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Evaluation Directorate



May 2008

Summative Evaluation of the National Homelessness Initiative

Final Report
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***Evaluation Directorate
Strategic Policy and Research Branch
Human Resources and Social Development Canada***

May 2008

**SP-AH-693-05-08E
(également disponible en français)**

Paper
ISBN: 978-1-100-10371-6
Cat. No.: HS28-149/2008E

PDF
ISBN: 978-1-100-10372-3
Cat. No.: HS28-149/2008E-PDF

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List of Abbreviations

CE	Community Entity
CMHC	Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation
HHB	Housing and Homelessness Branch
HIFIS	Homeless Individuals and Families Information System
HRSDC	Human Resources and Social Development Canada
IMIS	Integrated Management Information System
NHI	National Homelessness Initiative
NRP	National Research Program
OAG	Office of the Auditor General
RHF	Regional Homelessness Fund
RMAF	Results-based Management Accountability Framework
SCPI	Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative
SD	Shared Delivery
SFRPHI	Surplus Federal Real Property for Homelessness Initiative
UAH	Urban Aboriginal Homelessness

Executive Summary

This report contains the findings and conclusions for the summative evaluation of the National Homelessness Initiative (NHI) completed during 2006-2007. The evaluation addressed issues of the continued relevance of the NHI given current needs and priorities, and the NHI's success in meeting its objectives and expected outcomes.

Background

Initially announced by the Government of Canada in 1999, the NHI was designed as a three-year \$753M initiative to “help ensure community access to programs, services and support for alleviating homelessness in communities in all provinces and territories”. It was recognized that homelessness is a complex issue that would best be solved by governments and community organizations working in partnership to pool resources and efforts. This initial phase focused on both meeting the short-term emergency needs of people, and the need for a community-driven planning process to address longer-term needs and prevention. The initial phase of the NHI ran from 1999-2003 and is referred to as “Phase 1”.¹ In 2003, the NHI was renewed for an additional three years (\$405M), with a further one-year extension (2006-2007) announced in November 2005 (\$134.8M). This second phase (referred to as “Phase 2”) focused on maintaining the gains that had been achieved during Phase 1 in addressing the emergency needs, and further implementing measures to assist individuals and families to achieve and maintain self-sufficiency through longer-term solutions such as transitional and supportive housing.

The overall long-term objectives of the NHI are:

- To develop a comprehensive continuum of supports to help homeless Canadians move out of the cycle of homelessness and prevent those at-risk from falling into homelessness by providing communities with the tools to develop a range of interventions to stabilize the living arrangement of homeless individuals and families – encouraging self-sufficiency where possible – and prevent those at-risk from falling into homelessness; and
- To ensure sustainable capacity of communities to address homelessness by enhancing community leadership and broadening ownership, by the public, non-profit and private sector, on the issue of homelessness in Canada.

The NHI in Phase 2 consists of six main components:

- **Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative (SCPI)** - The SCPI was developed to assist in creating a more integrated and inclusive approach to homelessness in Canada. The SCPI aims to increase the availability and access to a range of services and facilities along the continuum from homelessness to self-sufficiency within designated communities.

¹ 2003-2004 was an administrative year that overlapped with the first year of Phase 2.

- **Urban Aboriginal Homelessness (UAH)** - The UAH was designed to address the unique needs of off-reserve Aboriginal homeless population by providing flexibility in meeting the needs of homeless Aboriginal people through culturally sensitive services.
- **Regional Homelessness Fund (RHF)** - The RHF was designed to support small and rural communities by addressing homelessness issues. Although funding is determined on a project-by-project basis, communities are encouraged to place an emphasis on addressing youth homelessness issues.
- **National Research Program (NRP)** - The NRP focuses on increasing understanding of the magnitude, characteristics and causes of homelessness in Canada. This component was designed to increase the base of policy and community-relevant research, encourage and support research partnerships, and facilitate the sharing of best practices and the transfer of knowledge.
- **Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS)** - HIFIS is an electronic records management system built as a means to collect information about the population using shelters while assisting in daily operations such as booking-in and out clients, and reporting on shelter use.
- **Surplus Federal Real Property for Homelessness Initiative (SFRPHI)** - The SFRPHI compensates federal departments and agencies at market value for surplus properties and transfers them at a nominal cost to community organizations, the not-for-profit sector and other orders of government for projects to help alleviate and prevent homelessness.

Evaluation scope, timing and issues

The evaluation team conducted the summative evaluation of the NHI between the summer of 2005 and the fall of 2006 with data collection occurring between January and August 2006. Given this timing, the evaluation scope focused on the first three years of Phase 2 and did not include the extension year. The main evaluation issues covered by the evaluation include:

- Rationale and relevance:
 - Overlap and duplication.
- NHI Success:
 - Success in increasing community capacity to deal with homelessness;
 - Success in establishing a comprehensive continuum of supports and services;
 - Success in increasing knowledge and understanding of homelessness;
 - Success in contributing to the reduction of homelessness;
 - Incremental impact of the NHI;
 - Impact on individuals;

- Implementation issues for the Regional Homelessness Fund and HIFIS²; and
- Impact issues for the Surplus Federal Real Property.
- Review of Performance Measurement.

Evaluation methods

There were seven lines of evidence for this evaluation:

- Document and literature review;
- Administrative data review;
- Cases studies including:
 - Community case studies;
 - Project case studies; and
 - Shelter case studies.
- Key informant interviews;
- Interviews with individuals and families using NHI-funded services;
- Survey of NHI project representatives; and
- Survey of community planners and decision-makers.

Conclusions for NHI Rationale and Relevance

- **While evaluation respondents reported that the NHI has been effective in addressing some of the current needs of communities and individuals with respect to homelessness, they saw a continued need for federal government involvement in and support of homelessness issues in Canada.** The individuals consulted during the evaluation stated that there continues to be a need for an initiative such as the National Homelessness Initiative. They reported that significant progress has been made with the development of capacity within Canadian communities to address diverse homelessness issues, and that the NHI has had positive impacts on the quality of life of people who are homeless or at risk of being homeless. In their view, there remains an issue whether this progress is sustainable without a continued presence of a federal initiative similar to the NHI.

² HIFIS is considered at an implementation stage with new versions being developed and implemented during Phase 2, so issues addressed were more of a formative nature rather than summative.

- **According to respondents, many of the most pressing needs will require further development of ongoing partnerships with multiple levels of government and various sectors in order to produce the long-term coordinated effort required to address homelessness in Canada.** Respondents identified the following areas of need: affordable housing; ensuring the involvement of the federal government as a main partner in developing a long-term coordinated effort to address homelessness in Canada; investments in transitional and supportive housing; support for emergency shelters; greater availability of mental health, addiction, and youth services; and homelessness prevention. Respondents argued that these on-going needs will require support from all levels of government, community organizations and the private sector working in partnership to pool resources and efforts.
- **Evidence suggests that the NHI has developed an effective model to address homelessness that complements many other local and regional initiatives. Evaluation respondents reported that additional coordination at the federal and provincial/territorial levels would enhance its effectiveness.** With the exception of a few examples of perceived overlap between SCPI and UAH, there was little evidence of overlap between the NHI and other programs and initiatives; however, there were many examples of potential complementarity. The perception amongst respondents is that the potential benefits of this identified complementarity are not being fully realized due to the need to improve the coordination of the NHI with other federal and possibly provincial/territorial initiatives. Some of the provincial/territorial representatives expressed concern that they had not been adequately consulted in the design of Phase 2 of the NHI prior to its implementation, yet were expected to then provide ongoing support to ensure the sustainability of NHI investments.

Conclusions for NHI Success

- **Positive impacts have been reported by respondents in the area of developing community capacity for planning, which in turn have had positive impacts on the outcomes obtained through projects funded under the NHI.** The key impacts identified by evaluation respondents resulting from the enhanced community capacity for planning were: increased capacity to respond to contextual changes that affect homelessness issues; increased community participation, buy-in and acceptance from various groups and sectors in addressing homelessness issues; and increased coordination among stakeholders, which decreased risk of duplication and overlap of efforts and resources.
- **According to respondents, positive impacts on the daily lives of individuals are one of the major areas of success for the NHI. They reported that NHI investments have resulted in observable, significant positive impacts for diverse Canadians who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.** The various lines of evidence from the evaluation demonstrated consistently that NHI investments had a direct impact on improving the quality of life of people who sought support from community organizations that had received NHI contributions for various projects. Evaluation respondents reported that people benefiting directly from the NHI investments were from diverse backgrounds with different issues. They included youth, Aboriginal people, people addressing mental health and addiction issues, new immigrants, single parents, and survivors of abuse or violence.

- **Respondents reported that the NHI has contributed to the development of a continuum of supports and services at the community level. Although the gap in affordable housing in many urban communities is outside the mandate of the NHI, respondents added that this gap has had a detrimental impact on establishing an overall continuum and has put additional pressures on other stages of the continuum (e.g., emergency, transitional).** Progress has been made in establishing a continuum of supports and services at the community level for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. A shift in emphasis from emergency services and shelters in Phase 1 to transitional and supportive housing in Phase 2 was evident in most communities as a result of the NHI. Despite the progress that has been made as a result of the NHI, most communities identified gaps in their continuum of supports and services, particularly in the area of affordable housing. Although not within the mandate of the NHI, the continued gap in availability of independent, affordable housing at the final stage of the continuum was identified by evaluation respondents as having a detrimental impact on establishing the overall continuum of supports and services.
- **According to respondents, the community-driven model developed and adopted by the NHI has increased communities' capacity to assess, to prioritize, and to react to the contextual factors for homelessness.** Although it is challenging to determine the extent to which rates of homelessness and at-risk of homelessness are increasing or decreasing, many communities reported that they would have even larger problems and be less prepared to address any potential increases/decreases had the NHI not been implemented. The community-driven planning processes to develop relevant priorities and approaches is deemed more likely to contribute to the eventual reduction of homelessness than a “top-down” approach that assumes the issues and solutions are the same across communities.
- **Evaluation respondents reported that the NHI has made some contributions to increased understanding and awareness of homelessness issues among various groups such as researchers, community organizations, and municipal governments. In addition, it was reported that efforts to resolve cases of NIMBY-ism led to increased, more accurate awareness of homelessness issues among community residents. It appears that the impact of these knowledge and awareness-generating activities has remained localized and/or regionalized in many instances.** The evaluation found that activities were undertaken that likely led to an increase in the knowledge and understanding of homelessness issues. Considerable numbers of studies and research projects were commissioned under the NHI. Additional effort is required to ensure that the knowledge and understanding obtained from these studies is further disseminated outside of the individual communities in which the research occurred.

