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Agri-Food Canada



REPORT: Evaluation of the Fostering Business Development Program

Office of Audit and Evaluation

The AAFC Evaluation Committee recommended this evaluation report for approval by the Deputy Minister on March 3, 2015.

Evaluation of the Fostering Business Development Program

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ACRONYMS

| | |
|--------|--|
| 4-H | 4-H Canada |
| AAFC | Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada |
| ACP | AgriCompetitiveness Program |
| AGM | Annual General Meeting |
| AIC | Adaptability and Industry Capacity |
| APF | Agricultural Policy Framework |
| CAHRC | Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council |
| CAIR | Canadian Agricultural Injury Report |
| CASA | Canadian Agricultural Safety Association |
| CFBMC | Canadian Farm Business Management Council |
| COYFP | Canada's Outstanding Young Farmers' Program |
| CYFF | Canadian Young Farmers' Forum |
| FBD | Fostering Business Development |
| FCC | Farm Credit Canada |
| FMC | Farm Management Canada |
| GF | <i>Growing Forward</i> |
| GF2 | <i>Growing Forward 2</i> |
| HR | Human resources |
| MRAP | Management Response and Action Plan |
| OAE | Office of Audit and Evaluation |
| PB | Programs Branch |
| PPMRMS | Program Performance Measurement and Risk Management Strategy |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background and Profile

AAFC has supported the development of business management and workplace safety-related knowledge and skills of Canadian youth, young and established farmers through national organizations since the Renewal Initiative under the Agricultural Policy Framework (APF) (2003-04 to 2008-09).

Under *Growing Forward 2* (GF2, 2013-14 to 2017-18), AAFC is continuing its support through the Fostering Business Development (FBD) stream of the AgriCompetitiveness Program. The FBD program supports activities that allow agri-businesses to transition, adapt and improve their profitability and resilience by nurturing entrepreneurial capacity through the development of youth, young and established farmers, farm safety initiatives, skills and individual and industry leadership.

The FBD program provides contribution agreement funding for activities carried out by the following five national organizations:

- 4-H Canada (4-H);
- Canadian Agricultural Safety Association (CASA);
- Canadian Young Farmers' Forum (CYFF);
- Canada's Outstanding Young Farmers' Program (COYFP); and
- Farm Management Council (FMC).

The FBD program authority totaled \$29.9 million over the GF and GF2 period covered by the evaluation (2009-10 to 2013-14), including Vote 1 (operating) and Vote 10 (grants and contributions).

Under GF, the program funding supported national organizations to enhance knowledge and skills development/training, improve access to assessment and business management services and develop workplace safety initiatives for both new and established farmers.

Under GF2, AAFC no longer provides funding to assist national organizations with their day-to-day (core) operations. FBD program funding has become project-based and continues to support the development of farm safety initiatives, business skills and individual and industry leadership of youth, young and established farmers.

Key Findings

With respect to relevance, the evaluation found that the FBD program, through the five funded national organizations, contributes to addressing ongoing and emerging agricultural sector needs for business development. These needs relate to business and risk management, human resources management, workplace health and safety, and leadership.

The FBD program's objectives are aligned with past and current government priorities and with AAFC's strategic outcomes. However, the range of the contributions made by national organizations to program outcomes should be reflected in the program logic model and performance measurement documents.

Other programs and services offered primarily by provincial and industry organizations have a regional/local focus and complement rather than duplicate those supported by the FBD program. The federal role, via the FBD program, is considered essential to guarantee national access to business management resources and to increase integration and collaboration across regions.

FBD-funded activities are contributing to the achievement of immediate, intermediate and end outcomes under both GF and GF2. They have a positive impact on participating producers' awareness and adoption of business management and farm safety practices, leading to increased realization of their business goals. The evaluation found that youth awareness of career opportunities in the agriculture sector increased as a result of the FBD program but there was no clear evidence that program activities have directly contributed to the outcome of increasing the number of new entrants to the agricultural sector.

From a cost perspective, the FBD program was delivered economically and efficiently. Changes introduced in GF2 should further improve program economy and efficiency. These changes include: the capping of administrative costs, the introduction of the new funding model, and increased scrutiny and standardization of the application, claim and reporting processes.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report presents the findings of the Evaluation of the Fostering Business Development (FBD) program. The FBD program is a five-year federal initiative under *Growing Forward 2 (2013-2018)*. This program activity was previously under *Growing Forward (2009-2013)* as Agri-Business Development.¹ The FBD program fosters the development of business management tools and information designed to increase competitiveness, innovation and risk management, through project support to national organizations. The project funding is directed at developing tools and information targeted to youth, new entrants and established producers.

The evaluation was undertaken by AAFC's Office of Audit and Evaluation (OAE) as part of AAFC's five-year Departmental Evaluation Plan (2014-15 to 2018-19). The evaluation examines the relevance and performance of the Agri-Business Development and FBD program activities from April 1, 2009 to March 31, 2014, covering the transition between *Growing Forward (GF; 2009-2013)* and *Growing Forward 2 (GF2; 2013-2014)*. The evaluation fulfills the requirements of the *Financial Administration Act* and the *Treasury Board Policy on Evaluation (2009)*. It focuses on the funding that AAFC has provided to five national organizations under section 2.2.2, Fostering Business Development of AAFC's Program Activity Architecture.

¹ For the purpose of consistency, the program under GF and GF2 is described as Fostering Business Development (FBD) in the evaluation.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Data Collection Methods

The evaluation addresses the five core evaluation issues defined in the *Treasury Board Policy on Evaluation* (2009) associated with the relevance and performance of the FBD program using the following data collection methods:

