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Summative Evaluation of the Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities

Final Report
November 17, 2014

Strategic Policy and Research Branch

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*Summative Evaluation of the
Opportunities Fund for Persons with
Disabilities*

Final Report

*Grants and Contributions and Labour Programs Evaluation
Evaluation Directorate
Strategic and Service Policy Branch
Employment and Social Development Canada*

November 17, 2014

Table of Contents

<i>List of Acronyms</i>	i
<i>Executive Summary</i>	ii
Relevance	ii
Effectiveness	iii
Design and Delivery.....	iii
Efficiency and Economy	iv
<i>Management Response</i>	v
1. Introduction	1
1.1 Overview of the Opportunities Fund.....	1
1.2 Evaluation Scope	2
1.3 Analysis and Reporting.....	2
2. Key Findings	3
2.1 Relevance	3
2.2 Effectiveness	6
2.3 Design and Delivery.....	10
2.4 Efficiency and Economy.....	13
3. Key Conclusions and Recommendations	16
Appendix A: Program Overview	A-1
Appendix B: Methodology	B-1
Appendix C: APEs with Receipt of Benefits	C-1
Appendix D: ESDC Employment Programs for Persons with Disabilities	D-1
Appendix E: Evaluation Issues and Questions Matrix	E-1
Appendix F: Logic Model - Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities	F-1

List of Acronyms

APE	Action Plan Equivalent
ASETS	Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy
CPPD-VR	Canada Pension Plan Disability Vocational Rehabilitation
EAF	Enabling Accessibility Fund
EI	Employment Insurance
ESDC	Employment and Social Development Canada
GC	Government of Canada
LMAs	Labour Market Agreements
LMAPD	Labour Market Agreement for Persons with Disabilities
OF	Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities
SDPP-D	Social Development Partnership Program – Disability Component
WS	Wage Subsidies

Executive Summary

This report presents a summary of the findings for the Summative Evaluation of the Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities (OF). The OF is a funding program that aims to assist persons with disabilities who have little or no labour force attachment to prepare for, obtain and keep employment or become self-employed. Eligible participants can access a range of interventions and services, including job search supports, coaching, counselling, resume writing, interview preparation, job placements, tuition assistance, wage subsidies (WS) and entrepreneurial training. Funding for employer awareness activities is also made available to eligible organizations.

The evaluation employed a calibrated approach by making use of findings from the 2008 summative evaluation of the program to further supplement the analysis undertaken in this evaluation. The evaluation also builds on the knowledge gaps identified in the previous evaluation of the program, with a focus on providing relevant information to the Department in support of program and policy development.

Overall, the evaluation found that the OF program is performing well, remains relevant in the context of unequal labour market outcomes for persons with disabilities and reflects Government of Canada (GC) policy directions and Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) priority areas. However, the evaluation also noted areas for improvement including information sharing, employer awareness and controlling for the potential for overlap with similar ESDC labour market programs for persons with disabilities.

Relevance

- **The OF objectives remain relevant in the context of unequal labour market outcomes for persons with disabilities and reflect Federal Government policy directions and align with ESDC priority areas:** In 2012, only 47% of persons with disabilities were employed compared to 74% of individuals without disabilities who were employed. Budget 2012 and the Economic Action Plan 2013 reiterated the GC's support for the OF program. The objectives of OF reflect ESDC's mandate of increasing the participation of Canadians in the labour force.
- **The objectives of OF remain relevant in the context of other ESDC labour market programming for persons with disabilities. However, attention should be given to coordination and collaboration among programs:** The evaluation found a medium level of overlap between OF and other ESDC labour and employment programs for persons with disabilities. Furthermore, findings on the overall structure of federal and provincial programming for persons with disabilities suggest that issues of coordination and collaboration among programs should be addressed.

Effectiveness

- **As per the intent of OF to assist persons with disabilities who have had little to no labour force attachment, EI data indicates the program is serving its target population:** Focusing on the most recent years of 2011 and 2012, the percentage of clients in receipt of EI one year prior to program entry was less than 2%.
- **Observed patterns of EI use indicate positive changes to the employment and income levels of program participants, which is in line with the findings from the previous evaluation:** By comparing pre- and post-program EI receipt, the current evaluation revealed increased employment of participants in the years following intervention receipt. The previous OF evaluation showed an increase in both labour market attachment and earned income following program participation.¹
- **A greater number of program participants receive less intensive interventions:** Analysis of administrative data shows that the percentage of WS decreased from a high of 15% in 2006 to 6% in 2012. Employment assistance services interventions, on the other hand, increased during the same time period from 62% to 77%.

Design and Delivery

- **Findings indicate the absence of a systematic approach to promoting the OF program to service providers and potential participants.** The large majority of key informants (OF-funded organizations and regional OF officials) believe that visibility of OF is limited at the community level.
- **Information sharing (promising practices and lessons learned) among organizations could be improved:** Key informant interviews suggest most information sharing activities occur through ad hoc meetings at conferences (e.g. national symposium) and existing networks (e.g. collaboration with other organizations). Competition between organizations over obtaining recognition for having met performance targets was cited as a potential barrier to the sharing of information.
- **OF-funded employer awareness activities demonstrate promising practices to promoting the labour market participation of persons with disabilities, but employer awareness could be addressed more fully:** There is a sufficient degree of variation in the types of OF funded employer awareness activities, with some incorporating identified lessons and promising practices. However, there is a need to better highlight the benefits of hiring persons with disabilities within the employer community.

¹ Ongoing labour market attachment is measured as the percentage of program participants with at least one employer in the three years following program participation.

Efficiency and Economy

- **The average cost per OF client compares favourably with the cost per client of other labour market training programs:** From 2007 to 2013, the average cost per client under OF was \$5.2K, which is within range of average costs for other federal training programs for disadvantaged groups, for example the \$6.3K average cost for clients in the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS)² and the Skills Link stream of the Youth Employment Strategy (YES), where the cost per client for 2003 to 2006 was \$7.2K.

Recommendations

The evaluation makes four recommendations:

1. Improve the sharing of information on lessons learned and promising practices between OF-funded organizations.
2. Review the distribution of interventions to ensure that they align with OF objectives.
3. Continue to maintain and improve the level of quality of OF administrative data.
4. Examine the potential for greater coordination between OF and other ESDC program areas that direct labour market programming for persons with disabilities.

Further details can be found in the Management Response and in section 3 of this report.

² While similar to OF in the area of eligible activities in support of persons with disabilities, it is worth noting that ASETS programming is geared towards the unique needs of Aboriginal organizations and their clients.

Management Response

Management acknowledges the contribution of those who participated in the summative evaluation of the Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities (OF). Management agrees with the evaluation findings and proposes the following Management Response.

As announced in Economic Action Plan 2013, the Government of Canada committed to reform the OF “to provide more demand-driven training solutions for persons with disabilities and make it more responsive to labour market needs. Employers and community organizations will be involved in project design and delivery.” The OF is being reformed to provide more demand-driven programming; place a greater focus on targeted work experience and pre-employability supports; dedicate support to help young persons with disabilities gain job experience; introduce the use of social partnerships to maximize the impact of federal spending; and improve performance measurement and focus on results. Together with Program Operations Branch (POB), the Skills and Employment Branch (SEB) within Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) is currently working to implement the set of reforms to the OF which will come into effect in 2015-2016. A phased-in approach is being used to implement the reforms in order to prepare partners for the upcoming changes.

Key Findings

Overall, the findings of the summative evaluation demonstrate that the OF remains relevant in the current context and that it continues to make a difference in the lives of persons with disabilities. While the evaluation demonstrates that the OF is meeting program objectives, it also recommends some areas for improvement which the Management commits to examine.

Recommendation 1: Improve the sharing of information on lessons learned and promising practices between OF-funded organizations.

Management agrees with this recommendation. Sharing information on promising practices among OF-funded organizations has the potential to increase the adoption of innovative projects and practices across organizations and jurisdictions.