- **According to evaluation findings, HIFIS, the data collection system for shelters, has demonstrated gains in development and implementation across Phase 2. Continued development and support is required for the system to reach its potential to contribute to decision-making at the local, regional, and national levels.** There are examples of communities and organizations that are now using HIFIS information to assist in decision-making and understanding needs of their communities and clients. Some implementation and design issues will need to be addressed in order for the system to succeed on local, regional and national levels.
- **Evaluation respondents reported that the investments made through the NHI are incremental to investments made by other programs and levels of government with respect to addressing homelessness issues.** The NHI's financial investments in most cases appear to be incremental to other direct investments in homelessness. Respondents believe that NHI investments have been responsible for the leveraging of substantial non-NHI investments in homelessness issues.

Conclusions for Review of Performance Measurement

- **Performance measurement should have included on-going measurement of medium-and long-term outcomes, rather than waiting until the end of the initiative at the evaluation stage.** The performance measurement strategy outlined in the RMAF was challenging to implement with respect to the measurement of medium and longer-term outcomes of the NHI. The performance measurement strategy is missing on-going measures for medium- and long-term outcomes. It is problematic to expect that the summative evaluation would be the only time to gather this information, rather than building on and analyzing ongoing measures of outcomes. Information on most Phase 2 project outcomes is expected to become available in spring/summer 2007.

Management response

Introduction

A Summative Evaluation of the National Homelessness Initiative (NHI) was undertaken between the summer of 2005 and the fall of 2006 to address issues of the continued relevance of the NHI given current needs and priorities, and the NHI's success in meeting its objectives and expected outcomes.

The NHI Summative Evaluation was designed to focus on these main evaluation issues:

- Rationale and relevance:
 - Overlap and duplication of funding;
- NHI Success:
 - Success in increasing community capacity to deal with homelessness;
 - Success in establishing a comprehensive continuum of supports and services;
 - Success in increasing knowledge and understanding of homelessness;
 - Success in contributing to the reduction of homelessness;
 - Incremental impact of the NHI;
 - Impact on individuals;
 - Implementation issues for the Regional Homelessness Fund and HIFIS³; and
 - Impact issues for the Surplus Federal Real Property
- Review of Performance Measurement

In conducting this evaluation the following seven lines of evidence were used:

- Document and literature review;
- Administrative data review;
- Case studies including:
 - Community case studies;
 - Project case studies; and
 - Shelter case studies;

³ HIFIS is considered at an implementation stage with new versions being developed and implemented during Phase II, so issues addressed were more of a formative nature rather than summative.

- Key informant interviews;
- Interviews with individuals and families using NHI-funded services;
- Survey of NHI project representatives; and
- Survey of community planners and decision-makers

NHI Accomplishments

The majority of the conclusions made by the Evaluation confirmed that the NHI has been successful in achieving its stated objectives. The conclusions included success in increasing community capacity, establishing a continuum of supports and services, increasing knowledge and understanding of homelessness, contributing to a reduction in homelessness, and impacting the daily life of individuals.

The Evaluation made four conclusions for the NHI that required remedial action on the part of the program area. Below is each finding and the program response.

Conclusions:

1. The NHI has been effective in addressing some of the current needs of communities and individuals with respect to homelessness; however, according to evaluation respondents, there is a continued need for federal government involvement in and support of homelessness issues in Canada.

In order to continue federal government involvement in and support of homelessness issues in Canada, the Minister of HRSDC announced the new Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) on December 19, 2006. The HPS took effect on April 1, 2007 with funding of \$270M over two years. The HPS, building on the success of the NHI, provides programs and services that assist communities in helping homeless individuals and families, as well as those at risk of homelessness, move towards self-sufficiency, thereby contributing to society and the economy.

2. Many of the most pressing needs will require further development of ongoing partnerships with multiple levels of government and various sectors in order to produce the long-term coordinated effort required to address homelessness in Canada.

The new HPS places the development of ongoing partnerships at the heart of its strategy to reduce and prevent homelessness. The HPS supports community-level facilities and services that help homeless people attain housing and shelter stability through partnerships with all levels of government, the private and voluntary sectors, and faith based communities. It builds on the foundation of an existing community-based model and is bolstered by inviting provinces, territories (and municipalities where provinces concur), to enter into partnering arrangements and mobilizes federal departments on issues that exacerbate the risk of homelessness.

3. The NHI has developed an effective model to address homelessness that complements many other local and regional initiatives. Additional coordination at the federal and provincial/territorial levels would enhance its effectiveness.

As a key component of the new HPS, HRSDC has introduced a more formalized approach to enhance coordination at the federal and provincial/territorial levels. The HPS invites partnerships with provincial and territorial governments, and private and not-for-profit organizations. The HPS also encourages federal departments to work together in areas linked to homelessness – such as corrections, crime prevention, mental health, family violence, skills development and immigration. The HPS seeks to engage provinces and territories to ensure effective joint planning and strategic alignment of federal/provincial/territorial investments in combating homelessness so that investments are aimed at best outcomes and are linked with social services such as health, education, employment and skills training. Provincial/territorial engagement is expected to help ensure a coordinated and consolidated approach to prevent and reduce homelessness at the community level.

Funding has been earmarked under the HPS for Federal Horizontal Pilot Projects to enhance collaboration between federal departments in testing new ways to address policy gaps that impact the lives of homeless individuals or those at-risk of homelessness. For example Horizontal discussions with other departments are already progressing well, with two pilot projects particularly advanced:

- Health Canada and Justice Canada – Provision of supportive housing to participants in the Drug Treatment Court Funding Program; and
- Correctional Service Canada – Provision of identification documents to offenders prior to their release from federal institutions.

4. Performance measurement should have included on-going measurement of medium- and long-term outcomes, rather than waiting until the end of the initiative at the evaluation stage.

The new HPS includes an Integrated Results-Based Management and Accountability Framework and Risk-Based Audit Framework. It outlines the performance measurement strategy and includes both its ongoing and periodic performance measurement activities linked to the logic model. The community planning process has been strengthened to include four generic outcomes, each associated with indicators, which will enable the assessment of progress made in the area of the continuum of housing and supports. In addition, the new project results reporting form has been designed to include annual reporting; which is a new requirement of the HPS. This will provide interim and final data on projects, incorporating the same outcome indicators as in the community plan, so that the outcomes can be compiled at the community level.

Future Application of NHI Summative Evaluation Conclusions

In summary, the initial conclusions of the Evaluation were generally positive and have been improved upon with the new HPS which aims at preventing and reducing homelessness across Canada through five objectives: prevention and reduction of homelessness through community-based approaches; longer-term solutions (transitional and supportive housing and related supports); enhanced provincial and territorial partnerships; horizontal linkages with other federal programs and policies, and strengthened accountability and results. The initiatives outlined in the management response will be the subject of the Impact Evaluation of the new HPS, scheduled to begin in spring 2008.

1. Introduction and Context

This section provides a brief overview of the National Homelessness Initiative (NHI) and a description of the context for the summative evaluation.

1.1 Program Description⁴

1.1.1 Background on the NHI

Initially announced by the Government of Canada in 1999, the NHI was designed as a three-year \$753M initiative to “help ensure community access to programs, services and support for alleviating homelessness in communities in all provinces and territories”. It was recognized that homelessness is a complex issue that would best be solved by governments and community organizations working in partnership to pool resources and efforts. The Government of Canada recognized that the issues that needed to be addressed required the identification of local-level solutions designed by the front-line organizations that worked directly with people who were homeless or at risk of homelessness. Phase 1 of the NHI ran from 1999 to 2003 and focused on both meeting the short-term emergency needs of people, and the need for a community-driven planning process to address longer-term needs and prevention.

In 2003, the NHI was renewed for an additional three years (\$405M), with a further one-year extension (2006-2007) announced in November 2005 (\$134.8M). This second phase (referred to as “Phase 2”) focused on maintaining the gains that had been achieved during Phase 1 in addressing the emergency needs, and further implementing measures to assist individuals and families to achieve and maintain self-sufficiency through longer-term solutions such as transitional and supportive housing. Similar to Phase 1, there continued to be a focus on community-level planning, and linking resources and support to clearly identified community priorities.⁵

The overall long-term objectives of the NHI, according to the Results-based Management Accountability Framework (RMAF) developed for Phase 2, were:

- To develop a comprehensive continuum of supports to help homeless Canadians move out of the cycle of homelessness and prevent those at-risk from falling into homelessness by providing communities with the tools to develop a range of interventions to stabilize the living arrangement of homeless individuals and families – encouraging self-sufficiency where possible – and prevent those at-risk from falling into homelessness.

⁴ Information for this section is adapted from the information on the NHI website: <http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/homelessness/index.shtml>

and the NHI Results-based Management and Accountability Framework.

⁵ The Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) was announced on December 19, 2006. The HPS replaces the National Homelessness Initiative, which expired on March 31, 2007.

- To ensure sustainable capacity of communities to address homelessness by enhancing community leadership and broadening ownership, by the public, non-profit and private sector, on the issue of homelessness in Canada.

1.1.2 NHI Programs under Phase 2

The NHI is made up of various program components, some of which have changed between Phases 1 and 2. The rationale for having multiple components is to ensure that communities can deliver a wide range of services in seeking to alleviate homelessness, and to offer longer-term solutions. The communities can choose to deliver some NHI components by using one of the two proposed delivery models – the Community Entity (CE) model or the Shared Delivery (SD) model.⁶ Under the CE model, the community, in consultation with HRSDC, chooses to designate responsibility for delivery of the community plan to a CE. A CE is normally an incorporated organization that will be responsible for the implementation of a community plan. The CE is responsible for project selection, contracting and monitoring. In contrast, under the SD model, both HRSDC and the community work in partnership, resulting in a joint selection and decision-making process. HRSDC is responsible for project approval, contracting and monitoring. According to Housing and Homelessness administrative data, approximately 35% of NHI funding was delivered via the CE model, while 65% was delivered via the SD model during Phase 2.

Table 1 outlines the six NHI program components under Phase 2, including the resources expended on each as of March 31, 2006, along with funds allocated for operating and maintenance.

