

Formative Evaluation of Income Security Programs — Outreach

*Evaluation and Data Development
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Executive Summary

Background

Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) has responsibility for the administration and delivery of the Canada Pension Plan (CPP) and Old Age Security (OAS) programs. These programs provide benefits to seniors, persons with disabilities and their children, survivors and migrants. In 2000-2001, the department estimates it will provide benefits to nearly 5 million Canadians and more than 135,000 clients living abroad. Total benefits paid under the programs are estimated at \$43.8 billion for 2000-2001 and it is expected that administration and delivery costs will be \$277.4 million.

Income Security Programs (ISP) Outreach is intended to promote awareness of CPP and OAS at the community level, and to improve citizens' understanding of how these benefit programs fit within overall retirement planning and income security. Outreach works with several other ISP divisions whose overall objective is to ensure that people obtain the benefits they qualify for, and that they see these benefits as a reliable part of their retirement income planning. In short, ISP Outreach's mission is *"to be leaders in the community at providing Old Age Security and Canada Pension Plan information to enable Canadians to plan and manage transitions in their lives."*¹

ISP Outreach was created as a separate entity from ISP Communications in April, 1998 as a result of an ISP Omnibus Submission approved by the Treasury Board. Prior to this, Outreach resources were in place in regional and local offices across the country. However, since Outreach had been funded by the Canada Pension Plan, there was no presence in Quebec where the Quebec Pension Plan (QPP) is administered by the provincial government. As a result of the Omnibus Submission, three changes occurred:

- the scope of Outreach activity was expanded to also incorporate Old Age Security;
- resources were increased (approximately doubled) in each of the regions and a significant presence was established in Quebec; and
- a headquarters presence was established for program direction, planning, product development, and research.

Objectives and Resources

The principle objectives of ISP Outreach are to work at the community level to:

- raise awareness and knowledge of CPP and OAS among current and future clients of the programs;
- improve Canadians' understanding of the role of CPP and OAS within overall retirement planning and income security;
- improve confidence in the CPP and OAS programs; and

¹ The Income Security Programs Outreach Strategic Framework, June, 1999.

- work with other ISP areas to increase the proportion of individuals that receive the benefits to which they are entitled under the Income Security Programs.

The first three objectives have been actively pursued under the current design and implementation of the program. However, the activities necessary to achieve the fourth objective are still in progress on a national basis.

ISP Outreach has a national budget of \$4.5 million which includes approximately \$3 million for salaries. This salary budget is allocated for 82 Full time Equivalents (FTE's). Of these, eight are at national headquarters in Ottawa. The remaining 74 are spread across the 10 regions.

The approach to staffing varies from region to region. In some regions (e.g., Manitoba, Quebec and Saskatchewan) staff are dedicated to Outreach. In other regions (e.g., Ontario, New Brunswick, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia and British Columbia), individuals are allocated to Outreach on a fractional basis and also perform other duties relating to the Income Security Programs.

Program Activities

The Outreach personnel in each region are accountable to the ISP regional manager. Consequently, the program is responsive to regional needs and specific activities vary from region to region.

Nevertheless, the activities undertaken fall into four broad categories as follows:

- **Direct Contact With Individuals.** This has been a major focus of ISP Outreach. Specific activities in this category include staffing booths at public events and giving presentations to individuals via retirement and pre-retirement seminars. Events such as these may also result in follow-up requests for information.
- **Working With Intermediaries.** ISP Outreach attempts to provide information to individual Canadians through a leveraged model. Specifically, this involves working with individuals who will, in turn, provide relevant information to individual Canadians. Examples include financial planners, staff of MP and MLA constituency offices and funeral directors.
- **Communicating With the Media.** ISP Outreach staff are often responsible for dealing with local media as regards the Income Security Programs. This may include both reactive and proactive approaches.
- **Identifying and Enrolling Those Entitled to Benefits.** This category of activities which is in progress at this stage, involves the development and implementation of procedures directed at target populations considered to be at above-average risk of not receiving benefits to which they are entitled. Outreach works in this area in concert with other ISP functions such as Communications, CPP Contributor Information, OAS/ CPP Policy, the 1-800 system, and Electronic Services (website).

Evaluation Approach

This formative evaluation addresses 15 issues relating to the following five categories:

- Rationale;
- Design, Delivery and Implementation — Clients Reached;
- Design, Delivery and Implementation — Tools;
- Design, Delivery and Implementation — Specific Activities and Alternatives;
- Design, Delivery and Implementation — Co-ordination.

The evaluation has been conducted using qualitative approaches:

- detailed case studies of program implementation were conducted in four regions;
- the evaluation team attended sample events in two regions;
- interviews were conducted with 71 individuals. Twenty-three of these interviews were with HRDC personnel at headquarters and in the regions. The remainder was with partners, non-government organizations and other government departments;
- interviews were conducted with 83 direct Outreach clients at regional events;
- the Performance Measurement Database was examined and users of the system were interviewed in nine regions and at headquarters; and,
- a literature review was conducted relating to Outreach type activities in nine other countries.

Program Relevance

The evaluation has found that the need for CPP and OAS public education is high and that Outreach has a significant role to play in local communities to this end. Available evidence indicates that Canadians have poor levels of knowledge of the Canada Pension Plan and Old Age Security. These low levels of knowledge create two significant risks:

- individuals may not receive all services or benefits they are entitled to; and
- individuals may base their retirement planning and related financial decisions on inaccurate information.

The evaluation has found that a significant share of the resources of ISP Outreach have been dedicated to direct communication with individual Canadians. These activities are relevant to the achievement of program objectives. However, they are not as efficient as other approaches that leverage the resources, networks and contacts of partners and NGOs in raising Canadians' level of awareness of the income security system. For example, Outreach has notable successes at working with local partners but these have not been as numerous as possible and Outreach has not yet adopted this way of doing business in a consistent, national manner.

To be more effective, ISP Outreach can adopt a more leveraged and targeted approach in all regions.