Actions Proposed

POB will encourage sponsors as part of the next planned Call for Proposal process (through negotiated agreements) to share lessons learned, particularly regarding employer engagement. Options will be explored for sharing lessons learned and promising practices with organizations in a manner that benefits the overall program and stakeholders (e.g. a compendium of best practices will be explored by SEB). In addition, POB will continue to encourage sponsors to identify their success stories. POB will continue to work with Public Affairs and Stakeholder Relations Branch to publish these success stories (e.g. by including them on a Government of Canada website) to showcase how the OF helps to integrate persons with disabilities in the labour market.

Recommendation 2: Review the distribution of interventions to ensure that they align with OF objectives.

Actions Proposed

Management agrees to continue to review the distribution of interventions so that they remain in line with program objectives. Management also agrees with the importance of work experience for the successful longer-term integration of persons with disabilities in the labour force.

As part of the Government of Canada's Economic Action Plan 2013 commitment to reform the OF to make the program more demand-driven, Management will review the interventions to help ensure that clients are prepared for available positions in their local labour market.

POB is also improving data integrity to help provide a better sense as to which combinations of interventions are the most successful. SEB will continue to monitor the distribution of OF interventions for projects, beginning in 2015-2016, to ensure they continue to align with OF objectives.

Recommendation 3: Continue to maintain and improve the level of quality of OF administrative data.

Management agrees with the recommendation to continue to maintain and improve the level of quality of OF administrative data.

Actions Taken

Over the past 5 years, ESDC has significantly improved the availability and accessibility of OF administrative data. Indicators have been refined to provide information on a broad spectrum of clients served under OF (e.g., type and severity of disability), as well as their income and labour force attachment pre- and post-participation in the OF.

Actions Proposed

As part of ongoing efforts at modernization, SEB in collaboration with POB will request that Innovation, Information and Technology Branch (IITB) examine and implement changes to improve the overall quality of data collection for the OF. This includes a transition to electronically capture administrative data collected on the Participant Information Form. Over the next 12 months, POB will work with IITB to identify how to best implement these changes, ensuring alignment with the OF Performance Measurement Strategy. One important improvement will be to better track the types and combinations of interventions OF participants receive through OF projects and linking this data with participant intervention outcomes.

Additionally, over the next 12 months, the collection of follow-up data six- and twelve-months post-intervention will be explored.

Recommendation 4: Examine the potential for greater coordination between OF and other ESDC program areas that direct labour market programming for persons with disabilities.

Management is pleased that the evaluation indicates that OF programming is reaching its intended target group (in looking at program participants from 2011 and 2012, less than 2% of clients were found to be in receipt of EI in the year prior to participation in OF interventions). Management agrees that greater coordination could allow for gains in operational efficiencies and cost-savings. Management also agrees to explore opportunities for collaborating with other ESDC program areas to share lessons learned on employer awareness activities, as well as greater coordination between the national and regional streams of OF.

Actions Proposed

Management agrees to ensure that the OF continues to be targeted at the desired population of persons with disabilities who are not EI eligible. ESDC offers a wide variety of supports to serve persons with disabilities which represent a diverse client group. SEB will continue to work with internal partners to minimize the potential for duplication in programming.

Management also commits to continue to explore the potential for greater coordination to achieve gains in operational efficiencies and cost-savings. The Government of Canada has committed to reforming Grants and Contributions programs and services. As part of the Government's *Economic Action Plan 2012*, ESDC's *Grants & Contributions Modernization Agenda* aims to make processing and delivery faster and easier for Canadians to access funding for programs, while also reducing red-tape, cutting costs and delivering results. POB will continue to examine ways to achieve efficiencies and improve coordination in program delivery as part of the Gs and Cs Modernization Agenda.

In terms of employer awareness, Canadian Business SenseAbility was established in 2014 for business leaders to increase employer awareness of the benefits of hiring persons with disabilities. Management will monitor the work of Canadian Business SenseAbility to learn from promising practices that are pursued by Canadian businesses.

1. Introduction

This report presents a summary of the findings, conclusions and recommendations from the Summative Evaluation of the OF. Findings from the evaluation's multiple lines of evidence support the previous evaluation findings that the program has positive impacts on the employment and income levels of participants following program participation. Also, there continues to be a demonstrated need for the type of programming offered by OF for persons with disabilities and the program reflects both GC and Departmental policy directions and priority areas.

The evidence collected for the evaluation can be found in more detail in technical reports which have been made available to program management. This document consists of the following three sections:

- **Section 1** provides a description of the OF program and the scope of the evaluation.
- **Section 2** presents the main findings regarding Relevance, Design and Delivery and Performance (Effectiveness, Efficiency and Economy).
- **Section 3** summarizes the main conclusions and recommendations.

1.1 Overview of the Opportunities Fund

In response to an identified gap in labour market programming for persons with disabilities, ESDC³ launched the OF in 1997. The OF is a contribution program funded through the Consolidated Revenue Fund that aims to increase the labour force participation of Canadians with disabilities by supporting individuals who have little or no labour force attachment to prepare for, obtain and keep employment or to become self-employed.

Persons with disabilities who are unemployed and normally not eligible for Employment Insurance (EI) Part II programming can, through this program, access a range of interventions and services, including: job search supports; coaching; counselling; resume writing; interview preparation; job placements; tuition assistance; entrepreneurial training; workplace accommodations; and WS to employers.⁴ OF Terms and Conditions for Contributions define "persons with a disability" as persons who self-identify as having a permanent physical or mental impairment that restricts his or her ability to perform daily activities.

Contributions are made directly to eligible participants, project sponsors, community coordinators or employers. The program is primarily delivered at the regional level and funding is allocated to local Service Canada Centres which, in turn, distribute funds for projects through either applications for funding or calls for proposals. In addition, there are provisions for calls for

³ Formerly Human Resources Development Canada.

⁴ Part II of the *Employment Insurance Act* provides for the provision of Employment Benefits and Support Measures that parallel OF program activities such as skills training, on-the-job work experience and employment assistance services.

proposals administered through National Headquarters for projects. For more information pertaining to the program’s profile, please see Appendix A.

1.2 Evaluation Scope

This evaluation was conducted in accordance with the Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS) Policy on Evaluation (2009) and reports on the core issues of relevance and performance (effectiveness, efficiency and economy) as well as the design and delivery of OF. The OF program has been evaluated in compliance with section 41.2 of the *Financial Administration Act* requiring the evaluation of ongoing grants and contribution programs every five years.

The focus of the evaluation is to provide relevant information to the Department for program and policy development and to address the knowledge gaps identified in the 2008 *Summative Evaluation of the Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities*, which included the ongoing impact of OF investments, the development and sharing of information regarding OF-funded projects, potential overlap with other programs, and employer awareness.⁵ A calibrated approach was employed for this evaluation by allocating a greater level of effort to those areas where knowledge gaps exist, and by leveraging previous evaluation findings from the 2008 summative evaluation of OF where necessary to further supplement the analysis undertaken in this evaluation. For more information about the methodology, please see Appendix B.

The evaluation reference period included an analysis of OF administrative data from 2000 to 2012. For the purpose of qualitative field work, particular attention was paid to the last three years of program implementation, up to June 2014.

1.3 Analysis and Reporting

Qualitative findings from the key informant interviews represent the informed perspectives of the respondents. Where the findings of the previous evaluation are relevant to the current analysis, the report makes a clear distinction between the findings of the previous evaluation and those stemming from this report. Responses from key informants are reported using the following relative weights:

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

⁵ The terms ‘overlap’ and ‘duplication’ have different meanings. For instance, ‘overlap’ occurs when there is a degree of similarity between programs, while ‘duplication’ refers to a program replicating other programming.

2. Key Findings

2.1 Relevance

Key finding: The objectives of the OF align with GC roles and responsibilities, policy directions and ESDC priority areas. In the context of an increasing number of Canadians with disabilities, unequal labour market outcomes and systemic barriers to employment, there continues to be a demonstrated need for labour market programming for persons with disabilities, such as OF.

