



Evaluation of the Fisheries Funds



Program Overview

The Fisheries Funds include the following three Funds: **Atlantic Fisheries Fund (AFF)**, **Quebec Fisheries Fund (QFF)**, and **British Columbia Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund (BCSRIF)**. The Funds are jointly funded contribution programs, wherein 70% of the funding is provided by the federal government, and the remaining 30% is provided by the participating provinces and territories.

The Funds are governed by a Management Committee and a Steering Committee, and are each overseen by three Regional Directors General (RDGs) located in the Maritimes, Quebec, and Pacific Regions. The Funds aim to keep the fish and seafood sector sustainable and innovative while meeting the growing demands of a worldwide market.

Atlantic Fisheries Fund (AFF)	Quebec Fisheries Fund (QFF)	British Columbia Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund (BCSRIF)
<p>AFF began in 2017, with over \$400 million budgeted over seven years, and provides funding to projects in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland and Labrador. It aims to help Canada’s fish and seafood sector transition to meet growing demands for products that are high quality, value-added and sustainably sourced.</p>	<p>QFF began in 2019 with \$42.8 million budgeted over five years. It aims to stimulate innovation in Quebec’s fish and seafood sector and support its development and adaptation.</p>	<p>BCSRIF began in 2019 with \$142.85 million budgeted over five years. The Fund aims to support protection and restoration activities for priority wild fish stocks, including wild Pacific salmon, and to ensure the fish and seafood sector in BC is positioned for long-term environmental and economic sustainability.</p>

Each Fund focuses on three main pillars: **innovation**, **infrastructure**, and **science partnerships**. AFF administers a fourth pillar, **the Canadian Fish and Seafood Opportunities Fund (CFSOF)**, a national market access and development program.

INNOVATION	INFRASTRUCTURE	SCIENCE PARTNERSHIPS	CANADIAN FISH AND SEAFOOD OPPORTUNITIES FUND
 <p>Encourages the development of new products, processes, and technologies in harvesting and aquaculture</p>	 <p>Encourages the adoption of new technologies or processes to improve productivity and sustainability</p>	 <p>Forms industry-based collaborations with academic and other research institutions to improve our knowledge and understanding of the marine ecosystem</p>	 <p>Helps Canada enhance its reputation as a country that provides fish and seafood products that are: legal; sustainable; high quality; and value-added</p>

About the Evaluation

The evaluation was conducted in compliance with the Treasury Board Policy on Results and meets the obligations of the *Financial Administration Act*. Overall, the evaluation covered the years 2017-18 to 2021-22. However, for BCSRIF, only the fiscal years 2019-20 and 2020-21 were evaluated. BCSRIF was realigned to be part of the Pacific Salmon Strategy as of April 2021, in addition to the Fisheries Funds (Budget 2021).

The evaluation included Fisheries and Oceans Canada’s (DFO) regions that manage the Fisheries Funds: Maritimes, Quebec, and Pacific. Provinces were involved as key informants. The evaluation included an assessment of the relevance, governance, design and delivery, and the effectiveness and efficiency of the Funds. Lines of evidence included a document and file review; 51 interviews; a survey to recipients; administrative data review; and a literature review.

Summary of Key Findings

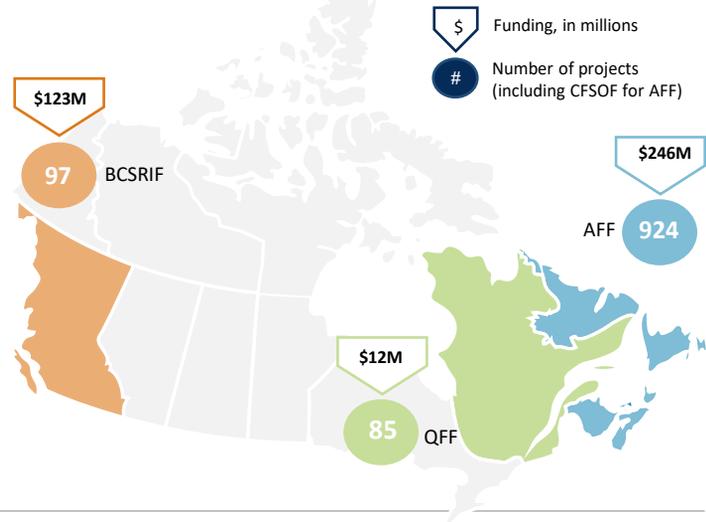
Overall, under its current governance and design, the **Fisheries Funds perform well**. Some challenges were found related to delays with approval processes, design of the pillars, especially with the design of the Canadian Fish and Seafood Opportunities Fund. Monitoring and data collection on results is limited, and further planning is needed for Funds' sunset.