Design, Delivery and Implementation — Clients Reached

Based on the analysis of this evaluation, Outreach has exceeded targets in almost all of its activity areas such as contacting clients, attending public events and distributing CPP/OAS information. However, ISP Outreach has not been able to consistently measure, on a national basis, the impacts of these activities. To this end, an innovative activities/impact/costing pilot is underway in Outreach with full implementation scheduled for April 2001.

Design Delivery and Implementation — Tools

Overall, ISP Outreach has access to high quality information tools. However, the process for developing new tools in response to identified needs requires improvement.

In particular, production of new national information materials can take an unacceptably long time. Several regions have addressed this by applying regional resources to address particularly urgent requirements. The evaluation has identified a few areas where current information tools are inadequate in reaching certain client groups including aboriginal people, individuals who speak neither official language, etc.

The evaluation found that the Performance Measurement Database (PMD) was constrained by the technologies available at its inception 3-4 years ago. As a result, it was used primarily to record activities and serve as a database to track partners and interest groups. It has been challenging to develop, implement, use and maintain. In addition, the design of the system makes it very difficult to produce aggregate data in a timely and accurate fashion. Based on this learning curve, Outreach is in the process of developing an innovative web-based system that will link with the ISP National Reporting Database. It will report equally on activities, costs and impacts according to a pre-defined program/performance framework where each region has identified its targets and priorities for the coming year.

Design, Delivery and Implementation — Specific Activities and Alternatives

Findings relate to specific activities targeted to the public, to partners and intermediaries and to the media.

Public

The direct public focus of the program has traditionally consisted of staffing information booths at public events and providing retirement and pre-retirement seminars. The evaluation has found that these activities do perform an educational role but are primarily a public relations function unless they are clearly focused. For example, the individuals reached via this approach are Canadians who often are literate and somewhat aware of pension issues.

Outreach's efforts to reach higher-risk clients such as aboriginals and low-income seniors offer better opportunities to raise awareness of ISP benefits and services.

Partners and Intermediaries

ISP Outreach has worked cooperatively with other organizations. Most often, these relationships have been based on inquiries and requests. The evaluation has found several examples of valuable partnerships. Primarily, however, it is the finding of the evaluation that the potential benefits from working with partners and intermediaries are greater than has been realized to date. It is noted that Outreach is focusing its efforts to increase their capacity in this regard.

Media

The program's relationship with the media has been generally positive but limited in scope. Volume of media contacts is lower than expected but consideration is given to the fact that media relations are shared in ISP between Communications, Outreach and regional/HQ issues spokespersons. Regional personnel indicate that the media has generally resisted their approaches for a continuing, pro-active partnership.

Design, Delivery and Implementation — Co-ordination

The evaluation has found that the existing organization structure of ISP Outreach and division of authority is a limiting factor in terms of addressing the objectives of Outreach. Generally, control of the program resources rests with regional ISP managers, while accountability to senior management and central agencies for achieving ISP Outreach's objectives rests primarily with headquarters.

Coordination of the Outreach activities with other ISP communication-related activities is not problematic and the forthcoming overall ISP Branch Communications Strategy will further refine this integration.

Management Response

Income Security Programs (ISP) has reviewed the final report of the Outreach Formative Evaluation. Overall, ISP management views this evaluation as a useful exercise that provides necessary information to continue to modernize the manner in which Outreach performs.

The evaluation accomplished its objectives by providing an accurate picture of the environment and challenges faced by ISP in conducting its public information campaign about the Canada Pension Plan (CPP) and the Old Age Security program (OAS). The study confirms that efforts initiated by Outreach over the course of the last year are headed in the proper direction and that the planned continuation will provide Canadians with a modern, professional organization.

The evaluation describes accurately the need for Canadians to have proper information to be able to plan for their retirement needs. It also reaffirms the fact that knowledgeable citizens will avail themselves of the CPP and OAS provisions and benefit programs to which they are entitled.

The observations and conclusions contained in the evaluation provide a useful basis upon which to continue to develop public education initiatives in the future. The evaluation report will be shared with Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) managers and will lay the groundwork for the Summative Evaluation to be conducted within the next year.

1. Introduction

1.1 The Context of the Evaluation

In 1998, Income Security Programs (ISP) Outreach was created as a separate entity from ISP Communications as a result of an ISP Omnibus Submission approved by the Treasury Board. The Omnibus Submission addressed four key results/goals:

- provide quality service to Canadians;
- strengthen the management and administration of Canada Pension Plan (CPP) Disability;
- increase public understanding of the goals, methods and administration of Canada's public pension system; and
- protect Canada's public pension system against errors, fraud and abuse.

Based on the Submission, the Treasury Board approved additional resources for the administration of the Income Security Programs. This allocation included resources for ISP Outreach. These resources were intended primarily to address the third goal/objective above. However, achieving this goal is not the sole responsibility of ISP Outreach.

Prior to 1997, Outreach resources were in place in regional and local offices across the country. However, since Outreach had been funded by the Canada Pension Plan (CPP), there was no presence in Quebec where the Quebec Pension Plan (QPP) is administered by the provincial government. As a result of the Omnibus Submission, three changes occurred:

- the scope of Outreach activity was expanded to also incorporate Old Age Security (OAS);
- resources were increased (approximately doubled) in each of the regions and a significant presence was established in Quebec; and
- a headquarters presence was established for program direction, planning, product development, and research.

The Omnibus Submission included an Accountability Framework (AF). The AF notes two measures which relate directly to ISP Outreach:

- a performance management system which would monitor the activities under the program and provide measurements of effectiveness and cost-efficiency of the Outreach program; and
- evaluation activity would be based on an evaluation framework.

To address the Treasury Board requirement for evaluation, Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) developed a two-phased approach. This report marks the completion of the first phase — a formative evaluation which was designed to “provide information on the progress towards the achievement of the overall objectives and ... to

identify weaknesses in design, delivery and implementation that could be corrected so that the program could be more effective”. A second phase was planned during 2001-2002 — a summative evaluation “to measure the effectiveness of ISP Outreach in delivering on its mandate”.

1.2 Evaluation Issues

This evaluation addresses 15 issues relating to the following five categories:

- Rationale;
- Design, Delivery and Implementation — Clients Reached;
- Design, Delivery and Implementation — Tools;
- Design, Delivery and Implementation — Specific Activities and Alternatives;
- Design, Delivery and Implementation — Co-ordination.