Alignment with Government Priorities and Federal Roles and Responsibilities

OF programming is aligned to Federal priorities and Departmental strategic outcomes. As outlined in Budget 2012 and Economic Action Plan 2013, the OF reflects the GC policy priority of improving labour market opportunities for Canadians with disabilities. Recognizing that a well-trained and highly educated workforce is key to Canada's long-term economic growth, the GC committed to better utilizing the labour market potential of under-represented groups, of which persons with disabilities constitute a key group. To this end, Budget 2012 provided an additional \$30 million to the OF over three years to enable more Canadians with disabilities to participate in the labour force. Economic Action Plan 2013 proposed to maintain an ongoing funding of \$40 million per year for the OF starting in 2015-2016.

Administered by ESDC, the objectives of OF align with the Department's mandate of building "a stronger and more competitive Canada, to support Canadians in making choices that help them live productive and rewarding lives and to improve Canadians' quality of life." In particular, the OF objective of assisting persons with disabilities to prepare for, obtain and keep employment or become self-employed reflect ESDC's objective of increasing the participation of Canadians in the labour force. Related to the Department's strategic outcome of enabling a skilled, adaptable and inclusive labour force and an efficient labour market, OF contributes to the Department's key objective of ensuring that under-represented groups and vulnerable workers have the opportunity to acquire skills to find and maintain productive employment.

The Provinces and Territories play a significant role in providing labour market training and reintegration programs for persons with disabilities. In particular, the role and responsibility of the federal government in the delivery of the OF reflect established commitments.

- In 2010, the GC ratified the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* which as a binding document commits the GC to promote the wellbeing of persons with disabilities.
- In line with this commitment, in the 2011 Budget the GC committed to removing barriers to labour market participation for persons with disabilities.

Need for the Program

The evaluation found that there is an ongoing need for labour market programming for persons with disabilities, such as OF, in helping to address systematic barriers impeding the participation of persons with disabilities in the labour market. Some of these barriers include societal attitudes and misconceptions, inadequate workplace policies and the severity and type of the disability. Various data and documentation show that there is an increasing number of Canadians with disabilities. For example, based on the 2011 Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics, it is estimated that approximately 800,000 working-age Canadians with disabilities are out of the labour force.

Furthermore, an examination of data from the 2012 Canadian Survey on Disability (CSD) confirms that there are unequal labour market outcomes for persons with disabilities when compared to the non-disabled population. For example, the employment rate of just over 47% for working-age persons with disabilities aged 15 to 64 compares unfavorably to almost 74% for individuals in the same age group without disabilities. Also, the severity of disability and lack of educational attainment were found to be powerful explanatory variables in the labour market outcomes of persons with disabilities in such a manner that those who have a higher severity of disability and/or a lower educational attainment demonstrated lower employment rates.⁶

While statistics demonstrate a need for programming for persons with disabilities, it should be noted that programming in support of the labour market integration of persons with disabilities exists at all orders of federal and provincial/territorial governments and Aboriginal communities, this makes it difficult to determine the exact parameters of OF's potential reach.⁷

Program Overlap

Key finding: Evidence suggests a need to examine the interaction between OF and similar ESDC labour market programs for persons with disabilities. Findings from the literature review suggest a lack of coordination between programs at the federal and provincial levels.

Potential Overlap and Complementarity Between OF and ESDC Labour Market Programs for Persons with Disabilities

The evaluation found a medium level of overlap between OF and other ESDC labour market programming for persons with disabilities, in the areas of eligible clients, activities and sources of funding. Recognizing that disability is a complex multidimensional phenomenon, persons with disabilities require a comprehensive set of programs to address their diverse and complex needs. ESDC has put in place various programming that supports persons with disabilities transition to

⁶ Persons whose disability was classified as 'mild' (aged 15 to 64) had an employment rate of 65%, compared to 26% for those with very severe disabilities. Meanwhile, for persons with disabilities aged 15 to 64 without a high school degree, the employment rate was only 26%, compared to 43% for those with a high school diploma, 58% for those with a college degree, trade, or other non-university diploma, and 67% for those with a university degree.

⁷ Program reach is calculated by dividing the actual number of people/entities served by the potential number of people/entities served.

the labour market, some of which include the Labour Market Agreements for Persons with Disabilities (LMAPDs), Labour Market Agreements (LMAs), the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS), Skills Link stream of the Youth Employment Strategy (Skills Link), Canada Pension Plan Disability Vocational Rehabilitation component (CPPD-VR), the Enabling Accessibility Fund (EAF), the disability component of the Social Development Partnership Program (SDPP-D), and the OF (see Appendix D for further details on these programs).

The 2008 *Summative Evaluation of the Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities* identified the growing possibility for overlap and duplication between OF and the LMAPDs, even before the implementation of the LMAs, which also target persons with disabilities. In line with this finding, a qualitative assessment undertaken in this current evaluation highlighted a medium level of overlap between OF and LMAPDs in the areas of eligible activities and sources of funding.⁸ It is noteworthy that, in the absence of available electronic case management data on LMAPD and LMA clients, this evaluation was not able to directly compare LMAPD and LMA participants to OF clients for evidence of overlap using administrative data.

Skills Link and LMAs both include persons with disabilities as potential target groups. Moreover, they include objectives and activities that are similar to OF. Skills Link's targeting of youth with disabilities between the ages of 15 and 30, presents the potential for the uptake of the program by a segment of OF's intended target population and points to a medium level of overlap with OF. Analysis of administrative data, showing that 10% of Skills Link clients have a disability, supports the findings of the qualitative assessment. Given that persons with disabilities form one of the priority groups and non-EI eligible clients are covered, LMAs were also found to constitute a medium level of overlap with OF.

Furthermore, ASETS was also found to constitute a medium level of overlap with OF on the basis that Aboriginal persons with disabilities can access similar interventions as OF, including employment related assistance, such as skills development, work experience and WS. ASETS is a funding program designed to increase the labour market participation of Aboriginal persons. As an example, due to similarities in objectives, target populations and eligibility criteria, persons with disabilities between the ages of 15 and 30 with disabilities have the opportunity to access similar interventions as OF under Skills Link, under the LMAs or LMDAs (if they are EI eligible or formerly EI eligible according to LMDA guidelines), or under LMAPD or other provincially funded programming.

In relation to the SDPP-D and EAF, there exists very little to no overlap with OF programming due to sufficient divergence of program objectives and activities. EAF provides funding for the capital costs of construction and renovations in support of enhanced accessibility and safety for persons with disabilities, while SDPP focuses on helping organizations to better deliver services.

⁸ Low level: There are some similarities to that of another program, but the positive impact outweighs any potential negative impact. Medium level: The similarities between comparison elements of different programs are obvious and the positive impact on the client (and society) is less clear. High level: Two programs provide similar services to the same clientele and there may be a redundancy of program activities.

In contrast, OF is a client-centred program. In this respect, there is a degree of complementarity with the OF program.

Need for Coordination between OF and Other ESDC Labour Market Programs for Persons with Disabilities

Building on the recognition that persons with disabilities require a mix of programs and services in support of their labour market participation, there are a variety of programs both at the federal and provincial orders of government to enhance their labour market participation. Findings from the literature review suggest that the overall labour market programming for persons with disabilities across federal and provincial jurisdictions is marked by complexity and that there is insufficient coordination of programs for persons with disabilities.⁹

An internal ESDC review of labour market programs for persons with disabilities found that overall there is a lack of coordination between programs and services by the federal and provincial orders of government.¹⁰ In part stemming from varying eligibility criteria and lack of program interaction, the current makeup of federal labour market supports for persons with disabilities is characterized by a degree of complexity that has the potential to reduce the likelihood of persons with disabilities obtaining timely, adequate and appropriate supports to secure labour force attachment.¹¹ Exploring the potential for greater coordination between the OF and similar programs such as LMAs, LMAPDs and Skills Link may present an opportunity to better control for overlap.

2.2 Effectiveness

Finding: An analysis of EI data for all OF clients between 2000 and 2012 indicates that the program is targeting intended clients. The data further shows positive changes to the employment and income levels of program participants, in terms of pre- and post-program EI receipt.

