with ACOA's approach.

Conclusion 9

ACOA has been successful in improving community capacity related to economic development planning and project management through its CI PSA.

⁶² Within the scope of this evaluation, the actual length of time required for different processes was not examined. It is therefore not possible to elaborate on these suggestions through specific conclusions or recommendations.

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Conclusion 10

Through the funded projects, the CI PSA has brought together a large number and wide range of collaborators, including other federal government departments and agencies, provincial governments, municipal governments, and non-governmental organizations. ACOA is having influence in initially bringing these collaborators on board. In fact, many would not participate in the projects without ACOA's involvement. To a large extent, these collaborations are sustainable and continue even after the ACOA projects are completed. The PSA is therefore enhancing community collaborations in Atlantic Canada.

Conclusion 11

The CI PSA has contributed to the development of critical economic infrastructure in the communities assisted. The range of types of "bricks and mortar" and "non bricks and mortar" projects have generated economic activity. This includes economic activity through enhanced business environments, job creation, tourism, and many others. Different types of projects generate different types of economic activity in the communities. It is therefore essential that ACOA continue to fund a broad range of types of critical economic infrastructure in order to be able to address the wide range of needs of Atlantic Canadian communities.

Conclusion 12

The CI PSA has contributed to enhancing the business environment in communities across Atlantic Canada. The benefits to the businesses and communities include jobs created or maintained, increased sales or revenues, survival of existing businesses and creation of new ones, and many other direct and indirect benefits to Atlantic Canada.

Conclusion 13

ACOA's CI assistance is critical to providing communities with the ability to undertake the funded projects. Incrementality is high. In fact, in a significant proportion of the cases, ACOA's assistance is essential for the projects to go ahead. As such, the project results are highly attributable to ACOA's involvement. Since the projects have resulted in building the capacity of communities, improving collaborations, improving infrastructure and/or in positive economic impacts in the communities, the CI PSA is successful in achieving its intended results and impacts.

Conclusion 14

The CI PSA does not overlap other programs within ACOA, nor does it overlap other federal and provincial programs. Rather, the CI PSA complements other existing programs.

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Conclusion 15

ACOA's CI PSA's internal costs are proportionate to the corresponding level of funding involved even though community development projects require more internal resources because of they generally require more involvement from ACOA staff to help build the capacity of communities. This PSA is effective in achieving its intended results. In addition, ACOA's funding is helping leverage an almost equal amount (\$0.95 for every ACOA \$1.00) to its investment, exceeding the leveraging targets identified in ACOA's PMF. ACOA's CI PSA is therefore cost-effective.

3.6.2 Recommendations

Notwithstanding recommendations in other parts of this report which pertain to the CI PSA, no specific recommendation is required based on the conclusions identified above.

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4.0 Official Language Minority Communities and Aboriginal Communities Program Sub-Activities

The coverage of this evaluation includes both the OLMC and AC Program Sub-activities. However it is important to note that these two Program Sub-activities were active as PAA elements only for fiscal years 2007-2008 and 2008-2009⁶³. They were therefore not in existence for the entire time period covered by the evaluation, and all inputs, outputs and results were limited to only those projects coded as these two PSAs at the time of data collection.

Before their inclusion in April 2007, and after the OLMC and AC PSAs were removed from ACOA's PAA in 2009-2010, CDR and CI were delivered to OLMCs and ACs as part of all ACOA program activities and through BDP and ICF funding programs. Accordingly, this section of the evaluation is not meant to be a full assessment of all of ACOA's resources, activities and results for both the Official Language Minority Communities and the Aboriginal Communities, but rather an assessment of the resources and results for a limited number of OLMC and AC PSA-coded projects.

4.1 OLMC and AC Profile

4.1.1 OLMC Program Sub-Activity

Almost 300,000 Acadians and francophones live in Atlantic Canada, representing roughly one-third of the nation's French language minority community. The economic vitality of this population is critical to the health of the Atlantic Canadian economy. ACOA's considerable support for this minority group is couched in tradition, and required by legislation. It should be noted that the OLMC is entitled to particular consideration for constitutional reasons. In addition to requirements flowing from the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Section 41 of *Canada's Official Languages Act (OLA)* imposes upon federal institutions the duty to enhance the vitality of the country's English and French linguistic communities, and to support and assist them in their development. In this respect, ACOA collaborates with several Acadian and francophone organizations across the region whose activities encompass social, political, commercial and economic interests. While the Agency partners primarily with other federal departments from a financial perspective, it also collaborates with provincial and municipal governments to achieve its objectives. Beyond fulfilling the basic requirement of ensuring service for French clientele, ACOA uses the BDP and ICF funding programs, along with funds accessed through its partnerships, to enable the official language minority community to engage in activities of an incremental nature, fostering the sustainable community economic infrastructure necessary for its success.

While ACOA is legislatively required to enhance the vitality of OLMCs in Atlantic Canada, it is not the main player providing services to OLMCs. Other departments, such as Canadian

⁶³ As noted in section 1.2 of the report, the PAA was significantly modified in 2009, where it was replaced with a structure that only has four PSAs when both the OLMC and AC sub-activities were removed. This change was made to better reflect the horizontal nature of the AC and OLMC-related activities ACOA undertakes.

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Heritage and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada have more resources and programming specifically targeted to OLMCs.