The 15 specific issues and findings for each are provided in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 provides the conclusions of the Evaluation.

1.3 Evaluation Methodology

The methodology applied to this evaluation has been described in detail in the Methodology Report submitted on March 21, 2000. In brief the following methodologies have been applied to the evaluation:

- case studies which examined the detailed operation of ISP Outreach in four regions — New Brunswick, Quebec, Southwestern Ontario and Manitoba;
- interviews with ISP Headquarters officials (11) and with ISP Regional managers (12) in the six regions where a case study was not conducted;
- interviews (9) with Non-Government Organizations and Other Government departments;
- interviews (39) with organizations identified by regional offices as partners or organizations which they have worked with. This is in addition to 19 similar interviews conducted during the regional case studies;
- case studies of two events conducted under the auspices of ISP Outreach. The first was operation of a booth at the Atlantic National Home Show in Saint John, New Brunswick March 10–12, 2000. The second consisted of three retirement/pre-retirement information sessions in St. John’s, Newfoundland in April and May, 2000;
- interviews with 83 direct Outreach clients at these events;
- review of the design and implementation of the Performance Management Database;
- review of documents pertaining to the program; and
- literature review of experience relating to Outreach type activities in 9 other countries as well as experience of the Canadian Customs and Revenue Agency.

2. Program Description

2.1 Income Security Programs

Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) has responsibility for the administration and delivery of the Canada Pension Plan (CPP) and Old Age Security (OAS) programs. These programs provide benefits to seniors, persons with disabilities and their children, survivors and migrants. In 2000-2001, the department estimates it will provide benefits to nearly 5 million Canadians and more than 135,000 clients living abroad. Total benefits paid under the programs are estimated at \$43.8 billion for 2000-2001 and it is expected that administration and delivery costs will be \$277.4 million.

2.2 Outreach

Income Security Programs (ISP) Outreach is intended to promote awareness of CPP and OAS at the community level, and to improve citizens' understanding of how these benefit programs fit within overall retirement planning and income security. Outreach works with several other ISP groups whose overall objective is to ensure that people obtain the benefits they qualify for, and that they see these benefits as a reliable part of their retirement income planning. In short, ISP Outreach's mission is *to be leaders in the community at providing Old Age Security and Canada Pension Plan information to enable Canadians to plan and manage transitions in their lives.*

ISP Outreach was created as a separate entity from ISP Communications in April, 1998 as a result of an ISP Omnibus Submission approved by the Treasury Board.

2.2.1 Rationale and Objectives

The principle objectives of ISP Outreach are as follows:

- raise awareness and knowledge of CPP and OAS among current and future clients of the programs;
- improve Canadians' understanding of the role of CPP and OAS within overall retirement planning and income security;
- improve confidence in the CPP and OAS programs; and
- work with other ISP areas to increase the proportion of individuals that receive the benefits to which they are entitled under the Income Security Programs.

The first three objectives have been actively pursued under the current design and implementation of the program. However, the activities necessary to achieve the fourth objective have not yet been made fully operational on a national basis.

2.2.2 Resources and Management Approach

ISP Outreach has a national budget of \$4.5 million which includes approximately \$3 million for salaries. This salary budget is allocated for 82 Full time Equivalents (FTE's). Of these, eight are at national headquarters in Ottawa. The remaining 74 are spread across the 10 regions.

The approach to staffing varies from region to region. In some regions (e.g., Manitoba, Quebec and Saskatchewan) staff are dedicated to Outreach. In other regions (e.g., Ontario, New Brunswick, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia and British Columbia), individuals are allocated to Outreach on a fractional basis and also perform other duties relating to the Income Security Programs.

Outreach managers in the regions report to the ISP regional manager. The national director of ISP Outreach provides functional guidance to regional Outreach managers.

2.2.3 Outreach Activities

There is distinct variation in the activities of the program from region to region, due to the staffing and management approaches noted above. Nevertheless, program activities fall into the following four broad categories:

Category 1 Direct Contact with Individuals

This has been a major focus of ISP Outreach. Attending public events (e.g., booths at home shows), giving presentations to the public via retirement and pre-retirement seminars are examples of Category 1 activities. Outreach personnel may also receive inquiries from members of the public whom they have encountered at such events. While the standard protocol is to refer these individuals to the department's formal information sources (i.e., 1-800 number; brochures; website and ISP administrative personnel), in many instances, Outreach personnel deal with the information request directly.

These activities are not always considered to be the most cost-effective approach in achieving Outreach objectives although, based on quantitative/qualitative information, the numbers of individual Canadians contacted greatly exceeded the targets of the program. Outreach headquarters management expects to reduce the number of resources dedicated to individual contact over time in favour of working through leveraged partnerships.

The Omnibus TB Submission noted that with the funding requested (and provided), ISP Outreach would conduct incremental activities which fall into the categories noted below. The table identifies the volume of activity targets and results for the 1998/99 and 1999/2000 fiscal years. Note that the figures were derived largely from the Outreach reporting database but were supplemented as required by estimates and manual figures in regions where the database was not operational during the full two-year period under review.

Initiative	Target	Result
Presentations	3,717	2,616
Training sessions	969	771
Staff booths	218	404
Client contacts	27,853	799,999
Distribute information packages	105,769	2,405,891

Note that the Treasury Board (TB) Submission does not differentiate between presentations and training sessions which target the general public and those which target intermediaries/partners.

Category 2 Working with Intermediaries

The planning materials for Outreach refer to partnerships and promote an increased use of partners to get information to the ultimate client. In our interviews, these “partners” were also referred to as “non-individual clients” or intermediaries, which is a more accurate description of their role. Groups and organizations which Outreach has worked with include the following:

- other federal and provincial departments and agencies;
- health and education organizations;
- advocacy groups;
- MP and MLA constituency office staff;
- finance and insurance companies;
- consulting firms; and
- funeral homes.

While this is a diverse group, they all have relationships with Canadians who — in turn — require information about Income Security Programs. Consequently, they are generally interested in working with ISP Outreach since whatever they learn is knowledge which they require in order to perform their own role better and serve as an information broker to their own staff or clients.