Data Quality

Improvements to the reliability and integrity of OF administrative data year by year are apparent; however, some issues were identified:

- The non-mandatory requirement for the identification of the OF project number in the Common System for Grants and Contributions (CSGC) makes it difficult to link the Client Module to other CSGC modules for the purposes of tracking client results.
- Missing or questionable end dates and duplicate intervention records across data files.
- Inconsistent reporting of the action plan administrative field (multiple action plans for same individual, key dates related to client participation missing, etc.).

⁹ OECD (2010) [Sickness, Disability and Work: Breaking the Barriers, Canada: Time for structural reform](#), Paris: Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs, Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development.

¹⁰ Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (2011). *Review of Labour Market Supports for Persons with Disabilities*. P. 40.

¹¹ Ibid.

- Information on participant characteristics (e.g. disability status) was also found to be inconsistent over time and across the various data systems (e.g. missing fields).

Overall, the OF administrative data were found to be of good quality and can be used with confidence for monitoring, accountability and evaluation purposes. The consistent collection of client Social Insurance Numbers, clear provisions for client consent, and the identification and use of OF intervention types all contribute to sound data and facilitated the analysis presented below.

EI Use and Employment

Given that persons with disabilities often lack the necessary labour force attachment to qualify for EI assistance, the intent of the OF program is to assist persons with disabilities who have had little or no labour force attachment and who therefore are not eligible for assistance under EI Part II. The evaluation examined use of EI among participants as a proxy indicator for changes in employment and income levels following program participation.¹²

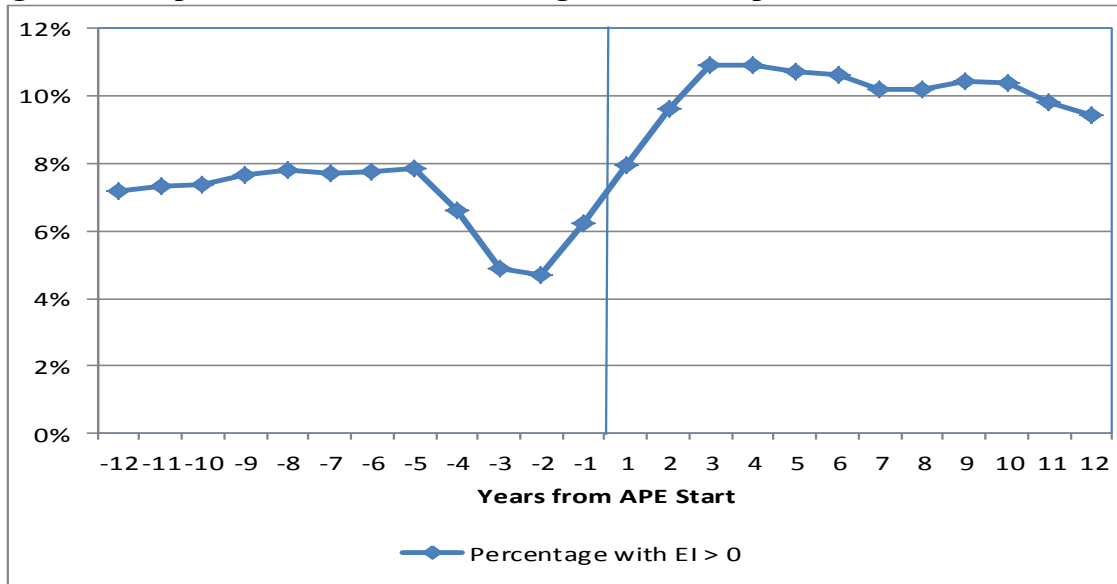
As per the objectives of OF, the examination of EI use (provided in Appendix C) reveals that the program is targeting individuals who are not EI eligible or who have exhausted their EI benefits, especially in the more recent years. Five years prior to entering the program, 7% of OF clients between 2007 and 2012 were in receipt of EI benefits. The percentage declines markedly to 3% one year prior to participating in the program. Focusing on the most recent years of 2011 and 2012, the percentage of clients in receipt of EI one year prior to program entry was less than 2%, which is down from 6% five years prior to program entry, again indicating that individuals entering the program have exhausted their EI benefits.

An action plan is developed for each OF client, which can include a number of interventions. Since action plan information was not always available in the OF database, for the purposes of the evaluation, an Action Plan Equivalent (APE) has been developed to capture the overall set of programming provided to each OF client.¹³ Figure 1 shows the percentage of APEs in which clients received EI benefits, by number of years before and after the start of APE. The data show a decline and then a reversal of the decline in the percentage receiving EI benefits. The initial decline in the percentage receiving EI benefits suggests the onset, worsening or recurrence of disabilities and exhaustion of EI benefits for which OF participants previously qualified. Following participation in OF-funded interventions, there is an increase in the percentage of OF participants gaining EI eligibility.

¹² Statistical significance and confidence intervals are generally used to indicate the extent of variability in the data that is attributable to sampling. Since EI data for the full population of OF participants was used, confidence intervals were not created.

¹³ For purposes of the study an APE for a client was defined as comprising one or more interventions received with less than six months between the end of one intervention and the start of the next.

Figure1: Comparison of Pre and Post-Program EI Receipt



Source: EI Status Vector File

The increased prevalence of EI use suggests that the incidence of employment increased, resulting in an increased number of OF clients qualifying for post-OF EI benefits. This implies an improved labour market attachment after program participation. The average amount of EI benefits received by OF participants increased from an average of \$3,994 one year prior to the start of their APE to a high of \$4,945 in the eleventh year following receipt of OF intervention.¹⁴ The pattern of pre and post-program EI use and benefits indicates that those who do make successful claims for EI in the post-program period were working longer or at higher-paying jobs following their OF participation.

Findings from the previous OF evaluation showed that OF participants had a notable increase in both labour market attachment and earned income following program participation.¹⁵ Overall, the increase in the incidence of EI use and amount of EI benefits received following program participation, suggests the continued effectiveness of the program in meeting the objectives of helping persons with disabilities to find employment.

Since CRA data were not available for a planned longitudinal study of employment outcomes at this time, further study should be conducted in the context of future evaluation work to better quantify the program impact, particularly with regard to the program objective of assisting persons with disabilities to acquire skills and maintaining employment (see Appendix B).

¹⁴ These figures are based on OF participants who received at least some EI benefits during the reference period.

¹⁵ The findings of the 2008 evaluation were based on administrative data containing employment and earnings information for almost all OF participants. Therefore, statistical and confidence were not required.

Factors Influencing the Successful Employment of OF Participants

Findings from key informant interviews also suggest that the OF program is achieving its objectives, with national/regional officials and funded organizations reporting that the program is effective in helping persons with disabilities find and maintain employment. Almost all of the OF-funded organizations cited the programs flexibility in allowing for a one-on-one approach as a key factor in assisting participants to find and maintain employment. Additional factors cited included:

- The capacity of the organizations delivering the services
- Relationship with employers
- Extent of employer awareness
- Post-program support for participants and employers
- Fit between the skills of participants and needs of employers
- Job readiness of participants

Hiring and Retention of OF Participants

The hiring and retention of OF participants through the WS and work experience interventions provides additional insight into the employment trends of OF participants. Key informant interviews with employers found that only some of the candidates were retained beyond the period of the WS or work experience placement. Given the small number of employers interviewed (11), however, the results are not indicative of long-term trends in employment sustainability and cannot be generalized for the overall OF population of clients. However, in most cases, without financial incentive for the WS, employers would not have been able to hire the OF participant. It is worth noting that section 4 (a) of the program's Terms and Conditions states that it is intended that the OF participant will continue employment with the employer once the subsidy concludes.

Employers identified two main factors as being critical in the retention of OF participants:

- The participant must be a good fit possessing the right skills and aptitude, and who shows a willingness to continue.
- It must be financially possible for the firm to retain the participant beyond the WS or work experience placement.

Beyond the provision of financial incentives to employers through WS to hire persons with disabilities, effective partnerships between community organizations and employers play an important role in promoting the labour market attachment of persons with disabilities.¹⁶ For instance, the ability of community agencies to match a client's skills set to those needed by the employer is a key factor in successfully integrating persons with disabilities into the labour market.

¹⁶ Rethinking Disability in the Private Sector. Report from the Panel on Labour Market Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities. Department of Employment and Social Development Canada. 2013. P.20.