The expected result of the Official Languages Minority Communities Program Sub-Activity is: "Increased capacity of the Official Language Minority Communities (OLMC) in Atlantic Canada to reach its potential."⁶⁴

4.1.2 AC Program Sub-Activity

Aboriginal Communities (AC) in Atlantic Canada are small, often remote, and characterized by extremely high unemployment, with a young and rapidly growing population (almost half the population is between 15 and 24 and growing three times faster than non-Aboriginal)⁶⁵. A majority of Aboriginals live on reserves, with lower average incomes, with higher rates of poverty and lower levels of education attainment (including literacy). These factors have contributed to an underdeveloped segment of the Atlantic Canadian population, which struggles with internal capacity, business development and governance issues. As a result, interventions need to be at a much more fundamental level than in non-Aboriginal communities. The responsibility for Aboriginal economic development is led by Indian and Northern Affairs (INAC) and shared with other federal government departments, including Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), Industry Canada (IC), and Human Resources and Skills Development (HRSDC). For this reason, ACOA works through a number of coordinating mechanisms which are tripartite in nature, involving Aboriginals and federal and provincial authorities in developing a coordinated approach to address Aboriginal economic development issues and needs. ACOA uses the flexibility within its existing programs to invest in priority areas jointly identified by governments, Aboriginal businesses and communities: community capacity building; the development of management skills; strategic community planning; and small business development and growth including improved access to financing. The BDP and ICF are the primary funding programs.

The expected result of the Aboriginal Communities Program Sub-Activity is: "Increase community economic development in Aboriginal communities within Atlantic Canada."⁶⁶

4.2 OLMC and AC Relevance

4.2.1 OLMC Program Sub-Activity

As a federal agency, ACOA has legislated requirements under the OLA to provide services to the public in both official languages, to protect the rights of public servants to work in the official language of their choice in certain regions, to promote linguistic duality, and to enhance the vitality of OLMCs.

⁶⁴ Source: ACOA, Performance Measurement Framework, 2007-2008.

⁶⁵ Source: ACOA, Program Activity Architecture, 2007-2008 and 2008-2009.

⁶⁶ Source: ACOA, Performance Measurement Framework, 2007-2008.

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In a report entitled *Horizontal Management of Official Languages*, prepared by Donald J. Savoie of the Université de Moncton⁶⁷, the importance of the 2005 amendment to the OLA is stressed. It reads: “every federal institution has the duty to ensure that positive measures are taken for the implementation of the commitment under subsection 1” which, in turn, “commits the government of Canada to enhancing the vitality of the English and French linguistic minority communities in Canada and supporting their development.”

Mr. Savoie goes on to suggest that the “expectations of communities have been and continue to be very high. The requests of OLMCs to the federal government are invariably higher than the resources available to meet them.”

The 2007-2008 status report for the implementation of Section 41 of the OLA within ACOA⁶⁸ indicates that ACOA has achieved its objectives related to enhancing the vitality of OLMCs in the Atlantic provinces through various economic development initiatives led by the Agency, as well as by financial support to projects proposed by OLMCs that relate to ACOA's mandate. During fiscal year 2007-2008, ACOA invested \$10.3 million in 39 new projects aimed at economic development. The report goes on to indicate that the presence of ACOA employees throughout Atlantic Canada facilitates collaboration between ACOA and the various organizations working in a community. A working committee of RDÉE (Regroupement de développement économique et d'employabilité) Atlantique and ACOA was formed to strengthen the partnership with OLMCs, set priorities, and implement action plans to foster the vitality of OLMCs. The Agency also collaborates with provincial and municipal government to achieve its objectives. ACOA uses the BDP and ICF, as well as funds accessed through its partnerships, to enable OLMCs to engage in sustainable economic development activities.

It is important to note that other federal departments, such as Canadian Heritage and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, have a strong national mandate for coordinating the provision of programming targeted at OLMCs. For example, Canadian Heritage's Official Languages Support Programs includes a Development of Official Language Communities – Community Life sub-component⁶⁹ which aims to enable the federal government to work with partners to provide OLMCs with access in their own language to community services and infrastructure requirement to develop and grow. Funding allocations across Canada between 2003-2004 and 2008-2009 for this program alone totalled \$328.2 million.⁷⁰ However, coordination mechanisms are deemed to ensure the complementarity (and the absence of duplication) between the various partner departments supporting OLMCs in Atlantic Canada.

⁶⁷ Savoie, Donald J., *Horizontal Management of Official Languages*, Université de Moncton (March 2008).

⁶⁸ Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, *Status Report 2007-2008 For the Implementation of Section 41 of the Official Languages Act* (May 2008).

⁶⁹ Canadian Heritage, <http://ororwww.pch.gc.ca/orpgrmorlo-olorpgrmordclo-vc-eng.cfm> (as accessed in July 2009).

⁷⁰ Provincial allocations are not available, but even if the allocation is roughly equivalent to population distribution Atlantic communities could have received more than \$20 million through this program between 2003-2004 and 2008-2009.

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While reviewed documents clearly demonstrate that ACOA must be involved in helping increase the capacity of OLMCs across Atlantic Canada to reach their potential, other lines of evidence were also examined. Over the short period of time when the PSA has been active, a limited number of funded projects have been categorized as OLMC PSA projects in the ACOA database (QAccess). The evaluation found that some projects targeting OLMCs have not been categorized as OLMC PSA projects because they were not Community Development PA projects, or because they were coded under another PSA within Community Development PA (e.g. CI and CDR PSA). In other words, over the period covered by the evaluation, ACOA has undoubtedly provided assistance to a significantly larger number of OLMCs than is indicated by the data for the OLMC PSA.

The OLMC PSA recipients surveyed indicated that they believed ACOA involvement was extremely important (i.e. on a scale of 1 to 10, 10 being extremely important, the average rating was 9.7). In support of this, other knowledgeable interviewees noted that it was important for ACOA to be involved with OLMCs.