The Omnibus TB Submission committed ISP Outreach to incremental activities which relate to the categories noted below. The table identifies the volume of activity targets and results for the 1998/99 and 1999/2000 fiscal years. Note that the figures were derived largely from the Outreach reporting database but were supplemented as required by estimates and manual figures in regions where the database was not operational during the full two-year period under review.

Initiative	Target	Result
Additional partnerships	1,390	3,658
Presentations	3,717	2,616
Training sessions	969	771
Develop regional products	299	142

As noted above, targets for presentations and training sessions include both Category 1 and Category 2 activities.

Category 3 Communicating through the Media

In many regions, media inquiries are routinely referred to ISP Outreach personnel while in others they are sent to Communications or program managers. Outreach personnel have also been involved in writing newspaper columns and appearances on radio shows and Cable TV community programs. The following table identifies the volume of activity targets and results for the 1998/99 and 1999/2000 fiscal years. Note that the figures were derived largely from the Outreach reporting database but were supplemented as required by estimates and manual figures in regions where the database was not operational during the full two-year period under review.

Initiative	Target	Result
Media contacts	837	148

Category 4 Identifying Those Entitled to But Not Receiving Benefits

The fourth objective of ISP Outreach is a by-product of its educational goal and is to work with other ISP areas to “increase the proportion of individuals that receive the benefits to which they are entitled under the Income Security Programs”. To some extent, all of the information activities in the first three categories are expected to help fulfill this objective. However, it has been increasingly recognized that there may be some groups on the margins of society who are at risk of not receiving benefits to which they are entitled. ISP Outreach has identified the following groups as “target groups” for more proactive approaches. An asterisk (*) indicates the two groups which are currently considered a priority for Outreach although the priority of the risk groups is currently being reassessed:

- aboriginal Canadians (*);
- Canadians with a disability;
- women who have raised children;
- self-employed Canadians;
- low-income seniors and near-seniors (*);
- Canadians living in rural areas;
- functionally illiterate Canadians;
- third language Canadians;
- senior and near-seniors living in institutions; and
- youth.

3. Evaluation Findings

3.1 Program Relevance

Issue 1: Is the rationale for the Outreach Program still relevant? Is there a continuing need for activities to reach clients beyond what can be achieved by less pro-active means?

Finding: The rationale for Outreach remains strong since knowledge of Old Age Security (OAS) and the Canada Pension Plan (CPP) is low which in turn creates risks that:

- individuals will base their retirement planning and related financial decisions on inaccurate information; and
- individuals will not receive the benefits they are entitled to.

There is an ongoing need for activities to reach clients that are difficult to reach by less pro-active approaches and those that have lower levels of knowledge of Canada's public pension system.

Knowledge of Canada's Public Pensions is Low

"Canadian Attitudes Toward the Public Pension Plan and Retirement Planning", Ekos Research Associates Inc., March, 2000, concludes that knowledge levels regarding public pensions and information needed to plan for retirement are both quite low.

As part of this study², Ekos created a "knowledge index" based on responses to 10 knowledge-related questions. The minimum score possible was 0 while the maximum was 12. Knowledge was considered high for survey respondents scoring 6 or more out of the maximum of 12. Only 30% of those surveyed score 6 or more out of 12 on this knowledge rating.

This appears to be much lower than the knowledge Americans, for example, have about their social security system. In a 1998 survey, designed to measure American knowledge of their Social Security system, 55% scored 70% or higher (answered 13 or more questions correctly out of 19 "knowledge indicators")³. While those results may not be directly comparable, the method of measuring understanding in Canada does not appear to be significantly more stringent than that used in the U.S.

² Surveying was conducted from late October to mid-November, 1999.

³ The U.S. has the objective of having 90% of Americans 18 years of age and older knowledgeable about Social Security by the year 2005. To measure public knowledge in this area, Social Security Administration (SSA) worked with the Gallup Organization to develop the Public Understanding Measurement System (PUMS). This system measures public understanding of 19 key messages that the SSA feels the public should understand about Social Security.

The rationale for the Outreach Program is still relevant — but the resources of the program necessitate a more leveraged and targeted approach.

Interviews with key officials at headquarters noted that Outreach activities are being redirected from the general population to specific sub-populations deemed to be at-risk. These individuals noted the need for both greater leverage and improved targeting:

- providing information to organizations and individuals who deal with individual Canadians who require information about public pensions;
- identifying individuals and groups of individuals who are or may be eligible for but not receiving benefits;
- providing customized information to organizations who deal with current and future clients; and
- targeting activities to narrow the gap in knowledge levels of Canada’s public pension system between sub-groups of the population (such as aboriginal people, allophones, and clients with low literacy levels) and the Canadian average.

3.2 Design, Delivery and Implementation — Clients Reached

Issue 2: Was Outreach able to achieve the volume of events anticipated for each activity, and increase partnerships by the anticipated amount?

Finding: Based on the analysis of this evaluation, Outreach has achieved or exceeded targets for most of its activities but has fallen a bit short of intended targets involving presentations, training and media contacts. It has far exceeded its targets for client contacts and information kit distribution.

The following table identifies the volume of activity targets and results for the 1998/99 and 1999/2000 fiscal years. Note that the figures were derived largely from the Outreach reporting database but were supplemented as required by estimates and manual figures in regions where the database was not operational during the full two-year period under review.

Initiative	Target	Result
Additional partnerships	1,390	3,658
Presentations	3,717	2,616
Training sessions	969	771
Staff booths	218	404
Media contacts	837	148
Client contacts	27,853	799,999
Develop regional products	299	142
Distribute information packages	105,769	2,405,891
Total Activity	141,052	3,213,629

Income Security Programs (ISP) Outreach has generally been able to monitor its achievements relative to these activity targets but needs to adopt a measurement tool that is web-based and focuses equally on costs and impacts. Based on interviews with headquarters and regional personnel and approximate data provided by ISP Outreach headquarters officials, the following information is available:

- Outreach far exceeded its targets for client contacts and information kit distribution;
- ISP Outreach placed about 400 booths at public events — about double what was intended;
- the volume of presentations and training sessions is somewhat below what was intended and these activities were more focused on the general public than intended (e.g., pre-retirement seminars) and less focused on intermediaries and partners;
- ISP Outreach has exceeded its targets for partnerships but many of these were in similar areas (e.g., funeral homes). Outreach is currently focusing its efforts to broaden its partnership framework, such as in dealing with financial planners and aboriginal partners, etc.; and
- Outreach is now piloting a tool that can report equally on costs and impacts. This initiative will significantly improve its measurement of achievements related to targets.