As outlined in the OF's operational guidelines and Terms and Conditions, tailored interventions or activities are provided to participants to meet the unique needs of persons with disabilities. To that end, a participant may require a mixture of different interventions. A few organizations noted that in order to become employed, clients often need to acquire soft skills through pre-employment programming and require on-going assistance to maintain employment. Furthermore, that a greater emphasis is being placed on WS and less on pre-employment training. Analysis of administrative data found that the percentage of employment assistance services interventions have actually increased from 62% in 2006 to 77% in 2012, while the percentage of WS decreased from a high of 15% in 2006 to 6% in 2012. Moreover, the percentage of skills development interventions decreased from 16% to 11% in the same period.

2.3 Design and Delivery

Key finding: Evidence suggests the absence of a systematic approach to promoting the program to clients and service providers and on the sharing of information on promising practices. A review of OF-funded employer awareness activities indicates that the program is addressing the need for employer awareness activities.

Program Awareness and Promotion

As part of its objective to ensure that persons with disabilities are integrated into the labour market, OF activities include the promotion of the program to employers, stakeholders and persons with disabilities. Related to this a direct outcome for the OF program is to ensure employers, stakeholders and persons with disabilities are aware of the program. OF employer awareness projects are intended to raise the profile and labour market potential of persons with disabilities among employers. Following up on the previous evaluation finding indicating minimal awareness and promotion of the program to clients and stakeholders, key informant interviews and an analysis of administrative files and documents were undertaken to determine whether improvements in the area of promoting the program took place.

Findings from key informant interviews suggest the absence of a systematic approach to the promotion of the OF program, with the majority of interviewees (both organizations and program/regional officials) indicating that the promotion of the program could be improved. While the large majority of program officials at National Headquarters feel there is a sufficient degree of awareness of the program within the community, noting that the program is oversubscribed, a large majority of organizations and regional officials believe that visibility of the program is limited at the community level.

Focusing on the extent to which promotional activities have been implemented through OF, national and regional officials noted that some promotional activities have taken place. The majority of organizations however indicated that they were unaware of any promotional activities through OF. Suggestions from key informants for improving the awareness and promotion of the program included:

- Highlighting success stories of persons with disabilities who have successfully found employment.

- Directly engaging employers on the benefits of hiring persons with disabilities.

The low-level of employer awareness was an identified weakness in the 2008 evaluation of the program and was further examined in this evaluation. Key informants indicated that employers are not sufficiently aware of the benefits of hiring persons with disabilities, with the large majority of national/regional officials and organizations reporting that employers are not sufficiently aware of OF-funded services and resources at their disposal. Additionally, employers of OF participants found program awareness was limited, with almost all employers reporting that they were not aware of any activity to inform employers about the OF program. However, a few organizations indicated undertaking OF-funded activities in support of the promotion of OF within the employer community. In 2007, the OF Terms and Conditions were amended to allow regional Service Canada Centres (SCCs) to conduct employer awareness activities.

Employer Awareness

Findings from the literature review support the need to better raise the profile of persons with disabilities within the employer community and address the concerns of employers with respect to the needs of persons with disabilities in the workplace. A document review of the extent to which employer awareness activities have taken place, covering the period of 2007 to 2012, examined 43 employer awareness activities funded across Canada. Focused on raising the profile and labour market potential of persons with disabilities, project activities varied in terms of their scope and strategies. Required to report on the outcomes of funded activities, the vast majority of funded organizations reported positive results, such as completion of activities (e.g. production of promotional material, number of employers engaged and satisfaction rate among workshop/conference participants).

Findings from the document review suggest that funded proposals are in line with assessment criteria stipulated in the program's Terms and Conditions. There is a sufficient degree of variation in the types of employer awareness activities undertaken, with some incorporating identified promising practices with regard to the labour market participation of persons with disabilities. The 2012 GC Panel on Labour Market Opportunities for persons with disabilities noted that some employers are reluctant to hire persons with disabilities and found that increased education and training for employers on the benefits of hiring persons with disabilities can go a long way in addressing misconceptions.¹⁷ In particular, lack of employer awareness and misconceptions on the cost and legal liabilities of hiring and accommodating persons with disabilities were found to be a barrier to the employment of persons with disabilities, especially among small and medium sized businesses.

Reflecting the benefits of providing educational and training material to employers, funded OF activities covered the following themes:

- Training and educational workshops for employers

¹⁷ Rethinking Disability in the Private Sector. Report from the Panel on Labour Market Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities. Department of Employment and Social Development Canada. 2013. P. 6.

- Addressing employer obligations and liabilities
- Disseminating promising practices in the hiring of persons with disabilities
- Increasing employer awareness of supports available to employ or retain persons with disabilities
- Showcasing experience of employers and persons with disabilities
- Recruitment of Human Resource professionals to promote employability of persons with disabilities within their business networks.

In light of the continual need for greater awareness of the benefits of hiring persons with disabilities within the employer community, the program should explore the potential of collaborating with other ESDC programs for persons with disabilities on employer awareness. Partnering with other programs presents an opportunity to leverage resources and consolidate promising practices. Given that expenditure on employer awareness activities are limited to 20% of OF regional budgets, a more targeted approach to funding employer awareness activities, whereby funding is tied to the needs of the local employer community, could lead to a greater impact within the employer community.

Information Sharing

OF's Terms and Conditions require the program to achieve its objective by working with other orders of government, the private sector and non-governmental organizations in using innovative approaches that demonstrate promising practices to promoting the economic integration of persons with disabilities.¹⁸ The 2008 evaluation of the program found limited evidence of any systematic information provided by OF management at National Headquarters to funded organizations on the results of innovations or promising practices funded under OF, indicating a need to improve the sharing of information on promising practices and lessons learned.¹⁹ Interviews with OF regional officials and funded organizations highlighted the following channels through which the sharing of information on promising practices is currently taking place:

- On-going collaboration and communication among community organizations
- National symposium
- Regular workshops for organizations to discuss issues of relevance at a national level
- Newsletter, websites and meetings.

Most OF regional staff stated that information sharing on promising practices and lessons learned are not occurring in their region. With the majority of OF-funded organizations indicated that information sharing is occurring only on an ad hoc basis there is evidence to suggest the absence of a comprehensive approach to the dissemination of information on promising practices.

Competition between OF-funded organizations over their client's action plan outcomes was cited by some organizations (along with some program officials) as a potential barrier to the sharing of

¹⁸ [Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities. Operational Guides](#), p. 106.

¹⁹ Summative Evaluation of the Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities, 2008. P. 12.

information between organizations.²⁰ Stemming from program reporting and accountability requirements, organizations must report on key indicators such as the number of clients served and the number of clients employed. Only one organization, the last one, can be assigned “credit” for the closed action plan outcomes even though multiple organizations may have contributed to the success of the OF participant. As a consequence, organizations may be less inclined to share information and clients.

The findings on the type of information sharing activities and the nature of those activities (principally through communication and collaborative activities between organizations) suggest that the sharing of promising practices and lessons learned is ad hoc and primarily driven by organizations themselves. Addressing the factors that inhibit greater collaboration and sharing of information between funded organizations has the potential to enhance the extent to which innovative approaches are developed and incorporated.

2.4 Efficiency and Economy

Key Finding: The average cost of OF interventions per client compares favourably with the cost of clients in other labour market training programs. The evaluation identified opportunities for gains in operational efficiencies through greater coordination with similar ESDC labour market programs for persons with disabilities.

During the current evaluation, evaluators were unable to conduct a cost-benefit analysis for OF due to the inability to access Canada Revenue Agency data for the purpose of calculating the incremental impact of OF on earnings.²¹ However, it was possible to calculate the average cost per participant and refer to past evaluation conclusions representative of the cost-benefit ratio of OF programming.

Cost Benefit Analysis

Findings from the cost-benefit analysis undertaken for the program in the 2008 evaluation, provides for a degree of insight into the potential impact of the program on the incremental earning of participants post-intervention. The evaluation found that the estimated gains in earnings over a four-year time frame exceeded the cost of the program by a ratio of 2 to 1.