Additionally, the survey of OLMC PSA recipients confirms that their economic development needs and opportunities are similar to those of CDR and CI recipients. For example, the most frequently mentioned issues of OLMCs were:

- outmigration (24%);
- access to funding (19%);
- infrastructure issues (19%);
- lack of employment opportunities (14%); and
- tourism issues or challenges (14%).

OLMC PSA survey respondents believed ACOA is somewhat effective in supporting their economic development opportunities or challenges (average rating of 5.9 out of 10).

4.2.2 AC Program Sub-Activity

In Budget 2008, the Government of Canada made a commitment to develop a new economic development framework for Aboriginal communities. A discussion guide, entitled *Toward a New Federal Framework for Aboriginal Development*, was developed to promote discussion among Aboriginal organizations and communities, the private sector, provincial and territorial governments, and other interested stakeholders.⁷¹ The previous economic strategy for Aboriginal communities was put in place in 1989. The new framework is intended to coordinate federal actions and ensure that the most important challenges facing Aboriginal Canadians are addressed. The discussion paper points out that major economic gaps still remain between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians that lead to significant differences in quality of life and opportunities. Some of the persistent barriers to Aboriginal economic development include:

⁷¹ Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, *Toward a New Federal Framework for Aboriginal Economic Development – Discussion Guide* (2008).

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- inability to access capital;
- legislative and regulatory barriers;
- limited access to lands and resources;
- deficits in human capital;
- infrastructure deficits;
- lack of governance capacity; and
- fragmented federal approach to economic development and limited federal funding.

ACOA management and staff interviewees noted that INAC is the lead department with respect to economic development of ACs. ACOA shares this responsibility within Atlantic Canada with INAC, and coordinates with other partners.

One of INAC's Program Activities is entitled "Community Investment". The INAC Report on Plans and Priorities (RPP) notes that:

"This program activity enhances communities' ability to benefit from economic development opportunities. The programs that support this goal include: the Community Economic Opportunities Program, the Aboriginal Workforce Participation Initiative, the Procurement Strategy for Aboriginal Business, the Community Economic Development Program, and the Community Support Services Program.

Together, these programs help communities identify and activate economic potential, resulting in increased community employment, greater use of community controlled land and resources, enhanced community economic infrastructure, more and larger community businesses, more business opportunities, and a better environment for community economic development."⁷²

Key expected results for INAC's PSA are:

- Economic development benefits for First Nations and Inuit communities; and
- First Nations and Inuit economic institutions have capacity to support community economic planning.

INAC's RPP notes that the 2009-2010 planned spending for this Program Activity across Canada is \$172.2 million with 50 FTEs.⁷³

⁷² Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, *Indian and Northern Affairs Canada and Canadian Polar Commission 2009-2010 Estimates, Report on Plans and Priorities* (2009).

⁷³ Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, *Indian and Northern Affairs Canada and Canadian Polar Commission 2009-2010 Estimates, Report on Plans and Priorities* (2009).

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Recognizing that there are limitations in INAC's economic development mandate, interviewees explained that ACOA is waiting to see what guidance the new Aboriginal Economic Development Framework will provide regarding the need to shift roles and responsibilities. ACOA interviewees also mentioned that the Agency is currently carrying out an Aboriginal Development Research Project to establish baseline data for ACs. It is expected that this will improve ACOA's understanding of the economic development needs of ACs.

The surveyed AC PSA recipients indicated that their key economic development needs were:

- access to funding (40%);
- isolation, distance to markets (40%); and
- infrastructure issues (20%).

4.3 Design and Delivery

There is no special programming nor budget, and no particular established targets for OLMCs and ACs. This is similar to the approach used by other regional development agencies across the country as reported by interviewed representatives. FedNor has designated bilingual Community Futures Development Corporations (CFDCs), which deliver REDO-like services, as well as the Community Futures Program (delivered by CBDCs in Atlantic Canada). For its main program, the Northern Ontario Development Fund (NODF), FedNor tracks its OLMC-related projects, but does not have any budgetary and reach targets. Furthermore, Fednor has indicated that all programming is available to ACs. Similarly, Western Economic Diversification supports francophone Economic Development Organizations (FEDOs) which operate like CFDCs. Other programs are accessed by francophone communities the same way as they are by English communities. Western Economic Diversification also indicated that it has six CFDCs that serve ACs, and that it also supports a number of AC-related projects. In Quebec, CED-Q consults with English OLMC communities but offers no special programming. CED-Q is mainly involved with ACs through one office in Northern Quebec.

The QAccess data show that ACOA has reached a limited number of OLMCs and ACs through its PSAs, as only 35 AC PSA projects and 51 OLMCs were mapped to their respective PSA between April 2007 and May 2009, the period the PSAs were active.

4.4 Effectiveness or Success

Due to the limited period during which the PSAs were in place and the definition of their scope, a relatively small sample of 31 recipients was surveyed and two case studies were completed. Even though the findings are based on a small number of respondents, it is important to highlight some of the key results of projects.

It should be noted that the 10 AC recipient organizations surveyed had received funding for 14 projects, and the case study involved three projects. Therefore a total of 17 of the 35 AC PSA projects were involved in the survey and case study.

4.4.1 Incrementality

Using the same incrementality ratings as for CDR and CI, Figure 5 and Figure 6 show that ACOA was highly incremental to the ability of the OLMC and AC to undertake the project or to do so within the same scope, quality or timing. While full and major incrementality ratings are lower than those identified for the CI and CDR PSAs, it is important to again note that other federal departments play a major role in providing services to these communities. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that ACOA funded, on average, 56.5% of the total overall costs for of OLMC PSA projects, which is higher than the average percentage of ACOA funding for CDR (i.e. 34.4%) and CI (i.e. 38.9%) projects. It is also noteworthy that ACOA funded, on average, 37.5% of the total cost of AC PSA projects, which is similar to the average percentage of ACOA funding for CDR PSA (i.e. 34.4%) and CI PSA (i.e. 38.9%) projects.