Issue 3: At what groups has ISP Outreach targeted its efforts? What strategies have been employed to reach targeted clients? How effective have these strategies been? Have individual regions focused on priority groups in their region?

Finding: At the formative stage, ISP Outreach has operated in a primarily reactive mode rather than in a targeted or strategic mode. However, all regions have now identified target groups and significant individual, regional successes have been noted.

Traditionally, the primary focus of ISP Outreach has been on public events and pre-retirement seminars, with the audience consisting of seniors and near-seniors. These events are typically in response to requests and in many cases have been attended by ISP personnel for many years. Our interviews with senior managers at national headquarters found limited support for this activity as part of Outreach. The Director of Outreach is influencing regions to move away from some of these activities. Nevertheless, the regions remain under pressure to perform this essentially public relations function which, in turn, limits their capacity to address the target groups.

The definition of target populations is a regional responsibility at present. Targeting of two types occurs:

- The first type of targeting relates to “partners” or non-individual clients; i.e., organizations or professionals who deal with clients of ISP. Examples are financial planners; funeral home directors; Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) personnel; other government departments and provincial governments; and, MP and MLA constituency offices. Excellent progress has been made with some of these groups but broader and more nationally consistent efforts are planned and are required.

- The second type of targeting relates to groups of individual who have been identified as priorities by regional management. Most commonly mentioned in interviews with regional offices were aboriginal Canadians, Canadians with disabilities, low-income seniors and near-seniors and youth. Again, in many cases, providing services to these groups can better be accomplished by working through leveraged partnerships.

Issue 4: On what basis has Outreach identified organizations which would be desirable partners? How successful has it been in establishing partnership with these organizations? What has been the contribution of these partnerships in terms of (a) increasing reach and (b) increasing effectiveness with targeted clients?

Finding: At the formative stage, ISP Outreach’s approach to partnerships is largely reactive and mostly consists of working with organizations which request information/assistance. However, significant regional successes have been noted.

In most cases, the approach to identifying partnerships is best described as reactive resulting from invitations and requests to regional and local offices. Often, these represent the maintenance of historical relationships. The definition itself as to what constituted a partnership was not consistent across the country. Examples of partnerships cited in interviews and case studies with regional offices included a wide range of relationships and activities.

Effective partnerships exist when each party brings some particular value to the relationship and each gains from the involvement of the other(s).

It must be noted that there are several excellent examples of effective regional partnerships in the program. For example:

- Most regions have established partnerships with funeral homes in order to develop a streamlined process for dealing with CPP Survivor Benefits. In some regions the establishments have moved beyond handing out applications and are involved in notifying ISP of the death and certifying the documents which the clients forward with their application for benefits. In return for this, ISP can move quickly on the Death and Survivors Benefits application and can minimize overpayments following the death of existing payees.
- Several regions have made sound inroads to work with First Nations and Inuit representatives and make regular knowledge-transfer visits to remote communities.
- The Ontario region has worked with the London Skill Center, the London Life Insurance Company and the Royal Bank Financial Group to develop financial planning workshops.
- The Career and Life Management (CALM) project in Nova Scotia involved the introduction of income security information to the high school curriculum by working in partnership with the provincial Department of Education.

Despite these examples of effective useful partnership, there are opportunities for significant improvements in working with partners. Successes to date — such as those noted above — have been implemented in individual regions and have been developed on the basis of efficient use of government resources.

Opportunities to improve the partnership component of ISP Outreach consist of:

- identifying and pursuing partnerships with organizations in order to reduce the risk that various groups of marginalized Canadians fail to receive benefits to which they are entitled; and
- developing national partnerships with organizations which can assist the Department to provide information in cost-effective ways.

Managers at headquarters identified a need to build national partnerships which would be constructed with specific organizations for clearly defined reasons. Pilots now underway are with financial institutions and national non-profit organizations. Interviews with individuals representing the latter type of organizations (e.g., national seniors organizations and national aboriginal organizations) provided support for this concept. Several of these organizations are prepared to work with ISP along the lines of the good relationship they have with Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (CCRA). Several of these organizations, however, noted that the limited resources of their organizations would be a barrier to them making a major commitment to working with ISP unless funding would be provided.

3.3 Design Delivery and Implementation — Tools

Issue 5: What printed materials and multi-media tools are being used by ISP Outreach? How effective are these materials? What variations exist among regions and client groups in terms of materials used and effectiveness? What gaps have been identified? How are they being addressed?

Finding: Overall, ISP Outreach has access to high quality information tools. However, regions have identified many specific needs for new information tools and no satisfactory approach has been developed towards meeting these needs through headquarters. Several regions have addressed some of their priority needs in an ad hoc fashion. However, the evaluation has identified several high priority needs (e.g., third language publications; brochures targeting aboriginal populations) for which regions require assistance from national headquarters.

A wide variety of national and regional materials are in use throughout the country. There are national materials such as the national presentation package⁴ and the basic brochures⁵ that have the advantage of having been vetted for accuracy. The main concern from the general public with respect to publications is in the lack of “plain, clear language”.

There have been many customized products designed by the regions either for particular focus or because no such product is provided nationally.

Examples of regional products include:

- Ontario has developed several products such as newsletters, Internet sites, MP kits, funeral director kits, etc.
- Saskatchewan has produced a handout for their information sessions which consists of their presentation package printed in a booklet format. Also, their regional Communications branch has produced radio ads in Cree and Dene.
- Quebec has developed employee training kits which include; a slideshow that is customized for each audience and an OAS video.
- Alberta has produced a fact sheet that explains income with respect to the Guaranteed Income Supplement, and a customized poster for the GIS initiative encouraging individuals to notify ISP of change of address or change in marital status.
- Manitoba produced a pamphlet entitled Canada Pension Plan Students’ Benefits. They also produced a product in partnership with Workers Compensation Board that explains Workers Compensation, CPP and Employment Insurance. New Brunswick has a similar publication.

