



### Evaluation of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency's Communities and Inclusive Growth Programming

The Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency's (ACOA's) Communities and Inclusive Growth (CIG) programming promotes rural economic development across the region by helping to: improve infrastructure; attract and retain people and labour; develop skills; build partnerships; and support priority-setting and strategic planning.

#### WHAT THE EVALUATION FOUND

- There continues to be a need for the CIG programming. ACOA offers unique supports to address regional economic challenges, such as a declining workforce, inadequate infrastructure and skills gaps.
- The programming achieves key expected outcomes, including strengthened community and sector partnerships, skills, infrastructure, and planning. It attracts investments and lays the foundation for future economic growth.
- ACOA is a valued and trusted partner in economic development in Atlantic Canada. To achieve results, the Agency facilitates local community economic development, including convening, pathfinding, and providing advice.
- There are opportunities to enhance ACOA's approach to integrating and communicating newer Government of Canada priorities, including better consideration of under represented groups, into its current programming.

- ACOA collects and monitors information about program results. There are gaps in the availability of consistent information on broader outcomes, and on how the programming reaches under-represented groups, needed for planning, decision-making and reporting.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Ensure strong coordination and communication on newer priorities within and outside of the Agency.
2. Improve the availability of meaningful performance information to support decision making and communication about the impacts of ACOA's investments in communities.

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#### ABOUT THIS STUDY

*This study supports ACOA's accountability and information requirements. It examined the relevance and performance of all of ACOA's community economic development programming from 2012-2013 to 2017-2018, with the exception of short-term funding programs and the Community Futures Program (evaluated separately).*

*The evaluation analyzed data from a number of lines of evidence: existing administrative and performance information, a document and literature review, key informant interviews, case studies, and an online client survey.*

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