⁶ It should be noted that a few communities have chosen to use a blend of the two models. An example is Calgary.

Table 1
Overview of NHI Components and Resources[†]
Phase 2 (2003-2006)

NHI Component	Resources Expended* (2003-2006)	Resources Available** (2003-2006)	Description
Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative (SCPI)	\$203M	\$258M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The SCPI was developed to assist in creating a more integrated and inclusive approach to homelessness in Canada. The SCPI aims to increase the availability and access to a range of services and facilities along the continuum from homelessness to self-sufficiency within designated communities. • Communities are allocated a maximum funding level, which must then be matched from other community sources. Funded projects support priority areas identified through a community planning process. • There are currently 61 communities that have been participating in the SCPI since Phase 1. Ten communities are designated "80% communities" which receive 80% of SCPI funds due to their large populations and the severity of homelessness issues in the communities. The remaining 51 communities receive approximately 20% of the SCPI funding. • Approximately 1,100 projects were funded under the SCPI between April 2003 and March 2006.***
Urban Aboriginal Homelessness (UAH)	\$37M	\$45M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The UAH was designed to address the unique needs of the Aboriginal homeless population by providing flexibility in meeting the needs of homeless Aboriginal people through culturally sensitive services. • Unlike the SCPI, the UAH does not require the community or project proponents to secure matching funds. • In eight communities, the UAH is coordinated with the Urban Aboriginal Strategy (UAS) – an initiative developed by the Government of Canada to help respond to the needs of Aboriginal people living in key urban centres. • The UAH was implemented in Phase 1 of the NHI and continued through Phase 2. • Approximately 160 projects were funded under the UAH between April 2003 and March 2006. ***
Regional Homelessness Fund (RHF)	\$8M	\$13M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The RHF was designed to support small and rural communities by addressing homelessness issues. Although funding is determined on a project-by-project basis, communities are encouraged to place an emphasis on addressing youth homelessness issues. • There is no requirement for matching funds. • The RHF was implemented in Phase 2 of the NHI. • Approximately 120 projects were funded under the RHF between April 2003 and March 2006. ***

Table 1 (continued)
Overview of NHI Components and Resources†
Phase 2 (2003-06)

NHI Component	Resources Expended* (2003-2006)	Resources Available** (2003-2006)	Description
National Research Program (NRP)	\$5M	\$7M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The NRP focuses on increasing understanding of the magnitude, characteristics and causes of homelessness in Canada. This component was designed to increase the base of policy and community-relevant research, encourage and support research partnerships, and facilitate the sharing of best practices and the transfer of knowledge. In Phase 2, the NRP replaced the Research and Planning component implemented in Phase 1. The NRP operates as a grants and contributions program (in contrast to contracting out research under Phase 1), and experienced a substantial increase across Phases going from one FTE at the Housing and Homelessness Branch (HHB) to a team of five, in addition to some regional presence. Approximately 45 projects were funded under the NRP between April 2003 and March 2006. ***
Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) Initiative	\$6M	\$6M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HIFIS is an electronic records management system built as a means to collect information about the population using shelters, while assisting in daily operations such as booking-in and out clients, and reporting on shelter use. The development and implementation of HIFIS continued from Phase 1 with substantially more resources in Phase 2. The HIFIS team in Phase 1 consisted of 2.5 FTEs at NHQ. In Phase 2, this team grew to 10 FTEs at NHQ, in addition to regional representatives.
Surplus Federal Real Property for Homelessness Initiative (SFRPHI)	\$3M	\$9M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The SFRPHI compensates federal departments and agencies at market value for surplus properties and transfers them at a nominal cost to community organizations, the not-for-profit sector and other orders of government for projects to help alleviate and prevent homelessness. The SFRPHI was implemented in Phase 1 of the NHI and continued through Phase 2. In Phase 2, a total of 27 contribution agreements were signed under the SFRPHI between April 2003 and March 2006, worth a total value of \$5.4 M.
Operating and Maintenance	\$67M	\$67M	Funds allocated to HRSDC to operate and maintain the NHI.
<p>* Source: Excel table provided "Phase2financialanalysisbyprogramarea.xls" (10/2006).</p> <p>** Source: Comptroller's Office - The National Homelessness Initiative - Phase 2.</p> <p>*** Source: IMIS - Phase 2 Projects (not including extension year) (05/2006).</p> <p>† Resources not expended in the anticipated period 2003-06 were re-profiled into 2006-2007.</p>			

1.2 Evaluation Context

1.2.1 Evaluation objectives and scope

As part of Treasury Board's Policy on Transfer Payments, departments are required to produce Results-based Management and Accountability Frameworks (RMAF) for their transfer payment programs. The RMAF developed for Phase 2 of the NHI and approved by TB includes provisions for a summative evaluation to be conducted at the end of the Initiative. A formative evaluation was conducted during Phase 1 of the NHI that focused primarily on design, delivery and implementation issues.⁷ The present evaluation is a summative evaluation that aims to assess the results and impacts of the NHI during Phase 2 (not including the extension year announced mid-way through the evaluation). It should be noted that although the overall evaluation is summative in nature, given the recent implementation and development of the RHF and HIFIS components, these two components were evaluated using more traditional formative issues. It should also be noted that a large proportion of the resources for the evaluation went to assessing the impacts of SCPI given the large proportion of NHI resources allocated to this component.

1.2.2 Evaluation issues

The specific issues identified for the summative evaluation were:

- Rationale and relevance;
- Overlap and duplication;
- Success in increasing community capacity to deal with homelessness;
- Success in establishing a comprehensive continuum of supports and services;
- Success in increasing knowledge and understanding of homelessness;
- Success in contributing to the reduction of homelessness;
- Incremental impact of the NHI;
- Impact on individuals;
- Implementation issues for the Regional Homelessness Fund and HIFIS⁸; and
- Impact issues for the Surplus Federal Real Property for Homelessness Initiative.

⁷ Evaluation of the National Homelessness Initiative: Implementation and Early Outcomes of the HRDC-based Components – Final Report – HRDC (03/2003).

⁸ HIFIS is considered at an implementation stage with new versions being developed and implemented during Phase 2, so issues addressed were more of a formative nature rather than summative.

1.2.3 Timing of the evaluation

The evaluation team conducted the summative evaluation of the NHI between the summer of 2005 and the fall of 2006, with data collection occurring between January and August 2006. This period coincided with the third year of Phase 2, the announcement of the extension year, and the implementation of the extension year funding by communities. Given this timing, the evaluation scope focused on the first three years of Phase 2 and did not include the extension year.

2. Evaluation Design and Methodology

This section provides an overview of the methods developed and implemented for the evaluation, and a description of the limitations associated with the methods.

2.1 Evaluation methods

The approach used to evaluate the NHI is based on multiple lines of inquiry. That is, more than one method was used to address each of the evaluation questions, thereby ensuring that the findings are corroborated. Lines of inquiry or methods are cross-referenced with the evaluation questions in Appendix A. A brief overview of each method used is provided below.

2.1.1 Administrative data review

The main goals of the data review were to collect key information to assist in the development of the other evaluation methods (e.g., case studies, surveys); assess NHI performance measurement; and develop a profile of NHI activities. The main data sources included the following:

- Community plans and community plan updates;
- Extractions from the Housing and Homelessness Branch (HHB) administrative databases (a combination of files and tables from different sources) for all Phase 2 projects not including the extension year (as of May 2006);
- Extractions of financial data on expenditures and budget allocations from the HHB for Phase 2 projects not including the extension year (as of March 2006); and
- Surplus Federal Real Property for Homelessness Initiative project information.

2.1.2 Document and literature review

The evaluation team conducted a focused literature review to address specific evaluation issues. Relevant literature was identified through web searches, electronic citation directories, key informant interviews and case studies. Identified literature included peer-reviewed articles, published books, and unpublished reports.

2.1.3 Key informant interviews

One main line of evidence was key informant interviews conducted with various groups. HHB and Service Canada provided the evaluation team with various lists of potential key informants. These interviews were conducted using semi-structured key informant interview guides, tailored to each group of interviewees. Interviews were conducted either in-person or by telephone depending on the informant's locale. In most instances, the key informant received a copy of the interview guide or summary of topics prior to the interview, to allow the interviewee to review the questions and prepare responses. Interviews lasted between 30 and 120 minutes and were conducted between February and August of 2006. In total, 88 key informant interviews were conducted with the following groups:

- Representatives from the Housing and Homelessness Branch (n=4);
- Regional Facilitators – Service Canada employees (n=9);
- City and Local Facilitators – Service Canada employees (n=34);
- Representatives from other federal departments involved with the NHI (n=10);
- Representatives from provincial and territorial governments (n=11);
- Regional HIFIS Coordinators (n=10); and
- Local HIFIS users (n=10).

2.1.4 Case studies

The case studies consisted of site visits, document reviews, and interviews. The evaluation team conducted case studies for 22 SCPI communities, 46 NHI projects and 10 shelters implementing HIFIS. Case studies were conducted between February and August 2006.

- Community case studies were selected based on a combination of criteria including community size, approach to delivery of the NHI, participation in previous evaluation case studies, region, and types of projects funded. A list of participating communities is provided in Table 2 below.

Table 2
Communities selected for case studies

Region				
North	West	Ontario	Québec	Atlantic
Whitehorse	Vancouver	Toronto	Montreal	Halifax*
Iqaluit	Edmonton*	Hamilton*	Québec*	Fredericton
	Calgary	Ottawa*	Sherbrooke	St. John's*
	Winnipeg*	Sudbury*		Charlottetown
	Kelowna	Guelph		
	Prince George*			
	Red Deer			
	Saskatoon*			
* Indicates that a shelter case study was conducted in that community.				

- The evaluation team selected two NHI projects for case studies from each community (with the exception of Vancouver, which included four project case studies). Projects were identified in consultation with community representatives according to a combination of criteria including unique, innovative, or large-scale projects, as well as projects focusing on youth, Aboriginal people, families, new Canadians, or other specific groups.
- Shelter case studies were selected in collaboration with community representatives, according to the various stages of HIFIS implementation.