In both the OLMC and AC case studies, interviewees indicated that the projects could not have proceeded without ACOA assistance.

Figure 5: OLMC Incrementality

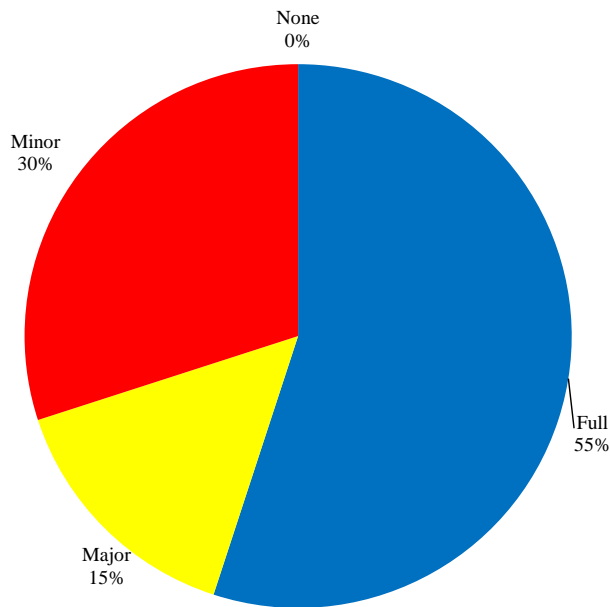
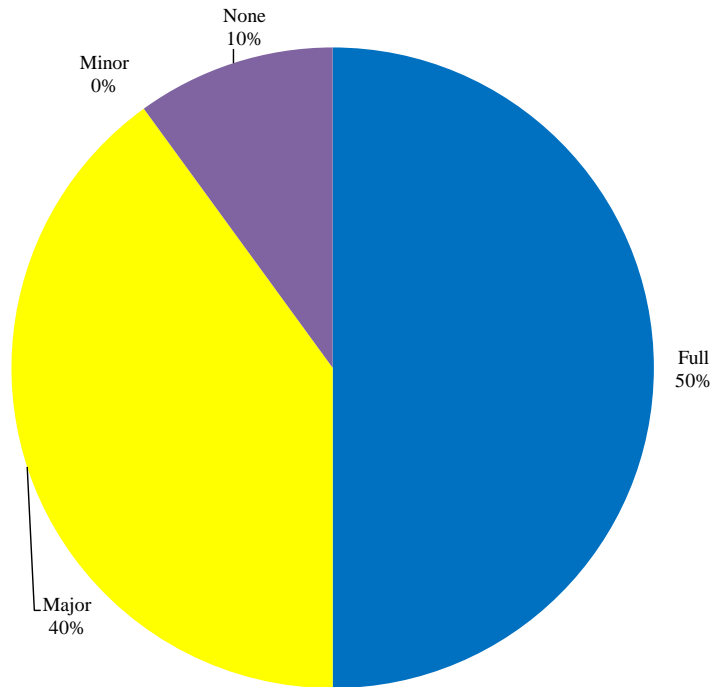


Figure 6: AC Incrementality



4.4.2 Results

Recognizing that a limited number of OLMC (21) and AC (10) recipients were surveyed and only two case studies completed, it is difficult to generalize and form valid conclusions about ACOA's overall effectiveness and impact on Aboriginal and official language minority communities from this small sample. However, based on the survey, the key results (mentioned by more than 60% of surveyed recipients) of OLMC and AC PSA projects are:

OLMC

- improved image of organization, community or region (81% of all OLMC recipients surveyed);
- impact on the people in the community (81%);
- improved economic development planning and project management capacity (67%);
- impact on businesses in the community (67%);
- existing businesses survived (62%);
- access to improved information (62%); and
- impact on tourism in the community (62%).

AC

- impact on the people in the community (90% of all AC recipients surveyed);

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- ACOA contributed to improved economic development planning and project management capacity (80%);
- impact on businesses in the community (70%);
- new jobs created (70%);
- new businesses created (60%);
- existing businesses benefited from increased revenues (60%);
- impact on tourism in the community (60%);
- increased satisfaction of visitors (60%);
- attraction of people to the community (60%); and/or
- increase in the number of tourists (60%).

Survey results therefore indicate that the PSAs projects have contributed to building capacity and economic impacts in OLMCs and ACs.

The results of the OLMC case study indicate that immediate impacts of the Communauté de Wellington (PEI) project (Barlow's Pond and Park area restoration case study) include local jobs and economic activity generated by the construction phase of the pond and park area. Based on consultations with key project stakeholders and businesses in the community, the project has also resulted in the hiring of an individual during the summer to provide services in the interpretation centre. The project has also generated a feeling of pride among the members of the community, increased the well-being of the residents, and provided visitors and tourists with an attractive site to visit. The site has been used on a number of occasions for weddings, and has been the location of the festivities for the 50th anniversary of the Village of Wellington.⁷⁴

The immediate impacts of the Aboriginal Policy Congress (APC) projects examined in the AC PSA case study are as follows:

- APC strategic planning – It is too early to assess the long-term impacts of the Economic Development Strategy on Aboriginal communities in the region. At the outset, data to understand the needs of the Aboriginal communities does not exist, and no information is available to analyse the impact of the APC projects on the economic development of these communities.
- Quickstart pilot program – Based on the projected business plan figures, the Ulnooweg Development Group (UDG) estimated that the Quickstart pilot program had helped create 16 full-time and 29 part-time jobs, as well as 13 seasonal full-time and 12 seasonal part-time jobs. However, since there is no equivalent information for the unapproved projects, it is not possible to ascertain to what extent these jobs can be attributed to the program intervention.