- **Document review:** The document review informed the program profile and provided evidence to address evaluation questions of relevance and performance. Program documents and documentary evidence from federal government sources (i.e., Reports on Plans and Priorities, Budgets, Speeches from the Throne) and surveys commissioned by AAFC (e.g., National Renewal Survey, Client Impact Assessment Survey) were primarily used to address relevance issues. To examine the issue of duplication or complementarity, an internet scan was performed which identified national or regional/provincial organizations that deliver similar activities. Administrative data and performance data collected from national organizations were examined in detail to address performance issues, including progress towards expected outcomes and efficiency and economy.
- **Key informant interviews:** A total of seven key informant interviews were conducted in-person and by telephone to provide insight on questions relating to relevance and performance issues. Three interviews were conducted with AAFC staff/management and four with representatives of similar (non-funded) national/regional organizations.
- **Case studies:** A total of five case studies were conducted for this evaluation, one per national organization funded by the FBD program. The objective of the case studies was to examine the projects conducted by each national organization to assess progress toward achievement of program outcomes and unintended impacts, as well as to collect insight on efficiency and economy, and on design and delivery. Relevance questions were also examined to a more limited/targeted extent. Because the case studies cover FBD funding under both GF and GF2, they include a longitudinal perspective to examine changes in needs, activities and achievements over time, and to examine the impact of new/revised processes under GF2 on program implementation. Each case study involved a review of file and administrative data and interviews. A total of 26 interviews were conducted as part of the case studies with FBD program staff (4), senior management representatives of the national organizations (5), program sponsors (i.e., organisations that contributed financially to the projects; 7) and program beneficiaries (i.e., clients, producers, agri-businesses;10).

2.2 Evaluation Limitations

There were some challenges encountered in the evaluation mainly related to the transition of the program from GF to GF2. Some longitudinal information was unavailable since program staff members were not always familiar with both GF and GF2 program periods.

Performance information for GF2 was limited since only one fiscal year of the program was available. The evaluation mitigated these limitations by using multiple lines of evidence to fill in any gaps around missing information.

3.0 PROGRAM PROFILE

3.1 Program Context

Stakeholder organizations in the agricultural sector have expressed a need for activities to support producers' access to skills, knowledge, and tools to improve farm business management; promote best business practices; address human resource issues; promote on-farm health and safety practices; and create leadership development and awareness of farming opportunities for new generations of farmers. Enabling farmers to increase their skills and knowledge and build entrepreneurial capacity and leadership will help them to improve their profitability and resilience.

AAFC has traditionally supported Canadian agricultural producers in the continuous development of a broad range of specialized skills (e.g., technical, business or leadership skills), which are critical to the success of entrepreneurs in a modern agriculture and agri-food sector. To assist producers in developing and applying these skills, AAFC has funded a range of private, not-for-profit organizations that offer information, products and services to Canadian producers, either nationally or within specific provinces. At the national level, such organizations vary in mandate, in target clientele, in size, and in the length of time they have been working with AAFC, with many receiving AAFC support since at least 1995.²

National organizations have the ability to rapidly develop and disseminate information and resources to foster business development in the agricultural sector. They can also encourage the use of farm business management tools; directly reach targeted clientele; leverage their existing networks of members or affiliated organizations; support lifelong learning and skills development for three main types of clientele (i.e. youth, beginning farmers, established farmers); and help coordinate and avoid duplication of efforts among provinces and territories.

3.2 Overview of the Program

The FBD program resides under Stream B of the AgriCompetitiveness Program (ACP) of GF2. The FBD is managed by AAFC's Programs Branch (PB) within the Competitiveness Division of the Business Development and Competitiveness Directorate. The program was previously delivered under AAFC's former Renewal Division of the Farm Financial Programs Branch until late 2012.

Since the Renewal Initiative under the Agricultural Policy Framework (APF) (2003-04 to 2008-09), AAFC has been providing funding via contribution agreements to five national organizations:

² AAFC (2001).

- **4-H Canada (4-H):** Established in 1933 through the Department of Agriculture as a Boys and Girls Club in Manitoba. The 4-H Canada helps to develop responsible citizenship and confidence in youth between the ages of 8 and 21 (to be expanded to 25). Youth learn a wide variety of skills through hands-on project work in the area of agriculture, leadership, citizenship, communication and business.
- **Canadian Agricultural Safety Association (CASA):** Established in 1993 from a need identified by provincial agricultural departments, farm organizations, the research community and preventive agencies. CASA acts as a national farm safety networking and coordinating agency, to address problems of illness, injuries and accidental death on Canadian farms and ranches. CASA works collaboratively with agricultural safety and health specialists and producers in all provinces and territories to promote health and safety on Canadian farms.
- **Canadian Young Farmers' Forum (CYFF):** Established in 1997, following a national roundtable of young farmer groups and agricultural commodity/farm groups across Canada, to facilitate the exchange of information and foster collaboration between young and beginning farmers across the country.
- **Canada's Outstanding Young Farmers' Program (COYFP):** Established in 1979, following an American model, to exemplify excellence in agriculture in Canada. COYFP provides an opportunity to encourage young farmers to pursue excellence. It also provides a forum for exchange to foster better urban-rural relations through greater understanding and appreciation of farmers' concerns and achievements.
- **Farm Management Canada (FMC);** formerly the Canadian Farm Business Management Council (CFBMC): Established in 1992, following a recommendation of Federal Provincial and Territorial Ministers of Agriculture and the industry, to establish a national body to coordinate, develop, and disseminate farm business management materials.

Under the Renewal Initiative of the APF³ and GF (2009-10 to 2012-13) contribution funding supported national organizations to deliver projects to enhance skills development/training, improve access to assessment and business management services and develop workplace safety initiatives for both new and established farmers. Until 2013 national organizations also received funding to assist with their day-to-day operations.

Under GF2 (2013-14 to 2018-19), AAFC no longer provides operational funding to assist national organizations with their day-to-day operations. This program funding has become project-based supporting projects designed to enhance skills, tools and knowledge of entrepreneurs in the industry through activities that allow agri-businesses to transition, adapt, and improve their profitability and resilience, by nurturing entrepreneurial capacity

³ These five national organizations were funded under the Renewal Initiative over five years (2003-04 to 2007-08), followed by a one-year extension (2008-09) as a transition to the implementation of the Business Development Program under GF. In 2009-2010, APF's Renewal Initiative was replaced by the Business Development Program under a new policy framework known as Growing Forward, AAFC (2010)2.

through the development of youth, young and established farmers, farm safety initiatives, business skills and individual and industry leadership.

To deliver these activities, contribution funding is provided to Canadian not-for-profit organizations with projects that are national in scope. Following the GF2 open and transparent application process, the same five national organizations were funded through the FBD program.