Despite recent changes in NHQ approaches, regions are adopting a “wait and see” attitude toward product development. For the most part, respondents feel NHQ is receptive to their needs and has a genuine desire to assist. On the other hand, they report that NHQ may be overwhelmed by the enormity of needs and are heavily involved in trying to support a large number of ISP internal client groups. Consequently, some basic needs are not being met.

⁴ A Powerpoint slide show which provides information about OAS and CPP.

⁵ Communications Division produces a wide variety of brochures concerning OAS and CPP.

When questioned about gaps that exist in materials, regional officials offered many suggestions. These fell into the following four broad categories:

Materials Targeted to Aboriginal People

Several of those interviewed, noted that existing materials are often not appropriate for many aboriginal people. In particular, it was noted that while aboriginal clients have typically not participated in CPP, they can opt to make contributions. While there is a draft “Fact Sheet” available regarding this, a more comprehensive treatment of the issues involved is also required in the form of a detailed brochure.

In addition to this major issue, several respondents noted that “plain language”, user-friendly” materials are required for aboriginal clients.

Materials Targeted at Other Specific Populations

Those interviewed noted two specific issues relating to the need for population-specific materials.

First, it was noted that there is a lack of materials for individuals who read neither English nor French or who would prefer to receive materials in another language. Given the changing face of Canadian society this issue is one facing the government at large and there is no easy, inexpensive solution.

Secondly, it was noted that most existing materials tend to be directed to seniors or near-seniors in the pre-retirement years. Several interviewees noted that if ISP Outreach is to focus effectively on specific target populations, they need communication materials which provide the information that these populations will be interested in and that the messaging be appropriate for the population. The two populations which were seen as poorly served by existing materials are individuals with a disability and youth.

Materials Dealing With Specific Policies/Procedures

Regional Outreach officials identified a number of topics where a need exists for better information tools:

- overpayments;
- materials dealing with modernization of benefits;
- materials dealing with policy changes on permissible earnings while receiving CPP Disability benefits;
- brochure on benefits for orphans/students age 18-25⁶; and
- communiqué with banks outlining appropriate procedures to minimize the risk that account closures deprive clients on direct deposit of monies to which they are entitled.

⁶ Manitoba and Saskatchewan had jointly designed a booklet on this that NHQ converted to a fact sheet. It was still felt, however, that a brochure which provides a more comprehensive description would be valuable.

Technology/Formatting/Distribution

Some interviewees made suggestions regarding formatting of messages. Several suggestions were made relating to possible uses of videos. For example, it was suggested that videos would be a useful approach to disseminating information to remote areas. It was also suggested that a continuously running video would be useful for trade shows. It is noted that ISP has created two excellent videos that are in the process of distribution to regional Outreach teams.

Another suggestion was that an increased utilization of “Fact Sheets” would be useful.

It was also noted that overly glossy materials may be perceived as wasteful by taxpayers. Several of those interviewed noted that some of the newer materials have colour photos, etc. and have sometimes received a negative reaction from the public.

It was noted that distribution and availability of materials is sometimes a problem. One region mentioned they generally receive 1/3 of their materials in French and this group represents less than 5% of the population. It was also noted that the standard brochures that are nationally distributed could have better availability. There are periods of time when these cannot be obtained at all or are sent in French when the English supply is not available. Those materials that generate the biggest demand should be consistently available and should be up-to-date with no errors. There is strong demand for the ISP overview booklet and there have been ongoing difficulties with the supply for it and other essential products in the past few years.

Several of those interviewed were aware that new communications materials have been developed as part of the “Information on the Retirement Income System” (IRIS) campaign and noted that these materials were not yet being made available in quantity.

Among the products that received positive reviews were the new Disability Information Guide and the marketing pamphlet with space for inclusion of a business card. The recent product emporium, which gave regions the opportunity to share regionally customized products, was viewed positively also. Regions were pleased that a “plain language” expert has been brought into ISP.

Outreach staff has developed the capacity, through remote hookup, to generate automated CPP Statements of Contributions while at trade shows and similar events. However, in some regions staff were flown in from Ottawa to perform this function but it is noted that this practice has been discontinued.

Issue 6: To what extent and in what ways has the ISP Performance Measurement Database (PMD) been enhanced or developed to provide indicators appropriate to track outputs relating to events? Are the transfer potential estimates and quality factors adequate to measure the events? What lessons have been learned as regards effective performance measurement?

Finding: Efforts at designing the PMD to be a performance measurement database have been overtaken by the evolution of technology. Transfer potential estimates and quality factors are not adequate with the existing system to measure the events. Because of this limited value as well as the complexity of using the system, data are not consistently entered into the system. Finally, the design of the application as a distributed system is inconsistent with its primary goal of aggregating performance data to regional and national totals.

A review of the PMD has been used by Outreach HQ to develop the new data collection system currently in pilot mode within the branch. User requirements derived from this pilot will be passed to HQ systems managers to permit a web-based interface from regions directly into ISP's National Reporting Database.

3.4 Design, Delivery and Implementation — Specific Activities and Alternatives

Issue 7: Was training of partners effective?

Finding: Without exception, all of those interviewed who had received Outreach training rated it highly. Outreach has not, however, offered comprehensive training to its partners in all sectors. It is more accurate to describe some of its activities with organizations and professionals as of a briefing nature than formal training. Training/presentations offered by Outreach personnel (typically to pre-retirement seminars or other public groups) are invariably positively regarded.

“Training” is generally thought of as formal instruction. What Outreach officers are generally providing is an understanding of how the system works to two types of audiences:

- individuals who currently (or soon will) receive benefits from the Income Security Programs. Our evidence indicates that pre-retirement seminars or presentations to retirees are the most common training/information sessions offered⁷; and
- organizations dealing with partners who will eventually access the income security system, e.g., constituency office staff, seniors' organizations, health care and social workers, etc.