2.1.5 Interviews with individuals and families

The evaluation team conducted brief interviews with individuals and families who had benefited from NHI-funded projects. These interviews were conducted in-person in five large SCPI communities (Vancouver, Winnipeg, Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal) selected according to region, proportion of Aboriginal population, community size and participation in the community case studies. The interviews followed a semi-structured interview guide and focused on the NHI impacts on the day-to-day lives of clients. Community representatives contacted potential community organizations on behalf of the evaluation team to determine if they would be willing to assist the team in contacting and speaking with previous or current clients. Community organizations included emergency shelters, transitional housing, supportive housing, and drop-in centres. Participating individuals and families were compensated with a small honorarium for their time and efforts. The evaluation team conducted interviews with 61 people including men, women, youth, seniors, Aboriginal people, refugees, single parents, people with mental health and addiction issues, abuse survivors, and people involved with the justice system. The interviews were implemented at the same time as the case studies, between February and August 2006.

2.1.6 Survey of NHI project representatives

The evaluation team conducted a phone survey of representatives from the NHI projects that had been funded in Phase 2 (not including extension year). The survey frame was developed from extractions of the various project databases maintained by the HHB.⁹ Interviews were completed with 549 project representatives, which represents a 60% completion rate. The number of completed interviews according to project component included: SCPI – 427 interviews; UAH – 54 interviews; RHF – 53 interviews; and NRP – 15 interviews. The survey was implemented between February and July 2006. Interviews were 20 minutes in length on average.

This survey data was not weighted, given the similarity between distributions of responses and distributions of the frame based on key variables including NHI components and community type. The confidence level for this survey was calculated at the 95 percent level, with a confidence interval of +/- 3%.

2.1.7 Survey of community decision-makers and planners

The survey aimed to contact all Community Advisory Board¹⁰ (CAB) members in each of the 61 communities that received SCPI funding. There was no overall list of members, so the evaluation team worked in cooperation with regional and city facilitators and communities to develop lists of potential respondents (n=367). Interviews were completed with 213 CAB members. This represents a completion rate of 58%. One hundred and eighty-four (184) interviews were completed with representatives from 20% communities, while the remaining 29 interviews were within 80% communities. The survey was implemented between February and July 2006. Interviews were 25 minutes in length on average.

The survey data should be treated more as qualitative information rather than quantitative (see Limitations section). As such, no weighting was undertaken for this survey.

2.2 Limitations

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

⁹ The total number of records extracted was 1,443. To develop the survey frame, the evaluation team removed the following types of records from the extraction: community entity agreement records; records with no contact person; records with no phone number; records for which the contact person was duplicated on another record; and records for which the organization and address were duplicated on another record. The final survey frame included 921 records for the SCPI, UAH, RHF and NRP components.

¹⁰ This type of committee goes under different names in the various communities. As well, the role of this group tends to vary according to the type of delivery model used in the community.

- The summative evaluation was conducted during the scheduled final year of Phase 2 of the NHI (2005-2006). Project results from the various components (SCPI, UAH, RHF, NRP) were scheduled, according to the RMAF, to be provided to the HHB upon conclusion of the projects, anticipated at the end of the final year of the Initiative (spring/summer, 2006). With the announcement of the one-year extension of the NHI in winter 2005-2006, the reporting of project results shifted to the following year (2006-2007). As a result, due to a combination of the timing of the evaluation, the one-year extension of the program and the scheduled reporting of project results, very little results information was available from the program databases for the summative evaluation. The evaluation team relied solely on the results and outcomes reported via interviews, surveys and case studies.
- The evaluation team used the project information extracted from the Integrated Management Information System (IMIS) system to develop a frame for the survey of NHI project representatives. Some communities delivering SCPI and UAH under the community entity model had not forwarded all their approved project information to HHB by May 2006, when the data was extracted. This resulted in information gaps that had an impact on the completion and reliability of the survey frame of NHI project representatives. The same extraction was also used as the main source for the administrative data review. This resulted in a partial review of administrative data for SCPI and UAH projects.
- The development of the survey frame for community planners and decision-makers encountered significant challenges, as there is currently no overall, complete listing of members of the various Community Advisory Board members. This had a direct impact on the representativeness of the survey frame and therefore, the data ought to be interpreted in a more qualitative manner.
- Within Québec, an agreement was developed between the former HRDC and the Québec Government with respect to how the NHI would be delivered in Québec. The Canada-Québec Agreement delegates responsibility for community planning and the approval of community plans to the government of Québec. The Agreement also states that the evaluation of the SCPI and RHF is the responsibility of the Government of Canada. Although the federal government is responsible for evaluating these programs and approving projects, the federal government cannot evaluate the performance of the Quebec government in the area of homelessness.¹¹ The evaluation team did not interview any key informants representing the Government of Québec, did not include any perspectives of the Government of Québec agencies in the community case studies (e.g., centre d'hébergement de soins de longue durée; centre local de services communautaires), and did not include projects led by Government of Québec agencies from the survey of NHI Phase 2 project representatives. This presented challenges to the evaluation team considering the integrated manner in which the NHI is delivered in Québec. As a result, evaluation findings based on interviews with provincial/territorial representatives may not be representative of Quebec's participation in the NHI.

¹¹ Entente Canada-Québec concernant l'Initiative de partenariats en action communautaire et le Fonds régional d'aide aux sans-abri – June 2003.

- The success of the NHI in reducing homelessness in Canada is difficult to measure in a quantitative manner given the challenge in determining the level of homelessness in Canada. As well, in some circumstances, it is difficult to directly attribute changes back to NHI investments, given the numerous issues that may have an impact on the level of homelessness in a community (e.g., rapid changes in the local economy, immigration growth, etc.) and the different levels of programming. The evaluation relies on qualitative data from interviews and case studies to examine the effects of NHI-funded projects on individuals/families and communities. Ideally, the evaluation would rely on both quantitative and qualitative information to address these issues.
- The actual sustainability of the success and results of the NHI could not be assessed through this evaluation. To conduct a true assessment of sustainability of these aspects, some period of time post-investment to accurately observe would be required.
- The key informant interviews faced two issues. First, those representing federal government departments and agencies (other than HRSDC) and provincial/territorial governments were contacted from lists provided to the evaluation team. Among these two groups of interviewees, some reported having limited knowledge and understanding of the NHI and chose not to comment on the impact or outcomes of the NHI. This resulted in receiving limited information from these groups on issues such as funding overlap and duplication, rationale and relevance of the NHI, and NHI success. Second, the key informants selected were people directly or indirectly involved with the NHI. Information was not collected from knowledgeable key informants who were not involved with the NHI. This limitation may be addressed in future evaluations by including an expert panel at various stages in the evaluation.

3. Key Findings

This section contains an overview of the key findings from the summative evaluation of the NHI. The findings are arranged according to the main evaluation issue areas, namely: program rationale and relevance; program success; and performance measurement. The findings presented in this chapter have been identified from more than one source of data. Throughout the text of this section, findings from qualitative methods (e.g., interviews, case studies) are presented using the following “scale” which corresponds to the proportion of respondents that held similar views:

- **“All/almost all”** – findings reflect the views and opinions of 90% or more of the key informants in the group;
- **“Large majority”** – findings reflect the views and opinions of at least 75% but less than 90% of key informants in the group;
- **“Majority/most”** – findings reflect the views and opinions of at least 50% but less than 75% of key informants in the group;
- **“Some”** – findings reflect the views and opinions of at least 25% but less than 50% of key informants in the group; and
- **“A few”** – findings reflect the views and opinions of at least two respondents but less than 25% of key informants in the group.

3.1 Program Rationale and Relevance

The two main evaluation issues under the area of Program Rationale and Relevance included the extent to which the NHI continues to be relevant and the extent to which the NHI overlaps or duplicates funding from other programs targeted to homeless people. The key findings for each of these issues are presented below, together with the specific questions examined under each issue.

3.1.1 *Rationale and relevance*

EVALUATION QUESTION:
Q1: Does the NHI continue to be consistent with HRSDC and government-wide priorities?
Q2: Is there a demonstrable need for the federal government support for addressing homelessness?

Based on the findings of the document review, the NHI continues to be consistent with HRSDC and government priorities. The Report on Plans and Priorities (RPP) for HRSDC for 2006-2007 indicates that housing and homelessness priorities are linked to the strategic outcome of “enhanced income security, access to opportunities and well-being for individuals, families and communities”. The priorities are listed as: contributing to the reduction of homelessness in Canada; developing homelessness and housing policies for Canadians, including Aboriginal peoples; and strengthening horizontal links between housing and homelessness and other policy areas.

Evaluation respondents in the key informant interviews, case studies and surveys consistently indicated that despite the progress that has been achieved over the first two phases, there is a continued need for the NHI to address various homelessness issues in Canadian communities. Respondents identified the following main areas of continued need: the presence of the federal government as a main partner in developing a long-term coordinated effort to address homelessness in Canada; investments in transitional and supportive housing; support for emergency shelters; greater availability of mental health, addiction, and youth services; and homelessness prevention. Overall, respondents reported a shift over the two phases of the NHI from a need for emergency shelter to greater needs for transitional and supportive housing.

Halifax – Case study respondents reported that on-going funding from the NHI would be required to support the work of the Community Action on Homelessness (CAH), (i.e. the committee processes, awareness raising, and community capacity development). Without such funding, respondents anticipate that the momentum and collaboration established through the two phases of the NHI would be lost.

Calgary – Respondents to interviews for the case study indicated that without the presence of the federal government “at the table”, many of the other funders would likely not continue to participate.

Respondents in the case studies, surveys and interviews identified the lack of availability of affordable housing as a key challenge in addressing homelessness issues in their communities. It should be noted that the NHI was not designed to address affordable housing issues, as the Government of Canada developed various agreements with provinces and territories under the separate *Affordable Housing Initiative*. Despite this distinction, respondents in the evaluation tended to view the issues of homelessness and affordable housing as significantly linked. Respondents reported that the impact and sustainability of the efforts under the NHI have likely been negatively influenced by the large gap in affordable housing in many communities.

Cunningham Place (Edmonton) – Cunningham Place is a 52-bed transitional housing unit in Edmonton that allows families and individuals (18-30 years of age) who are homeless or at risk of homelessness to receive services and housing for up to three years. The main project sponsor is the Native Counselling Services of Alberta (NCSA) which has worked in partnership with many other groups to realize the project. The \$3.2M project’s main source of funding was from UAH funds under the NHI to construct the facility. According to the project sponsors, success towards meeting their original objectives has been achieved (i.e., providing transitional housing to families and individuals), but the demand remains high for this type of service in the community. Project sponsors believe that, at this stage, the project would not be sustainable without additional funding support from the various levels of government.