⁷⁴ Based on the details provided in the case study write-up, it is notably too early to measure some of the economic impacts of the project.

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- Awards and trade shows – The nominations and awards provided exposure (with the participants of the event and through the media) and increased the credibility of the businesses and of the individuals concerned. The awards and trade shows have also improved the image and credibility of the UDG as a key player in supporting economic development in Aboriginal communities. However, the visibility of the awards and trade shows was relatively limited and created very little awareness of the awards among the Aboriginal communities themselves.

Overall, surveyed OLMC and AC recipients indicated that their projects were successful. The factors facilitating success identified by OLMC recipients included:

- collaboration, co-operation, teamwork (32%);
- the money (26%);
- the organization's staff involved on the project (16%); and
- the experience or expertise of those involved (16%).

Similarly, the identified success factors for the case study were:

- the financial support and services provided by ACOA;
- the support of key stakeholders for the project;
- the development of a strong development plan and project proposal;
- the presence of interest and management expertise among the community members; and
- the motivation and commitment of the population (and a municipal budget) to maintain the site.

The only facilitating factor identified by more than one respondent for AC was the support and commitment of ACOA staff.

4.5 Cost-Effectiveness or Value for Money

4.5.1 Uniqueness or Overlap

None of the interviewees identified any concerns with overlap or duplication of the OLMC PSA or the AC PSA with other federal or provincial programs. However, over half (57%) of the surveyed OLMC recipients indicated that they were aware of other organizations that provide assistance to non-commercial organizations in Atlantic Canada which are similar to ACOA. In addition to mention of provincial government organizations or programs (92% of surveyed OLMCs who were aware of others), the only other organization mentioned by more than one respondent was Canadian Heritage (17%). In total, only 30% of the surveyed AC recipients indicated that they were aware of other organizations that provide assistance to non-commercial organizations in Atlantic Canada which are similar to ACOA.

4.5.2 Costs versus Results

The evaluation found that the data available to support an analysis of cost is limited by the fact that the PSAs were only in existence for a limited period of time.

Given the limitations with the small survey sample size, the results identified in Section 4.4 cannot reliably be analyzed in more detail with regard to cost effectiveness. However it should be noted that the OLMC PSA- and AC PSA-coded projects examined were successful in achieving their intended outcomes.

4.5.3 Possible Improvements

ACOA management, staff and other stakeholders had no suggestions for improvements to the PSAs.

The most frequently mentioned improvements suggested by OLMC PSA survey recipients were:

- more French, bilingual services or more support for OLMCs (24%);
- faster processes (14%);
- easier, simpler, more streamlined processes (14%); and/or
- more flexible or less restrictive criteria (10%).

Of the AC PSA recipients surveyed, 90% had suggestions for possible improvements. Improvements mentioned by more than one respondent (all mentioned by two) were:

- more money;
- easier, simpler, more streamlined processes; and/or
- more personal contact or follow-up.

4.6 Conclusions and Recommendations

4.6.1 Conclusions

Conclusion 16

It is relevant for ACOA to provide community development programming to OLMCs, particularly in light of ACOA's legislative requirement under Section 41 of the *Official Languages Act*.

Conclusion 17

It is relevant for ACOA to provide community development programming to ACs, albeit to a limited extent since other organizations, such as INAC, have a stronger mandate for assisting ACs in their community development endeavours.

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Conclusion 18

ACOA provides services to OLMCs and ACs through all its Program Activities and, as such, the OLMC and AC PSA which were part of the Community Development Program Activity did not adequately reflect the efforts of the Agency with respect to these target communities. OLMCs and ACs are influenced by all aspects of ACOA's PAA. The 2009-2010 change to ACOA's PAA which imbeds OLMCs and ACs as target groups in all Program Sub-activities is therefore logical.

Conclusion 19

There is a need to clarify the roles and responsibilities of ACOA versus INAC. The revised Aboriginal economic development framework should help define the role ACOA can play to help fill the economic development gaps of Aboriginal communities in Atlantic Canada. The framework should also help determine the extent to which ACOA needs to partner or work with INAC.

4.6.2 Recommendations

Recommendation 3

In order to ensure that the results of ACOA's OLMC and AC efforts are monitored, it is critical that OLMC and AC projects be captured as a separate reach field in ACOA's information management system, thereby providing the Agency with accurate information on all OLMC and AC project inputs, outputs and outcomes. It is also important to define OLMCs and ACs for the purposes of entering data in this separate field, to ensure the data is complete and reliable.

Recommendation 4

Upon the finalization of the Aboriginal Economic Development Framework, ACOA to review the framework to determine how the Agency best fits within the framework. As required, programming elements and/or the Program Activity performance measurement framework should then be adjusted, updated or revised.

5.0 Other Key Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Performance Measurement, Monitoring and Reporting

The evaluation also examined the extent to which recommendations from prior evaluations had been implemented by ACOA management. A review of the evaluation management action plans revealed that no further action was required in all cases.

The evaluation also attempted to determine whether the PSAs had SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time bound) performance indicators. An assessment of the performance indicators outlined for ACOA's 2007-2008 to 2008-2009 Performance Measurement Framework⁷⁵ for the four PSAs under review is as follows:

- Some indicators are specific (e.g. number of, dollars, extent of) while others are less specific (e.g. progress).
- Some indicators are more easily measurable than others (e.g. for CDR, presence of regionally-based plans is easier to measure than the progress made on the implementation of plans).
- Based on the information gathered for this evaluation, they are achievable and thus realistic.
- Where targets have been set, dates to achieve these targets have been identified and thus are time bound. However, targets for results are not specific (e.g. for CI, CDR and AC PSA results, the targets are evidence of impact, and for the OLMC PSA result, the target is to be determined).