Key Findings

Relevance of the Funds & Contribution to the Fish and Seafood Sector

- There was widespread agreement that the Fisheries Funds are meeting the needs of the fish and seafood sector. The Funds were adaptable to the fish and seafood sector's evolving needs.
- Other similar federal, provincial, and regional programs exist and generally programs complement each other rather than duplicate. While there are not many formal communication mechanisms, good communication within the different groups direct project proponents to funding programs that suit their needs.
- As of March 2022, the Fisheries Funds successfully signed more than 1,100 contribution agreements.

Number of signed contribution agreements and financial federal and provincial contributions (in millions), by Fund, as of March 2022



Governance of the Fisheries Funds

- The Secretariats, Steering Committees, and Management Committees support the delivery of the Fisheries Funds; while their roles and responsibilities are clear, and the role of the Secretariats are viewed as key to delivery, some adjustments would improve efficiency.
- A major issue with the funding process for all Funds is delays in getting projects approved. The Management Committee and the Steering Committee are perceived as somewhat redundant. The governance structures could support the delivery of the Fisheries Funds in a more efficient way by combining those two levels of approval into one executive committee.
- Federal and provincial collaboration is mostly working well. However, some challenges exist related to differing priorities and the cost share ratio in QFF.

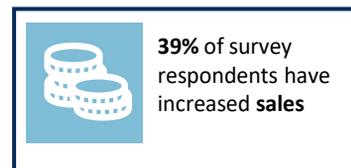
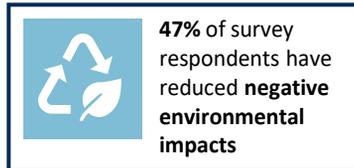
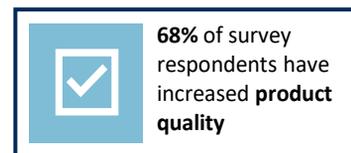
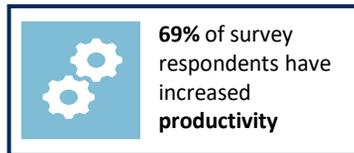
Design and Delivery

- The innovation, infrastructure and science partnership pillars are positively perceived, with only minor challenges being noted. The infrastructure pillar receives the most funding.
- While there is a need for a national marketing program, there is limited awareness of, and issues identified with the design of, the Canadian Fish and Seafood Opportunities Fund.
- The funding process is mostly going well. The Fisheries Funds were considered accessible and inclusive, it was easy to apply, the information provided was clear, the staff were supportive, and reporting requirements were reasonable. Although continuous improvements were made since the launch of the Funds some challenges were identified such as delays with funding decisions and disbursement of funds.

Early Results

- The Fisheries Funds support the adoption and adaptation of new equipment, technologies, processes, and products, as well as the publication of studies and articles. Projects are showing some early signs of results, including improved productivity and product quality, and reduced negative environmental impact.
- All three Funds have collected limited information on results from recipients, therefore the information collected does not provide a full picture of results achieved to date. Some challenges were noted regarding monitoring, which varied between the Funds.

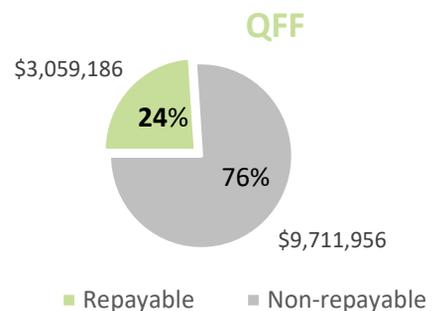
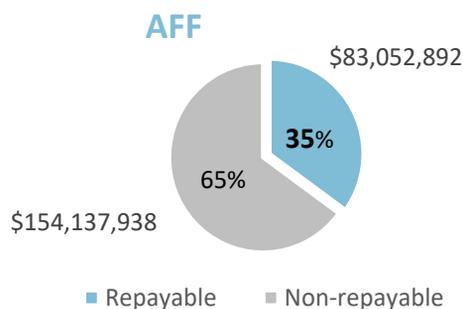
Percentage of survey respondents who experienced the following early signs of results:



Repayable Contributions & Funds' Sunset

- Most Fisheries Funds projects are non-repayable. Although a small percentage of AFF and QFF projects are repayable, these projects total more than \$86 million dollars. As such, it will be necessary to have a plan in place when the Funds sunset, as projects can be repayable for up to ten years.

AFF and QFF repayable vs. non-repayable contributions



Recommendations

Recommendation 1. It is recommended to identify and implement improvements in order to reduce delays in the approval process.

Recommendation 2. It is recommended to improve project monitoring, and performance data collection. A significant increase in the collection of performance data is required to fully demonstrate progress made in increasing productivity, competitiveness, quality, and sustainability in the fish and seafood sector.

Recommendation 3. It is recommended to ensure project repayments continue beyond the sunset of the Funds. It is also recommended that the RDG, Quebec Region find solutions to ensure the 70/30 federal-provincial cost share ratio is met over the life of the Fund.

Recommendation 4. It is recommended to review the Canadian Fish and Seafood Opportunities Fund in order to address challenges with the governance and delivery of the Fund.