Research on the characteristics of homelessness and the specific needs to be addressed continues to be a challenge at the local, regional and national levels as identified in the literature review, key informant interviews, and through the cases studies. Issues remain with respect to the appropriate methodology and ensuring some consistency in approaches when quantifying the needs of people who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness (this includes both “counts” and needs assessments). In addition, some larger communities participating in the NHI have conducted surveys, counts and needs assessments that examine the areas of need with respect to homelessness in their communities. Some communities are in the process of implementing HIFIS or similar data collection systems in shelters to assess need of shelter users in a more quantifiable manner. Overall, there is the generally accepted acknowledgement of the diverse nature of the causes of and solutions for homelessness in Canada, and the challenges this presents in attempting to quantify need beyond a local or regional level.

EVALUATION QUESTION:

Q3: Is the community-driven design of the NHI compatible with the setting by the NSH¹² of national program priorities?

Respondents reported that when assessing community needs with respect to homelessness issues, it is important to be aware of the dynamic nature of homelessness issues and the strong continued need for ongoing effective planning and coordination at the community level. Communities reported how their contexts can change significantly over brief periods, which then has major impacts on their capacity to address the needs of community members with respect to homelessness issues. These context changes can include rapid changes in the local economy (both growth and decline), immigration patterns, amalgamation of municipalities, shifts in government priorities and responsibilities, and implementation of large municipal projects. For example, both Calgary and Edmonton are reporting large increases in numbers of homeless people over the past few years which according to the case study findings are partially attributable to the quickly growing Alberta economy that is making demand for housing in these two communities rise extremely fast.

Given these context-specific needs, the community-driven model¹³ implemented under the NHI was viewed by respondents in the case studies, key informant interviews and surveys as the most appropriate model for responding to needs. The community-driven model was determined to be flexible enough to meet the specific needs at the community level while also addressing the overall NHI priorities. The community-driven model developed under the NHI was cited throughout the evaluation in key informant interviews, case studies and surveys as innovative and responsive, and, in a few instances, was being adapted for other community-based initiatives.

¹² The National Secretariat on Homelessness (NSH) was restructured in 2006 as the Housing and Homelessness Branch (HHB) and renamed the Homelessness Partnering Secretariat in 2007.

¹³ “Community-driven model” refers to the approach developed by the NHI which has individual communities actively identifying and agreeing upon the specific priorities for their community, rather than a more “top-down” model which determines national or regional-level priorities which are then implemented by communities.

3.1.2 *Overlap and duplication*

EVALUATION QUESTION:

Q4: Does NHI funding overlap with or duplicate funding from federal programs and provincial/territorial and municipal programs targeted to homeless people?

Given the reported high level of ongoing need in the area of addressing homelessness issues, combined with the community-driven model for implementation of various NHI components, respondents in the evaluation reported that there is essentially no overlap between the NHI and other programs either at the federal, provincial/territorial or municipal levels. The respondents in the community case studies and survey of CAB members reported that the coordination mechanisms and priority setting at the community level ensures minimal duplication and overlap among the various programs. There were some reports that overlap may exist within the NHI, particularly between the SCPI and UAH components. This occurrence of overlap, however, appeared to be somewhat linked to a reported absence of coordination between these two components in a few communities, rather than consistent overlap over many communities. The fact that there is little evidence of overlap and duplication with other programs provides additional support to the findings cited above that the NHI is viewed as fulfilling needs that are not currently being addressed by other programs and initiatives.

Respondents consistently indicated that the NHI complemented many other initiatives and programs at the federal, provincial/territorial and municipal levels. Some examples include the Shelter Enhancement Program delivered by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), affordable housing initiatives delivered by provinces, and shelter per-diems delivered by provinces and municipalities. In some instances, however, respondents reported that the coordination of these multiple initiatives and programs is left to the communities or individual projects, resulting in considerable burden on individual organizations and communities. Community case study respondents reported that they are required to investigate multiple potential programs, determine if their projects meet eligibility criteria for each program, make separate applications/proposals, and then report separately on each project/initiative. It should be noted that this was also cited as a main issue in the November 2005 report from the Office of the Auditor General (OAG) in which coordination between the NHI and other federal government departments was found not to be optimal.¹⁴ It was expressed during the case studies and key informant interviews that the results achieved would likely have been even greater had additional effort been made to coordinate the various federal government programs designed to address similar or related issues, and not left up to the communities or individual projects alone to coordinate these efforts. There were examples in which federal representatives (e.g., Service Canada, CMHC) were available and consistently participating in the community committees, and, as a result, coordination was reported to be much less of an issue.

¹⁴ Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the House of Commons – Chapter 4: Managing Horizontal Initiatives (November, 2005).

3.2 Program Success

The evaluation covered various aspects of program success. These included success in increasing community capacity, establishing a continuum of supports and services, increasing knowledge and understanding of homelessness, contributing to a reduction in homelessness, and impacting the daily life of individuals. In addition, the evaluation examined incremental impacts from the NHI and the implementation issues from the RHF and SFRPHI.

3.2.1 *Success in increasing community capacity to deal with homelessness*

EVALUATION QUESTION:

- | |
|--|
| Q5: Has the NHI led to increased local capacity and resources to address homelessness? |
| Q6: Has the community-driven community plan model adopted by the NHI contributed to an increase in community capacity? |

Overall, the most frequently cited impact of the NHI with respect to community capacity was improved planning. Respondents in the case studies, surveys and key informant interviews indicated that the planning processes, such as consultations and determination of priorities undertaken at the beginning of each NHI phase, contributed significantly to the community's capacity to address homelessness issues. Respondents identified the following impacts from the community planning process:

- Increased community capacity to respond to contextual changes that affect homelessness issues;
- Increased community participation, buy-in and acceptance from various groups and sectors in addressing homelessness issues; and
- Increased coordination among stakeholders, which decreased risk of duplication and overlap of efforts and resources.

As noted in the key informant interviews and community case studies, the NHI planning process had the most impact in communities where no process existed prior to the implementation of the NHI. In communities in which there was already a planning process, the NHI process complemented and enhanced the established process. The planning process - in particular the multi-stakeholder, priority assessment aspect - has reportedly been adapted by other community groups addressing different issues.

One area identified as a challenge in some communities was the development of capacity to address Aboriginal-specific homelessness issues. As many respondents in case studies and key informant interviews indicated, Aboriginal people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness are entitled to services from either Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal organizations. The evaluation respondents identified the need for coordination and communication between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations at a community level in order to ensure that the NHI addresses the specific needs of Aboriginal community members. Some communities reported that it was challenging to plan for both the SCPI funds and UAH funds in a coordinated manner.

The challenges in coordination were reported to be less of an issue in the communities that had the same entity delivering both components, or in communities in which there were more formal structures in place to ensure that the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community planning groups were aware of each other's work and priorities.

Elizabeth Fry Transition House (Sudbury) – The development of a transitional shelter for women being released from local correctional institutions was viewed as being congruent with the community planning process and priorities for Sudbury. The project addressed some niche shelter needs (women in conflict with the law) that were not being addressed with other facilities, and coupled the direct housing need with appropriate services and supports, thus meeting the desire to provide a continuum of service approach within Sudbury.

Mères et monde (Québec) – This project is a resource centre for young single mothers. Its mandate is to improve the living conditions and quality of housing for young single mothers and their families. The project supports the development of their self-confidence, breaks the isolation and assists with their social, academic and professional development. This project was viewed as directly supporting the objectives of the community plan for Québec city.

The capacity of communities to plan and then implement projects related to their plans was demonstrated in the review of community plan updates and community case studies. The community case studies illustrated that the funded projects matched the priorities established during the planning process. Although the allocation of funds was not necessarily always proportional to the planned allocation according to priorities, this is understandable given that the funding allocation is a proposal-driven process within communities, and communities often need to adjust their plans over the course of three years to adapt to the dynamic nature of the issues.

Communities that had higher levels of agreement amongst the various sectors and sub-groups within the community, also tended to report larger impacts in the areas of sustainability of the community planning processes, increased community capacity, and community awareness. The evaluation identified a few instances in which the community planning process presented some challenges. In communities where organizations or groups had traditionally not worked together on homelessness issues, there was a need to come to more thorough understandings of each other's areas of strength and potential contributions.

EVALUATION QUESTION:

Q7: Is the capacity of communities to address homelessness sustainable beyond 2006? Are the projects and activities funded under the NHI sustainable beyond 2006?

The *actual* sustainability of certain aspects of the NHI such as community capacity and projects outcomes could not be assessed through this evaluation. A true assessment of sustainability of these aspects would require some period of time post-investment to be accurately observed. According to the evaluation respondents in surveys, case studies and key informants, there was an emphasis placed throughout Phase 2 on both the sustainability of project outcomes and community capacity. Sustainability was to be determined based on whether community capacity, and/or project outcomes would continue in the absence of NHI funding.

Information from case studies, surveys and key informant interviews indicates that in most of the larger communities and in some of the smaller communities, the community planning capacity developed as a result of the NHI will be sustainable. In a few case studies, the community planning process was reported to have existed as a function of the NHI and would not likely be sustained should NHI funding be no longer available.

Respondents reported that alternative funding sources for homelessness issues are limited in many communities. They do not anticipate the sources and amounts of funding to address homelessness issues increasing over the next five years. The private sector in general tends to play a minimal role in addressing homelessness issues, and there was concern expressed by approximately half of the provincial/territorial representatives interviewed that the provincial/territorial governments would be expected to provide ongoing support for the NHI investments in communities. This was of particular concern given that the same respondents indicated that their provinces/territories had not been adequately consulted with respect to the design of Phase 2 of the NHI prior to its implementation.

The key informant interviews, case studies and review of community plans indicated that the sustainability of project impacts or outcomes was a criterion for project selection for SCPI, UAH and RHF projects. For example, while the project activities may have had a limited time horizon (e.g., the renovation of a rooming house into supportive housing units), the intention was that the impacts or outcomes of this project would be sustained (e.g., funding for the operation and maintenance of the supportive housing units). The project case studies representatives reported that they believed that the outcomes and results of their projects would be sustainable. On the survey of project representatives, the respondents were asked how likely that the NHI project or aspects of the project would continue over the next three years. Approximately one-third (31%) reported that the project or aspects of the project would definitely be continuing, and that there was funding assured. One-half (51%) reported that the project would likely be continuing, but had not secured funding at the time of the interview.