⁷ Typically, the presentation by Outreach personnel is part of a larger agenda. Many of those identified as partners by the regions were co-presenters at these sessions.

In our interviews with 39 partner organizations, almost all respondents had attended one or more information sessions. Those who had not attended had often been given the option of attending but were unable to do so. Occasionally, Outreach staff has visited partners such as MP constituency offices to update people one on one.

Within the group of defined partners interviewed, a limited number required and requested information beyond the “briefing” approach typically offered by Outreach. Some of these individuals called for a more customized session that would meet their particular needs. Examples were advocacy groups which deal with individuals with a disability and MP constituency offices which have received numerous inquiries relating to the same issue. Representatives of organizations dealing primarily with individuals from ethnic groups also identified a need for a customized approach.

Finding: Outreach has limited experience with “train the trainer”⁸ approaches. The approach used by the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (CCRA) appears to be a model which may be useful to ISP Outreach.

Through the regional case studies and key informant interviews, five successful examples of “train the trainer” approaches were identified:

- The Quebec region has used a “train the trainer” approach with various groups such as provincial staff dealing with social assistance recipients, social workers in hospitals and Air Canada employees.
- All regions have trained funeral directors and CCRA volunteers.
- Nova Scotia has developed a highly-acclaimed education tool that has seen use in its high school system. In-service training for teachers has been highly successful.
- New Brunswick Outreach has trained provincial government human resource staff and youth representatives to deliver ISP information.
- A train the trainer approach was also used in Nova Scotia when the Multicultural Council of Halifax approached ISP staff for assistance. Twenty-four staff representing 12 ethnic groups received ISP training which they, in turn, delivered to their ethnic communities.

⁸ Under a “train the trainer” approach, an organization trains individuals outside of their own organization, to “train” those who ultimately require the information.

Interviews with key informants from outside the federal government noted that CCRA made more effective use of “train the trainer” than ISP. The approach used by CCRA received high praise on two counts:

First: The Community Volunteer Income Tax program was held up as an effective outreach model. An internal evaluation report from CCRA reported a 31% increase over the previous year in the number of returns prepared by volunteers. This was attributed to telephone management practices with well defined targets, weekly reporting of results, injection of additional resources, technology enhancements, better working tools and a focused approach to the filing seasons. ISP Outreach works closely and trains this group and realizes excellent results in the annual GIS renewal exercise (e.g. about 180,000 low-income seniors have their tax returns completed and their GIS renewed each year by CCRA volunteers).

Second: The approach CCRA uses when dealing with aboriginal groups was highly praised. Last year, information seminars on Family Tax Credits and GST issues were held. CCRA flew in three individuals from Ottawa to work with staff from regional associations who provided on-site translation. This approach worked extremely well and The Inuit Tapirisat Association of Canada highly recommends that HRDC use similar procedures. Outreach is in an developing stage in delivering national targeted aboriginal services but has regional successes, especially in Northern Ontario and Manitoba.

Issue 8: What client-focused activities are being undertaken at the regional/local level under ISP Outreach? Are regions developing strategies to ensure that their activities represent “best available” approaches to addressing program objectives and priorities?

Finding: Client-focused activities primarily consist of booths at public events, pre-retirement seminars and media contact. All of these activities are provided primarily in response to requests and fulfill a public relations purpose. They are not always directly tied to Outreach objectives and do not always represent “best available” approaches.

Regions and HQ Outreach are in the process of developing strategies to better use their time. They have acknowledged that a more strategic approach to defining target groups and approaches is needed. Work has begun on this and there is agreement that booths and pre-retirement seminars may not be the best use of existing resources.

In our interviews with all groups consulted in this evaluation, it was generally agreed that such events targeted groups who generally are more literate and knowledgeable than the at-risk groups noted above and that working directly with these individuals is not as

valuable an activity in the context of Outreach objectives. It is noted however, that Outreach is in the process of expending significant effort in terms of:

- targeting information at groups of individuals who are at above-average risk of not receiving benefits to which they are entitled; and
- targeting groups of individuals who are poorly informed and at risk of making poor retirement planning decisions as a result.

“Best approaches” would focus on these target populations.

Issue 9: How are regional staff employing media contacts? Are regions developing strategies to ensure that their activities represent “best available” approaches to addressing program objectives and priorities?

Finding: The relationship with the media is primarily reactive to the needs of the media.

The degree of involvement with the media in the regions ranged from no media contacts to a high degree of comfort. Some regions have participated in talk shows and write regular newspaper articles. Others defer this entire area to Regional Communications. Establishing media ties was not viewed as a simple process in one region. When the coordinator asked that Outreach officers place an increased emphasis on radio shows, it was not always easy to spark interest from the media. Requests from ISP for coverage were not often favorably received and were occasionally viewed as government propaganda. Decisions to do newspaper articles or conduct interviews often only came about after reporters attended public seminars and saw the level of public interest firsthand. There appears to be considerable room for development of better media relations in virtually all regions. For this to occur, guidance and assistance from headquarters will likely be required.

Issue 10: Was Outreach effort allocated to the most cost-effective methods of reaching clients? Are all activities still relevant?

Finding: Outreach effort was not always allocated to the most cost effective methods of reaching clients. Public events such as booths and pre-retirement seminars were not always cost-effective when compared to alternate ways to do business.

Many of these events are judged by managers in headquarters and, to a somewhat lesser extent, in the regions, as expensive and in the words of one manager “sometimes helping those that don’t need help and perhaps not always helping those that do”. In other words, they can be expensive, and may not always be the best way to achieve program objectives.

Dropping these activities is somewhat difficult, however. In many regions, commitments to attend these functions extend over many years and withdrawing may reflect on the department. Certainly, these public relations activities are quite defensible and, seemingly,

affordable relative to the enormous expenditures on Income Security Programs (about \$44 billion annually). However, these expenditures represent a significant portion of the total resources of Outreach and contribute less than other possibilities to meeting program objectives.

If these public relations activities are to be continued, either they need to be separated from the Outreach function or the resourcing and planning process of Outreach needs to be adjusted to reflect the reality of these activities.