ACOA management and staff indicated that performance monitoring practices and use of indicators has evolved over time. At the project level, specific indicators are identified in the letter of offer. No suggestions for improvement were identified. REDOs are accountable for results through the SEPs and annual business plans that identify specific results to be achieved. It was pointed out by interviewees that community development does not easily lend itself to quantitative results measurement. Narratives are necessary to explain context and changes in communities. From the policy perspective, some concern was expressed that the current Benefits Monitoring Tracking System (BMTS) is not well suited for doing broad-based impact analysis.

The BMTS tracks project performance for all ACOA projects. However, over time, significant deficiencies have been identified regarding this system and ACOA is currently in the process of developing and implementing a new system. Through this new system, the Account Manager will be required to work directly with the recipient to identify the outcomes (from the PSA logic models) that are applicable to the project as well as when these outcomes are likely to occur. This is intended to help measure the right project outcomes at the right time. It is too early to tell

⁷⁵ Source: ACOA Performance Measurement Framework dated December 2007.

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if this system will result in more SMART indicators. However, it appears promising that there should soon be improvements in project-level outcomes data.

Several data quality challenges were encountered during this evaluation with the Agency's project database, QAccess. These include:

- The information entered in QAccess is not consistent and complete. Name of recipient organizations are entered differently from one project to another, making it difficult to determine how many projects were completed by one particular organization.
- Inconsistency is also evident in the identification of the PSAs themselves in QAccess. For example, only 51 projects were identified as OLMC projects, even after a lengthy process of data validation. There were still noted discrepancies in the data generated by QAccess versus the information reported by individual regions based on their own tracking information.
- Incomplete or incorrect financial information (e.g. total project cost is not consistent with amounts noted for ACOA, federal funding, provincial funding and other and approved projects with ACOA amounts of \$0).
- Projects funded by non-ICF or SCIF or BDP programs coded as CDR or CI.⁷⁶
- Collaborator information not available and, when available, entered inconsistently.

5.1.1 REDOs

All REDOs felt that they were highly accountable in their reporting to ACOA and other funding partners, given the requirement for SEPs, annual integrated business plans, quarterly reporting, mid-term assessments and year-end reports. REDOs also mentioned that ACOA representatives sitting on Boards of Directors as ex-officio members generally have a good attendance record at meetings. This also provides a direct method of on-going monitoring of REDO activities by ACOA. Most REDOs indicated satisfaction with the current reporting process. It should be noted that a few REDOs were unclear as to how the performance information was actually being used by ACOA and would appreciate feedback on their annual reports. A few interviewees mentioned they would like to see greater coordination between federal and provincial funders with respect to reporting and administrative requirements (e.g. in NL each REDO has two Letters of Offer to administer. The federal agreement requires use of TB guidelines for expenses, while provincial rates are different).

⁷⁶ For the purpose of this evaluation, all CDR, CI, OLMC and AC projects were included in the analysis unless funding program analysis was required.

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5.2 ICF Results

As noted in Section 1.2, the objectives of the ICF are to:

- Enhance community or regional capacity through the development of competitive, productive, strategic industry sectors;
- Strengthen community infrastructure in rural communities to improve their economic development capacity; and
- Support initiatives that enhance communities’ capacity to overcome economic development challenges and take advantage of their strengths, assets and opportunities presented.

Based on the ICF recipient survey results, the program has achieved these objectives as shown on Table 8. Results for the second and third objectives are presented together because the results are similar.

Table 7: ICF Results

Objectives	Results
Enhance community or regional capacity through the development of competitive, productive, strategic industry sectors	<p>42% of surveyed ICF recipients indicated that they had undertaken an industry or business development project in the past five years</p> <p>43% completed a tourism infrastructure project</p> <p>30% indicated that their projects had resulted in the increased viability of a particular industry or a stronger industry sector</p> <p>68% indicated that the projects had an impact on tourism in their community, including increased satisfaction of visitors (61%), increase in tourism revenues in the community (59%), increase in the number of tourists (57%), new tourist attractions or offerings (54%), increase in hospitality occupancy rates, increase in the average length of stay for visitors (39%), and increase in the length of the tourism season (30%)</p>
<p>Strengthen community infrastructure in rural communities to improve their economic development capacity</p> <p>Support initiatives that enhance communities’ capacity to overcome economic development challenges and take advantage of their strengths, assets and opportunities presented</p>	<p>80% of surveyed ICF recipients indicated that their projects had an impact on the businesses in their communities, including existing businesses benefited from increased revenues (72%), existing businesses survived (67%), new businesses were attracted to the community (35%), and new businesses were created (33%)</p> <p>51% indicated that the projects had an impact on the ability of the community to attract new investments</p> <p>94% indicated that the projects had an impact on the people in their community, including new jobs (64%), more or better education options in the community (52%), more things to do in the community (50%), better jobs (43%), reduced outmigration (42%), more or better places to shop (28%), more or better restaurants (21%), more or better housing (15%)</p>

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5.3 BDP Results

The BDP is the Agency's principal program for providing direct financial assistance to Atlantic Canada small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Its broad goal is to stimulate stronger economic growth in Atlantic Canada. The BDP was first developed for commercial projects. As ACOA's approach to economic development changed to include community development, the program was adjusted to include non-commercial projects.

As noted in Section 1.2 BDP objectives are:

- To increase the number of successful business start-ups;
- To increase the successful expansion and modernization of SMEs; and
- To enhance the business environment in Atlantic Canada.