3.3 Program Resources

The evaluation examined the total planned authorities for FBD programming from 2009-10 to 2013-14. The total planned authorities for this period were \$29.9 million, including \$6.5 million operating funds (Vote 1) and \$23.4 million in grants and contributions (Vote 10).

Under GF, funding authorities were \$25.9 million over the four-year period from April 1, 2009 to March 31, 2013, with maximum contributions to recipient organizations not exceeding \$20.3 million in total over the duration of the program.

Under GF2, which will extend over a five-year period, from April 1, 2013 to March 31, 2018, funding authorities were decreased to \$20.0 million overall. Maximum contributions will not exceed \$15.6 million in total over the duration of the program.

The maximum payable amount to any one recipient will not exceed \$2.0 million per year. Only activity/project costs are eligible under GF2 since AAFC no longer provides core operational funding.⁴

⁴ Programs Branch, AAFC. Resource information was limited to vote 1 and vote 10 amounts. The number of FTEs was not available.

4.0 EVALUATION FINDINGS

4.1 Relevance

4.1.1 Continued Need for the Program

This section examines the continued need for the FBD program in the context of the recent trends in the agricultural sector. Justification for AAFC support is also discussed for the five national organizations currently funded through the FBD program.

Canadian producers face business challenges inherent to the agricultural sector, such as weather instability, price volatility, and market access. These ongoing issues are enhanced by agriculture becoming increasingly complex, changeable, and global in nature. In recent years, many Canadian farms have consolidated or expanded the scale of their operations, and shifted their mix of farming practices and commodities.⁵ While domestic markets remain important, the Canadian agriculture, agri-food and agri-processing sector relies on trade, exporting approximately half the value of primary agriculture production in 2012, based on a recent estimate.⁶ Producers also need to respond to emerging market trends driven by more stringent consumers and a growing expectation that they will learn and adopt sustainable agricultural business models.⁷

To remain competitive at the domestic and global level, Canadian producers must increasingly make business decisions that take into account economic, environmental and social considerations. A 2010 review by Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council (CAHRC)⁸ stressed that producers must gain sound business management and HR-related skills (e.g., develop and implement a succession plan, develop and implement a human resource management plan, implement workplace health and safety policies) to be able to enter and to establish themselves in emerging markets.

In 2012, less than half of Canadian producers reported using various business management tools (e.g., written goals, business plan, succession or HR plan).⁹ About half believed they have been successful in implementing their business plan, in achieving their short- and long-term goals, and in using farm management practices to reduce risks on their farm operations. There remains a continued need to provide producers access to business management expertise and tools through programs such as the FBD program to further encourage the adoption of sound business management practices among Canadian producers.

The specific business development needs of young and/or beginning farmers are often different from those of older or more established producers.¹⁰ Young farmers typically show a higher level of use of business management practices and tools than older or

⁵ Statistics Canada, (2012).

⁶ AAFC, (2014).

⁷ Farm Credit Canada, (2012).

⁸ Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council, (2010).

⁹ Ipsos Reid, (2012).

¹⁰ Ipsos Reid, (2012).

more experienced farmers, but they tend to report lower rates of achievement of their business goals. There are competency and training gaps in the Canadian context, including a lack of formal learning opportunities available for working managers (i.e., outside of courses offered by universities and colleges) and a general lack of agricultural human resource management training programs.¹¹ Of the five national organizations funded through the program that provide services to address this range of needs, the Canadian Young Farmers' Forum (CYFF) and Canada's Outstanding Young Farmers' Program (COYFP) focus on a target audience comprised of young farmers (i.e., age 18-40), while Farm Management Canada's (FMC) target audience covers a broader segment, including established farmers.

Another key trend in the Canadian agricultural sector is the significant decrease of young farmers among the producer population over the last 20 years.¹² Since 2009, there has been a notable increase in the proportion of agricultural producers aged 55 and over, reaching 48% in 2011.¹³ At the same time, the agriculture and agri-food sector is facing a labour shortage.¹⁴ These trends strongly suggest a need to continue efforts to increase youth entrants to the sector, such as by promoting farming as a valuable profession in Canada and by facilitating access to capital and to ongoing educational resources.¹⁵ Under the FBD program, efforts to increase youth entrants to the agricultural sector are primarily supported by 4-H through activities carried out by its provincial clubs.

Canada faces an ongoing critical gap in farm safety: there is a low level of recognition among Canadian producers of the impact of risk management processes and standards relating to farm safety on financial outcomes and agri-competitiveness. Canadian producers believe their farm practices are safe, yet Canada's agricultural industry is one of the top three most hazardous industries in which to work,¹⁶ with about 90 adults and 10 children in agricultural fatalities each year.¹⁷ A 2011 Farm Credit Canada (FCC) survey showed that farm safety in Canada has remained unchanged since 2008, resulting in a "B" grade on its Farm Safety Report Card in both years.¹⁸ There remains a need to raise awareness of farm safety and to help producers address their farm safety practices. Under the FBD program, CASA addresses farm safety issues with a target audience that spans across the age continuum from youth to young and established farmers.

The evaluation found that the FBD program appears to adequately cover the business management needs of Canadian producers. AAFC staff and national organization representatives and beneficiaries did not report any major gaps during interviews. The main suggestion arising from the interviews was to improve communication of, and access to existing services, knowledge, and tools to better meet producers' needs.

4.1.2 Alignment with Government Priorities

¹¹ Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council, (2010).

¹² Statistics Canada, (2014).

¹³ Statistics Canada, (2012).

¹⁴ Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council, (2013).

¹⁵ Report of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, (2010).

¹⁶ CASA, (n.d). *Who We Are*.

¹⁷ Canadian Agricultural Injury Reporting. (2012).

¹⁸ Farm Credit Canada. (2011).

In this section, the evaluation assessed the linkages between program objectives and federal priorities and departmental strategic outcomes.