Issue 11: Have complementary activities, such as Internet-based Outreach, been used effectively to reach clients and partners?

The design of complementary activities is not the direct responsibility of ISP Outreach. The extent to which Outreach activities and initiatives are complementary to those of other organizations within ISP is addressed in Section 3.5 below.

3.5 Design, Delivery and Implementation — Co-ordination

Issue 12: Has the messaging in Outreach activity effectively complemented other components of the communications plans developed by ISP?

Issue 13: Did client contact activity complement or overlap 1-800 telephone bank functions?

Issue 14: Did media contact activities complement the activities of the phone bank and the communications branch appropriately?

Finding: Outreach activities complement the 1-800 telephone bank and the activities of the Communications Division as well as other aspects of the ISP communications approach.

In our interviews it was clear that during contact with clients, Outreach personnel provide the appropriate 1-800 number to clients so that they can call at their convenience for further information. As well, ISP Outreach personnel use the textual materials developed by the Communications Division and distribute these materials — directly and indirectly⁹ — to individual Canadians.

However, at the time of the evaluation there appeared to be a number of issues requiring attention with both of these complementary activities. For example, in interviews with regional managers, partners and national organizations, difficulties regarding the 1-800

⁹ By providing materials to intermediaries such as financial planners and funeral directors who in turn distribute them to individual Canadians.

service¹⁰ were noted. As regards the Communications Division, long lead times for production of new materials were frequently cited as problematic. It is beyond the scope of this evaluation to address these matters in detail.

Finding: An overall communications strategy is needed that incorporates the web, the 1-800 number, Outreach, and other components of the communications plan. While some pieces of an overall strategy are in place, these pieces would be much more complementary as part of an overall strategy.

Issue 15: Is the organization structure and division of authority the most effective possible?

Finding: The existing organization structure and division of authority is a limiting factor in terms of addressing the objectives of Outreach.

The resources of Outreach are small in the context of the Income Security Programs. However, the objectives are substantial. Furthermore, as previously noted,

- a substantial fraction of the current resources are attached to activities to which there is a historical commitment but which are not as effective as other approaches to the business; and
- the needs to which the objectives are tied are substantial given Canadians' poor knowledge of their Income Security Programs.

In such a context, management must be empowered to set priorities and deploy resources to address these priorities. The current structure, however, makes this difficult in the absence of agreed-upon ways to do business, funding and results measurement.

At present, authority in relation to the activities of regional Outreach rests with the Regional Managers of Income Security Programs. This authority includes the ability to reassign Outreach personnel to other activities. This authority is not always accompanied by an accountability for achievement in relation to Outreach objectives.

Conversely, Outreach HQ, who are accountable for the program objectives, can only influence priority setting and deployment of resources by persuasion.

These organizational/structural issues are a concern, at a time, when some of the program's resources are tied to activities which are not in all cases the best way to educate Canadians. Addressing this will be challenging within the current organizational structure but steps are being taken, including the development of a national communications plan so that all parties can agree upon implementing a system to manage activities, costs and expected results.

¹⁰ Some individuals are not comfortable with the automated attendants used by this service. As well, difficulties getting through were noted.

4. *Conclusions*

The conclusions of the evaluation are as follows:

Conclusion 1: Canadians generally have poor knowledge of their Income Security Programs.

Research work cited in the evaluation has shown that the majority of Canadians have very poor knowledge of their Income Security Programs — worse, apparently, than the knowledge of Americans about their national Social Security programs.

Conclusion 2: Given the very large and varied population served and the complex programs to administer there is some risk that members of some marginalized groups may not be receiving all the services or benefits to which they may be entitled.

The extent of non-receipt of services or benefits has not been fully quantified in ISP and it has been recognized that addressing this risk is a priority within the branch. Due to its earlier start, the United States Outreach Demonstration Program is progressing to the identification and addressing of such risks.

ISP has, however, taken some major initiatives in this area. For example, it is now a routine practice that all 1.5 million low-income recipients of Old age Security/Guaranteed Income Supplement (OAS)/GIS who file an income tax return are assessed for their possible eligibility for renewal of the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS). As well, the branch has undertaken yearly mailings to CPP contributors, provided benefit information to existing clients with their annual T4 slip, and sends “presumptive” OAS/ CPP applications to possibly-entitled Canadians prior to their 65th birthday.

Conclusion 3: ISP Outreach is potentially part of the solution of addressing these two issues of poor knowledge and risk of missed services and benefits among some populations.

While ISP Outreach can be part of the solution it is definitely not going to be all of the solution. It is noted that the strategies and activities of ISP Outreach are being integrated with the larger branch-wide communication plan to address these two issues.

Conclusion 4: ISP Outreach can be better focused on meeting its objectives. The share of the work done by ISP Outreach at this formative stage is generally of a reactive nature and does not contribute as well as other approaches to meeting the stated objectives of the program.

A portion of ISP Outreach resources is devoted to public relations activities such as staffing booths at public events. Public events are generally selected in response to requests received. These public relations activities may be a sensible investment in the larger framework. Expending resources in public relations activities relating to \$44 billion in annual expenditures is not a concern and is probably worthwhile. However, the amount spent does not contribute as well as other approaches to meeting the program objectives.

An alternative approach would be more strategic and would allocate program resources in order to maximize achievements relative to the program objectives. There are two considerations to adopting a more strategic focus:

- historical and continuing commitments to public relations activities; and
- the current organizational structure and division of authority.

Conclusion 5: The current Performance Management Database is inadequate.

The PMD has proven to be inadequate for Outreach purposes and is in the process of being replaced at the time of writing this report.

Efforts at designing the PMD to be a performance measurement database were limited by the evolution of technology. Transfer potential estimates and quality factors are not adequate with the existing system to measure the events. Because of this limited value as well as the complexity of using the system, data are not consistently entered into the system. Finally, the design of the application as a distributed system is inconsistent with its primary goal of aggregating performance data to regional and national totals.

It is noted that the stand-alone Outreach database has been phased out in favour of a data collection system that is presently in pilot mode. User requirements derived from this pilot will be passed to HQ systems managers to permit a direct web-based interface from regions into ISP's National Reporting Database.