Participant Cost Analysis

A simple cost analysis, based on ESDC contributions, was undertaken to calculate the average participant cost. The average cost of OF clients was then compared to the average cost of clients of other ESDC labour market programming. On the basis of similarity of objectives, target population and funded activities, the ASETS program and the Skills Link stream of YES were chosen as relatively comparable programs to OF. Administered by ESDC, both Skills Link and

²⁰ Action plans are a case management tool whereby a client’s barriers to employment are determined and a plan of action is developed. Accordingly, action plans capture the one or more interventions that are provided to the client.

²¹ Delays in securing a memorandum of understanding between ESDC and CRA to make use of CRA data, commonly available for other ESDC program analyses, could not be finalized in fiscal years 2013-14 and 2014-15.

ASETS are funding programs that aim to increase the labour market participation of under-represented groups.

Over the course of 2008 to 2013, the OF assisted 8,281 Canadians with disabilities to find employment.²² The number of clients served under OF steadily increased from 2008 to 2011 by 11%; however, in more recent years there is a reversal of this upward trend. In fiscal year 2012-2013, the number of clients served was approximately 18% less than 2008 levels (4,222 versus 5,124).²³ With program officials indicating that the program is oversubscribed, the number of clients being served may reflect the program's limited resources.

Table 1: OF Client Results, Fiscal Years 2008-2013

Results	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	Percentage Change between 2008-2009 and 2012-2013
Client Served	5,124	5,574	5,632	5,449	4222	-18%
Clients with Enhanced Employability	3,627	3,583	4,196	3,280	3786	+4%
Return to School	229	293	331	291	219	-4%
Clients Employed	1,869	1,701	1,719	1,429	1,563	-16%

Source: Performance Measurement, Analysis and Reporting, ESDC

From 2007 to 2013, the average cost per client under OF compared favourably to that of other programs (\$5.2K versus \$6.3K for clients in ASETS²⁴ and when compared to Skills Link, where the cost per client for 2003 to 2006 was \$7.2K).²⁵ The OF cost per client is included in table 2 below.

²² Source: Figures sourced from Performance Measurement, Analysis and Reporting

²³ Based on evidence generated, the evaluation could not determine with confidence the cause for the drop in the number of clients served in 2012-13 and the corresponding increase in cost per client. In particular it is unclear why this would occur seeing that a greater number of program participants were in receipt of less-intensive interventions in fiscal year 2012-13.

²⁴ While similar in some aspects (ASETS serves clients with low EI or no EI attachment and serves Aboriginal Canadians with disabilities), it is worth noting that ASETS programming entails a broad spectrum of programs and services tailored to the needs of Aboriginal Canadians. Accordingly, the comparative analysis should be interpreted with caution.

²⁵ The average participant costs for the 2003 – 2006 cohort was based on data provided by ESDC program management for the fiscal years 2005 – 2006 and 2006 – 2007.

Table 2: OF Cost per Client

OF Cost per Client Over Time			
Fiscal Year	Number of Clients Served	Total Expenditure	Cost Per Client
2007-2008	4631	\$25,394,997.00	\$5,483.70
2008-2009	5124	\$27,177,430.00	\$5,303.95
2009-2010	5574	\$25,873,172.00	\$4,641.76
2010-2011	5632	\$26,175,505.00	\$4,647.64
2011-2012	5449	\$25,741,875.00	\$4,724.15
2012-2013	4,222	\$25,656,038.00	\$6,076.75
Average cost per client (2007-2013)			\$5,093.33

Source: Expenditure figures sourced from CFOB and Performance Measurement, Analysis and Reporting

Lastly, in light of the findings highlighting a medium level of overlap with similar labour market programs for persons with disabilities, greater coordination between similar ESDC labour market programs for persons with disabilities may result in reduced administrative costs and generate gains in operational efficiencies at the departmental level. For example, greater coordination on overlapping themes and activities such as employer awareness, would allow the department to leverage its limited resources to better support the need for awareness in the employer community around the benefits of hiring persons with disabilities.

3. Key Conclusions and Recommendations

The evaluation found that OF is relevant to GC policy directions and ESDC Departmental priority areas. Relevant statistics on the profile and labour market outcomes of persons with disabilities and potential gaps in the labour market programming for persons with disabilities demonstrate the continual need of the program. Analysis of EI data and interviews with key informants support previous evaluation findings that the program is helping persons with disabilities to find employment. The examination of issues relating to design and delivery found that the program is addressing the need for employer awareness activities. However, findings indicate potential areas for improvement, including the extent to which information sharing is occurring between OF-funded organizations.

Recommendations

There are four recommendations issued by this evaluation:

Recommendation 1: Improve the sharing of information on lessons learned and promising practices between OF-funded organizations.

Findings indicate that the sharing of promising practices and lessons learned is primarily driven by organizations themselves and occurs on an ad hoc basis. Program management should explore the potential to further enable the sharing of information on lessons learned and promising practices between OF-funded organizations.

Recommendation 2: Review the distribution of interventions to ensure that they align with OF objectives.

WS have been shown to be an important intervention in reconnecting those who have less attachment to the labour force and have been identified as a key component in helping persons with disabilities reintegrate into the workforce. Findings indicate a decrease in the use of WS interventions, and an increase in employment assistance services. Interviews with key informants suggest the need for a better balance between the focus on employer's needs and client's needs. Activities to address these issues should include:

- Review the distribution of OF interventions to ensure they are in-line with OF objectives.
- Continue to focus on both WS interventions as evaluation findings and employer key informant interviews noted that it was helpful in enhancing the employability of OF participants.

Recommendation 3: Continue to maintain and improve the level of quality of OF administrative data

Overall, the OF administrative data were found to be of good quality and are a model for data collection that could be used by other programs targeting persons with disabilities. In light of the ongoing improvements that have been made to OF administrative data during the reference period examined, it is recommended that OF administrative data continue to be collected in a way that ensures the quality of OF administrative data while examining areas for improvement, some of which are identified below:

- Further enhance the CSGC OF Client Module by making the CSGC project number mandatory.
- Examine the potential to improve the reliability of specific recorded details such as the start date and end date of interventions.
- Action plan information contained in the CSGC is unreliable, and can potentially be done without if OF client and intervention-related fields such as SIN and intervention coding can be used.

Recommendation 4: Examine the potential for greater coordination between OF and other ESDC program areas that direct labour market programming for persons with disabilities.

In order to overcome challenges to their integration into the labour market, persons with disabilities have been found to benefit from a comprehensive set of programs and services to better address the multiple barriers persons with disabilities face. ESDC has put in place a multiplicity of programs that support persons with disabilities transition into the labour market, some of which include the LMAPDs, LMAs, LMDAs, CPPD-VR, Skills Link and the OF. Noting that both EI and non-EI eligible persons with disabilities can make use of various ESDC programming, program design and delivery can benefit from greater interaction and coordination.

While OF provides funding for employer awareness activities, their impact in the employer community is subject to program resource limitations. Evidence from the literature review and key informant interviews suggests a need to highlight the benefits of persons with disabilities in the workplace to a greater extent.

- Examine the interaction with other ESDC labour market programs that impact persons with disabilities.
- Explore the potential for greater coordination that could allow for gains in operational efficiencies and cost-savings.
- Explore opportunities for greater collaboration with other ESDC labour market programs for persons with disabilities on employer awareness activities.

Program Overview

The Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities (OF) is a Federal contribution program funded through the Consolidated Revenue Fund. It was created in 1997 in response to an identified gap in labour market programming for persons with disabilities. The OF's original budget provided \$30M annually to assist persons with disabilities in preparing for, obtaining and keeping employment or becoming self-employed, thereby increasing their economic participation and independence. The OF achieves this objective by supporting the following activities, as identified by the program's Terms and Conditions:

- i. providing financial support to employers to encourage them to hire persons with disabilities whom they would not normally hire;
- ii. providing financial incentives to persons with disabilities to encourage them to accept employment;
- iii. supporting projects to help persons with disabilities create jobs for themselves by starting a business;
- iv. supporting projects that provide persons with disabilities with opportunities through which they can gain work experience which will lead to on-going employment;
- v. providing financial assistance to persons with disabilities to help them obtain skills for employment, ranging from basic to advanced skills;
- vi. providing financial assistance to persons with disabilities to help them access employment or employment services;
- vii. providing financial assistance to support special services and interventions tailored to meet the needs of persons with disabilities in order to facilitate their integration into employment;
- viii. providing financial assistance to increase awareness of the needs of persons with disabilities by building employer and service provider awareness activities into projects; and
- ix. providing financial assistance to support such other activities that, in the opinion of the Minister, promote the objective of the program.