Alignment with federal priorities

The FBD program objectives were found to be aligned with past and current government priorities outlined in federal Budgets and Speeches from the Throne. The main objective of the FBD program is to support activities that allow agri-businesses to adapt and to improve their profitability and resilience by developing agri-businesses entrepreneurial capacity, and individual and industry leadership.¹⁹ Under GF2, this program furthers the GF objective to build awareness of the benefits and encourage the use of sound business management practices, while also enabling businesses in the sector to be profitable and invest where needed to manage the natural resource base sustainably, and to market and produce safe food and other products.²⁰ These objectives directly support several federal government priorities in the agricultural sector that have received ongoing support in federal budgets over the years, such as business development, adaptation, increased profitability, and competitiveness.²¹

Through the national organizations, the FBD program contributes to the fulfilment of the federal government commitment to promote awareness and involvement of youth in the agricultural sector.²² Under GF2, activities related to young or new entrants were more explicitly included in the FBD program logic model following a recommendation of the 2010 evaluation of the program.

Alignment with departmental strategic outcomes

The FBD program objectives remain aligned with AAFC's Strategic Outcome 2 as per the 2014-15 Program Activity Architecture "an innovative and sustainable agriculture, agri-food and agri-based products sector".

AAFC has repeatedly reaffirmed its commitment to contribute to increased awareness and use of sound management practices in the agriculture sector.²³ The FBD program objectives also directly support the objective of the broader GF2 AgriCompetitiveness program. Specifically they support the Adaptability and Industry Capacity (AIC) component of the program which is to enhance the capacity of the sector to develop leadership, strategies, networks and tools for improving competitiveness, adapting to challenges, innovating and managing risk.

In 2010, the "Evaluation of National Organizations" conducted by the OAE within AAFC concluded that the links between the activities national organizations were undertaking and AAFC's expected objectives were not well explained in the program documentation (e.g., performance measurement strategy). In response to the recommendation to clarify

¹⁹ AAFC. (2013).

²⁰ AAFC. (2009).

²¹ Federal Budgets and Speeches from the Throne from 2009-10 to 2013-14.

²² Report of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, (2010).

²³ AAFC 2009 to 2012 Reports on Plans and Priorities.

the program rationale, these links were more clearly articulated in program documentation under GF2. Although these improvements were found to clarify the program rationale by articulating the contribution of youth activities to program outcomes, some issues remain.

There continues to be a gap in the program narrative around the link between farm safety and the outcome of “increased realization of business goals”. While the contribution of farm safety to program outcomes remains implicit; it is not clearly reflected in the program logic and performance measurement documents, and there is only one performance indicator specific to safety in the program’s performance measurement strategy. This link could be articulated through a description of how the adoption of occupational health and safety plans and practices is expected to reduce on-farm injuries, and contributes to improved business outcomes (e.g., productivity, retention of employees) for producers.

4.1.3 Alignment with Federal Roles and Responsibilities

Given the broad nation-wide uptake of the services offered by the national organizations and their importance to the agriculture sector, the federal government has an important role to play by contributing to national coordination and consistency (standards), and by funding national projects. In the absence of the federal government, provinces would likely deliver their programming with more limited consultation with one another, resulting in more duplication and less consistent access to resources for producers located across the country. Federal funding for the FBD program plays a key role in providing this access regardless of the capacity of each province, which varies greatly from one province to another.

Duplication and complementarity with other national or provincial programs

The evaluation assessed the extent to which programs delivered at the national level and in other jurisdictions complement or duplicate the FBD program. At the national level, CAHRC and FCC deliver programming that complements the five national organizations funded through the FBD program in meeting the business development needs of the agricultural sector. More specifically, CAHRC conducts research and provides resources to the full continuum of audiences (i.e., youth, young and established producers) to address HR and labour market issues facing agricultural businesses²⁴ but these issues are not the focus of any of the FBD-funded organizations. FCC provides management-related training, tools (e.g., software, calculators) and reference materials for new and established producers as part of its broader mandate to provide loans, business and financial services to Canadian agricultural organizations.²⁵ A review of the FCC’s services, tools and materials showed little duplication with those provided by most FBD-funded organizations. As a Crown corporation, FCC sponsors a variety of initiatives and organizations supporting awareness of agriculture and capacity-building services for youth and young farmers, including through several FBD-funded organizations. Both CAHRC and FCC work in partnership with some of the FBD-funded organizations promoting the development of complementary activities.

²⁴ Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council (2014).

²⁵ Farm Credit Canada (2014).

Outside of CAHRC, FCC and the FBD-funded national organizations, the vast majority of the identified programs and courses that are designed to strengthen business management skills (including farm safety, networking, and mentorship for young farmers) are primarily delivered by the provinces (some of which are supported by AAFC through GF2),²⁶ by industry associations/groups (including commodity-specific organizations) and by academic institutions.

Key informants from the national organizations indicated that, while these programs are complementary with the FBD program, some degree of duplication between national and provincial initiatives is inevitable, notably when a more general training program is adapted to meet the specific needs of a province, commodity, or age group. More often, when program offerings are developed and implemented independently by various organizations at the local or regional scale, in some cases resulted in both a duplication of effort and a lack of consistency in business development programming and resources across Canada.

The evaluation found that the five national organizations play an essential role in helping coordinating inter-jurisdictional efforts – with FBD-dedicated funding – to foster business development and to ensure Canadian producers have access to national resources, tools and programs whenever possible. FBD initiatives are specifically designed and managed to fill gaps or needs that are not covered by other available programming, particularly at the provincial level. FBD funding was directed to support projects that are national in scope and which support and complement GF2 provincial initiatives with similar objectives.

Duplication and complementarity between FBD-funded projects

The evaluation found that there is little duplication or overlap occurring between projects supported by the FBD program across the five national organizations. Evidence was found of past and current collaborative activities among the five national organizations, although these do not necessarily take place frequently and may be informal. Periodic dialogue and knowledge sharing was observed between almost all FBD-funded organizations, primarily on content or other matters related to their programming (e.g., activities, events, materials) and more rarely related to administrative matters (e.g., management of AAFC agreement or of charitable organizations). A review of the performance reports from GF provided limited examples of activities that have been delivered jointly by two or more national organizations, with the exception of two discontinued mentorship programs:

- The STEP-UP mentorship program was jointly delivered by FMC, CYFF, COYFP and 4-H, under the leadership of FMC.

²⁶ Programs offered by AAFC prior to 2009 related to farm business management, farm safety and career orientation were transferred to the provinces under Growing Forward. Source: AAFC Contribution Agreements.

- The Business Development On-Farm Mentorship/Work Experience Program, which matched 4-H members with winners of COYFP for a two week on-farm work experience.