Choices for Youth – Young Men’s Shelter and Youth Services Centre (St. John’s) – Choices for Youth is a not-for-profit, community-based organization that sponsored the building of a young men’s shelter and youth services centre. The development of the proposal for NHI funding occurred over a two-year period involving a range of government and community agencies. This also included negotiation with the provincial government for funding to support shelter operations in advance of submitting the proposal to the NHI. The key to the financial success of this project was that the funding approach negotiated with the province provides stable funding instead of per diems-based funding which fluctuates according to usage. This allows for consistent cash flow and an adequate level of funding to meet needs.

3.2.2 Success in establishing a comprehensive continuum of supports and services

EVALUATION QUESTION:

- Q8: Has the NHI contributed to the enhancement and/or increase in the number of supports and services to address homelessness?
- Q9: Has the NHI contributed to a comprehensive continuum of support to help address and prevent homelessness?

Overall, the various lines of evidence for the evaluation indicate that during Phase 2 the NHI has contributed towards the enhancement of a continuum of supports and services for individuals who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Case studies and surveys along with the review of community plans indicate that there was a shift in emphasis from emergency shelters and support in Phase 1 to transition and supportive housing and related supports in Phase 2. The administrative data review identified that 66% of projects funded in Phase 2 for enhancing sheltering facilities were focused on transitional/supportive housing in comparison to 39% of these projects which were focused on emergency shelters.¹⁵

Overall, a large majority of project representatives (85%) reported that project achievements were largely due to the NHI contribution.

Guelph – Initially under Phase 1, the community focused on outstanding emergency shelter needs which included expanding services offered by a youth drop-in centre so that it could convert space in the basement of a church into an overnight shelter for up to 20 youth, and providing some existing shelters with funds for infrastructure such as industrial-size washers and dryers and personal lockers to increase the sense of safety among shelter users. Upon addressing these needs, the community proceeded under Phase 2 to provide several organizations with funding to enhance supportive housing services such as hiring a youth worker for the rural areas, developing a “kit” of housing literacy materials, and arranging for a mental health worker to be available over the weekends.

Toronto – Significant emphasis was placed on transitional and supportive housing in Phase 2. Thirty-three projects received approximately \$42M to create 1,170 new housing units. An example of transitional housing is the project developed by the Fort York Residence which provides homeless men with employment-focused transitional housing. The residence contains 24 self-contained units and 74 dormitory-style beds. Education/skills training is provided and all tenants are expected to conduct 30-40 hours of volunteer work and then transition into work placement programs, saving a proportion of their earnings in preparation of independent living. Residents stay 18-24 months.

The main challenge identified by evaluation participants regarding the continuum of support approach for the NHI is that the final stage of the continuum (affordable housing) is not addressed within the Initiative. As a result, most of the 80% communities and a few of the 20% communities report that there is a large gap in the work that they are doing, as the support for affordable housing is viewed generally as insufficient. This lack of affordable housing was also the most frequently cited area of need amongst project representatives (58%). As a result, communities report that they are moving people along the continuum with the NHI contributions, only to see many of them fall into a cyclical pattern given the bottleneck at the end of the continuum caused by lack of affordable housing.

Prevention of homelessness was identified by a small proportion of project representatives as an area of great need (7%). Some community planners and decision-makers indicated that prevention services were the type of support service that had received the most attention under the NHI.

¹⁵ Individual NHI projects listed in NHI administrative databases could indicate more than one type of activity. As such, the percentages do not add up to 100%.

Red Deer – The Coordinated Community Outreach Team (CCOT) was identified by community representatives as significantly contributing to the prevention of homelessness, a key aspect of enhancing the continuum of supports. The CCOT assists individuals to access a bridging and loan fund to enable them to stay in their homes, links people on social assistance with mental health issues with opportunities for supportive housing, and advocates for individuals being threatened with eviction.

3.2.3 Success in increasing knowledge and understanding of homelessness

EVALUATION QUESTION:

Q10: Has the NHI contributed to increased awareness of the nature of homelessness and of effective responses?

The evaluation respondents in the case studies, key informant interviews and surveys reported that impacts on awareness of homelessness issues have occurred among some groups. Among community organizations, there is greater awareness of the breadth and depth of the issues, and a better understanding of the resources available in the community to address the issues. In addition, municipal elected officials and municipal officers are cited by evaluation respondents as having greater awareness of homelessness issues, as a result of NHI funds being delivered at the municipal level.

The findings from the literature review and review of community plans and project information indicate that many project activities had a component that focused on general public awareness of homelessness issues. While few NHI-funded projects focused solely on raising public awareness, nearly one-quarter (23%) of project representatives identified increased public awareness/participation/advocacy as one to the achievements of their NHI-funded project. Among the NRP projects, nearly one-half (47%) of representatives reported achievements in public awareness/participation.

St. John's – The community group has worked well with the media and has generated some media interest in homelessness issues. For example, the Raising the Roof pancake breakfast is broadcast live on CBC radio.

Montreal – Le RAPSIM is an organization that is present in the community and province, and is working directly to raise public awareness of homelessness. The organization has received NHI funding in collaboration with le Centre de recherche sur l'itinérance (CRI) of the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM).

A large majority of community planners and decision-makers reported that their communities have experienced some cases of NIMBY-ism (Not In My Back Yard). Some community case study participants indicated that incidences of NIMBY-ism have likely increased as a result of the NHI, given the increased profile of homelessness in the community, due to the increased investments and activities to address homelessness issues. In the case studies, most issues of NIMBY-ism were reported as resolved with the resulting benefit of increased, more accurate awareness of homelessness issues among the general public and specific community residents. In the survey of community planners and decision-makers, approximately two-thirds (65%) reported that their communities had adopted strategies to address NIMBY-ism.

Toronto – An example of addressing NIMBY-ism includes the achievements of HomeComing Community Choice Coalition. HomeComing is a consortium of several supportive housing providers. The organization has been very active in community-level advocacy and awareness raising. Activities undertaken by the consortium include developing and distributing a booklet entitled “Yes in My Backyard”, developing protocols for community meetings, contributing to meetings in which NIMBY-ism is being addressed, and communicating with and informing municipal councillors on specific homelessness issues.

Winnipeg – As a method of addressing NIMBY-ism in the Behavioural Health Foundation, a residential addiction program facility, respondents reported that they worked directly with the community by inviting them to BBQs and graduations as well as making some of their teaching facilities available to adult learners.

Strategies for Gaining Community Acceptance – One example of building community capacity to raise public awareness within the context of countering NIMBY-ism was the project undertaken via a partnership between the NSH and CMHC in 2003. As part of the project, the partners conducted 46 case studies across Canada that included a variety of projects (e.g., shelters, and transitional, supportive, and affordable housing), all of which had encountered NIMBY issues. Successful strategies were identified along with key concerns.

EVALUATION QUESTION:

Q11: Has the NHI contributed to improved information and data on the homelessness population and homelessness issues?

The literature review and case studies identified a large number of studies that have been conducted with NHI contributions, including community research under the SCPI and research studies under the NRP. Although the research conducted under the NRP is coordinated, there appears to be very little coordination or sharing of community research findings at a national or regional level. Much of the community-level research appears to be staying within the community with representatives relatively unaware of research occurring outside their own communities. Regional and national conferences that have been arranged under the NRP for information sharing or consultations were frequently cited by respondents as very important and helpful and as having a large impact on how they thought about issues in their own community.

One potential source of information and data on the homeless population is the HIFIS, which underwent revisions during Phases 1 and 2 of the NHI. Opinions of evaluation respondents in case studies and key informant interviews were mixed when asked about HIFIS. Respondents reported that there were some issues with the level and accessibility of support earlier on for implementing HIFIS during Phase 2; however, this seems to have improved considerably within the past two years. There were examples provided to the evaluation team of how HIFIS information is being used for planning purposes at both the organization and community levels. The most frequently cited example was the 2005 Report Card on Homelessness, developed by the City of Ottawa using HIFIS information. However, according to some respondents, there remain issues with HIFIS regarding:

- Software problems and technical assistance;
- Staffing and capacity issues within shelters;
- Uncertainty with respect to the federal commitment to NHI and continued support for HIFIS;
- Compatibility with other systems developed or being developed; and
- Compatibility with other reporting requirements of shelters.

Ottawa – The implementation of HIFIS in Ottawa is considered a success in providing up-to date information on shelter usage in Ottawa, according to key informants. The factor that was identified by many respondents as a key to the success was the decision by the City of Ottawa to employ two full-time staff who were responsible for assisting the shelters in implementing HIFIS. The City of Ottawa has chosen not to adopt the latest version of HIFIS (v3.0) because it is early in the release cycle and issues are still being addressed. Another main issue raised was the uncertainty with respect to federal commitment to homelessness funding, which may leave the HIFIS software as an unsupported, partially developed system.

St. John's – The implementation of HIFIS is ongoing with all shelter services having agreed to implement the system, all having received hardware, and most having received training. Respondents indicated that one key aspect of the ongoing success with the implementation has been the city facilitator's identification of the need for a resource who understood the shelter systems to provide support and assist shelters in implementing the system.

3.2.4 Success in contributing to the reduction of homelessness

EVALUATION QUESTION:

Q12: Has the NHI contributed to the reduction of homelessness?

As previously discussed in Section 4.1, there continue to be challenges at the local, regional and national level in quantifying the actual levels of homelessness and those who are at risk of homelessness. Issues remain with respect to the appropriate methodology and ensuring some consistency in approaches when quantifying need, and then being able to make attributions of potential reductions directly back to the NHI interventions. The Auditor General also acknowledged this challenge in a recent report with recognition that measurement of homelessness is difficult.¹⁶ Similarly, Statistics Canada has indicated that undertaking a comprehensive “count” of all homeless people in Canada would be prohibitively expensive; the methodological challenges would be significant; and the data would not likely be reliable.

Given these ongoing challenges, it was not possible for the evaluation to quantify the extent to which homelessness has been reduced as a result of the NHI. Rates and estimates of homelessness vary, particularly in large Canadian urban centres. Street counts which are often point-in-time estimates tend to underestimate the extent of homelessness by not capturing the “hidden homeless”. Despite these caveats, the street counts have consistently demonstrated increasing numbers of homeless people in Canadian urban centres since 2000 (e.g., Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Kelowna). Populations that appear to continue to be disproportionately affected include Aboriginal people, youth, and those with mental health and addiction issues.