The program's initial budget of \$30M annually has been supplemented by the 2012 Budget, which provides an additional \$30M, to be spent over three years (\$5M allocated for 2012-2013, \$12.5M in 2013-2014 and \$12.5M in 2014-2015). The expected outcome of these additional investments is to "enable more persons with disabilities who have had limited labour force attachment to gain work experience in small- and medium-sized businesses and increase employer awareness of the benefits of hiring persons with disabilities." As such, the following activities are funded through this three-year investment, which is being delivered through a national call for proposals:

1. Wage subsidies for small- and medium-sized businesses
2. Employer awareness activities
3. Support for workplace accommodations

In support of its objectives, the OF funds both regional and national-level activities. The majority of OF annual funding is directed towards regional-level activities through contribution agreements, with the goal of assisting people with disabilities to prepare for, obtain, and maintain employment. Each year, funds are allocated to the Service Canada regions for distribution to

eligible funding recipients (e.g. non-governmental organizations, employers, individuals or municipal governments) through an on-going application process. These local Service Canada Centres consult closely with community groups, businesses, and not for profit organizations in order to determine an appropriate mix of programs and services that reflect the needs of the community and OF objectives. The Contribution Agreements vary widely in scope and value, generally falling into one of four program options:

- a. OF Community Coordinator;
- b. OF Enhanced Employment Assistance Services;
- c. OF Wage Subsidies; and
- d. OF Skills for Employment.

The remaining program contribution funding is direct towards national-level activities. OF National Project proposals are solicited annually through a Letters of Intent (LOI) process followed by a more formal Call for Proposals (CFP). Organizations that receive a positive assessment of their LOI are invited to submit a detailed proposal under the CFP. In order to be eligible, a National Project must have activities which operate in three or more provinces or territories.

Methodology

The evaluation employed a mix of quantitative and qualitative research methods. The qualitative analysis undertaken was used to supplement the quantitative analysis. As part of the evaluations calibrated approach, findings from the 2008 summative evaluation of the program were used to supplement the analysis and findings of this evaluation. In addition, since extensive studies were undertaken as part of the 2008 summative evaluation of the program, findings from that evaluation were used, as a base, to supplement the findings of the evaluation.

Quantitative Analysis: The quantitative analysis conducted for this project consisted of an outcome analysis and an analysis of participant characteristics over time. The analysis of employment used EI use among OF participants as a proxy indicator, while an analysis of participant trends was used to better understand the profiles of program participants and trends in this profile over the period 2000 to 2012. For the analysis of EI use there were 61,402 APEs representing 64,707 OF clients spanning the period from 2000 to 2012, which were used to measure the incidence of EI use and amount of EI benefits received.

Key Informant Interviews: A total of 47 key informant interviews were conducted over the phone with 51 individuals were conducted with OF program representatives and stakeholders. Interviews were distributed as follows: ESDC program officials (5), OF-Service Canada regional staff (5), OF agreement holders (26) and Employers of OF participants (11).

A Document, File, and Literature Review: The literature review undertaken for the evaluation provided evidence on the profile and labour market outcomes of Canadians with disabilities. A separate qualitative assessment examined the issue of overlap between OF and ESDC labour market and employment programs. A review of program documents including program Terms and Conditions, employer awareness activity reports and project agreements was used to supplement the findings from the qualitative and quantitative findings.

Limitations

A key limitation to the evaluation was that a longitudinal study around the use of social assistance among OF participants over time and changes in employment and income levels following program participation could not be undertaken due to the lack of CRA data. Delays in securing a memorandum of understanding between ESDC and CRA to make use of CRA data, commonly available for other ESDC program analyses, could not be finalized in fiscal year 2013-14 and 2014-15. As a mitigation strategy, the use of EI among participants served as a proxy indicator for changes in employment and income levels following program participation.

As per standard practices employed in other ESDC evaluations, intervention records with missing or suspicious end dates were corrected for using the average or 95th percentile duration among records whose dates appeared valid. Duplicate records were eliminated by comparing records using the person identifier, the type of intervention, and the start date.

Appendix C

Percentage of Action Plan Equivalents with Receipt of EI Benefits, by Year from APE Start and Cohort

Years from APE Start	Year in which APE Started													Total
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	
-12								7.9%	7.8%	6.8%	7.0%	7.1%	6.5%	7.2%
-11							8.2%	8.1%	6.5%	7.0%	7.0%	7.6%	6.8%	7.3%
-10						8.1%	8.0%	7.1%	6.8%	7.2%	7.3%	8.0%	6.5%	7.4%
-9					8.4%	8.1%	7.4%	7.2%	6.7%	8.0%	8.2%	7.7%	6.9%	7.7%
-8				8.4%	8.6%	8.0%	7.3%	8.0%	7.1%	8.6%	7.7%	7.2%	6.8%	7.8%
-7			8.9%	8.1%	7.9%	7.8%	7.0%	7.6%	7.4%	8.9%	7.5%	7.0%	5.9%	7.7%
-6		9.0%	8.7%	7.3%	7.4%	8.1%	7.7%	7.9%	7.9%	8.5%	7.4%	6.5%	5.4%	7.8%
-5	11.5%	8.9%	8.4%	7.0%	7.3%	7.4%	7.5%	7.4%	6.9%	8.0%	6.7%	6.0%	5.3%	7.8%
-4	12.7%	7.5%	6.7%	6.5%	6.2%	6.4%	5.7%	6.2%	5.5%	5.1%	4.2%	3.9%	3.6%	6.6%
-3	12.0%	6.6%	4.8%	4.8%	4.3%	3.6%	3.3%	3.5%	3.4%	3.7%	2.5%	2.2%	2.0%	4.9%
-2	13.1%	5.6%	4.7%	4.4%	4.0%	3.2%	3.1%	2.5%	3.0%	3.2%	2.4%	2.3%	1.6%	4.7%
-1	19.5%	8.5%	6.3%	6.7%	5.1%	3.7%	2.7%	2.6%	3.0%	4.3%	2.5%	1.7%	1.6%	6.2%
1	20.6%	10.9%	8.8%	9.1%	6.7%	5.9%	4.5%	4.2%	4.4%	6.0%	3.5%	3.1%	3.6%	8.0%
2	15.5%	12.4%	11.1%	10.0%	8.6%	8.8%	8.4%	8.2%	7.3%	7.4%	6.5%	5.9%		9.6%
3	15.4%	14.1%	11.5%	11.3%	9.8%	9.5%	10.5%	9.9%	8.6%	8.5%	7.5%			10.9%
4	15.0%	12.9%	10.4%	10.4%	9.9%	11.0%	10.6%	9.3%	7.8%	8.5%				10.9%
5	14.7%	11.7%	10.1%	9.6%	11.0%	11.4%	9.4%	7.7%	7.3%					10.7%
6	13.4%	11.0%	10.0%	10.7%	11.5%	9.9%	8.3%	7.6%						10.6%
7	12.3%	10.3%	10.1%	11.1%	9.9%	8.4%	7.5%							10.2%
8	11.8%	11.6%	10.7%	9.4%	8.8%	7.8%								10.2%
9	12.0%	11.7%	9.8%	9.0%	8.5%									10.4%
10	13.1%	10.8%	8.4%	7.3%										10.4%
11	11.6%	9.2%	7.5%											9.8%
12	10.3%	8.2%												9.4%