Some organizations serve fairly distinct target audiences (e.g., youth) or focus on fairly narrow topics (e.g., farm safety), such that the largest potential for duplication is likely to occur when national organizations independently develop business development-related projects or activities for audiences that are shared across two or more organizations (e.g., young farmers). The performance reports do not provide enough detail to ascertain whether overlap in some seemingly similar activities exists. Currently, the activities for these shared audiences were not seen to overlap, but there remains an ongoing potential for duplication.

4.2 Performance

The evaluation assessed the extent to which FBD-funded activities carried out by the five national organizations have contributed to the achievement of expected outputs and immediate, intermediate and end outcomes under GF and GF2.²⁷

4.2.1 Achievement of Expected Outcomes

Information extracted primarily from the national organizations' GF and GF2 performance reports, as well as interview responses indicate that outputs have generally been produced as expected. Through these outputs, progress has been made under both GF and GF2 toward achieving greater awareness and adoption of business management and workplace safety practices and of agriculture-related career opportunities, and advancing producers' business goals.

4.2.1.1 Outputs

Under GF, all five national organizations developed and disseminated new educational programs, resource materials and tools and organized networking and training events (e.g., annual conferences, seminars, workshops). Some of the achievements between 2009-10 and 2012-13 include:

- FMC: The organization sold 7,000 copies of farm business management resources (hardcopy/electronic versions) in the last three years. Over 400,000 copies of the *Canadian Farm Manager Magazine* were distributed during this period to an average of over 16,000 subscribers per issue. FMC also enhanced its Agriwebinar® platform with social media capabilities, reaching over 15,000 registered users and over 9,000 live webinar participants. FMC updated its *Farm Business Planning Guide*.

²⁷ It is important to note that each national organization received different amounts to deliver different types of activities, such that their outputs and outcomes should not be compared against one another.

- CYFF: More than 200 different CYFF publications (e.g., project materials, brochures, magazines and manuals) were distributed to over 31,000 members/leaders in 2009-10 alone. Participation in CYFF's national Annual General Meeting (AGM) increased from 65 in 2009-10 to approximately 120 in 2012-13, and around 500 people participated in provincial AGMs each year.
- CASA: CASA supported the development of 34 new Ag Safety training resources at the national and regional level. The organization disseminated information on agricultural fatalities through the Canadian Agricultural Injury Report (CAIR) website (up to 4,000 visits annually). CASA also supported 75 farm safety-related events and initiatives and promoted networking during these events (e.g. National Conference, Ag Safety Week, Progressive Agriculture Safety Days®). In particular, Safety Days® were held in 9 provinces across Canada and reached 41,711 participants, primarily youth. CASA developed or amended 9 machinery standards. It also made available a safety planning template (the *FarmSafe Plan*), which was downloaded approximately 570 times from the CASA website in one nine-month period, and has been used by provinces, corporations and academics.
- 4-H held three National Conferences each year (2010 to 2013), with between 157 and 186 youth/leaders reached each year.
- COYFP's National Recognition Event was held in different locations across the country and maintained attendance levels ranging from 125 to 140 attendees.
- Several national organizations (i.e., CYFF, FMC and 4-H) increased or improved their use of online technologies such as email, websites, and social media, to better reach their audiences, especially younger producers.

Under GF2, all national organizations set specific targets relative to the different expected outputs of the FBD program, such as the number of information products and training tools developed and distributed, and the number of producers or clients reached through knowledge transfer events. Most national organizations met or exceeded their respective targets for almost all information product distribution goals (e.g., websites, bulletins, newsletters, social media, publications etc.) and for outreach through knowledge transfer and/or networking events. Most of the products, events and tools produced under the first year of GF2 are similar to those produced under GF.

4.2.1.2 Immediate Outcomes

Activities led by the national organizations under GF have contributed to the achievement of immediate program outcomes under GF and GF2. These activities have had a positive impact on participating producers' awareness of business management and farm safety practices, and youth's awareness of career opportunities in the agriculture sector. Below

are some examples, derived from the national organization's performance reports and verified by the interviews, suggesting that these outcomes were achieved under GF.²⁸

- CYFF: In 2012, national AGM attendees reported gaining a clearer perspective on how to overcome challenges within the family farm, and a greater understanding of how personality types can pose challenges.
- 4-H: 83% (2012-13) and 98% (2010-11) of youth participants in annual national conferences reported they left the event with an increased appreciation of agriculture and agri-business; 72% (2010-11) of the participants also indicated that they had developed a greater awareness of farm safety.

Under GF2, all five national organizations set specific performance requirements for the achievement of outcomes identified for the FBD program, including targets pertaining to the level of awareness of business management or farm safety practices and the level of youth awareness of agriculture and agri-business career opportunities. Each organization was asked to administer a survey of their members and/or participants to their activities, which was used as the main source of information to report on their success in meeting these targets.²⁹

Survey results from 2013-14 indicate that the five national organizations met all their performance targets. These results were also used by some organizations to set a baseline against which they would assess their performance in future years under GF2. Detailed highlights of progress made towards the achievement of immediate outcomes under GF2, are as follows:

- CYFF: 90% of national and provincial event/conference attendees were aware of business management strategies and tools.
- CASA: Students reported a high level of interest and learning through their participation in CASA training courses and activities.
- FMC: 91% of farmers and 96% of non-farmers were more aware of business management strategies and tools.
- 4-H: Over 80% of respondents (aged 13 and over) who participated in 4-H activities reported that they were aware of the career opportunities in agriculture, agri-food and agri-business.

²⁸ Some national organizations did not directly or explicitly measure the impact of their activities on the level of awareness of producers of farm business management practices under GF (COYFP, FMC, CASA). Evidence was found that activities have contributed to changes in business practices, indicating a greater awareness of new ways to run operations.

²⁹ The findings resulting from the interpretation and comparison of survey results between organizations should be used with care. The organizations' performance reports provided no details on survey methodology or description of the survey population (e.g., specifying whether respondents were new or ongoing participants or both).

The evaluation found that respondents interviewed expressed positive views confirming that progress has been made toward increasing producers' awareness of business management and farm safety practices. Beneficiaries confirmed that events held by national organizations provided opportunities for producers to exchange ideas and share best practices with farmers from all over the country. They also often emphasized the role of national organizations in coordinating provincial efforts and in raising awareness and centralizing access to relevant programming and resources available on business management and farm safety.