The main objectives of BDP's Business Support Element are:

- To strategically assist not-for-profit operations to provide specialized services and infrastructure in support of entrepreneurship and small and medium-sized business or,
- To strategically assist not-for-profit operations to provide specialized services and infrastructure in support of local economic development that further advance the Agency's strategic priorities and the federal government's regional development policies.

Based on the BDP recipient survey results, the program has achieved these objectives as shown on Table 9. Results for the second and third objectives are presented together because the results are similar.

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Table 8: BDP Results

Objectives	Results
<p>To strategically assist not-for-profit operations to provide specialized services and infrastructure in support of entrepreneurship and small and medium-sized business</p>	<p>38% of surveyed BDP recipients indicated that they had undertaken an industry or business development project in the past five years</p> <p>84% indicated that the projects had an impact on the businesses in their community including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 72% indicated that existing businesses had benefited from increased revenues • 70% indicated that the project helped existing businesses survive • 44% indicated that the project had resulted in new businesses being created • 38% indicated that the projects has attracted new businesses to the community • 30% noted that existing businesses benefited from the development or growth of export markets <p>53% indicated that the projects had an impact on the ability of the community to attract new investments</p> <p>68% indicated that the projects had an impact on tourism in the community including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increased satisfaction of visitors (56%) • increase in tourism revenues (55%) • new tourist attractions or offerings (53%) • increase in the number of tourists (51%) • increase in hospitality occupancy rates (47%) • increase in the average length of stay of visitors (43%) • increase in the length of the tourism season (33%)
<p>To strategically assist not-for-profit operations to provide specialized services and infrastructure in support of local economic development that further advance the Agency’s strategic priorities and the federal government’s regional development policies</p>	<p>59% of surveyed BDP recipients indicated that they had completed marketing projects</p> <p>53% completed tourism infrastructure projects</p> <p>18% completed projects that involved marine infrastructure</p> <p>46% indicated that the projects had resulted in international exposure</p>

5.4 Conclusions

The following conclusions pertain either to the findings outlined in Sections 5.1, 5.2 or 5.3 or to the findings presented in more than one section of the rest of the report.

Conclusion 20

Performance measurement has improved over time. However, improvements are still required before the indicators can be considered specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound (SMART), and the data collected for performance measurement purposes deemed complete, accurate, reliable and timely. The new project performance tracking system could help address some of the weaknesses (e.g. poor project-specific outcomes information) and inconsistencies (e.g. poor coding) in the existing system. In addition, the new tracking system should help ensure that performance measurement for Community Development projects,

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including for CDR, CI, OLMC and AC projects, is more relevant to the nature of the projects and that BMTS concerns are alleviated.

Conclusion 21

Having two funding mechanisms (ICF and BDP) to deliver programming that is relevant to several PA and PSAs presents a challenge in planning and budgeting according to the PAA and thus federal government requirements. In addition, the results of the projects funded through ICF and BDP are comparable.

Conclusion 22

While the CDR PSA's intended outcomes are limited to building capacity and developing collaborations, the CI PSA's intended results are also to build capacity and develop collaborations, in addition to other economic outcomes. With the upcoming changes to the Agency's performance measurement system linking projects to outcomes, the overlap in outcomes across PSAs may increase confusion on how to categorize projects according to the CDR or CI PSAs.

5.5 Recommendations

Recommendation 5

ACOA to monitor the effectiveness of the new performance measurement system in providing timely and accurate results information that can be used for management monitoring and future evaluations of its Community Development PA and PSAs. (Adjustments to be made to the logic models, performance indicators and system choices when required.) Logic models and PSA definitions should also be reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure the outcomes that are captured in ACOA's information management system are unique. This will result in less overlap in performance measurement and reporting (i.e. similar project outcomes reported for two PSAs). It will be important to address the specific data quality issues discussed in this report.

Recommendation 6

ACOA to explore the possibility of having only one Community Development Fund which integrates the ICF and the elements of the non-commercial BDP related to community development. This will help facilitate planning, budgeting, measurement and reporting according to ACOA's PAA. This could be timely, in light of ACOA's upcoming program review.

5.6 Linkage between Conclusions and Recommendations

The linkage between the conclusions and recommendations presented throughout the report is as shown on Figure 7.

Annex A: Glossary of Terms

Glossary of Terms

Collaborator

An organization or individual providing financial or other resources on a project also funded by ACOA.

Program

A group of related resource inputs and activities that are designed and managed to meet a specific public need and to achieve intended results, and that are often treated as a budgetary unit.

Program Activity

The Program Activity is the highest level of the Program Activity Architecture and represents the largest identifiable program(s) that the department manages. A Program Activity is best thought of as a program at the highest or most aggregated level of intervention by the department.

Program Sub-Activity

The Program Sub Activities represent smaller identifiable programs that are logically part of a Program Activity.

Partner

For the purposes of this study, partner is used in a non-legal fashion to represent an organization or individual providing financial or other resources either on a project or other program.

Strategic Outcome

A long-term and enduring benefit to Canadians that stems from a department or agency's mandate and vision. It represents the difference a department or agency intends to make for Canadians, and should be measurable and within the department's sphere of influence.

