Housing, Infrastructure and Communities Canada | Logement, Infrastructures et Collectivités Canada

SUMMARY OF THE EVALUATION OF THE DISASTER MITIGATION AND ADAPTATION FUND

What we evaluated

- The Disaster Mitigation and adaptation Fund (DMAF) is a national, competitive and merit-based contribution program supporting infrastructure projects to help communities mitigate risks and impact of disasters triggered by natural hazards, such as floods, wildfires, droughts, and seismic events.
- DMAF was launched on May 17, 2018, committing $2 billion over 10 years to invest in large-scale infrastructure projects with a minimum cost of $20 million. This initial program cycle was known as DMAF 1.0. Since 2023, the DMAF has been delivering a one stream program, open to projects with total eligible costs of $1 million and above. This cycle is known as, DMAF 2.0. where a total of $3.74 billion in targeted investments were committed with payments extending to 2032-2033.

Evaluation Context

- DMAF evaluation was conducted in alignment with the Treasury Board's 2016 Policy on Results and the Financial Administration Act, that requires an evaluation, every five years, of the relevance and effectiveness of all ongoing grants and contributions programs with average annual spending of more than $5 million. The DMAF evaluation was also included in the 2023-28 Departmental Integrated Audit and Evaluation Plan as a formative evaluation and the first formal evaluation since its inception. The evaluation covered the period from May 2018 to March 2023.

How we proceeded

- The evaluation used multiple lines of evidence to gather information. This included a review of program and external documents, literature review, program data review, key informant interviews, and a case study.

What we found

We found that DMAF:

1. Is a relevant and flexible Program to support Canadian communities become more resilient to natural disasters. These investments help reduce the negative impacts of disasters on the Canadian economy;
2. Complements other federally funded disaster management and climate adaptation programs. To enhance the efficiency and long-term resilience of Canadian communities, there is a need to continue ongoing coordination and alignment of these programs given the increasing frequency, severity and costs of disasters in Canada;
3. Was well designed and implemented to support the achievement of its expected immediate outcome. As infrastructure projects take time to complete, there is a need to review the Program's Performance Measurement Strategy to ensure that intermediate and ultimate results, including related indicators and targets, remain relevant to assess progress and program long-term impacts, including economic benefits. Updated indicators should be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-Bound (SMART); and

Canada

4. DMAF's primary objective is to fund mitigation infrastructure that strengthens community-level resilience, particularly in small, remote, and northern communities. While the program has incorporated government-wide priorities, such as Gender-based (GBA) + considerations, disasters do not affect all populations equally. This report highlights that data-informed approaches aimed at understanding and reducing vulnerabilities of at-risk populations can further enhance the long-term resilience of Canadian communities. For example, by lowering the project cost threshold to improve accessibility for communities with varying capacities and by providing full funding for Indigenous-led projects.

Our conclusions

- Overall, the evaluation concluded that DMAF had a positive return on investment and is relevant to supporting Canada's efforts to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of disasters and climate change. However, for DMAF to continue to be effective and to reduce the long-term impacts of disasters in Canada, there is a need to continue ongoing coordination and alignment with other federal disaster management programs, and for specific measures to support at-risk communities.

Recommendation and Considerations

Recommendations

Considering DMAF was launched seven years ago, in light of the evolving context with increased frequency and costs of disaster events in Canada, it is recommended that the Program Management:

- Review the DMAF Performance Measurement Strategy to ensure that expected intermediate and ultimate results remain relevant to assess progress and long-term program impacts, including economic benefits as infrastructure projects take time to complete.
- Ensure that selected indicators follow the SMART criteria and that relevant targets are identified. This will allow for tracking and reporting on progress towards completion of funded projects.

Considerations

In addition to the recommendations, the evaluation team would like to highlight the following considerations :

1. Ensure understanding and alignment with HICC's role in federal disaster mitigation and climate adaptation programing with other relevant federal departments, and:
    - Align with and ensure complimentary with other federal disasters management* programs to identify areas of need "gaps" for better coordination of project funding for long-term resilience of Canadian communities.
    - to support programming like DMAF to focus on proactive disaster mitigation investments and climate adaptation measures to help reduce response and recovery costs and to leverage the long-term economic benefits of disaster mitigation.
2. In collaboration with relevant stakeholders:
    - Explore additional mechanisms to enhance involvement of provinces and territories (PTs) for projects with regional impacts requiring collaboration among different communities for long-term resilience.
    - Better understand the needs of low-capacity communities and vulnerable populations as disasters do not impact people equally.