4.2.1.3 Intermediate Outcomes

FBD-funded activities have had a positive impact on achieving the intermediate outcome of the program under GF and GF2, by contributing to participating producers' adoption of business management and farm safety practices. The most cited changes by interviewed beneficiaries were the implementation of sound financial and HR management practices, risk management strategies, succession plans, and, in the case of CASA, health and safety plans.

The examples below, which were derived from the national organizations' performance reports, further illustrate how the activities carried out have contributed to the achievement of intermediate outcomes under GF.

- COYFP: Participants in the 2010 National Recognition Event reported that it had a profound impact on the way they do business, affected their broader perspective of agriculture and innovation in addition to business practices, and inspired them to make important changes in their business and trade practices.
- CASA: In 2011, 69% of surveyed Canadian producers (not only producers using CASA services)³⁰ routinely checked and managed hazards; 34% showed an interest in agricultural safety training (an increase from 29% in 2008); 24% sought to access resources related to agricultural safety in the last year but only 9% of respondents had a written agricultural safety plan.

Among notable achievements under GF2, survey results indicate that a large proportion (70% to 92%) of participants in the national organizations' activities have implemented or intended to implement changes in their business operations.

Detailed highlights of progress made toward the achievement of intermediate outcomes under GF2, are as follows:

- COYFP: The National Recognition Event inspired 70% of respondents to implement changes in their business operations; 75% of respondents involved in COYFP were encouraged to develop/implement changes to management areas.

³⁰ Farm Credit Canada (2011).

- CYFF: 66% of national and provincial event/conference attendees reported having gained business management strategies and tools beneficial to their operation; 43% stated that their involvement with CYFF and in other young farmer events resulted in the implementation of changes in operations.
- CASA: 92% of producer survey respondents participating in CASA's safety initiatives indicated that they would be adopting the lessons learned in their operations.
- FMC: 91% of farmers are adopting beneficial management strategies and tools in their operation; 82% of farmers are implementing changes to their operation.
- 4-H: Over 50% of respondents who participated in 4-H activities (aged 16 and over) indicated that they intended to pursue a career in agriculture.

Specific to 4-H, the fact that only about half of 4-H respondents stated their intent to pursue a career in agriculture may be explained by the fact that 4-H activities are targeted at a broad audience that includes youth from both rural and urban communities and include non-agriculture-related activities. Interviewees described several activities carried out with children that contributed to raise their awareness of the farming world and of farming-related activities, which often revolve around animal husbandry and participation in agricultural fairs. The available data are insufficient to assess the extent to which 4-H activities are directly contributing to the outcome of increasing the number of new entrants to the agricultural sector. It is difficult to measure 4-H's contribution to this outcome given that a large segment of 4-H's audience is still in primary or secondary school and unlikely to set a firm career path within the funding timeframe.

4.2.1.4 End Outcome

The evaluation found that the activities of the national organizations have contributed to the achievement of the FBD program end outcome: Increased realization of business goals. For instance, many beneficiaries interviewed reported that the changes they made to their business operations (under GF and GF2) related to workplace safety or business management practices, helped them increase their profitability through more effective and efficient financial management, more informed marketing choices and improved HR management. Succession planning knowledge and tools were also often mentioned as having greatly contributed to increase their ability to successfully take over the family farm or involve their children and non-family members in their farming business.

The survey results for 2013-2014 were positive confirming that changes implemented by producers participating in FBD-funded activities contributed to the advancement of their business goals:

- COYFP: 85% of respondents reported that the changes they made advanced their business goals for the next five years;

- CASA: 98% of producer survey respondents participating in CASA's safety initiatives stated that the activity will help them meet their business goals;
- FMC: 88% of surveyed farmers have advanced their goals and 84% are meeting their goals; and
- 4-H: over 90% of respondents who participated in 4-H activities (aged 18 or over) reported that their involvement in 4-H activities had advanced their career goals.

The activities and projects undertaken by these five national organizations have a number of implicit and far-reaching benefits. They provide leadership, innovation and business and safety management practices to producers and to farming communities across Canada. These outcomes play an important role not just in the agriculture sector but in Canadian society spanning across the generations. The evaluation found that the performance measures and logic model does not currently provide outcomes that reflect many of these more intrinsic achievements which provide an overarching social and economic value for the agriculture sector and rural communities. With the elimination of core funding to the national organizations, the funding is now directed at specific projects, suggesting there needs to be an evolution of the program logic model and performance measures to better capture the range of activities, products and impacts on the agriculture sector.

4.2.2 Economy and Efficiency of Program Design and Delivery

The evaluation assessed the extent to which the FBD program and funded activities have been designed and delivered in an efficient and economical manner. Consideration was given to changes that were made to the program design and delivery between GF and GF2.

Program Design Transition from GF to GF2

The fiscal year of 2013-14 marked an important transition for the FBD program, as the program modified several of its design features. Specifically, under GF2, the terms and conditions of the FDB program placed greater emphasis on national organizations becoming more economical and efficient. GF2 program design changes include:

- The withdrawal of core funding, creating a need for the national organizations to find these resources elsewhere;
- A matching funding requirement which limits AAFC's contribution to 50% of the eligible costs for the projects proposed by national organizations. Remaining costs are covered in cash contributions (or in some cases, in-kind) from the organization, industry partners, and/or other levels of government (within permissible stacking limits);

- Project proposals with more detail budget planning to ensure that AAFC provides no more than 50% of project costs with all sources of funding listed; and
- In-kind contributions with additional financial information.

The new GF2 funding and administrative requirements have resulted in the national organizations taking various measures to make a more cost-effective use of their resources. Some of these measures include:

- The use of volunteers to deliver activities and leveraging of other sources of funding;
- Matching of AAFC funding through attracting and increasing external revenue sources; and
- Making substantial structural changes to reduce costs such as, reducing overhead costs, changing the governance structure, and building greater in-house management capacity.