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Annex B: ICF and BDP Financial Resources and Governance

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ICF and BDP Financial Resources

Between 2005-2006 and 2008-2009, ICF and BDP approved funding for the four PSAs is as follows:⁷⁷

Funding Allocation by PSA, Funding Program and Year of Approval (in \$)⁷⁸						
PSA	Funding Program	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	Total
CDR	BDP	28,257,444	2,848,720	3,278,623	6,315,372	40,700,159
	ICF	0	440,000	2,275,300	100,000	2,815,300
CI	BDP	10,993,969	9,863,861	5,054,988	9,658,603	35,571,421
	ICF	37,899,371	61,500,925	56,084,735	42,835,979	198,321,010
OLMC	BDP	799,300	388,870	500,728	328,177	2,017,075
	ICF	303,000	0	28,450	55,000	386,450
AC	BDP	2,443,120	25,660	1,008,335	955,183	4,432,298
	ICF	265,000	105,679	382,691	24,750	778,120

ICF and BDP Funding Program Governance Structures

Financial signing authorities are established as per the Agency's Financial Signing Authority Delegation Instrument. This instrument is in accordance with the Transfer Payments Policy, the Policy on Delegation of Authorities, and any other applicable policies, acts or regulations.

For ICF, only the minister has the authority to approve projects and substantive amendments to contribution agreements. The Agency's financial signing authority instrument directs the authority to approve and sign ICF contribution agreements, to make non-substantive amendments, and to approve ICF payments. In the case of the BDP, authority is delegated to various levels depending on the regional office and type of project, and is also established as per the Agency's financial signing authority delegation instrument. The BDP levels of authorization are limited by the total amount of the ACOA grant and contribution to a particular project. In general, most decisions are made within the delegated authority of the regional vice-presidents of up to \$500,000. The ACOA president or executive vice-president may approve contributions up to \$1,000,000 while the minister approves contributions up to \$10,000,000. Higher levels of authority can also approve smaller projects. Regions may vary in this regard.

⁷⁷ Source: QAccess

⁷⁸ The totals presented in this table may differ from those in other tables in the report because they are limited to the 2005-2006 to 2008-2009 fiscal years. In addition, this table only includes BDP and ICF funding, whereas other tables in the report may include SCIF.

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The ACOA's director general of CD and/or the program director are responsible for the programs direction, and are assisted in each region by the directors, CD. ACOA CD management, account managers and development officers are responsible for the delivery of the BDP and ICF funding programs within ACOA's regional offices. Their role includes various aspects of project proposal review, including due diligence, funding allocation levels as well as client liaison. Information such as project performance indicators is also collected by various ACOA personnel who monitor results of projects.

Accountability for both ICF and BDP lies with the regional vice-presidents. Each regional vice-president is responsible for ensuring that the funding program guidelines are followed for elements of project approval, financial matters related to the project and project monitoring and follow-up. ACOA account managers or development officers play an advisory role during the project development stage.

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Annex C: List of Documents Reviewed

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REDO Website Documents

Newfoundland and Labrador Regional Economic Development Boards (REDBs)

Avalon Gateway RDC Inc. – www.avalongateway.ca

Capital Coast Development Alliance – <http://www.capitalcoast.nf.ca>

Central Labrador EDB – <http://www.cledb.ca>

Coast of Bays Corporation – <http://www.coastofbays.nl.ca>

Discovery RDB – <http://www.discoveryboard.nf.ca>

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Emerald Zone Corporation – <http://www.ezc.ca>

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Inukshuk EDC or Nunatsiavut Government

Inukshuk Contact Information – [http://](http://www.intrd.gov.nl.ca/intrdorInukshuk%20Economic%20Development%20Board.htm)

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Nunatsiavut Contact Information – <http://www.intrd.gov.nl.ca/intrdorNunatsiavutGov.htm>

Nunatsiavut Government – <http://www.nunatsiavut.com>

Irish Loop REDB – <http://www.irishloop.nf.ca>

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Labrador Straits Development Corporation – <http://www.lsdca.ca>

Long Range REDB – <http://www.zone-9.com>

Marine and Mountain Zone Corporation – <http://www.mmzc.com>

Mariner Resource Opportunities Network – <http://www.baccalieu.nf.ca>

M-RON IT Services (home page) – <http://www.mronitservices.ca>

Nordic EDC – <http://www.nedc.nf.ca>

Red Ochre Regional Board Inc. – <http://www.redochre.org>

Schooner RDC – <http://www.schooner.nf.ca>

Southeastern Aurora Development Corporation – <http://www.labradorsadc.nl.ca>

New Brunswick Community Economic Development Agencies (CEDAs)

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Enterprise Fundy – <http://www.ent-fundy.ca>

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Invest Greater Fredericton – <http://www.investfredericton.com>

Enterprise Grand Falls – <http://www.ent-grandsault.ca>

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Enterprise Kent – <http://www.ent-kent.caorhome.html>

Enterprise Madawaska – <http://www.entreprisemadawaska.com>

Enterprise Miramichi – <http://www.ent-miramichi.ca>

Enterprise Peninsula – <http://www.ent-peninsula.ca>

Enterprise Restigouche – <http://www.restigouche.ca>

Enterprise Saint John – <http://www.enterprisesj.com>

Enterprise South East – <http://www.enterprisesoutheast.ca>

Nova Scotia Mainland and Cape Breton Regional Development Authorities (RDAs)

Annapolis Digby EDC – <http://www.annapolisdigby.com>

Antigonish Regional Development Authority – <http://www.antigonishrda.ns.ca>

Cape Breton County Economic Development Authority – <http://www.cbceda.org>

Colchester Regional Development Agency – <http://www.corda.ca>

Cumberland Regional Economic Development Association – <http://www.creda.net>

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Guysborough County Regional Development Authority – <http://www.gcrda.ns.ca>

Hants Regional Development Authority – <http://www.hantscounty.com>

Kings Community Economic Development Agency – <http://www.kingsced.ns.ca>

Lunenburg Queens Regional Development Agency – <http://www.lqrda.ns.ca>

Pictou Regional Development Commission – <http://www.prdc.com>

South West Shore Development Authority – <http://www.swsda.com>

Strait-Highlands Regional Development Agency – <http://www.strait-highlands.ns.ca>

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