Evaluation respondents in case studies, key informant interviews and surveys reported that whether rates of homelessness are increasing or decreasing, many communities would have even larger problems and be less prepared to address homelessness had the NHI not been implemented. Respondents indicated that the NHI reliance on the community-driven planning processes to develop relevant priorities and approaches is more likely to contribute to the eventual reduction of homelessness than a “top-down” approach that assumes the issues and solutions are the same across communities.

3.2.5 Incremental impact of the NHI

EVALUATION QUESTION:

Q13: Have financial investments been incremental to other direct investments in homelessness through the funding period?

¹⁶ Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the House of Commons – Chapter 4: Managing Horizontal Initiatives (November, 2005).

Although there is no quantitative evidence of incrementality of the investment, given the challenge in determining the level of homelessness in Canada, the *qualitative* evidence collected during the evaluation demonstrated that, in many cases, the NHI financial investments were incremental to other direct investments in homelessness through the Phase 2 period. Most community planners and decision-makers along with project representatives indicated via surveys that the amounts of non-NHI funding that existed prior to Phase 1 of the NHI were less than what was invested throughout the two phases of the NHI. Similarly, most agreed that the increase in non-NHI investments since 1999 was directly related to the NHI investments.

Aventa Addiction Treatment for Women (Calgary) – Aventa renovated a newly purchased building to better meet the needs of its clients and the addiction treatment program. The substantial renovation allowed for an expansion of the transitional housing capacity of the organization. Respondents reported that NHI funds have had a leveraging effect on other donors with an example of a \$750K matching grant fund provided by an anonymous donor which project personnel assert would not have taken place without the presence of the NHI contribution. In addition, respondents reported that the expansion would not have been possible without the NHI contribution.

The actual incremental impact of the NHI investments could not be quantified by the evaluation as data was not readily available on the baseline investments of non-NHI resources by community or region for homelessness prior to 1999. A complete file containing the non-NHI funding spent on each project (e.g., other federal sources, provincial/territorial, municipal, NGO, private, etc.) was not available at the time of the evaluation given that the final results reporting by project was scheduled for spring-summer 2007.

3.2.6 Impact on individuals

EVALUATION QUESTION:

Q14: Have individual NHI interventions improved the quality of life of clients?

A large majority of respondents cited the positive impacts on individuals as a strong success for the NHI. Most evaluation respondents in the cases studies, key informant interviews and surveys provided insights into the positive impacts of the NHI on individuals and families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The case studies and interviews with individuals and families in particular demonstrated that the NHI contributions were having immediate and medium-term positive impacts on the day-to-day quality of life of people. These impacts were seen in a variety of project types, varying in size, scope, and target group. According to most respondents, the NHI has had a positive impact on diverse groups such as youth, Aboriginal people, people dealing with mental health and addiction issues, new immigrants, single parents, and survivors of abuse or violence. UAH and SCPI project representatives were most likely to respond positively when asked if NHI-funded projects led to tangible improvements to clients' lives (69% and 41% respectively). It should be noted that making correlations of specific impacts and target groups was not possible given the qualitative nature of the data collected in the evaluation. The consistent

theme throughout was that NHI-funded projects had made very large differences in the lives of target groups. Examples of impacts cited included:

- Disengagement from street life (e.g., sex trade, drugs, violence);
- Obtaining employment;
- Improved physical and mental health;
- Better connections with community and other services;
- Opportunity to continue/improve education;
- Access to counselling and assistance with life skills development (e.g., budgets, parenting, shopping, cooking);
- Housing and furniture, “some place to call home”; and
- Increased self-confidence and self-esteem.

Below are some stories illustrating the positive impacts of NHI-funded services and supports, based on information collected from individuals and families.

- *“Being able just to sign in and get a mat, blanket and food – nobody ever gets turned away, everyone gets fed, and you are treated good here.”* – Man who had been homeless for 17 years (since he was a teenager) describing how an emergency shelter provided what he needed at the time. He is now in his own place of four months – the longest time he has ever had his own home.
- A woman reported *“jumping up and down with excitement”* when she learned that her transitional unit came with beds, sheets, towels, appliances, dishes, and lamps. At the time she owned only a garbage bag full of clothes and a clock radio. She now volunteers *“to give back to the community”*.
- One woman related her story that the second-stage housing had provided her with the support, stability and structure to now regain custody of her children.
- One woman who had addiction issues indicated that prior to her involvement with the NHI project, she *“had no control”*. Now she has moved from an abusive situation, and her children *“tell me that I am a nice mother, and they are happy to have me as a mother. Here they are safe, getting an education and learning about their culture”*. Once she has improved her writing skills, she will *“write all about what everyone at the organization has done for me”*.
- A woman who was a refugee lost her apartment because her roommate moved out and she ended up in an emergency shelter with her young child. She was referred to the NHI project where she received housing, employment training, work placements and childcare. She is now *“full of hope”* as a result of the project.

- *“I became clean, independent and responsible”* – A young woman who had been living on the streets for two years, lived for six months in a transitional house and was in the process of moving into an apartment.
- *“I would recommend this place to anybody...I will never forget it.”* – Man staying at a transitional housing project who had been in two shelters after having repeatedly quit jobs. He did not want to go on social assistance because he feels he is healthy enough to work.
- *“This is a place to call home...there is always someone to turn to when I need help”* – Man who lives in a supportive housing unit.

3.2.7 Regional Homelessness Fund

EVALUATION QUESTION:

Q15: Has the RHF increased the capacity of smaller communities to respond to homelessness?

The RHF was implemented in Phase 2 to allow smaller non-SCPI communities to begin to address some of the priority needs of homeless individuals and families (i.e., needs for shelters, crisis support, drug treatment, etc.) by providing communities with assistance to develop appropriate support and services. In addition, smaller SCPI communities had access to RHF funds for projects that focused on youth. According to the review of administrative data, 60% of RHF projects were implemented in non-SCPI communities, 28% in smaller SCPI communities and 13% in large SCPI communities.¹⁷ Slightly less than one-half of the RHF projects (43%) had activities related to the provision of services, 39% had activities related to capacity development and research, and 28% of projects focused on sheltering facility activities.¹⁸

According to evaluation respondents in the key informant interviews, it is unlikely that many of the RHF projects would have been implemented without the availability and flexibility of the RHF funding. Key informant interview respondents reported some challenges in implementing the RHF and providing the assistance required to project proponents to access the RHF funds. Most agreed that the premise of the RHF was sound, but the pragmatic aspects of assisting organizations not located in SCPI communities to develop adequate proposals without the benefit of a community plan or other similar framework resulted in a considerable burden for both Service Canada representatives, who deliver the NHI programs, and the project proponent. These included aspects such as having to develop detailed project rationale and need analysis, rather than being able to build on the established framework and priorities identified in the community planning process. Other concerns with the RHF from an implementation perspective identified by key informants included:

- Lack of clarity around eligibility and terms and conditions; and
- A geographic split of funds via a formula designed at NHQ that was challenging to implement in the regions.

¹⁷ The projects implemented in larger SCPI communities had a direct focus on youth.

¹⁸ Projects could indicate more than one type of activity so percentages do not add up to 100%.

3.2.8 Surplus Federal Real Property for Homelessness Initiative

EVALUATION QUESTION:

Q16: Has the SFRPHI contributed to the continuum of supports through projects that are sustainable beyond 2006?

Q17: Has the SFRPHI led to new partnerships and greater horizontality federally and between federal, provincial/territorial and local governments?

The SFRPHI was implemented initially in Phase 1 and continued throughout Phase 2 of the NHI. A few communities have used this NHI component extensively, and where SFRPHI projects have been implemented, it appears to be working well according to evaluation respondents in the key informant interviews and case studies. Uptake of the program is unevenly distributed across the country and is used most frequently by communities in the Atlantic provinces. Of the 27 agreements signed under SFRPHI during Phase 2, 19 (70%) were in the Atlantic provinces. Key informants indicated that the sustainability of SFRPHI projects is unknown at this point as the number of properties that will be successfully managed after the initial holding period of five years will only be known in the upcoming few years.

Overall, the SFRPHI tends to be viewed by communities and facilitators as relatively cumbersome. The time required to transfer properties is viewed as too long. Projects require a very strong advocate in order to succeed, according to evaluation respondents. An issue raised was that many of the surplus federal properties that are potential candidates under the SFRPHI are actually not located in any of the SCPI communities. This means that there is not necessarily a community group with planning expertise available to develop a SFRPHI project.

The provincial and territorial partners interviewed for the evaluation were either not aware of SFRPHI, or were unable to provide specific examples of SFRPHI projects in their region.

3.3 NHI Performance measurement

As part of the summative evaluation, a review of the performance measurement process for the NHI was undertaken. The details of the performance measurement strategy are contained in the Results-based Management and Accountability Framework (RMAF) developed for Phase 2 of the NHI, and included numerous performance indicators. The frequency of reporting varied according to the indicator ranging from *quarterly* to *annually* to at the *end of the initiative*. For the most part, activities, outputs and immediate outcomes were to be reported on quarterly and annually using various data sources. The medium-term, long-term and ultimate outcomes were to be reported on in the summative evaluation.

Interviews with HHB directors indicated that many of the other performance indicators are monitored via ad hoc reports generated with point-in-time data from the IMIS system. The performance measurement strategy in the RMAF outlined that the “data-source/collection method” for medium- and longer-term outcomes would only be “EDD Evaluation”. Considerable emphasis was placed on the summative evaluation for producing information on outcomes. The performance measurement strategy is missing on-going measures for medium- and long-term outcomes. It is problematic to expect that the summative evaluation would be the only time to gather this information, rather than building on and analyzing on-going measures of outcomes.

As previously discussed within the limitations section, the summative evaluation was challenging due to the extension year announced in 2005-2006, which then extended the results-reporting requirements for many of the NHI projects until spring/summer 2007. As a result, the results information that the performance measurement strategy and the summative evaluation depended on to assess many of the medium- and longer-term outcomes was not available.

At the time of the evaluation, most of the project information that was maintained in the IMIS system were projects plans and anticipated results. Project-level results are only reported, collected and entered into IMIS upon completion of projects.

4. Key Conclusions

This section contains the key conclusions developed from the findings of the summative evaluation of the NHI.