Although the transition from GF to GF2 had challenges, the evaluation found that cost reductions did not significantly impact the delivery of services to the agriculture sector. The national organizations involved have done well to adapt. While a similar range of projects were funded, overall program authority amounts decreased by 23% between GF and GF2.³¹

During GF and GF2, AAFC tasked two of the national organizations to identify more cost-effective ways to deliver their mandate, which they began to achieve under GF and their efforts intensified during the first year of GF2. FMC moved staff to project-based activities, reduced Board expenses, moved its activities online, and increased revenues from external partners. CYFF discontinued one of its peripheral activities and introduced stricter guidelines on spending and instigated fees for delegates to attend some of its events.

Changes in Program Management Processes

The Federal Government priority of ensuring that programs are delivered efficiently and effectively has guided the streamlining of the FBD program's management processes for GF2. The changes include: standardizing application and management processes and forms, and enhancing the accountability of the program through: the use of three distinct reviewers to review proposals; formal technical proposal reviews; conducting a risk assessment of proposed projects; standardization of financial/budget forms; additional approval levels during the management of claims; and a more rigorous oversight of program performance.

³¹ This amount is based on total authorities of \$25.9M for GF and \$20M for GF2. The per year savings of GF2 compared to GF (about \$2.5M) would be substantial since FBD was a 4 year program under GF and a 5 year program under GF2.

Findings from the key informant interviews and case studies indicates that changes in program management – particularly the increased level of scrutiny and standardization of the application, claim and reporting processes – are expected to contribute to the efficiency and economy of the program under GF2. Interviewees noted that the use of formal technical reviews and more centralized oversight of program performance have resulted (or will result) in reduced inconsistencies, greater readability of the processes by senior management, and increased uniformity in decision-making. The new reporting requirements, including the participant survey, have also allowed the organizations to collect data more relevant to the FBD Program outcomes in a more systematic and consistent manner within and across organizations.

The transition of GF to GF2 affected the contribution agreement approval process in that it was somewhat slower with GF2 than with GF and caused a delay in project activities for the national organizations. On average for GF, it took 204 days from the start of the program to a signed contribution agreement. The corresponding figure for GF 2 was 261 days, or 57 days longer. Beneficiaries received information on the new funding requirements for GF2 at the end of GF. In one case (CYFF), the delay meant that there was only a small window of time (i.e., one month) for a major event to be planned and delivered. Some delays in communications around policy issues such as funding requirements influenced the implementation and delivery of activities and program efficiency for the first year of GF2.

In relation to the initial authorities, the FBD program has been delivered economically. For both GF and the first year of GF2, the FBD program was delivered below budget, (i.e., for less than the initial program authorities). The savings total is \$6 million or 22% of the total authorities for GF and the first year of GF2.

Building on Collaborative Relationships: Working Group

AAFC created a Working Group for National Organizations in the summer of 2014 with the objective of fostering greater efficiency and/or economy through:

- Reducing duplication of activities between the national organizations;
- Examining how services are delivered to target audiences; and
- Increasing dialogue, collaboration, and the sharing of resources.

Collaboration, though important will present some challenges. Because of the matching requirements, these organizations are increasingly competing for funding from a relatively limited pool of potential external sponsors (e.g., FCC, agriculture sector service and product providers). Organizations may not all have the same degree of motivation to collaborate, with some having more incentives to do so than others. For example, the CYFF has a two-year contribution agreement (2013-14 to 2014-15) and is working to develop collaborations with other organizations to find efficiencies during the period of the agreement. The other national organizations currently have no such obligation.

It was still early to predict the outcome of ongoing collaborative efforts but some examples of the working group discussions between the national organizations include: the cross-promotion of events; sharing platforms, tools and content; developing common risk management standards; and sharing best practices on performance data collection, reporting, and management of contribution agreements. Representatives from the organizations interviewed indicated that this working group will be useful for developing shared approaches. There may also be an opportunity to include or strengthen linkages with other national organizations involved in similar work, such as CAHRC or FCC on relevant issues (e.g., labour shortage), either through FBD working group or another mechanism.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

Relevance

The agricultural sector faces both ongoing and emerging challenges that require a continued focus to enhance business management capabilities and farm safety, as well as to attract new entrants to the sector. The FBD program, through the five funded national organizations, contributes to addressing ongoing agricultural sector needs for business development, including those relating to business and risk management, human resource (HR) management, workplace health and safety, and leadership. The five national organizations offer services to address these needs across a continuum covering its three main target groups: youth, young farmers and established farmers. No major gaps were identified although the FBD program could better meet needs by further improving awareness of and access to available services.

The FBD program's objectives are aligned with past and current government priorities outlined in Federal Budgets and Speeches from the Throne. The FBD program contributes to the fulfilment of the federal government commitment to promote awareness and involvement of youth in the agricultural sector. The FBD program also aligned with AAFC's strategic outcomes fostering innovation and competitiveness of the agricultural sector. The explicit contribution of project activities to program outcomes could be further clarified and reflected in the program logic and performance measurement documents.

The evaluation found that other programs and services offered primarily by the provinces (some of which are supported by AAFC through GF2) and industry associations/groups (for example, FCC and CAHRC) generally complement rather than duplicate the FBD program. Some degree of duplication between national and provincial initiatives is inevitable when a training program must be adapted to meet the specific needs of a province, a commodity group or age group. Other services offered to meet FBD target groups' needs tend to be regional/local and highly variable across regions. Given this regional variability, the federal role, via the FBD program, is considered essential to guarantee national access to business management resources and to increase integration/collaboration across regions.

There is little duplication or overlap occurring between projects supported by the FBD program across the five national organizations. Rather, several examples of collaboration and dialogue among them were observed, which tend to occur periodically rather than on a frequent basis.

Performance

FBD-funded activities under GF and GF2 carried out by the five national organizations have contributed to greater awareness and adoption of business management, workplace safety practices, and agriculture-related career opportunities, and advancing producers' business goals. It was not possible to determine if the activities have contributed to the intermediate outcome of increasing the number of new entrants to the agricultural sector.

The evaluation found that the FBD program disbursed less funding (operating funds and contributions) than initially planned under both GF and GF2 (year 1). Under GF2, the revised funding model - which eliminated funding for core costs, required matching 50-50 contributions, and allowed little-to-no in-kind funding - impacted the amount of funding sought by industry and ultimately the program dollars disbursed.