ESDC Employment Programs for Persons with Disabilities

	OF	ASETS	LMA	CPPD-VR	YES (Skills Link)	LMAPD	SDPP	EAF
Objectives	To increase the labour force participation of persons with disabilities by assisting persons with disabilities who have little or no labour force attachment to prepare for, obtain and keep employment or to become self-employed.	ASETS aims to improve the labour market participation of groups who often experience multiple barriers to integrating into the economy, including Aboriginal persons with disabilities.	LMAs aim to increase the labour market participation of groups that are under-represented in Canada's labour force and to enhance the employability and skills of the labour force.	Prepares CPPD recipients who want to return to the labour market by enabling them to develop the necessary skills to become job ready.	Skills Link is a client-centered program that provides funding for employers and organizations to offer eligible activities to youth facing barriers to employment.	LMAPDs aim to enhance the employability of persons with disabilities; increase the employment opportunities available to persons with disabilities; and build on the existing knowledge base.	SDPP is a funding program which works in partnership with social not-for-profit organizations to help improve life outcomes for persons with disabilities, children and families, and other vulnerable populations.	EAF is designed to support capital costs of construction and renovations related to improving physical accessibility and safety for people with disabilities in Canadian communities and workplaces.
Eligibility	Persons with disabilities with little or no labour attachment who do not qualify for EI Part II (with exceptions).	Aboriginal peoples (First Nations, Inuit, Métis as well as status and non-status Aboriginal peoples living off-reserve) including those with disabilities.	Persons with disabilities constitute one of the four priority areas of LMAs, employed or unemployed individuals who are low-skilled are eligible for funding.	Persons with disabilities with previous labour market participants who meet the medical criteria for what constitutes severe and prolonged medical condition.	Persons with disabilities aged 15 to 30.	Persons with disabilities who are either unemployed or employed and are seeking to improve their skills and education.	Not-for-profit organizations.	Not-for-profit organizations, municipalities with a population under 125,000, Aboriginal organizations and territorial governments.
Similarities and Differences with OF		Similar to OF, ASETS supports activities that provide employment related assistance, such as skills development, work experience, wage subsidies and financial assistance to participants to cover costs incurred in relation to their participation in an eligible activity.	Similar to the OF, some of the activities funded by LMAs entail employer incentives to train on the job, skills training of various levels and financial and employment assistance to those looking for work.	The range of intervention offered are fairly similar to OF (e.g. skills development, training, job counselling).	Similar to OF, participants are eligible for subsidies, development of self-employment skills, financial assistance to develop skills for employment, assistance in gaining work experience and access to employment services.	Similar to OF, supported activities under the LMAPDs include wage subsidies, assistance with self-employment, employability skills, and financial assistance to encourage and help persons with disabilities maintain employment. Unlike LMPADs, OF is restricted to individuals who are not EI eligible.	The Disability Component of the SDPP provides funding to support projects that improve the participation and integration of persons with disabilities in all aspects of Canadian society, focusing on helping not-for-profit organizations to better deliver services and develop new ideas.	The EAF supports infrastructure projects to improve the lives of persons with disabilities and does not provide funding to directly assist persons with disabilities find employment.

Degree of Overlap with OF		There is a medium level of overlap with OF.	There is a medium degree of overlap with OF.	There is a low level of overlap with OF.	There is a medium level of overlap with OF.	There is a medium level of overlap with OF.	There is no to very little overlap with OF.	There is no to very little overlap between OF and EAF.
Duration and Funding Amount	Established in 1997 with annual budget of \$30 million. Economic Action Plan 2013 proposed to maintain an ongoing funding of \$40 million per year for the OF starting in 2015-16.	\$1.68 billion over five years (April 1, 2010 to March 31, 2015). The ASETS is a successor program to the Aboriginal Human Resources Development Strategy (AHRDS) which was in place between April 1999 and March 2010.	Started in 2008 and provides \$500 million annually to support provincial labour market.	Established in 1997. Program expenditure averages \$3 million a year.	Funded from 2003 to 2015, YES is a \$330 million a year program.	Economic Action Plan announced \$222 million annually for the program, over the next three years.	Funded from 1998 to 201. From 2009 to 2013, \$11.3 million was allocated to the program annually.	EAF is funded for six years (2007-2013) with \$45 million annual budget.

Evaluation Issues and Questions Matrix

Question/Issue	Indicator	Source of Information
1. How has the profile of program participants changed over time since the year 2000?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change in program participant profile (such as age, gender, intervention, disability severity, etc.) 	Quantitative analysis KI interviews (for more recent context) Document review (e.g. program Terms and Conditions and other program documents)
2. How has program delivery changed over time since the year 2000?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes in the mechanisms for distributing funds • Changes in the parameters for obtaining funds • Changes in client eligibility 	KI interviews (for general insight) Document review (e.g. program Terms and Conditions and other program documents)
3. To what extent and in what ways have trends in social assistance receipt and Employment Insurance use changed amongst intervention recipients since 2000?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trends in social assistance receipt • Trends in EI use 	Quantitative analysis KI interviews (for more recent context)
4. To what extent have positive changes to the employment and income levels of program participants continued in the years following intervention receipt?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trends in employment and income levels of participants post-program 	Quantitative analysis KI interviews (employers)
5. To what extent has awareness, promotion of the program and sharing of promising practices taken place at the community, regional, provincial and national level? a. To what extent has the sharing of these products, resources and promising practices had the desired impact (e.g. increased awareness of the OF program and the benefits of hiring persons with disabilities; enhanced complementary relationship with other federal/provincial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent of dissemination of OF-funded products and resources • Extent of sharing of information about OF project promising practices • Perception of success/impact of these products and resources on awareness • Options identified for information sharing and awareness approaches 	KI interviews Document review Literature review

Question/Issue	Indicator	Source of Information
<p>funding)?</p> <p>b. Are there information sharing and awareness building approaches that would yield better results with the same budget?</p>		
<p>6. To what extent have employer awareness activities taken place?</p> <p>a. To what extent have employer awareness activities had the desired impact (e.g. employers are aware of OF program and the benefits of hiring persons with disabilities)?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nature of employer awareness activities undertaken Perception of success (e.g.. extent to which employers are aware of OF program and the benefits of hiring persons with disabilities) 	<p>KI interviews Document review Literature review</p>
<p>7. Do OF programs, including those funded under financial commitments made in the 2012 Budget, overlap or duplicate other federal and provincial programs and supports developed since the previous evaluation in 2008?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent to which OF programs overlap or duplicate with other F/P/T programs, including LMAs, LMAPDs, SDPP, EAF, YES (Skills Link) • Extent to which OF programs serve the same clients as these other programs • Extent to which OF clients also participate in these other programs before, during, or after OF participation 	<p>KI interviews Document review Quantitative analysis</p>
<p>8. To what extent have employers hired/retained OF participants who participated in a wage subsidy or work experience intervention?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employer's perception of hiring and retaining wage subsidies and work experience participants. • Employer's perception of factors influencing the successful retention of wage subsidies and work experience participants. 	<p>KI interviews (employers) Document review (e.g. Operational Guide, project agreements, T's and C's)</p>

Logic Model – Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities

Program Objective

TO ASSIST PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES PREPARE FOR, OBTAIN AND MAINTAIN EMPLOYMENT

Activities

Administer Contribution Agreements with stakeholders and employers to provide assistance to persons with disabilities

Provide assistance to persons with disabilities to prepare, obtain and maintain employment

Promote OF Program to Employers, Stakeholders and persons with disabilities

Outputs

Return to Work Action Plans ← Agreements with Stakeholders Employers and Persons with Disabilities

Promotional Material

Direct Outcomes

Persons with disabilities are participating in skills enhancement activities | Persons with disabilities have tools, skills and information to obtain employment | Persons with disabilities are employed or self - employed

Employers, stakeholders and persons with disabilities are aware of OF program

Intermediate Outcomes

Persons with disabilities are financially self-reliant | Persons with disabilities have entered Labour Market to their fullest potential | Persons with disabilities are accessing Employment Opportunities

Employment Opportunities are available to persons with disabilities

Ultimate Outcome

Persons with disabilities are integrated into Labour Market

Strategic Outcome

A skilled, adaptable and inclusive labour force and efficient labour market