4.1 Program Rationale and Relevance

- Conclusion #1:** *While evaluation respondents reported that the NHI has been effective in addressing some of the current needs of communities and individuals with respect to homelessness, they saw a continued need for federal government involvement in and support of homelessness issues in Canada.* The individuals consulted during the evaluation stated that there continues to be a need for an initiative such as the National Homelessness Initiative. They reported that significant progress has been made with the development of capacity within Canadian communities to address diverse homelessness issues, and that the NHI has had positive impacts on the quality of life of people who are homeless or at risk of being homeless. In their view, there remains an issue whether this progress is sustainable without a continued presence of a federal initiative similar to the NHI.
- Conclusion #2:** *According to respondents, many of the most pressing needs will require further development of ongoing partnerships with multiple levels of government and various sectors in order to produce the long-term coordinated effort required to address homelessness in Canada.* Respondents identified the following areas of need: affordable housing; ensuring the involvement of the federal government as a main partner in developing a long-term coordinated effort to address homelessness in Canada; investments in transitional and supportive housing; support for emergency shelters; greater availability of mental health, addiction, and youth services; and homelessness prevention. Respondents argued that these on-going needs will require support from all levels of government, community organizations and the private sector working in partnership to pool resources and efforts.
- Conclusion #3:** *Evidence suggests that the NHI has developed an effective model to address homelessness that complements many other local and regional initiatives. Evaluation respondents reported that additional coordination at the federal and provincial/territorial levels would enhance its effectiveness.* With the exception of a few examples of perceived overlap between SCPI and UAH, there was little evidence of overlap between the NHI and other programs and initiatives; however, there were many examples of potential complementarity. The perception amongst respondents is that the potential benefits of this identified complementarity are not being fully realized due to the need to improve the coordination of the NHI with other federal and possibly

provincial/territorial initiatives. Some of the provincial/territorial representatives expressed concern that they had not been adequately consulted in the design of Phase 2 of the NHI prior to its implementation, yet were expected to then provide ongoing support to ensure the sustainability of NHI investments.

4.2 Program Success

- Conclusion #4:** *Positive impacts have been reported by respondents in the area of developing community capacity for planning, which in turn have had positive impacts on the outcomes obtained through projects funded under the NHI.* The key impacts identified by evaluation respondents resulting from the enhanced community capacity for planning were: increased capacity to respond to contextual changes that affect homelessness issues; increased community participation, buy-in and acceptance from various groups and sectors in addressing homelessness issues; and increased coordination among stakeholders, which decreased risk of duplication and overlap of efforts and resources.
- Conclusion #5:** *According to respondents, positive impacts on the daily lives of individuals are one of the major areas of success for the NHI. They reported that NHI investments have resulted in observable, significant positive impacts for diverse Canadians who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.* The various lines of evidence from the evaluation demonstrated consistently that NHI investments had a direct impact on improving the quality of life of people who sought support from community organizations that had received NHI contributions for various projects. Evaluation respondents reported that people benefiting directly from the NHI investments were from diverse backgrounds with different issues. They included youth, Aboriginal people, people addressing mental health and addiction issues, new immigrants, single parents, and survivors of abuse or violence.
- Conclusion #6:** *Respondents reported that the NHI has contributed to the development of a continuum of supports and services at the community level. Although the gap in affordable housing in many urban communities is outside the mandate of the NHI, respondents added that this gap has had a detrimental impact on establishing an overall continuum and has put additional pressures on other stages of the continuum (e.g., emergency, transitional).* Progress has been made in establishing a continuum of supports and services at the community level for people who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness. A shift in emphasis from emergency services and shelters in Phase 1 to transitional and supportive housing in Phase 2 was evident in most communities as a result of the NHI. Despite the progress that has been made as a result of the NHI, most communities identified gaps in their continuum of supports and services,

particularly in the area of affordable housing. Although not within the mandate of the NHI, the continued gap in availability of independent, affordable housing at the final stage of the continuum was identified by evaluation respondents as having a detrimental impact on establishing the overall continuum of supports and services.

- Conclusion #7:** *According to respondents, the community-driven model developed and adopted by the NHI has increased communities' capacity to assess, to prioritize, and to react to the contextual factors for homelessness.* Although it is challenging to determine the extent to which rates of homelessness and at-risk of homelessness are increasing or decreasing, many communities reported that they would have even larger problems and be less prepared to address any potential increases/decreases had the NHI not been implemented. The community-driven planning processes to develop relevant priorities and approaches is deemed more likely to contribute to the eventual reduction of homelessness than a "top-down" approach that assumes the issues and solutions are the same across communities.
- Conclusion #8:** *Evaluation respondents reported that the NHI has made some contributions to increased understanding and awareness of homelessness issues among various groups such as researchers, community organizations, and municipal governments. In addition, it was reported that efforts to resolve cases of NIMBY-ism led to increased, more accurate awareness of homelessness issues among community residents. The impact of these knowledge and awareness-generating activities has remained localized and/or regionalized in many instances.* The evaluation found that activities were undertaken that likely led to an increase in the knowledge and understanding of homelessness issues. Considerable numbers of studies and research projects were commissioned under the NHI. Additional effort is required to ensure that the knowledge and understanding obtained from these studies is further disseminated outside of the individual communities in which the research occurred.
- Conclusion #9:** *According to evaluation findings, HIFIS, the data collection system for shelters, has demonstrated gains in development and implementation across Phase 2. Continued development and support is required for the system to reach its potential to contribute to decision-making at the local, regional, and national levels.* There are examples of communities and organizations that are now using HIFIS information to assist in decision-making and understanding needs of their communities and clients. Some implementation and design issues will need to be addressed in order for the system to succeed on local, regional and national levels.

Conclusion #10: *Evaluation respondents reported that the investments made through the NHI are incremental to investments made by other programs and levels of government with respect to addressing homelessness issues.* The NHI's financial investments in most cases appear to be incremental to other direct investments in homelessness. Respondents believe that NHI investments have been responsible for the leveraging of substantial non-NHI investments in homelessness issues.

4.3 Performance Measurement

Conclusion #11: *Performance measurement should have included on-going measurement of medium- and long-term outcomes, rather than waiting until the end of the initiative at the evaluation stage.* The performance measurement strategy outlined in the RMAF was challenging to implement with respect to the measurement of medium- and longer-term outcomes of the NHI. The performance measurement strategy is missing on-going measures for medium- and long-term outcomes. It is problematic to expect that the summative evaluation would be the only time to gather this information, rather than building on and analyzing ongoing measures of outcomes. Information on most Phase 2 project outcomes is expected to become available in spring/summer 2007.

Appendix A

Evaluation Matrix		
Evaluation Issue	Key Evaluation Questions	Methodologies
Program Rationale and Relevance		
Rationale and Relevance	<p>Q1. Does the NHI continue to be consistent with HRSDC and government-wide priorities?</p> <p>Q2. Is there a demonstrable need for federal government support for addressing homelessness?</p> <p>Q3. Is the community-driven design of the NHI compatible with the setting by the NSH of national program priorities?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document review • Review of NSH data and information • Key informant interviews • Survey of community participants in planning and decision-making process • Survey of NHI-funded facilities and services • Community case studies • Project case studies
Overlap and Duplication	<p>Q4. Does NHI funding overlap with or duplicate funding from federal programs and provincial/territorial and municipal programs targeted to homeless people?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document review • Key informant interviews • Survey of community participants in planning and decision-making process • Community case studies
Program Success		
Success in increasing community capacity to deal with homelessness	<p>Q5. Has the NHI led to increased local capacity and resources to address homelessness?</p> <p>Q6. Has the community-driven, community plan model adopted by the NHI contributed to an increase in community capacity? (Q6 is a sub-question of Q5).</p> <p>Q7. Is the capacity of communities to address homelessness sustainable beyond 2006? Are the projects and activities funded under the NHI sustainable beyond 2006?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document review • Review of NSH data and information • Key informant interviews • Survey of community participants in planning and decision-making process • Community case studies • Project case studies

Evaluation Matrix (continued)		
Evaluation Issue	Key Evaluation Questions	Methodologies
Success in establishing a comprehensive continuum of supports and services	<p>Q8. Has the NHI contributed to the enhancement and/or increase in the number of supports and services to address homelessness?</p> <p>Q9. Has the NHI contributed to a comprehensive continuum of supports to help address and prevent homelessness?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document review • Review of NSH data and information • Key informant interviews • Survey of community participants in planning and decision-making process • Survey of NHI-funded facilities and services • Community case studies • Project case studies
Success in increasing knowledge and understanding of homelessness	<p>Q10. Has the NHI contributed to increased awareness of the nature of homelessness and of effective responses?</p> <p>Q11. Has the NHI contributed to improved information and data on the homeless population and homelessness issue?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document review • Review of NSH data and information • Key informant interviews • Survey of community participants in planning and decision-making process • Survey of NHI-funded facilities and services • Community case studies • Project case studies • Case studies of shelters using HIFIS • Peer review of research reports
Success in contributing to the reduction of homelessness	Q12. Has the NHI contributed to the reduction of homelessness?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document review • Survey of NHI-funded facilities and services • Community case studies • Project case studies • Case studies of shelters using HIFIS

Evaluation Matrix (continued)		
Evaluation Issue	Key Evaluation Questions	Methodologies
Incremental impact of the NHI	Q13. Have NHI financial investments been incremental to other direct investments in homelessness through the funding period?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of NSH data and information • Key informant interviews • Survey of community participants in planning and decision-making process • Survey of NHI-funded facilities and services • Community case studies • Project case studies
Impact on individuals	Q14. Have individual NHI interventions improved the quality of life of clients?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document review • Review of NSH data and information • Survey of NHI-funded facilities and services • Community case studies • Project case studies • Case studies of individuals and families
Regional Homelessness Fund (RHF)	Q15. Has the RHF increased the capacity of smaller communities to respond to homelessness?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of NSH data and information • Key informant interviews • Survey of NHI-funded facilities and services • Community case studies • Project case studies
Surplus Federal Real Property for Homelessness Initiative (SFRPHI)	<p>Q16. Has the SFRPHI contributed to the continuum of supports through projects that are sustainable beyond 2006?</p> <p>Q17. Has the SFRPHI led to new partnerships and greater horizontality federally and between federal, provincial/territorial and local governments?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of NSH data and information • Key informant interviews • Survey of NHI-funded facilities and services • Community case studies • Project case studies