For the first year of GF2, progress was noted toward the programs' expected outcomes, but some organizations did not meet their targets. While changes were made to the program's design and delivery between GF and GF2, including increased scrutiny and standardization of the application, claim and reporting processes this transition was marked by challenges that have affected the delivery of activities and possibly program efficiency. Most notably, a major challenge was the GF2 contribution agreement approval process was delayed for all five organizations and FBD program rules, guidelines and forms changed during the transition from GF and GF2.

6.0 ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The evaluation includes the following issue and recommendation:

Issue

The program outcomes and logic model could be improved to provide some of the key contributions that the FBD program is making. For example, the contribution of farm safety is not captured in the program logic and performance measures and the 4-H plays a broader role in the acquisition of leadership and other business development capacities than is reflected. There are also limitations associated with achieving the outcome of “increase in new entrants to the sector”.

Recommendation

AAFC’s Programs Branch should:

Examine the logic model and supporting performance measures to further clarify, strengthen and broaden the program’s outcomes to better capture the value of the program.

Management Response and Action Plan (MRAP)

Agreed. The FBD Program Performance Measurement and Risk Management Strategy (PPMRMS) is an evergreen document and program managers will review the FBD performance measures as part of an ongoing annual performance measurement review process. During this review, program managers will explore options to further clarify, strengthen and broaden the program’s outcomes to better capture the value of the program.

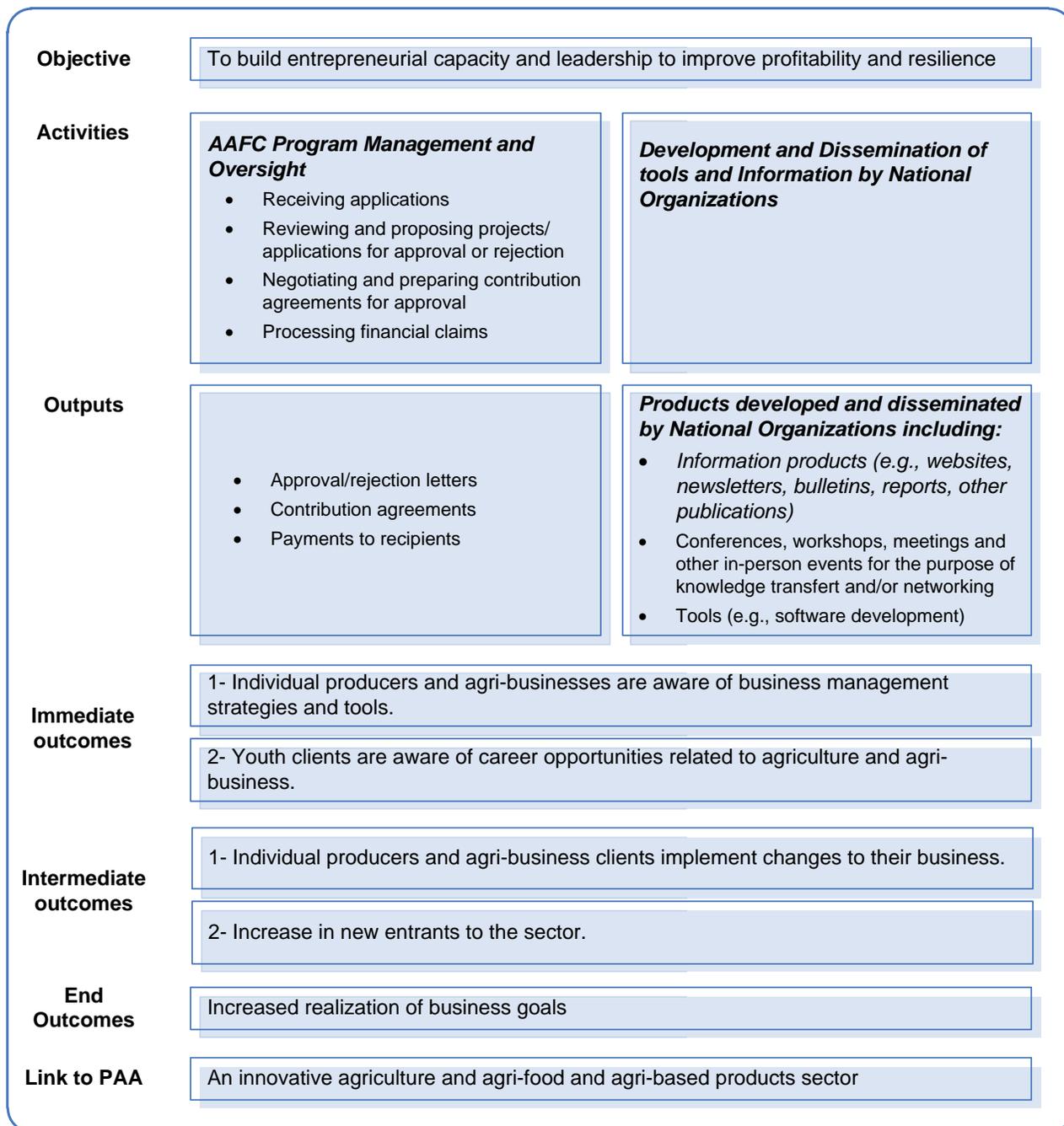
Target date for Completion

March 31, 2016

Responsible Position

DG, Business Development and Competitiveness Directorate, Programs Branch (PB)

ANNEX A: FBD PROGRAM LOGIC MODEL



ANNEX B: SUPPLEMENTARY TABLE

Table 1. FBD allocations in contribution agreements, 2009-10 to 2017-18

| | GF Total (4 years) (2009-10 to 2012-13) | GF 2 Total (5 years) (2013-14 to 2017-18) |
|--------------|--|--|
| CASA | \$5,367,032 | \$3,284,252 |
| COYFP | \$120,000 | \$162,500 |
| 4-H | \$3,136,000 | \$5,173,900 |
| CYFF | \$1,204,232 | \$500,000 ^a |
| FMC | \$7,102,000 | \$4,210,000 |
| TOTAL | \$16,929,264 | \$13,330,652 |

Source: AAFC Contribution agreements for GF (2009-10 to 2017-18)

(a) for 2013-14 and 2014-15 only. Allocation for 2015-16 to 2017-18 TBC.

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